



**Interior Minister Expresses satisfaction on law & order situation during Elections**

Caretaker Minister for Interior Dr. Gohar Ejaz Thursday expressed satisfaction on the conclusion of the process of polling for General Elections 2024. He announced with immense satisfaction that the overall security situation across the country remained generally stable to ensure the peaceful conduct of free and fair elections. (Details on Page 8)



**Azerbaijan's Aliyev re-elected as President for a fifth consecutive term**

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev secured a fifth consecutive term in elections on Wednesday, official results showed, an expected outcome after his country's historic victory over Armenian separatists last year. Tallies showed that Aliyev won the election with 92 percent of the vote after nearly all electoral precincts declared results, in a ballot held during a crackdown on independent media and in the absence of any real opposition. (Details on Page 5)

Simultaneously published from Islamabad, Lahore and Multan

**New Era**

ISLAMABAD: People hold their national identification cards as they wait their turn to cast vote at outside a polling station during Pakistan's national elections in Federal Capital. Millions of Pakistanis began voting February 8 in an election marred by allegations of poll rigging, with the country's most popular politician in jail and a military-favoured candidate tipped to win.

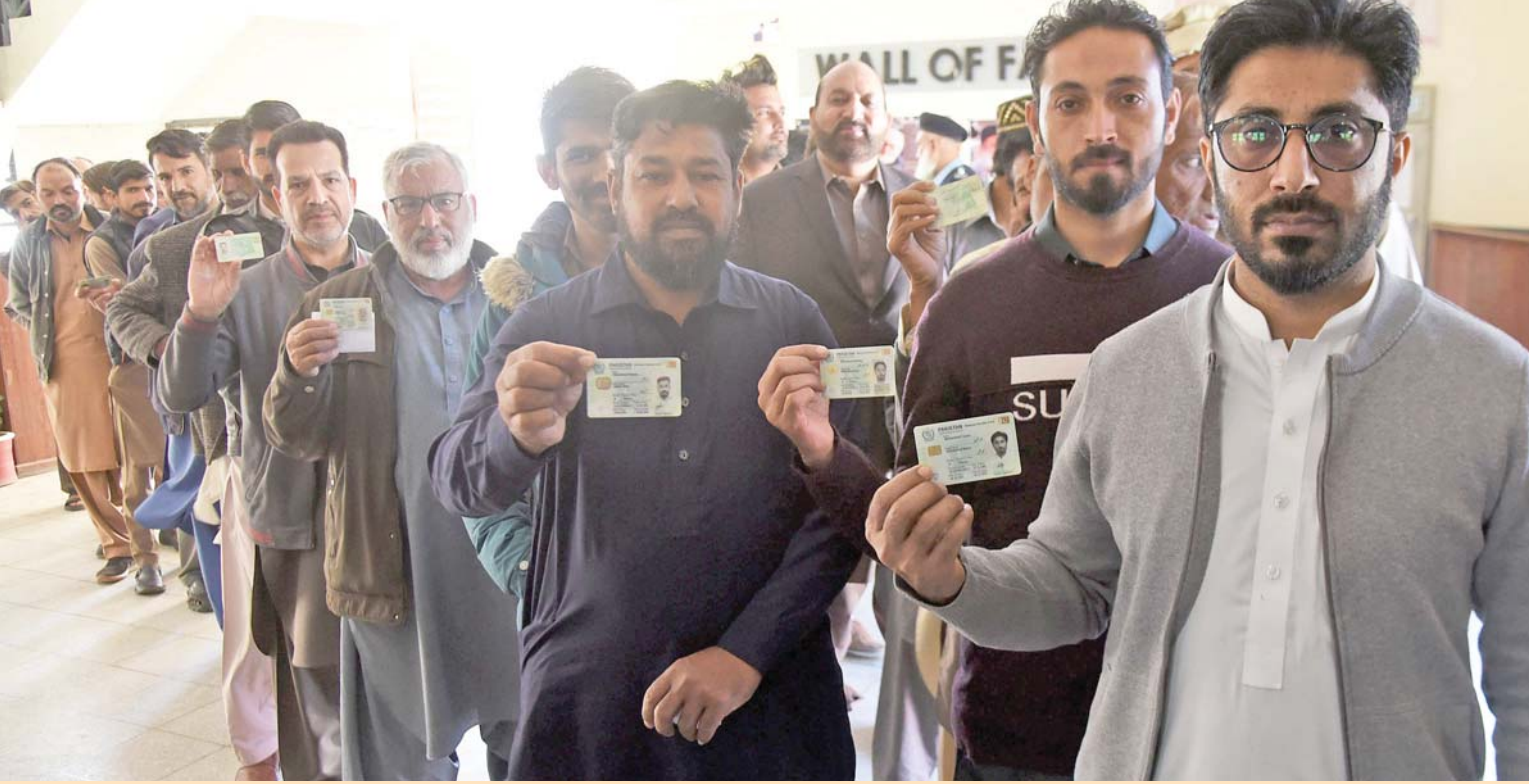


Photo: Online by Raja Farid

**ISPR hopes election will serve as catalyst for further strengthening democracy**

**Spokesman Report**

RAWALPINDI: The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) hoped that the general elections 2024 will serve as a catalyst for further strengthening democracy in Pakistan, and that it will pave the way for the realization of the aspirations of the people of Pakistan. ISPR in a statement said that sacrifices rendered by the security officials for the conduct of peaceful elections would not be in vain. Pakistan Army's military media wing also extended congratulations to the nation on the generally peaceful and violence free conduct of the general elections. It said the armed forces alongside other law enforcement agencies are proud to have played a pivotal role in providing security during conduct of the sacred electoral process, in aid of civil power, and in accordance with the constitution of Pakistan. "With the deployment of 137,000 army personnel and civil armed forces at approximately 6,000 selected most sensitive polling stations and over 7800 QRFs, a safe and secure environment for the public was ensured," it said.

Despite 51 cowardly terrorist attacks, mostly in KP and

Balochistan, aimed at disrupting the electoral process, the soldiers remained resolute and effectively ensured peace and security across Pakistan. ISPR said that 12 people, including 10 personnel of security forces and law enforcement agencies, embraced martyrdom and 39 others have been injured in these attacks. Through proactive intelligence manoeuvres and swift action, many potential threats were neutralized, underscoring the unwavering commitment of our security agencies to protect the democratic rights of our citizens. During various operations, five terrorists were also killed. "Gratitude is owed to other law enforcement agencies that worked hand in hand with the armed forces to safeguard the democratic process." "It is our fervent hope that our sacrifices would not be in vain and this election will serve as a catalyst for further strengthening democracy in Pakistan, and that it will pave the way for the realization of the aspirations of the people of Pakistan." The armed forces remain dedicated to upholding peace and security in the country and stand ready to provide unwavering support in safeguarding the democratic traditions of our state, the ISPR said.

**Internet, mobile services suspended across Pakistan on polling day**

**Naveed Ahmad Khan**

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Interior Ministry on Thursday suspended mobile phone and internet services across Pakistan to maintain law and order situation in election 2024. "As a result of the recent incidents of terrorism in the country precious lives have been lost, security measures are essential to maintain the law and order

situation and deal with possible threats, hence the temporary suspension of mobile services across the country," the interior ministry said in a message on X (formerly Twitter). Following the suspension of internet and cellular services across Pakistan, the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) 8300 SMS service has been also affected. Meanwhile: Chief Election



Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja has said that the law enforcement agencies have decided to suspend Internet service. "We will not direct for restoration of telephone and Internet

service," talking to media CEC said. "Who will be responsible if we order opening of the cellular service and a terrorism incident takes place," he said. CEC Raja said, "Our system doesn't depend on internet, there will be no difference. The election will be transparent." The election commission could give its recommendations, he said. ECP member Nisar Durra-

ni said that the mobile phone service shutdown would not have an impact on the election. The election monitoring centre has been functional, he added. The Interior Ministry late night on Thursday announced that mobile phone services have been partially restored in parts of the country as the nation waits for results of all-important elections 2024.

**President Alvi casts vote, urges people to use their constitutional right**



KARACHI: President Dr Arif Alvi on Thursday cast his vote and urged the countrymen to use their voting right saying that the country needed their opinion as never before. The president, who reached the polling station along with his family members, awaited his turn in the queue and cast his vote. Later, he wrote on his X timeline, "The Islamic Republic of Pakistan has asked for your personal advice through your vote to elect representatives to the National & Provincial Assemblies."

**Nawaz Sharif casts his vote in Model Town Lahore**

**Bureau Report**

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) supreme and former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif cast his vote at a polling station in Model Town Lahore as polling continues for election 2024. As per details, the former PM reached the polling station in NA-128 along with his daughter and PML-N senior organizer Maryam Nawaz and IPP candidate Aun Chaudhry. After casting vote, PML-N supreme Nawaz Sharif urged the people to vote against the abusive and intolerant politics. In response to a question regarding coalition government, the former PM said that "don't even mention the word coalition government". Prior to this, former prime minister and PML-N leader Shehbaz Sharif cast his vote at a polling station in Lahore's NA-128. Talking to media after casting his vote, Sharif called security measures as satisfactory adding that the fate of Pakistan has been



in the hand of the people. "If given chance, we will join hands and build Pakistan," he said. Pakistan People's Party's Aseefa Bhutto-Zardari cast her vote at a polling station of NA-207 Nawabshah, the hometown of Zardaris. Former president Asif Ali Zardari contesting for the NA-207 from his native district of Nawabshah. PML-N leader and former information minister Marriyum Aurangzeb used her right to vote in NA-51 Murree. Caretaker Information Minis-

ter Murtaza Solangi reached Dora Model School polling station before 8:00am and exercised his right to vote as first voter of the polling station. He urged citizens to cast their votes for a better future of their generations. JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehmen cast his vote at NA-44 constituency in Dera Ismail Khan. MQM-Pakistan's central leader Dr Farooq Sattar cast his vote at a polling station in Karachi's Pir Illahi Bakhsh (PIB) Colony.

**Women voters prohibited to cast vote in Swabi, Talagang areas**

**Aman ullah**

SWABI: Women voters at a village of NA-20 in Swabi district have been banned to cast vote. The locals have prohibited women to exercise their right to vote in Adeena village of Swabi district. According to reports, the election staff has been present at the polling station, while women voters are not being sighted. It is said that around 6,000 women in Adeena village have not been allowed to use their right to vote in the election. Moreover, in NA-59 in Punjab, women voters were found absent at polling stations in conservative Talagang district of Potohar region. According to reports, not a single voter from 3,101 women voters cast vote at four polling stations of the district.

**Election 2024: Counting of votes under way**

**City Desk**

ISLAMABAD: No official results yet but suggestions of PTI-linked candidates leading. It's now a little over seven hours since the voting officially ended - and still not a single result has been announced. In a surprising turn of events, initial trends show PTI-affiliated candidates leading in multiple constituencies across the country. The party was stripped off its electoral symbol cricket bat merely days before the polls and its candidates were allegedly harassed and threatened with abduction, making it difficult for them to run a regular campaign like their political rivals.

The Election Commission of Pakistan has not issued any statement regarding the delay in results. The US State Department has expressed concerns about steps taken to "restrict freedom of expression" in Pakistan during the elections, citing phone and internet access. Meanwhile, Congressman Greg Casar said on X that "Pakistanis have the right to elect their leaders without cell phone service shutdowns & other authoritarian practices aimed at undermining election results." He added that the US "must stand" with the people in Pakistan and "make clear we will not support anyone working to undermine democracy."

**PM congratulates nation on conduct of successful polls**

**City Desk**

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Thursday congratulating the nation over the successful conduct of general elections 2024, said the high voter turnout was a clear indication of public commitment to shaping the country's future. "The participation and enthusiasm of the people of Pakistan have been the cornerstone of this democratic exercise. The high voter turnout is a clear indication of public commitment to shaping the future of our country," the prime minister wrote on his X timeline following the polling ended after a smooth and peaceful process across the country. He appreciated the efforts of the Election Commission of Pakistan, interim provincial governments, armed forces, civil armed forces, police, law enforcement agencies, election staff, media and all those institutions and individuals who contributed to the conduct of

the free and fair elections. Prime Minister Kakar said that the momentous occasion was not just a testament to the resilience and strength of the country's democratic processes but also the indomitable spirit of the Pakistani people. He said that the voices, expressed through the votes, would contribute to the fortification of the country's democracy, and for that, the people of Pakistan deserved every bit of appreciation. PM Kakar said that despite few incidents of terrorism in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, the efforts of armed forces, civil armed forces, LEAs, civilian administration and Election Commission of Pakistan for conducting free and fair elections across the country were commendable.

**Election 2024: 600,000 security personnel deployed across Pakistan**

**City Desk**

ISLAMABAD: Over 600,000 security personnel have been deployed across Pakistan to maintain law and order situation during election 2024. Polling began at 8 am today

and will continue uninterrupted till 5 pm as more than 128 million voters are set to elect their representatives for the national and provincial assemblies for the next five years in what appears to be one of the most unpredictable general

elections in Pakistan's political history. To maintain the law and order situation on polling day 600,000 security personnel including Pakistan army, civil armed forces and police have been deployed on polling

stations across the country. Whereas 106,342 quick response forces have also been deployed on the ECP's request. Among 600,000 security personnel, 23,940 are from Pakistan army, 30,882 from civil armed forces and 465,736 police

forces have been deployed across the county. The military troops are deployed to assist the civil administration in general elections, ensure transparency in electoral process and maintain law and order.

# CM pays a visit to central control room of the home department

**Bureau Report**

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi paid a visit to the Central Control Room being established by the Home Department at the Civil Secretariat to review and monitor the arrangements being made for holding the general elections across the province. CM went to the Central Control Room and conduct-



ed a detailed review of the monitoring

arrangements. Secretary Home gave a briefing to the CM about the arrangements being undertaken to ensure holding of general elections in a peaceful environment along with the monitoring system. Mohsin Naqvi stated that by the Grace of Allah Almighty and due to day and night hard work of the Punjab government, the crucial phase of holding general elections has been completed in a peaceful and nice

manner. The police, administration and law enforcement institutions jointly maintained the law and order environment during the general elections. CM acknowledged that excellent arrangements have been made for holding the general elections in every city of Punjab including Lahore. IG Police Dr. Usman Anwar, CCPO Lahore and concerned officials were also present on the occasion.

## National Duty

ISLAMABAD: A disable person casts his vote at a polling station during the country's parliamentary elections, in the Federal Capital. Pakistanis lined braved cold winter weather and the threat of violence to vote for a new parliament Thursday, a day after twin bombings claimed at least 30 lives in the worst election-related violence ahead of the contested elections.



Photo: Online

## General Elections were held in a peaceful manner in Multan Division: Amir Khattak



**Asim Tanveer**

MULTAN: Commissioner Multan Division Engineer Aamir Khattak said that the general elections were held in a peaceful manner in Multan Division. The election process started on time at 5463 polling stations across the division and no untoward incident occurred in the entire election process.

The situation of Aman also remained intact. In the division, 240 candidates on 16 national constituencies, 642 candidates on 32 provincial constituencies participated in the election. 623 polling stations of A category, 1853 of B category, 2987 of C category have been established in the division. 5463 polling stations, 16680 polling booths have been established. 5538 presiding officers, 34667 assistant presiding officers, 17334 polling officers including 57539 officers performed their duties in the general election.

The control rooms in the commissioner office, district administration offices were also functional. In addition, Commissioner Multan Division Engineer Aamir Khattak, RPO Multan Region Captain R. Sohail Chaudhry Khanewal, Kadirpur-Ran visited the polling stations of Multan and reviewed the election process, law and order situation. He visited the control room and gave a briefing. Nafri is performing duty for transparent and peaceful elections. Law and order situation-Police are active to maintain.

## Sindh governor commends ECP's role for election arrangements

**City Desk**

ISLAMABAD: Sindh Governor Kamran Tessori on Thursday expressed his satisfaction over the arrangements made for the elections 2024 by the election commission. He also commended the efforts of the election commission for smooth flow of election process in most parts of the province.

Talking to a private news channel after casting his vote, he said that minor complaints were reported but the overall set up and arrangements of the election commission for the polling was laudable.

In reply to a question about the shutdown of mobile signals and internet facilities, Governor Tessori said



that the step was taken to protect people's lives and property and that was the top priority of the caretaker government, he added.

He said that all necessary measures had been taken for security reasons, and safety of the citizens.

In an appeal to the public, the Governor said, every person should exercise their right to vote for the future of this country.

## Jan Achakzia congratulates people of Balochistan for conducting peaceful elections

**Bureau Report**

QUETTA: Caretaker Baluchistan Provincial Minister for Information Jan Achakzia, on Thursday congratulated the people of the province for holding general elections 2024, in a peaceful environment.

A large gathering of the people at polling stations had showcased their faith on rule of law and democracy in the country. He said the people of Balochistan rejected the enemy's agenda to sabotage the democratic process and destabilise the province throughout the election process. The people of the province have foiled the plan of spreading fear and panic by the enemy country agents, he said adding that the people came out in large numbers to exercise their right to vote. The people of the province after participating in the electoral process with a large number gave a clear message to the terrorists that they are alert, united and against terrorism.

Jan Achakzia lauded the efforts of the Pakistan Army FC, Balochistan Police, Levies Force and law enforcement agencies (LEAs), for conducting peaceful elections in the province. He said that due to the tireless efforts of the LEAs and forces, the peaceful process of general elections has been completed. He also appreciated the ROs, DROs and other polling staff across the province for conducting transparent elections. The caretaker provincial minister said that election has been concluded in a peaceful manner.

He said the caretaker provincial government in general and caretaker chief minister Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki in particular, deserve special congratulation for conducting elections in a peaceful atmosphere.

He also thanked the Election Commission of Pakistan and the Provincial Election Commissioner for conducting the elections in a befitting manner.

## Polling process in Hazara Division concludes peacefully

**Correspondent**

ABBOTTABAD: The general elections process in Hazara Division on Thursday concluded peacefully without any incident. The election commenced at 8:00 AM, and polling stations across the eight districts of Hazara remained operational until 5:00 PM, ensuring a smooth electoral process.

A total of 2,862 polling stations were established throughout the division where 3,430,456 male and female voters exercised their right to vote. No untoward incidents were reported from any polling station, indicating a peaceful atmosphere conducive to democratic participation.

To ensure transparency and oversight, foreign observers, Commissioner Hazara Division Syed Zaheer-ul-Islam, and Deputy Commissioners from all districts visited polling stations to assess the voting process.

The law enforcement agencies, particularly the police department, implemented stringent security measures, contributing to the maintenance of peace and order at the polling stations. In addition to the presence of over 3,000 policemen in Abbottabad and more than 2,400 in Haripur, security duties were effectively carried out by the Pakistan Army and FC.

## Ballot boxes snatched in Karachi on eve of elections

**Bureau Report**

KARACHI: A presiding officer along with election material has been robbed inside a polling station in Saudabad area of Karachi.

The police said that armed robbers entered the polling station established in Pakistan Public School in Saudabad, snatching valuables as well as three ballot boxes from the presiding officer. The suspects managed to escape after the snatching.

Earlier in the day, Inspector General of Sindh Police (IGP) Riffat Mukhtar has directed all police officials to ensure high alert security and enhance patrolling measures ahead of general elections, slated for Feb 8.

## CM casts his ballot at the Riwaz Garden polling station



**Bureau Report**

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi cast his vote at the Riwaz Garden polling station today. CM cast his ballot in the polling station no. 42 of GPS Junior Model School Riwaz Garden. Mohsin Naqvi stood in the queue and waited for his turn. CM on his turn took ballot papers from the polling officer and by putting a stamp on the electoral symbol put the ballot papers in the ballot box.

## CM lays virtual foundation stone of 40 Police Stations

**Bureau Report**

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi performed the virtual groundbreaking for 40 state-of-the-art police stations in Sabzazar, simultaneously commencing construction at the Shirakot police station site with the use of an excavator. Accompanied by senior police officials, IG Usman Anwar briefed about the project.

Expressing his vision, the CM outlined plans for the construction of 22 smart police stations in Lahore and 18 in other cities across the province. Additionally, he highlighted the establishment of dispute resolution centers within these facilities to expedite the resolution of public grievances. Emphasizing inclusivity, he mentioned the provision of separate entrances for men and women.

Acknowledging the pressing need for these modernized police stations, the CM affirmed plans for their further expansion, recognizing them as imperative solutions for societal challenges.

## Election Commission delegation reviewed polling arrangements

**Raza Naqvi**

ATTOCK: A four member delegation of Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Thursday visited various polling station of Attock to review the polling arrangements to ensure conduct of free, fair and transparent elections. The delegation comprising Nisar Ahmad Durrani, Shah Muhammad Jatoi, Babar Hussain Bharwana and Justice (retd) Ikramullah. The delegation visited Government Graduate College Attock and Government Pilot School Attock. The members witnessed the voting process and met the voters and polling staff. The presiding officer and staff informed the EC delegation about the election procedure.

On this occasion, district returning officer Rao Atif Raza and District Election Commissioner Noor-ul-Khattab briefed the arrangements for conduct of elections in the district. Rao Atif Raza informed the delegation that as many as 1015 polling stations are established to facilitate as many as 1349040 voters in the district. He revealed that to facilitate the voters, 1015 presiding officers, 6712 assistant presiding officers and 3356 polling officers are deployed. On this occasion, while talking to media, EC member Shah Muhammad Jatoi has said that the Election Commission of Pakistan is ensuring transparency in the general elections and it is being closely monitored. He expressed satisfaction that the polling process is smooth and transparent.

## NA-31 Peshawar: Suspect posing as policeman arrested outside polling station

**Bureau Report**

PESHAWAR: Police on Thursday arrested a suspect posing as policeman outside a polling station in NA-31 Peshawar during election 2024.

As per details, the police officials stated that the suspect wearing police uniform was trying to enter polling station 179 in NA-31 Peshawar.

Police spokesperson said that the suspect was arrested and arms were also recovered from his possession whereas further investigation is underway.

Polling began at 8 am today and will continue uninterrupted till 5 pm as more than 128 million voters are set to elect their representatives for the national and provincial assemblies for the next five years in what appears to be one of the most unpredictable general elections in Pakistan's political history.

## South Punjab election in full swing, Chief Secretary

**Asim Tanveer / Kiran Asim**

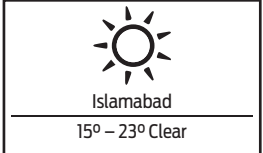
MULTAN: On the occasion of general elections, polling continued in full swing in South Punjab.

Additional Chief Secretary South Punjab Captain (Rtd) Saqib Zafar visited various polling stations in Multan and reviewed the ongoing polling process and security arrangements in the cantt and city areas. He also talked to the citizens and inquired about the polling process. Citizens expressed full satisfaction on the polling process Captain (Rtd) Saqib Zafar also went to Police Secretariat and met Additional IG Police South Punjab Muhammad Kamran Khan. Additional Chief Secretary and Additional IG expressed satisfaction over the overall law and order

situation on the occasion of polling day. The Chief Secretary opened fire outside the polling station in Chowk Sarwar ShaheedA report of the incident has been requested.

In connection with the elections to be held on February 8

On the direction of Additional Chief Secretariat South Punjab, Captain (retd) Saqib Zafar, control rooms were established in Civil Secretariat South Punjab. These control rooms were established for coordination between the Election Commission and the administration of the districts of South Punjab. Multan. I Control Room Section Officer Ahmed Rana while in Bahawalpur-The Control Room Section was established under the leadership of Riaz Ahmed Khan.



**SERVICES**

**Namaz Timings**

Fajr .....5:35 am  
 Zohr .....12:22 pm  
 Asr .....4:07 pm  
 Maghrib .....5:45 pm  
 Isha .....7:09 pm

**EMERGENCY**

Rescue (Police) .....15  
 Bomb Disposal .....15  
 Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad .....1122 & 16  
 Emergency Ambulance .....1122 & Rescue Services .....4451122  
 Motorway Police .....92706044  
 Motorway Police .....9270601-20

**Women Police Stations**

Islamabad .....9222596  
 Rawalpindi .....9270601-20

**ENQUIRY**

Edhi Ambulance .....115  
 PIA Flight Info .....114  
 PIA Cargo .....9280979  
 Railway Inquiry .....117  
 Railway Exchange .....9270831-5  
 WASA Rawalpindi .....5555489  
 CAA .....9281092

**HOSPITALS**

CMH .....561111  
 MH .....561116  
 MH .....561116  
 Cantt Hospital .....9270907-11  
 DHQ .....5556311-4  
 RGH .....9290301-7  
 Holy Family .....9290322-7  
 PIMS .....9261170-79

## Shehbaz Sharif casts his vote in Model town

**Bureau Report**

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz President Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday cast his vote at a polling station number 82 of constituency NA 127 (Lahore-XI). Later, briefly talking to media, he said that today entire nation was exercising their right to vote for ensuring progress and prosperity in the country.

He said, "We pray that new elected government promotes love, unity and spirit of goodwill in the country." To a question, he said that security arrangements were satisfactory. It was pertinent to mention here that Shehbaz Sharif was contesting election from NA-123.

# Enthusiastic turn out testament to strengthening democracy in Pakistan, says Solangi

**City Desk**

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi said on Thursday that enthusiastic turn out in the general elections was not only a testament to the strengthening democracy in the country but also marked a significant milestone in its history.

Congratulating the entire nation on successful completion of polling process of the general elections 2024, he said in a policy statement on elections that today the nation had witnessed another historic event in the democratic journey.

"People across Pakistan participated in the process in large numbers demonstrating their commitment to democracy, their national responsibility and belief in the power of vote", he maintained.

"The smooth conduct of the elections is attributed to the collective efforts of multiple stakeholders and it is my privilege to extend my gratitude to all those who played a pivotal role in this democratic exercise", he added.

He specially thanked the international media, observers, local

media and journalists covering the electoral process.

"Your presence and coverage has been instrumental in ensuring transparency and credibility shining a light on integrity of electoral process at global stage", said the minister.

The minister also thanked the armed forces, civil armed forces, law enforcement agencies and civilian administration for their unwavering commitment and diligence in providing safe and secure environment for the electoral process.

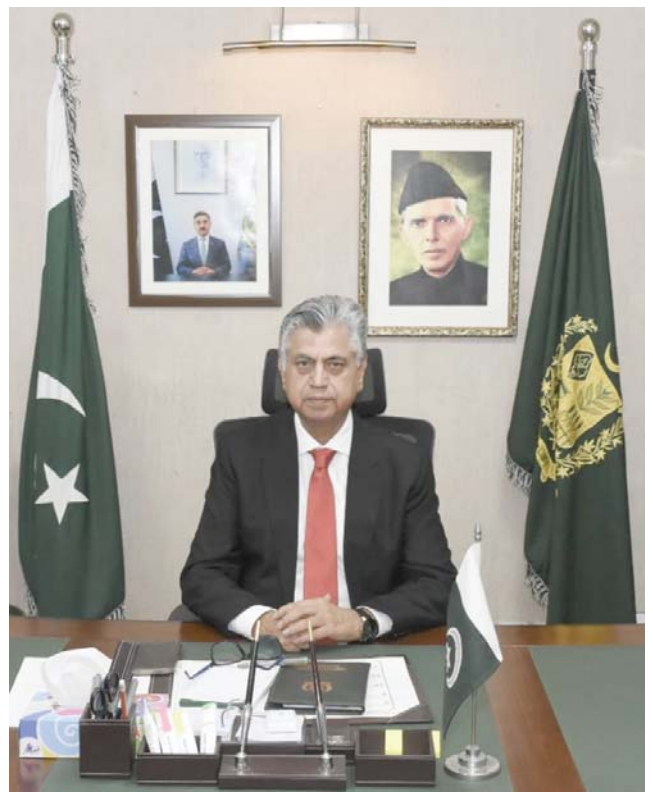
"Their dedication ensured that the polling process was conducted

peacefully allowing every citizen to exercise their right to vote in peace and safe environment", he said.

Furthermore, he extended appreciation to the Election Commission of Pakistan for its exemplary conduct and management of electoral process.

Tireless efforts and dedication of the ECP to uphold democratic values and ensuring free and fair elections was commendable.

"The professionalism and integrity displayed by the commission has been crucial in reinforcing the confidence of public in democratic electoral process", said Solangi. He said that in the moment of



achieving a great benchmark, the nation should raise hands to pray for those who became victims in yesterday and today's incidents. May Allah bless their souls in eternal peace and may the nation stands united for benefit from their ultimate sacrifice.

"As we move forward, let us all pledge to continue to support and strengthening our democratic institutions and process." "Together, we will build a stronger and more prosperous and democratic Pakistan for the future generations", he remarked.

## Obligation

ISLAMABAD: A woman holding her kid leaves after casting her vote at a polling station during national elections in Federal Capital. Millions of Pakistanis began voting on February 8 in an election marred by allegations of poll rigging, with the country's most popular politician in jail and a military-favoured candidate tipped to win.



Photo: Online by Raja Farid

# It's not overpopulation that plagues Pakistan; the true hurdles are Corruption and Injustice

**M. Ameer Hamza**

**O**verpopulation has long been identified as a significant global issue, often associated with strain on resources, environmental degradation, and economic instability. However, in the case of Pakistan, it is crucial to recognize that overpopulation is not the core problem. Instead, the country faces significant challenges related to corruption and injustice, which overshadow the impact of population size.

By addressing these underlying issues, Pakistan can work towards a more sustainable and equitable future. The term "overpopulation" refers to the accumulation of too many people in a given area, resulting in economic and social problems. Pakistan's population was 240,485,658, up 1.88% from 2022. Pakistan's population was 235,824,862, up 1.91% from 2021, according to the Council of Common Interest (CCI). The results of the 2023 digital census were "unanimously" accepted on August 5th, 2023. According to the census results, Pakistan's population has increased to 241.49 million with an annual growth rate of 2.55%.

In recent months, reports of corruption and injustice within government agencies have raised serious concerns about the integrity of public institutions. From bribery and embezzlement to abuse of power and lack of accountability, the scourge of corruption and injustice appears to be undermining public trust and confidence in the government.

Corruption has deeply entrenched itself in various aspects of Pakistani society, permeating government institutions, business transactions, and public services. It erodes trust in the public sector, stifles economic growth, and perpetuates inequality. In a corrupt system, resources are often misallocated, hindering the potential for sustainable development. As a result, the true impact of overpopula-

tion is obscured by the ramifications of systemic corruption.

According to Transparency International: Pakistan is the 133 least corrupt nation out of 180 countries, according to the 2023 Corruption Perceptions Index reported by Transparency International. Corruption Rank in Pakistan averaged 113.04 from 1995 until 2023, reaching an all time high of 144.00 in 2005 and a record low of 39.00 in 1995. Pakistan's buzzwords for 2018 were corruption and "accountability." Nawaz Sharif was found guilty of two corruption charges. On July 6, Nawaz was found guilty of owning assets that were beyond the scope of his knowledge of the law, while his daughter Maryam Nawaz was sentenced to seven years in prison for abandonment.

Maryam's husband, a retired captain Mohammad Safdar, was sentenced to a year in prison for non-cooperation with nab and abetting his wife and father-in-law. Nawaz, on the other hand, was convicted of another offence in December by the accountability court, this time in the Al-Azizia steel mills corruption case, bringing him back to prison. The court found him guilty of possessing more money than his means, imposing a seven-year jail term as well as a us \$25 million fine. In the rs14 billion Ashiana Iqbal Housing Society corruption lawsuit, NAB snared the Younger Sharif, who held the prominent positions of PML-n president and leader of the opposition in the parliament.

In a fake bank accounts lawsuit dating back to 2015, former chairman of the Pakistan stock exchange Hussain Lawai, who is widely believed to be a close aide to former president Asif Ail Zardari, was arrested by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA in July). Following a supreme court decision in a case involving the housing projects, Malik Riaz's Bahria town is being investigated in other investigations; in may, nab chairman retired justice Javed Iqbal ordered the anti-graft watchdog to launch investigations

against Bahria town Karachi, Bahria town Lahore, and Bahria town Rawalpindi.

Every one know that a corruption lawsuit against retired army officers, which Sharjeej Memon's detention last year was just as interesting to watch as the 'honey and oil' mystery surrounding him during his 2018 detention. Former prime minister Yousef Raza Gilani was charged with corruption in the years-old multi-billion dollar Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) corruption lawsuit in march. Two other former prime ministers, Nawaz Sharif and shahid Khaqan Abbasi, were investigated by nab for alleged power abuse by granting a contract for the liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal to 15 different companies of their choice.

Similarly, injustice, both economic and social, exacerbates the challenges faced by Pakistan. Economic inequality limits access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities, perpetuating cycles of poverty and marginalization. The consequences of corruption and injustice within government agencies are far-reaching, affecting not only the allocation of public resources but also the lives of ordinary citizens who rely on these institutions for essential services. When funds meant for vital public projects are siphoned off through corrupt practices, it is the communities in need that suffer the most. Similarly, when individuals are denied opportunities or treated unfairly due to systemic injustice, the social fabric of the nation is torn apart, leading to further divisions and unrest.

Injustice and abuse of power have also come to light. A recent investigation revealed a pattern of discriminatory practices within a government agency, resulting in the unfair treatment of certain individuals based on their race, gender, or political affiliation. Such systemic injustice scale for adhering to the rule of law, which is by no means acceptable. Regional Rank is 5/6 and

overall score is 0.38. not only violates basic principles of equality and fairness but also erodes the public's confidence in the government's commitment to upholding the rule of law. The Noor Muqaddam case in Islamabad, the horrific murder of a 27-year-old girl used to be announced on July 2021. As the facts became known, Zahir Jaffer, the son of a wealthy businessman and a buddy of the victim, became the killer. In Pakistan's criminal justice system, conventional capability (such as blood money) have been used to defend the accused from courtroom action.

Article 25 of Pakistan's constitution guarantees equality before the rule. However, Pakistan's criminal justice system is in no way intended to provide justice to those at the lower levels of the hierarchy. Justice is at the top of the game; many victims are unable to file a complaint. If they succeed in doing so, the vicious cycle of court hearings and court trials undermines their faith in the criminal justice system.

The role of the media in exposing and shedding light on corruption and injustice cannot be understated. Investigative journalists have played a crucial role in unearthing cases of malfeasance and shining a spotlight on the perpetrators. The power of public scrutiny and accountability through the press has been instrumental in holding government agencies to a higher standard and demanding swift action to rectify the wrongs that have been committed.

The fight against corruption and injustice within government agencies is a collective responsibility that requires the commitment and collaboration of all stakeholders. It is essential for citizens to remain vigilant and hold their elected representatives and public servants accountable for their actions.

A country like China would be starving if overpopulation were a barrier to growth. We have come to the conclusion that it's not overpopulation that plagues Pakistan; the true hurdles are Corruption and Injustice.

## PRCS strengthens emergency response for general election 2024



**PPA**

ISLAMABAD: In support of government efforts to manage emergencies, the Pakistan Red Crescent Society strategically positioned advanced ambulances, trained responders, and first aid personnel near polling stations nationwide that remained vigilant to ensure swift response to any unexpected incidents during the General Election 2024. Additionally, a comprehensive emergency response plan was formalized, with skilled personnel appointed at various locations in major cities. Collaborating with all relief agencies, the Pakistan Red Crescent Society remained steadfast in its commitment to fulfilling its duties during emergencies.

Volunteer teams were also dispatched to hospitals across the country to facilitate blood donations in anticipation of potential adverse situations. The Regional Blood Donor Center in Islamabad has maintained an adequate supply of blood units to address emergencies.

Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari, Chairman of the Pakistan Red Crescent Society, underscored, "The Red Crescent has consistently stood by the nation. Our Emergency Response Teams (ERTs) have demonstrated exemplary dedication, while trained personnel have shown readiness by diligently performing their duties, emphasizing that peace, security, and impartial humanitarian aid are fundamental to our mission."

Chairman Laghari further stated that PRCS Blood Donor Volunteers are on high alert, stationed at various hospitals nationwide not only to facilitate blood donations but also to provide immediate assistance to dedicated health teams working tirelessly in hospitals.

## 10Pearls Launches 10Pearls Studio, Fully Integrated Digital Marketing Capabilities

**PNP**

LAHORE: 10Pearls announced the launch of 10Pearls Studio, a significant expansion of our digital and creative capabilities. Employing a "one brand, one team" strategy, this initiative seamlessly consolidates our digital media acquisitions into a unified, full-service digital powerhouse.

The studio brings together our existing digital capabilities and past digital marketing acquisitions, such as Likeable, an acclaimed social media agency based in New York City, and Pixel506, a digital services agency based in Costa Rica. It offers brands a one-stop solution for comprehensive digital marketing services spanning creative services, branding, social media management, digital advertising, digital engineering & AI.

"We have created a compelling value proposition for our customers. With the combination of world-class digital marketing services fully integrated with cutting-edge technology and AI capabilities under a unified team, we are positioned to help our customers through the entire gamut of digital." Imran Aftab, CEO, 10Pearls

10Pearls Studios will be led by Carrie Kerpen, co-founder and former CEO of Likeable. An industry veteran, Carrie will oversee the growth and management of the business globally.

"10Pearls Studio allows us to balance the use of emerging technology with a deep understanding of human behavior, one which has been rooted in the team for decades. Adding global reach to the equation makes this division unstoppable." Carrie Kerpen, Managing Director, 10Pearls Studio

## PEMRA issues show cause notices to 4 TV news channels

**PPA**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) on Thursday issues show cause notices to four electronic media news channels for violation of the election code of conduct.

Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) had complained that Geo News, ARY News, GNN and Dawn News had violated ECP code of conduct and PEMRA law by conducting exclusive interviews of leaders of various political parties.

PEMRA has given the management of the news channels seven days to file a reply in personal hearing after which further action would be taken.

Moreover, the PERMA issued directives to the satellite news channels to strictly follow the code of conduct issued under Election Act 2017, otherwise, they would face action.

Group Chairman/Chief Editor: **Almas Ayoub Sabir**  
 Vice Chairman: **Asim Nazir Ahmad**  
 Managing Editor: **Naveed Ahmad Khan**  
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## Corps Commanders Conference and Public Endorsement for Pak Army - II

The youth, with their energy, passion, and innovative spirit, have been the driving force behind transformative changes in numerous countries globally. Examples abound of young people working tirelessly for the betterment of their nations, contributing to social, economic, and political advancements.

In the 1970s, South Korea witnessed a remarkable transformation with the Saemaul Undong (New Village Movement). Spearheaded by President Park Chung-hee, this initiative aimed at modernizing rural communities and eradicating poverty. The movement mobilized the youth to engage in community development projects, resulting in significant improvements in infrastructure, agriculture, and living standards. The Saemaul Undong is credited with propelling South Korea into an era of rapid economic growth and development.

In 2020, Nigerian youth took to the streets in the EndSARS protests, demanding an end to police brutality and corruption. Largely organized through social media, the movement brought together a diverse group of young activists who passionately advocated for justice and accountability. Despite facing challenges, the youth-led protests sparked a nationwide conversation about governance and the need for systemic reforms, showcasing the power of collective action.

The Civil Rights Movement in the United States during the 1950s and 1960s witnessed substantial contributions from young activists. Guided by inspirational leaders like Martin Luther King Jr., students and young adults played pivotal roles in sit-ins, freedom rides, and voter registration drives.

Their relentless efforts were instrumental in dismantling racial segregation and discrimination, paving the way for increased equality and civil rights for all Americans.

In the initial years of its independence, Singapore confronted numerous challenges, including economic uncertainty and social unrest. Under the leadership of Lee Kuan Yew, the government acknowledged the potential of the youth in nation-building. Policies were implemented to prioritize education, skill development, and youth employment. The disciplined and industrious ethos instilled in the youth significantly contributed to Singapore's transformation into a global economic powerhouse.

The Arab Spring, originating in Tunisia in 2010, was largely fueled by the discontent of the youth with prevailing political and economic conditions. Young people played a central role in advocating for political change, social justice, and economic opportunities. The protests ultimately resulted in the overthrow of the authoritarian regime, marking a significant moment in the region's history.

In the intricate mosaic of governance and decision-making, the opinions, needs, and preferences of the public weave an essential thread. Public surveys, as tools for direct engagement and feedback, play a pivotal role in understanding the heartbeat of a nation.

Public surveys function as potent instruments for assessing public sentiment and comprehending the diverse perspectives within society. By soliciting opinions on various issues, policy-

makers garner valuable insights into the concerns, priorities, and expectations of the people they serve. This knowledge is crucial for formulating policies that are not only effective but also reflective of the majority's needs. Effective governance necessitates policies that resonate with the public and address their most pressing concerns. Public surveys furnish decision-makers with a nuanced understanding of what resonates and what does not.

By aligning policies with public sentiments, governments can amplify their effectiveness and ensure that resources are directed toward areas of utmost importance to citizens.

Transparency stands as the cornerstone of a thriving democracy.

Conducting public surveys nurtures an atmosphere of openness, showcasing a commitment to involving citizens in decision-making processes. This transparency, in turn, fosters trust between the government and the public, laying the groundwork for constructive dialogue and collaboration. Public surveys function as diagnostic tools, aiding in the identification of gaps in public services and areas that demand improvement. By directly consulting citizens about their experiences and needs, governments can pinpoint deficiencies in sectors like healthcare, education, and infrastructure, leading to targeted interventions and improved service delivery.

Public surveys facilitate a more comprehensive and inclusive representation of voices. Through random sampling and outreach initiatives, surveys capture the opinions of diverse demographic groups, ensuring that the perspectives of minority populations, marginalized

communities, and various socio-economic groups are taken into account. This inclusivity contributes to policies that better mirror the needs of the entire population. Anticipating potential backlash or resistance to proposed policies becomes possible by understanding public sentiment in advance. Identifying areas of concern early on allows policy-makers to adjust strategies, communicate more effectively, and implement policies in ways that minimize opposition.

Public surveys act as a means to actively involve citizens in the democratic process. By seeking their input, governments empower individuals to feel vested in decisions that shape their lives. This participatory approach not only fortifies the democratic fabric but also cultivates a sense of civic duty and responsibility among the populace.

In the field of public opinion research, Ipsos stands as a global leader, possessing the ability to unveil nuanced insights and convert data into actionable knowledge. Through its expansive network and methodology, Ipsos public surveys play a crucial role in providing a comprehensive understanding of societal perspectives.

It is heartening to note that 74% of Pakistani youth have expressed full confidence in the Pakistan Army. A survey conducted by the renowned market research organization 'Ipsos' for the Voice of America, based on the opinion of Pakistani youth, has been released. The survey took place from January 3 to January 12 among youth aged 18 to 34 years. According to the survey, the majority of Pakistani youth consider the army the most trusted institution in the country. This alignment between the people, especially the youth, and the Pakistan Army is a positive sign for the nation.

*To be continued*

## Election-day internet shutdown is a reckless attack on people's rights

Following the internet shutdown in Pakistan as the country holds its general elections day, Livia Saccardi, Interim Deputy Director for South Asia at Amnesty International, said:

"The decision to suspend telecommunications and mobile internet services on an election day is a blunt attack on the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. It is reckless to impede access to information as people head out to polling stations on the heels of devastating bomb blasts and what has been an intense crackdown on the opposition in the lead up to the elections in the country.

Amnesty International calls on the authorities of Pakistan to adopt a rights-respecting approach and urgently lift all blanket restrictions on access to the internet.

"Unwarranted restrictions on dissemination of information, despite reassurances to the contrary from the Pakistan Telecommunications Authority and Election Commission of Pakistan, are in breach of people's human rights at this critical time in Pakistan.

"Blanket shutdowns impacts people's mobility, livelihood and ability to navigate through a difficult time further undermining their trust in authorities. Amnesty International calls on the authorities of Pakistan to adopt a rights-respecting approach and urgently lift all blanket restrictions on access to the internet to enable people's access to timely information and report on any election-related matter throughout the polling process."

On 6 February, Amnesty International and other members of the #KeepItOn coalition — a global network of over 300 organisations from 105 countries working to end internet shutdowns — wrote to the caretaker Prime Minister Mr Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar and Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja, to ensure unfettered access to the internet, social media platforms, and all other communication channels throughout Pakistan's general election.

Pakistani authorities have already imposed multiple shutdowns that violated the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, including of opposition leaders and parties, during this election cycle.

Earlier Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) issue the clarification statement that government will not shutdown internet services on Election Day and confirmed that internet will be available on the Election Day without any interruption.

## Comparative analysis of the economic stewardship during the tenures of PDM and PTI - II

During the inaugural year of the PTI administration, the amalgamated sum of exports and remittances witnessed a commendable surge of \$1.3 billion. Conversely, in the maiden year of the PDM governance, the collective figure of exports and remittances experienced a stark decline, amounting to a substantial \$9.1 billion reduction.

The downturn in non-debt foreign currency inflows significantly contributed to the heightened concerns in global markets regarding Pakistan's ability to meet its external debt obligations in the fiscal years 2022-23. This apprehension was underscored by a substantial surge in the credit default swap rate, representing the cost of safeguarding Pakistan's default-denominated bonds against default risk. Initially below 5.0%, this rate skyrocketed to over 50% within a few months following the introduction of a vote of no-confidence. Even a year after the installation of the PDM government, the rate remained elevated at 46.9%.

During the inaugural year of the PTI administration, the credit

default swap rates persisted beneath the 5.0% threshold, notably decreasing compared to the period coinciding with the PTI's assumption of power. This indicates that international financial markets harbored no discernible apprehensions regarding the potential default risk while the PTI government navigated the inherited external crises.

Let us delve into the nuanced analysis of the adjustments made in response to inflationary pressures during the tenures of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) governments.

In July 2018, antecedent to the inception of the PTI government, inflation, quantified by the consumer price index, stood at 6.2%. Subsequently, in July 2019, it ascended to 10.5%, reflecting an augmentation of 4.3%.

In April of 2022, inflation stood at 13.4% upon the establishment of the PDM government, escalating to 36.4% a year later in April 2023, marking a significant surge of 23% within the span of twelve months. To put it into perspective, the augmentation in inflation during the initial year of e witnessed during the inaugural year

of the PTI administration.

Pakistan experienced the most severe inflationary upheaval in its annals under the governance of the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM). The Sensitive Price Index soared to unprecedented levels in the upper forties, while food inflation surpassed the apogee of 50%, resulting in profound ramifications for the livelihoods of myriad Pakistanis.

During the period of macro-adjustment under the PDM administration, inflation was significantly exacerbated compared to the PTI era, primarily due to the precipitous decline in non-debt inflows and its resultant impact on the currency's value. In the initial 12-month period following the PTI government's assumption of power, the Pakistani rupee depreciated by Rs33 against the US dollar, whereas during the first year of the PDM regime, the depreciation amounted to Rs100 per dollar.

In summary, The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) administration confronted a more substantial external crisis upon assuming power than the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) government. Nevertheless, it adeptly managed the situation, achieving notably superior economic growth rates and substantially lower inflation levels compared to its PDM predecessor.

## Beyond the Ballot: Free Electricity

Shafqat Abbas

There are a lot of promises of prosperity and change that political parties are making for the 2024 general election. Among the cacophony of slogans echoing across the nation, one theme resonated louder than most: free electricity. To gain public attention, political parties competed with promises to mitigate the financial strain associated with electricity expenses. In response to growing voter dissatisfaction with ever-increasing electricity prices, one political party took the lead and made a daring promise to every home to give free electricity up to 200 units. Another party quickly retaliated, raising the incentive with promises to increase this bonus to 300 units. Could Pakistan genuinely afford to provide every home with complimentary electricity up to 200 or 300 units?

Recent NEPRA tariff determination data for July 2023 show that the domestic sector accounts for 43% of total electric energy sales, with subsidies protecting 43.7% of that amount. This subsidized proportion is 18.7% of the total energy sales. This situation is problematic for a power sector that already faces almost 20% transmission and distribution losses of the total power generation. Furthermore, the analysis of this data highlighted that under 300 units of energy consumption, 68.6% are domestic, which is 29.4% (almost one third) of total energy sales.

A harsh reality is evident that Pakistan's power sector groaned under the weight of inefficiency and bad management. Years of subsidies and political maneuvering have left the power sector reeling, resulting in over Rs. 2.6 trillion in circular debt, which grows by 8-12% annually. With the mounting circular debt of Pakistan's power sector, the dream of free electricity seems increasingly out of reach. Instead, it seems to be merely a political ploy to gain votes during elections.

Addressing the issues plaguing Pakistan's power sector requires urgent and serious reforms, and the incoming government will undoubtedly encounter numerous challenges. The "uniform tariff" is one reason for this debt. Domestic consumers across all distribution companies pay the same price regardless of their different production costs.

Under uniform tariffs, the government protects poor households by providing tariff differential subsidies without identifying the intended household for the provision of subsidies, leading to a rise in fiscal burden. Existing criteria for electricity subsidies based on consumption slabs raise concerns regarding their accuracy in determining eligibility for energy subsidies. This system tends to benefit affluent urban residents, who often exhibit lower consumption patterns because they have multiple electricity connections, falling into lower consumption slabs.

Another factor is the provision of sovereign grantees to independent power plants (IPPs), whose accumulated capacity payments vary with and without the utilization of their energy plants. Because of a lack of electricity demand during the winter season, power plants receive capacity payments without utilization.

To address these issues, the next government needs to take some serious steps. They should avoid installing extra energy generation capacity and providing sovereign grantees to privatize distribution. Getting rid of uniform tariffs launches a fair mechanism to protect just life-line consumers. Balancing energy demand between winter and summer will also help ease the burden of growing circular debt. These changes can bring down energy prices over time, although free electricity might not be possible right away. Under any circumstance, supplying free electricity for one-third of the total electricity sales is not possible for a country whose economy is already on the ventilator.

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Cartoon by Amjad Rasmi. (Courtesy of Ashraf Al-Awsat)

**Historical Victory**

# Azerbaijan's Aliyev re-elected as President for a fifth consecutive term

**Spokesman Report**

**BAKU:** Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev secured a fifth consecutive term in elections on Wednesday, official results showed, an expected outcome after his country's historic victory over Armenian separatists last year.

Tallies showed that Aliyev won the election with 92 percent of the vote after nearly all electoral precincts declared results, in a ballot held during a crackdown on independent media and in the absence of any real opposition.

"The Azerbaijani people have elected Ilham Aliyev as the country's president," Central Election Commission chief Mazahir Panahov told a press conference.

Turnout was 67.7 percent, he added.

Aliyev was heralded at home after his troops recaptured in September the breakaway Nagorno-Karabakh region from Armenian separatists who had controlled it for decades.

But the oil-rich nation's main opposition parties boycotted the vote, which

after its entire ethnic-Armenian population – more than 100,000 people – fled to Armenia after Baku's takeover.

Last month, Aliyev called the Karabakh victory "an epochal event unparalleled in Azerbaijan's history."

"The election will mark the beginning of a new era," he said, with the country holding the presidential vote on all its territory for the first time.

Supporters have praised Aliyev for turning a country once thought of as a Soviet backwater into a flourishing energy supplier to Europe.

But critics say he has crushed opposition groups and suffocated independent media.

Aliyev's win was a foregone conclusion, said independent analyst Ghia Nodia of the Caucasus Center for Strategic Studies.

There was "no suspense whatsoever in these elections without the slightest sign of competitiveness."

In recent months, Azerbaijani authorities have intensified pressure on independent media outlets, arrest-

ing several critical journalists who had exposed high-level graft.

"All fundamental rights are being violated in the country, opposition parties can't function normally, freedom of assembly is restricted, media are under government pressure, and



political dissent is being suppressed," said Kerimli of the Popular Front.

On Tuesday, Amnesty International said: "The escalating crackdown by Azerbaijani authorities ahead of the elections is not just an attack on individual rights, it's a widespread, coordi-

nated assault on civil society and the rule of law."

Aliyev, 62, was first elected president in 2003 after the death of his father, Heydar Aliyev, a former KGB officer who had ruled Azerbaijan since 1993.

He was re-elected in 2008, 2013 and in 2018, with 86 percent of the votes.

All the elections were denounced by opposition parties as rigged.

In 2009, Aliyev amended the country's constitution so he could run for an unlimited number of presidential terms, a move criticised by rights advocates who said he could become president for life.

In 2016, Azerbaijan adopted controversial constitutional amendments that extended the president's term in office to seven years from five.

He then appointed his wife as first vice president.

Around six million voters were registered for the election, which was being monitored by observers from the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

## Pakistan, Russia express satisfaction on similarities of views on global strategic stability, regional security

**City Desk**

**ISLAMABAD:** Pakistan and Russia have expressed satisfaction on the similarity of views on range of issues of global strategic stability, regional security including matters related to arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. The two sides, during the 14th meeting of the Pakistan-Russia Consultative Group on Strategic Stability held in Moscow on Wednesday expressed readiness to continue close coordination at relevant international platforms.

Moreover, the two sides also emphasized importance of regular meetings of the Consultative Group, a joint statement issued by the spokesperson of foreign office said on Thursday. The 14th round of Pakistan-Russia Consultative Group on



Strategic Stability was held under the chairmanship of

Additional Foreign Secretary (Arms Control and Disarmament) Mohammad Kamran Akhtar and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs S. A. Ryabkov. The parties had an in-depth exchange of views on international security and regional stability challenges, as well as on various aspects of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. The two sides discussed issues related to the agenda of the First Committee of the UN General Assembly, the Conference on Disarmament, the IAEA and the OPCW. The issues concerning biological, space and international information security, as well as new and emerging technologies, including the military use of artificial intelligence, came under discussion at length. It was agreed to hold the 15th meeting of the Group next year in Islamabad.

### Army, police, judiciary complete successful general election

**RAWALPINDI:** We extend heartfelt congratulations to the nation on the generally peaceful and violence free conduct of the general elections. The armed forces alongside other Law Enforcement Agencies are proud to have played a pivotal role in providing security during conduct of the sacred electoral process, in aid of civil power, and in accordance with the constitution of Pakistan. With the deployment of 137,000 army personnel and civil armed forces at approximately 6,000 selected most sensitive polling stations and over 7800 QRFs, a safe and secure environment for the public was ensured. Despite 51 cowardly terrorist attacks, mostly in KP and Balochistan, aimed at disrupting the electoral process, the soldiers remained resolute and effectively ensured peace and security across Pakistan. 12 people (including 10 personnel of security forces and law enforcement agencies) embraced Shahadat and 39 others have been injured in these attacks. Through proactive intelligence manoeuvres and swift action, many potential threats were neutralized, underscoring the unwavering commitment of our security agencies to protect the democratic rights of our citizens.

### President Alvi congratulates Ilham Aliyev on his victory in Azerbaijan's presidential elections



**Spokesman Report**

**ISLAMABAD:** President Dr Arif Alvi on Thursday congratulated Ilham Aliyev on his decisive victory in Azerbaijan's Presidential elections. Conveying best wishes to Azerbaijan's president, the president said his leadership continued to inspire progress and stability.

### Pakistani envoy meets Czech PM

**City Desk**

**ISLAMABAD:** Ambassador of Pakistan to the Czech Republic Ayesha Ali held a meeting with Prime Minister of Czech Republic Petr Fiala on Thursday at his reception for the diplomatic corps in Prague. In a post on X, she said, "I conveyed the greetings of our leadership and looked forward to further strengthening bilateral relations of Pakistan and Czech Republic."

### Pakistan, Dominica establish diplomatic relations

**News desk**

**NEW YORK:** Pakistan and Dominica, a Caribbean Island nation, have established formal diplomatic relations at a ceremony held at the Pakistan Mission to the United Nations. Pakistan UN Ambassador Munir Akram and his Dominican counterpart, Ambassador Philbert Aaron, signed a joint communique, to formalize the relationship between their countries.



Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador Akram said that despite falling in vastly different geographical zones, both Pakistan and Dominica were bound by their love of cricket. He recalled how the West Indies produced cricketing heroes who dominated the game and were a household name in Pakistan. The Pakistani envoy said that both the countries were also vulnerable to climate change which has emerged as a shared global challenge. Despite making virtually no any contribution to climate change, Pakistan was ranked among the top ten countries affected by global warming. He emphasized the need for building resilience to fight the impacts of climate change. "The establishment of formal ties between our two nations will ensure a substantive, cooperative relationship," he added. In his remarks, Ambassador Aaron thanked the Pakistan Mission for hosting the ceremony, saying the formalization of bilateral ties would open up avenues of cooperation, especially in the fields of sports and climate change. Ambassador Aaron said that given the challenges of climate change, the future will be massively impacted, which in turn warranted close cooperation. He expressed his appreciation for the government and the people of Pakistan and expressed the hope of working closely with Pakistan bilaterally as well as at the multilateral forums to promote understanding and mutual interests.

### Massive turnout of minorities witnesses in constituency 47

**Spokesman Report**

**ISLAMABAD:** In constituencies 47 and 48 massive turnout of minorities was witnessed on Thursday as many persons with disabilities (PWDs) came out of their houses to cast votes.

According to the presiding officer of the constituency of 47, the turnout of the females was almost 60 percent and the women cast their votes peacefully. "We have separate corners for the senior citizens and the person with disabilities for the general election".

She said that it was witnessed that PWDs were eager to vote for their leaders. A senior citizen Bashiran Manzoor mother-in-law of a person with disabilities named Huma Faisal said both the ladies came to cast their vote for the better future of the country.

She said that it is our national obligation to cast a vote for our country's progress.

## India to replace military personnel in Maldives with civilians after president demanded they leave

**News Desk**

**NEW DELHI:** India on Thursday said it will replace its military personnel in Maldives with civilian technical staff who will operate three aircraft from India that provide humanitarian services.

The decision comes after new Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu demanded that the Indian military personnel be withdrawn by March 15.

At least 75 Indian military personnel are believed to be in Maldives and their known activities include transporting patients from remote islands and rescuing people at sea. India earlier gave Maldives a Dornier airplane and two helicopters.

Tensions between India and Maldives have grown since Muizzu came to power last year and adopted a pro-China stance.



The Maldives Foreign Ministry said on Jan. 2 that officials from two countries met in New Delhi and agreed that India would begin withdrawing its troops from the Maldives on March 10 and complete the process by May 10.

Indian External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal told reporters on Thursday that the Indian military personnel "would be replaced by competent Indian technical persons." He did not elaborate.

After taking power, Muizzu visited China ahead of India and said Maldives' small size is not a license for anyone to bully the country. His comments were an apparent response to social media calls in India for tourists to boycott

Maldives after three Maldives deputy ministers made derogatory posts against Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The dispute began in January when Modi posted pictures on X, formerly known as Twitter, of himself strolling on the beach and snorkeling in Lakshadweep, an Indian archipelago that his government believes has untapped tourism potential. Some in Maldives saw it as an attempt to lure tourists away from its sandy white beaches and luxury island resorts.

Muizzu suspended the deputy ministers, saying their comments did not reflect government policy. However, Muizzu after returning from China announced plans to end Maldives' dependence on India and find alternate places for Maldivians to obtain education and health services and import staples and medicines.

Bull & Bears PSX 100-Share Index Fluctuation

Table with 2 columns: Index Value, Change. Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index. Current: 64,143.87, Prev. Close: 63,799.01.

Table with 2 columns: Index Value, Change. Europe: FTSE 100 Index. Index Value: 7,595.48, Change: -33.27.

Table with 2 columns: Index Value, Change. USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average. Index Value: 38,598.53, Change: -78.83.

Table with 2 columns: Index Value, Change. Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average. Index Value: 36,863.28, Change: +743.36.

Table with 3 columns: Currency, Buying, Selling. Open Market Forex Rates. Includes Australian Dollar, Bahrain Dinar, Canadian Dollar, etc.

IT exporters should be immediately excluded of internet suspension

PPA

ISLAMABAD: A leading IT exporter of Pakistan, Noman Said, has lambasted the consultation-less and blanket blockage of internet services in the country due to the elections...



this excuse that we need some time leverage due to unavailability of internet - and, to be precise, credibility & goodwill achieved through timely delivery is everything in the IT export markets as once a client or order is gone, it is impossible to regain them.

Transforming Mirpur

SCO's Software Technology Park (STP) Ignites Innovation, Collaboration & Prosperity

Bureau Report

MIRPUR: Mirpur, the heart of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, is on the brink of a monumental transformation with the imminent inauguration of the region's inaugural Software Technology Park.

the organization's endeavors to uplift the local community. This visionary project is poised to deliver a multitude of benefits, catering to the diverse needs of freelancers, entrepreneurs, startups and professionals in the region.



ing knowledge-sharing and networking opportunities. Dedicated offices cater to the unique needs of startups, offering them the necessary support to thrive and grow.

focused work sessions, fostering a conducive environment for creativity and innovation. The spacious hall serves as a versatile venue for hosting a variety of events and gatherings, fostering community engagement and collaboration.

Responsibility

ISLAMABAD: Atif Ikram Sheikh, President FPCCI casts his vote at a polling station during the country's parliamentary elections, in the Federal Capital along with Mr. Karim Aziz Malik, Chairman FPCCI Capital Office, Islamabad, former Vice President FPCCI & CEO Barkat Rice Mills (PVT) Islamabad.



China's stock exchanges release guidelines on corporate sustainability disclosure

Xinhua

BELJING: Three major stock exchanges in China released Thursday their first guidelines on corporate sustainability disclosure and started to seek public opinion.



According to the Shanghai Stock Exchange (SSE) and the Shenzhen Stock Exchange (SZSE), companies included in the SSE 180, STAR 50, SZSE 100 indexes and the ChiNext Index, as well as those listed both at home and abroad, are required to publish their 2025 sustainability reports before April 30, 2026.

according to the exchange. The guidelines covering the environmental, social and governance fields are expected to improve corporate sustainability disclosure. The China Securities Regulatory Commission vowed to build and improve the corporate sustainability disclosure in a three-year action plan on improving the quality of listed companies in November 2022.

The capitalization of the related companies in total accounted for 51 percent of the entire market. Meanwhile, companies listed on the Beijing Stock Exchange, generally small and medium-sized innovative enterprises, can issue voluntary disclosures,

China Focus: Chinese provinces plan to support emerging, future industries in 2024

Xinhua

BELJING: Numerous Chinese provinces have mapped out blueprints to beef up support for tech-intensive industries and foster new growth momentum or "new productive forces" that feature innovation, high-quality and advanced productivity.



In their annual government work reports delivered at this year's local "two sessions," regional policy-makers unveiled clear signals on where China's economic landscape will be shifting in the years to come. Many provinces have highlighted the production of new energy vehicles (NEVs), which is among the fastest growing sectors in the country, as one of their major industrial goals.

China's installed new-type energy storage capacity had reached 31.39 gigawatts by the end of 2023, according to the National Energy Administration. Guangdong has also emphasized building itself into a "high ground" of low-altitude economy in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. The southern Chinese province aims to explore new aviation scenarios in urban transportation, emergency rescue and logistics, which will be supported by a low-altitude unmanned sensing system.

cal takeoff and landing aircraft is currently in the pipeline. Multiple provincial-level regions have pledged to break tech bottlenecks in order to tap new growth potential. Shanghai has formulated a plan to vigorously develop home-grown, self-controllable industrial software and operating systems. Meanwhile, in Anhui, support will be provided for dynamic random access memory (DRAM) and display panel industries as part of the new-generation information technology sector.

China's central bank to further optimize financial services

Xinhua

BELJING: China's central bank has pledged efforts to optimize financial services this year, revealing its plans in a report on Thursday.



Efforts will be made to establish a modern central bank system and enhance counter-cyclical and cross-cyclical adjustments, the People's Bank of China said in its latest monetary policy report for the fourth quarter of 2023. A prudent monetary policy will be flexibly, accurately and effectively implemented, the report said, adding that the central bank will guide the reasonable growth and balanced supply of credit, and maintain reasonable and sufficient liquidity.

make better use of both the aggregate and structural functions of monetary policy tools, and do better jobs in technology finance, green finance, inclusive finance, pension finance and digital finance, it said. Financial support will be strengthened for the construction of affordable housing and public infrastructure, and the renovation of urban villages. Underlining keeping the RMB exchange rate basically stable and in reasonable balance, the report also called for effectively preventing and defusing financial risks in key areas, and guarding against systemic financial risks.

Big Oil offers record returns to lure investors back

Reuters

LONDON: Big Oil firms are handing shareholders more money than ever and are promising more going forward in an attempt to reassure investors of their discipline and resilience in the face of an uncertain outlook for fossil fuels. The top five Western oil and gas firms—BP, Chevron, Exxon Mobil, Shell and TotalEnergies—returned to shareholders over \$111 billion in dividends and share repurchases in 2023, according to Reuters calculation.

Ukraine. Net profits dropped sharply in 2023 to \$123 billion. All five companies have reported results over the past week. "During a time of geopolitical turmoil and economic uncertainty, our objective remained unchanged: safely deliver higher returns and lower carbon," Chevron CEO Mike Wirth told investors last Friday. Investors such as pension funds have traditionally held on to oil majors' shares because of their steady, long-term dividends.

But the rise of the tech sector, a sharp drop in oil majors' performance last decade due to excessive spending and oil price volatility as well as the growing environmental concerns have led to a decline in interest in the sector. The energy sector accounted for 4.4% of the overall weighting of the S&P 500 index by the end of January, down from around 14% in the last decade, according to S&P data. The group has revealed a clear transatlantic divide in strategies in recent years, with Chevron and Exxon focusing on growing oil production while BP, TotalEnergies and Shell invest a higher proportion of capital in low-carbon and renewables.

investors last week, vowing "complete predictability" over returns. Shell, Chevron and TotalEnergies increased their dividend in the fourth-quarter results, while BP increased the rate of its buybacks. Exxon returned \$32 billion to shareholders last year, the sector's highest. "Oil and gas is investors' least favourite sector so spending gazillions on large mega-projects for cash flows in 5 years time with uncertain demand trends is very hard to stomach for many investors," Bernstein analyst Oswald Clint said.

The sector is expected to make minimal spending increases in 2024, according to Tobias Wagner, Vice President, Senior Credit Officer at Moody's Investors Service. The increased discipline is a result of a few factors including investors' demands for returns as well as an uncertain energy demand outlook, he said. "Companies are being more selective and investments face greater hurdles in terms of returns, emissions and regulations." "The credit quality of the sector has improved with more upgrades than downgrades in recent years also reflecting discipline in maintaining balance sheet strength and flexibility," Wagner said.



## Counting

SARGODHA: February 08—Polling officials counting votes in polling stations during General Elections 2024.



## Elections 2024

## Here's all you need to know about Form 45, 46, 47, 48 and Form 49

Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is all set to have general elections on February 8, under strict security measures.

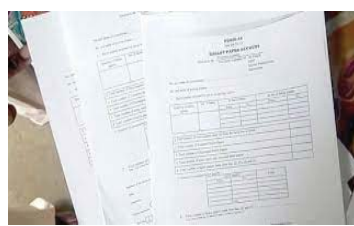
During the electoral process, there are several forms used to file the results of a constituency. Here we will try to explore the importance of the several forms that play a vital role in the election process.

Form 45: It is commonly referred to as the "Result of the Count." The Form 45 contains essential information

about the polling station, including the polling station number, constituency name, total registered voters, total votes cast, and a detailed breakdown of votes received by each candidate.

Candidates can independently verify their received votes through Form 45.

Form 46: This form provides details about the number of ballot papers received at the polling station, the number of ballot papers issued from the ballot boxes, and the number of challenged, incorrect, and canceled ballot papers. Additionally, Form 46



includes information about any irregularities in the voting process.

Form 47: Form 47 contains the number of rejected votes and the breakdown of votes for each candidate about

the unofficial results of an electoral constituency.

Form 48: Form 48 is crucial in the preparation of election results as it includes the total number of votes cast for each candidate in a specific constituency.

Form 49: Form 49, also known as the Gazetted Form, comprises the final and official results of the election.

It includes the names of candidates, their affiliated political parties, and the total votes received in the electoral constituency.

## Interior Minister Expresses satisfaction on law &amp; order situation during Elections

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Minister for Interior Dr. Gohar Ejaz Thursday expressed satisfaction on the conclusion of the process of polling for General Elections 2024. In his statement issued here, he announced with immense satisfaction that the overall security situation across the country remained generally stable to ensure the peaceful conduct of free and fair elections.

The minister said that he acknowledged the unwavering dedication and professionalism of the security forces, law enforcement agencies, and police personnel for holding elections in peaceful manners. These forces were



deployed extensively and in large numbers, ensuring the smooth conduct of the electoral process, which was a

testament to their commitment to democracy and the people of the country, he added. Dr. Gohar specially

congratulated to all the security personnel who played a critical role in facilitating a peaceful voting environment.

Their deployment covered even the most far-flung areas of Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, interior Sindh, and Punjab, underscoring government's commitment to ensuring every citizen's right to vote in a secure atmosphere, he said. The minister said that despite a few isolated incidents, the overall situation remained under control, demonstrating the effectiveness of the security measures. Smooth conclusion of the polling process underscored commitment of the Armed Forces, Civil Armed Forces and law enforcement agencies to providing a peaceful environment for voters, enabling them to exercise their democratic right without fear, he added.

## China wishes smooth, stable, safe elections in Pakistan: FM Spokesperson

BELJING: A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson on Thursday said that China, as an all-weather strategic cooperative partners and iron friend, wished Pakistan a smooth, stable and safe elections being held across the country. "As an all-weather strategic cooperative partner and iron friend, China wishes Pakistan a smooth, stable and safe election," Wang Wenbin said during his regular briefing in response to a question about incident of violence on the eve of the election in Pakistan.

Wang Wenbin said that Chinese side was deeply shocked by the attacks in Pakistan and strongly condemned them. "We express our condolences to the victims and condolences to the families of the victims and the injured," he added. He said that China opposed to all forms of terrorism and firmly supported the unremitting efforts of the Pakistani government and people to eradicate terrorism and achieve social security and stability. The spokesperson said that Pakistani general election was the internal affairs of Pakistan, adding, "As an all-weather strategic partner and iron friend, we wish the Pakistani general election a smooth, stable and safe holding."

## Bilawal, other politicians demand restoration of cellular services

PPA

KARACHI: Chairman Pakistan People's Party Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari in a social media statement demanded immediate restoration of the cellular services across the country.

In a tweet PPP chairman has said that he has directed the party to contact the election commission and courts over the matter.

Syed Khurshid Shah, a PPP stalwart and former leader of opposition, has called suspension of Internet services has not been a good tradition. He said transparency of the election will lift Pakistan out of a quagmire and hoped that the fairness of polls will not be challenged.

He said the voters' turnout will be affected if cellular services would not open. "No political party taken into confidence over suspension of internet services," he said.

He also demanded immediate opening of the mobile phone service.

Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami Karachi Hafiz Naem ur Rehman has also demanded restoration of the mobile phone service.

Talking to media after casting his vote in NA-250 in North Nazimabad, Hafiz Naem said that termination of cellular services is an excess with the country's 250 million population.

He also complained that at several polling stations election material is present, but the polling staff is absent. He alleged that watchmen and drivers have been made presiding officers.

He urged the election commission to inform, why the election has been made a farce.

Meanwhile, Sindh information minister Ahmad Shah has clarified that the province didn't recommend termination of Internet services.

"The federal government has been empowered to shutdown mobile service and the interior ministry has suddenly suspended the mobile phone service," Ahmad Shah said.

## Smooth, peaceful polling for General Election 2024 concludes

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: A daylong polling process concluded on Thursday for the General Election 2024 overall in a peaceful manner, with active participation from all age group voters who came out in droves to elect candidates of their choice. The polling started simultaneously across the country at 8 a.m. and continued till 5 p.m. without any break to provide maximum time to citizens to exercise their right to vote enshrined in the constitution.

The voters present in the premises of the polling stations at the poll-ending time were allowed to cast their votes, said a spokesperson for the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja had been personally seeing the election proceeding at the Central Election Monitoring Control Center. According to the ECP, over 128 million registered voters were scheduled to exercise their democratic right by casting votes for candidates participating in elections for the national and provincial legislatures. The polling was held for 265 seats of the National Assembly and 590 seats of provincial assemblies.

The voting took place on 51 seats of the Balochistan Assembly, 128 out of 130 seats of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, 296 out of 297 seats of the Punjab Assembly and 130 seats of the Sindh Assembly. The polling was held in 855 constituencies out of 859 however due to the death of the candidate, voting will not be held in NA 8, PP 266, PK 22 and PK 91.

The government had deployed over 648,000 security personnel nationwide to ensure the safety of voters, as well as, conduct of fair and transparent polling process. Out of 648,000 security personnel deployed, 137,000 were from army and paramilitary force, while 511,000 policemen performed duties during the election. An average of seven to eight security personnel manned each of the 90,777 polling stations across the country. In the first tier, the police performed the duty, along with the civil armed forces in the second tier and the armed forces in the third tier. A special aerial Quick Reaction Force (QRF) had also been established to promptly deal with any untoward incident, especially in the Balochistan province.

## 169 seats hold key to National Assembly control

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: In the intricate landscape of the National Assembly, the magic number for political supremacy is a straightforward 169 seats for securing simple majority out of the 336 total seats, which include reserved slots for women and minorities.

This uncomplicated majority is the golden ticket that political parties aim to secure to wield influence in the legislative powerhouse.

The National Assembly boasts a total of 266 seats, with 265 dedicated to general representation.

However, a hiccup in the electoral process arose when the polling for one seat had to be postponed due to the unfortunate demise of a candidate. This incident brought the effective count down to 265 at present.

For those keeping score, a party

aspiring to clinch a simple majority needs to secure precisely 169 seats.

This means having the backing of more than half of the available seats, allowing them to steer the course of legislative decisions in their favour.

It is important to note that the significance of these numbers transcends mere mathematics; it represents the power dynamic that can shape the future course of the nation. With the focus on the clear-cut goal of 169 seats, political maneuvers and strategies intensify as parties jockey for position in the race for control.

As the political arena heats up, every move and decision takes on heightened importance in the pursuit of this pivotal majority. The nation watches with bated breath as the drama unfolds, knowing that the path to dominance in the National Assembly is defined by a simple, yet powerful, numerical goal of 169 seats.

## JI emir casts vote at NA-6 Lower Dir

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: Jamaat-e-Islami Emir Sirajul Haq has cast his vote in NA-6 Lower Dir constituency.

Sirajul Haq urged people to cast their votes for progress and prosperity of the country. He asked the voters to play their part in making the country corruption-free.

The JI emir believed his party would emerge as the biggest political party and votes cast to the party would put the country on the path of prosperity.



Siraj stressed that the people should fulfill the national duty by casting vote.

## Elections 2024: International observers review polling process

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: As polling is underway for elections 2024 across the country, the international observers and journalists who were invited by the Election Commission have started reviewing the polling process.

In this connection, a 25-member delegation of the Commonwealth Observers Group visited different polling stations of NA-47 constituency in Islamabad on Thursday morning. The delegation expressed satisfaction that the polling process is smooth and transparent.

The purpose of these visits is to monitor the electoral process.

Meanwhile, a delegation of Japanese Overseer group visited a polling station in NA-48 Islamabad today. The presiding officer and staff informed the delegation about the election procedure.

Polling began at 8 am today and will continue uninterrupted till 5 pm as more than 128 million voters are set to elect their representatives for the national and provincial assemblies for the next five years.

## Election 2024: 90-year-old woman casts her vote in NA-237 Karachi

Bureau Report

KARACHI: A 90-year-old woman cast her vote in NA-237 Karachi after the Polling began at 8 am today as more than 128 million voters are exercising their constitutional right in election 2024.

Talking to media, the 90-year-old Mai Maka urged people to exercise their constitutional rights and cast their vote.

Another handicapped man from Peshawar arrived at the polling station in a wheelchair to cast his vote, whereas old women from Sialkot and Toba Thek Singh also cast their votes.

Polling began at 8 am today and will continue uninterrupted till 5 pm as more than 128 million voters are set to elect their representatives for the national and provincial assemblies for the next five years in what appears to be one of the most unprecedented general elections in Pakistan's political history.