

Independent

dailyindish@gmail.com

Chief Editor: Syed Farooq Shah

www.dailyindependent.com.pk

Gwadar

Ph: 2841470/2841473 Vol: XIX No. 249, Shaban 08, 1445 AH Monday February 19, 2024, Pages 04, Price Rs.15



QUETTA: Caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki visiting different roads and shopping centers of Quetta city

Caretaker CM pays surprise visit to Quetta city: Ours' constitutional obligation to provide peace to traders & general public: Domki

Expresses satisfaction over law & order situation and normal life in metropolis; emphasizes upon adopting legal course for removing any of the reservations

Independent Report

QUETTA: The caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki has insisted that the legal course should be adopted to remove any of the reservations in accordance with the country's laws. He said that it is our constitutional obligation to provide peace to the traders community and general public, and for the purpose, all available resources are

being mobilized by the interim government.

The caretaker Chief Minister was on surprise visit to the Quetta city on Sunday afternoon. He was accompanied by the caretaker Provincial Minister for Home, Mir Zubair Jamali, Commissioner Quetta, Muhammad Hamza Shafiqat and Additional Inspector General of Police, Jawad Ahmed Dogar. Mr. Domki visited different main roads and bazaars including Jinnah road, Zarghoun road, Mission road, Gulistan road, Prince road, Bacha Khan chowk, Mannan chowk, Liaquat bazar and reviewed the rou-

time life there.

During the course of visit, the Chief Minister expressed satisfaction while witnessing the normal life in different parts of the metropolis.

He was also satisfied that general public and traders didn't become part of any illegal action or course, which is a welcoming.

He on the occasion stressed the need to adopt legal course to remove any reservation in accordance with the country's laws.

He said that the legal and peace course is solution to all issues. The Chief Minister also said that no

such act that causes inconvenience to the general public is not fair.

He expressed the hope that the traders and general public would not be used for any individual interests.

In the meantime, the caretaker Provincial Minister for Home, Mir Zubair Jamali, Commissioner Quetta, Muhammad Hamza Shafiqat and Additional Inspector General of Police, Jawad Ahmed Dogar briefed the caretaker Chief Minister about the overall

law and order situation besides the steps taken for restoration of peace in the metropolis.

Bilawal rejects power-sharing formula offered to PPP

Asif Zardari will be PPP's candidate for presidency, reiterates ex-foreign minister

THATTA (INP) – Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, the chairman of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), on Sunday stated his party was proposed a power-sharing arrangement in which the prime minister's position would be alternated between two parties. Speaking at a rally in Thatta, Bilawal revealed, "I was offered to let one party hold the prime ministership for three years, and then the other could take over for the remaining two years."

Rejecting the proposal, the PPP chief said, "I refused because I don't want to attain the prime ministership through such means. If I were to become the prime minister, it

would be through the mandate of the Pakistani people."

Bilawal reiterated that his party would not take any ministries in the cabinet of the coalition government [being cobbled by the PML-N], but would vote for [its candidate for] the prime minister in the Center.

"If you want PPP's vote, then don't ask us to be part of the cabinet, just give projects for the people of Sindh."

Bilawal, however, announced that Asif Ali Zardari would be PPP's candidate in the presidential election.

He urged all political parties to work within the constitutional framework

and contribute to the nation's progress. He cautioned against divisive politics based on religious, ethnic or sectarian lines.

Challenging political figures Pir Pagara and Maulana Fazlur Rehman, Bilawal invited them to present all their election documents (Form 45s) to him. He pledged to contest elections against them if found guilty.

Regarding election grievances, Bilawal announced PPP's decision to gather complaints from supporters nationwide and address them through appropriate channels. He emphasized the importance of peaceful protest if legal recourse failed.

PTI demands judicial probe into electoral rigging following ex-commissioner's 'confession'

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has called for an investigation into alleged irregularities and alterations in electoral outcomes by a judicial commission.

During a press conference, PTI leaders Barrister Gohar Ali Khan and Omar Ayub claimed that their party secured 180 seats across the country, but their majority in Punjab was minimised.

Citing the admission of rigging by former Rawalpindi commissioner Liaquat Ali Chhattha on Saturday, Gohar demanded the establishment of a judicial commission to investigate his confession, asserting that the former commissioner spoke out according to his conscience.

Omar Ayub, PTI's nominee for the position of prime minister, insisted that the judicial commission's report should be made public. He stressed that individuals mentioned by the former commissioner should not be part of the investigation, further suggesting that Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa and Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja remain separate from the proceedings.

Ayub maintained that JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman's admission regarding the engineered no-confidence vote against the former PTI government, along with Liaquat Ali Chhattha's confession regarding electoral malpractices, corroborated PTI's stance.



THATTA: Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addresses to his supporters during the public gathering meeting held in Thatta.

On call given by 4-Parties Alliance: Wheel jam strike observed on national highways across Balochistan

Highways remained block on different locations; general public including women & elderly persons as well as transporters suffer due to blockade of roads across province

Independent Report

QUETTA: The wheel jam strike was observed on almost all national highways of the Balochistan province on Sunday.

The call for observance of the wheel jam strike was given by the 4-Parties Alliance comprising Balochistan National Party (BNP), Pashtoonkhw Milli Awami Party (PkMAP), National Party and Hazara Democratic Party (HDP) against the alleged rigging in the results of general elections in Balochistan.

Following the wheel jam strike, the highways

connecting Quetta to interior parts of the province and country remained blocked at different locations.

The workers of four parties mainly BNP, PkMAP and NP created hurdles and staged dharnas on different highways blocking the main road arteries of the province.

The Quetta-Chaman-Pishin-Muslim Bagh-Killa Saifullah and Loralai highway was blocked by the workers of four parties near Baleli and Kuchlak. Similarly, the Quetta-Kolpur-Mach-Sibi highway was blocked by BNP workers at Darakhshan Scheme suspending the traffic leading to Jacobabad, Sukkur and then Punjab.

Moreover, the Quetta-

Mastung-Karachi and Quetta-Taftan highway was blocked near Son Khan police station located in the outskirts of Quetta near western bypass.

The Quetta-Khuzdar-Karachi highway was also blocked at Kalat while Quetta-Harnai and Harnai-Punjab highway was blocked at different points in Harnai area.

Meanwhile, according to the reports, the Makran coastal highway was also blocked at Surbandan area suspending the movement of traffic from Karachi to Gwadar and other parts of Makran division. Similarly, Pasni zero point was blocked by the NP and BNP workers interrupting the flow of traffic from Gwadar to Karachi and Turbat.

connecting Quetta to interior parts of the province and country remained blocked at different locations.

The workers of four parties mainly BNP, PkMAP and NP created hurdles and staged dharnas on different highways blocking the main road arteries of the province.

The Quetta-Chaman-Pishin-Muslim Bagh-Killa Saifullah and Loralai highway was blocked by the workers of four parties near Baleli and Kuchlak. Similarly, the Quetta-Kolpur-Mach-Sibi highway was blocked by BNP workers at Darakhshan Scheme suspending the traffic leading to Jacobabad, Sukkur and then Punjab.

Moreover, the Quetta-

PPP to form govt in Balochistan with PML-N's support: Sarfraz Bugti

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Amid prevailing political uncertainty regarding the formation of government in the Centre, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader Sarfraz Bugti Sunday claimed that the party would form its government in Balochistan with the support of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). "The PML-N would be our ally in Balochistan [as it has] given us a clear signal to form our government [in the province]," Bugti said while addressing a press conference in Islamabad along with party's parliamentary committee members Haji Malik Shah and Sardar Sarbuland Khan.

His remarks come as the Bilawal Bhutto-led party is in pole position to form its government in the country's western province after securing 11 seats in the 51-member provincial assembly, whereas the PML-N bagged 10 seats.

Despite engaging in a war of words in the run-up to the elections, both parties, who have previously served as close allies during the Pakistan Democratic Movement's government, are on the way to once again emerge as key political stakeholders following the PPP's announcement to back the PML-N's candidate for the prime minister's post after none of the two parties managed to secure a simple majority in the polls.

President summons senate session

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr. Arif Alvi has summoned a session of the Senate to be held on February 19 (Monday) at 3 PM.

The president summoned the session of the Senate in the exercise of the powers conferred by clause (1) of Article 54 of the Constitution, said a notification issued by the Senate Secretariat.

The Senate is likely to take up questions, calling attention to notices, legislative business, and matters of public importance.

Five passengers killed in Lasbela bus collision

LASBELA (INP): At least five people were killed and several others sustained injuries when two passenger buses were collided on Coastal Highway Kund Malir area in the Lasbela district of Balochistan on Sunday.

According to rescue officials, the collision occurred at the Coastal Highway Kund Malir, a popular tourist spot. The victims were immediately transported to the DHQ Hospital for medical treatment, a private news channel reported. According to a Police source, one bus was heading from Karachi to Gwadar whereas the other from Gwadar to Karachi.

Three laborers killed during well cleaning in Quetta

QUETTA (APP): Three laborers were killed on Sunday while cleaning a well at Sabzal Road Uzbek Chowk in Quetta.

According to the private news channel, the incident occurred due to gas filling during the cleaning of the well.

Two of the three laborers have been identified as Abdul Baki and Abdul Wali.

The bodies were extracted from the well and shifted to the nearby Bolan Medical Complex Hospital.



ISLAMABAD: PTI leader Umar Ayub addresses press conference.

Parliamentary group of PML-N Balochistan's meets; discusses about formation of government

Independent Report

QUETTA: The parliamentary group of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Balochistan met here in Quetta the other day.

According to the PML-N sources, the meeting of party's parliamentary group was held with its provincial president, Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhail in the chair.

The meeting decided the matters about formation of government in Balochistan. In this regard,

it was decided to bring the candidate for slot of Chief Minister Balochistan from within the party. During the course of meeting, a committee was also formed for talks with the independent members-elect and other political parties.

The sources quoted the party's provincial president as saying that smaller parties and independent members are wanting to support the candidate of PML-N for the slot of Chief Minister Balochistan.

Wheel jam strike of four-parties alliance failed: Jan Achakzai

Independent Report

QUETTA: The caretaker Provincial Minister for Information, Jan Achakzai has stated that the wheel jam strike of the four-parties alliance has been failed in the province.

In an official statement issued here on Sunday, the caretaker Minister Information said that all important highways remained open, however, flow of traffic remained lesser on some highways due to the closed holiday, Sunday. Jan Achakzai said that the Sardars and Nawabs have been punishing the common men for rejecting them in the 2024 general elections. However, they should not harm the welfare of general public, but should go for the legal forums, adding he stressed.

Three die in road accident in Uthal

In yet another road accident in Balochistan, three people were killed when two passenger buses collided with each other on the Coastal Highway near Uthal city of the province.

Several others, including women and children, were injured in the incident.

Similarly in Daska, Punjab, four friends were killed while another sustained serious injuries in a road accident.



ISLAMABAD: Leader of Pakistan People's Party Sarfraz Bugti addressing a press conference in the Federal Capital.

Nine terrorists killed in two separate IBOs in KP

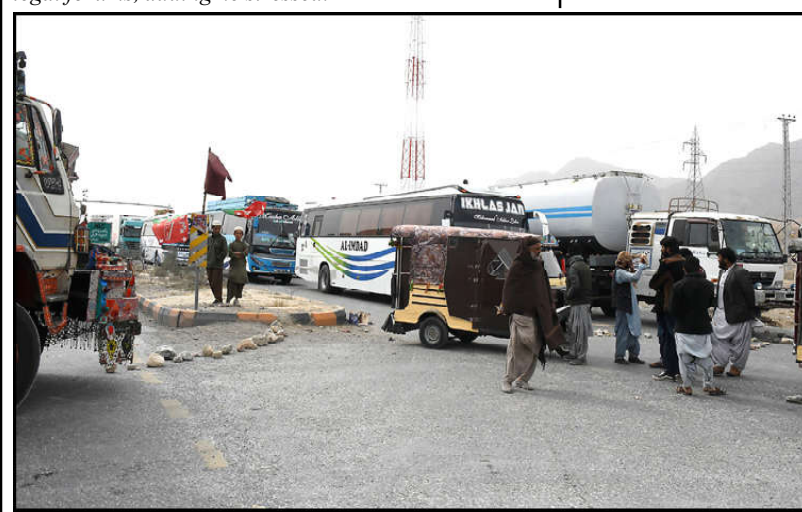
RAWALPINDI (Online): Nine terrorists were gunned down by the security forces during two separate intelligence-based operations conducted on February 16 and 17 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province.

According to the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR), two terrorists including a high-value target identified as Rehmat Ullah alias Badar Mansur and Amjad alias Babri were killed in an intelligence-based operation conducted by the security forces in Tank District.

In another operation conducted in the South Waziristan District, after an intense fire exchange, seven terrorists were sent to hell. Weapons, ammunition,

and explosives were also recovered from the killed terrorists, who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities in the area against the security forces as well as extortion and target killing of innocent civilians.

However, during the operation, a brave son of the soil, Sepoy Shahzeb Aslam (age 29 years; resident of district Haripur), having fought gallantly, embraced Shahadat (martyrdom). "Security forces of Pakistan are determined to wipe out the menace of terrorism from the country and such sacrifices of our brave soldiers further strengthen our resolve," the ISPR said.



QUETTA: A view of traffic jam on the national highways due to Char Jamaati Ittihad protest against the alleged interference in the elections.



LAHORE: Newly elected MPA from Balochistan Mir Asim Kurd Gailo meeting with President PML (N) Shahbaz Sharif.

Shehbaz Sharif calls for unity for nation's rebuilding

LAHORE (INP): Former prime minister and PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif has said on Sunday that instability in the country will benefit none, and dangers to the country's economy call for concerted efforts to build Pakistan.

Talking to the newly elected independent candidates from Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Shehbaz said that previously, too, the PML-N governments had saved the country from default, and this time too it

would be his priority as the prime minister of the country to do the same.

"Those bent upon spreading anarchy in the country are still doing the same thing they had been doing in the past," he said.

PML-N president was of the view that former prime minister Nawaz Sharif and the PML-N supreme Nawaz had always preferred national interests to his own. "What we intend to do is to save the country from crises."

Daily Voice of Masses
Independent

Chaos unfolding

It seems there will be no avoiding the inevitable for the ECP. Rawalpindi commissioner Liaquat Ali Chattha's Saturday press conference, during which he dropped bombshell allegations against the CEC, has strengthened the demands for an immediate and independent audit of election results. The senior officer, while expressing regret for "facilitating" the rigging of election results, asked to be punished while also holding the respective heads of the judiciary and ECP responsible for "the theft of the people's mandate".

Lending credence to allegations that have been made by scores of contestants from different political parties over the past 10 days or so, Mr Chattha said that, on his orders, candidates who were winning with large margins in the constituencies of the Rawalpindi division were made to lose, while the losing candidates were declared victorious.

"I am taking responsibility for this wrongdoing and telling you that the chief election commissioner and the chief justice are also completely involved," he alleged.

A commissioner is no ordinary officer. They are some of the most powerful bureaucrats in service, handicapped by the state to oversee entire administrative divisions. By virtue of their position, they exercise immense power and influence over the machinery of the state. It is, therefore, no surprise that Mr Chattha's 'confession' has caused quite a storm. It has been widely extolled as an example of a bureaucrat resisting pressures from powerful quarters and choosing to stand on the right side of history.

However, one must also remain wary of confirmation bias. Humans have a tendency to believe anything that affirms what we already hold to be true. For this reason, it is in everyone's best interest that Mr Chattha's claims are immediately and thoroughly investigated and that any supporting evidence that is unearthed be brought before the public. The claims he has made cannot be dismissed; at the same time, however, one must exercise increased prudence during times of growing uncertainty.

These elections will be remembered as perhaps the most controversial electoral exercise held in the last few decades. The credit for this unforgettable ignominy will accrue mainly to the ECP, which, despite being empowered by the law in every possible manner to conduct "free, fair, impartial and inclusive" polls, betrayed its mandate in the worst possible way. Its failure to ensure transparency in the vote-counting process, in particular, has caused unaffordable chaos, with multiple stakeholders now unwilling to accept the results given how stark the irregularities seem. Instead of addressing the public's apprehensions or assuring them that issues in results tabulation will be promptly looked into, the ECP has chosen to stay mum. Now, much more serious allegations are being levelled against senior officials of the state. The commission must wake up. Its silence is causing irreparable harm.

All about women

Muna Khan

I understand that politics is the art of compromise, but why must women's bodies be sacrificed at the altar of deal-making?

This question weighs heavily on my mind, but I've accepted this is just the way things are going to be here. Men accused of sexual assault, for example, will be awarded seats because that crime won't be considered as grievous as their opponents' loot maar. I was reminded of just how little value is placed on women when news of Imran Khan's decision to nominate Amin Gandapur broke.

I understand enough politics to know that you won't find a perfect candidate or one that will appeal to various stakeholders. However, since Gandapur's name was announced, many questions were raised across prime time shows, leading with his alleged role in May 9 violence. It would be grossly unfair to reward him with such a high seat when people are imprisoned on the same charges. Many people brought up his sexist remarks made at jalsas about Maryam Nawaz, saying she spent Rs80m on taxpayers' money on cosmetic surgery. (It was not denounced by the party leadership or supporters.) What few mentioned on mainstream media, but it figured on social media, were the serious allegations about his alleged support to the perpetrators of a crime where a teenage girl was stripped and paraded naked in his native D.I. Khan in 2017. He has denied those charges.

That the chairman thought it more important to send a certain message to the country with Gandapur's nomination is the reminder I needed about women

being sacrificial lambs again and again in deal-making. What disappoints me the most is the women who support this. I'm talking about the party supporters who blast 'feminists' for not standing up for a host of issues related to PTI but stay silent when women are thrown under the bus by their party leadership.

Gandapur should not be the hill anyone wants to die on.

It is possible to support a party and criticise its policies. PTI has some of the most passionate women supporters and leaders, many of whom do not subscribe to these horrendous views. I hope they will take co-urage and denounce anti-women rhetoric.

Unfortunately, Gandapur is not alone in the brazen display of misogyny but how can we make it unacceptable to hold such views, at least in public office? You can't eradicate misogyny but surely there is another road away from systems built on a disregard for women's participation in public life.

This is why language matters, especially if they frame policies. Remember when we celebrated Afghans for having 'broken the shackles of slavery'? It demonstrated a lack of thought to the consequences the Taliban's return to power will have on women. Today, there is no indication when the Taliban will lift a ban on secondary education for girls, or working in government or travelling far without a male relative or even going to parks. Social services, like the healthcare sector, are in a dire state. There is a cost to this ban on women's participation in the country's progress. The UNDP put a figure on it: an estimated five per cent of the country's GDP.

Perhaps one way forward is to stop thinking of issues as women's issues. No issue only impacts women — be it her health or her freedom of movement. Women's issues impact everyone; they require urgent redressal, which won't happen if their well-being is an afterthought; if she herself perceives her safety, health, access to services was not taken into consideration when creating XYZ policy.

We should strive to live in a country where people think twice before saying something sexist for ratings or giggles. Instead, we live in a country where the portrayal of toxic masculinity, domestic violence and regressive female roles are considered ratings gold. Our pace of reforms towards gender equality is painfully slow. We ranked 142 out of 146 countries on the Global Gender Gap report in 2023; it was 145 out of 146 in 2022. This is nothing to cheer.

The small optimist in me says things don't have to be this way. Pakistan doesn't have to keep featuring in lists of worst countries for women's rights. That there is more to women than their reproductive ability or place in the family or ties to power.

I understand the new government has the economy as its foremost priority but stability cannot come if half the country's demographic is ignored. Policies must include contributions women can make in stabilising Pakistan. Investments must be made in sectors that will enable their full participation, starting with health and education, which will lead to an increase in the labour force. All TV analysts are saying the new government has to take tough decisions. I hope they will make the right ones, too. -- Courtesy Dawn

GB without rights

Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry

Mohammad Hussain, who hails from Ghanche in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) and has been working in a household in Lahore, watched in despair as the whole of Pakistan, except for his own fellow Baltis, went to vote for their preferred candidates in the Feb 8 election. Hussain asked his boss why his folks were not allowed to vote. He could not understand the complex answer to this simple question.

GB's political fate has been hanging in the balance for the past seven decades, even though on the eve of partition, the people of Gilgit Agency and many other northern areas, who had hardly accepted the suzerainty of the Dogra rulers, expressed their wish to join Pakistan. However, the political fate of these territories got linked to the dispute between India and Pakistan over Jammu and Kashmir. Ever since, the territories of Gilgit, Skardu, Diamer, Astore, Ghanche, Ghizer, and Hunza have been under Pakistan's administrative control. Their people join the civil and armed services, carry Pakistan national identity cards, and for all practical purposes are Pakistanis. Yet, they cannot join our National Assembly and Senate to participate in Pakistan's governance.

Successful governments have tried to enhance GB's administrative autonomy, particularly in 2009 and 2018, but have fallen well short of what the people of GB have repeatedly demanded: full integration into Pakistan. In January 2019, the Supreme Court extended its jurisdiction to GB, creating an anomaly, because constitutionally GB was not a part of Pakistan. In March 2021,

the GB Legislative Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution demanding provisional provincial status with representation in the constitutional bodies of Pakistan. Further, GB residents feel that while Pakistan took from the resources of GB, it was reluctant to give it constitutional status.

There is political consensus in Pakistan to admit GB as a provisional province. Under prime minister Nawaz Sharif, the Sartaj Aziz Committee recommended in 2016 giving GB a provisional provincial status. Prime minister Imran Khan's government had also announced in 2020 that GB would be granted a provisional provincial status. And yet, the status quo is so hard to break, mainly because the integration of these territories into Pakistan could undermine the UNSC resolutions calling for determining the political fate of the entire state of Jammu and Kashmir through a plebiscite under UN auspices. So, for nearly 76 years, the people of GB have been waiting for the plebiscite.

Is such a plebiscite likely to happen anytime soon? The ground reality is that India has consistently and brazenly refused to implement UNSC resolutions in the Kashmir dispute. The Modi government went a step further to annex the occupied territory in August 2019, and is currently engaged in demographic and electoral engineering to change the Muslim-majority status of India-occupied Kashmir in blatant violation of the UNSC resolutions.

However, given India's large market and strategic partnership with the US, there is no real pressure of the international community on India to fulfil its obligations under the resolutions. So, in practical terms, the prospects of India agreeing to hold the plebiscite are extremely low. If that is the ground reality, then the people of GB wonder how much longer they have to wait to get their right to self-determination recognised.

Understandably, integrating GB could have implications for Pakistan's legal position on the Kashmir dispute. Hence, the suggestion has been to keep the integration provisional and subject to the final settlement of the Kashmir dispute. However, there are other factors that must not be ignored. Firstly, the people of GB have a right to self-determination, which is a fundamental right that overrides other considerations.

Secondly, given the salience of our relationship with Beijing, GB provides the vital geographical link to China and is central to the implementation of CPEC. Formally integrating GB will give full constitutional protection to CPEC-related and other international investments in GB. Thirdly, ignoring the consistently expressed desire of the people of GB to join Pakistan is creating a sense of alienation in GB, which could be exploited by the detractors of Pakistan. As it is, BJP leaders in India have sharpened their rhetoric of claim on these territories. In view of these arguments, it is a strategic imperative that GB be integrated into Pakistan as a provisional province without further delay and its people be recognised as citizens of Pakistan with full rights admissible under the Constitution of Pakistan, pending a final settlement of the Kashmir dispute. -- Courtesy Dawn

Commerce News

Pakistan's earns \$1,454m from IT services' export in 6 months

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan earned US \$1,454.881 million during July-December 2023-24, providing different Information Technology (IT) services to various countries during the first six months of the current fiscal year 2023-24.

This shows a growth of 8.98 per cent as compared with the US \$1,334.969 million earned through the provision of services during the corresponding months of the last fiscal year 2022-23, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported.

During the months under review, the export of computer services grew by 10.32 per cent as it surged from US

\$1,064.579 million last year to US \$1,174.481 million during July-December 2023-24.

Among the computer services, the exports of software consultancy services witnessed a nominal decrease of 180 per cent, from US \$3.394 million to US \$3.333 million this year while the export of hardware consultancy services surged by 3.401 per cent, from US \$391.570 million to US \$404.875 million.

The export of repair and maintenance services however decreased by 39.15 per cent from US \$1.530 million to US \$0.930 million whereas the export and imports of

computer software services surged by 2.79 per cent, from \$302.376 million to \$310.807 million.

Meanwhile, the export of information services during the months under review dipped by 19.72 per cent from US \$2.180 million to US \$1.750 million.

Among the information services, the exports of information-related services increased by 3.64 per cent, from US \$0.687 million to US \$0.712 million whereas the exports of news agency services however decreased by 30.48 per cent, from US \$1.493 million to US \$1.038 million.

The export of telecommunication services increased by 3.89 per cent as these went down from US \$268.0210 million to US \$278.650 million, the data revealed.

Among the telecommunication services, the export of call centres services increased by 12.14 per cent during the months as its exports increased from US \$107.006 million to US \$119.994 million whereas the export of other telecommunication services witnessed a decrease of 1.58 per cent, from US \$161.204 million to US \$158.656 million during this year, the PBS data revealed.



QUETTA: Anjuman-e-Tajran Balochistan President, Rahim Agha is addressing the seminar organized by All Balochistan Restaurant and Hotel Association against the increase in gas prices and taxes, at Quetta press club.

Fly Jinnah inaugurates first Intl flight connecting Islamabad and Sharjah

ISLAMABAD (APP): Fly Jinnah, Pakistan's low-cost carrier, celebrated the inaugural flight of its first international route from Islamabad, Pakistan, to Sharjah, UAE with a dual ceremony at Islamabad International Airport before departure and at Sharjah International Airport, where the aircraft received a warm welcome upon arrival.

The inaugural flight carried onboard Fly Jinnah's senior leadership along with a group of travel agents, media, and social media personalities among

others said a news release. The inaugural ceremony at Sharjah International Airport was welcomed with a traditional water cannon salute and followed by a welcome ceremony at Sharjah Airport attended by Pakistan's Ambassador in the UAE, Faisal Niaz Tirmizi, in addition to senior management representing Sharjah International Airport and Air Arabia.

Commenting on the occasion, Fly Jinnah's spokesperson said: "Yesterday marked a

significant milestone for Fly Jinnah as we inaugurated our first international flight after a successful year of domestic operations.

Sharjah's location serves as a perfect gateway to the United Arab Emirates with its proximity to the rest of the country. This step also reflects our unwavering commitment to providing our passengers with more travel options as we look forward to expanding our network to more exciting destinations".

Tetra Pak demonstrates packaging circularity at Euro Village 2024

Independent Report ISLAMABAD: Tetra Pak showcased its commitment to packaging circularity at Euro Village 2024, hosted by the European Union in Islamabad.

The event provided an excellent platform for Tetra Pak to demonstrate its ongoing efforts towards creating a sustainable future.

Distinguished dignitaries and guests, including the Ambassador and Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Pakistan, Dr. Riina Kionka

visited the Tetra Pak booth and engaged with company representatives. She appreciated Tetra Pak showcasing its innovative approach of repurposing used cartons and promoting the idea of packaging circularity to foster a greener environment in Pakistan.

Tetra Pak Pakistan also highlighted its local partnership with Green Earth Recycling, which has been successfully increasing its recycling targets annually since 2014.



Dr. Riina Kionka, the Ambassador and Head of the delegation of the European Union to Pakistan and Noor Aftab, the Head of Public Affairs and Government Relations at Tetra Pak Pakistan posing next to a children's play swing made from recycled Tetra Pak cartons at the Euro Village 2024 festival.

SCCI meeting review industrial exhibition

SIALKOT (APP): A meeting was held at the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) auditorium regarding the industrial exhibition to be held on 2nd and 3rd March, 2024 at Living Dreams Marquee, Sialkot Cantt, organized by the Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry Sialkot (WCCIS).

Sialkot (WCCIS) President Dr. Mariam Nouman said that Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) President Abdul Ghafoor Malik along with the business community of Sialkot had fully supported them for holding the exhibition. "So we have made it possible to provide subsidized stalls to promote and encourage new women entrepreneurs in business," she added.

Farmers advised for timely plantation of rose plants

FAISALABAD (APP): The agronomists of the University of Agriculture Faisalabad Sunday advised farmers for timely completion of planting rose plants. They said that for the proper growth of the plants, the farmers should dig a hole in wet sand or soil and keep them upside down in the ground for 10 to 15 days.

Furniture industry direly needs skilled workforce

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan's furniture industry is grappling with a severe shortage of skilled woodworkers that has triggered significant delays in the timely shipment of export consignments, posing challenges to the industry's efficiency, repute and profitability.

Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) Chief Executive Officer Mian Kashif Ashfaq stated this

while talking to a delegation of furniture manufacturers led by Faryad Ahmed Raza here Sunday. He said, woodworking skills are fundamental in the furniture manufacturing process, from crafting intricate designs to ensuring the structural integrity of pieces. However, the demand for skilled woodworkers in Pakistan exceeds the available workforce.

PR collects Rs 74.8 mln from ticketless passengers

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways has collected an amount of Rs 74.8 million from ticket-less passengers in a crackdown during the three two months with the help of railway police and train staffers.

"Around 58,446 passengers found travelling without tickets in different trains and collected the said amount from them, which is deposited in the official bank account of the department," sources in the Ministry told APP.

They said that it was not the first time that action was taken on a large scale against ticket-less passengers, adding that these types of crackdowns had taken place daily. The sources said that ticketless travelling was illegal, and those who were caught without a ticket were charged a ticket price for the whole journey of the train besides the penalty. Those who do not pay are handed over to the railway police. To a question, they said that Pakistan Railways Police claimed to have arrested a total of 3,923 accused due to their involvement in violations of rules and laws and also registered some 3,625 cases against them in eight Railways divisions over one year.

Governor pays rich tribute to Nawab Sadiq for education contributions

BAHAWALPUR (APP): Governor of Punjab and Chairman of the Board of Governors of Sadiq Public School, Muhammad Balighur Rehman, attended the 70th Founders Day (Platinum Jubilee) of Sadiq Public School here.

Muhammad Balighur Rehman was also the chief guest on the occasion.

In his address, he mentioned, "Sadiq Public School reflects the vision, dedication, and determination of Sir Sadiq Muhammad Khan Abbasi, who is a great humanitarian responsible for the establishment of this unparalleled institution for great educational purposes and contributed with

resources, effort, steps, and words of cooperation.

"This institution can take pride in its glorious traditions and remarkable past. Prominent personalities who have graduated from this institution have excelled in every field of life. Even today, I see many outstanding individuals in this ceremony who have acquired education from this great alma mater."

"All this is due to the significant historical role of this school, which the nation expects will continue to produce individuals of high caliber and maintain the highest standards of moral,

intellectual, and physical education that are the hallmark of Sadiq," the governor said.

He said, "His connection with Sadiq Public School is longstanding. As the Chairman of the Board of Governors, it is a heavy responsibility for him to play a role in the betterment of this institution."

"Sadiq has played a crucial role in bringing me to this position," he added.

The governor emphasized the importance of both curricular and extracurricular activities in his speech. Additionally, Governor Punjab stated, "Today's event,



LAHORE: Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Raza Naqvi presides over the 41st Provincial Cabinet meeting.

Station Commander for eliminating terrorism with people's cooperation

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): Station Commander Dera Muhammad Amir on Sunday praised Dera police for fighting against terrorism bravely and said the menace of terrorism would be eliminated from society with the help of people.

He stated this during the visit to Chaudhwan police station where the police repulsed a terrorist attack last night. On this occasion, the station commander was accompanied by District Police Officer (DPO) Abdul Rauf Babar Qaisrani.

Both the officers also met with the local dignitaries. The local people eulogized the

sacrifices of the Pak Army and police in the war against terrorism. They also assured their full cooperation with the law enforcement departments in this regard.

The visiting officers met with policemen on duty at the police station including the station house officer (SHO) and acknowledged their bravery for repulsing the terrorist attack last night.

Talking to policemen, the station commander said the Pak Army and police would fight against terrorists on each and every front as the safety of people's lives and property was the top priority of these institutions.

On this occasion, the

ECP notifies names of 93 candidates returned to KP

PESHAWAR (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Sunday notified the names of 93 candidates who returned to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly.

The 93 candidates included two candidates from PPP and three from JUIF while all the remaining were independent candidates.

The notification asked all the independent candidates to join a political party within three days of the notification under proviso of sub-clause-C of Clause-3 of Article 106 of the constitution.

The PPP candidates included Ahmed Karim Kundi from PK-112, DI Khan and Ehsan ullah

Khan from PK-115 DI Khan.

The JUIF candidates were former opposition leaders in the provincial assembly Lutf ur Rehman from PK-114, DI Khan, Aftab Haider from PK-111, DI Khan, and Sajjad Ullah from PK-32, Kohistan Lower.

The independent candidates returned to KP assembly were: Suriya Bibi, Fateh ul Mulik, Sharaf Ali, Ali Shah, Akhtar Khan, Fazl Hakim Khan, Amjad Ali, Habib ur Rehman, Sultan Room, Gul Ibrahim Khan, Muhammad Yamin, Muhammad Anwar, Azam Khan, Hamayun Khan, Shafiq ullah, Ubaid ur Rehman,

Liaquat Ali, Hamid ur Rehman, Shakeel Ahmed, Musavir Khan, Riaz Khan, Syed Fakhar Jehan, Abdul Kabir Khan, Fazal Haq, Sajjad Ullah, Muhammad Riaz, Taj Muhammad, Munir Hussain, Zubair Khan, Barber Munir Swati, Zahid Chenzeb, Ikram ullah, Nazi Ahmed, Raja Ali, Mushtaq Ghani, Akbar Ayub, Arshad Ayub, Malik Adeel, Rangez Ahmed, Aqibullah, Abdul Karim, Faisal Khan, Murtaza Khan, Zarshad, Tufail Anjum, Amir Farzand, Muhammad Zahir, Abdul Salam, Tariq Mahmood, Iftikhar Ali, Ithesham Ali, Khalid Khan, Arshad Ali, Iftikhar Ullah, Fazal Shakoor Khan.



PESHAWAR: Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Leaders, Taimur Khan Jhagra, Shandana Gulzar addressing a press conference, at Peshawar press club.

Bandit killed during police encounter

RAWALPINDI (APP): A bandit was killed during the police encounter in the jurisdiction of Dharmyal police station here on Sunday.

According to police spokesman, the bandits opened fire on the raiding police party, injuring Constable Inam Ali, who was shifted to the hospital.

After injuring the constable, the bandits fled the scene but later engaged in another shootout with the police, during which one bandit was killed.

The deceased bandit was identified as Hamad.

Senior police officers, including SP Muhammad Nabil Khokhar, rushed to the crime scene upon receiving information about the incident.

City Police Officer CPO Syed Khalid Hamdani has commended SP Saddar, ASP Saddar, SHO Dharmyal, and their team, affirming that the Rawalpindi Police will not hesitate to make sacrifices in their duty of crime prevention and citizen protection.

CM chairs cabinet meeting, reviews PSL-9 security plan

LAHORE (APP): Punjab IG Police Doctor Usman Anwar gave a briefing about the law & order in the province.

The CM directed to undertake all essential measures for the protection of life and property of people across the province.

Mohsin Naqvi asserted that no compromise would be made on upholding the rule of law.

The PSL-9 security plan was also reviewed in the meeting.

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi presided over the 41st provincial cabinet meeting at CM Office here on Sunday.

The Punjab cabinet granted an approval to amend the Punjab Highway Patrolling Police rules.

The decisions of the 39th meeting of the caretaker Punjab cabinet were endorsed in the meeting. The cabinet also reviewed law & order in the province.

Empowered women – elevating nation, beaming with pride

LAHORE (APP): Experts on Sunday said that women's multidimensional empowerment in society is central to realising their rights and enabling them to equally participate in businesses, scientific, social sports and entrepreneur, control over productive resources and economic decision-making.

From risky summits to space while representing Pakistan in global media, making themselves heard worldwide, these equipped women during last two years have been standing historic.

In recent outgoing years the empowered Pakistani women have

displayed their best potential in every sphere of life, achieving for the country, by breaking barriers and achieving numerous 'firsts' in their respective fields, APP observed.

To a great surprise, Naila Kiani, renowned mountaineer and the first Pakistani woman, who climbed 10 peaks above 8,000 metres last year. She also became the only Pakistani to ascend seven peaks above 8,000m in six months.

Likewise, Samina Baig attained the feat of becoming the first Pakistani woman to summit the world's ninth-

highest peak, the 8,125m-tall Nanga Parbat. Pakistan's women cricketers also excelled during the year 2023, while making history by registering their maiden win over New Zealand not just in the first T20 International but also in the one-day format.

Earlier, in the same year wicketkeeper-batter Muneeba Ali became the first Pakistani woman to score a T20I century and only the sixth to score one in a T20 World Cup.

Pakistani women in the walk of social or performing arts, did not shy away from exhibiting their love for modern arts

and media either as they set new records.

Arooj Aftab last year performed at ceremony of Grammy Awards 2023 in Los Angeles, US — and became the first Pakistani to win the prestigious Grammy Award, she also became the first artist from the country to perform at the Grammys. Oscar-winner Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy was announced as the director for the latest Star Wars film, making her the first woman and person of colour to direct a film in the franchise.

Shifting focus to a different category among the 'firsts', women and minorities in Pakistan made

significant endeavors, toward achieving parity with men.

Justice Musarrat Hilali took oath as Peshawar High Court chief justice on April 11.

In February 2023, and similarly the Lahore High Court Bar Association got its first woman secretary since its inception in 1893 following Sabahat Rizvi's election.

In September last year, the Supreme Court of Pakistan got its first female registrar after sworn-in Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa appointed Additional District and Sessions Judge Okara, Jazeela Aslam, to the role.

International News

Ethiopia-Somalia friction boils over at AU summit

ADDIS ABABA: Tensions between Horn of Africa rivals Ethiopia and Somalia boiled over on Saturday on the opening day of an African Union summit in Addis Ababa. The two neighbours — already at odds over a controversial maritime pact — locked horns over Somalia's claims that Ethiopian security tried to block its President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud from accessing the summit venue.

The feud is one of a "litany of difficulties" referred to by AU Commission chief Moussa Faki Mahamat in his opening address to the gathering in the Ethiopian capital.

Faki painted a "bleak picture" and said leaders of the pan-African body had to step up and tackle the myriad

conflicts, coups and political crises blighting the continent of 1.4 billion people. The 55-nation AU, which is headquartered in Addis Ababa, has long been criticised for being ineffectual and taking little decisive action in the face of numerous conflicts and power grabs.

In a sign of the uneasy relations between two member states, Mogadishu accused Addis Ababa of "outrageous conduct" and a "provocative" act over the reported security incident and demanded a full AU investigation.

Mohamud told reporters he had been blocked by Ethiopian security agents as he tried to enter a summit venue, a second time while accompanying Djibouti's President Ismail Omar Guelleh. "A soldier

with a gun stood in front of us and denied us access to this facility," he said after later attending the summit.

Ethiopia insisted Mohamud was warmly welcomed and that the Somali delegation was blocked when its security detail tried to enter a venue with weapons. Mogadishu has accused Addis Ababa of violating its sovereignty over a January maritime deal with Somaliland, which declared independence in 1991 in a move not recognised by the international community.

Under the memorandum of understanding, Somaliland agreed to lease 20 kilometres (12 miles) of its coast for 50 years to landlocked Ethiopia, which wants to set up a naval base and a commercial port on the coast.



ADDIS ABABA: Outgoing chairperson of the African Union (AU) and President of Comoros, Azali Assoumani, congratulates the newly elected AU chairperson, President of Mauritania Mohamed Ould Ghazouani. Also seen are Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and Moussa Faki, Chairperson of the African Union Commission.

Navalny's 'killers' refusing to hand over body: allies

MOSCOW: Alexei Navalny's supporters on Saturday accused Russian authorities of being "killers" who were "covering their tracks" by refusing to hand over his body, as the Kremlin stayed silent despite Western accusations and a flood of tributes to the late opposition leader.

The 47-year-old Kremlin critic died in an Arctic prison on Friday after three years behind bars, prompting outrage and condemnation from

West-tern leaders and his supporters.

His death, which the West has blamed on the Kremlin, deprives Russia's opposition of its figurehead just a month before elections poised to extend President Vladimir Putin's grip on power.

On Saturday, Navalny's mother, Lyudmila and his lawyer were refused access to his body, after arriving in the region of the remote prison colony where he had been held, his spokeswoman Kira Yarmysh said.

China to step up patrols near Taiwan after 2 killed in deadly boat incident

BEIJING: China on Sunday said it would step up law enforcement patrols in waters near Taiwan after two Chinese nationals died in a boat incident involving Taiwan's coast guard.

A Chinese boat was carrying four people when it capsized on Wednesday near the Kinmen islands while pursued by the Taiwanese coast guard.

All four on board were thrown into the water and two of the crew later died.

'Extraordinary' chance for Israel to integrate into region: Blinken

MUNICH: There is "an extraordinary opportunity" in the coming months for Israel to normalise ties with its Arab neighbours, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Saturday, while also emphasising the need for the creation of a Palestinian state.

The top US diplomat said there were genuine efforts led by Arab countries to revitalise the Palestinian Authority so it can be more effective in representing the Palestinians.

"Virtually every Arab country now genuinely wants to integrate Israel into the region to normalise relations...to provide security commitments and assurances so that Israel can feel more safe," Blinken said during a panel discussion at the annual Munich

Security Conference.

"And there's also, I think the imperative, that's more urgent than ever, to proceed to a Palestinian state that also ensures the security of Israel," he added.

The Biden administration has been working to secure a mega-deal that will see ties between Saudi Arabia and Israel normalise. The Saudi as well as other Arab countries are seeking the creation of a Palestinian state as part of the deal.

On Friday, Biden called for a temporary truce in Gaza for a potential prisoner swap deal. He said he had held "extensive" conversations with Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on this and negotiations were "underway".



LONDON: Pro-Palestinian activists wave flags and carry placards during a march.

Tel Aviv out to destroy UNRWA: agency chief

GENEVA: Israel is waging a concerted campaign aimed at destroying UNRWA, the head of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees said in an interview published on Saturday.

Philippe Lazzarini said calls for his resignation were part of the Israeli government's push. "Right now we are dealing with an expanded, concerted campaign by Israel aimed at destroying UNRWA," he told the Swiss newspaper group Tamedia.

"It is a long-term political goal because it is believed that if the aid agency is abolished, the status of the

Palestinian refugees will be resolved once and for all — and with it, the right of return. There is a much larger political goal behind this.

"Just look at the number of actions Israel is taking against UNRWA," the main aid body in the Gaza Strip, he said.

He cited measures in the Israeli parliament, moves to remove the agency's VAT exemption and orders for contractors at Israel's port of Ashdod to "stop handling certain food deliveries for UNRWA." "And all these demands come from the government."

Afghanistan special envoys meet in Doha

NEW DELHI: National and regional special envoys to Afghanistan convened in Doha on Sunday in the second UN meeting of its kind in less than a year, though it remained unclear whether Taliban authorities would join the closed-session event.

The two-day meeting, hosted by the UN secretary general, was due to discuss increasing engagement with Afghanistan and a more coordinated response to the Central Asian nation.

In the aftermath of the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan in 2021, the international community has wrestled with its approach to the country's new rulers.

On the first day of the convention in gas-rich Qatar, which hosted the Taliban during years of peace talks with the United States, the Kabul government's participation remained unclear.

Though the Afghan foreign ministry did not immediately respond to requests for comment on plans to attend.

Third time lucky Japan launches next-gen rocket

TOKYO: Japan's space agency JAXA. The latest launch follows Japan's successful landing last month of an unmanned probe on the Moon — albeit at a wonky angle — making it just the fifth country to land a craft on the lunar surface.

The H3 launched from the Tanegashima Space Center in south-western Japan at 9:22 am. Cheers and applause could be heard from the JAXA control centre after the agency's live stream announced the H3's engines had successfully burned.

World Health Organization trying to get access to Gaza hospital after raid

GENEVA (Internews): The World Health Organization (WHO) said on Friday it was trying to get access to biggest functioning hospital in Gaza, the Nasser Hospital, after an Israeli raid. "There are still critically injured and sick patients that are inside the hospital," WHO spokesman Tarik Jasarevic said.

"There is an urgent need to deliver fuel to ensure the continuation of the provision of life-saving services.

Italy, home of the mafia, now one of Europe's safest countries

ROME: Italy may be the land that launched Cosa Nostra, but today it is one of the safest countries in Europe, with a murder rate well below its neighbours.

From the mid-19th century through to the 1990s, thousands of people died in mafia violence, from rivals or traitors cast in cement or fed to pigs, to judges, priests and witnesses killed for daring to defy the mob. There were also the traumatic "Years of Lead" from the end of the 1960s to the 1980s, when armed groups from the extreme left and extreme right brought terror to Italy with bombings and assassinations.

The brutal murder of former prime minister Aldo Moro by the Marxist-Leninist Red Brigades in 1978 is burned into the national psyche, although the largest number of the estimated 400 victims of the period were killed by neofascists. But when this

bloody period ended, and after a crackdown on mafias which pushed them into less violent financial crime, the murder rate plummeted.

Back in 1990, there were 34 murders per one million inhabitants in Italy, compared to 24 in neighbouring France, according to UN figures. In 2021-22, this had fallen to 5.5 per million in Italy and 11 in France, eight in Germany and 10 in the UK.

In Europe, only Norway and Switzerland have a murder rate lower or equal to Italy's, while Latvia, the worst, has a rate 6.5 times higher.

"Homicides in general have decreased in the last 25 years, especially the percentage of men" — who previously were the main victims of mafias, noted Raffaella Sette, a sociologist at the University of Bologna. Just 10 per cent of murders each year are now blamed on organised crime.



QUETTA: Caretaker Home Minister Mir Zubair Khan Jamali, Commissioner Quetta Division Hamza Shaqqaat and Additional Inspector General Police Jawad Dogar meeting with Caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki.

PML-N leader fears another May 9-like incident in Pakistan

LAHORE (INP): Those involved in the May 9 violence haven't learned anything, said PML-N leader Malik Ahmad Khan on Sunday, adding that the campaign launched against Pakistan from abroad was continuing unabated.

"Wake Mr Caretaker Prime Minister, wake up Mr Caretaker Punjab Chief Minister! Another May 9 is about to be carried out. Stop it before it happens," he said, adding, "Stop them. Otherwise, they will cause irreparable damage to the state."

Addressing a press conference in Lahore, Malik said the PTI had a tradition of not accepting the election results and the latest controversy generated through former Rawalpindi commissioner Liaquat Chatha was part of the practice.

He stressed the need for pre-empting their designs, saying they had started targeting the civil servants - a reference to the administration officials

serving as district returning officers (DROs) and returning officers (ROs) in Rawalpindi - on social media by sharing not only their images and home addresses but also of the family members.

The purpose was to influence and threaten the government servants for changing their loyalties to the PTI instead of state, Malik said.

Addressing the state, he warned that if no action wasn't taken against the elements running the campaign from outside and inside the country, they would go ahead with the "May 9 Part II".

Blasting the former Rawalpindi commissioner, he said Chatha had nothing to do with the election process in any capacity and was facing multiple inquiries.

Malik said the PTI had attacked every foundation of the state as well as its institutions and values, adding that the government wasn't meant to act after an event,

as pre-empting the nefarious designs and planned violence.

Speaking on the occasion, PML-N Deputy Secretary General Attullah Tarar questioned whether posting the images of DROs and ROs as well as their family members wasn't terrorism, as he demanded a severe action against those involved in the matter.

Tarar also asked whether the close relationship between PTI social media in-charge Arsalan Khalid and Chatha wasn't established.

In her comments, PML-N Punjab Information Secretary Azma Bokhari said Chatha held meeting with PTI leader Mian Aslam Iqbal before levelling baseless allegations. "An attempt is being made to turn the DROs and the ROs into Liaquat Chatha," she remarked and noted that the country could not afford the anarchy which was being spread.

Jan Achakzai strongly condemns firing incident in Chaman

Independent Report

QUETTA: The caretaker Provincial Minister for Information, Jan Achakzai has strongly condemned the incident of firing by terrorists in Chaman.

In an official statement issued here on Sunday, the caretaker Minister expressed heartfelt grief over martyrdom of two personnel of secret agencies in the firing incident.

Jan Achakzai said that those rendering sacrifice of their lives for stability and survival of the country and nation are our heroes.

He also said that the people are proud of their secret agencies who remain busy in our protection round the clock.

The caretaker Minister pledged to eliminate terrorists from the country saying that sacrifices of martyrs would not go waste at all.

He expressed sympathy and condolence with the bereaved families of the martyrs.

He prayed for the departed souls and bereaved families to bear the tragic loss with fortitude.

Political stability vital for economic stability: Kh Asif

SIALKOT (APP): Former defence minister and central leader of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Khawaja Muhammad Asif has said that political stability in the country is crucial for economic stability.

Addressing a press conference at his residence on Sunday, he said consultations with the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) for forming a government in centre was under way currently. "We have majority in Punjab where we are in a position to form the government alone, and the process for the purpose had started already.

He said Shehbaz Sharif would be the PML-N candidate for prime minister's office. He said a coalition government in centre would unite people and work for development and prosperity of the country.

Kh Asif said political stability in the country is very important for economic stability, but some people were engaged in promoting politics of chaos, anarchy and unrest in the country, which could not be well-wishers of the country and the nation in any case. He said the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) had withdrawn from every slogan that they raised, which was proof of the contradiction in their words and actions. The PML-N leader said all government and party affairs would work under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif.

He advised that the political community should go beyond their personal interests and sacrifice for the country and the nation. He said that for political stability in the country, they should shun party politics and play a constructive role even if they sit in the opposition.

In response to a question, he said that there was no estrangement from Maulana Fazlur Rehman.



SIALKOT: Former Minister Defence Khawaja Asif, addressing media persons at his residence at cantt.

He also attended the newly-formed International Forum for 'Freedom of Nations' where he was elected as Member of the Forum's 20-member Standing Committee. The Forum was organized by the United Russia party.

Senator Hussain Co-Chaired the Forum's plenary session where Foreign Minister Lavrov spoke and Senator Hussain had a comprehensive exchange with former President Dmitri Medvedev, now Deputy

1st computerized FIR registered as Levies force put on modern lines

QUETTA: The Levies force has been put on modern lines in Pishin district.

The credit of putting the Levies force on modern lines goes to the Deputy Commissioner Pishin, Captain (Retd) Jumma Dad Khan Mandokhail who took special interest in this regard.

The laptops and printers have been provided to all Levels thanas for making the FIR system computerized.

With this, the registration of computerized FIRs has been started in different Levies thanas of the district.

Meanwhile, the Risaldar SHO of Levies Thana Huramzai, Itar Khan registered the first Computerized FIR in the concerned Thana.

It may also be mentioned here that SHO of Levies Headquarter Muhammad Younas has also registered a computerized FIR in the district.

Govt achieves 13 goals, out of 15, set to promote IT sector within brief period: Dr. Saif

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Dr. Umar Saif has said the caretaker government had successfully achieved 13 goals, out of 15, set to promote the IT sector and increase its exports within a brief period of 5 months under the caretaker setup.

In a video message, he said, "We have achieved 13 out of 15 important targets for the promotion of the IT & telecom sector in a short period of 5 months in the caretaker set-up. The forum of SIFC will prove to be a great support for the upcoming elected government in the process of building and developing the country, and the elected government will also reap the benefits of the measures we have taken during the caretaker period."

"We worked with the SIFC and the State Bank to make a significant policy intervention, allowing IT companies to keep 50% of their export revenue in dollars in an account in Pakistan and make their international expenses without any restrictions from this amount," he further ex-

plained. He said that with this decision, allowing the retention of 50 percent in dollars, the country's IT exports have increased by 32 percent in the last 60 days.

Dr. Umar Saif highlighted that the establishment of the Telecom Tribunal fulfills a longstanding demand of the telecom sector. The specialized Tribunal will now handle telecom sector disputes and cases instead of the High Courts, aiming to expedite the resolution of legal issues and facilitate rapid progress in the telecom sector.

According to the minister, the Ministry of Law will nominate the chairperson and members of the Tribunal.

The Chairperson must be a Judge of the High Court or a lawyer with 15 years of experience, he said. Similarly, the Tribunal will have 2-member technocrats, whose number may be increased or decreased from time to time.

The minister believes that this specialized approach will lead to faster and more efficient resolution of disputes, contributing to the overall advance-

ment of the telecom industry. He said, "The effective implementation of the Right of Way Policy, the Special Investment Council has removed all departmental hurdles, and all decisions in the interest of the country and the nation have been approved without delay."

He said that the ministry is concurrently establishing a research and development fund to support mobile phone manufacturing companies and facilitate the growth of the mobile phone manufacturing sector. Dr. Umar Saif said that the first standardized quality test for the 75,000 information technology graduates will be conducted soon. He highlighted significant decisions made to revamp IT education in collaboration with various entities, including HEC, the National Computing Accreditation Council, the Examination Testing Council, the Pakistan Software Export Board, and the Pakistan Software Houses Association.

Dr. Saif said students who successfully pass the test will be offered job opportunities through the Industry Placement Program.

plained. He said that with this decision, allowing the retention of 50 percent in dollars, the country's IT exports have increased by 32 percent in the last 60 days.

Dr. Umar Saif highlighted that the establishment of the Telecom Tribunal fulfills a longstanding demand of the telecom sector. The specialized Tribunal will now handle telecom sector disputes and cases instead of the High Courts, aiming to expedite the resolution of legal issues and facilitate rapid progress in the telecom sector.

According to the minister, the Ministry of Law will nominate the chairperson and members of the Tribunal.

The Chairperson must be a Judge of the High Court or a lawyer with 15 years of experience, he said. Similarly, the Tribunal will have 2-member technocrats, whose number may be increased or decreased from time to time.

The minister believes that this specialized approach will lead to faster and more efficient resolution of disputes, contributing to the overall advance-



JUI's Central Secretary General and newly elected MNA Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haideri presiding over a meeting of parliamentary members of the party in Islamabad. Newly elected MNAs and MPAs from Balochistan Haji Zaid Ali Reki, Engr. Usman Badini, Mir Zafarullah Khan Zehri and Ghulam Dastagir Badini are also present.

Mushahid hopes Pakistan can join BRICS with Russian support

MOSCOW (Online): Senator Mushahid Hussain, Chairman Senate Defense Committee, is visiting Russia on the invitation of the ruling 'United Russia' party, during which he met Former President Dmitri Medvedev (who's number two to President Putin) and Foreign Minister Lavrov.

He also attended the newly-formed International Forum for 'Freedom of Nations' where he was elected as Member of the Forum's 20-member Standing Committee. The Forum was organized by the United Russia party.

Senator Hussain Co-Chaired the Forum's plenary session where Foreign Minister Lavrov spoke and Senator Hussain had a comprehensive exchange with former President Dmitri Medvedev, now Deputy

Chairman of the Security Council of Russia.

Senator Hussain and Dmitri Medvedev discussed Pakistan-Russia relations, the situation in Afghanistan, the war in Gaza and the "unlimited possibilities for Pakistan-Russian collaboration in the region, particularly on energy & economic connectivity", adding "Pakistan core interests are linked to this region, where Russia is a key factor".

Senator Hussain told Mr Medvedev that the probable election of President Trump in the US Presidential elections in November 2024 would qualitatively change the region's geopolitics. Senator Hussain said he found "tremendous goodwill" for Pakistan in all official and popular circles in Moscow.

During the visit Sena-

tor Mushahid Hussain also delivered a lecture at the Russian Diplomatic Academy, the first prominent Pakistani to be invited to address the Diplomatic Academy in 50 years.

The topic of the talk was 'Pakistan and the changing regional scenario'. Senator Hussain during his talk also highlighted the fact that there's 'no fundamental conflict of interest' between Pakistan and Russia', therefore, 'Pakistan has remained neutral on Ukraine, abstaining on voting in the United Nations on this issue'.

He welcomed growing relations between Pakistan and Russia especially in the field of energy, connectivity, education, regional security including Afghanistan and cooperation at multilateral fora including SCO and UN.



LAHORE: Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami Sirajul Haq addressing a Press conference.

ECP yet to notify results of majority of independents

ISLAMABAD (INP): Independent candidates backed by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) are still in limbo as they await official notification of their electoral success. Despite more than a week passing since the general elections, the Election Commission of Pakistan has yet to issue notifications for the majority of independent candidates who secured seats in the National Assembly.

Out of over 10 victorious independent candidates, only 8 have received official notifications by Saturday evening. Late into the night, the Election Commission announced the success of an additional 33 candidates.

According to reports, notifications have been issued for 154 out of 265 National Assembly seats, with only 41 independent candidates among them. It

takes three days for an independent candidate to join a political party after their victory.

Raja Khurram Nawaz, triumphant from NA-48 Islamabad, was the first independent candidate to receive notification on February 12, after joining the Pakistan Muslim League two days prior.

Further successes were declared on subsequent days, including former Punjab Governor Mian Muhammad Azhar from NA-129 Lahore and Ghulam Muhammad from NA-93 Chiniot on February 13. On February 15, PTI-backed independent candidate Adil Khan of NA-262 Quetta and independent candidate Aqeel Malik of NA-54 Rawalpindi were notified. Additionally, Muhammad Ilyas Chaudhry from NA-62 Gujrat.

Four killed in a firing in Wazir Qala

PESHAWAR (APP): As many as four persons were killed as a result of firing in the Wazir Qala area of Peshawar here on Sunday, Daudzai Police confirmed the incident.

According to details, the firing took place in the limits of Daudzai Police Station.

The firing started after the hot words exchange over a property dispute between two groups Haider Haji and Jameel. After the firing was started as a result Nawaz Khan, Haider, Saleh and Azad were killed on the spot, Police said.

The bodies have been shifted to the hospital for post-mortem, Police said.

Police have started raids to arrest the accused.

Four killed, one injured after car collides with the wall of mart

SIALKOT (APP): Four persons were killed and one got injured after a car collided with the wall of Mart, due to overspeed at Daska-Sambrial Road late last night.

According to a rescue spokesperson, the accident occurred at Daska-Sambrial Road near Adam-Kay Stop, late last night where a speedy car collided with the wall of the Mega Mart after hitting the divider.

PTI leader claims people of Karachi have given their mandate to PTI, JI only

KARACHI (INP): Alleging widespread rigging in the general elections in Sindh, senior PTI leader Halim Adil Sheikh said on Sunday that only two parties, the PTI and Jammate-Islami (JI), enjoyed the mandate of the people of Karachi.

Addressing a press conference here, he saluted JI Karachi Ameer Hafiz Naeemur Rehman for relinquishing his seat, saying it belonged to a PTI candidate. He said that had the ROs been taken from judiciary, such a massive rigging could have been prevented. "In fact, it was the beginning of rigging in the country," Sheikh said, adding, "And when the electoral symbol of 'bat' was snatched from the PTI, it was a last nail

into the party's coffin." PTI leader said that despite the fact that so much was done during the last two years to break up the PTI, the party had still managed to win a two-third majority in these elections. "And all those blue-eyed boys, Nawaz Sharif and others have failed," he said.

He was of the view that the country was sinking deep into mire day by day. "The country's image in the world has been tarnished," he said, adding, "The IMF will also not come to our rescue."

Sheikh said that there was still a way to put the house in order and that was to update Form 47 as per Form 45 in the entire country and to later announce it in Form 49.



BAGH: Skiers take part in the Ganga Choti Winter Sports Festival near Bagh, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK).

Rawalpindi division's DROs reject ex-boss' charges, seek ECP inquiry

RAWALPINDI (INP): Newly appointed Rawalpindi Commissioner Saif Anwar Jappa has rejected the allegations levelled by former commissioner Liaquat Ali Chhattha about massive rigging in general elections 2024.

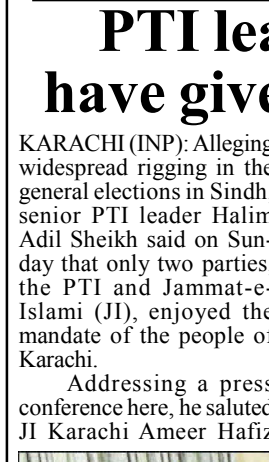
After assuming his office, Saif, in a late-night press conference, claimed that clean and transparent elections were held as per the rules and regulations set by the Election Commission of Pakistan.

The district returning officers (DROs) belonging to Rawalpindi, Jhelum, Chakwal and Attock also joined the press conference to ratify the version of the new commissioner and reject the allegations of the former commissioner.

"We managed the general elections with honesty

and performed duties and responsibilities without any pressure," the DROs told the media.

All the DROs demanded the chief election commissioner complete probe of the allegations levelled by Chhattha. DROs Chakwal, Jhelum, Attock claimed that all the arrangements were made in transparent manners. DRO Chakwal Quratul Ain said elections in Chakwal were conducted under the Election Act, and all processes adhered to the oath. She demanded an independent investigation into the allegations. Similarly, DROs Attock and Jhelum, Rao Atif Raza, and Captain Sami also denied any pressure during the February 8 polls, asserting that the elections in their respective districts were conducted transparently.



QUETTA: Independent MPAs Malik Asfandyar Kakar, Maulana Noorullah and Haji Liaquat Lehri meeting with former Chief Minister Balochistan and leader of PPP Nawab Sanaullah Khan Zehri.

Pneumonia kills 13 more children in Punjab

LAHORE (APP): Thirteen more children succumbed to pneumonia in the last 24 hours on Sunday, bringing the total toll from the disease to 392.

The Punjab Health Department highlighted a concerning surge in pneumonia cases, particularly during the dry cold spell. Within a single day, 622 new patients were reported across Punjab, with Lahore bearing a significant brunt, recording 131 new cases, including one fatality.



QUETTA: Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Leaders, Zain-ul-Abideen Khilji, Faisal Dahwar and others addressing a press conference, at Quetta press club.

Siraj wants immediate resignation of CEC Raja over most tainted election

LAHORE (INP): Jamaat-e-Islami chief Sirajul Haq has demanded the immediate resignation of Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja, referring to the Feb 8 elections as the most tainted with rigging in the country's history.

Addressing a press conference in Mansooria, Siraj announced plans to protest against rigging in Peshawar on Feb 23 and to hold a conference in Islamabad on Feb 25.

The Jamaat chief stated that while governments were typically formed after elections worldwide, in Pakistan, the government was formed first, followed by decisions about elections. This unique process contributed to an increase in corruption after elections, a phenomenon observed only in Pakistan, he added.

Siraj pointed out that the elections held in 1970 were not accepted, and similarly, this trend persisted today. Despite widespread

rigging, there had been a noticeable silence from those who benefited from it, he added. The Jamaat chief criticised the role of former Rawalpindi commissioner Liaquat Ali Chhattha, describing him as a mere pawn, suggesting that all commissioners were similar in this regard.

He expressed regret that returning officers were appointed from within the administration instead of the courts, lamenting that democracy in Pakistan was buried beneath the results of the Feb 8 elections.

Siraj voiced concern that the issues arising from this election would hinder the country's progress for a period of five years. He also highlighted reservations regarding the delimitations and the rushed closure of cases in the courts. Siraj called for unity to address the country's crises, warning that accepting temporary happiness would hinder the nation's path to achieving true.