

Daily Voice of Masses Independent

Our 'free' media

Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar told a CNBC interviewer during his recent trip to Davos that the media in Pakistan was "freer than in the West", while arguing that Western media operates under far more regulations compared to the media in Pakistan.

Mr Kakar's words brought to mind a similar statement made by former prime minister Imran Khan during his tenure, when he had made the same appraisal of press freedoms in Pakistan in response to a probing question by a foreign interviewer.

The answer had been as scandalising to practising journalists then as it is now. Taken without context, their words seemed to suggest that the relative lack of formal regulatory oversight gives Pakistani media some sort of qualitative edge. Anyone familiar with the country and its media landscape knows that this is clearly not the case.

The truth is that whenever the Pakistani media and working journalists have attempted to assert their freedoms in recent years, they have invariably been made to pay a very heavy price for it.

Starting from the days when Nawaz Sharif last fell out of favour with the establishment, powerful operators acting behind the scenes have used progressively coercive means to whip the media into lining up with their narratives. This publication is among those that were made to suffer the worst of such practices.

So weary have media practitioners now become of the sword constantly hanging above their necks that various journalists' and media workers' representative bodies resolved this past weekend to begin pushing back against it.

The Coalition for Free Media, as it is being called, is a welcome effort that had been long awaited. It is hoped it will be able to wrest back a modicum of the independence Pakistani media has been gradually deprived of over the last decade.

From high-profile abductions that have gone unquestioned to unresolved murders of journalists, the Pakistani media fraternity has suffered much in silence, while being forced to cede more and more control over editorial decision-making to unaccountable individuals.

Press 'advisories', a relic of the Zia era, now seem to be issued every week. Both overt and veiled threats are issued periodically, ensuring that few dare question the state's diktats.

There is a growing realisation that protecting press freedoms is no longer a question of self-preservation or interest: it is clear that the Fourth Estate cannot continue to watch out for the public interest and fulfil its duty to speak truth to power if it allows itself to continue to be divided and exploited by a predatory state.

In this suffocating environment, more and more journalists and media practitioners are realising that their safety is in presenting a united front. More power to those leading the change.

Winners and losers

Dr Niaz Murtaza

Who will the winners and losers be in the 2024 polls? Some jokingly say that even though the polls themselves are not certain, the winner is.

But if a (favourable) winner is certain, why would anyone try to delay them, especially as the US may link a critical new IMF loan to polls? So, barring a national calamity, polls on Feb 8 look certain, still months late constitutionally. And yet there is doubt.

There is often uncertainty even in the US despite credible opinion and actual polls. In our context, a recent poll shows the PTI and PML-N close in Punjab. But are our opinion polls reliable? The 2013 and 2018 ones were reasonably so. Such polls take national or provincial samples and not constituency ones. So, they predict the vote ratios of parties overall but not their number of seats.

The average of four polls (Gallup, Pulse, IPOR and SDPI) completed within two months of the 2018 polls had the PTI, PML-N and the PPP getting 28.3 per cent, 27.5pc and 16.5pc votes respectively. They actually got 31.8pc, 24.4pc and 13pc. So, they erred from the actual ratios by less than 4pc, which is common even in the US.

In 2013, the average of two polls (Gallup and IRI) showed the PML-N, PPP and the PTI getting 36pc, 15.5pc and 16pc of the votes, even closer to the 33pc, 15pc and 17pc actual ratios. So, the polls of such firms can't be rejected outright as biased or unscientific, despite the many constraints in carrying out accurate surveys in Pakistan.

But how did the vote ratios translate into

seats? The party with the highest actual vote ratio got 10-15pc more seats: the PTI 43pc seats in 2018 and PML-N 46pc in 2013 but the PPP got only 2pc more in 2008.

What can we expect in 2024? Gallup has withheld national results this time. But its recent poll shows the PTI at 34pc and PML-N at 32pc in all-crucial Punjab, ie, close as in 2018 nationally. Given the 2013 and 2018 trends, the PTI may win 40-45pc of seats there.

The PTI got 45pc support in KP (the PML-N and JUI-F together got 24pc) and 19pc in Sindh (PPP got 42pc) in this poll. It would suggest a PTI set-up nationally and in Punjab and KP, a PPP one in Sindh, with Balochistan unclear.

There are two big caveats though. Polling over the months in 2018 had shown the PTI's vote ratio increasing but PML-N's falling. Gallup polls over the months in Punjab now show the reverse. This momentum may mean a PML-N win. But both trends are odd. In 2017-18, the PML-N had given 6pc growth, low inflation, CPEC and a cut in terrorism and power outages. In 2022-23, it gave near-zero growth and record inflation. So, neither trend reflects party outcomes. But the commonality is that in 2018, the PML-N faced the establishment's wrath which now PTI faces even more. This may have played a key role in changing the choices of voter blocs watching for such signals.

The bigger caveat is there is no PTI in the polls, unfairly removed by the party symbol case verdict. No law allows the Election Commission of Pakistan to reject party poll results. But it did so twice with the PTI. Laws allow the ECP to handle national

polls disputes via tribunals run by judges, as it isn't a judicial body. Arguably, the ECP nixed the PTI's party polls without law and capacity. PTI horses must run as independents though it's unclear if any law says so.

Party symbols don't represent their registration but are given in elections due to illiteracy. The ECP says PTI is still registered with it. So, its winners must be treated as its assembly representatives, subject to party loyalty laws, even if the PTI's symbol doesn't appear on ballots. Forcing them to run as independents may confuse voters, and more critically, make PTI winners open to poaching by others waiting with their nets. It all appears designed. It follows the imprisonment of the PTI's top leaders, forced desertion and rally bans. More novel ploys may emerge to undercut the party until and after polls.

All this may make 2024 polls more rigged than the 2018 and 1990s ones and on a par with those held in 1985 and 2002 by unconstitutional regimes. Similar rigging can apparently happen even under constitutional rule.

This may usher in an inept and weak PML-N regime reliant on small parties, more so than the PTI in 2018. Even if the PTI wins by magic, we will still have an inept set-up with uneasy ties with all key internal and external forces.

The only (tiny) hope is if the winner is allowed to appoint a competent cabinet, letting the Sharifs or Imran Khan run the parties, as Congress did after Rajiv Gandhi's death to usher in India's progress under Manmohan Singh. Otherwise, even if the winners are not certain, the losers are the masses. -- Courtesy Dawn

Blinding rage

Shahzad Sharjeel

Blinding pretenders to the throne has been an age-old favourite in our part of the world. In addition to making the aspirant an example for other external adventurists and curbing in-house ambition, the injury also added to the challenge of running chaotic kingdoms that frequently experienced uprisings the monarch usually had to quell, leading the forces at the empire's disposal personally in the battlefield.

Lest anyone assume that the despicable practice was limited to kings and their sons or brothers, in the 16th century, Mallu Adil Shah of Bijapur was blinded on his Maratha grandmother's orders to promote another brother in the line of succession.

In an age when physical prowess was at least as much, if not more, important than the intellectual capacity to mount a credible challenge, blinding an opponent must have appeared as sufficient a minimisation of future risk as possible, short of outright extermination. Maybe, in their sick minds, they occupied a status one rung higher than those of murderers.

In the Bhagalpur district of Bihar in 1980, police officials, with the knowledge of at least one minister and active indifference of officers as senior as DIG and IG, went about blinding as many as 87 suspects in custody over a nine-month period. They claimed this was the only way to stem the tide of criminal activities in the area. The readers shall be spared the gruesome details of how these protectors of life and honour went about their gory business. It

took some brilliant and courageous investigative reporting to expose the case. Inquiries were initiated, and 15 police officials, including the superintendent of Bhagalpur Central Prison, were suspended.

The superintendent, who had forwarded the victims' petitions for relief to the chief judicial magistrate, along with his forwarding letter, was accused of failing to record and report the undertrials' condition upon receiving their custody at the jail. The party bhais (people wearing the same belt/badge) closed ranks and claimed that enraged mobs handled all the victims and that they were brought to the police stations already blinded.

The Indian supreme court heard the matter for three years. It used 'grandiloquent' language to express its anguish, as Arun Shourie, former editor of the Indian Express, puts it in his book The Commissioner For Lost Causes. However, the court did little by way of punishing the policemen whose suspensions were, one by one, revoked, and some were even promoted to more important positions.

Those victims who survived the ordeal got Rs30,000 deposited in their bank accounts as compensation to live off its interest, a grand amount of Rs750 a month at its highest point before it was discontinued altogether in 2019.

Recently, the caretaker chief minister of Punjab approved action against 18 Directorate of Drug Control officials in the Avastin eye injection case. More than 60 people have lost their vision completely or partially

because of the administration, without consent, of apparently contaminated supplies of the drug. The inspectors were responsible for ensuring safety standards.

Some people would consider it unfair to equate the Bhagalpur atrocity with Punjab officialdom's failure. Consider that expired stents were put in people's hearts not too long ago. Technicians and, in one case, a security guard were found to be performing surgeries. According to media reports, a doctor and a motor mechanic were running a kidney transplant racket. Inquiries and 'action' will be initiated; however, 'gown brothers,' too, have each other's back. Even if the culprits are apprehended, tried, and punished, how do you bring back the dead or compensate for a limb or an organ?

The days of absolute monarchs and tyrants may have been over, and the modern state guarantees rights and protections to its citizens. However, in the absence of constant vigilance, accountability, and timely justice, tiny state officials and common criminals can turn diabolical. One is reminded of Iqbal's poem Ghulam Qadir Rohilla, in which he laments the brutality of the invader who gouged out Mughal emperor Shah Alam II's eyes upon overthrowing him. The Rohilla at least had an old grouse to hide behind, as his erstwhile retainer had purportedly gotten him castrated in childhood to serve inside the royal harem. What harm did Punjab's hapless citizens bring the health officials to deprive them of their sight? -- Courtesy Dawn

Commerce News

BOI assures support for transferring of 'Nantong HiTide Biotechnology'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Secretary Board of Investment, Dr. Muhammad Sohail Rajput on Tuesday assured full support for the establishment and transfer of Nantong HiTide Biotechnology's to Pakistan.

Secretary Board of Investment, Dr. Muhammad Sohail Rajput, hosted a distinguished delegation led by Lin Xuyue, President of Nantong HiTide Biotechnology, in a productive meeting at his office, said a press release issued here.

Nantong HiTide, Biotechnology is engaged in Veterinary bio-product manufacturing and supply. There is an emphasis on innovation and R&D other than production, sales, technology consultation, and service of biological solutions for

animal disease control. Their commitment to providing safe and high-quality products aligns with their dedication to serving farmers in addressing animal health challenges.

The discussions during the meeting centered around a potential collaboration for the development of a foot and mouth disease vaccine in Pakistan.

The proposed collaboration includes potential avenues such as establishing a lab in Pakistan, joint ventures, and research and development partnerships. Nantong HiTide Biotechnology aims to bring its advanced technology and personalized support to Pakistan's agriculture and livestock sector.

Chen Shang, a Board

Member of HiTide Biotechnology, highlighted the effectiveness and affordability of their vaccines, aiming to enhance animal health for farmers in Pakistan.

The company plans to establish a new facility in Pakistan, focusing on the development and production of high-quality vaccines for cattle, pigs, poultry, and other animals.

The company will establish its lab in Pakistan and transfer technology. Nantong HiTide Biotechnology was established in 2017 by Dr. Lin Xuyue, the company stands as a leading private high-tech enterprise, specializing in animal vaccines and adjuvants. Notably, some of the company's products have outperformed industry giants like Pfizer and Boehringer Ingelheim.



ISLAMABAD: CEO Ener Tech Abdullah al-Mutairi called on Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

Pakistan to facilitate Chinese companies in field of smart city construction

BEIJING (APP): Pakistan is actively promoting digitization and embracing new technologies and industries to foster comprehensive economic and social development.

"The Pakistan Embassy in China will continue to provide comprehensive support and assistance to Chinese companies, including Beijing Urban Construction Intelligent Control (BUCIC), in facilitating the implementation of big data projects in Pakistan and promoting cooperation

between China and Pakistan in the field of smart city construction," said Aslam Chaudhary, Economic Minister in Pakistan Embassy in Beijing.

Aslam Chaudhary led a delegation to BUCIC to enhance bilateral cooperation in the field of digital city development. During the visit, the delegation toured BUCIC's state-of-the-art facilities, which encompassed the Digital Experience Center and the Urban Rail Transit Cloud Intelligent IoT

Laboratory. They were highly impressed by the digital transportation and smart city-related products, with a special focus on the integrated intelligent control center.

The integrated control center incorporates a range of facilities and functions, such as station control rooms, customer service centers, fire control rooms and ticket booths, contributing to intelligent operation and maintenance. China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Tuesday.

Vegetable dehydration initiative can help generate handsome income

MULTAN (APP): The National Productivity Organization (NPO) arranged an awareness session on vegetable dehydration to improve farmers' income and improve exports.

General Manager NPO Wajeeha Ahmed Abbasi while addressing the participants at Multan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MCCI) remarked that NPO was

imparting information about vegetable dehydration across the country.

The government is committed to enhancing vegetable exports, she added.

President Multan Chamber of Commerce and Industry Mian Rashid Iqbal stated that there were immense opportunities in foreign markets for vegetable export.

Gold up by Rs.500

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs.500 and was sold at Rs.215,200 on Tuesday compared to its sale at Rs.214,700 on last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs. 429 to Rs.184,500 from Rs.184,071 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went down to Rs.169,124 from Rs.168,731, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

Sauqib Fayyaz says: FPCCI to support look Africa initiative & FTAs

Independent Report KARACHI: Mr. Saqib Fayyaz Magoon, Acting President FPCCI, has stressed that the absence of free trade agreements (FTAs) with the African nations should be addressed; which, in turn, has limited our trade volume with a huge continent comprising of 54 countries. There are significant economies in Africa with whom we can multiply our trade volumes within years – both bilaterally & exports to the region cumulatively, he added.

Mr. Saqib Fayyaz



Magoon, Acting President FPCCI, maintained that the apex body will fully support Look Africa Policy Initiative of the Ministry of Commerce, Pakistan; and, will advocate signing of free trade agreements (FTAs) with the African nations. He specifically emphasized to have bilateral FTAs with the

top 7 economies of Africa; i.e. Egypt, Nigeria, South Africa, Algeria, Ethiopia, Morocco and Kenya – accounting for approximately 78 percent of the total GDP of Africa; with each having country GDP in upwards of \$100 billion.

It is pertinent to note that The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI) and Pan African Chambers of Commerce & Industry (PACCI) have held a high-profile interactive session to identify and explore the areas of mutual interests:

trade promotion activities; chamber-to-chamber linkages; investments & JVs; business tourism and economic cooperation.

Mr. Saqib Fayyaz Magoon, Acting President FPCCI, apprised that Pakistan's exports to Africa, as a whole, demonstrated stagnation at around \$1,500 million in 2022.

POL import bill declines by 13.78% in 1st half of FY 2023-24

ISLAMABAD (APP): The imports of the overall petroleum group contracted by 13.78 per cent during the first six months of the current fiscal year (2023-24) compared to the corresponding period of the last year, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. The total imports of the petroleum group during July-December (2023-24) stood at \$ 8,005.784 million against the imports of \$9,285.522 million during the same

period of last year. Among petroleum commodities, the import of petroleum products declined by 24 per cent, from \$ 4,202.185 million last year to \$3,193,849 million during the period under review. Likewise, the imports of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) declined by 4.96 per cent from \$1,949.704 million last year to \$ 1,852.996 million this year whereas petroleum crude dipped by 5.94 per cent from \$ 2,776.186 million.

Sargodha Citrus Fest kicks off in Federal capital

Independent Report ISLAMABAD: The first-ever two-day 'Sargodha Citrus Fest' kicked off at COMSTECH on Tuesday displaying around 45 varieties of citrus fruit and its products attracting a large number of visitors.

The fest is being organized by the University of Sargodha and COMSTECH jointly where the visitors enjoy the products, especially citrus fruit-made cakes, juices, desserts, candies and green tea besides a variety of citrus fruit.

The varieties of citrus fruit including Rangpur Lime, Carrizo Citrange, Gada Dahi, Rangpur, Gilgil, Miha, Pishawari Mittha, Kinnow, Seedless Lemon, Jati Khathi, Bara Masii, Ornad Blood, Mosambi, Murcott and many others were exhibited through several stalls. The citrus fest is set

to captivate visitors especially fruit enthusiasts of all ages on Wednesday too offering citrus-infused culinary delights and interactive exhibits.

The staff of the University of Sargodha briefed the visitors about the products made from citrus fruit and offered them to taste.

Speaking on the occasion, the Vice Chancellor of the University of Sargodha, Prof. Dr. Qaisar Abbas welcomed the participants of the inaugural ceremony and said that this is a first-ever citrus exhibition being organized in Islamabad.

Prof. Qaisar Abbas shed light on the brief history of the University of Sargodha and said that the uniqueness of this university is that it has faculties of both medical and agriculture.

PSX stays bullish, gains 514 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Tuesday, gaining 514.81 points, a positive change of 0.81 percent, closing at 64,454.22 points against 63,939.41 points the previous trading day.

A total of 425,709,896 shares valuing Rs.24,995 billion were traded during the day as compared to 298,699,061 shares valuing Rs.12,515 billion the last day.

Some 354 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 209 of them recorded gains and 127 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 18 remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were Oil and Gas Development with 52,947,125 shares at Rs.136.50 per share, Fauji Foods Ltd with 44,935,382 shares.

Governor emphasizes importance of alternative medicine in Punjab

Independent Report
LAHORE: Federal Health Minister Nadeem Jan called on Punjab Governor Muhammad Balighur Rehman at Governor House Lahore. During the meeting, a detailed discussion was held about the measures taken in the health sector. Punjab Governor appreciated the services rendered by Federal Health Minister and gave suggestions for reforming the system in view of misuse of health card in the past. Governor Punjab also emphasized the importance of alternative medicine.

due to the measures taken in the health sector. He said that Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC) should also pay special attention to the cleanliness of infrastructure, kitchens, and washrooms of medical colleges, hospitals and student hostels.

On this occasion, Federal Health Minister Nadeem Jan informed Governor Punjab about the measures taken in the health sector. He said that revolutionary measures are being taken along with the policy of producing the basic ingredients of medicines at the local level in Pakistan.

Later, Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman/Chancellor presided over the 19th Convocation of Lahore College for Women University. Speaking on this

occasion, Punjab Governor Muhammad Balighur Rehman said that our religion has laid great emphasis on education. The first word revealed to our last Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) from Allah Almighty was Iqra, which means to read, to seek knowledge. Governor Punjab urged the students to develop a penchant for knowledge.

Governor Punjab said that education provides opportunities to get a job, but the real success is one's character that guarantees success in life and hereafter. He said that the students should develop qualities like truthfulness, honesty, and tolerance in their character. Governor Punjab said that there are many positive things in our, we should look at the positive aspects of society.



LAHORE: Federal Health Minister Nadeem Jan called on Punjab Governor Muhammad Balighur Rehman at Governor House.

KP Governor writes to caretaker CM for provision of medicines to hospitals

Independent Report
PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Ghulam Ali has written a letter to the interim Chief Minister Arshad Hussain Shah here urging immediate provision of essential and emergency medicines to government hospitals.

Drawing the attention of the KP CM to the issue, the Governor said that the shortage of emergency medicines including life-saving drugs, anti-rabies vaccines and immunoglobulins in the government hospitals was a matter

of grave concern and posing a threat to the poor and vulnerable population of the province.

He said the issue was also highlighted by the leading newspapers and needed decisive action and intervention of the interim CM as the issue was tarnishing the public image of the caretaker set up.

The Governor urged the caretaker CM to take prompt action and ensure the provision of emergency and essential medicines in the government hospitals.

ANF seizes 190 kg drugs in six operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in its crackdown against drug traffickers managed to recover over 190 kg drugs and arrested seven accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Tuesday.

He informed that 3 kg Ice drug was recovered from three Doha-bound passengers in two different operations at Islamabad Airport. 500 grams heroin was recovered from a passenger going to Bahrain at Bacha Khan Airport.

52 heroin-filled capsules were recovered from the stomach of a passenger going to Doha at Allama Iqbal Airport.

Launches Bannu Economic Zone Caretaker CM vows zero tolerance for corruption

PESHAWAR (APP): Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Justice (Retd) Arshad Hussain Shah, has taken notice of complaints regarding undue problems in the Inteqal of land (land transfer deeds).

He has directed the Board of Revenue Land to obtain records of land Inteqal deeds from the last four months.

The Chief Minister has instructed the records to be scrutinized in the CM Complaint Cell, and individuals should be contacted by telephone to ensure that no additional amounts were wrongfully taken from them during the Inteqal of land process.

He announced a zero-

tolerance policy of the government against corruption and warned of strict action against officials involved in corrupt practices.

Meanwhile, Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Justice (Retd) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah formally launched the Bannu Economic Zone here on Tuesday.

The launching ceremony was held here in the Chief Minister's Secretariat wherein the Caretaker Chief Minister also distributed plot allotment letters among intending investors. Bannu Economic Zone is 14th zone of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.



LAHORE: Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Raza Naqvi along with Inspector General Police Punjab inspecting latest Security Cameras after inaugurating Special Protection Unit (Special Operation Room) at city traffic Police Lines Manawa.

Naqvi inspects public welfare projects

Independent Report
LAHORE: Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi inspected Lahore Ring Road's southern loop-III, Babu Sabu toll plaza, Liberty's Capri cinema and inaugurated the SPU's operations room at city traffic police lines at Manawan.

The CM conducted a detailed visit of 8-KM long LRR's SL-III from Maraka to Adda Plot to check the progress, said a handout issued here on Tuesday.

He checked the quality of asphalt work at various locations. Expressing optimism, he anticipated the project's swift completion, ensuring seamless traffic flow, given the accomplishment of both major and minor structures.

In a related development, the Babu Sabu toll plaza is set to undergo enhancements aimed at improving accessibility and minimizing vehicle queues.

Ombudsman Punjab takes 26 notices, resolves public issues

LAHORE (APP): In response to 126 notices taken by Ombudsman Punjab Maj (ret) Azam Suleman Khan in December to provide relief to the general public by resolving collective public problems at the grassroots, the administration of respective districts spent a total of Rs 257.3 million to resolve 26 problems.

However, 100 other public issues did not incur any government expenditures for the actions taken by the relevant departments.

The spokesman for the office of the Ombudsman Punjab shared the financial breakdown of the actions taken. Rs 339,500 were spent to address three complaints related to sewerage lines repair, Rs 5,722,500 were spent to address four complaints

related to cover open manholes.

A significant amount of Rs 60,000 was invested in resolving three complaints regarding waste disposal and Rs 247,769,000 was spent in resolving ten complaints regarding repair and cleanliness of streets and roads across different districts.

Additionally, Rs 3,465,180 was utilized to attend six complaints, linked to the repair of street lights and maintenance of water filtration plants, ensuring access to clean drinking water for the public, the spokesman stated.

Notably, the concerned administration and government departments also successfully addressed 26 notices for the restoration of sewerage lines.

Efforts to be made to regularize slums: Alwari

BAHAWALPUR (APP): Renowned intellectual, parliamentarian and candidate for NA-168, Syed Tabish Alwari has said that he would make serious efforts for the regularization of slums in Bahawalpur.

He said this during his meeting with the Christian community in Islami Colony Bahawalpur here. He said that tens of thousands of poor people used to live in slums. He emphasized the need for practical measures should be taken to regularize slums.

He said that if he won the general elections from NA-168, he would make serious efforts for the regularization of slums. He further said that people should vote for honest candidates who were sincere to resolve their issues.

Work is in progress on Orange train to solar power: Hasan Murad

Independent Report
LAHORE: Provincial Transport Minister Ibrahim Hasan Murad said in a statement that on the instructions of the Chief Minister of Punjab, the work on the project to shift the Orange train to solar in Lahore in the first phase is going on rapidly.

The provincial minister said that on the recommendation of the Energy Department, the talks with NESPAK have entered the final stages, but after signing the agreement with NESPAK, the study

will be completed within 3 months and after the study, the solarization project will be started.

The provincial minister further said that solar panels will be installed at Depots, stabling yards and stations of Orange train while solar grid stations will be constructed at stabling yards and orange train Depots.

Ibrahim Hasan Murad said that along with the Orange train, the stations will also be transferred to solar energy.

Interim bail of PTI leaders extended

PESHAWAR (APP): The interim bail of PTI's former Deputy Speaker Mehmood Jan, cabinet members and MPAs in corruption and illegal appointments cases was extended till February 13.

PTI's former Deputy Speaker Mehmood Jan, Taimur Saleem Jhagra, Fazal Elahi, Kamran Bangash and Muhammad Asif, MPAs Ajmal Khan, Guldad Khan and Aftab Alam were having allegations of corruption and illegal appointments in different districts.

International News

At least 50 injured in major earthquake on China-Kyrgyzstan border

ALMATY (AFP/APP): At least fifty people were injured after a 7.0-magnitude earthquake struck along the mountainous China-Kyrgyzstan border on Tuesday, authorities said.

The major quake was registered just after 2:00 am (1800 GMT Monday) at a depth of 13 kilometres in China's Xinjiang region, about 140 kilometres (85 miles) west of the city of Aksu.

Local authorities dispatched a team to the quake's epicentre, Beijing's Xinhua state news agency said, while around 800 people were on standby for any large disaster relief mission.

The health ministry

in Kazakhstan said that 44 people suffering "various" injuries had sought medical help in the city of Almaty, the country's largest city.

Images posted on social media and by local news outlets showed citizens streaming outside following the quake.

In China's Akqi County, six people suffered injuries—two of which were "serious"—according to a Weibo post by a Xinjiang government media account.

A total of 47 buildings in the county collapsed, while a further 78 were damaged, the post said.

Two residential houses and livestock sheds

collapsed in the area near the epicentre, in rural Wushi County, Xinhua reported, while electricity was temporarily knocked out.

Video circulating on Chinese social media showed household appliances crashing to the floor as wild shaking rocked homes.

More footage shared by state broadcaster CCTV showed firemen entering a damaged building with cracked walls and police helping an injured local.

Local TV channels in the Indian capital New Delhi reported strong tremors in the city, about 1,400 kilometres away.



Russian President Vladimir Putin takes part in the official ceremony for pouring the first concrete into the foundation of power unit 4 at Egypt's El-Dabaa Nuclear Power Plant with the participation of Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, via video link at the Kremlin in Moscow, Russia.

US, Britain hit targets in Yemen as Huthis vow to strike back

SANAA (AFP/APP): The United States and Britain launched a second round of joint military strikes on Yemen's Huthis on Tuesday over their attacks on Red Sea shipping, as the rebels vowed to hit back.

The latest raids, heard by residents of the rebel-held capital Sanaa around midnight (2100 GMT), hit eight Huthi targets, a joint US-UK statement said, while the Huthis listed 18 strikes across their territory.

US and British forces carried out a first wave of strikes against the rebel group earlier this month, and the United States launched further air raids against missiles that Washington said posed imminent threats to both civilian and military vessels.

The latest US-UK strikes were against "eight Huthi targets in Yemen in response to the Huthis' continued attacks against international and commercial shipping as well as naval vessels transiting the Red Sea".

Russian strikes kill four, wound dozens across Ukraine

KYIV (AFP/APP): Dozens of people were injured and at least four killed after a wave of Russian missiles targeted Kyiv and other cities across Ukraine, setting residential buildings ablaze and reducing others to rubble. Rescue workers in Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city near Russia's border, hauled injured residents from the scene of an attack where smoke rose from smouldering piles of rubble, AFP journalists reported.

The regional governor said three residents were killed in the overnight barrage.

Biden, Harris blast 'extremist' Republicans in abortion vote battle

BIG BEND (AFP/APP): US President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris put abortion rights at the center of their reelection campaign Monday, attacking Republicans over an issue that Democrats see as a powerful vote winner against Donald Trump.

"How dare he?" Harris said of former president Trump—who has boasted of his role in overturning the constitutional, federal right to abortion—as she traveled to Wisconsin at the start of a nationwide tour on the issue.

Biden meanwhile railed at "extremist" and "cruel" Republicans in a speech at the White House marking the 51st anniversary of Roe v Wade, the landmark judg-

ment legalizing abortion that the conservative-leaning US Supreme Court then stunningly overturned in 2022. Harris and Biden warned that Republicans will impose a nationwide abortion ban if the party wins the November presidential election.

Already, 21 states have brought in full or partial bans since the Supreme Court—where three Trump-appointed justices tilted the balance sharply to the right—issued its ruling.

"These extremists are trying to take us backwards. We are not having it," Harris said to a cheering crowd in Big Bend in Wisconsin, which is expected to be one of the most closely fought states in this year's election.

WHO chief warns pandemic accord hangs in the balance

Monitoring Desk
GENEVA: The World Health Organisation chief fears plans for a global pandemic preparedness agreement will fall apart amid wrangling and disinformation, warning on Monday that future generations "may not forgive us".

Shaken by the Covid-19 pandemic, the WHO's 194 member states decided more than two years ago to start negotiating an international accord aimed at ensuring countries are better equipped to deal with the next health catastrophe, or to prevent it altogether.

The plan was to seal the agreement at the 2024 World Health Assembly, the WHO's decision-making body, which convenes on May 27. But WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the momentum had been slowed down by entrenched positions and "a torrent of fake news, lies, and conspiracy theories".

And he warned that if nobody is prepared to seize the initiative or give

ground, the whole project risks going nowhere. "Time is very short. And there are several outstanding issues that remain to be resolved," Tedros told the WHO's executive board in Geneva.

Failure to strike an agreement would be "a missed opportunity for which future generations may not forgive us," he said. Tedros said all countries needed the capacity to detect and share pathogens presenting a risk, and timely access to tests, treatments and vaccines.

He called for a "strong agreement that will help to protect our children and grandchildren from future pandemics".

Tedros said claims that the accord would cede sovereignty to the WHO or give it the power to impose lockdowns and vaccine mandates were "completely false". "We cannot allow this historic agreement, this milestone in global health, to be sabotaged."

Yemen's Huthis say hit US ship, Washington denies attack

SANAA (AFP/APP): Britain and the United States have carried out strikes on the Yemeni capital Sanaa, the news agency of the Huthi rebels said Tuesday, after the group claimed to have hit a US military cargo ship. The official Saba news agency said that "American-British forces are launching raids on the capital of Sanaa" and several other parts of Yemen, while Huthi TV outlet al-Masirah said four strikes targeted the Al-Dailami military base north of the capital, which is under rebel control.

Earlier on Monday, Huthi rebels claimed they had hit a US military cargo ship off the coast of Yemen—although the United States denied an attack had taken place.

The Yemeni rebels began striking Red Sea shipping in November, saying they were hitting Israeli-linked vessels in support of Palestinians in Gaza, which has been ravaged by fighting amid the Hamas-Israeli war.

12 injured as Myanmar military plane overshoots India runway

Monitoring Desk
NEW DELHI: Twelve people were injured on Tuesday when a Myanmar military plane overshoot a runway while landing in India to collect soldiers who had fled armed insurgents fighting their country's junta.

The Chinese-made Shaanxi Y-8 turboprop skidded off the tarmac shortly before midday at Lengpui, the main airport of India's Mizoram state.

An Airport Authority of India (AAI) official at

Lengpui told AFP that the flight was collecting 92 soldiers who had crossed into India from neighbouring Myanmar last week. Of the 12 injured, "four are stated to be serious," added the official, who requested anonymity as they were not authorised to speak to the media.

Footage of the crash's aftermath aired by local broadcasters showed the bent fuselage of the transport plane, which had cut a swath through tall grass after sliding down an embankment.

New ambassadors present credentials to Turkish President Erdogan

WASHINGTON (AA/APP): Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan received letters of credentials on Tuesday from the new ambassadors of four countries.

At the presidential complex in the capital Ankara, Erdogan separately welcomed Gabriele Jen of Austria, Ahmed Ben Sghaier of Tunisia, Kok Li Peng of Singapore, and Maria Virginia Mendes Da Silva Pina of Portugal.

Blinken sees Ivory Coast model on extremism on Africa tour

ABIDJAN (AFP/APP): US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Tuesday praised Ivory Coast for choosing a less militarised approach to security, on a tour to rally African democracies as crises engulf the region and world.

Blinken was meeting separately with two key leaders on the same day—Ivorian President Alassane Ouattara, a veteran leader who has won US praise for consolidating democracy, before heading to Abuja to see Nigerian President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, elected last year on a platform of economic reforms.

In Abidjan, Blinken hailed Ivory Coast's stand against last year's coup in Niger and its approach of "building security together" by investing economically to combat extremism in northern areas bordering Mali and Burkina Faso.

"I have to applaud the approach that's been taken by Cote d'Ivoire—working with communities, listening to commu-

nities, making sure that their security forces understand the needs, the concerns of communities," Blinken said alongside Ouattara. "I think that can serve as a very powerful model for other countries," he said.

Ivory Coast has not experienced a major terrorist attack for some two years, despite its troubled neighbourhood. Blinken nonetheless promised to boost cooperation on the ground with Ivory Coast, largely training of security forces.

He said that the United States would provide an additional \$45 million to West African nations as part of a plan to battle instability, bringing total funding under the year-old programme to nearly \$300 million.

Ouattara expressed appreciation for the US assistance and voiced alarm over a spate of coups in West Africa.

"Like the United States, we are very committed to democracy and justice."

Modern agri technology, effective decision making vital to cope with climate change challenge: President

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Tuesday citing the abundance of natural resources, said that adopting modern agricultural technology and effective decision-making were inevitable for Pakistan to cope with the challenge of climate change.

The president, in his inaugural address at the Regional Dialogue 2024 on "Climate Crisis: Shaping South Asia's Resilience" arranged by the Institute of Regional Studies, said that Pakistan was rich in water, renewable energy potential and other resources but it direly needed a driving force to implement the decisions and make it compete with the world.

He told the gathering of former diplomats, academicians and researchers that Pakistan had around 150 million acre-feet of water which was sufficient to meet its needs if modern

agriculture techniques like spray and drip irrigation were adopted and flood irrigation was done away with.

Emphasising the implementation of national water policy and other relevant legislation, he said a pricing mechanism could also lead to water conservation.

He said around 400 million gallons per day of water in Karachi was drained into the sea through sewerage which was a criminality.

He also highlighted the use of prohibited nets by the fishermen which also swept small fish resulting in a huge loss of marine life. He said due to the very reasons, Europe was not allowing fish import from Pakistan.

The president exemplified the Netherlands which was the second largest food supplier on earth

despite being 19 times smaller in size than Pakistan and not having such an abundance of water similar to Pakistan. Similarly, Vietnam has taken its fishery exports to around \$10 billion per annum by adopting international standards and techniques, he added.

He said by pushing the farmers to adopt modern agriculture technology, Pakistan could also feed the world.

He recalled Pakistan's successes in fighting COVID-19 through a data-based approach and national unity and said that the world would follow its footprints if the country set such an example as it had also achieved recognition through massive tree plantation.

He said the energy the sun provided to the earth every day was many times higher than the world's annual production.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi addressing the inaugural session of the Regional Dialogue 2024 on "Climate Crisis: Shaping South Asia's Resilience" organized by the Institute of Regional Studies.

Seerat Conference for promotion of values of forgiveness, tolerance

BAHAWALPUR (APP): Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Aneeq Ahmed has stressed the need to promote Islamic teachings of forgiveness and tolerance to make society beautiful and peaceful.

He said this while addressing the 10th International Seerat-ul-Nabi Conference that was organized by Seerat Chair Faculty of Islamic and Arabic Studies at the Islamia University of Bahawalpur at Bahawalpur-Jadeed Campus here on Tuesday.

The conference focused on human values and their impact on societies in the light of Seerat ul Nabi (Peace Be Upon Him) was inaugurated by the Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed, while presided over by the Vice Chancellor of the Islamia University of Bahawalpur

Prof. Dr. Naveed Akhtar. Prof. Dr. Saleem Tariq Khan, former Vice Chancellor of the Islamia University of Bahawalpur was the guest of honour. Prof. Dr. Ahmed Mohammad Al-Sharkavi Salem, Chairman the Department of Quranic Studies, Jamia Azhar Egypt and Prof. Dr. Muhammad Saad Siddiqui, Jamia Punjab also addressed it.

Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Aneeq Ahmed said that values are a very important subject in Islam. "The last Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) said that the religion was complete and final guidance for the whole of humanity," he said adding that on the occasion of the conquest of Makkah in 8th Hijri, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) displayed the excellent human values of forgiveness and tolerance.

"Allah loves those who do good deeds". He said that modesty is also a part of values because modest people are the beauty of society. He said that we have learned scholars with us in the conference hall from whom we can gain a lot of knowledge about values.

Vice-Chancellor of the Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Prof. Dr. Naveed Akhtar said that the Islamia University of Bahawalpur has a century-long history and honour of dissemination of religious education in the Indo-Pak sub-continent. "In 1875, Madrasa Sadr Uloom Diyanet was founded. Later, it was called Jamia Abbasia, setting the standards of excellence in the academic field," he said adding that eminent scholars from the Indian sub-continent performed teaching in Jamia Islamia.

Strong institutions, competent teachers play crucial role in overall national progress: Sadiq

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Senate Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani on Tuesday underscored the crucial role of strong institutions and competent teachers in expediting national progress and prosperity. Speaking at the convention "Youth — Pivot of National Integration" organized by the Higher Education Commission (HEC), he urged the nation to work diligently and said hard work would eventually be rewarded.

He lauded the HEC for bringing together a diverse group of individuals from across the country and ac-

knowledge the fact that Pakistan was a great country with robust institutions and armed forces.

Drawing on his global perspective due to travels worldwide, the Chairman Senate emphasized the value of Pakistan's skilled and hardworking population, as compared to the nations with profound resources, but lacking similar human capital. Recognizing the significant contributions of HEC in establishing universities in Balochistan, he noted the positive transformation in the province's overall narrative and mindset.

Police cops imparted training to ensure law & order in upcoming elections

Independent Report
QUETTA: The training session was conducted for the police personnel assigned security duties during the upcoming general elections here in the metropolis the other day.

The session was participated by the master trainers to enable them to impart training to other security personnel at the district level.

The Director Headquarter, Provincial Election Commission office, Waseem Ahmed imparted training to the police personnel.

While delivering lecture, Waseem Ahmed exhorted the police personnel

to ensure peaceful, safe and conducive environment for the voters during the election process.

He also urged them to behave very well with the voters and polling staff while ensuring the implementation on law.

The police personnel have to ensure that no one can influence the voters outside the polling stations, adding Director Headquarter PEC stressed.

He also asked them to inform the presiding officers or other high ups about any irregularity or against the code of conduct immediately so as to address the same well in time.



QUETTA: Caretaker Home Minister Captain (Retd) Muhammad Zubair Jamali in a meeting with Chairman Balochistan Public Service Commission Abdul Salik during his visit to office of BPSC

Independent candidate withdraws from PB-46 in favor of JUI's candidate

QUETTA (APP) Central leaders of Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), independent candidates from constituency PB-46, Malik Abdul Salam Shahwani and Abdul Wahab Kakar along with hundreds of their colleagues announced to join Jamiat-e-Ulama-e-Islam (JUI) after resigning from PTI.

Malik Abdul Salam Shahwani and Abdul Wahab Kakar announced unconditional withdrawal in favor of candidate Sardar Ahmed Khan Shahwani from constituency PB 46 of JUI party, he said. He also appealed to his friends and the public to vote for the JUI's candidates on February 8.

On this occasion, Abdul Wahab Kakar along with his colleagues Saullah Danna, Rais Junaid, Hanif Aqil, Dr. Malik Nichari, Imdadullah Shahwani and Dr. Habibullah announced to join the JUI.

The JUI's candidate from constituency PB 46, Sardar Ahmad Khan Shahwani congratulated Abdul Salam Shahwani, Abdul Wahab Kakar and their colleagues for joining the party.

He said that the JUI's candidate of constituency PB-46 Sardar Ahmed Khan Shahwani met us last few days and requested to join the JUI and to withdraw in favor him saying that after which we resigned from PTI along with our colleagues in view of consulting our friends. I formally announced today my unconditional withdrawal from joining the JUI and in favor of candidate Sardar Ahmed Khan Shahwani from constituency PB 46 of JUI party, he said. He also appealed to his friends and the public to vote for the JUI's candidates on February 8.

On this occasion, Abdul Wahab Kakar along with his colleagues Saullah Danna, Rais Junaid, Hanif Aqil, Dr. Malik Nichari, Imdadullah Shahwani and Dr. Habibullah announced to join the JUI.

The JUI's candidate from constituency PB 46, Sardar Ahmad Khan Shahwani congratulated Abdul Salam Shahwani, Abdul Wahab Kakar and their colleagues for joining the party.

They made announcement in supervision of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) candidate for constituency PB-46 Sardar Ahmed Khan Shahwani in a press conference at Shahwani House in Saryab on Tuesday.

JUI's senior leaders and other workers were present on the occasion.

Malik Abdul Salam Shahwani said that we belonged to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf but PTI did not issue us tickets after which we decided to participate in the general elections as an independent.



QUETTA: Secretary Finance Babar Khan presiding over a meeting regarding funds of employees working on internship in Directorate of Public Relations Balochistan



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Communications Shahid Ashraf Tarar visiting the Control Room established by Ministry of Interior to monitor the overall security situation during General Elections.

Ministry establishes control room for General Elections 2024

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Communications Shahid Ashraf Tarar on Tuesday visited the control room established in the Ministry of Interior for monitoring of security arrangements and law and order situation during the general election 2024. The caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar appointed Shahid Ashraf Tarar as the Chairman of the Committee for

the Security and Administrative Affairs of General Elections 2024.

The coordinator National Action Plan briefed the minister in detail about the functioning of the control room on behalf of the Secretary of Interior Aftab Akbar Durrani, who was also present in the meeting.

The minister appreciated the efforts of the officials of the interior ministry while expressing satisfac-

tion with the functioning of the control room and said that the security and law and order situation will be monitored during the elections in the country through the control room.

He said that it is the prime responsibility of the Election Commission of Pakistan, according to the constitution, to conduct transparent elections in the country and the caretaker government will provide full support.



QUETTA: Commissioner Quetta Division Hamza Shafqaat holding dialogue regarding Chaman sit-in with the protestors who block road

Quetta Administration launches land verification portal

QUETTA (APP): The Quetta Administration has launched land verification portal in the city to maintain transparency in land affairs. In the meeting, held here under the chairmanship Commissioner Quetta Division Muhammad Hamza Shafqaat was decided the launch of the digital portal and the procedure for the verification of all the public properties in Quetta.

On the occasion, Commissioner Quetta Division Hamza Shafqaat said

that the launch of digital portal is an important initiative for the convenience of the public and the protection of public property, which will resolve the problems related to land revenue and land ownership. Later, under the chairmanship of Commissioner Quetta Division Hamza Shafqaat, a meeting was also held regarding the connection of ambulance services to the Safe City Command and Control Center and to carry out all the work in an orderly manner.

Tajik outgoing envoy in Pak calls on PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Outgoing Ambassador of Tajikistan in Pakistan Ismatullo Naserdin Tuesday called on Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

The prime minister, appreciating the role of Ismatullo Naserdin in promoting bilateral relations between the two countries, expressed his best wishes for him in future.

He hoped that the upcoming ambassador would also play a key role in strengthening the bilateral relations.

Mushaal says: Muslims must boycott India diplomatically over Ram Temple issue

ISLAMABAD (INP): Special Assistant to Prime Minister (SAPM) for Human Rights and Women Empowerment Mushaal Hussein Mullick lashing out at the supremacist and RSS-inspired Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi for inaugurating Ram temple at the site of demolished, five centuries-old Babri Masjid at Ayodhya has called upon the Muslim world to announce diplomatic boycott of India for wiping out Islamic civilization from its soil. In her strong reaction over the Indian government's action, she said that Narendra Modi was using the inaugural of 'Ram temple' event as a political gimmick because his popularity graph did witness alarming decline due to his anti-minority policies.



QUETTA: Former Federal Minister Agha Hassan Baloch meeting with Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar

Dr Ishaq says Medical preparations finalized in CHQ to tackle any emergency situation

QUETTA (APP)-Medical Superintendent (MS) Civil Hospital Quetta (CHQ), Dr. Ishaq Panizai chaired a meeting in view of the security threat during the upcoming general elections in Balochistan.

In the meeting said that medical preparations have been completed in Civil Hospital Quetta and Trauma Center to deal with any emergency situation.

The meeting was attended by Head of Department of Surgery Professor Dr. Shoaib Qureshi, Head of Department of Gynecology Professor Dr. Baligh Aslam, Head of ENT Department Professor Dr. Siddique and other concerned doctors.

Addressing the meeting, MS Civil Hospital Quetta Dr. Ishaq Panizai

said that the Accident and Emergency Department would remain alert 24/7, in case of any emergency. Accident and Emergency Department has been allocated for trench, 24/7 attendance of all doctors and medical staff in Surgery, Neurosurgery, Orthopedic, Plastic Surgery, Medicine, Burn Unit Consultants is ensured, he said. He said that all the medicines and medical equipment were available and according to the duty roster measures have been taken to ensure the presence of medical staff at their place. MS Civil Hospital Quetta Dr. Ishaq Panizai said that Civil Hospital Quetta was the biggest government hospital in Balochistan where continuity of provision of facilities was no less than a challenge.



LORALAI: Commissioner Loralai Division Balaach Aziz presenting a memorial to Chief Secretary Balochistan Shakeel Qadir Khan

People would lit torch of real freedom through vote on Feb 8, says Asif Tareen

Independent Report
QUETTA: The senior leader of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Balochistan, Muhammad Asif Tareen has stated that the public enthusiasm is creating history in the PTI's election campaign and people would not only cast their votes on February 8 but would also make the party successful in the elections.

The PTI provincial leader was speaking to the media about election campaign of the party here on Tuesday.

Asif Tareen said that the Pakistani masses would lit the torch of real freedom through their vote on the Election Day.

He said that every

conscious person, media and even the opponents are saying that the public enthusiasm is worth seeing in election campaign of PTI.

The public response to the party's election campaign is unprecedented in the history, adding Tareen claimed.

He also said that PTI workers rather all segments of the society are considering the public interest in the general elections as source to rid of the slavery and gain real freedom.

He believed that the people would create history by voting to the PTI candidates and winning them with big margin on February 8.