

Independent

Member APNS & CPNE

Chief Editor: Syed Farooq Shah

www.dailyindependent.com.pk Quetta

Ph: 2841470/2841473 REG: No. BC-116 B/ID-445 Vt XXV No 180, Shaban 08, 1445 AH Monday February 19, 2024 Pages 08, Price Rs.15

Caretaker CM pays surprise visit to Quetta city:

Ours' constitutional obligation to provide peace to traders & general public: Domki

Expresses satisfaction over law & order situation and normal life in metropolis; emphasizes upon adopting legal course for removing any of the reservations

Independent Report

QUETTA: The caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki has insisted that the legal course should be adopted to remove any of the reservations in accordance with the country's laws. He said that it is our constitutional obligation to provide peace to the traders community and general public, and for the purpose, all available resources are being mobilized by the interim government.

The caretaker Chief Minister was on surprise visit to the Quetta city on Sunday afternoon. He was

accompanied by the caretaker Provincial Minister for Home, Mir Zubair Jamali, Commissioner Quetta, Muhammad Hamza Shafqaat and Additional Inspector General of Police, Jawad Ahmed Dogar. Mr. Domki visited different main roads and bazaars including Jinnah road, Zarghoon road, Mission road, Gulistan road, Prince road, Bacha Khan chowk, Mannan chowk, Liaquat bazar and reviewed the routine life there.

During the course of visit, the Chief Minister expressed satisfaction while witnessing the normal life in different parts of the me-

tropolis.

He was also satisfied that general public and traders didn't become part of any illegal action or course, which is a welcoming.

He on the occasion stressed the need to adopt legal course to remove any reservation in accordance with the country's laws.

He said that the legal and peace course is solution to all issues. The Chief Minister also said that no such act that causes inconvenience to the general public is not fair.

He expressed the hope that the traders and general public would not be used

for any individual interests.

In the meantime, the caretaker Provincial Minister for Home, Mir Zubair Jamali, Commissioner Quetta, Muhammad Hamza Shafqaat and Additional Inspector General of Police, Jawad Ahmed Dogar briefed the caretaker Chief Minister about the overall law and order situation besides the steps taken for restoration of peace in the metropolis.



QUETTA: Caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki visiting different roads and shopping centers of Quetta city

PTI demands judicial probe into electoral rigging following ex-commissioner's 'confession'

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has called for an investigation into alleged irregularities and alterations in electoral outcomes by a judicial commission.

During a press conference, PTI leaders Barrister Gohar Ali Khan and Omar Ayub claimed that their party secured 180 seats across the country, but their majority in Punjab was minimised.

Citing the admission of rigging by former Rawalpindi commissioner Liaquat Ali Chhatta on Saturday, Gohar demanded the establishment of a judicial commission to investigate his confession, asserting that the former commissioner spoke out according to his conscience.

Omar Ayub, PTI's nominee for the position of prime minister, insisted that the judicial commission's report should be made public. He stressed that individuals mentioned by the former commissioner should not be part of the investigation, further suggesting that Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa and Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja remain separate from the proceedings.

Ayub maintained that JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman's admission regarding the engineered no-confidence vote against the former PTI government, along with Liaquat Ali Chhatta's confession regarding electoral malpractices, corroborated PTI's stance.

Bilawal rejects power-sharing formula offered to PPP

Asif Zardari will be PPP's candidate for presidency, reiterates ex-foreign minister

THATTA (INP) - Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, the chairman of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), on Sunday stated his party would be proposed a power-sharing arrangement in which the prime minister's position would be alternated between two parties.

Speaking at a rally in Thatta, Bilawal revealed, "I was offered to let one party hold the prime ministership for three years, and then the other could take over for the remaining two years."

Rejecting the proposal, the PPP chief said, "I refused because I don't want to attain the prime ministership through such means. If I were to become the prime minister, it

would be through the mandate of the Pakistani people."

Bilawal reiterated that his party would not take any ministries in the cabinet of the coalition government [being cobbled by the PML-N], but would vote for [its candidate for] the prime minister in the Center.

"If you want PPP's vote, then don't ask us to be part of the cabinet, just give projects for the people of Sindh."

Bilawal, however, announced that Asif Ali Zardari would be PPP's candidate in the presidential election.

He urged all political parties to work within the constitutional framework

and contribute to the nation's progress. He cautioned against divisive politics based on religious, ethnic or sectarian lines.

Challenging political figures Pir Pagara and Maulana Fazlur Rehman, Bilawal invited them to present all their election documents (Form 45s) to him. He pledged to contest elections against them if found guilty.

Regarding election grievances, Bilawal announced PPP's decision to gather complaints from supporters nationwide and address them through appropriate channels. He emphasised the importance of peaceful protest if legal recourse failed.



THATTA: Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addresses to his supporters during the public gathering meeting held in Thatta.

On call given by 4-Parties Alliance:

Wheel jam strike observed on national highways across Balochistan

Highways remained block on different locations; general public including women & elderly persons as well as transporters suffer due to blockade of roads across province

Independent Report

QUETTA: The wheel jam strike was observed on almost all national highways of the Balochistan province on Sunday. The call for observance of the wheel jam strike was given by the 4-Parties Alliance comprising Balochistan National Party (BNP), Pashtoonkhw Milli Awami Party (PKMAP), National Party and Hazara Democratic Party (HDP) against the alleged rigging in the results of general elections in Balochistan.

Following the wheel jam strike, the highways connecting Quetta to interior parts of the province and country remained blocked at different loca-

tions. The workers of four parties mainly BNP, PKMAP and NP created blockades and staged dharmas on different highways blocking the main road arteries of the province.

The Quetta-Chaman-Pishin-Muslim Bagh-Killa Saifullah and Loralai highway was blocked by the workers of four parties near Baleli and Kuchlak. Similarly, the Quetta-Kolpur-Mach-Sibi highway was blocked by BNP workers at Darakhshan Scheme suspending the traffic leading to Jaccobabad, Sukkur and then Punjab.

Moreover, the Quetta-Mastung-Karachi and Quetta-Taftan highway was blocked near Sona Khan police station located

in the outskirts of Quetta near western bypass.

The Quetta-Khuzdar-Karachi highway was also blocked at Kalat while Quetta-Harnai and Harnai-Punjab highway was blocked at different points in Harnai area.

Meanwhile, according to the reports, the Makran coastal highway was also blocked at Surbandan area suspending the movement of traffic from Karachi to Gwadar and other parts of Makran division. Similarly, Pasni zero point was blocked by the NP and BNP workers interrupting the flow of traffic from Gwadar to Karachi and Turbat.

Three die in motorcycle, car collision in Quetta

QUETTA (INP): Three persons were killed in a collision between a motorcycle and car on Airport Road in Quetta on Sunday.

Three die in road accident in Uthal

In yet another road accident in Balochistan, three people were killed when two passenger buses collided with each other on the Coastal Highway near Uthal city of the province.

Several others, including women and children, were injured in the incident. Similarly in Daska, Punjab, four friends were killed while another sustained serious injuries in a road accident.



LAHORE: Newly elected MPA from Balochistan Mir Asim Kurd Gailo meeting with President PML (N) Shahbaz Sharif.

Shehbaz Sharif calls for unity for nation's rebuilding

LAHORE (INP): Former prime minister and PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif has said on Sunday that instability in the country will benefit none, and dangers to the country's economy call for concerted efforts to build Pakistan.

Talking to the newly elected independent candidates from Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Shehbaz said that previously, too, the PML-N governments had saved the country from default, and this time too it

would be his priority as the prime minister of the country to do the same.

"Those bent upon spreading anarchy in the country are still doing the same thing they had been doing in the past," he said.

PML-N president was of the view that former prime minister Nawaz Sharif and the PML-N supremo Nawaz had always preferred national interests to his own. "What we intend to do is to save the country from crises."



ISLAMABAD: PTI leader Umar Ayub addresses press conference.

Parliamentary group of PML-N Balochistan's meets; discusses about formation of government

Independent Report

QUETTA: The parliamentary group of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Balochistan met here in Quetta the other day.

According to the PML-N sources, the meeting of party's parliamentary group was held with its provincial president, Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhail in the chair.

The meeting decided the matters about formation of government in Balochistan. In this regard,

Independent Report

QUETTA: The caretaker Provincial Minister for Information, Jan Achakzai has stated that the wheel jam strike of the four-parties alliance has been failed in the province.

In an official statement issued here on Sunday, the caretaker Minister Information said that all important highways remained open, however, flow of traffic remained lesser on some highways due to the closed holiday, Sunday. Jan Achakzai said that the Sardars and Nawabs have been punishing the common men for rejecting them in the 2024 general elections. However, they should not harm the welfare of general public, but should go for the legal forums, adding he stressed.



QUETTA: A view of traffic jam on the national highways due to Char Jamaati Ittihad protest against the alleged interference in the elections.

President summons senate session

ISLAMABAD (APP):

President Dr. Arif Alvi has summoned a session of the Senate to be held on February 19 (Monday) at 3 PM. The president summoned the session of the Senate in the exercise of the powers conferred by clause (1) of Article 54 of the Constitution, said a notification issued by the Senate Secretariat.

The Senate is likely to take up questions, calling attention to notices, legislative business, and matters of public importance.

Five passengers killed in Lasbela bus collision

LASBELA (INP):

At least five people were killed and several others sustained injuries when two passenger buses were collided on Coastal Highway Kund Malir area in the Lasbela district of Balochistan on Sunday.

According to rescue officials, the collision occurred at the Coastal Highway Kund Malir, a popular tourist spot. The victims were immediately transported to the DHQ Hospital for medical treatment, a private news channel reported. According to a Police source, one bus was heading from Karachi to Gwadar whereas the other from Gwadar to Karachi.

Three laborers killed during well cleaning in Quetta

QUETTA (APP): Three laborers were died on Sunday while cleaning a well at Sabzal Road Uzbek Chowk in Quetta.

According to the private news channel, the incident occurred due to gas filling during the cleaning of the well.

Two of the three laborers have been identified as Abdul Baki and Abdul Wali.

The bodies were extracted from the well and shifted to the nearby Bolan Medical Complex Hospital.

PPP to form govt in Balochistan with PML-N's support: Sarfraz Bugti

ISLAMABAD (Agencies):

Amid prevailing political uncertainty regarding the formation of government in the Centre, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader Sarfraz Bugti Sunday claimed that the party would form its government in Balochistan with the support of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). "The PML-N would be our ally in Balochistan [as it has] given us a clear signal to form our government [in the province]," Bugti said while addressing a press conference in Islamabad along with party's parliamentary committee members Haji Malik Shah and Sardar Sarbuland Khan.

His remarks come as the Bilawal Bhutto-led party is in pole position to form its government in the country's western province after securing 11 seats in the 51-member provincial assembly, whereas the PML-N bagged 10 seats.

Despite engaging in a war of words in the run-up to the elections, both parties, who have previously served as close allies during the Pakistan Democratic Movement's government, are on the way to once again emerge as key political stakeholders following the PPP's announcement to back the PML-N's candidate for the prime minister's post after one of the two parties managed to secure a simple majority in the polls.

Nine terrorists killed in two separate IBOs in KP

RAWALPINDI (Online):

Nine terrorists were gunned down by the security forces during two separate intelligence-based operations conducted on February 16 and 17 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province.

According to the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR), two terrorists including a high-value target identified as Rehmat Ullah alias Badar Mansur and Amjad alias Babri were killed in an intelligence-based operation conducted by the security forces in Tank District.

In another operation conducted in the South Waziristan District, after an intense fire exchange, seven terrorists were sent to hell. Weapons, ammunition, and explosives were also recovered from the killed terrorists, who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities in the area against the security forces as well as extortion and target killing of innocent civilians.

However, during the operation, a brave son of the soil, Sepoy Shahzeb Aslam (age 29 years; resident of district Haripur), having fought gallantly, embraced Shahadat (martyrdom).

"Security forces of Pakistan are determined to wipe out the menace of terrorism from the country and such sacrifices of our brave soldiers further strengthen our resolve," the ISPR said.



ISLAMABAD: Leader of Pakistan People's Party Sarfraz Bugti addressing a press conference in the Federal Capital.

11 corruption cases inquiries are pending against him Commissioner Rawalpindi has good terms with PTI leaders

By M. Ilyas

ISLAMABAD: Commissioner Rawalpindi Liaqat Ali Chatta, who has gained international fame after being accused of rigging elections under his watch, has been on good terms with PTI leaders and Lt Gen (ret'd) Faiz Hameed. While 11 corruption inquiries are also pending against him.

However, General (Rtd) Faiz Hameed's sources have denied any role in Chatta's press conference yesterday. Sources familiar with the matter have said that he was instrumental in acquiring land for Imran Khan's sister Uzma Khan, which was later converted into a settlement and is being investigated by the Punjab Anti-Corruption Establishment.

Uzma and her husband who are co-accused in this case and are currently on bail. Chatta himself is also facing investigation in ACE.

It is also known that Chatta was also close to former chief Faiz Hameed. A source privy to their relationship said that he (Faiz) issued instructions to him (Chatta) on three occasions to facilitate personal matters when General Faiz was the ISI chief. Similarly, Chatta's colleagues in the bureaucracy have also given statements regarding various incidents when they were given concessions. His closeness to Usman Buzdar was very evident

and this is evident from the fact that Buzdar's appointed Chatta as the commissioner of Dera Ghazi Khan division where he served in 2022 till the PTI government took over, not expelled through a motion of no confidence.

That was the time when he helped Uzma Khan to purchase land in Layya. In this regard, a meeting was held in the office of Chief Minister Buzdar. According to an insider, the Commissioner DG Khan Chatta recommended settlement of Akthi land in segments without which it was not possible to acquire it.

In this regard, an FIR was registered against Uzma Khan and her husband at the Dera Ghazi Khan police station accusing Uzma of acquiring 5261 kanals of land at a low price. According to the FIR, the land was worth Rs 6 billion, which was allegedly bought for Rs 13 crore through forgery.

Chatta's name is also included in his inquiry. Apart from this, 10 other inquiries are going on against him in which notices have been issued to him many times but he has not appeared even once.

Among the inquiries he is facing are allegations of corruption and wrongdoing that he took to approve the Development and Design Committee, misuse of authority for the Lahore Entertainment City, and illegal ownership of private land and money to private individuals. There are allegations of non-payment.



MULTAN: Karachi Kings team players celebrating after taking the wicket of Multan Sultans batter Muhammad Rizwan during the Pakistan Super League (PSL) Twenty20 cricket match at the Multan Cricket Stadium.



QUETTA: Workers of Char Jamaati Ittihad hold a protest against the alleged interference in the elections.

Ready to face arrest if it benefits Pakistan: Gandapur

Independent Report

PESHAWAR - Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) nominee for Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Gandapur, stated during a conversation with senior journalists in Peshawar that he is ready to face arrest if it benefits Pakistan.

He emphasized the need for an inquiry into the events of May 9, asserting that his party did not engage in any wrongdoing. Gandapur stressed the importance of advocating for the province's rights and called for support in this endeavor. He highlighted the

necessity of addressing the silence that has led to the current state of affairs in the province. Gandapur also called for an inquiry into why PTI supporters were not prevented from going to Rana Sanaulah's residence. He acknowledged that FIRs have been lodged against him in nine districts, including Lahore and Mianwali. Despite this, Gandapur urged for moving forward and focusing on institutional reform.

He pledged to enact laws to prevent illegal activities and emphasized a commitment to non-retaliation.

Dera police repulse terrorist attack on police station

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): The district police repulsed a terrorist attack on Chaudhwan police station last night.

According to a police spokesman, the unknown militants attacked the Chaudhwan Police Station with heavy weapons. The policemen on duty noticed the movement of terrorists through the thermal camera and successfully repelled the attack. However, the terrorists managed to flee by taking advantage of the darkness.

Later, the local people also came out of their homes by making announcements in the Masjid in support of the police against terrorists.

India crush England with record win to lead Test series 2-1

RAJKOT, India (AFP/APP): Yashvi Jaiswal hit an unbeaten double century to help India to its biggest-ever win Sunday, crushing England by 434 runs in the third Test to take a 2-1 lead in the series.

Chasing 557 for victory, England's batting fell like a pack of cards with the loss of eight wickets in the final session to be dismissed for 122 on day four in Rajkot.

"In Test cricket... when you're playing well, you have to make it big," Jaiswal told broadcasters after the stunning win.

"Test cricket is hard, but I thought that when I'm in there, I need to give my 100 percent," he said.

Ravindra Jadeja got Mark Wood out for 33 as the final wicket—and his fifth—and he kissed the pitch as India registered their greatest win in terms of runs. It was England's second-biggest Test loss since their 562-run defeat to Australia in 1934.

England lost their openers, including first-innings centurion Ben Duckett run out on four, before tea and Jadeja then rattled the middle-order with his left-arm spin. Jadeja was named player of the match for his seven wickets in the Test and 112 with the bat in the first innings.

FAFEN urges ECP to audit election results, proposes three-stage methodology

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN) has proposed a three-stage methodology for the audit of election results, urging the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to scrutinize the results of constituencies that have been duly challenged by political parties and candidates at the appropriate legal fora using data analytics and forensics to establish the legitimacy of the outcome of General Election (GE) 2024. Such an audit must include representatives nominated by the political parties concerned as well as independent observers to ensure the transparency and credibility of the process.

FAFEN has been advocating since 2013 for the Election Commission to conduct scrutiny of results of all constituencies before the notification of winners in an effort to strengthen the integrity of election outcomes and to minimize the post-election disputes that linger on in election tribunals beyond legally stipulated deadlines.

The post-GE-2024 situation warrants an urgent and prompt response by the Election Commission to ascertain the veracity of the claims of illegality and irregularities by political parties and candidates, and as a prerequisite to establish that the GE-2024 results truly reflect the

will of the people.

FAFEN's proposed audit was a technical investigation that was purely based on the physical evidence i.e. official election documentation available with the Election Commission under Section 99 of the Elections Act, 2017. These documents include:

tamper-evident bags containing (a) the packets containing the ballot papers each of which shall be sealed with the seal of the Presiding Officer or, if opened by the Returning Officer, with the seal of the Returning Officer; (b) the packets containing the counterfoils of issued ballot papers; (c) the packets containing the marked copies of the electoral rolls used in the poll; (d) the packets containing the Ballot Paper Account; (e) the packets containing results of the count, provisional and final consolidated statement of results of the count and final consolidated results; (f) the packets containing the Tendered Ballot Papers included in the count; the Tendered Ballot Papers excluded from the count; the Challenged Ballot Papers included in the count; the Challenged Ballot Papers excluded from the count; the Spoiled Ballot Papers; and (g) such other papers as the Commission may direct. FAFEN's election re-

sult audit methodology comprises the following three stages:

The first stage involves assessing the availability, authentication, completeness and correctness of the election documentation including the result forms, and the consistency of information within and amongst these forms.

The second stage involves ascertainment of material effect of unverified forms on election outcome and taking corrective action.

The third stage involves determination of the omission and commission and accountability of election officials.

For the conduct of election, the Commission performs its duties through its staff as well as with the support of the human resources taken from the executive and judiciary. The extensive logistical undertaking involved in conducting general elections for both federal and provincial assemblies requires the deployment of hundreds of thousands of officials seconded by the federal and provincial governments. For GE-2024, nearly 1.5 million election and polling officials were appointed. These officials managed the election operations including the counting, tabulation, and consolidation of results, which has led to controversies and disputes.

The election process

entails an exhaustive list of forms to be maintained to document every step of the process including the results. This documentation establishes an entire trail of the results to refer to in case of any controversy. However, these forms are never referred to after their preparation, save in case of an election petition that also remains undecided in many cases for several years.

Since most challenges to election results revolve around Form-45 and their subsequent consolidation, FAFEN urges the ECP to also clarify the legality of multiple copies of the forms that are generated on the Election Day. Under Election Act, 2017 and corresponding rules, there are multiple copies of Form 45:

1) copy sealed by the Presiding Officer in a temper-evident bag that is placed in the bag of election material; 2) picture of Form-45 transmitted by the Presiding Officer to the Returning Officer through mobile app; 3) original copy sealed in a temper-evident bag by the Presiding Officer for physically delivering it to the Returning Officer; 4) copy that is affixed by the Presiding Officer outside the polling stations; 5) copy that is retained by the Presiding Officer for own record; 6) copy sealed in a temper-evident bag by the Presiding Officer for dissemination to the District

Election Commissioner; 7) copies that are given by the Presiding Officer to polling agents at the polling stations; and 8) copy that is given by the Presiding Officer to the observer. The Elections Act, 2017 does not establish which copy will be considered legal in case the available and produced copies are different and duly signed and there is a dispute.

FAFEN has also called upon the Election Commission to encourage the political parties and candidates to promptly reach out to it with their complaints of illegality and violations of the Elections Act, 2017. According to Section 9(1) of the Act, if, from facts apparent on the face of the record and after such enquiry as it may deem necessary, the Commission is satisfied that by reason of grave illegality or such violation of the provisions of this Act or the Rules as have materially affected the result of the poll at one or more polling stations or in the whole constituency including implementation of an agreement restraining women from casting their votes, it shall make a declaration accordingly and call upon the voters in the concerned polling station or stations or in the whole constituency as the case may be, to recast their votes in the manner provided for by-elections.

Babar Azam rewrites PSL record books

LAHORE (INP): Peshawar Zalmi captain Babar Azam set another record in the Pakistan Super League (PSL) history, becoming first batsman to score 3,000 runs in the tournament.

Azam, a right-handed batsman, achieved a significant milestone by becoming the first player to reach 3000 runs in the PSL, surpassing any other player who has yet to breach the 2500-run mark. He achieved this feat in the second match of the ninth season of the PSL at Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium on Sunday.

Despite facing a challenging target of 207 runs, Azam exhibited his exceptional skills by reaching a fifty in just 29 balls. However, despite his impressive performance, scoring 68 runs, Zalmi fell short in their chase, thereby rendering Azam's brilliant knock in vain.

Azam's remarkable achievement unfolded over 80 innings, during which he amassed a total of 3004 runs at an impressive average of 44.83. His batting prowess is evident in his record, which includes 29 half-centuries and a century.

Javed Miandad offers his services to PCB chief for 'betterment' of cricket

LAHORE: (INP) - Pakistan former captain Javed Miandad offered his services for the betterment of the cricket in the country.

He offered his services during a meeting with the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman Mohsin Naqvi.

"I am available to contribute to the enhancement of cricket," Miandad affirmed. Miandad extended his congratulations to Naqvi on his appointment as PCB chairman and discussed strategies for promoting and developing Pakistan cricket on sustainable grounds.

Additionally, Miandad praised Caretaker Punjab Chief Minister Naqvi for the successful inauguration

of Pakistan Super League 9 in Lahore, expressing hope that under Naqvi's leadership, Pakistan cricket would reach new heights.

In response, Naqvi acknowledged Miandad's stature as a cricketing icon and expressed his desire to benefit from Miandad's expertise to restore Pakistan's original standing in international cricket.

Naqvi emphasized the importance of teamwork and consultation in strengthening the Pakistani team, with a focus on promoting domestic cricket to nurture talented players.

Naqvi was unanimously elected as the PCB chairman for the next three years on February 6.

Another Indian nefarious move to mentally upset innocent Kashmiris in IIOJK

MIRPUR (APP): In the wake of India's continual abortive attempts to perpetuate her forced and illegal hold of the major part of the internationally acknowledged dispute Jammu Kashmir state in her unlawful occupation absolutely against the wishes and aspirations of the population of the state, in her post-

August 5, 2019 sinister action abrogating the special status of the disputed territory, India has started colonizing the Kashmiri mind by telling them that if there is no tourism, Kashmir will be finished off, says a report reaching here Saturday from across the line of control (LoC).

Intellect class in the turbulent occupied valley, while commenting on the above Indian move, warned that the Kashmiris have to be made aware that their (Kashmiris) root of trade for 1000s of years was through Muzaffarabad to Central Asia as the ancient part of the Silk route.

"If our (Jammu and Kashmir's) natural routes are opened, we will progress more," a Kashmiri historian commented in occupied Srinagar on Friday while talking on social media, according to the report.

He underlined it as saying, "Muzaffarabad is 72

miles away, and New Delhi is 900 miles from Srinagar. Why should Kashmiris go thousands of miles away when a shorter trade route is available for the supply of locally produced items to South Asia through the traditional Silk route?" "It has taken me 33 years to this awakening," the independent observer commented according to the report.

The report revealed, quoting the independent Kashmiri observer, that "the fruit growers from the Indian-occupied Kashmir valley, especially Shopians, have to transport their productions to New Delhi. Their trucks are deliberately stopped. Either they are made to pay Rs 50000 per fruit truck or their fruit is rotten on the Jammu and Kashmir National Highway."

He emphasized that the Kashmiris need to be made aware that they knew 600 trades when Shah e Hamdan came to the ancient Himalayan state of Jammu and Kashmir with his 700 Saadat. "We will not die without Delhi's tourism," he underlined, adding, "In fact, we can have tourists from Iran and Central Asian Republics like Tajikistan, Bukhara, and Uzbekistan."

Two former top cricketers' entry into Peshawar Zalmi

PESHAWAR (APP): Two top former cricketers were given entry into the Peshawar Zalmi family when former Test cricketer Umar Gul and legendary batsman Muhammad Yousuf joined as bowling and batting consultants.

According to detail, Pakistan's former Test cricketer Umar Gul has been appointed bowling consultant for Peshawar Zalmi in the Pakistan Super League-9, while former

Test cricketer Mohammad Yousuf has been appointed batting consultant for Peshawar Zalmi.

The chairman of Peshawar Zalmi, Javed Afridi, welcomed Muhammad Yousuf and Umar Gul to the Zalmi family. Young, talented batsmen Saim Ayub, Muhammad Haris, Haseebullah, and others in the Peshawar Zalmi squad will get a chance to learn a lot from Muhammad Yousuf and Umar Gul.



LAHORE: Activists of Jamat-e-Islami (JI) are holding protest demonstration against alleged rigging in General Election 2024, at Lytton road in Lahore.

PSL 9: Gladiators emerge victorious in thriller against Peshawar Zalmi

Peshawar Zalmi fall short of 16 runs to complete massive 207-run target in second PSL 9 match

Sports Desk

LAHORE: Quetta Gladiators emerged victorious in a humdinger of a game against Peshawar Zalmi at Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium on Sunday, as the Babar Azam-led side fell short of 16 runs to reach the massive, 207-run target.

Thanks to the stellar 157-runs stand between Saud Shakeel and Jason Roy, Gladiators had good runs on the board and despite losing wickets, the side did manage to get past the 200-run mark.

Though the Zalmi started off with a bang but failed to chase the target as Quetta bowlers put in a remarkable effort in the death overs.

Azam top scored for his side by scoring 68 runs on 42 balls courtesy of eight boundaries but his efforts went in vain as his side fell 17 runs short of the total target set by the Gladiators.

Zalmi had a thrilling start, Saim Ayub and Azam were well set on the crease as they were heading towards 100 for no loss. How-

ever, in the ninth over, a misunderstanding between the two batters cost them a big blow.

Saim lost his wicket after scoring 42 runs after getting run out leaving his side 91-1 in 8.4 overs. Mohammad Haris came in after the left-handed batter's departure but he too walked back to the pavilion shortly after scoring just 7 runs.

Azam stayed on the crease as he continued to score for his side, but the Zalmi skipper mistimed his shot on mystery spinner's Abrar Ahmed ball and was caught by Mohammad Wasim Jr.

The wickets kept falling and the outstanding effort by the Gladiators' bowlers restricted Zalmi to 190 for six wickets, winning the match by 16 runs. Earlier in the first innings, Jason Roy and Saud Shakeel wreaked havoc as they thrashed Zalmi's bowler all over the ground and built a 157-run partnership.

Shakeel departed after scoring a brilliant 74 off 47, laced with ten boundaries, which included four sixes as well. Gladiators' skipper Rilee Rossouw joined the party and hit the six off the first ball, followed by a boundary two balls later, but Mohammad Zeeshan castled him in the next over to end his brief stay.

Roy was departed by Salman Irshad in the 18th over with 185 runs on the board after playing a clinical knock of 75 runs from 48 balls, featuring nine boundaries and two sixes.

Sherfane Rutherford played a 20-run cameo off 13 balls before getting out in the last over, followed by Mohammad Wasim who scored a boundary and departed on the next ball.

Khawaja Nafay (6) hit the last ball for four to lift the team's total to 206 in their allocated 20 overs.

Irshad led the bowling charts for the Peshawar Zalmi with figures of 3-38, while Wood and Zeeshan contributed with one wicket each.



KARACHI: Visitors are reading books on a stall during Karachi Literature Festival 2024 at a local hotel, in the Provincial Capital.



ISLAMABAD: People are busy in purchasing grocery at Sunday weekly bazaar at Aabpara area during rain in the Federal Capital.

17 years on, India denying justice to families of Samjhauta Express victims

ISLAMABAD (APP): Despite the lapse of 17 years, the Indian government continues to deny justice to the families of victims of the Samjhauta Express terrorist attack despite the availability of evidence.

On February 18, 2007, 68 persons, mostly Pakistanis, were killed in bomb blasts in Samjhauta Express, a cross-border train service between Pakistan and India, said a report released, on Sunday by Kashmir Media Service. The report maintained that the bombs were planted by Hindutva terrorists with the connivance of Indian secret agencies.

The report deplored that the Indian government continues to deny justice to the families of victims of

the heinous act despite the availability of evidence. It said that the bombs were planted by Hindutva terrorists in connivance with the Indian secret agencies to malign Pakistan.

The report maintained that the acquittal of those involved in blasts showed Hindutva extremists enjoy impunity under Modi-led BJP/RSS/VHP and Bajrang Dal govt in India and that the Indian court decision in this regard was a reflection of Indian state policy to protect the Hindutva terrorists.

Despite the passage of 17 years, families of victims of the Samjhauta Express terrorist attack still await justice while the Indian court acquitted four culprits involved in the Samjhauta Express blast

owing to their Hindutva connections

The Samjhauta Express bombing was a false flag operation aimed at maligning Pakistan while the Indian secret agencies like RAW have staged several Samjhauta Express blasts like false flag ops to defame Pakistan.

The international community and peace-loving countries must realize that the Indian court decision in this regard was a reflection of Indian state policy to protect Hindu terrorists.

It lamented that Indian agencies had blamed a Pakistan-based group despite seeing a clear Hindutva link to the Samjhauta blast.

The report said that Samjhauta Express bombing was a false flag operation aimed at maligning Pakistan.

Friends of Margalla Hills, civil society protests; demand CDA to de-seal visitors' info centers

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Friends of Margalla Hills National Park and members of the civil society on Sunday staged a peaceful protest outside the CDA-sealed visitors' information center at Trail-5 to condemn the civic agency's move that deprived many national and international tourists of credible knowledge on the wildlife and nature of the national park.

The protestors held placards with slogans written on it particularly "Save Margalla Hills", "CDA Leave Margalla Hills", "STOP Destroying Margalla Hills" and chanted slogans "We will have to protect Margalla Hills".

A protestor requesting anonymity told APP that the demonstration and rally of Islamabad's civil society and friends of Margalla Hills at Trail-5 was against

the sealing of visitor information centers by the Capital Development Authority (CDA).

He said the Islamabad Wildlife Management Board (IWMB) staff was holding special awareness sessions for the masses visiting the national park. "After myriad of efforts, all the trails of the Margalla Hills were made plastic and littering free which was mainly due to the dedicated efforts of the Board staff and the members of the civil society supporting its nature preservation efforts," he added.

He added that the protestors only demanded the federal capital's civic agency de-sealing of the Visitor Information Centres at Trail-5 & 6. "The CDA illegally sealed the visitor information centers on Trail-5 & 6, where many domes-

169 news bulletins broadcast through ICP Web TV

ISLAMABAD (APP): Under the special directives of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police (ICP) broadcast 169 news bulletins through its Web TV, which was formally launched in August 2023.

An ICP public relations officer said, since its inception, not only news bulletins but traffic-related awareness videos were also regularly released on web TV for the awareness of the citizens of Islamabad.

Moreover, 169 news bulletins have been aired on Web TV, while 30 road safety programs have also been aired to educate citizens about road safety, which plays an important role in educating citizens about the rules and regulations of road safety.

As Islamabad Capital Police is responsible for the protection of life and property of the citizens, it also provides opportunities to keep them fully aware of the regular situations and events of Islamabad Capital Police.



ISLAMABAD: Mechanics sit around the fire to warm their hands as the temperature drops due to rain in the city.

Jamal Shah's painting exhibition unveiled at PNCA

Independent Report
ISLAMABAD: Acclaimed Miniature Painting Ustad Bashir Ahmed on Sunday inaugurated Jamal Shah's painting exhibition titled "Celebration of a Dehumanized Existence" at the Pakistan National Council of the Arts.

themes so inquisitorial, soul-searching, and heart-breaking that it seems almost trite to describe his subject matter. His work inserted itself into the viewer's consciousness through the way he seemed to fumble toward an understanding of how he should respond to the world he lives in. The return to painting reaffirmed Shah's belief in the permanence and intellectual nature of the medium, the sense that the painted image necessitates a singular, uncompromising confrontation between the viewer and the object.

The collection, which bears a universal interpretation transcending peace, positivity, and harmony, was praised for its profound symbolism and message.

Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture, Jamal Shah is a renowned visual artist. He has used the Murgha symbolically in most paintings to create an ambience of lampooning, remorse, and mounting struggle. The Minister believed that humanity's salvation lies in making a positive contribution towards the well-being of the less fortunate, who are devoid of daily bread and healthcare.

Jamal Shah's paintings and sculptures are about

colonialism and reflects on the decline of working-class identity in confrontation with the right-wing programs.

It is clear that these paintings, titled "Celebration of a Dehumanized Existence," on show at PNCA National Art Gallery, Islamabad, are a response to a particular set of historical circumstances. This helps explain both the polemics and the urgency of the imagery.

In the first instance, Shah has saturated the pictures with symbols, allusions, and questions. There are the recurring emblems of working-class struggle: the spade and the axe, the monkeys, and labor cast as a murgha – a stress position used as corporal punishment. The figures take their cue from an earlier installation titled Situations 101, created for the Karachi Biennale 2017, and later re-installed at the PNCA, Islamabad, that conflated the human figure with social realism as public art.

He has been almost unique in reinventing the paradigm of socialist painting. Consequently, his account of the imagery focuses attention on the notion that the combined images present a history of the working class – the dispossessed and the disenfranchised.

Hence, the new body of paintings offers a memoir of the victory of British

APHC expresses concern over continued operations by Indian troops in IIOJK

ISLAMABAD (APP): The All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) has expressed deep concern over the continued cordon and search operations and house raids on the peace and freedom-loving people and activists by the Indian troops and other intelligence agencies in the Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

According to Kashmir Media Service, the APHC in a statement issued in Srinagar said the continued operations were aimed at terrorizing the freedom and peace-loving people in the territory.

The statement said the youth are being continuously arrested and summoned to police stations, adding all these pressure tactics have failed to deter the freedom-loving people of Kashmir from pursuing their legitimate demand for right to self-determination.

The APHC said Jammu and Kashmir is neither a law and order prob-

lem nor a land dispute that can be resolved by military and brutal acts. Contrary to this, it added, Kashmir is purely a political dispute that has been recognized by the United Nations and its Security Council as an issue of right to self-determination.

The statement, taking a dig at the so-called and puppet Hindutva Bharatiya Janata Party regime for its heinous criminal record in IIOJK, said the freedom and peace-loving people of Jammu and Kashmir only want their political and birthright to self-determination, which is a peaceful and democratic formula for settlement of the lingering Kashmir dispute. The statement appealed to the United Nations Secretary General, António Guterres, to help settle the Kashmir dispute according to the resolutions of the World Body and the aspirations of the Kashmiri people and put pressure on India to stop human rights violations in IIOJK.



ISLAMABAD: A mechanic repairs an excavator at his work place.

Cop injured in Rawalpindi shootout with suspects

ISLAMABAD (APP): A police personnel was shot and injured during an attempt to apprehend a proclaimed offender in the precincts of Dhamial Police Station in Rawalpindi on Sunday.

According to the police, Sub-Inspector Inaam Ali, along with other personnel, went to arrest a suspect when his accomplices opened fire on the police party, resulting in the injury of the officer.

The injured police personnel has been transferred to the hospital for medical treatment, according to a private news channel.

Two-day trials of PM Youth Talent Hunt Judo to be held on Feb 19, 20

ISLAMABAD (APP): Two-day trials of the Prime Minister Youth Talent Hunt Judo (Women) organized by Rawalpindi Women University under the auspices of Higher Education Commission (HEC) Islamabad will be held at Rawalpindi Women University on February 19-20.

The Rawalpindi Women's University has already conducted successful two-day trials at Hunza, Skardu, Mirpur, and Muzaffarabad regions took place on January 24-25, January 26-27, February 02-03, and February 16-17, respectively.

Prof. Dr. Anila Kamal, Vice Chancellor of Rawalpindi Women's University, expressed her satisfaction with the full participation of women athletes from diverse regions.

She commended the efforts of the HEC in facilitating the event and providing the necessary support. The HEC and Rawalpindi Women's University are dedicated to promote and nurturing the potential of female athletes nationwide, she added.

Sadaf Parveen, Assistant Director of Sports Rawalpindi Women's University, served as the organizing secretary for the trials. She acknowledged the abundance of talent in every region. Female players from every region participated in the trials and showed their skills with full enthusiasm. Renowned personalities from each region also participated in the trials and encouraged the women athletes.

Registered a data of 313 house servants of 761 houses from Khanna and Bani Gala Police Station jurisdiction.

The purpose of this campaign is to avoid any untoward incident by maintaining law and order in the federal capital adding that the registration of tenants and domestic workers could not only keep a close watch on miscreants but also prevent the elements involved in any kind of suspicious activity.

He said citizens are also requested that they can ask for the identity of a person if someone dressed in civil clothes comes to their house in order to collect the data.

Nepali envoy explores religious, matters with custodian of Bari Imam shrine

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador Tapas Adikari of Nepal to Pakistan engaged in discussions at Pir House, the custodian of Bari Imam shrine with Sajjada Nasheen Pir Syed Haider Ali Gilani covering bilateral, regional, religious, and spiritual topics. The meeting delved into various subjects, including inter-faith harmony, Sufism, and the identity of Auliya Allah. Emphasizing Islam's emphasis on human dignity over divisions, the Sajjada Nasheen highlighted Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH).

Met office predicts snowfall in Murree from today

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) on Sunday predicted snowfall and torrential rain in Murree from today, whereas cold grips northern and upper regions of the country.

"As of today, there is a 70 percent chance of snowfall in Murree, and the weather conditions are expected to remain uncertain until February 22," said the weather forecasting officer.

Re-polling in six polling stations for NA-43 today

ISLAMABAD (APP): Re-polling in six polling stations of NA-43, Tank-cum-Dera Ismael Khan, will be held on Monday, with all arrangements in place.

According to the ECP spokesperson, re-polling in these six polling stations, initially planned for Feb 17, has been moved to Feb 19. The polling on Feb 8 was interrupted because of the law and order situation.

The ECP has instructed the Chief Secretary, Inspector General of Police, and other law enforcement agencies of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to coordinate and ensure a conducive environment for the public in this matter.

The polling will be continued uninterrupted from 8 am to 5 pm.

In NA-43, Dawar Khan Kundi, an independent candidate, emerged victorious with 63,556 votes.

Renowned Pashto poet Hamza Shinwari remembered

ISLAMABAD (APP): The 29th death anniversary of renowned Pashto poet, writer, novelist, translator and the father of Pashto ghazal Amir Hamza Khan Shinwari was observed on Sunday. Shinwari was born in Landi Kotal. After matriculation, he became inclined towards the literary arts. In 1935, he wrote the first Pashto drama, 'Zamindar,' for All India Radio Peshawar, followed by scripting the story, dialogues, and lyrics for the first Pashto film, 'Laila Majnoon,' released from Bombay in 1941. Apart from writing, he also directed and performed playback singing duties.

Following the establishment of Pakistan, Hamza Shinwari penned numerous dramas, features, and speeches for Radio Pakistan Peshawar. As a translator, he rendered translation of Rahman

Baba's 204 ghazals into Urdu, while translating Allama Iqbal's 'Javid Nama' and 'Armughan-e-Hijaz' into Pashto. He also translated 'Nahjul Balagha' into Pashto.

Amir Hamza Shinwari contributed to every genre of Pashto literature, leaving behind a rich legacy in mysticism, poetry, psychology, and culture through numerous prose and poetic works. His work 'Tajalliyat-e-Mohammadiya' is considered as a seminal work in Pashto Sufi literature.

He is respectfully remembered as 'Hamza Baba' or the 'Father of Pashto Ghazal'. It is believed that he introduced the ghazal in Pashto poetry. Amir Hamza Shinwari also served as the editor of the Pashto page of the English newspaper 'Khyber Mail', where he contributed daily columns under the title 'Zhor Fikrona' (Deep Thoughts).



ISLAMABAD: Commuters getting shelter under the bridge to avoid the rain that experienced in the city.

Campaign for registration of house servants and tenants data in full swing

Independent Report
ISLAMABAD: According to details, following the special orders of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police "Knock the Door" campaign for the registration of employees and tenants is in full swing, a public relations officer said.

He said that, during this campaign various teams of Islamabad Capital Police are going to the streets and door-to-door to ensure the registration of tenants and domestic workers as well as to inquire about the problems faced by the citizens.

In this regard, the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) Islamabad has



ISLAMABAD: Visitors feeding Zebras at a roadside Zoo at the green belt area of Sector F-8 in the city.

Daily Voice of Masses Independent

Monday February 19, 2024

Chaos unfolding

It seems there will be no avoiding the inevitable for the ECP. Rawalpindi commissioner Liaquat Ali Chattha's Saturday press conference, during which he dropped bombshell allegations against the CEC, has strengthened the demands for an immediate and independent audit of election results. The senior officer, while expressing regret for "facilitating" the rigging of election results, asked to be punished while also holding the respective heads of the judiciary and ECP responsible for "the theft of the people's mandate".

Lending credence to allegations that have been made by scores of contestants from different political parties over the past 10 days or so, Mr Chattha said that, on his orders, candidates who were winning with large margins in the constituencies of the Rawalpindi division were made to lose, while the losing candidates were declared victorious.

"I am taking responsibility for this wrongdoing and telling you that the chief election commissioner and the chief justice are also completely involved," he alleged.

A commissioner is no ordinary officer. They are some of the most powerful bureaucrats in service, handpicked by the state to oversee entire administrative divisions. By virtue of their position, they exercise immense power and influence over the machinery of the state. It is, therefore, no surprise that Mr Chattha's 'confession' has caused quite a storm. It has been widely extolled as an example of a bureaucrat resisting pressures from powerful quarters and choosing to stand on the right side of history.

However, one must also remain wary of confirmation bias. Humans have a tendency to believe anything that affirms what we already hold to be true. For this reason, it is in everyone's best interest that Mr Chattha's claims are immediately and thoroughly investigated and that any supporting evidence that is unearthed be brought before the public. The claims he has made cannot be dismissed; at the same time, however, one must exercise increased prudence during times of growing uncertainty.

These elections will be remembered as perhaps the most controversial electoral exercise held in the last few decades. The credit for this unforgettable ignominy will accrue mainly to the ECP, which, despite being empowered by the law in every possible manner to conduct "free, fair, impartial and inclusive" polls, betrayed its mandate in the worst possible way.

Its failure to ensure transparency in the vote-counting process, in particular, has caused unaffordable chaos, with multiple stakeholders now unwilling to accept the results given how stark the irregularities seem. Instead of addressing the public's apprehensions or assuring them that issues in results tabulation will be promptly looked into, the ECP has chosen to stay mum. Now, much more serious allegations are being levelled against senior officials of the state. The commission must wake up. Its silence is causing irreparable harm.

Muhammad Amir Rana

It all started with the nationwide suspension of mobile phone services on election day. Poll managers might not have realised that this suspension would aggravate political chaos, which could lead towards a demand for fresh elections.

Though the caretaker government claimed it had suspended mobile phone services due to security concerns, the Election Commission and other concerned departments and ministries were reportedly unaware a day before the election whether a suspension would be necessary. This confusion fuelled debate that the election results could have been manipulated under the cover of the communication blackout.

While rigging charges and election day irregularities are not new in Pakistan, the dust usually settles after a few weeks, with political parties and losing candidates making compromises. Only a few continue their legal battles. In 2013, the PTI launched a massive anti-rigging campaign, maintaining pressure on the gov-

ernment through protests. With the poll managers on their side, they were confident of eventually coming to power. Meanwhile, the PML-N continued to rule in a compromised manner.

The managers seemed to believe that the political fervour would subside after the formation of the new government. While we may see temporary appeasement, tampering with election results weakens the country's power structures and erodes public faith in the system. As scholar Adil Najam rightly points out, it is not the economy but the loss of faith in the state by its citizens that is the biggest challenge emerging from this election.

The security concerns were genuine as general elections loomed; Islamist militants and Baloch insurgents had intensified their attacks to disrupt and discredit the democratic process. From Feb 1 to Feb 9, 36 out of 63 reported terrorist attacks were directly linked to election violence.

Most of these attacks occurred in Balochistan's central and Makran regions and Pakhtun-dominated districts. While threats persisted in Dera Ismail Khan

and North Waziristan in KP, these largely mirrored previous trends.

The pattern of threats was clear, with identified territories and known locations of heightened risk. Law-enforcement agencies knew the intensity of attacks and could have devised security plans accordingly. However, shutting down mobile services nationwide appeared unnecessary and potentially detrimental to the democratic exercise. Despite the suspension of the mobile phone services, the terrorists managed 11 attacks in the high-risk areas mentioned.

The state has invested heavily in developing counterterrorism infrastructure, including dedicated departments, such as the National Counter Terrorism Authority, specialised security cells, and forces. If these institutions cannot formulate a comprehensive security plan for elections, the state and incoming parliament must critically analyse their performance and resource allocation.

It was alarming that just after the polls, the TTP issued a statement addressing the JUI-F and Jamaat-Islami to say that the ma-

nipulated democratic system would not allow religious parties to come to power. The right path, according to them, was to join their ranks to topple the system and bring a Taliban-style system to the country. While the TTP's stance is not new and does not likely inspire the religious parties' leadership, their statement fuels the ongoing discourse on the country's power elites. Baloch insurgents share similar views, asserting that the manipulated electoral process will not heal the Baloch people's wounds.

At this juncture in history, Pakistan needed the most transparent elections ever held to restore the people's faith in the system. Some speculate that the poll managers were following a different template, where parties and individuals showing resistance to the status quo were deemed unacceptable.

Establishments often focus on imposing order, frequently at the expense of political and social order. They may believe that order brings discipline and stability to society and governance, but they always neglect to consider how their

policies erode their legitimacy to impose order.

At least the perception is deepening in Balochistan, where nationalist parties have become alienated, targeted by insurgents, and victims of the poll managers' manipulations. Malik Siraj, a US-based journalist, has analysed the state's approach in Balochistan well. He describes how the establishment and caretaker government brought the province back to the Musharraf era, when Baloch alienation peaked. He argues that the situation will aggravate if someone like Sarfraz Bugti, who shares that mindset, is brought to power in the province. This would erode the confidence the previous government had tried to rebuild.

It is now clear that a politician who sensed the changing political winds was Maulana Fazlur Rehman. He realised this was the right time to align himself with the rapidly growing anti-establishment sentiment. In a TV interview on a private channel, he claimed that the no-confidence motion that ousted former prime minister Imran Khan was tabled on the directives of former army chief Gen Qamar Javed

Bajwa. He further claimed that he opposed the no-confidence move. While his claim has been contested, it paved the way for him to join the PTI-led anti-establishment camp. Meanwhile, he has secured 11 provincial seats in Balochistan, exploiting the rigging narrative. Quetta-based journalists believe that the maulana's mandate is different from the JUI-F's actual electoral strength on the ground.

Maulana Fazlur Rehman has skillfully managed to break the ice with his long-time nemesis, but the longevity of this relationship remains to be determined. In that case, any alliance with the establishment would entail higher costs than the benefits of shared power at the centre and in Balochistan.

The political crisis seems entrenched, with no immediate end in sight. One potential path forward lies with the new government. By acting judiciously and independently, it can rebuild public trust. However, political actors remain paralysed, unwilling to move without the establishment's tacit approval. -- Courtesy Dawn

A Kafkaesque nightmare

Ghazi Salahuddin

What would a Charles Dickens, or a Dostoevsky or a Manto do with today's Pakistan, in terms of investing its intriguing socio-political realities into classic fiction? Times of upheaval, we know, have generally inspired great writers. And we are certainly living in interesting times in this country.

Over a week after the contested general elections, the outcome remains uncertain. The numbers game is continuing. Almost every party has complaints about irregularities. It is also rather difficult to decipher the split mandate. There is a growing sense of disorder and the tempo of political protest is rising. New alliances are being forged and old rivalries are becoming more antagonistic.

One reason why I am thinking about how the overall situation of the country would be interpreted by a creative writer is that media analysts are apparently not able to get a hang of it. They may feel constrained by their own partisan feelings and be professionally restricted by the oppressive media environment.

Besides, it is my understanding that writers and literary critics are usually good judges of the human condition and have the advantage of resorting to parables and metaphors. Poets would also do a better job of providing emotional expression to the feelings of sensitive and discerning citizens.

I was invited this week to speak on Faiz by an educational institution and had the opportunity to relate the poet's verse to specific moments in our history. That is how Faiz had chronicled our collective experiences during specific periods. It is interesting how poetry, and not just of Faiz, comes to our rescue when we feel bewildered by the waywardness of our political or administrative leaders.

There is another reason why my attention is diverted from specific political developments that make headlines. This is the Karachi Literature Festival weekend, a major social and cultural event that brings a large number of creative and learned individuals together. This is the 15th edition of what has become an institution, though it is somewhat

subdued this time.

Incidentally, conversations at a literary festival invariably remain hinged on current national affairs, partly because a large number of books are launched and reviewed. This KLF's theme is: 'Sustainability: Words changing Minds'. Still, there is to be no escape from the major political and social developments of our times. It would not be possible to ignore the aftershocks of the elections that obviously have the potential to create a lot of trouble for all leading players.

We know that 2024 is the year of the elections. Citizens of 70 countries – more than half of the global population – are participating in this democratic exercise and observers agree that in most cases, the elections will neither be free nor fair. The prospect of what can happen in the United States, supposedly the citadel of democracy, is really alarming.

In my column last week, I had noted how comedian Trevor Noah had called Imran Khan Trump's twin way back in 2018. Even now, Pakistan

has its Imran Khan and America has its Donald Trump and both have a committed cult following.

There can, of course, be no comparison between the United States and this impoverished star-crossed country. But I was struck by this headline of Paul Krugman's column in The New York Times this week: 'Why I am deeply worried for America'. Wouldn't this feeling be more appropriate for Pakistan? Anyhow, Paul Krugman wrote: "It now seems entirely possible that within the next year, American democracy could be irretrievably altered".

What can happen in Pakistan is sure to be more fearful. The crisis that is building up is rooted not just in the political wrangles that the widely disputed elections have brought to the surface. The economy is one glaring example that we can readily cite. In fact, the entire social order is in tatters. And this broken society has nurtured the politics that we have, marked by hatred, intolerance, greed, and an insane pursuit of power. The Pakistan we know is in the

process of being turned upside down.

Yes, this can be a great story to be told by a writer who can grasp the epic scale of this tragedy. After all, we are the fifth largest country in the world in terms of population, with more than 60 percent of its people below the age of 30 – a vast multitude that is mostly deprived of education and any kind of social protection.

At one level, this is a story of two dynasties and one dynast, buffeted by a variety of rudderless factions. There is this impression that these leaders have generated a high wave of political enthusiasm that has resulted in a bitter struggle for power. But the elections held on February 8 had a lower turnout than in 2018 – coming down from 52 percent to about 48 percent. If the elections were rigged, the actual voters would have been less than even 48 percent.

There are many twists in the tale. Consider the incongruity of Maulana Fazlur Rehman consorting with a delegation of Imran Khan's party. An entire volume

can be based on Imran's choice of Ali Amin Gandapur to become the chief minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the province where the PTI independents have a large majority.

Here is the spectacle of a leader who is passionately followed by so many educated and cultured people, including the DHA begums and emancipated young women, selecting one of the most misogynistic politicians in the country for the only post of authority his party has secured in these elections. From the point of view of telling an exciting story, Gandapur certainly has a colourful past. There is so much more that breaks your heart. It is this scenario that makes me wonder if Pakistan is slipping into a Kafkaesque nightmare. Yes, I am invoking Franz Kafka, whose characters often faced absurd situations. His work is characterized by anxiety and alienation. The expression 'Kafkaesque' describes a situation that is "extremely unpleasant, frightening and confusing". Is this not the situation that we confront in Pakistan at this time? -- Courtesy TheNews

All about women

Muna Khan

I understand that politics is the art of compromise, but why must women's bodies be sacrificed at the altar of deal-making?

This question weighs heavily on my mind, but I've accepted this is just the way things are going to be here. Men accused of sexual assault, for example, will be awarded seats because that crime won't be considered as grievous as their opponents' loot maar. I was reminded of just how little value is placed on women when news of Imran Khan's decision to nominate Amin Gandapur broke.

I understand enough politics to know that you won't find a perfect candidate or one that will appeal to various stakeholders. However, since Gandapur's name was announced, many questions were raised across prime time shows, leading with his alleged role in May 9 violence. It would be grossly unfair to reward him with such a high seat when people are imprisoned on the same charges. Many people brought up his sexist remarks made at jalsas about Maryam Nawaz, saying she spent Rs80m on taxpayers' money on cosmetic surgery. (It was not denounced by the party leadership or supporters.) What few mentioned on mainstream media, but it figured on social media, were the serious allegations about his alleged support to the perpetrators of a crime where a teenage girl was stripped and paraded naked in his native D.I. Khan in 2017. He has denied those charges.

That the chairman thought it more important to send a certain message to the country with Gandapur's nomination is the reminder I needed

about women being sacrificed lambs again and again in deal-making. What disappoints me the most is the women who support this. I'm talking about the party supporters who blast 'feminists' for not standing up for a host of issues related to PTI but stay silent when women are thrown under the bus by their party leadership. Gandapur should not be the hill anyone wants to die on.

It is possible to support a party and criticise its policies. PTI has some of the most passionate women supporters and leaders, many of whom do not subscribe to these horrendous views. I hope they will take co-urage and denounce anti-women rhetoric.

Unfortunately, Gandapur is not alone in the brazen display of misogyny but how can we make it unacceptable to hold such views, at least in public office? You can't eradicate misogyny but surely there is another road away from systems built on a disregard for women's participation in public life.

This is why language matters, especially if they frame policies.

Remember when we celebrated Afghans for having 'broken the shackles of slavery'? It demonstrated a lack of thought to the consequences the Taliban's return to power will have on women. Today, there is no indication when the Taliban will lift a ban on secondary education for girls, or working in government or travelling far without a male relative or even going to parks. Social services, like the healthcare sector, are in a dire state. There is a cost to this ban on women's participation in the country's progress. The UNDP put a figure on it: an estimated five per cent of the country's GDP.

Perhaps one way forward is to stop this n-king of issues as women's issues. No issue only impacts women – be it her health or her freedom of movement. Women's issues impact everyone; they require urgent redressal, which won't happen if their well-being is an afterthought; if she herself perceives her safety, health, access to services was not taken into consideration when creating XYZ policy.

We should strive to live in a country where people think twice before saying something sexist for ratings or giggles. Inst-e-ad, we live in a country where the portrayal of toxic masculinity, domestic violence and regressive female roles are considered ratings gold. Our pace of reforms towards gender equality is painfully slow. We ranked 142 out of 146 countries on the Global Gender Gap report in 2023; it was 145 out of 146 in 2022. This is nothing to cheer.

The small optimist in me says things don't have to be this way. Pakistan doesn't have to keep featuring in lists of worst co-ountries for women's rights. That there is more to women than their reproductive ability or place in the family or ties to power.

I understand the new government has the economy as its foremost priority but stability cannot come if half the country's demographic is ignored. Policies must include contributions women can make in stabilising Pakistan. Investments must be made in sectors that will enable their full participation, starting with health and education, which will lead to an increase in the labour force. All TV analysts are saying the new government has to take tough decisions. I hope they will make the right ones, too. -- Courtesy Dawn

GB without rights

Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry

Mohammad Hussain, who hails from Ghanche in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) and has been working in a household in Lahore, watched in despair as the whole of Pakistan, except for his own fellow Baltis, went to vote for their preferred candidates in the Feb 8 election. Hussain asked his boss why his folks were not allowed to vote. He could not understand the complex answer to this simple question.

GB's political fate has been hanging in the balance for the past seven decades, even though on the eve of partition, the people of Gilgit Agency and many other northern areas, who had hardly accepted the suzerainty of the Dogra rulers, expressed their wish to join Pakistan. However, the political fate of these territories got linked to the dispute between India and Pakistan over Jammu and Kashmir. Ever since, the territories of Gilgit, Skardu, Diamer, Astore, Ghanche, Ghizer, and Hunza have been under Pakistan's administrative control. Their people join the civil and armed services, carry Pakistan national identity cards, and for all practical purposes are Pakistanis. Yet, they cannot join our National Assembly and Senate to participate in Pakistan's governance.

Successive governments have tried to enhance GB's administrative autonomy, particularly in 2009 and 2018, but have fallen well short of what the people of GB have repeatedly demanded: full integration into Pakistan. In January 2019, the Supreme Court extended its jurisdiction to GB, creating an anomaly, because constitutionally GB was not a part of Pakistan. In March

2021, the GB Legislative Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution demanding provisional provincial status with representation in the constitutional bodies of Pakistan. Further, GB residents feel that while Pakistan took from the resources of GB, it was reluctant to give it constitutional status.

There is political consensus in Pakistan to admit GB as a provisional province. Under prime minister Nawaz Sharif, the Sartaj Aziz Committee recommended in 2016 giving GB a provisional provincial status. Prime minister Imran Khan's government had also announced in 2020 that GB would be granted a provisional provincial status. And yet, the status quo is so hard to break, mainly because the integration of these territories into Pakistan could undermine the UNSC resolutions calling for determining the political fate of the entire state of Jammu and Kashmir through a plebiscite under UN auspices. So, for nearly 76 years, the people of GB have been waiting for the plebiscite.

Is such a plebiscite likely to happen anytime soon? The ground reality is that India has consistently and brazenly refused to implement UNSC resolutions on the Kashmir dispute. The Modi government went a step further to annex the occupied territory in August 2019, and is currently engaged in demographic and electoral engineering to change the Muslim-majority status of India-occupied Kashmir in blatant violation of the UNSC resolutions.

However, given India's large market and strategic partnership with the US, there is no real pressure of the international community on India to fulfil its obligations under the resolu-

tions. So, in practical terms, the prospects of India agreeing to hold the plebiscite are extremely low. If that is the ground reality, then the people of GB wonder how much longer they have to wait to get their right to self-determination recognised.

Understandably, integrating GB could have implications for Pakistan's legal position on the Kashmir dispute. Hence, the suggestion has been to keep the integration provisional and subject to the final settlement of the Kashmir dispute. However, there are other factors that must not be ignored. Firstly, the people of GB have a right to self-determination, which is a fundamental right that overrides other considerations.

Secondly, given the salience of our relationship with Beijing, GB provides the vital geographical link to China and is central to the implementation of CPEC. Formally integrating GB will give full constitutional protection to CPEC-related and other international investments in GB. Thirdly, ignoring the consistently expressed desire of the people of GB to join Pakistan is creating a sense of alienation in GB, which could be exploited by the detractors of Pakistan. As it is, BJP leaders in India have sharpened their rhetoric of claim on these territories.

In view of these arguments, it is a strategic imperative that GB be integrated into Pakistan as a provisional province without further delay and its people be recognised as citizens of Pakistan with full rights admissible under the Constitution of Pakistan, pending a final settlement of the Kashmir dispute. -- Courtesy Dawn

Governor pays rich tribute to Nawab Sadiq for education contributions

BAHAWALPUR (APP): Governor of Punjab and Chairman of the Board of Governors of Sadiq Public School, Muhammad Balighur Rehman, attended the 70th Founders Day (Platinum Jubilee) of Sadiq Public School here.

Muhammad Balighur Rehman was also the chief guest on the occasion.

In his address, he mentioned, "Sadiq Public School reflects the vision, dedication, and determination of Sir Sadiq Muhammad Khan Abbasi, who is a great humanitarian responsible for the establishment of this unparalleled institution for great educational purposes and contributed with

resources, effort, steps, and words of cooperation."

"This institution can take pride in its glorious traditions and remarkable past. Prominent personalities who have graduated from this institution have excelled in every field of life. Even today, I see many outstanding individuals in this ceremony who have acquired education from this great alma mater."

"All this is due to the significant historical role of this school, which the nation expects will continue to produce individuals of high caliber and maintain the highest standards of moral,

intellectual, and physical education that are the hallmark of Sadiq," the governor said.

He said, "His connection with Sadiq Public School is longstanding. As the Chairman of the Board of Governors, it is a heavy responsibility for him to play a role in the betterment of this institution."

"Sadiq has played a crucial role in bringing me to this position," he added.

The governor emphasized the importance of both curricular and extracurricular activities in his speech. Additionally, Governor Punjab stated, "Today's event.



LAHORE: Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Raza Naqvi presides over the 41st Provincial Cabinet meeting.

Station Commander for eliminating terrorism with people's cooperation

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): Station Commander Dera Muhammad Amir on Sunday praised Dera police for fighting against terrorism bravely and said the menace of terrorism would be eliminated from society with the help of people.

He stated this during the visit to Chaudhwan police station where the police repulsed a terrorist attack last night. On this occasion, the station commander was accompanied by District Police Officer (DPO) Abdul Rauf Babar Qaisrani.

Both the officers also met with the local dignitaries. The local people eulogized the sacrifices of the Pak Army and police in the war against terrorism. They also assured their full cooperation with the law enforcement departments in this regard.

The visiting officers met with policemen on duty at the police station including the station house officer (SHO) and acknowledged their bravery for repulsing the terrorist attack last night.

Talking to policemen, the station commander said the Pak Army and police would fight against terrorists on each and every front as the safety of people's lives and property was the top priority of these institutions.

On this occasion, the DPO commended the cooperation of local people with police against the terrorism. He said that such cowardly attacks could not diminish the resolve of police to eliminate terrorism and extremism.

It is worth mentioning here that the district police repulsed a terrorist attack on the Chaudhwan police station last night.

ECP notifies names of 93 candidates returned to KP

PESHAWAR (APP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Sunday notified the names of 93 candidates who returned to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly.

The 93 candidates included two candidates from PPP and three from JUIF while all the remaining were independent candidates.

The notification asked all the independent candidates to join a political party within three days of the notification under proviso of sub-clause-C of Clause-3 of Article 106 of the constitution.

The PPP candidates included Ahmed Karim Kundi from PK-112, DI

Khan and Ehsan ullah Khan from PK-115 DI Khan.

The JUIF candidates were former opposition leaders in the provincial assembly Lutf ur Rehman from PK-114, DI Khan, Aftab Haider from PK-111, DI Khan, and Sajjad Ullah from PK-32, Kohistan Lower.

The independent candidates returned to KP assembly were: Suriya Bibi, Fateh ul Muik, Sharaft Ali, Ali Shah, Akhtar Khan, Fazl Hakim Khan, Amjad Ali, Habib ur Rehman, Sultan Room, Gul Ibrahim Khan, Muhammad Yamin, Muhammad Anwar, Azam Khan, Hamayun Khan, Shafiq ullah, Ubaid ur Rehman,

Liaquat Ali, Hamid ur Rehman, Shakeel Ahmed, Musavir Khan, Riaz Khan, Syed Fakhar Jehan, Abdul Kabir Khan, Fazal Haq, Sajjad Ullah, Muhammad Riaz, Taj Muhammad, Munir Hussain, Zubair Khan, Barber Munir Swati, Zahid Chenzeb, Ikram ullah, Nazi Ahmed, Raja Ali, Mushtaq Ghani, Akbar Ayub, Arshad Ayub, Malik Adeel, Rangez Ahmed, Aqibullah, Abdul Karim, Faisal Khan, Murtaza Khan, Zarshad, Tufail Anjum, Amir Farzand, Muhammad Zahir, Abdul Salam, Tariq Mehmood, Iftikhar Ali, Intesham Ali, Khalid Khan, Arshad Ali, Iftikhar Ullah, Fazal Shakoor Khan.



KARACHI: The Caretaker Federal Minister for Energy Mohammed Ali speaking in a session on 'The Big Picture: Future of Pakistan' of 15th Karachi Literature Festival at a local hotel.

CM chairs cabinet meeting, reviews PSL-9 security plan

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi presided over the 41st provincial cabinet meeting at CM Office here on Sunday.

The Punjab cabinet granted an approval to amend the Punjab Highway Patrolling Police rules. The decisions of the 39th meeting of the caretaker Punjab cabinet were endorsed in the meeting. The cabinet also reviewed law & order in the province.

IG Police Doctor Usman Anwar gave a briefing about the law & order in the province.

The CM directed to

undertake all essential measures for the protection of life and property of people across the province. Mohsin Naqvi asserted that no compromise would be made on upholding the rule of law. The PSL-9 security plan was also reviewed in the meeting. The CM directed to ensure 100 percent implementation of the security plan and SOPs for PSL-9. Provincial Ministers, Advisers, Chief Secretary, Advocate General Punjab, IG Police, Chairman P&D Board, SMBR and Secretaries of departments concerned attended the meeting.

Bandit killed during police encounter

RAWALPINDI (APP): A bandit was killed during the police encounter in the jurisdiction of Dharmyal police station here on Sunday.

According to police spokesman, the bandits opened fire on the raiding police party, injuring Constable Inam Ali, who was shifted to the hospital.

After injuring the constable, the bandits fled the scene but later engaged in another shootout with the police, during which one bandit was killed.

The deceased bandit was identified as Hamad.

Senior police officers, including SP Muhammad Nabil Khokhar, rushed to the crime scene upon receiving information about the incident.

City Police Officer CPO Syed Khalid Hamdani has commended SP Sadder, ASP Sadder, SHO Dharmyal, and their team, affirming that the Rawalpindi Police will not hesitate to make sacrifices in their duty of crime prevention and citizen protection.



KARACHI: Sindh Caretaker Minister for Information, Minority Affairs, and Social Welfare and Arts Council President, Muhammad Ahmed Shah administers oath of office to Iqbal Latif as a member of Governor Body of Arts Council of Pakistan during oath taking ceremony.

Gala dinner hosted to celebrate Pak-China, bilateral ties with Turkey

KARACHI (APP): K H A Business and International Relations hosted a dinner in honor of the Consul General of China, Yang Yundong, and the Consul General of Turkey, Cemal Sangu, to celebrate Pak-China friendship marking the completion of 73 years of diplomatic relations and also to celebrate the New Year of China.

A cake-cutting ceremony was held during the event.

Among the attendees were the President of K.H.A Business and International Relations, CEO Kafeel Hussain Group, renowned architect Kafeel Hussain, Consul General of Oman Engineer Sami Al Khanjari, Consul General of Indonesia Dr. June Kuncoro Hadiningrat, Consul General of Malaysia Herman Hardynata Ahmad, Consul General of Japan Hattori

Masaru, Diplomats from Qatar, UAE and Indonesia, President Pakistan Tax Bar Association Anwar Kashif Mumtaz, President Karachi Business Forum and Think Tank Rashid Ahmed Siddiqui, along with other prominent business personalities and dignitaries of the city.

Addressing the gathering, the President of K.H.A Business and International Relations, CEO Kafeel Hussain Group, Kafeel Hussain stated that Pakistan is keen on enhancing relations with countries worldwide. He emphasized the strong fraternal ties between Pakistan, China, and Turkey, and highlighted ongoing efforts to strengthen them further. He highlighted the vast opportunities for business and investment in Pakistan and expressed called for investment in the country.

Robber gang busted, 2 held

MULTAN (APP): Gulgasht police have busted a robber/mobile snatcher gang and arrested two members of the gang during a crackdown launched here on Sunday. In line with special directives of the City Police Officer (CPO) Sadiq Ali, the Gulgasht police launched a crackdown against the criminals involved in snatching mobile phones from citizens. The police team busted the notorious snatcher gang and arrested two members of the gang including the ring leader Muhammad Waheed and Jehangir. Police have recovered looted cash Rs 100,000 from their possession by tracing six cases from them. Further investigations were underway and more recoveries were expected from the arrested criminals, police sources added.

Pakistan Army providing quality treatment facilities to people of KP

PESHAWAR (APP): Pakistan Army has played a significant role in the provision of quality treatment facilities to the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa after completing scores of hospital projects in different districts of the province.

Following a long wave of terrorism, the Pakistan Army has taken practical measures for the reconstruction of many hospitals besides improved facilities in the health sector in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, a security official told APP.

He said that the reconstructed hospitals include Alizai Kurrum hospital, Tehsil Headquarters Hospital Mir

Ali, Razmak Hospital Bazar Zakakhel Khyber, Mamound hospital Bajaur, Toikhola hospital South Waziristan, Darazanda hospital DI Khan and a 40-bed hospital at Dogar Kurrum comprising 9 male and two female doctors besides nine nurses.

He underlined that the Pakistan Army has also established 150-bed Tehsil Headquarters Hospital Ghaleejo in 2018 equipped with the latest equipment, 12 flats and eight houses for medical staff besides a new medical centre at Parachinar.

He stated that a hospital with 8 OPDs, a CRP counter, a dental unit, an emergency ward, a radiology centre.



PESHAWAR: Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Leaders, Taimur Khan Jhagra, Shandana Gulzar addressing a press conference, at Peshawar press club.

PPP leader regrets ongoing protest after elections

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan People's Party Deputy General Secretary for Central Punjab Usman Malik Sunday condemned the ongoing campaign for seeking victory in the resignation of commissioner Rawalpindi, labeling it as a futile endeavor to cause chaos and unrest in country. In a statement issued here on Sunday, he emphasized that true intentions of those orchestrating these disturbances would soon be unveiled to the public eye. Furthermore, Malik revealed that both the PPP

and the PML-N are on the brink of finalizing a strategic formula aimed at establishing stable governments in key regions including the center, Punjab and Balochistan, within the next 24 to 48 hours. He urged independent group to reconsider their strategies, citing their failure to form a government in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. Addressing concerns over electoral results, Malik acknowledged the PPP's reservations but affirmed their commitment to preserving political.

Man held over fake dacoity call

MULTAN (APP): City Jalalpur police have arrested a man for making a fake dacoity call on police emergency helpline 15 here on Sunday.

According to police sources, Muhammad Sajid resident of the city area made an emergency call to the police in which he alleged that five unidentified armed outlaws had looted cash, a mobile phone, and a motorcycle from him at gunpoint.

The police team reached the spot and started the investigation into the incident.

During the initial interrogation, it was proved that he had some business-related issues with his partners and made a fake call to blackmail them.

The police registered a case against the accused.



KARACHI: Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Sindh President, Haleem Adil Sheikh addresses to media persons during press conference, in Karachi.

Youth commits suicide after killing bride

SARGODHA (APP): A youth committed suicide after killing a girl over refusal of marriage proposal in the area of Bhakar district on Sunday.

According to police, the incident took place at Bhady Wala village of tehsil Mankera of district Bhakar where a marriage ceremony was going on when accused Adnan, carrying a pistol, entered the bride's house and killed her.

After the murder, the accused also took his own life by shooting himself.

The accused and the victim were cousins and her parents had refused his proposal.

Police rushed to the spot and shifted the bodies to hospital for postmortem. An investigation is underway.

Austrian Ambassador visits private college

PINDI GHEB (Online): Ambassador of Austria to Pakistan Andrea Wicke visit to a Private College in Pindi Gheb Campus.

The purpose of the visit was to provide opportunities to the talented students to pursue higher education in Austria on the basis of scholarship.

Malik Muhammad Ali Khan of Kot Fateh Khan, Director of Punjab College Khizr Abbas and Principal of the College Ehsan Danish welcomed the Ambassador of Austria and made her visit different parts of the institution.

Ambassador Wicke met with a diverse group of students, each demonstrating an impressive understanding of their respective fields.

Their proficiency in both theoretical concepts and practical applications left a lasting impression on the Ambassador.

During his visit, he

appreciated the facilities of the college and distributed prizes to students who excelled in various curricular and co-curricular activities.

Austrian Ambassador address to the college community, she commended the students for their dedication and commitment to their studies. "I am impressed with the quality of education imparted in this college. The students are well-rounded and have a strong understanding of both the theoretical and practical aspects of their studies" She added.

Andrea Wicke said that it is truly inspiring to see the level of understanding and passion displayed by the students here their ability to grasp complex theories and apply them in practice is indicative of the high-quality education they are receiving.

950 kites confiscated in crackdown

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police have arrested 17 kite sellers, kite flyers and confiscated more than 950 kites and strings from their possession during crackdown here on Sunday.

Naseerabad police held Hazrat Jan, Huzaifa, Jamal and Abdullah besides confiscating 670 kites and strings from their custody.

Similarly, Waris Khan police nabbed Daniyal and recovered 80 kites from his possession.

While Airport Police arrested Darvesh, Obaid.



GILGIT: Pakistan Red Crescent Society Gilgit-Baltistan distributing relief items among the people of Nalter.

Empowered women – elevating nation, beaming with pride

LAHORE (APP): Experts on Sunday said that women's multidimensional empowerment in society is central to realizing their rights and enabling them to equally participate in businesses, scientific, social sports and entrepreneur, control over productive resources and economic decision-making.

From risky summits to space while representing Pakistan in global media, making themselves heard worldwide, these equipped women during last two years have been standing historic.

In recent outgoing years the empowered Pakistani women have

displayed their best potential in every sphere of life, achieving for the country, by breaking barriers and achieving numerous 'firsts' in their respective fields, APP observed.

To a great surprise, Naila Kiani, renowned mountaineer and the first Pakistani woman, who climbed 10 peaks above 8,000 metres last year. She also became the only Pakistani to ascend seven peaks above 8,000m in six months.

Likewise, Samina Baig attained the feat of becoming the first Pakistani woman to summit the world's ninth-

highest peak, the 8,125m-tall Nanga Parbat. Pakistan's women cricketers also excelled during the year 2023, while making history by registering their maiden win over New Zealand not just in the first T20 International but also in the one-day format.

Earlier, in the same year wicketkeeper-batter Muneeba Ali became the first Pakistani woman to score a T20I century and only the sixth to score one in a T20 World Cup.

Pakistani women in the walk of social or performing arts, did not shy away from exhibiting their love for modern arts

and media either as they set new records.

Arooj Aftab last year performed at ceremony of Grammy Awards 2023 in Los Angeles, US – and became the first Pakistani to win the prestigious Grammy Award, she also became the first artist from the country to perform at the Grammys. Oscar-winner Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy was announced as the director for the latest Star Wars film, making her the first woman and person of colour to direct a film in the franchise.

Shifting focus to a different category among the 'firsts', women and minorities in Pakistan made

significant endeavors, toward achieving parity with men.

Justice Musarrat Hilali took oath as Peshawar High Court chief justice on April

In February 2023, and similarly the Lahore High Court Bar Association got its first woman secretary since its inception in 1893 following Sabahat Rizvi's election.

In September last year, the Supreme Court of Pakistan got its first female registrar after sworn-in Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa appointed Additional District and Sessions Judge Okara, Jazeela Aslam, to the role.



QUETTA: Anjuman-e-Tajran Balochistan President, Rahim Agha is addressing the seminar organized by All Balochistan Restaurant and Hotel Association against the increase in gas prices and taxes, at Quetta press club.

Fly Jinnah inaugurates first Intl flight connecting Islamabad and Sharjah

ISLAMABAD (APP): Fly Jinnah, Pakistan's low-cost carrier, celebrated the inaugural flight of its first international route from Islamabad, Pakistan, to Sharjah, UAE with a dual ceremony at Islamabad International Airport before departure and at Sharjah International Airport, where the aircraft received a warm welcome upon arrival.

The inaugural flight carried onboard Fly Jinnah's senior leadership along with a group of travel agents, media, and social media personalities among others said a news release.

The inaugural ceremony at Sharjah International Airport was welcomed with a traditional water cannon salute and followed by a

welcome ceremony at Sharjah Airport attended by Pakistan's Ambassador in the UAE, Faisal Niaz Tirmizi, in addition to senior management representing Sharjah International Airport and Air Arabia.

Commenting on the occasion, Fly Jinnah's spokesperson said: "Yesterday marked a significant milestone for Fly Jinnah as we inaugurated our first international flight after a successful year of domestic operations.

Sharjah's location serves as a perfect gateway to the United Arab Emirates with its proximity to the rest of the country. This step also reflects our unwavering commitment

Tetra Pak demonstrates packaging circularity at Euro Village 2024

Independent Report
ISLAMABAD: Tetra Pak showcased its commitment to packaging circularity at Euro Village 2024, hosted by the European Union in Islamabad. The event provided an excellent platform for Tetra Pak to demonstrate its ongoing efforts towards creating a sustainable future.

Distinguished dignitaries and guests, including the Ambassador and Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Pakistan, Dr. Riina Kionka visited the Tetra Pak booth and engaged with company representatives. She appreciated Tetra Pak showcasing its innovative approach of repurposing used cartons and promoting the idea of packaging circularity to foster a greener environment in Pakistan.

Tetra Pak Pakistan also highlighted its local partnership with Green Earth Recycling, which has been successfully increasing its recycling targets annually since 2014. They collect and recycle packaging waste, transforming it into sellable products like garden furniture, school desks, roofing solutions, and much more.

During the event, Noor Aftab, the Head of Public Affairs and Government Relations at Tetra Pak Pakistan remarked, "At Tetra Pak Pakistan, we are proud to showcase our initiatives for packaging circularity at Euro Village 2024. Our collaboration with Green Earth Recycling exemplifies our dedication to increasing recycling targets and transforming packaging waste into valuable products."

Pakistan's earns \$1,454m from IT services' export in 6 months

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan earned US \$1,454.881 million from providing different Information Technology (IT) services to various countries during the first six months of the current fiscal year 2023-24.

This shows a growth of 8.98 per cent as compared with the US \$1,334.969 million earned through the provision of services during the corresponding months of the last fiscal year 2022-23, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported.

During the months under review, the export of computer services grew by 10.32 per cent as it surged from US \$1,064.579 million last year to US \$1,174.481 million during July-December 2023-24.

Among the computer services, the exports of software consultancy services witnessed a nominal decrease of 180 per cent, from US \$3.394 million to US \$3.333 million this year while the export of hardware consultancy services surged by 3.401 per cent, from US \$391.570 million to US \$404.875 million.

The export of repair and maintenance services however decreased by 39.15 per cent from US \$1.530 million to US \$0.930 million whereas the export and imports of computer software services surged by 2.79 per cent, from \$302.376 million to \$310.807 million.

Meanwhile, the export of information services during the months under review dipped by 19.72 per cent from US \$2.180 million to US \$1.750 million.

Among the information services, the exports of information-related services increased by 3.64 per cent, from US \$0.687 million to US \$0.712 million whereas the exports of news agency services however decreased by 30.48 per cent, from US \$1.493 million to US \$1.038 million.

The export of telecommunication services increased by 3.89 per cent as these went down from US \$268.0210 million to US \$278.650 million, the data revealed.

Among the telecommunication services, the export of call centres services increased by 12.14 per cent during the months as its exports increased from US \$107.006 million to US \$119.994 million whereas the export of other telecommunication services witnessed a decrease of 1.58 per cent, from US \$161.204 million to US \$158.656 million during this year, the PBS data revealed.

Industries must follow global trends to boost exports: CTI

LAHORE (APP): Carpet Training Institute (CTI) Chairperson Ejazur Rahman has said that following the global trends is indispensable for promotion of exports for which a dedicated department should be established and entrusted the task of research and promoting Pakistan's export products.

In a media statement issued here on Sunday, he also called for preparing a comprehensive strategy for awareness among the exporters regarding the trends of people living in different regions; access of Pakistani products to the markets of different countries and especially for the promotion and marketing of the products.

Ejazur Rahman added that handwoven carpet products are the source of unique recognition of Pakistan in the whole world and there is a dire need to market it properly. "A separate department should be created for the

promotion of export products, where separate pavilions should be created for the promotion of export products," he said and asserted that the same department should also be entrusted with the task of research, which evaluates the trends of people living in different countries of the world and their exports, and prepares recommendations in this regard.

He said the government should take help from the private sector for this and especially the youth who have graduated from the universities should be given responsibilities, which will also provide them with employment opportunities. He said that increase in exports is inevitable to run the system of a country with a population of 250 million, therefore, instead of neglecting any export sector, it should be given incentives and facilities to compete in the global markets.

Agri Promotion: IPM training being imparted to agri-officials

MULTAN (APP): The agriculture department decided to provide integrated pest management (IPM) training to staffers of the 'Extension and Pest Warning Departments'.

According to official sources, "IPM is considered one of the best models for agriculture promotion as it not only enhances production but also reduces input expenses. The South Punjab Secretariat issued a training schedule."

Deputy Director (DD) of Technical Dr Haider Karar will impart training to staffers.

The training will be held in 11 districts of south Punjab, including Bahawalnagar, Bahawalpur, Layyah, Lodhran, Multan, Muzaffargarh, DG Khan, Rajanpur, Vehari, and Khanewal.

The training will commence on February 19, and one day will be specific for staff of the relevant district.

SCCI meeting review industrial exhibition

SIALKOT (APP): A meeting was held at the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) auditorium regarding the industrial exhibition to be held on 2nd and 3rd March, 2024 at Living Dreams Marquee, Sialkot Cantt, organized by the Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry Sialkot (WCCIS).

Addressing the meeting, Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry Sialkot (WCCIS) President Dr. Mariam Nouman said that Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) President Abdul Ghafoor Malik along with the business community of Sialkot had fully supported them for holding the exhibition. "So we have made it possible to provide subsidized stalls to co-promote and encourage new women entrepreneurs in business," she added.

WCCIS President Dr. Mariam Nouman said that the exhibition would have stalls of quality products of WCCIS members like cutlery, handicrafts, shoes, leather products, jewellery.



ISLAMABAD: A vendor is preparing hot milk for customers at his workplace at a local market due to cold weather during rain in the Federal Capital.

Furniture industry direly needs skilled workforce

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan's furniture industry is grappling with a severe shortage of skilled woodworkers that has triggered significant delays in the timely shipment of export consignments, posing challenges to the industry's efficiency, repute and profitability.

Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) Chief Executive Officer Mian Kashif Ashfaq stated this while talking to a delegation of furniture manufacturers led by Faryad Ahmed Raza here Sunday.

He said, woodworking skills are fundamental in the furniture manufacturing process, from crafting intricate designs to ensuring the structural integrity of pieces. However, the demand for skilled woodworkers in Pakistan exceeds the available workforce. This shortage can be attributed to various factors including limited vocational training programmes, low wages and a lack of interest among the young generation.



Dr. Riina Kionka, the Ambassador and Head of the delegation of the European Union to Pakistan and Noor Aftab, the Head of Public Affairs and Government Relations at Tetra Pak Pakistan posing next to a children's play swing made from recycled Tetra Pak cartons at the Euro Village 2024 festival.

Farmers advised for timely plantation of rose plants

FAISALABAD (APP): The agronomists of the University of Agriculture Faisalabad Sunday advised farmers for timely completion of planting rose plants.

They said that for the proper growth of the plants, the farmers should dig a hole in wet sand or soil and keep them upside down in the ground for 10 to 15 days.

They further said that prepare the land well, add one bag of TSP, one bag of SOP and one bag of Ammonium Sulphate fertilizer and mix it well in the soil to help optimize the soil fertility.

The farmers were told that by planting new rose bushes during the current month, not only the timely growth of the plant is ensured, but the rose plant also starts giving flowers at the fixed time.

He said that for further guidance and counseling in this regard, agricultural experts or the field staff of the Department of Agriculture can also be contacted.

PR collects Rs 74.8 mln from ticketless passengers

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways has collected an amount of Rs 74.8 million from ticketless passengers in a crackdown during the three months with the help of railway police and train staffers.

"Around 58,446 passengers found travelling without tickets in different trains and collected the said amount from them, which is deposited in the official bank account of the department," sources in the Ministry told APP.

They said that it was not the first time that action was taken on a large scale against ticketless passengers, adding that these types of crackdowns had taken place daily.

The sources said that ticketless travelling was illegal, and those who were caught without a ticket were charged a ticket price for the whole journey of the train besides the penalty. Those who do not pay are handed over to the railway police.

To a question, they said that Pakistan Railways Police claimed to have arrested a total of 3,923 accused due to their involvement in violations of rules and laws and also registered some 3,625 cases against them in eight Railways divisions over one year. "Around 658 cases were registered in Peshawar Division, 577 in Rawalpindi, 1,044 in Lahore, 326 in Mughalpur workshops, 393 in Multan, 208 in Sukkur, 346 in Karachi, and 73 in Quetta Division," they added.

They said the Railways Police Help Desks had been established at all the major railway stations across the country, and the performance of the Railways Police has been quite satisfactory during the last year.

Meher say: Political stability ensures sustained economic growth

LAHORE (APP): Political stability is pre-requisite for sound economy that promises greater well for the people, and Pakistan needs a continued stable democracy for sustained economic growth to cope with multiple challenges.

State Minister and Federal Tax Ombudsman's (FTO) Coordinator Meher Kashif Younis, while talking to a delegation of traders led by Faran Shahid here on Sunday. At this crucial juncture of its history, Pakistan cannot endure political turmoil and instability, he said, adding that politics of confrontation and violence has never been a solution to any problem.

Meher argued that time has changed, now the influential nations are paying more attention towards financial warfare to maintain their dominance. "These countries are successfully using their techniques of economic destruction to weaken the poor nations to achieve their unholy designs while Pakistan's economy is not strong enough to withstand economic terrorism," he observed.

The Coordinator said, it is indeed important to increase exports for which Pakistan needs to reduce the cost of doing business to make its products competitive in world market.

He was of the view that trade facilitation is the key to promote industries and 'we have to remove all the bottle necks and create the culture of trade facilitation. He also called for consistency in the government policies and a clear economic roadmap to move upon.



ISLAMABAD: People are busy in purchasing warm clothes due to cold weather at Aabpara Sunday weekly bazaar during rain in the Federal Capital.

Prices of fruits, vegetables go beyond affordability level

PESHAWAR (APP): As the sun rays bath the mud house of poor fruit seller, Ayaz Khan starts his journey from his village to the fruits and vegetable market hoping to purchase apples, guavas, bananas, and citrus at reasonable rates to support his six members of the family on the financial front.

Donned in traditional attire—woolen chadar, Chitrali cap, and wearing Peshawari Chappal, Ayaz Khan (32), who is assisted by his elders brothers, wakes up early in the morning and starts his Chingchi rickshaw soon after having breakfast and

rushed to the fruit market Pabbi Nowshera, expecting to get fresh fruits through open auction on reasonable prices by anticipating sale.

Associated with the inherited pain-sticking business for the last 12 years after the death of his father Sher Ali Khan at village Mohib Banda Nowshera, the motivated fruit seller said that he suffered financial losses in case perishable fruits and vegetables were not sold on time.

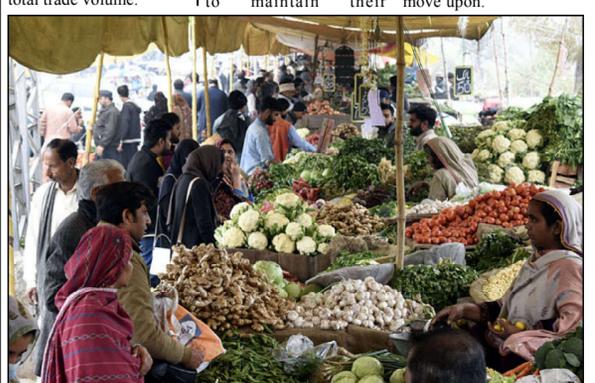
"These days many consumers just ask about prices of fruits and vegetables and return empty handed due to

exorbitant prices forcing us to wait till late at night with a hope to sell out stock of perishable goods to avert financial loss." The citrus of Khanpur Haripur and Manki Sharif Nowshera is almost out of common man's reach after its prices soared to record Rs. 350 per dozen in local fruit markets against Rs. 280 last year.

The alarming surge in vegetable and fruit prices in Peshawar and Nowshera districts raised significant concerns among the citizens, prompting them to call upon the district government to ensure the availability of essential

food items at reasonable rates and take strong action against price hikers and hoarders. A visit to vegetables and fruit markets at Chamkani Peshawar by this scribe revealed that one kilogram apple was being sold at Rs300, banana at Rs150 per dozen, guava Rs150 strawberry at Rs 600 per kilogram, citrus at Rs 350 per dozen and citrus fruit Rs 300 which was almost beyond of purchasing power of the under privileged.

Similarly, prices of small onion has swelled to Rs 350 per kilogram, tomato at Rs150 per



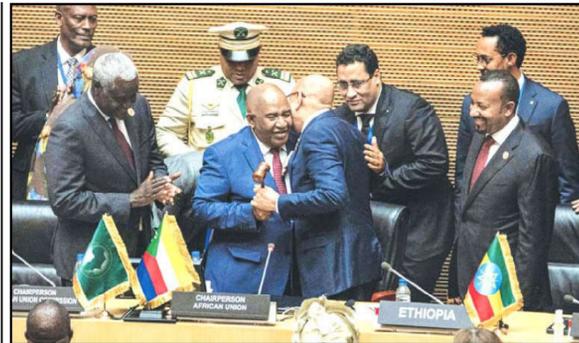
LAHORE: People are busy in buying vegetables in Sunday weekly bazaar at Shadman area in the Provincial Capital.

Ethiopia-Somalia friction boils over at AU summit

Monitoring Desk
ADDIS ABABA: Tensions between Horn of Africa rivals Ethiopia and Somalia boiled over on Saturday on the opening day of an African Union summit in Addis Ababa. The two neighbours — already at odds over a controversial maritime pact — locked horns over Somalia's claims that Ethiopian security tried to block its President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud from accessing the summit venue. The feud is one of a "litany of difficulties" referred to by AU Commission chief Moussa Faki Mahamat in his opening address to the gathering in the Ethiopian capital. Faki painted a "bleak picture" and said leaders of the pan-African body had to step up and tackle the myriad

conflicts, coups and political crises blighting the continent of 1.4 billion people. The 55-nation AU, which is headquartered in Addis Ababa, has long been criticised for being ineffectual and taking little decisive action in the face of numerous conflicts and power grabs. In a sign of the uneasy relations between two member states, Mogadishu accused Addis Ababa of "outrageous conduct" and a "provocative" act over the reported security incident and demanded a full AU investigation. Mohamud told reporters he had been blocked by Ethiopian security agents as he tried to enter a summit venue, a second time while accompanying Djibouti's President Ismaïl Omar Guelleh. "A soldier

with a gun stood in front of us and denied us access to this facility," he said after later attending the summit. Ethiopia insisted Mohamud was warmly welcomed and that the Somali delegation was blocked when its security detail tried to enter a venue with weapons. Mogadishu has accused Addis Ababa of violating its sovereignty over a January maritime deal with Somaliland, which declared independence in 1991 in a move not recognised by the international community. Under the memorandum of understanding, Somaliland agreed to lease 20 kilometres (12 miles) of its coast for 50 years to landlocked Ethiopia, which wants to set up a naval base and a commercial port on the coast.



ADDIS ABABA: Outgoing chairperson of the African Union (AU) and President of Comoros, Azali Assoumani, congratulates the newly elected AU chairperson, President of Mauritania Mohamed Ould Ghazouani. Also seen are Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and Moussa Faki, Chairperson of the African Union Commission.

Navalny's 'killers' refusing to hand over body: allies

Monitoring Desk
MOSCOW: Alexei Navalny's supporters on Saturday accused Russian authorities of being "killers" who were "covering their tracks" by refusing to hand over his body, as the Kremlin stayed silent despite Western accusations and a flood of tributes to the late opposition leader. The 47-year-old Kremlin critic died in an Arctic prison on Friday after spending more than three years behind bars, prompting outrage and condemnation from

Western leaders and his supporters. His death, which the West has blamed on the Kremlin, deprives Russia's opposition of its figurehead just a month before elections poised to extend President Vladimir Putin's grip on power. On Saturday, Navalny's mother, Lyudmila and his lawyer were refused access to his body, after arriving in the region of the remote prison colony where he had been held, his spokeswoman Kira Yarmysh said.

China to step up patrols near Taiwan after 2 killed in deadly boat incident

Monitoring Desk
BEIJING: China on Sunday said it would step up law enforcement patrols in waters near Taiwan after two Chinese nationals died in a boat incident involving Taiwan's coast guard. A Chinese boat was carrying four people when it capsized on Wednesday near the Kinmen islands while pursued by the Taiwanese coast guard. All four on board were thrown into the water and two of the crew later died.

World Health Organization trying to get access to Gaza hospital after raid

Monitoring Desk
GENEVA (Internews): The World Health Organization (WHO) said on Friday it was trying to get access to biggest functioning hospital in Gaza, the Nasser Hospital, after an Israeli raid. "There are still critically injured and sick patients that are inside the hospital," WHO spokesperson Tarik Jasarevic said. "There is an urgent need to deliver fuel to ensure the continuation of the provision of life-saving services. We are trying to get access because people who are still in Nasser medical complex need assistance."

Third time lucky Japan launches next-gen rocket

Monitoring Desk
TOKYO: Japan's space agency toasted a successful blast-off for its new flagship rocket on Saturday, making it third time lucky after years of delays and two previous failed attempts. The next-generation H3 has been mooted as a rival to SpaceX's Falcon 9, and could one day deliver cargo to bases on the Moon. "I've been in the space industry for a long time, but I've never felt so happy before, and I've never felt so relieved," said Hiroshi Yamakawa, president of space agency JAXA. The latest launch follows Japan's successful landing last month of an unmanned probe on the Moon — albeit at a wonky angle — making it just the fifth country to land a craft on the lunar surface. The H3 launched from the Tanegashima Space Center in southwestern Japan at 9:22 am. Cheers and applause could be heard from the JAXA control centre after the agency's live stream announced the H3's engines had successfully burned, meaning the rocket had made it into orbit. Developed jointly by JAXA and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, the H3 is the successor to the H-IIA launch system, which debuted in 2001.



LONDON: Pro-Palestinian activists wave flags and carry placards during a march.

Tel Aviv out to destroy UNRWA: agency chief

Monitoring Desk
GENEVA: Israel is waging a concerted campaign aimed at destroying UNRWA, the head of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees said in an interview published on Saturday. Philippe Lazzarini said calls for his resignation were part of the Israeli government's push. "Right now we are dealing with an expanded, concerted campaign by Israel aimed at destroying UNRWA," he told the Swiss newspaper group Tamedia. "It is a long-term political goal because it is believed that if the aid agency is abolished, the status of the Palestinian refugees will be resolved once and for all — and with it, the right of return. There is a much larger political goal behind this. "Just look at the number of actions Israel is taking against UNRWA," the main aid body in the Gaza Strip, he said. He cited measures in the Israeli parliament,

Afghanistan special envoys meet in Doha

Monitoring Desk
NEW DELHI: National and regional special envoys to Afghanistan convened in Doha on Sunday in the second UN meeting of its kind in less than a year, though it remained unclear whether Taliban authorities would join the closed-session event. The two-day meeting, hosted by the UN secretary general, was due to discuss increasing engagement with Afghanistan and a more coordinated response to the Central Asian nation. In the aftermath of the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan in 2021, the international community has wrestled with its approach to the country's new rulers. On the first day of the convention in gas-rich Qatar, which hosted the Taliban during years of peace talks with the United States, the Kabul government's participation remained unclear. Though the Afghan foreign ministry did not immediately respond to requests for comment on plans to attend.

India expels longest-serving foreign correspondent for critical reporting

Monitoring Desk
NEW DELHI: A French journalist who had been in the crosshairs of India's rightwing Hindu nationalist government for her reporting on Kashmir, and the alleged mishandling of the Covid-19 emergency, was expelled on Friday. Vanessa Dougnac had been the longest serving foreign correspondent in India. She announced her departure on Friday after the Indian government issued a two-week revocation of her Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) card last month, for alleged concerns over her reporting, The Wire said. The notice sent by the Ministry of Home Affairs was also raised by French President Emmanuel Macron during his visit in January for India's Republic Day celebrations. In a statement, Vanessa Dougnac said that she was writing her announcement "in tears". "Today, I am leaving India, the country where I came 25 years ago as a student, and where I have worked for 23 years as a

NIA creating tension through unnecessary searches in Tamil Nadu: MLA Jawahirullah

Monitoring Desk
CHENNAI (INP): The Manithaneya Makkal Katchi's (MMK) President, MH Jawahirullah has said that National Investigation Agency (NIA) is creating unnecessary tension under the guise of searches across various locations in Tamil Nadu ahead of the Lok Sabha elections. According to Kashmir Media Service, speaking in the Assembly, MLA Jawahirullah highlighted concerns regarding the dreaded action of NIA, particularly its arrests of certain individuals. Urging an end to what he called NIA's unnecessary searches, he emphasized the low conviction rate in such cases, which stood at about 1%. Flaggng certain issues facing the minorities, he said there were restrictions in building mosques even.



Police officers detain a woman during a gathering in memory of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny near the Wall of Grief monument to the victims of political repressions in Moscow.

Egypt setting up area at Gaza border to shelter Palestinians

Monitoring Desk
CAIRO (INP): Egypt is preparing an area at the Gaza border which could accommodate Palestinians in case an Israeli offensive into Rafah prompts an exodus across the frontier, four sources said, in what they described as a contingency move by Cairo. Egypt, which denied making any such preparations, has repeatedly raised the alarm over the possibility that Israel's devastating Gaza offensive could displace Palestinians into Sinai — something Cairo says would be completely unacceptable — echoing warnings from Arab states such as Jordan. The United States

Belarus' Lukashenko says 'saboteurs' detained on border with Ukraine

Monitoring Desk
MOSCOW (Internews): Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko said on Friday that several "saboteurs", including Ukrainian and Belarusian nationals, had been detained earlier on Friday on the border of the two countries in a "counter-terrorist operation". Speaking at an event in Minsk, Lukashenko said that the detainees had "crawled across our border and transported explosives to commit sabotage primarily in Russia and in Belarus." He did not say how many had been detained.

Dalit children thrashed mercilessly in MP for drawing water from well

Monitoring Desk
BHOPAL (INP): Five innocent Dalit children were mercilessly thrashed and brutally assaulted in Bharatiya Janata party ruled Madhya Pradesh state in India. The incident serves as a stark reminder of the entrenched caste discrimination and violence that continue to plague marginalised communities in India. The serene backdrop of Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh was recently shattered by an appalling incident that laid bare the ugly reality of caste violence still

Varsity apologises for role in slavery

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: Yale University on Friday issued an apology for its connection to slavery after several years of research and study that it said it undertook into its formative ties to the slave trade. "Today, on behalf of Yale University, we recognise our university's historical role in and associations with slavery, as well as the labour, the experiences, and the contributions of enslaved people to our university's history, and we apologise for the ways that Yale's leaders,

'Extraordinary' chance for Israel to integrate into region: Blinken

Monitoring Desk
MUNICH: There is "an extraordinary opportunity" in the coming months for Israel to normalise ties with its Arab neighbours, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Saturday, while also emphasising the need for the creation of a Palestinian state. The top US diplomat said there were genuine efforts led by Arab countries to revitalise the Palestinian Authority so it can be more effective in representing the Palestinians. "Virtually every Arab country now genuinely wants to integrate Israel into the region to normalise relations...to provide security commitments and assurances so that Israel can feel more safe," Blinken said during a panel discussion at the annual Munich Security Conference. "And there's also, I think the imperative, that's more urgent than ever, to proceed to a Palestinian state that also ensures the security of Israel," he added. The Biden administration has been working to secure a mega-deal that will see ties between Saudi Arabia and Israel normalise. The Saudi as well as other Arab countries are seeking the creation of a Palestinian state as part of the deal. On Friday, Biden called for a temporary truce in Gaza for a potential prisoner swap deal. He said he had held "extensive" conversations with Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on this and negotiations were "underway".

Italy, home of the mafia, now one of Europe's safest countries

Monitoring Desk
ROME: Italy may be the land that launched Cosa Nostra, but today it is one of the safest countries in Europe, with a murder rate well below its neighbours. From the mid-19th century through to the 1990s, thousands of people died in mafia violence, from rivals or traitors cast in cement or fed to pigs, to judges, priests and witnesses killed for daring to defy the mob. There were also the traumatic "Years of Lead" from the end of the 1960s to the 1980s, when armed groups from the extreme left and extreme right brought terror to Italy with bombings and assassinations. The brutal murder of former prime minister Aldo Moro by the Marxist-Leninist Red Brigades in 1978 is burned into the national psyche, although the largest number of the estimated 400 victims of the period were killed by neo-fascists. But when this bloody period ended, and after a crackdown on mafias which pushed them into less violent financial crime, the murder rate plummeted. Back in 1990, there were 34 murders per one million inhabitants in Italy, compared to 24 in neighbouring France, according to UN figures. In 2021-22, this had fallen to 5.5 per million in Italy and 11 in France, eight in Germany and 10 in the UK. In Europe, only Norway and Switzerland have a murder rate lower or equal to Italy's, while Latvia, the worst, has a rate 6.5 times higher. "Homicides in general have decreased in the last 25 years, especially the percentage of men" — who previously were the main victims of mafias, noted Raffaella Sette, a sociologist at the University of Bologna. Just 10 per cent of murders each year are now blamed on organised crime.

"Delhi Chalo" Farmers March continue on fifth day in India

Monitoring Desk
NEW DELHI (INP): Indian farmers march continued on the fifth day as thousands of farmers, led by 250 farmer unions, are gathered and protesting for guaranteed minimum prices, debt relief, crops and policy reforms, in the outskirts of New Delhi. As per Indian media reports, the Bharatiya Kisan Union (Ekta Ogrihan) also announced to protest outside the residences of three senior BJP leaders in Punjab. According to Economic Times, another farmers faction, Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), also announced plans to escalate their protest against the BJP's Modi government anti-farmers policies. Bharatiya Kisan Union Punjab former chief minister Amarinder Singh, BJP's Punjab unit chief Sunil Jakhar and senior leader Keval Singh Dhillion are ready to stage outside the homes. It is pertinent to note that India has been heading towards general elections this year amid the allegations of anti-Muslim and anti-minorities policies by the center government of India led by BJP. The hindutva party is expecting to get third term in office at times when India's PM has inaugurated the Ram Temple on the site of the Babri mosque violating the basic rights of Muslims, which are the largest minority in India. Declaring its support for farmers with the "Delhi Chalo March", the union will also protest at hundreds of toll plazas across India. Bharatiya Kisan Union Tractor Rally led by Gurnam Singh Charuni will take out a tractor rally today in solidarity with the Delhi Chalo March, which started on Tuesday, has been stopped for the fifth day by the security personals in the border areas of Shambhu and Khanuri.

Sydney parks cordoned off, Mardi Gras event cancelled after asbestos concerns

Monitoring Desk
SYDNEY (INP): Australian authorities on Friday cordoned off areas in several parks in Sydney after the discovery of asbestos in mulch, while precautionary testing began in schools as the government scrambled to remove the toxic material from public spaces. Asbestos was found in a playground in Sydney's inner west in January and subsequent investigations spotted it in recycled mulch at several locations near the park constructed above an underground road interchange. Since then about 20 city sites including transport projects, a primary school, a supermarket and a hospital were confirmed contaminated. Sydney City Council said it would begin inspecting 33 parks, some in popular tourist spots, and dozens of garden beds where the contaminated mulch may have been used. The testing will take up to several weeks. About 700 students at a public school in Sydney's southwest will be relocated for several weeks after asbestos was found on campus. Inspections began at seven other schools, with findings expected later on Friday, officials said. The Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Fair Day event scheduled for Sunday, which usually draws tens of thousands of revellers, was cancelled after traces of asbestos were found around the venue. Asbestos became popular from the late 19th century onwards as a way to reinforce cement and for fireproofing, but research later found the inhalation of asbestos fibres could cause lung inflammation and cancer. It is now banned in much of the world. Except for one location, the type of asbestos discovered is bonded asbestos which is considered low risk to human health and environment, the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) said. "If it's bonded and not disturbed... then the risk remains low but it's important to have a precautionary approach."



Students walk on the campus of Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut.

Govt achieves 13 goals, out of 15, set to promote IT sector within brief period: Dr. Saif

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Dr. Umar Saif has said the caretaker government had successfully achieved 13 goals, out of 15, set to promote the IT sector and increase its exports within a brief period of 5 months under the caretaker setup.

In a video message, he said, "We have achieved 13 out of 15 important targets for the promotion of the IT & telecom sector in a short period of 5 months in the caretaker set-up. The forum of SIFC will prove to be a great support for the upcoming elected government in the process of building and developing the country, and the elected government will also reap the benefits of the measures we have taken during the caretaker period."

"We worked with the SIFC and the State Bank to make a significant policy intervention, allowing IT companies to keep 50% of their export revenue in dollars in an account in Pakistan and make their international expenses without any restrictions from this amount," he further ex-

plained. He said that with this decision, allowing the retention of 50 percent in dollars, the country's IT exports have increased by 32 percent in the last 60 days.

Dr. Umar Saif highlighted that the establishment of the Telecom Tribunal fulfills a longstanding demand of the telecom sector. The specialized Tribunal will now handle telecom sector disputes and cases instead of the High Courts, aiming to expedite the resolution of legal issues and facilitate rapid progress in the telecom sector.

According to the minister, the Ministry of Law will nominate the chairperson and members of the Tribunal.

The Chairperson must be a Judge of the High Court or a lawyer with 15 years of experience, he said. Similarly, the Tribunal will have 2-member technocrats, whose number may be increased or decreased from time to time.

The minister believes that this specialized approach will lead to faster and more efficient resolution of disputes, contributing to the overall advancement of the telecom industry. He said, "The effective implementation of the Right of Way Policy, the Special Investment Council has removed all departmental hurdles, and all decisions in the interest of the country and the nation have been approved without delay."

He said that the ministry is concurrently establishing a research and development fund to support mobile phone manufacturing companies and facilitate the growth of the mobile phone manufacturing sector. Dr. Umar Saif said that the first standardized quality test for the 75,000 information technology graduates will be conducted soon. He highlighted significant decisions made to revamp IT education in collaboration with various entities, including HEC, the National Computing Accreditation Council, the Examination Testing Council, the Pakistan Software Export Board, and the Pakistan Software Houses Association.

Dr. Saif said students who successfully pass the test will be offered job opportunities through the Industry Placement Program.



QUETTA: Caretaker Home Minister Mir Zubair Khan Jamali, Commissioner Quetta Division Hamza Shafiqat and Additional Inspector General Police Jawad Dogar meeting with Caretaker Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki.

Jan Achakzai strongly condemns firing incident in Chaman

Independent Report
QUETTA: The caretaker Provincial Minister for Information, Jan Achakzai has strongly condemned the incident of firing by terrorists in Chaman.

In an official statement issued here on Sunday, the caretaker Minister expressed heartfelt grief over martyrdom of two personnel of secret agencies in the firing incident.

Jan Achakzai said that those rendering sacrifice of their lives for stability and survival of the country and nation are our heroes.

He also said that the people are proud of their secret agencies who remain busy in our protection round the clock.

The caretaker Minister pledged to eliminate terrorists from the country saying that sacrifices of martyrs would not go waste at all.

He expressed sympathy and condolence with the bereaved families of the martyrs.

He prayed for the departed souls and bereaved families to bear the tragic loss with fortitude.

PML-N leader fears another May 9-like incident in Pakistan

LAHORE (INP): Those involved in the May 9 violence haven't learned anything, said PML-N leader Malik Ahmad Khan on Sunday, adding that the campaign launched against Pakistan from abroad was continuing unabated.

"Wake Mr Caretaker Prime Minister, wake up Mr Caretaker Punjab Chief Minister! Another May 9 is about to be carried out. Stop it before it happens," he said, adding, "Stop them. Otherwise, they will cause irreparable damage to the state."

Addressing a press conference in Lahore, Malik said the PTI had a tradition of not accepting the election results and the latest controversy generated through former Rawalpindi commissioner Liaquat Chatha was part of the practice.

He stressed the need for pre-empting their designs, saying they had started targeting the civil servants—a reference to the administration officials serving as district returning officers (DROs) and returning officers (ROs) in Rawalpindi—on social media by sharing not only their images and home addresses but also of the family members.

The purpose was to influence and threaten the government servants for changing their loyalties to the PTI instead of state, Malik said.

Addressing the state, he warned that if no action wasn't taken against the elements running the campaign from outside and inside the country, they would go ahead with the "May 9 Part II".

Blasting the former Rawalpindi commissioner, he said Chatha had nothing to do with the election process in any capacity and was facing multiple inquiries.

Malik said the PTI had attacked very foundation of the state as well as its institutions and values, adding that the government wasn't meant to act after an event, as pre-empting the nefarious designs and planned violence.

Speaking on the occasion, PML-N Deputy Secretary General Attaullah Tarar questioned whether posting the images of DROs and ROs as well as their family members wasn't terrorism, as he demanded a severe action against those involved in the matter.

Tarar also asked whether the close relationship between PTI social media in-charge Arsalan Khalid and Chatha wasn't established.

In her comments, PML-N Punjab Information Secretary Azma Bokhari said Chatha held meeting with PTI leader Mian Aslam Iqbal before levelling baseless allegations. "An attempt is being made to turn the DROs and the ROs into Liaquat Chatha," she remarked and noted that the country could not afford the anarchy which was being spread.



JUI's Central Secretary General and newly elected MNA Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haideri presiding over a meeting of parliamentary members of the party in Islamabad. Newly elected MNAs and MPs from Balochistan Haji Zabid Ali Reki, Engr. Usman Badini, Mir Zafarullah Khan Zehri and Ghulam Dastagir Badini are also present.

Mushahid hopes Pakistan can join BRICS with Russian support

Independent Report
ISLAMABAD: Senator Mushahid Hussain, Chairman Senate Defense Committee, is visiting Russia on the invitation of the ruling 'United Russia' party, during which he met Former President Dmitri Medvedev (who's number two to President Putin) and Foreign Minister Lavrov.

He also attended the newly-formed International Forum for 'Freedom of Nations' where he was elected as Member of the Forum's 20-member Standing Committee. The Forum was organized by the United Russia party.

Senator Hussain Co-Chaired the Forum's plenary session where Foreign Minister Lavrov spoke and Senator Hussain had a comprehensive exchange with former President Dmitri Medvedev, now Deputy Chairman of the Security Council of Russia.

Senator Hussain and Dmitri Medvedev discussed Pakistan-Russia relations, the situation in Afghanistan, the war in Gaza and the "unlimited possibilities for Pakistan-Russia collaboration in the region, particularly on energy & economic connectivity", adding 'Pakistan core interests are linked to this region, where Russia is a key factor'.

Senator Hussain told Mr Medvedev that the probable election of President Trump in the US Presidential elections in November 2024 would qualitatively change the region's geopolitics. Senator Hussain said he found "tremendous goodwill" for Pakistan in all official and popular circles in Moscow.

During the visit Senator Mushahid Hussain also delivered a lecture at the Russian Diplomatic Academy, the first prominent Pakistani to be invited to address the Diplomatic Academy in 50 years.

The topic of the talk was 'Pakistan and the changing regional scenario'. Senator Hussain during his talk also highlighted the fact that there's "no fundamental conflict of interest" between Pakistan and Russia, therefore, 'Pakistan has remained neutral on Ukraine, abstaining on voting in the United Nations on this issue'. He welcomed growing relations between Pakistan and Russia especially in the field of energy, connectivity, education, regional security including Afghanistan and cooperation at multilateral fora including SCO and UN.

Political stability vital for economic stability: Kh Asif

SIALKOT (APP): Former defence minister and central leader of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Khawaja Muhammad Asif has said that political stability in the country is crucial for economic stability.

Addressing a press conference at his residence on Sunday, he said consultations with the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) for forming a government in centre was under way currently. "We have majority in Punjab where we are in a position to form the government alone, and the process for the purpose had started already."

He said Shehbaz Sharif would be the PML-N candidate for prime minister's office. He said a coalition government in centre would unite people and work for development and prosperity of the country.

Kh Asif said political stability in the country is very important for economic stability, but some people were engaged in promoting politics of chaos, anarchy and unrest in the country, which could not be well-wishers of the country and the nation in any case. He said the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) had withdrawn from every slogan that they raised, which was proof of the contradiction in their words and actions. The PML-N leader said all government and party affairs would work under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif.

He advised that the political community should go beyond their personal interests and sacrifice for the country and the nation. He said that for political stability in the country, they should shun party politics and play a constructive role even if they sit in the opposition.

In response to a question, he said that there was no estrangement from Maulana Fazlur Rehman.



LAHORE: Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami Sirajul Haq addressing a Press conference.

Four killed in a firing in Wazir Qala

PESHAWAR (APP): As many as four persons were killed as a result of firing in the Wazir Qala area of Peshawar here on Sunday, Daudzai Police confirmed the incident.

According to details, the firing took place in the limits of Daudzai Police Station.

The firing started after the hot words exchange over a property dispute between two groups Haider Haji and Jameel. After the firing was started as a result Nawaz Khan, Haider, Saleh and Azad were killed on the spot, Police said.

The bodies have been shifted to the hospital for post-mortem, Police said.

Police have started raids to arrest the accused.

ECP yet to notify results of majority of independents

ISLAMABAD (INP): Independent candidates backed by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) are still in limbo as they await official notification of their electoral success. Despite more than a week passing since the general elections, the Election Commission of Pakistan has yet to issue notifications for the majority of independent candidates who secured seats in the National Assembly.

Out of over 10 victorious independent candidates, only 8 have received official notifications by Saturday evening. Late into the night, the Election Commission announced the success of an additional 33 candidates.

According to reports, notifications have been issued for 154 out of 265 National Assembly seats. Additionally, Muhammad Ilyas Chaudhry from NA-62 Gujarat, takes three days for an independent candidate to join a political party after their victory.

Raja Khurram Nawaz, triumphant from NA-48 Islamabad, was the first independent candidate to receive notification on February 12, after joining the Pakistan Muslim League two days prior.

Further successes were declared on subsequent days, including former Punjab Governor Mian Muhammad Azhar from NA-129 Lahore and Ghulam Muhammad from NA-93 Chiniot on February 13. On February 15, PTI-backed independent candidate Adil Khan of NA-262 Quetta and independent candidate Aqeel Malik of NA-54 Rawalpindi were notified. Additionally, Muhammad Ilyas Chaudhry from NA-62 Gujarat.



QUETTA: Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Leaders, Zain-ul-Abideen Khilji, Faisal Dahwar and others addressing a press conference, at Quetta press club.

Siraj wants immediate resignation of CEC Raja over most tainted election

LAHORE (INP): Jamaat-e-Islami chief Sirajul Haq has demanded the immediate resignation of Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja, referring to the Feb 8 elections as the most tainted with rigging in the country's history.

Addressing a press conference in Mansoor, Siraj announced plans to protest against rigging in Peshawar on Feb 23 and to hold a conference in Islamabad on Feb 25.

The Jamaat chief stated that while governments were typically formed after elections worldwide, in Pakistan, the government was formed first, followed by decisions about elections. This unique process contributed to an increase in corruption after elections, a phenomenon observed only in Pakistan, he added.

Siraj pointed out that the elections held in 1970 were not accepted, and similarly, this trend persisted today. Despite widespread rigging, there had been a noticeable silence from those who benefitted from it, he added. The Jamaat chief criticised the role of former Rawalpindi commissioner Liaquat Ali Chhattha, describing him as a mere pawn, suggesting that all commissioners were similar in this regard.

He expressed regret that returning officers were appointed from within the administration instead of the courts, lamenting that democracy in Pakistan was buried beneath the results of the Feb 8 elections.

Siraj voiced concern that the issues arising from this election would hinder the country's progress for a period of five years. He also highlighted reservations regarding the delimitations and the rushed closure of cases in the courts. Siraj called for unity to address the country's crises, warning that accepting temporary happiness would hinder the nation's path to achieving true.



SIALKOT: Former Minister Defence Khawaja Asif, addressing media persons at his residence at cantt.

1st computerized FIR registered as Levies force put on modern lines

Independent Report
QUETTA: The Levies force has been put on modern lines in Pishin district.

The credit of putting the Levies force on modern lines goes to the Deputy Commissioner Pishin, Captain (Retd) Jumma Dad Khan Mandokhail who took special interest in this regard.

The laptops and printers have been provided to all Levels thanas for making the FIR system computerized.

With this, the registration of computerized FIRs has been started in different Levies thanas of the district.

Meanwhile, the Risaldar SHO of Levies Thana Huramzai, Itar Khan registered the first Computerized FIR in the concerned Thana.

It may also be mentioned here that SHO of Levies Headquarter Muhammad Younas has also registered a computerized FIR in the district.

Four killed, one injured after car collides with the wall of mart

SIALKOT (APP): Four persons were killed and one got injured after a car collided with the wall of Mart, due to overspeed at Daska-Sambrial Road late last night.

According to a rescue spokesperson, the accident occurred at Daska-Sambrial Road near Adam-Kay Stop, late last night where a speedy car collided with the wall of the Mega Mart after hitting the divider.



BAGH: Skiers take part in the Ganga Choti Winter Sports Festival near Bagh, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK).

PTI leader claims people of Karachi have given their mandate to PTI, JI only

KARACHI (INP): Alleging widespread rigging in the general elections in Sindh, senior PTI leader Halim Adil Sheikh said on Sunday that only two parties, the PTI and Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), enjoyed the mandate of the people of Karachi.

Addressing a press conference here, he saluted JI Karachi Ameer Hafiz Naemur Rehman for relinquishing his seat, saying it belonged to a PTI candidate. He said that had the ROs been taken from judiciary, such a massive rigging could have been prevented. "In fact, it was the beginning of rigging in the country," Sheikh said, adding, "And when the electoral symbol of 'bat' was snatched from the PTI, it was a last nail into the party's coffin."

PTI leader said that despite the fact that so much was done during the last two years to break up the PTI, the party had still managed to win a two-third majority in these elections. "And all those blue-eyed boys, Nawaz Sharif and others have failed," he said.

He was of the view that the country was sinking deep into mire day by day. "The country's image in the world has been tarnished," he said, adding, "The IMF will also come to our rescue."

Sheikh said that there was still a way to put the house in order and that was to update Form 47 as per Form 45 in the entire country and to later announce it in Form 49.

Rawalpindi division's DROs reject ex-boss' charges, seek ECP inquiry

RAWALPINDI (INP): Newly appointed Rawalpindi Commissioner Saif Anwar Jappa has rejected the allegations levelled by former commissioner Liaquat Ali Chhattha about massive rigging in general elections 2024.

After assuming his office, Saif, in a late-night press conference, claimed that clean and transparent elections were held as per the rules and regulations set by the Election Commission of Pakistan.

The district returning officers (DROs) belonging to Rawalpindi, Jhelum, Chakwal and Attock also joined the press conference to ratify the version of the new commissioner and reject the allegations of the former commissioner.

"We managed the general elections with honesty and performed duties and responsibilities without any pressure," the DROs told the media.

All the DROs demanded the chief election commissioner complete probe of the allegations levelled by Chhattha. DROs Chakwal, Jhelum, Attock claimed that all the arrangements were made in transparent manners. DRO Chakwal Quratul Ain said elections in Chakwal were conducted under the Election Act, and all processes adhered to the oath. She demanded an independent investigation into the allegations. Similarly, DROs Attock and Jhelum, Rao Atif Raza, and Captain Sami also denied any pressure during the February 8 polls, asserting that the elections in their respective districts were conducted transparently.