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Nation needs stable hands to steer country away from anarchy, polarisation: COAS

Congratulates entire nation, interim govt, ECP & winning candidates on successful conduct of polls

RAWALPINDI (APP): Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Syed Asim Munir on Sunday congratulated the entire Pakistani Nation, Caretaker Government, Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), Political Parties and all winning candidates on successful conduct of General Elections 2024.

The Army Chief in a statement issued by the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) said that the free and unhindered participation by Pakistani people to exercise their right of vote demonstrated their commitment to democracy and the rule of law as enshrined in Constitution of Pakistan.

The COAS said, "Leadership and personnel of law-enforcement agencies deserve our highest appreciation for creating a

safe and secure environment for the electoral process, despite overwhelming odds. The constructive role played by national media, civil society, members of civil administration and judiciary enabled the successful conduct of the largest electoral exercise in national history." "Pakistan's diverse polity and pluralism will be well-represented by a unified government of all democratic forces imbued with national purpose," he added.

"Elections and democracy are means to serve people of Pakistan and not ends in themselves. The nation needs stable hands and a healing touch to move on from the politics of anarchy and polarisation which does not suit a progressive country of 250 Million people. Elections

are not a zero-sum competition of winning and losing but an exercise to determine the mandate of the people. Political leadership and their workers should rise above self-interests and synergise efforts in governing and serving the people which is perhaps the only way to make democracy functional and purposeful," the Army Chief said.

As the people of Pakistan have reposed their combined trust in the Constitution of Pakistan, it is now incumbent upon all political parties to reciprocate the same with political maturity and unity. As we move forward from this national milestone we must reflect on where the country stands today and where our rightful place should be in the comity of nations, he added.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar giving interview to Turkish broadcaster TRT.

Voters exercised their constitutional right without any hindrance: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar has said that the voters in the currently held general elections exercised their constitutional rights, and by and large, they voted for their favorite candidates despite security challenges.

"It is the beauty of a vibrant democracy, and in Pakistan, it is a transformational democracy, also a brave democracy, considering the security challenges," he opined during an interview with the Turkish broadcaster TRT.

To a question, he said that the next parliament would decide to hand over

the power to that party who would meet the required magical number to form the new government.

The prime minister said that their responsibility as a caretaker government was to ensure security, and ahead of the elections, two terrorist incidents in Balochistan province occurred, which reminded the people of the real-time threat.

The government always had more responsibility when it came to security, he added.

Responding to a question about the suspension of the mobile services, he said that to face the security

challenge, they had to block the communication channels; otherwise, they did not have any political motive whatsoever.

Elaborating his viewpoint, he said that considering that the terrorists would confine themselves to these two provinces would be a fallacy, there might be other potential attacks in other provinces.

He said they did their best to secure them. It was only mobile services that were suspended while the internet service was available.

He did not think that

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QUETTA: Activists of different political parties staging sit-in in front of DC Office against alleged rigging in elections

Two NA independent candidates join PML-N

ISLAMABAD (INP): Two independent candidates, who secured victory in general elections 2024, have announced to join Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), strengthening the party's position in National Assembly (NA).

Independent candidates came up from behind and stole the show, with so far securing 102 seats in National Assembly (NA). Besides PTI, the successful candidates also include some who had only been awarded a ticket following the rejection of their party's more preferred nominees.

The results of 257 out of the total 265 National Assembly constituencies where elections were held had been announced, which showed the independents in the lead with 102 seats overall. The PML-N and

PPP had won 73 and 54 seats, respectively, and were set to bag most of the 70 reserved seats for women and non-Muslims in the house.

The Muttahida Qaumi Movement had bagged 17 seats, while the PML-Q had three. The JUI-F and Istehkam-i-Pakistan Party (IPP) had secured three and two seats, respectively. MWM and BNP had clinched one seat each.

Meanwhile, two independent candidates – one from Islamabad and another from Rawalpindi – throw their weights behind Nawaz Sharif-led PML-N.

Barrister Aqeel Malik, who secured Rawalpindi's NA-54 seat, said that the victory belongs to Nawaz Sharif. On the other hand, Raja Khurram – who took win in Islamabad's NA-48 – was the joint candidate for IPP and PML-N.

ATC approves bail of PTI founder, Qureshi in 12 cases

RAWALPINDI (Online): Anti Terrorism Court (ATC) has approved bail of PTI founder and Shah Mehmood Qureshi in 12 cases in the perspective of May 9.

Judge Malik Ijaz Asif of ATC took up the bail pleas for hearing Saturday. PTI counsel Shiraz Ahmad Ranjha appeared in the court.

The court rejected the plea from prosecution for more time.

The court ordered to accept bail of PTI founder and Shah Mehmood Qureshi in all the 12 cases.

It is pertinent to mention here PTI founder is imprisoned in Adiala jail at present after being convicted in Cipher, Toshakhana and Nikah during iddat case.



QUETTA: Provincial Secretary Health Abdullah Khan in a group photo with participants of a seminar held in connection with World Epilepsy Day at BMC

Commends losing candidates for accepting mandate of people: Jan congratulates nation and winning candidate on completion of election process

Caretaker Minister for Information says we are profoundly grateful to security forces for their sacrifices and commitment to ensuring the safety and security of our citizens

Independent Report

QUETTA: The caretaker Provincial Minister for information, Jan Achakzai has extended his congratulations to the nation and winning candidates in the February 8 elections.

He also applauded the grace and sportsmanship exhibited by losing candidates who have accepted the results.

In an official statement issued here on Saturday, Jan

Achakzai said that "We commend the losing candidates who have accepted the mandate of the people of Balochistan," Minister Achakzai stated.

"Their acceptance paves the way for a peaceful transition of power, which is vital for the stability and progress of our province."

Minister Achakzai expressed his appreciation for the role of the Armed Forces in ensuring a peace-

ful and secure environment during the elections.

He commended the leadership of Army Chief General Asim Munir and the dedication of all security personnel, including the army jawans in Balochistan.

"Thanks to their tireless efforts, no untoward incidents occurred during the polls," he emphasized.

"This allowed millions of

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Commonwealth observer group unveils preliminary findings on Pakistan polls

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Commonwealth Observer Group (COG) on Saturday unveiled its initial findings on Pakistan's General Elections-2024, highlighting the commendable efforts of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) and other institutions for conducting general polls.

Chairperson COG, Dr Goodluck Jonathan at a press conference here acknowledged Pakistan's significance as



one of the world's largest democracies and emphasized the importance of these elections for its people.

The COG chairperson expressed his gratitude for the invitation to observe the elections and commended the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) for logistical preparations amid challenges.

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General Polls 2024: 'Independents' steal spotlight by winning 100 NA, 90 KPK assemblies' seats

ISLAMABAD (APP): Independent candidates continued to consolidate their lead in the General Elections 2024 over mainstream political parties, especially in the National and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assemblies, throughout the result announcement process.

They won 190 seats in the National and KPK assemblies, according to the results announced by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) till Saturday.

According to available results (Form-47) from 255 National Assembly constituencies, independent candidates secured 100 seats, Pakistan Muslim

League-Nawaz (PML-N) 73, Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPPP) 54, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) three, Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) two, Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan 17, Grand Democratic Alliance one, Pakistan Muslim League-Zia one, Majlis-e-Wahdat-e-Muslimeen Pakistan (MWMP) one, and PML three seats.

Out of 295 Punjab Assembly-seat results, independent candidates won 137 seats, PML-N 137, PPPP 10, Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan 1, IPP 1, Pakistan Muslim League-

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Additional SHO martyred, five terrorists killed in gunfire in DI Khan

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): An Additional station house officer (SHO) was martyred and five terrorists were killed in an exchange of fire that took place after a terrorist attack on a policeman here in Sub-Division Darazinda on Saturday.

According to a police spokesman, Additional SHO Din Muhammad Sherani was going to Darazinda police station for his duty when some unknown terrorists targeted him on the way with firearms in the Morgah area.

The policeman retaliated against the terrorist

attack. In exchange of fire, the Additional SHO was martyred while two of the terrorists were also killed on the spot and others escaped from the scene.

The Rescue 1122 team shifted the body of the martyred SHO to the District Headquarters Hospital (DHQ) Dera Ismail Khan.

Soon after receiving information about the incident, District Police Officer (DPO) Abdul Rauf Babar Qaisrani along with a heavy contingent of police and security forces reached the site and started a search operation.

PML-N, PPP agree to work together to achieve political, economic stability

LAHORE (INP): Co-Chairman, Pakistan People's Party Asif Ali Zardari, Faryal Talpur and Bilawal Bhutto met with Central President PML-N Shehbaz Sharif in Lahore on Friday night.

On this occasion, both sides exchanged views about formation of forthcoming government in the country. It was agreed in the meeting that in order to achieve political and economic stability in the country, both parties should work together.

APP adds: The Pakistan Muslim League-N on Saturday has intensified its efforts to form a government.

According to party sources, PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif met party supremo Nawaz Sharif and informed him about the progress in the meeting with Asif Ali Zardari here on Saturday.

Party sources said that a 3-member committee has been set up by the PML-N leadership to contact independent candidates.

Mohsin Dawar injured in firing in N. Waziristan

MIRANSHAH (INP): Ex-MNA Mohsin Dawar has been injured in a "firing" incident in North Waziristan's Miranshah, his party leader Bushra Gohar has said.

Dawar, the chief of the National Democratic Movement, was contesting from the district's NA-40 constituency, where he had alleged there were attempts to rig the polling results. The incident comes more than a month after he survived a gun attack on his convoy in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's tribal district.

PPP's Malik Shah wins NA-259 election

QUETTA (APP): Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Parliamentarian Malik Shah has won the National Assembly election from NA-259 (Kech-Gum) by securing 40,778 votes.

According to the unofficial result issued by the Returning Officer/ECP, his runner-up was Dr. Abdul Malik of National Party (NP), who bagged 22,298 votes.

Overall voter's turn-out remained at 38.19 per cent.

Six independent candidates also win PA seats: PPP emerges major political party with 11 winning seats of Balochistan Assembly

PML-N and JUI-F become 2nd & 3rd major parties respectively with 10 & 9 seats in provincial assembly

Independent Report

QUETTA: The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) has emerged major political party securing highest number of 11 seats of Balochistan Assembly in the Elections 2024.

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) remained second and third by securing 10 and 9 seats of the Provincial Assembly respectively.

Among the political parties, Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) and National Party secured four and three seats of the Provincial Assembly respectively.

Awami National Party (ANP) and Balochistan National Party-Awami (BNP-A) got two seats of the Provincial Assembly each.

Similarly, Balochistan National Party (BNP), JUI-Pak, Haq Do Tehreek Pakistan (HDTP) could win one seat each.

While on the other hand, the independent candidates secured six seats of the provincial Assembly.

According to the unofficial results, PPP candidates who won their seats are included: Ali Madad Jatak, Abdul Samad Khan and Ubaidullah Gorgej from Quetta, Nawab Sanaullah Zehri from Khuzdar, Sarfraz Bugti from Dera Bugti, Sardar Sarfraz Chakar Domki from Sibi, Mir Zahoor Ahmed Buledi and Mir Asghar Rind from Kech, Mir Sadiq Umrani from Naseerabad, Mir Naseebullah Marri from Kohlu and Sardarzada

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ISLAMABAD: Chairman of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Gohar Khan addressing a press conference at PTI central secretariat

President Arif Alvi to invite PTI to form govt, claims Barrister Gohar

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan on Saturday claimed that President Arif Alvi would invite his party to form the government as they had gotten a majority in the National Assembly.

"We have no quarrel with anyone, we want to move forward. We will proceed and form a government in accordance with the constitution and the law," Gohar Khan said addressing the media in Islamabad.

He said the people freely exercised their right to vote. The presiding officers counted the votes and prepared Form 45, he added.

The PTI chief said the results should be made according to Form 45 as they had received all those forms.

He said the economy would not be able to toler-

ate the suppression of peoples' voice and forming a desired government.

"No obstacle should be created for the PTI and results should be announced as soon as possible. As per the law, the final result is extracted from Form 45 and we have received all the results," he said adding that the final results should be announced before 12:00am tonight.

Gohar said their independent candidates were in contact with them. They were loyal to the party and would remain so, he said adding that they would make their independent government.

He said the PTI would go towards intra-party elections within 15 days after completion of the process. The people had given a big mandate to the PTI, he maintained. He also said all the cases on the PTI founder were fake.

"Bogus" elections not acceptable, says Lashkari Raisani

INDEPENDENT REPORT

QUETTA: The convener of Balochistan Grand Alliance (BGA) and former Senator, Nawabzada Lashkari Raisani has described the general elections as "bogus" and categorically said that these "bogus" elections aren't acceptable to us.

Nawabzada Lashkari Raisani was addressing press conference here at the Quetta press club on Saturday.

He said the state

has been pushed in the "closed street".

He said that the governments are formed through the decisions made in closed rooms instead of the public opinions.

Nawabzada Lashkari Raisani claim that he was given a message that he would be given the seat again. But he refused to become part of the fake system. He also said that we are not going to accept the bogus election.



ABUDHABI: Ambassador Faisal Niaz Tirmizi, Pakistan's Envoy to the United Arab Emirates representing Pakistan in the 7th Ministerial Consultation of Abu Dhabi Dialogue, Pakistan is the current Chair of Abu Dhabi Dialogue.



KARACHI: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Dr. Umar Saif speaking during Town Hall programme of Pakistan Software Houses Association (P@sha)

At UN-IPU hearing Pakistan urges regulation of emerging technologies to safeguard global peace, security

UNITED NATIONS (APP): Pakistan has urged the international community, especially the developed nations, to harness new technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) for the betterment of society.

“Without regulation, these new technologies could become more lethal than any weapon witnessed before,” Pakistani representative Senator Mohsin Aziz told the Annual Parliamentary Hearing, a joint initiative between the President of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). UNGA President Dennis Francis and IPU President Tullia Ackson were hosting some 300 participants, including parliamentarians, Speakers of Parliament, advisers, and experts from more than 70 countries, at the UN Headquarters in New York, USA.

Organizers said the theme of this joint IPU-UN hearing will align with the IPU’s primary focus in 2024

ECP summons important meeting today

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has summoned an important meeting on the election 2024 results today (Sunday). According to sources, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja will preside the ECP meeting, says in media reports.

Sikandar Sultan Raja will be brief on February 8 election, the results in the meeting and the delayed announcement of election results. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has released unofficial results of 252 NA seats out of 265.

According to the unofficial results received from electoral watchdog, independent candidates were leading with 100 seats followed by Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz’ (PML-N) 71 seats.

Meanwhile, Pakistan People’s Party managed to secure 54 NA seats so far. Furthermore, MQM-P clinched 17 NA seats and IPP and JUI bagged two whereas PML-Q got secured three seats, and MWM, PML-Z, BNP clinched victory on two NA seats.

Gilani & sons win three NA and one PA seats

ISLAMABAD (INP): A remarkable achievement for the Gilani family of Multan because as per inconclusive and unofficial results, former prime minister and PPP stalwart Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani and his sons won three National Assembly (NA) seats and one Punjab Assembly (PA) seat from the city.

Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani has emerged victorious in NA-148, while his sons Ali Musa Gilani and Abdul Qadir Gilani have won their seats, NA-151 and NA-152, respectively.

Ali Haider Gilani, the former prime minister’s elder son, on the other hand, has won from PP-213.

The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) has so far won 53 National Assembly seats with a dozen still to be announced.

The victory of PTI-backed independent candidates in large numbers has surprised all and sundry as according to inconclusive and unofficial results received so far, they have won close to 100 NA seats, and close to 200 Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assemblies’ seats.

The Gilani family clinched half of Multan’s six National Assembly seats, besides claiming a provincial assembly seat.

Navaz challenges election result of NA-15 Manshehra

LAHORE (Online): PML-N Quaid Nawaz Sharif has challenged election result of national assembly constituency NA-15 Manshehra.

The former Prime Minister (PM) took plea in his petition filed in Election Commission (EC) that are difficulties being faced in making contacts due to snow fall in several areas of Manshehra.

He said in the petition that forms 45 have not reached in over 125 polling stations. But result was announced. Therefore, result from NA-15 be stopped.

Nawaz Sharif has remained unsuccessful from this constituency as per unofficial result of the polling.

FO surprised at negative tone of certain countries’ statements over general elections

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed its surprise on Saturday at the negative tone of some of the statements of certain countries over the recently concluded general elections in Pakistan.

It said these statements neither took into account the complexity of the electoral process nor acknowledged the free and enthusiastic exercise of the right to vote by tens of millions of Pakistanis.

“These statements ignore the undeniable fact that Pakistan has held general elections peacefully and successfully while dealing with serious security threats resulting primarily from foreign-sponsored terrorism,” the Foreign Office Spokesperson said in a press statement.

The spokesperson said that they had taken note of statements from certain countries and organizations on the general elections held in Pakistan on February 8.

“Some statements are not even factual. There was no nationwide internet shutdown. Only mobile services were suspended for the day to avoid terrorist incidents on the polling day. The election exercise has demonstrated that the concerns of many commentators were misplaced,” it was emphasized.

Pakistan held the elections as part of its commitment to building a stable and democratic society, the spokesperson said, adding that while they valued constructive advice from their friends, making negative commentary even before the completion of the electoral process was neither constructive nor objective.

“Pakistan will continue to work towards building a vibrant democratic polity. Every election and peaceful transition of power brings us closer to that goal. We do this not on account of the concerns expressed by others but because that is the aspiration of our people and the vision of our founding fathers,” it was further added.



KARACHI: Members of National Democratic Movement are holding protest against attacked on NDM Chairman Moshin Dawar, held at Karachi press club

PPP emerges major political party with...

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Faisal Jamali from Usta Muhammad.

The PML-N candidates who won the provincial assembly seats are included Zarak Khan Mandokhail from Quetta, Jam Kamal Khan from Lasbela, Sardar Abdul Rehman Khetran from Barkhan, Sardar Masood Luni from Duki, Mir Shoaib Naushervani from Kharan, Muhammad Khan Toor Utmankhail from Loralai, Muhammad Khan Lehri, Muhammad Saleem Khosa from Sohbatpur and Barkat Ali Rind from Kech.

The candidates belonging to JUI-F won the provincial assembly seats are: Nawab Aslam Khan Raisani from Mastung, Mi Zafarullah Zehri from Sorab, Asghar Tareen and

Syed Zafar Agha from Pishin, Saeed Ahmed Langove from Kalat, Younas Aziz Zehri from Kalat, Gulam Dastagir Badini from Noshki, Khalilur Rehman Dumar from Ziarat-Harnai, Fazal Qadir Mandokhail from Zhoab and Dr Muhammad Nawaz Kibzai from Shirani.

The winning candidates of National Party are included Dr Abdul Malik Baloch from Kech, Rehmat Saleh Baloch from Panjgur and Khair Jan Baloch from Awaran. Those who were elected on the tickets of Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) are included Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani from Chaghai, Prince Agha Umar Ahmedzai from Quetta, Sardar Muhammad Saleh Bhotani from Hub Nawabzada Tariq

Magsi from Jhal Magsi. Five independent candidates who made their way in Balochistan Assembly are: Wali Muhammad Noorzar, Bakht Muhammad Kakar and Liaquat Lehri from Quetta, Asfandyar Yar Kakar from Pishin and Abdul Khaliq Achakzai from Chaman.

Awami National Party (ANP)’s Engineer Zamarak Khan Achakzai and Malik Naeem Bazzi retained their seats from Kila Abdullah and Quetta respectively.

The BNP’s Sardar Akhtar Mengal and BNP-Awami’s Mir Asadullah Baloch also remained successful in the elections.

From Gwadar, Maulana Hidayatullah Rehman Baloch of Haq Do Tehreek also won the provincial assembly seat.

Jan congratulates...

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voters to exercise their right to vote freely and confidently.”

Furthermore, Minister Achakzai extended his congratulations to the security forces for their success in eliminating the mastermind behind the Pishin and Qilla Saifullah bombings. It was a great achievement in defeating the forces of evil.

He specifically highlighted the contributions of the FC North and FC South’s leadership and their jawans, who played a crucial role in securing the polling environment and allowing for a smooth electoral process.

“We are profoundly grateful to the security forces for their sacrifices and commitment to ensuring the safety and security of our citizens,” concluded Minister Achakzai. “Their dedication is instrumental in promoting peace and stability in Balochistan.”

Voters exercised their constitutional...

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this suspension had hindered the huge democratic exercise. The results showed that it was, by and large, a free and fair exercise.

The caretaker prime minister said that even though people went out and peacefully exercised their right to vote, for the time being, he didn’t have figures as to how many people had voted.

Probably it would have been a record, which meant that everyone was allowed and their votes were counted. So else was democracy, he added.

Two provinces were badly hit by terrorist attacks, and if it was kept in mind, people came out and bravely voted for their candidates, which was not usual but rather quite unusual, he opined.

He said, “The people of Pakistan are quite brave; they came out and voted.”

To a query regarding change in previous governments, he said there were perceptions and realities, and in the last two decades, the change in governments, like in post-2002, happened on the floor of the parliament.

The vote of no confidence against the previous PTI’s government was passed on the floor of the house with 179 votes, he added.

“So how can anyone call it an undemocratic exercise and intervention from outside forces?” he said, adding that even when Imran Khan was elected, people called it a product of a so-called selection process.

But the reality was that he (Imran Khan) was elected with the support of 179 members of parliament, he added.

‘Independents’ steal spotlight...

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Quaid (PML-Q) 7, and PML-Z 1.

For the Sindh Assembly, PPP secured 84 seats, independent candidates 13, MQM-P 28, GDA 2, and Jamaat-e-Islami 2, out of the total 129 constituencies’ results.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, independent candidates clinched 90 provincial assembly seats, PML-N 5, PPP 4, JUI 7, JI 3, Awami National Party (ANP) and PTIP one each, out of 112 seats.

In Balochistan, PML-N secured 9 seats, PPP 11, JUI 9, independent candidates 6, JI 1, Awami National Party 2, Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) 4, and one each by Balochistan National Party-Awami and National Party (NP), as per the results announced for 48 seats so far.

According to the ECP, over 128 million registered voters were scheduled to exercise their democratic right by casting votes for candidates participating in elections for the national and provincial legislatures. The polling was held for 265 seats of the National Assembly and 590 seats of provincial assemblies.

Voting took place on 51 seats of the Balochistan Assembly, 128 out of 130 seats of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, 296 out of 297 seats of the Punjab Assembly, and 130 seats of the Sindh Assembly.

Polling was held in 855



FAISALABAD: Participants hold a banner during a walk on the eve of International Epilepsy Day, at Allied Hospital in the city

Commonwealth observer...

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The group, he said, adhered to principles of impartiality, non-interference, and independence during its deployment, engaging with various stakeholders.

Appreciating the role of Election Commission of Pakistan, he said that the COG observers were deployed in various areas including Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore, Multan, Faisalabad, Karachi, Hyderabad and Abbottabad on February 6, 2024 to observe election preparations.

Recognizing and appreciating the substantial work by the ECP, the COG chairperson noted delays in proceeding with the elections, attributing them to the significant task of organizing an election involving around 128 million registered voters. The security challenges were acknowledged, with condolences extended for lives lost in terrorist attacks leading up to Election Day. The impact of adverse weather conditions, including snowbound areas and the damages caused by floods in 2022, was also highlighted.

Dr Jonathan mentioned the substantially reformed legal framework leading up to the 2024 General Elections, emphasizing the importance of continued reform in line with the Constitution and Commonwealth Charter values. The areas for refinement in the legal framework will be detailed in the final report.

Lauding the reduction in the national gender gap in registered voters and the reserved seats for women, he noted concerns regarding the

participation of women candidates and some communities discouraging women from campaigning and voting. The youth engagement in campaigns, especially on social media, was commended, but challenges for minority communities were mentioned.

The COG chairperson underscored the importance of a legal and administrative environment conducive to citizens’ right to run for office and vote. He noted the implementation of codes of conduct for political parties and the media, with calls for more stakeholder engagement. The complete recommendations to ensure transparency in this regard will be included in the final report.

While commending the ECP’s efforts to improve election management through the Election Management System (EMS), he acknowledged operational challenges on Election Day, which will be elaborated on in subsequent observations.

He provided a detailed overview of the pre-poll procedures, polling environment, voter turnout, role of polling staff, participation and inclusion, and the overall security situation.

Noteworthy observations included increased voter turnout throughout the day, the presence of youth and women in polling stations, and commendation for security officials’ professionalism.

As the results process unfolds, the COG chairperson congratulated the people of Pakistan for their patience and determination, urging citizens to continue exercising restraint.

IU Coach clarifies inclusion of Shah brothers in PSL 9 Squad

ISLAMABAD (INP): In a recent interview with a cricket website, Mike Hesson, the head coach of two-time Pakistan Super League (PSL) champions Islamabad United, shed light on the rationale behind including the Shah brothers in the squad for the ninth edition of the tournament.

Hesson emphasized that the decision to enlist the three brothers was solely based on cricketing merit. He explained that while each of the Shah brothers brings a unique skill set to the team, their collective presence promises to be advantageous for Islamabad United.

Highlighting the individual performances of the Shah siblings, Hesson pointed out that Haneen Shah has showcased commendable performances in domestic cricket, whereas Obaid Shah has distinguished himself as a standout performer in the U-19 World Cup, emerging as Pakistan’s top wicket-taker.

Looking ahead to the upcoming season, Hesson expressed anticipation for the intriguing prospect of witnessing all three cricketers bowling together, foreseeing an exciting moment for Islamabad United and its fans.

It’s worth noting that Naseem Shah, upon joining the franchise alongside his brothers, reiterated that their inclusion in the PSL squad was a result of their own performances.



KARACHI: Police officials are standing high alert to avoid untoward incident during the protest demonstration of Jamat-e-Islami (JI) and Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) against alleged rigging in General Election 2024, outside Provincial Election Commission Office in Karachi

PTI-backed candidates challenge results of NA constituencies

ISLAMABAD (INP): As the announcement of general elections 2024 were almost over, legal challenges to the election results started to land in courts on Saturday.

The election result of National Assembly constituency NA-48 was challenged in the Islamabad High Court (IHC) by a PTI-supported candidate.

Ali Bukhari filed a petition at the IHC on Saturday, praying the court to annul the result due to "faults" in the election process. Ali Bukhari also urged the court to fix the petition for hearing Saturday.

According to the unofficial election result from NA-48 Islamabad-III, independent candidate Raja Khuram Nawaz has won the poll by securing 69,699 votes. PTI-backed independent candidate Ali Bukhari was second with 59,851 votes.

Another PTI-supported independent candidate Shoaib Shaheen also moved IHC challenging the outcome of NA-47 result. Meanwhile, PTI Sindh

President Haleem Adil Sheikh has also challenged NA-238 result in Sindh High Court in Karachi.

Haleem Adil filed his plea through Barrister Ali Tahir, stating that he had obtained more than 71,000 votes in accordance with the form 45.

However, MQM candidate Sadiq Iftikhar was declared winner with a margin of 54,000 after altering the form 47. He urged the court to annul the notification of Sadiq Iftikhar's victory.

PTI-backed independent candidate Rehana Dar has challenged election result of NA-71 in Lahore High Court. She informed the court that his rival PML-N's Khawaja Asif had lost election as per the form 45. She urged to court to stop FCP from issuing the final election result of NA-71.

The victory of MQM-P's Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui from NA-248 was also challenged in Sindh High Court by independent candidate Arsalan Khalid.

Arsalan Khalid filed a petition in SHC through Barrister Ali Tahir, urging the court that as per form 45 Arsalan Khalid won the election by a big margin but while reading form 47 the RO expelled all the candidates and their agents out of his office. The RO changed the result, declaring Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui as winner with 103,082 votes. The court urged to annul the form 47.

PTI-backed independent candidate from NA-119 Shahzad Farooq has challenged the election victory of PML-N leader Maryam Nawaz in Lahore High Court.

The election victory of another PML-N leader Ataullah Tarar from NA-127 was also challenged in IHC by independent candidate Zaheer Abbas Khokhar.

Candidate Umar Aslam Khan has challenged the election victory of his rival from NA-87 Khushab in LHC. Candidate Ali Ijaz Buttar Advocate has also challenged election victory of his rival in NA-117.



ISLAMABAD: A large number of people in queue to get free food at G-11.

Independent candidates may face legal, constitutional challenges despite win: Experts

ISLAMABAD (APP): The independent candidates backed by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf are likely to face legal and constitutional challenges to form the government despite winning seats in the general election, experts have said.

Advocate Syed Noman Bukhari, senior legal and constitutional expert told APP on Saturday that under the law, the independent candidates after winning elections were required to join a political party within a specified period and form government. In the 2018 election, he said, several independent candidates of the KP Assembly joined the Balochistan Awami Party and joined the coalition government of PTI.

Noman Bukhari said that joining a political party by independent candidates

was a legal requirement to obtain perks and privileges besides women-reserved seats. Meanwhile, PTI leader Taimur Salim Jhagra told reporters here that consultation on all issues including legal and constitutional obstacles had been started and all decisions would be taken with consultation by the political leadership. PTI-backed candidates have obtained a maximum number of seats from Peshawar, Nowshera, Abbottabad, Swat, Charsadda, Swabi, Chitral, Bannu, Mohmand, Khyber and Mardan.

In Peshawar, PTI-backed independent candidates won four seats out of five of the National Assembly and six out of 13 Provincial Assembly seats.

Political stalwarts that lost the election 2024 include PTI Parliamentarians

Chairman Pervez Khattak on NA-23 Nowshera-I, KP PMLN Information Secretary Ikhtair Wali Khan, former Environment Minister Wajid Ali Khan in Swat, JIP Central Ameer Maulana Sirajul Haq.

Professor Dr A.H. Hilali, Chairman Political Science Department at the University of Peshawar told APP that the participation of large numbers of voters in the 2024 election reflected the people's unshakable trust in the electoral process.

He said the 2024 election results signified the diverse polity and pluralism in the country that would be well-represented by a unified government of all democratic forces imbued with a national purpose to take the country forward on the road to progress and development.

A new urine test may be able to detect ovarian cancer early

ISLAMABAD (Online): Scientists are working on a potential urine-based test to help detect ovarian cancer in its early stages.

The researchers from Virginia Commonwealth University published their study in the Journal of the American Chemical Society. They will also present their findings at the Biophysical Society Annual Meeting next week in Philadelphia.

The researchers' goal is for medical professionals to use this information, combined with CA-125 blood tests, transvaginal ultrasound, and family history, to provide early-stage detection, diagnosis, and treatment for ovarian cancer. "There are no screening tests that are useful or available for ovarian cancer," said Dr. Deanna Gerber, a gynecological oncologist at NYU Langone's Perlmutter Cancer Center

and an assistant professor of gynecology at NYU Langone Grossman School of Medicine-Long Island in New York who was not involved in the research.

"As such, the majority of ovarian cancers are diagnosed at stage three and four when they become symptomatic," Gerber told Medical News Today. "This technology is exciting because anything that may increase our chances of detecting cancer at an earlier stage will undoubtedly improve our chance of curing more ovarian cancers."

Peptides and ovarian cancer There are thousands of tiny particles, called peptides, in our urine and there are specific ones that signal ovarian cancer. Currently, the techniques commonly used are not always straightforward or cost-effective to detect the molecules connected to ovarian cancer.

DC leads crackdown on alms seekers; nabs 10

ISLAMABAD (APP): On the directions of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon, a relentless crackdown on beggars has been initiated across the capital city. According to ICT Spokesman, Dr. Abdullah Tabassum, the Assistant Commissioner City, Anil Saeed, spearheaded an operation on Saturday resulting in the apprehension of ten beggars from various localities. These individuals were promptly handed over to Kohsar police station for further legal action.

He said that in a concerted effort to address the issue comprehensively, professional beggars were targeted in order to make federal capital a liveable place for the citizens. Meanwhile, the underage beggars were also compassionately handed over to the Edhi Center for appropriate care.

He said that, following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police has intensified crackdown against the criminal elements in order to eliminate the crime from the city.

Following these directions, the Humak police team arrested an accused namely Faizan Haider and recovered the dagger from his possession. The Korla



ISLAMABAD: Indonesian citizens and their families residing in Pakistan use their right to vote for "Indonesian Elections" at the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia.

Mushahid concedes Punjab changed hands politically altering Pak politics direction

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz leader Mushahid Hussain Sayed Saturday conceded that Punjab for 3rd time in 50 years, Punjab, which has 'make-or-break' impact in the numbers game of electoral power, has changed hands politically, fundamentally altering the dynamics and direction of Pakistani politics.

His views came after the Election 2024 results via social media platform X.

Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi elected PTF President

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a landmark event, the Pakistan Tennis Federation (PTF) on Saturday elected tennis ace Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi as its new president for a four-year term, spanning from 2024 to 2028.

The election to choose new office-bearers were held at the PTF SDA Tennis Complex Islamabad wherein representatives of all affiliated units of the PTF took part.

Following a closely contested election, Aisam emerged victorious, securing 8 votes against his rival Maj General (ret'd) Asghar Nawaz's 7 votes for the presidential position.

The election results also saw Lt. Col. (ret'd) Zia Uddin Tufail assuming the

role of Secretary General PTF, while M. Arif Qureshi was elected Treasurer. Zia Uddin garnered 8 votes against Suleman Javed's 7.

Arif Qureshi clinched 9 votes against his opponent Umar Farooq's 6 votes.

"I'm very excited at the win. In my 25 years playing career I tried my best to bring laurels for my country and now as president of the federation I will be trying to deliver my best," Aisam told media after winning the election.

The 43-year-old Aisam said he had learnt a lot at the international level and would be trying to disseminate his knowledge of the game to Pakistan players.

Terming the elections Pakistan's most consequential since 1970 with a huge political significance, he noted that People still retain hope, faith and optimism in power of Vote to affect Change, which is good for democracy, as they came out voluntarily in droves to vote for Party of their choice, ensuring its victory.

"Using adversity to advantage, a Party whose name was banned from ballot paper + guided by a leader from jail, won largest number of popular votes by successfully campaigning digitally on social media, as they were denied conventional campaigning," he wrote.

"For 3rd time in 50 years, Punjab, which has 'make-or-break' impact in the numbers game of electoral power, has changed hands politically, fundamentally altering the dynamics & direction of Pakistani politics!" concluded Mushahid.

Objection raised on petition of independent candidates against decision of RO

ISLAMABAD (Online): Objection has been raised on the petitions filed by independent candidates including Shoaib Shaheen and Ali Bokhari in Islamabad High Court (IHC) against the decision of Returning Officers (ROs) in two constituencies NA-47 and 48 of Islamabad. Registrar office has raised objections of two kinds on the petitions.

It has been said in the objection that decision has not been made on the application given to ROs as yet and they can come to high court direct. No written evidence is available regarding allegations leveled by the petitioners.



ISLAMABAD: A heavy trailer is carrying an out of order Metro Bus on his way at Srinagar Highway in the Federal Capital.

Complete shutdown to be observed in IIOJK today

ISLAMABAD (APP): Complete shutdown will be observed tomorrow (February 11) in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) to mark the 40th martyrdom anniversary of prominent Kashmiri leader, Muhammad Maqbool Butt. According to Kashmir Media Service, "Call for the shutdown has been given by the All Parties Hurriyat Conference, Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front and other pro-freedom organizations."

India had handed

Muhammad Maqbool Butt in New Delhi's Tihar Jail on February 11, 1984 for his leading role in the Kashmiri's ongoing freedom movement and buried him in the premises of the prison. Indian authorities had not returned the mortal remains of the martyred leader to his family for proper burial despite consistent demand by the people of the occupied territory. The APHC and other Hurriyat leaders and organizations paying rich tributes to Muhammad

Maqbool Butt maintained, "Martyrs are the real assets of the Kashmiris' freedom struggle against Indian yoke, the sacrifices of Kashmiri martyrs will not be allowed to go waste and their mission will be accomplished at all costs."

On the other hand, posters with pictures of Muhammad Maqbool Butt and Muhammad Afzal Guru appeared in different areas of occupied Kashmir appealing to the people to observe a complete strike on Sunday (February 11).

Eight outlaws arrested; drugs and weapons recovered

Independent Report ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Police apprehended eight outlaws including four proclaimed offenders from different areas of the city during the last 24 hours and recovered drugs and weapons from their possession, a public relations officer said.

He said that, following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police has intensified crackdown against the criminal elements in order to eliminate the crime from the city.

Following these directions, the Humak police team arrested an accused namely Faizan Haider and recovered the dagger from his possession. The Korla

police team arrested the lady accused namely Shakila Bibi and recovered 290 gram heroin from her possession.

Likewise, the Kirpa police team arrested an accused namely Abid and recovered one 30 bore pistol from his possession. The Lohi Bher police team arrested and accused namely Muhammad Sarmad and recovered one 30 bore pistol from his possession.

Cases have been registered against the nabbed accused and further investigation is underway. During the ongoing crackdown against court absconders and proclaimed offenders, the Islamabad Capital Police apprehended four absconders involved in murder, attempted murder and land grabbing activities.

Amjad Islam Amjad remembered on 1st death anniversary

ISLAMABAD (APP): The first death anniversary of renowned poet, playwright, and literary icon Amjad Islam Amjad was observed here on Saturday.

Amjad was a renowned poet, screenwriter, and lyricist who inspired generations through his literary work. He was born on August 4, 1944, in Lahore. He made valuable contributions in the fields of drama and poetry.

Amjad was renowned for his contributions to poetry, drama, and literature, inspiring generations through his literary prowess. He left an indelible mark on the literary landscape with his extensive work, which includes over 40 books authored throughout his illustrious career.

Petition filed in SC for inclusion of successful independents in parties

ISLAMABAD (INP): A petition has been filed in the Supreme Court for the inclusion of successful independent candidates in political parties.

Maulvi Iqbal Haider Advocate filed the petition in the Supreme Court.

It was requested in the petition that the independent candidates be ordered to join the political parties within three days. In case of not joining a political party, the seats of independent candidates should be declared vacant, requested in petition.

The plea taken in the petition is that in the elections of 2024, about 100 independent candidates have won the election. Independent candidates can vote of confidence and no

confidence as per the Election Act.

The petitioner took plea that if the successful candidates remain independent, their buying and selling process will start. There can be horse trading in the election of the Prime Minister and the Speaker of the National Assembly, text of petition said.

In order to prevent corrupt practices, it is mandatory that independent candidates should be part of a party, says text of petition. Due to remaining independent, MNAs will be deprived of even reserved seats, says petition.

The Federation, Election Commission and Chief Election Commissioner have been made parties in the petition.

Fire in Rawalpindi, burn 25 shops

ISLAMABAD (APP): A blaze erupted on the third floor of the Rajabazar Mughal Sarai Market in Rawalpindi, causing damage to around 25 shops.

The incident occurred in Rawalpindi, prompting a swift response from the firefighting team.

Over 60 firefighters were mobilized to tackle the fire and conduct rescue operations. Their efforts were focused on bringing the flames under control and preventing further spread to

nearby establishments.

The fire incident has caused significant disruption to the market area, with shop owners and local authorities assessing the extent of the damage. Investigations are underway to determine the cause of the fire.

Efforts are ongoing to ensure the safety of residents and businesses in the vicinity, as well as to mitigate any potential risks associated with the aftermath of the incident.



ISLAMABAD: An aged man is selling plastic toys on a busy road.

PTDC hosts reception to honour two Polish explorers

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) hosted a reception to honor the remarkable achievement of two Polish women.

Monika Witkowska and Joanna Mostowska, who have successfully completed the First Female Winter Ski Traverse of Deosai.

Deosai, the second highest plateau in the world after Tibet, witnessed this historic expedition as Monika and Joanna traversed its challenging terrain alone, enduring harsh weather conditions with temperatures dropping as low as minus 25 degrees Celsius. Their ten-day journey from January 27th to February 5th, 2024, showcased extraordinary physical endurance and determination, said a news release.

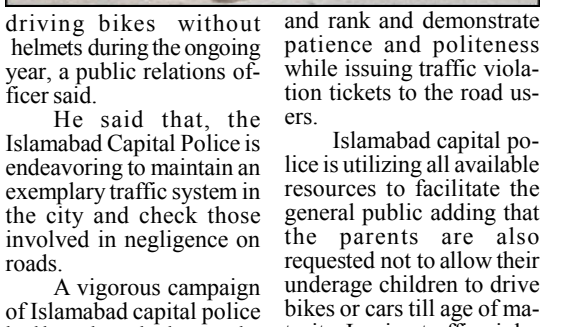
Managing Director PTDC Aftab ur Rehman Rana congratulated the duo on their exceptional feat and highlighted the significant impact of their expedition on promoting winter tourism in Pakistan. He emphasized that such endeavors would attract more adventure tourists to explore Pakistan's mountainous regions during the winter season, traditionally considered an off-season for tourism.

Rana further elaborated on the beauty and biodiversity of Deosai, affectionately known as the "Land of the Giants," which has been designated as a national park. He mentioned the conservation efforts that have led to an increase in the brown bear population, making Deosai an ideal destination for ecotourism during the summer months.

In her remarks, Monika Witkowska expressed gratitude for the warm welcome and reception extended by PTDC. As an avid traveller and K2 climber, she emphasized the challenges they faced during the expedition, starting from Shushar lake and concluding near Sadpara village.

4,600 bikers fined over helmet violation during the ongoing year

Independent Report ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Police issued 4,600 fine tickets to motorcyclists



driving bikes without helmets during the ongoing year, a public relations officer said.

He said that, the Islamabad Capital Police is endeavoring to maintain an exemplary traffic system in the city and check those involved in negligence on roads.

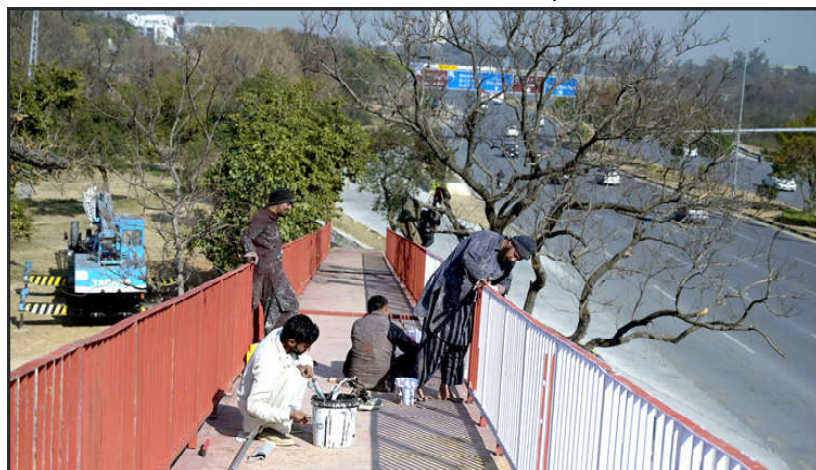
A vigorous campaign of Islamabad capital police had been launched as per the directions of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, in order to create awareness among citizens about the traffic rules.

Officials have been directed to ensure the implementation of traffic rules and regulation irrespective of status

and rank and demonstrate patience and politeness while issuing traffic violation tickets to the road users.

Islamabad capital police is utilizing all available resources to facilitate the general public adding that the parents are also requested not to allow their underage children to drive bikes or cars till age of maturity. Issuing traffic violation tickets by Islamabad capital police is not as a punitive measure but the purpose is to ensure a safe road environment in the Capital and secure the lives of the people.

He said that all the of-



ISLAMABAD: Workers paint the grills of a pedestrian bridge on Srinagar Highway.

Daily Voice of Masses Independent

Sunday February 11, 2024

Respect the mandate

Despite everything done to make these elections as controversial as possible, millions chose the ballot box this Thursday to make themselves heard.

In so doing, they demonstrated that public faith in Pakistan's democratic political system endures and also that, if threatened, the people will jealously protect their right to self-govern.

Unfortunately, though the public's decision was quite evident, some quarters still attempted to stamp their will over the election results. They should be warned that such meddling is no longer acceptable to the voting public, many of whom, if not most, have made their disapproval of its tactics amply clear.

We had seen state manipulation at work in the 2018 polls and earlier ones as well. However, this time, the political party that was targeted had almost everything taken from it.

From the pre-poll phase to election day irregularities to the post-poll counting process — the attempts to subvert the PTI were blatantly executed. The party's leadership was jailed, its workers were picked up, its electoral symbol was denied through a contentious verdict, and even the independent candidates it backed were not allowed to campaign.

These machinations ultimately backfired: at the end of the day, as the votes for the independents showed, the people refused to be deterred by fear tactics. They chose the pariah party, proving wrong all so-called surveys fed to the media in the run-up to the polls. It seems the only thing the state was able to achieve through its persistent victimisation of the PTI was to turn it into a symbol of resistance for the people.

This paper frequently questioned the PTI's decisions while it was in power and criticised it for its wrong actions. However, the treatment meted to the party in recent months has been patently unjust, and it is now evident that there is much anger against the establishment's open and constant interference in civilian matters — interference which has only grown over the years because there has been no firm political consensus against it.

The powers that be should therefore drop their vendetta against the PTI forthwith. Some urgent corrective measures are also needed. Firstly, there should be no attempt to coerce any of the independent candidates, and the ECP must facilitate them in joining the party of their choice, even if it is the PTI.

Secondly, since no party has an absolute majority, whoever can cobble together an alliance should form the government. Nawaz Sharif may have delivered a victory speech, but forcing others to join a PML-N-led government will only precipitate a bigger crisis.

Lastly, the state must realise that, sometimes, a vote for the underdog is a vote against the establishment. Does it want an 'election' contest in the future where the people blame the state for their problems?

Zafar Mirza

The health of the 2024 elections is not too far from the health of the nation. Let's take a look at the manifestos of the main political parties through a health lens.

To start with, the PTI's manifesto was not available through their website, which was not accessible at the time this article was being written. After many failed attempts to access the website, I decided to move on — like everyone else! The PTI manifesto references in this article come through secondary sources and hence may be incomplete. I had access to the manifestos published by the PML-N, PPP and the Jamaat-i-Islami (JI).

Although a party manifesto is more of a presence in our politics, it is nevertheless a tool that can help us understand the vision and mindsets of political leaders and their teams. So, dear reader, the rest of this article is imbued with relativism and will rely on reading comprehension. Thank you for your understanding!

At a time when Paki-

stan is suffering from a serious public health crisis, admittedly among many other challenges, the health of the people does not emerge as one of the key priorities of our aspiring political leaders. For better appreciation of the health crisis, please see my article 'Dubious distinctions' published on these pages on Jan 13, 2023. Having said that, I must quickly add that, overall, the status of health in the aforementioned manifestos was not as bad as I thought — as far as words go. The intentions behind the said words is a different matter altogether. There's the relativism again!

First of all, none of the parties acknowledged the tragic health conditions our country is so clearly facing — as can be seen from our abysmal national health indicators, which are the lowest in South Asia, and now comparable with those of Sub-Saharan African countries.

The right to health is not properly enshrined in Pakistan's Constitution to begin with. So, too, was the case with primary education but the 18th Amendment put this right through

Article 25A. Health was left out. The good thing is that both the PML-N and PPP have committed themselves to rectifying this. The PML-N has explicitly mentioned amending the Constitution to include the right to healthcare and the PPP has vowed to introduce this right by legislating the Right to Healthcare Act.

Universal health coverage is one of the key targets of the third Sustainable Development Goal and is set to be achieved by 2030. Pakistan's UHC index for 2022 was 52.7 out of 100. The index is calculated on the basis of 14 select indicators pertaining to access to essential health services. Political parties have not paid heed to achieving this target.

However, the JI has committed itself to the practical implementation of universal healthcare at the legislative level and the PPP has said it will prioritise UHC for primary healthcare (PHC) facilities. The PML-N has promised to provide free-of-cost healthcare services specifically to low- and middle-income households and to vulnerable groups: children, transgender people, senior

citizens, and special persons.

One of the fundamental problems in healthcare in Pakistan is the low spending on it by the government — i.e. 1.2 per cent of GDP in 2022. The internationally accepted threshold for healthcare spending by governments is at least 5pc of GDP.

In this regard, the PML-N has not made any targeted commitment, while the PPP has set an unrealistic goal to increase healthcare spending to 6pc of GDP or a whopping \$20 billion. Mind you, historically, Pakistan's health budget in terms of percentage of GDP has never touched 2pc. Pakistan only raises about 9-10pc of GDP through taxes. Given the current economic situation, the PPP's aim to increase the budget for health to 6pc of GDP is a lofty fantasy.

The PTI plans to introduce a unified health card across Pakistan to provide universal health insurance to people — a critical component of UHC. The PML-N also talks about providing universal health insurance, especially to low- and middle-income households, whereas the PPP vows to

provide health insurance to workers in the informal sector and their families.

That being said, unhindered population growth — the highest rate in South Asia — and a stagnant total fertility rate are major national issues to consider. Both the PML-N and PPP have dedicated sections on a "sustainable population roadmap" and "population and reproductive health" respectively. The JI, however, does not clearly address family planning.

PHC, with an emphasis on quality and universal access, has also found mention in all the manifestos.

The PML-N has rightly emphasised stunting, which is a huge public health issue that requires multiple and simultaneous development interventions, although most interventions suggested by the party manifestos are nutritional in nature. The intention to improve mental health services and open mental health centres in all districts and tehsil-level hospitals in the country is also expressed. The party also plans to launch clinics-on-wheels for urban slums across the provinces. It aims to increase routine child

immunisation to 90pc by 2029.

The PTI wants to develop a comprehensive electronic health records system, and invest in public health initiatives such as vaccination programmes, disease prevention, and health education.

Apart from the points mentioned above, the PPP has also emphasised the digitalisation of healthcare and vowed to introduce reforms in the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan. To its credit, the party has dedicated a separate section in its manifesto to mental health and drug consumption and promises to open mental health centres and provide social protection to mentally ill individuals among other measures.

The JI wants to establish mobile health units and rural health dispensaries for every 5,000 people, with no mention of existing BHUs and RHCs. In the midst of brutal power plays and moth-eaten democracy, who really cares about party manifestos? Nevertheless, this is what our major political parties are saying about health. Do with this information what you will. -- Courtesy Dawn

Hope for the future

Dr Ramesh Kumar Vankwani

The unique feature of yesterday's election was the contesting parties' heavy reliance on digital platforms. Be it instant messaging apps or social networking forums, it seems that the real battle between supporters of various political parties was fought in the digital arena.

The Election Commission of Pakistan deserves appreciation for fulfilling its constitutional responsibility in a brilliant manner. Returning officers (ROs) as well as police officials and LEAs played a pivotal role in conducting the voting process smoothly.

A social media message I received on WhatsApp reminded me of my columns published in The News some years ago. According to the message, God Almighty has blessed the tribal region of Pakistan, especially Waziristan, with hidden treasures of diamonds, gold, copper and other valuable minerals. Reportedly, the diamond mines in Waziristan were discov-

ered during the Soviet invasion in the 1980s, but they are not fully functional yet due to a lack of technical expertise.

The message says: "Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto signed a pact with an international company in 1994 to give technical support for diamond mining in Waziristan," hinting that the discovery of oil reserves in the Middle East resulted in changing the destiny of the entire region (once the world's most backward area) as well as uplifting the socio-economic conditions of millions of locals and immigrants.

Geographically, the semi-autonomous tribal area adjacent to the Pak-Afghan border, erstwhile Fata, consists of seven tribal agencies and six frontier regions. Although it was merged with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2018 through the 25th Amendment, people from the area are still facing numerous issues.

Fata has a rich heritage of waging freedom struggles against foreign invaders. Even at the peak of their power, the British faced tough resistance in controlling the tribal ar-

eas. However, the tribal

people supported the Pakistan Movement wholeheartedly to end British rule. A leader of freedom fighters, Maulana Fazal Elahi Wazirabadi, attended the historic March 23, 1940 jalsa in Lahore to represent the tribal population and endorse the Pakistan Resolution. Five years later, a large number of people came out on the streets of Landi Kotal to welcome Quaid-e-Azam as they preferred to associate their future unconditionally with an independent and sovereign Pakistan.

Quaid-e-Azam announced the withdrawal of armed forces from the area, calling the patriotic tribal people a frontline force in protecting the western borders. Regrettably, after his death, this marginalized and vulnerable region remained neglected for decades.

It is quite hurtful that successive governments decided to continue governing the area through the FCR law inherited from the British. During the Soviet invasion of neighbouring Afghanistan and later the 9-11 tragedy, tribal areas faced numer-

ous challenges.

The unanimously passed 1973 constitution is a remarkable achievement by Pakistan's first elected prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Although Fata was declared a part of Pakistan under the constitution, Articles 247 and 248 restrict the jurisdiction of parliament, the Supreme Court and high courts in the neglected tribal areas.

Understanding the genuine concerns of tribal people, Bhutto formed a committee to devise a framework for merging Fata with KP (then North-West Frontier Province) for general elections.

A few years ago, after my visit to North Waziristan, I warned in a column that if the government did not pay due attention, the region would once again become a haven of extremism. Although tribal areas have been merged into the province, people are still suffering from severe hardships.

With general elections and with a people empowered to use their power of vote to elect their political representatives in parliament, the tribal people are once again

looking forward to a bright future.

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During my recent interaction with several tribal personalities, they believe that their destiny is truly associated with the state of Pakistan but in a dignified manner.

"Our only hope now is Bilawal Bhutto Zardari who we believe will do something good to fulfil the incomplete agenda of his legendary grandfather and great mother to serve the tribal people." -- Courtesy TheNews

Fix fiscal account to tame inflation

Zafar Masud

Global inflation has remained stubborn, despite unprecedented action by central banks, leading to a debate on the underlying causes of inflation and the effectiveness of conventional tools to tackle it.

Contrary to the belief that inflationary pressures can be addressed through monetary policy alone, the role of fiscal policy in managing inflation is being increasingly discussed.

I believe fiscal policy is the main driver of inflation in Pakistan. Addressing the structural deficits in fiscal policy is critical for inflation to come down.

In his work The Fiscal Theory of Price Level, John Cochrane argues that "the prevailing inflation spurt seems clearly related to the massive fiscal expansion of the Covid-19 recession. In the shadow of large debt and deficits, taming inflation will require stronger fiscal-monetary coordination. So fiscal policy correction is important to remedy inflation".

He says that it is becoming "increasingly obvious that current theory on inflation targeting doesn't hold together logically, or provide much guidance for how central banks should behave if inflation or deflation do break out. Central bankers rely on late 1970s IS-LM [investment saving- and liquidity preference-money supply] intuition, expanded with some talk about expectations as an independent force. They ignore the actual operation of the new Keynesian models that have ruled the academic roost for 30 years. They tell stories of great power and minute technocratic control that are far ahead of economists' models or solid empirical understanding".

Monetary policies set up at the global level over the last few decades require a weighting of the counter-

balance between monetary and fiscal policies, and a deeper analysis of comparative, established and international and regional perspectives.

Pakistan needs recalibration perhaps more than others as it confronts regional conflicts both communal and transnational, along with complex forms of conventional and unconventional inflations — 'debt-flation', 'shrink-flation', 'greed-flation' — which are manifestations of both structural deficits and post-Covid pro-cyclical policies.

The structural deficit is where the level of government spending exceeds that of taxes collected. The primary balance of government spending — where we're struggling with IMF target of 0.4 per cent of GDP — is related to the structural deficit.

However, on top of the primary balance are the skyrocketing costs of servicing debt. In FY2023, debt-servicing costs increased to 74pc of FBR tax revenues; in FY2024 they are likely to rise closer to 90pc. In this situation, the use of monetary policy as the sole instrument to tame inflation has not worked and has actually proved counterproductive, given the inelastic demand of debt by the sovereign to fund its deficits. The government remains agnostic to interest rates to fund its deficits, considering limited financing options, while funding needs are inevitable.

Effectively, monetary tightening has been diluted by the large fiscal deficits. Hence, inflation is being fuelled by 'debt-flation', with the government's deficit financing needs driving growth in money supply. External sources of funding have dried up due to global liquidity conditions and credit-rating downgrades by international agencies. This means that nearly 95pc of the fiscal deficit is being financed by the domestic

banking sector.

Currently, the ratio of public domestic debt to bank deposits is over 85pc with almost a quarter coming from funding provided by the central bank through liquidity injections. Inflation has remained high at around 30pc in 2023, with average inflation almost 4.5 times higher than the regional average.

Reduction in local currency debt can't be achieved through restructuring, as I have argued previously. Any attempt to restructure debt without overhauling the fiscal account will be short-lived and have grave consequences on the overall economy. We can't get carried away with temporary patchwork, like local currency debt restructuring; now is the time to take bull by the horns, i.e. fiscal account restructuring.

There should be a 'progressive social agenda of inclusivity and tolerance' based on the redistribution of wealth. The starting point should be taxing the super-rich and untaxed sectors — real estate, retail and agriculture. This crisis might be our best opportunity to tackle these deficiencies. We must knock down the convenient myth of 'trickle-down' policies. Tax cuts for the richest and the latter's capture of untaxed subsidies will only accentuate the imbalances.

Tax collection is a challenging task. But the recent collection drive — including the crackdown on smugglers and hoarders and the move to cut utilities if taxes are not paid or one is not a registered taxpayer despite the manifestation of taxable income — seems to be bearing fruit.

On the expenditure side, the time has come for fostering private-public partnerships for the government's own developmental projects, pension management and privatisation. -- Courtesy Dawn

China or the US?

Touqir Hussain

After years of upheaval in US-China relations, caused by Donald Trump's trade war and assault on globalisation, the Taiwan crisis, President Joe Biden's obsession with maintaining America's economic and technological superiority and geopolitical dominance, and Chinese President Xi Jinping's hypernationalism, mutual ties are settling into an uneasy calm.

Spurred by the upcoming US polls and China's economic challenges, a consensus may be emerging that the two countries must manage relations responsibly by trying to cooperate where they can, compete where they should, and avoid conflict where they must. Both realise that even a limited Great Power conflict, could destroy the world economy in an era of economic interdependence and globalisation. A trade war and de-globalisation would hurt not just China but America too.

The US is thus trying not to reject globalisation but redefining it so that it does not harm its national security, technological supremacy and economic leadership, and is focusing its containment of China more on the latter's military and technological ascent rather than its economic rise. This benefits the US. Washington may thus be open to healthy economic competition with Beijing as it cannot isolate China economically, nor is it in its interest to do so. Pakistan may not have to worry after all about being asked by Washington to choose between the US and China.

There are other reasons, too, why America can live with Pakistan's ties with China. What began as a tentative tactical

alliance between China and Pakistan 70 years ago has matured into an extraordinary relationship of mutual strategic and economic dependence. This relationship is indispensable but insufficient to address Pakistan's economic and security challenges. Islamabad also needs the US, an important bilateral economic partner that has traditionally been a valuable security provider.

So, can Pakistan have smooth relations with both at the same time? Though they have different purposes, China and the US have shared interests in Pakistan, such as its political stability and economic well-being, peace and security in the region, and the challenge of militancy and extremism. That calls for engagement with it. But neither has enough leverage, influence, or political will to advance its interests merely by its own efforts. Each may need or desire the other's role.

China has vital stakes in a strategic partnership with Pakistan and knows the IMF's value to Pakistan's struggling economy, from which there is no early exit, as well as that of the US as its trading partner. It does not want to assume the role of sole rescuer as it would ease Pakistan into a position of dependency and further de-incentivise it from undertaking critical structural reforms. The IMF's and America's help and pressure on Pakistan suits China.

From Washington's perspective, an unstable Pakistan would foster militancy, endanger its nuclear assets, and raise the prospect of an India-Pakistan conflict, jeopardising US security and strategic interests. A Pakistan that is economically and politically stable could be more in-

strumental in serving US goals. To this end, China's economic ties with Pakistan may be helpful up to a point. Ideally, Washington would like Pakistan not to be so dependent on China that it becomes its surrogate.

The challenge of dealing with militancy and extremism also calls for the involvement of China and the US. Pakistan needs both compulsion and incentive to act. It comes naturally to Washington to be an instrument of pressure while Beijing prefers to be a source of incentive. Finally, peace and security too would be better served if the region is multi-aligned.

The areas of conflict of interest between China and the US remain. But they, too, call for Washington's tolerance of Pakistan's relations with China. Pakistan has literally become the sole strategic partner of China in Asia, serving the latter's interests not only in South Asia, but potentially enabling China to sidestep the US and its 'allied' naval dominance across the Indo-Pacific. This has a direct impact on the American Indo-Pacific strategy, especially amid India-Pakistan tensions that affect New Delhi's capability to balance ties with Beijing. The US cannot stop Pakistan from being China's ally but through its engagement can induce it not to undermine its Indo-Pacific strategy.

The bottom line is that Pakistan needs both China and the US, and the purposes of each would be better served if Pakistan was engaged with both. Each has, of course, red lines about Pakistan's relations with the other. If Islamabad is aware of these it can have tension-free relations with both. -- Courtesy Dawn

CM Naqvi visits PSCA, reviews monitoring process

Independent Report
LAHORE: Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi visited the Punjab Safe Cities Authority's Head Office at Qurban Lines and reviewed the monitoring process through the Digital Wall. He inspected the monitoring system of Faisalabad, Gujranwala and Rawalpindi Safe City projects being connected through the cameras. He shook hands with the staff members of the Safe Cities Authority and commended them on doing an effective monitoring work. The CM paid a visit to the Anti Graded Command, Control and Communication Centre and conversed with the communication officers. He also visited the Data Centre. The MD PSCA briefed him about the monitoring system. The CM chaired a

meeting at the Head Office of PSCA in which complete satisfaction was expressed over making excellent arrangements along with an effective security plan. Mohsin Naqvi paid tributes to the Cabinet Committee for Law & Order, administration, police, and the law enforcement institutions. "People used their right to franchise in a peaceful environment across Punjab. The whole team performed their national obligation in a very nice manner for holding transparent, free and fair elections. An important phase for holding the general elections passed away peacefully by the grace of Allah Almighty and owing to the day and night hard work of the Punjab government. We profoundly thank Allah Almighty on the holding of general elections peacefully and nicely," he said.

The police, administration and the law enforcement agencies jointly maintained the law and order in the province, he mentioned. "Excellent security arrangements in every city of Punjab including Lahore had been made," he added. The IG Police, Secretary Home, CCPO Lahore, MD PSCA and officials concerned were also present. Meanwhile, Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi inaugurated the state-of-the-art Police Khidmat Markaz 'Abshar' at Shadman (Jail Road) here on Saturday. He visited the Khidmat Markaz and undertook a test drive by sitting in the driving simulator. He inspected the counters being established for the facilitation of the general public.



LAHORE: Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Raza Naqvi during his visit to Anti-graded Command, Control and Communication Centre setup in Punjab Safe Cities Authority.

Governor approves to form BoG of Cadet College Khanpur

Independent Report
LAHORE: Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman has given approval to constitute the Board of Governors of Cadet College Khanpur. According to the details, Governor Punjab Muhammad Balighur Rehman approved the constitution of Board of Governors of Cadet College Khanpur, Rahim Yar Khan. The Chairman of the Board of Governors is Governor Punjab, Vice Chairman Commander Central Punjab while other official members include Secretary School Education, Secretary Finance Department and Commissioner Bahawalpur Division.

Non-official members of the board include Commodore Training Ashore, Station Commander Navy, Director Naval Education, Chairman Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education Bahawalpur, District Education Officer (Female) and Vice Chancellor Lahore College for Women University. Furthermore, Governor Punjab/Chancellor approved the appointment of Mohammad Farooq as Registrar of Emerson University Multan for a period of three years, Nadeem Mushtaq as Treasurer of the University for three years and Aftab Ahmed as Controller Examinations for three years on contract basis. The Governor of Punjab nominated professor Dr. Humira Majeed Khan, Dean Faculty of Pharmaceutical and Allied Sciences, Lahore College for Women University as a Syndicate member of Lahore College for Women University for three years. Further, Governor Punjab also approved the appointment of Naveed Ahmed as the treasurer of the University of Chakwal for a period of three years. Governor Punjab assigned the additional charge of Vice Chancellor of University of Home Economics to Dr. Falcha Zahra Kazmi.

Dr Javed highlights Rs 90 bln investment in health sector

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Punjab Health Minister Professor Dr. Javed Akram emphasized the significant strides made in the province's health sector, revealing a staggering investment of Rs 90 billion. Speaking at a conference organized by the Pakistan Academy of Family Physicians at a local hotel here on Saturday, Dr. Akram commended the organizers for addressing crucial health issues and stressed the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle. He expressed concern over the

high prevalence of hypertension and diabetes in Pakistan, urging proactive measures. Dr. Akram underscored the pivotal role of family medicine and called for decisive action against perpetrators of inhuman acts. Additionally, he reflected on Pakistan's demographic trajectory, foreseeing its ascent to the third-largest country by population in thirty years. The event witnessed widespread participation from the medical community, with prayers for continued service to the people of Pakistan.



HYDERABAD: Activists of Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) are holding protest demonstration against alleged rigging in General Election 2024, outside District Election Commission Office.

6 Ex-CMs KP defeated by political rivals in Election 2024

PESHAWAR (APP): As many as six Chief Ministers of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were defeated in their respective constituencies during 2024 election by their political rivals. They include QWP Chief Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherpao, PTIP Chairman Pervez Khattak, Mehtab Abbasi, PTI Vice Chairman Mahmood Khan, JUIF leader Akram Durrani and Central Vice President ANP Amir Haider Hoti.

According to ECP results, Aftab Sherpao has been defeated on NA 23 Charsadda-1, Pervez Khattak on NA 34 Nowshera-1, Mehtab Abbasi at Abbottabad, Mahmood Khan at Swat, Akram Durrani at Bannu and Amir Haider Hoti on NA 22 Mardan. Haider Hoti has resigned as central vice President of Awami National Party after losing the election and announced to serve the party as a political worker.



PESHAWAR: Leaders of Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Kamran Khan Bangash, Taimur Saleem Jhagra and others address to media persons during press conference held at Peshawar press club.

Minister Information congratulates people for holding peaceful elections

PESHAWAR (APP): Caretaker Minister for Information, Barrister Feroze Jamal Shah Kakakhel, on Saturday said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) witnessed a peaceful and well-organized electoral process, leading to the successful election of representatives. He extended heartfelt congratulations to the winning candidates. Expressing satisfaction over the outstanding performance of security agencies and administrative authorities, Barrister Feroze Jamal Kakakhel commended their efficiency in ensuring a secure electoral environment. The vigilant provincial government's mandate prioritized conducting free, fair, and

impartial elections, and this commitment was diligently fulfilled, said the Information Minister. He praised the efforts made to uphold a peaceful atmosphere during the election process. In response to any election-related grievances, the Information Minister advised candidates to approach the Election Commission office. He emphasized the importance of abiding by the law and refraining from taking matters into one's own hands. The province is now poised to move forward under the elected representatives, and the Information Minister expressed optimism for a prosperous and harmonious future for KP.

Two bodies found from Faisalabad

FAISALABAD (APP): Bodies of two sexagenarians were found from different parts of Faisalabad during the last 12 hours. A police spokesman said here on Saturday that some passersby witnessed a corpse of a 65-year-old man near Saleemi Chowk, Satiana Road, and informed the police. Similarly, a body of a 65-year-old man was found from a deserted place near Fish Farm on Satiana Road and both corpses were dispatched to mortuary for postmortem while an investigation for their identification is under progress, he added.

Haleem Adil challenges election result of NA-238 in SHC

KARACHI (Online): PTI leader Haleem Adil Sheikh has challenged election result of NA-238 in Sindh High Court (SHC). He has said in the petition that as per form 45 he secured over 71000 votes in the constituency. He further said that result in form 47 was changed and MQM candidate was declared successful. MQM candidate Sadiq Iftikhar who secured 54000 votes was declared successful. Haleem Adil Sheikh requested the court to nullify the success of MQM candidate Sadiq Iftikhar.

Four suspects involved in aerial firing held

MULTAN (APP): Police claimed to have arrested four suspects involved in aerial firing while celebrating jubiliations for elections and recovered illegal weapons from their possession. According to the spokesperson for the police, a video of aerial firing went viral a day before while celebrating the victory of the elections in the limits of the Shah Shams police station area. CPO Sadiq Ali took notice of the incident and ordered the immediate arrest of the accused. A special team consisting of SHO Shah Shams police station Muhammad Imran Gill and other police officials was formed and the police team took timely action and arrested the four suspects involved in the incident. The accused included Ali Asghar, Rana Junaid, Sheikh Waqar and Hassam Saeed. The police have also recovered two SMG rifles.

PPP to form Govt in centre: Shazia Marri

HYDERABAD (APP): Pakistan Peoples Party leader Shazia Marri has expressed hope that the PPP would form a Government in the centre and is already in a position to form a Government in Sindh. Talking to Media here on Saturday she said that speculation about an alliance with any Party was baseless as election results are not yet completed and no decision has been taken about the future of

Independent candidates. She said that the Pakistan Peoples Party's central executive committee meeting is to be held this week in which we consult on the Party's forum and the decision to be made in this regard would be communicated to the Media. She refuted the impression that the Pakistan People's Party has held an official meeting with PML-N regarding the formation of the Government.

Fatima Surayya remembered

LAHORE (APP): The 8th death anniversary of famous TV playwright and Urdu novelist Fatima Surayya Bajja was observed across the country. The literary icon, received ample recognition for her contributions to literature. Shama, Afshan, Aroosa, Ana and Tasveer are her memorable plays. Fatima Surayya received multiple awards at home and abroad including the Pride of Performance and Hilal-i-Imtiaz. She died in Karachi in 2016 on this day due to throat cancer.



LAHORE: Caretaker Provincial Minister for Health Professor Dr. Javed Akram addressing the awareness seminar at local hotel.

Training course started to increase professional skills of the nursing staff in PINS

Independent Report
LAHORE: Under the direction of the Executive Director of Punjab Institute of Neurosciences, Prof. Asif Bashir, a training course has been started to increase the professional skills of the nursing staff in PINS. Nursing Superintendent Razia Shamim is supervising the training course. In this regard, Razia Shamim said that the course will not only pave the way for providing world-class medical facilities to the patients, but the nurses participating in the course will be trained in better

patient care, ward management, record completion, discipline and health care. This will have an opportunity to refine its responsibilities regarding SOPs of healthcare commission. She said that such training courses are helpful in making the people associated with the medical field attuned to the modern medical requirements and the treatment of patients in medical institutions is of immense help. Razia Shamim further said that nurses are the backbone of our healthcare system.

CPO orders jubilant firing

FAISALABAD (APP): City Police Officer (CPO) Captain (retd) Muhammad Ali Zia Saturday directed the police officers to launch a crackdown on display of weapons and jubilant firing across the district. He said it was the first and foremost duty of police to provide safety and security to lives and properties of masses in addition to maintaining law and order. After general election, incidents of jubilant firing were reported from many parts of the district which created chaos and terror among people. He said supporters of winning candidates should not take the law into their hands.



KARACHI: Inundated road by overflowing sewerage water, creating problems for residents and commuters, showing negligence of concerned authorities, at Korangi S.M Muneer road.

Al-Fareed Zafar says: New more beds added to LGH and infection-free operation theaters built

Independent Report
LAHORE: The month of February is significant in the history of Lahore General Hospital. In February 1958, Begum Naheed Sikandar Mirza established a Darul Falah here within a year Mr. Akhtar Hussain Governor of West Pakistan converted it into LGH to provide medical facilities to the people. 17 years later, in February 2007, a new accident emergency department with 110 beds was established. Now, Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi maintained this tradition by inaugurating the upgradation work of hospital in February 2024 after upgrading and renovating it. Because of this, an individual place was once again achieved in the history of General Hospital for the month of February. These views were

expressed by Principal Ameeruddin Medical College Prof. Al-Fareed Zafar, while addressing the patients and their attendants in LGH said that the addition of modern medical facilities in the Emergency Department, LGH and the improving the capacity building after its renovation and upgradation. He further highlighted that the most valuable diagnostic MRI, CT scan was also inaugurated in February this year due to which LGH got a unique status. Prof. Al-Fareed Zafar said that new more beds were added to the hospital and infection-free operation theaters were built and the accident emergency department was made state-of-the-art in accordance with international standards. He said that better quality treatment facilities have been made available.

Reehana Dar moves court for recounting, nullification of form 47 result in NA-71

LAHORE (Online): PTI backed independent candidate Reehana Dar has filed petition in Lahore High Court (LHC). Returning officer, Election Commission (EC), Khawaja Asif and others have been made respondents in the petition. The petitioner has taken plea in the petition that Khawaja Asif has lost the election as per form 45. Khawaja Asif declared him victorious on his own in connivance with others. Returning officer allegedly

declared Khawaja Asif winner. The results of form 45 are held by us. The petitioner has requested the court to order for releasing the result as per form 45. The court should order EC to stop issuing the result. The court should order for recounting besides nullifying form 47 result. It is pertinent to mention here Khawaja Asif had defeated Reehana Dar in big electoral encounter in NA-71 Sialkot.



HYDERABAD: Children enjoy riding toy bicycle while crossing railway track near railway station.

Elections 2024: PPP emerges leading political party in district Multan

MULTAN (APP): Pakistan People Party, once again, managed to win the masses' confidence from district Multan as it grabbed three national assembly seats and four provincial assembly seats. In Elections 2018, PPP had won only one provincial seat from Multan. However, during Elections 2024, in national assembly seats, former prime minister Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani won from NA 148. Similarly, Syed Ali Musa Gillani and Syed Abdul Qadir Gillani won seats from NA 151 and NA 152 (Shujabad). Similarly, four candidates of PPP named Syed Ali Haider Gilani (PP-213), Wasif Raan (PP-213), Iqbal Siraj (PP-220), and Kamran Abdullah (PP-221) won provincial assembly seats. The recent victory of the Pakistan People Party in Multan is termed a revival of the PPP

across the district. Apart from this, Independent candidates secured two national assembly seats including Aamir Dogar (NA-149) and Makhdoom Zain Hussain Qureshi (NA 150). In provincial assembly seats, five independent candidates remained winner. The independent candidates who won their seats are Waseem Khan Badozai (PP-214), Moin Riaz Qureshi (PP-215), Adnan Dogar (PP-216), Nadeem Qureshi (PP-217) and Ayaz Bodla (PP-222). Pakistan Muslim League N could win only one seat of national assembly. Rana Qasim Noon (NA-153) secured a comfortable victory from tehsil Jalalpur Pirwala. In the provincial assembly, three PML N candidates including Salman Naeem (PP-218), Nazik Kareem (PP-223),



RAWALPINDI: Firefighters douse the blaze at Raja bazaar Mughal Sarai Market in the city, A blaze erupted on the third floor of the Rajabazaar Mughal Sarai Market in Rawalpindi, causing damage to around 25 shops.

UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar rank among top emerging markets for logistics

Monitoring Desk
ABU DHABI: The UAE, Saudi Arabia and Qatar continue to rank among the world's top 10 emerging markets for logistics, improving or holding steady in key areas while neighbouring Oman, Bahrain and Kuwait have experienced a decline in their rankings.

Globally, the UAE secured the third position in the 15th annual Agility Emerging Markets Logistics Index, which ranked 50 markets around the world for overall competitiveness based on factors that make them attractive to logistics

providers, freight forwarders, air and ocean carriers, distributors and investors.

The UAE, following China and India, maintained its rank from the previous year, as did Saudi Arabia at sixth place and Qatar at seventh. However, Oman slipped to the 15th position, Bahrain to 16th, and Kuwait to 21st.

The UAE's freight and logistics market, estimated currently at \$20.3 billion, is poised for a compound annual growth rate of 6.55 per cent to reach \$27.51 billion by 2029, according to data for the 2023 & 2024 created

by Mordor Intelligence Industry Reports.

Industry experts said the UAE logistics market has been growing steadily, mainly driven by the consistent and fast growth of e-commerce across the region and rising international trade. "Dubai's strategic location between Asia and Europe serves the East and the West, providing optimum trading conditions for the emirate. To facilitate the trade and e-commerce market, Dubai has implemented initiatives to develop its infrastructure and technology to implement a well-

integrated transport system and excellent logistics infrastructure.

"Despite economic disruptions in the Arabian Gulf, the logistics sector in the UAE continued to occupy the fast lane in recent years. Though the logistics sector outperforms other major industries, it is now a crucial enabler in the country's economic diversification efforts," industry analysts said.

Agility survey respondents highlighted the UAE and Saudi Arabia as leaders among the GCC countries in economic diversification.



LAHORE: Members of Kissan Rabita Committee are holding protest demonstration for acceptance of their demands, held at Lahore press club.



RAWALPINDI: A vendor is displayed shoes attraction for customers alongside a road at Raja bazaar, in the city.

ORA Developers banks on an innovative approach and unique designs

Monitoring Desk
DUBAI: ORA Developers aspire to create unique lifestyle destinations with mixed-use developments and expand to different parts of the globe. With its innovative approach and unique designs, it is well-positioned to make a significant impact on the global real estate and hospitality markets.

From humble beginnings to becoming a global force in real estate development, ORA's journey is nothing short of inspirational. Each project undertaken by ORA represents a testament to its unwavering commitment to excellence and innovation.

With projects in various destinations worldwide, the company has left an indelible mark on the international real estate scene. Notably, ORA has ventured in the UAE and is planning to diversify its roots over the next five years.

ORA's designs stand out for their willingness to

take on new and unique approaches, pushing boundaries, and bringing a fresh perspective to each project. ORA Developers' global expansion is a testament to its ambition and commitment to excellence.

ORA Developers' expanding portfolio of projects spans a rich variety of stunning developments in select locations around the world. Currently, there are exciting projects in UAE, Greece, Cyprus, Pakistan, Grenada and Egypt, with each country boasting unique qualities to potential buyers and visitors from the unlimited potential of Pakistan and Egypt to the natural beauties of Grenada and the abundance of opportunities in Cyprus.

Led by the visionary businessman Naguib Sawiris, CEO and chairman, ORA has embarked on a journey that has left an indelible mark on the industry. Sawiris' initial contact with Cyprus

came at a challenging time for the country when it was in the midst of a financial and banking crisis that made finding investors difficult for even the promising Ayia Napa Marina project. It also shows how having first visited the site, he was also won over by the family values of the project's local partners, Caramondani Group.

The landmark project, which includes two iconic twisting towers with luxury apartments, has been designed to blend within the beautiful surrounding environment and the crystal waters off the coast of Cyprus. As described by Sawiris, the €300-million-euro project is one that is anticipated to create long-term returns as it provides world-class yachting facilities, a thriving commercial village featuring designer stores and more, fine dining options, an event centre, and much more, all in a secure, well-tended environment.

Emaar Development property sales jump 22% to Dh37.4 billion in 2023

Monitoring Desk
ABU DHABI: Emaar Development, a majority-owned subsidiary of Emaar Properties, said property sales in 2023 jumped 22 per cent to Dh37.4 billion compared to Dh30.7 billion (\$8.4 billion) in 2022 following 27 new projects launched across various master plans. In 2023, Emaar Development reported an Earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization (EBITDA) of Dh8 billion and net profit of Dh6.6 billion, an increase of 89 per cent and 74 per cent compared to 2022, respectively. "Emaar's consistent performance in enhancing sales and profitability reflects our strategic focus on developing premier residential properties,

retail, hospitality, and entertainment environments. Our commitment to excellence resonates with our clientele, reinforcing their confidence in our brand. Emaar's robust project pipeline and our keen market insights ensure we remain on a path of sustained growth and success," said Mohamed Alabbar, founder of Emaar.

During 2023, it delivered over 12,000 residential units across Dubai Hills Estate, Dubai Creek Harbour, Downtown Dubai, Emaar Beachfront, Arabian Ranches, Emaar South, Dubai Marina and The Valley. As of December 2023, Emaar delivered more than 70,000 residential units, with over 25,500 residences currently under development in the UAE.

Gold rates decline by Rs.1,200

ISLAMABAD (APP): The per tola price of 24 karat gold decreased by Rs.1,200 and was sold at Rs.214,300 on Saturday compared to its sale at Rs.215,500 on last trading day.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs.1,028 to Rs.183,728 from Rs.184,756 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went down to Rs.168,416 from Rs.169,360, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and ten gram Silver remained stagnant at Rs.2,600 and 2,229.08 respectively.

The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$8 to \$2,045 from \$2,053, the Association reported.

Farmers advised to ensure early cotton cultivation

FAISALABAD (APP): Agriculture experts have advised farmers to ensure early cultivation of cotton crops to get bumper production.

According to Assistant Director Agriculture (Extension) Rizwan Amir Khan, cotton is a precious cash crop which plays a pivotal role in stabilizing the national economy in addition to mitigating financial constraints of the growers due to its attractive market value.

He said that early

cultivation of the cotton crop would give bumper yield as pest attack was witnessed in a low number during this season.

He said that growth of cotton plants in early cultivation also remained excellent which helped improve quality and quantity of the production. Therefore, the growers should prefer to cultivation cotton crops from February 15 to March 15 in the fields from where sugarcane, canola, raya and mustered crops were harvested.

The farmers should also use approved varieties of cotton including FH-333, CKC-6, CKC-3 and Hataf-3 as these varieties have sufficient resistance against seasonal diseases and pest attack.

He said that the farmers should ensure the number of cotton plants up to 12,000 per acre to get bumper yield. The agriculture department has activated its field staff to visit farms and guide the growers about cotton cultivation by using latest techniques, he added.



HYDERABAD: A carpenter busy in making part of a traditional bed (charpai) at his workplace

US declares AI-generated voices in robocalls illegal

Monitoring Desk
NEW YORK: The Federal Communications Commission outlawed robocalls that contain voices generated by artificial intelligence, a decision that sends a clear message that exploiting the technology to scam people and mislead voters won't be tolerated.

The unanimous ruling targets robocalls made with AI voice-cloning tools under the Telephone Consumer Protection Act, a 1991 law restricting junk calls that use artificial and pre-recorded voice messages.

The announcement comes as New Hampshire authorities are advancing their investigation into AI-generated robocalls that

mimicked President Joe Biden's voice to discourage people from voting in the state's first-in-the-nation primary last month.

Effective immediately, the regulation empowers the FCC to fine companies that use AI voices in their calls or block the service providers that carry them. It also opens the door for call recipients to file lawsuits and gives state attorneys general a new mechanism to crack down on violators, according to the FCC.

"Bad actors are using AI-generated voices in unsolicited robocalls to extort vulnerable family members, imitate celebrities, and misinform voters," the agency's chairwoman.

FCCI membership starts

FAISALABAD (APP): A membership renewal campaign of the Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) for the year 2024-25 has started which would continue till March 31. An FCCI spokesman said here on Saturday that the members have been requested to contact the FCCI.



ISLAMABAD: A vendor on his way while displaying a herd of sheep to attract the customers in the Federal Capital.

Google goes big on ChatGPT style chatbot, rebrands Bard to Gemini

Monitoring Desk
NEW YORK: Google on Thursday rebranded its ChatGPT-style chatbot to Gemini, giving it unprecedented prominence on its products, as the tech titan's AI race with Microsoft heats up.

The name change from Bard comes a year after the search engine giant rushed out its chatbot in a frantic bid to catch up with Microsoft's Bing chatbot, which was released through its partnership with OpenAI, the maker of ChatGPT.

Since their launch, the chatbots have expanded

into generating images as well as texts in answers to simple prompts, basing themselves on data trawled from the internet. Crucially, Gemini will be available through an easy-to-see link on the company's Google app on iPhones, signaling that the AI chatbot is becoming an integral part of its consumer experience on par with search. Google also said it was releasing Gemini Ultra 1.0, its most powerful generative AI model yet, which will be available as an advanced chatbot for \$20 a month in 150 countries — but only in English.



ISLAMABAD: A man is walks in mustard field at Golra rea.

Indian rupee slips tracking higher crude oil prices

Monitoring Desk
NEW DELHI: The rupee depreciated 5 paise to 22.618 against the UAE Dirham in early trade on Friday, tracking a strong American currency and elevated crude oil prices in the international market.

Forex traders said a negative trend in domestic equities and foreign fund inflows weighed on investor sentiments.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 82.96 against the US dollar and touched an early low of 83.01 and a high of 82.95 in initial trade.

US to invest over \$5B in chip research, workforce

ISTANBUL (APP): US President Joe Biden's administration announced on Friday it expects to invest over \$5 billion in semiconductor-related research, development, and workforce needs, including in the National Semiconductor Technology Center (NSTC).

The investment is part of implementation of the CHIPS and Science Act and Biden's Investing in America agenda, the White House said in a statement.

The plan aims to advance Biden's goals of driving research and development in the US, lower time and cost of commercializing new technologies, increase national security, and support workers in good semiconductor jobs, it added.

"Semiconductors were invented in America and serve as the backbone of the modern economy. But today, the United States produces less than 10 percent of global supply and none of the most advanced chips," said the statement.

"The NSTC, as the centerpiece of the CHIPS R&D program, will bring together and support government, industry, labor, customers, suppliers, educational institutions, entrepreneurs, and investors to accelerate the pace of new innovations, lower barriers to participation in semiconductor R&D, and directly address fundamental needs for a skilled, diverse semiconductor workforce."

China's auto parts import value down 12.4 pct in 2023

BEIJING (APP): China's auto parts import value fell 12.4 percent year on year to 29.84 billion U.S. dollars in 2023, data from the General Administration of Customs showed.

However, auto parts import value increased by 9.1 percent in December 2023 compared with a year earlier, totaling 3.01 billion U.S. dollars.

Last year, China's new car sales exceeded 30 million units for the first time, up 12 percent year on year. Vice Minister of Commerce Sheng Qiuping said at a press conference earlier this month that car ownership had reached 340 million in China—ranking first in the world.

Auto industry seeks growth via diversification

Monitoring Desk
KARACHI: Amidst the challenges faced by the auto industry, several local companies have embarked on diversification strategies to mitigate losses and tap into new revenue streams.

With the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent import bans, numerous companies within the auto sector, also known as the engineering industry, have pivoted towards manufacturing a diverse range of products to

serve both national interests and their own profitability.

Speaking to The Express Tribune, Auto Sector Expert and Pakistan Association of Automotive Parts and Accessories Manufacturers (PAAPAM) former chairman and Director of Mehran Commercial Enterprises, Mashood Khan said, "They can deploy their resources—existing technologies to reduce the swelling import bill and develop local products while benefiting locals and the country."

My 'worst frustration' is I have no power to end Gaza war, UN chief tells Arab News

NEW YORK (Internews): UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres expressed deep sadness at his inability to end the war in Gaza, "or at least to create the conditions for people to respect international law and international humanitarian law."

Speaking at his annual press conference to highlight his agenda priorities for this year, Guterres warned that a "gigantic tragedy" could happen in Rafah if Israel follows through on its intent to expand its offensive into the southern town where over 1 million Palestinians are sheltering.

"Half of Gaza's population is now crammed into Rafah. They have nowhere to go. They have no homes, and they have no hope," he said, again calling for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire, the unconditional release of hostages, and the need for "real, visible, concrete steps" towards a two-state solution.

He voiced his disagreement "with the policies of the government of Israel, with the settlements, and with a number of other initiatives that have undermined the two-state solution."

"And I've also expressed my opinion that the way the military operations have been conducted in Gaza has been with the absolutely unacceptable excess of people being killed, and the destruction."

He told Arab News: "My worst frustration is to see suffering at such a large scale and to know that I haven't the power to stop it. But it's a reality: I haven't the power to stop it."

He added: "I can raise my voice, and I do it. I can sometimes convene, but people need to be willing to be convened."

"But the biggest frustra-

tion I have is not to have the power to end this conflict, or at least to create the conditions for people to respect international law and international humanitarian law."

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"But the biggest frustra-



KABUL: Special envoy of the European Union for Afghanistan Tomas Niklasson and deputy head of the EU delegation Raffaella Lodice arrive to attend a press conference at the EU compound.

Trump brings fight to stay on ballot to US Supreme Court

WASHINGTON (Internews): Donald Trump's lawyers bring his fight against a campaign to kick him off state presidential ballots for his actions involving the 2021 Capitol attack to the U.S. Supreme Court in a case with major implications for the November election. The nine justices, three of whom Trump appointed, will hear arguments in his appeal of a lower court's decision to disqualify him from Colorado's Republican presidential primary ballot under the U.S. Constitution's 14th Amendment after finding that he participated in an insurrection.

Section 3 of the 14th Amendment bars from holding public office any "officer of the United States" who took an oath "to support the Constitution of the United States"

and then "engaged in insurrection or rebellion against the same, or given aid or comfort to the enemies thereof."

Trump is not expected to be present at the arguments scheduled for 10 a.m. ET (1500 GMT). Instead, he plans to start his day at his Florida home and travel to Nevada, according to a source familiar with his plans. Nevada on Thursday night holds a nominating caucus that Trump is expected to win handily as he cruises towards his party's nomination to challenge Democratic President Joe Biden on Nov. 5.

The case calls on the Supreme Court to play a central role in a presidential contest unlike any since its landmark Bush v. Gore decision that handed Republican George W. Bush the presidency over Democrat Al Gore in 2000.

Syria says Israeli airstrikes over Homs have killed and wounded civilians

DAMASCUS: Israeli airstrikes over the central city of Homs and its countryside killed and wounded civilians, the Syrian military said.

There was no immediate comment from Israel.

Syrian state news agency SANA quoted an unnamed military official early Wednesday saying the strikes damaged both private and public property, without giving additional details.

The Israeli jets reportedly struck the Syrian city and countryside from over the Mediterranean Sea near the Lebanese coastal city of Tripoli.

The strikes come as tensions across the Middle East flare with the Israeli-Hamas war and a drone attack on Sunday that killed three U.S. troops and injured dozens more in northeastern Jordan, near the Syrian border.

The pro-government Sham FM radio station said the areas struck included the affluent al-Malaab neighborhood and Hamra Street.

India to end free movement policy with Myanmar for 'internal security'

NEW DELHI (Internews): India said it would end a decades-old visa-free movement policy with Myanmar for their border citizens for reasons of national security and to maintain the demographic structure of its northeastern region.

The move, announced by the home minister, comes days after he said the 1,643-km (1,020 mile) border would be fenced. Currently, people living within a 16-km (10 mile) zone on either side of the border are allowed visa-free movement.

"The Ministry of Home Affairs has decided that the Free Movement Regime between India and Myanmar be scrapped to ensure the internal security of the country and to maintain the demographic structure of India's north eastern states bordering Myanmar," Home Minis-

ter Amit Shah said in a statement.

Since a military coup in Myanmar in 2021, thousands of civilians and hundreds of troops have fled to Indian states where communities between the two countries share ethnic and familial ties. This has worried New Delhi because of risk of communal tensions spreading to India.

Some members of the Indian government have also blamed the porous international border for abetting the tense situation in India's restive Manipur state abutting Myanmar.

For nearly a year Manipur has been engulfed by a civil war-like situation between two ethnic groups, one of which shares lineage with Myanmar's Chin tribe.

Addressing a weekly press conference, Indian foreign ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said the "situation along the bor-

UK PM Sunak declines to apologise over transgender jibe

LONDON (Internews): British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak declined to apologise for a gender identity jibe at opposition leader Keir Starmer, which drew criticism in the light of the widely reported recent murder of a transgender girl.

Sunak's Conservatives, trailing badly in opinion polls ahead of an election this year, have increasingly sought to weaponise identity politics and cast the Labour Party as excessively liberal or "woke".

On Wednesday, Sunak said Labour's leader had changed course on "defining a woman".



Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Commander in Chief of the Ukrainian Armed Forces Valerii Zaluzhnyi shake hands and pose for a picture during their meeting, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Kyiv, Ukraine.

Strikes could lead to end of US-led mission, Iraq warns

BAGHDAD: Iraq condemned a US air strike that killed a senior commander from a pro-Iran armed group accused of having been involved in attacks on American troops in the region.

The US attack on Wednesday came after a wave of strikes on Iran-linked targets in Iraq and Syria last week following the killing of three American troops in neighbouring Jordan on Jan 28.

The US Central Command (CENTCOM) said the commander killed on Wednesday was targeted "in response to the attacks on US service members".

The strike killed "a Kataeb Hezbollah commander responsible for directly planning and participating in attacks on US forces in the region," according to CENTCOM.

"The United States will continue to take necessary action to protect our people."

Biden mistakes dead leader for living one, again

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden has confused a European leader with a dead predecessor for the second time in a week, telling a campaign event he met Helmut Kohl four years after the German chancellor passed away.

The 81-year-old's gaffe late on Wednesday came days after he said he had spoken to long-dead French president Francois Mitterand, instead of current leader Emmanuel Macron, at the same G7 summit in June 2021 where he said he had met Kohl.

Hindus throng another 17th century mosque in India

NEW DELHI: Thousands of Hindus have been flocking to the site of India's 17th century Gyanvapi mosque where priests have been allowed to say prayers from a cellar in the latest sectarian dispute over holy sites.

A court ruled on Jan 31 that Hindu priests can use that part of the mosque in Varanasi, in India's most populous state of Uttar Pradesh, after an archaeological survey said it was built following the destruction of a temple there.

Conflicting religious claims have been dividing India — which has a Hindu majority of about 80 per cent of its 1.42 billion people but also the world's third largest Muslim population — since independence from British rule in 1947.

Hindu priests in the adjoining Kashi Vishwanath temple, devoted to Shiva, now offer prayers at the Gyanvapi mosque's cellar five times a day, said priest Ashutosh Vyas, who comes from one of the petitioner families in the legal case.

Ukraine aid, Tucker Carlson's Putin interview and Congo's M23 rebels

UKRAINE (Internews): Democrats have promised a vote on Thursday on a bill to give military aid to Ukraine after Senate Republicans blocked a border security bill that included the funding.

Tucker Carlson has said his interview with Russian President Vladimir Putin will be broadcast on Thursday night.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has rejected Hamas' terms for a ceasefire as "delusional".



Muslim women hold placards as they stand in protest outside the Palace of Justice on the day the country's federal court delivers verdict in a constitutional case challenging the legality of some Islamic laws in Kelantan state, in Putrajaya, Malaysia.

West African bloc says Burkina, Niger and Mali not following exit rules

ABUJA (Internews): The West African regional bloc ECOWAS said that military-ruled Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso had failed to abide by the rules for quitting the bloc as regional ministers met to discuss departures that threaten decades of integration.

The three countries' self-appointed military leaders jointly announced on Jan. 28 they were abandoning the political and economic bloc after it had pressured them to restore constitutional order following a string of coups. Their departure threatens to further weaken ECOWAS, which has

struggled to curtail a retreat of democracy in West Africa that started with a military takeover in Mali in 2020.

Its mediation and security council met in Nigeria's capital Abuja to discuss both their departure and an electoral crisis in Senegal, where the 10-month delay of the presidential vote has sparked a public outcry and fears of unrest. Regarding the countries leaving the bloc, ECOWAS Commission president Omar Touray said in opening remarks that "the hasty decision of withdrawal of membership of ECOWAS did not take into account the conditions for withdrawal".

Indonesian K-pop fans rally for presidential candidate Anies

JAKARTA: Indonesian presidential candidate Anies Baswedan's young supporters are borrowing elements from their favourite music genre K-pop to boost his popularity, swapping photocards and light sticks decorated with his face before the Feb. 14 poll.

Anies is up against frontrunner Defence Minister Prabowo Subianto and ex-Central Java governor Ganjar Pranowo in vying for the support of the 205 million Indonesians registered to vote.

With government data showing that more than half of these voters are millennials and Gen Z — people born between 1981 and 2012.

Fukushima operator reports leak, says no contamination detected

TOKYO (INP): An estimated 5,500 litres of radioactive water leaked from Japan's stricken Fukushima nuclear plant, but no sign of contamination has been detected outside the facility, its operator said.

A spokeswoman from Tokyo Electric Power Co (TEPCO) told a foreign news agency that the leak was detected at part of the plant that processes contaminated water.

"We estimate that roughly 5.5 tonnes (5,500 litres) of water leaked" on

Wednesday morning, but "there have been no significant changes" at posts monitoring radioactivity around the power station, she said.

Even so, TEPCO plans to remove soil from around the area that may have been contaminated, the spokeswoman said, without providing specific details on the location of the leaked water.

The Fukushima plant was wrecked by a huge earthquake and tsunami in 2011 that killed 18,000 people.

Indian CRPF SI dies of cardiac arrest in Telangana

HYDERABAD (INP): A Sub-Inspector of Indian Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) died of cardiac arrest in Telangana state in India.

The CRPF sub-inspector Paranthaman, 56, died in cardiac arrest after he had complained of chest pain to his fellow officers and collapsed in a CRPF camp in the Miyapur area of the state. The deceased Paranthaman was a resident of Vellore in Tamil Nadu.

Gaza situation a tragedy of Muslim world, all humanity: Ayatollah Khamenei

TEHRAN (Online): Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei says the ongoing catastrophic incidents in the Gaza Strip are a tragedy of the Muslim world and the entire humanity.

"The tragedy of Gaza is the tragedy of the Muslim world and rather all humanity, ... and it shows that the current world order is invalid and cannot endure and is doomed to perish," Ayatollah Khamenei said on Thursday during a meeting with a group of state officials and diplomatic representatives of Muslim countries in Tehran. Ayatollah Khamenei said the US, Britain and many European countries as well as their stooges are complicit in the Zionist regime's criminal acts against the Palestinian people.

The Leader empha-

sized that Israel's bombings of hospitals in Gaza and the killing of nearly 30,000 people in the Strip have brought disgrace upon the Western civilization and culture. The US money, weapons and political assistance are behind all these crimes against the Palestinian people, the Leader said.

As admitted by the Zionists themselves, Ayatollah Khamenei added, they could not have continued the war on Gaza for a single day in the absence of US weapons.

"Therefore, the Americans are also complicit and responsible for the ongoing tragic incidents" in the Gaza Strip, the Leader emphasized. The Leader stated that the Gaza crisis will end if the western powers stop their support for the Israeli regime, emphasizing that the Palestinian fighters are able to manage the situation.

US confronts dangers from 'not very good' Iran-backed militants

WASHINGTON (Internews): More than a month before a deadly drone strike that killed three U.S. soldiers in Jordan, U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin sought to reassure U.S. troops about the military's ability to withstand attacks by Iran-backed militants.

Austin, in previously unpublished remarks to sailors aboard the Gerald R. Ford aircraft carrier on Dec. 20, said the number one reason the militants had failed to that point was that "they're not very good at what they do." "Every day, Iranian proxies are shooting at our troops that are in Iraq and Syria. They haven't been effective at all because (of) two reasons: Number one, they're not very good at what they do," Austin told the crew.

"But number two, we've done a lot of things to ensure that we have the adequate force protection. Eventually, as we all know,

they may get lucky one day and cause injury to one of our troops. But we will stay on the balls of our feet and make sure that that doesn't happen."

In the wake of the drone attack, President Joe Biden's administration is vowing to do whatever it takes to protect U.S. troops from an escalating cycle of violence in the Middle East, where Iran-aligned militants are firing at them in Iraq, Syria, Jordan and off the coast of Yemen in the Red Sea. But current and former U.S. officials said the militants' periodic success in attacks may be unavoidable, given the sheer number of drones, rockets and missiles fired at U.S. troops and the fact that base defenses cannot realistically be completely effective 100% of the time. Experts also caution against underestimating the Iran-backed militants, even if most of their attacks fail.

Spain's paella rice could 'disappear', say farmers angry at EU rules

MADRID (Internews): A Spanish rice variety traditionally used to make paella is under threat from a fungus after the European Union banned a pesticide farmers said they relied upon, in another example of how the bloc's environmental rules are angering growers.

Three rice producers in the Valencia region said their harvest of arroz bomba, or bomb rice, a variety grown almost exclusively in Spain, was half the 10-year average in 2023 as a result of the Pyricularia fungus which causes rice blast disease.

Bomba rice "is very likely to disappear," said Miguel Minguet, a rice farmer in the Albufera Natural Park in Valencia. "Our crop is going to be lost to regulations."

Meanwhile, major exporters such as Brazil, India and Cambodia are widely using the pesticide to protect their own crops.

Farmers across Europe have staged angry protests against the EU over restrictions they say hand an advantage to outside competitors. Spanish farmers have been protesting across the country this week.

The clashes are exposing the EU's struggle to reconcile its sustainability drive with its aim of becoming more self-sufficient in food production amid disrupted supply chains.

The European Commission has been forced to backpedal, with President Ursula von der Leyen on Tuesday proposing the withdrawal of the EU's plan to halve the use of pesticides.

The EU in 2018 stopped authorising tricyclazole because it ruled it could be harmful to human health. It had been relied upon for 40 years to combat the fungus affecting bomba rice in Spain's wetlands, the farmers said.

Iceland volcano erupts again, spewing huge lava fountains into air

COPENHAGEN (Internews): A volcano in southwestern Iceland erupted for the third time since December, pumping lava up to 80 metres (260 feet) into the air and threatening to disrupt life in Reykjanes peninsula.

Video footage showed fountains of bright-orange molten rock spewing from cracks in the ground as daylight broke.

Volcanic outbreaks in the Reykjanes peninsula are so-called fissure eruptions, which do not usually cause large explosions or significant dispersal of ash into the stratosphere.

However, scientists fear they could continue for years, and Icelandic authorities have started building dykes to divert burning lava flows away from homes and critical infrastructure.

The latest eruptive fissure, the sixth outbreak since 2021, was roughly 3 km (2 miles) long, Iceland's meteorological office said.

Intense earthquake

activity began around 5:30 a.m. and the with the eruption itself starting 30 minutes later, it added.

A plume of smoke rose 3 km into the air, according to the Met Office. Still, Reykjavik's international airport, around 20 km to the north west of the fissure, was operating as normal, airport operator Isavia said.

The nearby Blue Lagoon - a luxury geothermal spa - closed its doors on Thursday due to the volcanic outbreak.

The previous eruption in the area started on Jan. 14 and lasted roughly two days, with lava flows reaching the outskirts of the Grindavik fishing town, whose nearly 4,000 inhabitants had been evacuated, setting some houses alight.

Thursday's eruption took place some way from Grindavik and was unlikely to pose a direct threat to the town, Icelandic geophysicist Ari Trausti Gudmundsson said.



Polish farmers slow down traffic on a road with tractors during a protest over price pressures, taxes and green regulation, grievances shared by farmers across Europe, in Poznan, Poland.

President stresses upon need of multipolar world, providing development chances to all

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi has underlined the need of a multipolar world, based upon 'an emancipation of people' and allowing people to progress and to continue with trade.

In an interview with the Chinese media, the president said that the world was in flux and many areas were still troubled by conflicts that had deterred the growth of emerging economies.

The president felicitated that the peace and cooperation demonstrated by the iron-clad bilateral relations between Pakistan and China had provided a stabilizing force in the changing world.

"The two countries always support each other's efforts to safeguard their respective core interests, and their deepening bond serves as a good example for the world," Xinhua quoted the presi-

dent on Saturday as saying. The president said that both Pakistan and China loved peace and also highlighted the initiatives put forward by China, such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), that focused on people's development.

"This (BRI) has shown the world a way of cooperating and a way of mutual development whereby movements of goods and people are made easier," he said, adding the initiative benefited international trade and sustainable development.

With regard to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), President Alvi said that the infrastructure, human resources, energy, and industry sectors in Pakistan were being improved with its help.

He also expressed appreciation that the loans from China did not come with strings.

As the construction of the CPEC entered a new phase of high-quality development, the president envisioned enhanced cooperation with China in the sectors of information technology (IT), agriculture, vehicle manufacturing, etc.

He opined that China's agricultural output per unit was much higher than in many parts of the world, and Pakistan boasted abundant agricultural resources, so their agriculture cooperation would yield tremendous results.

The president further said that China was the frontrunner in areas including artificial intelligence (AI) and supercomputers, and Pakistan wanted to be a part of that.

The president, on behalf of the Pakistani people and the government, extended greetings and best wishes to the Chinese people for the upcoming Chinese New Year.



KARACHI: The Caretaker Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed talking to media persons.

Pakistan says: UN must 'actively' seek resolution of Kashmir & Palestine disputes

UNITED NATIONS (APP): Pakistan has called on the United Nations to actively seek to resolve festering disputes, such as Kashmir and Palestine, with several modalities for conflict resolution being available under the UN Charter.

"The current threats to peace and security emanate mainly from violations of the fundamental principles of the UN Charter, especially non-use of force, foreign occupation, demand of self-determination, great power rivalries, and a new arms race," Ambassador Munir Akram said after UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres unveiled his priorities for 2024 as the world faces critical challenges.

The UN chief's multifaceted report notes that a volatile global security environment is further exacerbated by growing poverty, climate change, injustice, inequality, hate, intolerance, xenophobia and Islamophobia.

"We must prevent a major conflict, especially in a 'nuclearized environment'," the Pakistani envoy stressed, pointing out that it is essential to address the root causes of terrorism and new and emerging forms, as also "state terrorism" and "state-sponsored" terrorism; and ensure the protection of human rights while combating terrorism.

Ambassador Akram also called for a Security Council that is more representative, more democratic,

more transparent, more effective, and more accountable. "This goal can only be attained through a comprehensive reform that caters to the interests of all Member States - small, medium, and large," he said.

The model the United Nations has adopted for the Italy/Pakistan-led Consensus (UFC) group, which seeks more elected seats but no additional permanent members in an enlarged Council, was the most likely to secure the "widest possible" support, the Pakistani envoy said.

The Inter-Governmental Negotiations (IGN) process offers the best platform to reach an agreed and negotiated outcome to restructure the Security Council, he said.

Aneeq Ahmed says: Hajj app launched to facilitate pilgrims

KARACHI (APP): The Caretaker Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed on Saturday said that an app had been launched to facilitate the Hajj pilgrims.

While talking to media persons during his visit to New Haji Camp, he said that, this app will guide the pilgrims from Hajj flight to their stay in Saudi Arabia and all other relevant details will be available on the app including videos for the training of pilgrims.

Aneeq said that all the pilgrims would be provided with a free single-colored QR code suitcase so that they could easily identify their belongings. He said that every pilgrim will be given a mobile SIM of a Saudi company for free which will have 180 minutes for international calls.

He further said that the Caretaker government reduced the price of the official Hajj package by Rs0.1 million.

While talking about

the building of the New Haji Camp, the Minister said that the building had been renovated and a vaccination center had also been established for Hajj pilgrims. He said that the 'Interfaith Harmony Conference' was organized under the auspices of the Federal Ministry of Religious Affairs, in which the ambassadors from 30 countries were invited.

Aneeq said that 'Interfaith Harmony Dialogue' was held in University of Karachi, NED University and Iqra University Karachi and Islamabad campuses. The dialogue was also arranged in St. Patrick's Church in which Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Hindu, Parsi and Jain scholars participated. 'We conveyed the message of humanity to the world'.

He said that the project of establishing schools and clinics in mosques had been initiated by the Badshahi Mosque of Lahore and will be expanded across the country.



LAHORE: Chief of Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan Hafiz Saad Rizvi leading a sit-in against elections results at Mall Road

No one to be allowed to change public mandate by force, says Asghar Achakzai

INDEPENDENT REPORT QUETTA: The Provincial President of Awami National Party (ANP) Asghar Khan Achakzai has stated that we respect the public opinion and as such no one could be allowed to change the public mandate by force at all.

He urged the Election Commission to announce the election results of Chaman according to Form-45 honouring the public opinion.

In a statement issued here on Saturday from the ANP Bacha Khan markaz, Asghar Achakzai said that if our demands were not accepted then the continuing protest would be prolonged all over the province.

Meanwhile while addressing the protest sit-in in Chaman, the provincial president of ANP condemned the alleged rigging

in PB-51, Chaman. He said that we took part in the election campaign in Chaman for one and half month. We went to the people and shared with them our manifesto as a result they supported us on February 8.

While people gave opinion in our favour, but the candidate who was on fourth number was declared successful on behalf of the "hidden forces".

Meanwhile, protest was lodged against alleged rigging in the PB-51 elections outside the Deputy Commissioner office Chaman.

The head of Mazloom Ullasi Tehreek Sadiq Khan Achakzai and others addressed the protest.

The Quetta-Chaman highway was also blocked at Kozhak.



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

US, UK and EU urge probe, express concerns over elections

WASHINGTON (INP): The United States, Britain and the European Union on Friday separately expressed concerns about Pakistan's electoral process in the wake of a vote on Thursday and urged a probe into reported irregularities.

The main battle was between former prime minister Nawaz Sharif's party and candidates backed by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf. Both declared victory separately.

Elections were held for 265 seats in the National Assembly and a political party needs 133 seats

for a simple majority. The US and the EU both mentioned allegations of interference, including arrests of activists, and added that claims of irregularities, interference and fraud should be fully investigated.

PTI founder is in jail and his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party has been barred from the polls. Independents, most of them backed by PTI founder, had won the most seats - 98 of the 245 counted by 1830 GMT - while Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party had won 69 seats.

The EU statement noted a "lack of a level playing field", attributing that to "the inability of some political actors to contest the elections" and to restrictions to freedom of expression and internet access.

The US State Department said there were "undue restrictions" on freedoms of expressions and assembly while noting violence and attacks on media workers.

Some US lawmakers such as Democratic US Representatives Ro Khanna and Ilhan Omar also expressed concerns.

Huge number of candidates challenges election 2024 results

LAHORE (INP): Hectic legal activity is expected over next few days as several results of general elections 2024, showing PML-N candidates' winners, are challenged in high courts, with opponents alleging that their defeat was a result of "rigging", ARY News reported on Saturday.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) affiliated independent candidates have moved the Lahore High Court (LHC), challenging the results of the PP-164 and NA-118 - where father-son duo, Shehbaz

Sharif and Hamza Shehbaz secured victory.

In his petition, independent candidate Yousuf Mio, who contested against PML-N president, claimed that the returning officer (RO) did not allow the petitioner to enter the office.

"The results were announced in the petitioner's absence," stated the application, urging the court to direct returning officer to announce the results as per Form-45. "The court also bar the Election Commission from issuing the final result", the petitioner said.

Shoab Shaheen, Ali Bokhari move IHC

ISLAMABAD (Online): PTI leader Shoab Shaheen said he and Ali Bokhari had filed petition in Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Saturday.

We have requested registrar office to fix the case for hearing today. It is our request to chief justice to hear this case forthwith. The entire Islamabad knows my constituency is NA-47. We have formed 47.

Shoab Shaheen said this while talking to media men outside Islamabad High Court (IHC).

He said he has won this election with overwhelming majority. I regret that you are putting returning officer into pressure. What offence you committed in the past you are doing its replay today. One hope is left, it is judiciary, he added.



QUETTA: Provincial General Secretary of PTI Salar Khan Kakar, Syed Zahoor Agha and other addressing a Press conference

Ali Hassan Zehri says: Our sure success changed by undemocratic methods

INDEPENDENT REPORT HUB: Pakistan Peoples Party senior leader and spokesperson of former President Asif Ali Zardari and Pakistan People's Party leader Ali Hassan Zehri candidate from PB21 hub have refused to recognize the election results in the constituency and said that the every conspiracy against Pakistan People's Party is to plant will be resisted. He said that according to the facts on the ground, the Pakistan

Peoples Party won with a clear majority in the PB21 Hub, but the results were changed by unseen forces, which is a complete manipulation of the people of the Hub, which we strongly and strongly condemn. He said that the results will be challenged and the rights of the people will not be allowed to be robbed. Mir Ali Hassan Zehri said that our victory was clear till late night but suddenly the results were reversed and the public mandate.

Sheikh Rashid released from Adiala jail in May 9 riots case

RAWALPINDI (INP): The Rawalpindi anti-terrorism court has ordered to release Sheikh Rashid approving bail in May 9 riots case. The anti-terrorism court's Judge Malik Ijaz Asif heard the bail plea of Sheikh Rashid in May 9 riots case.

The former interior minister was ordered to submit surety bonds of 0.2 million and would be released from Adiala jail after filing surety bonds to police. Sheikh Rashid's counsels Sardar Abdul Razzaq and Sardar Shehbaz presented before the court however persecution side was absent during the hearing.

Al-Qadir Trust case: Indictment of Imran, Bushra Bibi deferred

RAWALPINDI (Online): Accountability Court (AC) has deferred the indictment of PTI founder Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi in Al-Qadir trust case till February 15. AC was to indict Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi Saturday in Al-Qadir trust case but Judge Muhammad Bashir of AC Islamabad recused from hearing Al-Qadir Trust case against Imran Khan and Bushra Bibi.

Due to this court staff

instead of Judge reached Adiala jail to mark the attendance of Imran Khan and Bushra Bibi.

It has been learnt that lawyers of Imran Khan reached Adiala Jail on this occasion.

However the indictment of PTI founder and his wife Bushra Bibi in Al-Qadir Trust case was adjourned till February 15. Therefore PTI founder and Bushra Bibi could not be indicted on Saturday.

ECP withholds results of one national, two provincial constituencies

MONITORING DESK ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has withheld results in three constituencies - one national and two provincial - due to incidents of snatching of polling material at various polling stations during the general elections held on Feb 8. The top electoral body said re-polling will be held at certain polling stations of NA-88 Khushab, PS-18 Ghotki and PK-90 Kohat on February 15 (Monday).

It said material of 26 polling stations was set on fire by an enraged crowd at the office of the returning officer in NA-88 Khushab.

In PS-18 Ghotki, unknown men snatched material of two polling stations, disrupting the voting process. In PK-90 Kohat, assailants destroyed the material of 15 polling stations, depriving people of their right to vote.



QUETTA: PPP Provincial Secretary Information Sardar Sarbuland Jozezai addressing a Press conference

60m people exercised their right to vote on Feb 8: Fafen

ISLAMABAD (INP): Approximately 60 million voters went to the polls in Pakistan on Feb 8 to elect their representatives in 265 National Assembly and 590 provincial assembly constituencies in one of the country's most competitive political contests, says Fafen.

The Free and Fair Election Network (Fafen) issued a report on Saturday, saying the elections followed two tumultuous years of political upheaval, discord and polarisation, which left behind a debris of constitutional confusions, judicial misadventures, communal stress, economic downturn and growing public distrust in electoral institutions - issues that must be taken up by the future government as its top priorities.

Fafen added that despite a spiral of allegations by multiple political parties about not getting a level playing field as well as a spike in militant violence in some parts of the country, none of the political parties backed out of the electoral race.

All parties continued until the last minute their efforts to muster up public support, which augurs well for Pakistan's struggling democracy.

In addition, the pre-election perception of an unlevel playing field does not seem to have prevented the accusing political parties from gaining electoral ground.

Notwithstanding the general perception that pre-election media freedoms were constricted and sporadic incidences of restric-

tions on expression and speech, in fact Pakistani print, electronic and digital media continued to contribute tremendously to strengthening the political and electoral process.

The media kept voters informed through their undiluted reporting, which helped voters make informed choices. Independent civil society groups deserve praise in particular for focusing attention on rights and liberties during the election process, including infringements of the rights of citizens and political parties.

The report said unfazed by a spate of scathing criticism from some political parties, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) must particularly be acknowledged for having organised the

country's largest electoral exercise - with the greatest number of candidates and highest number of voters - in a reasonably orderly manner. More than 1.1 million election officials performed election duties in a highly challenging political environment.

They ensured the integrity of voting and counting processes at the polling stations that largely remained free of controversy, notwithstanding sporadic complaints by political parties and candidates about not getting the election results forms to which they are legally entitled.

More than 0.7 million police and military officials stood guard across Pakistan and outside polling stations, ensuring peace and order on the election day against the backdrop of

fears of militant and political violence.

The report added that whatever the reasons and explanations, the ECP's delay in the preparation and announcement of preliminary election results overshadowed an otherwise orderly election, raising questions about the credibility of the election outcome.

In addition, the caretaker government's suspension of cellular and internet services on election day - regardless of the security reasons - undermined years of parliamentary efforts to reform the election results management process through amendments to the Elections Act, 2017, which were meant to maximise the integrity, efficiency and transparency of electoral outcomes.

Fafen said the country

had found a closure to a period of unsettling uncertainty that was not only exhausting for the people but also for the economy, with lingering inflation, unemployment and general disenchantment.

"Now it is the responsibility of political parties to bring to end their obstinate disengagement for a smooth transition of power in order to ensure the much-needed political stability in the country," the report stressed. "Many of the concerns raised by the political parties and their candidates need to be addressed on legal merit by the ECP as promptly as possible, while residual matters can be addressed by the election tribunals that will be formed and start working in less than two months," the report observed.

PML-N constitutes committee to contact independent candidates

LAHORE (INP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Saturday established a committee to contact independent candidates.

According to Muslim League-N, a committee comprising Ishaq Dar, Rana Sanaullah and Ayaz Sadiq will talk to Pakistan Peoples Party's (PPP) Asif Ali Zardari, Jamat-e-Ulema Islami-Fazl's (JUI-F) Fazlur-Rehman, Mutahidda Qoumi Movement-Pakistan's (MQM-P) Khalid Maqbool.

announced to form the government together in alliance with all the parties.

In his statement, Nawaz Sharif said that they are the majority party in the Center and Punjab, Shehbaz Sharif and Ishaq Dar will talk to Pakistan Peoples Party's (PPP) Asif Ali Zardari, Jamat-e-Ulema Islami-Fazl's (JUI-F) Fazlur-Rehman, Mutahidda Qoumi Movement-Pakistan's (MQM-P) Khalid Maqbool.



QUETTA: Former Senator Haji Mir Lashkari Raisani addressing a Press conference

Ambassador Tirmizi represents Pakistan at Abu Dhabi Dialogue

ABU DHABI (APP): Pakistan's envoy to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Ambassador Faisal Niaz Tirmizi represented Pakistan at the Abu Dhabi Dialogue (ADD) here on Saturday. Pakistan is the current Chair of the ADD.

Junaid Murtaza, Community Welfare Attache (CWA), Pakistan Consulate General, Dubai delivered the statement on behalf of Pakistan. In his remarks, he said that the forum provided an important opportunity to engage in meaningful discussion and dialogue regarding the safe, orderly, and regular labour movement in one of the largest temporary labour migration corridors.

He further said that

Pakistan was of the view that the Abu Dhabi Dialogue served as a platform for multilateral and multi-dimensional collaboration, bringing together leaders, policymakers, experts and stakeholders. It provided a mechanism to foster interconnectivity, enhance collaborations, and promote the exchange of ideas for lasting solutions related to temporary labour migration, he added. The CWA said that Pakistan considered that the deliberations held at the ADD would help in addressing the challenges and exploring opportunities to ensure the protection of migrant workers and enabling countries of origin and destination to get maximum benefits from the temporary labour migration.



QUETTA: Director General Public Relations Muhammad Noor Khetran, DG Environment Molvi Ibrahim Samalani, DG Finance Muhammad Afzal Khosti and others offering Fateha for departed soul of mother of senior journalist Zahir Khan Nassar