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ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar chairs a meeting of the Royal Foundation of Gilgit Baltistan.

28 dead, 50 others injured in two separate explosions in Pishin and Killa Saifullah districts

Three-day mourning announced by caretaker CM: **Independent Report**
 QUETTA: At least 28 people were killed and 50 others injured in two separate explosions targeting election candidates' offices in Pishin and Killa Saifullah districts on Wednesday.
 The caretaker Chief Minister Mir Ali Mardan Domki announced three-day mourning to mourn the loss of lives in both attacks. Caretaker Information Minister Jan Achakzai said in a presser.
 The first attack claimed at least 16 people's lives while 25 were injured after an explosion took place outside an independent candidate's office in Khanozai area of Pishin while the second blast took place outside the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazl (JUI-F) election office in Killa Saifullah.
 The Pishin blast took place outside the political office of independent candidate Asfand Yar Khan Kakar in Khanozai area. The injured people have been shifted to the Tehsil Hospital Khanozai, while the bodies have also been transferred, the hospital's MS Dr Habib told the media. According to MS Dr Habib, most of the injured are in critical condition.
 Following the blast, an emergency has been imposed across hospitals in Quetta for which additional staff has also been called, the provincial health secretary told Geo News.
 The second blast targeted the JUI-F office in the Killa Saifullah district couple of hours after Khanozai blast.
 At least 12 people were killed and 25 others injured in the second explosion, Information Minister Achakzai confirmed.
 He said JUI-F leader Maulana Abdul Wassay, who is contesting elections from PB-3, remained unhurt in the attack.

General Elections 2024 'most expensive' in Pakistan's history Nation to elect its representatives for five years today

ECP declares 16,766 polling stations highly sensitive, 29,985 sensitive; Over 596,000 Army, CAFs & Police personnel to perform election security

ISLAMABAD (INP): The nation is all set to elect its representatives on Thursday for a democratic term of five years, with extensive arrangements put in place by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) in coordination with various supporting departments, including law enforcement agencies.
 Approximately 18,000 candidates across the country are in the electoral arena to woo the registered voters (128,587,760) for about 855 general seats of National and Provincial Assemblies.
 The ECP has announced a public holiday on February 8, in order to provide the voters an opportunity to exercise of right of franchise in a smooth and convenient manner.
 The Commission has already issued a Code of Conduct for the voters as well for media-persons for the election day. The polling agents have been advised to display authorization cards.
 The ECP said that there would be a complete ban on any campaign within the radius of 400 meters of a polling station and added that no candidate, polling agent or their supporters would interfere or hinder the official functioning.
 The ECP has categorized over 17,500 as highly sensitive, 32,508 as sensitive and 42,500 as normal, out of a total of 92,500 polling stations nationwide.
 About 2,038 polling stations in Balochistan and 4,344 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have been categorized as highly sensitive. Likewise, 15,829 polling stations in Punjab, 8,030 in Sindh, 2,068 in Balochistan, and over 6,000 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are classified as sensitive.
 The ECP has completed the training of approximately 1.49 million election staff to ensure the smooth execution of the electoral process.
 The Commission has established an Election City in its premises,

equipped with the latest technology to swiftly disseminate election results of 855 constituencies to the media.
 A comprehensive strategy has been worked out to receive election results via WhatsApp, email, and fax. The ECP has also set up an alternative website to ensure uninterrupted dissemination of results in case of any disruptions.
 The Election Management System (EMS) will operate even if internet connectivity were not available. Satellite communication arrangements have also been made in some areas facing connectivity issues.
 Under the EMS, the photo of the Form 45 prepared by the Presiding Officer containing the result of the respective polling station will be swiftly transmitted to the respective Returning Officer for compiling of the results of the constituency on Form-47, which will be forwarded to the ECP and also shared with the media.
 In case of connectivity

Pakistan shuts border crossings with Iran, Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Foreign Office (FO) on Wednesday said border crossings with Afghanistan and Iran will remain closed to ensure full security during the general elections in Pakistan on Feb 8.
 Taking to X (formerly Twitter), FO spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said: "To ensure full security during the general elections, border crossings with Afghanistan and Iran, would remain closed both for cargo and pedestrians."
 Furthermore, the spokeswoman said that normal operations would resume on Friday.
 The announcement came hours after back-to-back blasts that hit Balochistan's Pishin and Qila Saifullah, killing at least 28 people.
 511,000 policemen will perform duties during the election. An average of seven to eight security personnel will man each of the 90,777 polling stations across the country. The General Elections 2024 are considered to be the most expensive polls in Pakistan's history as the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has estimated the expenditures at Rs42 billion which is 26 percent more than the last general elections.



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

Wafaqi Mohtasib resolves 193,028 complaints; provides relief Rs4.898bn

ISLAMABAD (APP): Wafaqi Mohtasib has resolved a total of 193,028 complaints against the maladministration of government departments and provided relief worth Rs 4.898 billion to the citizens during 2023.
 The Mohtasib processed a record 194,099 complaints during 2023, with processing witnessing a surge of 18 per cent, while the disposal of complaints increased by 22 per cent, as compared to 2022.
 Wafaqi Mohtasib (Ombudsman) Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi briefed President Dr Arif Alvi who visited the office of Wafaqi Mohtasib on Wednesday. The president had a briefing on the complaints received and resolved by the Ombudsman to ensure prompt relief to citizens during the year 2023. President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release.
 Briefing the president, the federal ombudsman highlighted the role and performance of the institution.
 He informed that 193,028 complaints were addressed in 2023, with monetary relief of Rs 4.898 billion provided to the complainants. Furthermore, on the recommendations of Wafaqi Mohtasib, as many as 18,000 street children were enrolled in government schools in Islamabad. The meeting was informed that 85.4 per cent of Wafaqi Mohtasib's decisions were implemented last year, with efforts underway to further improve the ratio of the implementation. It was stated that the increased use of technology in Mohtasib had enhanced people's accessibility, with 48,190 complaints registered online in 2023, marking an increase of 47 per cent from 2022. Similarly, 22,321 complaints were received through Mohtasib's mobile App in 2023, representing a 21 per cent increase from 2022. The meeting was also briefed on the Integrated Complaint Resolution System, processing 18,469 complaints in 2023, alongside Mohtasib's teams conducting Khuli Kutcheries and inspection visits to address people's grievances against government agencies.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi inaugurates "the Media Coordination and Facilitation Center" for Election Coverage at the Principal Information Department, Federal Information Secretary Ms. Shahera Shahid and Principal Information Officer Dr. Tariq Mahmood Khan also present on the occasion.

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

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi said on Wednesday that the caretaker government had stood by its commitment of holding general elections on the schedule given by Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).
 Addressing the inaugural ceremony of Media Coordination and Facilitation Center established by Press Information Department here, he said tomorrow morning the voting would start and by midday half of the polling would have been done.
 Referring to speculations, he said there were doubts and concerns in people's minds regarding the elections.
 "We stood by the promise of holding polls and elections are being held (tomorrow), putting aside all fears and rumours," Murtaza Solangi maintained.
 The minister said that

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

ISLAMABAD (APP): Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) IT Director, Khizar Aziz, dispelled the fears of 'hacking Election Management System' (EMS) in upcoming general elections 2024, saying that no public networks are being utilized for transmitting election results.
 "Private networks will be employed for the purpose which eliminates concerns about the hacking of the EMS," Aziz told a private news channel.
 He highlighted that the EMS was equipped with special software, securely housed in the offices of 859 Returning Officers (RO), with the provision of four data entry operators, four laptops, and IT equipment.
 Simultaneously, Aziz stated the EMS was also installed in the mobile phones of Presiding Officers (PO) who will capture an image of Form 45 and send it to the Returning Officer. In case of network issue, Form 45 will automatically deliver to the RO once a signal is restored.

Communication infrastructure, imperative for GB development: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan in the tourism sector. The prime minister directed the authorities concerned to devise a strategy to work out a sustainable solution to the issue of electricity in Gilgit-Baltistan.
 He also directed to devise a plan for enhancing the quota of GB students in the higher education and technical education sectors of all provinces of the country. e said the overall development of Gilgit-Baltistan was linked with the social integration across the area.
 He also appreciated the services of Royal Foundation of Gilgit-Baltistan in multiple sectors in the area.
 The delegation presented proposals to the prime minister to improve the working of various sectors of Gilgit-Baltistan.
 The prime minister was apprised that some 1.6 million tourists visited Gilgit-Baltistan last year.
 On the occasion, members of the Royal Foundation of Gilgit-Baltistan also presented a cultural robe as a souvenir to Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.



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

Pakistan fully committed to promote an inclusive democratic process

ISLAMABAD (Online): Foreign Office (FO) has said Pakistan is fully committed to promote an inclusive democratic process.
 This was said by FO spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch while reacting to remarks made by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights regarding the upcoming general elections in Pakistan. She held Pakistan is fully resolved to uphold rule of law and protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms.
 Guarantees in this regard are enshrined in our law and constitution.
 Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights had said in a statement that organization condemns all acts of violence against political parties and candidates and stresses authorities to maintain necessary fundamental freedom for the sake of meaningful democratic process.



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

Bilawal says PPP free of any bias, represents centre

KARACHI (INP): Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that only his party held public gatherings across Pakistan in connection with the General Elections 2024 which he said showed PPP's support in all parts of the country.
 While talking to a private news channel, the PPP Chairman said that he went to every part of the country for the election canvassing and received a 'great response' from the people. He said that his election campaign across the country is tantamount to the 'fact' that only the PPP represents the center.
 Bilawal also took a jibe at the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) for 'restricting' its election campaign to 'few' parts of the country. "The PML-N held electioneering in only a few constituencies and once again proved itself to be a party of Punjab," he added.
 The PPP Chairman said that the PML-N's leadership could not spare even half an hour to come to Karachi and run the election campaign in the port city. "The PML-N has also failed to turn to South Punjab and Balochistan. "Those who raised 'Vote Ko Izzat Do' (Respect the vote) slogans did not go to three provinces," Bilawal added.
 He said that prime minister aspirants across the world hold debate ahead of the elections to present their manifesto and plans. "It is regretful that PML-N supreme Nawaz Sharif did not accept my debate challenge," he added.
 Citing a comparison held by former finance minister Hafeez Pasha, Bilawal said Sindh is well ahead of Punjab in every sector.
 The PPP chairman expressed confidence in his party to secure a majority in the general elections 2024, saying that their supporters would be celebrating on February 8.
 Earlier on Tuesday, Bilawal said that he would go all-out to protect the party's mandate in the General Elections 2024 and won't let anyone snatch the same. Addressing a public gathering in Larkana in connection with the General Elections 2024, Bilawal lambasted the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) for what he called politics of hatred, division and victimisation, and vowed to 'bury' the same, if voted to power

Daily Voice of Masses
Independent

The day before

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Election 2024: Reaffirmation democratic journey

By Qamar Bashir

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



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

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

Recognizing the potential of women voters in the upcoming elec-

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

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

International media, including the Council on Foreign Relations, Al Jazeera, The Diplomat, and DW, along with the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan and the European Union, have raised concerns about the 2024 elections in Pakistan, highlighting issues such as "election engineering," disinformation, extensive media censorship, and state intervention in me-

dia coverage. These reports underscore the restrictive conditions facing political parties, particularly PTI, whose leadership is significantly constrained, impacting their ability to campaign freely. Allegations of an uneven playing field, exacerbated by the military's significant political influence and the barring of key political figures like former Prime Minister Imran Khan, suggest a contentious electoral environment that may not be free or fair, disadvantageous to certain parties and undermining the democratic process.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Commerce News

Germany provides Eur45m support to Pak on Technical Development Cooperation

ISLAMABAD (Online): Dr. Kazim Niaz, Secretary for Economic Affairs Pakistan, and Mr. Alfred Grannas, German Ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, witnessed the ceremony for signing of Euro 45 million agreements on Technical Development Cooperation for starting new bilateral cooperation projects. These new agreements are the result of a longstanding and trustful partnership between the two countries.

The newly commissioned projects align with the German development cooperation thematic areas of Climate

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

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

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

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

together'.

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

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



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



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

PM AJK chaired meeting about agriculture, livestock

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

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

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

China's vehicle sales, output soar in January

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

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

Specifically, passenger car output and sales stood at 2.08 million units and 2.12 million units, up 49.1 percent and 44 percent year on year, respectively, according to data released by the association. Commercial vehicle output rose by 66.2 percent year on year to 327,000 units, while commercial vehicle sales soared 79.6 percent year on year to 324,000 units.

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

Kyrgyzstan interested in boosting business ties with Pakistan: Kyrgyz Envoy

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

He stressed that both countries should develop sustainable business relations as they have good potential to cooperate in many sectors of the economy. He said that a business delegation from Pakistan should visit Kyrgyzstan to explore joint ventures and business partnerships, said a press release issued here. The ambassador said that Kyrgyzstan was importing pharmaceuticals, sports goods, and other products from Pakistan while it was exporting dry fruits, and agricultural products to Pakistan and added both countries should do business in more products as they have good potential for it.

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

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

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

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

Naqvi chairs 3rd Chambers of Commerce Coordination Committee meeting

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

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

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

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

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

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

Gold rates up by 400 per tola

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

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

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

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

According to the latest PBS data, exports

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

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

Governor urges masses to exercise right to vote

Appeals people to maintain brotherhood in election

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

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

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

KP Governor advised

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

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

administration, police, security agencies and polling staff.

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

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



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

NA-43 Tank anticipates exciting electoral battle

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

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

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

diversity. The constituency boasts 353 polling stations.

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

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

Minister Information says: Arrangements finalized for general elections

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

He said that Quick

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

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

KP CS reviews arrangements for general elections

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

2.6 mln people to cast votes in Sargodha

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

Rasool Bangash says: ECNEC approved two projects for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PEC KP says: All arrangements for election completed

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

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

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

He said that there are over 11,944,383 million male and 99,83,737 million female who exercise right

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

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

PO among three accused held

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

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

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

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

According to police all the injured were shifted to hospital.

International News

US lawmakers reject \$17.6 billion Israel aid bill

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

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

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

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

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

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

ter months of negotiations with a bipartisan group of senators.

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

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

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

Miss Japan gives up crown after affair

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

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

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

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



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

Houthi claim fresh Red Sea ship attacks

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

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

The Houthis "will carry out more military operations against all hostile American-British tar-

gets" in self-defence, Saree warned on X, formerly Twitter.

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

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

Palestinians hope Blinken visit can deliver Gaza truce before Rafah assault

DOHA (Internews): The top U.S. diplomat met Saudi Arabia's de-facto ruler on Monday during a Middle East visit. Palestinians hope will clinch a truce before a threatened Israeli assault on Rafah, a border city where about half the Gaza Strip population is sheltering.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrived in Riyadh at the start of his first trip to the region since Washington brokered an offer, with Israeli input, for the first extended ceasefire of the war.

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

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

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

Nikki Haley campaign requests Secret Service after security incidents

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

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

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

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

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



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

Russian missile strikes on Ukrainian cities kills three

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

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

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

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

Madad Ali Sindhi says: Sindh produces eminent writers including Ali Baba

Solangi pays tributes to great Sindhi writer Ali Baba at book launch on his life

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training Madad Ali Sindhi said on Wednesday that the civilization of Sindh was multi-lingual, multi-religious and multi-ethnic and had produced many eminent writers and Ali Baba was one of them.

He was delivering his speech at the launch of the book on the life and achievements of renowned Sindhi writer Ali Muhammad popularly known as Ali Baba here.

The book "Ali Baba's Personality and Art" was written by writer and columnist and Caretaker Federal Minister for Education Madad Ali Sindhi.

The minister said he was one of the lucky ones who saw Ali Baba in various cities of the province.

Madad Ali maintained that Sindh was a province with a strong culture and civilization and Sheikh Ayaz was considered among the great modern poets of the province.

Madad Ali Sindhi said that he had written about the personality of Ali Baba in great detail in the book. Despite being a great writer, Alibaba was oblivious to his greatness, Madad Ali said, adding that Ali Baba's writings reveal the depth of human existence and self.

About the works of Ali Baba, the minister said he contributed wonderful works like the novel Moenjo Daro and drama Dungi Manj Darya.

Terming Ali Baba's art as immortal and timeless, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi hoped his writings would be translated into Urdu, English and other languages.

Meanwhile, Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi said on Wednesday that the civilization of Sindh was multi-lingual, multi-religious and multi-ethnic that had produced many eminent writers and Ali Baba was one of them.

The book "Ali Baba's Personality and Art" has been written by writer and columnist and Caretaker Federal Minister for Education Madad Ali Sindhi. Solangi said Madad Ali was a very good writer he had written a very good book on the life and achievements of Ali Baba.

The minister said he himself was one of the lucky ones who saw Ali Baba in various cities of the province.

Solangi maintained that Sindh was a province with a strong culture and civilization and Sheikh Ayaz was considered among the great modern poets of the province.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Education Minister Madad Ali Sindhi addressed the discussion forum for his book titled 'Pakistani Adab Kay Ma'maar'.

ECP utilizing technology to ensure smooth, timely election results 2024: NC

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Coordinator for the Free and Fair Election Network (FAFFEN) Rashid Chaudhry Wednesday said that the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) was utilizing technology to strengthen the upcoming general polling process 2024 in the country and for timely election results to make the process smooth.

Talking to a private news channel, he said that as the general elections are knocking on doors, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) and FAFEN had issued various deadlines for the election process, including the final stage of the elections – the transmission of the results.

He said that the ECP instructed all the returning officers (RO) and the presiding officers that the election results of the February 8 vote must be sent by 2 a.m.

"Technology will be fully used to make the general elections 2024 transparent and impartial", he stated.

For that purpose, the Election Management System (EMS) would be used, through which the presiding officer concerned would forward the picture of 'Form 45' to the RO immediately, he mentioned.

Replying to a question, he explained that the presiding officers would be obliged to send the results of all the polling stations electronically or through available means. This year ECP has developed an automated and modern Election Management System (EMS) that will be used to "transform and compile election results from Presiding to Returning officers", he mentioned.

ECP sets up Election City for rapid results sharing

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has established an Election City in its premises, equipped with the latest technology to swiftly disseminate election results of 855 constituencies to the media.

Briefing media, Director of Information Technology, Muhammad Khizer Aziz said that a comprehensive strategy was in place to receive election results via WhatsApp, email, and fax.

He mentioned that the ECP had also set up an alternative website to ensure uninterrupted dissemination of results in case of any disruptions.

Election Management System (EMS) will operate if internet connectivity is unavailable, with satellite communication had also been deployed in some areas facing connectivity issues.

The EMS comprises two components, he said, adding that the initial capture of results through photos (of results) by the Presiding Officer, followed by the swift transmission to the respective Returning Officer to Form-45 for onward transmission to ECP and media.

In case of connectivity issues, the results would be compiled through off-line modules.

Presiding officers in all constituencies have been instructed to photograph Form 45 and send it to their respective Returning Officers.

The Returning Officers will then compile the results on Form-47 and share them with the media.

He said that media walls had been installed at each Returning Officer's (RO) office to share results, while five media walls had been set up in the ECP Election City to offer continuous updates on the results of one national and four provincial assemblies.



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Ambassador-designate to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Major General (ret'd) Syed Qaiser Abbas Shah, called on President Dr Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Stringent security measures adopted for elections in Islamabad

Independent Report

ISLAMABAD: In order to ensure the safety of citizens and maintain peace during general election 2024, Islamabad Capital Police (ICP) to deploy a formidable force of 6,500 personnel in the federal capital.

This massive security operation will be further fortified by 1,000 Frontier Constabulary members, 1,500 Rangers, and officials from the Pakistan Army at polling stations across the capital, a public relations officer said on Wednesday.

He said that to guarantee the adherence to Election Commission regulations, a central control room has been set up in Safe City Islamabad. Islamabad Capital Police officials assigned to security duties have already taken their positions at the polling stations and will remain vigilant even through the night.

He further said that stringent measures are in place to deter any violations, with legal action promised against activities such as the display of arms, aerial firing, and any disruptive behavior by potential rioters. Authorities are also taking steps to ensure the smooth flow of traffic and efficient parking arrangements.

To bolster transparency, surveillance cameras are set to be installed at sensitive polling stations. In a move to support the work of journalists, foreign observers, and observation teams covering the elections, the Islamabad Capital Police commits to providing professional assistance throughout the electoral process, he added.

The topmost priorities for the Islamabad Capital Police are the safety of citizens and the successful execution of peaceful elections in the federal capital. The masses are urged to stay connected with ICP authorities through emergency helpline 15 for more updates on this crucial security operation unfolding as the nation approaches the 2024 General Elections.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Health Minister, Dr. Nadeem Jan, High Commissioner of Sri Lanka to Pakistan Admiral Ravindra Chandrasiri Wijegunaratne (Rtd.) and others cutting the cake during 76th anniversary of independence of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka at a local hotel, in the Federal Capital.

ECP issues guidelines for Form-45

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

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

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

According to the instructions, the electoral watchdog ordered the presiding officers to prepare Form-45 without failing. "The Form 45 must be signed with their CNIC cards, taking signatures of polling agents at the polling stations," it said.

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

The ECP noted that the presiding officers will be responsible for changes in the form, besides sharing photographs of the same to the returning officers (ROs).

IHC summons SSP operations

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad High Court (IHC) Wednesday summoned SSP Operations, Islamabad in person in a case pertaining to arrest of a woman from the court premises.

The court expressed annoyance over the arrest of the petitioner woman and accepted her bail against surety bonds worth Rs 2,000.

Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir heard the case and announced the verdict.

The court said that the police personnel had tendered apology on arrest of woman from court premises.

It directed the police personnel to explain that why not action should be taken against him on misuse of authority.

The court said that the mother of an accused Saifur Rehman was in court premises when assistant sub-inspector Zahid Hameed arrested her and did not care about the prestige of the court. The court said that this act could not be ignored.

The court adjourned further hearing of the case till February 12.

PID makes elaborate arrangements for coverage of polling, elections results

ISLAMABAD (APP): Press Information Department (PID) has made elaborate arrangements for coverage of the polling and the elections results on February 08, 2024.

For coverage of polling stations 37 media teams of local and foreign correspondents will be conducted at various polling stations in the urban and rural areas by PID headquarters and its regional offices, said a press release issued here Wednesday.

In addition, PID has set up election media centers in Islamabad and its regional offices at the provisional capitals.

The center at Islamabad has been equipped with the latest means of communication to enable journalists to file their reports through the fastest available means.

The Election Media Centre will make available to the journalists all the necessary facilities under one roof, where journalists will be able to instantly receive election results as announced by the Election Commission and transmit the same to their respective media outlets.



ISLAMABAD: The honorable Law Minister Mr. Ahmad Irfan Aslam launched the urdu version of Pakistan Code.

IESCO makes arrangements to ensure seamless electricity provision on Election Day

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) has taken proactive measures to ensure uninterrupted electricity supply on Election Day.

According to the spokesperson of IESCO, the company has set up a central control room to monitor the demand and supply of electricity in the region.

Leaves for field officers and staff have been cancelled, with instructions to remain on high alert for 24 hours.

Monitoring cells have been established in six operational circles, providing necessary materials to field offices.

The scheduled shutdown from 7th to 9th February for system maintenance has been cancelled to ensure uninterrupted power supply during this critical period.

The Chief Executive and Chief Engineer Operations will personally oversee the operations to ensure efficient management.

Field formations are in constant communication with district administrations to swiftly address any potential issues. The complaint helpline numbers at the office, accessible at 118, have been fully activated to promptly address any electricity-related concerns.

Saudi Minister lauds Hajj arrangements

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

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

It should be noted that on the occasion of the Int'l Hajj Expo held in Jeddah last month, Pakistan Hajj Mission was presented with the award for the best and active Hajj Mission.

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

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

HEC steps to transform education system with technology, introducing smart teaching project soon: Chairman

ISLAMABAD (APP): Higher Education Commission (HEC) Chairman Dr Mukhtar Ahmed Wednesday said that his department was taking various steps to transform traditional education system with latest technology and introducing projects including 'smart teaching', 'smart campuses' and 'smart universities' to promote multi-technology ecosystem.

In an exclusive interview with PTV news channel, he said that the aim is to equip and prepare the younger generation and students with the advanced technology and knowledge in the digital industry.

He said that HEC is working to develop a new system of learning where the ever-expanding technological challenges are met, adding, the Government is working hard to provide internet access, better infrastructure and facilities which can benefit students.

He said online tools and classrooms will also provide an opportunity for students and teachers to introduce blended learning, adding, HEC is moving towards an affiliation policy, online education policy, artificial intelligence and systems approach.

Replying a question, he said that collective efforts are need of hour to bring reforms, adding, HEC with the help of all related departments was reviewing its policies.

He said that a long-term strategies are being implemented to allow universities to excel in providing quality technology-based education to open virtual campuses.

"HEC is committed to materialising the dream of making Pakistan a digital country", he mentioned.

To another question, he said that in a significant step towards enhancing data accessibility and obtaining international recognition, the Higher Education Commission (HEC) has also established 2 cutting-edge Data Centers.

These Data Centres will also facilitate high-speed, secure, and reliable access to data, offering a significant advantage to researchers at Pakistani universities, he added.

The Higher Education Commission (HEC) also introducing Smart University project to equip universities campuses with blanket Wi-Fi coverage, in order to enable the deployment of other smart instruments as needed, he added.



ISLAMABAD: People stands at a bus station at Faizabad in the Federal Capital due to travelling their home towns for cast their votes during general holiday for general election 2024 head on 28 Feb in all over the country.

Mangla dam water level in continual decline

ISLAMABAD (APP): As a result of ongoing intermittent heavy snowfall on the upper reaches of the Himalayan state of Jammu and Kashmir, the country's second largest reservoir, Mangla Dam, gradually dries following a continual reduction of inflows followed by increased outflows in the reservoir, where the water level has reduced to a greater extent.

The water level in Mangla dam, located in Mirpur district of AJK, was reported as 1150.30 feet on Wednesday, against the maximum conservation level of 1242 feet and the live storage capacity of 1.786 MAF in the reservoir, official sources told APP here on Wednesday.

The water level in the dam is gradually reducing further, the sources said. Mangla Dam, the largest reservoir in terms of water storage in the country, was filled to its maximum conservation capacity of 1242 feet on August 17 this year as a seasonal impounding of the reservoir, official sources told the news agency. The inflows and outflows of the Jhelum River at Mangla reservoir were recorded respectively, as 4500 and 30000 cusecs of water from the dam on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, the overall position of the river inflows and outflows at Tarbela, Mangla, and Chashma, along with the reservoir levels and the barrages on Wednesday, remained as follows:

Rivers: Indus at Tarbela: Inflows 13500 cusecs and Outflows 35000 cusecs; Kabul at Nowshera: Inflows 10400 cusecs and Outflows 10400 cusecs; Khairabad Bridge: Inflows 16100 cusecs and Outflow 16100, Jhelum at Mangla: Inflows 4500 cusecs and Outflows 30000 cusecs, Chenab at Marala: Inflows 7600 cusecs and Outflows 4000 cusecs.

Weather to be cold and windy on Election Day

ISLAMABAD (APP): The upper parts of the country will remain under the grip of cold wave conditions on the Election Day on Thursday as per Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) forecast.

Cold winds will also blow in upper Punjab during the next 24 hours.

According to the synoptic situation, continental air was prevailing over most parts of the country. "Mainly cold and dry weather is expected in most parts of the country while very cold weather conditions are expected in upper parts", the PMD said.

Shallow fog may likely occur at isolated places in northeast Punjab during morning hours.

During the last 24 hours, cold and dry weather prevailed over most parts of the country. However, rain occurred at isolated places in south Punjab, northeast Balochistan and Thatta. Shallow fog prevailed over a few plain areas of northeast Punjab.

The rainfall recorded was Punjab: Bahawalpur (city 04mm, Airport 02), Multan (Airport 03).

Eight outlaws arrested; drugs, weapons recovered

Independent Report

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Police (ICP) have apprehended eight outlaws from different areas of the city during the last 24 hours and recovered drugs and weapons from their possession.

According to ICP spokesman, following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCCPO) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police has intensified crackdown against the criminal elements in order to eliminate the crime from the city.

Following these directions, he said the Sumbal police team arrested an accused namely Akram Ali and recovered 530 gram hashish from his possession. The Tarnol police team arrested an accused namely Muzamil Arshad and one 30-bore pistol from his possession. The Sabzi Mandi police team arrested two accused namely Umair Khan and Anar Gul and recovered two 30-bore pistols from their possession.

Similarly, the Shams Colony police team arrested an accused namely Imran Khan and recovered 610 gram hashish from his possession.

The Khanna police team arrested an accused namely Muhammad Rafiq and recovered one 30-bore pistol from his possession.

The Sihala police team arrested an accused namely Shadab and recovered one 30-bore pistol from his possession.



ISLAMABAD: Members of polling staff leave after collecting polling material for general elections at a collage sector G-8, in the Federal Capital.