

# Independent

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ISLAMABAD: The newly elected members of the National Assembly taking oath of their office during the inaugural session of the 16th National Assembly at the Parliament House.

## Newly elected members of National Assembly take oath amid loud sloganeering

Election of PM to be held on March 3; Nomination papers of Ayaz Sadiq, Amir Dogar for NA Speaker accepted

ISLAMABAD (INP): The inaugural session of the newly elected National Assembly commenced with Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf in the chair to induct a fresh batch of lawmakers, who started arriving in the Parliament House before the scheduled time. The newly elected MNAs were administered the oath by the speaker after which they all also signed on the registration rolls. Moreover, the election for the Lower House speaker and deputy speaker will be held today, March 1. After the oath, the speaker first asked the candidates for speaker and deputy speaker to sign on the roll of members, which included PML-N Ayaz Sadiq and Awaiz Leghari. As per the official agenda, the session commenced with a recitation of the naat, the holy Quran and the national anthem. Following the national anthem, the Sunni Ittehad Council's MNAs-elect gathered in front of the speaker's dais and created a commotion with a strong protest with slogans and chants. As a result, the PML-N members also responded with counter slogans of "Ghari chor (watch thief)" against the PTI and its leadership. The Sunni Ittehad Council members were carrying posters of Imran Khan, while several leaders, including Barrister Gohar, were clad in masks depicting the former prime minister. On consistent sloganeering by PTI members, the speaker warned they would be evicted from the House. The National Assembly Secretariat has also issued the procedure for polling for the speaker and deputy speaker, which is set to take place on March 1. In order to avoid any mismanagement, the entry of political workers into parliament has been banned. Arrivals Among those arriving early were PML-N leader Khawaja Asif, Kheel Das Kohistani, and PTI-backed independent candidates Omar Ayub, Zartaj Gul and Sher Afzal Marwat.

## Sindh declares rain emergency amid heavy rain forecast

KARACHI (INP): Sindh's Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah on Thursday declared rain emergency in the province after a weather forecast of a heavy rainfall in the province. Murad Ali Shah presided over a meeting over the weather emergency and directed for high alert at all local bodies, administration and hospitals. The meeting also declared half-day duty at all government and private institutions in Karachi tomorrow (Friday) due to likely rain situation. "The people are requested to avoid going unnecessarily of their homes," Shah said. "Rainfall is expected in Karachi by 2:00pm," he said. "There are three to four spells of rainfall in the city tomorrow," he said. "The rainwater is expected to enter in Sindh from Khuzdar mountain range," Shah said. He directed Commissioner Larkana to take all precautionary measures to tackle the situation. "We have to keep our preparations complete with regard to rainfall warning," chief minister said. Director General Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Salman Shah briefed the chief minister. "Shahrah-e-

## Governor Sindh advocates coalition government formation to lead country forward

HYDERABAD (APP): Governor Sindh Kamran Tessori on Thursday advocated the formation of a coalition government and urged all the parties to work together to lead the country out of the crisis. He expressed these views while speaking to the media during the inauguration of the 772<sup>nd</sup> annual Urs celebration of Hazrat Qalandar Lal Shahbaz (RA). Speaking on the occasion he said that Sindh is land of saints and people of this land are fortunate to be custodians of such rich heritage. He said that the progress of Sindh and Pakistan interlinked. Governor Sindh appreciated the arrangements for the Urs and praised Secretary Aqbal Munawar Ali Maheesar, Commissioner Hyderabad Syed Khalid Hyder Shah, Deputy Commissioner Jamshoro Ali



KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister, Syed Murad Ali Shah presides over a rain-emergency meeting, held at CM House in Karachi.

## Attends 7<sup>th</sup> Pakistan Army Team Spirit Exercise-2024 COAS lauds anti-terrorism efforts of Pakistan Army

PATS, right forum fostering team spirit in evolving character of war

RAWALPINDI (APP): Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir on Thursday said Pakistan Army Team Spirit (PATS) was the right forum, which appropriately combined professional military skills and tactical acumen of all participating soldiers, fostering much-needed team spirit in the face of evolving character of war. The Army Chief was addressing the participants of the 7<sup>th</sup> Pakistan Army Team Spirit (PATS) Exercise-2024 as chief guest that concluded at Kharian Garrison with an impressive Closing Ceremony, an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release said. The COAS appreciated the participating teams for their professionalism, physical & mental endurance and high morale displayed during various stages of the exercise. He reiterated mutual learning during such exercises and said: "Pakistan Army upholds rich soldierly attributes of character, courage and competence which have amply been displayed by our men in the face of fight against terrorism." The 60 hours rigorous "Patrolling Exercise" aimed at enhancing combat skills through sharing of innovative ideas and experiences by the participants of the forum. Seven teams from Pakistan Army and fifteen teams from friendly countries including Bahrain, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Maldives, Morocco, Qatar, United States of America, Uzbekistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Turkey participated in the exercise. Azerbaijan, China, Germany, Indonesia, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Myanmar witnessed the exercise as observers. The exercise was conducted from 25-27 February in the semi mountainous terrain of Punjab. Over the years, the exercise has gained much prominence as a very competitive professional military activity for the friendly countries.



Chief of the Army Staff, General Syed Asim Munir addressing the closing ceremony of the Seventh Pakistan Army Team Spirit Exercise-2024 at Kharian.

## JUI-F to sit on opposition benches: Fazlur Rehman

ISLAMABAD (INP): Jamiat Ulema Islam (JUI) leader Maulana Fazlur Rehman has announced that his party will not participate in the upcoming elections for the Speaker, Prime Minister, and President of Pakistan. This decision signifies JUI's intention to function as an opposition party in the newly formed parliament. Speaking to the media in Islamabad on Thursday, Maulana Rehman stated that JUI will "not use the right to vote" and will instead "sit in the opposition." He further emphasized that JUI will not be involved in the selection of the Prime Minister, Speaker, and Deputy Speaker.

## Bottle hurled at Nawaz Sharif during NA session

ISLAMABAD (INP): An unidentified man hurled a bottle at Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz supreme leader Nawaz Sharif during National Assembly's (NA) inaugural session on Thursday. As per details, the bottle was hurled at Nawaz Sharif during Rule of Members' signature. Luckily, the bottle missed Nawaz Sharif. Sharif has returned to the National Assembly after seven years. He was declared winner by the Election Commission of Pakistan from NA-130, Lahore.

## PPP writes letter to CEC Election on 9 vacant seats of Senate held forthwith

ISLAMABAD (Online): PPP has written a letter to Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) on the matter of 9 vacant seats of senate. It has been said in the letter that 8 senators were elected as Members of National Assembly (MNA) in the recent general election. Those who have succeeded as MNAs are Yousuf Raza Gillani, Abdul Ghafoor Haidri, Nisar Khoramji Mehtab, Sarfraz Bugti, Sadiq Sanjarani, Prince Umar and Nuzhat Sadiq. Caretaker prime minister has already resigned from his Senate seat. Therefore the election be held forthwith on vacant seats.

## Umar Ayub, Ali Khan vow to bring PTI founder as prime minister

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leaders Umar Ayub and Ali Muhammad Khan said on Thursday that the PTI founder will be in the assembly as prime minister. He was talking to media outside the National Assembly here before attending the session of the newly-elected house. He vowed that the PTI would resolve people's problems. Ayub said that the international financial institutions want proper use of the debt as the government does not have the ability to do so. He said that the members of the Sunni Unity Council (SUC) would attend the assembly session en masse, take oath and stage protest. The PTI founder has directed the members-elect to ensure their presence in the assembly session. Ali Muhammad Khan said that their leader would return to the highest office with a two-thirds majority. He said that the party had won 180 seats but deprived of its mandate by tampering with Form 47. "We have pointed this out to the IMF," he added.



ISLAMABAD: Newly elected Members of National Assembly Umar Ayub Khan and Barrister Gohar Khan arrives to attend 1st session of 16th National Assembly at Parliament House.

## US urges new Pak govt. to prioritize economy, continue engagements with IMF

UNITED NATIONS (APP): The United States supports Pakistan's efforts to "break free" from the vicious cycle of debt and financing, a State Department Spokesperson has said, urging the new government to continue working with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other global financial institutions. "Pakistan's new government must immediately prioritize the economic situation because the policies over the next several months will be crucial to maintaining economic stability for Pakistan," Spokesperson Mathew Miller told his daily news briefing on Wednesday. The spokesperson was responding to a question at the daily State Department briefing about a letter sent by ex-PTI's Chairman Imran Khan's to the IMF, suggesting to link the next loan facility to an audit of the Feb 8 general elections in the country. "I'll just say with respect to the IMF that we support Pakistan's efforts to break free from the vicious cycle of debt and international financing," the Spokesperson added. "The long-term health of Pakistan's government—or economy is crucial to its stability," Miller added. Pakistan has been facing financial challenges in recent years, with dwindling foreign exchange reserves and declining value of its national currency.



SEHWAN: Governor Sindh Kamran Tessori laying wreath on the shrine of Hazrat Lal Shahbaz Qalandar (RA) on his 772 URS celebrations at Sehwan Sharif.

## Necessary arrangements made regarding expected rains in city: Mayor

KARACHI (APP): Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab Thursday said that necessary arrangements had been made regarding the expected rains in the city and decisions had been made regarding clearing choking points in the drains. All concerned staff would be present on the roads during the rains, KMC, Sindh Solid Waste Management Board and Water Corporation had made a strategy for the expected rains, he said this in a video message. Barrister Murtaza Wahab said that there was no such example in the past that such rains were expected in the month of March in Karachi. This is the effect of climate change that is being talked about all over the world. He said that the leaves of the relevant officers and other staff in KMC and other related institutions had been canceled and all the officers and staff would remain on the ground. "InshAllah, we are trying our best to minimize the problems of the people and wherever there is a problem, immediate action will be taken to provide relief to the people, we all making every effort so that urban life is not affected during rains," he said.

## Rain alert issued in KP, CM Sindh declares rain emergency

PESHAWAR2024 (Online) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) has issued an alert about rains and snowfall in different parts of the province from today till Sunday. According to PDMA, all Deputy Commissioners have been advised to take precautionary measures to avoid any human and material losses during the forecast period. Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has also declared a rain emergency in the province. Chairing a meeting in Karachi today, provincial Chief Minister directed the concerned to remain high alert in wake of heavy rain forecast in the province.

## Pakistan's total liquid foreign reserves reach \$ 13.038 billion

KARACHI (APP): The total liquid foreign reserves of Pakistan stood at US\$ 13,038.5 million in the week ended on February 23, 2024 while foreign reserves held by State Bank reached \$ 7,949.6 million. The State Bank of Pakistan, in a statement issued here on Thursday, informed that foreign exchange reserves held by the central bank decreased by \$ 63 million to \$ 7,949.6 million due to debt repayments during the week under review.

## Writing letter to IMF is anti state act: Nawaz

Letter to IMF proof Imran wants country's destruction: Shehbaz

ISLAMABAD (Online): PML-N Quaid Nawaz Sharif has said writing letter to IMF is tantamount to commit anti state act. "Writing to letter to IMF is tantamount to indulge in anti state act. He said this in an informal talks with the media men on his arrival in parliament house to attend inaugural session of National Assembly (NA) here Thursday. Talking on matter of writing letter by PTI to IMF on polls rigging he said no political party can write letter this way. Only they can write such letter. This is their routine norm. Writing this letter is anti state act. You can deduce result from this letter. Like wise Shehbaz Sharif nominated Prime Minister said while talking to media men after his arrival in NA that PTI has proved by writing letter to IMF after cipher that it wants to annihilate country. We condemn this act on the part of PTI. He held PTI wrote this letter to sabotage IMF program. INP adds: PML-N President and prime minister in waiting, Shehbaz Sharif, has called the letter written by the PTI to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) another anti-national move of the party. "After the cipher, this letter is another proof of the PTI's anti-state interests," he remarked while arriving at the Parliament House for the inaugural National Assembly session on Thursday morning.



GARHI KHUDBA BUX: Newly elected Speaker Sindh Assembly, Syed Awaiz Qadir Shah talking to media persons during his visit to Bhutto Mausoleum in Garhi Khuda Bux.

## Daily Voice of Masses Independent

### Unchanged rating

International ratings agency Moody's decision to keep Pakistan's long-term credit rating unchanged at Caa3, with stable outlook, is reflective of the poor standing of a cash-strapped nation in global financial markets. The rating indicates a higher probability of default and a greater degree of investment risks amid weak debt affordability. It also takes into account Pakistan's low growth rate and high exposure to extreme weather events, which can increase economic and social costs, with high debt-servicing requirements reducing the fiscal flexibility to undertake key expenditures on infrastructure and social initiatives. Global rating agencies have long ranked the country among 'speculative grade' economies, with very high credit risk owing to the liquidity crisis and external vulnerability challenges. A year ago, Moody's had downgraded Pakistan from Caa2 to Caa3, relegating it to almost the bottom of the riskiest markets, shortly after the IMF suspended its funding support due to the authorities' failure to meet the goals of the previous Fund programme.

That had seen Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves plunge and had raised concerns over the country's weakening ability to pay its foreign debt. The agency kept the sovereign rating unchanged last summer, even after the IMF agreed to provide a short-term \$3bn loan to help Islamabad stabilise the economy and avert default. Moody's latest decision once again underscores that the fears of default, exacerbated by political uncertainty in the aftermath of the Feb 8 poll, will continue, unless a new, larger loan agreement is reached with the IMF. "Political risks are high," it says, "following... controversial elections."

It says that there is a great deal of uncertainty regarding the new government's inclination and ability to quickly enter a new IMF programme, which is needed to attract additional financing from other multilateral and bilateral partners in order to reduce default risks.

It also maintains that the forthcoming coalition government's decision-making capacity will be severely constrained as its electoral mandate may not be sufficiently strong to pursue difficult reforms that will likely be required by a new IMF programme. Thanks to the current IMF facility and some other multilateral inflows, as well as strict controls on imports and profit repatriation in the last several months, Pakistan has successfully accumulated a small stock of foreign exchange.

That means the new set-up will likely meet its remaining external debt obligations for the present fiscal. However, as Moody's has said, there is "limited visibility" regarding the sovereign's sources of financing to meet its "very high external needs" after the current IMF Stand-By Arrangement ends in a few weeks. That concern will remain until Pakistan enters a new programme with the Fund.

However, the likelihood of Pakistan graduating from high-risk to investment-grade category will depend on the government's undertaking durable structural reforms, and political and policy stability.

## Cultural summits

F.S. Aijazuddin

The advent of spring was celebrated each year with the Basant festival. Now, its arrival is heralded by cultural festivals — this spring in quick succession by the ThinkFest, the Faiz Festival and over the last weekend the Lahore LitFest. All three provided more than food for thought; they were an irresistible invitation to intellectual gluttony.

It is the irony in which Pakistan specialises that some years ago, the Lahore LitFest was denied the Lahore Arts Council complex as a venue. Today, the chairmanship of the LAC is occupied by Razi Ahmed — the prime mover behind the same Lahore LitFest. Six transit potentia.

Since its debut in 2013, the Lahore LitFest has grown into a cultural octopus that can perform separate functions simultaneously. To demonstrate its flexibility, it spreads itself over five covered halls and numerous open-air lawns in the Al Hamra complex.

If one has reason to cavil about LitFests, it is that too many programmes are crammed within too few days, with sessions of interest competing unfairly with each other. At the Lahore LitFest, for example, a visitor had to choose between discussions during the same hour on 'Museums in the West and Pakistan', 'Plants of the Quran', 'Sufi Literature', and 'Industrial Sustainability'. Oh, for the magical powers of replication! And yet therein lies the strength of these LitFests. They offer diversity in scarcity.

LLF 2024 opened with a qawwali and then a film (Songs of the Sufi) about the origins and growth of qawwali in the subcontinent, made by Kamran Anwar, a banker-turned-film producer. The

following morning, four novelists discussed their individual approach to character formulation — Monica Ali of Brick Lane fame, Portuguese author José Luis Peixoto, H.M. Naqvi and our own home-grown Hemingway Mohsin Hamid.

A small hall overflowed to hear Alejan-dro Vergara of the Museo del Prado, Madrid. His informed discourse on European art compensated those whom visa restrictions deny the chance of seeing the originals.

The plight of Pakistani womanhood had three articulate proponents of gender equality — Roshaneh Zafar of Kashf, Moina Saad of IFC, and Sadaf Abid. They spoke from personal experience of helping thousands of Pakistani women squirm out of poverty. Millions more could benefit, they said, from the use of smartphones to expand home-based e-commerce. Remember: it took two world wars in the West and two revolutions in Russia and China for their women to become emancipated. Women in Pakistan are gaining — slowly, too slowly — their innate rights in a battle against suffocating patriarchy. Politicians have provided poor role models. A woman prime minister (Benazir Bhutto) and now a female chief minister Punjab (Maryam Nawaz) both had to rely upon their maiden names to advance their careers. No Margaret Roberts (later Mrs Thatcher) here, just as a President Mrs X has yet to occupy the White House.

For those who could not attend the LitFest, technology offers a virtual substitute. They can download the recordings of the sessions. Particularly recommended is one on the 'Future of the Written Word in an age of AI'. Four writers assessed their vulnerability to AI.

Each of them — Monica Ali, Mohsin Hamid, the novelist Hannah Dubgen and the American humorist David Sedaris — read out AI-generated texts which, at the press of a cursor, produced a pastiche of their individual writing styles.

Sedaris read out an AI version of a fictitious story involving a man trapped in a latrine, and then his own description of the same incident. The contrast could not have been sharper — insipid chalk vs a tangy, mature cheese. All four argued that AI does not produce literature — culled after centuries of learning, fuelled by inspiration. It is most probably the byproduct of three or four unseen minds, expressing themselves through words, spawned from binary codes. Sedaris dismissed an AI-produced text as one composed by an eight-year-old, relying for options on a thesaurus.

But even eight-year-olds grow up. Man-made technology is maturing faster than God's human-kind. Who knows how soon AI will replace live authors? Sooner than we fear. Authors (and especially university professors) are all too aware that attentive readership is waning, being replaced by bytes and sound-bites and fabricated prose. Many attendees found the most inspirational session to be a film Above the Sleeping Giants, produced by the DARD foundation on the achievement of a young Pakistani mountaineer Shehroze Kashif. He has planted his country's flag on 13 of the highest mountain peaks in the world. Recently, an ageing Nawaz Sharif returned to Pakistan with a plan to scale the same PM-ship, for the fourth time. Shehroze, not yet 22, waits to conquer his 14th summit. It is a generational thing. — Courtesy Dawn

Nadeem Hussain | Tabarak Rehman

Pakistan's youth dominated the discourse on the Feb 8 general elections and has stayed at the centre of the debate pre- and post-ballot counts. Some analysts attribute the poll upset to the new voters. However, rhetoric often outstrips tangible solutions when it comes to Gen Z driving national development. As a result, the millennials find themselves marginalised in the grand scheme of growth plans, struggling for recognition and space to contribute meaningfully.

The young in this country are often considered to be one of the greatest national assets, but how do we channel this energy and develop this resource to bring prosperity to our struggling nation of 240 million? This question mostly remains unanswered.

Some propose vocational training, while others think providing employment opportunities should be the priority. Successive governments in the past two decades have come up with programmes like the Prime Minister's Laptop Scheme, E-Rozgar, Ehsaas Scholarship Pakistan, Prime Minister's Youth Business & Agriculture Loan Scheme, Prime Minister's Youth Skill Development Programme, etc.

But despite such initiatives, Pakistan has not witnessed a significant growth in national productivity. Where is the magic then? Let's look at our neighbour, India (yes, let's compete outside the cricket ground and battlefield). From 2003 to 2016, India was busy establishing 1,000 colleges annually, ie, on an average three colleges a day, or one every eight hours! American higher education institutes are at least considered to be among the top, if not the best,

places for creativity and advancement. The US has led with the unicorns (start-ups valued at over \$1 billion) for many years, owing to its top-quality higher education, robust venture capital ecosystem, entrepreneurial culture, and strong innovation hubs.

In 2023 alone, India sent a total of 131,338 young men and women to American colleges and universities on F-1 student visas, while Pakistan managed to send only 3,353 students in the same year. F-1 visas issued to Pakistanis account for less than one per cent of all F-1 visas, whereas for Indians, the figure is roughly 30pc. The result at the highest level? The heads of two of the world's top five tech companies — Microsoft and Google — came to the US after completing their undergraduate studies in India.

Satya Nadella, Microsoft's executive chairman and CEO, completed his Bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from the Manipal Institute of Technology in Karnataka before coming to the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and subsequently joined the Windows-maker in 1992. Sundar Pichai, the CEO of Alphabet and Google, graduated from the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, with a B.Tech degree, and went on to complete a Master's degree from Stanford University. Following a short spell at McKinsey & Co, a management consulting firm, Pichai joined Google in 2004. Most American schools require standardised tests for admission in undergraduate and graduate programmes. Last year, 137,884 Indian college graduates took the Graduate Record Examinations (GRE) and the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT), compared to

3,485 Pakistani graduate school applicants who took the test in 2023. Similarly, a large number of Indian students take the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) and American College Testing (ACT) compared to a relatively small number of Pakistani test-takers.

The Higher Education Commission recognises close to 350 universities and degree-awarding institutions across Pakistan, with an enrolment of close to 1m students and virtually no public university schedules for graduate school admissions in the US. Single-digit private academic institutions do have some awareness series to help their graduates secure admissions in American higher education institutes. Most of the HEC's study-abroad programmes are flawed in design and are not bringing the intellectual capital that could drive the knowledge economy at home.

For Pakistan to come out of its current (and future) financial crisis, it needs to logically invest in top-quality higher education by fielding our young in the global grounds of innovation and knowledge. Some Pakistanis — mostly US business school graduates — are working hard to help fellow Pakistani men and women navigate their academic and professional journeys to the US. Their initiative, Sarzameen Pakistan, is being run and managed by volunteers at a very small scale. However, a larger programme to increase the number of Pakistani students in universities in the US, and hence the number of professionals in the American market, would provide a strong foundation for the nation to prepare for future crises and global challenges. — Courtesy Dawn

## Commerce News

### ICCI delegation visits POF to explore business chances in defense industry

ISLAMABAD (APP): A delegation of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) led by Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President visited the Pakistan Ordnance Factories (POF) and held a meeting with Lt. Gen. Syed Tahir Hameed Shah, Chairman POF to explore business opportunities for the private sector in the defense industry.

Chairman, POF, Lt. Gen. Syed Tahir Hameed Shah briefed the ICCI delegation about the role of Pakistan Ordnance Factories, which was the country's premier defense production organization.

He said that besides meeting the defense needs

of the country, POF exported its products to several countries around the world. He said that POF imported many parts and equipment to produce its finished products and said that it would welcome local vendors who could supply it with parts and equipment according to the required standards. He said that POF was the largest defense industrial complex comprising 14 ordnance factories and three commercial subsidiaries.

He said that the surplus products of POF were sold in the civil market and the standards of POF products were not less than any international company.

### FCCI rejected Implementation of Cess tax in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Independent Report ISLAMABAD: Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh President Federation Of Pakistan

being created for the newly elected provincial government under a deliberate conspiracy by



Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) said that the KP Business Community rejects the imposition of 2% Cess on import on all imports into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is totally unjustified and unacceptable to business community of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This will result in price hike of essential commodities and hyperinflation.

Atif Ikram further said that instead of giving relief to the poor people of the province, problems are

the bureaucracy, which cannot be ignored under any circumstances while our country is already running in economic crises.

He further said that the business community of the province and the importers and exporters are already under burden of heavy taxes while the Cess levy of 2% on import and export trade by the care-taker provincial government will further increase the problems and complications which is to be condemned.



PESHAWAR: A delegation of Association of Small Medium Enterprises (BVMW) Germany meeting with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Haji Ghulam Ali.

### Identifying agro-ecological zones crucial for maximizing output of agriculture

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for National Food Security and Research Dr Kausar Abdulla Malik on Thursday said that identifying agro-ecological zones was crucial for maximizing output of agriculture products as well as to achieve sustainable economic growth in the country.

Addressing the launching ceremony of the updated "Agro-Ecological Zones

of Pakistan", he commended the efforts of Pakistan Agriculture Research Council (PARC) scientists and also emphasized the importance of establishing a dissemination mechanism to engage all stakeholders.

The report offered a comprehensive overview of Pakistan's updated agro-ecological zones, considering changing environmental

conditions, he said adding that it was prepared under the directive of the Ministry of National Food Security and Research, categorizing Pakistan's ecology into various zones and sub-zones with a specialized database.

Chairman PARC, Dr Ghulam Muhammad Ali highlighted its significance updated agro-ecological zones in identifying appropriate crops for diverse

ecological conditions nationwide, which would help tailor agricultural practices to specific environmental conditions, maximizing crop productivity. He said that understanding these zones could lead to more sustainable and profitable farming methods, better resource allocation, contributing to food security and economic growth in the region.

### FCCI emerges as first E-chamber in country

FAISALABAD (APP): The Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) has emerged as the first E-chamber of the country by starting a 24/7 online digital service to issue new as well as renewal of the existing memberships.

Acting President FCCI Dr Sajjad Arshad renewed the first membership of his firm through this facility while Vice President FCCI Hajji Muhammad Aslam Bhalli was also present during the inaugural ceremony.

### PR CEO announces plans for train restoration, improvements

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Railways Chief Executive Officer Aamir Baloch said on Thursday that train service would be restored gradually based on resource availability.

During an online live e-Kuchery session, Baloch revealed that a new train timetable was set to be implemented from March 15 while the restoration of Sandal and Khushhal Khan Khattak Express trains was possible upon available resources. He highlighted ongoing efforts to enhance track conditions in the

Main Line Sukkur Division and mentioned plans to increase the number of trains overtime, with improvements expected to reduce engineering restrictions. Regarding specific routes, Baloch indicated that the decision on restoring Akbar Bugti Express was pending. He assured the public of special Eid trains and improved facilities during the festive season. Furthermore, he noted a decrease in salary delays, attributing it to enhanced revenue generation.

### Rupee stands at break-even point against Dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani rupee witnessed no change against the US Dollar in the interbank trading on Thursday and closed at the previous day's closing rate of Rs 279.11. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 279.3 and Rs 282.2, respectively. The price of the Euro increased by 30 paisa to close at Rs 302.41 against the last day's closing of Rs 302.11, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

### OGDCL, ISGS agree to collaborate for SUGS project

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) and Inter-State Gas Systems (Private) Limited (ISGS) have agreed to collaborate for the development of the Strategic Underground Gas Storage (SUGS) project to address the challenge of surplus gas management in Pakistan.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between OGDCL and ISGS on Thursday, said a news release issued here on Thursday.

The parties will evaluate potential opportunities in

developing SUGS at OGDCL fields to enhance the country's energy infrastructure and ensure efficient utilization of gas resources.

The SUGS Project is a critical initiative designed to establish storage facilities for surplus gas, particularly during off-peak seasons when demand is low relative to supply in the Pakistani market. Through the SUGS Project, OGDCL and ISGS aim to mitigate these challenges by creating storage capacity and facilitating gas-swapping arrangements with other stakeholders in the industry on commercial basis.



GILGIT: A shepherd guiding herd of goats heading towards grazing field near Nomal area.

### Facilitate rescue & relief operations Ufone 4G provides free calls in Gwadar to help connect flood-affected families

ISLAMABAD (APP): As Gwadar faces a large-scale natural disaster caused by catastrophic rains and flash floods, Pakistani telecom company, Ufone 4G has announced free calls to help connect local families, and assist in swift execution of rescue and relief operation in the affected port city. The heavy downpour has inundated large parts of Gwadar, destroying homes and livelihoods, and rendering hundreds of families homeless, said a news release.

A considerably large section of the local population is associated with the fishing industry,

whose boats were wrecked, and businesses decimated by the deluge. As a responsible Pakistani corporate citizen, Ufone 4G has always stepped up to help fellow Pakistanis affected by natural disasters. The free minutes will help the locals to connect with their loved ones, alert authorities to their plight and request urgent rescue and relief assistance.

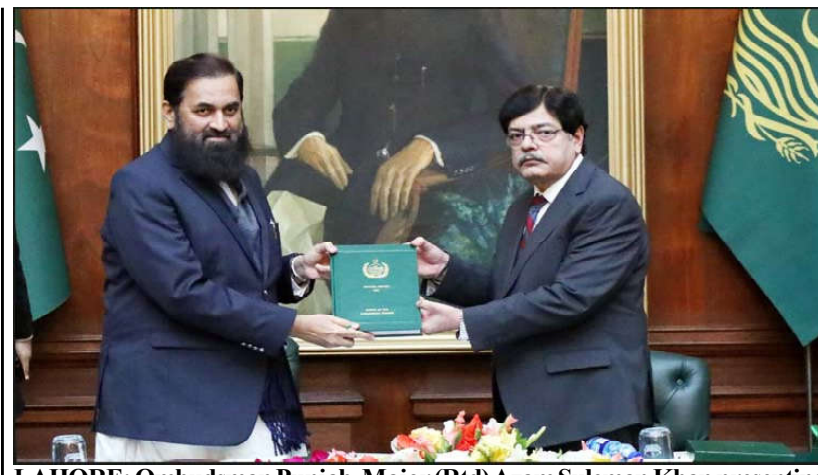
The initiative is particularly crucial as the extensive flooding has disrupted communications channels and made it harder for people to find ways to recharge their mobile balance.

## Punjab Governor says: Role of ombudsman is commendable in redressal of people's complaints

**Independent Report**  
LAHORE: The Ombudsman Punjab, Major (Rtd) Azam Suleman Khan, presented the annual performance report of the Office of the Ombudsman Punjab for the year 2023 to the Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman in a ceremony held here today at Governor House Lahore. Additional Chief Secretary Punjab Ahmad Raza Sarwar and administrative heads of the Punjab government along with advisors and

consultants of the Ombudsman Office were present in the ceremony. Speaking on this occasion, Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman said that the role of provincial ombudsman is commendable in redressal of people's complaints related to public institutions. He said that he appreciates Ombudsman Punjab for embracing information technology and facilitating people. The Punjab Governor lauded the

initiatives like complete digitalization of the Ombudsman Punjab office. He said that extending the offices of the Punjab Ombudsman to various districts and providing maximum relief to the people was commendable. Governor Punjab said that the decisions of the provincial ombudsman are written in Urdu which is easy for people to understand and they do not need to hire any lawyer for it. Governor Punjab further said,



LAHORE: Ombudsman Punjab, Major (Rtd) Azam Suleman Khan presenting annual performance report of the Office to Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman during a ceremony.

## PPP leader stresses constitutional limits for institutions' functioning

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan People's Party (PPP) South Punjab President Makhdoom Ahmed Mahmood has reiterated the party's longstanding stance on the importance of adherence to constitutional limits by all institutions of the country. He emphasised that such adherence was crucial for democracy, economy, federation, and overall stability of the country. In a recent gathering at Makhdoom House on Thursday, Ahmed Mahmood stressed the significance of politicians understanding and

respecting their political boundaries, asserting that the approach could prevent constitutional crisis like those witnessed on May 9. He highlighted the need for mutual respect among politicians, media, judiciary, and other institutions, stating that resolving personal animosities and ego clashes could contribute to addressing the nation's challenges. Ahmed Mahmood also shed light on PPP's decision to support the government despite lacking sufficient numbers, attributing the move to perilous state of the country's economy.

## May-9 violence: ATC grants interim bail to PTI leader in 9 cases

LAHORE (APP): An anti-terrorism court (ATC) on Thursday granted interim bail till March 7 to absconding Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Hafiz Farhat Abbas in cases related to May-9 violence. The court granted bail to the PTI leader in nine cases including attack on Jinnah House and Askari Tower and ordered him to furnish surety bonds of Rs 100,000 for availing the relief. ATC Judge Arshad Javed conducted the proceedings on the bail petition of the PTI leader, who also appeared in the court.

## Babar, Surayya take oath as KP Assembly Speaker, Deputy Speaker

PESHAWAR (Online): Babar Saleem Swati and Surayya Bibi of Sunni Ittehad Council took oath as new Speaker and Deputy Speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly in Peshawar Thursday. Outgoing Speaker, Mushtaq Ahmad Ghani administered the oath to newly elected speaker of provincial assembly, while the new Speaker Babar Saleem Swati administered



LARKANA: Student presents a bouquet to her teacher during a function at Govt little folks Girls High School Jinnah Bagh.

## Sindh Police wins over NYP in T-20 cricket match

KARACHI (APP): The Karachi Academy on Thursday hosted a riveting T-20 cricket match between the Sindh Police and the New York Police (NYP) teams. IGP Sindh Riffat Mukhtar Raja, was the chief guest on the occasion. Opting to bat first after winning the toss, the NYP team set a target of 87 runs, showcasing their batting prowess. However, the early players of the Sindh Police team displayed exceptional skill and determination, successfully chasing down the target in just 13 overs, clinching a well-deserved victory. IGP Sindh lauded the players for their remarkable performance, rewarding them with cash prizes and commendation certificates in recognition of their outstanding contributions



QUETTA: MPA Engineer Zamrak Khan Achakzai taking oath from Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) candidate Captain (Retd) Abdul Khaliq Achakzai as Speaker Balochistan Assembly

## HEC chairman inaugurates new Faculty at UAF

FAISALABAD (APP): Psychology and degrees of Fine Arts and Art and Design. The proposed building of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities would be completed within 10 months at a cost of Rs.469.64 million. It would include exhibition halls, multipurpose halls, classrooms, waiting rooms, offices, common rooms and others, he added. Moreover, Dr Mukhtar Ahmad also inaugurated the amphitheater in D-Ground UAF, meant to promote co-curricular activities and to sharpen the God-given qualities of the students.

## PDA launches tree plantation campaign in Hayatabad, RMT

PESHAWAR (APP): The Director General (DG) Peshawar Development Authority (PDA), Captain (Retd) Khalid Mehmood launched a tree plantation campaign here on Thursday. Under the campaign PDA in collaboration with IMSciences University will plant saplings at Hayatabad Township.

## 15 dead, 1,359 injured in Punjab road accidents

LAHORE (APP): At least 15 persons were killed and 1,359 others injured in 1,271 road accidents in Punjab during the last 24 hours. As many as 604 seriously injured people were shifted to different hospitals, while 755 with minor injuries were treated at the incident site by the rescue medical teams. The analysis showed that 731 drivers, 44 underage drivers, 185 pedestrians, and 458 passengers were among the victims of road accidents. The statistics show that 249 accidents were reported in Lahore.

## PDMA initiates development of disaster risk reduction policy

PESHAWAR (APP): The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, under the guidance of Relief Department, has initiated efforts to make Khyber Pakhtunkhwa resilient against potential disasters. In a momentous step, the PDMA has commenced the development of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Disaster Risk Reduction Policy with the support of the Community Resilience Activity-North (CRA-N). A workshop was convened in Peshawar, chaired by Secretary Relief, Inayat Ullah Wasim, and Director General PDMA, Muhammad Qaisar Khan. Representatives from CRA-N, Academia and other organizations were also present. The forum, comprising key stakeholders and disaster management experts, unanimously agreed that the forthcoming policy,

## DC for early construction of flyovers in Dera city

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (INP): Deputy Commissioner Mansoor Arshad Khan has underlined the need to start construction work of flyovers at the earliest to overcome the traffic congestion in the city. Chairing a meeting here, the deputy commissioner said that two flyovers were being constructed in the city including one at Tank Adda and the other at Sabzi Mandi where snarl-ups had become a routine matter.

# International News

## Putin warns West of risk of nuclear war

**Warns West against sending troops to Ukraine in major speech**

**Monitoring Desk**  
MOSCOW: President Vladimir Putin told Western countries they risked provoking a nuclear war if they sent troops to fight in Ukraine, warning that Moscow had the weapons to strike targets in the West. The war in Ukraine has triggered the worst crisis in Moscow's relations with the West since the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. Putin has previously spoken of the dangers of a direct confrontation between Nato and Russia, but his nuclear warning on Thursday was one of his most explicit. Addressing lawmakers and other members of the country's elite, Putin, 71, repeated his accusation that the West was bent on weakening Russia, and he sug-

gested Western leaders did not understand how dangerous their meddling could be in what he cast as Russia's internal affairs. He prefaced his nuclear warning with a specific reference to an idea, floated by French President Emmanuel Macron on Monday, of European Nato members sending ground troops to Ukraine — a suggestion that was quickly rejected by the United States, Germany, Britain and others.

"(Western nations) must realise that we also have weapons that can hit targets on their territory. All this really threatens a conflict with the use of nuclear weapons and the destruction of civilisation. Don't they get that?!" said Putin.

Speaking ahead of a March 15-17 presidential election when he is certain to be re-elected for another six-year term, he lauded what he said was Russia's vastly modernised nuclear arsenal, the largest in the world. "Strategic nuclear forces are in a state of full readiness," he said, noting that new-generation hypersonic nuclear weapons he first spoke about in 2018 had either been deployed or were at a stage where development and testing were being completed.

Visibly angry, Putin suggested Western politicians recall the fate of those like Nazi Germany's Adolf Hitler and France's Napoleon Bonaparte who had unsuccessfully invaded Russia in the past.



A member of the press consoles a woman outside Al-Aqsa hospital in Deir el-Balah.

## China urges largest nuclear states to negotiate a 'no-first-use' treaty

**Monitoring Desk**  
BEIJING: States with the largest nuclear arsenals should negotiate a treaty on no-first-use of nuclear weapons against each other or make a political statement in this regard, the Chinese foreign ministry's arms control department said. Director General of the department, Sun Xiaobo, called on nuclear states to fulfil their "special and priority responsibilities" on nuclear disarmament according to the UN Conference on Disarmament, which seeks to prevent nuclear war, official news agency Xinhua said on Wednesday.

During the forum's weekly meeting in Geneva on Monday, Sun said the body should define a roadmap or timetable for an international legal instrument that would protect non-nuclear-weapon states from the threat of nuclear weapons.



Russian President Vladimir Putin delivers his annual address to the Federal Assembly, in Moscow, Russia.

## More than 30,000 killed in Gaza, Hamas-run health ministry says

JERUSALEM (Online): More than 30,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza since 7 October, the Hamas-run health ministry says. That number equates to about 1.3% of the 2.3 million population of the territory — the latest grim marker of the awful toll of this war. The ministry says that the majority of those killed were women and children. Its figures do not differentiate between civilians and fighters when identifying those killed. In its daily update on Thursday, the ministry said 81 people had been killed in the last 24 hours, bringing the total to 30,035. The actual number of

dead is likely to be far higher as the count does not include those who have not reached hospitals, among them thousands of people still lost under the rubble of buildings hit by Israeli air strikes. More than 70,000 injured people have been registered by the Gaza ministry of health (MoH), which is the only official source for casualties. Its data is quoted by UN agencies and other international institutions. The World Health Organization (WHO) says it has a "long-standing co-operation" with the Gaza body and that it has "good capacity in data collection/analysis".

## UN 'appalled' by public executions in Afghanistan

**Monitoring Desk**  
GENEVA: The United Nations on Wednesday condemned recent public executions in Afghanistan, urging the Taliban authorities to cease the use of capital punishment. A f g h a n i s t a n ' s Taliban government publicly executed three convicted murderers in the past week on death warrants signed by Supreme Leader Hibatullah Akhundzada. All three men were shot multiple times in front of large crowds that included the families of their victims.

## Palestinians urged to reach Al-Aqsa mosque in Ramadan

**Monitoring Desk**  
CAIRO: Hamas urged Palestinians on Wednesday to march to Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque at the start of Ramadan, raising the stakes in negotiations for a truce in Gaza. The call by Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh followed comments by Biden, broadcast on Tuesday, that there was an agreement in principle for a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas during Ramadan.

## 'Uncommitted' votes show Gaza impact on Biden

**Monitoring Desk**  
DEARBORN: Joe Biden's campaign and top Democratic officials vowed to double down on efforts to win back former supporters after being hit by a much stronger-than-anticipated protest vote in the Michigan primary over the president's support of Israel. About 13.2 per cent of Michigan Democrats cast a ballot for "uncommitted" in the nominating contest, following a weeks-long push by activists, an Edison Research tally showed after 9am on Wednesday. With about 85pc of all votes counted, the uncommitted vote was already over 101,000 votes, far higher than expected. Turnout for

the Democratic primary was also high, at some 900,000 voters overall. About 81pc of those votes backed Biden. As the results were being tallied, a senior Biden campaign official said the team will continue to "make our case in the state — to both uncommitted voters and the entire Michigan constituency. The president will continue to work for peace in the Middle East." Biden's staunch support for Israel during its five-month war with Hamas, which has decimated Gaza, has sparked outrage and a well-organised backlash among progressive Democrats and Arab Americans, with Michigan as their epicentre.



People look at election results at a monitoring centre set up in Dearborn by the Listen to Michigan watch party, a group which asked voters to vote 'uncommitted' instead of voting for President Joe Biden.

## US seeks Israel's assurance for using American weapons

**Monitoring Desk**  
WASHINGTON: The Biden administration has established a mid-March deadline for Israel to sign a letter committing to adhere to international law when using American weapons. Furnished by Washington, the letter also mandates Israel to facilitate humanitarian aid into Gaza, where over half a million Palestinians are on the brink of famine. Axios, a US news outlet, which has a copy of the letter, reports that on Tuesday, US officials in both Washington and Tel Aviv formally briefed their

Israeli counterparts on this new policy. They provided them with a draft letter, essential for Israel to sign. According to a senior Israeli official, the US has requested written assurances by mid-March. This timeline aligns with Secretary of State Blinken's goal to certify them by month-end. Israel has the flexibility to designate the government representative signing the letter. Similar letters have also been presented to several other nations utilising US weaponry, as disclosed by a US official to Axios.

## South Korea to send military doctors to hospitals amid doctors' protest

**Monitoring Desk**  
SEOUL: South Korea will send its military and community doctors to hospitals within the next few days as part of emergency measures to support the healthcare system after a mass walkout by trainee doctors, Prime Minister Han Duck-soo said on Wednesday. Han also pleaded with the young doctors to return to work by a

Thursday deadline set by the government, and said the authorities would listen to their concerns. "The government fully understands that trainee doctors have serious concerns about the work environment and future career, and we are seeking measures to improve this from a number of perspectives," he told a government meeting.

## Alexei Navalny's funeral to be held on Friday in Moscow: spokesperson

**Monitoring Desk**  
MOSCOW: Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny's funeral service and burial will take place in Moscow on Friday, his spokesperson said, after a search for a hall to allow his supporters to bid farewell to him failed. Kira Yarmysh, his spokesperson, posted on X that a service for Navalny would be held on Friday at 1400 Moscow time (1100 GMT) in the Church of the Icon of the Mother of God in the Moscow district of Maryino. She told people to get there early. Navalny would then be buried at the Borisovskoye cemetery, she said.

# CM reviews uplift progress of flood-devastated infrastructures

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister, Syed Murad Ali Shah presided over a meeting and reviewed the progress made in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of flood-affected infrastructure and directed his team to expedite the ongoing works and pursue donors for funding where it is still pending.

The meeting was held at CM House and was attended by Chief Secretary Dr Fakhr Alam, Chairman P&D Shakil Mungroo, Principal Secretary to CM Agha Wasif, Secretary School Education Dr Shireen Narejo, Secretary Health Dr Mansoor, Secretary Irrigation Niaz Abbasi, Secretary Works Nawaz Soho, CEO Peoples Housing Khalid Shaikh, and other officers concerned.

Secretary School Education Dr Shireen Narejo briefed the CM that 19,808 schools were damaged in the floods 2022, of them 7,503 were fully damaged and needed to be reconstructed. Out of 7,503 fully

damaged school buildings construction of 2020 was committed by friendly countries like the European Union, China and donor agencies ADB, Federal PSDP and Provincial ADP for Rs 60.972 billion.

She said the Sindh government has started construction of 431 schools for Rs 4.428 billion but the funds committed by friendly countries are donor agencies were in the pipeline. Some of the projects are in the approval phase.

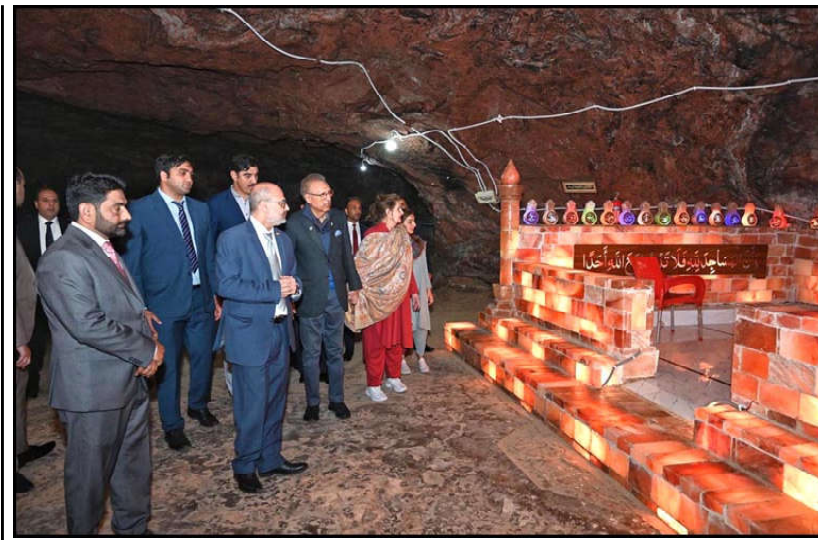
The CM directed the chairman P&D to get approval for the projects from CDWP and other agencies and then pursue for release of funds. He also directed the P&D department to prepare a plan to reconstruct the remaining 5483 fully damaged schools.

The Secretary Health Dr. Mansoor Rizvi told the CM that the 1000 Days - Integrated Health and Population Program has been started for Rs 61,600 million with the help of the

World Bank, Islamic Development Bank with a Sindh government share of \$30 million. The project would be completed in 2026-27.

He said the project's scope encompasses the refurbishment of 392 dispensaries, including equipment provision. It also involves the reconstruction of 121 Basic Health Units (BHUs), 97 Rural Healthcare Centers (RHCs), and 39 Taluka Headquarters (THQ) Hospitals that have been completely damaged.

Additionally, the project will establish hospital-based blood banks at four DHQ hospitals i.e. Kashmir-e-Kandhkot, Sujawal, Tando-Allahyar, and Tando Mohammad Khan. These blood banks will be linked with Regional Blood Centers. The project will also establish diagnostic laboratories at 39 THQ hospitals, 10-bed nurseries at 39 THQ hospitals, and strengthen operation theaters at 39 THQ hospitals, he added.



KHEWRA: President Dr Arif Alvi being briefed about salt mining during his visit to Khehra Salt Mine.

# Command & Staff Conference of Pakistan Navy reviews regional maritime situation

**Independent Report**  
ISLAMABAD: Command and Staff Conference of Pakistan Navy concluded at Naval Headquarters, Islamabad. The Conference was chaired by Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf.

During the conference, maritime situation in North Arabian Sea and Gulf of Aden was deliberated and measures for safety and security of Pakistan bound shipping were reviewed. Naval Chief expressed confidence over combat readiness and significant contributions of the Navy in maritime domain. During the

conference, matters related to geo strategic environment, national security, operational preparedness, training and welfare of troops were reviewed. Comprehensive briefing on important on-going and future developmental projects of Pakistan Navy was also given to Chief of the Naval Staff.

Chief of the Naval Staff emphasized on strengthening of maritime security and maintaining combat readiness so as to effectively respond to any aggression against Pakistan. He urged on acquisition of niche and novel capabilities

while exploiting indigenous sources in order to cope with modern day challenges in maritime domain.

He lauded the successful conduct of major Maritime Exercise SEA SPARK-2024 followed by Live Weapon Firing of Surface to Air Missile FM-90B reaffirming operational preparedness of Pakistan Navy to meet all challenges while safeguarding the maritime frontiers of Pakistan. He specifically appreciated the prolonged deployment of Naval assets in North Arabian Sea, Gulf of Aden and Bay of Bengal during the exercise.

# Pink salt may be projected as Pakistani product in world markets: President

KHEWRA (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Thursday underlined the need for projecting pink salt as a Pakistani product in potential global markets after its value addition in line with the international standards.

"A significant amount of foreign exchange can be earned by adding value to the local raw salt and making various products," he said during his visit to the Khehra Salt Mine.

He also emphasized to utilize the modern technology to minimize the loss of salt during the mining process besides adopting atmosphere-friendly and responsible mining ways.

He said Pakistan had huge reserves of high quality rock salt which was low-cost and full of minerals.

The president also reviewed the tourist places in

side the salt mine.

On the occasion, the president was briefed on various ongoing projects of Pakistan Minerals Development Corporation in Khehra. He was informed about quality of the salt found in Khehra and various salt ingredients.

Managing Director, Pakistan Minerals Development Corporation informed the president about various aspects of salt mining from Khehra Salt Mine. The president was informed about the ongoing activities for salt mining.

President Alvi also inaugurated the salt library at the Khehra Salt Mine and visited the Asthma Center.

He also interacted with the patients undergoing treatment in the Asthma center in Khehra salt mine.



HYDERABAD: Federal Tax Ombudsman (FTO), Asif Mahmood Jah addresses to members of business community during meeting held at Hyderabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (HCCI) in Hyderabad.

# MQM-Pakistan leaders urge political parties for national dialogue through Parliament

ISLAMABAD (APP): Leaders of the Mutahida Qoumi Movement (MQM-Pakistan) on Thursday urged all the political parties to hold a national dialogue through the forum of the Parliament as the country could not afford instability in the current situation.

In a press conference held here outside the Parliament House, Leaders of MQM-Pakistan including Mustafa Kamal, Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui and Farooq Sattar said that Parliament was the main institution for dialogue and urged all political parties to work together for the development of the country.

Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui said that in a true democracy, the public representatives were elected from the general public. "Without empowering the

general public, there is no benefit of democracy. The constitution benefited the rulers for the last 50 years, and now it should guarantee the safety of the general public," he said.

He stressed that his party's mandate was real and they came to the Parliament to change the fate of Pakistan.

To a question, Khalid Maqbool said that MQM-Pakistan was hopeful to bag more seats in the election and it would use legal platforms through democratic ways to register its complaints.

Meanwhile, Mustafa Kamal said that the MQM-Pakistan would keep its doors open for dialogue. "The masses have elected us to resolve their issues and not only for protests. The protests should be held in a democratic way."

# DC Sanghar inaugurates tree plantation campaign

HYDERABAD (APP): Deputy Commissioner Sanghar, Dr. Imran ul Hassan Khawaja Thursday said that trees were extremely essential for human life, as they were the biggest source of oxygen and food for living beings.

He expressed these views while inaugurating the tree plantation campaign by planting a sapling in his office.

Additional Deputy Commissioner, Muhammad Saleem Jatoi, Forest Officer Mumtaz

Majeedano and other officers were also present on the occasion.

Dr. Khawaja further said that thousands of trees would be planted in schools, colleges, highways, government offices and other places in this campaign.

He appealed to the public to plant trees in their empty spaces in their homes so that environmental pollution could be avoided, and a healthy environment could be created for the future generations.



KARACHI: Members of Christian Community are holding protest demonstration for recovery of Issac Samson missing since 2012, at Karachi press club.

# Careem, Dow University sign agreement to enhance student transportation

KARACHI (APP): Careem, the pioneer of ride-hailing in Pakistan and Dow University of Health Sciences have announced a collaboration aimed at improving students transportation services.

The partnership will offer discount packages to students as well as introduction of co-branded buses, providing convenient and affordable transportation options for students of Dow.

The collaboration was officially formalized at a signing ceremony hosted at Dow University of Health and Sciences, attended by dignitaries from

Dow University of Medical Sciences and Careem represented by Sana Shakeel, Associate Director, Business Development, Nazir Virani, Head of Communications and Amnah Rizvi, Manager Partnerships. From Dow University of Medical Sciences, dignitaries present were Prof. M. Saeed Qureshi, Vice Chancellor; Dr. Ashraf Afqar, Registrar, Tariq Shahid, Director of Marketing, Umair Zafar, Manager of Marketing, Hussain Mirza from the Marketing Department and Naeem Tahir, Head of Public Relations.



KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister, Syed Murad Ali Shah presides over a meeting to review the progress of the projects launched for the rehabilitation of flood-affected infrastructure in the province, held at CM House in Karachi.

# Joint strategy chalked out for drainage during expected rain: Salman

KARACHI (APP): Deputy Mayor Karachi Salman Abdullah Murad has said that a joint strategy for drainage has been chalked out by contacting the city institutions so that practical measures can be taken to save the public from trouble during the expected rains.

He said this after meeting Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah and while visiting various areas of the city along with Municipal Commissioner SM Afzal Zaidi and related officers on Thursday.

He said that due to the special interest and instructions of the Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah and Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab regarding the arrangements in the city in view of the forecast of possible rains in Karachi, all relevant departments including the Municipal Metropolitan Corporation have

been put on alert.

Deputy Mayor Karachi inspected Nehr e Khayam, Mahmoodabad drain, Sindh Secretariat drain, Railway Gate, Glass Tower drain and other places and issued instructions to the concerned officers for necessary works.

On this occasion, Deputy Mayor Karachi Salman Abdullah Murad also contacted all the town chairmen and directed them to adopt a coordinated strategy in view of the rains. He said that effective strategies are being adopted to keep clear, chokepoints in the drains so that rainwater can be drained off quickly and surrounding communities are protected from overflow. All machinery and pumps used during rainy season have been brought to chokepoints and other important places so that they can be used immediately to complete the drainage work at any time.

# ANF seizes 181 kg drugs, arrests 3 in five countrywide operations

KARACHI (INP): The Anti Narcotics Force (ANF) seized 181 kilogram drugs and arrested three drug peddlers during five operations conducted in various cities of country, an ANF spokesperson said on Thursday.

According to spokesperson, operations against drug pushers were conducted in Multan, Quetta, Hassanabad and at Lakpass toll plaza. During operations, 175 kilogram heroin, three kilogram hashish, two kilogram heroin, one kilogram methamphetamine (Ice) and 350 gram weed were recovered besides arrest of three drug peddlers. Separate cases were registered against the detainees under Drug Act and further investigations were underway.

# People's representatives to run country's affairs after general elections: Solangi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Thursday said the elected representatives of the people would eventually run the affairs of country after general elections.

Speaking in a talk-show of the Pakistan Television, he said the caretaker government had fulfilled its constitutional responsibility of holding elections in free, fair and peaceful manner by fully facilitating the Election Commission of Pakistan.

To a query, he said the newly elected Prime Minister would take oath on March 4 while Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly would be elected on Friday.

He said newly elected Members of National Assembly had taken oath today as the notification for convening of National Assembly session was issued late night.

Murtaza Solangi said the process of negotiations with International Monetary Fund would go forward despite PTI's letter.

# Sindh Excise collects over Rs22 million during tax recovery campaign

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Excise and Taxation department, during ten days of road checking campaign aimed at recovery of outstanding taxes, collected over Rs22.3 million across the province.

Director General Excise and Taxation Aurangzeb Panhwer, in a statement issued here on Thursday, informed that a total of 21,915 vehicles were checked till the tenth day of road checking campaign by inspection teams of the department.



ISLAMABAD: Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf chairing the Command and Staff Conference held at Naval Headquarters.

# Rare diseases need government attention

**Independent Report**  
KARACHI: In recognition of Rare Disease Day, Roche Pakistan Limited held a panel discussion and press briefing to raise awareness about rare diseases in Pakistan, and to emphasize the unmet needs of patients especially when it comes to awareness, funding and government support.

The panel comprised MD Roche Pakistan, Ms. Hafsa Shamsie, Roche's Head of Medical, Dr. Yasir Adnan

treatment burden for rare diseases even more difficult to bear. Rare diseases sufferers are the neglected outliers in Pakistan's healthcare system. Roche is a company that is committed to serving rare disease patients by bringing innovative treatments that can help patients live a fully normal life or at least a much better quality of life. But, treatment is one side of the picture. Ensuring that patients have

# Food delivery boy shot dead

KARACHI (INP): Unidentified gunman shot dead an online food delivery boy near Karachi University on Thursday.

According to details, armed men ambushed the youth outside staff gate PSO pump in Mobina Town police station jurisdiction.

As a result of firing, 22-year-old Muhammad Waqas Hanif s/o Muhammad Hanif was killed on the spot and attackers sped the scene.

The deceased hailed from Al-Mashriq Society Gulzar Hijri was only brother of three sisters.

The body was shifted to Abbasi Shaheed Hospital for postmortem.

Police said that the attackers haven't looted anything from the killed youth which reveals that it was not robbery but seems to be outcome of personal enmity.

A case was registered into the incident and police have started an investigation.



as well as paediatric neurologist Dr. Raman Kumar and hematologist Dr. Munira Borhani and Mr. Muhammad Ali Shaikh, Special Secretary Health, Govt of Sindh.

Ms. Hafsa Shamsie, MD Roche highlighted the fact that even for those who have been diagnosed, the lack of government healthcare spends and support makes the

# KDA geared up for PSL Season 9 matches

KARACHI (APP): In preparation for the ongoing Pakistan Super League (PSL) Season 9 matches in the city, the Karachi Development Authority (KDA) has been tasked with a series of initiatives aimed at enhancing the city's infrastructure and beautifying its roads. On the direction of Director General, KDA, Naveed Anwar, the authority was focusing on ensuring lane markings, installing new signboards, and beautifying roads stretching from Metropole to Airport and Karsaz to National Stadium.

# Three dead in Karachi's Shah Latif Town firing

KARACHI (INP): At least three dead in firing occurred in Shah Latif Town, Saleh Muhammad Goth area of Karachi.

As per details, the police officials said that three victims were taken to hospital where they succumbed to their injuries. The police spokesperson said that



the firing occurred at two separate places, and further investigation is underway.

LARKANA: Deputy Commissioner Larkana, Sharjeel Noor Chana presided over the meeting regarding possible rain alerts held at his office in Larkana.

# SMIU's 2nd Global Congress concludes

KARACHI (APP): The 2nd Global and Research Congress-2024 organized by Sindh Madressat-ul-Islam University, was concluded with several conferences and sessions held on Thursday.

On the second and concluding day of the GRC-24, panel discussion on the topic of "Population Challenges and Social Inclusion: Role of Media in Shaping Peaceful and Smart Communities" held.

The speakers stressed that society must control population as there were limited resources in our country to fulfil needs of the growing population. The academicians and media persons discussed the issue while taking part in the session.

Dr. Tauseef Ahmed Khan, former chairman of Department of Mass Communication at Federal Urdu University and a noted columnist said that media has played a pivotal role in the change of

society and educating the people and added media can play a major role in spreading awareness among masses about family planning.

He said our neighboring countries like Iran, Bangladesh and India were trying to control their population, hence we too must take steps to control the population.

He said during the era of Ayub Khan, Radio Pakistan and Pakistan Television had telecast programs on family planning, after that situation changed in this respect.

He said the government shall have made the family planning as its priority then media couldn't ignore it.

He further said the traditional and social media can play a major role in making aware the people and the society could be developed after educating the people about population which is a core problem of our society.