

# Independent

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## Becomes 24th PM in rucks-hit session Mounds of socio-economic challenges exist; but surmountable, says Shehbaz in victory speech

Obtains 201 votes; rival PTI-SIC candidate Omar Ayub Khan bags 92 votes; Shehbaz thanks Nawaz for nominating him for PM slot; Says his party never indulged in political victimisation

ISLAMABAD (AFP/APP): Shehbaz Sharif was voted in on Sunday as Pakistan's prime minister for a second time, presiding over a shaky alliance that has shut out followers of jailed opposition leader Imran Khan.

Newly sworn-in lawmakers in Pakistan's National Assembly elected Sharif with 201 votes, more than three weeks after national elections marred by widespread allegations of rigging.

"No one has won a majority. It is a split mandate. And it is the democratic way that if it's a split mandate, then the like-minded parties may form a coalition government," Sharif told parliament, referring to the February 8 election.

The Sharif family's Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party allied with their historic rivals the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), as well as several smaller factions, to keep Khan's candidates out.

In return, the PPP—a dynastic party ruled by the family of slain ex-premier Benazir Bhutto—has been promised the office of president for Bhutto's widower, Asif Ali Zardari.

Ex-prime minister Khan was jailed in the run-up to the election and barred from running, while his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party was targeted by a crackdown of arrests and censorship.

PTI candidates were forced to run as independents but nonetheless secured more seats than any other party.

However, they fell short of the figures needed to form a government, paving the way for Sharif's return.

Omar Ayub Khan stood against Sharif as the candidate of choice for MPs loyal to Imran Khan, gaining 92 votes.

"They put our leaders in jail, took our election symbol, rigged the elections, but we kept standing, and we will stand our ground," Omar Ayub Khan told parliament. Sharif, 72, first served as prime minister in 2022 at the head of a strikingly similar alliance which ousted Imran Khan, a former



cricket star.

Meanwhile Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, the newly-elected prime minister, on Sunday spelled out a number of initiatives to net the runaway inflation, high cost of living, price hike, circular debt in the energy sector and foreign debts, and expressed the optimism that though the mounds of challenges existed, but were not insurmountable.

In his maiden speech in the National Assembly, the prime minister-elect also offered an olive branch to the protesting opposition members with a 'charter of reconciliation', besides reiterating his insistence on pursuing a 'charter of economy'.

Shehbaz Sharif was, earlier, elected as the prime minister for the second time in a 201-vote count by the newly formed National Assembly about three weeks after the conclusion of general elections, leading to formation of a coalition government.

He said that after the general elections, they had two options ahead of them; either to protect their politics or to save the country, but the allied parties' leadership preferred interests of the country and resolved to play their role for the bright future of the country.

Shehbaz said that Pakistan was blessed with immense natural resources and talented young people

who could steer it out of the difficulties.

All the segments of society and political leadership should play their part in those endeavours, he stressed.

He said the economic and social challenges were myriad but at the same time, there was an opportunity, if they decided collectively to face them.

The PM-elect said that as per estimates, the budget revenues stood at Rs12,300 billion and after the NFC (national finance Commission) Award distribution, the Federal Government was left with only Rs 7,300 billion, out of which Rs 8,000 billion had been paid in interest and services charges, showing a deficit of Rs 700 billion.

He wondered that from where they would have to get resources for the development, education, health, salaries of the Federal Government employees and the armed forces!

He termed it an unending chain of seeking loans after loans and 'a grave situation' for about 250 million people of the country.

Referring to the protest of the opposition members, he regretted that there should be 'a reign of realization rather than making noises in the House', adding the history would decide over such tactics.

## Bugti assures financial compensation for losses caused to rain affected people in Gwadar

Forms committee to make assessment of damages in Gwadar; report to be submitted in 20 days

**Independent Report**  
QUETTA: The Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti has stated that hundreds of house have been affected due to torrential rains and floods in Gwadar and adding assured that financial compensation would be paid to those affected.

He said that a committee has been constituted to make assessment of the damages caused due to rains and flood in Gwadar. The committee would submit its report within 20 days.

The Chief Minister was speaking to the media persons soon after he visited official visit to Gwadar on Sunday afternoon.

He had reached Gwadar especially to review the situation following recent torrential rains in Gwadar.

Mir Sarfraz Bugti said that he wants to assure the people of Balochistan that most not feel alone in the critical time.

He said that the government of Balochistan are standing with its people in critical time. He said that our first priority is to rescue the affected people, then provide them and their rehabilitation. The Chief Minister mentioned that work is continued to drain out the rain water and restore routine life in the port city. He said that the dewatering process would be completed in Gwadar by Monday (today). He was highly appreciative of the role played by the Pak army, Provincial Disaster Management Authority, and other institutions for rescuing the affected people and providing them the relief.



GWADAR: Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti talking with media members

## Visits Gwadar's flood-hit areas Corps Commander vows timely relief efforts

**Independent Report**  
GWADAR: In a proactive response to the recent floods wreaking havoc in Gwadar district, Lieutenant General Rahat Naseem - Corps Commander of Balochistan Corps - undertook a visit to the affected areas to assess the situation firsthand and extend support to the flood victims.

His visit aimed at personally assessing the situation and extending support to the distressed flood victims. Accompanied by the General Officer Commanding (GOC) Gwadar Division, the Corps Commander engaged in crucial discussions with local authorities and community leaders to comprehend the challenges confronting the affected populace.

Furthermore, he gained insights into the immediate measures implemented by relief teams to alleviate the suffering of those affected by the natural calamity.

Interacting with social and regional elders during his visit, Lieutenant General Rahat Naseem reiterated the unwavering commitment of the Pakistan Army to ensure the prompt delivery of relief and rehabilitation efforts in collaboration with civil administration and pertinent institutions. Emphasizing continuity in relief operations until normalcy is restored, the Corps Commander assured the affected communities of the Pakistan Army's steadfast support.



JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman addressing a press conference in Karachi.

## Barrister Gohar elected PTI chairman unopposed for second time

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has released the results of its intra-party election. Raouf Hassan, PTI's information secretary, announced the intra-party election results.

Barrister Gohar Ali Khan has been elected as the chairman of PTI without facing any opposition in the intra-party elections. Omar Ayub secured the central general secretary position, while Dr. Yasmin Rashid clinched the presidency of Punjab unopposed.

Ali Amin Gandapur has been elected as PTI president for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Noorul Haq Qadri was elected as vice president, and Arbab Jahandad Khan as vice president of PTI in KP.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa election commissioner Qazi Anwar Advocate announced the victory notification of Ali Amin Gandapur. The panel of Ali Amin Gandapur was elected unopposed, as no other panel submitted nomination papers.

Ali Asghar Khan and Irfan Saleem won the roles of general secretary and additional general secretary, respectively. On the other hand, Fakhar Zaman won the position of deputy general secretary.

Daniyal Khan Jadoon, Khaista Mehmod, and Taimoor Khalid have been elected as joint secretaries.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif handshakes with PPP Leader Asif Ali Zardari after electing prime minister.

## 13 nomination papers submitted for 3 seats of Senate from Balochistan

Abdul Quddus Bizenjo, Kohda Babar, Mir Hair Biyar, Agha Shakeel Durrani, Mobin Khilji among others file candidatures for Senate

**Independent Report**  
QUETTA: In all 13 nomination papers were submitted for three vacant seats of Senate from Balochistan province here in Quetta. Those who submitted papers were included: Mir Abdul Quddus Bizenjo, Agha Shakeel Durrani and Mir Hair Biyar from Pakistan Peoples Party, Mobin Khilji and Kohda Babar from Balochistan Awami Party, Mir Dostain Domki and Mir Khan Kurd of Pakistan Muslim League-N, and 5.

The last date of filing papers against acceptance and rejection of the papers is March 7.

The revised list of candidates would be published on March 9.

The polling for the vacant seats of Senate would be held on March 14.

It may be mentioned here that the seats of Senate had fallen vacant due to resignation of Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haideri, Prince Agha Ahmed Umar Ahmedzai.

## Omar Ayub demands release of PTI's political detainees

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Omar Ayub called for an impartial inquiry into the events of May 9, and also demanded to release of the PTI's political detainees.

Addressing the post-PM voting session of the National Assembly, Ayub stressed the need for justice, stating that founding chairman Imran Khan Vice Chairman Shah Mehmood Qureshi, and other leaders have been unjustly detained as political prisoners.

He also urged for adequate facilities to be extended to Bushra Bibi.

PTI not responsible for May 9 mayhem

Ayub vehemently denied PTI's involvement in the May 9 incidents, instead placing blame on what he characterized as the unconstitutional actions of caretaker governments in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He alleged widespread arrests of PTI supporters and called for accountability under Article 6 of the Constitution, demanding an impartial inquiry into the events.

Expressing dissatisfaction with the coverage of his speech on state television, Ayub slams the delay in broadcasting, despite the Speaker National Assembly's directive for live transmission.

Ayub continued his address by recounting instances of alleged persecution faced by PTI members, including repeated police raids on his residence and harassment of his family.

He condemned the reported torture of PTI workers in custody, highlighting the suffering endured by youths and their families.



KARACHI: Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti offering Fateha at Mazar-e-Quaid

## Chinese President, PM congratulate newly-elected PM Shehbaz

BEIJING (APP): Chinese President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang on Sunday congratulated Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on his election as Prime Minister of Pakistan.

President Xi Jinping expressed the confidence that under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and the Pakistan's new government, and under the united efforts of all sectors of Pakistan, Pakistan would be able to make new and greater achievements in the cause of national development and progress, according to the state-run news agency Xinhua.

He stressed that China and Pakistan should continue their traditional friendship.

Chinese Premier Li Qiang of the State Council also sent a congratulatory message to the newly-elected Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

## Jam Kamal takes oath

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Speaker of the National Assembly, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq on Sunday administered the oath to Jamal Kamal Khan, the newly elected member of the National Assembly.

Jam Kamal Khan was elected as a member of the National Assembly from NA-257.



GWADAR: Corps Commander Balochistan Lt. General Rahat Naseem meeting with affectedes during his visit to flood affected areas of Gwadar

## Elections 2024 shattered record of rigging set in 2018: Fazal

KARACHI (INP): Maulana Fazlur Rehman, the head of Jamiat-e-Ulema Islam (JUI-F), lambasted the recently concluded 2024 elections in Pakistan, accusing them of surpassing the previous record of rigging set during the 2018 polls.

Fazl made these assertions during a press conference in Karachi, where he claimed that mounting international pressure forced Pakistan's military establishment to yield, thus influencing the election outcome.

"The establishment's coercion will indeed be labelled as coercion. The establishment has divided its own ranks, accommodating some at one place and others elsewhere," he stated, addressing the alleged interference in the electoral process.

Expressing dismay over the dwindling significance of the Parliament, Fazl remarked, "The Parliament, where we see a mockery of democracy, is no longer representative of the people. The Parliament, which we witness, will have some individuals calling themselves rulers. They may govern bodies but cannot govern the hearts of the nation."

Despite his inclination to support Mahmood Achakzai, the candidate backed by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)-supported Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC), Fazl indicated that his party's stance compels them to act otherwise.

He dismissed the prospect of forming alliances with allied parties, citing an inadequate environment for a grand alliance. "We will be where the opposition benches are. We will go to Parliament and protest," he asserted. JUI-F chief pledged to engage with provincial councils and workers in Karachi to devise a nationwide strategy for change. "Assemblies have been bought with money, and if governments are formed through such means, we remain uninvolved."

We do not accept this robbery, and those involved in this are criminals," he declared.

## Quetta records coldest night of current winter season

QUETTA (INP): Quetta, Balochistan's capital, experienced its coldest night of the ongoing winter season, recording a temperature drop to -5 degrees Celsius on Sunday, the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) said.

Water in pipelines and roads started to freeze as a cold breeze was blowing across Quetta. The majority of Balochistan province's areas were under the grip of a cold wave.

Meanwhile, the sky is now clear in Quetta and adjoining areas after heavy rainfall. The weather on Saturday remained rainy with thunderstorms, and heavy snowfall across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Islamabad, northern Punjab, and Balochistan.

## Akhtar Mengal boycotts PM election

ISLAMABAD (INP): Balochistan National Party-Mengal's Akhtar Mengal boycotted the election for the prime minister.

Despite insistence from PTI's Amir Dogar and PPP's Yousuf Raza Gilani, the BNP chief remained seated in the opposition benches and refused to cast a vote.

It must be noted that the JUI-F has also boycotted the election on allegations of rigging in the February 8 general elections.

## Balochistan rains killed five, damaged 237 houses: PDMA

QUETTA (INP): The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) has said that the recent rains in Balochistan claimed five lives besides damaging 237 houses across province.

According to PDMA report, five people including three children and a woman were killed in separate rain related incidents in Barkhan and Kharan while another was injured.

The rains also completely demolished 82 houses while 155 houses were partially damaged, the report added.

The PDMA further said that walls of 25 houses collapsed, four highways and a bridge was damaged due to rain.

PDMA, district administration, Pakistan Army and concerned departments were engaged in rescue operations in rain hit areas of Balochistan. The affectedes were being provided tents, blankets and other daily necessary items.



Daily Voice of Masses  
**Independent**

**Little respite**

Is inflation on its way out? The Consumer Price Index showed that inflation dropped to 23.1pc in February from 28.3pc the previous month, and 31.5pc a year ago, raising hopes. It is the lowest CPI reading recorded by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics in the last 20 months. Inflation peaked at 38pc last May. The PBS did not observe a month-over-month change in prices last month, reporting a broad-based decrease in the pace of price rise on account of falling food inflation, coupled with the high base effect of the last fiscal. The rates decreased in both the urban and rural areas, with core inflation, or non-food and non-energy inflation, also down from their higher levels. And yet, there will be little respite for households anytime soon, as overall price levels and the cost of living remain elevated.

Nevertheless, the drop in inflation seems to have encouraged some — such as a former finance minister, who called the reduction in the inflation rate “wonderful news” — to renew calls for early rate cuts to “reduce government deficit and also provide a much-needed respite to industry and consumers”. The calls for rate cuts are based on the assumption that the pace of increase in the prices of goods and services will slow down further over the next several months due to a high base effect, falling demand, easing of supply constraints and plunging global commodity rates. It means that if the trend witnessed last month holds, we should expect the State Bank to start monetary easing soon. However, the inflation outlook still faces risks that include a further increase in domestic energy prices, food supply shocks and an upswing in international commodity prices due to the geopolitics of the Middle East. Hence, inflation expectations remain elevated, despite recent improvements. On top of that, consumers must brace themselves for Ramadan inflation. Therefore, it might be too early to expect the State Bank to start to decrease borrowing costs. A rate cut without a consistent drop in inflation might also not sit well with the IMF whose support is crucial for stabilising Pakistan’s external sector. We are also not aware if the IMF agrees to a new extended programme — and how quickly. What is certain is that any new programme will be accompanied by more stringent conditions. A report in a local paper claims that the IMF has advised the FBR to significantly increase the income tax burden for both salaried and non-salaried segments and tax the contribution of private employers to their workers’ pension fund, thus enabling the FBR to collect additional revenue. The proposal does not take into account the burden of inflation on the salaried classes. If implemented, this could prove to be the proverbial straw that broke the camel’s back.

**India’s fault lines**

Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry

Pakistan is passing through a challenging time. A divisive and polarising politics, economic uncertainties, and the continuing threat of violent extremism are some of the fault lines that impede the country’s path to stability.

India, on the other hand, seems to be politically stable and economically well-off. However, if one were to scratch this veneer of stability, we could see serious fissures appearing in Indian society. As the country continues its march towards becoming a Hindu state driven by its Hindutva ideology, multiple fault lines have emerged in Indian society, which have deepened in the past one decade under BJP rule.

The first fault line is the growing discrimination against minorities, particularly Indian Muslims. Prof Christophe Jaffrelot at the Centre for International Studies and Research in Paris, recently carried out an extensive study on the plight of Indian Muslims under the Hindutva regime. Based on ethnographic studies and interviews of victims, Jaffrelot found that the representation of Muslims in India’s civil service, police or government jobs was far lower than the proportion of their numbers (14.5 per cent of India’s total population). Muslim representation has drastically come down in the national and state assemblies under BJP rule. The number of Muslim graduates is declining, particularly in northern India. Sadly, Indian Muslims were only in a majority in jails.

Indian Muslims are worried about saffron vigilante groups and the rising intolerance towards Muslim icons. The attempt to convert

Indian-occupied Kashmir from a Muslim-majority into a Muslim-minority area is also part of the wider discrimination against Muslims. Clearly, India is speeding away from a secular, pluralistic democracy towards a Hindu majoritarian raj.

The second fault line is the continuing discrimination against the Dalits, the low-caste Hindus; the system appears to favour the Brahmins, the upper-caste Hindus. The caste system has been an integral element of Indian society over millennia. It was officially abolished in 1951, but the social hierarchy continues to dominate Indian society. The Brahmins sit atop this hierarchy, which includes Kshatriyas (warriors), Vaishyas (merchants), and Shudras who are supposed to be labourers, and are sometimes called ‘achhut’, or ‘untouchables’, or ‘Dalits’. The scheduled castes (Dalits) or scheduled tribes (Adivasis), which together constitute over 25pc of India’s population, endure systemic social isolation and marginalisation, live in slums, and are obliged to do menial jobs.

Under a study supported by The Gates Foundation in 2017, it was revealed that of all those employed in the sanitation and cleaning work in India, 90pc belong to Dalit sub-castes. In most cases, they are underpaid, and not provided essential protective gear. According to a CNN study carried out in 2020, Dalits were the most vulnerable victims of the Covid-19 pandemic because of their susceptibility to viruses, as they had little to no access to education and health services and were at the bottom of the economic hierarchy. There are exceptions, such as the late Dr Ambedkar, who despite facing discrimination in

early life as a Dalit, rose to become the ‘father of the Indian constitution’. He strongly advocated for abolishing the caste system, and later converted to Buddhism, ostensibly to be part of a more egalitarian religion. Rajesh Saraya, the richest Dalit, runs a successful steel business. But these are exceptions.

The third noticeable fault line is the growing divide between north and south India. The major grievance for the southern states (Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh) is that they contribute more to the Union budget than they receive, whereas the northern states, particularly UP and Bihar, receive far higher returns. In many respects, the southern states have excelled over northern India. These states have a greater degree of religious harmony, are economically doing better, excel in providing IT services, and enjoy lower population growth, which over time has reduced their representation in the Lok Sabha. There is emerging chatter about the possibility of these states forming a country of their own, which recently evoked a heated debate in the Rajya Sabha.

Since 2014, the Modi regime has been steering India towards the path of a Hindu majoritarian nation, where space for minorities including Muslims and Christians is shrinking, while low-caste Hindus continue to suffer. The answer to whether they can ever reverse these discriminations is not yet apparent. However, it is clear that these fault lines could potentially create considerable commotion within Indian society if positive action is not taken to address these societal distortions. -- Courtesy Dawn

**Maryam-bashing**

Muna Khan

When I was teaching at a journalism programme in Karachi a few years ago, former editor of The News, and columnist Ghazi Salahuddin would give a lecture on Malala Yousafzai where he would tell students to speak openly. I once witnessed students’ disdain for Malala but Ghazi sahib handled it with such poise, never making them feel they were being challenged for their views. Students repeated the usual claims ‘what has Malala done for Pakistan’. (As an aside, I believe an update of that disdain should ask what has Malala done for Palestine because her silence has been especially disappointing.)

I digress. The point Ghazi sahib was making, as he told me after that lecture, was that if you want to gauge people’s politics quickly, you should ask them about Malala. It has served me well — seemingly well-meaning people, who aren’t anti-West, or women, or right-wing, would say the strangest things about her.

I believe Maryam Nawaz is the new bashing-kid on the block. Of course, she’s not a kid but I’ve rarely seen people express that kind of rage and hatred for another dynasty child — Pakistan has plenty across all parties. Maryam is treated like a pariah. She is also disparaged privately by party members who feel she doesn’t deserve to be where she is. She hasn’t ranked high in popularity polls before the elections, though to be fair, it’s hard to compete with Imran Khan.

I understand Maryam’s unfavourability factor, if there’s such a thing, is rooted in misogyny which women leaders the world over experience.

The Reykjavik Index, which studies how people

feel about women leadership, found in 2021 low levels of confidence for women leaders; the higher percentages were in G7 countries. I was surprised to read that younger men “were especially unlikely to endorse women leaders”, but then I reminded myself of some classroom discussions I’ve had about Aurat March...

This finding was particularly eye-opening: “Some people who don’t consider the m-selves sexist believe that because the world is sexist, women leaders are likely to be weaker.”

Just a year later, the index found trust in women leadership is falling though their numbers in high-ranking positions are on the rise. Analysts urged countries to ‘fix the trust gap’ if they want to eradicate gender bias.

The more Maryam’s profile rose since 2013, the more scorn she received. I remember how furious social media users were when The New York Times featured her as one of the 11 powerful women “we met in the world” in 2017. Although the paper reported on corruption charges against her family, social media users were not convinced she earned her place as her father’s right-hand person. Male scions are not carefully examined.

I am not here to convince you about Maryam’s abilities or lack of them — I have serious reservations — but I am curious what our attitude towards her says about us. We are a highly polarised society, with terrible social indicators and a very poor scorecard on how women are treated in this country. I don’t believe women leaders automatically means an improvement in women’s rights — looking at you, war-mongering Hillary Clinton — but shouldn’t we wait before giving Maryam an F?

I certainly do not believe she is above scrutiny.

By all means critique the video of her helping a female official adjust her dupatta, but to liken it to an assault — as some ‘progressives’ have done on X — is preposterous. Especially compared to the muted response to Imran Khan telling a jalsa in 2022 that Maryam talks about him so much it may make her husband jealous.

Men get away with so much, including saying PML-N’s leader Sobia Sha-hid in the KP Assembly was asking for it when she was met with verbal abuse, a shoe thrown at her and a lota earlier this week. The what-abouts always makes the woman the ‘bad guy’.

Women politicians all over the world are held to different standards. Their likeability is put under the microscope whereas it doesn’t matter what their counterparts are like. Men’s aggressiveness is a given but women doing something unexpected is well... unacceptable.

It is this double standard rooted in deep gender bias, often unconscious, that needs to change.

I believe the press should pound Mary-am, for policies, inaction, siding with cor-p-o-rations over the public, and any favouritism shown in awarding contracts, for ex-a-m-ple. I have heard men (always men) on TV advise her to dress down to be taken seriously. While I understand what they mean — get your hands dirty — it would not cross their mind to say this about her male counterparts.

Every election in this country has been tainted and that could include Maryam’s. However, she has won votes and needs to win people’s confidence. For that, she needs to be given a chance, not to be confused with a free pass. -- Courtesy Dawn

**Commerce News**

**GECF Summit concludes with pledge to natural gas for secure, sustainable energy future**

ALGIERS, Algeria (APP): The 7th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) concluded in Algiers with the issuance of the “Algiers Declaration,” reaffirming the member countries’ commitment to promoting natural gas as a key component of a secure and sustainable energy future.

Under the leadership of Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune, the summit saw the participation of leaders from GECF member countries, who convened to discuss crucial issues surrounding natural gas production, utilization, and cooperation. In his opening address, President Tebboune emphasized the importance of GECF as a

cooperation platform and highlighted the determination of its members to strengthen its role and contribution to global energy security.

Iranian President Dr. Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi and the Russian Minister for Energy addressed the summit, championing cooperation and innovation in the energy sector. President Raisi showcased Iran’s vast potential in the gas industry, extending invitations to international investors and urging collaboration among member countries to maximize utilization of resources. Echoing these sentiments, the Russian Minister for Energy emphasized the importance of collective action in ensuring stability amidst global challenges.



LAHORE: People visiting stalls during Jashan-e-Baharan Festival at Jilani Park organized by PHA.

**China’s top political advisory body BRI cooperation provides huge opportunities for partner countries**

BEIJING (APP): The high-quality Belt and Road cooperation provides huge opportunities for partner countries to achieve common development and improve people’s well-being, Spokesperson for the second session of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), Liu

Jieyi said here on Sunday. The last decade of practice has fully demonstrated that building a community with a shared future for mankind conforms to the trend of human development and progress and serves the common interests of peoples of all countries, Liu made the remarks during a press conference held by the CPPCC National Committee,

China’s top political advisory body. Mentioning the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, the China-Laos Railway and the Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Railway, he said various livelihood projects have helped Africa, Asia, the South Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean to improve medical infrastructure and promote rural poverty alleviation.

**Mobile companies cheating masses, evading taxes: PEW**

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chairman Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW), Brigadier (retd) Aslam Khan has said that some telecom companies were cheating consumers by employing different tactics. At the same time, the government was being defrauded by evading taxes to the tune of billions of rupees.

In a statement issued on Sunday, he said, “The masses are tired of inflation, and the country is on the verge of bankruptcy. Still, some greedy corporations are not ready to fulfill their commitments and discharge national obligations by paying due taxes.” Brigadier (retd) Aslam Khan said that some mobile phone operators deduct more

taxes from consumers than they transfer to the government, and there seems to be no end to this practice as authorities prefer to go soft on the telecom sector for obvious reasons.

Mobile phone operators also overcharge subscribers, who end up paying more money for less talk time, and other tactics were also employed to fleece consumers, he said, adding that one reason for this continued trend of economic crime was the lack of capacity of the tax collectors to monitor the cellular companies.

The Chairman PEW said that there were some underdeveloped areas in the country where some taxes are not applicable.



ISLAMABAD: A vendor displaying and selling caps to attract the customers at his roadside setup.



GILGIT: A vendor busy in compiling the parts of traditional fire stove at his workplace.

**Sheikhupura Transformer Reclamation Workshop inaugurated**

LAHORE (APP): Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) Chief Executive Officer Engineer Shahid Haider Sunday inaugurated a transformer reclamation workshop in Sheikhupura after Kasur to ensure uninterrupted supply of electricity to consumers and speed up the repair process of transformers.

He asserted that uninterrupted supply of electricity to consumers and prompt resolution of complaints is the motto of LESCO, for which all available energies would be utilized.

The CEO said, “We have also been equipping the company with modern facilities in the past, and this tradition will be continued in the future workshops would save a

**KTH chairman greets PM**

LAHORE (APP): Kyrgyzstan Trade House in Pakistan (KTH) Chairman Meher Kashif Younis here Sunday greeted Shehbaz Sharif on becoming Prime Minister for the second time.

He hoped that under his dynamic leadership, Pakistan would emerge as one of the leading economies in the world.

Meher said the character of economy is the need of the hour that requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach from the top leadership of the incumbent government. By evolving a consensus among all stakeholders and prioritizing national interests, the government can set the stage for meaningful reforms that will strengthen the national economy and improve the living standards of people, he added. Pakistan faced a number of economic challenges, ranging from high inflation and unemployment to a growing debt burden and dwindling foreign reserves, and to address these challenges.

LAHORE (APP): Experts on Sunday said that the government, by bringing an available potential area of about 10 million acres under olive cultivation in Punjab, is bringing about a silent revolution for the sustainable development of the country.

With a considerable increase in the area under potential cultivation, Pakistan is passing through a silent revolution of olive oil production, they opined. Talking to APP, they said that in all parts of the country, particularly the Pothohar region, Balochistan, Khyber-

Pakhtunkhwa and erstwhile Fata, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan areas, olive cultivation fertility is most suitable and have natural growthable environment while providing fruitful conditions. Given its potential for growing olive plantations, Pothohar has been termed an ‘olive valley’ where over 1.2 million olive plants are being grown on an area of 11,125 acres, engaging about 1,300 farmers, said Dr. Muhammad Tariq, national project director for the promotion of olive

**Olive cultivation to bring about economic revolution, sustainable growth: experts**

LAHORE (APP): Experts on Sunday said that the government, by bringing an available potential area of about 10 million acres under olive cultivation in Punjab, is bringing about a silent revolution for the sustainable development of the country.

With a considerable increase in the area under potential cultivation, Pakistan is passing through a silent revolution of olive oil production, they opined. Talking to APP, they said that in all parts of the country, particularly the Pothohar region, Balochistan, Khyber-

Pakhtunkhwa and erstwhile Fata, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan areas, olive cultivation fertility is most suitable and have natural growthable environment while providing fruitful conditions. Given its potential for growing olive plantations, Pothohar has been termed an ‘olive valley’ where over 1.2 million olive plants are being grown on an area of 11,125 acres, engaging about 1,300 farmers, said Dr. Muhammad Tariq, national project director for the promotion of olive

cultivation. More than half the plants have started bearing fruit since 2019-20’s cropping period, producing 5,118 tonnes of olive oil. By the fall of 2024, the value of olive production will increase to Rs1.727 billion, he said. In Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, over a million olive plants are being grown on an area of 9,391 acres engaging 768 farmers. The production of olive oil is estimated to reach the value of Rs1.458bn in 2024, Dr Tariq informed. Likewise, in Balochistan, over half a



## CM KP announces relief package for rains affected families in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur on Sunday announced compensation package for the affected families due to rains in the province.

The Chief Minister directed the Relief Secretary to compile reports on the affected and the damages incurred due to rains.

Detailed information about the life and property losses across the province should be collected, the Chief Minister's instructed.

He announced relief

checks of Rs1 million for the killed, Rs 300,000 for severely injured and Rs 50,000 for those who received moderate injuries.

Financial compensation will also be provided for property damages caused by the rains.

The Chief Minister has instructed the concerned Divisional Commissioners to coordinate efforts and promptly provide relief to the affected.

Immediate relief measures are to be taken on an emergency basis, focusing on essential needs

such as temporary shelter, food, and other necessities for owners of damaged homes.

Ali Amin Gandapur directed urgent provision of medical assistance to the injured.

He also directed to restore the closed roads due to heavy snowfall and rain.

The Chief Minister has stressed the utilization of all available resources for this purpose. In light of any emergency situations, preparedness measures should be in place to tackle the challenges effectively, Ali Amin Gandapur asserts.



LAHORE: The brave Superintendent of Police (SP) Syeda Sheherbano Naqvi heading a walk in liberty Chowk organized by Punjab Police.

## 27 persons killed, 38 injured due to rains in KP: PDMA

PESHAWAR (APP): At least 27 persons were killed and 38 were reported injured due rains for the last 48 hours, said DG Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA).

33 houses were reported completely destroyed while 129 partially.

The Chief Minister has directed to provide relief and compensation cheques to the affected families. He also directed for opening of closed road and provide facilities to

people stuck in rains and landsliding.

The Chief Minister also directed PDMA, Rescue 1122, district administrations to be alert and facilitate people.

Six tourists have been rescued in Malamjappa, said DG PDMA Muhammad Qaiser Khan.

He said that directives have been issued to all DCs in this regard.

Apart from humans, reports about perishing of livestock has also been received from authorities of Rescue 1122 KP.

## 2 people killed in different incidents in Attock

ATTOCK (APP): Two people, among them a teenage teacher of a private school were killed in two different incidents in various parts of Attock on Sunday, police and rescue sources said.

In the first incident, a teenage teacher of a private school was going to her house when she reached Mohallah Subalan, she slipped and drowned in a drainage line in the limits of Fatehjang Police Station. Later, Rescue 1122 retrieved her body and shifted to the Tehsil Headquarters Hospital in Fatehjang, where she was declared dead. Separately, an employee of the Municipal Committee, Hassanabdal, lost his life while repairing a street light in Mohallah Shaheedabad.

## Govt to take measures to protect wildlife: Maryam Nawaz

Maryam congratulates Shehbaz Sharif on being elected as PM

LAHORE (APP) Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has said that provincial government would take comprehensive and effective measures to protect wildlife in Punjab.

In her message on World Wildlife Day 2024 on Sunday, the CM said the importance of wildlife in maintaining ecological balance cannot be underestimated. Realizing the importance of biodiversity, the Punjab government would take effective measures to bring environmental balance. Conservation of all kinds of wildlife from wild sheep found in Salt Range to 'talurs' of Cholistan and to the dolphins, is our top priority. Like entire

Pakistan, nature has blessed Punjab with beautiful wildlife, the protection and promotion of which is our responsibility.

"On World Wildlife Day, I pay tribute to the workers and organizations serving in this field" she concluded.

Meanwhile, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif congratulated Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President Shehbaz Sharif on being elected Prime Minister of Pakistan for the second time.

In her message issued on Sunday, the CM said "I also congratulate the people of Pakistan as they have got a Khadim."



SARGODHA: Student giving final touch to painting during Punjab painting competitions organized by Sargodha Arts Council.

## KPCTA arranges Safari Train trip to Takhtbhai

PESHAWAR (APP): The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA) arranged first ever safari train trip to Takht Bahi relics on Sunday.

It was aimed of informing people about the rich history of Buddha-era heritage sites declared by UNESCO as world heritage site.

A large number of people enjoyed the train safari, which commenced from Saddar Railway

Station. The visitors were warmly welcomed at the station with traditional Pipe band. A total of 140 passengers visited the site through the train safari, during which they were briefed about the historic places of KP, its culture, traditions and the history of Takht Bahi relics.

The train safari departed from Saddar Cantt Railway Station at 9:00 AM and reached Takht Bahi Railway Station after sightseeing stops at City.



FAISALABAD: A speaker addressing an Annual General meeting of Faisalabad Union of Journalist (FUJ).

## Free medical, dental camp held at LPC

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Press Club on Sunday organised a free medical camp for members and their families with the support of Private Nursing Colleges Federation.

In the medical camp, general check-up, gynecological problems, dental diseases, eye examination, nutrition issues, free sugar check, and free blood pressure was checked. Specialist General Physician Dr. Jameel Baloch, Dr. Shumaila, Dr. Saba, Dr. Osama Asif, Dr. Abdul Rahman, Dr. Ayman and paramedical staff participated in the medical camp and examined the patients, participating in the medical camp for

prescribed treatment and provided medicines.

LPC President Arshad Ansari, Vice President Amjad Usmani, Secretary Zahid Abid, Member Governing Body Imran Sheikh, Rana Shehzad, Fatima Mukhtar welcomed doctors, members of Lahore Press Club and their families who participated in the camp.

The LPC members and their families expressed their satisfaction over the conduct of the camp and expressed hope that the elected governing body would continue to take such measures so that the members of the LPC can benefit more.

## Azma Bokhari greets Shehbaz

LAHORE (APP): PML-N Punjab spokesperson Azma Bokhari, congratulating Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on being elected as Prime Minister, stated that the era of progress and prosperity will continue again under his leadership.

Azma Bokhari in her felicitation message outlined that PM Shehbaz Sharif had saved Pakistan from default and it was his biggest credit. "PM Shehbaz Sharif would steer Pakistan out of the economic vortex and vicious circle as his first and foremost priority is to ensure the revival of the national economy and elimination of the price hike. Those who are destined to wait will continue to do so for the next five years. The PML-N government under the dynamic leadership of Nawaz Sharif will work with the same spirit of rendering public service in the federation and in Punjab as well. The able leadership of Nawaz Sharif is a matter of great pride for Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz," she added.

## 'Never Again' walk held to create awareness about violence against women

LAHORE (APP): A walk under the theme of 'Violence against women no more, never again' was organised by the Punjab Police here on Sunday to create awareness among citizens.

The walk participants were told the Punjab Police were determined to prevent violence against women and protect their rights. The walk started from Liberty Roundabout, and IGP Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar and ASP Gulberg Syeda Shehbanu led the

walk. Senior officers including DIG Operations Lahore Ali Nasir Rizvi, COO Safe Cities Authority Mustansar Feroze, CTO Lahore Amara Athar, SSP Operations, SPS, Supervisory officers of different divisions of Lahore, hundreds of male and female officials of all police units, a large number of students, famous personalities from various walks of life, civil society and citizens participated in the awareness walk.

## Boy electrocuted while catching stray kite

FAISALABAD (APP): A teenager boy was electrocuted while catching a stray kite in the area of Sadar police station. Rescue 1122 spokesman said here on Sunday that 19-year-old Shehzad Iqbal of Syedwala was working in a factory situated at Kararwala Road where he went on rooftop of the factory to catch a stray kite, but he accidentally touched a live electricity wire passing near the roof.

## International News

### Many aid distribution victims were shot in Gaza: UN

Monitoring Desk GAZA CITY: A UN team has reported seeing "a large number" of gunshot wounds among Gazans after Israeli troops opened fire on Palestinian civilians scrambling for food supplies near an aid convoy, killing 115 people and wounded more than 750.

The aid convoy deaths pushed the number of Palestinian dead in Gaza since Oct 7 to 30,320, mostly women and children. Hossam Abu Safiya, director of Gaza City's Kamal Adwan Hospital, said all the casualties it admitted were hit by "bullets and shrapnel from (Israeli) occupation forces".

There are contradictions within the Israeli claims; BBC News reported that officials first

claimed that "dozens of Gazans were injured as a result of pushing and trampling" during looting, then saying that tanks in the area "tried to disperse the mob with a few warning shots".

In a video statement posted on X, the Israeli armed forces spokesman, Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari claimed: "Hundreds became thousands and things got out of hand."

A UN team visited some of the wounded from the aid incident, in Gaza City's Al Shifa Hospital, on Friday and saw a "large number of gunshot wounds", a spokesperson for UN chief Antonio Guterres said.

The hospital received 70 of the dead, and around 200 wounded were still there during the team's

visit. 11 Palestinians killed separately, at least 11 Palestinians were killed on Saturday when an Israeli air strike hit a tent in Rafah, in Gaza's south where people have been seeking refuge from Israel's devastating bombardment.

Another 50 people were wounded in the strike next to a hospital in the Tel Al Sultan area of Rafah. One of the dead was a medic at the hospital. "The strike hit one tent, where people took shelter, directly, shrapnel came inside the hospital where I and friends were sitting, we survived by a miracle," a witness said by phone from the area.

And in the territory's north, three people searching for food in farmland in Beit Hanoun were killed by Israeli strikes.



Children stand amid the rubble of a mosque and makeshift shelters that were destroyed in Israeli strikes in Deir El-Balah in central Gaza.

### Malaysia says MH370 search must go on, 10 years after plane vanished

Monitoring Desk SUBANG JAYA: Malaysia is pushing for a renewed search for Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370, the transport minister said on Sunday, as the 10th anniversary of its disappearance in one of the world's greatest aviation mysteries approaches.

Flight MH370, a Boeing 777 carrying 227 passengers and 12 crew, vanished en route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing on March 8, 2014.

Malaysian investigators initially did not rule out the possibility that the aircraft had been deliberately taken off course, and debris, some confirmed and some believed to be from

the aircraft, has washed up along the coast of Africa and on islands in the Indian Ocean.

Malaysian Transport Minister Anthony Loke said US seabed exploration firm Ocean Infinity had been invited to discuss its latest search proposal after two previous failed attempts.

"The Malaysian government is committed to the search (for MH370) and the search must go on," Loke said at a remembrance event on Sunday.

Malaysia engaged Ocean Infinity in 2018 to search the southern Indian Ocean, offering to pay up to \$70 million if it found the plane.

### Around 9000 women killed by Israeli forces in Gaza since October last year

GAZA (Online): Around 9000 women were killed by Israeli forces in Gaza since October last year. This was reported by UN Women, a United Nations agency dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women.

It called the war in besieged Gaza as a war on women. The agency said that roughly thirty seven mothers are killed every day, leaving their families devastated and their children with diminished protection. According to Gaza's Ministry of Health, at least 50 people were injured in drone attack.

### Zelensky seeks Western air defence systems as Russian attacks kill 10

Monitoring Desk KYIV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Saturday urged the West to deliver more air defence systems as a wave of Russian missile, drone and artillery strikes killed at least ten people.

Seven were confirmed dead, including a three-month-old baby and an over-night drone strike on the southern port city of Odesa. Separate shelling attacks on the frontline Kharkiv, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions killed another three, Ukrainian officials said.

"Russia continues to hit civilians," Zelensky said in a post on social media.

"We need more air defences from our partners. We need to strengthen the Ukrainian air shield to add

more protection for our people from Russian terror. More air defence systems and more missiles for air defence systems save lives," he said.

Ukraine is currently on the back foot in the two-year war as a crucial \$60-billion aid package is held up in the United States congress.

In Odesa, "a nine-storey building was destroyed as a result of an attack by Russian terrorists," Interior Minister Igor Klymenko said on Saturday in a post on Telegram.

The attack killed at least seven people, including a three-month-old baby, Klymenko said. Another child, aged two, was also among the dead, Odesa region Governor Oleg Kiper said on state TV.

### UK PM Sunak rails against 'extremism' after Galloway's win

Monitoring Desk LONDON: For the first time since he became prime minister 16 months earlier, Rishi Sunak made an impromptu speech from outside his office, not to call a general election but to rail against extremist groups, which, according to him, are trying to tear the nation apart.

Standing in the rain, his back to 10 Downing Street, PM Sunak in speech to the nation on Friday night said: "There is no 'context' in which it can be acceptable to beam antisemitic tropes onto Big Ben in the middle of a vote on Israel/Gaza. And there can be no cause you can use to justify the support of a proscribed terrorist group, like Hamas. Yes, you can freely criticise the actions of this government, or indeed any government: that is a fundamental democratic right. But no, you cannot

use that as an excuse to call for the eradication of a state — or any kind of hatred or antisemitism."

After months of pro-Gaza public demonstrations and growing pressure on both the government and Labour party to take a tougher stance on Israel, it appears that the victory of George Galloway in a by-election in the erstwhile Labour stronghold of Rochdale is the straw that broke the camel's back.

He won with overwhelming numbers that night, beating both the Labour and Tory candidate by wide margins.

A much-loathed figure in British politics for his populist rhetoric, pro-Gaza Galloway lured Rochdale's Muslim voters through a targeted campaign centering on Gaza and the British government's silence on Israel's continued bombardment.



Rescuers work at the site of a heavily damaged apartment building in Odesa, following a Russian drone attack.

### Europe battles powder shortage to supply shells for Ukraine

Monitoring Desk PARIS: Hard-to-find gunpowder is hindering Europe's scramble to provide hundreds of thousands of shells for Ukraine's defensive effort against Russian invaders, with solutions only starting to emerge.

"We have all become aware of the need to face up to the scarcity of some components, especially gunpowders," French President Emmanuel Macron said Monday after a gathering of Kyiv's allies in Paris. "Powder is really what's lacking today," he

added.

Gunpowder goes into propellant charges that hurl artillery shells—such as the NATO-standard 155-millimetre projectiles used in many guns sent to Ukraine—over distances of tens of kilometres.

"A simple explosive artillery shell has three parts. It has a steel casing, a high-explosive main charge and a detonator usually set to trigger the blast on impact, said Johann Hoecherl, a munitions expert at the German armed forces university in Munich.

### Spanish tourist gang-raped in India

Monitoring Desk MUMBAI: Three men were arrested on Saturday after the gang rape of a Spanish tourist on a motorbike trip through India's remote east with her husband, local media reports said. The attack took place on Friday night in the Dumka district of Jharkhand, where the couple had stopped to camp the night in a tent. The woman was able to reach a police patrol van at around 11pm and was taken to hospital for treatment, police officer Pitamber Singh Kherwar told The Times of India newspaper. Kherwar said police had detained three people in connection with the attack and were on the hunt for more suspects.

The Spanish woman is being treated at a local hospital in Dumka and an investigation is underway, reports said. An average of nearly 90 rapes were reported in India every day in 2022, according to data by the National Crime Records Bureau.

### Australia PM defends action on cost of living amid by-election

Monitoring Desk SYDNEY: Voters went to the polls on Saturday in a by-election in Australia's Victoria state seen as a referendum on Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's handling of cost of living pressures across the country.

Australian households have been under broad financial pressure from high

inflation, which although recently easing has prompted the nation's central bank to hike interest rates by 425 basis points since May 2022 to a 12-year top of 4.35%.

"We know people have done it tough through cost of living pressures, but we've been prepared to take action, decisive action."

### India navy to open strategic base near Maldives

Monitoring Desk NEW DELHI: India's navy has said it is bolstering forces on "strategically important" islands close to the Maldives, with a new base set to open just days before Male starts sending home Indian forces. Relations between India and the Maldives have soured since pro-China President Mohamed Muizzu won elections last year after promising to expel Indian forces.



## Gohar says assembly isn't bogus, Qaiser and others still claim it

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) is seemingly divided over the stated position on the nature of newly-elected National Assembly, as Barister Gohar said they were not labelling the House as "bogus" while Asad Qaiser insisted that the rival parties had a fake mandate.

Talking to reporters outside the Parliament House on Sunday, Gohar said he was not using the word bogus for the assembly and would not escape the democratic process to leave the field open for the other parties. Amid the reports that the PTI members — who have joined the assemblies under the banner of SIC (Sunni Ittehad Council) after winning the recently-held polls as independents — are mulling over boycotting the session convened to elect the new prime minister, Gohar said they would have their opposition and parliamentary leader. "We won't boycott, we will compete against them."

But in complete contrast, Asad Qaiser, separately, said they were of the view that the rival parties had fake mandate and the person elected as prime minister would not have any legal standing.

"He would be fake prime minister elected on the basis of fake votes," he claimed and added that they would ponder upon all the available options.

Qaiser said they enjoyed the right to protest and would exercise the same, as he, like other party leaders, questioned the mandate of other.

Similar views were repeated by Ali Muhammad Khan who told reporters inside the Parliament House that the competition was between the "original" [Omar Ayub] and "bogus" [Shehbaz Sharif] mandate for the prime minister's office.

It is interesting to note that the three SIC leaders — Gohar, Qaiser and Ali — are from the same province — Khyber Pakhtunkhwa — and have been elected to the House from Buner, Swabi and Mardan respectively.

Amid the reports that the PTI members — who have joined the assemblies under the banner of SIC (Sunni Ittehad Council) after winning the recently-held polls as independents — are mulling over boycotting the session convened to elect the new prime minister



KARACHI: Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfaraz Ahmed Bugti meeting Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah

## Sindh & Balochistan CMs vow to strengthen mutual relations between two provinces further

**Independent Report**  
QUETTA: The Chief Ministers of Sindh and Balochistan have vowed to strengthen mutual relations between the two provinces further.

The Chief Minister Sindh, Syed Murad Ali Shah and Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfaraz Ahmed Bugti were confident that Asif Ali Zardari would be elected once again with thumping majority.

The Chief Minister of Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah

was in meeting with the Chief Minister Balochistan, Sarfaraz Ahmed Bugti, who called on him in Karachi on Sunday evening.

During the course of meeting, Chief Minister was accompanied by members of assembly Ali Madad Jatak, Mir Zahoor Buledi and Ubaid Gorgej.

While on the other hand, Syed Nasir Hussain Shah, Sharjeel Memon, Mukesh Chawla and Ziaul Hasan Lanjar were accompanied with the Chief Minister Sindh.

Speaking on the occasion,

Chief Minister Balochistan said that there are long-standing relations between Sindh and Balochistan.

Syed Murad Ali Shah congratulated Mir Sarfaraz Bugti on taking over as Chief Minister Balochistan.

During the meeting, both the Chief Ministers discussed the situation of Gwadar and the steps taken for wellbeing of the people.

Syed Murad Ali Shah said that PDMA Sindh is in contact with PDMA Balochistan, and if there was need of other machinery, then would be sent to Gwadar.

The Chief Minister Balochistan mentioned that measures are being taken for draining out the rain water and rehabilitation in Gwadar.

Moreover, they also discussed the upcoming Presidential elections to be held on March 9.

In addition to this, the law and order situation was also discussed by them.

The Chief Ministers were agreed upon taking action against the law breakers at borders.

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## CM directs to hand over GoB helicopter to Gwadar district administration

**Independent Report**  
QUETTA: The Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfaraz Bugti had directed to the concerned provincial authorities to hand over the government helicopter to the district administration of Gwadar to carry out relief activities in the port city.

He has also directed the Chief Secretary and Director General Provincial Disaster Management Authority to personally monitor the relief and rehabilitation activities while remaining in Gwadar.

These directives were issued by the Chief Minister during his maiden visit to the Gwadar city on Sunday.

Mir Sarfaraz Bugti visited the Gwadar city without protocol and inspected the situation following rains there.

He also met the people affected from the devastating rains in Gwadar.

## Aneeq says: First ever selection of Moavineen-e-Hujjaj via NTS ensures transparency

ISLAMABAD (APP): Emphasizing the significance of this development, he highlighted that every year, Pakistani assistants and doctors are deployed for Hajj duties. Last year, he said there were 794 assistants, while this year, the number stands at 625. Similarly, the number of doctors remains consistent at 540, as it was in the previous year, he added.

Aneeq further stated that this year, they pledged to serve the pilgrims diligently, and those selected through the written exam would demonstrate enhanced performance during the Hajj 2024.

He announced this milestone during his visit to the NTS center in the federal capital. During the visit, he oversaw the administration of written exams for the selection of Moavineen-e-Hujjaj and Hajj Medical Mission personnel for Hajj 2024.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shabbaz Sharif hand shakes with Leader of Pakistan Muslim League N Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif after electing prime minister.

## PN deploys helicopters in flood hit Gwadar to expedite rescue & relief operations

KARACHI (INP): Pakistan Navy continues to extend relief and rescue operations to various small coastal villages of Balochistan affected by recent flash flooding.

To expedite rescue and relief operations in flood affected areas of district Gwadar, Pakistan Navy has stationed helicopters there. Pakistan Navy helicopters undertook multiple hops from Gwadar to the flood affected villages of Pishukan and Kappar. Relief teams delivered ration bags, clean drinking water and food items near people stranded in their villages.

Moreover, ration and relief goods distribution conducted by Pakistan Navy personnel amongst flood affectees of Gwadar city. In addition, large numbers of medical supplies and ration bags have also been dispatched to different other flood-affected villages through road where land connectivity was restored.

Further, in assistance to civil administration, Pakistan Navy troops were wholeheartedly undertaking rescue and relief operations utilizing all available equipment and resources. In this regard, de-flooding operations were being conducted on various localities of Gwadar city to clear flood water.

Pakistan Navy was resolutely committed to supporting our flood-affected brethren during this difficult time.



QUETTA: Beautiful eye catching view of snow covered area during the snowfall of winter season, which more decreases the temperature below in minus degree Celsius, at mountainous areas of Balochistan.

## 503,261 illegal Afghans returned to their homeland

ISLAMABAD (INP): Repatriation of illegal foreign immigrants including Afghans to their homeland Afghanistan is continuing in a dignified and safe manner, reported on Sunday.

As per details, 503,261 illegal Afghan nationals returned to their country from February 25 till March 2, taking the total number of returned immigrants to 503,261.

Over 217 families including 1573 men, 1048 women and 2412 children returned to Afghanistan in 204 vehicles. Earlier, 233 Afghan nationals were sent to Afghanistan via the Torkham border.

According to details, a total of 6623 migrants were sent to Afghanistan, and another 5299 immigrants from Pakhtunkhwa, 138 from Islamabad, 1152 from Punjab, and 34 from Azad Kashmir were sent to Afghanistan. Efforts were made to send migrants to Afghanistan from Peshawar, other borders, and Angoor Adda in Kharachi. A total of 3956 people were sent to Afghanistan via the Angoor Adda border, while 698 people were sent to Afghanistan from the Kharachi border. It is pertinent to mention here that Pakistan reaffirmed its commitment to peace and prosperity in Afghanistan at a conference titled 'Afghanistan's Regional Cooperation Initiative' held at capital of the war-torn country. Ambassador of Pakistan in Kabul Ubaid Nizamani emphasized that the region must work together to harness mutually beneficial connectivity potential and address shared concerns.



Pakistan Navy Rescue working during rescue efforts at flood affected areas of Gwadar

## PTI mandate stolen on February 8, says Aamir Dogar

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) member Malik Aamir Dogar said on Sunday that the country had a quiet revolution on February 8.

Speaking to media at the Parliament House before the assembly session to elect prime minister, he said the PTI mandate was stolen on February 8. The party had won 180 seats as the nation voted for the ideology of the PTI founder, he added.

The PTI nominee for the office of speaker said the ECP has not yet decided on the reserved seats of the PTI. If those seats are counted, the total seats of the PTI becomes 235, Dogar continued.

JAMSHED DASTI  
Meanwhile, Jamsheed Dasti said they have been defeated squarely on February 8. The [new] government would prove to be a disaster for the country, he added.

An anti-people government would not last long, he said and added that

## PML-N stole public mandate to come into power: Zartaj

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader, Zartaj Gul said that Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has stolen public mandate to come into power.

Talking to a private TV channel in Parliament House on Sunday, face expressions of the mandate stealers reveal their theft.

Zartaj Gul said that PTI founder and Form 45 has won the election but those having Form 47 and 49, were celebrating the victory.

## Four killed, 12 injured as passenger coaster overturns

CHINIOT (INP): At least four people were killed and 12 others injured when an over speeding passenger coaster turned turtle here on Sunday, rescue sources said.

According to details, the accident took place at Chiniot-Sargodha road near Ahmad Nagar where a passenger coaster.

## Ahsan advises PTI to stop mudslinging, serve Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Ahsan Iqbal Sunday advised the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders to stop its mudslinging campaign and focus its attention and energies on serving people as the country needed national unity at this time.

"PTI has a track record of instigating chaos and blaming others for involvement in electoral rigging", he said while talking to a Private news channel outside the National Assembly.

He said that the PTI founder will not receive the National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO), adding, "he must demonstrate his innocence in court."

He also emphasized political stability, which, he states, is vital for achieving economic stability in the country.

To strive for economic stability, all differences must be set aside, he said adding that there is a need for mutual unity for political and economic stability in the country.

Replying to a question, he said that in the past, the PML-N had set a shining example of economic progress and stability and that it would take concrete and practical steps to further improve the economy.

"The era of Mian Nawaz Sharif was a golden era of progress and prosperity.

## SJC likely to send opinion on Justice Naqvi case to authorities

ISLAMABAD (Online): After the completion of the proceedings against Justice (ret'd) Mazahar Ali Akbar Naqvi in the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC), the opinion of the Council is likely to be sent to the relevant authorities this week.

The proceedings were completed under the chairmanship of Chief Justice Qazi Faiz Esa. The statements of different witnesses were completed, while the retired judge refused to cross-examine the witnesses, the letter sent to the council on behalf of retired judges was made part of the record. Council Chairman Chief Justice Qazi Faiz Esa said that the Council will give its opinion.



QUETTA: A view of counting of votes at the end of PTI inter-party election.

## Siraj-ul-Haq demands election audit, labels government 'fake'

LAHORE (INP): Siraj-ul-Haq, the leader of Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan, has openly criticized the legitimacy of the current government, calling it a product of a "fake election and results."

Addressing the media, he emphasized the need for constitutional adherence by institutions for national stability. He highlighted the disarray with electoral forms, indicating discrepancies in the election process.

He pointed out the lack of genuine victory among the declared winners, pressing for an independent judicial commission to audit the elections. He accused the election machinery of not only stealing votes but also manipulating results, and called for the resignation of the Chief Election Commissioner, citing the theft of Jamaat-e-Islami's mandate as a violation of electoral sanctity. His call for recognizing the people's decision underscores a deep rift in the political landscape, seeking a reevaluation of the electoral process.

## Gilani to contest Senate election

ISLAMABAD (INP): On the instructions of the party's high command, former prime minister and PPP stalwart Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani has said on Sunday he will contest the election for a Senate seat scheduled to be held on March 14. In this regard, Gilani has submitted his nomination papers to the Election Commission of Pakistan through his lawyers. The PPP leadership will decide who will be the party's candidate in the election for the National Assembly seat vacated by Gilani before contesting the Senate election.

## PML-N issues show cause notice to MNA for skipping Speaker, Dy Speaker polls

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has taken disciplinary action against newly elected National Assembly member Nelson Azim, issuing a show cause notice for failing to participate in the Speaker and Deputy Speaker elections.

Azim, elected on a large minority seat, has been given seven days to justify his absence from the crucial voting process. The notice highlights concerns over his non-participation in the democratic proceedings. In the recent Speaker election, PML-N's Sardar Ayaz Sadiq reclaimed the position with a resounding 199 votes, defeating his rival Malik Muhammad Amir Dogar. Meanwhile, Ghulam Mustafa Shah of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) secured victory.

## Death toll from pneumonia rises to 456 in Punjab

LAHORE (INP): Five more children died of pneumonia across Punjab on Sunday taking the death toll in about three months to 456, reported. However, no death was reported in Lahore during the last 24 hours. As many as 464 new cases of pneumonia have been reported in Punjab during the last 24 hours while 98 new cases were reported in Lahore during one day.

## Closer scrutiny of seized Karachi-bound ship deflates Indian propaganda

ISLAMABAD (INP): India's propaganda concerning the seizure of a Karachi-bound ship at Mumbai's Nhava Sheva Port has been discredited upon closer examination.

According to Kashmir Media Service, allegations suggesting links to Pakistan's nuclear program have been found to be entirely unfounded and concocted, representing nothing more than an attempt to undermine specific businesses through misrepresentation.

The CMA CGM Attila-a Malta-flagged commercial vessel was seized on the baseless charge of transporting a dual-use consignment with probable links to Pakistan's nuclear programme. Among the products withheld, is a Computer Numerical Control (CNC) machine, a standard piece of equipment used for precise manufacturing in a variety of industries, including the automobile sector.

While there have been claims about the potential use of CNC machines in military applications, it is important to remember that such machines are routinely used for legitimate fabrication purposes and are not restricted objects. A thorough review of the equipment's specifications reveals that it is widely used for commercial purposes.

As regards needful documentation, all shipment-related transactions were undertaken through transparent banking channels and fully documented. The shipment was intended for import by a Karachi-based commercial company that specializes in selling parts to Pakistan's automobile industry. There is no convincing evidence to substantiate any suspicion of illegal intent behind the transaction.

The claims made by Indian security forces and repeated by chosen media sources appear to be part of a larger effort to undermine specific groups. Such unfounded accusations not only degrade the reputations of individuals involved, but also demonstrate the dangers of misinformation and arbitrary disruptions in global trade.

The seizure of the shipment by Indian officials highlights the dangers of assuming policing responsibilities without specific evidence or reasonable reasons.



KHARAN: MPA Mir Shoab Nausherwani visiting rain affected areas of Kharan