

Independent

Member APNS & CPNE

Chief Editor: Syed Farooq Shah

www.dailyindependent.com.pk Quetta

Prt: 2841470/2841473 REG: No. EC-116 B/ID-445 Vt XXV No 161, Rajab 18, 1445 AH Tuesday January 30, 2024 Pages 08, Price Rs.15

Pakistan, Iran resolve to expand ties especially in political & security domains

PM Kakar reaffirms Pakistan's commitment to strengthen bilateral ties with Iran; Both sides have agreed to station liaison officers in Turbat and Zahedan at the earliest date; No doubt militants in Pak-Iran border areas supported by third countries, says Iran FM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and Iran on Monday agreed to further expand cooperation in the shared goals of security, regional stability, trade and economy, adopting a collective approach to address the confronted common challenges.

"Pakistan and Iran have agreed to adopt collective and collaborative approaches to confront the terrorism by fully leveraging the robust institutional mechanism which already exists between the two countries," Caretaker Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas

Jilani said in a joint press stakeout after an extensive meeting with his Iranian counterpart Hossein Amir-Abdollahian.

He said the two sides recognized that the close bilateral relationship was not only imperative for shared prosperity and development of the people of the two countries but also an important source of stability for the region.

He said during the meeting, both sides agreed to establish a high level consultative mechanism at the level of foreign ministers. The two foreign minis-

ters would meet alternatively in both Iran and Pakistan on a regular basis to oversee the progress that "is being made in various areas of our cooperation", he added.

Stressing the need to address each other's concerns with regard to terrorism, FM Jilani said in that respect the two sides had agreed to station liaison officers on which an agreement was already in place. The liaison officers would be deployed in Turbat and Zahedan, he added.

Continued on page 2



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki attending National Economic Council (NEC) meeting chaired by Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar

Assures fairness No solid reason yet to justify polls delay, says PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Monday said that no solid reason had yet come to the fore to justify a delay in the general elections, assuring that the government was committed to holding polls as freely and fairly as possible.

The prime minister, in an interview with a newly launched television channel (Aik News) said the candidates were canvassing and all the rumours would fall to rest by the evening of February 8 - the date for

general elections in the country. Regarding the usual complaints of rigging before or after the elections, he said that learning lessons from the past, the parliament needed to address all the flaws regarding the laws, administration, or the Election Commission.

He said the observers would monitor and local and international media would report on the activity, assuring that as per the standards in the region, the elections would be and

Continued on page 2



QUETTA: Chairman of PML-N Nawaz Sharif and candidate for NA 263 & 266 Mehmood Khan Achakzai addressing a public gathering in Hazarhganji

Nawaz reiterates pledge to address common man's issues

LAHORE (INP): Former prime minister Nawaz Sharif reiterated on Monday his promise to alleviate the problems facing the common man and make Pakistan self-sufficient, saying the PML-N would leave no stone unturned to address these challenges upon assuming power in the upcoming general elections.

Speaking at the inauguration of a party election office in NA-130, the PML-N supremo deplored that he was innocent yet

made to endure punishment.

Nawaz, in a pointed comment directed at the founder of PTI, stated that the one who served as a watchdog in his legal matters was gone, emphasising the idea that "a guilty conscience requires no accuser". Recalling his disqualification by a bench of the apex court, Nawaz castigated the conspirators saying, "The judges who deposed me are all gone. One by one, they all unveiled their true faces."

ECP warns of nullifying elections over women voter suppression

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has warned that elections might be annulled in constituencies where women face obstacles in voting or disruptions in the election campaign. A spokesperson for the ECP stated that the Election Commission may invoke Section 9 of the Elections Act, potentially leading to the nullification of the entire election process if women are impeded from casting votes.

The ECP took immedi-

ate action on reports circulating in certain media outlets on Monday, claiming that a group of scholars in the Kohistan region has purportedly issued a fatwa prohibiting women from participating in election campaigns. ECP spokesman said that the Election Commission of Pakistan sought report from the District Monitoring Officer (DMO), Upper Kohistan, who reported that the aforementioned news is inaccurate and a result of misunderstanding.

Mafia controlling govt machinery in Islamabad: Bilawal

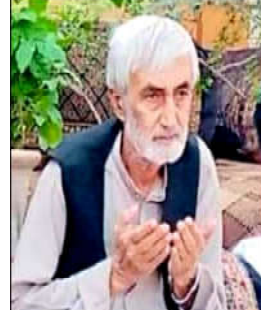
ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman and former foreign minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has said that most of the government machinery of Islamabad is under the control of mafia.

Talking to the students, the PPP leader said his party had prepared its manifesto while emphasizing that the document would serve as his agreement with the inflation-stricken masses of country.

Nawabzada Asadullah Raisani passes away

QUETTA: The tribal personality and elder brother of Chief of Sarawan, Nawab Muhammad Aslam Raisani, Nawabzada Asadullah Raisani passed away after protracted illness in Karachi on Monday.

According to the family sources, Nawabzada Asadullah Raisani was undergoing treatment in Karachi where he breathed his last. Nawabzada Asadullah Raisani's body was brought to native area.



Kanak from Karachi. He would be laid to rest at the native graveyard in Kanak today (Tuesday).

Farooq Shah condoles death of Nawabzada Asadullah Raisani

QUETTA: The Chief Editor Independent Group of Newspaper Syed Farooq Shah has condoled the death of tribal personality and elder brother of Chief of Sarawan, Nawab Muhammad Aslam Raisani, Nawabzada Asadullah Raisani who passed away after protracted illness in Karachi on Monday.

He prayed to Allah Almighty to rest the departed soul in eternal peace and grant courage to the bereaved family to bear this loss with fortitude.



ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister of Islamic Republic of Iran Hossein Amir-Abdollahian calls on Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar, in the Federal Capital.

COAS, Iranian FM reaffirm to remain closely engaged, bar any spoilers to divide brotherly nations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Foreign Minister of Iran Amir Abdollahian called on Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir here at the General Headquarters on Monday.

During the meeting, both sides reaffirmed the resolve to remain closely engaged and not allow any spoilers to drive a wedge between the brotherly nations, an Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release said.

"Pakistan and Iran are fraternal neighbours, and the destiny of both nations are intertwined," both the dignitaries resolved.

Realizing the historical, religious and cultural ties that bind Pakistan and Iran, both sides emphasized on strengthening bilateral ties and fostering greater understanding of each other's concerns.



RAWALPINDI: Chairman of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Zulfikar Ali Bhutto talking with media persons along with Chief of Tehreek-e-Nifaz-e-Fiqah Jafariya Allama Agha Syed Hussain Muqaddasi at Ali Masjid in the city.

MQM-P worker killed in clash with PPP in Karachi

A PPP activist sustained injuries in the incident that led to torching of two vehicles, say police

KARACHI (Agencies): A political worker of Muttahida Quami Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) lost his life while a Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) activist sustained injuries during a violent clash between the two parties late Sunday night in Karachi's Nazimabad area, Express News reported.

According to the police, the deceased has been identified as 44-year-old

Faraz Ahmed Qureshi, son of Ghayoor Ahmed Qureshi. The injured youth is identified as 25-year-old Rao Muhammad Talha, son of Rao Muhammad Salim. Talha was initially rushed to a private hospital after receiving initial medical aid. According to local residents, the clash occurred when a PPP rally was passing by the area.

Continued on page 2

More than 65,000 personnel would be deployed as security arrangements finalized for elections, says IGP

Independent Report

QUETTA: The Inspector General of Police Balochistan, Abdul Khaliq Sheikh has stated that the security arrangements have been finalized for the general elections in the province. He said that more than 65,000 personnel of different law enforcement agencies and security forces would be deployed for security during the elections.

Speaking to a section of media on Monday, the Inspector General of police said he is satisfied with the security arrangements made for the elections. The necessary rehearsal and coordination meetings have been held, he added.

The IGP said that around 18,000 candidates are taking part in the elections in the



province. Over 5,000 polling stations have been established for the elections, adding he mentioned. The IGP pointed out that although there are 16 seats of the National Assembly from Balochistan, but there are challenges because it has 44 percent area of the country.

However, we have made security arrangements well in the polling stations located in the remote areas. He informed that the Army, FC, Home Department, Levies and Police have made preparation for the security.

Security forces thwart terrorist attack in Mach

Independent Report
QUETTA: Security forces on Monday night thwarted a terrorist attack in Mach. According to details, BLA terrorists fire raid attempt in Mach repulsed by security forces.

The security forces had received prior intelligence about the terrorist attack and had set up a trap for the terrorists.

The terrorists fled after facing a strong resistance from the security forces.

Security forces have started a search operation against the fleeing terrorists.

Meanwhile, Provincial Caretaker Information Minister, Jan Achakzai, stated on Monday night that a report had been received regarding the firing of "a few rockets" from the hilly regions of Mach in Balochistan.

Caretaker Prime Minister (PM) Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar has approved the cancellation of foreign visits of Ministers and officers.

According to sources, all permits of foreign visits of cabinet members, government officers and officials of autonomous bodies have been canceled.

Authorities and government officers will not make any foreign visit until election process is completed and new government is formed.

Sources said that cabinet members, government officers and authorities cannot make private foreign visit either. PM has also issued orders to cancel the permits issued by Ministers and Federal Secretaries.

SC allows Akhtar Mengal to contest Feb 8 polls

Monitoring Desk
ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Balochistan National Party (BNP), Sardar Akhtar Mengal, has received approval to participate in the upcoming general election scheduled for February 8.

The decision came after a three-member bench, led by Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa, heard an appeal against the acceptance of Akhtar Mengal's nomination papers.

The appeal was filed by Yasir Ahmad, who contested the acceptance of Akhtar Mengal's nomination papers.

Yasir's counsel, Advocate Sultan Ahmed, argued before the court that the Returning Officer (RO) had initially rejected Akhtar Mengal's nomination papers. However, the election tribunal later accepted the papers, overturning the RO's decision.

Advocate Sultan

Continued on page 2

5028 polling stations to be set up with 14,882 polling booths for Election 2024 in Balochistan

Independent Report

QUETTA: As many as 5028 polling stations would be established for the general elections 2024 in Balochistan. These polling stations would include 1511 for male, 1317 for female and 2200 for combined voters.

Similarly, 298 polling stations would be established in Khuzdar with 865 polling booths there.

In Kech, a total of 255 polling stations would be established with 821 poll booths.

At the outset, a total of 53,71,949 voters would use the right of franchise in the General Elections 2024 from the province.

They are included 30,16,164 male and 23,55,785 female voters. The highest number of voters i.e., 8,54,233 are in Quetta district including 4,88,586 male and 3,65,647 female.

A total of 2573 polling



RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Syed Asim Munir exchanging views with Amir Abdollahian, Foreign Minister of Iran during meeting held at General Headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi.

Election public meeting in Noshki: 8th February sun to rise with good news of victory of BNP: Akhtar Mengal

Independent Report
QUETTA: The President of Balochistan National Party (BNP), Sardar Akhtar Mengal has stated that the BNP has always raised voice and waged struggle for security rights of the province and its people, and the sun of 8th February would rise with good news of victory of the party.

The BNP chief was addressing a public gathering organized by BNP at Mir Asghar Mengal Stadium in Noshki on Monday.

The leaders and workers of BNP besides a large number of other people were also present on the occasion.

Sardar Akhtar Mengal



NOSHKI: President Balochistan National Party Sardar Akhtar Jan Mengal addressing a public gathering in connection with general elections

5028 polling stations to be set up with 14,882 polling booths for Election 2024 in Balochistan

Independent Report

QUETTA: As many as 5028 polling stations would be established for the general elections 2024 in Balochistan. These polling stations would include 1511 for male, 1317 for female and 2200 for combined voters.

Similarly, 298 polling stations would be established in Khuzdar with 865 polling booths there.

In Kech, a total of 255 polling stations would be established with 821 poll booths.

At the outset, a total of 53,71,949 voters would use the right of franchise in the General Elections 2024 from the province.

They are included 30,16,164 male and 23,55,785 female voters. The highest number of voters i.e., 8,54,233 are in Quetta district including 4,88,586 male and 3,65,647 female.

A total of 2573 polling

ECP declares 50% of polling stations as sensitive or highly sensitive

ISLAMABAD (Online): Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has declared 50% of polling stations as sensitive or highly sensitive across country.

According to EC sources, the total numbers of polling stations which have been declared as sensitive or insensitive are 4665. EC has declared 27628 polling stations as sensitive and 18437 polling stations as highly sensitive.

12580 polling stations have been declared as sensitive in Punjab while 640 as highly sensitive. 32324 polling stations have been declared as normal in Punjab.

6545 polling stations of Sindh have been declared as sensitive and 6524 as highly sensitive while 5937 polling stations of Sindh are normal.

Sources said that 6166 polling stations of Khyber Pakhtun Khwa (KPK) have been declared as sensitive and 4143 as highly sensitive while 5388 have been declared as Normal.

Out of 528 polling stations in Baluchistan, only 961 are normal while 2337 polling stations have been declared as sensitive and 1730 as highly sensitive. 90675 polling stations have been established across country.

Meanwhile The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has issued special guidelines for the presiding and assistant presiding officers for the general elections across the country to be held on February 8.

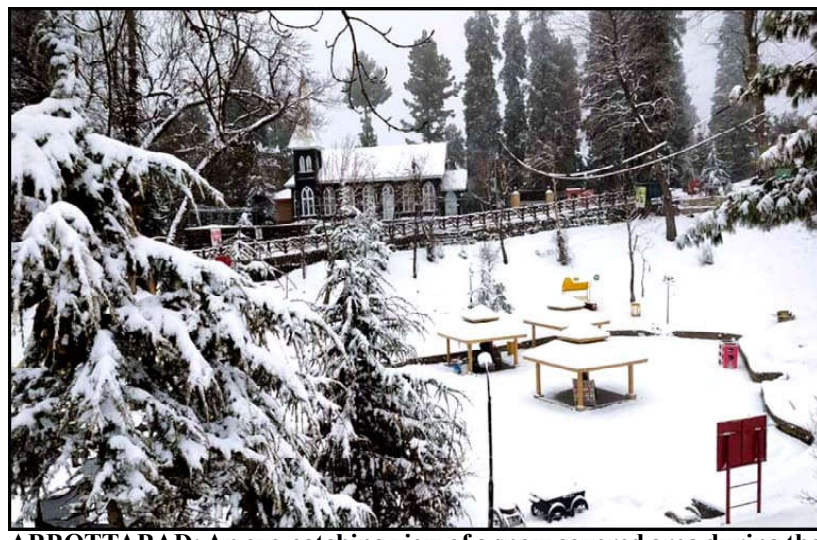
"As per the guidelines the presiding and assistant presiding officers should reach the

respective polling stations two hours before polling time," an official of the ECP told APP.

He said that the presiding and assistant presiding officers should enter all the information on the ballot paper counters file as per the guidelines issued by the ECP.

Apart from this, put the left thumb of men and the right thumb of women on the counters file of the ballot papers and put the official seal with a specific number on the back of the ballot papers, he said.

He said that a total of 90,675 polling stations have been established in the country for the general polls out of which 25,320 for men and 23,950 for women while 41,405 will be joint polling stations. \395



ABBOTTABAD: An eye-catching view of a snow covered area during the heavy snowfall, which more decreases the temperature below in minus degree Celsius, at Galyat area in Abbottabad.

Muhibullah taking part in election on sprit of public service

QUETTA (APP)-Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI)'s nominated candidate for PB-43 Quetta Maulana Muhibullah on Monday said that he was participating in the general election as per the decision of the party leadership in the spirit of public service.

He expressed these views while addressing a crowded press conference in Quetta on the occasion of the withdrawal of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Sami (JUIS)'s candidate Qari Naeemul Haq Bareach from PB43 in favor of JUI.

Haji Meer Usman Achakzai, Seth Kakar, scholars and tribal elders were also present on this occasion.

JUI(S) candidate from

PB-43, Qari Naeemul Haq Bareach said that he announced to withdraw unconditionally in favor of Maulana Muhibullah due to the instructions of the party leaders, the reduction of the problems faced by the area.

He also appealed people to fully support Maulana Muhibullah from PB-43 to make successful him in election.

Maulana Muhibullah, the nominated candidate of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam for PB-43 Quetta said that it was not possible to refuse the services of the Jamiat's ministers and members of the assembly for the provision of education, health, sanitation and clean water for Quetta city and prov-

ince. If given the opportunity to exercise the right of public representation in the February 8 election, I will devote all my energies to take priority-based measures to solve the problems faced by the citizens of PB-43, he said.

SC allows...

Continued from page 1

Ahmed claimed that the court had disregarded the RO's decision and accepted Akhtar Mengal's nomination papers.

Despite this argument, the Supreme Court (SC) stated that it refrains from interfering in the factual aspects of election-related cases. The SC upheld the tribunal court's decision to accept Akhtar Mengal's nomination papers.

Consequently, the Supreme Court discarded the appeal against the appellate tribunal's order, declaring Akhtar Mengal eligible to contest in the upcoming elections.

MQM-P worker killed in ...

Continued from page 1

They said that some PPP workers attempted to hoist the party flag in front of the MQM-P office which led to exchange of harsh words between the workers of both parties and later escalated to physical violence.

Later, unidentified armed men initiated indiscriminate firing, while some individuals also attacked vehicles with sticks. The locals said that the firing was so intense that it could be heard from a considerable distance. Police vehicles from Gulbahar Police Station reached the scene, but the firing persisted, they lamented.



President Dr. Arif Alvi enquiring after the health of patients during his visit to the Sundas Foundation Karachi Centre, providing blood and hematological services to patients, in Karachi.

BoG meeting summoned for election of PCB chairman

LAHORE (APP): Election Commissioner Shah Khawar has summoned a special meeting of the Board of Governors (BoG) for the election of the Chairman Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on February 6 (Tuesday) at 2pm at the National Cricket Academy (NCA) Gaddafi Stadium.

According to a press release issued by the PCB here on Monday, the meeting has been convened as per the provisions of the constitution of the PCB 2014. The PCB constitution makes it mandatory for all members of the BoG to attend the meeting in person.

Following are the members of the BoG:

1. Mustafa Ramday (PCB Patron's nominee)
2. Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi

(PCB Patron's nominee) 3. Sajjad Ali Khokhar, President Regional Cricket Association AJK 4. Zafarullah Jadal, President Regional Cricket Association Dera Murad Jamali 5. Tanveer Ahmed, President Regional Cricket Association Larkana 6. Tariq Sarwar, President Regional Cricket Association Bahawalpur 7. Muhammad Ismail Qureshi, Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited 8. Dr Anwaar Ahmad Khan, Ghani Glass Limited 9. Javed Iqbal, State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) 10. Osama Azhar, Pakistan Television 11. Secretary to the Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Inter Provincial Coordination, or any other officer nominated by him as an ex-officio member (Non-voting member)

Solangi visits PEMRA to condole with Baig over his brother's death

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Monday visited Chairman Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority, Muhammad Salim Baig, to condole with him over the death of his elder brother Zafar Baig.

The minister offered Fateha for the soul of the late Zafar Baig and said he was deeply grieved to hear the news of his death and shared the grief of the bereaved family.

He prayed to Allah Almighty to rest the departed soul in eternal peace and grant courage to the bereaved family to bear this loss with fortitude.

New leadership elected in Softball Federation of Pakistan

KARACHI (APP): Asif Azeem emerged as the President, while Naseem Khan secured the position of Secretary General unopposed, marking the onset of a four-year tenure in the Softball Federation of Pakistan elections.

The announcement of successful candidates occurred during a general body meeting held at Karachi Gymkhana, with Chief Election Commissioner Syed Waseem Hashmi unveiling the elected officials' names.

Notably, all candidates clinched their positions without opposition. Ahmed Ali Rajput attended the event as an observer representing the Pakistan Olympic Association.

In addition to Asif Azeem and Naseem Khan, the elected officials include Professor Dr Farhan Essa Abdullah as Senior Vice President, Yasmin Hyder as Chairperson, and Farah Saeed, Tehmina Asif, Dr Hina Jamshed Khan, Shahid Shinwari, and Muzamil Hussain as Vice Presidents.

The roster of elected officials further features Farhan Rashid as Joint Secretary, Muhammad Zeeshan Merchant as Secretary Finance, Murad Hussain as Associate Secretary, Shahid Aftab as Chairman Umpiring, Asim Khan as Chairman Coaching, and Faraz Ejaz as Chairman of the Technical Committee. Muhammad Nasir, Ahmed Yar Khan, Ali Haider, and Raisa Farhan join as members of the Executive Committee. During the session, the House ratified minutes from the previous meeting and endorsed the calendar for the upcoming year. Additionally, members unanimously supported proposed amendments to the Federation's constitution, addressing crucial matters such as the integration of the International Olympic Committee's principles of universal good governance.



QUETTA: Balochistan Secretary Health Abdullah Khan presiding over fourth quarterly review meeting of EPI Balochistan

Pakistan, Iran resolve to...

Continued from page 1

The foreign minister maintained that the visit of his Iranian counterpart testified deep commitment of both sides to further strengthen the bilateral relations.

He said during the meeting, respect of territorial integrity remained the foundational principle of bilateral cooperation.

The two sides, he added, also agreed to prioritize economic uplift of their border areas.

"We have also agreed to fast-track the operationalization of the five remaining border markets," he said. The markets would be operationalized at the earliest, he added.

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, in his remarks, said that Iran and Pakistan were enjoying great geographical, historical and cultural commonalities.

"If we look at the history of Pakistan and Iran there has never been any case of territorial differences or border problems between the two countries, which was one of the clear manifestations of friendly bilateral relations," he added.

He said that Iran considered Pakistan as its brotherly, neighbourly and friendly country. "Both countries strongly respect territorial integrity of each

other."

The Iranian foreign minister said it was agreed that the two countries would not let the terrorists endanger the security of border areas.

"In a loud voice we will tell all terrorists that we (Iran and Pakistan) will not provide them with any opportunity to endanger our common security."

He said there was no doubt that the terrorists located in common border areas of the two countries were supported by the third countries.

He said in the meeting, the two high ranking delegations agreed to take further actions together as soon as possible with respect to the border security, necessity of fighting against terrorism, enhancing of trade and economic cooperation, expanding border markets and establishing free trade zones.

He said the two sides also agreed to work together to promote the pilgrimage tourism and projects of energy cooperation.

As regards the Palestine issue, the Iranian FM appreciated Pakistan's stance of supporting the Palestinians. He also reiterated his country's resolve to continue to support the people of Palestine and the Palestine resistance.

The Iranian FM wished successful and safe conduct of elections in Pa-

kistan.

Replying to a question with respect to the recent incidents, FM Jilani said that due to deep and historical bilateral relationships, the two sides were able to resolve the misunderstandings very quickly.

He said Pakistan also extended an invitation to the Iranian president for a visit, which hopefully may take place any time after the general elections.

Meanwhile Foreign Minister of Iran Hossein Amir-Abdollahian on Monday called on Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar and discussed matters of mutual interest.

Underscoring close relations between Pakistan and Iran, the prime minister reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to further consolidate bilateral ties.

He also emphasized the need to address common challenges through collaborative and cooperative approaches, rooted in the respect for international law and the principles of the United Nations Charter, in particular territorial integrity and sovereignty of both Pakistan and Iran.

The prime minister conveyed his warm sentiments for President Ebrahim Raisi and extended an invitation for him to visit Pakistan at his earliest convenience.

MQM-P blames PPP for weakening local govt institutions through administrators

HYDERABAD (APP): The candidates of Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) contesting from NA-219, NA-220, PS-63 and PS-65 constituencies in

Hyderabad have blamed Pakistan Peoples Party's previous provincial government for destroying the local government institutions.

Speaking at a corner meeting here on Monday NA-220's contestant from MQM-P Syd Waseem Hussain said the PPP's Sindh government handed over the local government institutions to the bureaucracy in 2010 until the LG elections were held in 2015.

He said for a long period of 5 years the administrators were installed as the heads of the local bodies in all the districts of the province as a replacement for the elected LG representatives.

Hussain said that long-term presence of the administrators, who were allegedly under influence of the provincial government, The candidate for NA-219 Abdul Aleem Khanzada said all attempts to sap the popularity of MQM-P had backfired because at present the party was stronger than before.

He expressed hope that the MQM-P would emerge victorious on February 8 and it would defeat the PPP's candidates in Sindh's urban areas.

Pakistan, Bahrain hold joint exercise 'Al-BADAR-VIII'

RAWALPINDI (APP): The opening ceremony of the two-week Joint Exercise Al-BADAR-VIII was held at National Counter Terrorism Centre, Pabbi with participation of contingents from the Pakistan Army and the Bahrain National Guards.

According to an Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release on Monday, Al-BADAR is an annual bilateral joint exercise in counter terrorism domain between Pakistan and Bahrain.

The Director General Military Training was the chief guest at the opening ceremony.

The exercise is aimed at nurturing of joint employment and interoperability, besides harnessing the historic military to military relations among the brotherly countries.

Both countries have displayed zeal and enthusiasm for benefiting from each other's expertise and experience.



QUETTA: A view of different political party flag hanging on the road for upcoming general.

Talented Ravindra all set to face South Africa in test series

CAPE TOWN (INP): Uncapped pace bowler Rachin Ravindra, who was this week named ICC Emerging Player of the Year for his World Cup heroics, was included in New Zealand's Test squad for next month's two-match series against South Africa.

The 24-year-old all-rounder played the last of his three Tests in January 2022 but was preferred to Henry Nicholls for the series against a severely weakened Proteas team, which starts at Mount Maunganui's Bay Oval next week. Glenn Phillips looks likely to bat in the middle order with Ravindra in his first home test after returning to the longest format for the series in Bangladesh late last year.

Apart from Nicholls, Ajaz Patel and Ish Sodhi are the other notable absentees, with left-armers Mitch Santner, who last played a test on home soil in 2020, which is seen as vital to the future financial health of the 13-man squad.

Former captain Kane Williamson, batsman Tom Blundell and quick Kyle Jamieson, who all have hamstring issues, were selected despite doubts over their fitness. "Tom Blundell, Kyle Jamieson and Kane Williamson are all at slightly different points in their rehabilitation plans but we're confident they'll be good to go at Bay Oval," said coach Gary Stead. New Zealand have never beaten South Africa in a test series and will rarely have had a better chance after the Proteas named a weakened squad featuring eight uncapped players. The series will clash with Cricket South Africa's (CSA) domestic Twenty20 competition, which is seen as vital to the future financial health of the organisation.



QUETTA: PTI Balochistan Additional Secretary General and PB-41 Candidate Alam Khan Kakar addressing a press conference.

Hurt drove Brisbane miracle but West Indies want more tests

SYDNEY (INP): West Indies Skipper Kraigg Brathwaite credited injured pride for West Indies' extraordinary upset of Australia in Brisbane on Sunday. Brathwaite said comments by former Australian pace bowler Rodney Hogg had cut particularly deep.

"Rodney Hogg said we were pathetic and hopeless, so that was our motivation. I want to ask him: 'Are these muscles big enough for you?'" he retorted in the post-match ceremony on Sunday. "We wanted to let him know that we heard him," Brathwaite added in his news conference. "We planned well as a group, but we saw his words and that was extra motivation for us as well.

spearheaded by young quick Shamar Joseph, they staged a remarkable turnaround to beat their hosts by eight runs in a Gabba thriller on Sunday. Brathwaite said comments by former Australian pace bowler Rodney Hogg had cut particularly deep.

"Rodney Hogg said we were pathetic and hopeless, so that was our motivation. I want to ask him: 'Are these muscles big enough for you?'" he retorted in the post-match ceremony on Sunday. "We wanted to let him know that we heard him," Brathwaite added in his news conference. "We planned well as a group, but we saw his words and that was extra motivation for us as well.



QUETTA: Youth Mobilization Chairman, Bakht Muhammad Kakar addresses to media persons during press conference, in Quetta.

Dr. Gohar Ijaz says: Capital police to equip police stations with modern facilities, latest techniques

13 police stations to be modernized in 30 days

Independent Report
ISLAMABAD: The police stations in Islamabad will be equipped with modern facilities and new technological resources with an aim to ensure effective policing and protect lives and property of citizens.

Initiating efforts towards this goal, Caretaker Minister for Interior Dr. Gohar Ijaz laid the foundation stone of the Golra Police Station building. The decoration and embellishment of 13 police stations of the federal capital have also commenced, and within 30 days, these police stations will be equipped with modern facilities and new technological resources.

This initiative aims to enhance the recognition of Islamabad Capital Police, ensuring the protection of lives, property and the establishment of peace and security.

According to details, a ceremony was held in con-

nection with the construction of the new building of Golra Police Station in Islamabad in which the Caretaker Interior Minister Dr. Gohar Ijaz participated as a chief guest and addressed the ceremony. He mentioned that upon assuming the role of Interior Minister, the ICCPO and Chief Commissioner of Islamabad had informed him about the deteriorating conditions of 13 police stations out of 26 in Islamabad, making it impossible for a visit.

In response, he directed the Interior Secretary and other officials to expedite the immediate decoration and embellishment of these police stations.

The work on decorating and embellishing these stations will commence from today (Monday), and it is planned to complete this task within a record period of 30 days.

Dr. Gohar Ijaz em-

phasized the dedication of police officers and personnel working around the clock in the police stations, acknowledging that the public visits police stations seeking solutions to their issues.

He expressed the commitment to further improve the recognition of the police, ensuring the protection of lives, property, and maintaining peace and security. During the occasion, ICCPO Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan also addressed the ceremony, acknowledging the limited numbers in the force but highlighting their significant role in maintaining law and order, protecting lives and property, and combating crime.

He thanked the Interior Minister for initiating the decoration and embellishment of police stations, affirming the force's commitment to ensuring safety and providing facilities to the citizens in Islamabad.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Interior Minister Dr. Gohar Ijaz offering dua during ground breaking ceremony of new building of Police Station Golra.

SSDO, NCRC jointly sign MoU in safeguarding children

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Sustainable Social Development Organization (SSDO) and the National Commission on the Rights of Children (NCRC) have formalized their partnership through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at safeguarding children in the country. The MoU was signed by Senator Ayesha Raza Farooq, the Chairperson of the National Commission on the Rights of Child (NCRC) and the Executive Director of the Sustainable Social Development Organization Syed Kausar Abbas at the NCRC office, said a news release issued here on Monday.

Senator Ayesha Raza Farooq, during the signing ceremony, emphasized the

collaborative efforts between NCRC and SSDO, particularly focusing on the formulation of policies and research studies addressing issues such as child trafficking, child domestic labor, and child abuse in Pakistan. She stressed the importance of working closely with civil society organizations to enhance collaboration and implement impactful interventions at the policy level. Additionally, the collaboration aims to fortify the policy framework concerning transnational organized crimes, involving capacity building for relevant law enforcement agencies, community awareness campaigns, and the establishment of effective coordination mechanisms among

stakeholders to address issues related to violence against children. Syed Kausar Abbas expressed SSDO's commitment in fostering a collaborative approach with various government institutions and policy channels to address issues concerning the protection of children and other vulnerable communities in the country. He acknowledged the National Commission on the Rights of Child (NCRC) for its proactive measures, including consultative dialogues, meetings, and capacity-building sessions, which align directly with SSDO's goals. SSDO will extend support to the NCRC by facilitating effective coordination and raising awareness in local communities.

SC bars FIA from taking action against journalists

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Supreme Court of Pakistan on Monday barred the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) from taking action against specific journalists in an issue pertaining to the malicious campaign against the judiciary on social media.

The court also sought a report from the federal government within two weeks regarding complaints of some journalists. The top court directed the Director General FIA to hold a meeting with journalists concerned and adjourned the case till Tuesday.

A three-member bench, headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa and comprising Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Musarrat Hali, heard the suo-motu case about the FIA notices to journalists.

In its order, the court said it had been informed that the FIA had issued notices to some journalists for criticism over the judiciary. It said it was a right of ev-

ery citizen and journalist to have criticism, adding actions shouldn't be taken against them just for criticism.

It said that the Attorney General of Pakistan on behalf to government, has also assured that no action would be taken on the basis of criticism.

The court said that it has stopped the FIA to take actions against journalists to whom notices were served. It also directed the DG FIA to hold a meeting with the concern media men. The court inquired from the FIA officials that why the journalists has been summoned.

As per the order, the court sought report from federal government regarding incidents of torture against journalists within two weeks. The further hearing of the case was adjourned till tomorrow. It may be mentioned here that representatives of journalists' organizations also appeared before the court during the hearing.



ISLAMABAD: The Chief Ombudsman of TA/Arkiye Mr. Azeref MalkoAŞ and the Minister for Law and Justice Mr. Ahmad Irfan Aslam had a meeting today.

Civil Services Academy's probationary officers visit CCP for interactive session

ISLAMABAD (Online): As part of their training under the 51st Common Training Programme (CTP), a syndicate group of 20 probationary officers from the Civil Services Academy visited the Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) for an interactive session.

Mr. Saeed Ahmad Nawaz, Member (Office of Fair Trade, MIU), CCP, presided over the session. While speaking on the occasion, he discussed the proactive measures undertaken by the CCP, including the establishment of a Market Intelligence Unit (MIU), to effectively implement the Competition Law.

The syndicate group was led by the faculty in charge, Mr. Rehmat Wali Khan, Deputy Director. The group members, who are currently researching the "Implications of Fifth Industrial Revolution (IR 5.0) on Public Sector Management in Pakistan," asked multiple questions. While responding to the questions,

Mr. Nawaz underscored the significant challenges and opportunities presented by the advent of the Fifth Industrial Revolution.

The syndicate group also benefited from a comprehensive presentation delivered by Mr. Shahzad Hussain, DG (Advocacy)/Registrar of CCP. The presentation explained the substantive provision of Competition Law dealing with Abuse of Dominance, Prohibited Agreements, Deceptive Marketing, and Mergers & Acquisitions. It also traced the historical trajectory of Competition Law, highlighting its pivotal role in fostering a competitive environment conducive to Pakistan's economic progress.

Reflecting on the visit, the syndicate group members expressed gratitude to the CCP for the warm hospitality and offering invaluable perspectives on the challenges and opportunities posed by IR 5.0. They found the engagement beneficial for their research.



ISLAMABAD: People are waiting outside Benazir Bhutto Income Support Program (BISP) office for collecting money as waiting for their turn at sector G-7 in the Federal Capital.

Drivers urged to be careful in hilly areas amid snowy weather

ISLAMABAD (APP): All the tourists visiting the hilly areas to enjoy snowfall have been advised by the concerned authorities to take extra precautionary measures to avoid any untoward situation.

Authorities have advised both residents and tourists to refrain from unnecessary travel in order to navigate through the challenging circumstances, said a report aired by a Private news channel.

It also urged the tourists to ensure safety measures before packing their bags as extremely low temperatures were being recorded in the Northern Areas of the country.

PDMA also directed the local administration to ensure the availability of machinery needed to clear roads of any land sliding

effect, rain, and snowfall. The authority also called for timely updating the tourists so that they could take necessary precautionary measures in this regard, said PDM official.

A tourist said that snowfall is the favourite time of her children and they were very excited about playing in the snow and making snowmen. According to PMD, rain-wind and thunderstorm with snow over hills and isolated hailstorm in various parts of the country are expected during these days. "Pakistan is a very beautiful country with diverse weather and locations to explore," a women tourist added. Furthermore, the tourists are requested to contact the National Highways & Motorway Police (NH&MP) on their helpline.



ISLAMABAD: PM's aide on aviation Farhat Hussain Khan held a meeting with Ambassador of Iraq to Pak. to discuss various issues of air transportation at his office.

Seminar stresses role of Islamic teachings to tackle intellectual, ethical challenges

ISLAMABAD (APP): Speakers at a thought-provoking one-day seminar titled 'Foundations of Contemporary Ethical Crisis' held at Allama Iqbal Open University (AIU), on Monday emphasized the role of Quranic teachings and Sunnah for tackling intellectual and ethical challenges. The event presided over by Professor Dr. Shah Mohayyudin Hashmi, Dean of the Faculty of Arabic and Islamic Studies, and Professor Dr. Rashid Arshad Kaleem from Punjab University as the guest speaker.

In his lecture, Dr. Rashid Arshad emphasized the imperative role of Quranic teachings and the Sunnah in tackling intellectual and ethical issues. He underscored the need to guide the new generation towards these principles, stating that adherence could not only resolve ethical crises but also elevate worldly life to a virtuous existence.

Dean, Shah Mohayyudin Hashmi emphasized the importance of addressing intellectual crises within the Muslim Ummah, highlighting the need to focus on internal issues before external challenges.

Stressing guidance from the Quran and Sunnah, he noted that the biography of Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) serves as the most effective guideline for the welfare of humanity.

Celebrating its 50th Golden Jubilee, AIU sees this seminar as part of a series of events.

Prof. Dr. Hashmi highlighted the university's commitment to becoming a hub for intellectual, literary,

stating that adherence could not only resolve ethical crises but also elevate worldly life to a virtuous existence.

Dean, Shah Mohayyudin Hashmi emphasized the importance of addressing intellectual crises within the Muslim Ummah, highlighting the need to focus on internal issues before external challenges.

Stressing guidance from the Quran and Sunnah, he noted that the biography of Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) serves as the most effective guideline for the welfare of humanity.

Celebrating its 50th Golden Jubilee, AIU sees this seminar as part of a series of events.

Prof. Dr. Hashmi highlighted the university's commitment to becoming a hub for intellectual, literary,

Fehmida approaches IHC against non allotment of election symbol to her

ISLAMABAD (Online): Former Speaker National Assembly (NA) Fahmida Mirza has resorted to Islamabad High Court (IHC) against non-allotment of party election symbol to her by Election Commission (EC).

She took the plea in the petition that Sindh High Court (SHC) accepted appeal plea against rejection of her nomination papers by Returning Officer (RO) and Appellate Tribunal (AT). EC gave assurance in SHC that she will be allotted election symbol of GDA.

Party withdrew the party ticket from alternative candidate and allotted it to Fahmida Mirza. She informed EC about party decision in writing and by appearing in person.

ECP initiates Whatsapp helpline for complaints related to general elections

ISLAMABAD (Online): Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has introduced Whatsapp helpline for registering complaints related to polling in connection with general elections.

On February 8, more than 128 million voters across the country will exercise their right to vote while a large number of independent candidates are participating in the elections apart from political parties.

According to ECP, citizens can use Whatsapp

number 0327-5050610 to complain about polling while the speech and hearing impaired can submit their complaints through video.

Besides, ECP has established an Election Monitoring and Complaint center to redress the grievances of voters regarding the upcoming general elections.

According to official sources, apart from Whatsapp citizens can also complain at email address complaints@ecp.gov.pk and helpline 111-327-000.

Bad news for citizens of Federal capital

ISLAMABAD (Online): CDA has decided to add more burdens on citizens due to financial crisis.

It has been decided to restore toll tax for entry in Islamabad. According to documents, CDA Board has officially approved to restore toll tax.

CDA will build toll collection points on 6 entrances of the city. Toll collection points will be built on Sirinagar Highway, Express Highway, IJP road, Margalla Avenue and Monal Road.



ISLAMABAD: British High Commissioner to Pakistan, Jane Marriott CMG OBE posing for a group photograph along with photo journalists during a reception in honor of photo journalists at her residence in the Federal Capital.

Bilal Siddiqi urges to resolve Kashmir issue through dialogue

ISLAMABAD (APP): Jailed APHC leader Bilal Siddiqi has urged international community to fulfill its responsibilities to resolve the Kashmir dispute and stop India from changing the demography of the territory in the larger interest of peace and security in the region. According to Kashmir Media Service, he in a message from Srinagar Central Jail said that in Kashmir issue should be resolved through a sustained dialogue process.

Kashmir is a disputed

territory under UN resolutions and every state subject irrespective of cast, creed, color and gender has equal right to participate in the right to self-determination and it is therefore the duty of every Kashmiri to protect and defend the demographic composition of the disputed territory, he added. He maintained that the people of the disputed territory were well aware of Indian designs and would maintain brotherhood for the cause of freedom at any cost.

Generators lying on footpaths
SC seeks report
from mayor Karachi
within two months

ISLAMABAD (Online): Supreme Court (SC) has sought within two months report from mayor Karachi Murtaza Wahab about the generators placed on footpaths in Karachi.

Justice Mansoor Ali Shah head of 3-member bench of SC remarked Monday that the impediment on the way should be removed but pollution is big problem.

Mayor Karachi Murtaza Wahab appeared in the court and told over 500 generators are lying on footpaths in different areas of Karachi. Some generators

Tourists advised to use precautionary measures during hilly area's visit

ISLAMABAD (APP): Tourists are advised to use precautionary measures and follow the safety guidelines during thronging to hilly areas to save themselves from miseries and inconvenience to make their journey wonderful, amazing and memorable.

Talking to APP, the Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) official said that despite of cold weather, a large number of tourists are visiting marvellous and popular tourist destinations such as Malam Jabba, Kalam, Naran, Kaghan, Swat, Murree, Azad Jammu & Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan.

He said that numerous people have planned to visit these areas with their families to enjoy the picturesque beauty of hilly areas amid snowfall.

He urged the tourists to wear appropriate outdoor clothing including preferably a wind-resistant coat or jacket, warm clothing, and inner layers of light and waterproof boots. The official said the AJK tourism department has already constituted welcome receptions, helplines and information centres at all entry and exit points to facilitate domestic visitors and foreign tourists.



ISLAMABAD: President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari presenting the shield to Federal Ombudsman Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi during his visit to ICCI.

Daily Voice of Masses
Independent

Tuesday January 30, 2024

Partial justice

It is unfortunate that, on Friday, the International Court of Justice did not endorse South Africa's demand for an immediate cessation of hostilities in Gaza as it delivered a preliminary ruling on the genocide case brought against Israel.

While legal intricacies are important, stopping the butchery of Palestinians is a more pressing concern. However, the court has upped the moral pressure on Tel Aviv to end its amoral campaign against defenceless civilians in the besieged Strip, even though the Zionist state has no intention of doing so.

Importantly, the judges felt that South Africa's evidence supporting the genocide case against Israel could not be ruled out "prima facie". Furthermore, the bench ordered Tel Aviv to take all possible measures to prevent acts of genocide, prevent and punish those involved in the incitement of genocide, and ensure the delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza. Israel has been given a month to report back to The Hague with regard to complying with these measures.

In his reaction, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has termed the order "outrageous" and vowed to continue fighting his "just war" in which some 26,000 people have been massacred. Earlier, he had boasted: "Nobody will stop us — not The Hague..."

Meanwhile, the US that has lent its iron-clad support to Tel Aviv, which is responsible for a massacre that will go down in infamy, has said it continues to believe "allegations of genocide are unfounded". Though it may take the ICJ years to determine if, legally, Israel's actions in Gaza constitute genocide, in the popular view the murder of children, the collective punishment and starvation of an entire civilian population, and the ethnic cleansing of Gazans very much fit the definition of genocide. Other states have hailed the ICJ's order.

Where to from here? Most importantly, when will the slaughter of Gaza's people end? While the ICJ's rulings are binding, the court cannot enforce them. And as Israel's arrogant replies have proved, it has no intention of respecting the court's orders. This is a mockery of the very rules-based order the US, UK and other Western states have sworn to uphold.

In the past, these actors have bombed, or threatened to attack states that have, according to them, strayed from the 'rules-based order'. Will they take a similar line against Israel? Or will they continue to defend the indefensible? Kudos to South Africa for raising a voice for humanity and against barbarism, irrespective of religious and ethnic affiliations. It is hoped that when the court next meets, more concrete measures are proposed to end the bloodbath and that one day, those responsible for shedding the blood of innocents in Gaza are brought to justice, as are those who aided and abetted them.

Ahmed Bilal Mehboob

Now that the final list of contesting candidates has been released by the Election Commission of Pakistan, it has emerged that an unprecedented number of candidates (almost 18,000) are chasing 1,125 seats in the National Assembly (NA) and the four provincial assemblies in a contest which is less than two weeks away. A couple of cases may still be awaiting final adjudication in the apex court on the validity of candidature of those politicians whose nomination papers were rejected by the concerned Returning Officers and the decision upheld both by the appellate tribunals and the high courts. The Supreme Court has, in general, been more generous to the 'rejected' candidates than the high courts and the appellate tribunals as it ruled that even a person absconding from the law has the right to be a candidate in the upcoming election.

Never before in the history of the past 11 general elections have we seen over 19 candidates on aver-

age vying for a single NA seat. The number of competitors has been steadily going up since the first general election in 1970 when about five candidates competed for each NA seat on average. Only the number of candidates in the 2013 general election comes close when around 17 candidates competed for each NA seat. In that respect, the elections have been getting more competitive with time as the average number of candidates per seat in the national legislature has grown by 280 per cent since 1970.

Fiercer competition is not the only distinctive feature of the coming election. We are seeing an extraordinarily high percentage of independent candidates in the run. The fact that PTI candidates, after losing a common election symbol, are running as independent candidates, only partially explains this high number. The PTI claims to have fielded 236 candidates for the NA, who are contesting under various election symbols. In the past 11 elections, the number of independent candidates for the NA hovered around 53pc whereas now 63pc of

independent candidates are competing. The additional 10 percentage points translate into an additional 500 independent candidates, which means that there are 264 (after subtracting the PTI's claimed candidates) additional independent candidates. These may be covering candidates for the PTI or part of another scheme which may unfold after the election.

This trend of a higher number of independent candidates is slightly stronger in the case of the provincial assemblies where 66pc of the candidates are independent. Unless the returned independent candidates, especially those nominated by the PTI, display a strong character and party loyalty, there is a likelihood that such independent legislators will be vulnerable to huge pressure and temptations. In the 2018 general election, returned independent candidates played a decisive role in the formation of the PTI-led governments at the federal level and in Punjab. The proverbial Jehangir Tareen private plane had frantically ferried such legislators to Islamabad and Lahore at the time. Since the stakes

and likely number of independent legislators are much higher this time, one may see a record-breaking push and pull to win over independent legislators. What kind of effect such an exercise at such a large scale would have on the political landscape, especially on whatever little is left of ethics in politics, is not difficult to comprehend. Women candidates nominated by the political parties on general seats this time barely constitute around 4.77pc when collectively assessed both for the NA and provincial assemblies. This is lower than the minimum 5pc threshold prescribed in the Elections Act, 2017, for each party to follow. The PTI list indicates a slightly higher, about 8pc, share of women candidates on general NA seats.

In previous elections, political parties had not been fair to the youth when picking candidates. In 2018, political parties gave tickets for the NA and four provincial assemblies to only 19pc candidates of 25 to 35 years of age whereas young registered voters from 18 to 35 constituted over 44pc of the total reg-

istered voters. It may be surprising to some that the TLP topped the list of parties who gave relatively more tickets to young candidates from 18 to 35 years who constituted over 36pc of its total candidates for the NA and provincial assemblies. Political parties such as the PTI which are generally associated with the youth were not very generous in awarding tickets to young candidates. The PTI's share of young candidates was a mere 17pc, while the PPP was not much better with only 18pc. The PML-N awarded the least percentage — 13pc — of tickets to young candidates. Sadly, party-wise statistics of young candidates are not available yet for the upcoming election but one hopes the parties would have realised the importance of youth and their voting potential and awarded more tickets to younger candidates this time.

While discussing candidates for Election 2024, it may not be out of place to indicate that despite reports of rejection of a much higher number of nomination papers during the scrutiny by Returning Officers, a far higher percentage of candidates have emerged as 'valid candidates' out of the scrutiny and appeal process than in the past two elections. In the ongoing electoral process, 68pc of NA candidates who filed nomination papers ended up as valid candidates after clearing the RO's scrutiny and appeals in the appellate tribunals. The figure was 61pc in 2018 and 57pc in 2013, indicating that a larger number of candidates were dropped in scrutiny and appeals or withdrew from the contest. The percentage of candidates for provincial assemblies who have cleared these hurdles is not much different either. Even the overall percentage of nomination papers rejected by ROs were not very different this time compared to the previous two elections. Overall, 13pc of nomination papers were rejected by ROs during the recent scrutiny compared to 10pc in 2018 and 15pc in 2013. It is possible that political parties such as the PTI may have suffered more from the scrutiny but that can only be verified after authoritative data becomes available. -- Courtesy Dawn

Ahsan Raza won't vote

Ghazi Salahuddin

We do not know if Ahsan Raza Rizvi, a small businessman dealing in garments, had any interest in politics or if he felt connected to the election campaign. Did he even talk about politics with his friends, possibly voicing his emotional involvement with a movement or a leader?

Or, very likely, he may have been totally ignorant of the country's politics and the affairs of the world, preoccupied with his personal affairs and the challenge of living in these troubled times.

(Another thought interrupts. Are our political parties interested in Ahsan Raza? Here, of course, I have named the name in a generic sense. He represents a certain class constituting a sizeable percentage of our population. What kind of understanding do our parties have of the needs and aspirations of these people and if they have any answers to their questions?)

But why am I talking about Ahsan Raza in

the past tense? This is what I am struggling to explain in the context of the present political campaigns for the February 8 elections, now almost visible on the horizon. The point is that Ahsan Raza was in the news this week — and it hurts me to talk about it.

Let me, then, put it straight, as the news was published. Consider this headline: "Man kills wife, three kids before committing suicide". It happened in Karachi on Monday in an apartment building near the airport. Obviously, the man who first killed his wife and three kids and then committed suicide was Ahsan Raza.

Now, this headline would naturally leave you in a state of shock. You would want to learn about how and why this had happened. Not that similar tragedies had not occasionally been reported, though with fewer fatalities. Still, such human stories demand an exhaustive coverage, exploring them from various different angles.

Sadly, our media — print as well as broadcast — is not very good in dealing with the human angle

when it comes to reporting large and complex incidents that arise from the prevailing social conditions. I worry about it more because I have been a journalist for many years. Look at how the story of Ahsan Raza and his ill-fated family could not compete, in terms of media attention and space, with, say, the second marriage of an aging cricketer.

Anyway, I would like to refer to what I read in the newspapers. The police said that Ahsan Raza shot dead his wife Nida Rizvi, their two sons, six-year-old Jibraail and four-year-old Mekaail and two-year-old daughter Umme Hani. Then, he hanged himself from the ceiling fan. Five bodies were found in the sixth floor apartment. It was reported that Ahsan Raza was facing financial problems, having suffered losses in his garment business.

There was a handwritten suicide note in which he admitted to facing financial issues and saw no other way out. He said that his wife and children were innocent. He also wrote that a suicide

note was in his laptop in a file that should be opened.

On Tuesday, the police retrieved the file written in Roman Urdu. It related to some personal and family matters and ended properly with Allah Hafiz to all "from me and my children". He accepted the responsibility of murdering his wife and children and demanded that "no one should utter a word against my children and Nida". There were more details, including how he had stolen the gun from someone's shop who should not face any "mushkilat".

As I said, there have been other murder-suicide stories in recent years. In addition, violent extremism and hate crimes have risen. However, this horrifying, heart-breaking event has taken place in the midst of an election campaign when political leaders are supposed to be talking to the people and listening to their grievances and expectations.

Actually, there is no genuine interaction between the people and the leaders and, consequently, many of the is-

notes that relate to the daily lives and concerns of the ordinary citizens are not reflected in the pompous and manifestly unrealistic promises that are made in the campaign.

For instance, where is an informed and empathetic appreciation of the state of our society at any level in our political discourse? Did any political party take any notice of six deaths in Karachi and offer any corrective measures to heal a broken and bleeding social order? Where do people who are unable to make ends meet and who are mentally and emotionally afflicted really belong in the overall scheme of things?

We can be sure that our political leaders, in light of what they are proclaiming in their rallies and media interviews, are unable to hear the voice of the people. The kind of politics that we have has neither a heart nor a mind. And yet, the election drill has to be executed and oaths of office will be taken and more of the same will be baptised as an innovation.

Meanwhile, the election campaign has to run

its course. It has a larger sense of drama this time because of how it is being engineered. But it is making more noise in the virtual world of the media than in the real lives of the people. This disconnect has diminished the relevance of what the parties and their leaders are fighting for.

In the list of issues that our political parties have shied from, there is this spectacle of the incredibly brave protest of the Baloch women, headed by Mahrang Baloch. On Tuesday, the 60-day long 'dharma' of the Baloch women was wound up in Islamabad. Mahrang Baloch, bitterly disappointed by the state, talked about the constant harassment of the protesters by the police. On Thursday, thousands of people welcomed the protesters in Quetta.

Political parties do not even pretend to be involved with this and a number of other issues. Apparently, no one cares when people are driven to the edge. It was Ahsan Raza's own business to kill his family and commit suicide. -- Courtesy TheNews

Lesson plan

Muna Khan

Last year I felt a bit stumped when students in my news media literacy class told me they knew who Altaf Hussain was but didn't really believe the stories about his rule in Karachi in the 1990s. Did he really order the city to shut down on a phone call, that too a rotary dial phone? How did that even work in a mobile-less, internet-less time? Did I 'actually' experience it?

You may be tempted to berate them for not knowing this but pause for a moment and ask: how would they know this if Altaf Hussain has been banned from screens most of their lives and, more importantly, where would they have learned this? A cursory look at how they're taught history makes for a depressing read — it's likely you were taught the same stories about Mohammad bin Qasim landing in Sindh or that Pakistan was made for Muslims, etc. etc. The denial of the country's multi-religious and multicultural past has done irrevocable damage and created so much of the confusion around identity. I don't think it's possible to break the idea that 'Pakistaniyat' — even the one packaged as 'naya' — is firmly tied to one religion.

Instead of beating up young people for not knowing about history pre-internet or social media, or 2018, perhaps those doing the adulting can reflect on their role in creating a youth so disconnected or disinterested in knowing Pakistan before them.

I'll start: as a journalist, I didn't think of young people as my audience and was rarely in positions to fight back when ordered to remove XYZ from mainstream

media. As a journalism instructor, I didn't work hard enough to contextualise and frame events from a historical perspective. I should have used a megaphone to say "this isn't the first time this is happening", etc.

Maybe, this is why I wasn't so surprised to read the results of a survey Dawn online conducted earlier this month about the elections. The majority of the 5,500 respondents fell under the youth category of 18 to 40 years in age. While 65 per cent said they would vote, they were sceptical of the election process. (You'd be hard pressed to find someone who isn't cynical about these polls.) Meanwhile, 62.69pc "felt their vote won't make a difference" followed by 20.41pc "who feel disenchanted with all candidates". A significant number of respondents said they had little to no faith in elected officials' ability to address issues like unemployment or poverty. This may explain why 64pc want to see the inclusion of 'None of the Above' on the ballot.

It is no surprise to read that the majority of respondents — 67.3pc — support PTI, though opinions about their rule from 2018 to 2022 are mixed with a majority saying it was "neither good or bad".

The part that interests me the most is trust in media, which sadly, is low. Only 7pc have confidence in the media for unbiased coverage; 45.83pc expressed complete distrust; 30pc "only slightly trust" while 16.4pc have moderate trust in the media in providing accurate and unbiased coverage of the elections.

This should be a wake-up call for many in the media who have not

been able to connect with younger audiences, most of whom consume news on platforms that speak to them like TikTok. Instead of berating youngsters for trusting influencers over anchors, perhaps news organisations should be adapting to these changes. And making an effort to connect with younger audiences, including children, who are absorbing the 'news' in their surroundings but don't know who to ask questions from.

Everyone should be taught how the news is created, how to identify disinformation and differentiate bet-w-e-e-n fact and opinion. Because once they understand why things happen the way they do, they may want to do something about it. Like vote. Like hold the powerful to account, something journalists commit to doing every day on the job, without bias or judgement but with courage and conviction.

In that same class last semester, one student shared a link of an interview with Altaf Hussain conducted by a YouTuber based abroad three months ago. It had nearly 750,000 views and I scrolled through the near 5,000 comments from viewers saying things like "we didn't know this about MQM".

This is what happens when the media isn't allowed to do its job. Not every journalist can afford to move abroad and/or start their own channel but media owners can afford to take a hard look at ground realities and vow to invest in the principles of journalism.

Technological advancements may change the medium but the message of impartiality will remain the same. -- Courtesy Dawn

Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry

The year 2024 could not have started on a worse note. First, a humanitarian catastrophe of genocidal proportions has been unfolding in Gaza for over three months, owing to daily attacks by Israel's defence forces. The Houthis are attacking merchant ships in the Red Sea, obliging the US and other countries to mobilise their navies. Israeli attacks on Lebanon and Syria carry the risk of the conflict engulfing the entire region.

Second, the war in Ukraine has devastated the country, once known for its fertile land and grain exports. Millions of Ukrainians have been displaced, with little access to food, water or electricity. Russia, too, has suffered losses, but remains determined to fight on despite economic sanctions and Nato's continued expansion eastward. Finland's inclusion as its 31st member has more than doubled the length of Nato's borders with Russia. Sweden, too, is gearing up to join. The war's end is not in sight.

Third, the US-China strategic competition is intensifying, deepening risk and uncertainty in a world already in disorder. The two countries remain locked in a technology war, with growing rivalry over AI supremacy and the manufacture of advanced semiconductor chips that power AI technologies. The US, which has an edge in semiconductors supply chains, is building up additional pressure on China through export controls and investment curbs. For its part, China retains dominance in supply chains for minerals, particularly cobalt and lithium used for manufacturing EVs, batteries and solar panels. To neutralise these advantages, the US

has imposed a high tariff on Chinese cars and other products. The rivalry has created alarm that the world is headed towards camp politics.

Fourth, the international security environment has been vitiated. Major powers are modernising their nuclear arsenals as arms control regimes give way to a nuclear arms race. In November, Russia de-ratified the CTBT, opening the door for further nuclear testing. The Iran nuclear deal remains in a state of stalemate. The US-Russia agreement, New START, which limits the number of deployed strategic nuclear warheads, was suspended by Russia in 2023. The INF treaty, which sought elimination of intermediate-range nuclear forces deemed essential for European security, was terminated by the US in 2019.

In the midst of all this, dozens of countries are heading towards elections in 2024. Anxiety surrounds the forthcoming presidential election in the US. Joe Biden, 81, and Donald Trump, 77, are up for a contest the outcome of which would have profound implications for geopolitics, particularly the transatlantic equation.

President Vladimir Putin is seeking a fifth term in March. Indonesia and India are going to polls in February and May respectively. The UK will hold elections in the second half of the year. Acrimonious and sharpening societal polarisation in countries undergoing electoral transitions. The world economy has picked up pace, and the business use of generative AI has grown manifold. But most developing countries continue to suffer low growth, high inflation and unemployment challenges.

For Pakistan, 2024 is a watershed moment. For years, it has remained in the grip of political instability, economic uncertainty and rising terrorism. The pre-election environment is toxic. The blame game is at its peak. Investors are worried about Pakistan's economic future. The balance-of-payment crisis is not resolved. In this background, the Feb 8 polls are crucial. Pakistan needs a sustained period of political stability, which would ensure continuity in economic policies and help restore growth and industrial development.

In foreign policy, the next elected government has to manage ties with China and the US, despite their growing rivalry. One piece of good news is that the economies of both countries are so inter-dependent that the decoupling of China's economy the US had earlier envisaged is not happening. That opens up possibilities for Pakistan to maintain ties with both China and the US. In an age of rising unilateralism and declining multilateralism, countries like Pakistan need to engage in multi-alignments to promote their political, economic and security interests. Pakistan also needs to stabilise its frontiers with Afghanistan and Iran, shifting the focus to economic cooperation.

The trajectory of Pakistan's ties with India will be determined by the outcome of India's elections. With the scare created in India against Muslim icons, especially historical mosques, and the tendency of Indian intelligence to target opponents on foreign soil — Canada, the US, and now Pakistan — the new government will need much effort and smart diplomacy to restore normal ties with India. -- Courtesy Dawn

South Punjab's development PML-N's top priority: Shehbaz

RAJANPUR (INP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President Shehbaz Sharif on Monday assured the people of Rajanpur of the revival of development projects after coming into power.

Former three-time prime minister Nawaz Sharif, Maryam Nawaz, Hamza Shehbaz and other PML-N leaders are carrying out vigorous election campaigns across Punjab ahead of the general elections.

Shehbaz Sharif reached Rajanpur to address a public gathering in connection with the February 8 general

elections on a helicopter. The development of South Punjab remains PML-N's top priority, he added.

The former prime minister thanked the people of Pakistan for their continued support for Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz.

Recalling the 2010 super floods, the PML-N president said he reached Rajanpur to oversee the relief work in the region being the then-chief minister.

"Weather was not good so I reached Rajanpur in the vehicle, despite warnings from the authorities," Sharif said.

PML-N government

constructed Danish Schools in South Punjab and Basic Health Units so the people can get health services in the region.

On Saturday, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) launched its much-awaited election manifesto.

The manifesto was unveiled by PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif.

On the other hand, according to Election Commission of Pakistan sources, overall 90,675 polling stations have been set up across the country for the upcoming general elections, slated for Feb 8, 2024.



President Dr. Arif Alvi in a meeting with a delegation of the Employers' Federation of Pakistan, at Governor House, Karachi

KP Governor formally inaugurates Governor's Secretariat website

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Haji Ghulam Ali formally inaugurated the website of the Governor's Secretariat here Monday.

The website was inaugurated during a ceremony held here in the Governor's House.

Besides, Caretaker KP Minister for Education, Dr. Qasim Jan; Secretary IT Board, Mohammad Ali Shah; Vice Chancellors of the University of Peshawar, Khyber Medical University, and Agricultural University Peshawar; Director of

IMSciences, Dr. Usman Ghani; and officers of the Governor's Secretariat and IT Board were also present on the occasion.

With the launch of the website <http://governorkp.gov.pk>, the people will have easy access to the Governor's Office and the day-to-day affairs of the Governor's Secretariat.

All affairs of the Governor's Secretariat will now be available online.

Through the website, the employees of the universities could file applications against the administrative

decisions of their respective universities, and any order on their online appeal would also be available on it.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony, Haji Ghulam Ali said, "Today is the era of information technology, so the public should also be provided information on the basis of the requirements of the modern era."

"The website is created for the access of the people to the affairs of the Governor's Secretariat and is the beginning of a journey towards the modern era," he said.

CM ensures full support for peaceful elections

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi held a meeting with Provincial Election Commissioner Punjab Ijaz Anwar Chauhan to discuss the peaceful conduct of upcoming general elections and review the preparations.

Mohsin Naqvi, in his remarks, assured full support from the Punjab government for the seamless execution of the election process. He emphasized the

implementation of the Election Commission's code of conduct, and measures will be taken to ensure compliance.

The chief minister further stated that law enforcement, including the police and other security agencies, will play a pivotal role in upholding the rule of law during the electoral process.

The Provincial Election Commissioner acknowledged the valuable cooperation of the Punjab government in this regard.



LAHORE: Provincial Election Commissioner Ejaz Anwar Chohan meeting with Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi.

Teaching license exam successfully conducted, sets national benchmark

SUKKUR (APP): The caretaker Minister for Education and Women's Development, Sindh, Ms Rana Hussain has said that another milestone in the educational landscape of Sindh as the province successfully conducted the teaching license policy exam, setting a precedent for educational reform nationwide.

He said this during her visit to the examination centre in Sukkur, said a release here on Monday. Addressing the occasion, Minister Rana Hussain emphasized that Sindh has become the first province in Pakistan to complete the phase of conducting the teaching license exam following the implementation of the Teaching License Policy. She highlighted that Sindh

not only formulated policies to enhance the standard of educators but also initiated practical measures to implement them effectively.

Chairman of the Sindh Teachers Development Authority (STEDA), Syed Rasool Bukhsh Shah, Director Elementary, Shihabuddin Indhar, Director Primary Sukkur Region, Muhammad Haji Barro, Principal of IB Public School Sukkur, Dr Ali Gohar Chang, Atif Hussain Viglio and others were present on the occasion. Minister Rana Hussain was briefed that to maintain merit and transparency, third-party testing procedures were adopted, and exams were conducted in three cities of Sindh including Karachi, Hyderabad, and Sukkur.



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Haji Ghulam Ali addressing during inauguration of Website of Governor Secretariat.

Minister says: Breastfeeding awareness drives safest way of preventing outbreak of 'Pneumonia cases'

Independent Report
LAHORE: Punjab Caretaker Health Minister Professor Javed Akram Monday expressed that the low rate of breastfeeding is a major cause of the pneumonia deaths among kids.

Talking to a private news channel, he said that lack of breastfeeding can also result in stunted growth in children and so the health department is taking steps to encourage this feeding and nursing of infants in early ages.

To another question, he said that the Punjab has reported around 17,000 pneumonia cases so far this, with a mortality rate

of 1.3 percent.

He said media need to run massive awareness campaigns to educate the public about benefits of mother feed and for timely vaccination.

"A majority of victims of pneumonia are malnourished kids with low immunity," he said, adding, mothers must breast-feed their children to boost their immunity against such diseases.

Minister for Health said that malnutrition and promotion of breastfeeding remained a top priority agenda of the current government as relevant ministries and departments have been endlessly

engaged in efforts to address the issue of malnutrition and to control Pneumonia cases.

Replying to a question, he said that there was rise in pneumonia cases in Punjab to the prevalent winter season especially smog. Smog, a consequence of air pollution, has been identified as a significant factor contributing to the spike in pneumonia cases.

The minister added that the situation is improving with the intensity of the winter season subsides in the coming months.

KP Govt to provide over Rs 5bln to govt hospitals for emergency: CM's aide

Independent Report
PESHAWAR: Advisor to the Chief Minister for Health Riaz Anwar on Monday said that the provincial government has decided to release more than five billion rupees to the health department to address the shortage of medical equipment and emergency and essential medicines at the government hospitals.

He said that in the next few days, mandatory medicines, would be purchased for hospitals at the local level, adding that due to shortage of funds, the specific amount for purchase of medicines and

medical equipment by the government hospitals could not be released during the current financial year.

He said that the Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ghulam Ali also highlighted the issue and wrote a letter to the interim Chief Minister for release of funds. Riaz said that the approval of the funds required for essential medicines in the hospitals has been taken from the cabinet.

He said the funds would be utilized for the purchase of medicines for the public sector hospitals besides payment of arrears to the employees.

Carrying arms banned in Swat

PESHAWAR (APP): District Magistrate Swat, Dr Muhammad Qasim Ali Khan on Monday under the Section-144 CRPC, imposed a complete ban on carrying firearms including the legal one. A notification to this effect said a complete ban has been imposed in the jurisdiction of Swat district on exhibition and carrying of all kinds of firearms including the arms having valid license. It said the violators of this order will face legal action under Section 188 PPC of the law. The order will remain enforced till February 11, the notification said and added that the personnel of the law enforcing agencies (LAEs).

DCM Schofer visits emperor Jehangir's mausoleum in Lahore

LAHORE (APP): Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) at the U.S. Embassy, Islamabad Andrew Schofer on Monday visited the mausoleum of the Mughal emperor Nuruddin Mohammad Jahangir and hailed the artistic finesse of the 17th century architectural masterpiece.

Nurud Din Muhammad Salim, known as Jahangir, (1569-1627) was the fourth Mughal emperor who ruled India from 1605 to 1627. The tomb was decreed to be built at Dilkusha Garden - favourite sojourn of the Mughal emperor in Lahore - by his descendant emperor Shah Jahan. The mausoleum was completed

in 1637. DCM Andrew Schofer was accompanied by US Consul General to Lahore Kristin Hawkins and Public Affairs Officer Karl Rogers. After a warm welcome by the Walled City of Lahore Authority (WCLA) officials, Andrew Schofer was shown round the tomb while he also had a bird's eye view of the sprawling gardens and adjacent tomb of Asif Khan from one of the minaret of the tomb. DCM Schofer showed keen interest in the Mughal architecture and briefed on the facade of the mausoleum and was briefed about the red sandstone inlaid with marble motifs which were preserved in original.

Shikarpur Police foiled the attempt of kidnapping

Our Correspondent
SHIKARPUR: Shikarpur Police succeeded in saving the two persons of Punjab from kidnapping on Monday.

According to Press Release issued from SSP Office Shikarpur that on tip of information, Shikarpur Police foiled the attempt of Kidnappers who wants to kidnap the two persons of Narowal of Punjab Province identified as Muhammad Salman Ameen Bhatti and Muhammad Nouman Bhatti who were going towards Katcha area on the phone calls of Kidnappers.

On the spy information while seeing the suspected motorcycle on Faizoo Laaro to Cheeman Bridge and police checked them for identification who told the police they are selling/spreading the Holy Quran in villages and it came to know that the two motorcyclists were going towards Katcha area on the call of Kidnappers who continuously calling them to come their village for getting Holy Quran.



KARACHI: Inspector General Police (IGP) Sindh, Dr. Riffat Mukhtar Raja presiding over a high-level meeting regarding the control of law and order situation on the occasion General Election 2024, held at CPO Headquarters in Karachi.

IGP Sindh Riffat chairs Security measures for elections scrutinized in high-level meeting

KARACHI (APP): A high-level meeting chaired by IGP Sindh Riffat Mukhtar Raja delved into police security arrangements and readiness for the upcoming 2024 general elections.

The officers received briefings and directives to conduct on-ground assessments of security measures and deployments in their respective areas.

IGP Sindh emphasized the importance of finalizing and implementing election preparations at the zone and district levels, considering past incidents.

Riffat Mukhtar stressed the need for heightened security, especially during nighttime political events and gatherings, based on leaders' confidence and recommendations.

The Sindh Police chief underscored the immediate reporting of any code of conduct violations to the Election Commission and urged strict legal action against individuals involved in weapon displays or disturbances in the areas.

The meeting saw participation from Additional IGP Karachi.

PPP struggles to improve living standards of poor: Bachal

SUKKUR (APP): Senior politician and candidate from PS-31 Kingri, Advocate Pir Syed Bachal Shah Jillani on Monday said the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) always struggled for the improvement of the living standards of the poor.

Addressing in a corner meeting, he hoped the PPP would win the upcoming elections. Pir Syed Bachal Shah said the leadership of PPP would continue the mission of Shaheed Muhtarma Benazir Bhutto adding that she had the mission of serving humanity and the welfare of the common man.

Various problems can be solved if people pay taxes: Mayor Karachi

KARACHI (APP): Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab on Monday said that Karachi's economic situation and infrastructure are not major challenges and many problems can be solved if people pay taxes.

He said this while talking to Consul General of Austria Mrs. Andrea Wicke who along with Commercial Consul Dr. Johannes Brunner and Chairman PM Task Force for Strategic Reforms Unit, Hussain Islam called on the Mayor Karachi in his office here. The Mayor Karachi said that his doors are always open to all people for solving public problems, in this regard the current administration has adopted an open door policy to increase public

relations and solve all the problems of the city as soon as possible. Earlier, Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab welcomed the Austrian Consul General and members of his delegation at Jamshed Nasserwanji Building (KMC head office) and discussed matters of mutual interest with them.

Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab informed Consul General Austria about the history of City Council and KMC on this occasion.

He said that Pakistan and Austria can promote mutual cooperation in the fields of infrastructure development, education and research. Both countries can learn from each other's experiences and ensure better facilities for their citizens, he added.



KARACHI: New Consul General of Japan in Karachi, Hattori Masaru meeting with Sindh Governor Kamran Khan Tessori.

Nawaz is only option to put country back on growth trajectory: Rana

FAISALABAD (APP): Former Interior Minister and President Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PMLN) Punjab Rana Sana Ullah Khan said that the PML-N is the only party that has focused on the revival of the economy which was shattered by the imprudent policies of the previous government.

Addressing a public gathering in Chak No.100-JB Karriwala here on Monday, he said that Nawaz Sharif is the only available option who could put the country back on the growth trajectory through his economic vision.

He said that the country was facing

unprecedented loadshedding and terrorism when the PMLN took reins of the government in 2013. "However, under the visionary leadership of Mian Nawaz Sharif, the PMLN not only overcome the menace of loadshedding and terrorism but also put the country on the road to progress and prosperity," he added.

"The country was making progress by leaps and bounds during 2017 but unfortunately an ineligible person was clamped on the nation who was so hostile with the country that he did never sit with the opposition during his whole tenure for resolving national issues," he added.

CPO directs tight security for general elections

FAISALABAD (APP): City Police Officer (CPO) Captain (Retired) Muhammad Ali Zia has directed the police officers to ensure tight security at all polling stations during General Election 2024.

Chairing a meeting here on Monday, he reviewed security arrangements and said that the district would be divided into sectors, sub-sectors and clusters and their incharges would be bound to provide tight security arrangements in their respective jurisdiction.

He said that the police officers should finalize their security plan and make it comprehensive from all aspects so that nefarious designs of the miscreants could be foiled before occurrence of any untoward incident.



RAWALPINDI: A view of damage vehicles stand in a parking area of WASA office in the city, as needs to attention for concern authority.

One killed, another injured in road accident

FAISALABAD (APP): A man was killed while another sustained injuries in a road accident, in the limits of Roshanwala police station. Rescue 1122 spokesman said on Monday the accident took place at Khannuana road where a rashly driven car overturned in a bid.



LAHORE: Inspector General Police Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar listening the problems of Police employees and people during open Katchery at Central Police Office.

PML-N guarantees country's development, prosperity: Abid Sher

FAISALABAD (APP): Former Minister of State and PML-N candidate from NA 102, Chaudhry Abid Sher Ali has said that the Pakistan Muslim League-N was the guarantee of the country's development, prosperity and bright future.

Addressing party workers of the constituency here on Monday, he said that the party would clean sweep with the power of the people's vote on February 8. He said that Faisalabad district was a stronghold of the Pakistan Muslim League-N and it has 10 National Assembly constituencies and 21

Provincial Assembly constituencies where PML-N candidates have no competition. He said that the party's position for election is very strong and it would win all the seats of the district. He said that the election symbol of "lion" is a mark of national development and prosperity. He urged the citizens to cast their vote wisely on February 8 to make the country an Asian tiger under the leadership of PML-N supreme Nawaz Sharif. He urged the party workers including women to deliver the message of Muhammad Nawaz Sharif door to door so the country.

Dr Umar Saif says: IXP & data center set up to boost reliability of internet connectivity

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication, Dr. Umar Saif, Monday said that Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL) has established its first-ever carrier-neutral Internet Exchange Point (IXP) and Data Center to boost the reliability of internet connectivity in the country.

Addressing at the operational ceremony of 'Pakistan Internet Exchange (PIE) powered by DE-CIX', the first carrier-neutral IX in the

country, Dr. Saif underscored the significance of the telecom and Information Technology industry in Pakistan. He said: "Today is a monumental day for the Pakistan telecom and IT industry."

Three important milestones have been achieved today in collaboration with PTCL, SCO, PTA, De CIX, PEACE Cable, and China Mobile, he added.

The minister said, we have reached an agreement with China to route its Internet traffic through Pakistan, thereby making Pakistan a regional hub for

connectivity. This strategic move is expected to generate substantial revenue for Internet transit traffic in Pakistan, he added.

Dr. Saif revealed that PTCL would be collaborating with DE-CIX, a German data center, and IXP operator, to manage the operation of this new data center.

He emphasized that partnering with a world-class data center operator would enable Pakistan to introduce super-scaling cloud services such as AWS, Google Cloud, and Azure to the country. Additionally, it

would serve as a local content hub for popular services like YouTube, TikTok, and Netflix.

with these advancements, the minister expressed optimism that Pakistan's internet users could now access services locally, positioning the country to become a hub of regional connectivity.

Over the past few years, he said, we have made significant strides in advancing fiber connectivity. We got two fiber loops from Kashgar to Rawalpindi, further extended to Karachi by PTCL, he added.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for IT and Telecommunication, Dr. Umar Saif in a group photo on the occasion of Operational Launch of Carrier Neutral Pakistan Internet Exchange & Data Center.



DUBAI: H.E. Mr. Hussain Muhammad, Consul General visited various stalls of Pakistani exhibitors at Pakistan Pavilion set up by Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) at Za'abeel Hall-7 Dubai World Trade Centre on January 29, 2024. 40 exhibitors from Pakistan are participating in the 4-day lucrative Arab Health exhibition.

Satisfied with SIFC initiatives FPCCI demands to know its incorporation in MQM-P manifesto: Saquib Fayyaz

Independent Report
KARACHI: Mr. Saquib Fayyaz Magoon, Acting President FPCCI, has appreciated that Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, Convener of MQM Pakistan & Dr. Farooq Sattar, Senior Deputy Convener of MQM Pakistan, have visited the head office of the apex body to present their economic manifesto; business and infrastructure development plan to the

formulating their economic policies for their manifestos as the business community can provide them with the right grassroots level information and advice.

Mr. Saquib Fayyaz Magoon stated that Karachi is the fifth most unlivable city in the world; despite the fact that it contributes upwards of 50 percent total taxes of the country. To make matters worse, out of total



business, industry and trade community.

Acting FPCCI President categorically maintained that FPCCI is happy with the policy, macroeconomic, structural and export promotion initiatives being undertaken by Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC); and, wants to know how MQM Pakistan will incorporate those initiatives into their economic manifesto.

Mr. Saquib Fayyaz Magoon added that the political parties should consult FPCCI before

daily solid waste production of 12,000 tonnes, only 45 percent is disposed of properly; and, the remaining either piles up in the street or roads or, at worst, dumped in the sea.

Mr. Saquib Fayyaz Magoon, Acting President FPCCI, demanded the trade & industry needs to understand how the political parties are planning to reduce the cost of doing business; how the obstacles in ease of doing business will be eliminated; how skills development gaps will be

in the identity, welfare, education, skill-building, and economic empowerment all of which fall under the umbrella of Rozgar (Employment).

Mr. Javed Ahmed,

Employment Opportunities Jubilee Life Insurance partners with NOWPDP to empower persons with disability

Independent Report
KARACHI: Jubilee Life Insurance, Pakistan's largest private sector insurance company, signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with

setting tangible targets to promote a more diverse and inclusive workplace. A major focus of this agenda is to recruit persons with disabilities (PWDs), thus integrating them into

various roles across the organization. Jubilee Life has identified various positions across different departments to be filled by PWDs over the coming year, demonstrating a practical approach to its DEI goals. In this regard, NOWPDP is an ideal partner since it is a renowned disability inclusion initiative that has been playing a pivotal role



NOWPDP (Network of Organizations Working for People with Disabilities), Pakistan. This strategic alliance marks a significant step in Jubilee Life's ongoing commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusivity (DEI) within its workforce.

As an equal opportunity employer, Jubilee Life is committed to a robust DEI strategy,

Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer of Jubilee Life Insurance stated, "Embracing diversity and inclusion is not just a moral imperative but a business necessity. By hiring PWDs, we are not only diversifying our talent pool but also enriching our organizational culture and enhancing our business potential."

The CDNS surpassed the annual target and achieved the target of Rs 1.6 trillion in fresh bonds in the current fiscal year, from July 1 to January 20th, 2023-24.

WAPDA organises Road Show in Bangkok to woo contracting firms

LAHORE (APP): Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) on Monday organized a day-long Road Show in Bangkok for the 300 MW-Floating Solar Project - the first of its kind in Pakistan.

According to a WAPDA spokesman here, the Road Show aimed at forging an enhanced competition amongst the prospective bidders for the project. As many as 58 delegates, hailing from 50 international reputed firms participated in the event. Chairman WAPDA Engr Lt

Gen @ Sajjad Ghani, Pakistan's Charge d'Affairs in Thailand Yasir Hussain, World Bank's representatives, WAPDA high-ups and the project's Consultants also attended the event. Thanking the delegates for their active participation, the Chairman said that WAPDA floating solar project has excellent business opportunities for contracting firms through a transparent international competitive bidding. WAPDA has a strong asset base worth billion of dollars.



ISLAMABAD: Dr. Pema Gyamtsho, Director General International Center for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) called on the Caretaker Federal Minister for National Food Security & Research Dr. Kausar Abdullah Malik.

Dr Iqrar says: Scientific-based measures prerequisite for sustainable agriculture development

FAISALABAD (APP): Scientific-based measures are prerequisite to achieve sustainable agricultural development and combat challenges of the modern era for a better tomorrow, said Vice Chancellor (VC) University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF) Prof Dr Iqrar Ahmad Khan.

He expressed these views while presiding over a training workshop titled "Dynamic Human Environment Games" under the auspices of Center for Advanced Studies, UAF here on Monday.

Dr Iqrar said that the national policies must be mapped out by analyzing the relationship between the factors affecting our human environment and its

impact in the future.

In the context of increasing population, it is inevitable to jack up per acre production, for which we have to bring modern agricultural methods at the doorsteps of the farming community, he added. He said that we should come up with agricultural recommendations by keeping in mind the link between various factors affecting agriculture.

The resource person of the workshop was Prof. Dr. Andrew Bell from Corner University USA. He informed the participants in detail about modeling of human-environment interaction and said that through the scientific model, the effects of different factors.



HYDERABAD: Labourer women busy in packing tomatoes in wood boxes at Subzi Mandi.

CDNS attains Rs 1000b targets in fresh bond

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Central Directorate of National Savings (CDNS) has realized a target of Rs 1000 billion in fresh bonds in the current fiscal year, from July 1 to January 20th, 2023-24.

The CDNS surpassed the annual target and achieved the target of Rs 1.6 trillion in fresh bonds in the current fiscal year, from July 1 to January 20th, 2023-24. The senior official said this was a Rs 200 billion additional annual target than the target of Rs 1300 billion for the previous financial year 2021-22.

"The CDNS has set a reviewed saving target of Rs 1.4 trillion for the current financial year

(2021-22) which will promote savings culture in the country," he said. In view of the current market trend in the country, the ambitious target had been set to further improve the savings culture, he said.

The official said that work was being done on institutional reforms in CDNS and new reforms and innovations were being introduced. "At this time Automated Teller Machine (ATM) has also been introduced in CDNS which will provide enough facilities to the users," he added. Replying to a question, he said the CDNS had collected an investment of Rs 55 billion by January 9, 2023-24, through Islamic investment bonds.

SBP decides to maintain interest rate at 22 percent

KARACHI (INP): State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) Governor Jameel Ahmed announced that the State Bank Monetary Policy Committee has decided not to change the interest rate and to maintain it at 22 percent.

SBP Governor Jameel Ahmad and the Monetary Policy Committee members held a joint press conference and informed the media persons about the financial statistics of the country.

He said in an important economic assessment of the committee, that there has been a significant improvement in the foreign exchange reserves and in the

last six months, the foreign exchange reserves have exceeded 8 billion dollars. He added that the foreign exchange also saw an increase of four billion dollars despite paying the external debt and other payments.

The SBP governor said the current account deficit was 17.50 billion dollars last financial year. He said the committee also focused on various projections after reviewing the economic statistics.

He said the productivity of the industry is improving now and economic activities have been taken positively by the industry.

SBP Governor Jameel

also said that the inflation rate will be between 23 and 25 per cent at the end of this financial year.

Jameel Ahmed said that economic growth is expected to be 2 to 3 per cent this fiscal year.

According to a statement, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) decided to maintain the policy rate at 22 percent. While arriving at the decision, the Committee observed that the frequent and sizeable adjustments in administered energy prices have slowed down the pace of decline in inflation anticipated earlier, besides impeding a sustained decrease in inflation expectations.

PSX witnesses bearish trend, loses 1,039 points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bearish trend on Monday, losing 1,039.34 points, a negative change of 1.63 percent, closing at 62,773.72 points against 63,813.06 points the previous trading day.

A total of 317,577,239 shares valuing Rs 10,693 billion were traded during the day as compared to 412,823,322 shares valuing Rs.16.185 billion the last day.

Some 348 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 73 of them recorded gains and 253 sustained losses.

Businessmen honored commendation certificate for meritorious services

PESHAWAR (APP): A noted businessman from Peshawar, Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi has been honoured with the awarding of a commendation certificate by the Chairman Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), Amjad Zubair Tawana on the occasion of International Customs Day observed on January 26.

The certificate has been awarded to Zia Sarhadi for his outstanding and meritorious services for the cause of promotion of trade in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and at the

regional level between Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asian Republics (CARs).

On the occasion, Zia Sarhadi also received the honourable title of Baba-e-Customs for his decades-long services in custom clearing, shipping and goods forwarding fields. Zia Sarhadi presently holds the office of Coordinator Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI) and has vast experience of around five decades in import, export.



FAISALABAD: Workers busy in their work in a local Garment factory in the city.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Four ships namely, Olympia, Silver Eburna, EceNurBayraktar and Simaisma carrying Containers, Palm oil, Urea and LNG, berthed at Container Terminal, Liquid Terminal, Grain Terminal and Gas Terminal respectively on Sunday.

Meanwhile, three more ships, MSC Yukta-X, MSC Mumbai-VIII and FSM with Container and LPG are also arrived at outer-anchorage of the Port Qasim during last 24 hours.

The idea is being implemented with the help of the National Information Technology Board (NITB) which will be responsible for providing the relevant training to the staff of Pakistan Railways.

E-Office is a digital workplace solution that replaces the existing method of manual handling of files and documents with an efficient electronic system. According to an official source, Pakistan Railways will be on e-office soon which will not only facilitate the users but also make the entire system of the department transparent.

Railways to digitalize its multiple services

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways is taking steps to become an E-office soon to digitalize its service and improve internal efficiencies through electronic administration.

The e-office platform aims to cater for the need for effectiveness and transparency in Governmental processes and service delivery mechanisms as well as help government departments to go paperless.

The idea is being implemented with the help of the National Information

PSW Integration with IPPC E-Phyto Hub

ISLAMABAD (APP): In continuation of its ongoing integration with the E-Phyto Hub, Pakistan Single Window (PSW) has commenced receiving electronic phytosanitary certificates (e-Phyto) on imports of agricultural goods and commodities.

E-Phyto is exchanged between countries through the e-Phyto Hub of the International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC), and the PSW platform has already been sending e-Phytos on the

export of goods since integrating with the e-Phyto Hub in November 2023.

According to a press release received here on Monday, more than 10,000 E-Phyto certificates have been sent to 77 countries against Pakistani export consignments.

The integration with e-Phyto Hub is a joint effort of the Department of Plant Protection, Ministry of National Food Security Research, and PSW is a major step.

ICJ ruling may end up in UN Security Council, say experts

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: The International Court of Justice (ICJ) lacks the power to enforce its judgments, but it can seek a UN Security Council vote on its ruling, potentially paving the way for economic sanctions or military action against Israel, legal experts and scholars argue.

Last week, the ICJ issued a resolute order against Israel, emphasising adherence to humanitarian standards. The ruling directs Israel to prevent and penalise any public incitements to commit genocide against Palestinians in Gaza while also mandating the preservation of evidence related to such allegations. Israel is also obliged to ameliorate the humanitarian situation for Palestinian civilians in the enclave.

Commenting on the order, legal experts, think-tank scholars, and the Western media allude to the likelihood of this matter reaching the UN Security Council, where the majority is expected to demand Israel's compliance. They contend that, this time, the United States may face an even greater challenge in defending Israel, and the ICJ ruling may prove difficult for the United States to overlook.

Emphasising the significance of the ruling, former US Ambassador-at-Large for War Crimes Issues, Stephen Rapp, noted that Israel's noncompliance may make it difficult for its allies to continue defending the Jewish state.

"The US and all its major allies expect Israel to comply," because "if it defies the orders, the Israeli

government may find itself treated as a pariah," he wrote in an email to The Hill newspaper that covers the US Congress. Human Rights Watch's Israel and Palestine Director Omar Shakir underscored the importance of the ruling, stating, "This is quite a far-reaching order. The court has the opportunity in 30 days to review Israel's compliance or consider other options."

Explaining how this decision could be implemented, Shakir said in interviews to various media outlets that "the UN Security Council could take action to enforce the decision." He acknowledged that the US veto could once again protect Israel in the Security Council but warns that the veto would further weaken the US stance on this issue.



Palestinians carry bags of flour they grabbed from an aid truck near an Israeli checkpoint, as Gaza residents face crisis levels of hunger, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, in Gaza City.

Houthi claim missile attack on US warship

SANA'A (Online): Houthi militants fired a missile at a US warship in the Gulf of Aden on Sunday, a spokesman for the Yemen-based group has claimed. He described the incident as the latest response to American "aggression" in the region.

The attack, targeting the USS Lewis B. Puller expeditionary mobile base vessel, took place on Sunday evening, Yahya Saree said in a Telegram post in the aftermath of the alleged incident. The spokesman did not specify if the missile had hit the vessel.

The warship in question was providing logistical support to US forces participating in "the aggression" against Yemen, and was targeted as part of Houthi measures to protect the country, Saree stated.

The militant group will continue to strike commercial ships in the region until Israel ends its attacks on Gaza and the blockade of the Palestinian enclave is lifted, the spokesman added.

The US military has yet to officially comment on the alleged attack.

Seven dead in Brazilian small plane crash

SAO PAULO (INP): Seven people were killed Sunday in Brazil's southeast Minas Gerais state when the small plane they were travelling in crashed, authorities said.

After leaving Campinas, in neighboring Sao Paulo state, the single-engine plane apparently broke up mid-air and crashed at around 10:30 am (1330 GMT) in the mining town of Itapeva.

Firefighters "found seven dead victims (who were) on board the aircraft," the department said in updated statement.

Several states halt funding to Palestinian refugees

Monitoring Desk
GAZA STRIP: While bad weather hit displaced Palestinians seeking refuge further north in the battered enclave, Israel pressed ahead on Saturday with its aggression in Gaza's Khan Younis area after the failure of UN's International Court of Justice (ICJ) to call for a ceasefire.

Aggravating the crisis for Palestinians, the UK, Australia, Canada, Italy and Finland suspended their funding to the UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) despite the Palestinian Authority insistence that the organisation needs "maximum" support.

On the day of ICJ's ruling that Israel must prevent possible acts of genocide, 174 Palestinians were killed during the unabated

hostilities. Gaza health authorities said on Saturday some 26,257 Palestinians have been killed and nearly 65,000 wounded so far, including 174 lives lost during the last 24 hours.

The majority of the enclave's 2.3 million population has been displaced. Residents reported heavy aerial and tank fire across Khan Yunis, a part of southern Gaza that has become the focus of Israel's ground offensive against Hamas, and around two main hospitals there. After the ICJ ruling amid Israeli accusations that several employees of UNRWA were involved in October 7 attack, the United States, Australia, Britain, Canada, Italy and Finland suspended funding to the UN agency.

Iran executes four men convicted of spying for Israel

TEHRAN (INP): Iran executed four men at dawn on Monday after they were convicted of collaborating with the country's arch-foe Israel on a plan to sabotage an Iranian defense site, according to the judiciary.

The four defendants, identified as Mohammad Faramarzi, Mohsen Mazloum, Wafa Azarbar, Pejman Fatehi, were arrested in July 2022 and accused of plotting to carry out an operation against a Ministry of Defense centre in the central province of Isfahan, according to the judiciary's Mizan Online website. "The death sentence of four members of a group affiliated with the Zionist spy organisation.

Three US troops killed in Jordan, Biden vows reprisal

Iran denies links to Jordan drone strike that killed 3 US troops

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: Three US service members were killed and dozens wounded during an unmanned aerial drone attack on US forces stationed in northeastern Jordan near the Syrian border, President Joe Biden and US officials said on Sunday.

Biden blamed Iran-backed groups for the attack, the first deadly strike against US forces since the Israel-Hamas conflict erupted in October, sending shock waves throughout the Middle East.

It is the first time American military personnel have been killed by hostile fire in the Middle East since the start of the Gaza conflict, and the incident will further raise tensions in the region and fuel fears

of a broader conflict directly involving Iran.

Hamas said the death of the soldiers shows Washington's backing for Israel could put it at odds with the whole Muslim world if the Gaza conflict continues and that it could lead to a "regional explosion."

Meanwhile: Iran denied US and British accusations that it supported militant groups behind a drone strike in Jordan that killed three US military personnel, Tehran's official IRNA news agency said on Monday.

"These claims are made with specific political goals to reverse the realities of the region," IRNA quoted foreign ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani as saying.

Russia's drones, missiles target Ukraine's critical infrastructure, Ukraine says

Monitoring Desk
KYIV: Russia launched drone and missile attacks targeting civilian and critical infrastructure across wide areas of Ukraine, Kyiv's Air Force said on Sunday.

Preliminary information did not show any casualties in the attacks, the air force said on the Telegram messaging app.

Russia and Ukraine have increased their air attacks on each other's territory in recent months, targeting critical military, energy and transport infrastructure.

The air force said Russia attacked the central Poltava region with two ballistic missiles fired from the Iskander ballistic missile system, and three surface-to-air missiles over the Donetsk region in the east.

Filip Pronin, governor of Poltava region, wrote on Telegram that the attack struck an industrial site in the city of Kremenchuk, sparking a fire. Pictures posted on social media showed emergency crews battling a blaze.

Further southeast in the Zaporizhzhia region, Governor Yuri Malashko said an infrastructure site had been hit in a drone attack. Emergency crews were at the site, Malashko said, but gave no details of damage or casualties.

Ukraine's air defence systems destroyed four of eight Russia-launched drones overnight, the air force said.

Reuters could not independently verify the reports. There was no immediate comment from Russia.

India pivots away from Russian arms, but will retain strong ties

Monitoring Desk
NEW DELHI: India is seeking to distance itself from its largest arms supplier after Russia's ability to supply munitions and spares was hobbled by the war in Ukraine, but must step carefully to avoid pushing Moscow closer to China, Indian sources said.

The world's biggest arms importer is slowly turning West as the United States looks to strengthen ties in the Indo-Pacific region, hoping to contain an ascendant China by weaning the South Asian nation off a traditional dependence on Russia.

Russia supplied 65% of India's weapons purchases of more than \$60 billion during the last two decades, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, but the Ukraine war hastened the impetus to diversify its weapons base.

"We are not likely to sign any major military deal with Russia," said Nandan Unnikrishnan, a Russia expert at New Delhi think tank the Observer Research Foundation. "That would be a red line for Washington."

That view comes despite Moscow's offers, described by four Indian government sources, among them a senior security official who recently retired, as including platforms such as the most advanced Kamov helicopters and Sukhoi and MiG fighter jets, with the added fillip of joint manufacturing in India. All four sources spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss a sensitive subject.

The foreign and defence ministries of India and Russia did not respond to requests for comment.

Russia has publicly urged India to step up defence ties, but Prime Minister Narendra Modi has turned his focus to domestic production with Western technology, experts and officials said.

Australia's New South Wales state premier condemns neo-Nazi rally

Monitoring Desk
SYDNEY: The premier of Australia's New South Wales state condemned on Sunday a neo-Nazi rally in the state capital Sydney as "appalling", a day after Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said neo-Nazism was on the rise in the country.

Police on Sunday said around 30 men gathered at a park in the city's north and were issued with orders preventing them from entering other areas of Sydney, before they dispersed, with no arrests made.

"Police are meeting these obnoxious and appalling racists head-on in New South Wales streets," Premier Chris Minns told reporters in Sydney, describing the event as a "neo-Nazi demonstration".

The far-right event comes a day after

Albanese condemned domestic neo-Nazi activity following the arrests of six members of a black-clad group in Sydney on Friday, the country's national day, amid rallies in support of its Indigenous people.

The prime minister said Australia had seen a rise in neo-Nazism, which was condemned "by all decent people".

This month, new laws banning the Nazi salute and display or sale of symbols associated with terror groups came into effect in Australia in response to more antisemitic incidents following the Israel-Gaza war.

At the time, the centre-left Labor government said the laws sent a clear message there was no place in Australia for those who glorify the Holocaust or terrorist acts.



Turkish police stand guard outside the Italian Santa Maria Catholic Church after two masked gunmen were shooting during Sunday service, in Istanbul, Turkey.

China allows Philippines to supply troops at disputed reef

Monitoring Desk
BEIJING: The Chinese coastguard said it had made "temporary special arrangements" to allow the Philippines to deliver supplies to troops at a grounded World War Two-era vessel at a disputed reef. The Chinese coastguard has previously deployed vessels to block missions by the Philippines to supply troops on the transport ship, which has become a military outpost at the Second Thomas Shoal, 190 km (118 miles) off the Philippine island of Palawan. In a statement on its official WeChat account late on Saturday, the Chinese coastguard said it had allowed necessary supplies, but also that it would resolutely defend China's sovereignty and maritime rights and interests at the Second Thomas Shoal and its adjacent waters.

"On Jan 21, a small aircraft from the Philippines airdropped supplies to the illegally beached warship," the WeChat statement said.

"The Chinese coastguard has followed up and monitored the situation in real time, controlled and dealt with it in accordance with laws and regulations, and made temporary special arrangements for the Philippines to replenish necessary daily supplies," it added. China, which claims sovereignty over almost the entire South China Sea, points to a line on its maps that cuts into the exclusive economic zones of Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei and Indonesia. It has repeatedly called on the Philippines to tow away the ship on the Philippines to Manila made, but Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr has denied.

Saturday's WeChat message said the "relevant parties" in the Philippines had deliberately misled international opinion and ignored the facts, and that was not conducive to easing tension in the South China Sea.

US reviewing Venezuelan sanctions policy in wake of court decision

Monitoring Desk
VENEZUELA: The US is reviewing its sanctions policy against Venezuela after a court in that country upheld a ban preventing presidential candidate Maria Corina Machado from holding office, the US State Department said.

The ruling by Venezuela's Supreme Justice Tribunal on Friday means Machado, a 56-year-old industrial engineer, cannot register her candidacy for presidential elections scheduled for the second half of 2024. "The United States is currently reviewing our Venezuela sanctions policy, based on this development and the recent political targeting of democratic opposition candidates and civil society," State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said in a statement.

The US eased economically debilitating oil sanctions on the crude-exporting country in October after President Nicolas Maduro's government signed a deal with the opposition.

Jury orders Trump to pay \$83m for assault defamation

Monitoring Desk
NEW YORK: A jury in New York ordered former US president and 2024 candidate Donald Trump on Friday to pay \$83.3 million to compensate the writer E. Jean Carroll, whom he was found to have sexually assaulted and defamed. The civil order, which prompted an audible gasp in the federal court, far exceeds the more than \$10 million in damages for defamation that Carroll had sought. Trump lashed out almost immediately, calling the verdict "ridiculous" in a statement and promising to appeal. The jury reached its decision after slightly less than three hours of deliberations. Trump had been in court earlier, storming out at one point but subsequently returning for closing arguments.

French PM considers more help for farmers as protests persist

Monitoring Desk
PARIS: The French government is considering further help for the country's farmers, Prime Minister Gabriel Attal said on Sunday, as their nationwide protests to demand better pay and living conditions showed no sign of abating. Farmers in France, the European Union's biggest agricultural producer, complain they face unfair competition from rivals in more lightly regulated countries. To press their cause, they have set up roadblocks on major roads

over the last week. "We will look at any other measures we can take regarding those aspects of unfair competition," Attal told reporters.

Already on Friday, the government dropped plans to gradually reduce state subsidies on agricultural diesel, and announced other steps to reduce the financial and administrative pressures farmers face. The FNSEA, France's biggest farmers' union, has said it will continue protests and other unions have threatened roadblocks around Paris.

'Game changer': gene therapy offers hope for children born deaf

Monitoring Desk
PARIS: A gene therapy that has allowed several children born deaf to hear for the first time is being hailed as a "game changer" that raises hopes of the first new treatment for hereditary deafness in decades.

Several medical teams around the world are trialling the procedure, which focuses on a rare genetic mutation that affects only a small number of the 26 million people with congenital deafness globally.

But several success stories announced this week are already being seen as a turning point. On Tuesday, the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia revealed that 11-year-old Aissam Dam.

Indian Hindu group toughens stance on mosque-temple disputes

Monitoring Desk
NEW DELHI: A powerful Hindu group said several mosques in India were built over demolished Hindu temples, apparently hardening its stance in a decades-long sectarian dispute just days after a huge temple was inaugurated on the site of a razed mosque.

The comments from the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the ideological parent of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu-nationalist party, come after Modi and the RSS chief led Monday's consecration of the temple on the site of the 16th-century Babri mosque demolished by a Hindu mob in

1992. The fight over claims to holy sites has divided Hindu-majority India, which has the world's third-largest Muslim population, since independence from British rule in 1947.

Four days after the temple was inaugurated in the northern city of Ayodhya, a lawyer for Hindu petitioners said the Archaeological Survey of India had determined that a 17th-century mosque in the Hindu holy city of Varanasi, in Modi's parliamentary constituency, was built over a destroyed a Hindu temple.

The Archaeological Survey did not respond to a request for comment.

Mars rover data confirms presence of ancient lake sediments

Monitoring Desk
LOS ANGELES: Nasa's rover Perseverance has gathered data confirming the existence of ancient lake sediments deposited by water that once filled a giant basin on Mars called Jerezo Crater, according to a study. The findings from ground-penetrating radar observations conducted by the robotic rover substantiate previous orbital imagery and other data leading scientists to theorize.



French farmers use their tractors during a go-slow operation near Roissy Charles-de-Gaulle airport as they protest over price pressures, taxes and green regulation, grievances shared by farmers across Europe, in Compans, near Paris, France.

EU to provide additional Eur100m to enhance post-flood resilience

ISLAMABAD (APP): The European Union (EU) will provide an additional EUR 100 million to reinforce Pakistan's resilience in the aftermath of the devastating 2022 floods that severely impacted the nation. According to press statement issued by Economic Affairs Division, EU Ambassador to Pakistan, Ms. Riina Kionka and Secretary of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Dr. Kazim Niaz signed five new EU grant agreements in this regard. "These agreements, under Team Europe's response to the 2022 post-flood Resilient Recovery, Rehabilitation, and Reconstruction Framework, signify a substantial commitment of nearly EUR 100 million (equivalent to over PKR 30 billion)," the statement added.

The new EU support package aims to fortify Pakistan's resilience in the aftermath of the floods, bringing the total Team Europe response to the 2022 floods to over EUR 930 million.

The specific focus areas include revitalising the rural economy in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and restoring the disrupted livestock value chains in flood-affected Balochistan.

Notably, these activities align with the expansive EU Global Gateway initiative, the largest EU in-

vestment program designed to propel the global green transition.

Moreover, the package extends its impact by fortifying Pakistan's long-term resilience through targeted investments in human rights, gender equality, and civil society.

On the occasion, Dr. Kazim Niaz thanked the EU for their support and further emphasised that there were unmet needs in the flood affected areas that require assistance of development partners.

Speaking on the occasion, EU Ambassador, Dr. Riina Kionka said Pakistan was not alone in overcoming its challenging phase of economic crisis and flood recovery.

"The EU and Team Europe partners are committed to building back better, sustainably improving lives in the most affected communities in KP and Balochistan," she added.

The EU's commitment to Pakistan encompasses a vision of a stable, democratic, and pluralistic country that respects human rights and maximizes its economic potential.

The EU annually provides approximately EUR 90 million in grants for development and cooperation, supporting Pakistan's initiatives to combat poverty, enhance education, promote good governance.



KARACHI: President Dr Arif Alvi chairing a meeting on the role of Masajid and Madaris in promoting education and creating awareness about health issues, at Governor House.

NEC directs priority financial allocations for merged and backward districts

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Economic Council (NEC) Monday here directed that the development targets for all new merged and backward districts should be met on priority basis with appropriate financial allocations in the next budget. Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar was chairing meeting of the council.

Federal ministers Dr. Shamshad Akhtar, Sami Saeed, Shahid Ashraf Tarar, Chief Ministers Justice @ Maqbool Baqir, Justice @ Syed Arshad Hussain Shah, Sardar Ali Mardaan Domki and high level officials attended the meeting.

The meeting was told

that in the next financial year, instead of including provincial projects in the national development budget, only projects of newly merged border districts of erstwhile FATA and 20 backward districts would be included in the federal development budget.

The proper financial allocations for these areas would ensure provision of jobs to the people and economic progress.

The prime minister directed that the standard for compiling list of backward districts should be reviewed so that inclusion of all such areas should be ensured.

Speaking during the meeting, the prime minister said tax money belonged

to the people and the focus of all development projects should be welfare and well being of the people.

He urged that work on the national level development projects should be speeded up and their completion in the stipulated time should be ensured.

He expressed satisfaction that the caretaker government achieved substantial success in securing development targets in its short tenure.

The prime minister said despite immense economic challenges, national progress could only be ensured by completing public welfare projects on priority basis.

The National Economic Council comprising

the federation and provinces was the highest constitutional body for economic decision making, he said adding the federal government gave vital importance to consultation with provinces while taking decisions about the development projects.

In the development budget, the council decided that special importance should be given to the progress of basic communication infrastructure, hydel projects, water reservoirs, industry, information technology and the development of human resources particularly youth.

The overall economic situation of the country was reviewed in detail during the meeting.

President says: Role of mosques, vital for educating out-of-school children, preventing diseases

KARACHI (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Monday said the mosques might play a vital role in the provision of education to out-of-school children along with imparting religious ethos for bring about socio-economic development of the country.

He said the mosques had a central place in Muslim society and could be utilized to educate people about important social issues.

The President expressed these views while chairing a meeting about the vital role of Masajid and Madaris in promoting education and creating awareness about health issues.

The meeting was attended by the Caretaker Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Inter-faith Harmony, Dr. Aneeq Ahmed, and religious scholars from various schools of

thought.

Addressing the meeting, the President said that educating 26 million out-of-school children was an uphill task in the wake of inadequate educational infrastructure. Building new schools would require tremendous resources as well as time, he added.

He said that utilizing almost 2.5 lacs mosques across the country could be a unique and cost-effective avenue to bring these children back to education.

The President said that mosques could be used as centres of education by incorporating the Government's Accelerated Learning Programme. "Pakistan should have mosques at the centre of society, simultaneously imparting worldly and religious education to fight the challenges of society," he added.



ISLAMABAD: DG FIA Ahmad Ishaq Jahangir called on Federal Minister for Interior Dr Gohar Ejaz.

Dr Umar Saif says: Pak assembles around 9mln mobile phones worth \$1.5bln in 2yrs

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Dr Umar Saif on Monday said that the country had assembled approximately 9 million mobile phones worth around \$1.5 billion during the last two years. Addressing the Pakistan Mobile Summit, the first-ever mobile conference in the country, he said currently about 35 different mobile phone brands were actively contributing to the local mobile phone manufacturing industry.

He said the country had exported nearly 250,000 mobile phones and earned around \$ 200 million dollars foreign exchange.

The minister said local handset manufacturers in Pakistan had produced around 57 million phones, surpassing the annual domestic demand of 25 million units. He also informed the audience about efforts being made at the local level to prepare some components, with the goal of eventually manufacturing fully assembled phones within the country.



ISLAMABAD: Ms. Riina Kionka, European Union Ambassador to Pakistan and Dr. Kazim Niaz, Secretary Ministry of Economic Affairs signed Five New Additional EUR 100 Million Grant Agreements

ECP successfully trains 970,000 polling staff

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has completed the training of 96% of the polling staff, which includes 970,000 out of a total of 976,000 staff members.

An ECP spokesperson said in a statement that the training for the remaining 6,000 polling staff would conclude within the next four days.

He said the preparations of February 8 general elections were being completed swiftly.

The ballot paper printing, conducted in three government press offices, is proceeding well.

Initiated on January 16 after the assignment of election symbols by the

RO, this task is set to conclude by February 2 in the next four days.

According to an ECP spokesman, the ballot paper printing, carried out in three government press offices, is progressing smoothly.

Commented on January 16 after the election symbols were assigned by the Returning Officer (RO), this task is expected to be completed by February 2 in the next four days.

The spokesman stated that, in collaboration with security agencies and the District Administration, the process of delivering ballot papers to all four provinces has commenced.

Regional head offices of banks directed to ensure cameras installation

QUETTA: The Commissioner Quetta Division has asked Regional head offices of all banks to ensure installation of the high resolution cameras at the branches of their respective banks in Quetta Division including Quetta city.

In an official circular issued by the office of Commissioner Quetta, it has been stressed that installation of high resolution cameras is very necessary at the branches of all banks all over the province especially in Quetta just to improve the security measures.

This is also needed to do monitoring and adopt proper safety procedures in Quetta and other cities, therefore, installation of high resolution cameras should be ensured in all branches of the banks operating in Quetta and other cities of the division, it was further mentioned.

Shania visits Quetta central jail, distributes necessary items among prisoners

Independent Report QUETTA: The Advisor to caretaker Chief Minister for Social Welfare and Women Development, Ms. Shania Khan visited the central jail Quetta on Monday.

The Director General of Social Welfare, Tariq Javaid Mengal was also accompanied by the Advisor to caretaker Chief Minister.

During the course of visit, Ms. Shania Khan distributed clothes and other necessary items among prisoners including women in the jail.

She also distributed toys among the juveniles in the prison.

The sewing machines were distributed among female prisoners there.

Later, the Advisor went round of different parts of the prison.

The Superintendent of Quetta jail, Muhammad Ishaq Zehri briefed Ms. Shania Khan about the facilities and different parts of the prison.

She inspected in detail the measures taken for imparting technical skills to the female prisoners.

President inaugurates 'Sundas Foundation Karachi Centre'

KARACHI (APP): President Dr. Arif Alvi inaugurated 'Sundas Foundation Karachi Centre' on Monday. The centre is aimed at providing blood and hematological services to patients.

The President, soon after inaugurating the Centre, visited Blood Transfusion section of the facility and met patients present on the occasion.

Dr. Alvi enquired about the health of the patients and distributed fruit baskets for them.



QUETTA: PML-N Provincial Secretary General Jamal Shah Kakar addressing a press conference.

NP to gain success in elections with support of people: Sardar Bangulzai

QUETTA (APP): National Party (NP)'s Central Vice President and former MNA Sardar Kamal Khan Bangulzai on Monday said that his party would achieve success on February 8, with support of people in general elections.

He expressed these views while addressing the participation and support program organized by National Party Tehsil Dasht in Killi Umar-Abad Bangulzai Dasht Matura under the leadership of Asadullah Bangulzai and Master Muhammad Umar Bangulzai. Addressing at the program, Bangulzai said that the era of fixed stamping had passed, now people would make their decision with their votes.

He said that people would make successful their real representatives through their votes who were always present among them in difficult situation.

He said that the National Party was only party to believe serving of people, adding that therefore, the NP party was becoming

large party in Balochistan because it was taking practical measures for development of the respective areas of the province.

Bangulzai said that he had started a number of development projects in Mastung in order to provide basic facilities to people of rural area of the district during tenure of his MNA.

On this occasion, Sardar Kamal Khan Bangulzai thanked the elders for joining and supporting the party. Earlier, those people including Hikmatullah Muhammad Hassan, Ali Murad Muhammad Hassan, Nazir Ahmed Sumalani, Naveed Ahmed Sumalani, Riaz Ahmad Sumalani, Nazir Sumalani, Khuda-i-Reham Sumalani, Sultan Sasoli, Lal Baksh Jatak, Mohammad Salim Bangulzai, Sanaullah Bangulzai, Mehru'llah Bangulzai, Haji Saadullah Bangulzai, Waheed Ahmed Bangulzai, Mubasher Ahmad Shahwani, Basir Ahmad Shahwani, Zahid Bangulzai.

DC reviews election arrangements in Chaman

Independent Report QUETTA: The arrangements made for the general elections in Chaman were reviewed on Monday.

A meeting chaired by Deputy Commissioner Chaman Captain (Retd) Raja Athar Abbas reviewed the arrangements including security. Those who were present in the meeting were included Superintendent of Police, District Election Commissioner, Education Officers, Returning Officers and other concerned officials.

The matters including security of the polling stations, cleanliness, deployment of the polling staff and their training, provision of transportation and other necessary facilities in detail at the meeting.

Secretary Health presides review meeting of EPI Balochistan

QUETTA (APP): Balochistan Secretary Health Abdullah Khan on Monday presided the fourth quarterly review meeting of EPI Balochistan and reviewed the coverage of EPI, set goals and resources and evaluated the performance of all district health officers across the province.

The Secretary Health expressed his displeasure over the absence of Divisional Director Loralai and Divisional Director Rukhsan divisions.

Addressing the meeting, Secretary Health Balochistan Abdullah Khan said that District Health Officers should complete the targets set by EPI, MNCH and Nutritionist.

He directed that PPHI should ensure deployment of LHV and vaccinators.

He added that EPI will help in strengthening the services of MNCH and nutritionists. Abdullah Khan said that with the support of District Health Officers and Deputy District Health Officers and adoption of effective strategies, the vaccination and immunization targets set at the regional level can be achieved.

PPP submits reservations to ECP over election results system

ISLAMABAD (INP): The People's Party has submitted its reservations with regard to the election results system in writing to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).

"We are bringing our serious objections to your notice with regard to the new system of election results, the EMS," the letter read.

"The election commission had rejected the use of WhatsApp in the parliamentary committee session saying it would have Internet problems," according to letter. "When the WhatsApp will face problem, the new App would likely to have more problems," the PPP writes.

"The use of the EMS App will compromise transparency of the election," PPP argued. "We demand the use of WhatsApp for sending election results instead of the new application," PPP said.

"The Presiding Officers sending election result to the ROs, should also send it to the candidate and election agents," PPP suggests.

Secretary C&W reviews steps of departmental promotion BPS-1-15

QUETTA (APP): Secretary Communications and Works (C&W) Kamber Dashti on Monday presided over a meeting regarding departmental promotion BPS (1-15) in the department.

Chief Engineer of the three circles of the province, Roads Additional Secretary of the Department of Communications and Works, Amir Hamza Zehri, Chief Engineer Design, Dr. Sajjad Baloch and senior

officials of the Department of C&W were also present in the meeting.

The meeting was briefed in detail regarding promotion cases in the department. On this occasion, Secretary Communications and Works Kamber Dashti said that getting promotion during the service was very important and mandatory for the employees and it was the first effort of every employee to get promotion in his tenure period.



KARACHI: A view of burnt vehicles after clash between the workers of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Muttahida Quami Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) during an election campaign rally at Nazimabad area, in Provincial Capital.

Hamza issues instructions for better work on traffic, removal of encroachments

QUETTA (APP): Commissioner Quetta Division Hamza Shafqaat on Monday paid a surprise visit of the city and issued instructions for better work on traffic, removal of encroachments, cleanliness and restoration of street lights.

During his visit, he also inspected Circular Road Park Plaza and ordered that the case of the plaza for a better business model and better services for the public will be immediately sent to the Public Private Partnership Authority (PPPA).

He said that steps are being taken under various mechanisms to resolve the traffic problems in the city.

He also visited the main business hubs of the city including Abdul Sattar, Archer and Prince roads and met with various trade associations.

He said it had been decided to open these roads for general traffic and convert them into "No" parking zones to resolve the traffic problems.

He directed RTA and Assistant Commissioner City Quetta to submit a proposal along with the traffic team to resolve the traffic issue.

He said that the resolving of traffic issues in the city is important, so the cooperation of all stakeholders is needed to resolve it. On the occasion, he also inspected various commercial banks and discussed with the bank managers about the installation of security cameras and making them fully functional, besides parking the vehicles in the parking area instead of parking them on the city streets so that traffic problems can be resolved.