

# QUETTA VOICE

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## 7th International PATS Exercise Kicks Off: Promoting Military Cooperation

Dawood Ahmed:

**ISLAMABAD:** The opening ceremony of the 7th International Pakistan Army Team Spirit (PATS) Exercise-2024 was held at the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC) Pabbi, on Sunday, the military's media wing said.

Director General Military Training opened the 60 hours long Patrolling Exercise which aims at enhancing military-to-military cooperation under a complex international security environment.

A total of 20 friendly countries including military observers are participating in the event, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said. Major participants include Pakistan, Bahrain, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Maldives, Morocco, Qatar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Turkey, the United States of America, and Uzbekistan while Azerbaijan, Belarus, China, Myanmar, Germany, Indonesia, Japan and Oman will witness the exercise as military observers.

### PATS Is Organized Annually

Pakistan Army Team Spirit is a mission-specific and task-oriented professional military exercise organized annually in Pakistan. The exercise calls for the highest standard of physical fitness, mental agility, robustness and professional military expertise for quick decision-making in varied situations during the conduct of challenging missions in a near real environment.

The aim and objectives of this exercise revolve around perseverance acclaimed through team spirit. The exercise would help hone basic soldierly attributes besides interoperability through the sharing of innovative ideas and mutual best practices.



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## PPP's Syed Owais Shah elected Sindh Assembly speaker

Amir Khan:

**KARACHI:** PPP nominee Syed Owais Shah was elected on Sunday as the 18th speaker of the Sindh Assembly after bagging 111 votes in favour.

The election of the speaker and deputy speaker was held through a secret ballot under the new-former speaker Agha Siraj Durrani.

Around 147 members of the provincial legislature cast their vote today, however, nine PFI-



Sofia Shah, who managed to secure 36 votes only. PPP's Anthony Naveed was elected as deputy speaker Sindh Assembly after bagging 111 votes. MQM-P's Rashid Khan secured 36 votes. Anthony is the first deputy speaker of the provincial legislature from a minority group. After the victory, he embraced Speaker Owais Shah. Today, nine PFI-backed independent members of the Sindh Assembly also took the

oath, bringing the total number of members who have taken oath to 157. JI's member Muhammad Farooq also took the oath, while three members of the GDA were absent. With 114 members, the PPP is the largest party in the Sindh Assembly, and MQM-P is the second-largest party with 36 seats. GDA has three members, Jamaat-e-Islami has one, and there are nine independent members. NEWSDESK.

## Fatal Shooting Leaves Three Dead in Kohlu District, Balochistan

Yousaf Marri:

**KOHLU:** In a tragic turn of events, three individuals fell victim to a fatal shooting incident in the Kahan tehsil of Kohlu district of Balochistan. The assailants, their identities yet unknown, fled the scene before authorities could arrive.

Local levies swiftly responded to the distress call, reaching the site to secure the area and initiate investigations into the heinous act.

However, the motive behind the attack remains shrouded in mystery, leaving both authorities and the community perplexed.

Following the swift intervention, the lifeless bodies of the victims were promptly transported to the nearest hospital for further ex-



amination and necessary procedures. As the investigation unfolds, residents of the area remain on edge, seeking answers and justice for the senseless loss of life.

The incident serves as a grim reminder of the ongoing challenges faced by communities in conflict-affected areas, emphasizing the need for enhanced security measures and proactive interventions to prevent such tragedies in the future.

## ECP gears up to hold election for president by March 9

ISLAMABAD: Still coping with the post-poll challenges and rigging allegations, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) is now gearing up to hold the election for the office of the country's president by March 9, two days before the retirement of half of the senators after completing their six-year term, Dawn has learnt.

"The president will be elected by the present senators after setting up all of the four provincial assemblies," a senior PPP office-bearer said, adding that the election could take place on March 9 or 10.

Mr Zardari previously served as the president from September 2008 to 2013 after the resignation of the military ruler Pervez Musharraf.



Shehbaz Sharif, has already announced Asif Ali Zardari as its consensus candidate for the country's top constitutional office.

The six-party alliance, set to form a coalition government at the Centre under the PML-N's

## Balochistan Unites Against Polio: Massive Drive to Safeguard Health

Health Desk:

**QUETTA:** In a concerted effort to combat the resurgence of polio, Balochistan gears up for a seven-day anti-polio campaign set to commence on February 26. The initiative, spearheaded by the Coordinator of Emergency Operation Center Balochistan, Syed Zahid Shah, aims to administer drops across the province to safeguard public health.

Expressing his determination, Shah emphasized the significance of this campaign in light of recent developments. "After two and a half years of being polio-free, it is disconcerting to witness the reemergence of the virus in different districts of Balochistan during 2023," he stated in a recent press release.

### Shah Calls For Complete Eradication Of Polio Virus

Highlighting the im-



portance of utilizing all available resources, Shah called for a unified approach to ensure the complete eradication of polio from the region.

Despite the challenges posed by the recent developments, he commended the diligent efforts of health workers and the robust routine immunization system in place.

With meticulous planning, over 11,000 teams comprising

mobile units, fixed sites, and transit points are set to participate in the campaign. These teams, totaling 11,446, will blanket the province, aiming to reach every child and administer the necessary vaccinations.

### Balochistan Has Been Polio Free Currently

The mobilization effort underscores the province's commitment to safeguarding public health and maintaining its polio-free status.

Through collaborative endeavors and community engagement, Balochistan remains resolute in its fight against polio, prioritizing the well-being of its citizens above all else.

## Balochistan Governor Calls Assembly Session for Feb 28; New MPs to Swear Oaths

Staff Reporter:

**QUETTA:** In a pivotal move for Balochistan's political landscape, Governor Malik Abdul Wali Kakar has summoned the provincial assembly to convene on February 28th. The session, scheduled for 3 pm at Quetta's Zarghoon Road, marks a significant moment as newly elected members prepare to take their oaths of office.

With the total count of assembly members standing at 65, this inaugural session holds promise for shaping the legislative agenda and direction of the province. As Balochistan braces for this momen-



tous event, all eyes are on the emerging leadership and the issues they'll tackle in the days ahead.

Stay tuned as we bring you comprehensive coverage of

this historic assembly session and its implications for Balochistan's future.

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اپنے بچوں کی حفاظت یقینی بنائیں اور انہیں ہر مہم میں پولیو کی ویکسین لازمی بنوائیں

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## URGENT ACTION NEEDED: POLIO RESURGENCE IN PAKISTAN DEMANDS IMMEDIATE RESPONSE

Editor: Asim Khan

### Urgent Action Needed: Polio Resurgence in Pakistan Demands Immediate Response

**Editorial:** In a startling revelation, the presence of the polio virus has been confirmed in various districts across Pakistan, including the capital city of Islamabad. This alarming development poses a significant threat to public health, demanding swift and comprehensive action from the government, UNICEF, and other concerned organizations.

The Ministry of Health's recent announcement, confirming 14 positive environmental samples from different districts, highlights the urgent need for intensified efforts to curb the spread of polio. Among the affected areas, Balochistan, a province that has maintained a polio-free status for over two years, now faces a renewed threat to its hard-won achievement.

**Environmental Samples Found In More Than Dozen Points In Balochistan**

The gravity of the situation becomes evident as environmental samples from more than a dozen points in Balochistan have tested positive for the polio virus. This calls for an immediate and targeted response to prevent further escalation.

The efforts of anti-polio teams in maintaining the province's polio-free status are commendable. However, the recent discovery of environmental samples carrying the virus underscores the importance of redoubling vaccination efforts. The government, in collaboration with UNICEF and other relevant organizations, must adopt an indigenous approach to effectively tackle the resurgence.

#### Balochistan Requires A Tailored Strategy

Balochistan, with its unique challenges and terrain, requires a tailored strategy that takes into account the local context. This includes engaging with communities, understanding cultural nuances, and overcoming logistical hurdles to ensure every child under the age of five receives the necessary vaccinations.

In light of this concerning development, we urge the government, UNICEF, and other stakeholders to prioritize Balochistan in their polio eradication efforts. Rapid response teams should be deployed to affected areas, and vaccination campaigns must be intensified to cover every child, particularly those in remote and inaccessible regions.

#### Collective Determination To Eradicate Polio

The international community should also lend its support by providing the necessary resources and expertise to bolster local initiatives. Collaborative efforts between the government, NGOs, and international organizations are crucial to effectively combat the resurgence of polio and protect the health of Pakistan's children.

The stakes are high, and time is of the essence. Let us unite in the fight against polio, ensuring that no child in Balochistan or any other part of Pakistan is left vulnerable to this preventable disease. The collective determination to eradicate polio must prevail, and only through concerted efforts can we hope to secure a polio-free future for the nation.

## Smoke and mirrors?

BY Muna Khan:

A LINE from a piece I quoted a few weeks ago has stayed with me: "Does social media cause this anger or does it reveal it?" This was from a 2022 interview Vox did with Lucy Allais, a philosopher at Johns Hopkins University. I've been paying more attention to exchanges in the real world and the virtual world to see if I can attempt to answer whether X held up a mirror to show us our rage and angry, were we always like this?

These platforms allow for people's inhibitions to be lowered online because the nature of the interaction offers anonymity, invisibility and no fear of consequences. Social media is an unforgiving place. Users are being for blood and unable to imagine, let alone accept, that someone made a mistake in their 280-word tweet. You can get away with saying truly horrible things and most, your account is suspended, only for you to create another one. Studies show how extreme emotions coupled with lack of accountability can lead to bullying, harassment and — this is scary — violent in-person confrontations.

Max Fisher documented some incidents in his book *Chaos Machine*. He cites a study conducted in 2017 where researchers tried to understand why refugees in some towns in Germany experienced violence from others didn't. They found that where people used Facebook a lot in that area, violence against refugees increased or decreased in proportion to the use of the platform. An explanation may be needed here, especially for an older generation unfamiliar with how algorithms select others who they think will elicit anger and outrage as an audience engagement strategy.

equally compelling, and terrible, stories of how people used WhatsApp to organize massacres of Muslims in Myanmar and the violence in the US Capitol on Jan 6, 2021, has been linked to vlogs on YouTube promoting radical views.

Social media platforms are, as the founder of Twitter Jack Dorsey told a Congressional hearing in the US, "ultimately... a business. And a business wants to grow the number of its customers."

The way it does so is by keeping users online longer, in their echo chambers, hearing what they want to hear. However, they don't want to accept responsibility for what people do after they've been fed content on their platforms.

This is where it gets tricky. Social media is a sharing world view but world events too, as Fisher writes in his book *Dolores*.

And Facebook, which also owns WhatsApp — doesn't really want to take responsibility for the mobs that went on an anti-Muslim rampage in Sri Lanka in 2018.

## Balochistan's Population Growth Challenges: A Call for Comprehensive Strategies

Muhammad Asghar Harifal:

Recently, Balochistan held its 2nd Task Force meeting on population growth, a critical issue identified by the Supreme Court of Pakistan. This intervention in 2018 led to the formation of Task Forces at national and provincial levels, focusing on key areas such as legislation, financial resources, advocacy, family planning services, contraceptive security, and the support of ulma.

Effectiveness of Task Forces: The Task Forces, comprising various stakeholders, have proven to be effective tools in addressing urgent and complex issues.

These bodies, meeting every three months, bring together departments like Population Welfare, Planning

and Development, Health, Education, Social Welfare, Women Welfare, donor partners, and activists. This collaborative approach is crucial, considering the limited attention and funding typically allocated to social well-being agencies in the public sector.

Lessons from China and Regional Disparities: Examining successful models like China's one-child policy, it becomes evident that population control is intertwined with economic growth. China's shift from the most populous country to the highest growing economy highlights the correlation.

Unfortunately, the success factors in birth control models are lacking on a national

scale, especially in Balochistan, where the population growth rate is 3.37%, higher than the national average of 2.55%. Balochistan's Unique Challenges: Compared to other provinces, Balochistan faces similar issues but with heightened severity. The province's population growth rate is alarming, estimated to reach 24 million by 2050 if the current trend persists.

Institutional Effectiveness and Political Processes: The quality of political processes directly impacts institutional effectiveness. Political appointments compromising specialization have

weakened public institutions, creating a detrimental environment for addressing population-related challenges. The collusion in appointments for political gain further undermines public service effectiveness. Lack of National Narrative: Population growth and its consequences remain inadequately addressed in the national narrative, despite being a critical challenge.

Balochistan, with its low literacy, women exclusion, widespread poverty, scattered population, and traditional values, needs increased investment in advocacy and public outreach. The rise of social media offers a potential platform for disseminating information and engaging with the public, but significant public sector in-

vestment is lacking. Resource Allocation and National Finance Commission's Discontent: Balochistan's discontent with the National Finance Commission's resource distribution, particularly concerning population weightage, is a point of contention. The province advocates for a formula considering factors due to its high poverty rates, vast area, low literacy, and health indicators. The divisible pool distribution gains significance as it constitutes nearly 90% of Balochistan's revenue, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive approach to revenue generation. Conclusion: Balochistan's population growth challenges demand immediate and comprehensive strategies.

BY Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry:

Relations between India and Pakistan remain frosty, a theatrical play in Washington has stirred conversations of peace, harmony and pluralism, as clearly stipulated in his speech to the Assembly in 1947. He was not opposed to the unity of India per se, as he had accepted the Cabinet Mission Plan of 1946.

However, Jinnah was concerned that the legacy of parliamentary democracy the British were leaving behind would keep the Muslim minority perpetually subservient to the rule of the Hindu majority. He did not wish to see British Raj replaced by Ram Raj. Jinnah's efforts to create Pakistan were essentially aimed at ensuring that Muslims of India to protect their political, economic, and cultural rights.

Seventy-six years

later, if Gandhi and Jinnah were to fictionally, return home in 2024, they would find their respective countries to be very different than the ones they had envisioned. Gandhi would find India on course to becoming a Hindu nationalist state, with shrinking space for minorities, growing communalism, and mosques being replaced with mandirs, and the legacy of parliamentary democracy the British were leaving behind would keep the Muslim minority perpetually subservient to the rule of the Hindu majority. He did not wish to see British Raj replaced by Ram Raj. Jinnah's efforts to create Pakistan were essentially aimed at ensuring that Muslims of India to protect their political, economic, and cultural rights.

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unemployment and poverty. He would be aggrieved to see a country blessed with such fertile land, minerals, mountains, and splendid coastline ranking depressingly low in social and economic indicators.

The play, conceived by Akbar S. Ahmad, the Ibn-e-Khalid chair at the American University, Washington, and directed by Manjula Kumar of Global Performing Arts, sends out a powerful message that in the interest of peace, both countries must return to the vision of their founding fathers.

Another, perhaps more important, message that Akbar S. Ahmad sends through this play is that the prevailing hostility between India and Pakistan does not serve either country well. The past cannot be

changed. There is a need to look at each other afresh as friends and neighbours.

Jinnah had envisioned India and Pakistan living in peaceful coexistence, much like the US and Canada.

He even maintained his residence in Mumbai. Gandhi was opposed to partition. Yet, when it happened, he used all his influence on the Indian government to prevent partition. Yet, when it happened, he used all his influence on the Indian government to prevent partition. Yet, when it happened, he used all his influence on the Indian government to prevent partition.

BY Ahmed Bilal Mehboob:

At the centre of the raging controversy over the Feb 8 election results are two forms prescribed in Ection Rules, 2017: Form-45 is the Result of the [vote] Count prepared by the presiding officer at each polling station and Form-47 is the Provisional Consolidated Statement of the result of the vote count of all polling stations in a constituency prepared by the concerned Returning Officer (RO) before including the received postal ballots in the count.

These two and some other associated forms like the Ballot Paper Account of each polling station (Form-46), Consolidated Statement of the Results of the Count Furnished by the Presiding Officers including the count of postal ballots (Form-48) and Final Consolidated Result (Form-49) constitute the backbone of the system of electoral transparency guaranteed by Elections Act, 2017.

Primarily, there are three pillars which sustain the integrity of the electoral process (especially on polling day) operations in Pakistan.

## A matter of form

The first pillar is the correctness of the information recorded in Forms 45 to 49. If there are flaws in the basic information contained in Form-45 and the obvious errors and omissions such as an incorrect total area checked by the RO at the time of receiving Form-45, the errors, in all probability, will be carried through, leading to incorrect results for the concerned constituency.

Although both the presiding officer and senior-most assistant presiding officer at each polling station are required to sign, affix their thumb impressions, and record

their CNIC numbers, certifying that they have checked and verified the completed form, many Form-45s generally contain errors, and, in some cases, the signatures of the officers are missing.

The law also requires that the completed Form-45 also be signed by the polling agents through their polling but in the 2018 election, 90 per cent of the forms uploaded to the ECP website did not contain the signature of a polling agent, raising questions about the credibility of the forms. Such scrutiny of Form-45s in the 2024 election

is yet to be undertaken as the forms have not been uploaded on the ECP website yet.

There are three pillars which sustain the integrity of polling day operations. The second pillar of poll integrity is sharing of information with all candidates and political parties through their polling and election agents, and the media and public at large soon thereafter. In order to ensure complete transparency, an authenticated copy of Form-45 has to be handed to the polling agent of each candidate according to Elections Act, 2017.

BY Abbas Nasir:

SLOWLY but surely Feb 8 election result is becoming a fait accompli, and the system will move ahead, despite widespread dissatisfaction and protest for some time to come, including many long drawn-out legal battles in the ECP and courts. And the system is moving ahead as the oath-taking in Punjab and Sindh assemblies demonstrated, with the former also likely to decide who will be the Speaker and deputy Speaker this weekend, before moving on to elect the two chief ministers next week.

Given the numbers in Punjab, Sindh and KP assemblies, it is safe to assume, the usual suspects aside, that PML-N, PPP and SIC (read: PTI — not to be confused with SIC), respectively. Then, the real challenge to see their nomination.

unique wisdom, is not to hand over power to the legitimately elected and popular leadership but to experiment with its own surrogates.

Distinctly, the franchise was never going to be a path to stability and it isn't. But we seem determined to keep on doing it. This last election was no different. Let us see what happens this time. The Balochistan Assembly meets, there is some clarity as to who takes to the key positions in the province, and if those who take the reins have what it takes to be inclusive, heal the deeply wounded electorate and restore its faith in the democratic process and in the federation.

After the 18th Amendment and the AFC Award, huge responsibility has fallen

on the provinces not just to take charge of their own development but also to take forward the process of devolution to the grassroots level. This is where the political class as a whole seems to have failed as we speak.

It is incumbent on all elected political parties to devote authority and funds to the local government where they exist, and call for immediate elections where they don't, in order to take the fruits of development reach the grassroots level. To be honest, it is not the job of members of parliament to get roads paved, ensure sewers work and address similar day-to-day issues of the people. That by its very definition is the local government's domain or the quality of education

available to those fortunate enough to find themselves in school. There can be no denying the prevalent system has failed to deliver. In this age and without a properly functioning education system that has skilled teachers and the right curriculum, forget about creating worthwhile jobs for the multitudes who join the workforce every year.

This risks alienating more and more people, particularly the youth. Perhaps on Feb 8, many of them voted at the ballot box. They want to be heard.

But in the face of continuing disillusionment, their disappointment and despondency may force them down a different path, further eroding the possibility of desired stability, the prerequisite to economic

growth as we try and catch up with our two big neighbours. Even if matching their growth rates appears too ambitious at this point, and this is the only way for all political parties to retain and gather support among the new voters. If the parties fail to earn the trust of the electorate, especially new voters, they won't get another chance as anarchy and even fascism may beckon.

From the day the chief ministers assume office, they should not let anything distract them from concentrating on working towards visible improvements in the health and education and healthcare systems, strengthening local bodies and ensuring delivery of the basics to the people.

## Route to political longevity

ANF recovers over 1215 kg drugs, arrests 36 accused

RAWALPINDI (INP) Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) Pakistan while conducting 32 operations across the country managed to recover over 1215 kg drugs and arrested 36 accused during last week, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman.

He informed that ANF in a successful operation also busted a drug dealer group and arrested eight accused. He said that the raids were conducted simultaneously in three major cities of the country and the gang members were rounded up.

The gang members were involved in selling CBD oil-laced vapes through online platforms, he added. Eight people were arrested targeting the inter-provincial drug dealer group involved in the distribution of vapes. During the operation, vapes filled with hashish oil, CBD oil, THC oil and cigarette rolls made from hemp plant were recovered. The accused were seized. The accused were involved in illegal activities under the guise of selling natural products and medicines.

Apart from this, marijuana oil, opium and other illegal materials including marijuana were also seized. The accused were involved in illegal activities under the guise of selling natural products and medicines.

E-commerce platforms were being used to supply drugs, the spokesman informed. The accused used to import prohibited items from foreign countries through cargo companies. ANF strives to enforce government regulations and standard operating procedures for online businesses, he said.

The spokesman urged the parents to discourage teen vape use. He also asked the citizens to keep a close eye on their children's use of online shopping platforms and report any suspicious activity to law enforcement agencies immediately.

ISLAMABAD (INP) Chairman Pakistan Industrial & Traders Associations Front (PIAF) Fahimur Rahman Saigol has said that education and academic will ultimately bridge the skill gap, leading to a quantum jump in the country's exports.

The PIAF Chairman said that the young generation should pay full attention to their studies because they have to take care of the country's future. The speakers on this occasion said that the aggressive economic measures, high borrowing rates, inflation, oppressive taxation and unstable currency have been negatively affecting the trade and industry.

He stated this while addressing the audience as special guest of the annual meeting of Defense Welfare Society. Fahimur Rahman Saigol appreciated the work and passion of the organizers of Defense Welfare Society who are providing technical education to students in this era of inflation, which is valuable and praiseworthy. He observed that promotion of technical education is vital and much-needed for economic growth. He said that the collaboration between the industry and academic will ultimately bridge the skill gap, leading to a quantum jump in the country's exports.



Islamabad. Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa justice (R) Syed Arshad Hussain Shah addressing a ceremony at Pakistan Sweet Home.

Effective policy needed to promote demand-driven technical education: Saigol

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Collective team efforts led to victory over Qalandars: Mir Hamza

LAHORE (INP) Left-armed pacer of Karachi Kings' Mir Hamza has said that collective team efforts helped his team to have a thrilling victory against Lahore Qalandars. During Super League (PSL) 9 clash at Gaddafi Stadium Saturday, Karachi Kings edged past Lahore Qalandars in a thrilling courtesy of a clinical bowling performance and Kieron Pollard's blistering half-century.

He said that the collective effort has benefited the team. Hamza remarked. He also thanked the team management of Karachi Kings for entrusting him with his role as an attacking bowler. "The management has given me the responsibility to attack, so I am bowling according to my role and trying my best to fulfill the team's expectations," he added.

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Pakistan's agricultural machinery imports surge by 103% in first 7 months of FY

ISLAMABAD (INP) Pakistan's imports of agricultural machinery and equipment have witnessed a remarkable increase of 103% in the first seven months of the current financial year. According to data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, the country's expenditure on importing agricultural machinery and equipment reached \$49 million, marking a substantial rise compared to the same period in the previous fiscal year.

CM Naqvi inaugurates new lab, collection center at SIMS

LAHORE (INP) Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi inaugurated the newly built lab and collection center at Services Institute of Medical Sciences (SIMS) Lahore late Saturday night. The chief minister also cut the cake on the occasion of the inauguration of the 42nd project of the health sector.



KARACHI: Security personnel stand alert outside the Sindh Assembly during the Assembly session.

Human error blamed for 2020 Karachi plane crash

KARACHI (INP) The PIA investigation board has released an inquiry report into the Karachi Airbus A320 nearly four years after the crash that claimed 99 lives on May 22, 2020. The report clearly said there was a lack of communication and harmony between the two pilots and air traffic controllers. It further revealed that four times before landing, the air traffic controller stopped the pilot from landing, telling him that the plane's key height was too high.

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KARACHI: VC ISRA university Prof. Dr Ghulam Qadir kazi giving certificate to Student during 9th convocation of ISRA university Karachi Campus.

Public notices including TENDER NOTICE and NOTICE INVITING TENDER with details of procurement processes and contact information.

## Hindutva regime pursuing policy to crush Muslim identity in IIOJK

ISLAMABAD (INP): The political injustice, fear and atrocities added to the miseries of the people in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir at the hands of Hindutva BJP-RSS regime and its men in uniform due to the unresolved Kashmir dispute.

An analytical report released by the Research Section of Kashmir Media Service revealed that the atrocities, political injustice, mental disturbances and fear have increased manifold since the imposition of strict military and police siege by the Hindutva BJP-RSS regime and Indian military and police establishment and their dreaded agencies on August 5, 2019, when

it revoked the special status of the territory.

The report said Indian troops have martyred 857 Kashmiris and injured 2413 during this period. It maintained that the Kashmiris had been pushed to the Stone Age due to an inhuman undemocratic regime and Indian military siege.

It further said that the brutalities perpetrated by Indian forces' personnel against the oppressed and defenceless people of Jammu and Kashmir have become a routine matter. It added that nocturnal house raids and cordon and search operations are conducted by the Indian troops, paramilitary and police personnel on a daily



Quetta: Workers of char jamaati ittihad hold a sit-in protest against the alleged vote-rigging in the general election.

## Approval of 80 km 1st phase of Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project hailed

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chairman Businessmen Panel of Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI), Mian Anjum Nisar has appreciated the Cabinet Committee's approval of work on 80-kilometer first phase of the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project within its borders after a long delay and hoped that it would proceed expeditiously, as the project was bound to bring an industrial revolution in Pakistan.

In a statement issued on Sunday, he said the businessmen had already been pressing the government hard for procuring the required energy resource from whatever source suits to it to relieve the country of the mounting shortage of gas.

Mian Anjum Nisar said that the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project began in 2013, and several deadlines have already been missed due to long-standing US sanctions against Tehran. According to reports, Pakistan was trying to negotiate with Tehran to avoid a whopping \$20 billion in liabilities as the long-stalled project's deadline approaches this year. Last year, government also approached Washington, requesting a solution to the lingering imbroglio, but received no response.

The business leader said that we were convinced that Iranian source was the most feasible, financially as well as from the point of view of proximity. He observed the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline would serve Pakistan's national interests and go a long way in mitigating the energy issues, asserting that an early completion of this mega project of national importance would be a great favour to the business community as its very survival was at stake at the moment. The availability of gas would also help government achieve economic targets.

It was to be noted that in a landmark development, the

Cabinet Committee on Energy has approved the initiation of work on the 80-km segment (Iranian border to Gwadar) of the Iran-Pakistan Gas Pipeline project, and deferred the filing of application for waiver of US sanction on the project due to geo-political situation.

A summary of Petroleum Division regarding IP Gas Pipeline was presented to the Cabinet Committee on Energy in its meeting, giving its nod to the recommendations of the Ministerial Oversight Committee (MOC) for the IP Project.

The committee recommended to start work on the 80 km segment of the pipeline inside Pakistan i.e. from Pakistan border up till Gwadar in the first phase. The project will be executed by Inter-State Gas Systems (Pvt) Ltd and will be funded through Gas Infrastructure Development Cess (GIDC). All the concerned divisions gave a positive nod to move ahead with the project to ensure gas supplies to the people of Pakistan, thereby addressing the increasing energy needs of the country.

Pakistan has decided to kick-off construction work on 80 kilometre portion of Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project from Iranian border to Gwadar. The project will be executed by Inter-State Gas Systems (Pvt) Ltd and will be funded through Gas Infrastructure Development Cess (GIDC). All the concerned divisions gave a positive nod to move ahead with the project to ensure gas supplies to the people of Pakistan, thereby addressing the increasing energy needs of the country.

The estimated cost of the 80-km Pak-Iran border to Gwadar portion of the project will be \$158 million and it has been decided to fund it through Gas Infrastructure Development Cess (GIDC). During the PDM coalition government, the then Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had constituted a committee to recommend a way forward re-



Quetta: Pashtun Abad Welfare Organization and Qaisar Ka Luni Regional Union Residents are protesting against the increase in gas bills in front of the press club.



Quetta: JUI candidate PB-7 Khalid-Ur-Rehman Dummars speaks during a press conference against the increase in Gas bills.

## India 'fully stops' water flow to Pakistan with Shahpur Kandi barrage on Ravi river

ISLAMABAD (INP): The water flow of Ravi river has reportedly been stopped to Pakistan after the completion of Shahpur Kandi barrage which is situated on the borders of Indian Punjab and the state of Occupied Jammu and Kashmir, as per Indian media reports.

India Today reported that previously allotted 1150 cusecs of water of Pakistan will now benefit the region of Indian occupied Jammu and Kashmir (J&K).

The water will be benefiting 32,000 hectares of land in the Kathua and Samba districts.

Indian perusing the water terrorism agenda, now executing the latest project of Shahkandi barrage that would supposedly be used for irrigation and for hydro power generation

but at the cost of cutting the flow towards Pakistan.

Already India so far constructed many dams like Bhakra Dam on Sutlej, Pong and Pandoh Dam on the Beas and Thein (Ranjitsagar) on the Ravi.

The Indus Waters Treaty is a water-sharing agreement between India and Pakistan, arranged by the World Bank, signed on September 19, 1960. The treaty divides the rivers into two categories: East River basins (Sutlej, Beas, and Ravi) which are allocated to India, and Western Rivers (Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab) which are allocated to Pakistan.

Indian media reported Shahpur Kandi dam completion allows India to make maximum use of the Ravi River water previously flowing to

wards Pakistan from the Lakhapur dam.

It is pertinent to note that former Indian Prime Minister Narsima Rao laid the foundation stone for the shahpur kandi in 1995 and remained disputed for almost over four and a half years.

Earlier, addressing the UN Security Council, Pakistan Permanent Representative in the United Nations Ambassador Munir Akram said Pakistan aims to reinvigorate the Indus River basin which provides food security to over 225 million people.

Pakistan has called for strict implementation of the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty to address the looming water crisis. He said that to this end, Pakistan has launched the multi-dimensional Living Indus projects.

## PTI boycotts Sindh Assembly's Speaker election

KARACHI (INP): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Sunday announced to boycott the election of speaker and deputy speaker of Sindh Assembly.

As per details, the PTI-backed independent candidates jointly announced that they will neither support MQM-P candidate nor PPP nominated candidate for the speaker and the deputy speaker of Sindh Assembly, Sunni Ittehad Council's (SIC) PTI-supported nine members and a Jamaat-e-Islam member took oath in Sindh Assembly earlier today (Sunday).

Murad Ali Shah welcomed the members who took oath

today and said, "We hope we all will play a role in betterment of the province".

People's Party's candidate for speaker's office, Owais Qadir Shah also held a meeting with the PTI's independent members and welcomed them in the house. "Hopefully you will sit in a better environment in the house," he added.

Sindh Assembly has been in session to elect the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the House today. The People's Party has nominated Owais Qadir Shah as its candidate for Speaker and Naveed Anthony as Deputy Speaker for Sindh Assembly.

The MQM-Pakistan has nominated Advocate Sofia Shah and Advocate Rashid Khan as the party's candidates for speaker and deputy speaker's offices of the provincial assembly respectively. The members will elect the speaker and deputy speaker with a secret ballot.

The election for Sindh's chief minister will be held tomorrow. Murad Ali Shah has been People's Party's candidate for the CM office. Sindh Assembly's Secretariat has announced that the candidates for chief minister could submit their nomination papers from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm today.



Quetta: BNP Hazara Town Leader Kashif Haidari is addressing a press conference against the increase in gas bills.

## One stop facility center set up for incoming members of Parliament

ISLAMABAD (INP): With aim to facilitate and acquaint the newly elected members of the 16th National Assembly of Pakistan, a dedicated facility center has been established within the hallowed halls of the Parliament House in Islamabad. The arrival of these elected officials has commenced, marking the beginning of their journey in the legislative arena.

Under the guidance of Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervez Sharaf, welcoming banners adorn the precincts of Parliament, extending warm greetings to the incoming legislators. To streamline the induction process, a comprehensive one-window facility center has been instituted in Committee Room Number Two of the Parliament House. Here,

members are undergoing essential formalities, including obtaining their assembly cards and familiarizing themselves with the protocols of the National Assembly through provided booklets.

Among the privileges extended to the newly inducted members is the issuance of blue passports for themselves, their spouses, parents, and unmarried children under 28 years of age. This passport grants visa-free travel to 46 countries worldwide, albeit necessitating a sworn oath. Concurrently, details of their bank accounts are being collected to facilitate the disbursement of salaries and other entitlements.

Furthermore, as part of their engagement within the parliamentary framework,

members are invited to select from four distinct forums: women's rights, children's rights, youth welfare, and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This initiative aims to encourage active participation in key legislative agendas.

Moreover, an international relations desk has been established within the facility center to gather pertinent information from new members regarding their political affiliations, educational backgrounds, and foreign travel history.

The inauguration of this facility center underscores a commitment to ensuring a smooth transition for incoming members of the National Assembly, empowering them with the resources and support necessary to fulfill their legislative duties effectively.