

# QUETTA VOICE

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## 2m children out of school in Balochistan as learning quality declines

Syed Ali Shah:

QUETTA: In Balochistan, over 2 million children are out of school despite repeated enrollment campaigns by the provincial education department, political parties and non-governmental organizations. Learning quality in government-run schools continues to decline as teachers are recruited on a political basis with no proper training to teach students. During the middle-level examination for the year 2019-20, only 0.8 percent of students secured an A+ grade across the province. This simply exposed the declining quality of education in government-run schools.

### 322 students out of a total of 42,823 got A+ grades in the middle examination

Only 322 students got A+ grade out of a total of 42,823 candidates in the middle-level examination, statistics of the Balochistan Assessment and Examination Commission (BAEC) revealed. This painted a bleak picture of declining and poor quality of education.

The documents showed 122 students got an A grade during the examination conducted in the province. In 9 districts including Barkhan, Hamat, Kachi, Kharan, Musabbi, Nushki, Sherani, Killa Abdullah, and Sikandar Abad, no student achieved an A+ grade.

### The literacy rate in Balochistan is 46%

The literacy rate in Balochistan is 46 percent as per statistics obtained from the education department with 61 percent male and 29 percent female.

The province has not conducted any survey to assess the learning quality of students studying in over 15,000 government-run primary, middle and high schools across Balochistan. As per a confidential report obtained by Daily Quetta Voice, still over 2 million children are out of school. Similarly, the number of enrolled students in government schools is 1,119,925, the report mentioned. The students studying in private schools are in addition to this. However, no data about the private schools' enrollment is available.



Girls students at TLC established in Naserabad: Photo provided by UNICEF

### 47% of children are out of school in Balochistan

The report mentioned the percent of the out of school children stands at 47 percent. It means half of the children of Balochistan are deprived of education. Those who are going to government schools are unable to read a sentence in English. The main focus of the Balochistan government in general and the education department, in particular, is on salaries and the construction of new buildings for schools. In every budget, schools are upgraded and strategy is evolved to impart required training to teachers.

The provincial teachers training institute remains symbolic and nominal with staff just drawing salaries.

### Huge amounts pumped but with no results

The Balochistan government allocated Rs.15 billion to the Public Sector Development Program (PSDP) for the year financial year 2023-24.

However, not a single penny has been allocated for the training of teachers and improving curriculum to improve the quality of education in government schools. European Union provided 18 million euros, World Bank and the Global Partnership for Education have been pumping huge amounts to improve literacy rates and ensure the enrollment of school children.

Nevertheless, still 2 million children remain out of school and the quality of education continues to decline.

### Tabadlab making some positive strides in this regard

Tabadlab's Centre for Education Skills & Youth (ESY), is committed to raising awareness about the reading challenges faced in Pakistan. Our goal is to chart a course towards swift progress and development in learning.

Your involvement as a reporter/education activist is of paramount importance to amplify our message. By doing so, we aim to engage a wide audience capable of propelling the momentum for a transformative shift in foundational education. In this whole scenario, the government, political parties, NGOs, and civil society should put their heads together and work on a war footing basis to ensure the enrollment of out-of-school children and improve the quality of education.



## 500 Iranian petrol pumps closed in Balochistan: Jan Achakzai

From Our Correspondent:

KARACHI: Caretaker Balochistan Information Minister, Jan Achakzai on Sunday said law enforcement agencies closed 500 Iranian petrol pumps across the province. Pumps selling smuggled Iranian petrol were sealed as a part of a nationwide crackdown against smuggling.

Addressing a news conference in Karachi, Jan Achakzai said that a crackdown was underway against foreign currency and smuggled Iranian petroleum products. He said that the 1 million accused arrested recovered more than 1 million dollars from an area of Quetta. Major currency smuggling gang busted in Quetta, he informed.

### Legal action be taken against smugglers

Caretaker Information Minister Balochistan added that they are working on border management. Iranian oil has become a business worth 5 billion, and more than 500 Iranian pumps have been closed in Balochistan.

Jan Achakzai said that we will end the Iranian oil network, and are making a joint effort with the Sindh government to cut off the supply line. The Provincial Caretaker Minister said that the end of smuggling is part of the Army Chief's vision, and the people involved in smuggling will be deported.

He said that law and order is deteriorating due to illegal Afghan refugees, it is not yet clear which Afghan refugee should be kept and who should not be kept. He said that solving the problems of Balochistan is our priority, and steps are being taken to promote the sports sector.

## 15 narcotics factories abolished in Killa Abdullah district of Balochistan

Sardar Muhammad Khondai:

CHAMAN: Law enforcement agencies abolished 15 narcotics factories in Balochistan's Killa Abdullah district Sunday.

On the instructions of Corps Commander Balochistan, the Pakistan Army, FC Balochistan, Anti-Narcotics Force, Levies and other law enforcement agencies are participating in the operation. So far, 15 drug factories including 938 kg of hashish have been destroyed in the operation, an official hand-out issued here said.

The operation plan was finalized in a meeting held on 28 August 2023 at Headquarters

12 Corps, in which all stakeholders were involved. After which a jirga was also held on August 30 in Qila Abdullah under the anti-narcotics campaign, the official statement said.

In the Jirga, the local elders demanded the abolition of drug factories and the stoppage of drug production in Qila Abdullah and Gulistan and assured their full support to the security agencies.

These operations are being carried out by the Pakistan Army and other law enforcement agencies to protect Balochistan, especially educational institutions, from the menace of drugs.



## Morocco survivors seek aid as quake toll of over 2,000 seen likely to rise

Survivors of Morocco's deadliest earthquake in more than six decades struggled to find food and water on Sunday as the search for the missing continued in hard-to-reach villages and the death toll of more than 2,000 seemed likely to rise further.

Many people spent a second night in the open after the 6.8 magnitude quake hit late on Friday. Relief workers face the challenge of reaching the worst-affected villages in the High Atlas, a rugged mountain range where settlements are often remote and where many houses crumbled.

Moroccan media reported the collapse of a historically important 12th century mosque, underlining damage to the country's cultural heritage. The quake also damaged parts of Marrakech old city, a UNESCO World Heritage site.

In Moulay Brahim, a village near the epicentre 40km south of Marrakech, residents described how they had dug the dead from the rubble using their

bare hands.

"We lost our houses and we lost people also and we are sleeping like two days outside," said 36-year-old Yassin Nounghtar, a Moulay Brahim resident. Complaining of shortages of water, food and power, Nounghtar said he had received little government aid so far. "We want just for our government to help us," he said, expressing a frustration voiced by others.

Later, sacks of food were unloaded from a truck which local official Moulahamad al-Hayyan said had been organised by the government and civil society organisations.

Twenty-five bodies had been brought to Moulay Brahim's small medical clinic, according to staff there who warned they were starting to face a shortage of some first aid supplies. With many homes built of mud bricks and timber, structures in the area crumbled easily. News Desk



## Electricity related issues of businessmen needed to be resolved: ICCI

ISLAMABAD (INP): President of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that open hanging electric wires in the markets always pose great danger to the shopkeepers, while fire incidents due to short circuit of electricity cause loss of millions of rupees to the plaza owners as well as the shopkeepers. Therefore, IESCO should address this issue on priority to save the traders from further losses.

Talking to XEN, F-6 Division of IESCO Abdul Rasheed Sariki during his visit to ICCI on Saturday, he said that 5,000 traders are doing business in the Blue Area, but there have been fire incidents 6 to 7 times due to the short circuit of electricity in this big-

gest commercial center of Islamabad, which has caused huge losses to the business community, so IESCO should develop its infrastructure on modern lines besides improving the wiring system in all markets.

Ahsan Bakhtawari said that when a transformer burns in a market, there was no back up for it and repair of burnt transformer takes many days. Due to this situation, the perishable items get spoiled causing losses to the traders. He stressed that IESCO should come up with a better solution to this problem to save the traders from further losses. He said that the repair charges of commercial transformers are too high and should be reviewed. He said that ICCI will nominate

market-wise committees for F-6, F-7 and Blue Area to liaison with his office and he should fully cooperate with them for timely solution of the electricity problems of the traders in their respective areas.

Senior Vice President ICCI Faad Waheed highlighted the issues of MDI meters and net metering faced by the business community and proposed their better solution. He said that the cabinet doors of some transformers are left open which leads to short circuit so IESCO should take steps to address this problem. He said that deep freezers, refrigerators and other appliances of traders often get burnt due to fluctuation in electricity voltage, so IESCO should look into this issue for redress.

## Govt files review petition over SC decision on Review of Judgments Act

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Ministry of Law has filed a review petition against the Supreme Court verdict on Review of Judgments and Orders Act 2023.

The law ministry has pleaded to the apex court to review its August 11 verdict.

A three-member bench of the apex court headed by Chief Justice Bandial and comprising Justice Ijazul Ahsan and Justice Munib Akhtar had declared the legislation as void in its verdict. Justice Munib Akhtar had also written an additional note in the verdict on the legislation.

The law ministry has sought 15 days' time from the court for submission of additional documents. The Office granted the plea, sources said.



HYDERABAD: Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party addressing to inauguration ceremony of 10 MGD Water Filter Plant Hussainabad, Hyderabad.

## ECP obligated to conduct fresh delimitations, hold polls as per Constitution: Zardari

KARACHI (INP): PPP Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari emphasized on Saturday that the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) was obligated to conduct the delimitation of constituencies following the census results, stressing the importance of the electoral watchdog adhering to the Constitution in holding polls. The statement from the key PPP figure comes a day after party chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari called for timely elections and within the constitutional timeframe of 90 days during a media interaction in Karachi on Friday. The ECP has ruled out elections this year, while the 90-day limit for holding polls following the dissolution of the National Assembly (NA), as mandated under Article 224 of the Constitution, ends on November 9. It reasons its decision to push elections beyond November 9 on

the basis of the notification of results of the new digital 2023 census and Section 17(2) of the Elections Act, which states: "The commission shall delimit constituencies after every census is officially published."

In a statement issued on Saturday, the former president said: "The election commission will conduct elections according to the Constitution." He added that the ECP was obligated to undertake fresh delimitations following the census. "We have complete trust in the chief election commissioner and the members," Zardari said. Zardari also highlighted the urgency for the caretaker government to swiftly execute Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) projects in order to set the nation on a trajectory of development.

About the prevailing economic crisis, he called on political parties to prioritise the economy over politics. "We all exist as long as the country exists." Earlier this week, during the All Pakistan Lawyers Convention organised by the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) in Islamabad, a series of resolutions were adopted. Among them was the demand for the timely conduct of general elections "within the constitutional period of 90 days following the dissolution of the assemblies." The lawyers had also announced a nationwide strike on September 14 to safeguard and uphold the Constitution, the rule of law, and human rights. Additionally, during the same week, the Pakistan Bar Council (PBC) passed a separate resolution, urging President Arif Alvi to fulfill his constitutional responsibility by announcing a date for the upcoming general elections.

## Govt persuades banks to resume lending money to PIA

ISLAMABAD (INP): There are chances of improvement in the financial condition of the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) as the government's intervention, private banks have decided to start giving loans to the airline again. As per instructions given to banks, funds will be released to the PIA, which is grappling with financial constraints because of the inability to repay interest let alone the principal amount. It is being hoped that the release of funds, which is expected to start next week, will help better the balance of payment by the national flag carrier.

The airline's management has decided to spend the amount on the purchase of spare parts for planes and other purposes. The three days ago, Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar had called for drawing up a detailed plan for the restructuring of struggling flag carrier as soon as possible.



rate the 10 MGD Water Filter Plant Hussainabad, Hyderabad.

## It's confirmed. Nawaz Sharif is coming next month

LONDON (INP): Nawaz Sharif – the three-time former prime minister who is also the supreme of PML-N – is returning to Pakistan next month after spending four years in exile as the country grapples with economic turmoil and political uncertainty with the date for fresh general elections yet to be decided.

It was Nawaz himself who ended months of speculations after confirmed the news during a meeting with party leaders and workers in London, although without revealing the exact date.

Nawaz had returned to London on November 19, 2019 as he fell critically ill in prison, allegedly because of an attempt to poison him.

His return is considered critical to the chances of PML-N winning the upcoming elections as the party dented its own chances thanks to rising prices

during the 16-month stint of the Shehbaz Sharif-led coalition government.

Earlier, it was reported that the PML-N had decided to employ an aggressive strategy in the next general elections, as party sources said the responsibility "to carry out the attack" had been mainly assigned to Maryam Nawaz – the PML-N vice-president known for her hardline stance and fiery rhetoric – the ultimate crowd puller after her father who will also be following this approach.

Under this strategy, the PML-N election campaign will reveal its agenda before and after the conspiracy hatched and vendetta faced by the party leaders and targeting some important personalities.

As far as the cooperation with other political parties is concerned, any decision about alliance or seat adjustment would be made by the elder Sharif.

der Sharif and her daughter who doesn't mince words while explaining her point of view – the factor differentiating their politics with that of Shehbaz who believes in a conciliatory approach. On the other hand, Shehbaz and his son Hamza Shehbaz – who enjoyed a brief stint as the Punjab chief minister – will focus on pacifying tactic and share the development work carried out by the party during its government tenures, the sources said. Meanwhile, a comprehensive campaign would be launched on mainstream and social media for the speedy recovery of those injured in the calamity. Caretaker Prime Minister Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar said in this hour of difficulty, Pakistan stands with the brave people and government of Morocco and will provide them all possible support.

## President, PM express grief over damages caused by severe earthquake in Morocco

ISLAMABAD (INP): President Dr Arif Alvi and Caretaker Prime Minister Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar have expressed grief and sorrow over the losses caused by the earthquake in Morocco. In their separate statements on Saturday, the President and Prime Minister condoled with the quake affected families. The President expressed solidarity with the people and government of Morocco. He also prayed for the speedy recovery of those injured in the calamity. Caretaker Prime Minister Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar said in this hour of difficulty, Pakistan stands with the brave people and government of Morocco and will provide them all possible support.



QUETTA: President Balochistan Assembly and MPs Hostel Officers Welfare Association Zafar Rand speaks during a press conference.

## FBR to launch country-wide crackdown against tax evasion

LAHORE (INP): Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has decided to launch countrywide crackdown against tax evasion, sources said on Saturday.

The taxation authority has prepared a list of 11,000 persons from major cities including Lahore and Karachi, sources said. The list included industrialists, mill owners, traders, property dealers and wholesalers, according to sources.

The grip will be tightened against tax defaulters, and they will also be arrested, sources said.

The FBR's list of tax evaders included people from Karachi, Lahore, Faisalabad, Rawalpindi and Multan.

"We have substantial evidence against tax defaulters," FBR sources said.

"They have to produce documents within one week's period after tax notice," FBR sources

added. A global market research firm in a survey report in June disclosed staggering 956 billion rupees tax evasion in Pakistan. It is the third largest market research firm in the world, made the sensational disclosure after its survey of five industrial sectors including real estate, tea, cigarette, tyres, oil and pharmaceutical sectors. The research report pointed out massive 500 billion rupees tax evasion in a year in the real estate sector of the economy. Tax theft by cigarette traders is causing a year in the real estate sector of the economy. Tax theft by Rs240 billion annually.

The research report pointed out annually 45 billion in tax evasion in business and 65 billion tax theft in pharmaceutical sector of the national economy. Moreover, tyres and oil sector inflicting 106 billion rupees revenue losses to the economy annually, according to the report.

## Caretaker FM to chair Commonwealth Youth Ministerial Meeting in London

ISLAMABAD (INP): Caretaker Foreign Minister Jallil Abbas Jilani will chair the 10th Commonwealth Youth Ministerial Meeting (CYMM) beginning from Tuesday next in London.

The theme of the meeting is "Am Higher: Delivering More for Young People in the Commonwealth". It aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Radio Pakistan reported.

Four core areas of education, employment, engagement and environmental climate in the Prime Minister's Youth Program (PMYP), will be extensively discussed in the meeting.

While in London, FM Jallil Abbas Jilani is also expected to meet the participating Ministers and high-ranking officials of the Commonwealth.

Earlier, it was reported that Caretaker

Prime Minister Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar is likely to attend the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly Meeting (UNGGA), which opens on September 5.

Caretaker PM Kakar will apparently be the first interim prime minister to represent Pakistan at the UN General Assembly. He will be addressing the UN summit on September 22 and he will return the same day after delivering his speech.

A small delegation will accompany the caretaker prime minister including interim Foreign Minister Syed Jallil Abbas Jilani, interim Information and Broadcasting Minister Muraza Solangi, interim Climate Change and Environment Minister Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Ahmad Irfan Aslam and Foreign Secretary Iftikhar Syrus Qazi.

## Pak-UAE to sign free trade agreement by September end

ISLAMABAD (INP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Commerce, Industries, and Production Dr Gohar Ejaz said that the South Asian country was expected to sign a free trade agreement (FTA) with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) during the upcoming visit of an Emirati delegation in the last week of September.

It is worth mentioning here that the UAE is Pakistan's third-largest trade partner after China and the United States. It is also viewed as an ideal export destination by policymakers in the South Asian coun-

try due to its geographical proximity to Pakistan which reduces transportation and freight costs.

The Gulf country is also home to an estimated 1.8 million Pakistani expatriates and after Saudi Arabia, the second-largest source of remittances for the South Asian nation of more than 240 million.

"Emirates delegation is planned for end September to finalize the FTA between Pakistan and UAE," Ejaz said, adding the visit would be focused on trade, investment, and economy. Arab News reported.

Pakistan's ambassador to the UAE, Faisal Niaz Tirmizi, said both nations were optimistic about signing the agreement, officially known as the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), during the upcoming visit.

"There are some issues which are being negotiated and we would like to finalize the deal when they come."

Tirmizi said the UAE had already signed FTAs with around nine countries and was working with Pakistan on it, according to the ambassador.

"A successful signing of the CEPA will potentially reduce trade tariffs that could significantly enhance Pakistan's income and revenue."

"Our bilateral trade has increased by 24 percent from last year to this year and after CEPA our market access will increase here by UAE," he said.

"There are already many significant trade events which we attended and Pakistani presence is increasing in every sector be it food, health food, pharmaceuticals, and tourism," the ambassador added.

### 5 footballers kidnapped in Dera Bugti Balochistan search operation launched

**From Our Correspondent, Manan Mandokhail, News Desk:** DERA BUGTI: At least five football players were kidnapped in Balochistan's Dera Bugti district on Saturday afternoon. "The footballers were playing in the troubled Sangsila area of Dera Bugti," a senior administration official said. He requested anonymity since he was not authorized to speak to the media.

The five kidnapped football players were coming to Sibi to qualify for the Chief Minister Balochistan Gold Cup when picked up by armed militants. "We have launched a search operation in the area", Saleh Muhammad Nasar, the Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Balochistan said. He said the operation was suspended because of the darkness and the sensitivity in the area.



Chief Minister's Secretariat said. The CM directed the local administration to form a joint team of levies and police to recover the kidnapped football players.

#### CM Balochistan takes notice of the kidnapping of football players

The operation would be relaunched in the morning and hopefully, the football players would recover soon, the Home Secretary said. The incident prompted the caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan, Ali Mardan Domki to take notice of the incident.

The CM has directed the administration to double efforts to ensure the unhurt recovery of the kidnapped football players, an official statement issued by the

#### Senior officials reached Dera Bugti

The kidnapped football players belonged to the Sangsila area of Dera Bugti and they are local tribesmen, the Home Secretary informed. Senior administration officials also reached Dera Bugti and have been monitoring the search operation, he mentioned.

Dera Bugti is considered to be one of the sensitive districts of Balochistan. Militants in the area have been targeting security forces, and vital national installations and kidnapping pro-government people in the area. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the kidnapping. Security tightened in and around Sangsila in the aftermath of the incident.

### Chaghi levies seize 72 bags fertilizers 1027 bags sugar: Tufail Baloch

**Riaz Baloch:** DALBANDIN: Chaghi levies seized 72 bags of fertilizers and 1027 bags of sugar during the ongoing crackdown against hoarders and smugglers on Sunday.



On the instructions of Deputy Commissioner Chaghi, Tufail Baloch, Assistant Commissioner Dalbandin, Mohammad Jan Baloch along with Levies Force raided various warehouses in Dalbandin and seized 72 bags of urea fertilizer and 1027 bags of sugar smuggled into Afghanistan and sealed the warehouses.

Muhammad Jan Baloch said

that no one will be allowed to smuggle, and legal action will be taken against those hoarding and smuggling, and their shops and warehouses will be sealed.

### Russia says G20 declaration as 'balanced'

NEW DELHI (INP): Russia praised a G20 summit declaration that stopped short of directly criticising Moscow for the war in Ukraine and said the bloc's leaders had agreed in the interest of conflict resolution as deliberations headed into a second day on Sunday.

The group adopted a consensus declaration in New Delhi on Saturday that avoided condemning Russia for the war but called on all states not to use force to grab territory. Russia says it is conducting a "special military operation" there. "There were very difficult negotiations on the Ukraine issue, first of all, the collective position of the BRICS countries and partners worked, everything was reflected in a balanced form", Svetlana Lukash, the Russian G20 sherpa, or government negotiator, was quoted as saying by Russian news agency Interfax. BRICS groups Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

In the weeks leading to the summit, G20 countries had struggled to find a consensus on the Ukraine conflict with the West demanding countries call out Moscow for its invasion of Ukraine and Russia saying it

### Six killed, over 50 injured in Sheikhpura bus accident

SHEIKHPURA (INP): At least six people were killed and more than 50 injured when a bus turned turtle near Khanka Dogran Interchange Sheikhpura Motorway on Saturday night. The ill-fated bus was coming from Sialkot and Christian pilgrims were on board the bus.

Soon after the incident, the rescue teams reached the spot and shifted the injured to hospital. The police have registered a case against the bus driver and conductor. However, the National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) refuted the happening of incident on the motorway, saying the accident happened on Khanqah Dogran road. Sector Commander Faraz Akram said Rescue 1122 fed the wrong information to the media about the location of the accident. In a separate traffic accident on September 6, at least four people died as a car fell into the Neelum River near Pathka Chhun, a suburb of Muzaffarabad, Azad Kashmir.

### Dozens of students arrested for using Bluetooth devices in MD CAT Test

PESHAWAR (INP): Dozens of students were arrested on Sunday for using Bluetooth devices to cheat in the MD CAT test in Peshawar.

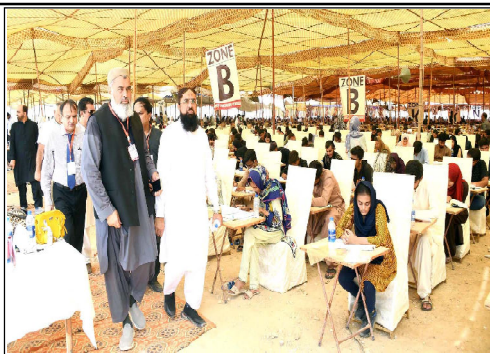
The students were arrested by the Examinations and Training Department (ETA) at various examination centers in the city. According to ETA spokesperson, the ETA Secretary Anila Mahfooz Durran said that the students were caught red-handed using Bluetooth devices to communicate with each other during the test. She said that the ETA had received information about a group of people who were helping students cheat in the test through Bluetooth devices. "Lakhs of rupees were being charged from the students for getting the paper out and solving it through the Bluetooth device," she said. Durran said that the ETA had increased the security at all the examination centers and had deputed staff to check for Bluetooth devices. "During the special check, the staff turned on the Bluetooth of their phones and traced the Bluetooth devices," she said. She said that the arrested students would be dealt with according to the law.

The MD CAT is a medical entrance test conducted by the University of Health Sciences, Peshawar. The test is held every year to admissions to the MD programs offered by the university. The use of unfair means in examinations is a serious offense and the ETA has taken strict measures to curb it.

### Punjab govt to hand over 1,000 schools to NGO for better educational facilities

LAHORE (INP): Punjab Chief Minister (CM) Syed Mushtaq Naqvi has said that the standards of education at government schools could be raised in collaboration with the private sector and welfare organizations.

He was talking to a six-member delegation of Muslim Hands Pakistan, which, led by its Chairman Syed Lakht Hasan, called on him at the Chief Minister's House on Sunday. Briefing the CM about the activities of the organization, the chairman said that Muslim Hands was running 117 schools in Punjab. "Out of these, there are 18 schools of excellence while 35 are model schools," he explained. "Similarly, we are running different projects in health and education sectors in different districts of Punjab," he said, and added, "Market-based IT skills are being imparted to the youth so that they could become self-reliant."



JAMSHORO: VC LUMHS Prof. Dr Ikram Din Ujjan visiting during the entry test for admission held at Liaquat University Of Medical and Health Science (LUMHS).

### 'Biden administration is not interfering in Pakistan's political matters,' says US senator

ISLAMABAD (INP): US Senator Chris Van Hollen Sunday said the US President Joe Biden-led administration has no intentions of interfering in the internal politics of Pakistan and denied all allegations of political engineering.

"I have been in contact with the Biden administration for a long time and can confidently say that there was no attempt made to engineer anything related to Pakistani politics," the senator said while speaking with Pakistan journalists during the annual meeting and gala dinner of the DC, Maryland, Virginia (DMV) chapter of the Association of Pakistani Physicians of North America.

The senator's statement comes as Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan is being investigated regarding a diplomatic cipher that the party chief claimed contained the evidence of alleged US involvement in his ouster from power in April last year through a no-confidence vote.

Senator Hollen was the guest of honor at the ceremony, which was also attended by Pakistan's Ambassador to the US Masood Khan. The event, meanwhile, became a platform for the American politician to address critical issues related to US-Pakistan relations and the role of the Biden administration in Pakistani politics.

He iterated that it is up to the people of Pakistan to decide their leaders and further expressed the need to ensure that the will of the Pakistani people is heard and reflected, advocating for free and fair elections.

Highlighting the global importance of transparent elections, the US senator said: "The US, other democracies, and the people of Pakistan have an interest in ensuring that elections are free and fair."

Commenting on bilateral relations between the two countries, the senator affirmed the Biden administration's desire for a strong partnership with Pakistan.

He spoke about the recent assistance provided by the US after the devastating floods in Pakistan as an example of the American government's commitment towards the calamity-stricken nation.

He also praised the US's role in supporting Pakistan to secure the \$3 billion International Monetary Fund's (IMF) bailout package.

The senator underlined the significance of maintaining good relations with Pakistan, stressing that such relations were essential for global stability and security.

The cipher controversy first emerged on March 27, 2022, when Khan — just days before his ouster after a no-confidence motion against him — branched a letter, claiming that it was a cipher from a foreign nation, which mentioned that his government should be removed from power. He did not reveal the contents of the letter nor mention the name of the nation that had sent it. But a few days later, he named the United States and said that Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Affairs Donald Lu had sought his removal. The cipher was about former Pakistan ambassador to the US Asad Majeed's meeting with Lu.

The former prime minister, claiming that he was reading contents from the cipher, said that "all will be forgiven for Pakistan if Imran Khan is removed from power".



QUETTA: A cobbler repairing old shoes for selling purpose at Weekly Sunday Bazaar at Joint Road.

### No action being taken against any politician in Sindh: Home minister

KARACHI (INP): Caretaker Sindh Home Minister Brigadier (ret'd) Harris Nawaz Sunday denied allegations of political victimisation in the province, asserting that no action is being taken against any political leader.

The minister's statement comes amidst heightened political tensions in the province after a series of alleged reports began surfacing regarding politicians, particularly from the Pakistan People's Party, being placed on a stop list and their homes being raided in a bid to uncover corrupt practices.

Last month, sources said that a PPP politician and former provincial minister, Mukesh Chawla, has been placed on the interim stop list following National Accountability Bureau's (NAB) inquiry pertaining to misuse of authority and corruption in a vehicle registration scam.

However, the anti-corruption authority was restrained from arresting him after he approached the Sindh High Court against his possible arrest. Chawla's plea stated that his residence was raided, although there had been no call-up notice issued to him in connection with any NAB inquiry.

The sources added that the names of more than 60 government officials close to the PPP have also been included in the stop list.

Additionally, the inquiries were expected to be opened in the anti-graft body's office in Karachi against government officers close to PPP, the sources added.

Chawla's name, as per the sources, was added to the list on NAB's recommendation and all the names were included in different phases from the first week of August — an act termed as political victimisation in the province.

Commenting on the aforementioned reports about Sindh politicians today, Brigadier (ret'd) Nawaz said only NAB investigations and criminal cases are underway.

"Political victimisation is not being done against anyone in Sindh", the interim minister told the journalists.

The caretaker home minister also refuted reports of politicians being placed on the stop list.

Following alleged reports of cash being recovered from residences of politicians in the province, the minister clarified that no money has been recovered from anyone's house and no politicians' residences had been raided in Sindh.

Earlier this month, fake news regarding a raid on the residence of PPP's former federal minister Shazia Marri's house began circulating on social media with claims of "confiscating Rs97 billion" in cash.

Marri rebutted the fake news and stated that no such raid by any official authority had been conducted.

The fake news garnered immense traction after a Lahore-based journalist posted it on his social media account, after which Marri slapped him with a defamation notice under Section 8 of the Defamation Ordinance 2002 and Section 20 of the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (Peca), 2016.

However, the interim home minister suggested that the allegations might be part of a deliberate campaign to malign the caretaker government's reputation.