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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 widow, 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 tar-

getted 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-



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif address in the National Assembly after electing Prime Minister.



GWADAR: Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfaraz Ahmed Bugti talking with mediamen

13 nomination papers submitted for 3 seats of Senate from Balochistan

Abdul Qudus 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 Qudus 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,

Abdul Shakoor Ghaibzai and Agha Mehmood of Jamiat Ulema-E-Islam.

Besides them, the independent candidates Kashif Aziz and Mir Danish Langavo also submitted their nomination papers.

The nomination papers were submitted to the Provincial Election Commissioner, Muhammad Farid Afridi.

According to the Provincial Election Commissioner, scrutiny of papers would be done on March 4

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.



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

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."

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.

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz President Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif was elected as the prime minister for the second time after bagging 201 votes in the National Assembly.

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

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.

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.

People of Balochistan must not feel alone in difficult time: Chief Minister Bugti assures financial compensation for losses caused to rain affected people in Gwadar

Mir Sarfaraz Bugti forms committee to make assessment of damages in Gwadar; report to be submitted in 20 days

Independent Report
QUETTA: The Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfaraz 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 his official visit to Gwadar on Sunday afternoon.

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

Mir Sarfaraz Bugti said that he wants to assure the people of Balochistan that must 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

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

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



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

Iranian President greets Shehbaz on becoming PM

ISLAMABAD (PR): Seyed Ebrahim Raisi, the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, congratulated Mohammad Shehbaz Sharif on his election as the new Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. In this message, the president of the Islamic Republic of



Iran expressed his confidence that the two countries, in the light of the deep historical and cultural links, will work harder to strengthen and expand cooperation in order to achieve the desired and befitting level of the relations between the two great nations of Iran and Pakistan.

In this message, the President stressed that the Islamic Republic of Iran is fully prepared to strengthen and deepen all aspects of bilateral relations with the brotherly and neighboring country of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan within the framework of its constant policy.

He expressed hope that the new government of Pakistan will take steps towards the growth and prosperity of Pakistan and prayed to Almighty Allah for the success of the new government and the happiness and well-being of the honorable nation of Pakistan.

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

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 slammed 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.



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

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 Mehmood, and Taimoor Khalid have been elected as joint secretaries.

Know about Shehbaz Sharif – the twice-elected Prime Minister of Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif was elected on Sunday as the Prime Minister of Pakistan by securing 201 votes in the National As-



sembly defeating Omar Ayub Khan of Sunni Ittehad Council who received 92 votes. Born on September 23, 1951, he is now the twice-elected Prime Minister of Pakistan and thrice-elected Chief Minister of Punjab. He is the younger brother of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz Quaid Nawaz Sharif, the thrice-elected premier of the country. Shehbaz Sharif's first stint of the premiership spanned from April 11, 2022 to August 14, 2023. He was elected by the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) by ousting Imran Khan through a vote of no confidence in the National Assembly.

Coming from a re-

spected business family, Shehbaz Sharif graduated from Government College, Lahore and served as President of the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry in 1985 before entering the politics. He held positions as a Member of the Punjab Assembly from 1988 to 1990 and a Member of the National Assembly from 1990 to 1993. He later served as Leader of the Opposition in the Punjab Assembly from 1993 to 1996. In 1997, he was elected Chief Minister of Punjab and served till 1999 when as a result of coup, his government, along with the federal government, was toppled.

Shehbaz Sharif played a leading role in the restoration of democracy in the country and was elected unopposed as Member of Punjab Assembly for the fourth time in 2008, and served as Punjab chief

industry in 1985 before entering the politics. He held positions as a Member of the Punjab Assembly from 1988 to 1990 and a Member of the National Assembly from 1990 to 1993. He later served as Leader of the Opposition in the Punjab Assembly from 1993 to 1996. In 1997, he was elected Chief Minister of Punjab and served till 1999 when as a result of coup, his government, along with the federal government, was toppled.

minister for the second time from June 2008 to March 2013. After getting elected on three provincial assembly seats and on one National

Lahore Orange Line Metro Train was also among his government's famed initiatives that revolutionized transportation. His administration focused on upgrading schools, merit-based hiring of educators, and establishing the Punjab Educational Endowment Fund, supporting over 350,000 deserving students. To his credit, the innovative programs like the Daanish Schools in South Punjab and the laptop scheme are also included. Besides launching Zeevar-e-Taleem program featuring the provision of stipend to over half a million girls of South Punjab, Shehbaz Sharif also led an education program for the children of brick kiln workers that resulted in the enrollment of about 100,000 out-of-school children back to schools.

Shehbaz Sharif's government made significant reforms in the health sector, including the division of health departments into specialized healthcare and primary/secondary healthcare, and establishment of new hospitals, medical universities, and innovative institutions like the Pakistan Kidney and Liver Institute and Research Center, as well as the country's first forensic laboratory.

Under his leadership, Pakistan swiftly tackled its energy crisis, completing the Sahiwal Coal Power Plant in a record 22 months and implementing three RLNG-power projects in Punjab. He spearheaded the establishment of the Metro Bus System, providing state-of-the-art traveling facilities in Lahore, Multan, and Rawalpindi/Islamabad. The transformative projects like the

LAHORE (INP): Cricket legend Wasim Akram recently commended Peshawar Zalmi captain Babar Azam, hailing him as one of the world's premier batsmen. Speaking in a recent interview on a local sports channel, Akram fondly referred to as the "Sultan of Swing," shared insights into his bowling strategy when facing Azam on the field.

Responding to a fan's inquiry, Akram lauded Azam's exceptional talent and placed him among the top three batsmen globally. He specifically noted Azam's proficiency in playing "good shorts," drawing comparisons to cricketing icons Brian Lara and Sachin Tendulkar. "He's not a hitter who throws his wicket away on a bad ball," Akram explained. "Like Lara and Tendulkar, he can play good shorts even on good deliveries." Akram acknowledged the challenge such batsmen pose to bowlers, offering limited opportunities for dismissals. However, Akram stressed the importance of seizing the initiative early on.

Umrani and Deputy Commissioner Aurangzeb Badini briefed him about the situation and relief activities. It was informed that 187 millimeter rain was recorded in recent spell. The affected people were shifted to the safer places immediately. The Chief Minister appreciated the relief activities in Gwadar and directed to continue work till complete relief and rehabilitation on emergent basis. The Chief Minister also met the affected people along with members of the assembly and distributed relief items among them.



Pakistan Navy helicopter landing ration for distribution amongst flood affected of Gwadar district.

PCB announces ticket refund policy for rain-interrupted PSL matches

LAHORE (INP): The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has announced a crucial update regarding ticket refunds for the washed-out matches in the Pakistan Super League (PSL). According to the statement issued by PCB, cricket enthusiasts who purchased tickets for the rain-affected matches in Rawalpindi can apply for refunds at various branch centers until March 12. To avail the refund, fans must present their original ID cards used for purchasing the tickets. Online ticket buyers will have their refunds credited directly to their booking bank accounts. However, tickets bought through corporate channels will

only be refunded to the respective organizations, with individual refund requests not being entertained. The ticket refund policy, outlined in Clause 2.1, ensures full reimbursement if a match is canceled before the toss due to any reason, including inclement weather. Refunds, as per Clause 3.3, will be processed within 10 business days upon receipt of a valid request. Notably, the recent cancellation of the matches between Lahore Qalandars and Peshawar Zalmi, as well as Quetta Gladiators and Islamabad United, due to rain resulted in each team being awarded one point each.

Six family members die in incident of roof collapse in Khyber

KHYBER (INP): Six members of the same family, four kids and two women, were killed after roof of their house caved-in in Zakhakhel area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) early Sunday morning. Sources in the police informed that three days of rain had left the house in a dilapidated condition. Locals retrieved the bodies from underneath the rubble on their own, the sources added. On Saturday, the rains had not only disrupted routine life in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) but also resulted in the loss of human life and property.

Babar Azam excellent in batting like Lara & Tendulkar: Wasim Akram

LAHORE (INP): Cricket legend Wasim Akram recently commended Peshawar Zalmi captain Babar Azam, hailing him as one of the world's premier batsmen. Speaking in a recent interview on a local sports channel, Akram fondly referred to as the "Sultan of Swing," shared insights into his bowling strategy when facing Azam on the field.

Chief Minister Bugti assures...

Continued from page 1
Management Authority, and other institutions for rescuing the affected people and providing them the relief. He said that Pak army and other institutions took commendable measures for provision of relief to the people of Gwadar. He also praised the co-operation extended by people of Gwadar to the relief agencies and Pak army. Earlier, the Chief Minister presided over a meeting to review the situation emerged due to rains in Gwadar. The Commissioner Makran Saeed Ahmed



QUETTA: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) candidate for the Senate Agha Shakeel Durrani is submitting his nomination paper to Provincial Election Commissioner Mohammad Farid Afridi.

CM initiates polio eradication campaign in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur on Sunday launched polio eradication campaign in the province. In a brief ceremony at the Chief Minister's House, he administered polio drops to children, marking the commencement of the second phase of the initiative. During this phase, the polio eradication campaign will continue from March 3 to March 7 in the province. The goal is to administer polio drops to 740,000 children, emphasizing preventive measures against the disease. For the successful execution of the polio vac-

ination plan, 35,000 teams have been formed. 55,000 security personnel have been appointed to ensure the safety of the polio eradication teams. Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur expressed gratitude to the security personnel and polio workers who have sacrificed their lives during previous campaigns. Gandapur affirmed the commitment to make Khyber Pakhtunkhwa polio-free, stating, "Clearing Khyber Pakhtunkhwa of polio is our determination and priority." He appealed to the parents to ensure their children receive the polio drops and urged against boycotting the

campaign due to lack of facilities. Highlighting the importance of the initiative for the safe future of children, the Chief Minister emphasized that compromises should not be made on this critical issue. He held the government responsible for providing facilities. The newly elected provincial government is determined to continue the fight against this infectious disease, he said. The Chief Minister appealed to parents, teachers, religious scholars, elected representatives and the media to collaborate with government efforts in this crucial endeavor.

People of Swat desire Sheharyar Ameerzeb as KP Governor

By Haroon Siraj
SWAT - Residents of Swat are advocating for the appointment of Sheharyar Ameerzeb as the Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. They assert that Ameerzeb, a prominent member of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and former NA-3 candidate, is well-equipped to address the region's challenges. With widespread support across various sectors of society, they highlight his extensive background and qualifications as a fit for the governorship. Ameerzeb's familial ties to key positions in the past, including his uncle's governorship of KP and Balochistan, as well as his lineage tracing back to



former President Ayub Khan and Swat's ruler Miangul Abdul Haq Jahanzeb, further bolster their endorsement. Engineer Haider Ali Khan underscores Ameerzeb's suitability for the role, emphasizing his capacity to serve KP's populace and address pressing issues such as education and tribal affairs.

Social activist Daud Khan expresses confidence in Ameerzeb's leadership to navigate political and economic uncertainties, particularly regarding impending tax legislation in tribal regions. He urges PPP leadership to heed the public's call for Ameerzeb's nomination, emphasizing his potential to drive reforms and improve governmental performance at the grassroots level. Overall, there is a resounding demand from residents of Swat and the wider Malakand division for Ameerzeb's immediate nomination as KP's Governor by both provincial and central PPP leadership.



QUETTA: Beautiful eye catching view of dark clouds during cloudy weather of winter season, captured over the horizon of Quetta.

Mounds of socio-economic challenges exist...

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.

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. The newly elected prime minister further said that the country had sought about Rs 80,000 billion external, internal and private debts in the past. The issues at hand required a deep surgery and

introduction of reforms in the system and various sectors, he said, expressing the confidence that his senior party leadership along with allied parties would get rid of the crippling loans trap. Shehbaz Sharif said other issues included in energy sector, which itself was burdened with Rs 2,300 billion circular debt while recovery stood at around Rs 2,800 billion with Rs 1,000 billion gap. About Rs 500 to Rs 600 billion accounted for power theft, whereas the circular debt in the gas sector reached Rs 2,900 billion, he added. Shehbaz Sharif further said that it was an irony of the fate that the state-owned enterprises (SOEs) were incurring Rs 600 billion deficit annually and cited the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) which had been suffering from losses to the tune of Rs 800 billion. He maintained that tax evasion and theft in power and gas were matters of gravity for the country, equating them to "a bottomless pit." "These challenges are difficult though but not impossible to resolve. It is a thorny journey, full of obstacles but the developed nations had overcome all these obstacles," he observed, expressing the resolve to lead the country on path of progress and prosperity.

The newly-elected prime minister said that they would strive for a network of health and educational facilities, green revolution, and construction of infrastructure and factories. To resolve these issues, they would utilize the latest technology and innovations, empowerment of women and loan facilities to the youth bulge, he said, adding that he was hopeful to ensure positive effects of the steps trickling down within one year. Shehbaz further said that about 500,000 students would be imparted the latest training, besides boosting the artificial intelligence and IT exports. Farmers' prosperity was linked with the country's progress, he said, and announced that fertilizers' subsidy would be directly provided to the farmers. A solar tube-wells programme would be launched for the smaller farmers, he said, adding the seeds mafia would be effaced as the upcoming government would import quality seeds, which would also work on an initiative to provide the same to the farmers for one time free of cost. He also emphasized to work collectively with the support of all provinces to bring revolution in the agricultural sector under the guidelines of Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC).

The upcoming prime minister also announced laying of an efficient public transport network through the length and breadth of Pakistan, which he viewed as a key of progress achieved by the developed countries. He said that high achievers and performing children would be provided with the scholarships and their expenditures would be borne by the Federal Government for their education in the world's renowned educational institutions. He also underlined the need for quick and speedy justice system with required reforms in consultations with all the stakeholders. Shehbaz Sharif announced that those jailed women and children who were not involved in heinous cases and completing their prison terms of less than two years, would be released and trained with skills to become useful citizens of the society. He lamented that on May 9, unthinkable incidents happened in the country's history and said that the law would take its course and the responsible involved in those incidents who had hatched the conspiracy against the country and its security institutions would have to face it, however, he hastened to add that innocents would be spared. The upcoming prime

minister also announced to completely implement the National Action Plan to end the scourge of terrorism forever. In a veiled reference to the previous PTI's government, he regretted that for the personal interests, hardened terrorists were brought back and released from jails; which was the reason for a surge in recent terrorist incidents. To ensure minorities' rights, it was their joint responsibility under the principles as laid down by the Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) and guaranteed by the Constitution of Pakistan, he added. He also reiterated ensuring equal rights to the women who comprised about 50 percent of the country's population, adding the nation stood indebted to the contributions and sacrifices of Mohtarma Fatima Jinnah and Benazir Bhatto, as well as other prominent female figures in different sectors as the national progress would not be possible without their involvement. The newly-elected prime minister said that his government would ensure a business friendly environment, and address issues impacting direct foreign investment and tax collection. He said that mafias indulged in tax evasion should be made to pay taxes, adding that export zones facilities would also be intro-

duced. Shehbaz observed that tax refund delay was a hurdle for the exporters and he would direct the FBR (Federal Board of Revenue) to expedite the process, ensuring its payment in ten days. He opined that promotion of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) was critical for providing jobs opportunities to the rural population and controlling a wave of urbanization. All the banks would be made to provide loans to the youth to run their small businesses under a similar parameter, he added. The upcoming prime minister said that investors from the brotherly countries might be provided with visa free entry to encourage investment opportunities, besides work on the CPEC projects would be accelerated. About Pakistan's foreign policy, he said that they would not become a part of any 'grey game', adding that the country's foreign policy would be focused on increasing the number of friendly nations and exploring the prospects for exports. He said nothing was impossible and with strenuous efforts, Pakistan could become a member of G20 by 2030. Alluding to the bilateral ties with the United States, he said both countries enjoyed historic relations and

they would further strengthen them, similarly, efforts would be made to cement ties with the European Union, Gulf and neighbouring countries. He particularly mentioned the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the deep affection and fraternal ties the both countries enjoyed and said that they were indebted to their generous assistance. Shehbaz also appreciated the leadership of Unite Arab Emirates, Turkiye and Qatar who always supported Pakistan. Bilateral relations with Kuwait, Bahrain and Iran would also be further cemented, he added. About Gaza, he said that gruesome, cruel and gory incidents were never witnessed by the world. The worst Israeli aerial attacks led to unprecedented deaths and carnage, and no global institution was able to stop it as the international community was viewing the grave situation as mere spectators, he regretted. In the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJK), Kashmiris' blood was spilled and the international community was silent, and everyone knew the reasons, he said and cited precedents of East Timor and Sudan where the world intervened due to obvious reasons.

OIC-CERT hosts Cybersecurity Roundtable at MWC 2024

ISLAMABAD (APP): Organization of The Islamic Cooperation-Computer Emergency Response Teams (OIC-CERT) organized a high-level industry roundtable to jointly discuss the evolving global cybersecurity landscape and challenges at the Mobile World Congress (MWC).

Under the theme 'Instilling Digital Trust and Resilience', the event gathered 13 members and organizations from Oman, Malaysia, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Indonesia, Azerbaijan, Brunei, Egypt, Bangladesh, Jordan, Nigeria, Uzbekistan, the OIC Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTEC) based in Pakistan, said a news release received here on Sunday.

During the roundtable, the OIC-CERT participating members finalized action plans and initiatives like the OIC-CERT 5G Working Group and Cloud Security Working Group, 5G

security, and Cloud Security Framework. The creation of a new potential working group for AI security and supply chain security was also discussed.

Eng. Badar Ali Said Al Salehi, Chair of the OIC-CERT, and Director General, Oman National CERT (OCERT), delivered the opening address, stating, "As a leading cybersecurity platform, OIC-CERT is committed to making cyberspace safe, and we hosted this exclusive roundtable to gather some of the world's leading cybersecurity experts to help build digital trust and boost cyber resilience. We strongly believe that through a global collaboration, we will be successful in mitigating cyber threats."

The OIC-CERT event featured several high-level speakers that shed light on crucial topics. Professor Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General, COMSTEC, delivered a keynote address, while Sean Yang, Huawei

Global Cybersecurity and Privacy Protection Officer, hosted a session on the need to boost digital trust and resilience. Huawei is a commercial member of OIC-CERT and Dr. Aloysius Cheang, Huawei's Chief Security Officer for Middle East and Central Asia together with Cybersecurity Malaysia, the OIC-CERT Permanent Secretariat were the co-chair leading the 5G Security Working Group.

Salma Hafez, Head of the National Efforts Coordination Department, EG-CERT from Egypt moderated a session on the roles of multiple stakeholders, like regulatory authorities, industry organizations, enterprises, etc., in enhancing digital trust and resilience.

She highlighted that by aligning interests and leveraging collective expertise, organizations can effectively harness the power of their stakeholders to propel digital transformation and fortify resilience in an increasingly volatile and interconnected world.



ISLAMABAD: On World Wildlife Day, IWMB and Friends of Margalla Hills along with university students busy in removing alien invasive plants like Lantana on Trail 4, Margalla Hills National Park in Federal Capital.

Marriyum says: PML-N saves country from default, opposition needs to play constructive role

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Information Secretary Marriyum Aurangzeb Sunday lauded Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif's role to save the country from default in previous PDM government besides taking bold economic decisions for Pakistan and asked opposition parties to play constructive role for strengthening democracy.

Talking to Media outside National Assembly she said that both government and opposition parties

should work in tandem in the interests of their country and people as country was facing current economic challenges where Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz leadership can only combat the recent challenges amicably. She said instead of protests and sit-ins PTI leaders should spend their time for the welfare of the public, adding, the opposition party should act in such a way as to expose the weaknesses, if any of the government so that the government can rectify and build upon such weaknesses.

The government always has its duties and obligations toward the country and people, she said, adding, in this regard, the opposition party can play a big role. She said Shehbaz Sharif is committed to brought the country back on track of development, adding, the people of Pakistan were looking towards Nawaz Sharif and Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif as they have all the abilities to take the country out of existing challenges.

Sardar Ramesh Singh elected as Pradhan of Pak Sikh Guru Dawa Parbandhak Committee

ISLAMABAD (INP): Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) Chairman Arshad Farid Khan chaired meeting of the newly elected members of Pakistan Sikh Guru Dawa Parbandhak Committee in Islamabad that unanimously elected Sardar Ramesh Singh Arora as the Pradhan of the committee.

The meeting also elected Satwant Kaur — who became a member woman of the Parbandhak Committee on Sikh Gurudwara for the first time — was elected as the general secretary.

Ramesh Singh Arora told media that he would fulfill his responsibility as a Pradhan in an efficient manner and steps will be taken for the betterment of the Sikh nation. He vowed to work for facilitation of the incoming sikhs from all over the world.

Arora has also credited for first Sikh lawmaker of the Punjab Assembly — Pakistan's largest assembly — and launching multiple projects for the facilitation of incoming Sikh yatrees from all over the world, including at Kartarpur Corridor.

General Secretary Satwant Kaur said that the Sikh community in Pakistan representation will do its service for welfare.



ISLAMABAD: Youth compete to catch abandoned kites jumping roof tops in Kachi Abadi in Sector G-7 during the Basant, kite flying festival.

Islamic legal system has legacy of knowledge: President IIUI

ISLAMABAD (INP): President International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI), Dr. Hathal Homoud Alotaibi has said that Islamic legal system has a legacy of knowledge. He said that Muslim ancestors guided the world about the equal rights of men and women in the light of teachings of Islam.

He was addressing the concluding ceremony of 4 month-long 65th regular Shariah course for the judges, Qazis, attorneys, law officers and prosecutors organized by Shariah Academy of the IIUI at Faisal Masjid on Sunday.

As many as 26 participants were part of this course from various areas and departments across the country. They covered important topics such as contemporary legal issues, international labor law and medical issues related to Islamic law. They were also given assignments of book reviews and term papers.

Second phase of 5-day anti-polio campaign begins in KP today

ISLAMABAD (APP): The second phase of five-day anti-polio campaign begins in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa today where polio workers visiting door to door to administer anti-polio drops to the children below the age of five.

During the second phase, more than 7.1 million children up to five years of age will be administered anti-polio vaccine drops, a private news channels reported.

The children will also be administered a supplementary dose of 'Vitamin-A' during the drive.

Meanwhile, strict security arrangements have also been made to provide security to the polio workers and police and rangers personnel will remain with the teams especially in the sensitive areas.

QAU students remove invasive plants to mark World Wildlife Day

ISLAMABAD (INP): Volunteers from Quaid-i-Azam University (QAU) and the Islamabad Wildlife Management Board (IWMB) came together to celebrate World Wildlife Day by removing invasive plant species from the Margalla Hills National Park.

During the event held on Sunday (March 03), 66 students from various departments of QAU, under the Plantarian Association, participated in the practical activity. They cleared widespread invasive species like Lantana camara and Brossunatia papyrifera from Trail 4 of the park, supervised by Dr. Shujaul Mulk Khan, an Associate Professor of Ecology, and IWMB volunteers. World Wildlife Day was established in 2013 by the UN General Assembly to raise awareness about the importance of wildlife conservation. This year's theme, "Connecting People and Planet: Exploring Digital Innovation in Wildlife Conservation," highlights the role of technology in protecting endangered species.

Hearing of appeal against contempt of court case likely this week

ISLAMABAD (Online): The intra-court appeal filed by Deputy Commissioner Islamabad Irfan Nawaz Memon against the single bench verdict in the contempt of court case is likely to be heard this week. An appeal against the decision of the single bench will be heard by the two member bench. In the appeal filed on Friday, it has been stated that the detention orders were issued under the Maintenance of Public Order (MPO) in May 2023.



ISLAMABAD: A view of a blossoming and flourishing flowers on greenbelt at H-8 in the Federal Capital.

Shehbaz Sharif enjoys confidence of allied parties: Hanif

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) senior leader Hanif Abbasi on Sunday said that the nominated candidate for premiership Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif was enjoying the full confidence of allied parties.

Addressing a news conference along with the PPP and MQM leaders at the Parliament House, he said that Shehbaz Sharif would win the election of Prime Minister with a clear majority.

He further said that after the formation of the coalition government, it would be the foremost priority of the government to provide relief to the masses. PPP leader Aijaz Hussain Jakhri emphasized the importance of sitting together to address the problems faced by the country. MQM's leader Amin-ul-Haque said the parliament is the best forum to address the problems being confronted by the country and its people.

IFA cracks down on unhygienic food points, seals 1, confiscates spices

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Islamabad Food Authority (IFA) recently conducted inspections at various food points across the city, including Shaheen Market, Rawat Bus Stand, and Defence Housing Authority to ensure the public health and safety.

Talking to APP, Director Operations of Food Authority, Dr Tahira Siddique, said that during the inspections, one food point was sealed due to unhygienic conditions, while heavy fines of Rs 110,000 were imposed on three other outlets. Additionally, notices were also served to eight food points for various violations.

In a significant move, authorities confiscated 360 packets of gutka, a heavy quantity of adulterated spices, expired drinks, fruits, and vegetables.

The Director of Operations of the Food Authority issued a stern warning, emphasizing that strict action would be continued against the violators.

IIOJK students assaulted in Jalandhar, over 100 sent back

ISLAMABAD (APP): Several students of Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) were allegedly attacked in CT Institute of Engineering in Jalandhar, India.

According to Kashmir Media Service, clashes broke out between two groups of students and those from occupied Kashmir, after a female Kashmiri student was subjected to harassment and heckling within the college campus.

A tense atmosphere gripped the CT College in Jalandhar, as students rallied in protest against the assault of Kashmiri students on campus.

The CT Institute administration has suspended 14 students in connection with this incident. Additionally, 110 Kashmiri students who were pursuing various professional

PM's address to bring eco., social revolution

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader, Dr Musadik Malik on Sunday said that Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif's address in the National Assembly would bring economic and social revolution to the country.

Talking to the media at the Parliament House, he said that after the formation of the coalition government, revolutionary measures would be taken for the provision of maximum relief to the common man.

He urged the National Bank of Pakistan (NBP) and other private banks to provide loans to talented youth to establish their small and medium businesses that would pave the way to create employment opportunities.

Dr Musadik said the prime minister announced immense programmes to ensure economic stability, adding that the tax should be collected directly.



ISLAMABAD: A large number of citizens of Federal Capital visited Pakistan Monument for recreation, on a sunny Sunday after two rainy days.

World Wildlife Day observed across world, including Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): The World Wildlife Day, is being observed across the world including Pakistan on Sunday.

It's a global event that aims to raise awareness about the importance of wildlife conservation and the need to protect endangered species.

The theme for the day is "Connecting People and Planet: Exploring Digital Innovation in Wildlife Conservation."

The theme highlights the critical role that digital innovation plays in wildlife conservation efforts.

The World Wildlife Day 2024 (WWD2024) poster was created by CHENG Hui Xin, a talented digital design student from Penang, Malaysia.

World Wildlife Day is significant because it provides an opportunity for people around the world to come together and celebrate the beauty and diversity of our planet's wildlife.

Living beyond moral, ethical values

ISLAMABAD (APP): Standing along a busy road and pondering on messy traffic sparks an immediate reaction to any sensible Pakistani's mind that are we a responsible nation?

With rare manifestations of respect for other's rights, we are most often in a senseless hurry or looking for a short cut creating an imagination not of a sensible nation but a crowd running towards an unknown destination.

Teachings of our noble religion, philosophy of Quaid-i-Azam for emerging as a responsible nation and respecting the laws of our land, all seem missing from our lives.

Except for a few, especially the elderly people who grew up in a peculiar environment of respecting elders and honoring laws, the rest take pride in trampling down ethical values.

Different laws, rules, and regulations formulated for a peaceful and respectful co-existence fell like the most ridiculed entity as seen at roads, banks, hospitals,

government offices, and other walks of life, even the Parliament.

But still, we are surviving as a resilient nation though plagued by menaces like terrorism, enmities, intolerance, nepotism, lies, short measuring, adulteration, and much more evils.

"It really pains when I see our conduct today. Our respect for religious norms, teachers and parents, and above all the law of land — all is lost somewhere," said a retired professor Abdul Shakoor. "We are impatient, cannot wait for our turn in a line. We are always in hurry zig-zagging on roads not caring for ourselves and others. We are plagued with social menaces like superiority and privileges," he said. "Our culture and norms faded away gradually with the replacement of different other cultures." Prof Shakoor stated. "I do not argue to live in isolation but globalism cannot mean that we do away with our noble customs and traditions."

In our early age, he

said, the educational institutions were meant for both 'teaching and training.' "Right from the laps of our mothers to mosque and schools, we had to be under strict vigil of our parents and teachers."

But, he said, the changes in the educational environment and the curriculum in the name of making it internationally compatible, affected our traditions. "As the race for money became fierce, our noble culture is lost in its dust somewhere."

As ethical norms have a trickle-down effect right from reformists, political elite, parents, preachers, and teachers — it seems like that they all have to revisit their conduct.

It is a common question in the mind of every sensible and responsible Pakistani — are we preparing a good nation?

Analyzing ourselves personally as well as in view of international ranking of globally recognized organizations, we continue to suffer deterioration on indexes of nobility, purity, honesty, fairness, truthfulness, righteousness and so on.

"In our daily life and dealing with one another, it seems like that we have stopped hating social evils and opted most them as our life style," remarked Allama Abdul Hafeez. "We are gradually detracting from our religious teachings. Instead of making our Holy Prophet a symbol of life for ourselves, we have indulged in variety of sins."

"I remember my childhood when our fathers used to have complete control on family affairs and mothers commonly used to help them in maintaining discipline," he stated. "But, the situation changed over the time due to obliviousness of our male and female folk to their rights and duties to themselves, their kids and the society."

Allama Hafeez, however was confident that still our religion is a panacea to all these evils. "Even today our religious teachings are not a bygone dogma for creating a noble society. But,

for this we need good parents, good teachers and good preachers."

Seldom sense of responsibility and respect for other's rights, impatience, intolerance, conspiracies, back biting, character assassination and many other social evils permeated to our lives leave the responsible citizens with nothing but a deep regret.

"Our professionals have become machines running from pillar to post to earn more and more money and this race leaves them with lesser time for their kids," stated social worker Chaudhry Muhammad Saleem. "When we would compromise discipline for love for our kids, how can we raise responsible nation. Therefore, whether it our own negligence or the influence of exotic cultures, our social fabric is shattering," he added. Saleem said our mothers keep busy on social media and Tik Tok when they had to be with their children and fathers forced to work in shifts or double jobs to earn living.



ISLAMABAD: Labourer busy in construction work of footpath at Club Road.

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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.

Shahbaz Sharif, a loyal and steadfast leader

By Qamar Bashir

Former Press Secretary to the President; Former Press Minister to the Embassy of Pakistan to France; Former MD, SRBC

Shahbaz Sharif, who today took oath for the second time as the country’s 24th Prime Minister amid looming financial and economic challenges, stands out as a rare example of unwavering loyalty to his elder brother, Mr. Nawaz Sharif. Despite numerous offers of the premiership by various army chiefs, including Musharraf, in exchange for shifting his allegiance, Shahbaz Sharif’s loyalty has remained steadfast. His resolve has never wavered, and no amount of wealth, power, or worldly riches has been able to weaken his deep-seated love, respect, and allegiance to his brother, though both are diametrically opposite on ideological considerations and philosophically bent of mind.

Shahbaz Sharif demonstrated his unwavering loyalty when he was directed by Nawaz Sharif to assume the role of Prime Minister in a coalition government in April 2022. Despite knowing that accepting the premiership at that tumultuous time, with the ousted Prime Minister Imran Khan enjoying immense popularity and leading widespread public protests against his removal, would be an immense challenge, Shahbaz Sharif did not falter. He held his fort amid long marches, large rallies, numerous sit-ins, drawing unprecedented crowds that exerted immense pressure on the country’s administrations.

Many, including myself, have pondered whether Nawaz Sharif would have ac-

cepted the premiership under such challenging circumstances in April 2022, given the country’s financial, economic woes, assertive establishment and high degree of political uncertainty. It’s likely that the response from readers and myself would lean towards a resounding “no.” This raises a critical question: why did Nawaz Sharif instruct his loyal brother to assume the premiership in such trying times.

Once Shahbaz Sharif assumed office as Prime Minister in April 2022, his primary objective was to secure the return of Nawaz Sharif to Pakistan without facing any risks. In pursuit of this goal, Shahbaz Sharif made significant concessions to the military establishment, compromising civilian powers in the process. Notably, he enacted the Pakistan Army (Amendment) Bill 2023, which granted full legal status to the military’s extensive business interests, criminalized criticism of the armed forces, and authorized them to engage in activities related to national development and strategic interests. Additionally, the Official Secrets (Amendment) Bill 2023 was passed, granting security agencies broad discretionary powers to arrest individuals deemed threatening. The legislation also prohibited approaches to military installations and offices, with suspects subject to trial in military courts.

Furthermore, Shahbaz Sharif’s administration appointed numerous military of-

ficers to sensitive civilian positions, including Chairman NADRA, Chairman NAB, and Chairman PTA. By October 2023, reports indicated that over 1,000 military officers, including 104 serving and retired Lieutenant Generals and Major Generals, had been placed in civilian roles across various ministries, divisions, and Pakistan’s diplomatic missions abroad.

By capitulating critical and sensitive positions of the country and granting unparalleled powers to the military, Shahbaz Sharif fulfilled his end of the deal. In return, the establishment facilitated Nawaz Sharif’s return to Pakistan under VIP status, despite being a declared absconder and convicted criminal, previously disqualified from holding public office.

Upon Nawaz Sharif’s return, the establishment swiftly resolved all legal cases against him, including the disappearance of his prison sentence and disqualification. The stage seemed set for Nawaz Sharif’s potential fourth term as Prime Minister. However, it appears that either bringing Nawaz Sharif back to power was not part of the deal, or the establishment reneged on their agreement with the PML(N).

In Scenario C of the article titled “Will Nawaz’s hopes die down soon?” published on December 10th, 2023, it was concluded that based on past bitter experiences with Nawaz, the Establishment would never bring back Nawaz Sharif as

the Prime Minister. The scenario suggested that to navigate resistance and controversies surrounding Nawaz Sharif’s leadership, the Establishment might orchestrate conditions during pre-poll and after poll 2024, where Nawaz will have no choice but to abdicate power in favor of his brother, Shahbaz Sharif.

In pursuit of this strategy, the results of the 2024 elections were orchestrated in a manner that significantly undermined Nawaz Sharif’s electoral prospects. Nawaz suffered a decisive defeat, losing one seat by a significant margin and barely managing to secure a victory in Lahore, a stronghold contested fiercely by his rival candidate. In contrast, Shahbaz Sharif emerged victorious in all his contested seats, clearly indicating the establishment’s preference for him as the chosen candidate.

Nawaz Sharif, who had set securing a simple majority in the parliament as the single most important condition to assume the premiership for the fourth time, found himself demoralized and humiliated by the election outcome. His hopes, pinned on assurances from the establishment, were dashed, leaving him feeling betrayed and dejected.

As predicted in the article, Nawaz Sharif found himself with no choice but to relinquish the premiership in favor of his younger brother. This raises an important question: why did Nawaz Sharif believe that some-

thing unfavorable for himself would be beneficial for his brother? Upon closer examination, the answer lies in Nawaz’s uncompromising nature, which, at times, becomes his biggest liability, and Shahbaz’s compromising nature, which, conversely, becomes his biggest asset.

Nawaz Sharif is characterized by his unwavering commitment to freedom of thought and action, refusing to succumb to pressures and intimidation until his limit is reached. When pushed beyond this threshold, he responds with a vengeance, disregarding potential consequences. He possesses a strong vision and dedication to a specific ideology, particularly in promoting democratic values.

Since the 1990s, Nawaz Sharif has emerged as a formidable challenger to the dominance of the military establishment in Pakistan. He has actively pursued policies aimed at curbing the military’s influence, including efforts to assert civilian control over intelligence agencies and challenge the military’s dominance in national security decision-making. Despite facing threats, intimidation, and periods of exile, Nawaz Sharif has remained steadfast in his commitment to advancing civilian authority and democratic principles. His resilience in the face of adversity underscores his determination to uphold fundamental values and principles in Pakistani politics.

In contrast, Shahbaz Sharif’s with his pragmatic ap-

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 at-

tempt 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 majoritarianism.

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’, ‘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

facial 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 Saraiya, 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, incl-ud-ing say-ing PML-N’s leader Sobha Shah-hid in the KP Assembly was asking for it when she was met with verbal abuse, a shoe thro-wn at her and a lota earlier this week. The what-aboutery 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-rat-ions over the public, and any favouritism sh--o--wn 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

CM Sindh to approach PM for release of K-IV funds

KARACHI (APP): Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah has said that the federal government has released only Rs4 billion for the K-IV project and he plans to approach Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif to address this funding issue.

He said that the fund is less than one-fourth of the allocated Rs16 billion. He said this significant shortfall will lead to further delays in the project.

He said this while talking to media persons just after submitting the nomination papers of PPP Senate Candidates Jam Saifullah Dharejo, Aslam Abro and their covering candidates Waqar Mehdi and Aajiz Dhamraha at the Election Commission of Pakistan, Sindh.

It may be noted that these two senate seats had fallen vacant after the resignation of two PPP Senators Nisar Khuro

and Jam Mehtab Dahar, who returned as members of the provincial assembly of Sindh in the general election held on Feb 8.

The chief minister said that both the PPP candidates would easily be elected as Senators from the provincial assembly.

"We need only 108 votes against which we have 114 votes in the assembly, therefore we will get them elected easily for which I am congratulating Asif Ali Zardari," he said.

In response to a question, the Chief Minister stated that Mayor Murataz Wahab is working tirelessly to develop Karachi into one of the most advanced cities in the world. As an elected mayor, he has all the necessary powers. The CM expressed that any further reforms to the local bodies law, if required, will be made by the Sindh

Assembly.

The CM also expressed regret that amendments to the local bodies law could not be made by a political party as demanded by the MQM.

Syed Murad Ali Shah said that he had talked to the MQM for the election of Speakers and Deputy Speaker of the Sindh Assembly. Presently, MQM leadership is in Islamabad for the Prime Minister's election and they would be approached for the presidential election, the CM said.

Shah admitted that MQM and Sunni Ittehad Council have stakes in Sindh, therefore they would be consulted for legislation, and other concerned matters. "I want to take all the stakeholders together so that the issues of the province can be resolved with collective wisdom.



KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister, Syed Murad Ali Shah talking to media persons, outside Election Commission Office in Karachi.

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.

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 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." The CM expressed good wishes for the success of elected Prime Minister of Pakistan, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. She said, "A new era of service will begin in Pakistan under the leadership of Muhammad Nawaz Sharif. Nation's servant and Nawaz Sharif's soldier Shehbaz Sharif's election as Prime Minister will bring prosperity and development."

The chief minister said, "Shehbaz Sharif's speed, hard work, efficiency and honesty are world-renowned. His past is witness to his hard work, efficiency and merit." She said that the election of Shehbaz Sharif as the Prime Minister of Pakistan is a victory of true democracy.



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

Governor expresses grief over loss of lives due to rains in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali on Sunday expressed grief over the loss of precious lives and damages caused by recent rains, landslides and snowfall in various districts of the province.

In a statement, the Governor expressed his heartfelt sympathy and condolence to the affected families.

CM Sindh greets newly elected PM

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Sunday has congratulated the newly elected Prime Minister Mohammed Shahbaz Sharif.

He said that Shahbaz Sharif is a senior parliamentarian and seasoned politician.

He hoped that the country would progress in his tenure.

Azma Bokhari greets Shehbaz

LAHORE (APP): PML-N Punjab spokesperson Azma Bokhari, congratulating Muhammad Shahbaz 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 Sheherbano 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.

The participants carried banners and placards about protection of women rights and prevention of gender-based crimes.

The IGP, in a talk with the media, highlighted the steps taken by the Punjab Police for protection of women. He said that according to the vision of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz,



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

14 dead, 1245 injured in 1127 road accidents in Punjab

LAHORE (APP): At least fourteen persons were killed and 1245 injured in 1127 road accidents in all 37 districts of Punjab during the last 24 hours.

Out of these, 583 people with serious injuries were shifted to different hospitals, while 662 victims with minor injuries were treated at the incident site by Rescue Medical Teams thus reducing the burden of hospitals.

Furthermore, the analysis showed that 665 drivers, 24 underage drivers, 159 pedestrians,

One killed, another injured in road mishap

MUZAFFARGARH (APP): A teenager boy was crushed to death while another sustained serious injuries when a speeding bus hit two motorcycles near Nawan Mor Chowk here Sunday.

According to Rescue 1122 sources, 13-year old resident of Chowk Sarwar Shaheed along with 50-year old Mansha, resident of village 571 was returning home from his friend's house on motorcycle when a speeding passenger bus hit their motorcycle. Resultantly, Hubaib was died on the spot while Mansha sustained injuries.

The rescue officials shifted the body and injured to the hospital and started investigations into the incident by taking the bus into custody. The driver of the bus managed to escape from the scene.

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 to 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

Two robbers killed in police encounter

BAHAWALNAGAR (APP): Two dangerous robbers involved in serious incidents were killed on Sunday during police encounter near Daultapur. Their bodies were sent to the district hospital for a postmortem. The police were taking the arrested suspects for recovery when four unknown suspects attempted to free the accused from the police custody near Daultapur.

As a result, the accused Waseem Sheikh and Shaqat Sanul were shot dead by their accomplices.

The deceased bandits were involved in several serious incidents.



KARACHI: A view of the massive traffic jam at Liaqtabad.

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. President Arshad Ansari and Secretary Zahid Abid thanked the members and their families who participated in the medical camp and thanked their general secretary Sania Kherra for organising the medical camp on behalf of the Private Nursing Colleges Federation and presented her with a memento shield from the club. They appreciated the efforts of Vice President Amjad Usmani and Council Member Muhammad Abdullah.

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.



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

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.



HYDERABAD: PTI Sindh President, Haleem Adil Sheikh addresses to party workers during his visit, at Badin Stop in Hyderabad.

'Vocational training Centre offers employment through skill, different courses'

HYDERABAD (APP): The management of Vocational Training Centre (Girls) Qasimabad has announced that admissions in different technical courses have been started.

Talking to APP at Vocational Training Centre Qasimabad here the other day, Principal of Government Vocational Training Centre (Girls) Naila Bhutto said that the Centre was disseminating vocational training in Giii/Gii Courses in 6 disciplines including Dress Making, Computer Operator, Tailoring and Dress Making, Hand Embroidery Machine Embroidery and Mehndi.

She said that besides these courses, the Centre was also offering National Vocational Certificate (Level 23 and 4 level) Competency Based Training and Assessment (CBT&A) in Beauty Therapy, Computer Operator, Computer Graphic (Print and Motion) Dress Making Fashion Designing, Chef De Partie, Cooking and Textile Designing. She said that admissions were open on a first come first serve basis and admission fees were very nominal. However, she added that the trend of joining vocational training was low as compared to general education courses and could be afforded by the young aspirant students but, they prefer private institutions for vocational training whose monthly fees were so high. On this occasion, Administrative Officer Sikandar Joyo urged the young girls to join Vocational Training Centre for Girls at the ideal and easily accessible location of Qasimabad for all. Joyo said that STEVTA was highly supporting the Centre equipped with the latest machines being provided by the UNDP.



HYDERABAD: Members of Sindh Awami Forum are holding protest demonstration against high handedness of police, at Fateh Chowk in Hyderabad.

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 Railway Station, Nasirpur, Pabbi, and Mardan.

Upon arrival, Manager Events, Hassina Shaukat, welcomed visitors, distributed traditional items and adorned them with garlands.

She said that KPCTA is keen to promote Rail tourism and added that tour of such kind would be arranged in future as well for promotion of heritage and archaeological tourism.

These tours would give insight to people about rich history of KP, attract foreigners to enjoy diverse culture and traditions of the province, she added.

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.

The "Algiers Declaration" highlighted several key points, including the sovereign rights of member countries over their natural gas resources, efficient management of natural gas resources to promote sustainable development, and cooperation to ensure balanced and reliable natural gas markets.

Member countries expressed their commitment to innovation-led practices and collaboration in enhancing the role of natural gas in improving energy access and reducing energy poverty. They also welcomed the accession of new members, reaffirming the forum's commitment to fostering energy cooperation and dialogue on a global scale.



MULTAN: Laborers are busy unloading bunches of bananas from a delivery truck at Fruit market.

Business world expects to witness era of 'Pakistan Speed' under PM-elect Shehbaz: PBF

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Business Forum (PBF) on Sunday congratulated Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on his election as the 24th Prime Minister of Pakistan and hoped that the business world would now witness a new era of 'Pakistan Speed'.

PBF President Khawaja Mehboob ur Rehman, Vice Presidents Ahmad Jawad and Jahan Ara Watoo, and Provincial Chairmen Naseer Malik, Daroo Khan Achakzai, Malik Suhail Talat, Atif Ikram Sheikh, Ashfaq Paracha and Shabnum Zafar urged the newly-elected prime minister to provide a competitive

environment to the business community.

The PBF President, in a statement, called for framing a 20-year economic vision for the country, including the signing of a 'charter of the economy' by all political parties and a roadmap for economic development.

He suggested that the vision should be reviewed after five years and no government should be allowed to change it on its own.

The PBF leader said that due to inconsistency in policies and frequent changes in them, a large number of SROs (Statutory Regulatory Orders) were being issued

and that process should be stopped.

At the moment, he said, "our exports are about US\$ 30 billion and half of it is from the textile sector".

PBF Vice President Chaudhry Ahmad Jawad said after the elections all the political parties must show maturity and join hands with the government for the country and its people. Unity was required as Pakistan was passing through economic turbulence. He claimed that constant rise in the electricity tariff was hurting the businesses and industry at large. The Discos' losses stood at Rs 77 billion during July-December 2023-24.

NTDC energises another 160-MVA transformer at Daud Khel grid station

LAHORE (APP): The National Transmission and Despatch Company Limited (NTDC) teams have successfully installed/added 160 MVA 220/132kV auto-transformer (T-4), make Jiangsu Hupang China, along with complete 220 kV Dia at 220 kV grid station at Daud Khel. The said 160 MVA auto-transformer has been energised, the company's spokesman disclosed this to the media on Sunday. He added that in its commitment to ensure smooth power supply, the NTDC has achieved a significant milestone by enhancing the capacity of its transmission network through the System Constraints Removal Programme.

He said that this is the 3rd auto-transformer installed during a span of one month. Earlier initiatives involved the replacement and augmentation of two auto-transformers at the

Ghakkhar and Okara grid stations. At the Ghakkhar station, a 160 MVA auto-transformer was replaced with a 250 MVA, 220/132 kV unit, while a new 160 MVA 220/132kV auto-transformer (T-3) was installed at the Okara grid station. These efforts have collectively added 570 MVA to the transmission capacity. These projects have been completed under National Transmission Modernization Project (NTMP-I), funded by the World Bank. This augmentation is poised to enhance the grid stations' capacity, catering to the growing demand from regions served by GEPCO, LESCO, PESCO, and FESCO. The increased capacity not only benefits industrial, agricultural, and domestic consumers but also improves the system reliability. The NTDC Managing Director Engr. Dr. Rana Abdul Jabbar Khan appreciated the Project Delivery.



ISLAMABAD: A vendor displaying and selling Prayer mats to attract customers at Aabpara in the Federal Capital.



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.

Over the past 10 years, the Chinese government has signed more than 240 documents on Belt and Road cooperation with more than 150 countries and more than 30 international organizations, he noted.

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.

On this occasion, Engineer Shahid Haider said that these workshops would save a lot of time and money. 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 as well." He vowed to take all necessary steps to make LESCO the number one company.

Director (Technical) Amir Yasin, SE (Civil Works) Furqan, Director (Safety) Fawad Khalid, SE Sheikhupura Najamul Hasan and X-En (Civil Works) Mubeen were also present.

Malik felicitates Shehbaz Sharif

LAHORE (APP): SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry former President Iftekhar Ali Malik here Sunday felicitated Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on his election as Prime Minister for the second time and said that his victory is a proof of people's confidence in his leadership and clear vision for the country's future.



ISLAMABAD: Ahead of Ramadan, a Vendor in Sunday Bazar in Federal Capital decorating different kinds of dates for the customers.

LESCO collects over Rs 3.2m from 232 defaulters in 24 hours

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO), in collaboration with Tehsil Daras (Recovery), recovered more than Rs 3.2 million from 232 chronic defaulters in all five districts - Lahore, Sheikhupura, Nankana Sahib, Kasur and Okara on the 167th day of its recovery campaign.

LESCO spokesman told media here Sunday that on the 167th day, SE (Superintending Engineer) Nisar Sarwar has recovered outstanding dues of Rs 0.67 million from 34

defaulters in Northern Circle; SE Umar Bilal recovered Rs 0.50 million from 21 defaulters in Eastern Circle; SE Shabbir recovered Rs 0.66 million from 26 defaulters in Central Circle; SE Zafarullah Sanghi collected Rs 0.7 million from 08 defaulters in South Circle; SE Muhammad Hussain recovered Rs 0.14 million from 25 defaulters in Nankana Circle; SE Najamul Hassan recovered Rs 0.28 million from 18 defaulters in Sheikhupura Circle; SE Jamsheed Zaman collected Rs 0.46 million.

PFC to take part in 4-day Intel Hong Kong expo

LAHORE (APP): The Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) will take part in a four-day international Hong Kong expo starting from April 27 to explore business opportunities and find new global markets.

The PFC Chief Executive Officer Mian Kashif Ashfaq announced this during a meeting with a delegation of furniture manufacturers and exporters led by Muhammad Arab here on Sunday. He said, this fair attracts thousands of exhibitors, investors, importers, exporters and buyers from all over the world to showcase their products.

Mobile companies cheating masses, evading taxes: PEW

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chairman Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW), Brigadier (ret'd) 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 (ret'd) 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.



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

Anjum Nisar demands upcoming govt to prioritize economic recovery

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chairman Businessmen Panel (BMP) of Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), Mian Anjum Nisar has said that the upcoming government should give priority to the economic recovery, emphasizing the necessity of joint efforts to tackle Pakistan's economic difficulties.

Chairman a meeting here on Sunday, he expressed confidence in the country's ability to overcome the prevailing challenges and emphasized that the new government should fulfill the commitment to eradicate poverty and

PCMEA delegation meets Customs Collector

LAHORE (APP): A Pakistan Carpet Manufacturers and Exporters Association (PCMEA) delegation led by its Senior Vice Chairman Usman Ashraf called on Collector Customs (Appraisal West) Zahra Haider to discuss their problems related to the Customs Department.

Senior central leader Abdul Latif Malik, Major (Ret'd) Akhtar Nazir and Shahid Hassan Sheikh were also among the delegates, the association's spokesman told media here Sunday. The delegation informed Collector Customs Zahra Haider



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

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 growth 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 oil 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 million plants are being grown over an area of over 9,391 acres and it is expected that by closing December, 2024, the value of oil will be Rs1.160bn.

In Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) and AJK, over 50,000 plants are being grown on an area of 455 acres of land engaging 228 farmers. The value of oil by 2024 is expected to be Rs71 million, he told.

To a query, he said that in 2024, the country will have about 3m fruit-bearing olive plants producing roughly 1,415 tonnes of olive oil with an estimated value of Rs4.416bn. The climate change ministry also plans to plant 1m olive plants.

Edible oil is an everyday use food item. Pakistan has been chronically deficient in its production. More than 80 per cent of the domestic requirements are met through imports, he added. Dr Waqas Cheema, a scientific officer at Promotion of Olive Cultivation project, told APP that over 1.5 million olive plants have already been planted under Promotion of Olive Cultivation project Phase-II, across the country.

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. The killings came amid uncertainty over whether negotiations on a Gaza ceasefire would resume on Sunday. US President Joe Biden has said he hopes a ceasefire will be in place by the time Ramadan begins on March 10 or 11.
Two Egyptian security sources said Israeli and Hamas delegations were expected to arrive in Cairo on Sunday to resume indirect talks. However, Israel’s Ynet news agency, citing an unnamed senior official, reported that Israel would not send a delegation to the Cairo talks until it received a full list of prisoners held in Gaza who were alive.



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



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

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 the eastern state 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.

Ailing King Harald of Norway returning from Malaysia

OSLO (AFP/APP): King Harald of Norway was returning home from Malaysia on Sunday after falling ill on holiday and spending several days in hospital, the royal palace said.
The oldest reigning monarch in Europe at 87 years old, Harald contracted an infection on a trip to the island of Langkawi and was admitted to hospital on Tuesday.
The palace said on Saturday that he had been fitted with a “temporary” pacemaker, which his personal physician said would make his return safer.
The palace said in a statement on Sunday that Harald would “soon be on his way to Langkawi Airport for medical transportation”, and would be joined by Queen Sonja.
“Upon arrival in Nor-

Calls for probe into Sikh singer’s killing in US

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: A Sikh musician (ragi) was shot dead outside a gurdwara in the US city of Selma on Feb 23, making it the second killing of an Indian-origin person in less than a month.
Indian media reported this week that Raj Singh, also known as Goldy, was shot dead outside a gurdwara in Selma, a city in the southern US state of Alabama.
However, it was later emerged that the shooting actually took place in another city of the same name in the state of California.
A Sikh website, Sikh Vox, called the murder “a chilling incident that has sent shockwaves through the Sikh community.”



Families of passengers from both China and Malaysia, who were aboard the missing Malaysia Airlines flight MH370, are seen during a remembrance event commemorating the 10th anniversary of its disappearance, in Subang Jaya, Malaysia.

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

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.

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. India is suspicious of China’s growing presence in the archipelago nation, which straddles key east-west international shipping routes.

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, to alleviate that,” Albanese told Australia’s Channel Nine TV on Saturday, according to a transcript.
The cost of living squeeze is said to be a key issue for voters in the electorate of Dunkley, in outer-metro Melbourne.

Israel has accepted truce proposal, US says

Monitoring Desk
GAZA STRIP: Israel has “more or less accepted” a proposal for a six-week ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, a US official said on Saturday as Palestinian negotiators were expected in Cairo.
Mediators have been scrambling to lock in a truce before Ramadan begins on March 10 or 11.
The US official told reporters that “there’s a framework deal” for a ceasefire which “the Israelis have more or less accepted”.
A source close to Hamas said a delegation from the group was headed from Qatar to Egypt on Saturday.
Meanwhile, Israel’s top ally the United States began air-dropping aid into Gaza on Saturday, as the territory’s health ministry reported more than a dozen child malnutrition deaths.
The start of the US relief operation came hours after President Joe Biden, who has pushed Israel to allow more aid in, announced the move and spoke of the “need to do more” after nearly five



HAVANA: People take part in a demonstration in support of the Palestinians outside the US embassy in Cuba.

Artificial glaciers stave off drought in Kyrgyzstan

SYNTASH (AFP/APP): In the Tian-Shan mountains of Kyrgyzstan, villagers have made an artificial glacier to provide water for their drought-hit farms.
Standing on the ice-hill-ock, farmer Erkinbek Kaldanov said he was optimistic about harnessing nature to counteract climate change.
“We won’t have any more problems with water,” said the farmer, who was worried for his sheep last year after some unusual temperature spikes.
“When the glacier melts, there will be enough water for the livestock and to water the land in Syntash,” the surrounding district, he said.
The glacier currently measures five metres (16 feet) high and about 20 metres long. At the height of winter it was 12 metres tall.
Local residents made it over a period of two weeks in autumn by redirecting water from the peaks of Tian-Shan, which tower more than 4,000 metres high in northern Kyrgyzstan.
Kaldanov and others are being forced to adapt since natural glaciers in Central Asia—the main water source for the region.

Gas Exporting Countries Forum 7th Summit opens in Algiers

ALGIERS (Xinhua/APP): The 7th Summit of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) opened here Saturday, aiming at safeguarding the interests of both gas producers and consumers.
In his opening remarks, Algerian President Abdelmadjid Tebboune underscored the crucial role of the forum in tackling contemporary challenges, advancing sustainable development, and meeting the surging global demand for energy. Tebboune reaffirmed the forum’s commitment to supporting long-term contracts.

Malaysia eyes food security with increased training in agricultural sector

KUALA LUMPUR (Xinhua/APP) — Malaysia aims to secure and strengthen its food security by increasing the number of technical and vocational education and training graduates, a Malaysian official said on Saturday.
The government aims to not only attract more students to pursue agricultural studies but also to encourage graduates from diverse disciplines to actively contribute to the sector, Agriculture and Food Security Minister Mohamad Sabu told reporters following the launch of an agro-sector expo here.
Elaborating on the ministry’s focus this year, Mohamad said that four industrial developments to be prioritized are rice and paddy, chicken, duck and eggs, red onion, and pineapple.
For the rice wave initiative launched this year, the target is to increase the country’s rice self-sufficiency level to at least 80 percent to reduce dependence on exports in the next 10 years.

BJP worker killed in Chhattisgarh: Seventh attack in Maoist-hit region in two months

CHHATTISGARH (INP): In a disturbing trend of violence against political workers in Maoist-affected areas, another Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) member fell victim to a deadly attack in Chhattisgarh’s Bijapur district. This incident underscores the escalating tensions and the dangers faced by political figures in the region.
On a seemingly peaceful evening at Toynar village, amidst the joyous celebrations of a wedding,

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 two-year-old child, after an overnight 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 protests 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.

Israel has accepted truce proposal, US says

months of devastating conflict. It also comes as negotiations continue for a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip, which has been under siege since Oct 7.
“We conducted a combined humanitarian assistance airdrop into Gaza” involving three US Air Force C-130 transport planes to provide “relief to civilians affected by the ongoing conflict,” a US military official said.
US Central Command, in a post on social media platform X, said the operation was conducted together with Jordan and saw planes drop “over 38,000 meals along the coastline of Gaza allowing for civilian access to the critical aid.”
The dire humanitarian situation in Gaza has led to the deaths of at least 13 children from “malnutrition and dehydration” in recent days, according to the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory.
In an incident that has thrown a spotlight on the crisis, dozens of Palestinians were killed before dawn.

Parties, cars, curtains: Kenyans upset by govt spending spree

NAIROBI (AFP/APP): Expensive curtains, lavish garden parties and jet-setting lifestyles: Kenya’s cash-strapped government has been on a spending spree even as austerity measures take their toll on weary citizens.
A report released by the country’s auditor general last month said the office of the deputy president spent 10.2 million shillings (\$70,000) on curtains while splashing out on furniture to the tune of some \$50,000.
The purchases, which were “in breach of the law” for flouting procurement rules, according to the report, have struck a nerve with an angry public.
“They have squeezed my finances to the limit as they drink and dine,” Kenyan teacher Moses Bett told AFP in the capital Nairobi.
The East African powerhouse—where corruption is a hot-button issue—raised taxes to shore up revenue for government debt repayments even as many citizens were already struggling with the high prices of basic commodities.
“I am living on negatives,” Bett said, patting the front pockets of his charcoal grey trousers.
“Every day is becoming more difficult to fend for my family with what is left of my salary,” the 32-year-old father of two said.
President William Ruto, who served as the country’s deputy leader from 2013 to 2022, had vowed to slash government spending, telling Kenyans that “we are living beyond our means”. But the businessman-turned-politician, who campaigned on a platform to help the country’s poor, is planning to spend more than 1.3 billion shillings (\$8.9 million) to spruce up his eight official residences. His offices at Nairobi’s State House, built a century ago, will be renovated at a cost of more than 700 million shillings.

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, Jamshed 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 the government formed by those who have been rejected by the people would spell doom for the country. "We are fighting them

inside parliament and outside. We have faced their highhandedness. We will not let Shehbaz Sharif government run for six months," Dasti stated.

Latif Khosa, a PTI leader, has clarified that their party's protest against rigging and irregularities in the Feb 8 polls result was their constitutional right but it mustn't be labeled as rowdism. He asserted that the party was struggling for the prevalence of democracy, rule of law, and public justice.

Ali Muhammad Khan Ali Muhammad Khan affirmed that today was the day of tough competition between Form-45 and Form-47, the day of real and forged mandate, referring to the election of the coveted seat of the prime minister of Pakistan.

He added that the real victory would be the victory of the people's mandate and truth whether the rivals won by rigging and malpractices. He stressed that the PTI founder would be victorious and would take the throne of the prime minister of Pakistan one day.



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

CMs of Sindh & Balochistan 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 Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti were confident that Asif Ali Zardari would be elected once again with thumbing majority.

The Chief Minister of Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah

was in meeting with the Chief Minister Balochistan, Sarfraz 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 Sarfraz 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.

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

KARACHI (INP): Pakistan Navy continues to extended 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.



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

CM directs to hand over GoB helicopter to Gwadar district administration

Independent Report
QUETTA: The Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz 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 Sarfraz 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): Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Aneeq Ahmed on Sunday said the selection of Moavineen-e-Hujjaj is being conducted for the first time in history through the National Testing Service (NTS) in a landmark move prioritizing transparency.

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.

Emphasizing the significance of this development 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 pledge to serve the pilgrims diligently, and those selected through the written exam would demonstrate enhanced performance during the Hajj 2024.



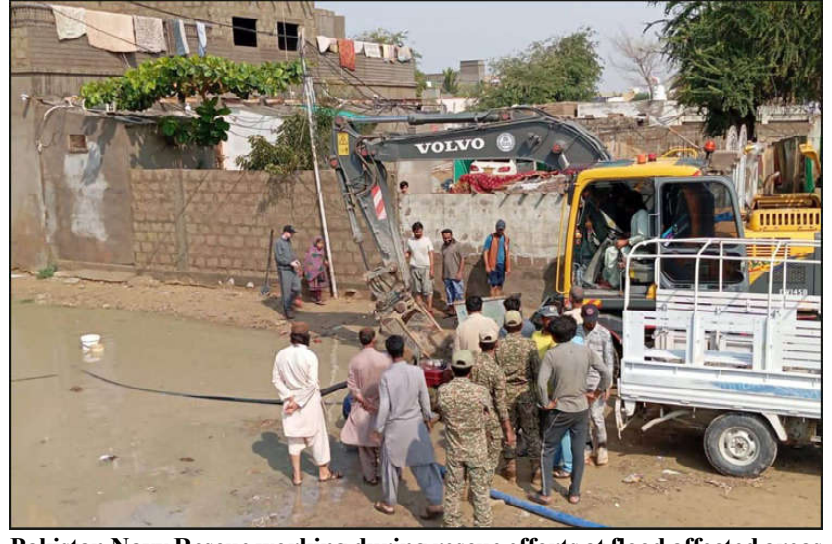
QUETTA: Beautiful eye catching view of snow covered area during the snowfall of winter season, which more decreases the temperature below in minus degree Celsius, at mountainous areas of Balochistan.

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 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

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.

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 (retd) 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.

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.

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.

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.

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