

Independent

dailyindisb@gmail.com Chief Editor: Syed Farooq Shah www.dailyindependent.com.pk Islamabad

Vol. XIV No. 33 Reg. mails-B/ID-445 Saturday February 10, 2024, Rajab 29, 1445 A.H. Ph: 2158688, 2158997 Pages 4: Rs. 12

Nation eagerly awaiting for final election results

Independents strengthen lead, PML-N and PPP follow closely

According to available results of 215 National Assembly constituencies, independent candidates managed to secure 89 seats, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) 60, Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPPP) 50, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) two, Istehqam-e-Pakistan Party (IPPP) two, Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan 11, and Grand Democratic Alliance one seat

ISLAMABAD (APP): Independent candidates contesting for national and provincial assembly seats seemed maintaining their lead over mainstream political parties in the General Election 2024, as per the results issued by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) by 9.00 p.m.

According to the available results (Form-47) of 215 National Assembly constituencies, independent candidates managed to secure 89 seats, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) 60, Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPPP) 50, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) two,

Istehqam-e-Pakistan Party (IPPP) two, Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan 11, and Grand Democratic Alliance one seat.

Out of 270 Punjab Assembly-seat results, independent candidates bagged 130 seats, PML-N 129, PPPP 10, Tehreek e Labbaik Pakistan one, IPP one and Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) five.

For the Sindh Assembly, PPPP so far secured 83 seats, independent candidates 14, MQM-P 21, GDA two, and Jamaat-e-Islami two, out of the total 122 constituencies' results announced by the time of

Out of 270 Punjab Assembly-seat results, independent candidates bagged 130 seats, PML-N 129, PPPP 10, Tehreek e Labbaik Pakistan one, IPP one and Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) five. For the Sindh Assembly, PPPP so far secured 83 seats, independent candidates 14, MQM-P 21, GDA two, and Jamaat-e-Islami two, out of the total 122 constituencies' results announced by the time of filing of this update.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, independent candidates so far clinched 85 provincial assembly seats, PML-N 5, PPPP three, JUI seven, JI three, Awami National Party (ANP) and PTIP one each, out of 105 seats.

In Balochistan, PML-N secured eight seats, PPPP eight, JUI six, Independent candidates four, JI one, Awami National Party (ANP) and PTIP one each, out of 105 seats.

In Balochistan, PML-N secured eight seats, PPPP eight, JUI six, Independent candidates four, JI one, Awami National Party (ANP) and PTIP one each, out of 105 seats.

In Balochistan, PML-N secured eight seats, PPPP eight, JUI six, Independent candidates four, JI one, Awami National Party (ANP) and PTIP one each, out of 105 seats.



LAHORE: Pakistan's former Prime Minister and leader of the Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N), Nawaz Sharif along with his brother, Shehbaz Sharif and his daughter Maryam Nawaz, speaks with supporters at Model Town.

Nawaz Sharif hints at forming coalition govt

Urges parties to join hands to steer country out of crises

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Quaid Mian Nawaz Sharif said on Friday it was a responsibility of all political parties to steer Pakistan out of challenges, and his party had always struggled for development and prosperity of the country.

While addressing his party workers at PML-N Secretariat in Model Town, he said, "The PML-N respects the mandate of all political parties and individuals." He said all political parties should come forward in the larger interest of the country. People knew very well that how the PML-N had worked hard for development and stability of different sectors in country including

defence and economy, he added. He invited all parties to come forward and sit together to play their role for country's better future. Nawaz Sharif said the country could not afford holding elections again and again. Judiciary, armed forces and all institutions should make collective efforts in harmonised manner to overcome challenges, facing the country, he suggested. He said that the country needed 10 years for stability, adding that it was a high time to make Pakistan strong. Had the momentum of development continued then today's country would have been much better, he maintained.

He said that he had given task to Shehbaz Sharif to meet Asif Zardari,

Maulana Fazl-ur-Rehman and Dr Khalid Siddiqui of the MQM so that a government could be formed to ensure development and prosperity in the country. He said the PML-N candidates, who had won election, must serve people considering it as a worship. He said that the PML-N had emerged as a single largest party in General Election 2024 at federal level and in Punjab.

The PML-N Quaid said that his party's agenda was based on welfare of people, adding that Shehbaz Sharif had worked a lot for empowerment of youth in the country. He said more initiatives would be taken to empower youngsters and to provide free medicine.



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

Regional countries want peace, stability in Afghanistan: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Friday said that all countries of the region, including Russia and China, wanted peace, security and stability in Afghanistan.

In an exclusive interview with TOLO news, he said that the recognition of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan needed regional consensus. Until the countries of the region and the world recognized the current government of Afghanistan, Pakistan would not take a step forward in that regard, he added.

"I personally believe that all the countries in the region want the Afghan

government to get recognized, although I cannot talk about the exact time, regional countries have understood this. I believe that the issue of recognition will be resolved as time passes."

The prime minister said the Durand Line was an internationally recognized border between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

"The UN and 206 countries have approved this as an international border and what the Afghan people say about this is their internal discussion, in which I am not interested."

He said the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) had shelter in some provinces of Afghanistan and that is-

sue had caused insecurity in Pakistan.

"When my people come to your soil, use it, train on it, and then come and harm my people, then I will definitely be telling you that my unpleasant brother is on your soil, no matter if by your permission or not, he must be expelled from your soil," he added.

"This is Pakistan's stance and we have not accused the Afghan government of intentionally sheltering these people," the prime minister said.

He said that no nation would be permitted to utilize Pakistan's airspace against Afghanistan.

Cabinet expresses satisfaction over peaceful and transparent election

ISLAMABAD (Online): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar has felicitated the nation on successful conduct of general elections.

In a post on X handle after the conclusion of polling process, he appreciated the efforts of Election Commission of Pakistan, Interim Provincial Governments, Armed Forces, police, law enforcement agencies, election staff, the media and all those institutions and individuals who contributed to the conduct of the free and fair elections.

The Prime Minister said this momentous occasion is not just a testament to the resilience and strength of our democratic processes but also to the indomitable spirit of the Pakistani people. The participation and enthusiasm

of people of Pakistan have been the cornerstone of this democratic exercise. He said the high voter turnout is a clear indication of public commitment to shaping the future of our country. The voices, expressed through the votes, will contribute to the fortification of our democracy, and for that, people of Pakistan deserve every bit of appreciation.

He said despite few incidents of terrorism in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, the efforts of Armed Forces, Civil Armed Forces, LEAs, Civilian Administration and Election Commission of Pakistan for conducting free and fair election across the country are commendable. Their unwavering commitment to their duties has been instrumental in the smooth conduct of the elections.

Caretaker Govt fulfilled pledge to hold peaceful, orderly polls : Solangi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Friday, felicitating nation over the peaceful and orderly conduct of general elections, said the caretaker government had fulfilled the solemn pledge of holding elections in line with time-frame, given by Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).

Addressing a press conference along with Caretaker Interior Minister Dr Gohar Ijaz, he said despite speculations and multiple challenges, "we have steadfastly stood by our stand regarding the conduct of elections."

Replying to a question, he said there was no shutdown of Internet on election day and added the fixed broadband was functioning and social media platforms were fully used by the subscribers.

He pointed out Internet suspension was not specific to Pakistan since many

countries opted for the shutdown of Internet service, simply due to security reasons.

Sharing data, he said that in 2022, the Internet was shut down 187 times in 35 countries of the world and a neighbouring country, with purported democratic credentials, closed Internet service for 84 times.

He said Pakistan had been fighting the longest war against the scourge of terrorism with over hundred thousand martyrs.

He said on election day, 16 persons lost their lives in 61 incidents of violence and on the previous day, 28 persons were martyred in two incidents of terrorism. Solangi said since January 15 this year, there were 47 incidents of terrorism including seven improvised explosive device blasts and 26 grenade attacks.

Answering a question, the minister said the temporary shutdown of mobile phone service was imperative for protection of people's lives.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information Murtaza Solangi and Caretaker Interior Minister Gohar Ejaz addressing a press conference at PID Media Center.

56 terrorist incidents take place across country on election day: Gohar Ejaz

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Interior Dr. Gohar Ejaz said on Friday that a total of 56 terrorist incidents were taken place on February 8 Election Day to sabotage the electoral process.

Briefing media persons about the overall security situation and challenges specifically regarding election day, he said that the biggest challenge of the caretaker government was to provide security to the people of the country on election day.

Sharing details of the casualties, the minister informed that 3 military jawans, 2 levies jawans, 7 police officials, 4 civilians including 2 minors lost their lives in the incidents.

The government had made a difficult decision to shut down the mobile service across the country in a high-level meeting on February 7 after

the two deadliest terrorist incidents in which 28 innocent lives were lost, he added.

The minister said that the government had received intelligence reports that the terrorist would carry out activities in different places through detonated devices.

He congratulated the deployment of hundreds of thousands of regular and civil armed forces, other law enforcement agencies and civilian officials across the country for successful conduct of the general elections.

Dr. Gohar said that 61 incidents of violence were also reported across the country during elections adding, all the incidents were being investigated in details and the action would be taken against culprits.

He said that deaths of 28 people and serious injuries to 64 others in terrorist

incidents just one day prior to the elections forced the state to take several measures for ensuring safety of the citizens.

This also included the difficult decision of suspending the mobile phone services across the country to disallow terrorists the means to communicate, coordinate and conduct terrorist operations, he added.

The minister said mobile devices were also instrumental in initiating the trigger mechanisms for modern explosive devices for mass casualties.

The government was fully aware that suspension of mobile services would impact the transmission of election results across the country and delay the process, however, the choice between this delay and safety of the citizens was quite straightforward and the decision was taken, he said.

Security forces kill mastermind of bombings in Qila Saifullah, Pishin

Independent Report RAWALPINDI: Security Forces have killed the mastermind of recent bombings in Qila Saifullah and Pishin.

According to ISPR, security forces conducted an intelligence based operation in Qila Saifullah District of Balochistan on reported presence of a high profile terrorist. During the conduct of operation, after intense fire exchange Abdul Shakoor Nauman Abu Hamza Khurshid was

Daesh was sent to hell. The killed terrorist was the mastermind of recent bombings in Qila Saifullah and Pishin on Wednesday and was highly wanted by the law enforcement agencies.

He also planned to conduct high profile suicide bombing attacks in Balochistan, which have been successfully averted due to timely and prompt action by security forces and the intelligence agencies.

Saad Rafique loses against Latif Khosa

LAHORE (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) backed independent candidate Latif Khosa secured victory against PML-N candidate Khawaja Saad Rafique in NA-122 Lahore in general election 2024.

According to unofficial results, PTI-backed Independent Latif Khosa bagged 117,109 votes followed by PML-N's Khawaja Saad Rafique who secured 77,907 votes.

Following his defeat, Saad Rafique took to X (formerly Twitter) and congratulated the PTI candidate on his victory.

PTI rules out forming coalition govt with PPP, PML-N

LAHORE (INP): The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Friday said that it is in a position to form government at the Centre and ruled out forging an alliance with Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N).

"We are not in contact with PPP or PML-N," Barrister Gohar

He claimed that PTI is winning 150 National Assembly seats and would be

able to achieve the required number of seats to form government at the Centre.

"We are not intending to form a coalition government with PPP and PML-N, Barrister Gohar Ali Khan.

"We will form the government at the Centre and Punjab," he added. He said the PTI has a clear lead in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and will form government there as well. "PTI will remain in Parliament and will play its role."

Hoti resigns as ANP Senior Vice President

PESHAWAR (APP): Amir Haider Hoti, Senior Vice President of the Awami National Party (ANP), on Friday announced his resignation from the party post. The decision came following the party's defeat in all constituencies of his ancestral district Mardan. The former Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chief minister, in a statement, said, "If the people of my constituency and Mardan have not trusted us, then I accept the responsibility for this defeat."

Khurshid Shah says PPP unlikely to join hands with PML-N if Nawaz projects himself as PM

KARACHI (INP): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) stalwart Khurshid Shah said Friday that his party was unlikely to join hands with Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) if Nawaz Sharif portrays himself as the next prime minister.

Although not all results have been issued yet, and the ones available are unofficial, PML-N supremo Nawaz has

claimed that his party has emerged as the "single-largest party", inviting others to join forces and form the next government.

"Nawaz Sharif wishes to become the prime minister [...] but I don't my party will form a coalition with him if he projects himself as the premier," Shah said hours after the world's fifth-biggest democracy voted to elect its leaders.



ISLAMABAD: Journalists stand in front of a screen displaying live election results in the Election Commission office a day after General Elections 2024.

Daily Voice of Masses
Independent

Election reflections

Lacklustre from the beginning, the exercise concluded with a whimper last evening. Amidst limited reporting due to the suspension of communication services, there were some reports of delays in the polling process and various violations of rules and the election code of conduct.

Thankfully, though, no major incidents of violence were reported and voting seems to have concluded in most places smoothly and uneventfully. It seems that all that remains now is the counting of votes and declaration of winners. As results trickle in overnight, we will learn how many chose to exercise their right to franchise on this historic occasion.

Till a clearer picture emerges, some reflections on the exercise: These elections had been critical for Pakistan for various important reasons. The country is mired in unprecedented economic and social challenges, which cannot be solved except by a stable government that enjoys strong public support for its decisions. Given its dependence on international assistance, it is also important for it to stabilise socially so that lenders and investors can feel safe about their decisions. With so many different forces pulling the country at its seams, it was almost good luck that a general election became due last year. All that was needed was for the ECP to let candidates campaign without restrictions, prepare the grounds for a clean and non-controversial contest, assist the country's adult population in freely exercising their right to self-determination, conduct a transparent count of their ballots, and quietly and respectfully bow out.

As history will bear witness, it failed on almost all of those counts. From repeatedly delaying the elections on one pretext or the other to failing to protect the legitimacy of its last act, it betrayed its mandate by organising an exercise that will be remembered for all the wrong reasons. It is difficult not to be disappointed: given the number of times the ECP hid behind the Constitution's 'free and fair' condition to justify putting them off 'till it was ready', one would have imagined the exercise, whenever it was eventually held, would be largely irrefragable.

Of course, the blame does not lie with the ECP alone. The caretaker government and the entire machinery of the state are equally culpable in robbing it of its sanctity. Their actions worsened political polarisation, and they did not know when to stop. As a result, the exercise was doomed to controversy well before it began. It already seems clear that it will not provide any closure for the country's political crisis. Crisis and instability will likely continue to plague the nation, with dissent kept in check through the use of fear tactics. It is a shame that such a momentous opportunity has been so carelessly lost.

Collecting dust

Aman Rehan

One cannot deny the prominence artificial intelligence has gained with innovative uses in the political sphere — such as using AI to clone the voice of Imran Khan, who addressed a virtual PTI jalsa from Adiala jail. Activist Usama Khilji recognises the possible use of AI to circumvent political crackdowns but also warns of the "potential abuse" of AI technology, which could lead to misinformation and manipulation of elections.

Foreign Secretary Syrus Qazi has previously stated that Pakistan recognises the "dual nature" of AI: while equitable and fair access to these new technologies is encouraged, there is concern regarding AI's unregulated military uses.

Internationally, AI commands the attention of both the public and private sectors — with almost daily updates in legislative instruments, knowledge, and content. Last Friday, 27 countries of the European Union unanimously approved the Artificial Intelligence Act. The EU AI Act is widely described as the world's first comprehensive law that regulates AI based on its capacity to cause harm. Closer to home, China is noted by some to have initiated the global movement to regulate AI when it introduced its Generative AI guidelines last year.

So where does Pakistan stand on the AI front? The Ministry of IT & Telecom introduced a draft national AI policy in May 2023. The proposed policy is part of the ministry's Digital Pakistan vision that aims to produce an "overarching developmental agenda" to promote the adoption of AI efficiently and responsibly.

The draft aligns with certain global standards for AI, such as its ethical and responsible use. For instance, the 'triple-helix' partnership between the research community, industry and government is similar to Singapore's national AI policy. Singapore was one of the first countries to introduce a national AI strategy.

While the draft AI policy sets the foundation for AI transformation in Pakistan, there is room for improvement. Take, for example, the lack of emphasis on ethical and transparent AI systems. In this regard, one can turn to the 'Artificial Intelligence Risk Management Framework' introduced by the US National Institute of Standards and Technology. Aiming to govern AI systems and mitigate risks, the framework promotes "trustworthy" AI systems, comprised of characteristics such as explainability, resilience, and data privacy.

An effective AI policy should ideally emphasise concepts of data quality and data privacy. Unfortunately, the cart seems to be placed before the horse.

The AI policy proposes an AI directorate to be constituted under a 'National Commission for Personal Data Protection'. However, the NCPDP is to be established under the Personal Data Protection Bill which is still pending approval by the National Assembly. While the draft AI policy encourages international and bilateral cooperation for AI development, the emphasis on "data localisation" by the PDPB could hamper cross-border data flows.

Other proposals include the establishment of a robust regulatory framework, a 'National AI Fund', and 'centres of excellence' in AI that will serve as AI innovation hubs. Naturally, these endeavours cannot be viable unless sufficient infrastructure, resources and funds are available. Rather than being a passive regulator, the government of Pakistan will have to actively enable the effective implementation of the AI policy. For example, Singapore's AI policy states that it had allocated 500 million Singaporean dollars through AI Singapore under the Research, Innovation and Enterprise 2020 and 2025 plans.

Any attempt at AI regulation needs to be more than a hurried response to a global trend and should consider the situation on the ground. The Digital Rights Foundation has stated that the draft AI policy should be human-rights centric. Additionally, the Islamabad Policy Research Institute found that there is "insufficient and controlled" availability of data, which can hamper implementation in different sectors (such as education, climate, and agriculture). The most recurring critique is the absence of any mention of diversity and inclusion.

The draft AI policy was to be finalised by December last year. However, like the PDPB, the proposed AI policy seems to be collecting dust. Contrary to international best practices, the draft AI policy was released without a period of consultation. Since then, critique from those at home and abroad can be used by the incoming government to regulate AI effectively.

Hopefully, in its final version, the AI policy won't just be — as journalist Mutaheer Khan puts it — a "piece of paper to 'serve samosas'". -- Courtesy Dawn

Whither Karachi?

Zubeida Mustafa

As was expected, Karachi was at the centre of all speeches at the event organised by the Theosophical Society to celebrate the 134th birth anniversary of the city's first mayor Jamshed Nusserwanjee. It warmed my heart to hear about Mr Nusserwanjee's services to the people of Karachi. What emerged was that we owe a lot to the non-Muslim communities for making the city what it became — a clean, elegant and livable place with the biggest concentration of educational institutes, health facilities and economic activities.

Speaker after speaker admitted that the city had lost its greatness. The current mayor, Murtaza Wahab, conceded his failure by informing the audience that he often had to cover Nusserwanjee's bust in his office with a piece of cloth so that all the evils that have visited Karachi were not visible to his august predecessor.

At the event, there was a lot of talk about the need for people to have a sense of ownership of and belonging to the city. Along with this, there was much mention of the compassion that Mr Nusserwanjee and his ilk had shown to animals that coexisted with the men and women.

The question that needs to be asked is what caused these feelings to vanish. There is a point of view that the main factor responsible for why no one owns Karachi or has a sense of belonging to it is the composition of its population, Karachi has become primarily a city of migrants who come here to make a living and go home to be buried when they die. Karachi is like the proverbial milch cow that is valued to the extent that it serves the purpose of those who come here. Hence it is regarded as a workplace and not a home.

However, another opinion differs saying that Karachi has always been a migrants' city since it was described as such in the Gazetteer of 1941 that the British administrators wrote after studying the area under their jurisdiction. This has always been the case as is indicated by the fact that the city's population has grown by leaps and bounds and much faster than what the natural birth rate would account for. This migration has made Karachi a cosmopolitan city. That did not prevent the development of the city when the city fathers wanted it. Those of us who have lived in Karachi for decades have been witness to this jerky growth. Thus the city's population jumped from 434,887 in 1941 to 1,137,667 in 1951 after the influx of migrants from India. Again there was a massive increase in the population from 9,802,134 in 1998 to 16 million in 2017.

If anything, migration has created a diversity that has enriched the city's culture and made the people versatile and tolerant of multiculturalism. There is no doubt that these characteristics have made Karachi more interesting, more creative intellectually and technologically as well as economically productive, attracting people from near and far. No wonder Karachi is said to generate 56 per cent of the revenues the Pakistani government collects from all over the country, while 50pc of national export earnings and 96pc of the sales tax of Sindh comes from Karachi.

What then stops Karachi's rulers from making the city liveable as it was many years ago? The most plausible reason for the decline in Karachi's fortunes is no doubt the politicisation of the administration of the city, combined with mismanagement, poor planning, and corruption. This has cumulatively led to the neglect of the city. This neglect translates into confusion, irksome issues that make day-to-day living a challenge, the breakdown of law and order, and divisions among the people. Who benefits from this state of affairs? Those who do not want Karachi to emerge as a powerful political force as it was before Ayub Khan shifted the capital from Karachi to Islamabad. Thereafter, constant meddling by the powers that be and the resultant polarisation of public opinion in the city has made Karachi ungovernable, leaving no room for the planned development of the city.

In such circumstances, it is inevitable that corrupt and exploitative forces step in to fill the vacuum. The rich use their wealth to provide for their own needs, while the poor suffer as their needs go unattended. They do not receive even the compassionate that animals were shown in days of yore. This intensification of inequality and poverty has made Karachi insecure, unstable and a difficult megacity to live in. In-fighting at the national level is also reflected at the city level. After all, the present incumbent in the mayor's office did not have smooth sailing at the hustings. What yesterday's national elections have in store for Karachi, we shall soon know. It is a pity that this city had become a bone of contention because of its potential to emerge as a modern and cosmopolitan metropolis. -- Courtesy Dawn

International News

Saudi Arabia rules out ties unless Israel accepts two-state solution

Monitoring Desk
RIYADH: Saudi Arabia has told the United States it will not open diplomatic relations with Israel unless an independent Palestinian state is recognised on 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital, its foreign ministry.

Riyadh reiterated its call for permanent members of the UN Security Council that have not recognised a Palestinian state on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital to do so, a ministry statement said.

It was referring to a state the Palestinians have long sought to establish alongside Israel in territories Israel occupied in a 1967 war: the West Bank including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip.

The statement added that "Israeli aggression" against the Gaza Strip must also stop and Israeli forces must withdraw from the territory.

The United States had led months of diplomacy to get Saudi Arabia to normalise ties with Israel and recognise the country until the Gaza crisis began in October, leading Riyadh to shelve the matter in the face of Arab anger over Israel's offensive.

This news agency reported last week that Saudi Arabia would be willing to accept a political commitment from Israel to create a

Palestinian state, rather than anything more binding, to try to get a defence pact with Washington approved before this year's US presidential election.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, who is touring the region, said Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman had "reiterated Saudi Arabia's strong interest in pursuing" normalisation when they met this week.

"But he also made clear what he had said to me before, which is that in order to do that two things are required: an end to the conflict in Gaza and a clear, credible, time-bound path to the establishment of a Palestinian state."



US Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer (D-NY) talks to reporters as he walks to his office at the Capitol in Washington, DC.

Iraq says US strikes pushing government to end US-led coalition's mission

Monitoring Desk
BAGHDAD: Repeated U.S. strikes against Iran-backed armed groups in Iraq are pushing the Baghdad government to end the mission of the U.S.-led coalition in the country, the prime minister's military spokesperson said.

The U.S. military said a strike on Wednesday killed a commander from Kataib Hezbollah, an Iran-backed armed group in Iraq that the Pentagon has blamed for attacking its troops. Spokesperson Yahya Rasool said in a statement the U.S.-led coalition "has become a factor for instability and threatens to entangle Iraq in the cycle of conflict".

Talks between the two countries began in January over the future of the coalition, but less than 24 hours later three U.S. soldiers were killed in an attack in Jordan that the United States said was carried out by Iran-backed militant groups in Syria.

Xi urges 'close strategic coordination' with Putin

Monitoring Desk
BEIJING: China's President Xi Jinping told Russian President Vladimir Putin that the two countries should pursue close strategic coordination and defend the sovereignty, security and development interests of their respective countries, state media said.

During a phone call with Putin on Thursday, Xi said both sides should resolutely oppose interference in internal affairs by external forces, state broadcaster CCTV said.

UN urges Russia to end forcible transfer of Ukrainian children

Monitoring Desk
GENEVA: The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child urged Russia to end the forcible transfer of children from occupied areas of Ukraine in violation of international law and return them to their families.

Kyiv says 20,000 children have been taken from Ukraine to Russia without family or guardians' consent, and the International Criminal Court (ICC) is seeking the arrest of Russian President Vladimir Putin for alleged illegal deportation, an accusation the Kremlin denies. In a report on Russia, the UN committee said Moscow should provide information about the precise number of children taken from Ukraine and their whereabouts, so they can be identified and returned. Moscow, which launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, has rejected the accusations, saying it has merely been protecting vulnerable children from a war zone.

The committee also said Russia should ensure that no child was deprived of their Ukrainian nationality.

Landslide in Philippines buries 38 people, two buses

Monitoring Desk
MANILA: A landslide triggered by heavy rains in a southern Philippine province buried 38 people and two buses, disaster officials said.

The landslide happened on Tuesday night outside a gold mining site in the town of Maco in the province of Davao de Oro where the buses were picking up employees, mining operator Apex Mining said in a statement.

It was not immediately clear how many passengers were on board the buses.

Those injured, including one in critical condition, were taken to a hospital, Maco town's disaster agency said in a Facebook post on Wednesday.

The disaster agency also issued evacuation orders in five villages in Maco, located on the island of Mindanao. Of the 38 people, seven were killed and 31 injured. The landslide on Tuesday night struck Masara in Davao de Oro province on Mindanao island, provincial disaster official Edward Macapili told AFP, destroying houses and engulfing three buses and a jeepney waiting for mine workers. Rescuers were digging through mud to find 48 people reported missing, including at least 20 people trapped inside the vehicles, officials said. At least 28 people were on board the vehicles when the landslide hit, but eight managed to escape unhurt through the windows before the mud engulfed them, Macapili said.

The buses and jeepney had been outside a gold mine operated by the Philippine company Apex Mining where they drop off and pick up workers.

Blinken ends latest Mideast mission after new Israeli snub of proposed Gaza ceasefire plan

Monitoring Desk
TEL AVIV: U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken left the Middle East with public divisions between the United States and Israel at perhaps their worst level since Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza began in October.

Wrapping up a four-nation Mideast trip — his fifth to the region since the conflict erupted — Blinken was returning to Washington after getting a virtual slap in the face from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who said the war would continue until Israel is completely victorious and appeared to reject outright a response from Hamas to a proposed cease-fire plan. Relations between Israel and its main international ally, the United States, have been tense for months, but Netanyahu's public dismissal of a plan the U.S. says has merit, at least as a starting point for further negotiation, heightened the divide.

Yet Blinken and other U.S. officials said they remained optimistic that progress could be made on their main goals of improving humanitarian conditions for Palestinians, securing the release of hostages held by Hamas, preparing for a post-conflict Gaza and preventing the war from spreading. Officials said Blinken's optimism was based on his first four post-Oct. 7 trips to the Middle East.

None of those visits resulted in immediate visible successes, but they brought limited but significant improvements in the delivery of humanitarian aid and a weeklong cease-fire in November in which scores of hostages were released.

"Clearly there are things that Hamas sent back that are absolute non-starters."



TAGUM (Philippines): Soldiers transfer an injured person to a hospital after evacuation from Maco region which was hit by landslides.

North Korea scraps all economic cooperation with South Korea

Monitoring Desk
SEOUL: North Korea's Supreme People's Assembly has voted to scrap all agreements with South Korea on promoting economic cooperation, the North's official KCNA news agency reported, as the two Koreas' ties continue to deteriorate.

The assembly, which takes formal steps to adopt policy decisions of the ruling Workers' Party, also voted to abolish laws governing economic ties with Seoul, including the special law on the operation of the Mount Kumgang tourism project.

The tours to the scenic mountain just north of the eastern border were a symbol of economic cooperation that began during a period of engagement between the two Koreas in early 2000s, drawing nearly 2 million South Korean visitors.

The project was suspended in 2008 after a South Korean tourist who strayed into a restricted zone was shot and killed by North Korean guards.

Ukraine claims it shot down a Russian attack helicopter in fierce street battle for Avdiivka city

Monitoring Desk
KYIV: Ukrainian forces claimed to have shot down a Russian attack helicopter in eastern Ukraine near the city of Avdiivka, where soldiers are fighting from street to street as Russia's army steps up its four-month campaign to surround Kyiv's defending troops.

Ukrainian soldiers used a portable anti-aircraft missile to take down the Ka-52 Alligator attack helicopter, one of the Russian air force's deadliest weapons, according to Oleksandr Tarnavskyi, the commander of Ukrainian units fighting on the southeastern front line. The roughly 1,500-kilometer (930-mile) line of contact has shifted little during recent months of wintry weather.

But as the war in Ukraine nears its two-year anniversary, Avdiivka has become "a primary focus" of Moscow's forces, the U.K. Defense Ministry said in an assessment.

Women politicians grasp crucial role in electoral process

ISLAMABAD (APP): Women from different age groups, political parties, and constituencies have actively contested in the General Election 2024, which depicts advancement in gender equality.

The election results also show that women are gaining ground in various constituencies, said a report aired by a private news channel.

Senior Leader of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Nafisa Shah said that active participation of women in politics and elections is a democratic norm that helps in addressing issues of women.

Promoting the political participation of women is a necessary step that will help to achieve gender equality and it will also portray a positive image of the country in the world, said Independent candidate Shandana Gulzar while hail-

ing active participation of women in elections.

Another contestant Rehana Imtiaz Dar expressed her commitment and dedication to the welfare of the country and expressed confidence in winning polls based on her massive social work.

Representation of women in Pakistan's Parliament is an important metric to evaluate progress in bridging gender inequities in the country, said a youngster while appreciating the active role of women in General Election 2024.

The emergence of these courageous women candidates serves as an inspiring narrative of change and progress that signals a transformational era of the political landscape, said a women social media user.

While giving details of female candidates who participated in the election, Seemabia Tahir from

Rawalpindi said that overall turnout of women voters in the election was better than last year and it is a positive development that a huge number of women contested in the election.

Rehana Imtiaz Dar, former MNA from Lahore and Alia Hamza Malik also hailed the role of women in politics.

Ayesha Nazir Jatt daughter of former MNA Nazir Jatt from Vahari commented that it was observed that women ran door-to-door campaigns against male candidates and appealed to exercise of right to vote.

Mrs. Talat Basra wife of Shaikat Basra from Bahawalnagar said participation of woman in the electoral process was increasing rapidly unlike in the past and Pakistani women are more aware of their political participation rights the past now.



ISLAMABAD: A vendor is displayed rice attraction for customers on his stall at Friday weekly bazaar at sector H-9, in the Federal Capital.

SECP enforces laws to promote compliance, transparency in corporate sector

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) efficaciously aided by its centralized adjudication function to promote compliance and transparency in the corporate sector. This quasi-judicial arm maintains regulator independence and minimizes arbitrariness, adhering to laws and international best practices.

The SECP effectively enforced its laws in the first half of FY 2024-25, deciding 1,849 cases of violations and imposing penalties of approximately Rs.962 million for corrective measures.

During July to December, the SECP primarily adjudicated cases against companies alleged to violate Section 84 of the

Companies Act, 2017, which prohibits companies from inviting, accepting, or renewing public deposits, except for banking companies.

A total of 11 orders were issued under Section 84, resulting in a penalty of Rs. 581.50 million. Directors of such companies were also disqualified from holding the office for five years using powers under 172 of the Companies Act, 2017.

In addition, a penalty of Rs. 1.750 million was also imposed by 11 orders against listed companies for violating Section 199 of the companies Act, which only allows companies to invest in their associated companies or undertakings only under special resolution.

Another area of focus was digital lending.



KARACHI: Brokers are busy in trading at Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) in Karachi.

PPP sweeps polls in 9 districts of Hyderabad division

HYDERABAD (APP): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) has clinched an overwhelming majority of seats of the National Assembly and the Sindh Assembly from 9 districts of Hyderabad division which together have 13 NA and 28 PS seats.

According to the results of 11 NA and 27 PS constituencies which have been declared by the Returning Officers (ROs), the PPP's candidates have returned successfully on 11 NA and 24 PS seats.

Two PS seats have been won by Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) and one by a candidate backed by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) in the district.

A good number of the constituencies 23 witnessed a walkover by the PPP's candidates with their opponents trailing far behind them.

Such constituencies include NA-217 and PS-59 in Tando Allahyar; PS-56 in Matiari; NA-218, PS-60 and PS-61 in Hyderabad; NA-221 and PS-66 in Tando Muhammad Khan; NA-222, PS-68 and PS-72 in Badin; NA-224, PS-73 and PS-74 in Sujawal; NA-225, PS-75 and PS-76 in

Sujawal; NA-226, PS-77 and PS-78 in Jamshoro; and NA-228, PS-82 and PS-83 in Dadu. However, 12 constituencies saw some contests mainly between the candidates of the PPP and the Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA). The NA-216 and PS-57 in Matiari; PS-58 in Tando Allahyar; NA-223, PS-69, PS-70 and PS-71 in Badin; NA-227, PS-80 and PS-81 in Dadu are among such constituencies.

In Matiari district, PPP's Makhdoom Jameeluz Zaman faced a tough battle with Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N's) Bashir Memon with the former getting 124,536 votes against 80,439 votes of the latter as the seat recorded 53.83 per cent turnout.

The PPP's Makhdoom Fakhruz Zaman also won PS-57 Matiari after a fight with the GDA's Syed Jalal Shah who polled 44,873 votes against 52,175 votes of the winner.

Some 52.8 per cent of people in the area cast their votes. The GDA's Dr Rahila Magsi also threw down a gauntlet to PPP's Syed Zia Abbass Shah on PS-58 in Tando Allahyar before losing the seat to her

opponent.

Four constituencies in Badin including NA-223, PS-69, PS-70 and PS-71 saw a tug-of-war between the candidates of the PPP and the GDA before eventually being conquered by the former.

The GDA's Muhammad Hassam Mirza, Mir Abdullah Khan Talpur and Hasnain Ali Mirza put up a fight against the PPP's Haji Rassol Bux Chandio, Taj Muhammad, Mir Allah Bux Talpur and Arbab Ameer Annullah, respectively.

Hassam had contested from NA-227 and PS-71.

However, all of them could not secure even a single seat. Dadu district also witnessed a struggle on NA-227, PS-80 and PS-81 among candidates of the same 2 parties.

However, PPP's Irfan Ali Laghari, Abdul Aziz Juenjo and Fayaz Ali Butt defeated their opponents Liaquat Ali Jatoi and Kareem Ali Jatoi, respectively, on all the seats.

Liaquat Ali had contested from NA-227 and PS-81. The results of Hyderabad's constituencies including NA-219, NA-220 and PS-64 have not been announced so far.



QUETTA: Security officials are standing high alert to avoid untoward incident during the protest demonstration different political party against rigging in General Election 2024, outside DC Office.

PML-N grabs 4 NAs, 8 PPs seats in Sialkot district

SIALKOT (APP): The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) won four out of five National Assembly seats and 8 out of 10 Punjab Assembly seats in the general election 2024 in the district.

According to the unofficial results issued by returning officers, in NA-70, Sialkot-I, PML-N candidate Ch. Armughan Subhani on Friday won the National Assembly election by securing 123,437 votes.

According to unofficial result issued by Returning Officer/ECP, his runner up was independent candidate Hafiz Hamid Raza who bagged 1,12,117 number of votes. Overall voters turn out remained 52.6%.

In NA-71, Sialkot-II, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) candidate Khawaja Muhammad Asif won the National Assembly election by securing 118,566 votes. According to unofficial result issued by Returning Officer/ECP, runner up was independent candidate Rehana Imtiaz Dar who bagged 1,00,272 number of votes. Overall voters turn out remained 43.54%.

In NA-72, Sialkot-III, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) candidate Ali Zahid won the National Assembly election by securing 110,190 votes. According to unofficial result issued by Returning Officer/ECP, his runner up

Independent candidate Ch. Amjad Ali Bajwa who bagged 1,03,792 votes. Overall voters turn out remained 50.76%.

In NA-73, Sialkot-IV, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) candidate Nosheen Iftikhar won the National Assembly election by securing 112,143 votes. According to unofficial result issued by Returning Officer/ECP, runner up was Umer Javed Ghumman who bagged 52,859 votes.

In PP-46, Sialkot-III, PML-N candidate Faisal Ikram won the Provincial Assembly election by securing votes 55,254. According to unofficial result issued by Returning Officer/ECP, his runner up was Independent candidate Ruba Umer who bagged 47,924 number of votes. Overall voters turn out 43.21%.

In PP-47, Sialkot-IV, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) candidate Khawaja Muhammad Mansha Ullah Butt won the Punjab Assembly election by securing 50,602 votes. According to unofficial result issued by Returning Officer/ECP, his runner up was independent candidate Muhammad Kashif who bagged 44,890 votes. Overall voters turn out remained 44.9%.

In PP-48, Sialkot-V, independent candidate Khurram Verk won the Punjab Assembly election by securing 47,340. According to unofficial result issued by Returning Officer/ECP, his runner up was independent candidate Saeed Ahmed Bhalli who bagged 40,425 votes. Overall voters turn out remained 50.38%.

PP-45, Sialkot-II, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) candidate Arif Iqbal won the Punjab Assembly election by securing 46,308 votes. According to unofficial result issued by Returning Officer/ECP, his runner up was independent candidate Saeed Ahmed Bhalli who bagged 40,425 votes. Overall voters turn out remained 50.38%.



ISLAMABAD: Leader of PTI Shoaib Shaheen addressing a press conference at his office, in the Federal Capital.

Polish farmers block roads, Ukraine border in nationwide protest

WARSAW (Internews): Polish farmers blocked roads nationwide and at border crossings with Ukraine on Friday, kicking off a month-long general strike to protest against EU policies and a lack of government action to protect their livelihoods.

Farmers in France, Belgium, Portugal, Greece, Spain and Germany have been protesting against constraints placed on them by EU measures to tackle climate change, as well as rising costs and what they say is unfair competition from abroad.

Polish farmers have been particularly vocal about the impact of cheap food imports from neighbouring Ukraine.

About 100 farmers and 50 cars blocked the approach to Medyka border crossing, blocking traffic for all vehicles, Ukrainian border service spokesman

Andriy Demchenko said on television.

Polish media said there were over 250 blockades across the country. Images showed convoys of tractors clogging roads and banners such as "Without us, you will be hungry, naked and sober".

"Today the whole of Europe is on fire. The Green Deal has arrived, which has destroyed our thinking about agriculture," one of the protesters, Wieslaw Gryn, told private broadcaster TVN24 at the Hrubieszow border crossing.

"We are not against pro-ecological solutions, but they must be agreed with farmers."

Poland's agriculture minister said he understood the challenges farmers were facing but he hoped the protests could be organised in a way to be "the least burdensome for citizens".



HYDERABAD: Activists of Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) are holding protest demonstration against rigging in General Election 2024, outside R.O Office in Hyderabad.

ICCI, FPCCI for joint efforts to address key issues of businessmen

ISLAMABAD (INP): President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari called on President Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) Atif Ikram Sheikh here on Friday and discussed with him the ways and means to work closely to address the key issues of the business community. Speaking on the occasion, Atif Ikram Sheikh said that the business community was the backbone of the economy and FPCCI would take all possible measures to resolve their issues and facilitate them in business development. He said that the FPCCI would work with the newly elected government to address the economic challenges, tackle the issue of rising inflation, reduce high policy interest rate, improve exports, enhance forex reserves, and revive the economy.

The FPCCI President said that he would take all chambers of commerce and trade associations on board on important matters of the economy to present a consensus voice of the business community to the government. He said that he would work closely with the newly elected government to promote ease of doing business in the country and improve the economy.

Atif Akram Sheikh said that ICCI was doing good work for the business community and he would always cooperate with it in efforts to promote a business-friendly environment and facilitate the better growth of trade and industry. Speaking during the meeting, ICCI President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that the economy of Pakistan was facing multiple challenges and the President FPCCI should cooperate with the newly elected government to steer the country out of economic crisis and put it on the path of sustainable economic development. He said that Pakistan has good potential to boost exports of IT, pharmaceutical, textiles, and other sectors.



MULTAN: Pakistan People's Party candidates from NA-148, Multan-I, Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani, NA-151, Multan-IV, Syed Ali Musa Gilani, and PP-213, Syed Ali Haider Gilani gesture to the supporters after winning their constituencies in the General Election according to unofficial results.

Pakistan's exports to Afghanistan increase by 3.63% in 6 months

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan's export of goods and services to Afghanistan witnessed an increase of 3.63 per cent during the first six months of the current fiscal year (2023-24) as compared to the exports of the corresponding period of last year, State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) reported.

The overall exports to Afghanistan were recorded at US \$260.716 million during July-December (2023-24) against exports of US \$251.580 million during July-December (2022-23), SBP data revealed.

On a year-to-year basis, the exports to Afghanistan decreased by 26.83 per cent from \$38.297 million in December 2022, against the exports of \$28.019 million in December 2023.

Meanwhile, on a month-on-month basis, the exports to Afghanistan also witnessed a decline of 46.02 per cent during December 2023 as compared to the exports of \$51.911 million in November 2023, the SBP data revealed.

Overall Pakistan's exports to other countries witnessed an increase of 4.99 per cent in the first six months, from US \$14.222 billion to US \$15.288 billion, the SBP data revealed.

On the other hand, the imports from Afghanistan into the country during the months under review were recorded at US \$4.425 million against US \$13.253 million last year, showing a decline of 66.61 per cent in July- December (2023-24).

Effective security measures ongoing in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD: According to the details, the Islamabad Capital Police has established comprehensive security arrangements during the 2024 General Elections. The security duty is well-established, and the situation remains peaceful.

In addition, intense scrutiny is being carried out to counter potential terrorist threats at Masjids and election-related offices. Any act of intimidation will be dealt with firmly.

The Islamabad Capital Police is determined to address any disruptions decisively. Moreover officials are actively engaged in

their areas, ensuring effective security measures.

Special duty assignments will continue for law



enforcement officers until the results of the elections are finalized. ICCPO Dr Akbar Nasir Khan commended the officers, officials, women, and personnel from various law enforcement agencies for their dedicated service. He stated, "Islamabad's peaceful polling is a significant success. Citizens are requested to report any suspicious individuals or incidents to their respective police stations, the emergency helpline 'Pucar-15', or at 'ICT 15' app."

lished comprehensive security arrangements during the 2024 General Elections. The security duty is well-established, and the situation remains peaceful.

In addition, intense scrutiny is being carried out to counter potential terrorist threats at Masjids and election-related offices. Any act of intimidation will be dealt with firmly.

The Islamabad Capital Police is determined to address any disruptions decisively. Moreover officials are actively engaged in

Tokyo's key Nikkei index up in early trade

Tokyo (AFP/APP): Tokyo's benchmark Nikkei index traded higher at the open on Friday, supported by Wall Street rallies as investors looked ahead to corporate earnings reports.

The Nikkei 225 index was up 0.44 per cent, or 163.99 points, at 37,027.27, while the broader Topix index slipped 0.08 per cent, or 1.99 points, to 2,560.64.

"The Japanese market is expected to start with gains following rallies in US shares," senior market analyst Toshiyuki Kanayama

of Monex said.

Now "the focus is whether the Nikkei index will extend its gains above the 37,000 level", he added. The dollar fetched 149.33 yen in early Asian trade, against 149.30 yen in New York.

Overnight on Wall Street, the S&P 500 flirted with a landmark new peak but finished just shy of 5,000 points, up 0.1 per cent. The Dow Jones Industrial Average also edged up 0.1 per cent, while the tech-rich Nasdaq advanced 0.2 per cent.

PM directs for focus on vertical buildings construction to provide maximum houses to people

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Friday directed the Capital Development Authority (CDA) to make special focus on the construction of vertical buildings for providing houses to maximum people, instead of using valuable agricultural land in the allotment of plots to the employees.

Chairing the meeting of the Federal Cabinet, he also directed to formulate policy in this regard.

The policy of allotment of plots to the CDA employees was presented to the Federal Cabinet in light of the decision of the Islamabad High Court.

According to the decision of the Islamabad High Court, the CDA had to determine the difference in the income of the CDA by giving employees at concessional rates.

The Cabinet deferred the decision on the proposed allotment policy.

On the recommendation

of the Interior Ministry, the Cabinet also approved the open bidding for the procurement of services of a category A audit firm, issued by the State Bank of Pakistan for the audit of National Database Registration Authority (NADRA). It modified the decision taken by the Federal Cabinet in 2019, according to which only four large and reputed audit firms could be hired for the audit of NADRA.

However in this decision, all the category A firms registered in the SBP have been provided equal opportunities for the audit of NADRA.

The meeting was apprised that to make the audit of NADRA, more effective, transparent and in line with the international standard, it was important to provide equal opportunities to all the category A firms registered with the SBP for audit of NADRA.

Meanwhile, the cabinet, on the recommendation of Ministry of Information

Technology and Telecommunication, approved nomination of the project of "Cyber Security for Digital Pakistan" as "National Computer Emergency Response Team (NCERT)".

The meeting was informed that the project - Cyber Security for Digital Pakistan - was part of the national development budget and work on it had already been initiated.

On the recommendation of Ministry of Kashmir & Gilgit-Baltistan Affairs, the Cabinet approved the amendment of Section 5(2) of the Adaptation Act. According to the amendment, in this section, instead of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Council, the words Azad Government of State of Jammu and Kashmir shall be used to transfer the license fee and renewal fee of mobile phone network spectrum from Pakistan Telecommunication Authority to Azad Government of State of Jammu and Kashmir.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar chairs a review meeting regarding progress on Pakistan's investment agreements with friendly countries.

Pakistan seeks UN intervention to save India's Islamic sites after razing of 2nd historic mosque

UNITED NATIONS (APP): Pakistan has drawn United Nations' attention to last week's "brazen" demolition of the centuries-old Akhoni mosque in New Delhi, and call for the organization's intervention to protect Islamic sites in India.

"This incident marks another highly disturbing chapter in an alarming campaign targeting Islamic sites and heritage in India, which symbolizes a concerning rise in Hindu-majoritarianism," Ambassador Munir Akram said in a letter addressed to the top official for the U.N. Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), Miguel Angel Moratinos.

The Akhoni mosque, standing for over 800 years, was abruptly demolished by Delhi Development Authority (DDA) officials in the middle of the night under a significant police presence, catching the local community, mosque-goers, and Madrasah students en-

tirely off guard without any prior warning, the Pakistani envoy pointed out. The letter said: "Several mosques and shrines, have already been razed under the garb of different administrative measures or judicial processes, and many more remain at a high risk of being demolished. Muslim holy sites also remain a target of attacks by the mobs of extremists."

"The State's support for normalizing such incidents in India poses imminent threats to the well-being of Indian Muslims across social, economic, and political spheres. The pervasive influence of the 'Hindutva' ideology, alongside alarming incidents of Islamophobia and the demolition of historic mosques, calls for immediate and unwavering international attention."

In a video surfaced online, Imam Zakir Hussain, the spiritual leader of the Akhoni mosque,

conveyed deep sorrow for the loss. He emphasized its crucial dual role as both a place of worship and a Madrasah for students, as well as housing the sacred resting place of revered figures.

"The construction and consecration of the 'Ram Temple' at the site of the demolished Babri Mosque in Ayodhya, followed by the recent incident at the Akhoni mosque, underlines the critical need for the swift implementation of the Secretary-General's Action Plan on the Protection of Religious Sites."

"We request you to accelerate efforts to address this urgent matter, ensuring the safeguarding of religious sites in India. The comprehensive mapping of religious sites in India, encompassing mosques, churches, and other such locations, has become imperative to monitor the ongoing destruction and much needed preservation."

PM directs ministries to formulate strategy on development projects to attract foreign investment

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Friday directed all the ministries to formulate a strategy within five days for the establishment of the development projects with a potential to attract foreign investment.

The prime minister, chairing a meeting to review the progress on execution of investment agreements in different sectors with GCC countries, directed the ministries to present their respective strategies on doable projects to the Special Investment Facilitation

Council without any delay, a PM Office press release said.

In the meeting, he was apprised of the progress on the international agreements in various sectors including energy, finance, logistics, food security, water, minerals and others.

Caretaker ministers for communications, maritime affairs and railways, law and justice, climate change, finance, energy, and food security attended the meeting besides the deputy chairman of the Planning Commission and senior officers.

President accepts resignation of justice Shahid Jamil of LHC

ISLAMABAD (Online): President Dr Arif Alvi has accepted resignation of Justice Shahid Jamil of Lahore High Court (LHC).

According to ministry of law, the resignation has been accepted from February 02.

Copy of notification regarding acceptance of the resignation has been sent to secretaries of president and prime minister.

Law ministry has issued formal notification on acceptance of resignation.

Copy has been sent to judicial commission of Pakistan, parliamentary committee and registrar LHC.

All members of Sharif family win NA seats comfortably

ISLAMABAD (INP): All members of the Sharif family won National Assembly seats from Lahore defeating their opponents with a comfortable margin on Friday.

PML-N Quaid and former three-time prime minister Nawaz Sharif has won the election from a National Assembly seat in Lahore defeating PTI-backed candidate Dr Yasmin Rashid by a huge margin of votes.

Nawab Sharif grabbed 171,024 votes from Lahore's NA-130 while Yasmin Rashid obtained 115,043 votes. The PML-N supremo defeated her by a margin of 55,981 votes.

PML-N President Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif won the election by securing 64,953 votes in Lahore's NA-123 while his rival Afzal Azeem Patat came second with 48,486 votes.

PML-N Senior Vice-President and Chief Organiser Maryam Nawaz Sharif also won his NA-119 seat by securing 83,855 votes while independent candidate Shahzad Farooq managed only 68,376 votes.

PML-N leader Muhammad Hamza Shehbaz Sharif also won the election from NA-118 by securing 105,960 votes.



ISLAMABAD: PML-N candidate Anjum Aqeel Khan with supporters celebrates after won the election for National Assembly constituency NA-46 Islamabad Capital Territory according to the unofficial result.

Gilani appeals political parties to unite for sake of nation

MULTAN (APP): MNA-elect national assembly of Pakistan Peoples Party, Yusuf Raza Gilani appealed all political stakeholders to unite for the sake of the nation with sole motive of bringing the country out of hitting quagmire.

He was talking to media after getting the razor-thin majority of 293 votes from his constituency NA-148 through the unofficial result's announcement after concluding the polls last day.

He felicitated PPP's Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and the Co-chairman, Asif Zardari for chalking out the inspiring manifesto of the party, PPP that according to him, was much loved by people of Multan.

Bilawal Bhutto had effectively run the political campaign across the country, he said.

Pakistan People's Party was moving up to bring political and economic stability in coordination with all stakeholders

across the country. He said the PPP with the help of stakeholders would develop foreign policy and express resolve to wipe out terrorism with full commitment and determination.

Underlining the current turmoil hitting the northwest border, he said "Afghanistan was our brotherly country and that the nation's prosperity was profoundly linked to stability in Afghanistan."

He termed the most significant problems swaying over the country was inflation and rising unemployment.

He urged all political stakeholders to unite for the one-liner agenda based on developing people economically.

Gilani said his all children got elected and vowed that they would work as a team to resolve the problems of the masses. The more we will strengthen economically, the better we stand up in a dignified way at all global forums, he said.

'Buyers' of independents have reached Islamabad: Faisal Vawda

HYDERABAD (INP) Former senator Vawda has said the 'sale' of independent winners has begun and their 'buyers' have reached Islamabad.

Speaking at a private TV channel transmission, the PTI former leader said, "Nawaz Show has come to an end and Go Nawaz Go happened." He said it was surprising that MQM-P was leading in more than expected seats.

"If PPP sits in opposition with the independents, the country will face destruction. Unrecognised PTI-backed independent candidates will sit in treasury benches," the former PTI leader said. What I am saying will prove in next 72 hours. It was expected that the independent candidates would have the upper hand. People will remember Junejo's tenure of 1985 when they will look at the game of independent candidates, he said. He added

Pakistan's total liquid foreign reserves reach \$ 13.1 billion

KARACHI (APP): The total liquid foreign reserves of Pakistan stood at US\$ 13,097.6 million in the week ended on February 2, 2024, while foreign reserves held by State Bank reached \$ 8,044 million.

The State Bank of Pakistan, in a statement issued here on Friday, informed that foreign exchange reserves held by the central bank decreased by \$173 million to US\$ 8,044 million due to debt repayments during the week under review. Meanwhile, net foreign reserves held by commercial banks stood at \$ 5,053.6 million.

Total liquid foreign reserves held by the country, in the previous week ended on January 26, 2024, were \$ 13,262.5 million.

Ishaq Dar says PML-N has emerged as single majority party in NA

ISLAMABAD (Online): Former finance minister and PML-N leader Ishaq Dar has made big claim about PML-N success with reference to election 2024.

Ishaq Dar who is head of PML-N Election cell has said in his tweet "we have collected all data and results in PML-N election cell. PML-N has emerged as single majority party in National Assembly (NA).



QUETTA: Pashatunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PKMAP) Chairman, Mehmood Khan Achakzai addresses to media persons during press conference, at Quetta press club.

Chairman PkMAP gives ultimatum to EC to correct 'rigged' results by today's noon

Independent Report

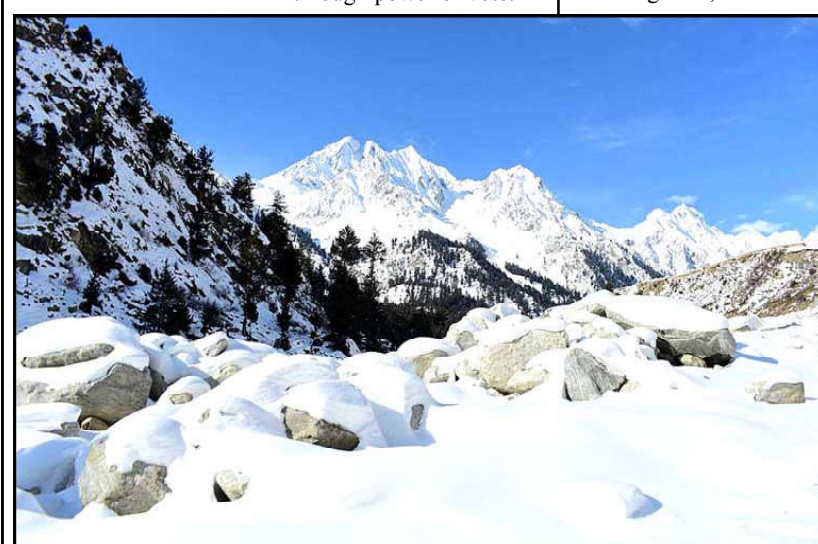
QUETTA: The Chairman Pashatunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PKMAP) Mehmood Khan has given ultimatum to the Election Commission of Pakistan to correct the otherwise "rigged" results of the elections in favour of the party's candidates.

The Chairman PKMAP alleged that victory of party candidates on six provincial assembly and three national assembly seats were converted into defeat in the province. r. Achakzai was addressing a hurriedly called press conference at Quetta Press Club on Friday evening.

said that we had lot of expectations with the 12th elections of the country, but the results were changed in half of the day.

Those candidates who defeated in the elections were declared winner on different seats of the provincial and national assemblies, adding he charged further. He said that democracy and supremacy of constitution is our weakness as our forefathers had struggled for the democracy in the country. He said our elders did never make any compromise over the democracy, and they also rendered sacrifices that the government is formed through power of vote.

The Chairman PKMAP



GILGIT: An attractive view of Naltar Valley covered by fresh snow on the mountains.

LHC stops ECP from notifying Aun Chaudhry's success from NA-128

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Friday stopped the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) from issuing notification for the success of Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) candidate Aun Chaudhry from NA-128 constituency.

The court also stopped implementation on form-47 about the result of the NA-128 constituency.

Justice Ali Baqar Najafi announced the reserved verdict on a petition filed by Salman Akram Raja, an opposite candidate from NA-128 constituency, about the result of NA-128 constituency. The court had reserved its verdict after hearing arguments of the parties, earlier in the day.

In the course of arguments, the petitioner's counsel emphasized that the issue pertained to violation of rule, not vote counting. He stressed the necessity of candidates' presence during result compilation as per the Election Act. The counsel questioned whether results could be validated in the candidate's absence and highlighted that results of only 13 polling stations of NA-128 constituency were compiled in their presence.

However, a law officer argued that if the petitioner had any complaint then he should approach to the ECP. It is pertinent to mention here that as per unofficial result, Aun Chaudhry has won from NA-128 constituency.



SUKKUR: Peoples Party (PPP) Leader, Syed Khursheed Shah celebrates with supporters after his victory in the General Election 2024, in Sukkur.

Pak envoy, Ugandan deputy speaker discuss cooperation, diaspora's contribution

ISLAMABAD (APP): High Commissioner of Pakistan in Uganda Muhammad Hassan Wazir on Friday met Deputy Speaker of Uganda's Parliament Thomas Tayebwa

wherein they discussed bilateral cooperation as well as the contribution of the Pakistani diaspora.

"It was indeed my pleasure meeting your Rt. Hon. Thomas Tayebwa and discussing bilateral cooperation between our two countries," the high commissioner wrote on X.

Thanking Uganda for hosting the Pakistani diaspora, he said that Pakistan and Uganda had great friendly relations and that

he was proud of Pakistanis for investing in Uganda.

Similarly, the Ugandan deputy speaker also took to X saying that both sides emphasised inter-parliamentary relations.

The Pakistani envoy appreciated Uganda's level of hospitality as a country and congratulated Ugandan President Yoweri K Museveni upon his new role as Chairman of NAM and G77 Plus China and the successful hosting of the two critical summits.

The deputy speaker also appreciated the contribution of the Pakistani community in Uganda towards the country's development.

AJK PM pays tributes to martyred Dr Afzal Guru

MIRPUR (APP): Azad Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwar Ul Haq, while paying tributes to Shaheed Kashmir freedom movement activist Dr Afzal Guru, said that he was a true hero of Kashmiris who played a significant role in the liberation movement.

Termining the execution of a death sentence by India against Guru as the murder of justice, the PM said, "The Indian Supreme Court awarded a death sentence to him to satisfy the collective conscience of Indian society."

Prime Minister Haq, while paying rich tributes to the martyred Kashmir freedom movement activist on his 11th martyrdom anniversary observed on Friday, expressed that charges

levelled against Afzal Guru were never proven in the court of law, but despite that, Afzal Guru was awarded capital punishment.

He further expressed that it was unfortunate that he was buried on the premises of the notorious jail soon after his execution.

"The Indian authorities didn't hand over the mortal remains of Afzal Guru to his heirs," he said, adding that Afzal Guru's supreme sacrifices would be remembered for a long time in the annals of Kashmiri history. The prime minister expressed optimism that the day would not be far away when the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir will achieve their cherished goal of freedom.

Samar Bilour sets high bar by visiting and congrats opponent

ISLAMABAD (APP): Awami National Party (ANP) leader Samar Haroon Bilour demonstrated remarkable grace on Friday by visiting and extending heartfelt congratulations to her opponent.

"I maintained the tradition set by my late husband, Haroon Bilour," she added.

Talking to a private news channel, she expressed that it's a tradition they uphold after every election campaign, regardless of victory or defeat, to visit their opponents first.

Samar, along with her son Daniyal, extended heartfelt congratulations to Meena Khan Afridi and his

team. They were pleased with their workers' efforts and believed that all political workers, whether from their party or opposition, deserved commendation for their role in completing the democratic process, she added.

She acknowledged the hard work of opposition supporters in her constituency and shared the joy of their success as political leaders.

Samar concluded by sending best wishes to the newly elected representatives for their service to the nation.

Independent candidates outclass parties' heavyweights in KP

Pakistan talks with IMF is important whatever election results may be: Bloomberg

NEW YORK (Online): Global Journal Bloomberg Asia Frontier Capital fund manager Rocher Desai has said that Pakistan either a majority government is formed in Pakistan or a coalition government Pakistan should stay in bail out program.

Rocher Desai said this while discussing the general elections in Pakistan.

He held that whatever the election results are, talks with the IMF is important for Pakistan.

He underlined the situation of Pakistan's external debt is uncertain and unstable.