

Independent

Member APNS & CPNE

Chief Editor: Syed Farooq Shah

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SC seeks govt's assurance over no army role in business

Army should do its work and courts will do their job, remarks CJP Qazi Faez Isa

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa has sought assurance from the attorney general that the army would only work on defence-related matters and not run any business.

The assurance was sought from CJP Isa during a hearing of a petition filed against commercial activity being done on military land.

During the hearing, CJP Isa remarked that the army was conducting business and had set up marriage halls on military lands. He then sought assurance from the attorney general that the army would remain the "protector" and not do any

business. "Can you get this assurance?" CJP Isa asked the attorney general. He also added that everyone should work as per their mandate.

"The army should do its own work and courts will do their job," said CJP Isa.

In response, AGP Mansoor Usman Awan stated that as per principle, everyone should do their job.

However, CJP Isa insisted that if the AGP had the directives then he should give the assurance to the court.

Continued on page 2



ISLAMABAD: Federal Tax Ombudsman (FTO), Mr Asif Mahmood Jah, presenting FTO's Annual Report 2023 to President Dr Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-i-Sadr.

FTO decides Rs 17,742.16m refund claims in 2023

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Tax Ombudsman (FTO) has addressed the grievances of the taxpayers by processing 8,963 cases with an implementation status of 94.07% during 2023 as compared to 73.29% last year.

Likewise, requests for refund claims were also decided to the tune of Rs 17,742.16 million in 2023 and the due amount was paid to the aggrieved taxpayers by the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR).

This was highlighted by the Federal Tax Ombudsman Asif Mahmood Jah, who called on President Dr Arif Alvi and presented FTO's Annual Report 2023 at Aiwan-e-Sadr on Wednesday.

The Federal Tax Ombudsman briefed the president about FTO's overall

performance and its key initiatives to facilitate taxpayers and expeditiously address their grievances against maladministration of tax officials.

He stated that concerted efforts were undertaken to enhance FTO's outreach by launching awareness campaigns and opening up regional offices in the country.

He informed that Honorary Advisors had also been appointed abroad to facilitate overseas Pakistanis in the USA, Canada, Sweden, UAE, Hong Kong and the Philippines.

He added that FTO had appointed leading businessmen as Honorary Advisors from various Chambers of Commerce and Industries to facilitate the business community.



QUETTA: President Women Chamber of Commerce Small Industries Quetta Division Shirmain Younis meeting with Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar

JI rules out alliance with PTI on govt formation

PESHAWAR (APP): Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) on Wednesday made a significant move by rejecting to enter into a political coalition and support Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), which had sought assistance from the religio-political party to accommodate its independents who emerged victorious in the February 8 elections for the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly.

Talking to media persons here, Deputy Emir of JI, Liaqat Baloch, announced that after thorough consultations within the party, they have decided not to comply with PTI's request.

Baloch revealed that PTI had approached JI solely for assistance in forming the government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa,

while expressing readiness for cooperation at the national level across Pakistan. In the repercussion of this refusal, PTI may not secure any of the reserved seats - 26 for women and four for minorities - in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly unless it finds an alternative solution.

PTI faces a challenge after the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) stripped the party of its "bat" symbol, compelling it to field candidates as independents who contested on various symbols. Consequently, despite securing seats in the provincial legislatures of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the PTI may not obtain reserved seats for women and minorities unless its members align with one of the parties that contested the recent elections.



A view of consultative meeting of the nominated representatives of Pakistan Muslim League (N) and Pakistan People's Party held in Islamabad

Gas prices likely to surge again

ISLAMABAD (INP): Consumers, both protected and non-protected, are poised to face a significant uptick in gas prices, according to the sources within the industry.

The media reports indicate that protected consumers can anticipate a Rs. 10 per mmbtu hike, while their non-protected counterparts will see a steeper increase of Rs. 300 per mmbtu.

Crucially, there will be no adjustment to fixed charges for either group, although heavy gas users can expect a substantial Rs. 900 per mmbtu rise in prices.

The impact of this price adjustment extends to various sectors, including the CNG industry, where prices per mmbtu will climb by Rs. 170. Engro Fertilizer, among other entities, will also feel the pinch with increased gas rates, effective from March 1st.

These adjustments come into effect retrospectively, with the increased prices slated to apply from February 1st. Overall, consumers are bracing for a collective burden of Rs. 204 billion due to the escalation in gas prices, a change that will also affect captive power plants.

CJP directs police to handle blasphemy cases with more care

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa on Wednesday directed the police to handle blasphemy cases more care and ensure that the religion should not be used for personal gains.

A three-member SC bench headed the CJP and comprising Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Musarrat Hilali heard the bail case of a blasphemy accused. The SSP and SP Islamabad police appeared before the court.

During the course of proceedings, the CJP remarked that the Superintendent of Police (SP) should do investigation in the blasphemy case himself. Whether the court should suspend the SSP or SP on the illegal act, he asked.

The court observed that the police should not enter someone's home without permission or warrants. It noted that there was a five-year imprisonment sentence in Police Order 2002 for entering a house without the warrants.

The court remarked that the blasphemy case was registered on basis of a picture.

Last session of Senate summoned on February 19

ISLAMABAD (Online): Last session of Senate has been summoned on February 19.

Chairman Senate Sadiq Sanjani will preside over the session.

According to parliamentary sources summary has been sent to the president for summoning last session of Senate.

The senators will make farewell speeches in last session of Senate.

Fazlur Rehman rejects poll results, invites PML-N to join JUI-F on opposition benches

JUI-F chief announces initiating a country-wide protest movement to press for approval of their demands

ISLAMABAD (INP) - The Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) on Wednesday rejected the election results, announcing countrywide protests against the alleged rigging in the Feb 8 polls.

Addressing a press conference, JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman said that the parliament had lost the credibility after the "rigged" elections.

The veteran politician invited the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supreme to join the opposition in the National Assembly. He said that the JUI-F would not join the coalition government.

"JUI-F is not ally of any party," clarifies Fazlur Rehman.

Maulana Fazlur Rehman criticised the Election Commission of Pakistan, alleging its role had been questionable since the beginning. He mentioned that the commission dismissed petitions submitted by JUI-F candidates against rigging. The JUI-F leader stated that the party would fulfill its parliamentary duties and join the assemblies with reservations.

Hinting at potential protests, he expressed concerns that decisions may be taken outside the parliament.

Additionally, he outlined a series of upcoming meetings scheduled by the party in various regions.

Maulana Fazl outlined the party's upcoming strategy, mentioning plans for provincial general council meetings in Balochistan on February 25 and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) on February 27, along with additional meetings scheduled in Karachi on March 3 and Lahore on March 5. JUI-F chief Fazlur Rehman said his party would play its parliamentary role but would become a part of the assemblies with reservations.

"Defeating the JUI-F through poll rigging was a conspiracy of anti-Islamic elements. Our fault is that we played our role in mending the relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan, which is not acceptable to the US."



QUETTA: Caretaker Home Minister Mir Muhammad Zubair Jamali in a meeting with Inspector General of Police Balochistan Abdul Khaliq Sheikh

Free, fair, transparent elections held in Balochistan: Jamali

Independent Report

QUETTA: Balochistan Caretaker Minister for Home and Tribal Affairs Mir Zubair Jamali on Wednesday said the caretaker government had left no stone unturned for conducting fair, free, and peaceful elections in the province.

He expressed these views during his meeting with IG Police Abdul Khaliq Sheikh held here at the IG office. The issue of

general elections in the province was discussed in detail.

"The Balochistan government took the best and boldest measures for the protection of the people," the minister said.

Jamali while commenting on the rigging allegations said, "We do not belong to any political party nor have any political objective". He said the caretaker government remained neutral during the entire polling process.

Four more independent MPAs elect join PML-N

ISLAMABAD (APP): Four more independent members of the Punjab Assembly joined the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) on Wednesday, as independents continue to flock to the party.

MPAs-elect, including Sultan Bajwa of PP-132, Hanif Patafi of PP-288, Mehmood Qadir Khan of PP-289, and Taimur Lali of PP-94, met

with Shehbaz Sharif, the nominated Prime Minister and President of the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N).

The MPAs elect expressed confidence over the leadership of former Prime Ministers Nawaz Sharif and Shehbaz Sharif.

They also felicitated Shehbaz Sharif as prime minister of Pakistan.



KARACHI: Awami National Party (ANP) Sindh President, Shahi Syed exchanging views with Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, Convener of Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM-P) along with delegation during meeting held at Mardan House in Karachi.

Two killed, 13 injured in firing during recount on PB-21 seat

HUB (INP): In a shocking incident, two people were killed and thirteen others sustained injuries in an armed clash between two groups during a vote recount on the PB-21 seat of the Balochistan Assembly.

The unconfirmed and unofficial results from PB-21 showed the candidate of Balochistan National Party (BAP) Muhammad Saleh Bhutani victory with 30,910 votes.

According to Senior Superintendent (SSP) HUB Manzoor Buledi, an armed clash erupted between two groups during a vote recount on the PB-21 seat of Balochistan Assembly from Hub.

The firing incident was reported last night outside Civic Centre, where the vote recount was going on the provincial assembly seat, said SSP. Getting information about the firing incident, the police party

reached the spot and arrested three suspects with Kalashnikov.

He confirmed the death of two and injuries to 13 others including one critically wounded. The bodies and injured were rushed to the hospital.

SSP Buledi said that Frontier Corps have been deployed in the area to control the law and order situation.

It is to be noted that on February 11, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) put a pause on the electoral results and mandated a recount of the votes in the PB-21 constituency.

The decision came in response to the joint request for a recount by the Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) and the National Party, highlighting the intensity and importance of the electoral contest in the region.



ISLAMABAD: President of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F), Maulana Fazal Ur Rehman addresses a media talk at G-6/4.

NA session to be summoned as per law: Solangi

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Wednesday said that the inaugural session of the new National Assembly would be summoned in accordance with the law.

"I need to sign the summary for the NA session as I also hold the portfolio of Minister for the Parliamentary Affairs," Solangi said while responding to the queries of media-persons regarding the procedure for the summoning of new National Assembly, outside the Election Commission of Pakistan.

The minister said in accordance with the law the ECP was required to issue official results within 14 days of the elections.

As per the Constitution, he stated, the president could convene the National Assembly's session within 21 days of the polling date.

"The last date for convening the NA session is February 29 and it can be summoned on any day before it."

Solangi said that any member of the National Assembly could contest the elections for the positions of prime minister, speaker and deputy speaker. To a query, he said legal forums were available for redressal of grievances regarding elections and justice should prevail if any violations were committed.

Those who had complaints in that regard should reach out the legal forums for justice, he added.

Non accepting PM slot does not mean Nawaz is parting ways with politics: Maryam

ISLAMABAD (Online): PML-N chief organizer and nominated Chief Minister (CM) Punjab Maryam Nawaz has said non accepting the slot of Prime Minister (PM) by Nawaz Sharif does not mean he is going to forsake politics. Nawaz Sharif will not only do forceful politics in next five years but will also patronize PML-N governments in center and Punjab.

She said in her tweet that Nawaz Sharif has made it clear he will not become part of any coalition government. The people who know about Nawaz Sharif they too know about his principled stance.



QUETTA: Peoples Party (PPP) Leader, Ali Madad Jattak along with Jamal Raisani addressing a Press conference

Balochistan, Sindh, KP witness protests against alleged polls rigging

Independent Report

QUETTA: Protests are ongoing across three provinces in Pakistan - Sindh, Balochistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The PTI, JUI-F, PTI, and other political parties are staging protests in different cities against the results of the general elections 2024.

demonstrated outside the district returning officer's office, while roads across the provincial capital, Chaman, Killa Saifullah, Loralai and Pishin were blocked due to the ongoing protests. As a result, land communication of Balochistan with Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was cut off. Meanwhile, PPP continued its sit-in in Naseerabad against the alleged polls rigging for the sixth day.

In Quetta, workers of National Party, Hazara Democratic Party and Balochistan National Party

Pakistan urges resolution of prolonged conflicts & occupation to fight extremism

UNITED NATIONS (APP): Pakistan has called for addressing situations of decades-old unresolved conflicts and foreign occupation—an obvious reference to Palestine and Kashmir—as part of efforts to combat violent extremism.

In this regard, Pakistani delegate Muhammad Jawad Ajmal, speaking at an event marking International Day for the Prevention of Violent Extremism, also urged reaffirmation by the world community of its commitment to promote peace, tolerance, inter-religious dialogue and countering hate speech.

“Political and economic injustices have created polarization and fueled animosities,” he told delegates at the event, which was organized by the Iraqi Mission to the UN on Tuesday.

Reiterating Pakistan’s condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, the Pakistani delegate noted that global landscape of the menace has evolved significantly in recent years.

“Today,” Ajmal said, “the world has failed to address the root causes of terrorism, including foreign occupation, denial of the inalienable right to self-determination, injustice, oppression and state terrorism.”

“We have also failed to address violent acts by white supremacist, far right extreme right wing, violent nationalist, xenophobic, Islamophobic, anti-Muslim and Hindu groups and ideologies of various parts of the world,” he added.

“To combat violent extremism, we therefore need to comprehensively address not just the symptoms, but the root causes as well.”

In this context, Ajmal, the Pakistani delegate, highlighted five points: The practice of insult-

ing any religion and acts of hate and violence on the basis of religion or belief must be universally outlawed;

The UN must make appropriate changes in its counter-terrorism architecture and sanctions regimes to cover new and emerging forms of terrorism like right wing and Islamophobic extremism and terrorism;

Ensure that the fight against counter terrorism is not misused to violate human rights.

Take action to stop the desecration of the Holy Quran, demolition of mosques, publication of blasphemous content, and allowing ethnic cleansing and mass murder of people of one particular faith.

The UN General Assembly establish a body to promote the universal consideration and balanced implementation of all four pillars of the Global Counter Terrorism Strategy



LARKANA: Activists of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) and Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA) are holding protest demonstration against the alleged rigging in General Elections 2024, in Larkana.

PTI wants talks with all political stakeholders: Ali Muhammad

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf senior leader Ali Muhammad Khan on Wednesday said that PTI wants talks with all political stakeholders.

Talking to a private TV news channel, Ali Muhammad Khan said that we need to play a constructive role in parliament instead of protests and sit-ins.

He lashed out at former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, saying that how would he propagate against corruption when he is in a coalition government with PPP co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari. Ali Muhammad regretted that party member’s resignation from parliament but it was the party’s decision and “we had to stand by it” he added.

Ali Muhammad Khan called on the President to extend an invitation to the largest political party (PTI) for government formation.

On Tuesday, Ali Muhammad Khan hinted to engage in discussions with political leaders of PML-N and PPP on national issues.

However, he clarified that the PTI founder will not compromise on his principles by negotiating with PPP and PML-N for the formation of the government in the centre.

It is pertinent to mention here that former prime minister and party founder Inran Khan ruled out the possibility of talks with the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) and the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) for the formation of the government.

The incarcerated PTI founder in his informal media talk in Adiala Jail, where he is in Toshakhana, Cipher and illegal mikah case said his party will not negotiate with PML-N, PPP and MQM-P for the formation of government, however, said that he had directed his party leaders to hold talks with other parties except these three.

Karachi Kings hit by setback due to overseas players’ limited availability

KARACHI (INP): Karachi Kings, a prominent franchise in the Pakistan Super League (PSL), faces a significant setback with the limited availability of their key foreign players, Tabraiz Shamsi and Jamie Overton. South African wrist-spinner Shamsi is set to depart the PSL on March 6th to participate in domestic T20 competitions after featuring in the first six matches, forcing him to miss the latter half of the tournament.

In a parallel development, English all-rounder Overton has been recalled by Surrey County for the entire season, prioritizing his readiness for the County Championship commencing on April 5th. This double blow impacts the Karachi Kings’ campaign, as they lose crucial contributors for pivotal stages of the tournament.

The repercussions of overseas player availability extend beyond Karachi, affecting Lahore Qalandars’ Rassie van der Dussen, who must return home on March 6th, disrupting the latter part of the season for his team.

Furthermore, England’s decision to withdraw the No Objection Certificate (NOC) for fast bowler Rhys Tople, slated to represent Multan Sultans, adds another layer of complexity. Tople’s absence due to a minor injury, flagged during the SA20, underscores the challenges faced by franchises in managing their overseas contingent.

Amidst these challenges, Islamabad United receives a boost with the arrival of Colin Munro and Tim Southee, reinforcing their squad for the ninth edition of the PSL.

World Jr Championship Leg-1 continues

ISLAMABAD (APP): The ITF Pakistan Khawar Hyat Khan Memorial World Junior Championship Leg-1 continued on Wednesday after one-day postponement due to sudden death of junior tennis player from Karachi Zainab Ali Naqvi.

As many as 45 players boys and girls from Kazakhstan, Turkiye, USA, Hongkong, China, Russia, Belarus, Uzbekistan, South Korea, Romania, Switzerland, Sri Lanka and Thailand were participating in the Championships.

A total of 27 Pakistani boys and girls were participating in the Championships.

In Boys Singles Pre-Quarter Finals, Kiagaoge Kang (CHN) beat Howard Chan (HKG) 6-3,6-2; Xiuyuan Guo (CHN) beat Jwan Park (KOR) 6-3,6-4; Hamza Roman (PAK) beat Ahtesham Humayun (PAK) 6-4,6-1; Ivan Mararov 6-1,6-4; Dong Hyeon Euom (KOR) beat Hamid Israr Gul (PAK) 7-6(3), 6-4; Ahmed Nael Qureshi (PAK) beat Papangorn Bunyarit (THA) 6-1,6-1; Zhe Jiang (CHN) beat Kieran Lin (USA) 0-6,6-4,6-0; Ju Hun Choo (KOR) beat Ilya Kryukov 7-5,6-0.



MOHENJO DARO: A tourist delegation from Italy and British are visiting and expressed keen interest in the historical ruins of the World Heritage Monuments of Mohenjo Daro.

PPP will take chairmanship of committees rather than ministries: Khurshid Shah

ISLAMABAD (Online): The important decision of PPP on the matter of formation of government has come to fore as the party has decided to take chairmanship of standing committees instead of ministries.

Talking to private TV channel, PPP leader Syed Khurshid Shah has said we will take the committees of ministries which will be taken by PML-N. Committees are more powerful than ministries. He further said that we will take constitutional slots from PML-N, he added.



Officials of Pakistan Navy, Karachi Shipyard and China Shipbuilding & Offshore Intl signing the milestone certificate during Keel Laying Ceremony of 6th HANGOR Class Submarine at Karachi Shipyard

Allied parties start consultation process on formation of cabinet

ISLAMABAD (Online): Following the alliance and agreement over government making between the major political parties of the country, consultation process on formation of cabinet has started between them.

PML-N has launched efforts to include PPP in the federal cabinet.

Nominated Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif has requested former president Asif Ali Zardari to review his decision on not joining cabinet.

National Assembly (NA) will be summoned by the end of this month. Ministry of parliamentary affairs will send the summary to Prime Minister (PM) for summoning session.

The sources further said JUI-F will decide on joining government and cabinet today at the request of Shehbaz Sharif.

PML-N will keep the key ministries related to policy, manifesto and decision making with itself.

On the other hand sources of parliamentary affairs have said the NA session will be called by the end of this month on the matter of formation of 16th NA.

In this regard ministry of parliamentary affairs will send summary for summoning NA session to prime minister who will send it to the president.

Sources further said the election of speaker and deputy speaker will take place after taking oath by members of national assembly.

The election of new leader of the house Prime Minister is likely till March 3 or 4. NA secretary has finalized its preparations with regard to session of new NA.

HEC Chairman advocates empowering youth with higher education for national development

HYDERABAD (APP): Chairman Higher Education Commission (HEC) Prof. Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed has said that GC University has a hundred years of historical heritage, university’s rapid progress within a short span sets a commendable example, while attaining a global ranking for GC University is a significant honor.

He said that for the development of the country, the youth must be equipped with higher education, technology and modern sciences.

He expressed these views while addressing alumni, industrialists and senior faculty members at a program held at the Syndicate Hall of Government College University. Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed further added that HEC was providing equitable resources across the country. The GC University has got the visionary leadership of Professor Dr. Tayyaba Zarif. He expressed hope that Hyderabad’s industrialists would benefit from the uni-

versity.

On this occasion, President of the Hyderabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (HCCI) Adeel Siddiqui said Hyderabad used to be a textile city in the past. However, due to a lack of appropriate research and development, the textile industry had ceased operations. Moreover, industries such as motorcycle, CNG rickshaw assembling and parts manufacturing were facing challenges. He stated that agro-based industry was growing in Hyderabad, and Mirpurkhas, Matiari, Tando Allahyar, Tando Adam, Tando Jam and Tando Muhammad Khan were agricultural cities, industries getting raw materials easily.

Adeel Siddiqui said that Hyderabad remain the city of glass bangles, but there has been no innovation in the production of these industries and the industry of glass bangles was declining due to lack of research, there was a need to establish research and development department in the university which could help to show the right way to the industrialists by researching the problems. The Chairman HEC said that they will fund the universities on the recommendations of HCCT.

The Vice-Chancellor Prof. Dr. Tayyaba Zarif mentioned that GC University prioritizes quality education, leading to its global ranking. The inauguration of the state-of-the-art and high-tech Laboratory and Science Block will further enhance the provision of quality education to the youth. On this occasion, the Vice-Chancellor of Sindh Agriculture University Dr. Fatah Muhammad Mari, Regional Director HEC Javed Memon, elected member of the provincial assembly Engineer Sabir Hussain Qaimkhani, former member of the Provincial Assembly Abdul Rahman Rajput, Dr. Agha Taj, Afzal Gujjar, Syed Barkat Rizvi and Naem Farooqi among others also expressed their views.



HYDERABAD: Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA) Leader, Safdar Abbasi inspecting the site for protest against alleged rigging in General Election 2024, in Hyderabad.

Ramiz Raja to miss majority of PSL 9 commentary due to prior commitments

LAHORE (INP): Former cricketer turned commentator Ramiz Raja has announced his partial withdrawal from the Pakistan Super League (PSL) 9 commentary panel, citing prior commitments to the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL). Raja took to Twitter to inform fans of his unavailability for the entirety of the PSL season, attributing the clash in schedules to his prior agreement with the BPL.

Although expressing regret over missing out on commentating duties for most of the PSL season, Raja assured fans that he will join the commentary panel during the second phase matches held in Rawalpindi and Karachi.

This development follows Raja’s exclusion from the commentary panel in the previous season due to reported conflicts with the Pakistan Cricket Board

SC seeks...

Continued from page 1

On this point lawyer for the Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) intervened and told the court that the building from which the dispute started belonged to his client. He added that the allottees sold the land based on fake documents and now a five-story building sits there.

At this, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar remarked that the ETPB was a bystander when the five-story building was being constructed.

However, CJP Isa observed that it would not have been possible without the involvement of the Sindh Building Control Authority (SBCA). He also added that the residents of demolished buildings should receive money from all assets beyond means,” said the CJP.

“The Karachi sub registry’s assets should also be audited by the FBR. The residents of demolished buildings should receive money from all assets beyond means,” said the CJP. He also added that the Sindh government would never do an inquiry on this.

On this point, the director general of the SCBA appeared in court and the CJP inquired how many inspectors and officers were part of the department.

The DG informed the court that currently there are 1,400 employees with the SCBA out of which 600 are building inspectors and 300 are senior inspectors.

ODI rankings: Babar Azam remains world’s No 1 batter

Sports Desk
LAHORE: Former skipper Babar Azam continued to hold the top position in latest ODI rankings released by the International Cricket Council (ICC) on Wednesday.

The celebrated player maintained the top spot with 824 points while Indian batters Shubman Gill (801), Virat Kohli (768) and Rohit Sharma (746) are standing at the second, third and fourth positions respectively.

position in 50-over cricket for 1739 days – from 7 May 2019 (when he took over from Rashid Khan) until 9 February 2024 -- the longest unbroken stretch anyone has had on top of the ODI all-rounder rankings. But an ongoing injury concern coupled with some good recent form from Nabi has seen a change at the top.

There is little to no change at the top of the Test rankings, with Kane Williamson increasing his lead at the top of the list for batters after a pair of centuries in the first Test against South Africa and India quick Jasprit Bumrah still at the head of proceedings for bowlers.

Kiwi pacer Kyle Jamieson did make some ground on Bumrah following six wickets for the match in that Mount Maunganui contest with the Proteas, with the right-arm jumper six places to eighth overall in an impressive performance.

Jamieson also moves up two places to 13th on the list for Test all-rounders after a contribution of 8* with the bat against South Africa, with India’s Ravindra Jadeja still leading the way comprehensively in that category.

Sri Lanka player Charith Asalanka jumped five places to 15th overall following his unbeaten 97 in the second match of the series, Pathum Nissanka improved 10 spots to 18th after his double century in the series opener, while Sadeera Samarawickrama climbed six rungs to 41st due to a stylish half-century.

Meanwhile, a new player crowned at the top of the ODI all-rounder rankings following a superb century against Sri Lanka.

Shakib Al Hasan’s reign at the top is over after Afghanistan veteran Mohammad Nabi claimed the No.1 spot on the latest ICC Men’s ODI All-Rounder Rankings.

Shakib held the premier

TENDER NOTICE

The Conservator Forest Quetta City invites bids from eligible Bidders for supply of following items. TSE-232402377111 Note: In All Procurements of GOB Whether Through Electronic or Manual Bid Submission, it is Mandatory For All Bidders to Get Registered At Electronic Public Procurement System of BPPRA GOB. Tender Fee Rs.1000/-

S.No	Name of Work/s	Bid Security
1	Solar Incubators QTY-50	2%

Procurements shall be made under the Balochistan Public Procurement Rules-2014. Eligibility of Bidders: 1 Assignments of Similar Nature and Complexity 3,000,000 in Previous 1 Years. Turnover of at least 3,000,000 PKR in 1 Subsequent Previous Years. Presence in Active Tax Payer List. Sales Tax Certificate. The bidding firm must not be currently blacklisted by any procuring agency of Pakistan. JV is not permissible. Submission of the required Bid Security in case Bid Security is not found as required during financial evaluation the bidding firm shall be declared as ineligible and non-responsive. Submission of the required Bidding document Fee Procedure Of Procurement: Single Stage Two Envelope Bidding Procedure Bid Security: The bids must accompany Bid Security in the form of Bank Guarantee, Deposit at Call of 2 %specified above in the name of the under-signed from a scheduled bank. Tender Documents: The bidding documents can be obtained from the office of the under-signed 1,000 PKR Issuance of tender Documents: From the date of publication of NIT to 04 March, 2024 during office hours on working days Last Date of bid submission: The Tenders must be submitted latest by 04 March, 2024 till 10:45 AM. Tender opening: All tenders will be opened on same day at the office of the undersigned at 11:45 AM Address: Conservator Forest Quetta City Wood Cuck Nursery Samungli Road quetta Phone no: 0819204491

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ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister Madad Ali Sindi chairs a meeting. The meeting was attended by DG FDE and senior representatives from HEC in addition with senior officials from Ministry of Education.

Ashrafi commends institutions for ensuring law, order during elections

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister's Special Representative on Religious Affairs and Pakistani Diaspora in Middle East and Muslim Countries, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi on Wednesday commended the significant role of all institutions, including the Pakistan Army, security agencies, and police for their efforts in ensuring law and order, especially during the recent general elections held on February 8, across the country.

Addressing a joint press conference along with other prominent religious scholars and leaders, he acknowledged that despite attempts by adversaries to disrupt the peaceful conduct of elections, their efforts had been thwarted, leading to the successful completion of the electoral process. Ashrafi who is also the chairman of Pakistan Ulema Council said in light of the current political and religious landscape, there was a pressing call for unity among Pakistan's political and religious factions to strengthen the nation. Acknowledging election results, he emphasized on utilizing legal channels such as the Election Commission of Pakistan and courts to address grievances and ensure fairness.

Ashrafi called on major political parties to unite and foster an environment conducive to reconciliation and dialogue.

Emphasising the importance of maintaining peace and stability within the country, he announced that a high-level delegation from the Pakistan Ulema Council would engage with all major political parties to foster understanding and cooperation.

Ashrafi also urged the leadership of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, to prioritize national stability and engage in dialogue for the betterment of the country. He reiterated that negotiations were key to resolving all issues encouraging political parties to engage in constructive dialogue. "A strong government with a robust opposition is deemed essential for Pakistan's progress and prosperity," he added.

He opined that there was a pressing need for political parties to forge a national pact for the betterment and stability of Pakistan. He urged all parties to set aside personal interests and prioritize the nation's well-being. He raising concerns regarding external commentary on Pakistan's elections, emphasized on the importance of respecting national sovereignty and democratic processes.

Ashrafi said Pakistan Ulema Council would observe a day of condemnation against Israeli aggression on Friday.

Education body acknowledges support of members, officials

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Senate Standing Committee on Federal Education and Professional Training, Senator Irfan Siddiqui in a final meeting of the committee before dissolution held Wednesday acknowledged the unwavering support of both committee members and officials from the education ministry and HEC over the past three years.

The chair conveyed to committee members that this marks the final meeting of the standing committee before its dissolution.

Expressing gratitude, the committee members commended the chair for ensuring the smooth functioning of the standing committee proceedings.

The committee addressed the agenda item related to a starred question posed by Senator Bahramand Khan Tangi during the Senate Session on 5th January 2024.

The question inquired about government-established institutes for teacher training. The Caretaker Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training informed the committee about two such institutions in Islamabad.

Senator Tangi urged international training for teachers to expose them to modern educational practices. The chair instructed

the education ministry to devise plans for teacher training encompassing dress code, moral values, and teaching acumen.

A point of public importance concerning the absence of a service structure for university teachers was discussed. The HEC Chairman reported on the special committee's progress, and the chair directed the HEC to submit an interim report by Friday.

The committee also discussed a starred question from Senator Mushtaq Ahmed regarding the number of students studying "A" and "O" levels under the Cambridge system in Pakistan.

Minister directs HEC, FDE to accelerate policy formulation process

Independent Report
ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training Madad Ali Sindi Wednesday directed the Higher Education Commission (HEC) and Federal Directorate of Education (FDE) to accelerate formulation of policy and execution of ongoing projects.

He made these directions while chairing a meeting held here which was also attended by DG FDE and senior representatives from HEC in addition with senior officials from the ministry.

The minister was briefed by HEC representatives about the consideration of the Private Members Bill "The Smart Institute of Science and Technology (Amendment) Bill 2023". HEC had been deliberating on developing a service structure and promotion policy for the university's teachers, they added.

The minister was told about imparting training to the teachers of FDE.



ISLAMABAD: FIA Director Anti Human Smuggling (AHS) Israr Ahmed Khan and SDO Executive Director Syed Kausar Abbas exchanges the documents after signing the MoU at FIA headquarters.

NDRMF ends capacity buildup of FIPs amid diversification of Fund's portfolio

ISLAMABAD (APP): The National Disaster Risk Management Fund (NDRMF) on Wednesday successfully concluded its two-day third Accreditation Workshop intended to ensure capacity buildup of its fund implementing partners (FIPs) amid diversification of the Fund's portfolio on accreditation criteria and project proposal development.

The NDRMF third Accreditation Workshop was in time step as there was need to update its accreditation criteria to cater the Fund's current mandate due to diversification of its portfolio and based on lesson learnt during execution of Phase-I and project grant financing.

The workshop was organized on backdrop of initiation of phase-II of NDRMF funding, to help achieve an enhanced level of coordination, involvement and capacity building of the prospective FIPs for accreditation application, understanding of the fund's proposal format and related documentation.

Addressing the inaugural session, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), NDRMF, Bilal Anwar said the workshop was an exercise to calibrate ideas and thinking with the FIPs or partner organisation to fill the gaps. He said the repurposing and redefining goal of the NDRMF was driven by the challenges faced by the country in the realm of disaster risk reduction, climate change, disaster risk management and others. The achievements made by the Fund so far was being made in collaboration with the FIPs and it was important and required as structural work needed both physical work like building small dams, early warning systems, and address slow onset disasters like drought, malnutrition and food security, he added.

"Climate change is bringing a new dimension of it and climate change is kind of a menace faced by the country that would become adverse in the future," he said. In the past few months, he said the Fund did a stocktaking of the previous role of NDRMF and its overall performance which helped it come up with a few ticket items incorporated in its draft Business Policy being prepared.

He provided a brief overview of the policy stating that disaster management was going to remain a major component of the disaster risk reduction work done by the fund which would make it more dependent on the expertise of the FIPs in this regard due to their assets.



ISLAMABAD: A woman is buying red rose flower bouquet at flower market on Valentine's Day, in the Federal Capital.

Rehabilitated Bengal Tiger finds new sanctuary at South Africa

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Wildlife Management Board (IWMB) has shifted a rehabilitated Bengal Tiger to a South African sanctuary to lead a normal life in a natural environment after getting 15 months long treatment for his multiple injuries. The Bengal Tiger (Babu) was brought to the IWMB's Rescue and Rehabilitation Centre, formerly Islamabad Zoo, in a critical condition, an IWMB spokesperson told APP on Wednesday.

"With seven fractured bones, the tiger could not even stand on his feet. However, due to provision of timely medical facilities and tireless efforts of the wildlife medics and vets, its condition gradually improved. It fully recovered after 15 months," he said.

The IWMB spokesperson said that the decision to send Babu to South Africa was taken as no wildlife sanctuary for tigers existed in Pakistan.

He said the Margalla Wildlife Rescue Centre had rehabilitated around 381 animals, including reptiles, mammals and birds.

Among them, the Asian elephant popularly known as Kavaan, which had received global attention due to the pathetic treatment meted out by the Islamabad Zoo staff.

Two missing kids reunited with family

ISLAMABAD (APP): Aabpara police on Wednesday reunited two missing kids including a boy and a girl with their family, a public relations officer said.

According to the details, the police team received an application from a citizen in which he stated that his daughter namely Ayesha and Son Rehan had been missing and could not be traced despite hectic efforts by family members.

CDA starts cleaning work of Khanpur Dam Canal

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Water Supply Directorate of the Capital Development Authority (CDA) is working rapidly on several projects to meet the shortage of water in the city so that the citizens could not face any kind of difficulties during summer.

In this regard, the annual cleaning work of Khanpur Dam Canal has been started by the Water Supply Department of the CDA which will be completed by the end of this month.

Since water is being supplied from Khanpur to the residents of Sectors G-10, G-11, F-10, F-11 and D-12 of Islamabad, and due to the annual cleaning campaign of Khanpur Canal, the water supply will be reduced by 50% in these sectors. The shortage of water in these sectors will be fulfilled by Sangiani Water Works including Simli Dam. After which water supply will be restored in the said sectors as per schedule.

It should be noted that due to lack of sufficient rains in monsoon and winter, the water level in the dams has become very low.

Int'l conference on 'Recent Trends in Chemistry' begins

ISLAMABAD (APP): A two-day 6th International Conference on "Recent Trends in Chemistry" commenced at Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) on Wednesday.

Vice Chancellor, AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood was the chief guest at the inaugural session. He highlighted the importance of promoting science as it is crucial for the development of any country and nation.

Dr. Nasir encouraged the students to work hard for the prosperity of the country, and to fulfill their dreams because it cannot be achieved without hard work.

He also mentioned that the world is open for those who work hard, and the success of students is an honor for the institution. Additionally, the Vice Chancellor emphasized the need for useful and applied research for the betterment of society. This conference is being organized by the Department of Chemistry, AIOU.

Candidates in NA-46, 47, 48 IHC reserves judgment on petitions seeking nullification of notification

ISLAMABAD (Online): Islamabad High Court (IHC) has reserved judgment on the petitions seeking nullification of notification regarding success of candidates in NA-46, 47 and 48 after hearing the arguments.

Chief Justice (CJ) IHC Aamir Farooq reserved the judgment after hearing the arguments.

The CJ IHC remarked notification has come but if later the decision on petition pending in Election Commission (EC) comes different later then what will happen. Tribunals have not been constituted therefore, court is authorized to hear this case.

According to petitioner final results were compiled despite stay order of EC. As per the petitioner EC issued order despite its own stay order. EC knew that the application is pending with it. The counsel for EC said EC had written in its order if consolidation has not been made then it should be stopped.



ISLAMABAD: Labourers busy in construction work of bridge on under construction 10th Avenue during development work in Federal Capital.

22 outlaws arrested; drugs and weapons recovered

Independent Report
ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Police (ICP) arrested 22 outlaws including six professional beggars from different areas of the city during the last 24 hours and recovered drugs and weapons from their possession.

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

Following these directions, the Karachi company police team arrested an accused namely Irshad Ahmed involved in illegal gas refilling. The Industrial Area police team also arrested an accused namely Altaf Hussain and recovered one 30-bore pistol from his possession. The Shams Colony police team arrested two accused namely Dost Muhammad and Nadeem Khan and recovered one iron punch and 1,110 grams of hashish from their possession.

Similarly, the Khanna police team arrested an accused namely Azhar and recovered one iron punch from his possession, while the police team also arrested two accused namely Nasrullah and Muhammad Sher involved in illegal gas refilling and petrol selling.

Moreover, The Humak police team arrested two accused namely Abid Ali and Nasir Ali and recovered one 30-bore pistol.



ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Religious Harmony and Chairman Pakistan Ulema Council, Maulana Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi addressing a press conference at Maaz bin Jabal (Markazi Jamia Masjid) I-8/3.

Remembering Sardar Abdur Rab Nishtar on death anniversary

ISLAMABAD (APP): Renowned Muslim League stalwart, a Pakistan movement activist and politician Sardar Abdur Rab Nishtar's sixty-sixth death anniversary is being observed today.

Born on June 13, 1899, in Peshawar, Sardar Abdur Rab Nishtar played a pivotal role in the All-India Muslim League and Pakistan movement.

Excise to facilitate citizens for vehicle registration under ICT doorstep initiative

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a move to streamline services and bring them closer to the community, the Excise department on Wednesday is providing civic facilities to residents of the federal capital to get their vehicle registration as well as access to various essential services at Rose and Jasmine Garden under the ICT doorstep initiative. On the directives of Deputy Commissioner Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon, the excise staff would be stationed at the park's parking lot from 3.00 to 5.00 pm, ICT Spokesman Dr Abdullah Tabassum said.

This initiative aims to streamline processes and provide ease to the public regarding vehicle registration, transfer, and token tax procedures, he added.

In addition to the vehicle registration, transfer, and token tax services, the Facilitation Center Doorstep ICT Vehicle will also be offering the following services: domicile certificate, birth certificate, power of attorney, international driving permit, fuel permit (domestic/commercial), and Motor vehicle registration.

The citizens are urged not to miss this opportunity to simplify bureaucratic processes and get everything done at the Rose and Jasmine Garden parking lot today.

Wanted member of bike lifter gang arrested

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Police Aabpara police team have arrested a wanted member of a notorious bike lifter gang involved in numerous bike theft activities and recovered two stolen motorbikes from his possession.

An ICP public relations officer said on Wednesday that, following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police had categorically started a crackdown against criminal elements in order to save the precious lives and property of citizens.

Following these directions, the Aabpara police team used technical and human resources and succeeded in apprehending a wanted member of a notorious bike lifter gang involved in numerous bike lifting activities in various areas of Aabpara police station.

ICP ensuring foolproof security arrangements in High Security Zone

Independent Report
ISLAMABAD: Following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police is using all available resources to ensure the peace and tranquility within the federal capital, a public relations officer said.

He said that the Islamabad Capital Police ensured data registration, identification documents and effective search of citizens entering the high security zone on a regular basis. Moreover, action against 1491 vehicles and 432 motorcyclists over traffic rules violations on various checkpoints of high security zone was also taken.

During the last week, the Islamabad Capital Police removed tinted glasses and fancy number plates from 1414 vehicles, impounded 77 vehicles without documents. Strict directions have been issued to police officers and officials performing their duties in high security zone checkpoints to exercise their duty with full responsibility. The protection of important public and private property and embassies located in the high security zone is of paramount importance. The police officials were further directed to ensure the data entry of all citizens entering the high security zone, the identification documents should be thoroughly scrutinized.



ISLAMABAD: A view of encroachment on road causing problems for traffic and pedestrians at Pirwadhai.

Daily Voice of Masses
Independent

Thursday February 15, 2024

Hard to 'move on'

The caretaker prime minister recently asserted that the nation has "accepted" the election results and that we must, therefore, "move on". With all due respect, this seems like an overly optimistic take on a terribly messy situation.

As is evident from the slew of petitions being filed against the results, very few seem interested in 'moving on'. In fact, the results are so unacceptable to certain stakeholders that, in some instances, political rivals are setting aside their differences to challenge them as one.

Similarly, the PM's dismissal of concerns over tampered results, based on the simplistic assertion that people "believe that rigging was committed because the mobile service was suspended and results were delayed by 36 hours", is a fallacious framing of a highly serious matter. The rigging accusations have much more to do with the suspicious conduct of many returning officers, which the PM conveniently glossed over in his eagerness to prove critics wrong.

Whether or not he feels it to be his "moral duty", the PM should not be defending the ECP and its decidedly poor management of the election exercise. Nor does it seem appropriate for him to be summarily dismissing the concerns over election rigging, especially when the complaints are being taken to election tribunals and courts.

It also seems irresponsible of him to blame political parties for "failing to enact effective legislation" as the reason why the polls became controversial, instead of letting them take the matter up with the ECP. It is also strange that Mr Kakar is still having trouble deciding what 'free and fair' means.

The night before the election, he told a foreign interviewer that he "could not guarantee" free and fair polls because the idea was "very subjective". Now, he is insisting that the "process" was free and fair and that anyone who disagrees with this assessment is wrong.

Such unwarranted self-assurance and disregard for consequence would perhaps be more easily overlooked in a popularly elected leader secure in their office.

However, they seem more than a little jarring when coming from an individual entrusted with the office to do just one job. The nation will, indeed, move on in good time. The political system will work through its present challenges and evolve.

However, the people will not be gas-lit into accepting less than what they deserve. The ECP will be held accountable for its failure to organise a smooth transfer of power from one elected government to the next.

It is only its disastrous mismanagement of the election process that is to blame for the growing controversy over rigging, not the media, which simply fulfilled its responsibility by acting as a check on the counting process. The government should accept this simple fact and move on.



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

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) finds itself embroiled in a multifaceted crisis, grappling with significant challenges that threaten its political standing and influence in both the National and Provincial Assemblies. At the heart of this turmoil is a contentious legal struggle to reclaim seats that PTI alleges were unjustly wrested from its grasp, amidst accusations of a biased Election Commission and state machinery ostensibly arrayed against it. This situation is further compounded by the unsettling trend of PTI-endorsed candidates, who secured their victories largely through the party's support and the charismatic appeal of its former chairman, Imran Khan, now defecting under the pressures of coercion or the allure of incentives.

Faced with this precarious scenario, PTI's ability to retain its elected representatives is severely constrained, leaving the party in a vulnerable position. The shifting allegiances of its candidates not only undermine PTI's legislative strength but also pose profound questions about party loyalty and political integrity in Pakistan's tumultuous political landscape.

In response to these daunting challenges, PTI must tread carefully, adhering scrupulously to the stipulations of the Elections Act, 2017 (Section 104).

PTI's Challenges: Stolen & reserved seats, and shifting loyalties

This legal framework, while offering a pathway to address grievances, also demands meticulous compliance and strategic acumen from PTI as it seeks to navigate these turbulent waters. The party's journey ahead is fraught with legal, political, and ethical hurdles, requiring a delicate balance between legal recourse, political strategy, and the maintenance of its core principles and public image.

Given this legal context, PTI's options to prevent defections are primarily political rather than legal. They may engage in negotiations or employ party-level strategies to retain their members. It may rely on internal rules or moral suasion to influence members' loyalty. Legally, the party should rely on pre-election agreements, if any, or party constitutions that candidates may have agreed to, which might include clauses related to party loyalty or penalties for defection PTI could explore enforcing these agreements.

However, the enforceability of such agreements is contingent upon their specific terms and compatibility with Pakistani law. Additionally, PTI could consider filing election petitions if there is substantial evidence of electoral fraud or malpractice associated with the defection. Nonetheless, the effectiveness of these legal measures is uncertain, given the lack of clear statutory provisions addressing post-election party loyalty. In Pakistan's political landscape, such issues of defection and party loyalty have historically been more amenable to political resolutions rather than legal interventions.

In the case of reserve seats, PTI has limited options. Since PTI could not file the initial list submission reflecting the party's eventual electoral strength or di-

versity, PTI could explore forming alliances or negotiating coalition agreements with other parties. These political maneuvers would involve discussions around policy concessions or legislative support in exchange for backing PTI's nominees for key positions, thereby indirectly enhancing their representation in the assembly. Such alliances not only require adept negotiation skills but also a willingness to engage in give-and-take, balancing the party's immediate needs with its long-term policy objectives.

PTI faces formidable challenges in its quest for justice concerning allegations of extensive electoral rigging that ostensibly transformed its potential victories and defeats. The party contends that it is up against an overwhelming adversary, with accusations that the entire Election Commission, along with various state institutions, is determined to thwart PTI's aspirations for a majority government, particularly at the federal level. This perceived alliance against PTI is accused of employing a wide array of tactics, both within and beyond the legal framework, to systematically undermine the party's electoral success and political influence.

The avenues available to PTI for contesting these allegations and seeking redress are notably constrained under these circumstances. The party's battle is not merely legal but also deeply political, entailing a struggle against a network of powerful forces allegedly aligned in opposition. This situation places PTI in a precarious position, necessitating a multifaceted strategy that goes beyond conventional legal challenges. It requires mobilizing public support, international advo-

cacy for fair play, and engaging in diplomatic channels to highlight the perceived injustices. The party's endeavor to overturn the alleged manipulation and secure its rightful place in the political arena is a testament to the turbulent nature of democratic processes in contexts where the impartiality of electoral bodies and state institutions is called into question.

The electoral framework in Pakistan, as delineated by the Elections Act, 2017, is structured to uphold the sanctity and integrity of the voting process through a series of meticulous procedures and checks. From the initial step of voter identification, which leverages both traditional ID cards and advanced technologies like biometric verification, to the methodical issuance and tracking of ballot papers marked with indelible ink, the system is designed to mitigate the risks of impersonation and double voting. The public announcement of provisional results, followed by a transparent consolidation process in the presence of contesting candidates or their representatives, further enhances the credibility of the electoral process. These procedural safeguards, coupled with the option for any grievances to be thoroughly investigated by Election Tribunals, including the verification of thumb impressions against electoral rolls, form a robust framework intended to deter and detect malfeasance.

However, the efficacy of this system in delivering justice, particularly in the face of allegations of widespread rigging, hinges on the integrity with which these procedures are implemented. While the law provides a comprehensive blueprint to safeguard electoral integrity, its success ultimately depends on the

impartial execution by election officials and the vigilant oversight by political parties, candidates, and civil society.

The provisions for legal recourse and the establishment of Election Tribunals serve as a critical backstop, offering a pathway to challenge and rectify potential irregularities. This multi-layered approach, combining preventive measures with mechanisms for redress, embodies the legislative intent to create a foolproof electoral system. Yet, the true measure of its effectiveness lies in its application, underscoring the importance of vigilance, transparency, and accountability at every stage of the electoral process.

In the intricate tapestry of Pakistan's political arena, PTI emerges as the dominant force at the Centre, yet finds itself short of achieving a simple majority. This scenario necessitates alliances for governance, but ideological rifts with major parties like PPP and PML(N) sharply limit PTI's options, steering it towards a probable tenure in opposition. This position compels PTI to focus on reclaiming what it alleges are its unfairly lost seats, while navigating the complex dynamics of parliamentary politics.

Despite the challenging circumstances, there's a simmering discourse among PTI leaders about the potential for a coalition with PPP. Such a partnership, though fraught with complexities due to fundamental ideological divergences, holds a glimmer of possibility. Realizing this alliance would require exceptional diplomatic finesse and a willingness to engage in pragmatic policy compromises. For PTI, this path demands a strategic recalibration to forge a united front with PPP, ensuring that governance is

marked by cohesion and effectiveness despite the underlying ideological disparities.

Conversely, in provinces like Punjab and Sindh, where PTI is not the dominant force, the party faces a more complex situation. In Punjab, where PML(N) leads, and Sindh, predominantly under PPP control, PTI's prospects for forming a government are slim. The political dynamics in these regions might compel PTI to adopt a role in the opposition, focusing on legislative influence and preparing for future electoral opportunities. Whereas, Balochistan offers a unique challenge where PTI didn't do well compared to any other national party.

Navigating the tumultuous waters of Pakistan's political landscape, PTI stands at a crossroads, facing daunting challenges that test its resilience, strategic acumen, and ideological commitment. The party's struggle to reclaim its allegedly stolen seats, counter the shifting loyalties of its representatives, and grapple with the complexities of forming alliances underlines the intricate balance between political pragmatism and principled governance. As PTI endeavors to solidify its position, whether in governance or opposition, its actions will not only shape its own future but also have profound implications for the democratic fabric of Pakistan. The path PTI chooses to pursue in this critical juncture will be a testament to its vision for the nation, its commitment to justice, and its capacity to navigate the intricate interplay of power, loyalty, and ideology in the quest for a more transparent and accountable political order.

Quo vadis?



Mahir Ali

The initial reaction was shock as independents affiliated with the PTI emerged as the dominant force in the next parliament. It was, after all, widely presumed to be preordained that the PML-N would emerge as the clear winner on Feb 8. It clearly did not, which is gratifying. What is unclear is whether even the PML-N's runner-up status is earned or manipulated. The PTI is challenging the results in several constituencies where the voting pattern is alleged to have been altered after polling day — and the delayed result anno-u-ncements appear to back that narrative.

On the other hand, the question arises whether the powers that be are as incompetent in rigging elections as they are in ensuring security, as demonstrated by the election eve attacks in Balochistan and KP. Another possibility is selective manipulation, whereby particular seats were targeted to ensure the incarcerated PTI leader Imran Khan's 'independent' acolytes fell substantially short of a simple majority, but won enough seats to facilitate plausible deniability about rigging while also denying the PML-N the chance of forming a government on its own.

In a country where actual conspiracies frequently compete with even more bizarre conspiracy theories, the least likely option in terms of public acceptance is that the establishment decided to let the voters have their say. Be that as it may, it is unlikely that the PTI's claims

of a stolen landslide will be judicially endorsed. Nor is there any evident possibility of Khan's return to power. But the same dream has also been shattered for Nawaz Sharif, whose party trails the independents by a substantial margin, and the rumoured plan of ushering Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari into the prime ministerial slot always seemed outlandish.

What lies ahead is anyone's guess. Some kind of clarity about the shape of the coalition to come — there is no other option — might emerge before the end of the month. A PDM 2.0 might be the least unlikely prospect, although who might be at its helm, or whether the PTI will dominate the opposition, remains unclear. A hung assembly naturally suits the purposes of those who have exercised behind-the-scenes power since 1988 — somewhat less directly (but nonetheless decisively) than in the preceding 11 years.

What the future holds so far remains shrouded in the smog of uncertainty. The foreign press, taken aback by the outcome, has been pushing the narrative of a vote against the establishment, while underplaying the latter's role in the 2018 election result. Several reports, including in Pakistan, have attributed the unexpected result to an unprecedented turnout. But there is no evidence of that yet. Both official and independent sources say that it was even lower than in 2018. That did not prevent The Intercept's Ryan Grim from proclaiming that a "historic turnout... is swamping the military's effort to rig the election".

The ill-informed likes of Grim also see Khan as some kind of democrat nonpareil, ignoring his military-backed initiation and pride in being on the same page as the security establishment. Other Western outlets have repeated the turn-

out claim, and suggested various solutions. Advice — local or extraneous — that the army ought to keep out of politics has made sense for almost half a century. That hasn't come to pass, and although the US cannot be exonerated in this context, the fault lies in ourselves, and not exclusively in the stars-and-stripes.

America's nuisance value has steadily multiplied for eight decades, and on all too many occasions Islamabad has latched onto Washington of its own volition, often with deleterious consequences. It does not naturally follow, though, that the cipher saga was instrumental in Khan's displacement, not least because the process of relieving him of responsibilities he had failed to fulfil had already been in motion before the message from a relatively low-grade State Department operative reached Pakistan, suggesting that the US would be glad to see the back of the prime minister, who had badly mistimed his 2022 visit to Moscow.

Far more significant is what the next coalition, with or without PTI participation, might have in store for a tanking economy — which neither the Imran Khan administration nor its successors managed to do anything about. Even worse, none of the main party platforms in 2024 offered policies that might point to a solution beyond absurd castles in the air, such as the PPP's populist promise of doubling everyone's income. Notwithstanding last week's delayed elections, and the unexpected result that has enthused many within and outside the country who really ought to know better, any hope that a distinctly better future — desperately needed — lies ahead would be premature. Not for the first time, I sincerely hope my scepticism is misplaced. -

Courtesy Dawn

Tribal transition



Mohammad Ali Babakhel

Historically, Pakistan's tribal areas have long stood at the crossroads of governance, culture, and geopolitics. These areas have navigated the complexities of autonomy, marginalisation, and integration within the broader national framework.

From 1877 to 1947, during the British Raj, they were a focal point due to their unique administrative structure and greater autonomy. The British Indian government aimed to understand tribal cultures and adapt its response accordingly, yet these areas made headlines for their challenges. In both the pre- and post-partition eras, these regions were managed through special legal and administrative frameworks. However, aside from the 25th Amendment, governance was mostly security-focused, leading to isolation and weak governance, which affected their administrative and sociopolitical health.

Post-independence, the tribal areas experienced constitutional changes, with the 1956 constitution designating them as 'Special Areas' and the 1962 constitution limiting the applicability of central and provincial laws, enforceable only by presidential or gubernatorial directive. This exclusion maintained the areas' administrative and legal isolation. The 1973 Constitution allowed 37,000 maliks voting rights, excluding ordinary tribal people from the electoral process and further alien-

ating them. Universal adult suffrage was introduced in 1997.

Before the 25th Amendment, Fata was divided into seven agencies and Frontier Regions, which were reorganised into districts post-merger. In 2022, South Waziristan was further divided into two districts. The inclusion of the Newly Merged Districts in the provincial assembly and cabinet through elections promises national integration, development, and a stronger rule of law. This political devolution and the introduction of criminal justice system (CJS) components are expected to solidify state authority and public empowerment in NMDs, facilitating the merger's goals.

Fata's integration into KP represents a significant move from exclusion to inclusion after 70 years, enhancing KP's role in national politics and sparking debates on administrative reforms, including the creation of new provinces. The merger has led to the integration of tribal forces into the police and the establishment of courts, aiming for unified law enforcement and CJS in KP.

Technological advances and globalisation have significantly impacted tribal communities, offering empowerment through social media, while challenging traditional social structures. The arrival of Afghan refugees and fighters for the Afghan jihad further transformed the socio-cultural landscape, leading to increased militancy and demographic shifts. These changes have prompted a complex mix of nostalgia for conservative values among older generations and a push towards political liberalism and modernity among the youth. The ongoing war on terrorism has bridged the gap between tribal traditions and modernity for the youth, highlighting the importance of political rights amidst transitions. The post-9/11 era has seen a fluctuation between

religious and cultural identities, with kinetic operations against militancy causing further displacements. The post-merger period has witnessed a surge in protests, a new phenomenon for Fata's people, emphasising the need for land settlement as a critical component of reform.

Since its establishment, the northwest has seen various administrative changes, progressing through reforms but without their outcomes being thoroughly assessed. The North-West Frontier Province was officially formed in 1901 as a chief commissioner province, allowing the princely states of Swat, Dir, Chitral, and Amb to maintain autonomy until their integration into NWFP in 1969. The region's status evolved, becoming a governor's province in 1932, and saw the implementation of the Government of India Act, 1935, in 1937, leading to the creation of the NWFP legislative assembly. In 1955, NWFP merged with West Pakistan, only to regain its provincial status in 1970, with the inclusion of additional areas as settled regions. The 18th Amendment in 2010 addressed the longstanding request to rename NWFP 'Khyber Pakhtunkhwa'.

Historically, the tribal areas served as arenas for conflicting ideologies and interests. Before the merger, these regions enjoyed autonomy, exempt from taxation, modern policing, and judicial systems. The transition post-merger emphasises gradual implementation of taxation, law enforcement, social empowerment, and development strategies. However, mere constitutional amendments and legal frameworks are insufficient for administrative stability. Effective governance relies on the synergy between revenue generation, public service delivery, economic growth, and peace. -- Courtesy Dawn

KP Governor inaugurates IT lab at AUST

HAVELIAN (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Haji Ghulam Ali on Wednesday inaugurated a free IT lab at Abbottabad University of Science and Technology (AUST) to foster technological education and promote sustainable practices.

Addressing the gathering, Governor KP emphasized the significance of Free IT Labs in Fourth Generation Universities and applauded Abbottabad University's efforts to obtain projects in information technology from global countries. He advocated for educational systems that prioritize skill acquisition over job pursuit and stressed the importance of empowering youth in the present era.

He further outlined plans to beautify the university's vacant land and enhance its atmosphere by planting 10,000 trees. He underlined the importance of student involvement in the university's care and beautification efforts.

He urged students to utilize information technology tools responsibly to shape a better future for themselves and society.

Speaking on the occasion, Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Malik Mujaddur Rehman underscored the importance of nurturing talent and ability among the province's youth to empower them as valuable assets to the nation and society.

During the event, it was revealed that AUST has generated approximately \$47,000 from various international-level projects in



LAHORE: Federal Minister for IT and Communication Dr. Umar Saif witnesses an MoU of Treatment And Prevention Of Heart Attack between NHATI (National Heart Attack and Treatment Initiative), Pakistan Society of Interventional Cardiology (PSIC) and National Information Technology Board (NITB). PSIC President Prof. Zubair Akram, Vice President Prof. Dr. Nauman Naseer (Focal Person of the Institute) and NITB Chairman Dr. Babar Majed Bhatti also participate the signing ceremony.

CM orders foolproof security for PSL-9

Independent Report
LAHORE: Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi has ordered to undertake excellent arrangements to ensure foolproof security for Pakistan Super League (PSL) 9 and for facilitation of cricket lovers.

Presided over a special meeting with regard to undertaking security and other arrangements to hold PSL-9 here on Wednesday, Mohsin Naqvi directed to implement the formulated security plan in its true spirit for the cricket matches to be played in Rawalpindi, Multan and Lahore. It was informed during the briefing that more than 16,000 police personnel will perform

their security duties during the PSL matches. A security plan for the matches to be played in Lahore, Rawalpindi and Multan has been chalked out. The matches of PSL-9 are going to be launched from Feb 17. The CM directed to carry out effective management to maintain traffic flow during the matches adding that the traffic closure time should be minimized keeping in view facilitation of the people. He directed to timely impart awareness to the citizens about the alternate routes through the media, saying that the institutions concerned and departments by keeping a close liaison should diligently perform their duties. The arrangements should match with the significance of holding a big tournament like PSL. The cricket lovers should be provided a peaceful and secure environment to watch cricket matches.

Chief Secretary, IG Police, Secretary (Home), Secretary Communication & Works, Commissioner Lahore, Capital City Police Officer, Chief Operating Officer Pakistan Cricket Board, Deputy Commissioner, DIG Operations, Chief Traffic Officer and officials concerned attended the meeting. Commissioners of Rawalpindi and Multan, Regional Police Officers, Deputy Commissioners participated in the meeting via video link.

US Deputy Chief of Mission calls on Mayor Karachi

KARACHI (APP): US Deputy Chief of Mission Andrew Schofer called on Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab on Wednesday in his office and discussed with him matters of mutual interest including the process of development and progress in Karachi and other issues.

US Consul General in Karachi Conrad Tribble, Political Officer Weldon Montgomery and Political Specialist Saleh Shah were also in the delegation. In contrast, Mayor Karachi's spokesperson for Political Affairs Karamullah Waqasi, Deputy Parliamentary Leader in the city council Dil Muhammad, Juman Darwan and Muhammad Hanif Chhattani were also present on the occasion.

Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab informed the delegation about the recent general elections in the country. He said that the Pakistan People's Party has won in six divisions of Sindh, out of the 25 towns of Karachi. The elected chairman of the People's Party in 13 towns are performing their duties whereas Jamaat-e-Islami have their chairmen in nine towns of Karachi, he said.

He said that the biggest challenge of Karachi is water and sewage problems, transport, infrastructure, public space, construction of parks are also big challenges for Karachi.

He said that Karachi is the business center of Pakistan and Karachi needs to be improved to promote the economic and commercial activities of the country.



ABBOTABAD: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Haji Ghulam Ali inaugurates Centre of Excellence for Freelancing IT Lab in the Abbotabad University of Science & Technology.

KP's CM nominee Gandapur vows to work for uplift of province

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): Ali Amin Gandapur, nominee for the slot of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's chief minister, on Wednesday, vowed to serve the people of the province regardless of any discrimination.

Ali Amin Gandapur, who has been nominated by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, thanked his party's leadership for reposing trust in him and said that he would alleviate the problems of the masses.

Gandapur, a former federal minister and member of the national and provincial assembly was elected in the general elections 2024 as a member of the KP Assembly from PK-113, Dera Ismail Khan. Previously, he served as the Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan from 2018 to 2022. Before his stint at the federal level, Gandapur

was a member of the KP's provincial assembly from 2013 to 2018. In the provincial assembly, he held the position of Provincial Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Revenue.

In an exclusive interview with APP, he said he would work for the development of the entire province, unlike the past rulers who focused on their districts.

He pointed out that the newly-merged tribal districts lacked infrastructure and their development was a big challenge for them.

He vowed to revive the Sehat Card programme in the province in a manner to help the poor and deserving people.

Gandapur said the restoration of peace and maintenance of law and order was the top priority of the government.

Inspector among 4 cops suspended over negligence

FAISALABAD (APP): City Police Officer (CPO) Captain (ret'd) Muhammad Ali Zia suspended four police officials including an inspector of Khurarianwala police station on the charge of negligence from duty.

Police Spokesman Irfan Niazi said here on Wednesday that Khurarianwala police had caught an accused Amanat, son of Charagh, a resident of Chak No 211-RB, in a terrorism case some time ago. But the accused managed to escape from the police custody when he was being taken to a court from the police station.

Taking serious notice of the incident, the CPO Faisalabad immediately suspended four police officials including Inspector Ahmad Nawaz, Sub Inspector (SI) Akram, Constable Asad and Constable Akbar Ali on the charge of negligence from duty.

MoU signed between NIT Board and PSIC for prevention of heart diseases

LAHORE (APP): A memorandum of understanding (MOU) for mutual cooperation was signed between the National Information Technology Board (NITB) and the Pakistan Society of International Cardiology (PSIC) for the prevention and treatment of heart diseases.

Under the agreement, the National Information Technology Board (NITB) will provide digital and technical cooperation to the Pakistan Society of International Cardiology (PSIC) for data preparation and research for the prevention and treatment of heart diseases, including heart attacks.

The signing ceremony for the agreement took place at a local hotel here in the presence of Federal

Minister for Information Technology Dr. Umar Saif on Wednesday.

In his address, the minister appreciated the initiative and said that it was a commendable project that will help save valuable human lives. He said that the government will provide all possible cooperation in this regard.

Earlier, NITB CEO Dr. Babar Majid Bhatti briefed the federal minister on the details of the agreement and explained that the completion of the project to establish national networks and databases would assist in the timely treatment of patients suffering from heart attacks.

He said that the agreement would prove to be very helpful for the primary and secondary

Two dead bodies of boys recovered

RAWALPINDI (APP): Two dead bodies of boys were recovered from an under-construction plaza in Chandni Chowk, Rawalpindi here on Wednesday.

Rescue 1122 teams were immediately rushed to the crime scene.

According to the Media Coordinator, Rescue 1122 Rawalpindi Muhammad Usman Gujjar said that there were no apparent injuries on the dead bodies.

After necessary action, the rescue teams have shifted bodies to the hospital.

The victims were identified as 20-year-old Falak Sher and 17-year-old Saram Ali. However, the motives behind this heinous murder could not be ascertained.



FAISALABAD: UAF Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Iqbal Ahmad Khan while CI Chinese Dean Dr Zhou Changming, cutting cake during celebrate Chinese New Year Happy Spring Festival at Confucius Institute (CI) University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF) on late night.

Hearing of Ramzan sugar mills reference against Shehbaz, Hamza adjourned

LAHORE (Online): Accountability Court (AC) has adjourned till March 12 hearing of Ramzan sugar mills reference against PML-N president and nominated Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his son Hamza Shehbaz.

Ali Zulqarnain Awan, judge of AC heard the reference Wednesday.

Anwar Hussain advocate representative of Shehbaz Sharif got attendance completed. Hamza Shehbaz did not

appear in the court. One day exemption plea from attendance was filed on his behalf. The court accepted the plea. The court while summoning the arguments on the petition for permanent exemption of Hamza Shehbaz from attendance adjourned the hearing till March 12.

Shehbaz Sharif and Hamza Shehbaz are charged with constructing nullah from national kitty.

NAB Lahore has filed reference in AC Lahore.



LAHORE: Women police and members of civil society lit candles during candle light vigil to pay tribute to the martyrs of police officers at Faisal Chowk, in the Provincial Capital.

NA-88 Khushab PEC Punjab reviews preparations for re-polling in 26 polling stations

LAHORE (APP): Provincial Election Commissioner (PEC) Punjab, Ijaz Anwar Chohan, on Wednesday reviewed the preparations for re-polling scheduled for 15 February 2024 at 26 polling stations in NA-88 Khushab.

As per a spokesperson of the PEC Punjab office, the commissioner issued necessary instructions to the concerned District Returning Officer (DRO) and district police officer (DPO) about preparations for the re-polling. He instructed the DPO to

ensure foolproof security arrangements at all the polling stations and returning officer's office, emphasizing that adequate police force should be deployed at all the polling stations to maintain law and order.

He also directed the DRO to ensure proper transport arrangements for polling staff. On February 8, the Election Commission had ordered re-polling at these polling stations on February 15 due to the loss caused to the polling material by the crowd at the returning officer's office.

DG FDA orders accelerating recovery drive

FAISALABAD (APP): Director General (DG) Faisalabad Development Authority (FDA) Muhammad Asif Chaudhry has directed the field staff to accelerate their efforts for expediting recovery drive.

Chairing a meeting here on Wednesday, he reviewed the recovery progress and said that FDA could not complete its public welfare projects till the availability of sufficient funds.

Therefore, the recovery teams and field staff of the FDA should expedite their efforts for accelerating recovery campaign, he said, adding that all recovery officers should chalked out a comprehensive strategy and implement it strictly for maximum recovery from the defaulters.

He said that some elements were not paying any heed of FDA requests made repeatedly for depositing FDA dues. Now the FDA officers should take strict against them and seal their properties for full recovery of FDA dues.

He also directed the FDA officers to adopt zero tolerance policy against illegal residential colony.

HEC Chairman emphasized on importance of research for national progress

HYDERABAD (APP): Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, Chairman of the Higher Education Commission (HEC) Islamabad, emphasized the pivotal role of research in PhD programs for driving national development.

Addressing the academic and administrative heads at Sindh Agriculture University and inauguration ceremony of a smart classroom established at Umerkot campus, Chairman HEC urged alignment of research with national priorities and expansion into crucial sectors like food security and agriculture.

Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed also emphasized that

during the past 76 years, conventional methods were employed in academia and research. Now, it is imperative to align research topics of PhD degrees with national development.

"Research expansion is needed on various subjects including food security, agricultural production, value chains, seed development, and veterinary vaccines, while Institutions need to enhance their efficiency."

He added, Expressing concern over the sheer volume of research papers being published, the Chairman of the Higher Education Commission (HEC) urged a shift towards research that yields tangible national benefits.

4 killed, 8 injured in road accident in Sargodha

ISLAMABAD (APP): At least four persons were killed and eight others seriously injured in a road accident on Wednesday when a truck overturned due to a tyre burst near the Motorway Sial Mor, Sargodha.

According to a private news channel, people in the truck were going to Kot Momin when the accident occurred due to a tyre burst. The rescue officials reached the spot immediately after the incident.

According to the police, four persons lost their lives on the spot while eight others were seriously injured, the dead bodies and injured have been shifted to Tehsil Headquarters Hospital.



HYDERABAD: Activists of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) are holding protest demonstration against alleged rigging in General Election 2024, outside Shahbaz Building in Hyderabad.

Information Commission summons AIG regarding promotion cases

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Commission (KPIC) on Wednesday summoned Additional Inspector General (legal) of Police to proactive disclose promotion cases in Police Department and recommends inquiry against Tehsil Municipal Administrations Jehangira and Abbottabad.

In compliance to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Commission (KPIC) personal hearing, the Additional Inspector General of Police (AIG Legal) Muhammad Asif attended the hearing.

The AIG was summoned as Public Information Officer (PIO) of the Central Police Office Peshawar in a case where a citizen namely Muhammad Iqbal sought information from the

police office regarding promotion from clerk to superintendent case.

The complainant asked for provision of copies of the Departmental Promotion Committee meeting from the rank of Assistant Grade Clerk (BPS16) to Office Superintendent (BPS17), in which the public body failed to provide the requested information with in stipulated time as envisaged in the KP RTI Act 2013.

In hearing, the KPIC directed the public body to provide the relevant data within seven days positively, besides proactive disclosure of the said information on the official website of police department within seven working days with intimation to the Commission.

DC urges parents to cooperate with polio teams

SUKKUR (APP): A five-day polio vaccination campaign will start on February 26, in which the polio vaccine will be administered to children up to the age of five.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Sukkur, Fayyaz Hussain Mahesar on Wednesday chaired a meeting in the committee room of his office to review arrangements.

The meeting was attended by all concerned officers including representatives of the WHO, Roraty and Red EPI. The Deputy Commissioner Mahesar said that no child up to the age of five should be deprived of the polio vaccine during the anti-polio campaign. He emphasized the need for monitoring of members of mobile teams.



PESHAWAR: Activists of Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) are blocked road as they are holding protest demonstration against alleged rigging in General Election 2024, at GT road in Peshawar.

Project for enhancing domestic pharmaceutical ingredients production inaugurated

KARACHI (APP): The Caretaker Federal Minister for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, Dr. Nadeem Jan, Wednesday, inaugurated a project of expansion and revamping of Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient (API) manufacturing facility at DrugPharma Chemicals.

It is the second project under endeavor of revival and invigorating domestic production of API and at completion of the project the production capacity of the DrugPharma would increase in a phased manner from existing 52000 liters to over 105000 liters by end of the year.

The federal minister speaking at the occasion said that APIs are used as basic ingredient in medicines of different disease and their enhanced indigenous production will not only lessen reliance on

API imports but it will also help reducing the price of medicines and improving quality and availability of the basic pharmaceutical ingredients in the country.

He said that medicines and other pharmaceutical products manufactured in Pakistan were in a great demand in Central Asia as well as in African countries and we can enhance our exports by ensuring expansion



LAHORE: Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman in a group photo with delegation of overseas Pakistani business community from UK, Europe, Muscat and Oman led by Chaudhry Khalid Mehmood Hanjara and Tafazul Hussain at Governor House.



KARACHI: Caretaker Federal Minister for Health Dr. Nadeem Jan along with Chief Executive Officer Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan Asim Rauf inaugurates Expansion & Revamping ceremony of Chemicals & API Manufacturing Facility Drug Pharma Chemicals (PVT) LTD.

Global LNG demand to grow beyond 2040

ISLAMABAD (APP): Global demand for liquefied natural gas (LNG) is estimated to rise by more than 50% by 2040, as industrial coal-to-gas switching gathers pace in China and South Asian and Southeast Asian countries use more LNG to support their economic growth.

According to Shell's LNG Outlook 2024, Global trade in LNG reached 404 million tonnes in 2023, up from 397 million tonnes in 2022, with tight supplies of LNG constraining growth while maintaining prices and price volatility above historic averages.

Demand for natural gas has already peaked in some regions but continues to rise globally, with LNG demand expected to reach around 625-685 million tonnes a year in 2040, according to the latest industry estimates.

"China is likely to dominate LNG demand growth this decade as its industry seeks to cut carbon emissions by switching from coal to gas," said Steve Hill,

Rupee remains flat against dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Rupee on Wednesday remained unchanged against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs279.31.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs280.6 and Rs282.35, respectively.

The price of the Euro decreased by Rs1.97 to close at Rs298.90 against the last day's closing of Rs300.87, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The Japanese Yen lost 01 paisa to close at Rs1.85, whereas a decrease of Rs2.91 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs350.45 compared to the last closing of Rs353.36.

The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham remained unchanged to close at Rs76.04 and the Saudi Riyal decreased by 01 paisa to close at Rs74.47.

NEPRA concludes hearing on XW discos petition for quarterly adjustment

ISLAMABAD (APP): National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) concluded a hearing on account of Quarterly Tariff Adjustment (QTA) for the period October 2023 to December 2023, the second quarter of FY24.

The request was filed by XWDISCOS and includes various charges concerning system operations.

As per government guidelines, the final decision issued by the regulator and notified by the GOP, will apply to all customers of distribution companies including KE, said a press release issued here.

The final notification will state the amount to be charged in customer bills, and the period over which these charges will apply.

As the power sector operates in a regulated environment, costs of electricity and such charges are determined by NEPRA and notified by Government of Pakistan.

Qadir Bakhsh says: Thematic design ideas for new banknote series to be submitted till March 11

ISLAMABAD (APP): Director Finance of the State Bank Pakistan Qadir Bakhsh Wednesday said that SBP was organizing an art competition to develop innovative and thematic design ideas for new banknotes where local artists, designers and art students would submit their final designs by March 11.

Talking to private news channel, he said that the final designs would be submitted to the federal government for approval and the process of issuing the new series of banknotes would involve a number of steps, adding, cash prizes would be awarded to top three entries in each of the current seven denominations.

The director explained that after the art competition, the selected design ideas and themes would be shared with professional banknote designers chosen through a

competitive process.

These designers would then develop the final printable designs for each denomination, he said, adding, the completed designs were going to be submitted to the federal government for approval.

Replying a question, he said launching a new banknote series would involve several steps and stages, requiring careful planning and coordination among multiple stakeholders, adding, typically this process took 2 to 3 years, but the SBP targeted to complete it within the next 2 years.

He said a jury of respected artists would evaluate the designs and recommend the top six designs for each denomination to the SBP.

The top three designs for each denomination would receive prizes of Rs 1,000,000, Rs 500,000, and Rs 300,000, respectively, he added.

NTDC maintains transmission line to ensure uninterrupted power supply in Ramadan

LAHORE (APP): Following instruction of its Managing Director Engr. Dr. Rana Abdul Jabbar Khan, the National Transmission and Dispatch Company (NTDC) is continuing with its comprehensive maintenance programme for the NTDC transmission lines and grid stations to ensure uninterrupted power supply across the country during the upcoming holy month of Ramadan.

NTDC spokesman told media here Wednesday that under the maintenance programme, washing, cleaning, replacement of Disc Insulators and other necessary activities are being carried out by respective formations. These activities, he added, would increase reliability of transmission lines and grid stations and help ensure

uninterrupted power supply during the Holy month of Ramadan.

Under this program, shutdowns were also availed on 500kV and 220kV transmission line circuits in the south region. During these shutdowns, he mentioned, the cleaning, washing of insulators, tightening of nut/bolts of line hardware and replacement of disc insulators with RTV coated Disc Insulators on Red, Yellow and Blue phases were carried out.

The spokesman elaborated that a total of 73,493 disc insulators were washed/cleaned at 459 locations, 9,804 disc insulators were replaced at 55 locations, more than 688 braces and 570 nuts and bolts were installed, two damaged disc insulator strings (132kV C.B E5Q1 and E7Q1 C.B Yellow Phase).



HYDERABAD: A tailor stitching an auto leather seat cover at his workshop.

FPCCI, KhCCI join hands to enhance trade with Afghanistan

PESHAWAR (APP): The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) and Khyber Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KhCCI) Wednesday joined hands to enhance bilateral trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

This was agreed during a meeting between the Vice President, Aun Ali Syed and president KhCCI and other office bearers of both organizations here at FPCCI Regional Office.

The meeting was attended by KCCI President Javad Hussain Kazmi, Vice President Zahirullah Shinwari, and Member Syed Ali Hamad Kazmi. During the meeting, they expressed their commitment to work together to enhance bilateral trade between the

two countries.

Speaking on the occasion, Vice President of FPCCI, Aun Ali Syed said that increasing trade activities with neighboring countries was crucial for economic stability and strengthening relations.

The KhCCI representatives congratulated the newly elected Vice President Aun Ali Syed and expressed their hope that his leadership would pave the way for resolving business community issues in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

They also exchanged suggestions for strengthening Pak-Afghan bilateral relations.

Discussing the current economic situation, Aun Ali Syed emphasized the need for practical steps to address business community problems.

Overseas Pak business community can play vital role in stabilizing economy

LAHORE (Online): Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman has said that overseas Pakistani business community can play an important role in stabilizing the country's economy by exporting agricultural products to European and other countries. He expressed these views during a meeting with the overseas Pakistani business community delegation from UK, Europe, Muscat and Oman led by Chaudhry Khalid Mehmood Hanjara and Tafazul Hussain at

Governor House Lahore. Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rahman said that overseas Pakistanis are the asset of the country.

He said that they are contributing to the country's economy by sending remittances to Pakistan. He said that overseas Pakistanis should play a robust role in increasing exports.

Governor Punjab further said that Pakistan offers conducive business environment to foreign investors, adding that the government through the Special Investment

Facilitation Council has facilitated foreign investors to invest in agriculture and other sectors. He said that the development of the country depends on the development of industry and foreign direct investment. Governor Punjab expressed the hope that the newly elected government will bring economic stability in the country. Sagheer Ahmad Bilal Abdul Rehman, Maqsood Ahmad Butt, Mian Khalid Javed, Chaudhry Naseer Ahmed and Dr. Naseer Ahmed and others were present on this occasion.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI (APP): Shipping activity reported at Port Qasim where four ships namely, Bow Endeavor, Epic Sunter, Lokoja and Stockholm Eagle, carrying Palm oil, LPG, LNG and Coal, berthed at Liquid Terminal, Engro Terminal, Gas Terminal and Bulk Terminal respectively during last 24 hours.

Meanwhile two more ship, Visayas and America scheduled to load/offload Rice and Containers are also arrived at outer anchorage of the Port Qasim during the same period. A total of seven ships were engaged at PQA berths during the last 24 hours.

PSX continues with bullish trend, gains 926 more points

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Wednesday, gaining 926.92 points, a positive change of 1.51 per cent, closing at 62,153.84 points against 61,226.93 points the previous trading day.

A total of 303,886,073 shares valuing Rs.14,687 billion were traded during the day as compared to 435,549,576 shares valuing Rs.15.972 billion the last day.

Some 342 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 267 of

them recorded gains and 56 sustained losses, whereas the share prices of 19 remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were K-Electric Limited with 33,417,936 shares at Rs 4.47 per share, Oil and Gas Development with 32,231,367 shares at Rs 122.01 per share and Pak Petroleum with 15,505,464 shares at Rs 107.37 per share. Philip Morris (Pakistan) Limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs 38.50 per share price, closing at Rs.728.50, whereas the runner-up was Indus Motor Company Limited.



LAHORE: Chairman of All Pakistan Textile Mills Association Punjab Kamran Arshad addressing a press conference.

SCCI organises training seminar on SMEs

SIALKOT (APP): A training seminar was organised at Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) to provide guidance and training to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

SMEs Committee of Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry Chairman Faizan Akbar presided over the seminar. He informed the participants about lead generation and email marketing. He said that in this era of inflation, it had become very expensive for new and small exporters to travel globally for business.

Automobile sale rises 29.57% in January 2024

ISLAMABAD (APP): Sale of cars in the country increased by 29.57 per cent in January 2024 compared to same month of the preceding year, a data released by Pakistan Automobile Manufacturing Association (PAMA) said on Wednesday.

Sale of cars rose to 7,802 units in January 2024 compared to 6,021 units during same month of previous year.

Sale of cars during first seven months (Jul-Jan) however decreased by 48.66 per cent when compared to the sale during same period of the year

2022-23. According to the data, as many as 38,464 cars were sold during the period under review as opposed to 74,933 units in the same period of last year.

The breakup figures showed that 5,145 units of Honda Civic and City were sold during July-January 2023-24 as compared to the sale of 10,526 units during July-January 2022-23.

Toyota Corolla and Yaris car sales also declined by 46.15 per cent as it went down to 7,422 units from 13,784 units in the previous year.

EDOTCO Pakistan spearheads sustainable development, community wellbeing in 2023

ISLAMABAD: EDOTCO Pakistan, a key player in the telecommunications infrastructure industry marked a significant stride in its dedication to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in 2023. The company's commitment to enriching underprivileged communities, particularly in areas with limited access to grid power, culminated in the successful execution of the Tower to Community (T2C) initiative.

The visionary project, centered in Tehsil Kabir Wala, Multan, not only

supplied clean energy to adjacent households but also set a benchmark in integrating sustainable energy practices with societal upliftment. By tapping into solar energy, EDOTCO Pakistan innovatively utilized its towers not just as telecom infrastructure to connect the unconnected, but also as power sources for neighboring off-grid homes. This initiative underscores the company's role in driving sustainable development and cementing its unwavering dedication to enhancing community welfare and liveli-

hoods. In its continuous pursuit to community welfare, EDOTCO Pakistan also introduced the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) school program, a pioneering step in promoting health and safety awareness. The program was piloted in Islamabad and the Manshehra District, reflecting the company's proactive stance in creating a safer and more health-conscious environment.

Implemented initially at the Manshehra Public School & College in April 2023, and subsequently at the Pehli Kiran Schools.



ISLAMABAD: Vendors displaying oranges to attract the customers at Fruit & Vegetable Market in Federal Capital.

Gaza truce talks open as Erdogan due in Cairo

Monitoring Desk

CAIRO: Officials from the US, Egypt, Israel and Qatar met in Cairo on Tuesday in another bid to agree a Gaza truce as calls grew for Israel to hold back on a planned assault on the enclave's southernmost city, crammed with over a million displaced people. Renewed efforts were underway to secure a truce in a war whose impact has rippled across the Middle East. Egypt's state-linked Al Qahera News said talks had begun involving US, Qatari, Egyptian and Israeli officials.

CIA director William Burns met Mossad chief David Barnea in Cairo for a new round of talks on a Qatari-brokered plan to temporarily halt fighting in exchange for Hamas freeing

hostages. The two intelligence chiefs were joined by Qatar's prime minister and Egyptian officials, while Turkish President is due in Cairo for talks on Wednesday (today).

A Palestinian official said, "The sides are looking for a formula that will be acceptable to Hamas, who says it is only possible to sign a deal once it is based on an Israeli commitment to ending its war and pulling out its forces from Gaza."

A proposal thrashed out with Israeli negotiators in Paris last month has gone back and forth between the two sides.

"Hamas and the [other] factions are awaiting the outcome of the Cairo meetings, and Hamas is open to discussing any

initiative that achieves an end to aggression and war," a Hamas official told AFP on condition of anonymity.

The quest for a ceasefire comes after the United States and the United Nations warned Israel against carrying out a ground offensive into Rafah, the southernmost Gaza city where more than a million Palestinians are trapped.

The official said Hamas had told the participants it does not trust Israel not to renew the war if the Israeli prisoners being held by Palestinians are released.

The prisoners have been detained by Hamas since Oct 7 to pressure Israeli forces to stop unending assaults on the people of Palestine.



President Joko Widodo and First Lady Iriana cast their ballots at a polling station during the general election in Jakarta, Indonesia.

Indonesia counts votes in presidential race amid calls for clean election

Monitoring Desk

DHAKA: Indonesian authorities were counting votes cast on Wednesday in the world's biggest single-day election, headlined by the race to succeed President Joko Widodo, whose influence could determine who takes the country's helm.

The race to replace Widodo, popularly known as Jokowi, pits two former governors, Ganjar Pranowo and Anies Baswedan, against controversial frontrunner Prabowo Subianto, the defence minister and a former special forces commander feared in the 1990s as a top lieutenant of Indonesia's late strongman ruler Suharto.

Initial indications of the result are expected to emerge later on Wednesday, based on independent pollsters' "quick counts" of publicly counted votes from a sampling of stations across

the country. In previous elections, the unofficial counts have proven to be accurate.

Election laws prohibit publication of quick counts before 0800 GMT. The General Election Commission is expected to announce official results by March 20 at the latest.

All eyes are on the presidential race and the fate of the Jokowi's plans to establish the country as an electric vehicle hub and extend a massive infrastructure push, including a multi-billion dollar plan to move the capital city. Two surveys last week projected Prabowo, who has promised to continue Jokowi's programmes, will win the majority of votes and avoid a second round. Those surveys showed Prabowo with 51.8 per cent and 51.9pc support, with Anies and Ganjar 27 and 31 points adrift, respectively.

Turkey under pressure to shut down gold mine after landslide

Monitoring Desk

ISTANBUL: Calls grew in Turkey on Wednesday to shut down a controversial gold mine as hopes dimmed of rescuing nine workers trapped by a massive landslide that rolled over their open pit.

Officials on Wednesday also reported the arrest of four people, including the open pit's field manager, in the opening stages of their investigation into the accident.

Hundreds of rescuers have been searching through a cyanide-laced field in eastern Turkey since Tuesday, when 10 million cubic metres of sludge suddenly crashed down from a gully.

Turkey's Union of Chambers of Engineers and Architects urged the government to shut down the mine "immediately", saying its past warning about a looming disaster had gone unheeded.

"All those responsible for the disaster should be held accountable before the

judiciary," it said in a statement. "All environmental impact reports should be cancelled and the plant should be closed immediately."

Environmentalists fear that cyanide and sulphuric acid used in the gold extraction process could spread into the Euphrates River, which runs from Turkey to neighbouring Syria and Iraq.

Turkey's environmental ministry said it had sealed off a stream running from the pit to the Euphrates as a precaution, adding that no polluting leaks had been detected so far.

But the Ilic Nature and Environment Platform, a local pressure group, said the stream had already mixed with the Euphrates. "Don't seal off (the stream), seal off the mine," the group said.

Environmental advocates and local officials sought to shut down the open pit mine after a 2022 cyanide leak caused by a burst pipe.

Microsoft says it caught hackers from China, Russia, Iran using its AI tools

Monitoring Desk

WASHINGTON: State-backed hackers from Russia, China, and Iran have been using tools from Microsoft-backed OpenAI to hone their skills and trick their targets, according to a report published on Wednesday.

Microsoft said in its report it had tracked hacking groups affiliated with Russian military intelligence, Iran's Revolutionary Guard, and the Chinese and North Korean governments as they tried to perfect their hacking campaigns using large language models. Those computer programmes, often called artificial intelligence, draw on massive amounts of text to generate human-sounding responses.

The company announced the find as it rolled out a blanket ban on state-backed hacking groups using its AI products. "Independent of whether there's any violation of the law or any violation of terms of service."

First child cured of rare brain tumour 'offers real hope'

Monitoring Desk

PARIS: When Lucas was diagnosed with a rare type of brain tumour at the age of six, there was no doubting the prognosis.

French doctor Jacques Grill gets emotional when he remembers having to tell Lucas's parents that their son was going to die. However, seven years later, Lucas is now 13 years old and there is no trace of the tumour left. The Belgian boy is the first child in the world to have been cured of brainstem glioma, a particularly brutal cancer, according to the researchers who treated him. "Lucas beat all the odds" to survive, said Grill, head of the brain tumour programme at the Gustave Roussy cancer centre in Paris. The tumour, which has the full name diffuse intrinsic pontine glioma (DIPG).

Fatal exchanges have been common along the closed, roughly 1,000 km frontier since 1988 when Armenia and Azerbaijan first went to war over the breakaway region of Nagorno-Karabakh, but the situation had calmed amid peace talks in recent months.

Tuesday's incident



President Tayyip Erdogan meets with Egypt's President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi in Cairo, Egypt.

Dismantling UNRWA a 'disaster' for Gaza: chief

Monitoring Desk

GENEVA: Dismantling the UN agency for Palestinian refugees would be a disaster, its chief said Tuesday, as pressure rose after Israel said it had found a Hamas tunnel beneath its Gaza headquarters. UNRWA is the main aid organisation in the Gaza Strip, which is now gripped by a serious humanitarian crisis due to the war.

Earlier, Israel's foreign minister called Saturday for Lazzarini, who said the Rafah situation was "deeply concerning", with people "anxious and in fear" of a major military assault "in the middle of a sea of displaced people".

"Maybe after this cataclysm which has hit the region in Gaza, it might be time

now to genuinely find a political solution, and it would be a disaster that, just before it, we get rid of... UNRWA," Lazzarini told reporters. UNRWA is the main aid organisation in the Gaza Strip, which is now gripped by a serious humanitarian crisis due to the war.

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Putin signs law to confiscate assets of those convicted of discrediting the Russian army

Monitoring Desk

NEW YORK: Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a law Wednesday that will allow authorities to confiscate money, valuables and other assets from people convicted of spreading "deliberately false information" about the country's military.

The bill sailed through the lower and upper houses of the Russian parliament, and was unanimously endorsed by the upper house last week.

The speaker of the lower house, Vyacheslav Volodin, said the measure includes harsher punishment for "traitors who sling mud at our country and our troops" and would "strip

those scoundrels of honorary titles, confiscate their assets, money and other valuables."

Russian officials have used the existing law against "discrediting" the military that covers offenses such as "justifying terrorism" and spreading "fake news" about the armed forces to silence Putin's critics. Multiple activists, bloggers and ordinary Russians have received long prison terms.

The new confiscation law would also apply to those convicted of publicly inciting "extremist activities" and calling for actions harmful to state security or "discrediting" the armed forces.

NIA's plea for death penalty for Yasin Malik—Delhi court defers hearing

Monitoring Desk

NEW DELHI (INP): The Delhi High Court, today, deferred the hearing on the National Investigation Agency's plea for the death sentence for Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front Chairman Muhammad Yasin Malik. Previously sentenced to life imprisonment, Yasin Malik, faces allegations of involvement in what legal experts term as fake cases. Some observers even fear that the Modi government aims to execute the Kashmiri leader for political gains in the upcoming elections in India.

The Caesar Kunikov amphibious ship sank near Alupka, a city on the southern edge of the Crimean Peninsula that Moscow annexed in 2014, Ukraine's General Staff said. It said the ship can carry 87 crew members.

Jailed Thai ex-PM to be freed, says minister

Monitoring Desk

BANGKOK: Jailed former Thai prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra is to be freed, the kingdom's justice minister said Tuesday, possibly as soon as the weekend — just six months after returning from 15 years of self-imposed exile.

The controversial billionaire, twice elected premier and ousted in a 2006 military coup, was jailed for eight years on graft and abuse of power charges in August, but within days had his sentence cut to one year by King Maha Vajiralongkorn.

Justice Minister Taweewee Sodong said Tuesday that the former Manchester City owner, 74, would be among 930 prisoners granted early release.

NATO chief hails record defense spending and warns that Trump's remarks undermine security

Monitoring Desk

BRUSSELS: NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said Wednesday that European allies and Canada have ramped up defense spending to record levels, as he warned that former U.S. President Donald Trump was undermining their security by calling into question the U.S. commitment to its allies. Stoltenberg said that U.S. partners in NATO have spent \$600 billion more on their military budgets since 2014, when Russia's annexation of the Crimean Peninsula in Ukraine prompted the allies to reverse the spending cuts they had made after the Cold War ended.

"Last year we saw an unprecedented rise of 11% across European allies and Canada," Stoltenberg told reporters on the eve of a meeting of the organization's defense ministers in Brussels. In 2014, NATO leaders committed to move toward spending 2% of their gross domestic product on defense within a decade. It has mostly been slow going, but Russia's invasion of Ukraine two years ago focused minds. The 2% figure is now considered a minimum requirement.

"This year I expect 18 allies to spend 2% of the GDP on defense. That is another record number and a six-fold increase from 2014 when only three allies met the target," Stoltenberg said. On Saturday, Trump, the front-runner in the U.S. for the Republican Party's nomination this year, said he once warned that he would allow Russia to do whatever it wants to NATO members that are "delinquent" in devoting 2% of GDP to defense.

Ukrainian military says it sank a Russian landing ship in the Black Sea

Monitoring Desk

KYIV: Ukraine's military said Wednesday it used naval drones to sink a Russian landing ship in the Black Sea, a report that has not been confirmed by Russian authorities.

The Caesar Kunikov amphibious ship sank near Alupka, a city on the southern edge of the Crimean Peninsula that Moscow annexed in 2014, Ukraine's General Staff said. It said the ship can carry 87 crew members.

Sinking the vessel would be another embarrassing blow for the Russian Black Sea fleet and a significant success for Ukraine 10 days before the second anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion on Feb. 24, 2022.

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov refused to comment on the claim during a conference call with reporters Wednesday. He said questions should be addressed to the Russian military.

Ukraine has moved onto the defensive in the war, hindered by low ammunition supplies and a shortage of personnel, but has kept up its strikes behind the largely static 1,500-kilometer (930-mile) front line.

It is the second time in two weeks that Ukrainian forces have said they sank a Russian vessel in the Black Sea. Last week, they published a video that they said showed naval drones assaulting the Russian missile-armed corvette Ivanovets.

Ukraine's Military Intelligence, known by its Ukrainian acronym GUR, said its special operations unit "Group 13" sank the Caesar Kunikov using Magura V5 sea drones on Wednesday.

Explosions damaged the vessel on its left side, it said, though a heavily edited video it released was unclear.

US defense secretary Lloyd Austin released from hospital, resumes full duties

Monitoring Desk

WASHINGTON: US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin was released from hospital on Tuesday, after undergoing treatment under general anesthesia for bladder issues as he battles prostate cancer, the Pentagon said. "He is recovering well and resumed his full functions and duties today at 5:00 pm (2200 GMT)..." Secretary Austin will recuperate and perform his duties remotely from home for a period before returning to work at the Pentagon later this week," his office said in a statement.

Austin's latest health scare came weeks after he emerged the 70-year-old had kept recent hospital stays secret and had not promptly informed President Joe Biden of his cancer diagnosis, sparking widespread criticism.

The White House and Congress have been notified of his return to work, the Pentagon said.

The statement quoted doctors at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center outside Washington who said Austin had been admitted Sunday with "discomfort and concern from a bladder issue related to his December 2023 prostate cancer surgery."

"His condition indicated a need for close monitoring by the critical care team and supportive care. His diagnostic evaluation identified the cause of his bladder issue and it was corrected with non-surgical procedures on February 12," they said.

"He remained in good condition throughout and no longer needed critical care monitoring on (Tuesday morning)... He progressed well and was discharged to his home today."

The statement echoed previous Pentagon explanations that the bladder issue was unrelated to the cancer itself, but rather to the treatment of it.

Indian police blockade capital from protesting farmers

Monitoring Desk

NEW DELHI: Indian riot police fired tear gas on Wednesday at columns of farmers on tractors seeking to breach heavily guarded barricades and march on the capital to demand higher crop prices.

Farmers in India this week launched a "Delhi Chalo", or "March to Delhi", in an echo of January 2021, when farmers breached barricades and rolled into New Delhi on Republic Day during their then year-long protest.

After first deploying tear gas on Tuesday, police fired fresh barrages on Wednesday, including dropping canisters from the air by drone as tractor-driving farmers tried to open the road by dragging barricades away. "Heavy stones were pelted at policemen," Haryana state police said in a statement on Tuesday night, reporting 24 officers had been injured. Police have ringed the capital on three sides, blocking highways with metal spikes, blocks and steel barricades, while mobile internet services have been cut in parts of Haryana.

A child sits atop items secured onto a vehicle by rope as people flee Rafah.

Armenian soldiers killed by Azeri fire in biggest skirmish since exodus

Monitoring Desk

TBILISI: Armenia said on Tuesday that four of its soldiers were killed by Azerbaijani fire along the heavily militarized border, the first fatal incident since they began negotiating a deal to end more than 30 years of intermittent war last year.

Fatal exchanges have been common along the closed, roughly 1,000 km frontier since 1988 when Armenia and Azerbaijan first went to war over the breakaway region of Nagorno-Karabakh, but the situation had calmed amid peace talks in recent months.

Tuesday's incident

Iran jails Mahsa Amini's uncle over anti-govt views

Monitoring Desk

PARIS: Iranian authorities have handed down a jail sentence of over five years to the uncle of Mahsa Amini — the young Iranian-Kurdish woman whose death in custody sparked months of protests — over his anti-government views expressed during the 2022 demonstrations, rights groups said on Tuesday.

Safa Aeli, 30, was sentenced to five years and four months in prison by the Revolutionary Court in the family's hometown of Saqez in northwestern Iran, the Norway-based Hengaw group and US-based Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA) said.

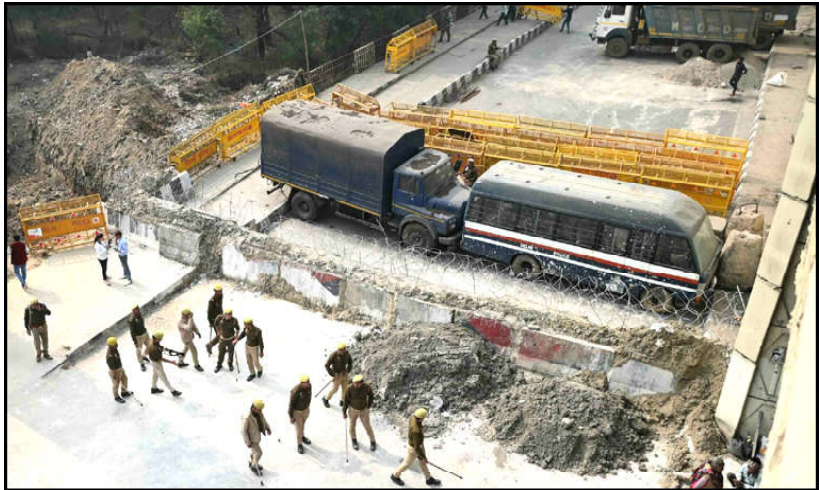
"Better than a real man"

Young Chinese women turn to AI boyfriends

Monitoring Desk

BEIJING: Twenty-five-year-old Chinese office worker Tufe says her boyfriend has everything she could ask for in a romantic partner: he's kind, empathetic, and sometimes they talk for hours.

Her "boyfriend" is a chatbot on an app called "Glow", an artificial intelligence platform created by Shanghai start-up MiniMax that is part of a blossoming industry in China offering friendly — even romantic — human-robot relations.



Police personnel stand guard next to a barrier and vehicles blocking a road to prevent farmers protesting to demand minimum crop prices from marching towards India's capital at the Delhi-Uttar Pradesh border in Ghazipur.

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Indigenization is a top policy of naval headquarters: CNS

KARACHI (PR): Achieving another milestone in indigenous submarine development project at Pakistan, the Keel Laying Ceremony of second HANGOR Class Submarine was held at Karachi Shipyard & Engineering Works (KS&EW). Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf graced the occasion as Chief Guest.

As per the defence agreement between Pakistan and China for development of 08 x HANGOR Class Submarines, 04 submarines are under construction at Wuchang Shipbuilding Industry in China whereas remaining 04 are being built at KS&EW under Transfer of Technology (ToT) agreement. This is the 2nd Submarine to undergo Keel Laying at KS&EW. Earlier, in Dec 2022, Keel Laying of first Submarine was successfully undertaken and currently it is at advanced stage of construction.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf said that it is a matter of great pride to witness the Keel Laying of HANGOR Class Submarine at Karachi Shipyard in collaboration with China Shipbuilding & Offshore International Co. Ltd (M/s CSOC). He lauded the joint efforts and performance of Ministry of Defence Production, Pakistan Navy, Karachi Shipyard (KS&EW) and M/s CSOC for construction of these Submarines. Chief of the Naval Staff highlighted that indigenization is a top priority of Naval Headquarters policy which is being manifested by construction of these state of the art Submarines at KS&EW.

Earlier during his welcome address, the Managing Director KS&EW, Rear Admiral Salman Ilyas highlighted that Karachi Shipyard is fully cognizant.



Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf laying the Keel of 6th HANGOR Class Submarine at Karachi Shipyard.

Pak urges 'strict' implementation of Indus Waters Treaty, an Indo-Pak water-sharing pact

UNITED NATIONS (APP): A top Pakistani diplomat Tuesday called for "strict" implementation of the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), a World Bank-negotiated water-distribution agreement between India and Pakistan, as he underscored the need to address the looming water crisis.

"Increasing water demand, coupled with climate change impacts, creates the potential for trans-boundary water disputes in several parts of the world," Ambassador Munir Akram told the UN Security Council's high-level debate on the impact of climate change and food insecurity on international peace and security.

"Pakistan attaches high priority to the strict implementation of the Indus Waters Treaty," the Pakistani envoy stressed in the course of the day-long debate, which was convened by Guyana, the president of the Security Council for February. Nearly 90 countries took part.

Pakistan, he added, aims to reinvigorate the Indus River basin — the largest contiguous irrigation system in the world, which provides food security to over 225 million people.

"To this end, Pakistan has launched the multi-dimensional Living Indus projects," Ambassador Akram told the 15-member Council.

Noting that the disputes over water — at the state, sub-national and local-community levels — were rising, he said competing claims to agricultural and animal pastures, especially in Sub-Sahara and Central Africa, were being exploited by terrorist groups and criminal gangs.

"The scramble for exploitation of fisheries and fishing rights, and potentially for seabed minerals and resources, is causing increased friction between neighbouring coastal countries," he pointed out.

"Addressing the looming water crisis will be critical," Ambassador Akram added.

Extreme temperatures, he said, were melting Pakistan's glaciers at an alarming rate, and together with heavier monsoons, lead to massive floods, like the 2022 epic floods which devastated the country, causing damage amounting to over US\$ 30 billion.

"Urgent action is required to preserve the Himalayan glaciers and adapt to the impacts of global warming," the Pakistani envoy told delegates from around the world.

When addressing climate change, securitizing the issue in the development agenda must be avoided, Ambassador Akram said. The already scarce funding should not be diverted from development and climate change actions to security-related approaches.

Scarcity is the mother of most conflicts, he said, adding that the best means of conflict prevention is sustainable development, achieving the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) and the climate goals.

"Unless the commitments made at COP-28 and other Conferences are implemented," Ambassador Akram said, "it will become almost impossible to achieve either the goals of climate change or the SDGs."

Short-term Hajj facility introduced for intended pilgrims: Aneeq Ahmed

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed has announced that this year's Hajj is set to be optimal for Pakistani pilgrims, offering unprecedented facilities. He introduced a short-term Hajj facility for the first time, marking a notable milestone in the nation's history.

Addressing the start of the training session for pilgrims at Darul Hajj Camp on Wednesday, he announced that during Hajj, all women would receive Abayas, adorned with the Pakistani flag. Selected through a transparent system, the minister said fortunate pilgrims were chosen via a draw, and their training began on February 12.

He said that Hajj pilgrims were the guests of Allah and a true ambassador of Pakistan, which would be facilitated with advance facilities. He said that when he took charge of the ministry, it was made clear that in 2024, Pakistani pilgrims would be provided with the best facilities. This year's Hajj would be exemplary for Pakistani pilgrims, offering facilities that were not available in the past.

The minister highlighted the comprehensive efforts made by the ministry regarding Hajj arrangements, collaborating with Saudi Arabia during a visit to assess the facilities. He mentioned that accommodations, meals, and transportation, along with all basic necessities, had been standardised.



LAHORE: Caretaker Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed talking with persons after visiting Haji Camp, in the Provincial Capital.

Provision of quality healthcare facilities top priority of govt: Nadeem

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, Dr. Nadeem Jan Wednesday said that the provision of quality medical facilities to the public was a top priority of the government.

Talking to a Private news channel, the minister said that the government was introducing health reforms to cover essential primary healthcare services and secondary-level hospital care. He said all possible resources were being utilized for lessening the economic burden and raising the living standard of deprived segments of society.

He underlined that the remarkable initiative of the government will tangibly reduce the burden on hospitals and thus will improve the quality of service delivery across the health system.

He said that the government also promoted a culture of research in the healthcare sector, adding that Pakistan needs more efforts towards providing high-quality, cost-effective healthcare. The government is committed to transforming the country's entire healthcare landscape, he said, adding that ultimate goal of the government was to use digital technology for harmonization and integration of health-related to improve the health status and well-being of our people.

Replying to a question, he said that the public was the asset of a country and considering that the caretaker government was investing in human capital.



QUETTA: Activists of Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) are holding protest demonstration against alleged rigging in Election 2024, at Quetta press club.

ECP delays decision on Rehana Dar's appeal, next hearing on Feb 22

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has deferred the verdict on Rehana Dar's plea to suspend the results of the NA-71 Sialkot constituency until February 22, following initial investigations into alleged voting irregularities.

Rehana Dar, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf backed candidate in the NA-71 election contesting against PML-N leader Khawaja Asif, has raised concerns over discrepancies in the official vote tally. She contends that while Form 45, utilized at polling stations, indicated her leading with a margin of 50,000 votes, the final outcome declared by the Returning Officer (RO) on Form 47 showed her trailing by 47,000 votes.

The Election Commission, in response to Dar's appeal, had previously solicited a report from the RO to probe these inconsistencies.

Despite initial deliberations on February 14th, the Commission opted to extend the hearing for an additional week.

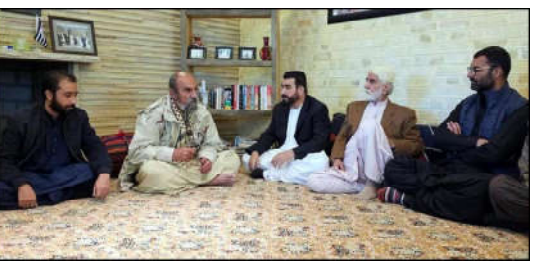
The scheduled resumption of the hearing on February 22nd implies that the ECP will evaluate the findings of the RO's report alongside arguments presented by both parties before reaching a final determination.

Samina condemns firing on protestors

Independent Report HUB: The incident of firing on unarmed protestors at Civic Center and Goth Sheikh Ibrahim is condemnable and a tool to spread chaos.

These views were expressed by Senator Samina Mumtaz Zehri in her condemnatory statement.

She strongly condemned the incident of firing on the protestors of the ongoing sit-in at the civic center and Goth Sheikh Ibrahim against the alleged rigging by the Bhutani brothers and son Shehzad



QUETTA: Newly elected MP Mir Asim Kurd Gailo meeting with Chief of Sarawan Nawab Muhammad Aslam Khan Raisani.

CJP Qazi Faez Isa says People of GB unaware of their constitutional status

ISLAMABAD (INP): Expressing surprise that the people of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) still had no idea about their constitutional status, Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Justice Qazi Faez Isa on Wednesday suggested holding a referendum or a plebiscite in GB and Pakistan-administered Kashmir.

A three-member bench of the Supreme Court (SC), headed by the CJP, heard the petition filed against the appointment of judges to the top court of GB.

The additional attorney general (AAG) said that it was the job of the United Nations to hold a plebiscite in these territories.

The CJP replied that he had no information about that. "All I am asking you whether this is possible."

The AAG told the apex court that the government wanted to make GB

Zubair says: PPP will take all key posts, but not responsibility

KARACHI (INP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz leader and former Sindh governor Muhammad Zubair said that the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) will accept all key positions and will not take responsibility for anything.

In an exclusive interview with a private TV news channel, Muhammad Zubair stated that there is no alternative for the PML-N other than accepting the conditions of the PPP, and the PML-N will attempt to include the PPP in the cabinet.

He mentioned that without the cooperation of the PPP, a simple majority cannot be achieved for forming the government in the centre.

Zubair stated that the PPP will only vote to elect the Leader of the House, and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf members will sit in the opposition.



ISLAMABAD: The signing ceremony of MoU between the Stakeholders on Consortium Formation for Machike-Thallian-Tarujabba White Oil Pipeline Project at SIFC Secretariat, PM Office.

MoU signed for Machike-Thallian-Tarujabba White Oil Pipeline

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a landmark achievement, the signing ceremony of the MoU between the Stakeholders on Consortium Formation (SCF) for the Machike-Thallian-Tarujabba White Oil Pipeline Project was held here on Wednesday.

The ceremony was witnessed by Minister for Power and Petroleum Muhammad Ali, Secretary (Petroleum Division) Momin Agha, and Secretary SIFC Jameel Qureshi, said a news release.

The heads of consortium entities i.e. MD Pakistan State Oil (PSO) Syed Muhammad Taha, DG Frontier Works Organization (FWO) Major General Abdul Sami, MD Interstate Gas Systems Pvt. Ltd (IGS) Nadeem Bajwa

Talpur emerges as potential challenger to Shah for CM

KARACHI (INP): Following Maryam Nawaz's nomination as Chief Minister in Punjab, discussions have commenced regarding the leadership of Sindh, with former Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah emerging as a frontrunner for the position. However, sources reveal that consultations have also initiated regarding the potential nomination of Faryal Talpur for the Chief Ministership in Sindh. Party leaders are deliberating on the possibility of having a female chief minister in Sindh, citing the precedent set by Punjab.

It's noteworthy that while the Muslim League-Nawaz has put forward Maryam Nawaz's name for the Punjab Chief Minister role, the Pakistan People's Party holds a clear majority in the Sindh Assembly.



QUETTA: Inspector General of Police Balochistan Abdul Khaliq Sheikh being briefed about criminal record office at Smart Police Station Civil Line.

Hassan Zehri says: Rigging of the Bhutani brothers is not going to be hidden from killings

Independent Report HUB: Senior leader of Pakistan Peoples Party, Spokesman of former President Asif Ali Zardari and candidate of Pakistan People's Party from PB-21 Hub, Mir Ali Hassan Zehri, protested against the ongoing sit-in and demonstration against the alleged rigging in constituency PB-21 at Civic Center.

On behalf of our people, while condoling and sympathizing with those who were killed and injured in the firing at civic center and Goth Ibrahim Sheikh.

He condemned the incident in strong words and expressed outrage. Expressing his reaction to the incident, he said that on the notification of re-counting of votes by the Election Commission on the protests and sit-in by the workers of Pakistan Peoples Party and the enthusiastic people of Hub against the alleged rigging in constituency PB-21. Bhutani brothers and Shehzad bhutani have lost their senses and resorted to killing innocent and peaceful people, which we strongly condemn and appeal to the higher authori-

PTA escalates efforts to combat illegal SIM activation

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) Zonal Office Sukhar, in close collaboration with the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Cyber Crime Circle Wednesday conducted a successful raid against a franchise involved in the illicit activation of SIMs at Ratodero, district Larkana.

During the raid, 25 Active SIMs were discovered. Furthermore, the Franchise owner and one other Kiosk person were also taken into custody by the FIA team, said a news release issued here.

FIA, SSDO join hands to address human trafficking, migrants smuggling

Independent Report ISLAMABAD: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and the Sustainable Social Development Organization (SSDO) have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to collaborate on various initiatives aimed at raising awareness, building capacity, campaigning, and coordinating stakeholders to address transnational organized crime, with a specific focus on Trafficking in Persons (TIP) and Smuggling of Migrants (SOM) in Pakistan.

The Memorandum signed by FIA Director Anti Human Smuggling (AHS) Israr Ahmed Khan and SSDO Executive Director Syed Kausar Abbas, the MOU signifies a commitment to joint efforts in combating organized crime and strengthening the rule of law, said a press release on Wednesday.

Signing ceremony held at FIA headquarters in Islamabad, this collaboration was hailed by Director General FIA Ahmad Ishaque Jehangir as a significant step towards effective partnership, while Director-AHS recognized SSDO's efforts in combating trafficking in persons (TIP) and smuggling of migrants in Pakistan, highlighting the importance of strategic cooperation between law enforcement and civil society organizations to increase public awareness and enhance the capacity of relevant officials on TIP and other transnational organized crimes.

Additional Director



QUETTA: Caretaker Provincial Health Minister Dr. Amir Muhammad Jomezai presiding over meeting of Board of Governors of Balochistan Institute of Nephrology Urology Quetta (BINUQ).