

# QUETTA VOICE

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## Intense Political Contest in Balochistan as Diverse Candidates Vie for Victory

**Syed Ali Shah Analysis:**

**QUETTA:** In the lead-up to the general elections in Balochistan, a myriad of influential candidates from various backgrounds are engaging in robust campaigns to secure victory on all fronts.

From nationalists to religious figures and conservatives to progressives, candidates are tirelessly working to sway voters in their favor.

Notably, seven former chief ministers, including Nawab Muhammad Aslam Raisani, Jam Kamal Khan, Nawab Sanaulah Zehri,

Mir Qudus Bizenjo, Sardar Saleh Bhootani, Mir Jan Muhammad Jamali, and Dr. Abdul Malik Baloch,

are actively participating in the electoral race, adding significant weight to the political landscape.

### Maulana Fazal To Face Khushal Kakar And Zahoor Agha

A pivotal moment unfolded when Maulana Fazal ur Rehman, the chief of Jamiat ul Ulema e Islam (JUI), submitted his nomination papers for NA 265 Pishin. In a show of solidarity,

Mehmood Khan Achakzai, the Chief of the Pashtoonkwa Milli Awami Party (PKMAP), withdrew his nomination pa-

per in support of Maulana. In re-circulation, JUI withdrew its candidate to back Achakzai on NA263, setting



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Syed Zahoor Agha, and Khushal Khan Kakar, the Chief of Pashtoonkwa National Awami Party (PNAP) on NA 265 Pishin.

### Akhtar Jan Mengal Vying For Provincial And National Assembly Seats

Despite the strong historical presence of his party in the constituency, the competition remains fierce.

Sardar Akhtar Jan Mengal, the Chief of the Balochistan National Party (BNP), is vying for seats in the provincial assembly

complexity to the electoral landscape.

putting them against the National Party and BNP Awami.

Dr. Abdul Malik Baloch, Chief of the National Party (NP), is contesting elections in Turbat, facing competition from Syed Ehsan Shah of the BNP. Chairman of the Senate, Sadiq Sanjrani, is in the electoral fray on PB-32 Dalbandin Chaghi. Competing against candidates from Pakistan Muslim League (N) and JUI F, Sanjrani is seen as a potential candidate for the chief ministerial position in Balochistan.

### Sarfraz Bugti Among Contenders For Position Of CM

Former caretaker interior minister Sarfraz Bugti, now aligned with the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), is seeking election in his native town Dera Bugti. Bugti is among the contenders for the position of chief minister. Given the historical challenges of bomb explosions and targeted killings during past elections, the Balochistan government is taking proactive measures by installing 8000 CCTV cameras to ensure the security and fairness of the electoral process in the province.

## PML-N tops economic management over past 3 decades: Bloomberg report

**News Desk:** The PML-N delivered the "best performance in managing the economy over the past three decades" compared to its political rivals, according to a report from Bloomberg Economics.

The report issued a day ago said that the PML-N "scored better" than the PTI and the PPP when using a combination of unemployment and inflation data called the misery index.

The report explained that it used an average of the index values over the respective years when each of the three parties was in power, adding that a higher value indicated more economic hardship for citizens.

It noted that with PTI chief Imran Khan's legal troubles, as he remains incarcerated while his party is deprived of its election symbol, PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif "looks set to resume power" after the February 8 general polls.

However, the report said



that Imran was "still the most popular politician, with an approval rating of 57 per cent, according to a recent Gallup opinion poll" while Nawaz's ratings jumped to 52pc from 36pc in the past six months.

Commenting on the development, Ankur Shukla of Bloomberg Economics said: "The public may be giving Sharif the benefit of the doubt."

He added that the "road ahead won't be easy for any party that wins the election" due to inflation at persistently near record highs and unemployment also at elevated levels.

The country's annual inflation remains sky-high, clocking in at 29.7pc last month, according to the latest data released from the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS).

Additionally, the country is currently propped by yet another International Monetary Fund (IMF) tranche release of \$700 million for the time being in addition to being restricted by the Fund's stringent conditions.

The report added that "the new government will need to implement policies that may be unpopular with voters, such as withdrawing subsidies and raising taxes."

PML-N rejoices Sharif's "respect on global scale". Responding to the report, the PML-N said the party chief's work had "earned him widespread praise in the international media" and "respect on a global scale".

Nawaz has amped up election tactics along with PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari as politicians race towards the Feb 8 polls.

He has vowed to usher a new age of development, promising that no youth will be "unemployed" if he is elected.

## Afghan-Pakistan Torkham border crossing reopens after 10 days

**TORKHAM BORDER:** The Pakistan-Afghanistan Torkham border, which was shut for 10 days due to the imposition of visa restrictions on truck drivers by Islamabad, was reopened on Tuesday, state-run Radio Pakistan reports.

The crossing was closed on January 13 after Pakistani officials at the crossing began asking for passports and visas from Afghan drivers under a new policy, prompting a reciprocal ban on Pakistani truckers by the Afghan Taliban authorities.

The border closure had come in the wake of Pakistan's decision to start expelling more than a million undocumented foreigners, mostly Afghans.

On Nov 1, amid a row over accusations that Kabul harbours militants that launch cross-border attacks.

Islamabad claimed that Afghan authorities had been conveying the message on the imposition of the visa policy several times, but Kabul had failed to take any practical steps to adhere to international border crossing rules.



According to traders, the border closure resulted in significant economic losses for people in both countries, with daily losses estimated at around \$100,000.

This was not the first time that Torkham was shut. The border crossing has been closed several times in recent months, including in September when it remained shut for nine days due to clashes between border forces.

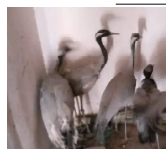
In a report today, Radio Pakistan said the border crossing was reopened for "commercial consignments".

The decision was taken in a meeting between the Afghan consul general and Pakistani authorities in Peshawar.

Quoting Customs authorities, it said the first cargo vehicle had entered Pakistan through the Torkham while Afghan drivers of commercial vehicles had been given visa and passport relaxations till March 31. **News Desk.**

## Joint Operation Rescues Rare Birds in Quetta

**Staff Reporter:**



**QUETTA:** In an ongoing effort to combat illegal wildlife activities, Mehmoond Khan, Deputy Conservator of the Quetta Wildlife Department, has reported successful operations alongside the local police in various areas of Quetta. The joint operations resulted in the recovery of seven specimens of a rare breed, which have now been securely taken into possession.

Furthermore, at Koela Phatak Samangali Road, the collaborative efforts led to the retrieval of 3 Shaheens, 20 Bank Myna, and 15 Bulbul. Unfortunately, the perpetrators managed to evade capture, but both the wildlife department and the police are actively pursuing the individuals involved.

### Birds Belong To Wild And Rare Species

Deputy Conservator Mehmoond Khan emphasized that these captured birds belong to

wild and rare species facing the threat of endangerment. He highlighted the illegal nature of possessing or selling such birds, as it violates Schedule III of the Wildlife Act, 2014, carrying penalties of imprisonment and fines.

A thorough investigation into the illicit trade of these wild and rare birds is currently underway, with subsequent actions to be taken based on the findings.

Mehmoond Khan shared additional information about the Kanji, a migratory bird native to Siberia, which journeys to Pakistan and other warmer regions before the onset of winter, returning to Siberia as spring begins. This insight adds depth to the significance of protecting these migratory species and reinforces the importance of upholding wildlife conservation laws. Authorities remain committed to curbing illegal wildlife trade and ensuring the safety of these rare and valuable creatures.

## 3 Injured in Kharan Attack

**From Our Correspondent:**



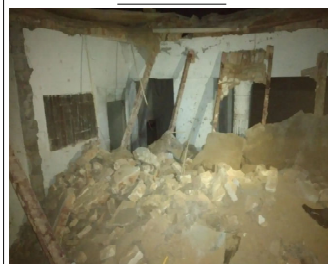
**KHARAN:** In a disturbing incident, a targeted shooting occurred in Kharan Bazar, resulting in the injury of three individuals belonging to the Yalanzai tribe. The armed assailants fired upon Abdul Ghafoor Yalanzai, resident of Gwash, Mohammad Yusuf Syapad Sakna Shadzai, and Jawad Ahmad Malazai Sakna Kharan Shahr.

The swift emergency response led to the immediate

transfer of the injured victims to the hospital for necessary medical attention. The authorities are actively investigating the circumstances surrounding the incident, and further details will be revealed as the investigation progresses. The community remains vigilant as efforts are made to ensure the safety and well-being of the affected individuals and to bring those responsible for the violence to justice.

## Gas Explosion Injures Family in Zarghoonabad Quetta

**News Desk:**



**QUETTA:** In the Zarghoonabad area of Quetta, a distressing incident unfolded as a powerful explosion rocked a residence, resulting from a hazardous gas leakage.

The blast left two children and a woman with severe burns and injuries. Swift action was taken to evacuate the injured to the hospital, where they are currently receiving medical attention. Authorities are actively investigating the cause of the gas leakage to prevent any potential hazards in the future.

Gas leakage incidents have claimed scores of precious human lives in Quetta and other parts of Balochistan. Unannounced and prolonged gas load shedding coupled with sub-standard heaters and pipes are the underlying reasons behind such incidents.

The Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC) has announced a campaign to launch an awareness campaign to save human lives and it has just been minting money from consumers.

EDITORIAL

Editor: Asim Khan

Blooded Coal: Miners Pay the Price in Balochistan

EDITORIAL: The air in Dukka, Balochistan, hangs heavy with grief. Three coal miners, nameless in the face of statistics, lie cold, their lungs choked by the very earth that sustained them...

Editorial: This isn't just an accident, it's a consequence, a bloody bill for years of apathy and greed. Contractors and mine owners, their pockets lined with black gold, turn a blind eye to safety norms, prioritizing profit over human lives.

Editorial: The government, the supposed custodian of lives, stands accused of abysmal negligence. Its regulatory teeth are dulled by corruption and indifference.

Editorial: The human cost is incalculable. Families shattered, dreams extinguished, futures choked by the dust of despair.

Editorial: Responsible Must Be Accountable. Amidst the darkness, embers of hope flicker. The cries of the bereaved, the outrage of activists, the demands for justice — these are the sparks that can ignite change.

Editorial: We, the collective conscience, must hold the powerful accountable. We must demand stricter regulations, enforced with an iron fist.

Editorial: Remember Names Of Miners Who Lost Lives. Dukka's darkness must not shroud our vision. Let this tragedy be the catalyst, the turning point...

Editorial: Remember their names, not just as statistics, but as human beings who deserved better. Remember their sacrifice, not with platitudes, but with action.

Editorial: Let Dukka's darkness be the spark that ignites the flame of change.

Code to an opportunity missed

By Parvez Hassan:

SATURDAY Night Massacre' is a well-understood phrase in US political and judicial history. It refers to a Saturday when, at the height of the Watergate crisis, the then president Richard Nixon sacked independent special prosecutor Archibald Cox...

survival of Imran Khan. Transparency, good governance and conflict of interest considerations are best left to the individual decisions of a judge but where tensions, acrimony, and feuds have long played out in full public view...

2018 general elections. However, brutally, Imran Khan attacked the members of the ECP can be retrieved from recent memory. His no-holds-barred language to persistently accuse the then chief election commissioner (CEC) left us all wondering about how this vulgarity would affect the future of political conversation in Pakistan.

could also be made to the well-known doctrine of indoor management in corporate governance. These should have overwhelmed the technicalities pointed out by the Supreme Court and that had not been followed by the PTI. We all know how the Indian supreme court rose to the challenges of Indira Gandhi's majoritarian rule in India by erecting the Basic Structure doctrine to meet her growing authoritarianism. It could have been our blessing, as a nation, if our Supreme Court had reacted to the present challenges with vision and innovative legal craftsmanship, instead of taking the pedestrian route of falling the bat as an election symbol of PTI on technical nits and bolts when a more creative architecture of judicial reasoning was the need and hope of the nation.

The enormity of the national challenge before the Supreme Court, instead of the troubled times, to its rightful democratic destiny. And, it was clearly the time for Imran Khan — and who can forget his recent threat to try all the members of the Commission for treason under Article 66m re-election as prime minister — did not, institutionally, forget the irreparable harm done to its standing as a national institution. It could not overcome the felicitous

The right to a 'fair trial' guaranteed under Article 10-A of the Constitution requires hearing/adjudication by an impartial and unbiased judge, and if the judge's reasonable perception/likelihood of bias against a judge, he should recuse himself. It is not only a judge's impartial, if right-minded persons would think that, in the circumstances, there is a likelihood of bias on the part of the judge, then he should recuse himself. This facilitates confidence in the court as a prerequisite for the dispensation of justice, and is pivotal for creating the legitimate right of association (and political representation) provided in Article 17 of the Constitution, and reinforced by a robust jurisprudence of the Supreme Court and the other superior courts, all poised against disenfranchising the people of Pakistan.

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Blinding rage

By Shahzad Sharjeel:

BLINDING pretenders to the throne has been an age-old favourite in our part of the world. In addition to making the aspirant an example for other external and internal adventurers and curbing in-house ambition, the injury also added to the challenge of running chaotic kingdoms that frequently experienced uprisings the monarch usually had to deal with leading the forces at the empire's disposal personally in the battlefield.

Let anyone else be the one to stymie the tide of criminal activities in the area. The readers should be spared the gruesome details of how these protectors of life and honour went about their gory business. It took some time before the brave and courageous investigative reporting to expose the case. Inquiries were initiated, and 15 police officials, including the superintendent of Bhagalpur Central Prison, were suspended.

Recently, the caretaker chief minister of Punjab approved action against 18 Directorate of Drug Control officials in his case. More than 60 people have lost their vision completely or partially because of the administration, without consent, of apparently contaminated supplies of the drug. The inspectors who were responsible for ensuring safety standards.

The patry bhais (people wearing of the same belt/badge) closed ranks and claimed that risks as possible, short of outright extermination. Maybe, in their sick minds, they occupied a status one rung higher than those of murderers.

In the Bhagalpur district of Bihar in 1980, police officials, with the knowledge of at least one minister and active indifference of officers as

senior as DIG and IG, many as 87 suspects in custody over a nine-month period. They claimed this was the best way to stem the tide of criminal activities in the area. The readers should be spared the gruesome details of how these protectors of life and honour went about their gory business. It took some time before the brave and courageous investigative reporting to expose the case. Inquiries were initiated, and 15 police officials, including the superintendent of Bhagalpur Central Prison, were suspended.

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An affront to Gandhi's Ram

By Jawad Naqvi:

IT was a day to celebrate and cheer for the ruling party. It was a day to reflect and worry for India's future. It was a day for the BJP to show what many say is its trump card in the run-up to the general elections due in May 2024.

According to this view, the grand but all too rushed inauguration of the Ram temple in Ayodhya was aimed at securing votes, like the way the killing of security personnel in Pulwama did in 2019, or as the politically induced communal carnage in Muzaffargarh was used in 2014.

It was a day for the opposition to calibrate its response: quietly, as they did when Rahul Gandhi battled obstacles in the BJP-nude Assam in his case, or loudly, as they did when Mamata Banerjee offered Punjab a day in Kolkata to call for needed campaign for communal unity.

There's nothing to explain about the practice and apparently desperate inauguration of the Ram temple in Ayodhya. There is a tradition, shown by Rajiv Gandhi, for example, who preferred Donald Trump to the opposition in 1989, despite heading the largest party albeit without a majority. And there is the example of Atal Bihari Vajpayee in 1996.

Asked first, he jumped at the opportunity to be prime minister for all of 13 days. Those are the truly daunting challenges the opposi-

tion faces, not the Ayodhya event. We don't know, of course, how the date of Jan 22 was arrived at for the temple inauguration by Mr Modi, but it surely meant different things to different people.

According to a TV interview by one of the Shankaracharyas that head the Hindu fold of Sanatan Dharma, a particular astrologer from Varanasi was pressed to find an auspicious day in January even though the temple was not complete and is not likely to be for quite a few more months. The idol ceremony requires the temple to be complete. The Shankaracharyas have pointed out. To what avail?

There was a gamut of things happening on Jan 22 in the wider world. An EU delegation was heading to the Middle East. Ron DeSantis quit the US presidential race as Republican hopeful to throw his weight behind Donald Trump.

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Winners and losers

By Dr Niaz Murtaza:

WHO will the winners and losers be in the 2024 polls? Some jokingly say that even though the polls themselves are not certain, the winner is...

But if a (favourable) winner is certain, who would anyone try to defeat them, especially as the US may link a critical new IMF loan to the polls. So, barring a national calamity, polls on Feb 8 look certain, still months late unconstitutional. And yet there is doubt. There is often uncertainty even in the US, despite credible opinion polls and actual polls. In our context, a recent poll shows the PTI and PML-N close in Punjab. But in our opinion polls reli-

able? The 2013 and 2018 ones were reasonably so. Such polls take national or provincial samples and not constituency ones. So, they predict the vote ratios of parties overall but not their number of seats. The average of four polls (Gallup, Pulse, IPOP and SDPI) compiled in the two months of the 2018 polls had the PTI, PML-N and the PPP getting 28.3 per cent, 27.3pc and 16.9pc, votes respectively. They actually got 31.8pc, 24.4pc and 13pc. So, the prediction error in vote ratios by less than one per cent, which is common even in the US.

But how did the vote ratios translate into seats? The party with the highest actual vote ratio got 10-15pc more seats. The PTI-43pc seats in 2018 and PML-N 46pc in 2013 but the PPP got only 2pc more in 2018.

What can we expect in 2024? Gallup has withheld national results this time. But a recent poll shows the PTI at 32pc and PML-N at 32pc in all-crucial Punjab, ie, close as in 2018 nationally. Given the 2013 and 2018 trends, the PTI may win 40-45pc of seats there.

The PTI got 45pc support in Punjab. N and JUI-F together got 24pc and 19pc in Sindh (PPP got 42pc) in this poll. It would suggest the PTI set-up nationally and in Punjab and PPP one in Sindh, with Balochistan in between. There are two big caveats though. Polling over the months in 2018 had the PTI vote ratio increasing but PML-N's falling. Gallup polls over the months in Punjab now show the reverse. This momentum

may mean a PML-N win. But both trends are odd. In 2017-18, the PML-N had given 6pc growth, low inflation, CPEC and a cut in terrorism and power outages. In 2022-23, it gave near-zero growth and record inflation. So, neither trend reflects party outcomes. But the odds now tilt in favour of the PTI. It is not even more. This may have played a key role in changing the choices of voters. The PTI is still registered with it. So, its winners must be treated as its assembly representing Punjab voters in their loyalty laws, even if the

verdict. No law allows the Election Commission of Pakistan to reject party poll results. But it did so twice with the PTI. Law allow the ECP to handle national polls disputes via tribunals run by judges, as it is a judicial body. Arguably, the ECP must run without law but its top leaders, forced to register their registration but are given in elections due to illiteracy. The ECP must be still registered with it. So, its winners must be treated as its assembly representing Punjab voters in their loyalty laws, even if the

PTI's symbol doesn't appear on ballots. Forcing them to run as independents may lower their profile. More critically, make PTI winners open to poaching by others wanting wider net. It all appears designed. It follows the imprisonment of the PTI's top leaders, forced desertion and rally bans. More novel ploys may emerge to undercut the PTI until and after polls.

All this may make 2024 polls more rigged than 2018 and 1996: ones on a par with those held in 1985 and 2002 by unconstitutional regimes. Similar rigging can apparently happen

even under constitutional. This may usher in inept and weak PML-N. The PTI has lost on smaller parties, more so than the PTI in 2018. Even if the PTI wins by magic, we will still have a magnet set with uneasy ties with all key internal and external forces. The only (tiny) hope is if the winner is allowed to appoint a competent cabinet, letting the Sharif or Imran Khan run the parties, as Congress did after Rajiv Gandhi's death to usher in the '80s under Manmohan Singh.

Otherwise, even if the winners are not certain, the losers are the masses.



### Canada sets two-year cap on international students

TORONTO (INP): Canada announced an immediate, two-year cap on international student permits and said it would also stop giving work permits to some post-graduate students as it seeks to rein in record numbers of newcomers seen aggravating a housing crisis.

The cap is expected to result in approximately 360,000 approved study permits in 2024, a decrease of 35% from 2023, according to a statement from the immigration ministry.

Immigration Minister Marc Miller said the federal government would work with the provinces, which oversee the educational system, to apply the cap.

He said the main

reason for the cap is to protect students who attend colleges, which are often private-public partnerships, that provide inadequate services at high costs, but also to ease pressure on housing and services.

"Some private institutions have taken advantage of international students by operating under-resourced campuses, lacking supports for students and charging high tuition fees, all the while significantly increasing their intake of international students," Miller told reporters.

"This increase is also putting pressure on housing, healthcare and other services," he said, adding that fewer numbers would primarily help lower prices for rent.

Read more: World's largest natural ice rink reopens in Canada.

Rapid population growth fueled by immigration has put pressure on services, like healthcare and education, and has helped drive up housing costs. These issues have weighed on Liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's support, with polls showing he would lose an election if one were held now.

In the third quarter of last year, the population grew at its fastest pace in more than six decades, with non-permanent residents – mostly students – increasing by 312,758, the most in more than five decades. The Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA), a student advocacy group, criticized the cap.

"The biggest problem is that ... there's been announced a cap that is a reaction to the housing crisis," said CASA Director of Advocacy, Mateusz Salmassi, adding that what is needed is more support and housing for international students.

The University of Toronto welcomed the announcement and said it would work with all levels of government on the allocation of study permits. The changes are "focused on addressing abuses in the system by particular actors and are not intended to adversely impact universities such as ours," the university said in a statement.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi in group photo with participants of the inaugural session of the Asia Regional Dialogue 2024 on "Climate Crisis: Shaping South Asia's Resilience" organized by the Institute of Regional Studies.

### England's 'Bazball' faces toughest task yet in upcoming India series

LONDON (INP): England's 'Bazball' style of attacking cricket faces its biggest challenge yet when they play an India side who have not lost a home Test series in more than a decade.

The five-Test series begins Thursday in Hyderabad, and although India will be without Virat Kohli for the first two matches because of personal reasons, they start as clear favourites.

But it was England who were the last team to beat India on home turf, when Alistair Cook's team won a four-match series 2-1. Monty Panesar, who was part of that team, said the tourists had nothing to fear in a series where spin is expected to play a huge part. "England have got every chance of winning Test matches out there," the former England spinner told.

"They've got to have a positive mindset. Ben Stokes himself, he's got to think, 'Can I make Bazball successful on turning pitches?'"

That's obviously going to be his biggest challenge. "Skipper Stokes and England prepared in Abu Dhabi instead of playing a tour match in India, which drew criticism in some raised fears England could be "undercooked".

Underlining the scale of the task facing England, Panesar added: "If he wins in India he will probably be known as one of the greatest captains ever to captain England, and one of the greatest captains ever in Test cricket." India and England drew 2-2 in their series meeting in England in 2021-22.

England coach Brendon McCullum has

helped transform England's red-ball fortunes since joining forces with Stokes in 2022, the pair taking over a team that had won just one of its previous 17 Tests.

England have since won 13 out of 18 Tests under the duo, playing an attacking brand of cricket dubbed "Bazball" in reference to former New Zealand captain McCullum's nickname.

But there were the first murmurs of dissent towards the all-action approach in the 2-2 home Ashes draw with Australia last summer.

Veteran pace bowler James Anderson and senior batsman Joe Root are the only two surviving members of England's last Test triumph in India.

The 41-year-old Anderson is 10 short of 700 Test wickets. "Jimmy is superhuman. People

have been anticipating he will retire for about seven years now and he keeps surprising people," former teammate Steven Finn said.

"He didn't have a fantastic summer last year, but knowing him as a character, he wouldn't be doing this (touring India) unless he felt he could make a difference."

Anderson will lead England's bowling after the retirement of pace partner Stuart Broad following the Ashes, which were retained by Australia. Jack Leach will be crucial to the tourists as their frontline spinner in a department that otherwise has two uncapped players including Tom Hartley and Shoab Bashir.

Despite his advancing years, Root stands tall in a batting department that also boasts Jimmy Bairstow, Stokes and Ollie Pope.



ISLAMABAD: Outgoing Ambassador of Tajikistan in Pakistan Ismatullo Naserdin calls on Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.

### Pakistan men's hockey team climbs FIH rankings after Paris Olympics qualifiers

LAHORE (INP): The Pakistan men's hockey team has seen an improvement in its ranking following its participation in the Paris Olympics qualifiers held in Muscat, Oman.

The Green Shirts have moved up one place to 15th in the latest rankings released by the International Hockey Federation (FIH). The Netherlands claims the top spot, with Belgium and India securing the second and third positions, respectively.

In his post, Imad Butt stated, "Boys are giving their blood and sweat wholeheartedly for Pakistan but the way we are being

elation, Pakistan Hockey Team Captain Imad Butt disclosed on Monday that the players have not received salaries from the Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) for the past six months. Taking to Instagram, Imad Butt expressed gratitude to the fans for their support and highlighted the challenges faced by the players in the absence of facilities while passionately pursuing the game.

In his post, Imad Butt stated, "Boys are giving their blood and sweat wholeheartedly for Pakistan but the way we are being

treated is totally unfair. Hockey is our national game, so please treat us like national heroes." He urged for support, emphasizing that despite facing these issues for the past ten years, the players remain motivated to contribute positively to the country.

Despite their efforts, the men in green failed to secure a spot in the Paris 2024 Olympics, losing 3-2 to New Zealand in the third/fourth place match of the qualifiers on Sunday.

It marks the third consecutive time Pakistan has missed out on

Olympic qualification, having previously failed to secure a place in Rio 2016 and Tokyo 2020.

In the qualifiers, Germany defeated Pakistan 4-0 in the semi-finals, earning a crucial point to advance to the final four. After losing the first match against Great Britain 6-1, Pakistan secured their first win in the competition by beating China 2-0. From the pool matches, Pakistan finished second in Pool A behind Great Britain, with China and Malaysia secured three and one point, respectively.

### Vawda predicts short-lived govt, power play by independents

ISLAMABAD (INP): Senior politician Faisal Vawda has raised alarm, stating that running the government without Asif Zardari will pose significant challenges.

With only two major parties active in the field, PPP and PML-N, and PML-N will not sit together. The decision-making power for the government will lie with the winning independent candidates, with the role of PPP and PML-N will be crucial.

Discussing Zardari's influence, Vawda noted his adeptness on the political chessboard, but lamented that his images adorning the Presidency. While he clarified his non-affiliation with PPP, he humorously remarked on the change in the winds

for the PTL. Predicting less than 100 seats for PML-N, Vawda labeled Asif Zardari as an experienced leader. He encouraged young leaders like Zardari's son to take the lead, emphasizing the need for fresh faces in the political landscape.

He acknowledged the necessity of having experienced figures in the game but lamented the lack of change.

Vawda questioned whether bringing in figures like Ishaq Dar would lead to a better situation, given their alleged involvement in

corruption cases. He highlighted the corruption files against the judges who resigned, particularly related to the Nisra tower, calling into question their moral authority.

In a metaphorical analogy, Vawda compared the upcoming political scenario to a cattle market where independent candidates, athletes, and big players will all enter the arena. He concluded that the one who plays well and garners support will emerge on the field, ready to take on the challenges ahead.

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ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Communications Shahid Ashraf Tarar being briefed regarding the working of Control room established by Ministry of Interior to monitor the overall security situation during General Elections.

### Kundi promises people for resolving their issues

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (INP): Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Central Information Secretary and Candidate for NA-4, Dera Ismail constituency, Faisal Karim Kundi vowed to address all the major issues being faced by the people of his constituency.

He stated this while addressing a public meeting organized here at the residence of renowned businessman Haji Ghulam Subhani in Mohallah Dabba Tabakhi.

Kundi said the worst electricity loadshedding was being carried out in Dera Ismail Khan, adding, most of the areas here were facing up to 16-18 hours and some areas up to 22 hours of power out-

ages. Besides, the Gas facility was also not available for the people of this area during winter, he added.

He promised that all the issues including electricity loadshedding and gas outages would be resolved by empowering the people if his party would come into power.

He said the PPP believed in the public mandate and it would form the next government with the help of the people. After the February 08 elections, he said, public meetings would be held every month and at union council levels in Dera Ismail Khan wherein he would be present accountable before the masses.

PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has given the best Ten-point manifesto through which the party would overcome all the challenges being faced by the country and its people.

Haji Ghulam Subhani, Councilor Muhammad Irfan, were present also present on the occasion who declared.

Sheikh Akmal and well-known political figure Naeem Khan Wazir also addressed the event while PPP City President Fazal ur Rehman Baloch, Party leader Jimmy Khan Sadozai and a large number of local dignitaries were present also present on the occasion who declared.

### Sharjah Warriors beat Dubai Capitals by 5 wkts

DUBAI (INP): Charles virtually carried his team on his shoulders with a 71 runs partnership in 51 balls for the fourth wicket with Lewis Gregory (16), and a 28-run stand with UAE's Basil Hameed for the fifth wicket. Though Charles got out when Warriors

needed 27 runs off 23 balls, Hameed, through an unbeaten 24, and Daniel Sams (16.0), carried their team to the victory with seven balls to spare. Capitals' medium pacer Dushmantha Chameera picked four out of the five wickets that fell for 28 runs, but

his efforts went in vain. Capitals were put into bat, but they posted a fighting total of 170 for 7 in 20 overs. Sam Billings top scored with 52 runs off 32 balls with four sixes and one boundary while Skandar Raza's hit 48 runs off 23 balls with three boundaries and

three sixes. Together they put on 81 runs for the fourth wicket off 44 balls after their team got off to a slow start scoring just 38 runs in the powerplay. In pursuit of their target of 171 runs, Warriors brought in opener Martin Guppitt and the super.



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture, Jamal Shah briefing diplomats of Central Asian States, Russia and China about second CPEC Cultural Caravan 2024; at PNCA.



### ECP freezes development funds of local Govt ahead of general elections

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has taken a significant step by freezing the development funds for all local government departments nationwide. This freeze extends until the announcement of the general election results.

The Election Commission's notification explicitly prohibits the initiation of any local development schemes or related activities throughout the country.

The directive includes a suspension on tenders and contract awards by local governments and cantonment boards until the conclusion of the general elections. While the day-to-day affairs of sanitation and cleanliness will continue, the

announcement or execution of any local development scheme is strictly forbidden.

Previously, the Election Commission of Pakistan had implemented a ban on appointments and transfers affecting federal, provincial, and local institutions alike. The Secretary of the Election Commission had communicated this decision to the caretaker governments in all four provinces, including the Federation.

Furthermore, the Election Commission ordered the retrieval of official vehicles from former ministers, advisors, and assistants, emphasizing similar actions for assembly members who were instructed to vacate official residences. The Commission also directed the

termination of employment for political figures appointed in various institutions, seeking detailed asset disclosures from the caretaker prime minister, chief ministers, and cabinet members.

While the caretaker governments are permitted to manage daily affairs in accordance with the law, implementing ongoing international and bilateral agreements, the Election Commission has set clear restrictions.

The Provincial Election Commissioners have communicated these restrictions to the Chief Secretary of Punjab, IG and all relevant authorities, outlining instructions for the supervisory setup across the four provinces.



Quetta: Caretaker Provincial Interior Minister Captain (R) Muhammad Zubair Jamali and Chairman Balochistan Public Service Commission Abdul Salik Khan are discussing BPS issues during the meeting.

### Int'l observers & journalists to monitor cover general elections: Info Minister

ISLAMABAD (INP): Caretaker Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi has said that international observers and journalists will visit Pakistan to monitor and cover general elections to be held on the 8th of next month.

He was addressing a news conference along with Secretary Information Shahera Shahid, Director General Radio Pakistan Saeed Ahmed Sheikh and Executive Director General External Publicity Wing Amreen Jan in Islamabad.

Sharing details of the applications being processed, the Information Minister said that forty-nine visas have so far issued to the foreign journalists whilst thirty-two are under process.

He said Pakistan's High Commission in India has also received twenty-four applications which are being processed.

The Information Minister said that a total of one hundred and seventy-four applications from various foreign media outlets have been received.

He mentioned that several international media outlets including CNN, BBC, DW and those of Japan have already

presence in Pakistan and they will be covering the elections on National and Provincial Assemblies' seats.

Murtaza Solangi said the applications submitted by the foreign observers are also being processed. He said twenty-five applications have been received from Britain, eight from Russia, thirteen from Japan, five from Canada, two from South Africa and five from Commonwealth.

He said that international journalists and observers are being given permission letters for monitoring and coverage of the electoral process in three big cities of Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad. He, however said if a foreign journalist wants to visit any other city, his case will be processed on case-by-case basis.

The Information Minister said local journalists are being provided with accreditation cards for coverage of the general elections.

He said six thousand and sixty-five accreditation cards have so far been issued to the local journalists across the country.

Dr. Gohar Ejaz emphasized that the current trade deficit is \$20 billion, and the government is keen on focus-

ing on 20,000 small-scale entrepreneurs to increase revenues and contribute to a positive balance of trade.

The minister stated that the Ministry of Commerce has organized visits for small and medium-sized business owners to Egypt, China, and GCC countries to explore new markets. These efforts have already shown successful results in expanding trade opportunities.

She said the Election Commission has also issued a code of conduct for the foreign journalists and observers.

The Executive DG EP Wing said a media cell will be established at the office of Press Information Officer where all facilities will be provided to the foreign observers and journalists.

She said a cell at EP Wing has also been established for the issuance of accreditation cards to the journalists.

### Pakistan sets target 20,000 small businesses to end trade deficit: Minister

ISLAMABAD (INP): Federal Minister for Commerce, Industry, and Investment, Dr. Gohar Ejaz, stated that the government is directing its attention towards 20,000 small businesses.

Addressing a gathering at the US-Aid Investment Summit, he mentioned that if each of the 20,000 small businesses can generate one million dollars in revenue, it could elim-

inate trade deficits, with the goal achievable within a year.

The Commerce Minister highlighted that various initiatives have been taken to concentrate on small and medium-sized businesses, indicating a strategic approach to uplift this sector.

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ing on 20,000 small-scale entrepreneurs to increase revenues and contribute to a positive balance of trade.

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Quetta: Finance Secretary Bahar Khan presiding over a meeting regarding the fund for employment on internship basis issues in Balochistan Directorate of Public Relations.



QUETTA: Ghulam Rasool Domki is meeting with Governor Balochistan Malik Abdul Wali Khan Kakar

### Jamal Shah shares 2nd 'CPEC Cultural Caravan 2024' plan with diplomats

ISLAMABAD (INP): Caretaker Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture, Jamal Shah on Tuesday held a meeting with Ambassadors of Central Asian States to discuss the initial plan of second 'CPEC Cultural Caravan 2024' aimed at strengthening cultural bonds between Pakistan, China, Russia and the Central Asian States.

The high level meeting held at Pakistan National Council of the Arts was attended by Ambassador of Russia to Pakistan Mr. Albert Khorev, Embassy of China Counselor Rao Zhong, Ambassador of Turkmenistan to Pakistan Mr. Atajan Movlamb, Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Pakistan Yerzhan Kistafim, Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan Totuayev Ulanbek Asankulovich, Ambassador of Uzbekistan Aybek Arif Usmanov and Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan Khazar Farhadov.

Federal Secretary National Heritage and Culture Humaira Ahmed, Advisor National Heritage and Culture Muhammad Kashif Irshad, Director General PNCA Ayub Jamali, Executive Director Lok Virsa Uzair Khan and Chairperson Pakistan Academy of Letters (PAL) Dr. Najeeba Arif were also present on the occasion.

Addressing the diplomats, Jamal Shah apprised that his ministry plans to organize a second China Pakistan Economic Corridor

(CPEC) Cultural Caravan aimed at promoting economic ties and strengthening cultural bonds between Pakistan, China and the Central Asian States.

He said that CPEC Cultural Caravan will commence its journey from Xi'an, China, and traverse through Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Iran, UAE, Gwadar, Karachi, ultimately concluding in Islamabad.

"Cultural Caravan to Document Diverse Lives on CPEC, Silk Route," the Minister National Heritage and Culture added.

This cultural excursion will document the experiences and stories of the people along the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and the Silk Route, covering Central Asian countries.

He said that the Cultural Caravan will be composed of diverse groups of Pakistani, Chinese and Central Asian artists, musicians, photographers, anthropologists, writers and filmmakers.

Jamal Shah said that the CPEC Cultural Caravan aims at promoting dialogue, cultural exchange, understanding, trust and respect between the nations, adding that it will also strengthen international relations in terms of protection of cultural heritage, cultural and academic exchange.

He said that CPEC Cultural Caravan will also strengthen and

support the promotion of arts and creative industries on the caravan route in fields of culture, history, education, and economic and heritage tourism.

The Minister National Heritage and Culture said that the idea was this that cultural excursion under the title 'CPEC Cultural Caravan 2024' will be composed of diverse groups of Pakistani, Chinese and Central Asian artists, musicians, photographers, anthropologists, writers and filmmakers.

The caravan will bring together a diverse group of artists, musicians, photographers, anthropologists, writers, and filmmakers from Pakistan, China, and Central Asia.

In their separate remarks, the Ambassadors commended the idea of joint CPEC cultural caravan. They said that it was very important to promote people to people contacts by organizing such mega cultural activities. They assured full support in convening this important event and agreed to continue work on the overall plan of Cultural Caravan 2024.

Earlier, Secretary National Heritage and Culture Humaira Ahmed in her welcome note, highlighted the importance of CPEC cultural caravan. She said that this will be second episode of CPEC Cultural Caravan.

### Shehbaz declares Nawaz as guarantee for economic revival, development

AHMEDPUR SHARQIA (INP): President Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has declared party supremo Nawaz Sharif as guarantee for economic revival and development of country if voted to power on February 8. While addressing an election campaign related public gathering in Ahmedpur Sharqia on Tuesday, he said that three-time prime minister Nawaz Sharif has served South Punjab while being in power

and he would continue the journey of bringing prosperity to Pakistan including South Punjab after coming into power. Terming the 2018 elections in Pakistan as fraud, Shehbaz Sharif said the nation had to suffer due to what happened after the said bogus polls. Revealing his development plan for Ahmedpur Sharqia, the former PM said that he will establish Danish Schools in every Tehsil of Punjab if Nawaz Sharif was voted

to power. Shehbaz also announced to give status of district to Ahmedpur Sharqia after coming into power in the 2024 elections. He said that Nawaz Sharif after coming into power will announce 'big projects' for Ahmedpur Sharqia masses will not be left alone. The PML-N President said that his party took steps on a war footing for the rehabilitation of the 2010 flood victims.



QUETTA: Provincial Joint Election Commissioner Admin. Tahir Mansoor Khan is presiding over the meeting of the District Monitoring Officer (DMO) regarding the code of conduct.

### Citizens need to wear masks, boost immune system to prevent pneumonia: Expert

ISLAMABAD (INP): The citizens need to wear masks and boost their immune systems which can reduce their chances of catching the 'Pneumonia Virus' as due to weak immune system several pneumonia cases among children have also witnessed a surge in Punjab during this month.

This was stated by Child Specialist Dr Ibrahim Yousaf while talking a private news channel on Tuesday.

He emphasized that 'Pneumonia' can be prevented by immunization, adequate nutrition, and by addressing environmental factors.

The citizens, especially

those vulnerable to Pneumonia attacks should be more careful as chronic exposure to air pollutants is associated with severe infections and higher mortality, he added.

Dr Ibrahim Yousaf suggested people to take the diets which can boost their immunity to fight seasonal diseases, revert to organic foods and handle such issues with home remedies.

Those with serious conditions especially continuous fever must contact the health providers immediately, he advised.

He said that pneumonia is lung infection disease and preventive measures need to be

taken at every level to prevent the loss of children's lives.

Timely vaccination holds key importance to decrease the increasing number of children's deaths and our motive is to send this message to the public so that they can take preventive measures such as a healthy diet, mother's milk and clean hands which can protect from many diseases.

People with weak immune systems and those who otherwise face a heightened risk of severe disease should also consider wearing a mask, he added. The child specialist said that preventive measures should be adopted to protect children from the disease.