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After many twists and turns PTI decides to play opposition's role in Centre, Punjab

Barrister Saif says PTI took this decision as it wants "harmony and environment of reconciliation" in country

PESHAWAR (INP): The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) decided to sit on opposition benches in the centre and Punjab on directives of the party founder, said Barrister Saif.

Speaking to media persons after meeting Quami Watan Party (QWP) Chief Aftab Ahmad Sherpao, Barrister Saif reiterated that the PTI's mandate was stolen in the General Elections. "As per Forms 45, the

PTI has the majority to form the governments in the centre as well as Punjab. Our protest will continue till our constitutional demands are met," he added.

Barrister Saif said that in the meeting with QWP leadership, the PTI delegation conveyed party founder Imran Khan's message. He said that Aftab Ahmad Sherpao was requested to join hands with the PTI to devise a joint strategy

against rigging in the elections. Speaking on the occasion, QWP leader Sikandar Sherpao said that the political situation is getting complicated day by day. "It is a good sign that political parties are engaging with each other," he added.

Uncertainty looms over Pakistan's political future as none of the major political parties – PML-N, PPP or the PTI-backed independent candidates – secured a simple

majority in the National Assembly in the February 8 general elections.

Political stakeholders were making efforts to forge alliances and secure 169 seats in the 336-member lower house of parliament. PTI-backed Independent candidates consolidated their lead in the general elections 2024 over mainstream political parties, especially in the National and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assemblies.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar chairs a review meeting regarding Karachi Electric.



HYDERABAD: Hundreds of thousands supporters of Grand Democratic Alliance and Hur Jamat participate in a sit-in protest against rigging in general election 2024, at M-9 Motorway near Jamshoro. (Inset) GDA Leader and spiritual leader of Hur Jamat Pir Sahib Pagara addressing to sit-in protest.

US Dy Chief of Mission Andrew Schofer bolsters US-Pakistan ties

KARACHI (Online): The Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) of the United States Mission in Pakistan Andrew Schofer reinforced U.S. efforts to promote democracy, economic growth, and women's economic empowerment, and to further strengthen ties with the people of Pakistan during his visit to Karachi February 13-16.

"We are committed to deepening our partnership with Pakistan and working together on our shared priorities that promote democracy, inclusive economic growth, and stability in the region. This visit to Karachi is the reflection of our commitment to our continued engagement with diverse stakeholders and reinforcing our bilateral ties," said DCM Schofer.

DCM Schofer stated the United States demonstrated its support for the people of Sindh during the

time of climate disaster and post floods recovery efforts by extending over \$215 million in support for Sindh since 2022. With a focus on education, clean water, malnutrition, and healthcare, the United States has been actively engaged in supporting the people of Sindh in their efforts to recover from the floods and build disaster resilience.

Underscoring the U.S. commitment to promote women's entrepreneurship, DCM Schofer visited the USAID-supported Terry Tex International company in Karachi, an example of how USAID's support can empower local businesses to expand their horizons.

Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) Schofer's visit to the Lincoln Corner at the Pakistan American Cultural Center brought together dynamic youth leaders, providing them with a unique platform for discussion.



KARACHI: US consul general Conrad Tribble addressing during 15th Karachi Literature Festival inauguration ceremony at a local hotel in the Provincial Capital.

PTI says 85 seats taken away from party 'fraudulently'

ISLAMABAD (INP): PTI Central Information Secretary Raouf Hasan said that 2024 would be remembered due to the "biggest voter fraud" in Pakistan's history against the party and its candidates.

"According to our estimates, out of 177 seats which were supposed to be ours, only 92 have been given to us. And 85 seats have been taken away from us fraudulently," he said at a press conference in Islamabad, adding that the party was taking constitutional and legal steps in this regard.

"We have verified data about 46 seats and it is be-

ing compiled for 39 seats," he said. He said that the party had three ways to ascertain alleged rigging in the polls, saying that there were discrepancies between the Form 45 and the Form 47.

He further said that there was also a huge difference in the numbers of votes polled for National Assembly and provincial assembly seats.

He said that the number of rejected votes, in certain cases, exceeded the number of victory. PTI's Seemabia Tahir then took the stage and played a video of alleged rigging in the Feb 8 polls.

Pakistan Railways hikes fares by 2pc

ISLAMABAD (INP): Following the increase in petroleum products prices, Pakistan Railways also jacked up fares of passenger and freight trains by two percent.

According to a notification, the increase in the fares would be in effect from February 17. "The new fares would apply on all classes of passenger and freight trains," the notification read.

Meanwhile, the Punjab Transport and Mass Transit Department notified Rs5 increase in Orange Line fares with immediate effect. The fares are increased after the hike in petroleum products prices on February 15.

PPP terms GDA protest as congregation of devotees, not political party

KARACHI (INP): The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) has termed the GDA protest as a congregation of devotees, not a political party.

Reacting to the GDA protest, PPP leader Sharjeel Memon challenged to resign from his seat and conduct re-election in the constituency. He said that losers always have the rigging narrative.

"The GDA has faced a historic defeat everywhere. It did not get a single seat in the local bodies elections across Sindh. The people did not see the GDA, the PML-N and the PTI during the floods in Pakistan," he added.

PML-Q eyes top post in PA

LAHORE (INP): Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) under the leadership of Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain was considering to seek the post of speaker in Punjab Assembly.

In the formation of Punjab government, PML-Q is supporting PML-N's proposed candidate Maryam Nawaz Sharif for the slot of Punjab Chief Minister. In case PML-N refused the post of speaker, PML-Q will demand deputy speaker's slot for MPA Ch Shafaay Hussain. It is pertinent to mention here that PML-Q bagged eight seats in Punjab Assembly in the recently-held general elections.

If PTI founder is thief, we all are thieves: Pir Pagara

HYDERABAD (INP): Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA) Chief Pir Sibghatullah Shah Rashdi, popularly known as Pir Pagara, said that the General Elections 2024 were 'sold' three months back.

Addressing GDA's protest demonstration against 'rigging' in the elections at Hyderabad Bypass, Pir Pagara said that he did not hold election campaign as the elections were already 'sold'.

"This elections showed that no party represents the centre as no one emerged as a leader at the national level," he added.

Pir Pagara said that the GDA's protest is not against any party or institution but against 'rigging' in the elections. The GDA chief said that in the current

circumstances, the coalition government would not last for more than 10 months. Pir Pagara said that a large number of youth came out on February 8 and voted for Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) backed independent candidates across the country.

"No one was expecting the independent candidates to secure votes in massive numbers but for the first time in Pakistan's history independent aspirants got the majority," the GDA chief said.

Pir Pagara said that the PTI was 'expelled' from the electoral process on the basis of Intra-party elections. "I don't consider Imran Khan a thief. If he is a thief, we all are thieves too," the GDA chief said.



KARACHI: PPPP President Asif Ali Zardari and Faryal Talpur in a group photo with President PPP Balochistan Meer Changaiz Khan Jamali and General Secretary Rozi Khan Kakar after meeting.

PML-N seeks power sharing formula with PPP

LAHORE (INP): The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) is actively pursuing a viable formula for government formation in the capital.

In a significant move towards this goal, a high-profile consultation meeting convened in Lahore on Friday, under the leadership of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, attended by key figures including Shahbaz Sharif and Maryam Nawaz.

The crux of the gathering centered on delineating a power-sharing arrangement between the PML-N and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), the two prominent entities within the current hung parliament.

Despite multiple deliberations, the negotiation

committees representing both parties have yet to solidify any conclusive terms.

The negotiation committees constituted by both parties have not reached any conclusion yet, and the PML-N committee briefed the party heads about the meetings held with the PPP committee so far.

The meeting also discussed the demands of the PPP from the expected federal government and Punjab, where the PML-N has a majority.

Among the attendees were key figures such as former federal ministers Rana Sanaulah, Khawaja Saad Rafiq, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, Rana Tanveer Hussain, and Ahsan Iqbal.



KARACHI: Former Provincial Minister and Peoples Party (PPP) Leader, Sharjeel Inam Memon addresses to media persons during press conference, at Bilawal House in Karachi.

Caretaker setup resolves major long-standing issues to ensure economic stability: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Friday said that the caretaker government had resolved major long-standing problems in a short span of time to move the country towards economic stability.

He said the caretaker setup also provided all possible facilities on priority to the international investors and business community to attract maximum foreign direct investment in the country.

He emphasized that the caretaker government was committed to continue

its efforts to resolve the problems facing the country's economy till its last day of working. Chairing a meeting to review various issues of Karachi Electric (K.E), the prime minister said that the government was trying to solve all the remaining problems as soon as possible to remove all obstacles in the way of uninterrupted supply of electricity to the residents of Karachi.

The prime minister directed to find out solutions on priority basis to the issues faced by the Karachi Electric. The del-

egation of K.E thanked the prime minister and his team for resolving the long awaited issues of Karachi Electric.

The prime minister also hailed the signing of the interconnection agreement between National Transmission and Distribution Company (NTDC) and Karachi Electric (K.E) held the other day.

The CEO of Karachi Electric paid tribute to the caretaker PM and the government officials for solving the problems faced by the company on priority basis.

Election tribunals formed for Sindh and Balochistan

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) Friday announced the formation of election tribunals for Sindh and Balochistan provinces to address the complaints of election irregularities.

The tribunals will consist of judges from the high courts and will hear the pleas of the candidates and parties who have challenged the results of the general elections.

According to the notification, four tribunals have been set up for Sindh province, while three tribunals have been established for Balochistan province.

For the Karachi division, the tribunals comprising Justice Muhammad Karim Khan Agha and Justice Adnan Iqbal Chaudhry will conduct the hearings.

SC fixes for hearing petition seeking nullification of Feb 8 election

ISLAMABAD (Online): The petition seeking nullification of February 8 general election has been fixed for hearing in Supreme Court (SC).

A 3-member bench of SC presided over by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa will hear the case on Feb 19.

Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Musarrat Hilali are included in the bench.

Important legal and constitutional questions have been raised in the petition. Summon notices have been issued to the respondents.

It is pertinent to mention here a citizen Ali Khan had filed this petition in SC four days earlier. Federal government and Election Commission were made respondents in the petition.

The petitioner has requested the court to nullify the elections held on February 8 besides stopping the process of government making as result of this election.

It was further said in the petition order be issued for holding election afresh under the supervision of judiciary. Orders be issued to probe into election rigging besides initiation of action against those found responsible in election rigging and fraud.

Fazl makes new claims about no-confidence motion, 2018 elections

ISLAMABAD (INP): Jamaat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) head Maulana Fazlur Rehman Friday clarified that Lt Gen (ret) Faiz was not involved in no confidence move against PTI founder Imran Khan rather his successor and the current director-general of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) was behind the motion.

Fazlur Rehman, earlier in his interview to a private channel, held Lt Gen Faiz responsible for toppling Imran Khan's government. However, he clarified that Lt Gen Nadeem Anjum was the man who was present along with the former

Army Chief Gen (ret) Qamar Javed Bajwa at the time of motion.

He also alleged that the elections of 2018 were rigged and that the entire team of Gen (ret) Bajwa was responsible for it. He warned that when the army officers enter into politics whether serving or retired his party will also give them a befitting response.

Maulana Fazlur Rehman also advised former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to join hands with him in the opposition. "I would request Nawaz Sharif to form a joint opposition against the government, he added.



KARACHI: Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori talking to media person during his visit to Government Hospital Korangi.

JUI-F's Fazl benefited most from no-confidence move against Imran: Kundi

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) has strongly rejected the allegations levelled by Jamaat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman that former army chief General (ret) Qamar Javed Bajwa and then ISI DG general Faiz Hameed asked the PPP to initiate no-trust move against PTI founder chairman and then-prime minister Imran Khan.

Addressing a news conference in Islamabad on Friday, PPP leader Faisal Karim Kundi said that General Faiz Hameed had nothing to do with the no-confidence move against then PTI government. He said at the time of vote of no-confidence Faiz Hameed was not ISI director general, he was Corps Commander Peshawar.

He further said that Maulana Fazl was the head of the Pakistan Democratic Movement at the time and could have stopped the no-confidence move, adding the JUI-F chief benefited the most from the move.

Kundi claimed maximum benefits of the no-confidence move were cherished by the JUI-F chief but now the Maulana had realized that the PTI chief was punished wrongly. The PPP leader claimed that Maulana Fazl was a "spent cartridge" in the politics. He said public saw big change in PTI and JUI-F when both parties made compromises on their stances and joined hands to protest together against the alleged irregularities in general elections.

The PPP leader further said that the Maulana was raising hue and cry over the defeat of his son from Tank constituency.

Daily **Voice of Masses**
Independent

Hiking gas prices

By increasing gas prices by up to 45pc to recover an additional Rs242bn from all categories of consumers, the caretaker government has met another goal of the \$3bn IMF programme. The cabinet approved the price hike recommended by the ECC on Thursday — the deadline for the implementation of the IMF condition. The significant part of the decision is the approval of uniform gas rates for the cash-rich fertiliser companies, largely revoking massive subsidies being pocketed by them for decades. However, the powerful textile industry again got away with a much smaller raise than proposed by the energy minister for already hugely subsidised captive power — despite the condition to make gas supplies for inefficient captive power plants expensive in order to divert the resource to cheaper RLNG power plants for generation. Apparently, the industry minister, a former APTMA chairman, got his way on the pretext that higher captive power gas prices would affect textile exports.

While the increase in fuel prices has been made to ensure the timely release of the last tranche of \$1.2bn under the Stand-by Arrangement facility ending in April, it was also crucial for the gas sector's stability. The new government taking over soon will be constrained to negotiate another longer, bigger IMF bailout to prevent the nation's finances from collapsing and avert a potential sovereign default. It was also crucial to improve the cash flow of the two public gas firms and slow down the increase in the circular debt in the gas sector, as well as discourage the wasteful use of the fuel. Higher gas prices would not only put more burden on the common man reeling under the rising cost of living, it will also potentially raise food and other prices further, and might delay monetary easing. The State Bank, which has maintained its key policy rate at 22pc, last month revised up its inflation projections for the fiscal year to 23-25pc from earlier estimates of 20-22pc. In its last monetary policy statement, it said that the impact of the tight monetary stance to bring down inflation was "diluted by sizeable adjustments in administered energy prices ... The large adjustments have significantly impacted the inflation outlook and its near-term outlook". Unless the authorities undertake serious reforms to address the underlying structural issues in the energy sector to avoid such periodic shocks, price stability will remain elusive.

New realities

Faisal Bari

The state or powerful institutions or people within the state using the law to target individuals and social media to undermine, destabilise and delegitimise individuals, organisations and institutions they think are working against the interest of the state, the country or their own, and using brute power to suppress dissent or alternative points of view with impunity, has become much more common in recent decades and across a wide variety of settings. This is witnessed not just in countries where institutions of democracy and law are weaker; it has been happening in more advanced countries too. In particular, the US has thrown up plenty of examples over the last decade or so. It is true, though, that these instances are more frequent, blatant and egregious in countries with struggling democracies and justice systems. Of course, these activities undermine democracy and the rule of law and justice even more.

We have seen these activities recently, and carried out quite openly, in Pakistan. A journalist went 'missing' for three to four months. Everyone 'knew' he had been abducted but no one can name the agencies who took him away. The courts could not get him out, and police refused to 'find' him. When he got back, there was no inquiry about where he had been, who had taken him and what all they did to him. His physical condition clearly told us that he had not been kept in comfortable circumstances, yet, no law-enforcement or judicial institution tried to step into the space.

On the larger issue of 'missing persons', everyone knows they are not missing and state agencies have even acknowledged as much in the case of some. There has been a judicial commission on 'missing persons' for a long time, and cases have been in courts for years. The relatives of the 'missing' have been protesting on the streets and on social media for years. Yet, there has been no

progress.

Every now and then, a judge of a higher court makes a statement but nothing comes out of it. It is all a badly acted drama. Nobody believes that institutions have any intention or power to check the impunity of the state agencies, but the drama continues. Families continue to be devastated at the hands of the 'state'. Recently, we have also seen the more blatant use of legal instruments and the law to target individuals. People are arrested on the basis of trumped-up charges and FIRs so that they stay in police custody or judicial remand for weeks while they try to get bail or the fake cases quashed. But even if they succeed in getting bail in one case or if the case is thrown out by the courts, the law enforcers have them arrested under a different FIR. Sometimes, there are multiple FIRs of the same incident in different jurisdictions, allowing the police custody of the person and the ability to move them around. If the state does not want you to be free and to move about freely or express your mind, it has plenty of ways even within the law (though not in accordance with its spirit) to ensure you no longer have the freedom of movement and expression guaranteed to every citizen in almost every constitution or structure of governance.

Then there is the role of social media, which has made it easier for the government to be able to produce and disseminate information and/or propaganda. State machinery can question, undermine and/or destroy the reputation of an individual or institution by producing, reproducing and disseminating information or propaganda easily. A person or an individual institution, even large institutions, are not able to counter the kind of firepower that a state can muster in the creation and dissemination of propaganda. We have seen many examples of this of late. This can be dangerous. Social media has not only been used for hate-mongering, it has also been used for

citing hate, even violence, against individuals and institutions. Again, we have seen many examples of this.

These things are not happening in Pakistan alone. India, over recent years, gives plenty of examples of this sort of egregious state behaviour. Maria Ressa, a journalist with 40-odd years of experience in the Philippines and the region, and the recipient of the Nobel peace prize for 2021, has documented it for the Philippines in her book *How to Stand Up to a Dictator* (2022).

She was at the receiving end of this treatment by the state in the Philippines. She has a dozen or so cases against her, has been arrested numerous times, her news organisation has borne the brunt of the repression, and all of this for trying to be a good journalist and report truthfully against the state.

The social media campaign against her and her organisation has also made her a target, to the point where she wears a bulletproof vest when going out in public and has had to increase security around herself and her organisation multiple times. The legal fees alone of fighting the battle with the state almost bankrupted her organisation. But this is not the only example. There are plenty of other documented cases from many countries. What is harder to see is a way forward. How does democracy and the rule of law and institutions of justice survive this new reality? Is the descent into fascism inevitable? One hopes not.

The people have to think of new ways of organising to be able to counter the state's new tactics. Communities have to think through how interactions among its members can be structured to ensure this abuse of the law does not happen — if the state still makes it difficult, they have to ensure that individuals and institutions have support from others in the community.

It will take time to figure this one out. But a keen awareness of the new reality is the first step.

Cultural change for economy

Shahid Mehmood

The topic of Pakistan's non-ending economic quagmire elicits many proposals, some good, some recorded, and some repetitive. Rarely, if ever, is there a discussion on cultural aspects impinging on economic outcomes.

I argue that, for the economic transformation of the country, cultural change is as important as factors like investment, savings, fiscal policy, etc. Importantly, the argument centres not just on government and governance — which are the usual targets, for good reason — but also on society. What follows is a brief description of where and what aspects need a change.

Let us start with the sensitive topic of religion. When we talk of the economic performance we would like to emulate, one inescapable conclusion is that religion takes a back seat in the affairs of the state and society and has a temperate, minor influence. Pakistan, however, represents the case of a country and society where faith and extreme attitudes are deeply woven into the fabric of society, as shown recently in an excellent survey by Dr Durre-e-Nayab and her team (PIDE Basics Survey).

This leads to several repercussions. Take the example of the institution of insurance, one of the most effective instruments devised to lessen risks surrounding our lives. Pakistan's insurance penetration rate is hardly 0.91 per cent, lower even among regional peers (in contrast, 90pc of households in Japan are covered by life insurance), mainly because the majority consider it to be against their religious beliefs. This, in turn, leads to spillovers that go far beyond economics. The search for physical and financial security to counter risks, for example, often leads individuals into the hands of extractive actors, who use them to get their illegal deeds done.

Ironically, it's a form of slavery that religion prohibits, but the same beliefs are cited as a hindrance to accepting instruments like

insurance or savings accounts. This mental outlook needs to change.

The second aspect where a cultural change needs to take root is the acceptance of divergent points of view. Modern economic growth did not come about merely through erecting cemented structures. In fact, it was a long, protracted battle of ideas from which theories and practices of modern growth emerged. That transformation was underpinned by intellectual humility and tolerance of others' opinion.

Such humility, unfortunately, is largely lacking in Pakistan. Across the country, what one usually encounters is the 'my way or the highway' approach. People frequently give opinions as if they know everything, repulsed by even the slightest impression that they may be wrong on some issue. Sadly, this attitude extends to the economist community of Pakistan (generally speaking), their senseless grandstanding being based on limited reading and understanding of historical circumstances, all the while answering to their own inert biases.

Third, Pakistani society and our governments have to give up their 'let's kill the rich' attitude. There is a dire need to realise that not every person in Pakistan who has made his/her way to riches is a haramkhor. This attitude is anathema to wealth creation. There are enough examples of individuals who have become rich by dint of their hard work, dedication and industriousness.

Yes, there is ample corruption as well as leeches who have accumulated wealth through dubious means. But more often than not, we find that the basis of their accumulation is support from governance structures (subsidies, fat contracts, lax application of laws that help them get away, etc.), which in turn perpetuates a culture of impunity, theft and corruption.

So let's realise that wealth and wealth creation by genuine means is some-

thing to celebrate rather than scoff at.

Fourth, people need to recognise that there is no substitute for hard work (physical and mental). Shortcuts (jugaar) can only take you so far, and are never a good strategy to gain long-term success and credibility. Examples abound, from 'professors' who achieved the position through plagiarising papers to 'double shah'-type characters, but a recent one would do.

Last year, Amazon suspended thousands of accounts from Pakistan for fraudulent business practices. It never occurred to the perpetrators that their behaviour would not only shut them out of the large-scale online marketplace, but also severely diminish the chances of other honest entrepreneurs/businessmen in Pakistan trying to establish themselves there. Neither did the government attempt to prosecute them for tarnishing the country's already low reputation.

Put another way, the attempted jugaar may have severely dented our access to one of the largest firms in the world (Amazon's market cap stands at \$1.77 trillion). These kinds of jugaars and rip-offs are common across the country, in every sphere of life, and are basically a reflection of a lack of ethical and moral standing upon which a healthy, trust-enhancing society is built.

The points and issues to ponder are many, but I will end by suggesting that both society and the government need to realise that economic growth and change is not merely about endless amounts of cement, steel, brick and mortar.

Nor would merely increasing the Public Sector Development Programme ensure economic prosperity (an issue to be taken up later). Breaking the cycle of economic backwardness has to be complemented by a cultural change that values ethics, morality and emancipation of mind from the clutches of obscurantism and mediocrity.

Commerce News

Govt urged to frame business-friendly policies for economic stability

PESHAWAR (Online): Members of the business community expressed grave concern over rising gas, electricity prices, and retaining policy rate at highest level and economic and industrial slow-down, urging the government to frame business-friendly policies to stabilize the economy.

The concern was taken up during a meeting of delegation of Khyber P a k h t u n k h w a businessmen led by president of Industrialists Association Peshawar (IAP) Ayub Zakori with Caretaker Prime Minister Anwarul Haq Kakar at

PMO, said in a press release here on Friday.

Other members of the delegation include Senator Nauman Wazir, SVP Haris Mufti, and Secretary General Muqtasid Ahsan, Executive members Adeel Rauf, Sherbaz Bilour and Zarak Khan. During the meeting, Governor SBP, Secretary Finance Division, Chairman NHA and FBR, members FBR Policy custom, IR Ops, Custom Ops, Chiefs of FBR Policy customs and IR Ops were also present.

In the meeting, concerns of industrial sector over economic

challenges, higher energy prices and costs pushed on to consumers, all time high monetary policy rate and cost push inflation, credit lending and loan portfolio issues to private business against provincial bank deposits, and implementation of Axle load regime which is mother to higher national fuel bill and commodity costs were extensively dissected and discussed.

Ayub Zakori while speaking on the occasion said prices of gas, electricity and fuel along with bringing policy rate to single digit is essential for flourishing business, trade

and industries and stabilization of the economy.

He urged the government to thoroughly review all decisions and frame policies in the best interest of the national economy.

The Caretaker Prime Minister Anwarul Haq Kakar assured the KP businessmen delegation of taking proactive steps for early resolution of all issues. In this regard, the interim premier on the occasion directed concerned ministries, divisions, secretaries and institutions to resolve highlighted issues.



GILGIT: Chief Minister Gilgi-Baltistan Haji Gulbar Khan presiding over the meeting regarding the Dasu Hydro power project effecties issue at CM Secretariat.

Envoy assures cooperation for making ICCI BOC successful in Dubai

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates Faisal Niaz Tirmizi Friday said that his Embassy would extend all possible cooperation to Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry in making the Business Opportunities Conference (BOC) a landmark event.

Talking to President ICCI Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, who called on him, the ambassador lauded ICCI for organizing the next edition of its BOC in Dubai in the first week of March 2024, said a press release received here today.

The Ambassador said that Pakistan and UAE have great potential to strengthen business relations and set up joint ventures. He stressed that a series of BOC-like events should be organized by the Pakistani Chambers of Commerce in UAE to explore all untapped areas of bilateral cooperation and expand economic relations.

He said that his Embassy would extend all possible cooperation to ICCI in making the BOC a landmark event.

He said that a 160-member delegation of ICCI representing real estate, construction, IT, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, food processing and packaging, light engineering, logistics, franchising, tourism, and other sectors would attend the BOC and Award Ceremony.

He said that both countries have great potential to further enhance bilateral trade and economic relations. He hoped that ICCI BOC would provide a good platform for the private sectors of both countries to hold B2B meetings, exchange ideas, develop strong business linkages, and explore opportunities for business and investment collaborations in areas of interest.

Prices of essential kitchen items fall by 0.78 percent

ISLAMABAD (APP): The prices of essential kitchen items eased as the weekly inflation measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed a decrease of 0.78 per cent for the combined consumption groups during the week ended on February 15, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday.

According to the PBS data, the SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 315.18 points as compared to 317.65 points during the past week.

As compared to the

corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 34.25 per cent.

The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16 = 100 covers 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups. The SPI for the lowest consumption group up to Rs. 17,732, decreased by 0.78 percent and went down to 307.99 points from last week's 310.42 points.

The SPI for consumption groups from Rs. 17,732-22,888, Rs. 22,889-29,517; Rs.

29,518-44,175 and above Rs. 44,175, decreased by 0.82 percent, 0.72 percent, 0.77 and 0.77 percent respectively. During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 22 (43.14%) items increased, 11 (21.57%) items decreased and 18 (35.29%) items remained stable. The items, which recorded a decrease in their average prices on a week-on-week basis included eggs (28.82%), chicken (4.23%), onions (3.48%), LPG (2.85%), gur (1.13%), wheat flour (0.32%), tomatoes (0.29%), pulse masoor (0.28%) and mustard oil (0.18%).



HYDERABAD: A labourer arranging threads for dry purpose outside Threds factory.

Textile exports earn \$9.738 billion for Pakistan in 7 months

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan earned \$9.738 billion during the first seven months of the current financial year (2023-24), the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported here on Friday.

The exports of the product, however, witnessed a decline of 2.99 percent during July-January (2023-24) when

compared to the exports of \$10,038,199 million during July-January (2022-23). The textile commodities that witnessed positive trade growth included raw cotton, the exports of which grew by 353.78 percent, from \$12,286 million last year to \$55,752 million this year. Likewise, the exports of cotton yarn increased by 49.04 percent, from \$449,418 million last year.

SCCI urges gov't to review raise in gas price

PESHAWAR (APP): The Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) on Friday urged the government review the recent raise in electricity, gas and fuel prices to bring economic stability in the country. The hike in gas tariff would adversely affect the industry and commercial sectors along with business, trade and industrial growth, SCCI President Fuad Ishaq said in a statement.

KP Govt decides establishment of EZs in tribal districts

PESHAWAR (APP): Secretary Industries and Commerce, Mohammad Anwar Khan, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development and Management Company (KP-EZDMC), Javed Iqbal Khattak and Manager Business Facilitation Centre (Board of Investment & Trade), Iqbal Sarwar, representatives of HA Consultant and other concerned authorities attended the meeting.

The meeting reviewed different aspects of the selected suitable sites for the establishment of economic zones.

The participants of the meeting were given a meticulous briefing on the

feasibilities prepared by the consultants for the establishment of new economic zones in the newly merged districts and shared sketches, possibilities and utilities of the establishment of new zones. Keeping in view various priorities, the meeting agreed on the establishment of two zones in two districts and decided that new zones should be established in such areas where there is no industrial estate of the Small Industries Development Board (SIDB) or no economic zone of the economic zones development company to provide maximum benefits to the local population of the area.



HYDERABAD: View of dried part of Indus River as the water level decrease due to acute water shortage which indicating for high risks of shortage of water in future, in Kotri.

ICT admin conducts interviews of childless couples to adopt child

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Administration on Friday conducted interviews of childless couples eager to welcome a new member into their family through adoption at Deputy Commissioner office here.

As many as twenty-one couples eagerly vied for the opportunity to expand their families through adoption.

Under the guidance of Additional Deputy Commissioner General Muhammad Abdullah Mahmood, the selection committee conducted interviews and scrutinized data to determine the most suitable candidates.

It is pertinent to mention here that the ICT.



LAHORE: Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Raza Naqvi witnessing the inauguration upgraded OPD blocked at Children Hospital by Blood Cancer affected children Kainat and Abdul Mufti Hanan.

HEC organizes regional round of Universities Debating Championship

PESHAWAR (APP): The Higher Education Commission (HEC) Regional Centre, Peshawar organized the Regional Round of the Pakistan Universities Debating Championship (PUDC) 2023-24.

The event was organized here at M. Hafizullah Auditorium, Khyber Medical University (KMU) and was attended by guests including Vice Chancellor KMU Prof. Dr. Zia Ul Haq, Vice Chancellor Sarhad University of Science & Technology Peshawar Prof. Dr. Salim ur Rehman.

A total of 27 universities nominated their students for the event, out of which 156 participants, including 41 females from 24 public and private sector universities / DAI's participated in the event.

Deputy Director / In-charge HEC Regional Centre, Peshawar Shafi Ur Rahman welcomed the participants, their focal persons / faculty members and other guests in the event. In the English debate, FATA University, FR Kohat clinched the 1st position, the Institute of Management Sciences, Peshawar got 2nd position, and Hazara University, Mansehra obtained 3rd position.

Meanwhile, in the Urdu debate competition, Ghulam Ishaq Khan University of Sciences and Technology, Swabi secured 1st position, Women University, Swabi secured 2nd position, and the University of Agriculture, D.I. Khan claimed 3rd position. Only two teams from each category will advance to the National Level at HEC Islamabad.

Chief guest, Vice Chancellor KMU Prof. Dr. Zia Ul Haq and Guest of Honour Vice Chancellor Sarhad University.

HEC, NCHR sign MoU to work on various academic, research activities on human rights

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Higher Education Commission (HEC), signed on Friday a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) to jointly work under a collaborative arrangement on various academic and research activities in the Human Rights area in the country.

Under the MoU, HEC and NCHR aim to equip academia, researchers, and students with knowledge of human rights laws and instruments, promote literacy through various media channels, introduce courses focusing on marginalized groups, and establish human rights study centers.

Additionally, the partnership seeks to conduct academic research contributing to a culture that values human rights and create and distribute digital content for widespread awareness.

The MoU was signed by the Executive Director HEC, Dr. Zia Ul-Qayyum and Secretary NCHR, Malik Kamran Azam Khan Rajar. The ceremony was attended by Dr. Bushra Mirza, (Member-Research and Innovation) HEC, Ms. Noor Amna Malik (Managing Director-NAHE), Engr. Muhammad Raza Chohan (Adviser-Academics), and other officials from HEC and NCHR.

Speaking at the occasion, Dr. Zia Ul-Qayyum emphasized HEC's commitment towards fostering awareness and research at higher education institutions, highlighting the importance of investing in teachers.

Pak mother languages literature festival unveils cultural tapestry

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a celebration of linguistic richness, the 'Pakistan Mother Languages Literature Festival' (PMLF) kicked off on Friday in Islamabad, drawing together a diverse array of writers, poets, artists, and language enthusiasts from across the country.

The event organized by the Indus Cultural Forum (ICF) and co-hosted by the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA), the festival promises a vibrant exploration of Pakistan's linguistic and cultural diversity, with more than 120 participants representing over 20 languages.

Caretaker Federal Minister for National Heritage & Culture Syed Jamal Shah as the chief guest, inaugurated the festival at the PNCA.

Notable scholars and writers will deliver keynote speeches and will pay tribute to recently departed legendary Pakistani writers.

The first day will feature an array of captivating performances, including music, dance, and a film screening. This cultural extravaganza aims to immerse attendees in the rich tapestry of Pakistan's linguistic heritage.

With UNESCO recognizing over 70 languages in Pakistan, the festival sheds light on the importance of preserving these diverse linguistic treasures. More than 25 languages in the country face the threat of extinction, making the festival's mission particularly poignant.

Aligned with UNESCO's 'International Decade of Indigenous Languages.'

Salman Raja using pressure tactics: Aoun

ISLAMABAD (APP): Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) leader Aoun Chaudhry on Friday alleged that his rival independent candidate Salman Akram Raja was using pressure tactics to get himself notified as the winner in the NA-128 Lahore election.

Salman Raja even attacked the office of returning officer for the purpose, he claimed while addressing a press conference. Aoun Chaudhry said he had won the NA-128 election and the Election Commission had rightly issued the notification of his success. He would soon present the facts before the media, he added. He cited a report of Senior Superintendent of Police Lahore that the workers of Salman Akram Raja had manhandled the employees of Metropolitan.

Over 400 cops deployed for security at 15th Karachi Festival

KARACHI (APP): Security measures are being ramped up for the 15th Karachi Literature Festival, with over 400 officers and personnel slated to oversee security operations.

Taking place over three days at a local hotel in the Keamari district, the Karachi Literature Festival draws a significant crowd each year.

International News

Authorities say Alexei Navalny, Russia's opposition leader, is dead

Monitoring Desk
MOSCOW: Alexei Navalny, Russia's most famous opposition leader, died on Friday after collapsing and losing consciousness at the penal colony north of the Arctic Circle where he was serving a long jail term, the Russian prison service said.

Navalny, 47, rose to prominence more than a decade ago by lampooning President Vladimir Putin and the Russian elite whom he accused of vast corruption, avarice and opulence.

The Federal Penitentiary Service of the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous District said in a statement that Navalny "felt unwell" after a walk at the IK-3 penal colony in Kharp, about 1,900 km (1,200 miles) north east of Moscow.

He lost consciousness almost immediately, it said.

"All necessary resuscitation measures were carried out, which did not yield positive results. Doctors of the ambulance stated the death of the convict," the prison service said, adding that causes of death were being established.

Putin has been told about Navalny's death, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said. Putin, who is running for reelection in a month, was shown on a television clip visiting a factory in the Urals.

Supporters of Navalny said they could not confirm he was dead, but that if he was then they believed he had been killed.

"Russian authorities publish a confession that they killed Alexei Navalny in prison," Navalny aide Leonid Volkov wrote on social media. "We do not have any way to confirm it or to prove this isn't true."

Condemnation quickly poured in from Western governments.

"Dreadful news about Alexei Navalny... If the report about his death in Russian prison is true it represents another terrible crime by Putin's regime," Swedish Foreign Minister Tobias Billstrom said on X.



Protesting farmers demanding guaranteed crop prices for their produce sit on train tracks at a railway station in Rajpura, India.

Ukraine's Zelenskyy signing security agreements with Germany, France as Kyiv shores up support

Monitoring Desk
BERLIN: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy signed a bilateral security agreement with Germany and planned to sign another with France on Friday, securing a strong signal of long-term backing as Kyiv works to shore up Western support nearly two years after Russia launched its full-scale war.

Zelenskyy met in Berlin with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, who said Berlin was providing another 1.1 billion-euro (\$1.2 billion) package of military aid, including 36 howitzers, 120,000 rounds of artillery ammunition and two more air-defense systems.

Scholz described the long-term security accord as a "historic step." It's Ukraine's second such bilateral agreement after one signed last month with the U.K.

Zelenskyy plans to sign another one with President Emmanuel Macron in France later Friday. He said more were in the works with other countries.

"Ukraine has never yet had more valuable and stronger documents," the president said. The security agreements appear aimed primarily at sending a message of long-term solidarity as Ukraine has gone back on the defensive in the war, hindered by low ammunition supplies and a shortage of personnel.

"Two years after the beginning of this terrible war, we are sending a crystal-clear message today to the Russian president.

Top Israeli ministers reject Palestinian statehood as part of post war plan

Monitoring Desk
JERUSALEM: Top ministers in Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government rejected Palestinian statehood on Thursday following a Washington Post report that Israel's main ally the United States was advancing plans to establish a Palestinian state.

"We will in no way agree to this plan, which says Palestinians deserve a prize for the terrible massacre they carried out against us: a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital," Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich said.

"A Palestinian state is an existential threat to the State of Israel as was proven on Oct. 7," he said, adding that he will demand the security cabinet, set to meet later on Thursday, to take a clear position against Palestinian statehood.

The Washington Post reported on Thursday that the United States was working with some Arab countries, including Egypt, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Saudi Arabia - with which Israel has long sought to establish diplomatic ties - on a post war plan for the region that would include a firm timeline for the establishment of a Palestinian state.

The Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs said any political initiative that did not begin with a Palestinian state as a full member of the United Nations was "doomed to failure".

Echoing Smotrich in separate remarks were National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, Diaspora Affairs Minister Amichai Chikli, Education Minister Yoav Kisch and lawmaker Matan Kahana, a member of the National Unity Party headed by main Netanyahu challenger Benny Gantz.



Governor Oleh Sunyiehubov, firefighters examine the site of Russia's missile attack that hit an apartment building in Kharkiv Region, Ukraine.

Russia has already fired 24 NK-made ballistic missiles on Ukraine

Monitoring Desk
MOSCOW: Prosecutor General Andrii Kostin, quoted by Interfax-Ukraine. Quote: "So far, at least 24 ballistic missiles, previously produced in North Korea, have been used during Russian missile attacks on the territory of Ukraine.

In total, between 30 December 2023 and 7 February 2024, the enemy launched at least 12 attacks on seven oblasts of Ukraine with this type of missile.

We are talking about Zaporizhzhia, Kyiv (three attacks), Kharkiv (two attacks), and towns and villages in Kirovohrad, Poltava, Donetsk and Dnipropetrovsk oblasts.

These attacks killed 14 civilians and injured more than 70 others. Details: As the Prosecutor General reported.

Greece breaks ground as first Orthodox nation to legalise same-sex marriage

Monitoring Desk
ATHENS: Greece's parliament has shattered traditional norms by legalising same-sex marriage and adoption, positioning the nation as a pioneer among Orthodox countries. The historic decision, championed by Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis and the New Democracy party, comes despite strong opposition from the influential Orthodox Church. The parliament approved a bill that not only legalizes same-sex marriage but also adoption by same-sex families. The bill received overwhelming support with 176 votes in favour out of 245 MPs present, following two days of impassioned debates. Prime Minister Mitsotakis hailed the decision as a "milestone for human rights" and a reflection of Greece as a "progressive and democratic country."

UN estimates 17,000 Gaza children left unaccompanied amid Israel's war

GAZA (Online): UN estimates 17,000 Gaza children left unaccompanied amid Israel's war. More than one million children in the besieged Gaza Strip now require mental health support, UNICEF says.

The United Nations says that at least 17,000 children in the Gaza Strip have been left unaccompanied or separated from their families.

Spokesman for the UNICEF in the Palestinian territories Jonathan Crick told a media briefing in Geneva, via video-link from Jerusalem that mental health of children in Gaza is severely affected by the war.

He called for a ceasefire so that UNICEF would be able to conduct a proper count of children who are unaccompanied or separated.

Seven Palestinians have been martyred and several injured in unabated Israeli air strikes on a home in Rafah.

The Israeli military also raided Nasser Hospital in Khan Younis, firing on the facility and expelling patients and medical workers. A UNICEF spokesperson said aid in the north is nonexistent since beginning of this year.

The White House has confirmed that Israel is preventing flour from reaching Gaza, where people are facing an imminent risk of famine.

Global Leaders Converge at the 60th Munich Security Conference

MUNICH (Online): As the frost of February blankets Munich, the city gears up to host the 60th Munich Security Conference, a gathering that over the years has become a cornerstone for global diplomacy and security discussions.

This year, the conference is set against a backdrop of escalating conflicts, shifting alliances, and a world grappling with the post-pandemic order.

Aneeq acknowledges Saudi ambassador's role in pilgrim services

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Aneeq Ahmed, extended gratitude to Saudi Ambassador Nawaf Saeed Al-Maliki on behalf of Pakistani pilgrims for the co-operation and excellent facilities provided by Saudi Arabia. Minister Aneeq Ahmed and Saudi Ambassador Nawaf Saeed Al-Maliki discussed finalizing arrangements for Hajj 2024 and expanding the 'Road to Makkah' project during a meeting at the Saudi Embassy. The Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Pakistan Hajj Mission are maintaining continuous communication with Saudi authorities to ensure timely completion of Hajj arrangements. Minister added that in accordance with Saudi directives, applicants for the private Hajj scheme have been provided with additional facilities. The Ministry of Religious Affairs has formed a total of 146 hajj organising companies and their particulars are available at the ministry. The booking process for private Hajj pilgrims has already started.

18th Round of Pak-Turkiye HLMDG meeting successfully held from 13-16 February

RAWALPINDI (Online): Lt Gen (Retd) Hamood uz Zaman Khan, Secretary Defence. During the HLMDG meeting, matters of mutual interest including whole spectrum of bilateral defence cooperation came under discussion. Both leaders expressed satisfaction on the pace of defence cooperation and pledged to take it to new heights. The issues like security, counter terrorism and prevailing regional as well as geopolitical environment also came under discussion. In addition, delegation took stock of the progress made so far since holding of HLMDG meeting in Turkiye last year.

Prior to holding of Plenary Session, General Irfan Ozsert, Deputy Chief of Turkish General Staff had a meeting with



LAHORE: Independent Candidate from Punjab announcing to join PML-N during meeting with Mariam Nawaz Chief Organizer PML-N and nominated candidate for CM Punjab.

US shows 'concern' over reports of intimidation, voter suppression in Pak

WASHINGTON (INP): The United States is "concerned" over reports coming out of Pakistan in terms of intimidation and voter suppression and is watching the situation "very closely," Coordinator for Strategic Communications at the National Security Council in the White House John Kirby said. Jailed former prime minister Imran Khan, who accused Washington of orchestrating ouster of his PTI government, on Thursday sought America's help through a special message to the US that it should play a role and voice concern about his country's "rigged" general elections. It was a purported diplomatic cable - the cipher - that Imran Khan, 71, had waived at a public rally in March 2022 claiming that the US wanted to oust his government, soon after

which his political stars took a downhill journey leading to incarceration, conviction in multiple cases and even being disbarred from contesting the polls. After a meeting of party leaders at the Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi on Thursday, where Imran Khan has been lodged since September last year, PTI leader Asad Qaiser conveyed a message from the former prime minister for the US, which was the highlight of Asad's presser. "Imran Khan has given a message that the US should raise its voice against the alleged rigging in elections. He also gave a special message with regard to America that the US had not played their role accordingly," Asad Qaiser said. Claiming that Imran Khan's message is that "the US has an opportunity and

should keep an eye on rigging in the elections," Asad Qaiser said, "If they are champions of democracy, then they should voice it if they think the elections in Pakistan were not fair." PTI's counsel Barrister Saif, who also addressed the media with Asad Qaiser, said: "America should take a tougher stance over these elections." "When PTI was cornered in the elections, America should have raised its voice," said Saif quoting the party founder as saying. The message was heard in Washington as hours later the White House responded. So far, the US State Department has been making statements on Pakistan elections, but this time a senior member of the Biden administration spoke. Asked whether the

US believes elections in Pakistan were not fair, John Kirby told a press briefing in Washington on Thursday: "We're concerned, and we share concerns about some of the reports that we've heard coming out of Pakistan in terms of intimidation, voter suppression, that kind of thing and so we are watching this very, very closely." Kirby was also asked about the concerns raised by several US congressmen about the way polls were handled and what the White House believed that the Pakistani elections were not free and fair. "And so, we are — we're watching this very, very closely. And as I understand it, votes are still being tallied. So, international monitors are still taking a look at — at those tallies."

President directs Rs3.46m payment to heirs of two insurance policyholders

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi has directed two private insurance companies to pay the death insurance claims of Rs 3 million and Rs 4,60,000 to the legal heirs of the deceased policyholders. He issued these directions while deciding two separate representations, filed by Adamjee Life Assurance Company Limited and EFU Life Assurance Limited against the decisions of Wafaqi Mohtasib, asking them to pay the death insurance claims to the respective claimants, a President Secretariat press release said. As per details, Zahid Nasreen's deceased sister had obtained an insurance policy from Adamjee Life Assurance Company for the sum assured of Rs 3 million against an annual premium of Rs300,000 in 2021. After her sister died in 2022, the company refused to pay the death insurance claim on the pretext that the deceased had hidden her pre-insurance ailment of acute kidney injury and chronic liver disease at the time of obtaining the policy. Feeling aggrieved, the complainants separately approached the Wafaqi Mohtasib to seek relief, which passed the orders in their favour and directed the respective insurance companies to honour their claims. Later, the companies filed separate representations with the President against the decisions of the Mohtasib. The President after perusing the material facts of the case and hearing the parties, rejected both the representations.

Similarly, Memoona Naeem's husband obtained an insurance policy from EFU Life Assurance Limited for the sum assured of Rs 460,000 against an annual premium of Rs 23,000 in 2015. Her husband died the same year and when she filed the death insurance claim, it was repudiated on the ground that the deceased had not disclosed his pre-insurance ailment of hypertension at the time of obtaining the policy. Feeling aggrieved, the complainants separately approached the Wafaqi Mohtasib to seek relief, which passed the orders in their favour and directed the respective insurance companies to honour their claims. Later, the companies filed separate representations with the President against the decisions of the Mohtasib. The President after perusing the material facts of the case and hearing the parties, rejected both the representations.



Mr. Murtaza Solangi, Caretaker Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting inaugurating the publication of the newsletter titled "PTV Times" at PTV centre, Islamabad.

People's decision to be implemented by summoning NA session soon: Solangi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Friday said that the decision made by the people in general elections would be implemented by summoning the first session of new National Assembly (NA). "We will implement the verdict given by the people of Pakistan and the NA session will be convened as soon as the Election Commission of Pakistan forwards the official results to the Assembly's Secretariat," he said while addressing the launching ceremony of the newsletter of the Pakistan Television (PTV). He said it was a commendable initiative of the PTV to issue a newsletter that would eventually promote reading and writing habits among the youth. The minister recalled that he started his professional journey with print reporting as part of the launch team of The News that carried his first by-line news story on February 11, 1991.

Six independent candidates join PML-N

LAHORE (Online): Six independent candidates, who emerged victorious in the General Elections 2024 announced to join the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). According to details, MNA-elect from NA-92 Rasheed Akbar Noorani and five newly elected members Punjab Assembly met PML-N Senior Vice President Maryam Nawaz and expressed 'full confidence' in the Nawaz Sharif-led party. The MPAs-elect who joined the PML-N included Irfanullah Khan Niazi from PP-90, Muhammad Amir Inayat from PP-92, Muhammad Akbar Hayat from PP-205, Asghar Hayat from PP-212 and Rana Abdul Manan from PP-272. Maryam Nawaz welcomed all the independent candidates in the PML-N's fold. She said that the people of Punjab have given mandate to the PML-N, vowing to carry out 'exemplary' development works in the province.



RAWALPINDI: H.E. General Irfan Ozsert, Deputy Chief of Turkish General Staff called on Lt Gen (Retd) Hamood uz Zaman Khan, Secretary Defence, at Ministry of Defence.

Mushaal concerned over deteriorating health condition of Yasin Malik

ISLAMABAD (INP): Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Human Rights and Women Empowerment Mushaal Hussein Mullick has vociferously condemned Indian authorities' inhuman behaviour towards her husband Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front Chairman Mohammad Yasin Malik. Mushaal Mullick in a statement issued in Islamabad said that Yasin Malik's health has deteriorated to an alarming level after he stopped taking medicines in protest to inhuman behavior of authorities for their delaying tactics to take him to the hospital for proper medical treatment, despite court orders. She said the expired and outdated pacemaker implanted in him had now gone ineffective, endangering his life. She said in addition to his heart problems, Yasin Malik is also suffering from kidney ailment. She further said that according to confirmed reports his body weight had also dropped to a great extent, which was a great cause of concern. Mushaal said as per reports, the health of Muhammad Yasin Malik is deteriorating speedily due to lack of proper medical treatment in jail. She said just two weeks ago, his mother had approached a court in Delhi to draw the court's attention towards the deteriorating health condition of her son. In her plea to court, his mother also expressed her readiness to bear the expenses of her son's treatment, she added.



ISLAMABAD: Senior leader of Jamaat-e-Islami Liaqat Baloch talking with PTI leader Asad Qaiser and others during a meeting at Mian Aslam residence in the Federal Capital.

Initiating proceedings against retired judge not the domain of SJC: Naqvi

ISLAMABAD (Online): Former judge Supreme Court (SC) Justice (Retd) Mazhar Naqvi has said initiating proceedings against retired judges is not in the jurisdiction of Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) as per law and constitution. Justice (Retd) Mazhar Naqvi has written a letter to secretary Judicial Council (JC). Justice (Retd) Mazhar Naqvi said in his letter that SJC proceedings are still underway despite his resignation. As per law and constitution initiating proceedings against retired judge does not fall in the jurisdiction of JC. It has been said in the text SJC is transgressing its powers on this matter. I have resigned on January 10 and the resignation has been accepted by the president. He said in the letter that notification regarding acceptance of my resignation has been published in official gazette. The January 12 order of SJC is illegal. He further said in the letter I am not bound to become part of proceedings of the SJC legally and constitutionally.



SUKKUR: Activists of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) are blocked road as they are holding protest demonstration against alleged rigging in General Election 2024, at Multan-Sukkur Motorway in Sukkur.

Rehana Dar claims results 'tampered' for Khawaja Asif's victory

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf-backed independent candidate Rehana Dar on Friday claimed results were 'tampered' at the RO office to ensure Khawaja Asif's victory. According to unofficial results of 353 polling stations, PML-N candidate Khawaja Asif was declared the winner with 118,566 votes whereas Rehana Dar secured 100,272 votes. Addressing the international and national media at a private hotel during PML-N's program to expose alleged rigging in polls, Rehana Dar said the people of Sialkot voted for PTI but the results were changed. Rehana Dar said she decided to contest the election from Sialkot after police raided her house at the alleged behest of Khawaja Asif. She announced filing a case against District Police Officer (DPO) Iqbal Hassan for raiding her house. Rehana Dar, mother of former SAPM Usman Dar, appealed to the Election Commission of Pakistan for the provision of justice like Nooshah Iftikhar in Daska. It is to be noted the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) restrained the result of the NA-71 Sialkot over a petition of the PTI-backed independent candidate Rehana Dar. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) served notice to the returning officer over Rehana Dar's petition and summoned his reply.

PTI founder resorts to IHC against his conviction in Cipher case, Toshakhana

ISLAMABAD (Online): PTI founder Imran Khan has resorted to Islamabad High Court (IHC) against his conviction in cipher case and Toshakhana reference. The appeal pleas have been filed through Sardar Latif Khosa advocate in IHC. NAB, FIA and subordinate court have been made respondents in the appeal pleas. The petitioner has taken plea the norms of justice have not been met in the cases. Transparent trial which is guaranteed by the law and constitution has been violated. In haste it was not allowed even to cross examine the witnesses. Even we were not heard. State counsel was appointed and arguments of their own will were obtained from him. We were not allowed to present our lawyers. Therefore, these sentences be nullified and PTI founder and Bushra Bibi be released. Latif Khosa told the media men on the occasion that miscellaneous petitions have been filed for suspension of the sentences and early hearing of appeal pleas. We have appealed to chief justice to fix these petitions for early hearing. Appeal in Iddat case has been filed in sessions court. It is pertinent to mention here that Official Secret Act Court awarded punishment to PTI founder on January 30 in cipher case.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman NAB Mushtaq Ahmed Janjua meeting with President Asad Kashmiri Barchester Sultan Mehmood Chaudhary.

PML-N accuses PTI of attempting to 'derail democracy'

LAHORE (INP): Pakistan Muslim League-BNawaz (PML-N) spokesman and newly-elected MNA Attullah Tarar said that PTI was making attempts to derail democracy in the country by seeking interference from external powers. Addressing a joint news conference with Marriyum Aurangzeb in Lahore on Friday, Atta Tarar said that there was rigging when the PTI lost in Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan, but there was no rigging when they won in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. PML-N spokesperson Marriyum Aurangzeb said PTI was full of confusions which claimed all forms 45 in KP were correct and but all these forms in Punjab were fake. Sometimes PTI claimed to win 150 and sometimes 180 seats. Sometimes they announced to contact PPP, sometimes they refused to contact PPP. Atta further said that PTI tried to derail democracy by making the election controversial, hundreds of fake forms 45 were posted on social media, PTI hastily prepared forms 45, some forms 45 came into my hands which were submitted by the opponents in the office. Atta Tarar said that billions of rupees were spent on a digital cell to create propaganda, attempts were made to change the results through digital terrorism. On this occasion, Marriyum Aurangzeb said that the PML-N was a responsible party, to counter PTI propaganda all the evidences were there. She said in the past they used to say America brought down their government, but now America's help was being sought to gain their vested interests.



KARACHI: Youngsters are flying kits at new Parade Street area as which may cause any incident any time and needs to attention for concern authority, in the Provincial Capital.

Consultation process between JI, PTI stands restored once again

LAHORE (Online): The consultation process between JI and PTI has been restored once again. According to JI spokesperson PTI leader Sardar Latif Khosa has made telephonic contact with JI Naib Amir Liaqat Baloch. Sardar Abdul Latif Khosa while talking to Liaqat Baloch said Siraj ul Haq has principled stand on alliance. We think alliance should be forged not only at the level of KP but at federal level as well. JI Naib Amir Liaqat Baloch said the door to talks between the political parties remains open always.

Durrani to lead Pak delegation at 'Special Envoys on Afghan moot'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador Asif Durrani, Pakistan's Special Representative on Afghanistan, will lead the country's delegation at the meeting of Special Envoys on Afghanistan to be held on February 18-19 in Doha. According to the Foreign Office, the meeting is being convened by the United Nations Secretary-General to discuss approaches for international engagement with Afghanistan in a more coherent and structured manner. "Pakistan's participation in the meeting is part of its efforts to actively engage with the international community, including the United Nations, to strengthen the efforts for lasting peace and prosperity in Afghanistan," the FO said.

Two terrorists killed, cop martyred in Tank joint operation

PESHAWAR (INP): Two terrorists were killed and two injured but fled while a cop was martyred in joint operation of Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) and security forces in Tank on Friday. SSP CTD Najamul Hassan said that on an intelligence tip-off regarding presence of wanted terrorists, a joint operation was launched in Tank. During operation, cross firing took place between the security forces and the terrorists. In exchange of fire, two terrorists were killed while their two accomplices were injured but managed to escape. A cop Zahid was also martyred in the fire exchange.