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Gwadar

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QUETTA: Members of Four-Party Alliance are holding protest demonstration against alleged rigging in General Election 2024, outside DC Office in Quetta.

PTI announces nationwide protest campaign on Saturday

Imran picks Omar Ayub as PTI's candidate for prime minister, Mian Aslam Iqbal as Punjab CM

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): In a significant development, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has officially nominated former provincial minister Aslam Iqbal as its candidate for the chief minister position in Punjab. This announcement came from PTI leader Barrister Gohar Ali Khan, signalling PTI's intent to solidify its leadership in the province. Speaking to the media on Thursday, Barrister Gohar also disclosed that PTI has put forward Salir Khan Kakar as its candidate

for the chief minister position in Balochistan. Moreover, the PTI has announced its plans for a nationwide protest scheduled for Saturday. "We will protest peacefully all over Pakistan on Saturday," Barrister Gohar added. Emphasizing the peaceful nature of the protest, the PTI leader asserted that the demonstration aims to convey a strong message against what the party perceives as electoral irregularities, particularly the alleged theft of 80 seats. "According to records,

the PTI has won 180 seats. Nobody has the right to form a government with a fake mandate," he insisted, adding that in the protest, they will give the message that 80 of their seats have been stolen. "The protest will be peaceful, and there should be no arrests," Barrister Gohar asserted. Addressing concerns over potential power-sharing arrangements, Barrister Gohar firmly stated that PTI will not engage in any such agreements with parties like the Pakistan

Peoples Party (PPP), Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), and Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM). Furthermore, Barrister Gohar affirmed Omar Ayub as the PTI's candidate for the prime ministerial position, reiterating the party's commitment to public service-oriented politics rather than pursuing power-sharing arrangements. He also claimed that the PTI was not going ahead with any alliance with the Pervez Khattak-led PTI-P.

Gas bomb: Caretaker govt raises tariff by 67%, effective from Feb 1

Monitoring Desk
ISLAMABAD: In a move that has stirred public outcry, the caretaker government has greenlit a 67% increase in gas prices, effectively burdening consumers with higher costs of living starting from February 1. The decision, approved in a meeting of the federal cabinet led by caretaker Prime Minister Anwarul Haq Kakar, follows the recommendation of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) to raise gas prices by a staggering 67%. This sharp hike in rates will apply to both protected and non-protected customers, translating to a surge of Rs100 and

Rs300 per MMBTU (million British thermal units), respectively. Notably, while the increase will apply to consumption charges, there will be no increase in fixed charges for both categories of consumers. However, bulk gas consumers will bear the brunt of a significant surge, facing a whopping increase of Rs900 per MMBTU. Furthermore, the CNG sector is set to face its own set of challenges, with prices anticipated to surge by Rs170 per MMBTU. Collectively, these price hikes are expected to impose an additional burden of Rs204 billion on all con-

sumers. The decision has sparked widespread criticism, with many decriing the government's imposition of further financial strain on an already beleaguered populace. As citizens brace for the impact of increased gas prices on their household budgets, concerns mount over the potential escalation of inflationary pressures across the economy. As the caretaker government drops a gas bomb on consumers within just days of its departure, it is also expected to raise the price of petroleum products as per the fortnightly adjustments.

Shehbaz apprises Nawaz of progress in talks with allies over formation of govt

LAHORE (Agencies): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President Shehbaz Sharif apprised three-time prime minister Nawaz Sharif on Thursday about the progress in the negotiations with the allies, including the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) in the centre. Shehbaz Sharif called on the PML-N supremo at Jati Umra. On this occasion, both leaders discussed the latest political position of JUI-F supremo Maulana Fazlur Rahman. A meeting of PML-N bigwigs was also held under the chairmanship of Nawaz Sharif. During the meeting, consultation was

held on the possible names of the Punjab cabinet. The possible names of the Punjab assembly speaker and deputy speaker were also considered. The consultations were also held regarding the inclusion of allies in the provincial cabinet and their possible ministries in the Punjab. In the meeting, Ishaq Dar, while giving a briefing on the joint meeting of the coordination committees of the PML-N and PPP, said, "There has been progress in matters regarding government formation, while the third meeting of the coordination committees will be held on Friday."



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister, Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar chairs a meeting of the Caretaker Federal Cabinet, in Islamabad.

Cabinet approves Syed Tariq's appointment as PBM MD

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Cabinet on Thursday approved the appointment of Syed Tariq Muhammad ul Hassan as Managing Director of Pakistan Baitul Maal (PBM). The decision was taken on the recommendation of Ministry of Poverty Alleviation and Social Security, according to a press release issued by the Prime Minister House Media Wing. Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar presided over the cabinet meeting. On the recommendation of the Ministry of Commerce, the cabinet approved the transit/transfer of vehicle spare parts and new tires used by the Country Office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in

Afghanistan from Karachi Port to Kabul. It was informed that such imports and their transfer to Afghanistan were prohibited to prevent smuggling in the country, however, the said spare parts and tires would be used by the United Nations and were not for commercial use. On the recommendation of the Ministry of Defence Production, the cabinet also approved the redeployment of Grade-20 officer Khan Nawaz of the Secretariat Group as Member Finance in the Heavy Industry Taxila. The cabinet, on the recommendation of the Finance Ministry, also gave its approval for the exemption of JS Bank's sponsoring shareholder Shabbir Ahmed Randiri from Sec-

tion (IV)(1)14 of the Banking Companies Ordinance. Under the exemption, Shabbir Ahmed would be able to exercise his voting rights in JS Bank Limited as a 7.06% sponsoring shareholder. Furthermore, on the recommendation of the Ministry of Interior, the meeting approved the handing over of Irfan Qadir Bhatti, an accused with dual citizenship, to the Kingdom of Norway. It was told that the Norwegian Government had alleged that the accused was involved in terrorism. The Additional Deputy Commissioner Islamabad was appointed as an inquiry officer, who after investigation came to the conclusion that the accused was involved in terrorism and other illegal activities.

Imran Khan was ousted on Gen Bajwa's directives: Fazlur Rehman

Monitoring Desk
ISLAMABAD: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) Emir Maulana Fazlur Rehman said Thursday that the no-confidence motion that ousted former prime minister Imran Khan was tabled on the directives of ex-army chief General (retired) Qamar Javed Bajwa. In an interview on a private news channel, Fazl, who was the chief of the multi-party alliance Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) responsible for removing Khan, said: "I was personally against the no-confidence move [...] but if I had said no despite insis-

tence of other parties, then an impression would've been given that I 'saved' the PTI founder." The PDM removed the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government in April 2022 and led by Shehbaz Sharif, the multi-party alliance ruled the country for 16 months before handing over the reins to the caretaker set-up. At first, Khan insisted that the US had him removed — a claim that the Joe Biden administration vehemently rejected. However, the ex-prime minister later shifted the blame to Gen Bajwa.



QUETTA: Caretaker Provincial Minister for Information Jan Achakzai meeting with Caretaker Home Minister Mir Muhammad Zubair Jamali

Independent MPs from Balochistan unite to join party for province's dev

QUETTA (INP): Newly-elected independent candidates from Balochistan convened a consultative meeting and unanimously decided to join a political party together. During the meeting, the newly-elected MPs, including Wali Noorzai, Maulvi Noorullah, Liaqat Lehri, Bakht Muhammad Kakar, and Asfandyar Kakar, participated, while Abdul Khaliq Achakzai

joined via video link. The MPs of the Balochistan Assembly resolved to adopt a unified stance for the development and prosperity of the province, affirming their collective commitment to representing the people of the province in the Balochistan Assembly. Sources said that these MPs are in contact with the provincial leaderships of the PML-N, PPP and JUI.

BUJ to move courts against wrongful termination of journalists

QUETTA (APP): The Balochistan Union of Journalists (BUJ) on Thursday decided to move courts against wrongful termination of journalists from several media outlets. The decision to the effect was taken in the inaugural meeting of the newly-elected BUJ cabinet, chaired by President Khalil Ahmed, at the Quetta Press Club. The BUJ's leadership voiced their concern over firing of journalists by the media outlets without any warning or prior consultation, and reaffirmed their commitment to defend the legal rights of the media workers. They emphasised, "Media owners cannot fire journalists from their respective organisations without serving any notice and fulfilling a due legal procedure."



Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf addressing the troops onboard PN ship during exercise SEASPAK 2024

Section 144 imposed in Hub

QUETTA (APP): The Balochistan government imposed Article 144 on Thursday following a clash between workers of two political parties in the Industrial Town area of Hub. Hub District Deputy Commissioner Munir Ahmed Musani requested the Department of Home Affairs and Tribal Affairs to impose Section 144 to prevent further clashes. Two political workers were killed and 13 injured as a result of firing by rival political parties at the RO office on the main RC road during the re-counting of votes. The Department of Home Affairs has issued a notification to enforce Section 144 in the district to maintain peace in the district bordering Karachi on the request of the DC Hub.

Naval Chief oversees conduct of Exercise Seaspark 2024

RAWALPINDI (APP): Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf on Thursday visited naval ships at sea, creeks areas on the coastal belt of Sindh and coastal areas of Balochistan to oversee the conduct of Exercise Seaspark 2024 and meet the deployed troops in the exercise. Exercise Seaspark 2024 is a major maritime exercise of Pakistan Navy (PN) which is regularly conducted after every two years on two force concept i.e. Blue Force (own force) and Orange Force (enemy force). The purpose of the exercise is to plan and conduct naval operations as per wartime procedures to check operational readiness, major mobilisation of personnel and practice coordination between various elements of PN to undertake complex operations, an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release said. During the operations

at sea, the PN warships and aircraft also detected Indian Navy ships, submarines and aircraft, attempting to covertly observe the exercise and interpret PN war plans. Accordingly, necessary safeguards were taken by the PN. During the visit of Maritime Headquarters at Karachi, the Chief of the Naval Staff was given a briefing by the Orange and Blue Naval Force Commanders on the conduct of operations by the respective forces. Thereafter, the Naval Chief visited Keti Bandar Post and Battalion Headquarters of Pak Marines at Shah Bandar where he was briefed on combat readiness for defence of Creeks areas which constitutes the South Eastern maritime boundary with India. During the visit, the Naval Chief interacted with the troops deployed in difficult marshy areas and appreciated their devotion and high morale.



QUETTA: Provincial President PML (N) Sheikh Jaffar Mandokhail, newly elected MNAs and MPs Jam Kamal Khan, Jamal Shah Kakar, Abdul Rehman Khetran, Shoaib Nausherwani, Masood Luni, Zarak Khan Mandokhail and other addressing a Press conference

AJKECP issues arrest warrants of Ali Amin

MUZAFFARABAD (Online): Azad Kashmir Election Commission has issued arrest warrants of former minister for Kashmir affairs and nominated Chief Minister KP Ali Amin Gandapur. Petition on violation of election code in AJK general election 2021 by Ali Amin Gandapur was filed against him. Deputy Commissioner (DC) D.I Khan has been ordered to present Ali Amin Gandapur in Azad Kashmir as he has not appeared despite being summoned by election commission repeatedly. Ali Amin Gandapur was arrested and presented on February 28.

ANP rejects alliance with PTI, citing electoral rigging

PESHAWAR (INP): After Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), the Awami National Party (ANP) has also declined to forge an alliance with the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). ANP leader Mian Ifthikhar Hussain stated that the party's position stemmed from the belief that supporting PTI in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa resulted in ANP's loss of seats. He explained that given these circumstances, negotiations with PTI were deemed inappropriate by the ANP. The ANP has already announced plans to protest against electoral fraud, result alterations and financial misconduct during the elections.



QUETTA: A delegation of teachers led by Master Abdul Karim meeting with Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar

Achakzai urges public reject calls for disruption from losing candidates

QUETTA (APP): Caretaker Balochistan Provincial Information Minister Jan Achakzai on Thursday urged the public to reject calls of agitation by the unsuccessful candidates and parties of elections, instead, he encouraged citizens to keep their role in efforts to promote national development and prosperity. Minister Achakzai emphasized that creating chaos and blocking roads is not a solutions to existing problems. He characterized such actions as attempts by "rejected individuals" to mask their disappointment with the electoral outcome. He advised those with

genuine concerns to seek legal recourse rather than resorting to disruptive protests. Furthermore, the Minister appealed to individuals blocking roads to consider the impact on ordinary citizens. He urged them to demonstrate peacefully on the side of the road, allowing for unimpeded traffic flow, if their intentions are truly focused on public well-being. While acknowledging the democratic right to peaceful protest, he warned that obstructing roads and disregarding the law would not be tolerated for long.

ECP dismisses Nawaz's plea against defeat in NA-15 Mansehra

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Thursday binned the plea of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz supremo Nawaz Sharif against his defeat in NA-15 Mansehra. According to unofficial and unconfirmed results

from all polling stations in the constituency, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf-backed independent candidate Shahzada Gustasp Khan won the seat with 105,249 votes, while Nawaz Sharif remained second with 80,382 votes.

Daily Voice of Masses
Independent

Staged show

The country barely survived the trailer; now, it appears, a full five-year show has been penned for PDM 2.0. There is little that can be considered new or improved, and there are very few changes in the cast: the PML-N will once again take the lead under Shehbaz Sharif, with the PPP content with reprising its supporting role.

There will be the usual favourites — parties that were first herded into the PTI government, and then into the PDM: MQM, PML-Q and BAP, as well as familiar faces from the IPP. The directors will continue calling the shots, especially on critical matters like the economy and foreign affairs.

Their 'backing' will be the glue that holds the rickety government together, with legislation likely to be reduced to an on-demand farce. This ragtag bunch of 'patriotic' politicians will soon resume their mission of 'saving' Pakistan, despite making a hash of it the first time around.

It will be grating not only to PTI sympathisers, who voted for change, but also PML-N supporters how this arrangement has come to pass. The latter were told that these elections would usher in Nawaz Sharif's fourth term as PM. Instead, it seems like his party ended up using his name and stature to strengthen another candidate's hand.

Mr Sharif may have had an idea he was not the 'preferred choice', which could be why he did not campaign as aggressively as he was expected to. The manner in which his victory in this election was announced also seemed designed to put him in a corner. It is puzzling, though, why the seasoned politician did not refuse to play once it became clear he was being manipulated.

His decision to, instead, give the government to Shehbaz Sharif was a sad reminder of all that he had achieved and was made to lose over his career. Still, he has ensured that his daughter will get a head start. The Sharifs have deemed Maryam Nawaz ready to take over as Punjab chief minister—a major responsibility. It remains to be seen how successful she is in regaining lost ground.

Meanwhile, the PPP has emerged as the most astute of the lot. It is likely to secure several constitutional posts despite refusing to carry the PML-N's baggage.

The other parties will also be accommodated, most likely through various ministries: the PDM's last term, too, had featured an obscenely bloated cabinet. But how will the alliance address the country's challenges this time around?

It will not be easy to tackle economic despair, social fragmentation, deep political polarisation and having to please allies while governing with a dubious mandate. Another big challenge will be to demonstrate some stability to international lenders. Has it learned from experience, and will it do a better job?

A lousy election

F.S.Aijazuddin

Pakistan is the only faux-democracy that holds general elections yet learns nothing from each experience.

Many remember the general elections of December 1970 — the first (and some say only) free and fair elections in our history. The electoral mood then bordered on the euphoric. President Ayub Khan's ham-fisted experiments with Basic Democracy had been relegated to oblivion. His renegade ex-foreign minister, Z.A. Bhutto, had launched his PPP. He crisscrossed the country, mustering support for his home brand of social democracy.

At the time, I happened to be in Gambat, in the interior of Sindh, managing our family textile mill. Political loyalty in that area was sharply divided between the feudal Pir Pagaro and the progressive Mr Bhutto.

Both sought to call on me to raise election contributions. My family was divided: the eldest brother followed Pagaro, another Bhutto. I was told to receive Pir sahib. During our discussions, Pir sahib predicted victory for his group.

After the results came in, I called on Pir sahib at Pir jo Goth to congratulate him on the victory of his candidate (his brother Sain Nadir Shah) over his PPP rival. Seeing me, Pir sahib crowed: "We have won by a margin of 35,000 votes." I replied: "Pir sahib, by my calculation, you've actually lost by 95,000 votes. If in your own stronghold of Sanghar, so many dared vote for the PPP and not you, you have actually lost by that number."

Fifty-four years later, the scenario of 1970 has been repeated. Then, the Bengali leader Mujibur Rahman was in jail in West Pakistan. Yet,

never be the same." Even before the results have been sanctified by the Election Commission, President Dr Alvi regretted that ballot papers were being hand-counted when the ECP/Nadra had the last five years to perfect the electronic voting machine system.

Even as the political parties jostled for supremacy, the COAS (speaking for the establishment) cautioned them: "Elections are not a zero-sum competition of winning and losing but an exercise to determine the mandate of the people. Political leadership and their workers should rise above self-interests and synergise efforts in governing and serving the people."

Such a belated homily notwithstanding, many Western pundits believe that the election results are an indictment of hybrid democracy. They foresee an uneasy alliance between the same parties whose last PDM coalition removed Imran Khan's PTI government two years ago. The new coalition may all too soon fulfil the prophecy made by a 17th-century Royalist to his Roundhead captors: "Now that you have done with us, go fight among yourselves."

Following the 1970 electoral impasse, Dr Henry Kissinger met Gen Yahya Khan on July 8, 1971. He recalled: "Am I a dictator?" Yahya Khan asked every American and Pakistani present. Naturally, everyone protested that he was not. When Kissinger's turn came, he told Yahya bluntly: "I don't know, Mr President, except that for a dictator you run a lousy election." How many more elections will be needed to delouse our democracy? -- Courtesy Dawn

Even before the ballot papers had been distributed, Nawaz Sharif had warned his sponsors that he would not accept the premiership if he was not given a clear majority. His ambition has been scuttled. His PML-N with 73-plus seats must now cobalt with the PPP's 54-plus in a coalition euphemistically labelled a 'national unity government'. As one wit put it: "They are all the same in the fact that they will

House of Lord

Shahzad Sharjeel

It is not for the first time that people are fighting over places of worship; and unfortunately, it appears not to be the last. After the consecration of Ram Mandir in Ayodhya recently, Varanasi, or Banaras, as it was known historically, has become the focus of another masjid-mandir controversy. A court has ordered that the mosque's basement be opened to Hindu worshippers. The Muslim caretaker is said to be concerned about a Babri Masjid-like fate.

Ayodhya-Kashi-Mathura is the BJP/RSS ambition in terms of reclaiming India, nay Bharat, for Hindus. The Gyanvapi mosque is adjacent to the Kashi Vishwanath temple in Varanasi, which is venerated as a place where Lord Shiva manifested his presence. The temple had been attacked and destroyed many times in history, the last being on Aurangzeb's directives. The current temple was built on an adjacent site by Ahilyabai Holkar, a female Maratha ruler, in 1780.

Mathura, also in UP, is important in the Hindu religion because it is considered the birthplace of Lord Krishna. The Keshavdeva temple, part of a complex built to mark Krishna's janamasthan, was destroyed on Aurangzeb's orders, and the Shahi Idgah mosque is believed to have been built on its site. The question is if it will stop there. So

far, as political expediency goes, it has to. The BJP reclaims the three sacred sites of Hinduism it considers usurped, declares a victory, and moves on. Pushing it any further would be more than just counterproductive; it would be stupid.

The ambition of projecting itself as a global power must be tempered with inclusion and restraint. All the gilded mandirs worldwide would not make India shine if it allowed exclusion's dark shadow to eclipse it at home.

The controversy behind it is well-known but worth summarising. Around 1922, Lahore's Hindu community built a temple in the Shah Alam neighbourhood. The Muslims insisted that a mosque be made on the adjacent plot. The matter was taken to the British court, and legend has it that the Muslims of the area overnight built a mosque to trump any adverse court order. Since the mosque was made without the requisite permission of the municipal committee, it was razed by the government.

The quaint little mosque one sees presently was constructed in 1934. It would be interesting to know if the temple that spurred the Muslim fervour to build the mosque overnight, with shops on the ground floor, is anywhere to be found today. One is reminded of Jamal Ehsani's couplet: Let us admit that we have all done wrong or have been brainwashed into be-

lieving stuff that does not reflect the whole truth. The destruction wrought by Mahmud of Ghazni, including the sack of the Somnath temple, is still taught in schools.

Most readers would know that famous Indian author Khushwant Singh wished to be buried in Hadali, a town in Khushab, Pakistan, where he was born in 1915. A plaque outside his school commemorates its illustrious student who, among his other scholarly achievements, wrote one of the most comprehensive histories of the evolution of Sikhism. The plaque has Mr Singh's ashes mixed in it. Very few would know that Jaswant Singh, a one-time BJP stalwart, a member of the Lok Sabha, leader of opposition in the Rajya Sabha; a man who held the portfolios for external affairs, defence, and finance through times as tough as the Pokhran nuclear tests, Ka-argil, the Kandahar hijacking, the scuttled Agra peace summit, attacks on Kash-mir and the Indian parliament; wished for his ashes to be released into the Hingol river in Balochistan. His wish was fulfilled.

Is it too much to hope the region's people could live in peace and interact as neighbours do, instead of waiting for their mortal remains to be united with the soil their ancestors called home? Variations of the following verse are attributed to Bulleh Shah, the 18th-century Sufi: -- Courtesy Dawn

Commerce News

President Alvi underscores need to promote creativity

ISLAMABAD (INP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Thursday underlined the need for nurturing the 'intellect ability' and 'innovative ideas' of the educated youth to achieve the required goals of national progress and prosperity.

"Pakistan does not lack solutions [to confronted issues] but the doers," he said while addressing the award distribution ceremony of the grand finale-III of the country's biggest ideas competition held under the National Idea Bank (NIB) vision, organised by the National University of

Technology (NUTEC) and ASPIRES Pakistan.

He said the ideas, shared by the youth in the competition, needed such an environment where these could be transformed into qualitative and competitive products, enabling the country to increase its exports and reduce imports.

President Alvi said he had been proponent of exploring innovative ideas for the last 15 years. He said this was the best forum through which the youth could be engaged to seek innovative ideas.

"This is era of human resource and innovation so

the intellectual ability is the most important in this regard," he added.

Sharing success story of the country's data management on scientific lines coupled with ideal civil-military cooperation during COVID-19, he said Pakistan was declared the third best performing country in the world, while its neighbouring countries were far behind in this index. He said Pakistan had utilised the experience and data collected during nationwide anti-polio drives to properly manage the disease spread. He said the country should have to make similar and effective

policies to improve world ranking in other areas as well. He said some 26.2 million children were currently out of school across the country.

The president pointed out that this area too needed proper attention as without developing human resource, the country could not compete with the world. He also raised questions about the validity of the recent polls, asserting that the introduction of electronic voting machines (EVMs) could have averted the chaos surrounding the election results.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi in a group photo with the winners and organizers of the National Idea Bank Season III, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.



ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Pakistan Association of Large Steel Producers (PALSP) and Industrialists of KP led by Senator Noman Wazir call on caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

PCJCCI for Pakistan-China cooperation in mulberry seeds

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan-China Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCJCCI) President Moazzam Ghurki said on Thursday that Pakistan is importing silk worth Rs 67 billion and it produces more silk locally, it will provide employment to 600,000 people mostly the rural women.

Sharing his views in a think-tank session here at PCJCCI Secretariat, he added that Mulberry is one

of the most popular fruits in Pakistan.

Mulberry trees, fast-growing and small to medium-sized, are being cultivated in rural areas of Pakistan. Apart from wide presence in Punjab, these can also be found in KPK, Abbottabad, and Gilgit-Baltistan.

"Thanks to the hot climate, the growth period of mulberry trees in Pakistan is about 10 months, which means its leaves can be harvested

several times within one year," he said.

Ghurki said that it is a fruit tree with no part going waste its leaves can be used as feed for silkworms, which provide silk for the textile sector; its branches are used to make different types of baskets that can be seen in almost every rural house of Pakistan.

Its fruit is edible and can be processed into mulberry juice, powder, jam, vinegar, and tea.

Pak IT companies to contribute 3.1b USD

LAHORE (APP): Experts at the Information Technology Career Fair have said that Pakistan's IT companies based on services and products will contribute 3.1 billion dollars in 2024.

The 13th Career Fair was organized by Punjab University Faculty of Computing & Information Technology (FCIT), sponsored by Dubizzle Labs here on Thursday. More than 65 leading IT companies from the software industry set up their stalls to hire the

graduates of FCIT from a batch of around 500 coming from domains of computer science, software engineering and information technology. PU Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Khalid Mahmood, FCIT Dean Prof Dr Shahzad Sarwar, faculty members and a large number of students were present on the occasion.

Addressing the ceremony, PU VC Prof Dr Khalid Mahmood said, "We all have to play our role to get Pakistan out of the crisis."

Pak-China friendship strengthening with passage of time: SCCI

PESHAWAR (APP): Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Fuad Ishaq said there is no doubt that Pak-China friendship is unmatched which is further strengthening with the passage of time and its example is that events are being held on eve of new Chinese year across the Pakistan.

Fuad Ishaq was speaking at an event at China Window Peshawar

and inauguration of a culture exhibition, arranged by students of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University Peshawar (SBBWUP), held in connection with China New Year here on Thursday.

The SCCI chief praised artwork and paintings of the students displayed during the exhibition and said citizens of Peshawar will get aware about Chinese culture through this event.

Steel industry acknowledges PM for assuring support

ISLAMABAD (APP): A delegation of Pakistan Association of Large Steel Producers (PALSP) on Thursday met with caretaker Prime Minister for Anwar ul Haq Kakar and acknowledged the government support for industry.

The delegation included leading member of long steel manufacturers which included senior members of PALSP including Senator Nauman Wazir Khattak, Abbas Akberali, Javid Mughal,

difficult period for industries amid exorbitant interest rates, sky rocketing cost of inputs especially electricity prices etc.

In order to bring the Steel Industry out of the current situation, the PALSP delegation urged the PM that the Govt must take effective measures to facilitate steel sector.

PM Kakar keenly heard all the issues of industry and assured govts full cooperation and support.

Gold rates up by Rs.300

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold increased by Rs.300 and was sold at Rs.211,100 in the local market on Thursday against its sale at Rs.210,800 on last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat also increased by Rs.257 to Rs.180,984 from Rs.180,727 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat gold went up to Rs.165,902 from Rs.165,666, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

PARC to install solar seed potatoes production

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Agriculture Research Council (PARC) in collaboration with the Korean Program on International Agriculture (KOPIA) would provide a 100-kilowatt solar system for seed potato production using aeroponics technology to boost virus-free seed production in the country.

The KOPIA-Pakistan Center also

intended to provide about 160,000 tons of certified seed potatoes during the next five years under its Technical Cooperation Project, which will further strengthen the government's efforts to produce certified high-yielding seed potatoes to enhance its output in the country, said Chairman PARC Dr Ghulam Muhammad Ali.

Ombudsman Punjab plays vital role in by providing justice to the people: Baligh

Independent Report
LAHORE: Ombudsman Punjab, Major (Rtd) Azam Suleman met Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman at Governor House Lahore. During the meeting, the Ombudsman Punjab Major (Rtd) Azam Suleman informed the Governor Punjab about various steps taken to provide speedy justice to the petitioners.

Speaking on the occasion, Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman said that the office

of Ombudsman Punjab is an easy and effective means of providing cheap and quick justice to the people. He said that he appreciates the Ombudsman Punjab and his team for the good work. Governor Punjab said that the office of Ombudsman Punjab is playing an important role in the improvement of the system by providing justice to the people. He lauded the Ombudsman Punjab office for redressing the grievance of the complainants in a short period of time. Governor

Punjab further said that initiatives such as digitization of the Ombudsman Punjab office and mobile app for resolving the problems of overseas Pakistanis are commendable. Ombudsman Punjab Major (ret'd) Azam Suleman said that research and development wing has been established in the office of the Ombudsman. He said that the ombudsman Punjab received a record number of 35,139 applications in the last year and all of them were disposed of.



LAHORE: Ombudsman Punjab, Major (Rtd) Azam Suleman meeting with Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman at Governor House.

NACTA delegation, DG Info KP discuss media role in peace

PESHAWAR (APP): A two-member delegation from National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) on Thursday met with Director General Information and Public Relations here at his office and discussed matters relating to the role of Information Dept in promotion of peace in the province. The role of media, especially the Radio in providing timely and accurate information to the general public was also discussed in detail.

DG Information KP, Muhammad Imran said the media has played a pivotal and responsible role in maintaining lasting peace in the province. To further improve its

capacity and sphere, the Information Dept has established FM radios in the far-flung areas of the newly merged districts from where transmission in local and Pashto languages was continued. He said the role of people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in promoting national harmony and cohesion was of the prime importance adding that the Radio in providing timely and accurate information to the general public was also discussed in detail.

He said ten radio stations of the department were proving credible information to the public besides informing them regarding their responsibilities.

Health Deptt issues working days for MTI hospitals

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Health Department issued a declaration of days for working in MTI hospitals on Thursday with the approval of Health Advisor Dr. Riaz Anwar.

The days were approved in light of MTI Policy Board recommendations, according to the official letters. "Working days will be implemented at MTIs Hospitals and its affiliated colleges," according to the notification issued in this connection by the health department KP.

Fire erupts in residential house in Peshawar

PESHAWAR (APP): A fire suddenly broke out in the house of a person, namely Faheem Khan, in Yousafabad Dir Colony here Thursday, said an official of the Rescue 1122. He disclosed that the fire erupted due to a short circuit, and as soon as the information was received, the fire vehicle of Rescue 1122 reached the accident site and started extinguishing the fire; however, no casualties were reported as a result.



GILGIT: Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan Haji Gulbar Khan presiding over the meeting of the steering committee on Power department at CM Secretariat.

KP govt signs MoU for digital skills training

Independent Report
PESHAWAR: A memorandum of understanding was signed between the Higher Education Department of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Cultural Communication Center on Thursday to increase the skilled workforce in the province.

The signing ceremony of the memorandum took place at the Pakhtunkhwa House in Islamabad, says a handout.

In addition to the provincial ministers Dr. Amir Abdullah, Dr. Najibullah, and Dr. Qasim Jan, relevant officials of the provincial government also participated.

The Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Justice (Ret'd) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah, participated in the ceremony via video link. According to the memorandum of understanding, two hundred thousand students from the province's public colleges will be trained in various fields of digital skills.

Students receiving training in digital skills will

also be provided employment opportunities in domestic and international markets.

Syed Arshad Hussain Shah said that the memorandum of understanding between the provincial government and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Cultural Communication Center is a major success for the current provincial government.

Chief Minister said that this partnership will prove to be crucial in fulfilling the requirements of digital skills in the province.

Court dismisses bail petitions of two co-accused in Gujrat development projects case

LAHORE (INP): An accountability court on Thursday dismissed bail petitions of two co-accused in a case of alleged corruption in Gujrat's development projects against Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf President Chaudhry Parvez Elahi. The court dismissed bail petitions of co-accused, Muhammad Khan Bhatti, former principal secretary to chief minister, and Asif Mehmood.

Accountability Court Judge Zubair Shahzad Kiyani

Two minor sisters burn to death as hut catches fire

MUZAFFAR GARH (APP): Two minor sisters burn to death while another girl sustained injuries as hut of wood caught fire in Basti Goram Pitafi chowk on Thursday. According to Rescue officials, three minor girls including two sisters were present into their house when suddenly fire erupted in hut made with wood near Basti Goram Pitafi chowk Mondka road. As a result, seven years old Hijab d/o Ansar and 8 Nayab d/o Ansar burn alive while 8 Dua Fatima d/o Abid sustained serious

ATC orders to seize property of PTI leaders declared POs

LAHORE (Online): Anti Terrorism Court (ATC) Lahore has ordered to seize the property of PTI leaders who have been declared proclaimed offenders. Court has ordered to seize their moveable and immoveable properties. Under this order 2 residential plots and one bank account of former provincial minister Mian Aslam Iqbal, 5 agriculture lands in Swati Enterprises and properties in US and Dubai of former federal minister Azam Swati Decision has been taken to arrest 9 newly elected members of assembly including Ali Amin Gandapur involved.

Over 10,000 students to get eco-friendly electric bikes in Punjab: Minister

Independent Report
LAHORE: Caretaker Provincial Transport Minister Ibrahim Hassan Murad Thursday said that his government has inaugurated a landmark project to distribute over 10,000 electric bikes among students from various educational institutions where such students in Lahore, Faisalabad, Multan, Bahawalpur, and Rawalpindi would be the primary beneficiaries of this initiative.

Around 7,000 electric bikes would be allocated to male students, while 3,000 will be designated for

female students, he said while talking to a Private news channel.

He said that these students must have a driving license while such an eco-friendly initiative will reduce environmental pollution, adding, that electric two-wheelers will offer long-term financial advantages to these students and would overcome their financial expenditures.

The launch of electric bikes can overcome the problems of exertion and would not take much time to reach their destinations, he added.



LAHORE: The pilgrims of Haji are being guided with all possible efforts by the Ministry of Religious Affairs on the styles of medical camp and training camp in Haji Camp.

ATC orders to seize property of PTI leaders declared POs

LAHORE (Online): Anti Terrorism Court (ATC) Lahore has ordered to seize the property of PTI leaders who have been declared proclaimed offenders. Court has ordered to seize their moveable and immoveable properties. Under this order 2 residential plots and one bank account of former provincial minister Mian Aslam Iqbal, 5 agriculture lands in Swati Enterprises and properties in US and Dubai of former federal minister Azam Swati Decision has been taken to arrest 9 newly elected members of assembly including Ali Amin Gandapur involved.

and 3 agriculture land, one residential property, 2 vehicles and 35 horses of Ali Amin Gandapur 2 residential properties, 2 bank accounts and 2 vehicles of Andeeb Abbas will be seized. Order has been issued to seize 2 agriculture lands, 2 residential properties, 5 bank accounts, one vehicle 3 plots flats, 51 percent shares in Swati Enterprises and properties in US and Dubai of former federal minister Azam Swati Decision has been taken to arrest 9 newly elected members of assembly including Ali Amin Gandapur involved.

International News

At least 11 civilians, including children, killed in Israeli strikes on Lebanon

BEIRUT (Online): At least 11 people, including children, have been killed in Israeli strikes on villages in southern Lebanon, according to a report.

A hospital director and three Lebanese security sources told Reuters that 11 people, including six children, were killed during strikes the Israeli military carried out against villages across southern Lebanon on Wednesday.

The Tel Aviv regime said in a statement that it had responded to an earlier rocket attack conducted by the Lebanese Hezbollah resistance movement that killed an Israeli trooper. The resistance group, however, did not announce any operations on Wednesday.

Initial reports had said four civilians were killed in

the strikes.

Hezbollah and Israel have been trading near daily cross-border fire since the occupying regime waged a deadly war on Gaza on October 7.

Hezbollah, whose constant rocket fire has prompted tens of thousands of Israeli settlers to flee from the northern areas of the occupied territories, says its operations are meant to support Gaza's resistance.

Two security sources said that a woman and her two children had been killed in an Israeli strike on the village of al-Sawana on Wednesday.

Another strike on a building in Nabatieh claimed the lives of four more children, three women and a man, according to the

director of the town's hospital, Hassan Wazni, and three other security sources. Wazni further said that seven people were also wounded in the strikes.

Sources also said that four Hezbollah fighters were also killed in separate strikes.

Hezbollah has warned it would expand the anti-Israel front in the south if the occupying regime escalated its acts of aggression against the Lebanese territory and the Palestinians in the besieged Gaza Strip.

The resistance group has vowed to keep up its retaliatory operations as long as the usurping entity continues its aggression against Gaza, which has so far killed more than 28,500 Palestinians, mostly women and children.



PARIS: Former French president Nicolas Sarkozy arrives for the verdict on his appeal in the so-called 'Bygmalion' case over illegal campaign financing.

Netherlands joins coalition to supply Ukraine with advanced drones

Monitoring Desk
THE HAGUE: The Netherlands is joining a military coalition with allies including Britain that will supply Ukraine with advanced drone technology and bolster its offensive capabilities in the war against Russia, the Dutch defence minister said.

The pledge from the Netherlands comes in addition to F-16 fighter jets, artillery, ammunition and air defence systems provided by the Dutch to Kyiv.

there may be additional costs on top of 2 billion euros earmarked already for 2024. Dutch Defence Minister Kasja Ollongren told Reuters in an interview ahead of two days of NATO defence minister meetings in Brussels starting on Wednesday.

"We know of course that drones are very important in this war," Ollongren said. "That's why we are joining the drone coalition that Ukraine has started together with Latvia.

Thailand warns of high pollution in capital, officials to work from home

BANGKOK (Internews): Thai authorities warned that pollution levels in Bangkok and surrounding provinces had hit unhealthy levels on Thursday, ordering government employees in the capital to work from home for the next two days and urging others to do the same.

Air pollution is caused by a combination of crop-related burning, industrial pollution and heavy traffic, and a smoky haze covered the Bangkok's skyline. Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin told reporters that crop burning was the main culprit behind the spike, but added that around quarter of the pollution was from vehicles, a factor "we can control". Swiss air quality tracking website IQAir said the level of fine inhalable particles in the city was 15 times higher than the recommended level by the World Health Organization, making it the world's 8th most polluted city on Thursday.



Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi meets with Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva to discuss the latest developments in the Gaza Strip amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, at the Ittihadiya presidential palace in Cairo, Egypt.

Hezbollah says Israel will 'pay price' after deadly day

BEIRUT (Internews): Hezbollah said on Thursday Israel would pay "the price" for killing 10 people including five children in southern Lebanon, the deadliest day for Lebanese civilians in four months of hostilities across the Lebanese-Israeli border.

An Israeli strike killed seven people in the city of Nabatieh late on Wednesday, including three children, sources in Lebanon said. It followed an earlier attack that killed a woman and her two children in the village of al-Sawana at the

Putin says Europe greening capitalising on climate fears

MOSCOW (Internews): Russian President Vladimir Putin criticised the green movement in Europe for capitalising on peoples' fears about climate change, while questioning Germany's commitment to phasing out coal.

Long demonized by Germany's Green party, which leads some of the government's top ministries, coal was due to be phased out by 2030, but Russia's conflict with Ukraine and gas export curbs brought coal back into favour.

UNRWA funding freezes risk 'aiding' deaths in Gaza: Saudi official

Monitoring Desk
RIYADH: Freezing funds to the UN agency for Palestinian refugees risks "aiding" the deaths of civilians in Gaza, the head of Saudi Arabia's humanitarian agency told AFP on Tuesday.

Several countries—including the United States, Britain, Germany and Japan—have suspended funding to the UNRWA agency in response to Israeli allegations that some of its staff members participated in the

Democrats pick up seat in US House as Suozzi wins in New York

NEW YORK (Internews): Democratic former congressman Tom Suozzi won a special U.S. House of Representatives election in New York on Tuesday, narrowing an already razor-thin Republican majority that has struggled to pass legislation. The seat became available after the House took the extraordinary step of expelling Republican George Santos, whose dizzying array of lies about his biography led to his indictment on fraud charges.

1 dead, children among 21 injured in Super Bowl parade shooting in US

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: One person was killed and children were among the 21 injured after a mass shooting at the Kansas City Chiefs' Super Bowl victory rally on Wednesday triggered panic among huge crowds of fans.

Shots rang out moments after jubilant Chiefs players addressed a vast, cheering crowd, sending shocked fans and VIPs fleeing in a tragic end to what had been a joyous morning of celebrating the NFL champions.

Police said three people had been taken into custody after the attack near Kansas City's Union Station, but the motive behind the shooting was still under investigation.

Fire department chief Ross Grundyson told a press conference that many

of the victims had sustained "life-threatening injuries."

A local DJ, Lisa Lopez, was killed in the assault, her radio station said. "This senseless act from her family and this KC Community," KKKFI posted on its Facebook page, referring to Kansas City.

Children's Mercy Hospital said it was treating 12 people—11 of them children, nine for gunshot wounds—after the shooting. A hospital spokesman said all were expected to recover.

Paul Contreras, who was at the rally with his three daughters, said he tackled and disarmed one of the suspected shooters before the police arrived. "I got the right angle on him and I hit him from behind.

Special counsel urges US Supreme Court to rebuff Trump in immunity fight

WASHINGTON (Internews): The special counsel prosecuting Donald Trump on federal charges involving the former president's efforts to overturn his 2020 election loss urged the U.S. Supreme Court on Wednesday to reject Trump's bid to further delay trial proceedings as he presses his claim of immunity.

"The nation has a compelling interest in seeing the charges brought to trial," Special Counsel Jack Smith said in his filing to the justices, adding that "the public interest in a prompt trial is at its zenith where, as here, a former president is charged with conspiring to subvert the electoral process so that he could remain in office." Smith's filing responded to a request by Trump's lawyers on Monday to put on hold a decision by a three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit rejecting the claim of presidential

immunity from prosecution.

If the justices do not immediately reject Trump's request, Smith asked that they take up the case and hear it on a fast-track basis.

Smith said Trump's criminal charges reflect an alleged effort to "perpetuate himself in power and prevent the lawful winner of the 2020 presidential election from taking office." The charged crimes strike at the heart of our democracy. "A president's alleged criminal scheme to overturn an election and thwart the peaceful transfer of power to his successor should be the last place to recognize a novel form of absolute immunity from federal criminal law," Smith added.

Trump's lawyers asked the justices to halt the trial proceedings pending their bid for the full slate of judges on the D.C. Circuit to reconsider the case, and, if necessary, an appeal to the Supreme Court.



ISLAMABAD: A delegation of READ Foundation call on President Dr Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

President for enhancing public-private partnership to educate out-of-school children

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Thursday said that the cooperation between public and private sectors was inevitable to educate around 26 million out-of-school children in the country.

The president, in the meeting with a delegation of Read Foundation - a non-profit organization - led by Muhammad Shafiq Khan, said that the education and self-dependence of the orphan children were essential for an inclusive society.

Similarly, he also called for a special focus on girls' education to make the country achieve progress.

The president lauded the services of the Read Foundation in the fields of education and welfare.

He said that the educational institutions played a key role for the human resource development.

In the briefing about the Foundation's contribu-



QUETTA: A group photo of Director PID Abdul Manan Babar during a luncheon hosted by him in honour of APS Press Information Department Muhammad Yasin Bangulzai on eve of his retirement.

Caretaker Federal Interior Minister visits FIA headquarters

ISLAMABAD (APP): The minister appreciated the performance of Wings saying that the FIA has a very important leading role in homeland security and safety.

The initiation of projects to modernize FIA is welcoming, said the minister adding that the importance of modern technology has increased to cope with the modern day challenges and effective use of technology to prevent human trafficking and cyber-crime is the need of the hour.

It is also very important to enhance the capacity of investigators and align them with modern requirements, said the minister adding that the overseas Pakistanis are our valuable asset who are playing an important role in the country's development.



HUB: View of site after traffic accident due to over speeding and break failed, at Quetta-Karachi Highway road near Winder in Hub.

Private Hajj bookings set to commence today: Ashrafi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister's Special Representative for Religious Affairs and Pakistani Diaspora in Middle East and Islamic Countries, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi on Thursday announced that the private Hajj organizers would start booking for the Hajj 2024 from Friday, February 16, nationwide.

Addressing a press conference along with Hajj Organizers Association of Pakistan (HOAP) Chairman Jamal Khan Tarakai, Vice Chairman Haji Sanaullah and other representative, said the intending pilgrims within the country and abroad could grab this sacred opportunity till February 25.

Ashrafi who is also the chairman of Pakistan Ulema Council expressed optimism about the possibility of extending the application submission deadline by a month through private Hajj organizers' platform. He revealed that Hajj quota allocated to the private Hajj organizers was 89,604 pilgrims, with fifty percent quota of 44,802 pilgrims is reserved for Sponsorship Hajj Scheme.

Ashrafi urged the government to provide all possible assistance to the intending Pakistani overseas pilgrims for smoothly remitting their funds in the local financial institutions. He proposed that it would be far better if they could be allowed to send their money into the private Hajj organizers' accounts in Saudi Arabia through International Bank Accounts Numbers (IBAN).

Sherry confirms nomination of Zardari for presidency

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) senior leader Senator Sherry Rehman clarified on Thursday that no formal discussions have taken place with Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) regarding coalition government formation.

Talking to a private news channel, Senator Rehman emphasized that while there have been discussions with the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) regarding government formation, no such talks have occurred with the PTI.

Sherry Rehman expressed openness to dialogue with all parties, stating, "Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) seems to be confused; PPP's doors are open for everyone for discussion."

Furthermore, she highlighted the ongoing formation of provincial committees and the process of provincial government formation with allies.

Senator Rehman said that peaceful protest was the democratic right of everyone, but apolitical sit-ins and mob demonstrations could undermine national stability.

She underscored the importance of political and economic stability for the country's progress.

There is option of reserved seats allocation for PTI: Kanwar

ISLAMABAD (INP): Kanwar Dilshad has said that there is option of the allocation of the NA reserved seats for the PTI.

Talking to a private TV channel, Dilshad, a former secretary of the ECP, said that the election commission could seek a way out on the PTI's petition.

"There are past instances of such facilitation," he said. "Hopefully the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) will give consideration to the request," Kanwar Dilshad said.

"It could get relief, if the PTI submits petition to the election commission about an agreement with another party," former ECP official said. "If the electoral body rejects the request, the Supreme Court could resolve the issue," he was opined.

He said the lawyers should leave their politics and go to the election commission.

Kaira says: PPP entrusts mandate to PML-N for govt formation

ISLAMABAD (INP): People's Party leader Qamar Zaman Kaira has said that the PPP has delegated mandate to the PML-N for formation of government.

It is to be mentioned here that Kaira has been a member of the six-member committee of the People's Party that had been entrusted for talks with other political parties.

Kaira said that the PPP will not get ministries but field its candidates for the Parliament and the assembly offices.

"We would have also work with the PTI, but the party's founder has closed that door," PPP leader said. "He has said that the PTI will not hold talks with three parties," Kaira said. Kaira stressed that Pakistan required collective decision-making.

He said Maulana Fazlur Rehman's antagonism towards Asif Zardari have no reason. "The PPP extending its reach to the JUL as well as other political parties," he said.

"When the parties contest elections they criticize policies of other parties," he said.

"If the People's Party or the PML-N will stay away from government formation, Pakistan will enter into a new crisis," Qamar Zaman Kaira said.



QUETTA: Caretaker Provincial Minister for Finance Amjad Rasheed presiding over a meeting regarding financial issues of Balochistan's public sector universities. Caretaker Education Minister Dr. Qadir Bakhs and other officials are also present.

Pakistan calls for UNSC's urgent intervention to impose ceasefire in Gaza

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan on Thursday called upon the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to fulfill its responsibility mandated under the UN Charter and to urgently intervene to impose a ceasefire and bring an end to the massacre of the Palestinian people.

"The siege of Gaza must be lifted to prevent further deaths and suffering from famine and non-availability of decent medical care. Pakistan stands resolute in its unwavering diplomatic, moral, political, and humanitarian support to the besieged people of Gaza," Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said in her weekly press briefing.

Calling for an immediate reversal of the decision by some countries to suspend UNRWA's funding, she reiterated Pakistan's endorsement of the OIC's condemnation of ongoing Israeli military aggression against Gaza and the expansion of indiscriminate attacks on the Rafah city.

She said that the OIC had raised alarm on expansion and escalation of the pace of the Israeli aggression and warned against an unacceptable attempt to forcibly displace the Palestinian people from their land.

"Israel's merciless onslaught against the 1.4 million displaced people in Rafah is a blatant defiance of the provisional measures outlined by the International Court of Justice in its interim order," she remarked.

Highlighting the Kashmir issue, the spokesperson said India's campaign to curb dissent in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) remained in full swing.

"On 10th February 2024, India's National Investigation Agency (NIA), conducted multiple raids on 15 properties of Jamaat-i-Islami, Kashmir in different cities. These raids were part of an ongoing crackdown against the Kashmiri political organizations. Jamaat-i-Islami is one of the six political organizations already proscribed by India," she said. The spokesperson urged the Indian authorities to end intimidation and persecution of the Kashmiri political activists and parties, also calling for the release of all Kashmiri political prisoners and activists.

"As far as Yasin Malik is concerned, we have expressed our serious concerns about his prolonged and continued imprisonment. We have condemned the illegal and fictitious cases in which he has been framed and we have also rejected the basis of awarding him the death penalty," she added.

"Pakistan will continue to extend political, diplomatic and moral support to our Kashmiri brothers and sisters for the just and peaceful settlement of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in accordance with the UN Security Council Resolutions," she reiterated.



KARACHI: Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM-P) Convener, Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui along with other leaders and party workers addressing a press conference, at Bahadurabad Markaz in Karachi.

ATC declares 11 PTI leaders proclaimed offenders

LAHORE (INP): An anti-terrorism court (ATC) on Thursday declared 11 Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders proclaimed offenders (POs) in a case of torching a container at Kalma Chowk, during May 9 riots.

The leaders include Azam Khan Swati, Muhammad Zubair Khan Niazi, Murad Saeed, Hammad Azhar, Mian Aslam Iqbal, Intiaz Ahmad Sheikh, Wasiq Qayyum Abbasi, Musarrat Cheema and Jamshed Cheema.

ATC Judge Muhammad Naveed Iqbal passed the orders while allowing an application, filed by the police for the purpose.

The investigation officer had filed the application for declaring the PTI leaders proclaimed offenders, stating that hectic efforts were made for the arrest of the accused but they could not be arrested as they went into hiding to avoid arrest.

JI announces to issue white paper on rigging in election

LAHORE (Online): JI while announcing to issue white paper on the result of general election has said we will go to Election Commission (EC) and court against election rigging.

"The seats won by JI in election were snatched from it through worst rigging. We demand of chief election commissioner to resign, this was said by Naib Amir JI Liaqat Baloch while addressing a press conference here in Mansoor Thursday.

He said election 2024 also remained controversial. The entire nation rejects the result of the election.

He went on to say the winners and losers of election 2024 are both worried. This election is in continuity of past election.

The politics in Pakistan has become a game. Engineering is done for government making. The desired results are achieved by targeting 30, 35 constituencies and these results are imposed on the entire nation.

He remarked Pakistan was dismembered through election rigging in 1977.

Every time they talk of puncture, some time opening boxes and some time placing them again.

He remarked the result of form 45 is changed on the basis of result of form 47.

KP to become Afghanistan's Tora bora under Gandapur CM tenure: PMLN

PESHAWAR (INP): Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) chapter spokesperson Akhtiarwali Khan on Thursday rejected the results of KP and alleged that KP to become Afghanistan's Tora bora with Gandapur as CM.

It is pertinent to note that Tora Bora is linked to the battle of Tora Bora on December 3-17 2001 wherein a U.S.-led coalition attacked the cave complex of the White Mountains at Tora Bora in Afghanistan.

He alleged that the PTI founder adopted the anti-state agenda by appointing Ali Amin Gandapur as the Chief Minister.

"If Ali Amin Gandapur becomes the CM, a situation similar to Balochistan will arise in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. PTI is plotting to make Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Tora-Bora," he alleged. He said PML-N rejected the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa election results.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has nominated Ali Amin Gandapur as the Chief Minister candidate of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP).



QUETTA: A large numbers of vehicles stuck in traffic jam due to negligence of traffic police staffs and illegal parking, in Quetta.

Court bars repatriation of Afghan's transgenders

PESHAWAR (INP): The Peshawar High Court on Thursday issued a temporary order barring the repatriation of 16 Afghan transgender women and directed authorities to stop harassing registered Afghan transgender migrants residing in Pakistan.

The order came in response to a writ petition filed by the transgender women against their potential deportation under a government decision to repatriate all Afghan nationals. Their lawyer argued that their lives would be in danger if they were sent back to Afghanistan, where persecution of transgender individuals is widespread.

Justice Shakeel Ahmed and Justice Waqar Ahmed heard the petition, acknowledging the precarious situation of Afghan transgenders in their home country. However, the court also clarified that foreign nationals do not have the same rights as Pakistani citizens and can only stay if they have valid visas.

Despite this, the judges noted that even registered Afghan refugees with valid documentation, including Proof of Registration (POR) cards, were being harassed by authorities. They deemed such actions unacceptable and damaging to Pakistan's international reputation. Therefore, the High Court directed authorities to halt the repatriation of the 16 Afghan transgender women and keep their deportation on hold until further proceedings. The Court also ordered to end the harassment of registered Afghan transgender migrants as they are protected under Pakistani law and must be treated with dignity and respect.

This decision provides temporary relief to the affected transgender women and highlights the ongoing challenges faced by this marginalized community in both Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Re-polling in six polling stations for NA-43 on Monday

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has directed to conduct re-polling in six polling stations of NA-43, Tank-cum-Dera Ismael Khan, on February 19, (Monday).

According to ECP spokesperson, re-polling in these six polling stations, initially planned for Feb 17, has been moved to Feb 19. The polling on Feb 8 was interrupted because of the law and order situation.



QUETTA: Caretaker Provincial Minister for Finance Amjad Rasheed presiding over a meeting regarding financial issues of Balochistan's public sector universities. Caretaker Education Minister Dr. Qadir Bakhs and other officials are also present.