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Allegations of rigging 'contrary to ground realities' Won't investigate alleged electoral fraud at behest of any country: PM

For me, demand of countrymen is more important than US, UK, EU combined; Level playing field enabled independent candidates to emerge as single largest group in general elections: Congratulates nation for peaceful elections despite heavy challenges

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Monday reiterated that the caretaker set-up had provided a level playing field to all political parties during the currently concluded polls and being a 'free and fair' process, a large number of independent candidates backed by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf emerged as the largest single group on the national and provincial assemblies seats.

He stressed that allegations of rigging were generated through social media which were based upon misconceptions and contrary to the ground realities, and said that throughout the country's democratic history, people had always questioned the electoral process.

Such results indicated the transparency and non-interference by any quarters, he emphasised.

Addressing a presser at the PM House, the prime minister said that there might be shortcomings or other minor issues, but by and large, the elections were held in a manner in which the entire nation and the law enforcement agencies deserved kudos despite various security challenges.

"Where the PTI has public support, it got that and they have results never dreamt of during 2018," he said, adding that the loyalists of jailed PTI leaders were emerged as returned candidates in the general elections but no one was appreciating that aspect of the neutrality of the caretaker government.

The prime minister, to a question, said that despite various threats prior to the February 8 election day and two terrorist attacks in the Balochistan province, all the stakeholders deserved appreciation over the 'big achievement' for peaceful conduct of the polls.

He also brushed aside any threats to integrity of the country due to certain protests and agitations held by certain parties, saying "it is an absurd chronology" to relate the situation with Dhaka during 1971.

"These are the mere rhetoric. Pakistan is a very stable and responsible country. Holding of a peaceful protest is the democratic right of the people," he said, however, hastened to add that no government could allow the situation leading

to chaos or anarchy.

Responding to a query, he maintained that over 60 million voters had exercised their constitutional right to elect their favourite candidates under 'a pressure free environment'. The prime minister said that the delay in the announcement of official results were caused by the specific procedures regarding compiling of results at 92,000 polling stations and credited the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) for conducting the massive exercise in a smooth manner.

He said that the official results were announced within 36 hours while during the 2018 elections, it took almost 66 hours. There might be irregularities but the relevant forums were available to address those

grievances.

In Sweden, the similar exercise almost took 10 to 11 days while in Indonesia, almost a month was consumed to furnish results, he added. To another question, the prime minister said that mobile phone services were suspended on the polling day due to security threats as the government could not compromise on the security of people.

On the other hand, the broadband internet services were available on that day, enabling the people to get connected, he said and rebutted the allegations that the move was aimed at managing the social media.

He said there were other occasions throughout the year, when the mobile services had been suspended to avert security threats.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar talks to National and foreign media in a press conference.

PML-N, PPP deliberate on 'sharing PM's Office for 3, 2 years each'

Monitoring Desk
LAHORE/ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) have deliberated on the possibility of appointing prime ministers from their parties for a three- and two-year term under a power-sharing formula.

The two parties held office for half of the five-year term.

In the Sunday meeting at the Bilawal House in Lahore, the two sides agreed in principle to cooperate for the country's political stability following the general election. The meeting was attended by PPP-Parliamentarian President Asif Ali Zardari, PPP Chairman Bilawal-Bhutto Zardari and former prime minister Shehbaz Sharif from the PML-N.

The prevailing political landscape and the imperative of collaborative efforts for the betterment of the country.

The PML-N delegation included Azam Nazir Tarar, Ayaz Sadiq, Ahsan Iqbal, Rana Tanvir, Khawaja Saad Rafique, Malik Ahmad Khan, Murrum Aurangzeb and Sheza Fatima.

The joint statement said key points of discussion were the assessment of Pakistan's overall situation, deliberations on future political strategies and the exchange of recommendations aimed at promoting stability and progress across the board.

The idea of appointing a prime minister for half the term was discussed during their first huddle on Sunday following the February 8 elections as part of their efforts to form a coalition government in the Centre and provinces, according to sources privy to the development.

The same power-sharing formula was chalked out by the PML-N and the National Party (NP) in Balochistan in 2013 when two chief ministers from

According to a joint statement issued after the huddle, the meeting was held in a cordial environment, which expressed commitment to putting the nation's interest and well-being above everything.

The leaders of both parties engaged in substantive discussions regarding

Both parties affirmed their dedication to steering Pakistan away from political instability and towards a path of prosperity and resilience.



LAHORE: Newly elected independent candidates meeting with President PML (N) Shabbaz Sharif on eve of their joining the party.

ECP directs re-polling in 7 polling stations of NA-253, PB-9 Kohlu on Feb 16

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has notified the conduct of re-polling in 7 polling stations in NA-253 and PB-9 Kohlu on Feb 16.

over the hearing of a petition challenging election results. The bench has restrained the announcement of final results for two provincial assembly constituencies: PP-14 Naseerabad, PP-44 Quetta, PP-33 Gujrat, PP-126, and PP-128 Jhang. Babar Awan, representing PTI, urged for stringent punishments for the returning officers found to have violated their oath.

Five independent candidates join PML-N

LAHORE (APP): Five independent candidates, who emerged victorious in the general election, called on Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President Shehbaz Sharif, here on Monday.

Sardar Shamsher Mazari who won the election from NA-189, Imran Akram from PP-195, Sohail Khan from PP-240, Khizar Hussain Mazari from PP-297, and Sahibzada Muhammad Ghazain Abbasi from PP-249 were among those who met with the PML-N President. All five members expressed confidence in PML-N

Quaid Nawaz Sharif and announced their decision to officially join the PML-N. Shehbaz Sharif extended a warm welcome and congratulations to the independent members for joining the party, saying that they have become part of collective efforts to enhance Pakistan's beauty and drag the country out of various challenges. He emphasized that economic stability and the well-being of the people remain the paramount priorities for his party. He expressed his resolve to serve the people of Pakistan with increased vigour and dedication.

Two terrorists killed in Mardan: ISPR

RAWALPINDI (Online): Security forces conducted an intelligence based operation in Mardan District, on reported presence of terrorists.

During the conduct of operation, after intense fire exchange, two terrorists were killed. Weapons, ammunition and explosives were also recovered from the killed terrorists, who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities in the area.

Sanitization operation is being conducted to eliminate any other terrorist found in the area. Local populace appreciated the operation and expressed their full support to security forces in eliminating the menace of terrorism.

Nawaz Sharif makes telephonic contact with Maulana Fazal

LAHORE (Online): Former Prime Minister (PM) Nawaz Sharif has once again made telephonic contact with JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman.

Both the leaders exchanged views on political situation. They have agreed on an early meeting.

According to sources during the meeting between Nawaz Sharif and Maulana Fazlur Rehman, overall political situation of the country and matters related to government making were discussed in the meeting.

Shah Faisal mosque to be renovated: Gohar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Interior and Commerce Dr. Gohar Ejaz addressing the media along with Saudi Ambassador to H.E. Nawaf bin Saeed Al Malkiy at the Faisal Mosque.

ISLAMABAD (APP): The minister said that when he assumed charge of the minister, he offered Jumma prayer at the mosque and latter he met with the Saudi ambassador and informed him that the mosque needed to be renovated.

"We are grateful to the Saudi Ambassador who took personal interest and decided to renovate the Shah Faisal Mosque, which will begin soon" the minister said.

Nawaf Saeed Al Malkiy said that the Shah Faisal Mosque was given as a gift to Pakistanis by the Saudi government.

Now the renovation work of this mosque would be started soon, he added.

Electricity tariff likely to be scaled up for next three months

ISLAMABAD (Online): Electricity tariff is likely to be enhanced by Rs 4.40 per unit for next three months. According to media report NEPRA will hear petition on February 14. The increase in tariff will be made under head of quarterly adjustment. An additional financial burden of Rs 82 billion will be shifted to the consumers due to this increase. According to context of application of ministry of energy FESCO has sought increase of Rs 9.44 billion, PESCO Rs 11.60 billion, MEPCO Rs 15 billion, LESCO Rs 15.10 billion and QECO Rs 10 billion.



QUETTA: Caretaker Home Minister Mir Zubair Jamali meeting with Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar

Sanjrani, Sanaullah Zehri, Jam Kamal, Aslam Raisani in race for Balochistan CM slot

QUETTA (INP): As the dust is settling after general elections 2024, the battle for the new chief minister of Balochistan is picking up pace with some of the top names of the province in the line on Monday.

Names of Sanaullah Zehri from the PPP, Jam Kamal Khan from the PML-N, Nawab Aslam Raisani from the JUI-F and Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjrani from BAP are among the prominent candidates vying for this coveted provincial post.

SC moved for declaring Feb 8 election null and void

ISLAMABAD (Online): Petition has been filed in Supreme Court (SC) seeking court order to declare February 8 election null and void. Federal government and Election Commission (EC) have been made respondents in the petition.

Petition has been filed by a citizen Ali Khan.

It has been requested in the petition that election held on February 8 be nullified. The process of government making as a result of February 8 election be stopped. Order be issued for conducting election afresh under judiciary.

Six bodies recovered from hilly area in Qilla Saifullah

QUETTA (Online): 6 bodies have been recovered from hilly area in Qilla Saifullah Balochistan.

According to Levies sources 6 bodies have been recovered from hilly area near the city in Qilla Saifullah. The bodies have been sent to hospital through ambulance.



ISLAMABAD: President Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians Asif Ali Zardari, Chairman Pakistan People's Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari chairing PPP Central Executive Committee (CEC) at Zardari House in the Federal Capital.

Session to form new NA expected to be held on Feb 29

ISLAMABAD (INP): The National Assembly's first session after the general elections is expected to be held on Feb 29.

According to sources, the new assembly's session must be held within 21 days after general elections are conducted under Article 19 of the Constitution.

The newly elected members of the assembly will take the oath in the inaugural session. Speaker Raja Pervez Ashraf will preside over the inaugural session and newly-elected members will take the oath from him for the National Assembly.

The members will be notified within 14 days after the elections, and the 60 and 10 seats reserved for women and minorities, respectively, will be granted afterwards.

The notification is expected to be released on Feb 21 or 22 for the session. Independent candidates are obliged to join any party within three days after the release of the notification.

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ECP rejects allegations of rigging in general election

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has outrightly rejected allegations of rigging in the general election.

According to a statement, the commission managed to hold a peaceful and orderly elections on Feb 8 and is taking quick decision on the complaints despite difficulties.

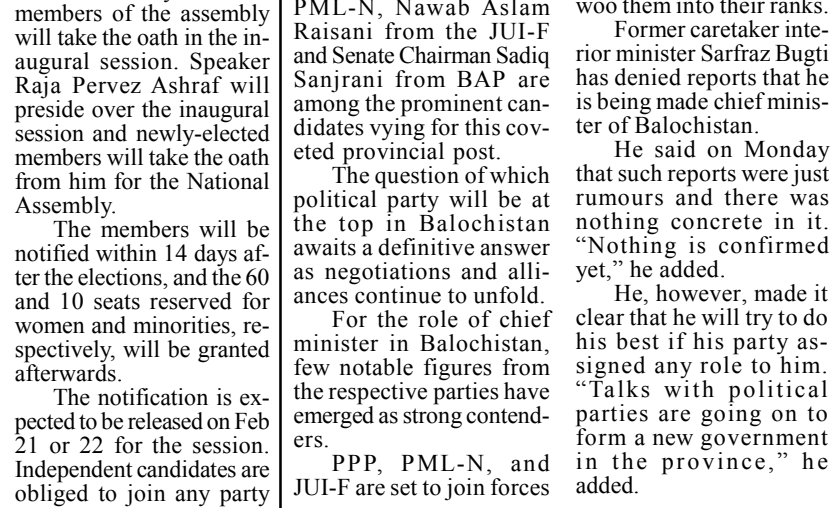
The holding of the election was a grand operation which was completed suc-

cessfully, the ECP said.

The commission mentioned its success of receiving first result at 2pm earlier than 4am in the next day in 2018.

The ECP accepted disruption in operation due to internet service disconnection.

The commission said the election results were completed in one and a half day except for some constituencies while it took three days in took three days in 2018.



QUETTA: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) Secretary General, Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Hyderi addresses to media persons during press conference

Daily Voice of Masses Independent

Glaring irregularities

Frantic negotiations have started behind closed doors over the possible configurations of power, and some quarters will be eager to see the election chapter closed, with results accepted as fait accompli. However, the citizenry — of which many braved a long campaign of intimidation and navigated several hurdles to exercise their vote — seems in no mood to meekly move on. It has good reason not to.

There were significant irregularities in this election that voters must be given answers for, and it is important that their concerns are promptly addressed by the ECP. The most pressing issue is what seems to be the outright theft of the public mandate in some parts of the country, as evidenced by the large discrepancies between various reported results.

There are growing voices of concern, including in the international community, over why some of the ECP's announced results differ so widely from the personal tallies kept by the candidates as well as the unofficial, parallel counts maintained by TV channels through their independent sources.

Observers' suspicions have been further strengthened by some obvious anomalies in the Form 47s released by ROs for certain constituencies, as well as the inordinately long time it has taken to 'finalise' results.

It is strange that, for most parts of the country, the results reported by the channels seem to closely match the results announced by the ECP much later; however, in many major urban constituencies, where media presence and resources are, in fact, the strongest, the divergence is extremely large. Clearly, something went awry during the results tabulation process in these constituencies, which needs to be promptly investigated and addressed. Though investigations will get tricky in places where candidates were never given Form 45 — a serious irregularity that has been highlighted by several poll observers — there seem to be quite a few candidates who are in a position to mount a strong challenge.

These include, among others, several PTI-backed independents in Karachi, Lahore, Multan and Islamabad, some of whom saw comfortable victories turn into overnight defeats. At least one, Salman Akram Raja in Lahore, has already contested his RO's result in court, and others will likely follow suit.

Before things get messier, the ECP should take action. The present CEC had taken strict and principled action over the February 2021 rigging of the Daska by-poll, starting with withholding its result. Similar action is needed right now, especially in constituencies where losing candidates have evidence to make a strong claim.

Moreover, wherever the rules call for it, the ECP must allow a recount. It should also release any information that can help auditors cross-check its results. This is an opportunity for the institution to restore its credibility. With international pressure growing, it must act quickly.

Indigenous wisdom

Muhammad Hassan Dajana

As the world struggles with the increasingly severe effects of climate change and experiences rapid disruptions, we must prioritise the issue. The planet and our survival depend on it. It is no longer a matter of whether we should act, but rather how we should respond with all-encompassing, inclusive solutions to minimise and adapt to the effects of climate change, which have dramatically increased in frequency and scale.

There is a rich source of wisdom that is frequently disregarded. This is indigenous knowledge, which refers to the collective knowledge, ideologies, customs, ways of life, and values that have been developed and handed down through the generations through rituals, storytelling, and personal experiences, ensuring their preservation and continuity.

Indigenous communities have long been closely tied to their lands and environments. Their traditional knowledge of local ecosystems, resource management, and sustainable practices enables them to detect subtle variations in weather, seasons, ecological balance, and the behaviour of plants and animals. Collaboration with indigenous communities is essential for re-orienting human-nature interactions and fostering resilience to protect around 80 per cent of the world's remaining biodiversity.

Some successful examples of indigenous wisdom and practices being harnessed for effective climate action and conservation are given here.

In Chitral, groups indigenous to the area have established seed banks to preserve tradi-

tional seed types well-suited to local conditions. In addition to collecting, storing, and distributing indigenous seeds, these seed banks also act as important archives for indigenous knowledge, providing people access to resilient crop varieties that can resist climate shocks, improve their access to food, and ensure their preservation and availability for future generations.

The Burusho people, one of the indigenous groups in the Hunza Valley, use strategies including terracing, tree planting, and organic farming to prevent soil erosion, increase biodiversity, ensure food security, and advance sustainable agriculture. To save endangered species and advance biodiversity preservation, they have also developed community-managed conservation areas. This has resulted in increased water availability, soil fertility, and forest cover while promoting the community's well-being.

In northwest India, indigenous tribes have created intricate knowledge systems to respond to climate change. They have successfully dealt with water-related difficulties by building and safeguarding water-collection systems such as ponds, johads, and nadis that not only collect rainfall but also refill water tables and enhance water balance. The homes in this area are built to survive the harsh climate, facing east to take advantage of the cool morning sunshine and employing cooling building materials. The cultivation of crops like khejri and preference for camel, goat, and sheep rearing over buffalo are examples of agricultural and animal-rearing practices.

In Africa, small-holder farmers have traditionally used indig-

enous signals to forecast the weather and guide farming decisions. Their decisions regarding agricultural procedures, such as planting time and crop selection, include animal and plant behaviour, weather cues, and human ailments. Indigenous conservation techniques, including intercropping, cover crops, crop rotation, and agroforestry, are successful in boosting agricultural yield, preserving water, minimising erosion, and improving soil health.

Community-managed natural forests (or village common woods) in Bangladesh support regional biodiversity preservation and improve essential community services. The Hawaiian native community's restoration of a sustainable loko ia, or fishpond system, has the possibility of annually producing thousands of pounds of sustainable protein, while reducing coral bleaching, beach erosion, overfishing, and other imbalances in the marine ecosystem.

Finally, it is crucial to acknowledge that indigenous communities are usually marginalised in climate conversations. Due to the uneven distribution of resources and unsustainable land practices, indigenous knowledge is not only lost but the community's adaptive capacity is also diminished.

Peaceful cohabitation with local ecosystems is a sign of the valuable insights they hold. They also provide wise advice, creative solutions, and an extensive viewpoint based on interconnection.

For a sustainable and equitable future, it is crucial to involve indigenous experts in meaningful discussions, incorporate their expertise into policies and action plans, and promote collaboration. — Courtesy Dawn

Marital rape

Sahar Bandial

A recent judgement passed by an additional district and sessions judge in Karachi is being celebrated as recognition of marital rape as a criminal offence under Pakistani law. The court found the accused husband guilty of Section 377 (unnatural offences) of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) for forcefully subjecting his wife to sodomy, and sentenced him to imprisonment for three years and a fine of Rs30,000.

Although the judgement does not strictly qualify as a conviction for rape — a separate offence defined in Section 375 of the PPC — it is significant in possibly being a first judicial pronouncement in our jurisdiction on the criminal consequence of forced sexual relations between spouses in a marriage. The United Nations Population Fund has reported that around 40 per cent of women in Pakistan are victims of spousal violence. Details on the incidence of marital rape and sexual violence within marriages are, however, little known. Complaints of marital rape are rare; convictions for marital rape — non-existent. This is so, despite the fact that the law provides space for criminal prosecution of marital rape.

Section 375 of the PPC (as amended recently in 2021) defines rape as the penetration of a bodily orifice of a person (who may be a man, woman or transgender) by an object, body part or mouth of another person, in the absence of meaningful consent. The expanded definition of rape now includes sodomy within its ambit.

Prior to 2006, when the offence of rape

(zina-bil-jabr) was governed by the Hudood Ordinances, a husband was exempted from criminal liability for non-consensual sexual intercourse with his wife. The exemption was removed when the offence of rape was re-legislated into the PPC through a criminal law amendment in 2006.

In the case before the judge, the husband could, in principle, have been convicted for rape under Section 375 for his forced act of sodomy with his wife (depending of course on under what section(s) of the PPC the FIR was registered). A conviction under Section 375 would invite graver penalties/punishments; rape is punishable by a maximum sentence of imprisonment for the remainder of a convict's natural life. A conviction under Section 375 would be significant in another aspect as well: criminal culpability would be based on the forceful and non-consensual nature of the sexual encounter between the husband and wife, as opposed to arising out of the act of sodomy (be it consensual or non-consensual), which is per se culpable under Section 377 of the PPC.

It is interesting to note that the Indian Penal Code (IPC) has maintained the marital rape exception in the definition of rape. Exception 2 to the Section 375 of the IPC reads: "Sexual intercourse or sexual acts by a man with his own wife, the wife not being under 15 years of age, is not rape." This exception is based on the understanding that a woman upon marriage irrevocably consents to sexual relations with her husband. The question of constitutionality of the marital rape exception in the IPC is pending before India's supreme court, after hav-

ing been determined by the high courts of two states. The exception is being challenged on the ground that it violates women's right to equality by depriving them of the equal protection of the law, amounts to discrimination on the basis of marital status, and in denying women bodily agency and autonomy violates their right to life and liberty. The decision of the Indian supreme court is awaited.

The marital rape exception was also undone in English law through judicial intervention. In 1991, the House of Lords (predecessor of the UK supreme court) held that the marital rape exemption was not a statutory provision but an anachronistic and offensive common law fiction, for which no room exists in modern times where marriage is a partnership of equals.

Many Muslim countries recognise marital rape as a criminal offence, though the exact nomenclature adopted in their laws may be different. For instance, Indonesia's sexual violence law classifies "forcing sexual intercourse... on people who live within the scope of the household" as "sexual violence". Similarly, the definition of "sexual assault" in Article 102 of the Turkish Penal Code for all purposes criminalises rape within a marriage.

Whilst the law recognises and makes provision for marital rape, cultural norms and pressure may in fact be the primary hurdle to aggrieved women seeking protection of the law. Public conversation and awareness-raising on the subject, therefore, are critical as are legal education and judicial training on the scope of the law governing rape. — Courtesy Dawn

Commerce News

Asian markets mixed ahead of US inflation data

HONG KONG (AFP/APP): Markets were mixed in Asia on Monday in holiday-thinned trade as investors look ahead to the release of crucial US inflation data due this week.

Another record close for the S&P 500 in New York did little to inspire buying on a day when most of the region is closed for the Lunar New Year break.

Wall Street welcomed revised data showing the US consumer price index (CPI) came down on-month in December.

That added to optimism that the Federal Reserve is on course to get inflation under control, though observers were sceptical as to whether officials will cut interest rates as early as markets expect.

Comments from Fed officials in recent weeks have pushed back against market bets on a series of cuts this year starting in March, with commentators now tipping a first move in May.

Still, sentiment was helped by the belief that while rates remain elevated, the world's top economy is still strong, with most experts hopeful it will not drop into recession, as had been feared last year.

Eyes are now on the release of January CPI figures, which are forecast to show another slowdown.

"High inflation rarely has been tamed without precipitating a recession," said Ed Yardeni of Yardeni Research Inc.

"The Fed has steered

inflation down toward its two percent target, while allowing the US economy to fly, avoiding a hard landing."

The S&P 500 finished above 5,000 points for the first time, marking its 10th all-time high this year, boosted by surges in tech titans including Amazon, Apple and Microsoft.

But Asian investors were a little less enthusiastic, with Sydney, Bangkok, Mumbai and Wellington falling while Jakarta and Manila edged up.

Tokyo, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Taipei, Seoul, Singapore and Kuala Lumpur were all closed for holidays. Oil prices dipped after Friday's gains fuelled by geopolitical worries linked to the Middle East crisis.

UAF inks MoU with HBL Zarai Service Limited

FAISALABAD (APP): HBL Zarai Services Limited and the University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF) have signed an agreement to enter a strategic collaboration to bridge the gap between industry and academia.

The MoU signing ceremony was attended by UAF Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Iqar Ahmad Khan, President & CEO - HBL Muhammad Aurangzeb and CEO - HBL Zarai Services Amer Aziz along with other senior members from UAF, HBL and HBL

Zarai Services.

UAF spokesman said here on Monday that under the agreement, HBL Zarai Services will develop Farm Research & Excellence Centers across the Punjab in collaboration with the University of Agriculture Faisalabad by integrating the concept of HBL Zarai Dera to promote sustainable agriculture. This strategic collaboration aims to establish "Farm Research & Excellence Centers" and integrate these centers.

Rupee sheds 04 paise against dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Rupee on Monday weakened by 04 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs279.32 against the previous day's closing of Rs 279.28. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs 280 and Rs 282, respectively. The price of the Euro increased by 78 paise to close at Rs301.64 against the last day's closing of Rs300.86, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).



ISLAMABAD: Secretary Muhammad Sohail Rajput, Board of Investment, meeting with Mr. K. K. Ahsan Wagan Ambassador Designate to Turkmenistan at Prime Minister's office, Board of Investment.

SECP all set to launch "eZfile", a new corporate registry

ISLAMABAD (Online): The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) is all set to launch a new corporate registry, "eZfile," a more sophisticated, advanced, and user-friendly online portal for company registration and post-incorporation filings.

The new corporate registry is envisioned in SECP's digital transformation program, namely LEAP—Leading Efficiency through Automation Prowess, launched to position SECP as a role-model regulator through end-to-end automation of its

business processes. eZfile, a modern corporate registry with a user-friendly interface and several advanced features, is ready to replace the SECP's existing online filing system, "eServices."

The "eZfile" portal offers comprehensive ease to its users while doing incorporation, filing statutory returns through built-in checks, and pop-up guidance messages.

The SECP has considerably simplified the regulatory framework by reviewing existing regulations and

merging multiple forms, reducing the number of filing forms from 75 to 28, eliminating duplication, and ensuring clarity.

The consolidated single set "Companies Regulations 2024" is issued, covering the regulations for company incorporation, post-incorporation compliance and reporting, issuance of license under Section 42 of the Companies Act, 2017, further issue of share capital, group registration, easy exit of companies, buyback of shares, registration of intermediaries, etc.

Pak, Iraq explore avenues to increase cooperation in agriculture sector

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and Iraq on Monday discussed ways and means to enhance bilateral cooperation in the field of agriculture, with a special focus on research and development.

The discussion came during a meeting between Pakistan's Ambassador to Iraq Muhammad Zeeshan Ahmed and Iraq's Minister for Agriculture Abbas Al Maliki, Pakistan's

Embassy in Iraq posted on X.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Ali Najafi son of Grand Ayatullah Bashir Hussain Najafi called on Ambassador Muhammad Zeeshan Ahmed.

During the meeting, they discussed issues pertaining to Pakistanis residing in Najaf and Karbala, as well as ways and means of facilitating Pakistani Zaireen.

FPCCI congratulates Mirza Ikhtiar on winning his NA seat of NA-241

Independent Report KARACHI: Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh, President FPCCI, has congratulated Dr. Mirza Ikhtiar Baig on winning his national assembly seat of NA-241; and, pinned his hopes in his leadership skills to facilitate business, industry and trade community of Pakistan through advocating for enabling, conducive business and economic policies from the august platform of National Assembly of Pakistan.

Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh added that Dr. Mirza

Ikhtiar Baig is not only a highly-respected former Senior Vice President of FPCCI; but, also a seasoned and accomplished governance leader as he has previously served as Advisor to the Prime Minister of Pakistan on Textiles. Furthermore, he has been active in social, philanthropic, economic and political circles for the past many decades.

Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh proposed that the new government should capitalize on his expertise and network in export markets and diplomatic circles.



LAHORE: FPCCI and Lahore Chamber's Standing Committee for Machinery Manufacturers and Importers signed an important memorandum of understanding with the world-renowned company MEF Machine to ensure the exchange of modern technology, cooperation on mutual and commercial issues.

RCCI hopes new government to bring economic stability

RAWALPINDI (INP): President of Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI), Saqib Rafiq, on Monday expressed hope that the newly elected government would work for the improvement of the economy. In a statement issued here, he said that a coalition or national government would be formed through consensus, which will restore the confidence of investors.

He said that Pakistan was facing many challenges

including the IMF program while 40 per cent of the population lived below the poverty line and inflation had skyrocketed to more than 30 per cent. Saqib Rafiq demanded that the new government should consult with the stakeholders to formulate a medium and long-term economic plan and continuity of policies. He said "We hope that the new government will take immediate steps to solve the problems of the business community."



LAHORE: President LCCI Kashif Anwar presenting shield to Director Pakistan Stock Exchange Ahmed Chenai during awareness campaign.

Punjab Governor says: Supremacy of merit vital to stability of institutions and good governance in country

Independent Report
LAHORE: Chairman Punjab Public Service Commission Lt. Gen. (Rtd) Malik Zafar Iqbal paid a farewell call on Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman here today at Governor House Lahore. Secretary Punjab Public Service Commission Afzal Chaudhry was also with him. Governor Punjab congratulated Lieutenant General (ret) Malik Zafar Iqbal on completing three years of tenure successfully and appreciated his performance as Chairman Punjab Public Service Commission. During the meeting, Chairman PPSC presented

the annual report of Punjab Public Service Commission 2023 to the Punjab Governor. Speaking on this occasion, Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman said that supremacy of merit is vital to the stability of institutions and good governance in the country. He said that the Punjab Public Service Commission is an esteemed institution that is playing a key role in selecting qualified and competent candidates on merit for government jobs. Governor Punjab further said that there is a need to take steps to increase the efficiency and bring improvements in the

institution. He underlined the need to promote information technology in the institution. Chairman Punjab Public Service Commission Lieutenant General (Retd) Malik Zafar Iqbal informed the Punjab Governor about the reforms made to improve the institution. He said that for the first time in the history of PPSC, grade four employees have been recruited on merit through written examination and interview. He said that the procedure of a computerized testing system has been devised in the Punjab Public Service Commission, and its trial will be started soon.



LAHORE: Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Raza Naqvi offering Dua after inaugurating Extension & upgradation Project of State of the Art Medicine Ware House at Gulberg.

Naqvi inaugurates medicine warehouse up-gradation project

Independent Report
LAHORE: Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi inaugurated the expansion and up-gradation project of the state-of-the-art Medicine Warehouse at Gurumangat Road, Gulberg here on Monday. During his visit, he inspected the facility and reviewed the process of storing medicines. He expressed his satisfaction over the meticulous attention to international standards in medication storage. Secretary Health provided a comprehensive briefing on the project's expansion and

upgradation, emphasizing the importance of maintaining international standards in medicine storage for safe and timely distribution. The CM commended the performance of Health Secretary and his team, affirming the optimal utilization of resources for enhancing the healthcare sector. He highlighted the significant results achieved through government initiatives aimed at improving the health sector. Addressing the media, Mohsin Naqvi emphasized a zero-tolerance policy towards

incidents akin to May 9, stating preparedness to swiftly address any such occurrences. He encouraged individuals with complaints regarding the Election Commission's procedures to exercise their legal rights and seek redressal through proper channels. The chief minister stressed the importance of maintaining stability for Pakistan's development and the welfare of its citizens, expressing hope for ongoing progress and prosperity under the incoming administration.

PML-N to announce PM candidate after consensus with allies: Attaullah Tarar

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) Deputy Secretary General Attaullah Tarar has said that his party's candidate for the prime minister slot will be announced after a complete consensus with allied parties. Addressing a press conference at the party secretariat in Model Town on Monday, he said that the party was in a position to form a government in Punjab as it had attained a simple majority in the province. The PML-N leader said that discussions were underway with the Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) and Muttahida

Qaumi Movement - Pakistan (MQM-P) for the Centre. Efforts are underway to induct more newly elected members in the party, he mentioned. Attaullah Tarar said that a candidate for premiership would be announced after a proper consensus of all political allies. He said that PML-N was going to form a government in Punjab and he congratulated all PML-N workers, elected members and leaders. About election results, he emphasized that certain elements had prematurely celebrated their triumph based on the initial announcement of a 25 percent result.



LAHORE: Chairman Punjab Public Service Commission Lt. Gen. (Rtd) Malik Zafar Iqbal presenting Annual Report 2023 to Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman at Governor House.

Kundi condemns firing on PPP rally

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Central Information Secretary and former deputy speaker of National Assembly Faisal Karim Kundi strongly condemning the incident of firing on the PPP rally in Dera Ismail Khan has called for the arrest of the attackers at the earliest. In a statement, he said that the tragic incident of firing on the PPP rally in Dera Ismail Khan is deeply regrettable and vowed that the perpetrators of this cowardly act would be brought to justice soon.

He said the People's Party would be forced to protest if suspects were not arrested. However, Faisal Karim Kundi said that both the IG Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Regional Police Officer (RPO) had assured the immediate arrest of the suspects. He said that opponents were perturbed by the progress of the People's Party and a peaceful rally in the Bhud area of Dera Ismail Khan was targeted when supporters were on their way to congratulate.

PFA launches crackdown on sale of unsafe food

Independent Report
LAHORE: On the directions of Punjab Food Authority (PFA) Director General Muhammad Asim Javaid, efforts have been stepped up to curb the sale and purchase of unsafe food in Punjab including Lahore. PFA DG Muhammad Asim Javaid said that PFA's enforcement teams inspected 16 breakfast points and 44 milk carrier vehicles in Data Ganj

Bakhsh Town and Sagayan, respectively and penalized seven food business operators (FBOs) with a total fine of Rs105,000 and served warning notices to nine eateries for improvement. He said the authority took action against FBOs for preparing breakfast in rusty vessels, failing to present the necessary records of oil change to the raiding teams and unhygienic working environment.

LHC moved for removal of name of Imran Riaz from ECL

LAHORE (Online): Petition seeking removal of name of senior anchor and journalist Imran Riaz from ECL has been filed in Lahore High Court (LHC). Imran Riaz Khan has filed petition through advocate Azhar Siddique in LHC. The petitioner has taken plea in the petition that information is there name of Imran Riaz Khan has been removed from PNIL list.

GIKI hosts conference on climate change, emerging trends

PESHAWAR (APP): The 1st International Conference on Climate Change and Emerging Trends in Civil Engineering (CCETC-2024) began in Ghulam Ishaq Institute of Engineering Sciences and Technology on Monday. The conference marked an important gathering where experts from around the world participated to talk about climate change in the context of Civil Engineering. The event brought together scholars, researchers, industry leaders, and policymakers to discuss the challenges posed by climate change in civil engineering.

The Executive Director of the Society for the Promotion of Engineering Sciences and Technology in Pakistan (SOPREST) Shakil Durani was the chief guest of the conference whereas Vice Chancellor of Mehran University of Engineering and Technology, Jamshoro Prof. Dr. Tauha Hussain Ali and Vice Chancellor, Karakoram International University Prof. Dr. Atta Ullah Shah were the guests of honor. The inaugural day featured keynote speeches, panel discussions, workshops, and setting the stage for important knowledge-sharing sessions.

ANF recovers 340 kg drugs in five operations

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting five operations across the country managed to recover 340 kg of drugs and arrested two accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Monday. He informed that 158 kg hashish and 99 kg opium were recovered from the possession of an accused arrested near Kohat Road Peshawar. 30 kg hashish was recovered from Jeewani Road, Gwadar and 28 kg opium, 4 kg heroin and 2 kg Ice drug were recovered from G.T. Road Nowshera and an accused was arrested during the operation.



KOTLI: Minister Higher Education Zafar Iqbal Malik is presiding over the meeting held regarding power outages and electricity issues. Deputy Commissioner Chaudhry Haq Nawaz is also present.

International News

Israel frees two hostages, Gaza officials say 67 killed in assault

Monitoring Desk
DOHA: Israel freed two Israeli-Argentine hostages held by Hamas in Rafah on Monday in a ferocious rescue operation which killed 67 Palestinians in the southern Gaza city where about one million civilians have sought refuge from months of bombardments. The mission by the Israeli military, the Shin Bet security service and a special police unit, freed Fernando Simon Marman, 60, and Louis Hare, 70, the military said. They were among 250 people seized during the Oct. 7 raid by Hamas militants that triggered Israel's war on Gaza. More than four

months on, much of the densely-populated strip of land on the Mediterranean is in ruins, with 28,340 Palestinians dead and 67,984 wounded, according to Gaza health officials, with many others believed to be buried under rubble. The Israeli military says 31 hostages have died in that time, but Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Monday's rescue showed that military pressure should continue and he brushed aside international alarm at its plans for a ground assault on Rafah. "Fernando and Louis, welcome home," he said, saluting the Israeli forces who rescued them. "Only

continued military pressure, until total victory, will bring about the release of all of our hostages." The Gaza health ministry said 67 Palestinians had been killed overnight and the number could rise as rescue operations were under way. A Reuters journalist at the scene saw a vast area of rubble where buildings, including a mosque, had been destroyed. Israel says many of those killed are militants; the Gaza ministry says 70% are civilians. "I've been collecting my family's body parts since the morning," said Ibrahim Hassouna, as a woman knelt over the body of a young child nearby.



Palestinians gather at the site of an Israeli strike on a house, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip.

US defence chief Lloyd Austin 'admitted to critical care unit': Pentagon

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin has been admitted to the critical care unit as he undergoes treatment for a bladder issue, the Pentagon said late on Sunday, in a statement citing his doctors. "Tonight, after a series of tests and evaluations, the secretary was admitted into the critical care unit at Walter Reed National Military Medi-

cal Centre for supportive care and close monitoring," the statement read. Austin's hospitalisation comes weeks after it emerged that the 70-year-old had kept previous hospital stays secret and had not immediately informed US President Joe Biden of a cancer diagnosis, sparking criticism as the United States faces crises in the Middle East and Ukraine.

Russia slaps sanctions on British officials

Monitoring Desk
MOSCOW: Russia on Monday imposed sanctions on 18 British citizens including several top academics and Russia experts for what Moscow said was an attempt to demonise Russia and fan the war in Ukraine. "We are forced to state that Russophobic charged British representatives do not shy away from trying to discredit the constitutional system and socio-political processes in our country," Russia's foreign ministry said. "The so-called brain trusts operating based on the largest British and Western educational institutions make a significant contribution to the subversive work of London in the Russian direction." Personal sanctions were announced against British Deputy Defence Minister James Cartledge, Deputy National Security Adviser Sarah MacIntosh and Director of Submarines Simon Asquith. Others targeted included Stuart Peach, the British prime minister's special envoy to the Western Balkans.



French President Emmanuel Macron and Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk deliver a statement to the media as part of their meeting at Elysee Palace, Paris, France.

Iran calls for expulsion of Israel from UN

Monitoring Desk
TEHRAN: Iran marked 45 years since its Islamic revolution with a ceremony on Sunday in which President Ebrahim Raisi condemned arch foe Israel over the Gaza attack and demanded it be expelled from the United Nations. Since Iran's 1979 revolution that overthrew the US-backed Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the region's main power has had deeply hostile relations with Israel, the United States and Britain. Tensions have spiralled further since the bloodiest ever Gaza unrest erupted on Oct 7.

Support for the Palestinian cause and harsh criticism of the United States — often dubbed the "Great Satan" in Iran — and Israel dominated ceremonies marking the anniversary. In Tehran, Raisi accused the "Zionist entity", Iran's term for Israel, of committing "genocide" in Gaza with the support of the United States and other Western countries. Supporters chanted "Down with the United States", "Down with Israel" and "Down with the United Kingdom" at the square, where Iranian-made missiles and other military hardware were on display.

Philippines landslide toll jumps to 54

Monitoring Desk
MANILA: The death toll from a massive Philippine landslide near a gold mine abruptly rose to 54, with the recovery of 19 more bodies from beneath the rubble in the southern mountain village of Masara on Sunday, local officials said. Sixty-three other miners and residents still missing, said the municipality of Maco, and provincial disaster official Randy Loy. The landslide buried a bus terminal for employees of a gold mining firm and 55 nearby houses on Tuesday night, leaving 35 people dead and 32 others injured.

Four Emirati soldiers, Bahraini officer killed in Somalia attack

Monitoring Desk
DUBAI: Four Emirati soldiers and a Bahraini officer were killed following an attack in Somalia, where they were training the Somali national army, the United Arab Emirates announced. The soldiers were "exposed to a terrorist act" while "performing their work duties in training and arming the Somali Armed Forces", the UAE's defence ministry said in a statement on Saturday, adding that three Emirati soldiers and a

Bahraini officer were killed. A fourth Emirati soldier, who was among two injured in the attack, "passed away upon arrival" in the UAE on Sunday, the official WAM news agency said, raising the overall death toll. The corpses arrived in the UAE capital Abu Dhabi on board a military aircraft, according to WAM, which carried footage of three coffins draped in Emirati flags being carried on a red carpet across the tarmac.

Body of Gaza girl trapped under Israeli fire found after 12 days

Monitoring Desk
GAZA (INP): Relatives found the body on Saturday of a six-year-old Palestinian girl who had begged Gaza rescuers to send help after being trapped by Israeli military fire, along with the bodies of five of her family members and two ambulance workers who had gone to save her. The Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) accused Israel of deliberately targeting the ambulance it sent to rescue Hind Rajab.

Rafah incursion will affect prisoner swap talks, Hamas warns

Monitoring Desk
GAZA STRIP: The threat of an Israeli incursion into Gaza's southernmost town of Rafah persisted on Sunday, but Hamas warned Tel Aviv that such an offensive into the city, crowded with displaced Palestinians, would threaten talks about the release of prisoners. Though Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu promised "safe passage" to civilians displaced in Rafah, a leader in the Palestinian group told AFP, "Any attack by the occupation army on the city of Rafah would undermine the exchange negotiations". In an interview, Mr Netanyahu reiterated his intention to extend Israel's military operation against Hamas into Rafah. Despite international alarm over the potential for carnage in a place crammed with more than half

of the Gaza Strip's 2.4 million people, he told ABC News: "We're going to do it". "We're going to do it while providing safe passage for the civilian population so they can leave," he said. Mr Netanyahu's announcement set off a chorus of concern from world leaders. "The people in Gaza cannot disappear into thin air," German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock wrote on social media platform X, adding that an Israeli offensive on Rafah would be a "humanitarian catastrophe in the making." Saudi Arabia's foreign ministry warned on Saturday of "very serious repercussions of storming and targeting" Rafah and called for an urgent UN Security Council meeting, while UK Foreign Secretary David Cameron said he is "deeply concerned" about the prospective offensive.

US Senate forges ahead on Ukraine, Israel aid as 'Putin is watching'

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: The US Senate on Monday will attempt to steer a \$95.34 billion package containing aid for Ukraine and Israel to passage this week following months of delays, even as it lacked any guarantee that the House of Representatives will support the measure. On Sunday, the bill got a boost when the Senate voted 67-27 to move it past an important procedural hurdle. Also over the weekend, Majority Leader Chuck Schumer set a course for passage by Wednesday. On Monday, the Senate is expected to cast a procedural vote that, if successful, would keep the bill moving forward. Having kept senators working during rare back-to-back Saturday and Sunday sessions, Schumer wrapped up for the night saying, "Our friends abroad are watching closely how we vote in the upcoming days. Ukrainian fighters are

watching and you can be sure (Russian President) Vladimir Putin is watching the Senate, too." Since last August, Democratic President Joe Biden has been urging Congress to hurry new aid to Ukraine. Following Hamas' Oct 7 attack on Israel he also requested funds for the US ally along with humanitarian aid for Palestinians in Gaza. Congress' haltingly slow response to Biden's call comes as Ukrainian officials have warned of weapons shortages at a time when Russia is pressing ahead with renewed attacks. "There's no good reason to delay the security and humanitarian assistance ... any longer," Senate Foreign Committee member Brian Schatz, a Democrat, said during Sunday's debate of the bill. "Ukraine is running dangerously low on munitions on the eve of the second anniversary of Putin's invasion," added Schatz.



A delegation of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, comprising of Mr. Raouf Hassan and Mr. Umair Niazi, called on President Dr. Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, Islamabad.

Aneeq Ahmed says: Hajj pilgrims would be provided exemplary facilities this year

HYDERABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed has said that this year Hajj expense has been reduced from 1175000 Rs. to 1075000 Rs. to facilitate the intending Hajj pilgrims. He expressed these views while addressing the First Hajj training programme organized by the Directorate of Hajj Karachi here on Monday. Federal Minister said that this Hajj was taking place in our interim setup so we will try to ensure provision of best facilities to Hajj pilgrims which were not provided in the past. He said that year as-

pirant pilgrims who were embarking for performing Hajj were fortunate and guests of Almighty Allah. He said that the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony every year organize such Hajj training programmes in major cities like Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi and this programme arranged in Hyderabad would also be helpful to educate Hajj pilgrims. He said that during Hajj women pilgrims hailing from various Muslim countries like Indonesia and Malaysia used to wear Abaya representing their country which was a good gesture, however we also

desire to provide Abaya to Pakistani women Hajj pilgrims free of cost mentioning the name of our country on its back to represent the civilized religious norms as Pakistani women are ambassadors of their country. Minister said that with the start of mobile app all facilities would be provided to pilgrims during performing all Hajj rituals which would be exemplary in the history of Pakistan. Every pilgrim would be provided a 30 kg suitcase to carry out their precious luggage and neither luggage nor any Hajj pilgrims would disappear during travelling.

Some elements planning to repeat May 9: Naqvi

LAHORE (INP): Some people are planning to repeat the May 9 events, warned Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Monday, as he said that the intelligence agencies had the evidence of the attempts. Talking to reporters in Lahore, Naqvi said the intelligence agencies had recorded the discussions held among such elements on the subject and made it clear that there would be a strong reaction if anyone tried to replicate the May 9 violence. He said anyone having objections over the Feb 8 polls results should approach the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) and added that the government would not allow repeating the May 9. No one would be stopped from staging peaceful political protest which was a democratic right, Naqvi said, but stated that the violent actions were unacceptable and the government could not allow creating further divisions among the nation. It was the PTI which had carried out attacks on the military and other government installations after the arrest of their party chief and the party is now busy in levelling rigging allegations despite having a massive win in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and sizeable seats in Punjab.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Health Minister Dr Nadeem Jan meets with US Ambassador in Pakistan.

No accused can be arrested from courts' premises: IHC

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday said that no accused could be arrested from the premises of high court and lower courts, and barred the authorities from this act. Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir heard the case pertaining to the arrest of a woman by the capital's police from the court's premises. SSP Investigation Rukhsar Mehdi appeared before the court. The court asked the police officer to prepare an SOP after a meeting with the Inspector General of Police regarding the arrests of accused. It said that no accused could be arrested from the premises of the high court, session courts or civil courts. The SSP tendered the apology to the court and said that the sb-inspector (ASI) involved in the arrest of a woman. A separate counter has been designated for each province. All these counters have been set up in front of the Commission's building.

PTI plans 'loyal to Imran' oath for election winners

ISLAMABAD (INP): Alarmed at the flight of some of its newly elected lawmakers to other political parties soon after the general elections, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Monday chalked out a strategy to prevent any further defections. Sources said that the party had decided to take oath from its winning candidates that they would remain loyal to the former prime minister and ex-PTI chairman Imran Khan. The affidavit given to PTI's Shahid Khattak, who had been elected as MNA from NA-38, Karak, read that he would not join any party, including the PML-N and the PPP, sources disclosed. After no party managed to get a simple majority either in the National Assembly or the Punjab Assembly.



QUETTA: Former Provincial Minister, Metha Khan Kakar addresses to media persons during press conference, at Quetta press club.

Munir Akram says: Pakistan makes 'significant progress' towards polio elimination by 2026

UNITED NATIONS (APP): A senior Pakistani diplomat has told UNICEF's Executive Board that Pakistan has made "significant progress" towards complete eradication of polio, despite challenges. "We remain committed to the complete eradication of polio within the set timeline for its elimination by 2026," Ambassador Munir Akram said during the Board's special session on Polio eradication. The Executive Board reviews UNICEF activities and approves its policies, country programmes and budgets. It comprises 36 members, representing the five regional groups of member states at the United Nations. Its work is coordinated by the Bureau, comprising the President and four Vice-Presidents, each officer representing one of the five regional groups. In his remarks, the Pakistani envoy pointed out that the unprecedented 2022 floods in Pakistan had adversely affected its polio vaccination drives. Despite that, he added, due to the concerted efforts by the government and our global partners, only 6 cases of polio were detected last year. This year, Ambassador Akram said the Pakistani government has set a target to immunize 45 million children, and the caretaker Prime Minister, Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar, had already kick-started this campaign.

The Pakistani envoy said dedicated efforts will be made to achieve that target. To do so, he said, Pakistan will require technical and financial cooperation from all its relevant global partners, adding that \$ 205 million was required for polio programmes in 2024, but noted there was a shortfall of \$95 million. Ambassador Akram urged all donors and partners to contribute generously to the polio eradication efforts and ensure that children were vaccinated. "We have entered the final stages in the fight against polio," he told delegates. "Urgent and bold actions are needed to eradicate polio by 2026. After smallpox, polio can be the second disease to be eradicated."

Opening the discussion, UNICEF's Executive Director, Catherine Russel, declared that Polio eradication in the world was "finally within reach."

"Today," they said, "the wild poliovirus is confined to a few districts in Afghanistan and Pakistan", marking the most significant progress against the disease since the inception of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative in 1988.

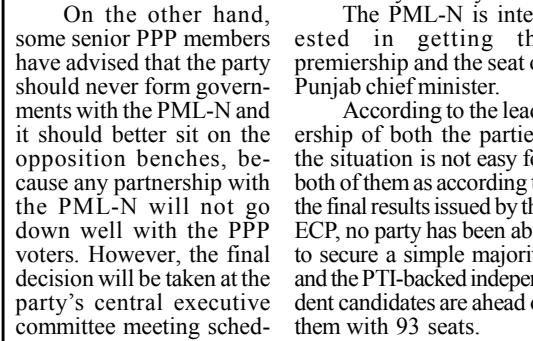
"We have come this far thanks to the heroic efforts of community health workers reaching children with vaccines ... government leadership."



ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Jilil Abbas Jilani, Governor Sindh Kamran Tessori, Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan Dr Reza Amiri Moghaddom, and others cutting the cake during National Day of Iran ceremony at a local hotel, in the Federal Capital.

Fissures in PPP over forming coalition govt with PML-N

ISLAMABAD (INP): Differences have developed within the PPP on Monday over the terms and conditions the party should set for the formation of governments both at the Center and Punjab. According to reports, some of the party members are of the view that the PPP can only get along with the PML-N if the latter agrees on making Bilawal Bhutto the country's prime minister, and that there can be no alliance with the PML-N unless this condition is met. On the other hand, some senior PPP members have advised that the party should never form governments with the PML-N and it should better sit on the opposition benches, because any partnership with the PML-N will not go down well with the PPP voters. However, the final decision will be taken at the party's central executive committee meeting scheduled to be held at Zardari House in Islamabad. Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has reportedly offered a 'lucrative package' to the PPP in a bid to secure its support for the formation of governments at the Center and Punjab. The PML-N offered the PPP - Presidency, National Assembly (NA) speakership and Senate chairmanship at a meeting held between the delegations of both the parties in Lahore yesterday. The PML-N is interested in getting the premiership and the seat of Punjab chief minister. According to the leadership of both the parties, the situation is not easy for both of them as according to the final results issued by the ECP, no party has been able to secure a simple majority and the PTI-backed independent candidates are ahead of them with 93 seats.



LAHORE: Newly elected members of Punjab Assembly meet with Senior Vice President and Chief Organizer of Pakistan Muslim League (N) Maryam Nawaz Sharif.

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has established four counters for the guidance of complainants coming to Election Commission Secretariat for the registration of complaints regarding electoral objections. A separate counter has been designated for each province. All these counters have been set up in front of the Commission's building.

BBISE installed ultra fast track software for provision of DMC to students: Ijaz

QUETTA (APP): Balochistan Board Intermediate and Secondary Education (BBISE) Chairman Mir Ijaz Azeem Baloch on Monday said that the BBISE has installed an automatic digital Ultra Fast Track software Cell (UFTSC) in seven districts of the province for the provision of Detailed Marks Certificates (DMC) to students at their doorstep. Talking to APP here, he said that the Ultra Fast Track Software Cell was installed in respective districts of the BBISE's sub-branch access including, Turbat, Loralai, Zhob, Khuzdar, Kharan, DMJ, and Sibi districts where students would get their DMC within 30 minutes after applying for it. He said that the installation of the Ultra Fast Track Software Cell would decrease the difficulties of the students and save their precious time in the rural areas of Balochistan. He also acquire quality knowledge with enthusiasm because going forward these children have to take care of the future of the country saying that we endeavored to equip the future generations with the jewel of modern education. He said that the present era was about quality, and technical education, ignorance could be ended through knowledge. He said that it was a top priority of the BBISE to end copy culture from the end copy students for which special monitoring teams have been formed to visit examination centers. He also urged teachers they play their role in eradicating the cheating system from examinations. In response to the question, he said that he had sent letters to the directors of education including the Director of Colleges and the Director of Schools regarding preparation of the examination under the syllabus.

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HYDERABAD: Caretaker Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed addressing the intending pilgrims during 1st training program

PTI candidate secured more votes than me, JI's Naeem withdraws from PS-129 seat

KARACHI (INP): In a significant development, Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami Karachi Hafiz Naeemur Rehman on Monday abdicated his provincial assembly seat PS-129 (Karachi) saying PTI-backed Independent candidate had secured more votes than him. JI's Naeemur Rehman returned successful on PS-129 (Karachi Central-VIII) by bagging 26,296 votes. Out of the seven provincial assembly seats of Korangi district three were won by independent candidates, two by MQM-P and one each by the PPP and the JI. Addressing media persons, he said they were giving me the seat in charity. He said worst rigging was made in recent elections. Naeem said his party had reservations over the results. He said seats were doled out in Karachi. He further alleged that MQM leaders including Mustafa Kamal faced defeat in elections but they were declared winners. The JI leader said his opponents were hell bent destroying Karachi. The JI leader said he had the moral courage to accept the defeat. He urged the ECP to declare the real winners as returned candidates. He said he had written to the chief justice of Pakistan to take notice of the rigging in election. He demanded the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to release results as per Form-45. The JI leader said his party did not want to take people towards violence and extremism. He alleged that MQM candidate secured 6000 votes but these were enhanced to 20,000. We don't want a seat in charity. We want our right," said Jamaat-e-Islami Karachi chief Hafiz Naeemur Rehman at a press conference in Karachi where he forfeited his Sindh Assembly seat. He said he knew that the heart of Karachi "beat with the JI". Acknowledging that some may not consider his decision to be the right one, he said, "Even if they have erased us, they can't erase us from people's hearts. We will fight for the people, democratically, hold peaceful demonstrations." He further said that the nation destroying Karachi. The JI leader said he had the moral courage to accept the defeat. He urged the ECP to declare

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Info Minister reiterates resolve to strengthen Pakistan-Iran ties

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Murtaza Solangi, has reiterated Pakistan's unwavering commitment to strengthen bilateral relations with Iran. He was addressing a ceremony marking the 45th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution in Iran organized by the Iranian Embassy in Islamabad today. While felicitating the government and the people of Iran on the occasion, the Minister said Pakistan and Iran share historic brotherly relations. He said the governments and people of Pakistan and Iran are well aware of the importance and benefits of friendly relations between the two countries. Murtaza Solangi said Iran achieved numerous goals in its struggle, and is rapidly heading towards development and prosperity.

GDA rejects poll results, announces vacating Sindh Assembly seats

KARACHI (INP): Pakistan Muslim League-Functional (PML-F) chief Pir Sibghatullah Shah, popularly known as Pir Pagara, announced on Monday the forfeiture of the two Sindh Assembly seats won by the Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA) - a coalition of political parties in Sindh - in the 2024 general elections, alleging electoral rigging. Describing the elections as "unfair", Pagara, during a press conference, called for a peaceful protest against the rigging and announced plans for a sit-in on Feb 16 near the Hyderabad Bypass Road. Pagara recalled an incident a few months ago when he was approached by an individual, whom he referred to as "a friend", to disband his party and offered two to three national and provincial constituencies. "When I refused the offer, citing my loyalty to my party members, I was warned of potential losses in the elections."



Assembly seats won by the Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA) - a coalition of political parties in Sindh - in the 2024 general elections, alleging electoral rigging. Describing the elections as "unfair", Pagara, during a press conference, called for a peaceful protest against the rigging and announced plans for a sit-in on Feb 16 near the Hyderabad Bypass Road. Pagara recalled an incident a few months ago when he was approached by an individual, whom he referred to as "a friend", to disband his party and offered two to three national and provincial constituencies. "When I refused the offer, citing my loyalty to my party members, I was warned of potential losses in the elections."

PML-N undermining democracy to seize power, says Salman Akram

ISLAMABAD (INP): Slamming the PML-N led by Nawaz Sharif, Salman Akram Raja, a PTI-backed independent candidate from Lahore's NA-128 constituency, on Monday asserted that those who once advocated for the integrity of the vote were now aiming to seize power by undermining the very essence of democracy. The senior lawyer, while speaking to media outside the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) office, alleged that the election was rigged, stating that he was winning by a wide margin according to the Form 45, but his victory was turned into defeat the following day. Raja called this (rigging) an insult to the millions of people who used their franchise right on the polling day, recalling that he had been forcibly removed from the office of the RO (returning officer) so that the results could be manipulated. "What kind of magic turned a lead of 0.1 million into 12,000," the electoral candidate questioned, asserting that the election was rigged and "we know how it was done". According to Salman Akram Raja, he won the election with a lead of at least 90,000 votes against Isteqdam-e-Pakistan Party candidate Awn Saqlain Chaudhry.