

Independent

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www.dailyindependent.com.pk

Hub

Ph: 2841470/2841473 Vol: XIX No. 30, Shaban 04, 1445 AH Thursday February 15, 2024, Pages 04, Price Rs.15

Fazlur Rehman rejects poll results, invites PML-N to join JUI-F on opposition benches

JUI-F chief announces initiating a country-wide protest movement to press for approval of their demands

ISLAMABAD (INP) – The Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) on Wednesday rejected the election results, announcing countrywide protests against the alleged rigging in the Feb 8 polls.

Addressing a press conference, JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman said that the parliament had lost the credibility after the ‘rigged’ elections. The veteran politician invited the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supreme to join the opposition in the National Assembly. He said that the JUI-F would not join the coalition government.

Maulana Fazlur Rehman criticised the Election Commission of Pakistan, alleging its role had been questionable since the beginning. He mentioned that the commission dismissed petitions submitted by JUI-F candidates against rigging. The JUI-F leader stated that the party would fulfill its parliamentary duties and join the assemblies with reservations.

Hinting at potential protests, he expressed concerns that decisions may be taken outside the parliament. Additionally, he outlined a series of upcoming meetings scheduled by the party in various regions.

Maulana Fazlur Rehman mentioned plans for provincial general council meetings in Balochistan on February 25 and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) on February 27, along with additional meetings scheduled in Karachi on March 3 and Lahore on March 5. JUI-F chief Fazlur Rehman said his party would play its parliamentary role but would become a part of the assemblies with reservations.

“Defeating the JUI-F through poll rigging was a conspiracy of anti-Islamic elements. Our fault is that we played our role in mending the relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan, which is not acceptable to the US.”



ISLAMABAD: President of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F), Maulana Fazlur Rehman addresses a media talk at G-6/4.

SC seeks govt’s assurance over no army role in business

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa has sought assurance from the attorney general that the army would only work on defence-related matters and not run any business.

The assurance was sought from CJP Isa during a hearing of a petition filed against commercial activity being done on military land.

During the hearing, CJP Isa remarked that the army was conducting business and had set up marriage halls on military lands. He then sought assurance from the attorney general that the army would remain the “protector” and not do any business.

“Can you get this assurance?” CJP Isa asked the attorney general. He also added that everyone

should work as per their mandate.

“The army should do its own work and courts will do their job,” said CJP Isa.

In response, AGP Mansoor Usman Awan stated that as per principle, everyone should do their job.

However, CJP Isa insisted that if the AGP had the directives then he should give the assurance to the court.

On this point lawyer for the Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) intervened and told the court that the building from which the dispute started belonged to his client. He added that the allottees sold the land based on fake documents and now a five-story building sits there. At this, Justice

Muhammad Ali Mazhar remarked that the ETPB was a bystander when the five-story building was being constructed.

However, CJP Isa observed that it would not have been possible without the involvement of the Sindh Building Control Authority (SBCA).

He then further remarked that the assets of officers above the rank of inspector at the SBCA should be checked.

“The Karachi sub registry’s assets should also be audited by the FBR. The residents of demolished buildings should receive money from all assets beyond means,” said the CJP. He also added that the Sindh government would never do an inquiry on this.



QUETTA: Caretaker Home Minister Mir Muhammad Zubair Jamali in a meeting with Inspector General of Police Balochistan Abdul Khaliq Sheikh

Allied parties start consultation process on formation of cabinet

ISLAMABAD (Online): Following the alliance and agreement over government making between the major political parties of the country, consultation process on formation of cabinet has started between them.

PML-N has launched efforts to include PPP in the federal cabinet.

Nominated Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif has requested former president Asif Ali Zardari to review his decision on not joining cabinet.

National Assembly (NA) will be summoned by the end of this month. Ministry of parliamentary affairs will send the sum-

mary to Prime Minister (PM) for summoning session.

PML-N will constitute its committee on what ministry has to be given to which alliance. Federal cabinet will take oath in different phases.

Sources said over 20 ministers can take oath in preliminary phase.

The sources further said JUI-F will decide on joining government and cabinet today at the request of Shehbaz Sharif.

PML-N will keep the key ministries related to policy, manifesto and decision making with itself. on the other hand sources of parliamentary

affairs have said the NA session will be called by the end of this month on the matter of formation of 16th NA.

In this regard ministry of parliamentary affairs will send summary for summoning NA session to prime minister who will send it to the president.

Sources further said the election of speaker and deputy speaker will take place after taking oath by members of national assembly. The election of new leader of the house Prime Minister is likely till March 3 or 4. NA secretariat has finalized its preparations with regard to session of new NA.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Tax Ombudsman (FTO), Mr Asif Mahmood Jah, presenting FTO’s Annual Report 2023 to President Dr Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-i-Sadr.

FTO decides Rs 17,742.16m refund claims in 2023

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Tax Ombudsman (FTO) has addressed the grievances of the taxpayers by processing 8,963 cases with an implementation status of 94.07% during 2023 as compared to 73.29% last year.

Likewise, requests for refund claims were also decided to the tune of Rs 17,742.16 million in 2023 and the due amount was paid to the aggrieved taxpayers by the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR).

This was highlighted by the Federal Tax Ombudsman Asif Mahmood Jah, who called on President Dr Arif Alvi and presented FTO’s Annual Report 2023 at Aiwan-e-Sadr

on Wednesday. The Federal Tax Ombudsman briefed the president about FTO’s overall performance and its key initiatives to facilitate taxpayers and expeditiously address their grievances against maladministration of tax officials.

He stated that concerted efforts were undertaken to enhance FTO’s outreach by launching awareness campaigns and opening up regional offices in the country.

He informed that Honorary Advisors had also been appointed abroad to facilitate overseas Pakistanis in the USA, Canada, Sweden, UAE, Hong Kong and the Philippines. He added that FTO

had appointed leading businessmen as Honorary Advisors from various Chambers of Commerce and Industries to facilitate the business community.

“To ensure prompt response against the maladministration of tax authorities, a mobile App has been developed enabling aggrieved complainants to lodge complaints and check their status using mobile/smart devices”, he stated.

He apprised that highly informative training sessions had also been conducted to enhance the professional skills and expertise of Ombudsmen institutions in the country.

Two killed, 13 injured in firing during recount on PB-21 seat

HUB (INP): In a shocking incident, two people were killed and thirteen others sustained injuries in an armed clash between two groups during a vote recount on the PB-21 seat of the Balochistan Assembly.

The unconfirmed and unofficial results from PB-21 showed the candidate of Balochistan National Party (BAP) Muhammad Saleh Bhutani victory with 30,910 votes.

According to Senior Superintendent (SSP) HUB Manzoor Buledi, an armed clash erupted between two groups during a vote recount on the PB-21 seat of Balochistan Assembly from Hub.

The firing incident was reported last night outside the Civic Centre, where the vote recount was going on the provincial assembly seat, said SSP. Getting information about the firing incident, the police party

reached the spot and arrested three suspects with Kalashnikov.

He confirmed the death of two and injuries to 13 others including one critically wounded. The bodies and injured were rushed to the hospital.

SSP Buledi said that Frontier Corps have been deployed in the area to control the law and order situation.

It is to be noted that on February 11, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) put a pause on the electoral results and mandated a recount of the votes in the PB-21 constituency.

The decision came in response to the joint request for a recount by the Pakistan Peoples’ Party (PPP) and the National Party, highlighting the intensity and importance of the electoral contest in the region.

Non accepting PM slot does not mean Nawaz is parting ways with politics: Maryam

ISLAMABAD (Online): PML-N chief organizer and nominated Chief Minister (CM) Punjab Maryam Nawaz has said non accepting the slot of Prime Minister (PM) by Nawaz Sharif does not mean he is going to forsake politics. Nawaz Sharif will not only do forceful politics in next five years but will also patronize PML-N governments in center and Punjab.

She said in her tweet that Nawaz Sharif has made it clear he will not become part of any coalition government. The people who know about Nawaz Sharif they too know about his principled stance.

Meanwhile former prime ministers Nawaz Sharif and Shehbaz Sharif discussed names for the federal cabinet during a meeting here on Wednesday.

According to party sources, the junior Sharif briefed his elder brother on the meetings with various allies.



A view of consultative meeting of the nominated representatives of Pakistan Muslim League (N) and Pakistan People’s Party held in Islamabad

CJP directs police to handle blasphemy cases with more care

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa on Wednesday directed the police to handle blasphemy cases more care and ensure that the religion should not be used for personal gains.

A three-member SC bench headed the CJP and comprising Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Musarrat Hilali heard the bail case of a blasphemy accused. The SSP and SP Islamabad police appeared before the court.

During the course of proceedings, the CJP remarked that the Superintendent of Police (SP) should do investigation in the blasphemy case himself. Whether the court should suspend the SSP or SP on the illegal act, he asked.

The court observed that the police should not enter someone’s home without permission or warrants. It noted that there was a five-year imprisonment sentence in Police Order 2002 for entering a house without the warrants.

Ji rules out alliance with PTI on govt formation

PESHAWAR (APP): Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) on Wednesday made a significant move by rejecting to enter into a political coalition and support Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), which had sought assistance from the religio-political party to accommodate its independent voters who emerged victorious in the February 8 elections for the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly.

Talking to media persons here, Deputy Emir of JI, Liaqat Baloch, announced that after thorough consultations within the party, they have decided not to comply with PTI’s request.

Baloch revealed that PTI had approached JI solely for assistance in forming the government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa,

while expressing readiness for cooperation at the national level across Pakistan. In the repercussions of this refusal, PTI may not secure any of the reserved seats – 26 for women and four for minorities – in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly unless it finds an alternative solution.

PTI faces a challenge after the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) stripped the party of its “bat” symbol, compelling it to field candidates as independents who contested on various symbols. Consequently, despite securing seats in the provincial legislatures of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the PTI may not obtain reserved seats for women and minorities unless its members align with one of the parties that contested the recent elections.

Gas prices likely to surge again

ISLAMABAD (INP): Consumers, both protected and non-protected, are poised to face a significant uptick in gas prices, according to the sources within the industry.

The media reports indicate that protected consumers can anticipate a Rs. 10 per mmbtu hike, while their non-protected counterparts will see a steeper increase of Rs. 300 per mmbtu.

Crucially, there will be no adjustment to fixed charges for either group, although heavy gas users can expect a substantial Rs. 900 per mmbtu rise in prices.

The impact of this price adjustment extends to various sectors, including the CNG industry, where prices per mmbtu will climb by Rs. 170. Engro Fertilizer, among other entities, will also feel the pinch with increased gas rates, effective from March 1st.

These adjustments come into effect retroactively, with the increased prices slated to apply from February 1st. Overall, consumers are bracing for a collective burden of Rs. 204 billion due to the escalation in gas prices, a change that will also affect captive power plants.

Last session of Senate summoned on February 19

ISLAMABAD (Online): Last session of Senate has been summoned on February 19, chairman Senate Sadiq Sanjani will preside over the session.

According to parliamentary sources summary has been sent to the president for summoning last session of Senate.

The senators will make farewell speeches in last session of Senate.



KARACHI: Awami National Party (ANP) Sindh President, Shahi Syed exchanging views with Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, Convener of Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM-P) along with delegation during meeting held at Mardan House in Karachi.

Daily Voice of Masses Independent

Hard to 'move on'

The caretaker prime minister recently asserted that the nation has "accepted" the election results and that we must, therefore, "move on". With all due respect, this seems like an overly optimistic take on a terribly messy situation.

As is evident from the slew of petitions being filed against the results, very few seem interested in "moving on". In fact, the results are so unacceptable to certain stakeholders that, in some instances, political rivals are setting aside their differences to challenge them as one.

Similarly, the PM's dismissal of concerns over tampered results, based on the simplistic assertion that people "believe that rigging was committed because the mobile service was suspended and results were delayed by 36 hours", is a fallacious framing of a highly serious matter. The rigging accusations have much more to do with the suspicious conduct of many returning officers, which the PM conveniently glossed over in his eagerness to prove critics wrong.

Whether or not he feels it to be his "moral duty", the PM should not be defending the ECP and its decidedly poor management of the election exercise. Nor does it seem appropriate for him to be summarily dismissing the concerns over election rigging, especially when the complaints are being taken to election tribunals and courts.

It also seems irresponsible of him to blame political parties for "failing to enact effective legislation" as the reason why the polls became controversial, instead of letting them take the matter up with the ECP. It is also strange that Mr Kakar is still having trouble deciding what "free and fair" means.

The night before the election, he told a foreign interviewer that he "could not guarantee" free and fair polls because the idea was "very subjective". Now, he is insisting that the "process" was free and fair and that anyone who disagrees with this assessment is wrong.

Such unwarranted self-assurance and disregard for consequence would perhaps be more easily overlooked in a popularly elected leader secure in their office. However, they seem more than a little jarring when coming from an individual entrusted with the office to do just one job. The nation will, indeed, move on in good time. The political system will work through its present challenges and evolve.

However, the people will not be gas-lit into accepting less than what they deserve. The ECP will be held accountable for its failure to organise a smooth transfer of power from one elected government to the next.

It is only its disastrous mismanagement of the election process that is to blame for the growing controversy over rigging, not the media, which simply fulfilled its responsibility by acting as a check on the counting process. The government should accept this simple fact and move on.



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

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) finds itself embroiled in a multifaceted crisis, grappling with significant challenges that threaten its political standing and influence in both the National and Provincial Assemblies. At the heart of this turmoil is a contentious legal struggle to reclaim seats that PTI alleges were unjustly wrested from its grasp, amidst accusations of a biased Election Commission and state machinery ostensibly arrayed against it. This situation is further compounded by the unsettling trend of PTI-endorsed candidates, who secured their victories largely through the party's support and the charismatic appeal of its former chairman, Imran Khan, now defecting under the pressures of coercion or the allure of incentives.

Faced with this precarious scenario, PTI's ability to retain its elected representatives is severely constrained, leaving the party in a vulnerable position. The shifting allegiances of its candidates not only undermine PTI's legislative strength but also pose profound questions about party loyalty and political integrity in Pakistan's tumultuous political landscape.

In response to these daunting challenges, PTI must tread carefully, adhering scrupulously to the

stipulations of the Elections Act, 2017 (Section 104). This legal framework, while offering a pathway to address grievances, also demands meticulous compliance and strategic acumen from PTI as it seeks to navigate these turbulent waters. The party's journey ahead is fraught with legal, political, and ethical hurdles, requiring a delicate balance between legal recourse, political strategy, and the maintenance of its core principles and public image.

Given this legal context, PTI's options to prevent defections are primarily political rather than legal. They may engage in negotiations or employ party-level strategies to retain their members. It may rely on internal rules or moral suasion to influence members' loyalty. Legally, the party should rely on pre-election agreements, if any, or party constitutions that candidates may have agreed to, which might include clauses related to party loyalty or penalties for defection. PTI could explore enforcing these agreements.

However, the enforceability of such agreements is contingent upon their specific terms and compatibility with Pakistani law. Additionally, PTI could consider filing election petitions if there is substantial evidence of electoral fraud or malpractice associated with the defection. Nonetheless, the effectiveness of these legal measures is uncertain, given the lack of clear statutory provisions addressing post-election party loyalty. In Pakistan's political landscape, such issues of defection and party loyalty have historically been more amenable to political resolutions rather than legal interventions.

In the case of reserved seats, PTI has limited options. Since PTI could not file the initial list submis-

sion reflecting the party's eventual electoral strength or diversity, PTI could explore forming alliances or negotiating coalition agreements with other parties. These political maneuvers would involve discussions around policy concessions or legislative support in exchange for backing PTI's nominees for key positions, thereby indirectly enhancing their representation in the assembly. Such alliances not only require adept negotiation skills but also a willingness to engage in give-and-take, balancing the party's immediate needs with its long-term policy objectives.

PTI faces formidable challenges in its quest for justice concerning allegations of extensive electoral rigging that ostensibly transformed its potential victories and defeats. The party contends that it is up against an overwhelming adversary, with accusations that the entire Election Commission, along with various state institutions, is determined to thwart PTI's aspirations for a majority government, particularly at the federal level. This perceived alliance against PTI is accused of employing a wide array of tactics, both within and beyond the legal framework, to systematically undermine the party's electoral success and political influence.

The avenues available to PTI for contesting these allegations and seeking redress are notably constrained under these circumstances. The party's battle is not merely legal but also deeply political, entailing a struggle against a network of powerful forces allegedly aligned in opposition. This situation places PTI in a precarious position, necessitating a multifaceted strategy that goes beyond conventional legal challenges. It requires mobilizing public support, international advocacy for fair play, and engaging in

diplomatic channels to highlight the perceived injustices. The party's endeavor to overturn the alleged manipulation and secure its rightful place in the political arena is a testament to the turbulent nature of democratic processes in contexts where the impartiality of electoral bodies and state institutions is called into question.

The electoral framework in Pakistan, as delineated by the Elections Act, 2017, is structured to uphold the sanctity and integrity of the voting process through a series of meticulous procedures and checks. From the initial step of voter identification, which leverages both traditional ID cards and advanced technologies like biometric verification, to the methodical issuance and tracking of ballot papers marked with indelible ink, the system is designed to mitigate the risks of impersonation and double voting. The public announcement of provisional results, followed by a transparent consolidation process in the presence of contesting candidates or their representatives, further enhances the credibility of the electoral process. These procedural safeguards, coupled with the option for any grievances to be thoroughly investigated by Election Tribunals, including the verification of thumb impressions against electoral rolls, form a robust framework intended to deter and detect malfeasance.

However, the efficacy of this system in delivering justice, particularly in the face of allegations of widespread rigging, hinges on the integrity with which these procedures are implemented. While the law provides a comprehensive blueprint to safeguard electoral integrity, its success ultimately depends on the impartial execution by election officials and the vigilant

oversight by political parties, candidates, and civil society.

The provisions for legal recourse and the establishment of Election Tribunals serve as a critical backstop, offering a pathway to challenge and rectify potential irregularities. This multi-layered preventive approach, combining measures for redress, embodies the legislative intent to create a foolproof electoral system. Yet, the true measure of its effectiveness lies in its application, underscoring the importance of vigilance, transparency, and accountability at every stage of the electoral process.

In the intricate tapestry of Pakistan's political arena, PTI emerges as the dominant force at the Centre, yet finds itself short of achieving a simple majority. This scenario necessitates alliances for governance, but ideological rifts with major parties like PPP and PML(N) sharply limit PTI's options, steering it towards a probable tenure in opposition. This position compels PTI to focus on reclaiming what it alleges are its unfairly lost seats, while navigating the complex dynamics of parliamentary politics.

Despite the challenging circumstances, there's a simmering discourse among PTI leaders about the potential for a coalition with PPP. Such a partnership, though fraught with complexities due to fundamental ideological divergences, holds a glimmer of possibility.

Realizing this alliance would require exceptional diplomatic finesse and a willingness to engage in pragmatic policy compromises. For PTI, this path demands a strategic recalibration to forge a united front with PPP, ensuring that

governance is marked by cohesion and effectiveness despite the underlying ideological disparities.

Conversely, in provinces like Punjab and Sindh, where PTI is not the dominant force, the party faces a more complex situation. In Punjab, where PML(N) leads, and Sindh, predominantly under PPP control, PTI's prospects for forming a government are slim. The political dynamics in these regions might compel PTI to adopt a role in the opposition, focusing on legislative influence and preparing for future electoral opportunities. Whereas, Balochistan offers a unique challenge where PTI didn't do well compared to any other national party.

Navigating the tumultuous waters of Pakistan's political landscape, PTI stands at a crossroads, facing daunting challenges that test its resilience, strategic acumen, and ideological commitment. The party's struggle to reclaim its allegedly stolen seats, counter the shifting loyalties of its representatives, and grapple with the complexities of forming alliances underlines the intricate balance between political pragmatism and principled governance. As PTI endeavors to solidify its position, whether in governance or opposition, its actions will not only shape its own future but also have profound implications for the democratic fabric of Pakistan. The path PTI chooses to pursue in this critical juncture will be a testament to its vision for the nation, its commitment to justice, and its capacity to navigate the intricate interplay of power, loyalty, and ideology in the quest for a more transparent and accountable political order.

Commerce News

Project for enhancing domestic pharmaceutical ingredients production inaugurated

KARACHI (APP): The Caretaker Federal Minister for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, Dr. Nadeem Jan, Wednesday, inaugurated a project of expansion and revamping of Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient (API) manufacturing facility at DrugPharma Chemicals.

It is the second project under endeavor of revival and invigorating domestic production of

API and at completion of the project the production capacity of the DrugPharma would increase in a phased manner from existing 52000 liters to over 105000 liters by end of the year.

The federal minister speaking at the occasion said that APIs are used as basic ingredient in medicines of different disease and their enhanced indigenous production will not only lessen reliance on

API imports but it will also help reducing the price of medicines and improving quality and availability of the basic pharmaceutical ingredients in the country.

He said that medicines and other pharmaceutical products manufactured in Pakistan were in a great demand in Central Asia as well as in African countries and we can enhance our exports by ensuring expansion

opportunities the local pharmaceutical sector.

Increase in export of pharmaceutical products will also contribute significantly in ensuring the availability of quality medicines on appropriate prices across the country, he added.

"Since formation of caretaker government, I have pursued a three pronged strategy in health sector with core objectives of health sector reforms.



LAHORE: Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman in a group photo with delegation of overseas Pakistani business community from UK, Europe, Muscat and Oman led by Chaudhry Khalid Mehmood Hanjara and Tafazul Hussain at Governor House.



LAHORE: Chairman of All Pakistan Textile Mills Association Punjab Kamran Arshad addressing a press conference.

EDOTCO Pakistan spearheads sustainable development, community wellbeing in 2023

Independent Report
ISLAMABAD: EDOTCO Pakistan, a key player in the telecommunications infrastructure industry marked a significant stride in its dedication to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in 2023. The company's commitment to enriching underprivileged communities, particularly in areas with limited access to grid power, culminated in the successful execution of the Tower to Community (T2C) initiative.

The visionary project, centered in Tehsil Kabir Wala, Multan, not only supplied clean en-

ergy to adjacent households but also set a benchmark in integrating sustainable energy practices with societal upliftment. By tapping into solar energy, EDOTCO Pakistan innovatively utilized its towers not just as telecom infrastructure to connect the unconnected, but also as power sources for neighboring off-grid homes. This initiative underscores the company's role in driving sustainable development and cementing its unwavering dedication to enhancing community welfare and livelihoods. In its con-

tinuous pursuit to community welfare, EDOTCO Pakistan also introduced the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) school program, a pioneering step in promoting health and safety awareness. The program was piloted in Islamabad and the Mansehra District, reflecting the company's proactive stance in creating a safer and more health-conscious environment.

Implemented initially at the Mansehra Public School & College in April 2023, and subsequently at the Pehli Kiran Schools.

Qadir Bakhsh says: Thematic design ideas for new banknote series to be submitted till March 11

ISLAMABAD (APP): Director Finance of the State Bank Pakistan Qadir Bakhsh Wednesday said that SBP was organizing an art competition to develop innovative and thematic design ideas for new banknotes where local artists, designers and art students would submit their final designs by March 11.

Talking to private news channel, he said that the final designs would be submitted to the federal

government for approval and the process of issuing the new series of banknotes would involve a number of steps, adding, cash prizes would be awarded to top three entries in each of the current seven denominations.

The director explained that after the art competition, the selected design ideas and themes would be shared with professional banknote designers chosen through a competitive process.

Saqib Ateel says: Early sown cotton yields more production

MULTAN (APP): Secretary Agriculture South Punjab Saqib Ateel said on Wednesday that early sowing of cotton was yielding handsome production and the trend was on the rise in the region.

While chairing a meeting here, Saqib Ateel said that early sowing increased production by reducing expenditures.

The trend of early sowing was being witnessed in Multan,

Sahiwal, Sargodha and Faisalabad divisions.

Saqib directed officials to guide farmers on breaking hard soil, triple-gene cultivation, and implementation of the IPM model.

He also stressed the importance of prioritizing national interests over personal gains. He highlighted how cotton, being a unique crop, can significantly contribute to the country's economy in a short period.

Overseas Pak business community can play vital role in stabilizing economy

LAHORE (Online): Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman has said that overseas Pakistani business community can play an important role in stabilizing the country's economy by exporting agricultural products to European and other countries. He expressed these views during a meeting with the overseas Pakistani business

community delegation from UK, Europe, Muscat and Oman led by Chaudhry Khalid Mehmood Hanjara and Tafazul Hussain at Governor House Lahore.

Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rahman said that overseas Pakistanis are the asset of the country.

He said that they are contributing to the country's economy by

sending remittances to Pakistan. He said that overseas Pakistanis should play a robust role in increasing exports. Governor Punjab further said that Pakistan offers conducive business environment to foreign investors, adding that the government through the Special Investment Facilitation Council has facilitated foreign investors to invest in agriculture and other sectors.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Shipping activity reported at Port Qasim where four ships namely, Bow Endeavor, Epic Sunter, Lokoja and Stockholm Eagle, carrying Palm oil, LPG, LNG and Coal, berthed at Liquid Terminal, Engro Terminal, Gas Terminal and Bulk Terminal respectively during last 24 hours.

Meanwhile two more ship, Visayas and America scheduled to load/offload Rice and Containers are also arrived at outer anchorage of the Port Qasim during the same period.

PSX continues with bullish trend, gains 926 more points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Wednesday, gaining 926.92 points, a positive change of 1.51 percent, closing at 62,153.84 points against 61,226.93 points the previous trading day.

A total of 303,886,073 shares valuing Rs.14,687 billion were traded during the day as compared to 435,549,576 shares valuing Rs.15.972 billion the last day.

Some 342 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 267 of them recorded gains and 56 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 19 remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were K-Electric Limited with 33,417,936 shares at Rs 4.47 per share, Oil and Gas Development with 32,231,367 shares at Rs 122.01 per share and Pak Petroleum with 15,505,464 shares at Rs 107.37 per share.

KP Governor inaugurates IT lab at AUST

HAVELIAN (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Haji Ghulam Ali on Wednesday inaugurated a free IT lab at Abbottabad University of Science and Technology (AUST) to foster technological education and promote sustainable practices.

Addressing the gathering, Governor KP emphasized the significance of Free IT Labs in Fourth Generation Universities and applauded Abbottabad University's efforts to obtain projects in information technology from global countries. He advocated for educational systems that prioritize skill acquisition over job

pursuit and stressed the importance of empowering youth in the present era.

He further outlined plans to beautify the university's vacant land and enhance its atmosphere by planting 10,000 trees. He underlined the importance of student involvement in the university's care and beautification efforts.

He urged students to utilize information technology tools responsibly to shape a better future for themselves and society.

Speaking on the occasion, Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Malik Mujaddad ur Rehman underscored the importance of nurturing talent and ability among the

province's youth to empower them as valuable assets to the nation and society.

During the event, it was revealed that AUST has generated approximately \$47,000 from various international-level projects in information technology. Furthermore, nearly 400 deserving and underprivileged students have been provided scholarships that reflect the university's commitment to inclusive education. Dr. Rahman also highlighted the significant advancements including the resolution of the university's land issue and the complete elimination of the electricity bill through a \$9 million investment in solar energy.



LAHORE: Federal Minister for IT and Communication Dr. Umar Saif witnesses an MoU of Treatment And Prevention Of Heart Attack between NHATI (National Heart Attack and Treatment Initiative), Pakistan Society of Interventional Cardiology (PSIC) and National Information Technology Board (NITB). PSIC President Prof. Zubair Akram, Vice President Prof. Dr. Nauman Naseer (Focal Person of the Institute) and NITB Chairman Dr. Babar Majeed Bhatti also participate the signing ceremony.

CM orders foolproof security for PSL-9

Independent Report
LAHORE: Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi has ordered to undertake excellent arrangements to ensure foolproof security for Pakistan Super League (PSL) 9 and for facilitation of cricket lovers.

Presided over a special meeting with regard to undertaking security and other arrangements to hold PSL-9 here on Wednesday, Mohsin Naqvi directed to implement the formulated security plan in its true spirit for the cricket matches

to be played in Rawalpindi, Multan and Lahore. He was informed during the briefing that more than 16,000 police personnel will perform their security duties during the PSL matches. A security plan for the matches to be played in Lahore, Rawalpindi and Multan has been chalked out. The matches of PSL-9 are going to be launched from Feb 17. The CM directed to carry out effective management to maintain traffic flow during the matches adding that the traffic closure time should be minimized keeping in view facilitation of the people. He directed to timely impart awareness to the citizens about the alternate routes through the media, saying that the institutions concerned and departments by keeping a close liaison should diligently perform their duties. The arrangements should match with the significance of holding a big tournament like PSL. The cricket lovers should be provided a peaceful and secure environment to watch cricket matches.

MoU signed between NIT Board and PSIC for prevention of heart diseases

LAHORE (APP): A memorandum of understanding (MOU) for mutual cooperation was signed between the National Information Technology Board (NITB) and the Pakistan Society of Interventional Cardiology (PSIC) for the prevention and treatment of heart diseases.

Under the agreement, the National Information Technology Board (NITB)

will provide digital and technical cooperation to the Pakistan Society of Interventional Cardiology (PSIC) for data preparation and research for the prevention and treatment of heart diseases, including heart attacks. The signing ceremony for the agreement took place at a local hotel here in the presence of Federal Minister for Information Technology Dr. Umar Saif.

Two dead bodies of boys recovered
RAWALPINDI (APP): Two dead bodies of boys were recovered from an under-construction plaza in Chandni Chowk, Rawalpindi here on Wednesday. Rescue 1122 teams were immediately rushed to the crime scene. According to the Media Coordinator, Rescue 1122 Rawalpindi Muhammad Usman Gujjar said that there were no apparent injuries on the dead bodies.

Hearing of Ramzan sugar mills reference against Shehbaz, Hamza adjourned

LAHORE (Online): Accountability Court (AC) has adjourned till March 12 hearing of Ramzan sugar mills reference against PML-N president and nominated Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his son Hamza Shehbaz.

Ali Zulqarnain Awan, judge of AC heard the reference Wednesday.

Anwar Hussain advocate representative of Shehbaz Sharif got attendance completed. Hamza Shehbaz did not

appear in the court. One day exemption plea from attendance was filed on his behalf. The court accepted the plea. The court while summoning the arguments on the petition of permanent exemption of Hamza Shehbaz from attendance adjourned the hearing till March 12.

Shehbaz Sharif and Hamza Shehbaz are charged with constructing nullah from national kitty.

NAB Lahore has filed reference in AC Lahore.



LAHORE: Women police and members of civil society lit candles during candle light vigil to pay tribute to the martyrs of police officers at Faisal Chowk, in the Provincial Capital.

NTDC maintains transmission line to ensure uninterrupted power supply in Ramadan

LAHORE (APP): Following instruction of its Managing Director Engr. Dr. Rana Abdul Jabbar Khan, the National Transmission and Dispatch Company (NTDC) is continuing with its comprehensive maintenance programme for the NTDC transmission lines and grid stations to ensure uninterrupted power supply across the country during the upcoming holy month of Ramadan.

NTDC spokesman told media here Wednesday that under the maintenance programme, washing, cleaning, replacement of Disc Insulators and other necessary activities are being carried out by respective NTDC formations. These activities, he added, would increase reliability of

transmission lines and grid stations and help ensure uninterrupted power supply during the Holy month of Ramadan.

Under this program, shutdowns were also availed on 500kV and 220kV transmission line circuits in the south region. During these shutdowns, he mentioned, the cleaning, washing of insulators, tightening of nut/bolts of line hardware and replacement of disc insulators with RTV coated disc insulators on Red, Yellow and Blue phases were carried out. The spokesman elaborated that a total of 73,493 disc insulators were washed/cleaned at 459 locations, 9,804 disc insulators were replaced at 55 locations.



FAISALABAD: UAF Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Iqbal Ahmad Khan while CI Chinese Dean Dr Zhou Changming, cutting cake during celebrate Chinese New Year Happy Spring Festival at Confucius Institute (CI) University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF) on late night.

KP's CM nominee Gandapur vows to work for uplift of province

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): Ali Amin Gandapur, nominee for the slot of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's chief minister, on Wednesday, vowed to serve the people of the province regardless of any discrimination.

Ali Amin Gandapur, who has been nominated by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, thanked his party's leadership for reposing trust in him and said that he would alleviate the problems of the masses.

Gandapur, a former federal minister and member of the national and provincial assembly was elected in the general elections 2024 as a member of the KP Assembly from PK-113, Dera Ismail Khan. Previously, he served as the Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan from 2018 to 2022. Before his stint at the federal level, Gandapur was a member of the KP's provincial assembly from 2013 to 2018.

International News

Gaza truce talks open as Erdogan due in Cairo

Monitoring Desk
CAIRO: Officials from the US, Egypt, Israel and Qatar met in Cairo on Tuesday in another bid to agree a Gaza truce as calls grew for Israel to hold back on a planned assault on the enclave's southernmost city, crammed with over a million displaced people. Renewed efforts were underway to secure a truce in a war whose impact has rippled across the Middle East. Egypt's state-linked Al Qahera News said talks had begun involving US, Qatari, Egyptian and Israeli officials.

CIA director William Burns met Mossad chief David Barnea in Cairo for a new round of talks on a Qatari-brokered plan to temporarily halt fighting in exchange for Hamas freeing

hostages. The two intelligence chiefs were joined by Qatar's prime minister and Egyptian officials, while Turkish President is due in Cairo for talks on Wednesday (today).

A Palestinian official said, "The sides are looking for a formula that will be acceptable to Hamas, who says it is only possible to sign a deal once it is based on an Israeli commitment to ending its war and pulling out its forces from Gaza."

A proposal thrashed out with Israeli negotiators in Paris last month has gone back and forth between the two sides.

"Hamas and the [other] factions are awaiting the outcome of the Cairo meetings, and Hamas is open to discussing any

initiative that achieves an end to aggression and war," a Hamas official told AFP on condition of anonymity.

The quest for a ceasefire comes after the United States and the United Nations warned Israel against carrying out a ground offensive into Rafah, the southernmost Gaza city where more than a million Palestinians are trapped.

The official said Hamas had told the participants it does not trust Israel not to renew the war if the Israeli prisoners being held by Palestinians are released.

The prisoners have been detained by Hamas since Oct 7 to pressurise Israeli forces to stop unending assaults on the people of Palestine.



President Tayyip Erdogan meets with Egypt's President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi in Cairo, Egypt.

Dismantling UNRWA a 'disaster' for Gaza: chief

Monitoring Desk
GENEVA: Dismantling the UN agency for Palestinian refugees would be a disaster, its chief said Tuesday, as pressure rose after Israel said it had found a Hamas tunnel beneath its Gaza headquarters. UNRWA chief Philippe Lazzarini called for an independent investigation once the conflict is over, looking into the tunnel allegations and the destruction of UN premises in the Gaza Strip.

"Maybe after this cataclysm which has hit the region in Gaza, it might be time

now to genuinely find a political solution, and it would be a disaster that, just before it, we get rid of... UNRWA," Lazzarini told reporters. UNRWA is the main aid organisation in the Gaza Strip, which is now gripped by a serious humanitarian crisis due to the war.

Earlier, Israel's foreign minister called Saturday for Lazzarini, who said the Rafah situation was "deeply concerning", with people "anxious and in fear" of a major military assault "in the middle of a sea of displaced people".

NIA's plea for death penalty for Yasin Malik - Delhi court defers hearing

NEW DELHI (INP): The Delhi High Court, today, deferred the hearing on the National Investigation Agency's plea for the death sentence for Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front Chairman Muhammad Yasin Malik. Previously sentenced to life imprisonment, Yasin Malik, faces allegations of involvement in what legal experts term as fake cases. Some observers even fear that the Modi government aims to execute the Kashmiri leader for political gains in the upcoming elections in India.

Putin signs law to confiscate assets of those convicted of discrediting the Russian army

Monitoring Desk
NEW YORK: Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a law Wednesday that will allow authorities to confiscate money, valuables and other assets from people convicted of spreading "deliberately false information" about the country's military. The bill sailed through the lower and upper houses of the Russian parliament, and was unanimously endorsed by the upper house last week.

The speaker of the

lower house, Vyacheslav Volodin, said the measure includes harsher punishment for "traitors who sling mud at our country and our troops" and would "strip those scoundrels of honorary titles, confiscate their assets, money and other valuables."

Russian officials have used the existing law against "discrediting" the military that covers offenses such as "justifying terrorism" and spreading "fake news" about the armed forces.

Jailed Thai ex-PM to be freed, says minister

Monitoring Desk
BANGKOK: Jailed former Thai prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra is to be freed, the kingdom's justice minister said Tuesday, possibly as soon as the weekend — just six months after returning from 15 years of self-imposed exile.

The controversial billionaire, twice elected premier and ousted in a 2006 military coup, was jailed for eight years on graft and abuse of power charges in August, but within days had his sentence cut to one year by King Maha Vajiralongkorn.

NATO chief hails record defense spending and warns that Trump's remarks undermine security

Monitoring Desk
BRUSSELS: NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said Wednesday that European allies and Canada have ramped up defense spending to record levels, as he warned that former U.S. President Donald Trump was undermining their security by calling into question the U.S. commitment to its allies. Stoltenberg said that U.S. partners in NATO have spent \$600 billion more on their military budgets since 2014, when Russia's annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in Ukraine prompted the allies to reverse the spending cuts they had made after the Cold War ended.

"Last year we saw an unprecedented rise of 11% across European allies and Canada," Stoltenberg told reporters on the eve of a meeting of the organization's

defense ministers in Brussels. In 2014, NATO leaders committed to move toward spending 2% of their gross domestic product on defense within a decade. It has mostly been slow going, but Russia's invasion of Ukraine two years ago focused minds. The 2% figure is now considered a minimum requirement.

"This year I expect 18 allies to spend 2% of the GDP on defense. That is another record number and a six-fold increase from 2014 when only three allies met the target," Stoltenberg said. On Saturday, Trump, the front-runner in the U.S. for the Republican Party's nomination this year, said he once warned that he would allow Russia to do whatever it wants to NATO members that are "delinquent" in devoting 2% of GDP to defense.

Ukrainian military says it sank a Russian landing ship in the Black Sea

Monitoring Desk
KYIV: Ukraine's military said Wednesday it used naval drones to sink a Russian landing ship in the Black Sea, a report that has not been confirmed by Russian authorities.

The Caesar Kunikov amphibious ship sank near Alupka, a city on the southern edge of the Crimean Peninsula that Moscow annexed in 2014, Ukraine's General Staff said. It said the ship can carry 87 crew members.

Sinking the vessel would be another embarrassing blow for the Russian Black Sea fleet and a significant success for Ukraine 10 days before the second anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion on Feb. 24, 2022.

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov refused to comment on the claim during a conference call with reporters Wednesday. He said questions should be addressed to the Russian

military.

Ukraine has moved onto the defensive in the war, hindered by low ammunition supplies and a shortage of personnel, but has kept up its strikes behind the largely static 1,500-kilometer (930-mile) front line.

It is the second time in two weeks that Ukrainian forces have said they sank a Russian vessel in the Black Sea. Last week, they published a video that they said showed naval drones assaulting the Russian missile-armed corvette Ivanovets.

Ukraine's Military Intelligence, known by its Ukrainian acronym GUR, said its special operations unit "Group 13" sank the Caesar Kunikov using Magura V5 sea drones on Wednesday.

Explosions damaged the vessel on its left side, it said, though a heavily edited video it released was unclear.



President Joko Widodo and First Lady Iriana cast their ballots at a polling station during the general election in Jakarta, Indonesia.

Indonesia counts votes in presidential race amid calls for clean election

Monitoring Desk
DHAKA: Indonesian authorities were counting votes cast on Wednesday in the world's biggest single-day election, headlined by the race to succeed President Joko Widodo, whose influence could determine who takes the country's helm.

The race to replace Widodo, popularly known as Jokowi, pits two former governors, Ganjar Pranowo and Anies Baswedan, against

controversial frontrunner Prabowo Subianto, the defence minister and a former special forces commander feared in the 1990s as a top lieutenant of Indonesia's late strongman ruler Suharto.

Initial indications of the result are expected to emerge later on Wednesday, based on independent pollsters' "quick counts" of publicly counted votes from a sampling of stations across the country.

Microsoft says it caught hackers from China, Russia, Iran using its AI tools

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: State-backed hackers from Russia, China, and Iran have been using tools from Microsoft-backed OpenAI to hone their skills and trick their targets, according to a report published on Wednesday.

Microsoft said in its report it had tracked hacking groups affiliated with Russian military intelligence, Iran's Revolutionary Guard, and the Chinese and North Korean governments as they tried to perfect their hacking campaigns using large language models. Those computer programmes, often called artificial intelligence, draw on massive amounts of text to generate human-sounding responses.

The company announced the find as it rolled out a blanket ban on state-backed hacking groups using its AI products. "Independent of whether there's any violation of the law or any violation of terms of service."

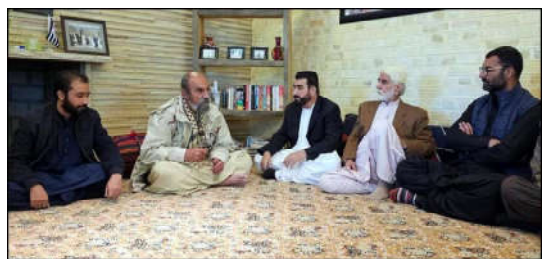
Indigenization is a top policy of naval headquarters: CNS

KARACHI (PR): Achieving another milestone in indigenous submarine development project at Pakistan, the Keel Laying Ceremony of second HANGOR Class Submarine was held at Karachi Shipyard & Engineering Works (KS&EW). Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf graced the occasion as Chief Guest.

As per the defence agreement between Pakistan and China for development of 08 x HANGOR Class Submarines, 04 submarines are under construction at Wuchang Shipbuilding Industry in China whereas remaining 04 are being built at KS&EW under Transfer of Technology (ToT) agreement. This is the 2nd Submarine to undergo Keel Laying at KS&EW. Earlier, in Dec 2022, Keel Laying of first Submarine was successfully undertaken and currently it is at advanced stage of construction.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf said that it is a matter of great pride to witness the Keel Laying of HANGOR Class Submarine at Karachi Shipyard in collaboration with China Shipbuilding & Offshore International Co. Ltd (M/s CSOC). He lauded the joint efforts and performance of Ministry of Defence Production, Pakistan Navy, Karachi Shipyard (KS&EW) and M/s CSOC for construction of these Submarines. Chief of the Naval Staff highlighted that indigenization is a top priority of Naval Headquarters policy which is being manifested by construction of these Submarines at KS&EW.

Earlier during his welcome address, the Managing Director KS&EW, Rear Admiral Salman Ilyas highlighted that Karachi Shipyard is fully cognizant.



QUETTA: Newly elected MP Amir Asim Kurd Gailo meeting with Chief of Sarawan Nawab Muhammad Aslam Khan Raisani.

Provision of quality healthcare facilities top priority of govt: Nadeem

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, Dr. Nadeem Jan Wednesday said that the provision of quality medical facilities to the public was a top priority of the government.

Talking to a Private news channel, the minister said that the government was introducing health reforms to cover essential primary healthcare services and secondary-level hospital care. He said all possible resources were being utilized for lessening the economic burden and raising the living standard of deprived segments of society.

He underlined that the remarkable initiative of the government will tangibly reduce the burden on hospitals and thus will improve the quality of service delivery across the health system.

He said that the government also promoted a culture of research in the healthcare sector, adding that Pakistan needs more efforts towards providing high-quality, cost-effective healthcare. The government is committed to transforming the country's entire healthcare landscape, he said, adding that ultimate goal of the government was to use digital technology for harmonization and integration of health-related to improve the health status and well-being of our people.

Replying to a question, he said that the public was the asset of a country and considering that the caretaker government was investing in human capital.



ISLAMABAD: The signing ceremony of MoU between the Stakeholders on Consortium Formation for Machike-Thallian-Tarujabba White Oil Pipeline Project at SIFC Secretariat, PM Office.

Hassan Zehri says: Rigging of the Bhutani brothers is not going to be hidden from killings

Independent Report
HUB: Senior leader of Pakistan Peoples Party, Spokesman of former President Asif Ali Zardari and candidate of Pakistan People's Party from PB-21 Hub, Mir Ali Hassan Zehri, protested against the ongoing sit-in and demonstration against the alleged rigging in constituency PB-21 at Civic Center.

On behalf of our people, while condoling and sympathizing with those who were killed and injured in the firing at civic center and Goth Ibrahim Sheikh.

He condemned the incident in strong words and expressed outrage. Expressing his reaction to the incident, he said that on the notification of re-counting of votes by the Election Commission on the protests and sit-in by the workers of Pakistan Peoples Party and the enthusiastic people of Hub against the alleged rigging in constituency PB-21, Bhutani brothers and Shehzad bhutani have lost their senses and resorted to killing innocent and peaceful people, which we strongly condemn and appeal to the higher authorities, the Election Commission and the Supreme Judiciary to take notice of the incidents and action should be taken against terrorist elements.

Mir Ali Hassan Zehri said that for forty years, those who robbed the rights of the people tried to spread fear and terror before and after the elections and the people are still being targeted by their terrorism, as a result of which now dozens of people have been injured and three persons have killed. Before the elections, my spouse and I were also fired upon but miraculously survived. An FIR has been registered for all these incidents. Mir Ali Hassan Zehri condoned with the families of the dead and injured and said that the blood shed unjustly will be accounted for and the killers will be brought to justice. Mir Ali Hassan Zehri said that the Bhutani brothers and their followers tried to steal the elections and the results of the elections were changed through record manipulation and once again the constituencies failed to impose these self-interested elements.



Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf laying the Keel of 6th HANGOR Class Submarine at Karachi Shipyard.

Pak urges 'strict' implementation of Indus Waters Treaty, an Indo-Pak water-sharing pact

UNITED NATIONS (APP): A top Pakistani diplomat Tuesday called for "strict" implementation of the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), a World Bank-negotiated water-distribution agreement between India and Pakistan, as he underscored the need to address the looming water crisis.

"Increasing water demand, coupled with climate change impacts, creates the potential for trans-boundary water disputes in several parts of the world," Ambassador Munir Akram told the UN Security Council's high-level debate on the impact of climate change and food insecurity on international peace and security.

"Pakistan attaches high priority to the strict implementation of the

Indus Waters Treaty," the Pakistani envoy stressed in the course of the day-long debate, which was convened by Guyana, the president of the Security Council for February. Nearly 90 countries took part.

Pakistan, he added, aims to reinvestigate the Indus River basin — the largest contiguous irrigation system in the world, which provides food security to over 225 million people.

"To this end, Pakistan has launched the multi-dimensional Living Indus projects," Ambassador Akram told the 15-member Council.

Noting that the disputes over water — at the state, sub-national and local-community levels — were rising, he said compet-

Six more children die of pneumonia across Punjab

LAHORE (INP): Dangerous pneumonia has claimed the lives of six more children in Punjab, reported on Wednesday.

However, no death due to pneumonia was reported in Lahore during the last 24 hours whereas about 188 new cases were reported in the provincial capital during one day.

According to details, as many as 865 new cases of pneumonia have been reported in Punjab during the last 24 hours.

As per report not less than 353 deaths and 25938 cases of pneumonia were reported in Punjab this year while 61 deaths and 5522 cases of pneumonia were reported in Lahore this year.

Short-term Hajj facility introduced for intended pilgrims: Aneeq Ahmed

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed has announced that this year's Hajj is set to be optimal for Pakistani pilgrims, offering unprecedented facilities. He introduced a short-term Hajj facility for the first time, marking a notable milestone in the nation's history.

Addressing the start of the training session for pilgrims at Darul Hajj Camp on Wednesday, he announced that during Hajj, all women would receive Abayas, adorned with the Pakistani flag. Selected through a transparent system, the minister said fortunate pilgrims were chosen via a draw, and their training began on February 12.

He said that Hajj pilgrims were the guests of Allah and a true ambassador of Pakistan, which would be facilitated with advance facilities. He said that when he took charge of the ministry, it was made clear that in 2024, Pakistani pilgrims would be provided with the best facilities. This year's Hajj would be exemplary for Pakistani pilgrims, offering facilities that were not available in the past.

The minister highlighted the comprehensive efforts made by the ministry regarding Hajj arrangements, collaborating with Saudi Arabia during a visit to assess the facilities, provided to pilgrims. He mentioned that accommodations, meals, and transportation, along with all basic necessities, had been standardised.



LAHORE: Caretaker Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed talking with persons after visiting Haji Camp, in the Provincial Capital.

CJP Qazi Faez Isa says People of GB unaware of their constitutional status

ISLAMABAD (INP): Expressing surprise that the people of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) still had no idea about their constitutional status, Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Justice Qazi Faez Isa on Wednesday suggested holding a referendum or a plebiscite in GB and Pakistan-administered Kashmir.

A three-member bench of the Supreme Court (SC), headed by the CJP, heard the petition filed against the appointment of judges to the top court of GB.

The additional attorney general (AAG) said that it was the job of the United Nations to hold a plebiscite in these territories.

The CJP replied that he had no information about that. "All I am asking you whether this is possible."

The AAG told the apex court that the government wanted to make GB part of the federation, but some international conventions were stumbling blocks in its way.

The chief justice said that India had devalued the state of Jammu and Kashmir by abolishing its special status.

He then asked whether the federal government had been formed after the elections. "Who has been elected as the prime minister?"

Saad Hashmi, counsel for the GB government, told the CJP that the government was yet to be formed.



QUETTA: Activists of Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) are holding protest demonstration against alleged rigging in Election 2024, at Quetta press club.

ECP delays decision on Rehana Dar's appeal, next hearing on Feb 22

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has deferred the verdict on Rehana Dar's plea to suspend the results of the NA-71 Sialkot constituency until February 22, following initial investigations into alleged voting irregularities.

Rehana Dar, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf backed candidate in the NA-71 election contesting against PML-N leader Khawaja Asif, has raised concerns over discrepancies in the official vote tally. She contends that while Form 45, utilized at polling stations, indicated her leading with a margin of 50,000 votes, the final outcome declared by the Returning Officer (RO) on Form 47 showed her trailing by 47,000 votes.

The Election Commission, in response to Dar's appeal, had previously solicited a report from the RO to probe these inconsistencies.

Despite initial deliberations on February 14th, the Commission opted to extend the hearing for an additional week.

The scheduled resumption of the hearing on February 22nd implies that the ECP will evaluate the findings of the RO's report alongside arguments presented by both parties before reaching a final determination.

Samina condemns firing on protestors

Independent Report
HUB: The incident of firing on unarmed protestors at Civic Center and Goth Sheikh Ibrahim is condemnable and a tool to spread chaos.

These views were expressed by Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri in her condemnatory statement.

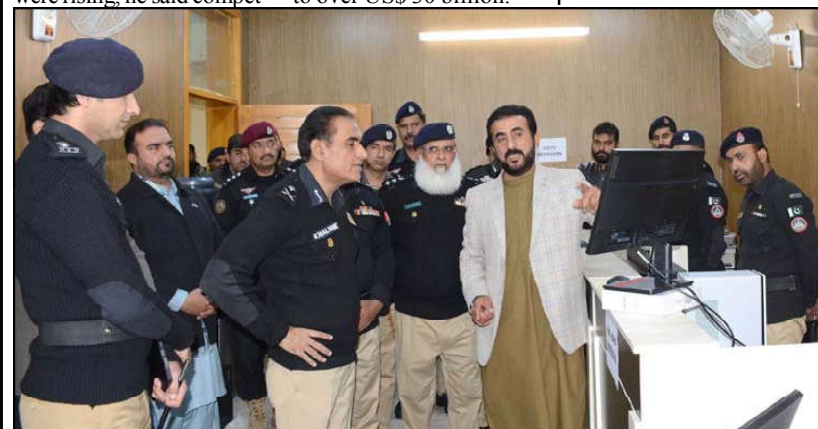
She strongly condemned the incident of firing on the protestors of the ongoing sit-in at the civic center and Goth Sheikh Ibrahim against the alleged rigging by the Bhutani brothers and son Shehzad

Zubair says: PPP will take all key posts, but not responsibility

KARACHI (INP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz leader and former Sindh governor Muhammad Zubair said that the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) will accept all key positions and will not take responsibility for anything.

In an exclusive interview with a private TV news channel, Muhammad Zubair stated that there is no alternative for the PML-N other than accepting the conditions of the PPP, and the PML-N will attempt to include the PPP in the cabinet.

He mentioned that without the cooperation of the PPP, a simple majority cannot be achieved for forming the government in the centre.



QUETTA: Inspector General of Police Balochistan Abdul Khaliq Sheikh being briefed about criminal record office at Smart Police Station Civil Line.

MoU signed for Machike-Thallian-Tarujabba White Oil Pipeline

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a landmark achievement, the signing ceremony of the MoU between the Stakeholders on Consortium Formation (SCF) for the Machike-Thallian-Tarujabba White Oil Pipeline Project was held here on Wednesday.

The ceremony was witnessed by Minister for Power and Petroleum Muhammad Ali, Secretary (Petroleum Division) Momin Agha, and Secretary SIFC Jameel Qureshi, said a news release. The heads of consortium entities i.e. MD Pakistan State Oil (PSO) Syed Muhammad Taha, DG Frontier Works Organization (FWO) Major General Abdul Sami, MD Interstate Gas Systems Pvt. Ltd (ISGS) Nadeem Bajwa signed the historical document.

The pipeline project is a testament to the commitment of the Petroleum Division and the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC). The Machike-Thallian-Tarujabba White Oil Pipeline (MTT-WOP) aims to complement the oil pipeline backbone from Karachi to Peshawar apart from achieving the energy-efficient movement of petroleum products as well as preventing adulteration and providing increased safety. It will connect Punjab from Machike, near Lahore, to Tarujabba, near Peshawar. The pipeline consists of three segments: Machike-Chakpirana, Chakpirana to Rawat, and Rawat to Tarujabba.

It completes the infrastructure supply chain from Karachi to Peshawar. This may be called a flagship project spearheaded by FWO and jointly supported by PSO and ISGS.

The 427 km long pipeline, aims at ensuring a smooth supply chain of petroleum products from Karachi to Peshawar with an initial carrying capacity of 6 MTPA.

Talpur emerges as potential challenger to Shah for CM

KARACHI (INP): Following Maryam Nawaz's nomination as Chief Minister in Punjab, discussions have commenced regarding the leadership of Sindh, with former Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah emerging as a frontrunner for the position.

However, sources reveal that consultations have also initiated regarding the potential nomination of Faryal Talpur for the Chief Ministership in Sindh. Party leaders are deliberating on the possibility of having a female chief minister in Sindh, citing the precedent set by Punjab.

It's noteworthy that while the Muslim League-Nawaz has put forward Maryam Nawaz's name for the Punjab Chief Ministership, the Pakistan People's Party holds a clear majority in the Sindh Assembly, making the decision significant for political dynamics in the region.

PTA escalates efforts to combat illegal SIM activation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) Zonal Office Sukhrai, in close collaboration with the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Cyber Crime Circle Wednesday conducted a successful raid against a franchise involved in the illicit activation of SIMs at Ratodero, district Larkana.

During the raid, 25 Active SIMs were discovered. Furthermore, the Franchise owner and one other Kiosk person were also taken into custody by the FIA team, said a news release issued here.

FIA, SSDO join hands to address human trafficking, migrants smuggling

Independent Report
ISLAMABAD: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and the Sustainable Social Development Organization (SSDO) have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to collaborate on various initiatives aimed at raising awareness, building capacity, campaigning, and coordinating stakeholders to address transnational organized crime, with a specific focus on Trafficking in Persons (TIP) and Smuggling of Migrants (SOM) in Pakistan.

The Memorandum signed by FIA Director Anti Human Smuggling (AHS) Israr Ahmed Khan and SSDO Executive Director Syed Kausar Abbas, the MOU signifies a commitment to joint efforts in combating organized crime and strengthening the rule of law, said a press release on Wednesday.

Signing ceremony held at FIA headquarters in Islamabad, this collaboration was hailed by Director General FIA Ahmad Ishaque Jehangir as a significant step towards effective partnership, while Director-AHS recognized SSDO's efforts in combating trafficking in persons (TIP) and smuggling of migrants in Pakistan, highlighting the importance of strategic cooperation between law enforcement and civil society organizations to increase public awareness and enhance the capacity of relevant officials on TIP and other transnational organized crimes.

Additional Director



QUETTA: Caretaker Provincial Health Minister Dr. Amir Muhammad Jozezai presiding over meeting of Board of Governors of Balochistan Institute of Nephrology Urology Quetta (BINUQ).