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dailyindish@gmail.com

Chief Editor: Syed Farooq Shah

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Three-day mourning announced by caretaker CM: 28 dead, 50 others injured in two separate explosions in Pishin and Killa Saifullah districts

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

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

The caretaker Chief Minister Mir Ali Mardan Domki announced three-day mourning to mourn the loss of lives in both attacks. Caretaker Information Minister Jan Achakzai said in a presser.

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

dent candidate's office in Khanozai area of Pishin while the second blast took place outside the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazl (JUI-F) election office in Killa Saifullah.

The Pishin blast took place outside the political office of independent candidate Asfand Yar Khan Kakar in Khanozai area.

The injured people have been shifted to the Tehsil Hospital Khanozai, while the bodies have also been transferred, the hospital's MS Dr Habib told the media.

According to MS Dr Habib, most of the injured are in critical condition.

Following the blast, an emergency has been imposed across hospitals in Quetta for which additional staff has also been called, the provincial health secretary told Geo News.

The second blast targeted the JUI-F office in the Killa Saifullah district couple of hours after Khanozai blast.

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

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



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

Terrorists not to be allowed to disrupt elections: Achakzai

QUETTA (APP): Balochistan's Caretaker Information Minister Jan Achakzai on Wednesday said that terrorists would not be allowed to disrupt the general elections.

While talking to a private news channel, he condemned blasts in Qila Saifullah and Pishin, asserting the country's resolve of preventing the terrorists to derail the electoral process.

The elections would proceed as planned as the caretaker government was fully committed to the process, he added.

The minister said, "The state will not bow down before any terrorist group or organization, rather it will chase them till their complete elimination."

Pakistan fully committed to promote an inclusive democratic process

ISLAMABAD (Online): Foreign Office (FO) has said Pakistan is fully committed to promote an inclusive democratic process.

This was said by FO spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch

while reacting to remarks made by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights regarding the upcoming general elections in Pakistan. She held Pakistan is fully resolved to uphold rule of law and protect the human rights and fundamental freedom.

Guarantees in this regard are enshrined in our law and constitution

Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights had said in a statement that organization condemns all acts of violence against political parties and candidates and stresses authorities to maintain necessary fundamental freedom for the sake of meaningful democratic process.

At least 24 incidents of violence against political parties workers have been reported before election.



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

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

Independent Report

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Altogether 1,696 candidates in competition runs for 67 seats: All set to hold general elections on 16 NA, 51 PA seats in Balochistan today

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

Independent Report

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

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

For the polling, in all 5,026 polling stations have been established in all 36

districts of the province. Out of them, 1,126 have been declared as normal while 2,249 and 1,651 polling stations have been declared as sensitive and highly sensitive respectively.

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

As many as 51,379 polling staff has been deputed for the election process at 5,026 polling stations of the province.

They are included: 5,279 presiding officers,

31,252 Assistant Presiding Officers and 15,626 Polling Officers.

A provincial control room has been set up by the provincial government to monitor the election and polling process in the province. Established at the Provincial Information Technology Department, the senior bureaucrats would remain deputed at the Control Room. Similarly, a control and monitoring room has also been set up at the Provincial Election Commissioner's office.

Earlier, the polling material including ballot papers and other necessary goods were distributed among the polling staff of Quetta at the Unity Law College.

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

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

Addressing the inaugural ceremony of Media Coordination and Facilitation Center established by Press Information Department here, he said tomorrow morning the voting would start and by midday half of the polling would have been done.

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

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

He said that the caretaker government had stood by its commitment of holding general elections on the schedule given by Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).

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Transparent, peaceful election's our national responsibility: Governor

Independent Report

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



RIYADH: Deputy Chief of the Air Staff (Operations), Air Marshal Abdul Moeed Khan in a group photo along with Foreign dignitaries and Pakistan Air Force (PAF) contingent during World Defence Air Show 2024 held in Riyadh.

Elections 2024: ECP official dispels fears of 'EMS being hacked'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) IT Director, Khizer Aziz, dispelled the fears of 'hacking Election Management System' (EMS) in upcoming general elections 2024, saying that no public networks are being utilized for transmitting election results.

"Private networks will be employed for the purpose which eliminates concerns about the hacking of the EMS," Aziz told a private news channel.

He highlighted that the EMS was equipped with special software, securely housed in the offices of 859 Returning Officers (RO), with the provision of four data entry operators, four laptops, and IT equipment.

Simultaneously, Aziz stated the EMS was also installed in the mobile phones of Presiding Officers (PO) who will capture an image of

Form 45 and send it to the Returning Officer. In case of network issue, Form 45 will automatically deliver to the RO once a signal is restored. He explained the process of Section 95, where the Presiding Officer is required to visit the RO's office and display Form 45 on their mobile device. The form will self-lock on the Presiding Officer's mobile, ensuring data integrity.

Elucidating the working of EMS, Khizer Aziz stated that during the creation of Form 47 the RO will verify that Form 45 is locked on the Presiding Officer's mobile. Computers in the RO office, he said will operate in three modes for national and provincial assemblies, conducting online data entry. In case of network disconnection, the software will seamlessly switch to an offline mode.

Communication infrastructure, imperative for GB development: PM

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Commissioner imposes ban on double riding of bike in Quetta

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

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

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

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



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

Bilawal says PPP free of any bias, represents centre

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

While talking to a private news channel, the PPP Chairman said that he went to every part of the country for the election canvassing and received a 'great response' from the people. He said that his election campaign across the country is tantamount to the 'fact' that only the PPP represents the center.

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

The PPP Chairman said that the PML-N's leadership could not spare even half an hour to come to Karachi and run the election campaign in the port city. "The PML-N has also failed to turn to South Punjab and Balochistan. "Those who raised 'Vote Ko Lzzat Do' (Respect the vote) slogans did not go to three provinces," Bilawal added.

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

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

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

Pakistan shuts border crossings with Iran, Afghanistan

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

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

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

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

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



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

Daily Voice of Masses
Independent

The day before

With political parties instructed yesterday to suspend their campaigns at the stroke of midnight, the 'pre-poll' part of election 2024 stands completed. All that is now left is for the votes to be cast and counted and for a winner to be declared.

It is slightly disconcerting how suddenly this election seems to have passed us by. The past two months already seem like a haze of court cases and stop-start political activity. For the longest time, one was unsure if polls would be held, and there were fears of another delay. It was not until about three weeks ago that campaigning began in earnest. Initially, the jalsas and rallies were damp affairs. The energy, enthusiasm and richness one usually associates with elections in Pakistan remained missing. It felt as if everyone was merely going through the motions; that a commitment to the process was missing.

Much of this was due, perhaps, to the prevailing impression that it was not a fair fight. Out of the two parties that consistently polled among the top two that voters intended to support, one was not allowed to campaign.

Most of the attempts made by the PTI to mobilise were met with arrests and intimidation. Thereafter, it moved its activities online, where its innovations not only helped it survive, but may have also put it in a position to mount a real challenge.

The other party, the PML-N, only hit the road towards the tail-end of the campaigning period. Indeed, it seemed at one point that it would need a push to start participating, considering how disinterested its leaders were. To its credit, the PPP was the only national party that actually took campaigning seriously. It started much earlier than the others and was able to maintain its energy throughout.

Just as the momentum seemed to be picking up, however, time had to be called. Today, voters will discuss and debate their choices with their families, friends, neighbours and fellow citizens. Tomorrow, they will speak through the ballot box.

The PML-N seems to be in a comparatively strong position after its late burst of activity, and because it seems to have the backing of powerful forces within the state. It will be an uphill struggle for the PTI, which is contesting without its traditional symbol and wasn't able to canvass. Still, the party has shown spirit throughout, and it can pull off an upset if its voters mobilise.

The PPP may prove a dark horse in this race. Even with its support base outside Sindh having dwindled over the years, its deal-making abilities have often seen it beat the odds. It understands better than most how to get ahead. Who will prevail? Not long to go before we find out.

Election 2024: Reaffirmation democratic journey

By Qamar Bashir

Press Secretary to the President(Rtd); Former Press Minister at Embassy of Pakistan to France; Former MD, SRBC



Amid swirling rumors, concerns, and a charged atmosphere both domestically and internationally, Pakistan is set to conduct its highly contested and controversial 2024 elections amidst significant economic challenges including stagnant growth, acute balance of payment issues, hyperinflation, and high unemployment rates. This election is marked by an unprecedented increase in the active voter base, reaching the milestone of 128 million, over half the country's population. This elevates Pakistan to the status of the world's fifth-largest democracy. With an anticipated 80% voter turnout, the nation demonstrates a strong commitment to the democratic process reflecting the population's strong commitment to the democratic process and their determination to influence their nation's future.

FAFEN in its recent report noted that for the first time, there were more women registered to vote than men between two election periods of 2018-2024, showcasing significant progress in gender inclusivity in the electoral process marked by an increase in women's voter registration by 27%, surpassing the growth in men's registration, which was 17% during the same period. This has led to a substantial decrease in the gender gap in voter registration from 11.8% in 2018 to 7.7% in 2024.

Recognizing the potential of women voters in the upcoming elec-

tions, both PTI and PML(N) have issued a 'record' number of National Assembly tickets to women, which might further encourage female voter participation reflecting a broader movement towards gender inclusivity in Pakistani politics. However, female voter registration and participation in the election process will depend on various factors, including campaign strategies, voter mobilization efforts, and the addressing of socio-cultural barriers that have historically limited women's political participation. As the elections approach, the focus on encouraging and facilitating women's participation in the democratic process remains crucial for a fair and inclusive electoral outcome.

The elections 2024 being the fourth elections since the era of martial law under Pervez Musharraf starting with governments of PPP, PML(N), and PTI reflects the evolving political landscape amidst the pre-election phase, where the PTI faced significant challenges and allegations of unfair advantages to the PML(N), highlighting underlying challenges in Pakistan's democratic processes which has been intermittently disrupted by martial laws posing setbacks to the democratic continuum.

International media, including the Council on Foreign Relations, Al Jazeera, The Diplomat, and DW, along with the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan and the European Union, have raised concerns about the 2024 elections in Pakistan, highlighting issues such as "election engineering," disinformation, extensive media censorship, and state intervention in media coverage. These reports underscore the restrictive conditions facing political parties, particularly PTI, whose leadership is significantly constrained, impacting their ability to campaign freely. Allegations of an uneven playing field, exacerbated by the military's significant political influence and the barring of key political figures like former Prime Minister Imran Khan, suggest a contentious electoral environment that may not be free or fair, disadvantageous to certain parties and undermining the democratic process.

Amid these apprehensions, the choice of political entities to engage rather than opt for boycotts, delays, or advocate for autocratic solutions underscores a pivotal shift towards deepening democratic norms indicating a resilient commitment amidst adversity. This collective resolve of Pakistan's political factions, intellectual community, and citizens arguably emphasizes the importance of democratic integrity and continuity, effectively curtailing any attempts by undemocratic elements to impose their agenda, thereby safeguarding the democratic process and ensuring its resilience against potential disruptions.

PML(N) is running a vigorous campaign, primarily concentrated in central Punjab and Hazara Division allegedly supported by the state machinery while neglecting other key provinces like KP, Sindh, and Balochistan. The PML(N) campaign is well-organized and directed by Nawaz Sharif, with Maryam Nawaz and Shahbaz Sharif providing strong support. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)'s

ability to run an effective campaign is highly compromised due to the absence of its chairman and key leaders, coupled with the lack of its own election symbol. Moreover its public meetings have completely been blocked on the mainstream media, and as alternative it is struggling to leverage Social media that too is subjected to planned slow down as and when required. Meanwhile, the PPP campaign, led by Bilawal Bhutto Zardari with Asif Zardari making a positive impression, seems to be gaining traction.

In this election season, media outlets, both traditional and social, have been exceptionally active, providing extensive coverage of the election campaigns. Renowned anchorpersons took to the streets, engaging with everyday citizens to gauge their electoral preferences. While these interactions were not scientifically structured, they did unveil some regional inclinations. In Central Punjab, there seems to be a tilt towards PML(N), with PTI also receiving notable support. Sindh's rural areas are predominantly leaning towards PPP, while urban centers show a preference for MQM. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (formerly NWFP), a significant sympathy vote appears to favor PTI, reflecting the party's strong foothold in the region. Meanwhile, Balochistan presents a more diverse picture, with no clear dominance by any national party, indicating a fragmented political landscape.

Unfortunately there is also a growing belief that mainstream parties are prioritizing forming provincial governments in the upcoming elections. This stems from the per-

ception that provinces offer larger budgets, greater decision-making freedom with less scrutiny, and fewer financial obligations compared to the federal government. The center, conversely, faces stricter oversight, smaller budgets, and heavier debts, often relying on foreign loans to function, while spending primarily occurs in the provinces, seemingly without responsibility for loan repayment. Essentially, parties see provincial power as more lucrative and less accountable, raising concerns about national priorities and fiscal responsibility.

The crude findings are also supported by According to different surveys, reflecting a close race, showing leading parties PTI and PML-N neck-and-neck. Economic woes and security concerns loom large, while Khan's disqualification adds uncertainty. Other parties like PPP hold regional strongholds.

Based on the discussion, survey reports, and media analysis, the PML-N, led by Nawaz Sharif, is likely to have a significant advantage in forming the government at the center due to its established political base and apparent mending of ties with the military, which plays a crucial role in Pakistan's political landscape. The PTI, despite facing significant challenges including legal battles, the disqualification of its leader Imran Khan, and issues surrounding its election symbol, may still manage to retain some influence, particularly in provinces where it has a strong support base. In Punjab, the competition between PML-N and PTI is expected to be fierce, with both parties vying for dominance. The political maneuvering and alliances formed in the run-

up to the elections could be key to determining the outcome in this crucial province.

PPP, led by Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, may continue to hold sway in its traditional stronghold of Sindh but could face challenges expanding its influence beyond this province due to the current political dynamics and its need to form crucial alliances in Punjab. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, PTI has historically had strong support, but the party's current challenges might impact its performance in the upcoming elections. Balochistan's political landscape is often more fragmented, with local parties and alliances playing significant roles. The situation in Balochistan may remain fluid, with various parties and independent candidates likely to influence the formation of the provincial government.

Amidst challenges, Pakistan's move towards the 2024 elections epitomizes the nation's resolve to sustain its democratic ethos. Despite the pre-election phase's uneven playing field and significant political entities facing hurdles, the unanimous decision against election boycotts or delays reflects a collective dedication to democratic values. This commitment, coupled with a notable surge in voter registration highlighting gender inclusivity, underscores the importance of a transparent, fair electoral process for Pakistan's democratic integrity and future stability. The forthcoming elections are a critical juncture, symbolizing not just a political transition but a reaffirmation of Pakistan's democratic journey in the face of adversity.

Commerce News

Germany provides Eur45m support to Pak on Technical Development Cooperation

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

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

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

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

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

together'.

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

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



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

PM AJK chaired meeting about agriculture, livestock

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

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

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

China's vehicle sales, output soar in January

BEIJING (APP): China's vehicle sales surged 47.9 percent year on year in January 2024 to nearly 2.44 million units, said the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers on Wednesday.

The country's vehicle output last month increased by 51.2 percent year on year to 2.41 million units, according to the association.

Specifically, passenger car output and sales stood at 2.08 million units and 2.12 million units, up 49.1 percent and 44 percent year on year, respectively, according to data released by the association.

Commercial vehicle output rose by 66.2 percent year on year to 327,000 units, while commercial vehicle sales soared 79.6 percent year on year to 324,000 units.

The new energy vehicle (NEV) sector maintained fast growth momentum last month.

Kyrgyzstan interested in boosting business ties with Pakistan: Kyrgyz Envoy

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

He stressed that both countries should develop sustainable business relations as they have good potential to cooperate in many sectors of the economy. He said that a business delegation from Pakistan should visit Kyrgyzstan to explore joint ventures and business partnerships, said a press release issued here.

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

He assured that his

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

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

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

Bakhtawari said Similarly, Kyrgyzstan can provide Pakistan with easy access to the Central Asian States.

Naqvi chairs 3rd Chambers of Commerce Coordination Committee meeting

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

Punjab Cabinet, Chief Secretary, IG Police and secretaries concerned specially participated in the meeting. The participants in the Chamber of Commerce Coordination Committee

accorded a standing ovation and paid tributes to the exemplary performance of the CM. They credited CM Naqvi for the establishment of 6 Business Facilitation Centres in Punjab.

Kashif Anwar LCCI President acknowledged that the day and night work being undertaken by the CM for the well-being of the masses has set a unique example of rendering public service. President Sargodha

Chamber of Commerce and Industry Imtiaz Dogar said that neither any Chief Minister has done such a huge amount of work since the inception of Pakistan nor "we have seen such an amount of work being done by any other".

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

Gold rates up by 400 per tola

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

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

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

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

According to the latest PBS data, exports

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

On the other hand, imports into the country declined by 14.11 percent to \$30.949 billion this year against the imports of \$36.034 billion last year.

Governor urges masses to exercise right to vote

Appeals people to maintain brotherhood in election

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

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

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

KP Governor advised

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

Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali has appealed to the people of the province to complete the election process peacefully by maintaining the environment of brotherhood during this democratic process on election day and extending full cooperation to the

administration, police, security agencies and polling staff.

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

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



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

NA-43 Tank anticipates exciting electoral battle

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

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

With a total of 392,214 registered voters, including 214,790 men and 177,424 women, the electoral landscape in NA-43 is marked by its

diversity. The constituency boasts 353 polling stations.

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

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

KP CS reviews arrangements for general elections

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

2.6 mln people to cast votes in Sargodha

SARGODHA (APP): A total of 2,668,700 voters are set to exercise their right to vote for five National Assembly and ten Provincial Assembly seat of general election 2024 in Sargodha district. According to a spokesman for ECP office Sargodha, a total of 1,417,495 male voters and 1,251,205 female voters would cast their votes on February 08.

Minister Information says: Arrangements finalized for general elections

Independent Report PESHAWAR: Provincial Caretaker Minister for Information, Barrister Feroze Jamal Kakakhel Wednesday said that all the necessary arrangements had been completed for general elections that was the mandate of caretaker government. Addressing a press conference here, the minister said that control rooms had been established by election commission, home department and police to monitor the election process.

He said that Quick

Response Force had also been deployed to meet any emergency in an effective way. He said that steps had been taken for security of sensitive polling station adding that about 15000 polling stations had been established among which some are declared sensitive.

The minister said that strict action would be taken that were planning to challenge of state. Regretting May 9 incident, he said that youth were misguided on the day by certain elements to fulfill their nefarious designs.

Rasool Bangash says: ECNEC approved two projects for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

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

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

He expressed these views while representing the province while participating in a Zoom meeting regarding Executive

Committee of National Economic Council in his office on Wednesday. Additional Chief Secretary Planning and Development Imtiaz Hussain Shah, Finance Secretary Aamir Sultan Tareen and other officials have participated in the meeting.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The counsel of the

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

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

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

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

PEC KP says: All arrangements for election completed

15, 696 polling stations for 21.928mn voters setup in KP

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

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

of votes in KP including merged tribal districts. Similarly, 4,180 polling stations were set up for male, 4,287 polling stations for female and 6600 collective polling stations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, he said, adding that 4,178 polling stations were declared highly sensitive and 5,925 sensitive where police and security personnel would be deployed for smooth conduct of the election process.

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

PO among three accused held

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

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

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

Five injured in IED blast on former MPA's car

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

According to police all the injured were shifted to hospital.

International News

US lawmakers reject \$17.6 billion Israel aid bill

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

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

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

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

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

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

ter months of negotiations with a bipartisan group of senators.

The standalone bill was also opposed by 13 Republicans as it did not contain budgetary offsets that conservatives have been pushing for with every proposal for new spending. One of Johnson's first actions when he took office in the fall was to shepherd a bill through the House that would have provided \$14.3 billion to Israel.

But it included steep cuts to the Internal Revenue Service, which Biden opposed.

The ultra-conservative House Freedom Caucus blasted Johnson for "surrendering" to pressure for an even larger package which is not offset by cuts.

Miss Japan gives up crown after affair

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

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

Then a scandal erupted over her private life after the weekly Shukan Bunshun magazine reported on her extra-marital relationship—a no-no for beauty pageant contestants, who are held to squeaky-clean moral standards. Japanese entertainment personalities who have affairs, dabble in drugs or suffer other scandals also often find themselves shunned by their fans and employers. The Miss Japan Association said it had accepted a request from Shiino to return the crown for "personal reasons", adding that there would be no Miss Japan for 2024.

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



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

Houthi claim fresh Red Sea ship attacks

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

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

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

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

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

Nikki Haley campaign requests Secret Service after security incidents

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

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

Palestinians hope Blinken visit can deliver Gaza truce before Rafah assault

DOHA (Internews): The top U.S. diplomat met Saudi Arabia's de-facto ruler on Monday during a Middle East visit. Palestinians hope will clinch a truce before a threatened Israeli assault on Rafah, a border city where about half the Gaza Strip population is sheltering. Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrived in Riyadh at the start of his first trip to the region since Washington brokered an offer, with Israeli input, for the first extended ceasefire of the war.

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

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

"The Secretary underscored the importance of addressing humanitarian needs in Gaza and preventing further spread of the conflict," Miller said in a statement.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"To be clear, intensi-

fied hostilities in Rafah in this situation could lead to a large-scale loss of civilian lives, and we must do everything possible within our power to avoid that," Laerke said. He urged the international community to make every possible effort to avoid such a scenario as continued heavy fighting in Khan Yunis forced many more to seek refuge in Rafah.

Della Longa from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) reported that 8,000 Gazans had left Al Amal hospital after Israeli authorities guaranteed safe passage. The IFRC spokesperson described the situation in Gaza as "beyond catastrophic," mourning the death of aid worker Hedaya Hamad from the Palestine Red Crescent Society.

Hamas proposes 135-day Gaza truce with complete Israeli withdrawal

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

Russian missile strikes on Ukrainian cities kills three

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

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

"Another massive attack against our state. Six regions were under the

enemy's strike. All our services are now working to cope with the consequences of this terror," Zelenskyy said on the Telegram messaging app. The Ukrainian air defence shot down 44 missiles and drones out of 64 launched by Russia in several waves of the attack, said Valeriy Zaluzhnyi, Ukraine's armed forces commander.

European Foreign policy chief Josep Borrell who is in Kyiv on a two-day visit to underline the EU's support for Ukraine.

President Dr. Alvi briefed: Wafaqi Mohtasib resolves 193,028 complaints; provides relief Rs4.898bn

ISLAMABAD (APP): Wafaqi Mohtasib has resolved a total of 193,028 complaints against the maladministration of government departments and provided relief worth Rs 4.898 billion to the citizens during 2023.

The Mohtasib processed a record 194,099 complaints during 2023, with processing witnessing a surge of 18 per cent, while the disposal of complaints increased by 22 per cent, as compared to 2022.

Wafaqi Mohtasib (Ombudsman) Ejaz Ahmad

Qureshi briefed President Dr Arif Alvi who visited the office of Wafaqi Mohtasib on Wednesday. The president had a briefing on the complaints received and resolved by the Ombudsman to ensure prompt relief to citizens during the year 2023, President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release.

Briefing the president, the federal ombudsman highlighted the role and performance of the institution. He informed that 193,028 complaints were addressed in 2023, with monetary relief of Rs 4.898

billion provided to the complainants. Furthermore, on the recommendations of Wafaqi Mohtasib, as many as 18,000 street children were enrolled in government schools in Islamabad. The meeting was informed that 85.4 per cent of Wafaqi Mohtasib's decisions were implemented last year, with efforts underway to further improve the ratio of the implementation. It was stated that the increased use of technology in Mohtasib had enhanced people's accessibility, with 48,190 complaints regis-

tered online in 2023, marking an increase of 47 per cent from 2022. Similarly, 22,321 complaints were received through Mohtasib's mobile App in 2023, representing a 21 per cent increase from 2022.

The meeting was also briefed on the Integrated Complaint Resolution System, processing 18,469 complaints in 2023, alongside Mohtasib's teams conducting Khuli Kutcheris and inspection visits to address people's grievances against government agencies.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi in a group photo during his visit to the office of the Wafaqi Mohtasib.



LAHORE: Pak Army soldiers patrol a road to ensure security ahead of general election, in Provincial Capital.

Speakers uphold self-determination at Pak-sponsored event, stressing its integral to freedom

UNITED NATIONS (APP): Pakistan Tuesday told a gathering of diplomats and rights advocates at the U.N. that the right of self-determination will not be fulfilled until all peoples who are under foreign occupation or settler-colonialism, especially Palestine and Kashmir, are able to exercise that right.

"The right of self-determination is bedrock of the modern international system," Ambassador Munir Akram said, warning that historically a colonial power has never succeeded in suppressing the right of self-determination of a determined people.

Ambassador Akram was speaking at a largely-

attended event, which was sponsored by Pakistan, in connection with Kashmir Solidarity Day. The topic of discussion was "Challenges to the realization of the Right to Self-Determination in the Contemporary Global Context", with speakers from all regions of the world upholding that inalienable right of peoples struggling for freedom.

"We are confident that the Palestinians, the Kashmiris and other oppressed people will ultimately secure their right to self-determination and freedom as most of us have done through the process of decolonization," the Pakistani envoy said.

Panelists at the Self-

determination event were: Ms. Fionnuala NiAolain, a professor at the University of Minnesota and former UN rights expert; Ambassador Maged Abdelaziz, permanent observer of the Arab League at the UN; Dr. Ghulam Nabi Fai, Chairman of the World Forum for Peace and Justice, and Hameed Ajibai, permanent observer for OIC at the UN.

After the presentations from the panelists, ambassadors and representatives of Algeria, Turkey, Morocco, Syria, Iran, Venezuela, Eritrea and India participated in the general discussion in which they also raised issues of concern to them.

ECP declares 16,766 polling stations highly sensitive, 29,985 sensitive

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has declared 16,766 polling stations highly sensitive and 29,985 as sensitive in the general elections across the country due to the prevailing security situation in those districts.

"The Returning Officer, Presiding and Assistant Officers have been delegated first-class magistrate to control the law and order situation at the polling stations, while Pakistan Army will be deployed outside the most sensitive polling stations," the ECP spokesman told APP.

The spokesman said that the ECP will use Election Management System

(EMS) to transmit and edit the results of the general elections, adding that no decision was taken yet to shut down the internet anywhere on Election Day.

"As many as 90,675 polling stations and 266,398 polling booths have been established across the country to ensure the right of the people to vote, while 1,490,000 election staffers will perform their duties of polling staff," he added.

He said the ECP has already fixed the election duties of the officers and employees for the general polls across the country, under which the staffers will perform duties in two shifts round the clock.

Aircraft carrying Pakistan's humanitarian aid for Gaza people arrives in Egypt

ISLAMABAD (APP): A special aircraft carrying 100 tons of relief goods donated by Pakistan for the suffering people of Gaza arrived in Egypt on Wednesday.

The plane carrying the fifth tranche of Pakistan's humanitarian assistance consisting of winterized tents, tarpaulins and blankets landed at El-Arish International Airport of Egypt.

The relief goods were received by the senior diplomatic officials of Pakistan for their onward delivery to Gaza.

This brings the total humanitarian assistance delivered by Pakistan for people of Gaza to 330 tons, Pakistan's Embassy in Egypt said on its X timeline.

Further deliveries are in the pipeline and will be delivered soon, it added.

This ongoing support underscores Pakistan's continued commitment to addressing urgent humanitarian needs of the people of Gaza.

Caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan says: Subversive acts in Killa Saifullah, Pishin conspiracy to sabotage peaceful election process

Governor strongly condemns blasts: says no one would be allowed to sabotage peaceful environment of Balochistan

INDEPENDENT REPORT QUETTA: The caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Ali Mardaan Khan Domki has condemned the explosions took place in Pishin and Killa Saifullah districts which claimed lives of several persons and left many injured on Wednesday.

In an official condemnation issued here on Wednesday, the Chief Minister expressed deep grief and sorrow over the loss of precious lives in the two blasts and injuries caused to several persons.

He also vowed to stop the subversive acts. He expressed sympathy and condolence with those died in the two blasts and prayed for the departed souls.

He also prayed for early recovery of the injured.

Meanwhile the Governor Balochistan, Malik Abdul Wali Khan has condemned the blasts occurred in Killa Saifullah and Pishin in strongest words.

In an official statement issued here on Wednesday, the Governor asserted that no one would be allowed to sabotage the peaceful environment of the province at any cost.

He exhorted the law enforcement agencies to take prompt steps against those elements creating law and order situation and trying to disrupt the election process in the province.

He also urged the law enforcers to foil the nefarious designs of miscreants who want to spread fear and harassment on occasion of the elections in Balochistan.

The Governor directed to the concerned authorities to provide best possible medical treatment to the injured of Killa Saifullah and Pishin blasts.

He prayed for the departed souls of those died in the two blasts besides praying for early recovery of those injured in them.

He directed to the law enforcement agencies to mobilize all available resources for arrest of the elements involved in the terrorism incidents.

The Chief Minister said that the subversive acts are conspiracy to disrupt the peaceful election process in the province.

He directed to the LEAs to take those involved in the blasts to task.

On the other hand, he asked the voters to not be scared of the situation and come out of their homes to use their right of franchise.

He assured that the security arrangements are being improved further, and

ECP issues guidelines for Form-45

ISLAMABAD (INP): With just only one day to go for general elections, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has issued instructions to the presiding officers (PO) for maintaining Form-45 after the polling process concludes.

Form 45, previously Form 14, is known as the statement of the count, according to the Election Commission of Pakistan.

It is supposed to show the number of valid votes for each contesting candidate and ballot papers excluded from the count. This form also includes gender-disaggregated data on the basis of male and female voters scored out from the electoral rolls in the relevant

polling booths.

According to the instructions, the electoral watchdog ordered the presiding officers to prepare Form-45 without failing.

"The Form 45 must be signed with their CNIC cards, taking signatures of polling agents at the polling stations," it said.

The presiding officers were told to ensure a brief reason in the form for refusal of signatures by the polling agents, pasting the copy of the form outside after their signatures and handing over to the polling agents.

The ECP noted that the presiding officers will be responsible for changes in the form.

EC not using any internet or public net: ECDGIT

ISLAMABAD (Online): Election Commission (EC) is not using any internet or public net and private net work is being used for results.

This was said by ECDGIT Khizar Aziz while talking to private TV channel here Wednesday.

He said RTS is not being used this time. We hold out assurance to nation Election Management System (EMS) is a special software. EMS has been provided to office of 859 Returning Officers (ROs) 4 data entry operators, 4 laptops and IT Equipment have been provided in RO office.

He held EMS has been installed in mobile phones of Presiding Officers. Presiding officer will take picture of form 45 and send it to RO. If signals are not coming then form 45 will automatically reach RO whenever signals come.



QUETTA: Provincial Secretary Health Abdullah Khan and CEO PPHI Hameedullah Khan Nasir inaugurate BHU Model at Kechi Baig.

Ballot papers EC rejects plea for recording PTI with name of independent candidate

ISLAMABAD (Online): Election Commission (EC) has rejected the plea for recording PTI as party with the name of independent candidate on ballot papers.

The reserved judgment on PTI candidate Suleman Akram Raja has been announced.

PTI candidate Suleman Akram Raja had prayed to EC to record name of PTI against independent candidates of PTI in form 33.

A five member bench

of EC headed by Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) had reserved judgment on the petition.

It was said in the decision issued by EC on Wednesday that election symbol was withdrawn for not holding intra party election.

The decision said Supreme Court has upheld EC decision. Therefore, the plea for recording name of party along with name of candidate in form 33 cannot be allowed.

Saudi Minister lauds Hajj arrangements

ISLAMABAD (Online): Saudi Minister of Hajj, Dr. Tawfig bin Al-Rabiyah, congratulated the Minister of Religious Affairs, Aneeq Ahmed, on his excellent and active performance related to Hajj arrangements.

In a letter received by the Saudi Embassy on Wednesday, Minister of Religious Affairs Aneeq Ahmed and his team were formally congratulated for winning the award.

It should be noted that on the occasion of the Int'l Hajj Expo held in Jeddah last month, Pakistan Hajj

Mission was presented with the award for the best and active Hajj Mission.

In his letter, the Saudi Hajj Minister also directed the Pakistani counterpart to complete the service contracts for the pilgrims before February 25 i.e., transport, Makatib, food, accommodation, air tickets and other services through Saudi "e-Hajj".

Saudi Hajj Minister Dr. Tawfig reiterated his commitment to continue full support for Pakistani pilgrims under the auspices of the custodians of the Holy Haram.

Bilawal, Zardari flay terrorist incidents

KARACHI (APP): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari on Wednesday strongly condemned terrorist incidents in Qila Saifullah and Pishin areas of Balochistan.

The two leaders sympathized with the families of those who lost their lives in the bomb blasts and prayed for the speedy recovery of the injured.

2 injured in blast near PTI MP candidate

SOUTH WAZIRISTAN (Online): Blast is reported to have taken place near vehicle of Nasirullah Wazir candidate of PTI Parliamentarian from PK-110 South Waziristan.

Two persons have been injured in bomb blast who have been shifted to hospital. Nasir Ullah was not present in his car at the time of explosion.

Nasir Ullah is former MPA and candidate from PTI Parliamentarian.

Pak envoy, Malaysian DG Immigration discuss issues of Pak nationals

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan High Commissioner in Malaysia Syed Ahsan Raza Shah met Director General Immigration Dato Ruslin bin Jusoh in Kuala Lumpur.

During the meeting the high commissioner raised immigration-related issues of Pakistani nationals in Malaysia.

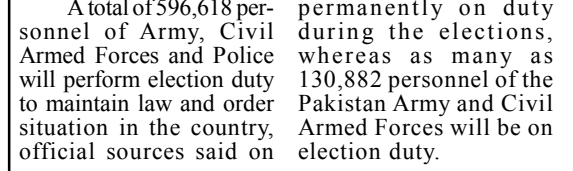
Over 596,000 Army, CAFs & Police personnel to perform election security

ISLAMABAD (APP): As the cool breezes of the outgoing winter season add flavour to the bright sunny days, the country's political fate is going to be decided on Thursday in the General Elections 2024 with over 596,000 Army, Civil Armed Forces and Police personnel being deployed across the country to maintain law and order for the smooth and fair electoral process.

A total of 596,618 personnel of Army, Civil Armed Forces and Police will perform election duty to maintain law and order situation in the country, official sources said on Wednesday.

The beefed-up security arrangements for General Elections 2024 have been ensured for peaceful conduct of the polls. Some 106,942 personnel of the Quick Response Force have been deployed across the country at the request of the Election Commission of Pakistan to conduct the Elections in a peaceful environment.

Besides, 23,940 security personnel will be permanently on duty during the elections, whereas as many as 130,882 personnel of the Pakistan Army and Civil Armed Forces will be on election duty.



QUETTA: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) Balochistan Chief, Maulana Abdul Wasay addresses to media persons during press conference.

Pakistani youth lauds Beijing's Intl environment

BEIJING (APP): Muhammad Ammar, who came from Pakistan around 18 years ago, and now works for an international education group in Beijing, has lauded international environment in the Chinese capital.

Beijing has greatly influenced his personal growth, and its international environment and various resources are unique advantages that have helped his career development.

"Beijing is almost my second home which helped me to connect with different multi-national organizations, different people and talents bringing a very unique advantages for my career development," he told China Daily.

"I have studied my high school, bachelor and

master degrees all from Beijing and Beijing has greatly influenced my personal growth," he added.

Ammar and his five other family members have studied at the Beijing Institute of Technology (BIT), forging an indissoluble bond with Beijing.

His father decided to bring the family to China after he saw many pictures in a magazine related to the infrastructure development of China as he felt that the Chinese people were very hard working to build their motherland.

"At a very young age, I naturally believed that I will come to China for study. So, in 2005, my two eldest sisters and me came to China for study," he added.



NASEERABAD: Members of Jamote Quami Movement are holding protest demonstration against Returning Officer of the Constituency PB-13, held outside Polling Station in Naseerabad.

Gwadar DC seeks dismissal of employees skipping election duty

GWADAR (INP): Deputy commissioner Gwadar on Wednesday sought the dismissal of 81 employees, who skipped election duty.

As per details, Gwadar deputy commissioner has penned a letter to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to highlight 81 employees skipping election duties in the area.

and four provincial assemblies will be held tomorrow. The election campaign by political parties and independent candidates concluded across the country last night.

The Election Commission has completed all arrangements for the polling. Ninety-thousand six hundred and seventy-five polling stations have been established in all four provinces.

A total of five thousand one hundred and twenty-one candidates are in the run for the National Assembly seats.

For the four provincial assemblies, 12695 candidates are in the field. There are a total of 128,585,760 registered voters in the country.

FM holds separate meetings with Norwegian, Australian envoys

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani on Wednesday held separate meetings with Ambassador of Norway to Pakistan Per Albert Ilsaas and Australian High Commissioner in Pakistan Neil Hawkins.

During these meetings, the discussions were focused on enhancing Pakistan's engagement and cooperation with Norway and Australia. Ministry of Foreign Affairs Wednesday, posted on its official account on social media platform X.



QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan presides over the meeting regarding Anti Corruption Department.