

Independent

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Karachi

Ph: 0300-3898091 Vol: 06. No. 22 Rajab 26, 1445 AH Wednesday February 07, 2024 Pages 04 Price Rs. 12.00

CM once again reviews police deployment at sensitive polling stations

KARACHI (APP): Caretaker Chief Minister Sindh Justice (retd) Maqbool Baqar chaired 30th Provincial Apex Committee meeting at CM House to review election arrangements and national action plan tasks.

The meeting was attended by provincial ministers, Brig. (retd) Haris Nawaz, Omar Soomro, Ahmad Shah, Corps Commander Lt. Gen Babar Iftikhar, Chief Secretary Dr Fakhre Alam, DG Rangers Major Gen Azhar Waqas, IG Police Riffat Mukhtar, Advocate General Hassan Akbar, Chairman P&D Shakil Mangnejo, Home Secretary Iqbal Memon, PG Fayaz Shah.

During the Apex committee meeting, the chief minister reviewed the arrangements for the upcoming election. The committee was informed that there would be a total of 19,008 polling stations, including 5,657 normal, 6,550 sensitive, and 6,801 highly sensitive ones.

IG Police Riffat Mukhtar shared the police deployment criteria, stating that four police personnel would be deployed at a normal polling station, five at a sensitive one, and seven at a highly sensitive polling station.

A total of 143,156 police personnel would be deployed at the polling stations, including 95,400 at the normal polling stations, 10,648 in the QRF Police, and 37,108 in the Auxiliary Force. Additionally, the Rangers and



KARACHI: Caretaker Sindh Chief Minister, Justice (Retd) Maqbool Baqar presides over a 30th Provincial APEX Committee meeting, held at CM House in Karachi.

Politics of 'hate' puts country into trouble: Bilawal Bhutto

LARKANA (INP): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said on Monday old politicians put the country in danger by involving in the politics of hate.

He made this remark while addressing an electoral rally. The former foreign minister added that the economy suffered immeasurably due to the stubbornness and ego of the old politicians as they have introduced the abuse culture in politics.

He said, "people are well aware who wants to become PM for the fourth time despite getting enough opportunity to provide people the basic necessities."

The PPP chief mentioned that old politicians did not know anything besides divisionary politics, adding the people should better get rid of this traditional politics.

"When a person from Larkana becomes

Pakistan strongly condemns terrorist attack in Istanbul

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan on Tuesday strongly condemned the terrorist attack targeting the Court-house complex in Istanbul.

"We extend our heartfelt condolences to the brotherly people and government of Turkey and pray for the swift and complete recovery of those injured in this heinous attack. Our thoughts and prayers are with the bereaved families," the Foreign Office spokesperson said in a statement.

According to Turkish media, two shooters attempting to attack a checkpoint outside a courthouse in Istanbul were captured dead.

"Today, there has been an attempted terrorist attack at the security checkpoint in front of the C Gate of Caglayan Courthouse," Interior Minister Ali Yerikeya said on X after the attack that left six people injured, including three police officers.

Best arrangements made to ensure peaceful election, PM tells international observers

Says now it is the turn of the people of Pakistan to exercise their democratic right to vote; Caretaker government has fulfilled its responsibilities.

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Tuesday said that despite numerous challenges, the best possible arrangements had been made to ensure peaceful and seamless conduct of elections on polling day, across the country.

He was talking to a delegation of the Commonwealth Observer Group (COG), led by former President of Nigeria Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, who called on him, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

The meeting was part of the COG's interaction with various stakeholders ahead of the upcoming general elections on 8th February, 2024.

The prime minister welcomed the COG delegation and said that Pakistan was proud to honour its commitment as a Commonwealth member state by inviting independent international observers to witness the general elections.

He also highlighted that the caretaker government had fulfilled its responsibilities to run the day-to-day affairs of the state and create a conducive environment ahead of the elections. Now it was the turn of the people of Pakistan to exercise their democratic right to vote, he added.



ISLAMABAD: Chairperson of the Commonwealth Observer Group for General Election H.E. Dr Goodluck Ebele Jonathan along with the delegation called on Caretaker Prime Minister, Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

ECP to announce unofficial results of all 859 constituencies till Feb 9

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) will announce unofficial results of all 859 constituencies of the National and Provincial Assemblies on February 9 which will be issued by the Returning Officers.

"The ECP has already completed all the arrangements to conduct free, fair and transparent general elections across the country on February 8," the ECP spokesperson told APP.

He said the ECP has completed the printing of 260 million ballot papers for all constituencies in the country ahead of the 2024 general elections. The spokesman said the National Assembly ballots are identifiable by green paper, whereas Provincial Assembly ballots are printed on white paper. Except for some districts, the distribution of printed ballot papers has been finalized across the nation.

The printing, which commenced on January 14, concluded by February 3.

He said that this time, a total of 260 million ballot papers were printed, reflecting a 54.74% rise in candidatures compared to the 2018 elections. Despite a 195% surge in demand for special paper, effective management led to a reduction from 2400 tonnes to 2177 tonnes.

The distribution of printed ballot papers comprises 5% single-column, 50% double-column, 30% three-column, 11.15% four-column, and 2.4% five-column formats, gearing up for the scheduled February 8 polls. Political parties and independent candidates are actively participating in campaigns, with the election drive slated to conclude on February 6 at 12 pm.



LARKANA: Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addresses to his supporters during public gathering meeting as a part of Election Campaign in connection of the General Election 2024 coming ahead, at Municipal Stadium in Larkana.

Federal Cabinet approves restructuring of PIA

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Cabinet on Tuesday approved the restructuring of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) on the recommendation of the Privatization Division.

The cabinet, in its previous meeting approved the appointment of a financial advisor for financial and administrative restructuring of the airlines.

The cabinet, in a meeting chaired by Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar was told that the financial advisor had formulated a financial restructuring plan of PIA in line with international precedents under which the airlines will be divided into two companies, Top-Co and Hold-Co.

PIA's core operations of engineering, ground handling, cargo, flight kitchen and training will be incorporated into Top-Co while other entities such as Precision Engineering Complex, PIA Investment Limited and others subsidiaries and properties will be incorporated in Hold-Co. These measures will help attract capital investors to PIA.

The cabinet also directed the cabinet sub-committee on Privatization to deal with the matters related to settlement of government-owned enterprises with PIA as soon as possible.

US continuing to monitor Pakistan's electoral process closely: State Dept

ISLAMABAD (APP): With just two days to go for Pakistan's general elections, the United States is continuing to monitor the country's electoral process "quite closely", a State Department spokesperson said Monday.

The department's Principal Deputy Spokesperson, Vedant Patel, said, "We're continuing to monitor Pakistan's electoral process quite closely, and as we have said, we want to see that process takes place in a way that facilitates broad participation with respect for freedom of expression, assembly, and associations."



KARACHI: Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori addressing students during a ceremony in connection with starting of IT classes at Governor House.

Sindh police chalks out contingency plan for general elections

KARACHI (INP): The Sindh police has chalked out a contingency plan for the February 8 general elections, with 143,156 police personnel and volunteers deployed for security across the province.

According to a report submitted to Inspector-General of Police (IGP) Riffat Mukhtar Raja on Tuesday, a total of 14,052 polling buildings and 19,008 polling stations categorised as the most sensitive, sensitive and normal.

There were a total of 6,801 most sensitive, 6,550 sensitive and 5,657 normal polling stations, the report stated.

It said 143,156 police personnel and volunteers would be deployed for the security of all polling stations, buildings and polling material across the province.

Out of a total of 143,156 policemen/volunteers, 95,400 would be deployed for security of polling stations, 10,648 personnel would be part of the "quick response force (QRF)" while 37,108

OGRA scales up gas tariff

ISLAMABAD (Online): OGRA has scaled up sui gas tariff enormously.

Tariff of Sui Northern has been increased by 35.1 percent from February 02 and Sui Southern by 8.5 percent.

OGRA has sent notification on enhancement of tariff to government for implementation.

According to notification the average cost of gas has been increased from Rs 1238.68 to Rs 1673.82 per MMBTU on Sui Northern system.

Sui Northern has been allowed to recover more Rs 180 billion from consumers.

OGRA has enhanced tariff of Sui Southern by 8.5 percent.

The average cost of Sui Southern gas has been increased from Rs 1350.68 to Rs 1466.40 per MMBTU.

Security forces kill two terrorists in North Waziristan

RAWALPINDI (Online): Two terrorists including terrorist ring leader Ayubullah alias Mansoor were killed in an intelligence based operation by security forces in North Waziristan.

According to the ISPR, weapons, ammunition and explosives were also recovered from the terrorists who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities including target killing as well as extortion and abduction of innocent civilians.

Sanitization operation is being conducted to eliminate any other terrorist in the area.



KASUR: PML (N) Quaid Nawaz Sharif, President Shabbaz Sharif and Chief Organizer Maryam Nawaz expressing solidarity during a public meeting in connection with general elections.

Nawaz vows to make Pakistan 'Asian Tiger'

KASUR (INP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) chief Nawaz Sharif says he will make the country an 'Asian Tiger' as the youth is supporting the former ruling party.

Addressing a rally on the last day of the election campaign in Khudian, the former prime minister said, "If our government were in power, every person here would have a job." "We have to come out of this era; we have to make the country an 'Asian Tiger'. Shabbaz Sharif should utilise this passion for Pakistan and change the country's destiny," said Nawaz.

The PML-N leader said that their government would build roads in Khudian better than those in Paris; there should be universities for the youth here, and they should have laptops and computers in their hands.

Nawaz Sharif said that their government would provide jobs to the youth of Khudian.

The former prime minister also promised to build stadium in Khudian. He said that he would bring Shabbaz Sharif to inaugurate it, and they would play the opening match in this stadium." He said, "Those who used to say that the youth will get 10 million jobs, where are those jobs and where have the houses gone?"

Nawaz Sharif said, "Vegetables were available at Rs10 per kg during my tenure as PM, roti was available for Rs4."



KARACHI: Inspector General Police (IGP) Sindh, Dr. Riffat Mukhtar Raja presides over a high-level meeting regarding the control of law and order situation on the occasion General Election 2024, held at CPO Headquarters in Karachi.

Sindh information dept. sets up Election Cell

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Information Department on Tuesday, established an Election Cell to ensure provision of authentic and reliable information regarding the general elections 2024 to the journalists. The election cell headed by Director General Public Relations of Information Department government of Sindh will work from February 7 to 9, 2024, said a statement issued here.

The cell will work continuously for three days for provision of authentic information to the journalists regarding the elections, it stated. The directors, deputy directors and information officers of Sindh Information Department will be deputised in the election cell while election cells has also been established at the divisional level for the purposes those would be headed by the directors concerned.



KARACHI: Caretaker Sindh Information Minister, Ahmad Shah addresses to media persons during press conference held at Sindh Assembly building in Karachi.

Mayor Karachi inspects building of KIHD's nursing school

KARACHI (APP): Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab on Tuesday inspected the under-construction building of the Nursing School of Karachi Institute of Heart Diseases (KIHD) and issued on the spot instructions to the officers concerned.

While talking to media persons on the unscheduled visit to the Nursing school, the Mayor Karachi said that he will continue to work for the betterment of the city and its institutions. Municipal solar park is being developed in Kidney Hill Park, he added.

Municipal Commissioner S. M. Afzal Zaidi, PPP, Deputy Parliamentary leader in the City Council Dil Muhammad and other officers were also present at the occasion.

He said the citizens of Karachi need better and quality medical facilities.

Daily Voice of Masses
Independent

Terrorism challenge

The new government that takes over after Thursday's general election will have the briefest of honeymoon periods, with the immediate task of formulating a cogent counterterrorism policy lying before it. Acts of terrorism continue unabated, particularly targeting police and military personnel, as the attack on the Chaudhwan police station in KP's D.I. Khan early on Monday shows. At least 10 police personnel were martyred in the attack, which officials say was launched from multiple directions by over 30 terrorists.

A military check post in nearby Daraban was stormed by militants last December, causing over 20 fatalities. That was apparently the deadliest single attack on military men last year. The Daraban atrocity was claimed by the Tehreek-i-Jihad Pakistan, an alibi used by the banned TTP, which emerged last year.

This particular part of KP, as well as neighbouring areas of Balochistan and Punjab, were beset by terrorist violence throughout 2023. The new administration needs to ensure this grim trend does not continue in the current year. Overall, 2023 was a blood-soaked year, with some figures citing over 1,500 terrorism-related fatalities.

The challenge is two-tiered: to secure Pakistan and ensure no part of the country is available for terrorist outfits to establish themselves, while the other goal must be to prevent militants from creating sanctuaries in Afghanistan.

The new government, together with the security establishment and provincial set-ups, must hammer out a failsafe plan to secure the country, particularly those parts of KP and Balochistan suffering from frequent terrorist attacks.

The basic structure exists in the form of the National Action Plan. The key is to update it as per the requirements of the day, and implement it. Furthermore, dealing with militancy should be a one-window operation, preferably led by Nacta with input from all stakeholders.

As for the issue of terrorist sanctuaries in Afghanistan, the UN has validated Pakistan's concerns about training camps on Afghan soil used by Al Qaeda and the TTP to foment trouble in Pakistan. The Afghan Taliban need to shut down these facilities, or else bilateral ties will suffer. Either the Taliban should stop the attacks or relocate terrorists away from the Pakistani border so that they are not able to spill blood in this country. The Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson recently remarked that the Afghan Taliban need to "firmly combat all forms of terrorist forces". This is the message that should be communicated from Islamabad, Beijing and all other regional capitals to Kabul's current rulers. Unless the new dispensation in Islamabad tackles terrorism head-on, economic stability and social cohesion will be very difficult to achieve. The security forces should also dedicate all their energies to eliminating the terrorist threat, and protecting the lives of civil and military personnel on the front line.

Will of the people

Rida Hosain

In his autobiography Friends Not Masters, Ayub Khan wrote "our people are mostly uneducated and our politicians not so scrupulous. The people are capable of doing great things, but they can also be easily misled. Unfettered democracy can, therefore, prove dangerous". As is the case with most dictators, the field marshal held deep disdain for politicians, as well as the judgement of the masses.

This utterly misguided narrative carries on, the essence of which is that the people simply do not know what is good for them.

Historically, those interfering in the democratic process always find a justification, ie, political and economic stability, good governance, peace and order, or the 'genius' of the people. Every supposed 'reason' is a cover for undemocratic interventions, whether overt or covert.

There is no past wrong which justifies the dismantling going on today. The Constitution guarantees that every citizen shall have the right to form or be a member of a political party. The courts have held that the right to form a political party includes the right to function as a political party. In violation of these rights, across provinces, there has been a crackdown on PTI workers. Attempts have been made to disrupt the election campaign of PTI candidates. Even virtual events have been met with internet disruption.

The maintenance of public order laws have been used to keep politicians in custody. In the detailed judgement setting aside various detention orders, Justice Babar Sattar observed that between May and September 2023, the "over-

whelming majority" of detainees were either leaders or members of the PTI. "Of the detention orders that were challenged before Islamabad High Court, not one order has been upheld as having been passed in accordance with law," per Justice Sattar. Not one detention order. Either the deputy commissioner would withdraw the detention order, or the court would set it aside, or the detention period would lapse.

For anyone living in Pakistan this past year, it would be no surprise that the ECP took particular interest in the PTI's intra-party elections. The Peshawar High Court rightly restored PTI's election symbol, and held that the ECP could not question the intra-party election process. Instead of accepting the decision of the Peshawar High Court, the ECP was so determined that it took the matter right up to the Supreme Court.

Then, in a quest to supposedly uphold democracy within political parties, the Supreme Court was seen to undermine the electoral process in the country. It found that PTI failed to hold intra-party elections, and would, therefore, lose its election symbol. The most inexplicable part of this decision was that the law does not expressly contemplate depriving a political party of its election symbol on account of intra-party elections. This decision has done nothing except hurt the ordinary voter. This was not a case about an individual or a political party, it was about the disenfranchisement of millions of voters. Weeks after this regrettable decision, Justice Mansoor Ali Shah was entirely correct in holding, "electoral laws must be interpreted in favour of enfranchisement rather than disenfranchisement".

Mere days before the elections, convictions in one case after another are being announced. In the cipher case, Imran Khan and Shah Mahmood Qureshi were denied the right to be represented by the counsel of their choice, and, instead, represented by state counsel. In the Toshakhana reference, the judge closed the right to cross-examine witnesses. At the heart of a fair trial is the right to be represented by the counsel of one's choice, and to properly defend oneself. Hearings have been conducted well past court hours, and the great urgency with which these convictions are being announced is beyond any reasonable justification. It is clear that there has been no fair, impartial process in these cases.

The conviction in the 'unlawful marriage' case manifests the tragic extent of the weaponisation of justice. Unjustifiable aspersions have been cast on a woman's character, and individuals have been forced into a courtroom to defend private decisions they made. The decision attacks the right to dignity, which the Constitution and the Supreme Court distinctly provide is an absolute right. There can be no restrictions on the right to dignity. Those adamant on overriding the will of the people continue with their dismantling, instil fear, mock the voter, and make it seem that it is not worth one's while to exercise their right to vote. But everyone must cast their vote on Feb 8. It is the day the people have a chance to make their voice heard, and for the future of our country, it is something we must all do. -- Courtesy Dawn

Poll manifestos

Dr Niaz Murtaza

Elections can rejuvenate nations if they are fair, parties present strong ideas and teams to the masses competitively and the winners have a strong mandate to take the country forward. Thursday's polls may be among our most rigged, more so after Imran Khan's dubious convictions last week. Opinion polls suggest a hung assembly. Thus, we may have a rigged and weak new government. This leaves the issue of whether parties have strong ideas and teams.

To convince discerning voters, party manifestos must present an in-depth analysis of why people suffer on account of major issues and the best way of addressing them permanently. In the current scenario, where we face huge economic and security challenges and, with the rest of the world, the impact of climate change, there must be a special focus on these areas. I reviewed the 2024 manifestos of the PTI, PML-N and PPP on such key points. All three were issued days before the elections, reflecting the limited role ideas play in our polls as against catchy slogans and patronage flows. But all are better than their 2018 iterations in terms of length, presentation and coverage. This is especially credible for the PTI, which has the longest and most comprehensive one, despite the state crackdown it faces.

The shortest is the PML-N's, much of it wasted on large Sharif photos. It is bereft of any in-depth analysis of the root causes of our long-term or current problems, jumping straight into sectoral promises. The PTI's and PPP's contain preambles that mention inequities as a root cause

of our problems and reflect on our economic and security problems. As expected, the PTI's reflects heavy religious ideology, but without linking it to concrete policies. The PPP's reflects no ideology despite its pro-poor rhetoric, its socialist origins mixed long ago.

The PPP's is the weakest on concrete economic ideas. It promises the sky on increasing income, social services and housing, and aims to increase investment and tax revenues for this purpose. But it hardly contains any concrete ideas on how it would do so. The other two present more meso-level concrete ideas in some economic areas. The PML-N talks rightly of merging investment, industries and commerce to create a ministry of economy, which must also include planning and IT. The PTI and PML-N both have some concrete proposals for exports, investment, industry, etc. However, they fall short of a new and coherent economic strategy that can remove the threat of default and high inflation to attain sustainable and equitable progress. All three lack strong economic teams to translate ideas into successful strategies. The PTI has lost its capacity due to the crackdown it faces, while PML-N has alienated talent by its family-centric politics.

The three say little on our second biggest threat, insecurity due to terrorism by TTP and Baloch militants, or their root causes such as societal extremism and genuine Baloch complaints. The PPP talks of its Balochistan package that proved inadequate even the last time. But there is little talk by the parties on solving Baloch complaints or talking to Baloch groups or ending

societal extremism. On the mother of all our problems — civilian supremacy — the PML-N has removed the mild talk of its 2018 manifesto but now PTI includes it mildly. Our Constitution needs an overhaul as many anomalies have been unearthed in it in recent years. But the three only mention limited changes. Lack of space does not let me review the other areas in their manifestos. Readers must read them to form informed views.

If the larger parties lack strong ideas, what is the alternative? The manifestos of small leftist outfits like the Awami Workers Party, National Democratic Movement and Haqooq-i-Khalq party provide detailed analysis of the root causes of deprivation due to inequities embedded in capitalism. But as small and new parties with limited resources, they need more time to develop concrete ideas and field large numbers of candidates who can win. So, their impact on these polls will be minimal, though I will still vote for them. Readers are encouraged to look more closely at such parties. Thus, we may get a weak and rigged new regime that lacks strong ideas and teams and is heavily dependent on the security establishment and other elites. It will lack the strong links to or mandate from the masses to challenge elites and make fundamental changes in our elite-dominated political and economic order. So, we may go from one weak and rigged hybrid regime to another that adds to our mounting problems and kicks the can further into the future. This cannot go on forever and ultimately there may be a crash landing. -- Courtesy Dawn

Commerce News

Minister inaugurates country's first e-Rozgar Center

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunications Dr. Umar Saif Tuesday inaugurated the country's first e-Rozgar Center in collaboration of Excel Consulting Services.

The center boasts around 100 workstations fully equipped with state-of-the-art facilities tailored for freelancers, with plans to expand to 300 workstations in the future. Additional Secretary MoITT Ayesha Moriani, Member IT Syed Junaid Imam, Project Director Amir Ahmed, Chairman EC Services, Nazir Qureshi, officials from MoITT, NTS, PSEB and a large number of freelancers were present on the occasion.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Umar Saif said that with the establishment of the center, the project of setting up 10,000 e-rozgar centers across the country now begun officially. "We have also fulfilled another promise made to the people, where a significant number from the existing 1.5 million and upcoming new freelancers can work independently at very low rates" the minister said.

He said, the best facilities including high-speed internet, UPS, training centers, individual cabins, meeting rooms and separate office rooms for start-ups had been provided to freelancers. The minister said that with the completion of the



Special Assistant to Prime Minister for Human Rights and Women Empowerment Mushaal Hussein Mullick in a group photo with the organizers and participants of the event organized by Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry in connection with Kashmir Solidarity Day in Islamabad.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for IT & Telecom Dr. Umar Saif inaugurates Pakistan's First Private Sector E-Rozgar Center managed by EC Services in association with NTS.

Zong 4G holds Annual Business Conference to set strategic roadmap for 2024

ISLAMABAD (APP): During the Annual Business Conference, focused on the theme "Elevate Core Capabilities, Strive for Excellence," Zong 4G celebrated its notable accomplishments in 2023 and revealed its strategic roadmap for 2024. The Chairman and CEO, Huo Junli praised the employees for their exceptional efforts that resulted in the company's positive growth, creating over 47 million satisfied and happy customers.

Huo Junli reaffirmed that Zong 4G's industry success is attributed to the unwavering commitment and resilience of its employees,

FESCO to ensure uninterrupted power supply on election day

FAISALABAD (APP): Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (FESCO) has chalked out a plan to ensure uninterrupted power supply to all polling station areas on general elections 2024. FESCO spokesman Tahir Sheikh said on Tuesday the company had set up a monitoring cell at FESCO Headquarters where Chief Executive Officer Engineer Muhammad Amir would monitor all electricity related issues. He said that circle officers and SEs of all circles were issued necessary directions to ensure uninterrupted electricity supply across the region on election day.

'Safer Internet Day' PTADG stresses public awareness to protect info on digital accounts

ISLAMABAD (APP): Director General of the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), Ahmed Shamim Pirzada Tuesday on 'Safer Internet Day' emphasized to create media awareness among the general public for the responsible and safe use of social media platforms.

Talking to the PTV news, he said that while acknowledging the digital impact on children, the PTA is dedicated to ensuring a safer internet that meets their educational needs and promotes positive online interactions, adding that the public urged to refrain from clicking on links from unknown numbers as well as unknown senders.

Pak earns US \$280m from travel services' export in Jul-Nov

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan earned US \$280.981 million by providing different travel services in various countries during the first five months of the current fiscal year 2023-24. This shows a decrease of 19.03 percent as compared to the US \$347.001 million worth same services provided during the corresponding months of the last fiscal year 2022-23, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported.

During the months under review, personal travel services also decreased by 19.80 percent, from US \$344.211 million last year to US \$276.071 million during July-November 2023. Among these personal services, the exports of health-related expenditure rose by 372.48 percent while the education-related expenditure increased by 83.25 percent.

President Alvi directs Postal Life to pay Rs 5 mln to heirs of insurance policyholder

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi Tuesday directed Postal Life Insurance to pay the sum assured of Rs 5 million against an annual premium of Rs 448,600 in 2010.

After his father died in 2015, PLI refused to pay the death insurance claim on the pretext that the deceased had concealed material facts about his date of birth and the pre-insurance ailment of diabetes at the time of obtaining the insurance policy.

Feeling aggrieved, the son (complainant) filed a complaint with the Wafaqi Mohtasib to seek relief.

Wafaqi Mohtasib held that the deceased had purchased the insurance policy as per his date of birth mentioned on CNIC and that PLI had issued the insurance policy after accepting the requisite information.

The Mohtasib held that the denial by the insurance agency to honour the claim of the complainant amounted to maladministration.

Afterwards, PLI filed a representation against this decision with the president.

SBP announces public holiday on February 8

KARACHI (APP): The State Bank of Pakistan, Tuesday, announced a public holiday on February 8, 2024 to facilitate voters on the polling day.

PSX stays bullish, gains 796 more points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bullish trend on Tuesday, gaining 796.10 points, a positive change of 1.26 per cent, closing at 63,799.02 points against 63,002.92 points the previous trading day.

The stock market; 230 of them recorded gains and 79 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 27 remained unchanged.

The central bank, in a statement issued here, stated that SPB will remain closed on February 8, 2024 (Thursday) being a public holiday in the country as notified by the Election Commission of Pakistan to enable the voters to exercise their right of franchise freely and conveniently in General Election, 2024.

A total of 330,921,598 shares valuing Rs 15,195 billion were traded during the day as compared to 263,547,879 shares valuing Rs. 10,730 billion the last day.

CM chairs meeting on election preparations, emphasises transparency, security measures

Independent Report
LAHORE: Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi chaired an important meeting at the Chief Minister's Office on Tuesday to discuss election arrangements in the province.

Addressing the attendees, Naqvi emphasized that internet and mobile services will remain operational throughout the province on election day without interruption. He instructed for the commencement of city cleaning activities immediately after dawn on February 9, with banners and posters to be removed from all areas by the end of the day. Secretaries concerned were tasked with monitoring the

removal process and reporting the completion of the task by evening on February 9.

Highlighting the importance of transparency, Naqvi urged district administrative officers to actively oversee election duties in the field.

He noted the installation of 32,000 CCTV cameras at polling stations and emphasized the need to complete the installation by midnight. Naqvi commended the Punjab government for saving 1 billion rupees in the procurement of CCTV cameras.

Emphasising adherence to SOPs and the Election Commission's code of conduct, Naqvi directed for the activation

of control rooms and the establishment of an efficient complaint redressal mechanism.

He stressed that ensuring peaceful and fair elections is a national responsibility, urging everyone to work together as a team.

The meeting was attended by Chief Secretary Punjab, Inspector General Police, Provincial Election Commissioner, Additional Chief Secretary, Interior Secretary, Secretaries from Local Government, Transport, Finance, CCPO, MD Punjab Safe Cities Authority, Commissioner Lahore, Deputy Commissioner, and other officials.



LAHORE: Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Raza Naqvi being presented "Karpan" by representative of Sikh Community during his visit to Kartarpur.

Mohsin Naqvi visits Kartarpur Corridor

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Tuesday visited the Kartarpur Corridor and explored various artifacts related to Baba Guranak Dev Ji.

Provincial ministers, Chief Secretary, Inspector General of Police, and senior officers, also accompanied the CM. They were received and warmly welcomed by prominent members of the Sikh community at Gurudwara Sahib, said a handout issued here.

During his visit, the chief minister received a briefing on Gurudwara Sahib Kartarpur and participated in the prayer ceremony, also taking time to observe

the historical well. He was honored and presented with a 'kirpan', and interacted with members of the Sikh community from India, including Lalita Agarwal from Delhi, who expressed gratitude for the facilities provided to the Sikh community in Punjab.

Posing for photographs with the Sikh community, the CM extended compassion towards a special person, engaging in a lengthy conversation. He made a special visit to the 'Langar Hall', where he dined with the Sikh community, commending the quality of the food and personally rewarding the cooks.



MIRO KHAN: Peoples Party (PPP) Candidate for PS-15 Constituency, Nisar Ahmed Khuhro addresses to gathering during a corner meeting as a part of election campaign in connection of the General Election 2024 coming ahead, in Miro Khan.

CM KP chairs meeting Cabinet takes number of decisions pertaining to issues of day-to-day affairs of Province

Independent Report
PESHAWAR: The Caretaker Cabinet of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa met here Tuesday afternoon under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Syed Arshad Hussain Shah to take a large number of decisions pertaining to the issues of day-to-day affairs of the Province and of urgent nature.

The cabinet approved the hiring of transactional Advisor / Legal Consultant for negotiations of agreements regarding private public partnerships with different entities and in this regard authorized the office of Advocate General of the Province.

It approved exemption from section 22-A of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Public Procurement Regulatory Authority Act 2012 enabling the Provincial Culture and Tourism Department to out-source the PTDC properties under Public Private Partnership mode. As a result of 18th Constitutional Amendment in 2010 Federal Ministry of Tourism having been devolved to the provinces, 19 different properties of PTDC were handed over to the Tourism Department of the Province. The outsourcing of these properties to local and international investors will be made under the guidance of Special Investment Facilitation Council.



LAHORE: Provincial Election Commissioner Punjab Ejaz Anwar Chauhan addressing a press briefing in the Provincial Election Office.

CS, IGP inspect polling arrangements in Haripur

PESHAWAR (APP): To ensure the peaceful conduct of general election, Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry and IGP, Akhtar Hayat Gandapur on Monday paid a visit to Haripur district.

On the occasion DPO Haripur, Muhammad Umar Khan, DC Haripur, Khan Muhammad, SP Investigation Haripur, Amjad Hussain and district officers were present on the occasion, said an official press release.

DPO Haripur Muhammad Umar Khan gave a detailed briefing to the CS and IGP on the security arrangements for the general election.

The Chief Secretary and IGP paid a visit to the polling station established at Post Graduate College Haripur and inspected the security arrangements.

The Chief Secretary directed the district administration to ensure a peaceful atmosphere and conduct of free, fair and transparent polling on the election day.

MS chairs meeting regarding general election arrangements

HYDERABAD (APP): The Medical Superintendent (MS) of Liaquat University Medical Superintendent Hyderabad Jamsoro has said that regarding the general elections 2024 to be held across the country.

Addressing the meeting with In-charges of different department he said that on the directives of the Director General Health Hyderabad circular has been issued regarding cancellation holidays of all civil

hospitals Hyderabad and Jamsoro doctors, paramedical and nursing staff including other employees of the hospital have been immediately cancelled. Action will also be taken against the staff who are late on duty.

MS Dr Shahid Islam Junejo directed the In-charges of all the departments present in the meeting and said that they should ensure the presence of all the necessary equipment in the accident.

Dr Jamal inaugurates renovation work of BBH nursing college

Independent Report
RAWALPINDI: Caretaker Provincial Minister for Primary and Secondary Health, Punjab Dr Jamal Nasir on Tuesday said that Rs 65 million would be spent on the renovation of the Nursing Hostel while repaving the College of Nursing would be completed at the cost of Rs 40 mln.

He expressed these views while inaugurating the renovation of the Nursing Hostel and College of Nursing at Benazir Bhutto Hospital (BBH).

Dr Jamal said that the College of Nursing would be completed in a month while the renovation work of Nursing Hostel would be completed in April.

Later, the provincial minister visited Holy Family Hospital (HFH) along with Commissioner Rawalpindi Liaqat Ali Chatha. He said that after the completion of the revamping and renovation work of the hospital, immediate steps were being taken to activate the PEADS and Gynecology wards of the HFH at the earliest.

The minister informed that as many as 100 hospitals had been renovated across the Punjab province.

Preparations complete for general elections in Punjab: Ijaz Chohan

LAHORE (APP): Provincial Election Commissioner (PEC) Punjab Ijaz Anwar Chohan said on Tuesday that all preparations had been finalized for general elections in Punjab.

Speaking at a press conference, he said that printing of ballot papers had been completed and delivered to all district returning officers in the province.

He said that on February 7, the returning officers would ensure the receiving of election material, including ballot

papers, by the presiding officers, besides polling stations' readiness.

He said that security, communication and transport plans had been chalked out for the elections, adding that police and army personnel would perform duties to maintain law and order at polling stations.

He emphasized the Election Commission's commitment to fulfilling its constitutional obligations, highlighting ongoing efforts to enhance the electoral process.

International News

Blinken seeks progress on Gaza cease-fire-for-hostages deal in meetings with Egyptian mediators

Monitoring Desk
CAIRO: U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken was in Cairo on Tuesday for a meeting with Egyptian leaders that U.S. officials said would concentrate on negotiating a cease-fire in the Israel-Hamas war in exchange for the release of hostages held by the militants.

Blinken's visit also comes amid growing concerns in Egypt about Israel's stated intentions to expand the combat in Gaza to areas on the Egyptian border that are crammed with displaced Palestinians.

Israel's defense minister has said Israel's offensive will eventually reach the town of Rafah, on the Egyptian border, where

more than half of Gaza's 2.3 million people have sought refuge and are now living in increasingly miserable conditions. U.N. humanitarian monitors said Tuesday that Israeli evacuation orders now cover two-thirds of Gaza's territory, driving thousands more people every day toward the border areas.

Egypt has warned that an Israeli deployment along the border would threaten the peace treaty the two countries signed over four decades ago. Egypt fears an expansion of combat to the Rafah area could push terrified Palestinian civilians across the border, a scenario Egypt has said it is determined to prevent. Blinken, who was

meeting Tuesday with Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi, has said repeatedly that Palestinians must not be forced out of Gaza. During his latest trip, Blinken is seeking progress on a cease-fire deal, on potential normalization of relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia, and on preventing an escalation of regional fighting.

On all three fronts, Blinken faces major challenges. Hamas and Israel are publicly at odds over key elements of a potential truce. Israel has dismissed the United States' calls for a path to a Palestinian state, and Iran's militant allies in the region have shown little sign of being deterred by U.S. strikes.



U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken meets with Qatar's Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani at Lusail Palace, in Doha, Qatar.

8 dead, 80 injured in India fireworks factory explosion: officials

Monitoring Desk
NEW DELHI: At least eight people died and 80 were injured on Tuesday in a giant explosion at a fireworks factory in India that saw balls of flames soar into the sky, officials said.

Footage on Indian television showed a tower of flame after the explosion at the firecracker plant, with dozens of ambulances sent and army helicopters called in to evacuate the wounded.

Senior district police official Rajeshwari Mahobia told AFP there were "eight deaths so far and around 80 injured", at the factory in Harda in Madhya Pradesh state, adding that "the death toll is likely to go up".

Images from the factory site showed a wasteland of blackened and smoking rubble.

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav said reports of the explosion were "very sad news" and said medics at burn units in nearby major hospitals were called to make "necessary preparations".

"Ambulances are being rushed to Harda from the surrounding areas, and the army has been contacted to arrange for helicopters," Yadav said in a post on X, formerly Twitter. At least 20 ambulances were at the site, with 50 more being sent to help those injured, he added.

Manish Sharma, a surgeon at the Harda district hospital, said the centre was flooded with a stream of casualties. "We have eight deaths at our hospital, a total of 90 people were admitted here so far and we have referred 15 of them to a bigger hospital."



Rain falls over cars stuck by a mudslide, caused by an ongoing rain storm in Studio City, California.

UN chief sets up body to probe Israeli allegations

Monitoring Desk
UNITED NATIONS: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres established an independent body on Monday to scrutinize allegations regarding neutrality of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA).

Guterres, in consultation with UNRWA Commissioner General Philippe Lazzarini, has assigned the leadership of this crucial review to Catherine Colonna, a former foreign affairs minister of France. The panel will collaborate with three reputable research organizations — the Raoul Wallenberg Institute in Sweden, the Chr. Michelsen Institute in Norway, and the Danish Institute for Human Rights. In a statement released in New York, the UN chief emphasised the importance of this review, stating, "The Review Group's mandate is to assess whether the Agency is doing everything within its power to ensure neutrality and to respond to allegations of serious breaches when they are made."

Two-state solution only path to peace, Scholz tells Netanyahu

Monitoring Desk
BERLIN: German Chancellor Olaf Scholz told Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in a phone call on Monday that a two-state solution with the Palestinians was the only path to lasting peace in the region.

"From the view of the government, only a negotiated two-state solution would open up the prospect of a sustainable solution to the Middle East conflict. This must apply to both Gaza and the West Bank," Scholz said, according to a statement issued by his spokesman.

Meanwhile, Russian President Vladimir Putin held a telephone conversation with his counterpart from the UAE Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Russia said on Monday.

The presidents discussed the situation around Ukraine and Gaza and agreed on the "further development of friendly relations".

Ukraine's Donetsk region pounded by up to 2,500 Russian strikes daily - governor

Monitoring Desk
DONETSK REGION: Russia is firing between 1,500 and 2,500 shells and rockets at Ukraine's war-ravaged Donetsk region every day and is targeting critical infrastructure to make it harder for people to remain there in winter, its governor told Reuters.

The eastern province, 57% of which is occupied by Russia, has been at the forefront of war since 2014, when Russian-backed proxies seized the region's capital city, also called Donetsk, as well as many other large towns.

Since Russia launched a full-scale invasion in 2022, this has been where many of the war's most vicious and protracted battles have occurred.

"The enemy shells (the region) from 1,500 to 2,500 times a day," Governor Vadym Filashkin said in an interview on Friday, adding he believed Moscow was still aiming to capture the entire region.

"The enemy's shelling is this dense, this heavy, almost every day."

The governor said the Kurakhove power plant, one of the region's few remaining large-scale sources of electricity generation, had been forced to close a week ago due to Russian shelling. He said this was part of a wider campaign.

"The enemy is trying to destroy critical infrastructure objects so that people find it difficult to remain in the region in winter."

Filashkin said the town of Avdiivka, home to the largest coking plant in Europe and the target of a massive Russian assault since October last year, was "95-98% gone." "The enemy dropped about 200 guided aerial bombs on Avdiivka alone over the (last month). They are totally destroying it," he said.

Local authorities say the number of civilians in the town has dwindled to less than 1,000.

Police shoot dead two 'terrorists' outside Istanbul court: minister

Monitoring Desk
ISTANBUL: Turkish police on Tuesday shot dead a man and a woman belonging to a leftist "terrorist" organisation who attacked a security checkpoint outside Istanbul's main courthouse, injuring six people, officials said.

Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya said the assailants were members of the Revolutionary People's Liberation Party-Front (DHKP-C) — a fringe leftist group that has staged periodic attacks in Turkey since the 1980s. The group issued no initial claim of responsibility. "While the terrorists who attempted to attack were neutralised, six people, including three police officers and three citizens, were injured," Yerlikaya said in a social media statement.

Justice Minister Yilmaz Tunc said "heroic police officers prevented a treacherous attack", adding that prosecutors had launched a "multi-faceted investigation". Images from the scene showed two bodies lying on the ground outside the main entrance of the Caglayan courthouse.

Over 100 Palestinians martyred by Israeli forces in Gaza

Monitoring Desk
GAZA (Online): More than one hundred Palestinians have been martyred in unabated Israeli aggression in the Gaza Strip during the last twenty four hours. According to medical sources, thousands of civilians are buried under the rubble, but the Israeli forces are blocking access of ambulance crews and civil defense teams attempting to reach them. They said that the ongoing Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip had resulted in the deaths.

UK-owned cargo ship damaged in drone attack off Yemen

Monitoring Desk
DUBAI (INP): A British-owned cargo ship was damaged in a drone attack off rebel-held Yemen, a maritime security firm said on Tuesday, the latest in dozens of incidents in the Red Sea.

The Barbados-flagged ship "reportedly incurred minor damage on the port side" in an attack west of Hodeida, British firm Ambrey said, adding that there were no injuries.

Britain's King Charles diagnosed with cancer: Buckingham Palace

Monitoring Desk
LONDON: Britain's King Charles has been diagnosed with a form of cancer and the 75-year-old will postpone public-facing duties while he undergoes treatment, Buckingham Palace said on Monday.

Charles, who became king in September 2022 following the death of his mother Queen Elizabeth, is "wholly positive" about his treatment and looks forward to returning to full public duty as soon as possible, the palace said.

Charles spent three nights in the hospital last month where he underwent a corrective procedure for an enlarged prostate.

The palace said a separate issue of concern was spotted during the hospital visit but did not give any further details beyond saying the king had a "form of cancer". A royal source said that it was not prostate cancer. "His majesty has today commenced a schedule of regular treatments, during which time he has been advised by doctors to postpone public-facing duties."

