

# Independent

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## Terrorist among three killed in Karachi grenade explosion 28 dead, 50 others injured in two separate explosions in Pishin and Killa Saifullah districts

### Independent Report

QUETTA: At least 28 people were killed and 50 others injured in two separate explosions targeting election candidates' offices in Pishin and Killa Saifullah districts on Wednesday.

The caretaker Chief Minister Mir Ali Mardan Domki announced three-day mourning to mourn the loss of lives in both attacks. Caretaker Information Minister Jan Achakzai said in a presser.

The first attack claimed at least 16 people's lives while 25 were injured after an explosion took place outside an independent candidate's office in Khanozai area of Pishin while the second blast took place outside the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazl (JUI-F) election office in Killa Saifullah.

The Pishin blast took place outside the political office of independent can-

didate Asfand Yar Khan Kakar in Khanozai area.

The injured people have been shifted to the Tehsil Hospital Khanozai, while the bodies have also been transferred, the hospital's MS Dr Habib told the media.

According to MS Dr Habib, most of the injured are in critical condition.

Following the blast, an emergency has been imposed across hospitals in Quetta for which additional staff has also been called, the provincial health secretary told Geo News.

He added that operation theatres with the staff are ready to treat injured at the Trauma Centre, Civil Hospital, BMC, Benazir and Sheikh Zayed Hospital.

The independent candidate was not present inside his office when the explosion took place in PP-47 in Pishin.

Meanwhile, speaking to the media, Asfand Yar Kakar said that the blast happened in a motorcycle outside his election office.

"Eight of our workers were martyred and more than 18 were injured in the explosion when the names of the polling agents were being finalised in the election office," he said.

Kakar himself was in Barshore when the blast happened and is currently reaching Khanozai.

Meanwhile, the second blast targeted the JUI-F office in the Killa Saifullah district couple of hours after Khanozai blast.

At least 12 people were killed and 25 others injured in the second explosion, Information Minister Achakzai confirmed.

He said JUI-F leader Maulana Abdul Wassay, who is contesting elections from PP-3, remained unhurt in the attack.



KARACHI: Security officials examine the site of bomb blast in Provincial Capital.

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

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

ISLAMABAD (INP): The nation is all set to elect its representatives on Thursday for a democratic term of five years, with extensive arrangements put in place by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) in coordination with various supporting departments, including law enforcement agencies.

Approximately 18,000 candidates across the country are in the electoral arena to woo the registered voters (128,587,760) for about 855 general seats of National and Provincial Assemblies.

The ECP has announced a public holiday on February 8, in order to provide the voters an opportunity to exercise of right of franchise in a

smooth and convenient manner. The Commission has already issued a Code of Conduct for the voters as well for media-persons for the election day. The polling agents have been advised to display authorization cards.

The ECP said that there would be a complete ban on any campaign within the radius of 400 meters of a polling station and added that no candidate, polling agent or their supporters would interfere or hinder the official functioning.

The ECP has categorized over 17,500 as highly sensitive, 32,508 as sensitive and 42,500 as normal, out of a total of 92,500 polling stations nationwide.

About 2,038 polling stations in Balochistan and 4,344 in Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa have been categorized as highly sensitive. Likewise, 15,829 polling stations in Punjab, 8,030 in Sindh, 2,068 in Balochistan, and over 6,000 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are classified as sensitive.

The ECP has completed the training of approximately 1.49 million election staff to ensure the smooth execution of the electoral process.

The Commission has established an Election City in its premises, equipped with the latest technology to swiftly disseminate election results of 855 constituencies to the media.

A comprehensive strategy has been worked out to receive election results via WhatsApp, email, and fax.

## Bilawal says PPP free of any bias, represents centre

Asks PTI workers to vote for "Arrow"

KARACHI (INP): Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that only his party held public gatherings across Pakistan in connection with the General Elections 2024 which he said showed PPP's support in all parts of the country.

While talking to a private news channel, the PPP Chairman said that he went to every part of the country for the election canvassing and received a 'great response' from the people. He said that his election campaign across the country is tantamount to the 'fact' that only the PPP represents the centre.

Bilawal also took a jibe at the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) for "restricting" its election campaign to 'few' parts of

the country. "The PML-N held electioneering in only a few constituencies and once again proved itself to be a party of Punjab," he added.

The PPP Chairman said that the PML-N's leadership could not spare even half an hour to come to Karachi and run the election campaign in the port city. "The PML-N has also failed to turn to South Punjab and Balochistan. "Those who raised 'Vote Ko Izzat Do' (Respect the vote) slogans did not go to three provinces," Bilawal added.

Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari asked the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) workers and supporters to vote for the PPP instead of the independent candidates backed by the latter.



NAWABSHAH: Peoples Party (PPP) President, Asif Ali Zardari showering rose petals and offers Fatcha on the graves of his parents during his visit, at Baloo Ja Quba Graveyard in Nawabshah.

## Ahmed Shah visits Sindh Information Dept Election Cell

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Caretaker Minister for Information, Minority Affairs and Social Security Muhammad Ahmad Shah, Wednesday, visited the Election Cell established in the Sindh Information Department.

The information minister inspected arrangements made at the election cell and issued various instructions for ensuring the timely dissemination of authentic information regarding the electoral process to media per-

sons. The minister, speaking on the occasion said that the Sindh Information Department's election cell will work round the clock from February 7 to 9, so that the election results can be conveyed to the people authentically and timely through the media.

Director General Public Relations Muhammad Salim Khan, Director Press Information Akhtar Hussain Surhio, Director Admin and Accounts Muhammad Yusuf Kaburo.

## Interior Sindh Minister visits polling stations

KARACHI (APP): Caretaker Home Minister of Sindh Brigadier (Rtd) Hariz Nawaz on Wednesday visited various highly sensitive polling stations of the metropolis and reviewed the security arrangements.

He visited the polling stations set up at DJ Science College (Burns Road) and Ghulam Abbas School (Maripur Road). The minister also visited the centre set up for distribution of election materials at CMS Boys School, Napier Road.

He said that ensuring the implementation of the

code of conduct and SOPs issued by the Election Commission of Pakistan and conducting peaceful elections is the first priority of the caretaker government.

He appealed to the public to cooperate with the police and other law enforcement agencies to maintain peace and report any suspicious activity immediately.

He further said that aerial firing and display of weapons will not be tolerated and immediate action will be taken against those who take the law into their hands.



KARACHI: Provincial Election Commissioner Sindh Shareefullah being briefed during his visit to display center at Karachi South.

## PEC review distribution of polling material at display centres

KARACHI (INP): Provincial Election Commissioner (PEC) Sindh, Sharifullah visited display centres set up in different districts of Karachi division on Wednesday and reviewed the arrangements for distribution of election material to polling staff.

PEC along with Joint Election Commissioner Nazir Abbas and Commissioner Karachi Muhammad Saleem Rajput visited display centre set up in dis-

trict South and asked questions from staff deputed in the centre.

The provincial Election Commissioner also visited the display centres set up in district Keamari, Central and the East districts and reviewed disbursement of polling material to the concerned staff. Speaking on the occasion, Sharifullah said polling material is being distributed among election staff on fixed time and in peaceful manner.



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

## Election campaign ends as polling process to begin at 8 am today

KARACHI (APP): The election campaign for general polls scheduled on February 08 (Thursday) has ended at the mid night of Tuesday as mainstream political, religious parties and independent candidates tried their best to convince their voters in city of nearly 20 million population.

The Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan, Jamaat-e-Islami, Pakistan People's Party, PML (N), Tahtek e Labaik Pakistan and the independent candidates organized the rallies, public and corner meetings of their workers and made them aware about their manifestos.

PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari,

Jamaat-e-Islami Emir Sirajul Haq, Hafiz Naem ur Rehman, MQM Pakistan's Convenor Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, Dr Farooq Sattar, Mustafa Kamal, PML N's Nehal Hashmi, Zubair Ahmed, Saleem Zia, TLP's leadership addressed public meetings in different areas of the mega city to convince their electorates and vote for their parties in February 8 election.

According to Provincial Election Commissioner Sharifullah, "All arrangements have been completed and polling material including ballot papers have been handed over to the concerned polling official while transport facilities were also provided to them to

take them towards the designated polling stations."

The security arrangements were also adopted with thousands of Police, Rangers and Pakistan Army personnel have been deployed at designated places to maintain peace and order.

The CCTV cameras were also installed at highly sensitive polling stations in the city where 22 National Assembly (NA) and 47 Sindh Assembly members would be elected by more than 8.2 million registered voters.

The security forces held flag marches to enforce strict security measures during general elections. The control rooms had been set up at centre.

## Bannu police repulse terrorists' attack on Miryan police station

PESHAWAR (APP): An attack by the terrorists on Miryan police station was repulsed by the police, making the terrorists run for their lives and flee the area, police said on Wednesday.

According to police, the terrorists attacked Miryan police station from two sides resulting only in damage to the thermal cameras installed on the walls of the police station. In retaliation for an effective police response, the terrorists escaped from the area.

## Original CNIC mandatory for casting vote: ECP

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has advised people to bring their Computerized National Identity Card (CNIC) to cast vote on the election day.

The ECP, in a message, said no person would be allowed to cast his vote at the polling station without having original CNIC.

No other document including a copy of CNIC, passport and driving license would be acceptable for casting a vote.



KARACHI: Caretaker Provincial Minister for Information Muhammad Ahmed Shah giving directions to Staff during his visit to Election Cell establish at Information Department.

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

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi said on Wednesday that the caretaker government had stood by its commitment of holding general elections on the schedule given by Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).

Addressing the inaugural ceremony of Media Coordination and Facilitation Center established by Press Information Department here, he said tomorrow morning the voting would start and by midday half of the polling would have been done.

Referring to speculations, he said there were doubts and concerns in people's minds regarding the elections.

"We stood by the promise of holding polls and

elections are being held (tomorrow), putting aside all fears and rumours," Murtaza Solangi maintained.

The minister said that the caretaker government had taken all possible steps for ensuring the conduct of free and transparent elections.

He said after oath-taking of caretaker government on August 17 last year, in his first press briefing here the very next day, the first question he was asked about the elections and his answer was that elections would be held on the timeframe given by the ECP.

Murtaza Solangi said that this country was established under constitutional democracy and constitutional federal parliamentary system was the foundation of its political system.



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

## Bilawal, Asif Zardari condemn terrorist incidents in Qila Saifullah, Pishin

KARACHI (APP): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari on Wednesday strongly condemned terrorist incidents in Qila Saifullah and Pishin areas of Balochistan.

The two leaders sympathized with the families of those who lost their lives in the bomb blasts and prayed for the speedy recovery of the injured.

Bilawal said the criminals involved in cowardly acts of terrorism should not be spared and urged federal and Balochistan governments to arrest them at the earliest.

## ECP sets up complaint desk for women, minorities, physically challenged voters

KARACHI (INP): The Election Commission of Pakistan has established a complaint desk for the convenience of women, physically challenged voters and voters belonging to minority communities.

The voters including women, physically challenged persons and those belonging to minority communities can register their complaint on 99205338021 or 99202624021 while on WhatsApp 0327-5056610.



KARACHI: Army personnel standing alert on the eve of General Elections 2024 at Korangi Girls College.

## Rangers conduct extensive flag march across Karachi ahead of election

KARACHI (APP): Pakistan Rangers Sindh has implemented stringent security protocols across Karachi in anticipation of the upcoming general election scheduled for February 8th.

As per a spokesperson for the Rangers, a coordinated flag march involving Pakistan Rangers Sindh, the Pakistan Army, and the local police was carried out on late Tuesday night across various neighborhoods of Karachi in preparation for the impending elections.

The extensive flag march covered key areas such

as New Karachi, Saba Cinema, Power House Chowrangli, Disco Mor, UP Mor, Liaquatabad, Golimar Chowrangli, Post Office, Sindh Hotel, Sharifabad, Nazimabad No. 4, Gol Market, Baldia Town, Ruby Mor, Furniture Market, Chandni Chowk, Tank Chowk, Bismillah Market, Gulshan Ghazi Mor, PTC Saeedabad, Musharraf Colony, Naval Colony, Hub River Road, Orangi Town, Habib Chowrangli, Ghani Chowrangli, Manghopr Road, Banaras Bridge, Kasbah Mor, Kasbah Colony, Katti Pahari, Jamshed Pump.

Daily Voice of Masses  
**Independent**

**The day before**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Election 2024: Reaffirmation democratic journey**

By Qamar Bashir

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



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

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

Recognizing the potential of women voters in the upcoming elec-

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

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

International media, including the Council on Foreign Relations, Al Jazeera, The Diplomat, and DW, along with the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan and the European Union, have raised concerns about the 2024 elections in Pakistan, highlighting issues such as "election engineering," disinformation, extensive media censorship, and state intervention in media coverage. These reports underscore the restrictive conditions facing political parties, particularly PTI, whose leadership is significantly constrained, impacting their ability to campaign freely. Allegations of an uneven playing field, exacerbated by the military's significant political influence and the barring of key political figures like former Prime Minister Imran Khan, suggest a contentious electoral environment that may not be free or fair, disadvantageous to certain parties and undermining the democratic process.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Commerce News**

**Germany provides Eur45m support to Pak on Technical Development Cooperation**

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

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

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

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

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

together'.

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

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



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

**PM AJK chaired meeting about agriculture, livestock**

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

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

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

**China's vehicle sales, output soar in January**

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

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

Specifically, passenger car output and sales stood at 2.08 million units and 2.12 million units, up 49.1 percent and 44 percent year on year, respectively, according to data released by the association.

Commercial vehicle output rose by 66.2 percent year on year to 327,000 units, while commercial vehicle sales soared 79.6 percent year on year to 324,000 units.

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

**Kyrgyzstan interested in boosting business ties with Pakistan: Kyrgyz Envoy**

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

He stressed that both countries should develop sustainable business relations as they have good potential to cooperate in many sectors of the economy. He said that a business delegation from Pakistan should visit Kyrgyzstan to explore joint ventures and business partnerships, said a press release issued here.

The ambassador said that Kyrgyzstan was importing pharmaceuticals, sports goods, and other products from Pakistan while it was exporting dry fruits, and agricultural products to Pakistan and added both countries should do business in more products as they have good potential for it.

He assured that his

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

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

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

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

**Naqvi chairs 3rd Chambers of Commerce Coordination Committee meeting**

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Gold rates up by 400 per tola**

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

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

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

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

According to the latest PBS data, exports

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

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

## Governor urges masses to exercise right to vote

**Appeals people to maintain brotherhood in election**

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

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

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

KP Governor advised

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

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

administration, police, security agencies and polling staff.

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

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



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

## NA-43 Tank anticipates exciting electoral battle

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

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

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

diversity. The constituency boasts 353 polling stations.

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

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

## KP CS reviews arrangements for general elections

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

## 2.6 mln people to cast votes in Sargodha

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

## Rasool Bangash says: ECNEC approved two projects for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The counsel of the

petitioners told the court Punjab Journalist Housing Foundation (PJHF) is an institution.

This institution works under Information department. The mandate of PJHF is working for the welfare of journalists. The forum mandate is to provide plots to journalists free of cost and without profit.

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

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

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

## PEC KP says: All arrangements for election completed

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

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

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

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

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

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

## PO among three accused held

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

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

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

## Five injured in IED blast on former MPA's car

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

According to police all the injured were shifted to hospital.

## Minister Information says: Arrangements finalized for general elections

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

He said that Quick

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

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

## International News

## US lawmakers reject \$17.6 billion Israel aid bill

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

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

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

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

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

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

ter months of negotiations with a bipartisan group of senators.

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

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

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

## Miss Japan gives up crown after affair

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

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

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

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



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

## Houthi claim fresh Red Sea ship attacks

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Nikki Haley campaign requests Secret Service after security incidents

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

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

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

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

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

## UN calls Rafah invasion war crime; Hamas responds to truce offer

**Monitoring Desk**

UNITED NATIONS: The UN aid coordination office (OCHA) warned on Tuesday that Israel's invasion of the densely populated southern city of Rafah would constitute a war crime.

"We, as the UN and member states, can bear witness," OCHA spokesperson Jens Laerke told journalists. "We can make it clear that under international humanitarian law, indiscriminate bombing of densely populated areas may amount to war crimes."

The concerns arose as OCHA reported an "increase in strikes" in Rafah governorate, with thousands of Gazans seeking refuge in the city, including those fleeing intense fighting in Khan Yunis.

"To be clear, intensi-

fied hostilities in Rafah in this situation could lead to a large-scale loss of civilian lives, and we must do everything possible within our power to avoid that," Laerke said. He urged the international community to make every possible effort to avoid such a scenario as continued heavy fighting in Khan Yunis forced many more to seek refuge in Rafah.

Della Longa from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) reported that 8,000 Gazans had left Al Amal hospital after Israeli authorities guaranteed safe passage. The IFRC spokesperson described the situation in Gaza as "beyond catastrophic," mourning the death of aid worker Hedaya Hamad from the Palestine Red Crescent Society.

## Hamas proposes 135-day Gaza truce with complete Israeli withdrawal

**DOHA (Online):** Hamas

proposed a ceasefire to quiet the guns in Gaza for four-and-a-half months, during which all hostages would go free, Israel would withdraw its troops from the Gaza Strip and an agreement would be reached on an end to the war.

Israel's government spokesman said Israel was studying the offer intently, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu due to hold a news conference later on Wednesday.

Israel's Channel 13 TV quoted an unidentified official as saying some aspects were not acceptable and officials were debating whether to reject the proposal or seek modifications.

The Hamas offer, the contents of which were first reported by Reuters, is a response to an earlier proposal drawn up by U.S. and Israeli spy chiefs and delivered to Hamas last week by Qatari and Egyptian

mediators. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken discussed the offer with Netanyahu after arriving in Israel following talks with the leaders of Qatar and Egypt, the countries that have acted as mediators in the conflict.

There remain major gaps between the two sides: Israel has previously said it will not pull its troops out of Gaza or end the war until Hamas is wiped out. But sources described Hamas as taking a new approach to its longstanding demand to end the war, now proposing this as an issue to be resolved in future talks rather than a pre-condition for the truce.

A source close to the negotiations said the Hamas counterproposal did not require a guarantee of a permanent ceasefire at the outset, but that an end to the war would have to be agreed before final hostages were freed.



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

## Russian missile strikes on Ukrainian cities kills three

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

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

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

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

## President Dr. Alvi briefed: Wafaqi Mohtasib resolves 193,028 complaints; provides relief worth Rs4.898 bn

ISLAMABAD (APP): Wafaqi Mohtasib has resolved a total of 193,028 complaints against the maladministration of government departments and provided relief worth Rs 4.898 billion to the citizens during 2023.

The Mohtasib processed a record 194,099 complaints during 2023, with processing witnessing a surge of 18 per cent, while the disposal of complaints increased by 22 per cent, as compared to 2022.

Wafaqi Mohtasib (Ombudsman) Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi briefed President Dr Arif Alvi who visited the office of Wafaqi Mohtasib on Wednesday.

The president had a briefing on the complaints received and resolved by the Ombudsman to ensure prompt relief to citizens during the year 2023, Presi-

dent Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release.

Briefing the president, the federal ombudsman highlighted the role and performance of the institution.

He informed that 193,028 complaints were addressed in 2023, with monetary relief of Rs 4.898 billion provided to the complainants.

Furthermore, on the recommendations of Wafaqi Mohtasib, as many as 18,000 street children were enrolled in government schools in Islamabad.

The meeting was informed that 85.4 per cent of Wafaqi Mohtasib's decisions were implemented last year, with efforts underway to further improve the rate of the implementation.

It was stated that the increased use of technology in Mohtasib had enhanced people's accessibility, with

48,190 complaints registered online in 2023, marking an increase of 47 per cent from 2022. Similarly, 22,321 complaints were received through Mohtasib's mobile App in 2023, representing a 21 per cent increase from 2022.

The meeting was also briefed on the Integrated Complaint Resolution System, processing 18,469 complaints in 2023, alongside Mohtasib's teams conducting Khuli Kutcheris and inspection visits to address people's grievances against government agencies. Additionally, 2,113 cases were disposed of through the Informal Resolution of Disputes.

During the meeting, the steps taken for the facilitation and resolution of complaints filed by Overseas Pakistanis were highlighted.



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

## Speakers uphold self-determination at Pak-sponsored event, stressing its integral to freedom

UNITED NATIONS (APP): Pakistan Tuesday held a gathering of diplomats and rights advocates at the U.N. that the right of self-determination will not be fulfilled until all peoples who are under foreign occupation or settler-colonialism, especially Palestine and Kashmir, are able to exercise that right.

"The right of self-determination is bedrock of the modern international system," Ambassador Munir Akram said, warning that historically a colonial power has never succeeded in suppressing the right of self-determination of a determined people.

Ambassador Akram was speaking at a largely-attended event, which was sponsored by Pakistan, in connection with Kashmir Solidarity Day.

The topic of discussion was "Challenges to the realization of the Right to

Self-Determination in the Contemporary Global Context", with speakers from all regions of the world upholding that inalienable right of peoples struggling for freedom.

"We are confident that the Palestinians, the Kashmiris and other oppressed people will ultimately secure their right to self-determination and freedom as most of us have done through the process of decolonization," the Pakistani envoy said.

Panelists at the Self-determination event were: Ms. Fionnuala NiAolain, a professor at the University of Minnesota and former UN rights expert; Ambassador Maged Abdelaziz, permanent observer of the Arab League at the UN; Dr. Ghulam Nabi Fai, Chairman of the World Forum for Peace and Justice; and Hameed Ajibaiye, permanent observer for OIC at the UN.

After the presentations from the panelists, ambassadors and representatives of Algeria, Turkey, Morocco, Syria, Iran, Venezuela, Eritrea and India participated in the general discussion in which they also raised issues of concern to them.

Ambassador Akram, who opened the debate, highlighted the decades-old Kashmir and Palestine conflicts, warning that these unresolved issues posed a threat to international peace and security.

Noting that the right of self-determination was the fundamental principle of the UN Charter, he said, there were still examples of where peoples continue to be denied the right of self-determination.

"I will focus on the fact that we face two situations at least, where the right of self-determination

## Pakistan fully committed to promote an inclusive democratic process: FO

ISLAMABAD (Online): Foreign Office (FO) has said Pakistan is fully committed to promote an inclusive democratic process.

This was said by FO spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch while reacting to remarks made by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights regarding the upcoming general elections in Pakistan. She held Pakistan is fully resolved to uphold rule of law and protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Guarantees in this regard are enshrined in our law and constitution Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights had said in a statement that organization condemns all acts of violence against political parties and candidates

and stresses authorities to maintain necessary fundamental freedom for the sake of meaningful democratic process.

At least 24 incidents of violence against political parties workers have been reported before election.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights had appealed to the authorities to ensure fully fair and free election and reiterate their resolve for democratic process.

FO spokesperson said security plans have been given final shape hold the elections on Thursday as per the electoral laws of Pakistan. She said our judicial system provides for fair trial and due process. Domestic legal remedies are available in case of any complaints in the electoral process.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training Madad Ali Sindhi calls on Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

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

ISLAMABAD (APP): Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) IT Director, Khizar Aziz, dispelled the fears of 'hacking Election Management System' (EMS) in upcoming general elections 2024, saying that no public networks are being utilized for transmitting election results.

"Private networks will be employed for the purpose which eliminates concerns about the hacking of the EMS," Aziz told a private news channel.

He highlighted that the EMS was equipped with special software, securely housed in the offices of 859 Returning Officers (RO), with the provision of four data entry operators, four laptops, and IT equipment.

Simultaneously, Aziz stated the EMS was also installed in the mobile phones of Presiding Officers (PO) who will capture an image of Form 45 and send it to the Returning Officer. In case of network issue, Form 45 will automatically deliver to the RO once a signal is restored.

He explained the process of Section 95, where the Presiding Officer is required to visit the RO's office and display Form 45 on their mobile device. The form will self-lock on the Presiding Officer's mobile, ensuring data integrity.

Elucidating the working of EMS, Khizar Aziz stated that during the creation of Form 47 the RO will verify that Form 45 is locked on the Presiding Officer's mobile.

## Elections 2024: Polling stuff being dispatched in Karachi

KARACHI (INP): The delivery of polling stuff to various parts of Karachi is underway on Wednesday ahead of general elections, scheduled to take place tomorrow, across the country.

As per details, the polling stuff is being dispatched from nine different parts of the metropolis.

In District East, the polling stuff is being dispatched from the Expo Centre, in Kemari from the JCT Site, and in Malir, Presiding Officers (ROs) receiving stuff from the DC Office.

Furthermore, in the West, the polling stuff is being dispatched from the DC office, in district Central from Government Comprehensive School North Nazimabad, in

Korangi from Superior College and Government Girls College Korangi.

Meanwhile, the polling stuff in District South is being dispatched from Government Commerce College.

It is to be noted that the General Elections of the National Assembly and four provincial assemblies will be held tomorrow.

The election campaign by political parties and independent candidates concluded across the country last night.

The Election Commission has completed all arrangements for the polling. Ninety-thousand six hundred and seventy-five polling stations have been established in all four provinces.



SUKKUR: Polling staff gather for collecting ballot boxes and election materials for their polling station from Election Commission Office, a day before General Elections 2024, in Sukkur.

## 1.2 million voters to elect 3 MNAs, 6 MPAs in Hyderabad

HYDERABAD (APP): Some 1,225,147 voters, including 662,713 male and 562,434 female voters, are registered to cast their votes to elect 3 Members of the National Assembly (MNAs) and 6 Members of the Provincial Assembly (MPAs) from Hyderabad on February 8.

According to the statistics shared by an official of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) here on Saturday, as many as 883 polling stations consisting of 3,219 booths, among

which 1,700 would be for male and 1,519 for female voters, are being established.

In Hyderabad and Qasimabad talukas based constituency NA-218, some 339,667 people are registered to exercise their right of adult franchise.

The ECP is setting up 240 polling stations with 861 polling booths for 178,678 male and 160,989 female voters. Likewise, 424,448 people would elect their MNA from Latifabad taluka-based NA-219.



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

## IGP visits polling station, reviews security arrangements

KARACHI (APP): Inspector General of Police (IGP), Sindh Rifhat Mukhtar Raja Wednesday paid a visit to the Commerce College polling station located near PIDC.

During his visit, the IGP interacted with the police personnel who were on duty at the polling station. He instructed the officers to enhance the security measures to ensure the safety of voters, candidates, polling staff, and materials by maintaining a strong police presence in and around the polling stations.

Rifhat Mukhtar Raja emphasized the importance of vigilance and readiness among the police stationed at the polling stations.

He stressed the need for extraordinary security measures based on past and anticipated election scenarios, with no room for any shortcomings.

Rifhat informed that the deployment of police personnel had been completed, and all necessary polling materials had been

delivered. Ensuring safety at all levels remains a top priority, with concerted efforts aimed at conducting peaceful elections, he reiterated. Addressing the media, the IGP highlighted the shared responsibility for ensuring peaceful elections, underscoring the pivotal role of the police in maintaining security.

He assured that the police force was utilizing all available resources, including Quick Response Force (QRF), which was on standby.

Additionally, district Senior Superintendents of Police (SSPs) have identified sensitive and highly sensitive polling locations, along with Designated Returning Officers (DROs), to ensure a swift response to any untoward incidents.

Subsequently, the IGP visited the election control room situated in the office of DIGP South, where he received a briefing on monitoring activities from DIGP South.

## EC not using any internet or public net: EC DG IT

ISLAMABAD (Online): Election Commission (EC) is not using any internet or public net and private net work is being used for results.

This was said by EC DG IT Khizar Aziz while talking to private TV channel here Wednesday.

He said RTS is not being used this time. We hold out assurance to nation Election Management System (EMS) is a special software. EMS has been provided to office of 859 Returning Officers (ROs) 4 data entry operators, 4 laptops and IT Equipment have been provided in RO office.

## Man killed, two injured in firing incidents

KARACHI (INP): One person was killed and two others critically injured in separate firing incidents in different localities of the metropolis on Wednesday, police said.

According to details, unidentified armed men gunned down one person in Old Golimar and fled the scene of crime.

A man was critically injured in firing incident near Awami Markaz at Shahrahe-Faisal.

Another person was shot injured by unidentified gunmen near Shireen Jinnah Colony of Clifton.

The body and injured were shifted to different hospitals and police after registering separate cases at respective police stations started search for the culprits.

## Sindh High Court directs to use modern tech in hunt for missing persons

KARACHI (INP): The Sindh High Court has issued a strong directive to law enforcement agencies, demanding they utilize modern technology and devices in their efforts to recover missing individuals. This order came during a hearing on petitions filed by families seeking the return of their loved ones who have vanished.

Justice Naimatullah Phalpot presided over the hearing, questioning the investigating officer about the measures taken to locate missing citizens. While the officer reported conducting 14 Joint Investigation Teams (JITs) and reaching out to various agencies, the court deemed these efforts insufficient.

Specifically, the families of Hasan Dilawar, missing from Landhi, and

Habib Khan, missing from Shah Latif, presented their cases before the court, pleading for their loved ones' safe return. In response, the court not only ordered the reconvening of JITs and the Provincial Task Force but also emphasized the crucial role of modern technology in expediting the search.

This emphasis marks a significant development, highlighting the potential of technological advancements in tackling the critical issue of missing persons.

The court expects law enforcement to leverage tools like advanced tracking systems, facial recognition software, and data analysis to enhance their investigations and bring missing individuals home.



LARKANA: Polling officials on the way after receiving polling related materials for General Election -2024 at DRO office.

## Commissioner visits election material dispatch centers

HYDERABAD (APP): Commissioner SBA Syed Muhammad Sajjad Haider visited election material dispatch centers established at Govt Boys Degree College Nawabshah and Govt Boys Higher Secondary School Qazi Ahmed and inspected the distribution of election material among polling staff for the general election. Regional Election Commissioner Muhammad Yousuf Siddiqui, SE Education Works Shafique Ahmed Channar and, Deputy Director Information Ghulam Abbas Goraho accompanied the Commissioner. At the Govt Degree College

Nawabshah Dispatch Center the Returning Officer NA-207 Subhash Chandar and other officials briefed the Commissioner regarding the distribution of election material and attendance of polling staff along with security and transportation facilities. RO also informed that all presiding Officers were provided complete polling material under the security of police and the Pak Army. The commissioner expressed his satisfaction with the dispatch work.

Later Commissioner visited Govt Higher Secondary School Qazi Ahmed where election material was being distributed for NA-208.



KARACHI: A member of the polling staff places information posters for voters outside a polling station in a school building for general election, in the Provincial Capital.

## Political instability, weak economy root cause of all problems: Mian Zahid

KARACHI (INP): Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain has said that political instability and weak economy was the root of all problems.

In a statement issued here on Wednesday, he said that an unstable government would never be able to stabilize autonomy, and the masses would continue to reel under multiple problems; therefore, voters must use their votes for a party that can form a stable government.

The business leader said a coalition government after the elections would be unfortunate as they can never resolve the issues confronting the masses and the economy.

He said that a stable government could stabilize the economy and ensure the country's development, so voters should prioritize a stable government above all other factors.

There have been dozens of experiences with unstable governments that have bankrupted a prosperous country like Pakistan, where hunger, poverty, ignorance, diseases and inflation were on the rise, he added. Mian Zahid Hussain said that Pakistan was not essentially a poor country, but the endless series of political engineering has made it a beggar who cannot take a step without the consent of the IMF.

Currently, over two and a half million children were out of the school; 40 per cent were malnourished, and seven per cent die before reaching the age of five, while other health indicators were also very depressing.