

Daily The Spokesman

A Leading National Daily



فرمان رسول
ہم سے مسودے بیان کیا انہوں نے کہا
ہم سے شہان نے بیان کیا ان سے کسی نے
بیان کیا ان سے ابوصالح نے بیان کیا اور ان
سے ابو ہریرہ رضی اللہ عنہ نے بیان کیا کہ نبی
کریم صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم نے فرمایا اللہ سے زیادہ
مہنگا کرو آرائش کی مشقت، بد بختی کی بستی،
برے خاتمے اور دشمن کے ہنسنے۔
(صحیح بخاری، حدیث نمبر 6616)

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RAWALPINDI

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

Approximately 60 million voters went to the polls in Pakistan on Feb 8 to elect their representatives in 265 National Assembly and 590 provincial assembly constituencies in one of the country's most competitive political contests, says Fafen. (Details on Page 3)



Serious economic problems awaiting the new government

Former President of ICCI, Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt, said on Saturday that significant economic challenges await the incoming administration as the middle class is dwindling, and the impoverished face extreme hardships. He said that after the transition to power, the rulers would have to pay close attention to the economy so that the country's threats could be reduced and the people could experience some relief. (Details on Page 6)

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Press conference

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Gohar Khan addressing a press conference at PTI central secretariat in the Federal Capital. Gohar Ali Khan said the decision regarding alliance with Majlis Wahdat-e-Muslimeen (MWM) will be announced soon to secure the reserved seats. He said that government will be formed by parties who have a majority in National Assembly and PTI will form government in Centre, Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as "we have 170 seats."



Photo: Online

Voters exercised their constitutional right without any hindrance: PM

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar has said that the voters in the currently held general elections exercised their constitutional rights, and by and large, they voted for their favorite candidates despite security challenges. "It is the beauty of a vibrant democracy, and in Pakistan, it is a transformational democracy, also a brave democracy, considering the security challenges," he opined during an interview with the Turkish broadcaster TRT.

To a question, he said that the next parliament would decide to hand over the power to that party who would meet the required magical number to form the new government. The prime minister said that their responsibility as a caretaker government was to ensure security, and ahead of the



elections, two terrorist incidents in Balochistan province occurred, which reminded the people of the real-time threat. The government always had more responsibility when it came to security, he added. Responding to a question about the suspension of the mobile services, he said that to face the security challenge, they had to block the communication channels; otherwise, they did not

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

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

added. "So how can anyone call it an undemocratic exercise and intervention from outside forces?" he said, adding that even when Imran Khan was elected, people called it a product of a so-called selection process. But the reality was that he (Imran Khan) was elected with the support of 179 members of parliament, he added. The prime minister said that the people were unfair in their criticism of Pakistan's political system. "Political parties and the parliament are the biggest stakeholders in this whole exercise of statecraft arrangements," he asserted. About the issue of PTI's election symbol, he said it was subjected to a judicial process and related more to the structure of a political party.

Prime Minister Kakar said that it was about the democratic exercise and how political parties were governed by the laws of the land. And in the largest inter-

est of democracy, he saw it in a quite sanguine way, which had set a precedent for all the political parties to go through that process, and in the future, people would be appreciative of this judicial decision, he added. He further said the working and performing democracy in Pakistan would grow and evolve. The prime minister, to another question, said Pakistan had a transitional and evolving democracy, and it had had three direct military interventions in the past, and no one could deny it. When there was a transition of power to the civilian government, there had always been pull and push, he said, adding that in his view, they should keep the larger interests of the population in mind while negotiating this power framework structure. One was the reference to the constitution, and the other were the existing pragmatic exercises.

Blast near MNA Zubair Wazir's house left one dead, two injured

Adam Khan Wazir

WANA: A powerful bomb exploded in a Beeju car in Sarkikot area of Wana, South Waziristan on Sunday night.

As a result, one person died and two people were injured.

Police said, that the blast took place in a Beeju car outside the house of newly elected MNA NA42 Zubair Wazir from South Waziristan, supporter of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf.

Sources said that one person was killed and two others were injured in a car bomb explosion outside MNA Zubair Wazir's house.

The injured were immediately shifted to District Head-



quarters Hospital, Wana for treatment.

The police said that the incident is being further investigated.

Police said that MNA Zubair Wazir was present in the house at that time and he is safe.

PML-N contacts 'disgruntled' partymen who contested independently

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has begun contacting 'disgruntled' candidates, who contested the general elections 2024 independently and came out victorious, in efforts to strengthen the party's position in National Assembly (NA).

The results of 253 out of the total 265 National Assembly constituencies where elections were held had been announced, which showed the independents in the lead with 100 seats overall. The PML-N and PPP had won 71 and 54 seats, respectively, and were set to bag most of the 70 reserved seats for women and non-Muslims in the house.

Public mandate must be respected: Gohar PTI Chairman

Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Barrister Gohar PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar made it clear that PTI had emerged as a lead political party to comfortably form independent governments in the center, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Punjab, as people gave their clear verdict "slavery is unacceptable."

Speaking at a press conference along with PTI senator Walid Iqbal and PTI Central Information Secretary Raoof Hasan, PTI Chairman congratulated the nation on behalf of PTI Founding Chairman Imran Khan for making a history by trouncing the political opponents in the electoral field with clear margin against all odds.

"Khan Sahab, who is in jail, said we won't let slavery happen. Now the whole situation is in front of you, as people came out in droves on their leader's call to vote for PTI who

remained unfazed despite facing all operation and suppression," he added.

Barrister Gohar said: "We will continue to struggle for the rights of the people, and we will present some facts to you. At the moment, PTI has a lead of 170 seats, and legal avenues will be pursued regarding what happened with results."

PTI Chairman stated that the ECP's last responsibility was to compile the results in a transparent manner, as according to the law, the contesting candidate, an election agent and an authorised observer needed to be present during the compilation process.

He said that people used their right to vote peacefully on February 8 on ex-premier Imran Khan's call and it was the ECP's "constitutional and legal responsibility" to declare polling results by 2am the next day and to explain the reasons if there was a delay.

PTI Chairman urged that the

voters' mandate must be respected and no hurdles should be created for PTI in forming government since it had clear-cut majority with securing victory on 170 National Assembly seats out of the 265 where elections were held.

He said that President Arif Alvi would invite his party to form the government as they had gotten a clear and convincing majority in the National Assembly. He said the economy would not be able to tolerate the suppression of people's voice and forming a desired government.

Gohar Khan stated that PTI Chairman-for-life would decide who will be the next prime minister of Pakistan. "He is the one, always, and he is the leader whether he is in jail or outside," he added.

"PTI has claimed victory on 39 NA seats out of the 45 in KP, which was historic and unprecedented that a party had won these many National Assembly seats from the province," he added.

ATC grants bail to PTI founder, Shah Mahmood Qureshi in May 9 cases

City Desk

RAWALPINDI: An anti-terrorism court (ATC) in Rawalpindi has granted bail to the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder and Shah Mahmood Qureshi in 12 cases registered against them.

ATC judge Malik Ijaz Asif held the hearing on bail pleas filed by the PTI founder and Qureshi, and granted them bail.

PTI counsel Sheraz Ahmed Ranjha appeared before the court. The court discarded the plea filed by the prosecution for postponement of hearing.

Later, the PTI founder and Qureshi got bails in 12 cases registered against them in May 9 riots.

PPP, PML-N exchange reservations over criticism before elections

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), who are potentially set to form coalition governments in the Centre, exchange reservations over the criticism from both sides before the conduct of general elections 2024.

In a speech on Friday evening, PML-N leader Nawaz Sharif announced that he had tasked his brother, former PM Shehbaz Sharif, to reach out to major parties such as PPP, MQM-P and others, to form an alliance.

In this vein, Shehbaz Sharif met with PPP leader Asif Ali Zardari and his son, Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, at the resi-

dence of Punjab caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi.

During the meeting, Shehbaz Sharif told Asif Zardari that PPP leadership – prominently Bilawal Bhutto – unnecessarily criticised PML-N in the election campaign.

Responding to the reservation, Asif Zardari said it was part of the election campaign and must be ended. "Mian Sahab [Shehbaz Sharif], you too had been criticising PPP," Zardari told the PML-N president.

The PPP co-chairman stressed that now the matters should be resolved for the peaceful formation of the government. "A joint formula must be established to stable the democracy," he added.

PTI protest police’s treatment of its Attock camp after Sadiq’s defeat

 Raza Naqvi

ATTOCK: Police’s misbehavior with voters and supporters of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) nominees has drawn criticism, as PTI camps were destroyed instead of providing facilities to voters. Syed Arif Naqvi, a Pakistani-American, arrived with his supporters and successfully negotiated with the police to set up the camp again. Speaking to the media, Naqvi expressed concerns that PTI’s nominated candidates were not given a level playing field, which he deemed a violation of the constitution. He highlighted that hundreds of men and women were unable to cast their votes due to the Internet shutdown, despite the Election Commission of Pakistan’s assurance that Internet service would not



be disrupted.

Naqvi further revealed that polling agents of PTI’s nominated candidates

were intimidated and forced out of polling stations by election staff, but were reinstated following intervention

by justice advocates. When questioned about the police’s actions, they cited orders from higher authorities. Naqvi expressed surprise over the sudden turn of events, particularly the defeat of Major (retd) Tahir Sadiq, PTI-supported candidate from NA-49 Attock-1. He condemned the incident and congratulated Syed Ejaz Hussain Bukhari Advocate on the success of the PTI-supported candidate from PP3 Tehsil Attock of the Punjab Assembly.

Naqvi criticized the government’s imposed restrictions and suggested that independent candidates of PTI should seek justice through the courts for the general elections of 2024. He emphasized that justice could be obtained swiftly, pointing to evidence of victory in Form 45 signed by the District Returning Officer.”

Protest

KARACHI: Supporters of the Jamaat-e-Islami protest against riggings in general elections outside Election Commission Office, in the Provincial Capital.



Photo: Online

SW, PTI supporter candidates won one National & two PK seats

 Adam Khan Wazir

WANA: Independent candidates supported by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) won one national and two provincial assembly seats in South Waziristan Lower and upper in the general elections like the rest of the country.

According to the unofficial and results of 182 polling stations, independent candidate of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, Zubair Khan Wazir won from South Waziristan Constituency NA-42.

In South Waziristan Constituency NA-42, Zubair Khan Wazir secured the first position and got 20022 votes, independent candidate Ali Wazir secured the second position by securing 16194 votes, and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUIF) candidate Maulana Jamal



Uddin Mehsud secured the third position by securing 13907 votes.

According to the unofficial results of 94 polling stations out of the total 94 polling stations of South Waziristan Lower PK 110, Ajab Gul Wazir, an independent candidate supported by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, won.

Ajab Gul Wazir got 12525 votes, independent candidate Taj Moham-

mad Wazir is second with 5354 votes. While independent candidate Alamgir Wazir is in the third position with 5233 votes.

Apart from this, independent candidate Asif Khan Mehsud, supported by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, won according to the unofficial results of 182 polling stations in South Waziristan Upper PK 109 and asif Khan Mehsud

got 11519 votes.

Independent candidate Saeed Anwar Mehsud is second with 7668 votes, while Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Ahmed Sher Mehsud won the third position got 6699 votes.


It should be remembered that this time for the first time independent candidates supported by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf have elected one national and two provincial assembly members in South Waziristan Lower and Upper.

In this way, PTI won three constituencies.

The newly elected PTI supported independent candidates thanked the workers, supporters and said that they will serve the people more than before and will work together for the collective development of South Waziristan Lower and Upper two districts.

Commissioner, RPO Dera visits the injured cops in attack



 Adam Khan Wazir

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: Commissioner and RPO of Dera Division visited CMH and Trauma Center of DHQ Hospital Dera to visit the injured policemen in Kulachi Police Station and Hathala.

Commissioner Dera Zafar Ul Islam Khattak and Regional Police Officer Nasir Mehmood Satti along with SP Elite Arshad Mehmood met with the personnel who were injured in the ID blast by anti-national elements during the election duty in Garha aslam area of Tehsil Kulachi.

RPO and commissioner Yesterday visited and met with constables Mushtaq and Jan Dost were visited at CMH Hospital while ASI Iqbal Niazi, Constables Inayatullah, Numan and Fazlur Rehman who were injured in the attack on the polling station in Kot atal Sharif were visited at District Headquarters Civil Hospital Dera.

They reviewed the medical facilities provided to the policemen and issued instructions while obtaining information from the doctors to use all resources for better treatment.

On this occasion, they encouraged the policemen and said that we are proud of these police officers who not only resisted the successive attacks of anti-national elements to hold a peaceful election without caring for their lives, rather, their impure ambitions were crushed.

On this occasion RPO said that your sacrifices will not be allowed to go in vain, inshallah soon the terrorists involved in these incidents will be exposed and brought to justice.

Dastti says my aim is to serve the poor people of the constituency

 Kiran Asim




MULTAN: Senior politician NA-175 newly elected Member of National Assembly Jamshed Ahmad Dasti has said that my aim is not the politics of the police station but serving the poor people of the constituency is the first priority.

I respect the heavy mandate of the people of the constituency. Always promoted to unite day and night to serve the people of the constituency. Revenge politics is not a part of my manifesto. Jamshed Ahmed Dasti added that I am the son of a laborer and I know more about the problems of workers, farmers, farmers, women, youth, students, traders, and other sectors, and I will use all my abilities to solve the problems of the constituency and I will play an active role in providing employment to the unemployed youth, he said. That my doors are open to all who voted for me Even if it is not given, I will stand by their side to solve their problems for them. The workers and residents of the area will point out the problems and will play their role in the real sense for the solution of their problems.


Northern Gas Regional Manager says to provide best customer service to the customers



 Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: Regional Manager Sui Northern Gas Distribution Engineer Hussain Zafar has said that it is my and Sngpl mission to provide the best facilities and service to the customers. He expressed these views yesterday after taking charge of the Regional Manager On a surprise visit to the customer service center, he directed all the staff to solve the problems of the customers as soon as possible. Chief Security Officer Saifur Rehman Khan Adeel Shehzad Executive Engineer Other officers were with him.

Mayo National Unity Council awards prominent personalities for their services in social welfare

 Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: Mayo National Unity Council of Pakistan organized a ceremony to award recognition services to personalities who have rendered significant services in various fields of life. Makhdoom Syed Ghulam Yazdani Gilani, the head of the Gilani family, presided over the ceremony and distributed awards to the personalities. Haji Ghulam Rasool Mayo In this regard, the chief organizer of Mayo National Unity Council of Pakistan, Salim Rehman Mayo, made a telephonic address from Karachi and organized a ceremony at the local club of Old Shujabad Road. and to the social welfare services of the late Abdul Razzaq Mayo Tributes were presented and the award attached to his name was given to the head of Geelania family and member of the Central Council of Pakistan Muslim League Quaid-e-Azam, Chairman Tehreek Aman Pakistan Makhdoom Syed Ghulam Yazdani Gilani and PPP leader candidate PP 220 Rana Iqbal Siraj. With Dast Mubarak Salim ur Rehman Mayo Speaking at the award distribution ceremony, Makhdoom Syed Ghulam Yazdani Gilani said that the creatures who serve God are the chosen people of God, who realize the difficulties and sufferings of the people around them and help them. This is the nature of religion. Let us create ease for the people and peace in the society And promote love. He said that in the elections to be held on February 8, the nation has elected those who have a good reputation and who teach the country and the nation so that our problems are reduced, people get jobs and get relief from inflation. This is our religion and this is it. Our motto should be Rana Iqbal Siraj said that Our region needs elected representatives who are interested in solving people’s problems. Our young people should prioritize their business instead of jobs. If we get a chance, we will also create a province for the rights of the people of the region. Phonik said in his speech that Mayo National Solidarity Council social Struggle for the elimination of evils To get rid of the scourge of usury and dowry, people across Pakistan are being made aware of its harms and Shariah points, and to make this movement more effective, the public should support us Chaudhry Azam Mayo Said that our youth should learn skills along with education pay attention to it, only then we will be able to solve our economic problems. Preventing evils and reforming the nation is welfare, God willing This struggle will continue along with Ghulam Yazdani Geelani, Chaudhry Ghulam Rasool Mayo, Chaudhry Azam Mayo and other political and social leaders.

Islamabad
15° – 23° Clear

SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr	5:33 am
Zohr	12:22 pm
Asr	4:08 pm
Maghrib	5:47 pm
Isha	7:11 pm

EMERGENCY

Rescue (Police)	15
Bomb Disposal	15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad	1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance	1122 & 4451122
Motorway Police	9266044
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
Polyclinic	9218300-09
Shifa International	4603666

DEPARTMENTS

CDA	9221334-43
CDA	9208301-04
Met Office	9250360-6
RDA	5555864
TMA	5770886
Cantonment Board	9270151-3
Islamabad Metropolitan Corporation	9209224
Potohar Town	9209224
Rawal Town	5773343

COMPLAINTS

Water Tanker Service	
E-7, F-10 & F-11	9204654
G-5, G-6, G-7, G-8	9203883
G-9, G-10, G-11, G-12, H-8	9266316
Wapda Islamabad	9217579-80
Sui Gas Complaint	119, 9272249
Wasa Water Tank	
Rawalpindi	0331-5022125

FI staged protest outside ECP provincial office in Karachi

PNP

KARACHI: The three political parties including Tehreek-e-Labbaiik Pakistan (TLP), Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), and Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) staged a protest outside the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) provincial office in Karachi, denouncing what they claimed to be electoral rigging in the general election 2024.

As the results of the general election of 2024 emerged, the political parties staged a protest outside ECP's provincial office and denounced against the alleged electoral rigging while demanding fair electoral results. A heavy contingent of police has been deployed around the office of the Provincial ECP office, while officials of the law enforcement agencies also took up positions to control the situation.

PTI-backed Shoaib Shaheen challenges NA-47 results

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) backed independent candidate and lawyer Shoaib Shaheen on Saturday challenged the result of the NA-47 Islamabad constituency in Islamabad high court.

The lawyer, Shoaib Shaheen, was defeated by Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) candidate Tariq Fazal Chaudhry, who bagged 102,502 votes and won the constituency in the general elections 2024 that were held on February 8.

Meanwhile, Shaheen managed to get the second position as he received 86,396 votes. The independent candidate challenged the results issued by the returning officer (RO) in the court.

Following the plea from the lawyer, the



Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) penned down a letter to the District Returning Officer (DRO) and Returning Officer (RO) of NA-47 seeking the report regarding the allegation of change in result in their respective constituency.

The ECP officials in the letter sought an immediate report from the DRO and RO on the matter of alleged rigging in their

constituency.

In another development, the ECP summoned an important meeting on the election 2024 results tomorrow (Sunday).

According to sources, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja will preside over the ECP meeting.

Sources said that Sikandar Sultan Raja will be brief on the February 8 election, the results in the meeting, and the delayed announcement of election results.

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has released unofficial results of 252 NA seats out of 265.

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

Golden Crop

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



Photo: Online

Central Bar Association Muzaffarabad to hold annual dinner to mark 70 years of legal profession

Abdul Majeed Tahir

MUZAFFARABAD: A function Annual dinner was organized by Central Bar Association Muzaffarabad. The Chief Justice of Azad Jammu and Kashmir High Court Justice Mr Justice Sadaqat Hussain Raja attended the annual dinner as the chief guest. Vice Chairman Azad Jammu and Kashmir Bar Council Chaudhary Shaukat Aziz Advocate, President Central Bar Association Raja Aftab Ahmed Advocate, Vice President Central Bar Association Malik Naseer Advocate, Secretary General Central Bar Association Asad Khan Advocate, Joint Secretary Central Bar Association Chaudhry Asad Khalid Advocate, Members Executive Committee Central Bar Association Naqash Ali Advocate, Chaudhry Shahzad Advocate and a large number of lawyers were attended the cere-



mony. Speaking at the ceremony, Chief Justice of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir High Court, Justice Sadaqat Hussain Raja said that I contested the first election as a candidate from the Central Bar Association Forum at the very beginning of the legal profession.

There is a bar association of states. I have a sincere attachment to the Central Bar Association. Chief Justice of Azad Jammu and Kashmir High Court Justice Sadaqat Hussain Raja further said that lawyers play

a key role in providing justice to the victim. Lawyers should play a more active role for the justice of the oppressed in the society. President Central Bar Association Raja Aftab Ahmed Advocate in his address said that it was a difficult task to show exemplary performance in one year but worked diligently and tried to deliver in the best way.

He said that Bar Association is grateful to Justice Sadaqat Hussain Raja and grateful to the High Court for providing two kanal space for lawyers' chambers in Muzaffarabad. Vice President Central Bar Association Malik Naseer Advocate, Secretary General Central Bar Association Asad Khan Advocate, Joint Secretary Central Bar Association Chaudhry Asad Khalid Advocate, Members Executive Committee Central Bar Association Naqash Ali Advocate, Chaudhry Shahzad Advocate also addressed the ceremony.

PAC BOM members intends to promote regional culture

PPA

RAWALPINDI: Third meeting of the Board of Management of Punjab Arts Council was held under the chairmanship of President Board Sakib Rafik. Secretary Board Waqar Ahmed and members Asma Butt, Muhammad Azim Iqbal,



Babar Niazi, and Muhammad Aslam Mughal participated in the meeting. President Board Sakib Rafik said that the land of Punjab is extremely fertile in terms of literature and culture. Punjab is an ancient cultural center and a province rich in folk heritage. The board is fully active for the promotion of art and culture. In the proceedings of the meeting, the President Board and all the members agreed to write a letter to the Executive Director Punjab Arts Council to include the name of former resident director Punjab Arts Council Naheed Manzoor in the board. The meeting participants said the food and culture festival was postponed till April due to PSL matches. It has also been agreed to hire staff for the audio video studio, release funds for cultural activities and create a craft bazar to increase the income of the Arts Council. Board Secretary Waqar Ahmed told the board members that Punjab Arts Council is going to organize singing and painting competitions in Rawalpindi, Attock, Chakwal, Jehlum and Murree, for which the names of the judges have been finalized. Talent competitions will be held at district, division and provincial levels. At the end of the meeting, it was agreed to hold a Jashan Baharan musical gala at the Arts Council on February 24. Nooran Lal, Sana Nemat and versatile dance group from Lahore will perform in the musical gala. President Board Sakib Rafik and other board members emphasized on wide publicity for the musical gala.

Efficiency of environment department on Sargodha road is zero: Alhaj Vohra

Abdul Majid

FAISALABAD: The affected residents of Muslim Town, Muslim Park and Sargodha Road, who have suffered from numerous accidents and numerous diseases, appeal to the administrator, Mrs. Silwat Saeed, to complete these roads as soon as possible so that the people of the area can breathe a sigh of relief. This was said by the Central President of Anjuman Tajran Cloth Board Etihad Group Pakistan Alhaji Naseer Yousuf Vohra while talking to the media during his visit to these areas. He has further said that if the work on the sewers and sewerage of these areas is not completed soon, then a protest will be held at Allied Chowk Sargodha Road along with the local people and if this is not done, then this protest will be held in eight markets of Faisalabad. will be done by The district administration should complete the development works of Sargodha Road and its adjacent areas as soon as possible.

Chief Minister KPK should be from Peshawar: Gulam Bilal Javaid

PNP

PESHAWAR: PTI senior leader Gulam Bilal Javaid, who is also the Additional Vice Chairman of Hunkoan Conservation Foundation, said that we demand from party leaders that this time the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa should be from Peshawar. So far, we have been deprived of this position and have always had Chief Ministers from Swat, Mardan, or Nowshera. We will not consider such a mistake this time. Qasim Ali Shah has won the most votes from PK-81 and is currently seated in the Provincial Assembly. We will consider every decision of the party final, but at least we can give our opinion. Gulam Hussain Chand said that due to this reason, developmental work cannot be carried out in Peshawar, and there is an increase in incidents with Peshawar every time. We also want Peshawar to be developed like Islamabad. Just an hour's drive away, reaching Islamabad feels like reaching Europe. Now is the time for Peshawar to have its own Chief Minister, and at this time, Qasim Ali Shah is the most hopeful candidate."

EC announced result of the National Assembly/Provincial Assembly of Khanewal District

Waqar Paracha

KHANEWAL: The Election Commission has announced the complete results of all the constituencies of the National Assembly and Provincial Assembly of Khanewal district. Out of the four National Assembly and eight Provincial Assemblies in Khanewal, two seats of Muslim League (N) MNA and PP Mian, an independent candidate for the National Assembly, won in five PML-N elections And the independent candidate won from Kabirwala, while the candidate supported by Tehreek-e-Insaf won from Jahanian seat of Provincial Assembly and independent candidate won two seats from Kabirwala.

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

Wassem Khokhar

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

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

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

All parties continued until the

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

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

Notwithstanding the general perception that pre-election media freedoms were constricted and sporadic incidences of restrictions on expression and speech, in fact Pakistani print, electronic and digital media continued to contribute tremendously to strengthening the political and electoral process.

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

The report said unfazed by a spate of scathing criticism from some political parties, the Election

Commission of Pakistan (ECP) must particularly be acknowledged for having organised the country's largest electoral exercise – with the greatest number of candidates and highest number of voters – in a reasonably orderly manner.

More than 1.1 million election officials performed election duties in a highly challenging political environment.

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

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

The report added that whatever the reasons and explanations, the ECP's delay in the preparation and announcement of preliminary election results overshadowed an

otherwise orderly election, raising questions about the credibility of the election outcome.

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

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

"Now it is the responsibility of political parties to bring to end their obstinate disengagement for a smooth transition of power in order to ensure the much-needed political stability in the country," the report stressed.

"Many of the concerns raised by the political parties and their candidates need to be addressed

on legal merit by the ECP as promptly as possible, while residual matters can be addressed by the election tribunals that will be formed and start working in less than two months," the report observed.

Fafen Findings and Recommendations

Based on Fafen's assessment of the Form 47 (Provisional Consolidated Statement of the Result of the Count) from 235 National Assembly constituencies, as announced by the Election Commission, the voter turnout for these elections was 48.2 percent.

Islamabad witnessed the highest voter turnout with over 54.2 percent of registered voters participating in the polls across three NA constituencies, followed by Punjab with 51.7 percent voter turnout in 133 NA constituencies.

In Sindh, the voter turnout reached 43.9 percent across 56 NA constituencies; in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, it was 41.4 percent across 40 constituencies; and in Balochistan, it was 35 percent across three NA constituencies.

Fafen analysis suggests that there are 25 NA constituencies

where the number of ballots excluded from the count exceed the margin of victory – 23 in Punjab and one each in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh.

The late delimitation of constituencies, triggered after announcement of the Seventh Digital Population Census days before the dissolution of the National Assembly in August 2023, delayed the elections beyond the constitutionally-stipulated 90-day period, and created a disadvantage for political parties and candidates in their election preparations.

The Feb 8, 2024, election followed a competitive and long campaign, but it lacked traditional fanfare.

There were sporadic incidents of irregularities, but the voting process on election day generally was smooth and orderly. In addition, the voting and counting processes remained accessible to media, observers and candidates and their agents.

Contrary to fears of disorder, discord and violence against the backdrop of a highly polarised political atmosphere and spike in militancy, the election day general-

ly remained peaceful, orderly and organised amid heightened security measures by law enforcement agencies across the country.

Some political parties including the PTI raised their voices against what they called an unlevel playing field for their candidates. In many cases, the PTI claimed that their rallies were obstructed, candidates were arrested or coerced into withdrawing from the race.

The Fafen observers reported polling officials to be largely complying with the legally-prescribed processes of identification of incoming voters. Major political parties largely retained or improved their vote banks in GE-2024.

Despite enhanced use of technology and more sophisticated election management system, the Election Commission did not publish progressive polling station-wise results on its website.

Fafen said the ECP must immediately address the complaints of illegalities and irregularities by political parties and the candidates and initiate proceedings against those responsible under Section 55 of the Elections Act, 2017.

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UN must ‘actively’ seek resolution of Kashmir & Palestine disputes

Pakistan has called on the United Nations to actively seek to resolve festering disputes, such as Kashmir and Palestine, with several modalities for conflict resolution being available under the UN Charter. “The current threats to peace and security emanate mainly from violations of the fundamental principles of the UN Charter, especially non-use of force, foreign occupation, demand of self-determination, great power rivalries, and a new arms race,” Ambassador Munir Akram said after UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres unveiled his priorities for 2024 as the world faces critical challenges.

The UN chief’s multifaceted report notes that a volatile global security environment is further exacerbated by growing poverty, climate change, injustice, inequality, hate, intolerance, xenophobia and Islamophobia. “We must prevent a major conflict, especially in a ‘nuclearized environment’,” the Pakistani envoy stressed, pointing out that it is essential to address the root causes of terrorism and new and emerging forms, as also “state terrorism” and “state-sponsored” terrorism; and ensure the protection of human rights while combating terrorism. Ambassador Akram also called for a Security Council that is more representative, more democratic, more transparent, more effective, and more accountable. “This goal can only be attained through a comprehensive reform that caters to the interests of all Member States – small, medium, and large,” he said. The model the Uniting For the Italy/Pakistan-led Consensus (UFC) group, which seeks more elected seats but no additional permanent members in an enlarged Council, was the most likely to secure the “widest possible” support, the Pakistani envoy said. The Inter-Governmental Negotiations (IGN) process offers the best platform to reach an agreed and negotiated outcome to restructure the Security Council, he said. Quoting the Secretary-General that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are “on life-support”, he noted that over 100 developing countries confront food, fuel and financial insecurity, and over 60 developing countries are trapped by unsustainable debt. In that light, Ambassador Akram said that there was a need for a binding international convention on the right to development.

Pakistan may face more economic misery if election result unclear

Farida Usman

The possibility of a political stalemate in Pakistan leading to delays in both reforms and crucial foreign funding has sparked a selloff in its international bonds and fuelled analysts’ fears of further economic misery for the country.

Results coming in from Thursday’s election saw an unexpectedly strong showing for independents – mostly supporters of jailed former prime minister Imran Khan – trailed by former prime minister Nawaz Sharif’s Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Pakistan People’s Party of Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari. Sharif has already claimed victory, but his party remains far short of the necessary number of seats to form a government on its own.

The election, which was itself much delayed, comes at a pivotal moment.

Pakistan is in an economic crisis, with dwindling foreign currency reserves that will be further strained by a \$1 billion bond payment due in two months, while its \$3 billion funding programme with the International Monetary Fund expires on April 12.

“Pakistan will be entering into more severe political and economic instability if no party emerges with a simple majority,” said Sajid Amin of the Sustainable Development Policy Institute, a former adviser to the ministry of finance.

“But most important is credibility of elections and legitimacy of the government – any government which lacks credibility will not be able deliver on much

needed reforms.” Securing funding will be a top priority, with the country having not yet fully covered its external financing requirements for 2024 and its near \$100 billion external debt burden casting a long shadow over the

A new government is expected to quickly take the necessary steps for example on governance of state-owned enterprises to complete the last remaining review of the current \$3 billion IMF Standby Arrangement – a bridge loan that helped pull the country back from the brink of default.

Doing so would secure it a final \$1.1 billion tranche before the current IMF programme expires in mid-April – with the government then having to secure a follow-up programme straightaway.

“We expect one of the most immediate policy initiatives taken by the new government will be to negotiate a new IMF Extended Fund Facility program, which typically runs for about 3-4 years,” said Johanna Chua, global head of emerging market economics at Citi in a note to clients. While the country’s international bonds make up just 3.4% of its total public debt – dwarfed by the near 13% it owes to China, external debt amortisation is high in percent of FX reserves, according to calculations by Oxford Economics.

China is a major creditor for Pakistan and has in recent times rolled over loans to the country, as have the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia.

“Investors will be worried about protests, worried that Imran Khan might end up coming back and worried that a non-Khan government will find it harder to push through further austerity – which is required given the IMF deal expires

in April,” said Charlie Robertson, head of macro strategy at asset manager FIM Partners.

Political fragmentation might make it harder to push through painful and unpopular but necessary measures such as widening the tax base, analysts said.

Should the unrest and demonstrations that Pakistan witnessed in the run up to the election continue, this would also have an impact on the economy, said Joe Delvaux, a portfolio manager at Amundi, whose firm is invested in Pakistan bonds.

“This is a country that is in and out of political turmoil on a regular basis, so we are monitoring this very closely,” Delvaux said. Pakistan’s international bonds dropped as much as 5 cents in the dollar on Friday before trimming some losses. Its sovereign dollar bond due on April 15 trades at 95 cents in the dollar, reflecting expectations that investors will get paid back, but maturities coming due in 2027 and beyond trade at or below the 70 cents in the dollar below which debt is seen as distressed, Tradeweb data showed.

Pressure on the bonds could continue depending on how quickly a government can be formed and how effective it will be able to operate, investors and analysts said, with time running out.

“Our reserves will evaporate in weeks,” said former finance minister Hafeez Ahmed Pasha, who pointed to the current level of FX reserves at just over \$8 billion being equivalent to just 1-1/2 months of import cover – well below the minimum three months generally seen as safe.

“It’s very important that we have the cushion and the umbrella of an IMF programme, especially before the budget scheduled in July.”

Xinhua

As communities worldwide, both within and outside China, partake in diverse festivities to welcome the Year of the Dragon, the mythical creature has become the subject of debate. Some call it a dragon, while others prefer the term “loong,” underscoring a discussion about the most accurate translation of this symbol of traditional Chinese culture.

Do dragon and loong convey the same meaning, or do they represent different creatures with distinct connotations?

“Clearly, there’s a difference,” said Luca Nurmio, a scholar at the University of Luxembourg. “Western dragon is usually like a big magical monster.”

In Western culture, shaped by Greek mythology, the dragon is frequently portrayed as the guardian of treasure, embodying a symbol of greed and destruction.

“In the West, our dragons are almost all negative and very bad, fierce beasts that have to be killed,” said Frances Wood, a well-known British sinologist.

Notably, medieval European manuscripts depict the iconic image of “Saint George slaying the dragon.”

Furthermore, within the Christian Bible’s Book of Revelation, there is the representation of the Great Red Dragon, symbolizing Satan and the impending end times.

These diverse cultural narratives

contribute to the multifaceted symbolism of dragons in the Western imagination, where they often embody themes of conflict, temptation and apocalyptic forewarnings.

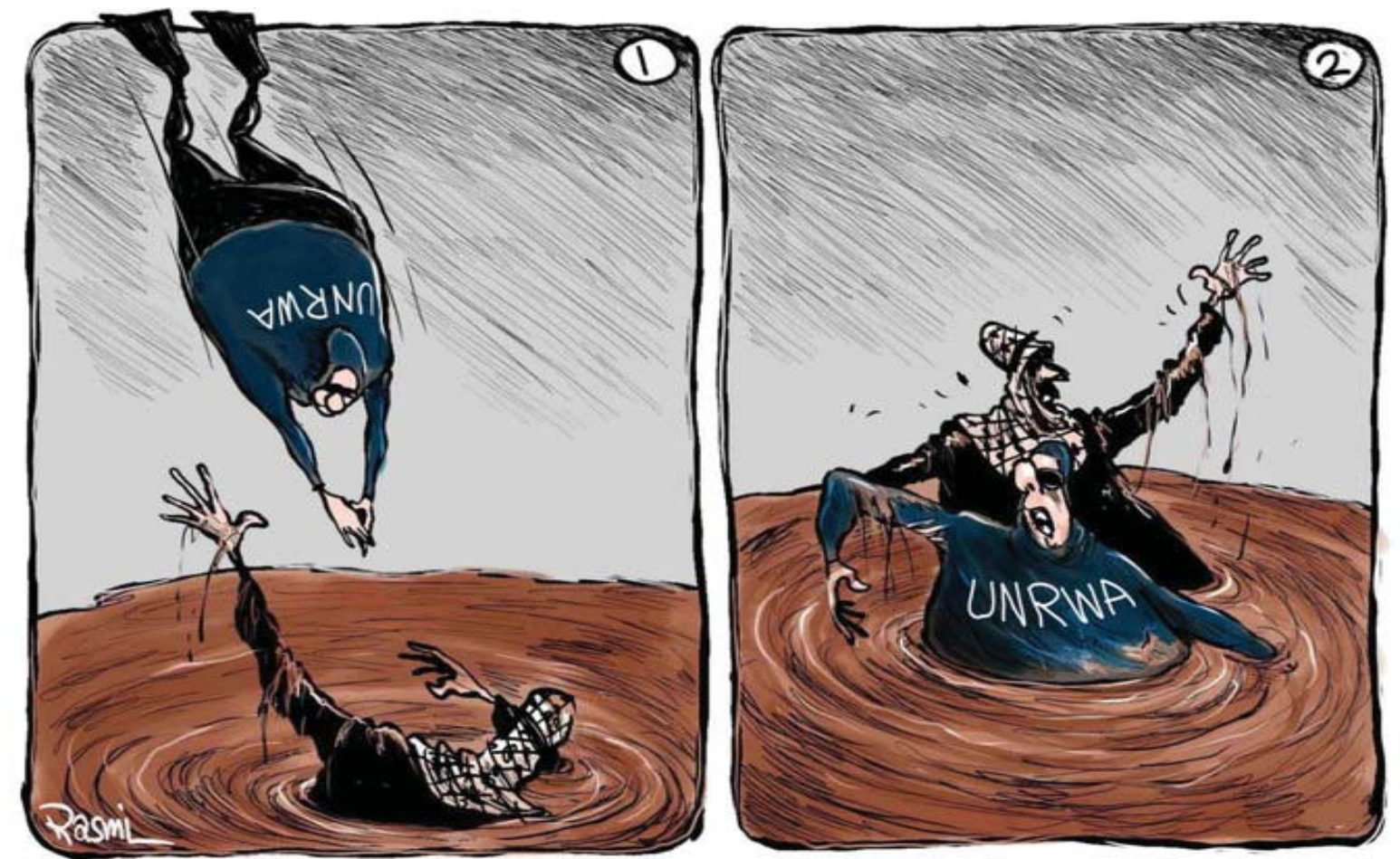
“The one word dragon does encompass two very different ideas,” explained Wood, adding, “In China, the dragon is very positive, it’s an animal that helps humanity and that is noble.”

In Chinese culture, the dragon, or Chinese loong, is considered an auspicious symbol, with emperors often referring to themselves as the “true dragon sons of heaven.”

In the Chinese language, more than 100 idioms incorporate the word “dragon,” predominantly conveying positive connotations such as excellence, power, prestige, royalty and good luck. Given the Chinese penchant for illustrating daily nuances through idiomatic expressions, the term “dragon” remains a pervasive and integral element in their everyday conversations.

When people express admiration for a son-in-law, they often refer to him as “a swift son-in-law who rides the dragon,” subtly suggesting his abilities, power and prestige.

During weddings, couples are often blessed with wishes for a harmonious and prosperous life, symbolized by the dragon and phoenix, with the groom referred to as the dragon and the bride as the phoenix. The dragon is revered as a symbol of strength and authority, while the phoenix embodies wisdom, beauty and auspiciousness.



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

Election 2024, Revenge and retribution II

At 12:37 am in Karachi, Khalid Maqbool Siddique of MQM Haqqparast confidently claimed victory in 18 to 19 out of 21 seats, breaking all previous records. He pledged to serve all citizens of Karachi, regardless of gender, race, or ethnicity. Mr. Faisal Wadha while commenting said everything was normal. The election server is once again down, and will be down again in Election. He said that PTI independent will be on sale and will be bought by those parties who will offer them better terms and conditions and rest loyal supporters will sit in the opposition. He said that the result was fully expected and suited the establishment. According to him it was a plan to stage a win by the independents and then, make a weak coalition government. While reacting to a question that the unexpected performance of the PTI was a sympathy factor which was mainly triggered due to illogical and senseless courts verdicts against the PTI chairman and his wife.

Asif Ali Zardari expressed satisfaction with the incoming results and congratulated Bilawal Bhutto on the outstanding performance, asserting that the next government would be formed by the PPP. Meanwhile, TV commentators, who had previously speculated on a strong PML(N) victory and discussed the potential oath-taking of Nawaz Sharif as Prime Minister and Maryam Nawaz as Chief Minister of Punjab, shifted their focus. They now deliberated on the likelihood of a PPP and PTI coalition government at the center, advising PML(N) to gracefully accept defeat and assume the role of the opposition.

Allegations have surfaced suggesting that the Election Commission may have intervened to alter results, particularly due to PTI’s lead in many constituencies. At 2:30 pm, notable snapshots of election results revealed Dr. Yasmeen Rashid leading over Nawaz Sharif in Lahore, while Nawaz Sharif trailed behind Gustasib Khan in Mansehra. Amin Gandpure maintained a substantial lead over Maulana Fazal ur Rehman, and Atta Tarar trailed behind Bilawal Bhutto. PTI’s Qaiser secured a significant lead, as did Zartaj Gul, Aminpur Gandapur, and Salman Akram Raja. Rehana

Dar emerged victorious over Khawaja Asif in Sialkot, while Barrister Gohar Ali led by a wide margin. Shaukat Basra of PTI also held a lead over PML(N), while Mir Muqam faced a significant defeat. Notably, Nafisa Shah and Sarfraz Bugti of PPP secured clear victories, and PTI claimed victory in Nankana Sahib, with Mian Javaid Latif, a PML(N) stalwart, suffering a substantial loss.

Earlier, the Human Rights Commission expressed concern regarding the termination of internet and mobile services in the lead-up to the elections. Local and international observers have provided observations on the conduct of the elections thus far. Local observers have noted issues such as irregularities, voter intimidation, and violence in certain areas, raising concerns about transparency and fairness. Similarly, international observers have emphasized the importance of free and fair elections, calling for impartiality, transparency, and adherence to electoral laws. They stress the need for accountability and transparency to ensure public confidence in the electoral process. Both local and international observers continue to monitor closely and provide assessments to uphold democratic standards.

As the tumultuous events of the 2024 elections in Pakistan unfold, a narrative emerges of resilience and determination amidst adversity. Despite challenges ranging from disruptions in communication to incidents of violence and intimidation, the Pakistani electorate has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to democracy. The power of the vote has prevailed over attempts to manipulate and suppress it, as voters have asserted their agency and sought to shape the future of their nation. As the dust settles and the results begin to take shape, it is clear that the path forward will be marked by continued vigilance, accountability, and a steadfast dedication to upholding democratic principles. In the face of uncertainty, Pakistan stands poised to embrace its democratic destiny, guided by the collective will of its people and the promise of a brighter tomorrow.

Writer is Press Secretary to the President (Rtd), Former Press Minister at Embassy of Pakistan to France, Former MD, SRBC

IS Indonesian General Elections

Indonesian Embassy facilitates nationals at early voting event

PPA

ISLAMABAD: The Committee for the Indonesian General Elections with the support of the Indonesian Embassy in Islamabad conducted an advance polling event today at the premises of the Embassy. This early voting was held for the upcoming general elections in Indonesia scheduled to be held on 14 February 2024. The event provided an opportunity for the Indonesian nationals in Pakistan to participate in the electoral process as well as fostered a sense of community and camaraderie among the Indonesians and their families. The elections in democratic Indonesia will determine not only the new President and Vice President but also parliamentary and local representatives.

On this occasion, the Embassy made befitting arrangements to facilitate more than 800 citizens along with their families from all provinces of Pakistan to participate in voting process including Islamabad Capital Territory. While another approximately 200 Indonesian nationals will exercise their democratic right to vote in the Indonesian Consulate General in Karachi on this Sunday.

In addition to serving as a platform for exercising political rights, the event transcended its primary purpose and evolved into a vibrant social gathering. Attendees, both old acquaintances and new friends, seized the opportunity to reconnect, share stories, and celebrate the joyous occasion together. The atmosphere was filled with laughter, music, and the taste of Indonesian cuisine as participants enjoyed the bazaar featuring food stalls, a musical



event, health facilities, and a children's play area.

"This event is designed not only as a political event, but also as a moment

of sharing happiness for Indonesians despite political differences," said Mr. Arrozi M. Munib, Head of Indonesian General Elections Committee in Islam-



abad. "The ballot process was done smoothly with no significant hurdles on the ground," added Mr. Zulfikar Alamsyah, Head of General Elections Supervisory Committee.

Moreover, the Embassy extended invitations to Pakistani think tanks and journalists, highlighting the significance of the electoral process in fostering strong democratic ties between Indonesia and Pakistan and further amplified the message of cross-border cooperation and mutual respect.

One of the distinctive features of the event was the marking of voters' fingers with special purple ink, symbolizing their active participation in the electoral process. This visible demonstration of civic duty underscored the commitment of voters to shaping the future of their homeland through democratic means.

Expressing his views on the election arrangements, Ms. Solehatun from Haripur expressed her gratitude to those involved in the general election

process particular the Embassy and all Committees for efficiently organizing the voting process, ensuring a smooth and democratic experience for all. "It was no tense faces. All I saw were smiles and happiness," said Babar, a Pakistani national from Gujranwala, who accompanied his Indonesian wife during the event. The Embassy's meticulous attention to security ensured that voters felt safe and secure throughout the electoral process, contributing to the overall success of the event.

Experts urge inclusive parliamentary democratic system, respect to everyone's vote

PPA

ISLAMABAD: The concerned citizens and the experts urged all the political parties and state institutions to respect the mandate given to the candidates in the February 8 elections. They said especially the majority of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) supported Independents shall be given a rightful chance to take the course. An inclusive and collaborative political governance shall pave the future development discourse in the absence of clear majority at the federal level. Even the majority parties in the provinces shall take other parties on board for an inclusive democratic stability.

The participants said the majority win of Independents reflect that the public has rejected the political engineering and the establishment's fiddling in the political process. They also questioned the Election Commission of Pakistan's capacity to tabulate and announce the election results in time. Contrarily, the bit-by-bit announcement of results by the TV channels has created doubts on the tabulation process, cast delusions and confusion. The internationally recognized standard process for the election results tabulation and announcements shall be

adopted in future elections.

These views were expressed by the concerned citizens and experts at a webinar on "Pakistan's Elections 2024: Emerging scenarios and future challenges," organized by the Devcom-Pakistan (Development Communications Network) and DTN on Saturday. The speakers included former senator Farhatullah Babar, constitutional expert Zafarullah Khan, Executive Director Devcom-Pakistan Centre for Geopolitical Studies Munir Ahmed, Associate Professor of International Relations at the Lahore Garrison University Dr. Zainab Ahmed, Associate Professor of political science at the Kinnaird College for Women Dr. Khushboo Ejaz, Associate Professor at Bahria University Islamabad Dr. Hassan Daud Butt, political activists Amina Sadaf and Sabeen Younas from Islamabad and Zammur Shahid from Quetta, National Defence University PhD scholar and Governance specialist T. A. Bhutta, development experts Aftab Alam Khan and Qaiser Ejaz. An overwhelming participation of citizens and youth presented their opinion.

Farhatulla Babar envisaged no role of establishment in Pakistan's future political scenario. They

should understand that the public's political awareness has increased, now the political engineering and maneuvering would create extreme situations. In the emerging scenario, only inclusive alliances in the parliament would deliver results. The split-mandate and populist politics may harm the democratic process if the rigidity reigned. Only stronger institutions within their mandate can control populism. He urged all the stakeholders to respect everyone's vote.

Zafarullah Khan said our political system is governed by many confusions and illusions. We need to sort it out for clarity of perceptions and practices. The present situation reflects that the public has rejected the role of establishment and its undue fiddling in the political process. Secondly, we shall accept the mandate given to the candidates and their role in the future discourse shall not be diminished. No party would be able to form its government independently.

He urged the need for dialogue in politics while appreciating the direct-win of 12 women from different constituencies. He said digital poverty existed in Pakistan, and we gradually need to move to the use of technology in the election process.

Devcom-Pakistan Centre for Geopolitical Studies Executive Director Munir Ahmed urged the civil society to play their supportive role to strengthen the political process beyond their political affiliations. It's time to think beyond the vested interests and political conflicts. We should keep on raising our voices for inclusive parliamentary practices and development agenda.

Dr. Zainab Ahmed highlighted the role of women in the election process, right from the campaigns to the voters' mobilization. With the present election and turnout, the electoral process is further strengthened because of the participation of youth and women. The institutions shall remain in their mandate, and civil society shall play their role in supporting the new political government to perform.

Dr. Khushboo Ejaz commended the participation of youth and the lawyers and urged them to play their positive role. She said narrative building has become very important in the election campaigns. It would be a decisive element in the future as well. Now the establishment has to take into consideration the public opinion that their role in politics is no more wanted.

Ambassador Tirmizi represents Pakistan at Abu Dhabi Dialogue

Spokesman Report

ABU DHABI: Pakistan's envoy to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Ambassador Faisal Niaz Tirmizi represented Pakistan at the Abu Dhabi Dialogue (ADD) here on Saturday. Pakistan is the current Chair of the ADD. Junaid Murtaza, Community Welfare Attache (CWA), Pakistan Consulate General, Dubai delivered the statement on behalf of Pakistan.

In his remarks, he said that the forum provided an important opportunity to engage in meaningful discussion and dialogue regarding the safe, orderly, and regular labour movement in one of the largest temporary labour migration corridors. He further said that Pakistan was of the view that the Abu Dhabi Dialogue served as a platform for multilateral and multi-dimensional collaboration, bringing together leaders, policymakers, experts and stakeholders. It provided a mechanism to foster interconnectivity, enhance collaborations, and promote the exchange



of ideas for lasting solutions related to temporary labour migration, he added. The CWA said that Pakistan considered that the deliberations held at the ADD would help in addressing the challenges and exploring opportunities to ensure the protection of migrant workers and enabling countries of origin and destination to get maximum benefits from the temporary labour migration. He informed that the Chair and Secretariat had prepared a series of reports with the help of experts that would be presented to the Ministers at the Seventh Ministerial Consultation on Sunday. Pakistan suggested

to devise a comprehensive Social Security paradigm within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)'s labour migration corridor and also provide an enabling environment for migrant workers in their respective home countries for their dignified return and reintegration. Pakistan thanked the government of UAE for its resolve to act as the Permanent Secretariat of the Abu Dhabi Dialogue and appreciated the role of the Advisory Committee, experts and researchers in their assistance in formulating policy directions for governmental representatives of ADD member states.

PTDC hosts reception to honour two Polish explorers



Muhammad Amin

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) hosted a reception to honor the remarkable achievement of two Polish women, Monika Witkowska and Joanna Mostowska, who have successfully completed the First Female Winter Ski Traverse of Deosai.

Deosai, the second highest

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

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



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

In her remarks, Monika Witkowska expressed gratitude for the warm welcome and reception extended by PTDC. As an avid traveller and K2 climber,

she emphasized the challenges they faced during the expedition, starting from Shushar lake and concluding near Sadpara village. Joanna Mostowska, a ski expert and mother of four, echoed Monika's sentiments and praised the hospitality of the people, affirm-

ing that Pakistan is a safe destination for international tourists. The reception concluded with the presentation of shields, ajraks, and souvenirs to the guests, symbolizing the enduring friendship and cultural exchange between Poland and Pakistan.

Lunar New Year Eve sees over 190 million passenger trips across China



Xinhua

BEIJING: Some 195.24 million passenger trips were handled by China's transportation sectors on Friday, the Chinese Lunar New Year Eve, up 26.7 percent from the same day of last year, official statistics showed.

Of the total, highway traffic amounted to 184.62 million passenger trips, up 24.2 percent year on year, according to a special work team established in January to ensure the safety and sound operation of the year's Spring Festival travel rush.

Railway traffic jumped 98.8 percent to 8.257 million trips while air trips surged 137.7 percent to 1.797 million, and passenger trips by water increased by 11.9 percent to 566,000.

The Chinese Lunar New Year, or Spring Festival, China's most important festival, fell on Feb. 10 this year. The travel rush, usually a period of high transportation demand as people return home for family reunions, lasts from Jan. 26 to March 5.

Financial issues, serious economic challenges await new govt: APBF

PPA

ISLAMABAD: As not a single party has gained simple majority in the National Assembly in the general elections and there would be a coalition federal government the All Pakistan Business Forum has warned that the financial constraints and the economic challenges are awaiting the incoming government amidst highest record inflation and unemployment in the country.

The APBF President Syed Maaz Mahmood said that the new government would have to face mammoth economic challenges. The country is facing challenges like higher inflation and unemployment rates, ongoing IMF program and possible engagement for fresh program to improve balance of payments situation, debt restructuring, framing new resource sharing formula between centre and provinces, National Finance Commission (NFC) and privatization of loss-making state-owned entities. However, it would be a challenging task for the coalition government.

China's logistics sector posts steady revenue growth in 2023



Xinhua

BEIJING: China's logistics sector reported steady revenue growth last year, according to the China Federation of Logistics and Purchasing.

The industry generated revenue totaling 13.2 trillion yuan (about 1.86 trillion U.S. dollars) in 2023, up 3.9 percent year on year, the federation said.

China's logistics efficiency continued to improve last year. The ratio of social logistics costs to GDP was 14.4 percent in 2023, down 0.3 percentage points from the previous year. Solid progress was made in the construction of logistics infrastructure. In 2023, whole-year investment in logistics-related fixed assets such as transportation, warehousing and postal services increased by more than 10 percent year on year, according to the federation.

Gold rates decline by Rs.1,200 to Rs.214,300 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The per tola price of 24 karat gold decreased by Rs.1,200 and was sold at Rs.214,300 on Saturday compared to its sale at Rs. 215,500 on last trading day. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs.1,028 to Rs.183,728 from Rs.184,756 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold went down to Rs.168,416 from Rs.169,360, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported. The price of per tola and ten gram Silver remained stagnant at Rs.2,600 and 2,229.08 respectively. The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$8 to \$2,045 from \$2,053, the Association reported.

Serious economic problems awaiting the new government

Tariq Khattak

ISLAMABAD: Former President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt, said on Saturday that significant economic challenges await the incoming administration as the middle class is dwindling, and the impoverished face extreme hardships.

He said that after the transition to power, the rulers would have to pay close attention to the economy so that the country's threats could be reduced and the people could experience some relief.

Shahid Rasheed Butt said in a statement issued here today that, at present, inflation is on the rise despite having interest rates at the highest level of twenty-two percent; price shocks have made life very difficult for the middle class



and people experiencing poverty, and inflation has made survival very difficult.

He said the new government should avoid

deciding to seek quick popularity and focus on achieving long-term results. He added that electricity, oil, and gas prices are bleeding the public white.

The business leader said that interest rates have made it impossible to do business; foreign debt has reached \$128 billion, while this year, about \$ 28 billion and \$ 77.5 billion loans to August 2026 need to be paid.

Repaying these loans is only possible with the new IMF program, and getting loans will become equally difficult and expensive over time.

Shahid Rasheed Butt said that the annual expenditure of the government is over Rs14 trillion, which is much higher than its income, so funds have to be borrowed.

Tax revenue, exports, and remittances must be improved to run the country. He said that while the population is constantly increasing,

the youth need jobs, which is becoming a problem.

A small segment has been robbing domestic resources for decades, which has pushed the country to the brink. Other countries improve their economy through loans, while in Pakistan, money is borrowed for luxuries, and all the burden has to be lifted to the people.

Mr. Butt said that unnecessary dependence on borrowing has caused irreparable damage to the domestic economy, and now the country needs wise economic policies to survive.

Currently, the only way to reduce the pressure on inflation is to make corrections in our fiscal account.

Pakistan has borrowed 23 times from the IMF, and if the domestic system is not improved, more IMF loans will not be able to save the country.

Cattle

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



Photo: Online

ICCI hopes new govt to put the economy on sustainable growth trajectory



PPA

ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) in a statement hoped that the newly elected government would put the economy on the path of a sustainable growth trajectory by taking priority measures to address the key issues of the business community and maximizing ease of doing business in the country. He said that Pakistan has plenty of natural resources and a great potential to emerge as a strong economy.

Ahsan Bakhtawari said that the rising inflation, high energy prices, unaffordable bank markup, policy inconsistency, complicated regulatory regime, import restrictions, etc. are some of the major factors that are hindering the growth of business activities and emphasized that the newly elected

government should engage the private sector in consultation to address these issues on priority basis and facilitate the better growth of trade and industrial activities in the country.

ICCI President said that the newly elected government should focus on enhancing regional trade to promote exports and investment opportunities. He said that the new government should encourage export diversification and cooperate with the private sector in producing value-added goods to boost exports.

Faad Waheed, Senior Vice President ICCI said that high energy costs in Pakistan have made the industry and exports uncompetitive and emphasized that the newly elected government should focus on renewable energy to reduce high production costs and make exports competitive in the international market.

Palm oil buyers switch to soy, sunflower oil

Reuters

The rebound in palm oil prices is likely to be capped by abundant supplies of rival soyoil and sunflower oil, "soft" oils that are available at discounts to tropical palm oil for the first time in more than a year.

Benchmark Malaysian palm oil futures have risen nearly 5% in 2024 after losing 11% last year.

Primary competitor soyoil typically trades at a premium to palm oil, but a record South American soybean crop has driven down prices, and buyers are taking more soyoil shipments.

Soft oils production is rising while palm oil production is falling, driving divergent price trends, said Vipin Gupta, chief executive officer of Dubai-based trader Glentech Group. "Higher prices are pushing away buyers from palm oil, which will limit the price rise," Gupta said.

Crude palm oil (CPO) imports are being offered at about \$930 a metric ton, including cost, insurance and freight (CIF), in India for March delivery, while soyoil and sunflower oil are offered around \$915 and \$910 a ton, respectively, dealers said.

Palm oil, available at a discount of nearly \$200 a ton to soyoil in November, is trading at premiums as dryness caused by an El Nino weather is limiting output in the two



largest producers, Indonesia and Malaysia.

In India, the top vegetable oil importer, buyers are trimming palm oil imports and increasing soyoil for shipments in coming months, said Sanjeev Asthana, CEO at Patanjali Foods Ltd, India's top palm oil buyer.

Palm oil imports by India fell to their lowest in three months at 787,000 ton in January as soyoil purchases rose 24% to 190,000 tons.

India's soyoil imports could jump to 300,000 tons in March and further to 400,000 tons in April, while palm oil imports could fall to around 700,000 tons, said Sandeep Bajoria, CEO of Sunvin Group, a vegetable oil brokerage.

Negative refining margins for palm oil for Indian refiners contrasts with the positive margin in soyoil and sunoil, prompting increases soft oil purchases, said Rajesh

Patel, managing partner at edible oil trader and broker GGN Research.

India buys palm oil mainly from Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand, while it imports soyoil and sunflower oil from Argentina, Brazil, Russia and Ukraine.

Due to higher freight costs, palm oil is even more expensive for European buyers and is trading in Europe at a premium of up to \$100 a ton over soyoil, canola oil and sunflower oil, said a Singapore-based dealer with a global trading house.

While high prices are likely to squeeze household consumption, industrial demand for palm oil is likely to remain intact, the Singapore dealer said.

In Pakistan, palm oil is primarily used to make vanaspati ghee, a cheaper substitute for clarified butter, for which demand will persist, said Rasheed JanMohd, chief executive of Karachi-based Westbury Group.

Palm oil is expected to maintain its premium for at least a few months, as production in Indonesia and Malaysia declines and demand for biodiesel in Indonesia rises, said a Kuala Lumpur-based vegetable oil trader.

"Palm oil stocks are decreasing in producing countries, which will give them leverage to quote higher prices," the trader said.

Malaysia's palm oil stocks likely fell for the third straight month in January, a Reuters survey showed.

Hydroponic Technology: Key driver for economic returns from vegetables, fruits

Spokesman Report

MULTAN: The promotion of hydroponic vegetables and fruits can help get handsome foreign exchange as it has immense nutritional value along with cosmetic beauty and is also a favourite choice of people across the globe.

In the hydroponics technique, the vegetables and fruits are grown vertically and there is no need for soil for the germination of high-value crops, this was stated by agriculture experts hailed from the Muhammad Nawaz Sharif University of Agriculture.

Talking to media, they informed that MNSUA had grown tomatoes by employing hydroponics technology. These tomatoes have good nutritional value and their shape is highly

attractive.

About the hydroponics agriculture technique, the expert observed that it was a method of growing plants in a water-based, nutrient-rich solution. Hydroponics does not use soil, instead, the root system is supported using an inert medium such as coco coir, perlite, rockwool, clay pellets, peat moss, or vermiculite. They informed that MNSUA had imported coco coir, peat moss to train university students in hydroponic agriculture techniques.

Although hydroponic is costly at the initial stages and there is a need to search out specific markets for the consumption of highly value vegetables and fruits, he stated. At the international level, there are so many markets and hydroponic vege-



tables are in Europe. People are ready to pay for nutritional-rich vegetables and fruits. The prices of hydroponic vegetables are higher as compared to other vegetables grown in soil, he maintained.

Why is it costly, the experts stated farmers have to spend

more on inputs for hydroponics. There are two types of cost, one is on infrastructure and the second is operational cost. However, hydroponics has many health benefits. Every nutritional ingredient to feed plants is given in a calculated way. At different stages

of plants, the requirements of plant feeds are different. For hydroponics crops, neat and clean irrigation water is used, they observed. In Muhammad Nawaz Sharif University of Agriculture (MNSUA), a Reverse Osmosis (RO) plant has been installed for irrigation to a hydroponic unit.

When questioned about high-value crops, they informed that high-value crops have greater demand throughout the years.

Mostly, these are used in salads, they informed. Tomatoes, lettuce, cucumber, spring onions, peppers, spinach, strawberries, blueberries etc are commonly grown in hydroponics.

How Pakistani farmers will earn from this costly technique, the agrarians observed

that CPEC would be operational very soon and many international corporate companies would start a business in CPEC. Similarly, they added that the marketing of high-value crops would enhance across the region in the next few years.

Regarding any recommendation for the promotion of hydroponics vegetables and fruits, the experts suggested that the government should extend subsidies to introduce hydroponics techniques across the country. However, the farming technique is being observed in some areas in Pakistan. However, large-scale farming would surely help earn maximum foreign exchange.

The experts stated that Netherlands, USA and China were earning huge amounts by exporting these crops.

President's Trophy: Dahani's seven-wicket haul puts SNGPL in commanding position

 Sports Desk

RAWALPINDI: Shah Nawaz Dahani took a seven-wicket haul for SNGPL as WAPDA were bundled out for a paltry 140 in 34.4 overs on the second day of the final of the President's Trophy Grade-1 here at the Pindi Cricket Stadium in Rawalpindi on Saturday. At stumps, SNGPL were 121 for five in 36 overs, leading by 460 runs.

Resuming their first innings with a deficit of 474 runs, WAPDA batters had no clue to face fiery spell from right-arm fast bowler Shah Nawaz Dahani. Dahani, who has represented Pakistan in 13 white-ball matches, claimed seven wickets for 42 runs in 12.4 overs. The 25-year-old fast bowler was supported by another pace bowler Mir Hamza, who bagged two wickets for 30 runs. For WAPDA, captain Iftikhar Ahmed



was the only notable run-getter, as the right-handed batter top-scored for his side with a 59-ball 52, smashing four fours. Test batter Umar Akmal was another contributor with the bat, scor-

ing run-a-ball 28, laced with six boundaries. WAPDA were bowled out for 140 in 34.4 overs, handing SNGPL a lead of 339. SNGPL, in return, didn't enforce a follow-on and managed to score 121

for five in 36 overs, when stumps were drawn. Test opening batter Abid Ali, top-scored for SNGPL in the second innings with 38 off 59 balls, which included six fours. The first innings centurion Saud Shakeel returned undefeated on 18 off 47 balls. For WAPDA, left-arm spinner Asif Afridi, the second-highest wicket-taker in the tournament, bagged three wickets for 43 from 16 overs. Scores in brief:

SNGPL 479-7, 80 overs (Sahibzada Farhan 161, Saud Shakeel 123 not out, Kamran Ghulam 101, Mubasir Khan 44; Tahir Hussain 2-78, Iftikhar Ahmed 2-105) and 121-5, 36 overs (Abid Ali 38, Kamran Ghulam 28; Asif Afridi 3-43)

WAPDA 140 all out, 34.4 overs (Iftikhar Ahmed 52, Umar Akmal 28; Shah Nawaz Dahani 7-42, Mir Hamza 2-30)

Drama-filled Asian Cup fuels 2026 World Cup hopes

 Sports Desk

DOHA: An Asian Cup that will be remembered for shocks and dramatic finishes has showcased the region's strength in depth and raised hopes its teams could reach new heights at the 2026 World Cup.

Eight direct spots and one intercontinental playoff berth are up for grabs for Asian Football Confederation sides at the expanded 48-team World Cup in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

The Asian Cup in Qatar, which concludes with Saturday's final between the hosts and Jordan, suggests that the region's traditional heavyweights now have some serious competition.

"Asian football has improved a lot," South Korea coach Jurgen Klinsmann said in Doha.

"The quality has risen over the last 10, 15 years dramatically."

His strongly fancied side were subsequently beaten 2-0 by Jordan in the semi-finals while pre-tournament favourites Japan crashed out in the quarter-finals to Iran, who then lost to Qatar.

"All of the teams at the Asian Cup have a lot of quality and we have had difficult games because they are getting better," said Japan coach Hajime Moriyasu, whose team conceded at least one goal in every game.

Close encounters
Teams have mostly found success by playing positive, attacking football, while games have generally been close. The biggest margin of victory at the tournament was matching 4-0 wins for Australia and Jordan over Indonesia and Malaysia respectively.

Notable successes have been Jordan, whose high-tempo attacking style made a mockery of their world ranking of 87, and debutants Tajikistan, who reached the quarter-finals.

Hong Kong, the lowest-ranked



team, were competitive despite losing all three games, giving Iran a real scare before going down 1-0.

Another so-called regional minnow, Malaysia, pulled off a famous 3-3 draw with South Korea.

South Korea skipper Son Heung-min thought he had scored the winner from the spot in the 94th minute, only for Malaysia to grab the leveller in the 105th minute.

"They fought until the end," said Son. "I was very pleased to see this for Asian football." For all the progress, a few teams appear to be treading water or going backwards.

India and China both headed home without scoring a goal in their three games each. Some of the goalkeeping has also been iffy at times and Japan, notably, badly lacked a reliable stopper.

Football writer Scott McIntyre, of The Asian Game website, believes

the World Cup expansion gives Asia's smaller nations a reason to invest more in the sport.

"If you're one of the handful of Asian nations that have consistently gone to the World Cup, those nations have invested in their domestic leagues," he told AFP.

"For others, it's like, 'What's the motivation if you're an Uzbekistan or a Jordan?'"

"You think with four spots, you're never going to get to the World Cup."

Asian teams had some notable success in the group phase of the Qatar 2022 World Cup. Japan beat Germany and Spain, and Saudi Arabia stunned eventual champions Argentina.

Saudi Arabia are throwing money at football and are set to host the 2034 World Cup.

However, South Korea's run to the semi-finals in 2002 as co-hosts

remains the region's best World Cup performance, and no AFC team has gone further than the last 16 since.

Teams from other confederations beyond Europe and South America have done better, with Morocco giving Africa its first World Cup semi-finalist in 2022.

Hussein Ammouta, the Moroccan coach of Jordan, believes the key to improving national sides is to have their players in the major European leagues.

Of his Jordan squad, only Mousa Al-Tamari at Montpellier currently does that, but Ammouta sees a growing number of Asian players good enough to follow suit.

"Asian football has developed so much and is producing those quality players that are being sought by big European teams," he said on the eve of the final.

Beijing cancels Argentina friendly as Messi fallout continues



 Sports Desk

LAHORE: Argentina's friendly against Ivory Coast, scheduled to be held in Beijing in March, has been cancelled, the Chinese city's football association said on Saturday, following a backlash against Lionel Messi's failure to play in a match in Hong Kong.

Beijing's announcement came a day after Hangzhou's sports authorities also cancelled a friendly between Argentina and Nigeria after Messi's failure to play for Inter Miami in Hong Kong on Sunday caused widespread anger among fans.

"Beijing does not plan, for the moment, to organise the match in which Lionel Messi was to participate," the Beijing Football Association said in a statement to local media.

Messi, who did not play in the friendly in Hong Kong due to a reported injury, appeared as a second-half substitute on Wednesday in Inter Miami's friendly against Vissel Kobe in Tokyo.

Organisers of the Hong Kong friendly, Tatler Asia, announced a 50% refund on tickets, which cost up to nearly HK\$ 5000 (\$639), following criticism from the Hong Kong government.

Nigeria's Sanusi a doubt for Cup of Nations final



 Sports Desk

LAHORE: Nigeria left back Zaidu Sanusi will undergo a fitness test later on Saturday to decide whether he can return to the team for Sunday's Africa Cup of Nations final against hosts Ivory Coast, coach Jose Peseiro said.

Sanusi, 26, missed the semi-final win over South Africa with a hamstring injury, forcing a change in the well-drilled Nigerian defence which has conceded two goals in six games at the tournament in the Ivory Coast.

"He was partially involved in Friday training and we will check his condition again tonight before we make a decision," said Peseiro.

He is the only concern for the Nigerians, who have had a consistent team selection throughout the tournament and beat the Ivorians in the group phase.

"There is no favourite for the final," insisted Peseiro. "I think each side has a 50 percent chance but we are determined to win this final."


There will be a special focus on African Footballer of the Year Victor Osimhen, who has been an outstanding performer at the tournament but scored a single goal in Nigeria's opening game a month ago.

"He doesn't play like he is the star. He fights for the team and is completely unselfish," said Peseiro.

"He knows he is an important player and he gives us the best energy. He has suffered a lot in this tournament with all the attention he receives from the opposing defenders because he knows it is a team game."

Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi elected PTF President



 Sports Desk

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

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

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

The election results also saw Lt. Col. (ret'd) Zia Uddin Tufail assuming the role of Secretary General PTF, while M. Arif Qureshi was elected Treasurer.

Zia Uddin garnered 8 votes against Suleman Javed's 7.

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

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

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

"It's my goal to take Pakistan tennis to new heights and work for the betterment of players, coaches and trainers. I'll not disappoint my nation," he added.

Joburg Super Kings crush Paarl Royals in SA20 Eliminator

 A Sports

JOHANNESBURG: Sam Cook's four-fer, followed by Leus du Plooy and Faf du Plessis's blistering half-centuries helped Joburg Super Kings crush Paarl Royals in the Eliminator of SA20 here on Wednesday.

The home side invited Paarl Royals to bat first and reduced them to 43-4 in five overs, with Nandre Burger and Cook grabbing two wickets each.

David Miller and Dane Vilas (21) then knitted a 44-run stand in 33 balls to recover from the early damage before Burger once again struck to break the promising stand.

Miller waged a lone war from his end while losing partners on the other end as he top scored with 47 off 40, laced with four boundaries and two sixes.

Imran Tahir ended Miller's gutsy knock on the last ball of the 17th over to reduce the Royals to 126-8.

Cook then wrapped things up as he picked the last two wickets in the same over at a total of 138. He led the bowling charts with the figures of 4-24, while Burger claimed three wickets for 26 runs.

In response, the Super Kings came out all guns blazing as Leus du Plooy and Captain Faf du Plessis ran riot on the Royals from the word go.

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They knitted a 105-run opening stand in 11 overs, scoring their respective half-centuries in the process before



Tabraiz Shamsi provided the breakthrough.

Du Plooy, who scored 68 off 43, was the only wicket to fall for the hosts after smashing two sixes and even boundaries.

Joburg Super Kings successfully chased down the total in 13.2 overs, with Du Plessis going unbeaten with 55 runs from 34 balls, which featured three boundaries and three sixes.

Joburg Super Kings will face Durban's Super Giants in Qualifier 2 of SA20. The winner will qualify for the final against the defending SA20 champions, Sunrisers Eastern Cape.



Commonwealth observer group unveils preliminary findings on Pakistan polls

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The Commonwealth Observer Group (COG) on Saturday unveiled its initial findings on Pakistan's General Elections-2024, highlighting the commendable efforts of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) and other institutions for conducting general polls. Chairperson COG, Dr Goodluck Jonathan at a press conference here acknowledged Pakistan's significance as one of the world's largest democracies and emphasized the importance of these elections for its people.

The COG chairperson expressed his gratitude for the invitation to observe the elec-

tions and commended the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) for logistical preparations amid challenges.

The group, he said, adhered to principles of impartiality, non-interference, and independence during its deployment, engaging with various stakeholders. Appreciating the role of Election Commission of Pakistan, he said that the COG observers were deployed in various areas including Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore, Multan, Faisalabad, Karachi, Hyderabad and Abbottabad on February 6, 2024 to observe election preparations.

Recognizing and appreciating the substantial work by the ECP, the COG chairper-

son noted delays in proceeding with the elections, attributing them to the significant task of organizing an election involving around 128 million registered voters.

The security challenges were acknowledged, with condolences extended for lives lost in terrorist attacks leading up to Election Day. The impact of adverse weather conditions, including snowbound areas and the damages caused by floods in 2022, was also highlighted. Dr Jonathan mentioned the substantially reformed legal framework leading up to the 2024 General Elections, emphasizing the importance of continued reform in line with the Constitution and

Commonwealth Charter values. The areas for refinement in the legal framework will be detailed in the final report. Lauding the reduction in the national gender gap in registered voters and the reserved seats for women, he noted concerns regarding the participation of women candidates and some communities discouraging women from campaigning and voting.

The youth engagement in campaigns, especially on social media, was commended, but challenges for minority communities were mentioned. The COG chairperson underscored the importance of a legal and administrative environment conducive to citizens' right to run for office and vote.

He noted the implementation of codes of conduct for political parties and the media, with calls for more stakeholder engagement. The complete recommendations to ensure transparency in this regard will be included in the final report.

While commending the ECP's efforts to improve election management through the Election Management System (EMS), he acknowledged operational challenges on Election Day, which will be elaborated on in subsequent observations. He provided a detailed overview of the pre-poll procedures, polling environment, voter turnout, role of polling staff, participation and inclusion, and the overall security situation.

Pakistan-China ties stabilizer in constantly changing world, says president Alvi

Deng Kaiyin, Jiang Chao, Wang Huan

ISLAMABAD (XINHUA): Pakistan-China friendship is rooted in the people, and the spirit of peace and cooperation demonstrated by the iron-clad bilateral relations provides a stabilizing force in the changing world, Pakistani President Arif Alvi has said.

The two countries always support each other's efforts to safeguard their respective core interests, and their deepening bond serves as a good example for the world, said the president in a recent interview with Chinese media. "If there are issues, we solve the problems, we help each other in times of crisis."

Noting that the world is in flux, the president said that many areas are still troubled by conflicts and some Western countries attempt to deter

the growth of emerging economies.

The new world order should be a multipolar world, allowing people to progress and allow people to continue with trade, he said, adding that the world order should "not base on the victors' rules, but base on the fact that it should be an emancipation of people."

The president said that both Pakistan and China love peace, highlighting the initiatives put forward by China such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) that focuses on people's development so that people can live a stable and healthy life.

"This (BRI) has shown to the world a way of cooperating and a way of mutual developments, whereby movements of goods and people is made easier," said the president, adding that the initiative benefits international trade and sustainable development.



Pakistani President Arif Alvi speaks during an interview with Chinese media in Islamabad, Pakistan, Feb. 7, 2024. Pakistan-China friendship is rooted in the people, and the spirit of peace and cooperation demonstrated by the iron-clad bilateral relations provides a stabilizing force in the changing world, Pakistani President Arif Alvi has said. (Xinhua/Ahmad Kamal)

Regarding the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Alvi said that the infrastructure, human resources, energy, and industry sectors in the country are being improved with the help of the CPEC. He also

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

As the construction of the CPEC has now entered a new phase of high-quality development, the president envisioned enhanced cooperation

with China in the sectors of information technology (IT), agriculture, vehicle manufacturing, etc.

China's agricultural yield per hectare is much higher than in many parts of the world, and Pakistan boasts abundant agricultural resources, so "our agriculture cooperation would yield tremendous results," said the president, noting that China is the frontrunner in areas including Artificial intelligence and supercomputers, and Pakistan wants to be a part of that.

Concluding the interview, Alvi, on behalf of the Pakistani people and government, extended greetings and best wishes to the Chinese people for the upcoming Chinese New Year. "Happy Spring Festival, and an auspicious Year of the Dragon," he said in Chinese.

Huge number of candidates challenge election 2024 results

Naveed Ahmad Khan

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

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

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

"The results were announced in the

petitioner's absence," stated the application, urging the court to direct returning officer to announce the results as per Form-45.

"The court also bar the Election Commission from issuing the final result", the petitioner said, requesting the court to declare form-47 results' null and void.

Meanwhile, Alia Hamza's husband, whose wife contested against Hamza Shehbaz, challenged the result and noted that the PML-N candidate lost the election as per Form-45.

On the other hand, Dr Yasmeen Rashid also challenged former prime minister Nawaz Sharif's victory in Lahore's NA-130 constituency in Lahore High Court (LHC).

Another independent candidate Shehzad Farooq challenged Maryam Nawaz's success from Lahore's NA:119,



while another PML-N winner Ata Tarar's success in NA:127 has also been challenged in court by PTI-supported independent candidate Zaheer Abbas Khokhar.

Rehana Dar, mother of Usman Dar, petitioned the high court for recounting of votes in Sialkot's NA-71, challenging the success of PML-N veteran Khawaja Asif in the Sialkot constituency.

Rehana Dar challenges Khwaja Asif's victory in NA-71

Bureau Report

SIALKOT: Rehana Dar, a PTI-backed independent candidate, has challenged the victory of his opponent Khwaja Asif in NA-71 Sialkot.

The mother of Usman Dar has filed the petition in the Lahore High Court (LHC) to challenge the poll result of NA-71. Rehana Dar has made the returning officer, Election Commission of Pakistan and Khwaja Asif party in the petition.

The petition stated that Khawaja Asif lost the electoral battle in NA-71 as per Form-45 but the RO allegedly declared Asif victorious in Form-47.



Rehana claimed she was the winner of NA-71 as per Form-45 results. She accused his opponent of rigging.

The petition requested the court to issue results according to Form-45. The petition also prayed for recounting of votes in NA-71 and halt the announcement of final and official results by the ECP.

AJK PM, president express grief over death of prominent religious scholar

Abdul Majeed Tahir

MUZAFFARABAD: President Azad Jammu and Kashmir Barrister Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry has expressed deep sorrow and grief over the death of a prominent religious scholar and Ameer of Jamiat Ahl Hadith Azad Kashmir Maulana Anwar Ruknuddin.

In his condolence message the AJK president extended his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family and prayed to Allah the almighty to rest the departed soul in eternal peace.

Prime Minister Azad Kashmir Chaudhry Anwar ul Haq has also expressed his profound grief and sorrow over the death of prominent religious scholar, Ameer Jamiat Ahl



Hadith Maulana Anwar Ruknuddin. In his condolence message, the AJK premier paid rich tribute to the religious services of the deceased scholar. He prayed to Allah the almighty to rest the departed soul in eternal peace.

Hearing against PTI founder, Bushra Bibi in 190m pounds reference adjourned

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The court proceedings against the PTI founder and his wife Bushra Bibi in the 190 million pounds reference in Al-Qadir Trust case have been adjourned till Feb 15.

Earlier today, an accountability court in Islamabad was set to hear the case in Adiala jail. But the hearing was postponed due to unavailability of judge Muhammad Bashir.

The judge will hear the case against the PTI founder and his spouse in the

190 million pounds reference. As per sources, there was a possibility of indictment of the couple but it could not be done.

The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) had filed a reference in the accountability court against the PTI chairman pertaining to the 190 million pounds Al-Qadir Trust scam.

The PTI founder has already been convicted in three cases—cipher case, Toshakhana case and illegal marriage case.

PTI gives call for nationwide protest tomorrow

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has given a call for nationwide protest for tomorrow to protect sanctity of vote as independent candidates are in the lead with 102 seats so far.

A meeting of PTI's core committee meeting was held, which decided to hold 'peaceful protests' across the country tomorrow at 02:00pm to protect sanctity of vote.

The meeting also deliberated on election results and future course of plan. The core committee also discussed matters related to affiliation with specific political parties.

Important decisions were made during the meeting, which the party said would be implemented after consultation from PTI founder Imran Khan.

"The people have given their verdict in a peaceful and constitutional manner," the PTI said, adding that now its time to protect the mandate.

The results of 257 out of the total 265 National Assembly constituencies where elections were held had been announced, which showed the independent candidates in the lead with 102 seats overall. The PML-N and PPP had won 73 and 54 seats, respectively, and were set to bag most of the 70 reserved seats for women and non-Muslims in the house.

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