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IMF chief: Israeli war 'devastating' Palestinian economy

Detailed News On Page-07

Hungarian president resigns

Detailed News On Page-07

Maxwell shines as Australia beat West Indies

Detailed News On Page-06

Final results announced

Struggle for forming govt picks pace

Independents grab 101 NA seats, PML-N 75 as ECP finally completes vote count

KHAYAM ABBASI / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Around 60 million eligible voters participated in the electoral process in Pakistan on February 8, 2024, casting their ballots to elect representatives across 265 National Assembly and 590 Provincial Assembly constituencies. This marked one of the nation's most fiercely contested political battles, with an estimated voter turnout ranging from 45 to 50 percent. Following a period of heightened anticipation and amidst considerable turmoil, the general elections have concluded without major incidents, and the results have been officially announced. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has announced official results for the majority of constituencies, revealing a fragmented political landscape. However, the outcome has triggered a flurry of discontent among contestants, with accusations of electoral irregularities and rigging flying between rival parties. Legal challenges have been mounted against the declared results. Nonetheless, behind the scenes, political maneuvering is underway as parties engage in negotiations to woo independent candidates and bolster their positions to secure government formation at both the national and provincial levels. Meanwhile, the incoming government is poised to confront a myriad of pressing issues, spanning from economic instability and

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Zardari 'demands PM's slot for Bilawal Bhutto'

PML-N suggests Shehbaz Sharif PM, Maryam CM in Punjab

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD/ LAHORE/SUKKUR: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President Shehbaz Sharif told his party leaders that former president Asif Zardari has demanded prime minister's slot for Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and major ministerial portfolios, a newspaper reported citing sources. In a major development, the PPP has agreed to make a coalition government with the PML-N on the condition that Bilawal will be made the PM. Shehbaz told the party leaders that

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Countrywide protests against 'rigged' results

PTI, National Party, PPP, JUI-F, BAP, BNP-Mengal, PkMAP, PkNAP, stage sit-ins

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI:Widespread protests erupted across Balochistan and Karachi on Sunday as several political parties rejected the recently announced election results, alleging widespread rigging. Following hotly contested polls, major parties including the National Party, PPP, JUI-F, BAP, BNP-Mengal, PkMAP, and PkNAP, have staged sit-ins at district returning offices, demanding recounts and challenging the declared outcomes. Discontentment ran high in Quetta, with protests engulfing major thoroughfares like Sarab Road, Buleli Road, and Anscorb Road. Similar demonstrations raged in Chaman, Chagai, Dalbandin, Loralai, Qila Abdullah, Kharan, and Sibi, effectively shutting down vital national highways in Naseerabad,

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LAHORE: A man is detained by police officers as PTI supporters protest demanding free and fair results of the election in Lahore. - DNA

Govt formation

MQM turns down reports of talks on govt formation

Coalition govt strengthens federation, stresses Azam Tarar

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Following a high-level meeting with the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's leadership Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) Convener Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui has called for political stability in the country. Speaking to the media, Siddiqui turned down the reports suggesting that the Karachi-based party is holding talks with the PML-N over matters pertaining to the formation of the government. His remarks come as attempts are underway by political parties including the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and the PML-N, to rope in independents and form alliances after neither of the parties managed to secure a simple majority following the results of the February 8 polls which were released so far. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)-backed independent candidates have emerged as the largest group with 93 National Assembly seats so far, whereas the PML-N and PPP have

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PTI looks towards COAS Asim for mandate acceptance

Gohar, while responding to the COAS's "unified government" stance, added that it does not necessarily mean a coalition government

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) top leader Barrister Gohar Khan Sunday demanded the release of the party's "political prisoners," including founder Imran Khan, in reaction to Chief of the Army Staff General Asim Munir's "healing touch" statement on general elections. Congratulating

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Daesh commander eliminated in Khyber IBO

Daesh commander Surat Gul remained involved in terrorist activities, says ISPR

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Security forces eliminated a "high-value target" Surat Gul aka Saif Ullah of Daesh in an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's (KP) Khyber district on Sunday. On the reported presence of a high-profile terrorist, security forces swung into action immediately and carried out a raid in the tribal district, Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement. An intense fire exchange occurred during the conduct of the

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

President congratulates people on polls

Pays tribute to youth for huge interest

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi Sunday congratulated people on taking part in the voting process during the general elections. In a statement on X, he said he must congratulate the people of Pakistan, specially the women for coming out in huge numbers and strengthening democracy. "The youth deserve a special mention, and I praise them for having decided to take charge of the country by participating peacefully in the voting process. They have put their faith in democracy. This belief is very precious, it will write history and must be recognized," he added. He said, "A true mandate is elusive to come out of the severe financial crunch, to make difficult decisions, to repair, and to heal the bitterness of the past."

Siraj demands resignation of CEC

Says ECP failed to ensure free, fair polls

DNA

LAHORE:Jamaat-e-Islami emir Sirajul Haq has declared the Feb 8 polls rigged and demanded resignation of Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja. The Jammat central leadership held a meeting in its headquarters Mansoorah with Siraj in the chair to discuss post-election scenario. Siraj lambasted the ECP and said it supported the PML-N, the PPP and the MQM in the general elections. He asserted that there was no level playing field for everyone in the polls. He claimed that election results do not reflect true public sentiment. It was an injustice to the public and voters, Siraj added.

Pakistan general elections US lawmakers advise Joe Biden against recognising results

"We must protect democracy and the will of the people," says Congressman Greg Casar

DNA

WASHINGTON: Several lawmakers of the United States, on both sides of the aisle, have urged President Joe Biden's administration not to recognise election results in Pakistan until alleged irregularities are investigated. "Claims of interference or fraud should be fully investigated," the US State Department's spokesperson said in a statement on Friday, expressing concerns about the allegations of interference in the electoral process. "We join credible international and local election observers in their assessment that these elections included undue restrictions on freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly," the statement said. "Given the recent strong statements by House

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Independent candidates join PML-N

PTI Lahore Secy General also joins PML N

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Newly 'elected' eight independent candidates of National and Provincial Assemblies joined Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz (PML-N).

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Post-election scenario: PDM Part-II on the anvil

ANALYSIS

ANSAR M BHATTI



ISLAMABAD: The February 8 election will undoubtedly be remembered as a pivotal moment in Pakistan's parliamentary history, marked by intense controversy surrounding the exclusion of a specific political party from the entire electoral process. The unfolding events have raised serious questions about the fairness and transparency of the electoral procedures. Initially, the key leadership of the PTI found themselves behind bars, facing allegations of involvement in the May 9 incidents. Subsequently, the party faced another setback when it was stripped of its election symbol, the "bat." As if that wasn't enough, numerous winning candidates from the party were purportedly denied their rightfully earned seats, adding fuel to the already heated situation. The international community, too, expressed apprehensions about the legitimacy of the election process. The United States, in particular, promptly voiced its concerns, emphasizing the need for a thorough investigation into the allegations of fraud. This global response underscores the significance of ensuring a fair and just electoral process that up-

holds democratic principles. The Australian government has conveyed its concerns regarding the conduct of the 2024 elections, expressing regret over the limitations imposed on the Pakistani people in their electoral choices. The restriction on certain political parties from participating in the elections is viewed as a setback to the democratic process. "Australia remains steadfast in its support for a democratic, stable, and prosperous Pakistan, emphasizing the importance of upholding commitments to democratic principles. These principles encompass not only the electoral process but also extend to fundamental rights such as human rights, media freedoms, freedom of expression, and freedom of association". The European Union and the Commonwealth states have both released statements that share a striking resemblance. The Commonwealth observers' mission, during their visit to Pakistan, acknowledged certain irregularities in the elections, albeit in a discreet manner during their media interaction. Notably, an interesting comment arose from a high-ranking diplomat stationed in Islamabad, questioning the legitimacy of the Commonwealth observation mission chief, given the presence of the current Interior Minister of the Pakistani government seated beside him during the mission's proceedings. This observation raises intriguing questions about the perceived objectivity and independence of the mission in the context of the political dynamics at play. The excessive delay in releasing the final

election results was a concerning deviation from a healthy electoral process. Ideally, the Election Commission should have promptly announced the results within two days of the election, yet regrettably, even after four days, the conclusive outcome remains elusive. This prolonged delay not only raises eyebrows but also lends credibility to speculations suggesting ongoing post-election manipulations. The extended timeframe offers an opportunity for certain political entities to exert influence, particularly on independent candidates. The delay grants these 'favorite' parties ample time to maneuver and manage alliances or exert pressure on independents, potentially impacting the final outcome. Once the official results are disclosed, this window of influence may no longer be available. With all factors considered, the pivotal inquiry emerges regarding the establishment of governments, both at the national and provincial levels. The electoral outcomes in Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) indicate that the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) in Sindh and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) in KP are poised to effortlessly shape governments independently. Furthermore, the PPP is anticipated to take on a prominent role in the government formation in Baluchistan, collaborating with the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazl (JUI-F). At the federal level, the competition for the prestigious position of the Prime Minister of Pakistan demands a display of political prowess from various parties.

Ideally and logically the PML N seems better poised to get this post as the party supremo Nawaz Sharif travelled all the way from UK to Pakistan despite a load of cases against him; got himself freed from all those cases and secured reasonable number of seats in the national assembly, though much short of what he and his party had claimed. However Shehbaz Sharif may also emerge as the consensus candidate for the position of Prime Minister. In such a scenario, Asif Ali Zardari aims to secure the role of President of Pakistan, while Bilawal envisions a position akin to Deputy Prime Minister or an equivalent role. If these arrangements materialize, Maryam Nawaz could be viable candidates for the Chief Minister post in Punjab. Another possible scenario: A strategic negotiation between Asif Zardari and other key players may result in Bilawal obtaining the Prime Minister's position, with Nawaz Sharif assuming the role of President. The MQM is poised to play a significant role in the federal cabinet, and their interest in retaining the governorship of Sindh is apparent. If all these parties join hands then it may be dubbed as an extension or continuation of the PDM government, which came into being after dislodging of the PTI government. Though PTI has claimed that it would form governments in KP, Punjab and at the federal level however it may not be possible. This raises important questions such as: Why was the PTI government removed in the first place? What led to the imprisonment

of key party figures? Why was their election symbol confiscated? These factors contribute to a broader skepticism about PTI's potential to succeed in forming governments again. Summing up, the powers who wanted to keep PTI out, PML N down and the PPP in seem to have successfully completed their task. Convicting Imran Khan in consecutive cases appears to be a strategic move in this game plan, intended to incite PTI supporters and drive them to vote in large numbers. This increased voter turnout effectively curtailed PML N's chances of securing a simple majority, and the PPP was unable to attain a majority as well. As per reports, PTI's majority was allegedly converted into a minority on many seats. Consequently, the ultimate outcome is that the influential forces have established a strategic advantage, positioning themselves as key players in determining the formation and sustainability of any government without their consent. Regardless, it appears highly likely that the government formed through these negotiations and maneuvers may face significant challenges in maintaining its stability over an extended period. The inherent fragility of the current administration could potentially lead to the initiation of snap elections or even an internal power shift. In the context of Pakistan, the tenure of an elected government is typically expected to last a maximum of two to two and a half years, contingent on the dynamics between civilian authorities and the military.

Attacks on Rafah

Egypt may suspend peacetreaty with Israel

Egypt fears a mass influx of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees

NEWS DESK

RAFAH: Egypt is threatening to suspend its peace treaty with Israel if Israeli troops are sent into the densely populated Gaza border town of Rafah, and says fighting there could force the closure of the territory's main aid supply route, two Egyptian officials and a Western diplomat said Sunday.

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Western nations expressing concerns over elections

President of Pakistan Economy Watch, said that it is unfortunate that not a single party could get a whole mandate in the elections

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD : Dr Murtaza Mughal, President of Pakistan Economy Watch, said on Sunday it is unfortunate that not a single party could get a whole mandate in the elections. In the absence of a majority, a party can only form a government with the help of other parties; therefore, ensuring political and economic stability in the country would be challenging. He added that the major parties and the independent candidates are meeting to agree on the new government while those who lost elections are accusing rigging. In a statement today, Dr. Murtaza Mughal said that many Western countries are concerned about elections that interfere with Pakistan's internal affairs. The Western countries that are expressing reservations about the electoral process in Pakistan are ignoring the massacre of Palestinians and extending all possible help to Israel. Dr. Murtaza

Mughal said that the party coming to power would have to do it with the help of other parties and independents, resulting in an army of ministers and advisers. A coalition government will spend billions of rupees to keep allies happy. It will not be able to find time and resources to strengthen the economy or provide relief to people. It will further burden the masses, who are already reeling under the cost of living crisis.

He remarked that the establishment of coalition governments in the center of Punjab and Balochistan is written on the wall, which may impede development. It seems that the PML-N and PPP will form a government by joining hands as both parties criticized each other during the election campaign but within limits. Dr. Mughal said political leaders should complete consultations and form the government as delay will damage the economy. To stabilize the economy for the next few years, severe economic decisions would be necessary, while a fresh

IMF program would also be necessary. Given the ideological differences between the PML-N and PPP, a coalition administration can substantially impact the intended results of tax reforms and raise revenue. The PML-N and PPP have quite different approaches regarding the privatization of state-owned businesses. This is a persistent problem that has been unsolved for many years. Since the caretaker administration has already started implementing a privatization strategy, PML-N and PPP must agree, as these companies are causing the country trillions in losses. The question is whether the ruling coalition, which promised the masses much during the election campaign, would accept these challenging choices. He said the stock market is already falling due to uncertainty that should not be allowed to spread, adding that the coalition government may be unable to deliver as expected by the masses.



ISLAMABAD: People busy shopping at Sunday Bazar G-9 in the Federal Capital.—DNA

PFC delegation off to USA for Las Vegas Expo

LAHORE : Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) delegation Sunday left for Las Vegas, USA, to partake in a three-day expo commencing on February 13 to showcase the diverse range of Pakistan's furniture products and to explore new opportunities in the global market. The delegation comprises representatives from various segments of the furniture sector including manufacturers, designers, and exporters, all poised to highlight the richness and uniqueness of Pakistani furniture designs. PFC CEO Mian Kashif Ashfaq told the media that with an aim to bolster the country's furniture industry on an international platform, the delegation was set to exhibit the craftsmanship, innovation, and quality synonymous with Pakistani furniture. He said the expo in Las Vegas presents an ideal opportunity for the PFC to engage with potential buyers, distributors and investors, fostering partnerships and collaborations that can propel the industry to greater heights. "As Pakistan endeavors to position itself as a prominent player in the global furniture market, the participation of the PFC delegation in this prestigious event would help grab more opportunities for growth and expansion," he remarked. With determination and dedication, he said, the delegation sets forth to make a lasting impression on the international stage, thus promoting the Pakistan's furniture industry.—APP

Stakeholder involvement vital for effective policy making

LAHORE : Minister of State and Federal Tax Ombudsman's (FTO) Coordinator Meher Kashif Younis has called for taking stakeholders into confidence in the policy-making decisions as it would not only help strengthen the economy and leads to transparency but also yields tangible benefits of sustainability of policies in Pakistan. Sharing his views in a think-tank session on 'The impact of taking stakeholders into confidence in policy making decisions' here Sunday, he added that stakeholders' active involvement in policy making process would definitely assure better outcomes. The diverse socio-economic landscape and complex governance structures necessitate a comprehensive approach that considers the perspectives of various stakeholders, including the public sector and private sector especially the chambers of commerce and elected trade bodies, he suggested. The Coordinator said that policymakers could ensure that decisions were made in a manner that was transparent, accountable, and reflective of the needs and interests of the business community and the people, asserting that it would foster trust between the public and private sector, thus enhancing the legitimacy of policies and minimizing the risk of resistance or opposition. He argued that different stakeholders bring diverse expertise, experiences and perspectives to the table, which could enrich the decision-making process and lead to more informed and effective policies. He said

stakeholders could help build consensus and garner support for proposed initiatives. "Once the stakeholders are taken into confidence and their concerns are addressed, they are more likely to support and cooperate with the implementation of policies, leading to smoother execution and achieving desired results". Meher Kashif Younis added that stakeholders could improve the effectiveness and sustainability of policies by tapping into local knowledge and resources. They have invaluable insights into the ground realities and can give their input on how policies can be tailored to better suit local contexts and needs. This bottom-up approach ensures that policies are more responsive, adaptive, and sustainable in the long run, he concluded.

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LESCO detects 484 power pilferers

LAHORE : Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) has detected a total of 484 connections from where the customers were pilfering electricity in all its circles of five districts (Lahore, Sheikhupura, Nankana Sahib, Kasur and Okara) on the 152nd day of grand anti-power theft campaign. The LESCO spokesman told media here Sunday that the company has also submitted FIR applications against electricity thieves, out of which 148 FIRs have been registered in respective police stations. Grand anti-power theft operations against electricity thieves are being conducted on the directives of the Federal Power Division and the LESCO Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Engineer Shahid Haider is supervising these operations. The LESCO chief vowed that the operations would continue without discrimination until the complete end of electricity theft. The electricity pilferers as well as the LESCO officers and employees who facilitate them are also being brought to justice. On the 152nd consecutive day of the anti-power theft campaign, the spokesman added, large commercial consumers were also found involved in electricity theft and all of them were also disconnected and charged with detection units. Among the seized connections 12 were commercial, 04 agricultural and 468 domestic, and all these connections were disconnected and charged with a total of 378,023 units as detection bill amounting to Rs 11.796 million. During the 152 days of the grand anti-theft campaign, the spokesman mentioned, the LESCO detected pilferage on 52,419 power connections and 48,038 FIRs have been registered against electricity thieves in the relevant police stations, while 17,520 accused have so far been arrested by the police. The LESCO has so far charged a total of 72,018,869 detection units worth Rs 2,785,054,865 to all the power pilferers.—APP

PR putting maximum efforts retrieve 13,972 acres land

ISLAMABAD : Pakistan Railways has accelerated the efforts to retrieve the major portion of around 13,972 acres of land worth billions of rupees found under the illegal occupation of private individuals and different government departments across the country. "Around 5,809 acres were occupied in Punjab, 1,181 acres are under encroachment in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 5,948 acres in Sindh and 1,034 acres land occupied in Balochistan," an official in the Ministry told APP. He said the category of land under illegal occupations included commercial, residential, agricultural and various persons or departments. Giving details of the land, the official said that around 769 acres were commercial in all the provinces, 3,309 residential, 5,512 acres agricultural and 4382 were under encroachment of various persons or departments. The official said the department had

also decided to accelerate its ongoing anti-encroachment operation against land grabbers across the country to recoup its land from different individuals, groups, and even business organizations which were using it for residential, commercial and agriculture purposes for decades. "The joint procedure orders have been issued to all Divisional Superintendents of Pakistan Railways to retrieve the railway land from encroachers," the official added. Accordingly, he said the anti-encroachment operations for retrieval of encroached Railway land all over the Railway network are being initiated by the concerned divisions and notices are issued to encroachers under the Possession Ordinance 1965 for vacation of Railway land/structure within 14 days. The official said that Pakistan Railway Police, District Administration and law

enforcement agencies are informed of necessary assistance in anti-encroachment operations. To further control and restrict new encroachments, he said the responsibilities defined for Railway officers within Railway Station premises, Station Master concerned, within/around the colony premises, inspector of works and Railway Police. "The anti-encroachment schedules, on a three-month basis, are being prepared and sent to all concerned in line with the joint procedure order," he said adding that the operation will be launched with the assistance of Railway Police and district administrations of the relevant provincial governments. The official said PR owned 167,690 acres of land across the country, of which 90,326-acre was in Punjab, 39,428-acre in Sindh, 28,228-acre in Balochistan, and 9,708-acre in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.—APP

Lahore ranks 5th in global air pollution ranking

"Short and medium-term projects have been prepared in this regard", he added. He said that it was the need of the hour to reduce the emission of harmful gases and use modern technology to control air pollution

LAHORE : The provincial metropolis was the 5th most polluted place in the world on Sunday. According to the details, the weather in the provincial capital again has become polluted, despite cold winds continuing in the early morning in the bright sun, the temperature was recorded at 10 degrees Celsius, while the weather is predicted to remain dry-polluted in the next 24 hours. According to the Meteorological Department, the maximum temperature in the city is likely to go up to 21 degrees, the humidity in the air is 90 percent, the wind is blowing at a speed of 5 km, there is no chance of rain in the next 24 hours. Lahore ranks 5th in the global air pollution ranking, with an overall air quality index of 192. Meanwhile, on the instructions of Commissioner Muhammad Ali Randhawa, action continues against violation of anti-smog orders. Various trash burning furnaces have been demolished for using old technology, while others were extinguished. The Punjab Environment Protection Department (EPD) also started various initiatives to control smog, under which smog dissolution "weather generators" have been installed in Lahore. EPD Directors Naseem-Ur-Rehman Shah told APP that anti-smog generators were operating successfully in Russia, Dubai, adding a weather generator is capable of dissolving smog or thickly polluted environment in a 10 square kilometer area. The EPD director said that all possible measures including generators were being taken to control the polluted air. "Short and medium-term projects have been prepared in this regard", he added. He said that it was the need of the hour to reduce the emission of harmful gases and use modern technology to control air pollution. Meanwhile, the EPD's anti-pollution squad sealed various smoky units in the city. The anti-smog squad is also imposing fines worth millions on factories and units responsible for creating smog.—DNA

DPO lauds police for foolproof security

SARGODHA : District Police Officer Muhammad Faisal Kamran on Sunday appreciated Sargodha police for playing a key role in conducting peaceful elections in the district. Talking to APP, he said that more than 6,000 policemen provided security to all polling stations for five National Assembly and 10 Punjab Assembly constituencies in the district along with security forces including Rangers, army and other law enforcement agencies. He said that he himself along with his officials remained in different constituencies and monitored the security situation. Sargodha police utilised its professional skills to provide security to voters, he added.—APP

Rwp Ring Road plantation drive set for feb 15: Commissioner

RAWALPINDI : Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Liaquat Ali Chatta has said that the plantation drive on both sides of Rawalpindi Ring Road would be started from February 15. The Commissioner said that the ring road project would be completed within the stipulated time frame as over 20 percent physical work of the ring road project had been completed. After the traffic network design

to link the ring road with the motorway, work on the Thalian Interchange would be started, he added. He said that the authorities concerned had been directed to complete Swan Bridge as soon as possible. The rest area being built on the ring road would be developed on the pattern of Bhera rest area, Liaquat Ali Chatta informed. The Ring Road project would prove to be a game changer for the people of Rawalpindi, he added. Once the

ring road is completed, the residents would get employment opportunities near their respective areas, he said. Special attention should be given to the quality of the construction work, Liaquat Ali Chatta instructed and warned that no compromise would be made on the quality of the construction work. He said that after the completion of the ring road project, there would be a clear difference in the traffic flow of Rawalpindi city.



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CM Naqvi inaugurates FM Radio at P&SHD

He inspected the studios and various sections of the FM Radio and recorded a message for the FM Radio Sehat Zindagi

ABID RAZA

LAHORE : Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi paid a visit to the Primary and Secondary Healthcare Department (P&SHD) located at the Birdwood Road Lahore and inaugurated FM Radio 'Sehat Zindagi' by the Health Department. He inspected the studios and various sections of the FM Radio and recorded a message for the FM Radio Sehat Zindagi. He said that launching of FM Radio was an appreciable step of the Health Department. The people could be provided awareness to save themselves from various diseases and undergo their treatment through the FM Radio. He said that specialists from various medical departments should be invited on Sehat Zindagi radio and people should be provided awareness with regard to health issues and treatment. Mohsin Naqvi underscored that

Sehat Zindagi radio would prove to be a beneficial project in the health sector. He maintained that the standard of radio industry has definitely declined but FM Radio is listened even today. The broadcast of FM Radio Sehat Zindagi can be listened within approximately 50-km range of Lahore. The P&SHD minister deserved appreciation on successful launch of FM Radio, he said. The Health Department could make an effective awareness campaign through the platform of Sehat Zindagi. The health secretary, despite scarce resources, launched an excellent project, he added. The FM Radio has to focus only on programs relating to the health sector. Naqvi apprised that various hospitals had been upgraded in a short span of time while upgradation of few other hospitals was in their final phases of completion. The hospitals which have not been upgraded yet, would be upgraded in the next phase. The CM said,

"We have provided non-available facilities in the hospitals. We will arrange new operation theatres, MRI machines and other facilities in collaboration with the private sector." The CM also inaugurated Human Resource Information and Management System (HRIMS), Health Information and Service Delivery Unit (HISDU). He inaugurated the van especially being prepared for the video link along with the coaster project. Provincial Minister for P&SHC Dr. Jamal Nasir, Chief Secretary, Secretary C&W, Secretary Health and officials concerned were also present. Earlier on, CM reviews progress on Mazar Bibi Pak Daman road. A new route from the Empress Road will be built to facilitate pilgrims at Mazar Bibi Pak Daman. Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi paid a visit to the project and reviewed the progress being made on construction of the road to link the Mazar Bibi Pak Daman

with the Empress Road. Mohsin Naqvi inspected the allocated site for car parking along with the construction of the new road and also inspected the construction activities from the Empress Road up to the Mazar along with removing the building structure causing obstruction during the construction work. He ordered to remove the remaining structure at the earliest. The caretaker CM ordered to expeditiously complete the road construction work. He said the pilgrims would be provided easy access to the Mazar with the construction of 20 feet wide road up to the Empress Road. More space is being allocated for parking of vehicles. Secretary Communication and Works gave a briefing about progress being made on the project. Officials of C&W, Lahore Development Authority, Infrastructure Development Authority Punjab (IDAP) and other administrative officers were also present.

National Days and Armed Forces Days

FEBRUARY

- Feb 04/Sri Lanka National Day
Feb 06/N. Zealand National Day
Feb 06/Uganda Army Day
Feb 11//Iran Revolution day
Feb 16/DPR Korea National Day
Feb 16/Lithuania National Day
Feb 18/Gambia National Day
Feb 19/Nepal Democracy Day
Feb 23/Uzbekistan National Day
Feb 23/Brunei National Day
Feb 23/Guyana National Day
Feb 23/Russia National Army Day
Feb 23/Tajikistan Armed Forces Day
Feb 25/Kuwait National Day

Hotels & Restaurants



- Serena Hotel.....111 133 133
Marriott.....051- 2826121
Monal.....0334-5421812



- Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

- Rescue (Police).....15
Bomb Disposal.....15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance.....1122 & Rescue Services.4451122
Motorway Police.....9266044
Motorway Police.9270601-20
Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596
Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



Enquiry

- Edhi Ambulance.....115
PIA Flight Info.....114
PIA Cargo.....9280979
Railway Inquiry.....117
Railway Exchange9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi.5555489
CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

- CMH.....5611111
MH.....561116
Cantt Hospital...9270907-11
DHQ.....5556311-4
RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9261170-79
Polyclinic.....9218300-09
Shifa International 4603666



Departments

- CDA.....9221334-43
CDA.....9208301-04
Met Office.....9250360-6
RDA.....5555864
TMA.....5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Water Tank

- Islamabad.....0321-5744480

China-Pak coop constructing smart city through AI tech

At present, on the basis of local conditions, the license plate recognition system and intelligent security system developed by the lab have begun to be piloted in Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In the context of the joint construction of the Belt and Road Initiative and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Chinese and Pakistani researchers are helping Pakistan build smarter and safer cities through the use of artificial intelligence (AI) technology.

development," Seemab Latif, Head of the Pakistani side of the lab and Associate Professor at the School of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science (SEECs) at the NUST, indicated that China's AI industry leads the world, as well as Pakistan's scientific and technological development has huge potential, thus by deepening bilateral cooperation, Pakistan can make great progress in the field of Sci-Tech, by which own the potential to become an AI development center in South Asia.

Pak fully capable of becoming AI development hub in South Asia

ISLAMABAD: Dr Wu Jun, the Director of CPInS Lab Sunday said that Pakistan through further cooperation with China, was fully capable of becoming an Artificial Intelligence (AI) development hub in South Asia and the wider region.

Apart from bringing technology overseas, talent exchange and training could be said to be another key purpose of establishing the lab. Nowadays, the lab has recruited four outstanding postdoctoral fellows from Pakistan to work in Guangzhou for a long time, and will continue to recruit students in years to come.

Pakistan's infrastructure is booming day by day. A large number of road cameras and other equipment have not been intellectualized yet, which shows that the CPInS Lab has a great potential in the future.

"Through further cooperation with China, Pakistan is fully capable of becoming an artificial intelligence development hub in South Asia and the wider region," Wu concluded, full of confidence.



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

Political stability essential for smooth economy, high growth

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Disposable Food Packaging Association (DFPA) has said that political stability is essential for smooth economy and high growth, as the newly-elected government that comes into office after general elections would be faced not by only stagflation, and a very difficult debt situation, but will have to make a lot of climate-related expenditure so that the country can meaningfully move towards becoming a climate-change-resilient economy.

Female teachers express annoyance over unpaid dues

ISLAMABAD: As the Federal Directorate of Education (FDE) gears up for the centralized exams of primary and middle standard scheduled to begin on Monday, female teachers assigned to conduct exams have raised concerns over unpaid remuneration for the past three consecutive years and the absence of essential facilities.

Significant economic tasks await incoming administration

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

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt, the former president of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI), stated on Sunday that the new administration will have major economic issues like debt servicing and inflation.

and inflation has made survival very difficult. He said the new government should avoid deciding to seek quick popularity and focus on achieving long-term results.

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

Tourists urged to follow traffic rules

RAWALPINDI: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Murree, Agha Zaheer Abbas Shirazi has urged the tourists to strictly abide by traffic rules to avoid traffic congestion and road mishaps at the hill station. He informed that the traffic management plan was being implemented to facilitate the tourists.

1886 cameras installed at 306 locations

RAWALPINDI: As many as 1886 cameras under Rawalpindi Safe City Project have been installed at 306 locations to make Rawalpindi a safe city. A Punjab Police Integrated Command, Control, and Communication Centre in Rawalpindi has been set up and the security arrangements of the city is being monitored through cameras on the digital wall.

Advertisement for General Practice Healthcare Centre. Includes a grid of medical services (General Physician, General Surgery, Neurology, Plastic Surgery, etc.), a collage of photos showing medical staff and patients, and contact information: +92334 7474701 | +9251 8900 682.

Briefs

New govt will have to announce long-term economic plan: FRIA

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Ferozepur Road Industrial Association (FRIA) has said that the newly-elected government will have to put in place a long-term financing plan to meet its very large external debt obligations for the next few years, as a timely announcement of the results, leading to a smooth formation of a new government will reduce policy and political uncertainty. The FRIA senior vice chairman and PIAF EC member Shahbaz Aslam said that this is crucial for the country that is facing very challenging macroeconomic conditions, with fragile balance of payments, weak growth and high inflation. He said that political stability is essential for economic stability. The business community is anxious to improve the economic situation, however, the caretaker government deserves congratulations for holding free and impartial elections. Shahbaz Aslam said that the government will need to negotiate for another International Monetary Fund program, after the current one expires in April 2024. Until a new program is agreed to, Pakistan's ability to secure loans from other bilateral and multilateral partners will be severely constrained. Even under a new IMF program, the new government will be tested on its willingness and ability to implement and sustain reforms, particularly revenue-raising measures, that may be politically unpopular, but required to improve macroeconomic conditions, he added. He said that Pakistan's sovereign dollar bonds extended losses to more than 5 cents, data showed on Friday, as both Imran Khan and Nawaz Sharif claimed victory in neck-and-neck results from Thursday's elections in the debt-laden nation.

Citizens to take responsibility in overcoming pollution

ISLAMABAD: Director General (DG) of the Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA) Farzana Altaf Shah on Sunday urged the citizens to take the lead and responsibility to overcome environment pollution in the country which was polluting its rivers, oceans, natural ecosystems and damaging human and wildlife health through disastrous impacts. Talking to PTV news channel, she said that if we not controlled on pollution then the climate change will not just a subject, it could become a major cause of impact on all kinds of flora, fauna and human beings in our country. She highlighted various efforts by her organization to confront the environmental challenges. She guided citizens about the prevention of cutting of trees and should be a ban on converting agricultural lands into settlements.—APP

ICCI hopes new govt to put economy on right track

Engr. Azhar ul Islam Zafar, Vice President ICCI said that streamlining the regulations and ensuring policy consistency should be the key focus of the newly elected government to attract local and foreign investment and promote business activities in the country

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) in a statement hoped that the newly elected government would put the economy on the path of a sustainable growth trajectory by taking priority measures to address the key issues of the business community and maximizing ease of doing business in the country. He said that Pakistan has plenty of natural resources and a great potential to emerge as a strong economy. He stressed that the newly elected government should focus on good governance and regulatory reforms to unlock the true economic potential of the country and make it a hub of business and investment activities. Ahsan Bakhtawari said that the rising inflation, high energy prices, unaffordable bank markup, policy inconsistency, complicated regulatory regime, import restrictions, etc. are some of the major factors that are hindering the growth of business activities and emphasized that the newly elected government should engage the private sector in consultation to address these issues on priority basis and facilitate the better growth of trade and industrial activities in the country. ICCI President said that the newly elected government should focus on enhancing regional trade to promote exports and investment opportunities. He said that the new government should encourage ex-



port diversification and cooperate with the private sector in producing value-added goods to boost exports. He said that the new government should facilitate the private sector in embracing digital transformation that would help foster innovations and create new jobs for youth. He reiterated that ICCI would extend all possible cooperation to

new government in endeavors targeted to make Pakistan a hub of business and economic activities. Faad Waheed, Senior Vice President ICCI said that high energy costs in Pakistan have made the industry and exports uncompetitive and emphasized that the newly elected government should focus on renewable energy to reduce high production

costs and make exports competitive in the international market. Engr. Azhar ul Islam Zafar, Vice President ICCI said that streamlining the regulations and ensuring policy consistency should be the key focus of the newly elected government to attract local and foreign investment and promote business activities in the country.

WMB safely rescued female leopard cub in Dhirkot

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Wildlife Management Board (IWMB) on Sunday safely rescued a female cub of leopard from the scenic Dhirkot Tehsil of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) which is known for its deodar jungle. The Wildlife Spokesperson told the media that the female leopard cub was five to six months old and was rescued from Dhirkot area as the AJK Wildlife Department lacked the wildlife rehabilitation facility and requested the IWMB for assistance. He added that the local people broke the teeth and fractured the legs of the female leopard cub. However, during the medical examination, the female leopard cub was found to have severe dehydration along with skin infections, he said. "The condition of the female leopard cub is out of danger due to the provision of emergency medical facilities. The IWMB has chosen Lucky as the name of the female leopard cub because it was successfully kept alive. Lucky has also started taking her meal and will be transferred to the Rescue and Rehabilitation Center in the next few days after providing veterinary medical care," the IWMB official said.—DNA

Serious economic problems awaiting the new government

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Former President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt, said on Saturday that significant economic challenges await the incoming administration as the middle class is dwindling, and the impoverished face extreme hardships. He said that after the transition to power, the rulers would have to pay close attention to the economy so that the country's threats could be reduced and the people could experience some relief. Shahid Rasheed Butt said in a statement issued here today that, at present, inflation is on the

rise despite having interest rates at the highest level of twenty-two percent; price shocks have made life very difficult for the middle class and people experiencing poverty, and inflation has made survival very difficult. He said the new government should avoid deciding to seek quick popularity and focus on achieving long-term results. He added that electricity, oil, and gas prices are bleeding the public white. The business leader said that interest rates have made it impossible to do business; foreign debt has reached \$128 billion, while this year, about \$28 billion and \$77.5 billion loans to August 2026 need to be paid. Repaying these loans is only possible with the new

IMF program, and getting loans will become equally difficult and expensive over time. Shahid Rasheed Butt said that the annual expenditure of the government is over Rs14 trillion, which is much higher than its income, so funds have to be borrowed. Tax revenue, exports, and remittances must be improved to run the country. He said that while the population is constantly increasing, the youth need jobs, which is becoming a problem. A small segment has been robbing domestic resources for decades, which has pushed the country to the brink. Other countries improve their economy through loans, while in Pakistan, money is borrowed for luxuries, and all the burden has to be

lifted to the people. Mr. Butt said that unnecessary dependence on borrowing has caused irreparable damage to the domestic economy, and now the country needs wise economic policies to survive. The necessary changes to address our budgetary imbalances will be quite painful. A postponement will make the necessary adjustment larger and more painful. Though some options might be preferable, there are no simple answers to this serious problem. Currently, the only way to reduce the pressure on inflation is to make corrections in our fiscal account. Pakistan has borrowed 23 times from the IMF, and if the domestic system is not improved, more IMF loans will not be able to save the country.

Financial issues, serious economic challenges await new govt: APBF

DNA

ISLAMABAD: As not a single party has gained simple majority in the National Assembly in the general elections and there would be a coalition federal government the All Pakistan Business Forum has warned that the financial constraints and the economic challenges are awaiting the incoming government amidst highest record inflation and unemployment in the country. The APBF President Syed Maaz Mahmood said that the new government would have to face mammoth economic challenges. The country is facing challenges like higher inflation and unemployment rates, ongoing IMF program and possible engagement for fresh program to improve balance of payments situation, debt restructuring, framing new resource sharing formula between centre and provinces, National Finance Commission (NFC) and privatization of loss-making state-owned entities. However, it would be a challenging task for

the coalition government. He said that results of the current general elections are indicating for establishing a coalition government at the federal level, which would have to deal with plethora of economic issues including higher inflation and unemployment rates, dealing with International Monetary Fund (IMF), debt restructuring and others. The Pakistan Stock Exchange opened the day on a negative note as the benchmark index plunged over 2,000 points on Friday as uncertainty surrounded election 2024 results. The KSE-100 shares index, the benchmark of the country's capital market, fell below the 62,000 mark by losing 2,145.53 points or 3.34% during the intraday trading. APBF Chairman Ibrahim Qureshi said that the stocks, a day before the general elections in Pakistan, closed on a higher note, boosted by a pre-election rally and hopes of an upgrade in the country's credit rating, but trading volumes remained thin as investors stayed cautious. The PSX gained 344.85 points or 0.54% to

close at 64,143.87 points on Wednesday. Ibrahim Qureshi said that the global ratings agency, the S&P has recently stated that a more stable political environment in Pakistan is likely an important precondition to repairing the government's creditworthiness. The rating agency in a note on Pakistan stated that together with new policy moves to improve investor confidence and bring down inflation, this could lift fiscal and external metrics sufficiently for the sovereign ratings to move to the "B" rating category. It further stated that if the coming elections yield a government that has popular support and able to work with key institutions in the country, it will have a better chance of securing external financing from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Syed Maaz Mahmood said that the country is currently witnessing higher inflation rate, which would be a main challenge for the new coalition government.

Experts urge inclusive parliamentary democratic system

DNA

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

has rejected the political engineering and the establishment's fiddling in the political process. They also questioned the Election Commission of Pakistan's capacity to tabulate and announce the election results in time. Contrarily, the bit-by-bit announcement of results by the TV channels has created doubts on the tabulation process, cast delusions and confusion. The internationally recognized standard process for the election results tabulation and announcements shall be adopted in future elections. These views were expressed by the concerned citizens and experts at a webinar on "Pakistan's Elections 2024: Emerging scenarios and future challenges," organized by the Devcom-Pakistan (Development Communications Network) and DTN

on Saturday. The speakers included former senator Farhatullah Babar, constitutional expert Zafarullah Khan, Executive Director Devcom-Pakistan Centre for Geopolitical Studies Munir Ahmed, Associate Professor of International Relations at the Lahore Garrison University Dr. Zainab Ahmed, Associate Professor of political science at the Kinnaird College for Women Dr. Khushboo Ejaz, Associate Professor at Bahria University Islamabad Dr. Hassan Daud Butt, political activists Amina Sadaf and Sabeen Younas from Islamabad and Zamar Shahid from Quetta, National Defence University PhD scholar and Governance specialist T.A. Bhutta, development experts Aftab Alam Khan and Qaiser Ejaz. An overwhelming participation of citizens and youth

presented their opinion. Farhatullah Babar envisaged a role of establishment in Pakistan's future political scenario. They should understand that the public's political awareness has increased, now the political engineering and maneuvering would create extreme situations. In the emerging scenario, only inclusive alliances in the parliament would deliver results. The split-mandate and populist politics may harm the democratic process if the rigidity reigned. Only stronger institutions within their mandate can control populism. He urged all the stakeholders to respect everyone's vote. Zafarullah Khan said our political system is governed by many confusions and illusions. We need to sort it out for clarity of perceptions and practices. The present situation reflects that the public has rejected the role of establishment and its undue fiddling in the political process. Secondly, we shall accept the mandate given to the candidates and their role in the future discourse shall not be diminished.

PAC Board of management members intends to promote regional culture

The meeting participants said the food and culture festival was postponed till April due to PSL matches

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Third meeting of the Board of Management of Punjab Arts Council was held under the chairmanship of President Board Waqar Ahmed and members Asma Butt, Muhammad Azim Iqbal, Babar Niazi, and Muhammad Aslam Mughal participated in the meeting. President Board Waqar Ahmed said that the land of Punjab is extremely fertile in terms of literature and culture. Punjab is an ancient cultural center and a province rich in folk heritage. The board is fully active for the promotion of art and culture. In the proceedings of the meeting, the President Board and all the

members agreed to write a letter to the Executive Director Punjab Arts Council to include the name of former resident director Punjab Arts Council Naheed Manzoor in the board.

The meeting participants said the food and culture festival was postponed till April due to PSL matches. It has also been agreed to hire staff for the audio video studio, release funds for cultural

activities and create a craft bazar to increase the income of the Arts Council. Board Secretary Waqar Ahmed told the board members that Punjab Arts Council is going to organize singing and painting competitions in Rawalpindi, Attock, Chakwal, Jehlum and Murree, for which the names of the judges have been finalized. Talent competitions will be held at district, division and provincial levels. At the end of the meeting, it was agreed to hold a Jashan Baharan musical gala at the Arts Council on February 24. Nooran Lal, Sana Nemat and versatile dance group from Lahore will perform in the musical gala. President Board Waqar Ahmed and other board members emphasized on wide publicity for the musical gala.



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Ukraine's President and general: political-military blur

POLITICS doesn't end in wartime, even when it has been subsumed by more immediate, existential matters. With the passage of time, Winston Churchill's wartime leadership can appear as if it were unassailable – yet in reality, criticism grew loud enough that the House of Commons held two votes of confidence in 1942. Though some have compared Volodymyr Zelenskyy to Churchill, the Ukrainian president will be grateful that he has not faced anything approaching that kind of challenge. The “rally round the flag” effect, along with his charisma, effective diplomacy and personal courage as Russia invaded, created a remarkably enduring mood of national unity. Even those criticising the decisions or conduct of those around the president shrank from questioning his. But by last autumn, it was clear that the country was seeing the return of politics. It is still far from business as usual. But Mr Zelenskyy's decision to fire Ukraine's admired commander-in-chief, Valerii Zaluzhnyi, on Thursday has turned up the volume. Mr Zelenskyy says politics played no part. But he has not explained the move beyond citing the need for “renewal” in the armed forces. Disagreements between the men over strategy and tactics were open knowledge and it was widely reported last week that the president had asked for the general's resignation. Military decisions can be political and economic too – like Mr Zaluzhnyi's desire to mobilise half a million troops, which his boss regarded as unrealistic. The president was also reportedly annoyed when the general said the war had reached a stalemate in an interview late last year. That was seen as unhelpful to the diplomatic push for more arms donations, and as venturing on to political turf. The general is wildly popular in Ukraine and aides explored a future political career even as he denied an interest, according to *The Showman*, a new biography of Mr Zelenskyy by the journalist Simon Shuster. It is hard to see the change of command transforming Ukraine's fortunes on the battlefield, not least because Gen Zaluzhnyi's replacement, Oleksandr Syrskyy, the commander of Ukraine's land forces, has a mixed record and at best a mixed reputation among troops. But curiously, it is also hard to see much political benefit to Mr Zelenskyy. Gen Syrskyy is seen as the president's man, and as lacking political ambition. Gen Zaluzhnyi will be out of the spotlight, but equally will not take the blame for any future military shortcomings. His departure also encourages discussion of whether the president is willing to accept questioning of his decisions. While some western officials have expressed concern about the change of personnel, Mr Zaluzhnyi's removal is more likely to be a pretext than a reason for Republicans in the US to block further aid: wrangling over the \$60bn aid package continues. This is primarily a domestic issue.

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Labour's green u-turn threatens growth plan

SHADOW chancellor Rachel Reeves promised to be Britain's first “green chancellor” when she announced in 2021 that a Labour government would invest £28bn a year in greening the economy. A little over two years later, and the Labour party has unceremoniously dropped this commitment, instead pledging to spend a more modest £4.8bn a year over the next parliament on green investment, over and above the government's existing investment plans. Labour says this is part of its broader commitment to fiscal responsibility; but in the week that the EU's climate service announced that global heating had exceeded 1.5C across an entire year for the first time, environmentalists have expressed concerns that it might signal a diminishing commitment to tackling the climate crisis. While Labour's plans still represent a significant increase in green investment, there are certainly questions about whether it goes far enough. Moreover, the reduction leaves a big hole in the party's plans to expand the economy by boosting lagging levels of public and private investment. Because the government shifted its planned spending on the green transition since Reeves' 2021 announcement, Labour's original commitment to spend £28bn a year amounted to an additional £20bn a year on top of government plans. The revised announcement reduces that by three-quarters, with about 40% funded through hiking windfall taxes on oil and gas. The rest will be funded through additional borrowing, which Reeves is assuming will still allow Labour to meet the fiscal rules she has set. Labour has justified this scaling back because, as it rightly points out, the cost of government borrowing has risen sharply since its original announcement, thanks to rising inflation and interest rates in the last two years. It is also true that it was unrealistic to believe that a new government could raise spending on green investment to this level immediately on taking office.

That said, this planned reduction could have an impact not just on the speed at which the UK can transition to net zero, but also on energy bills. Labour's warm home plans will be cut by a fifth, meaning many fewer homes will be insulated during a first Labour term. There will also be implications for the transition to electric vehicles. The party is still planning to spend £8.3bn to achieve its clean power pledge to decarbonise the UK's energy supply by 2030, although this will be made more difficult by delays in building the new nuclear power station Hinkley Point C. So the implications for the UK's green transition are concerning, although there is no question that a Labour government would be far better for the climate than a Conservative one. But there are also implications for economic growth. The beauty of Labour's “green prosperity plan” was that it was double-headed: it would be good for the climate, but also provide a vital and significant injection of public investment to kickstart Britain's sluggish productivity growth. By effectively adopting the arbitrary fiscal rule Jeremy Hunt has set that debt must be forecast to be falling in five years' time – a rule that Paul Johnson, director of the Institute for Fiscal Studies, calls “basically silly” – Reeves is hemming a Labour government into the Tories' macroeconomic worldview.

The stolen elections-2024

Qamar Bashir



PPP is poised to form the government in Sindh, while PTI is expected to do so in KP. In Punjab, PML(N) holds the majority with 144 seats, closely trailed by PTI. The battle for Lahore's throne is anticipated to be fiercely contested between the two parties. In Balochistan, PPP has secured the most seats and is likely to pursue a coalition government, a common occurrence in the province's political landscape. Mr. Rauf Hassan of PTI asserted that the party is poised to form governments in Punjab, KP, and at the federal level. Mufta Ismael remarked on the significant voter turnout for PTI...

THE nation nears the conclusion of the exhaustive election process, amid accusations of rigging and the misuse of state power in favor of PML(N), leading to widespread condemnation from the media and PTI, who have labeled the election as stolen. The mandate appears highly fragmented across the country, surprising both observers and influential figures. Allegations abound regarding the manipulation of results by state entities to benefit PML(N) and hinder PTI from securing a clear majority, both nationally and in the crucial province of Punjab. The election outcomes, though shocking and demoralizing, saw PML(N) exhibiting resilience by claiming victory in Punjab and at the national level. However, the humbling results prompted a shift in demeanor, with PML(N) adopting a more conciliatory tone. Leader Mian Nawaz Sharif extended an olive branch to all political parties, the judiciary, and the Armed Forces, emphasizing a desire for collaboration to overcome the country's challenges. He pledged PML(N)'s commitment to avoiding confrontation and instead advocated for unity to elevate the nation to greater heights of prosperity. He announced the formation of two-member teams, led by Shahbaz Sharif and Ishaq Dar, tasked with initiating immediate dialogue with Asif Ali Zardari of PPP, MQM, and JUI. The objective was to persuade these parties to form a coalition government with PML(N) aimed at fostering prosperity and development in Pakistan. However, PML(N) is cognizant of the potential hefty cost associated with such a coalition. It may entail relinquishing the premiership to Bilawal Bhutto and granting the presidency to Asif Ali Zardari, among other costly demands from various parties. This could leave PML(N) in a precarious position, rendering it ineffective for practical purposes. Mr. Ishaq Dar sounded a warning to PTI, suggesting that while independents may have secured significant victories, they cannot independently form a government and will likely align with other parties to do so. He proposed Nawaz Sharif as Prime Minister with himself as Finance Minister. On the other hand, Syed Khurshid Shah of PPP struck a cautious tone regarding Mian Nawaz Sharif's proposals. He stated that it is premature to discuss coalition formation until all results are finalized. PPP will determine its

future course of action once the total results are announced and discussions with over 16 independents progress further. At present, PTI is embroiled in a protracted legal struggle to reclaim what they allege as a stolen mandate, restore their party status, and explore options to align with smaller parties to secure seats reserved for women. As it stands, PTI has emerged as the largest party at the federal level (95/265), closely followed by PML(N) with 67 seats, PPP with 52, MQM with 8, IPP with 3, JUI with 2, and BNP Mengal with 1. PPP is poised to form the government in Sindh, while PTI is expected to do so in KP. In Punjab, PML(N) holds the majority with 144 seats, closely trailed by PTI. The battle for Lahore's throne is anticipated to be fiercely contested between the two parties. In Balochistan, PPP has secured the most seats and is likely to pursue a coalition government, a common occurrence in the province's political landscape. Mr. Rauf Hassan of PTI asserted that the party is poised to form governments in Punjab, KP, and at the federal level. Mufta Ismael remarked on the significant voter turnout for PTI, surprising all political stakeholders. Salman Akram Raja, in a Vlog, disclosed that despite leading with 80,000 votes according to Form 45, the Returning Officer (RO) unlawfully denied him Form 47 and expelled him from his room. He has filed an appeal with the Lahore High Court and urged PTI leaders and workers to remain vigilant to safeguard their victory. Mr. Jabran Nasir of PTI asserted that even the aggregate votes in Nawaz Sharif's Form 47 did not reconcile, suggesting widespread rigging nationwide. He accused the pervasive rigging, conducted with impunity, of fueling disillusionment, anger, and frustration among the populace. An analyst alleged that the election outcomes in over 60 constituencies were manipulated in favor of PML(N), with numerous presiding officers coerced into altering results under threat of severe repercussions. The international media's headlines resound with concerns over transparency, rigging allegations, and perceived bias favoring PML(N). The New York Times warns of a shadow cast by rigging accusations, while the BBC raises questions about the election's fairness amidst irregularities. France's *Le Monde*, *Hindustan Times*, and

Turkey's Anadolu Agency echo similar apprehensions. Al Jazeera reports on rigging claims and internet disruptions, with Reuters highlighting Western observers' worries about irregularities. CNN International reports on unexpected delays in vote counting. The Associated Press calls for transparency from the international community, while TRT labels the 2024 elections as the least fair and transparent in Pakistan's history.

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) and Amnesty International condemned the suspension of internet and cellular services, highlighting Pakistan's temporary closure of border crossings with Iran and Afghanistan for security reasons. Analysts criticized the election as the least credible since Pakistan's independence, citing allegations of pre-poll rigging and a crackdown on Imran Khan's PTI party. The banning of PTI's cricket bat symbol on ballots disadvantaged illiterate voters, while TV stations were prohibited from airing Khan's speeches. Political violence marred the lead-up to the vote, exemplified by twin blasts targeting campaign offices in Balochistan, claimed by the Islamic State Pakistan Province militant group. In the aftermath of the 2024 elections, Pakistan finds itself at a critical juncture, grappling with the fallout of allegations of widespread rigging, transparency concerns, and the polarization of political forces. As the nation awaits the finalization of results and potential coalition formations, the need for transparency, accountability, and a commitment to democratic principles has never been more pressing. The international community's scrutiny, coupled with domestic calls for justice and electoral integrity, underscores the imperative for thorough investigations and corrective measures. It is incumbent upon all stakeholders, including political parties, electoral authorities, and civil society, to work towards restoring faith in the democratic process, ensuring that the voices of the Pakistani people are heard and respected. Only through genuine dialogue, accountability, and a collective commitment to democratic values can Pakistan chart a course towards a more stable, inclusive, and prosperous future.

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

Balance between emotion and logic in voting

Amina AG



PML-N promises to create 10 million jobs and reduce poverty from 38% to 25% in five years. They plan to lower electricity bills and strengthen ties with China. They aim to cut taxes for businesses, increase the tax money the government gets and sell off state-owned companies that are not making a profit. They also want to get rid of a government body called NAB and bring back...

VOTING is really important and before you vote, it is crucial to know about the people's will and what they stand for. In the past, decisions made because of emotions sometimes turned out badly. So, it is essential to learn from those mistakes and make smart choices. Right now, during the election season, it is challenging to balance emotions and logic when making decisions. People talk a lot about their favorite leaders and political parties. But some think that it is not fair that only adults can vote. Some suggest letting kids as young as six votes to help them understand how democracy works. No matter what people say about “it is time for a change,” we should vote thoughtfully as responsible citizens in a democracy. Let's promise to be well-informed voters this time, understanding what each party wants to do. Voting shouldn't be just about feelings; it should be a careful choice based on knowledge.

Before we vote, it is crucial to know what changes each party wants to make. This includes important things like the economy, helping people in need, creating jobs, legal and court matters, education, supporting women, dealing with other countries, farming, water and energy plans, taking care of the environment, healthcare, controlling the population and protecting human rights. It is better to rethink our opinions if they're wrong instead of sticking to them blindly. The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) wants the country to grow economically. They

have big plans like increasing the economy by 6%, making exports worth \$60 billion every year and getting \$40 billion in remittances from people living abroad. They also want to improve infrastructure, make sure there's enough energy and boost the economy. PML-N promises to create 10 million jobs and reduce poverty from 38% to 25% in five years. They plan to lower electricity bills and strengthen ties with China. They aim to cut taxes for businesses, increase the tax money the government gets and sell off state-owned companies that are not making a profit. They also want to get rid of a government body called NAB and bring back certain parts of the Constitution. The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) has focused on helping poor people in their manifesto. They want to reduce poverty and hunger, protect the rights of minorities and marginalized groups and strengthen the country. PPP has five main goals for a new people's economy, including economic stability, more public and private investment, protecting vulnerable groups, managing money well and handling debt. They plan to double the income of workers, provide free electricity to the poorest people, use solar and wind energy, build 3 million houses for women in charge of their households and introduce special cards for different sectors. PPP wants to fund these plans by getting rid of unnecessary government offices, saving money through the 18th Amendment and ending subsidies. They also promise to protect the 18th Amendment, criminalize forced disappearances, hold intel-

ligence agencies accountable, and change discriminatory laws. The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) wanted to create a country inspired by Islamic values in their manifesto. They focus on following the law, good governance, justice, and accountability. PTI suggests changing the constitution to make the Prime Minister's election process different, reducing the time the National Assembly and Senate stay in power, and changing how Senators are elected. PTI wants to set up a “Truth and Reconciliation Commission” to bring people together in the country. Other things PTI promises include tax changes, expanding free healthcare with the Sehat Card, bringing back the Ehsaas program and making a uniform education system. PTI emphasizes holding people accountable for white-collar crimes, creating special anti-corruption teams in each province and starting an elite anti-corruption academy. During the election campaigns happen, it was important to pay attention to party manifestos. These were the plans that political parties have for the country. It is crucial to check these plans independently and involve the public in the political process. Understanding the goals, policies and changes proposed by candidates in your area is important. Making an informed of the decision when you vote is not just for you but for the benefit of future generations. The vote has the power to make significant changes.

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Briefs

'PTI in habit of not accepting its defeat'

DNA

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League leader Azma Bukhari said on Sunday that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf was in the habit of not accepting its defeat. Talking to the media here at Model Town, she said, "From where PTI loses its levels allegation of rigging in that constituency". Azma Bukhari said that PTI levelled rigging allegations in 2013 and created chaos in the country. She said, "Every party talks about respect of their mandate but no one talks about the respect of PML-N's mandate." She further said that PML-N was a responsible party and it does not believe in politics of lies and agitation. Election tribunal was an appropriate forum which could be approached by aggrieved candidates, she added. She said that with the grace of Allah Almighty, PML-N was the only majority party in Punjab, adding that prosperity and development process would start again in the province. She claimed that PML-N was also a single majority party in the National Assembly. Azma said that PML-N Quaid Nawaz Sharif had mentioned it again and again that no single party could steer the country out of challenges as collective efforts were required in this regard. She said it was vital to ensure stability in the country and all political parties had to play their role for this purpose.

JUI-F alleges 'historic rigging' in Feb 8 polls

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: JUI-F Secretary General Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haideri, in a statement on Saturday, said JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman would soon convene a meeting of the Central General Council to decide the future action plan. He said leaders of national mainstream parties were forcibly defeated while little-known candidates were helped to win their constituencies. Mobile phone service was shut down on the polling day to achieve the desired result. Why the Election Commission of Pakistan was so helpless, he asked, adding that the commission set new traditions. This, he said, also happened in the 2013 and 2018 general elections. He questioned why the ECP was bent upon giving the country an unelected government containing people who would act as showpieces. Meanwhile, JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman has called a meeting of the central working committee and senior leaders in Islamabad on February 14. The meeting will discuss the situation arising out of February 8 elections, the party spokesman in a statement said.

ECP bars ROs to issue final results of 26 seats

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has barred the Returning Officers (ROs) to issue the final results of several National Assembly and provincial assembly seats. A four-member bench headed by chief election commissioner held the hearing of alleged alteration in the election result of NA-48. "We were ahead with the lead of 50,000 votes as per the Form-45 but the Returning Officer issued the Form-47 and changed our victory into defeat," the counsel of PTI candidate Ali Bukhari argued. The ECP issued notice to the Istehtkam-e-Pakistan Party backed candidate Raja Khurram Nawaz and barred the RO to issue the final notification of NA-47 and NA-48. Meanwhile, ECP also barred the ROs to issue the final results of PK-73, PK-79, PK-80 and PK-82. PTI backed Taimoor Jhagra and Kamran Bangash had challenged the results from PK-79 and PK-82 respectively.

New President to be elected also

Indonesian nationals living in Pak vote for general elections

This early voting was held for the upcoming general elections in Indonesia scheduled to be held on 14 February 2024



DNA

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



ting arrangements to facilitate more than 800 citizens along with their families from all provinces of Pakistan to participate in voting process including Islamabad Capital Territory. While another approximately 200 Indonesian nationals will exercise their democratic right to vote in the Indonesian Consulate General in Karachi on this Sunday. In addition to serving as a platform for exercising political rights, the event transcended its primary purpose and evolved into a vibrant social gathering. Attendees, both old acquaintances and new friends, seized the opportunity to reconnect, share stories, and celebrate the joyous occasion together. The atmosphere was filled with laughter, music, and the taste of Indonesian cuisine as participants enjoyed the bazaar featuring food stalls, a musical event, health facilities, and a children's play area.



"This event is designed not only as a political event, but also as a moment of sharing happiness for Indonesians despite political differences," said Mr. Arzoi M. Munib, Head of Indonesian General Elections Committee in Islamabad. "The ballot process was done smoothly with no significant hurdles on the ground," added Mr. Zulfikar Alamsyah, Head of General Elections Supervisory Committee. Moreover, the Embassy extended invitations to Pakistani think tanks and journalists, highlighting the significance of the electoral process in fostering strong democratic ties between Indonesia and Pakistan and further amplified the message of cross-border cooperation and mutual respect. One of the distinctive features of the event was the marking of voters' fingers with special purple ink, symbolizing their active participation in the electoral process.



This visible demonstration of civic duty underscored the commitment of voters to shaping the future of their homeland through democratic means. Expressing his views on the election arrangements, Ms. Solehatun from Haripur expressed her gratitude to those involved in the general election process particular the Embassy and all Committees for efficiently organizing the voting process, ensuring a smooth and democratic experience for all. "It was no tense faces. All I saw were smiles and happiness," said Babar, a Pakistani national from Gujranwala, who accompanied his Indonesian wife during the event. The Embassy's meticulous attention to security ensured that voters felt safe and secure throughout the electoral process, contributing to the overall success of the event.

Indonesia set for presidential vote on Wednesday

Ex-general and sitting defense minister tipped to win

JAKARTA: Indonesians vote in a presidential election Wednesday with Defence Minister Prabowo Subianto the clear favourite after a campaign mixing nationalist rhetoric and pledges to continue the era of popular outgoing leader Joko Widodo. The former general lost to Widodo in 2014 and 2019 but is on course to finally lead the world's third-largest democracy after rehabilitating his image. Widodo is constitutionally barred from running for a third term but his popularity hit all-time highs last year with polls showing he would have likely won another election.

Instead he is playing king-maker for his defence chief and eldest son, who have joined forces on the same ticket. Polls project Subianto to win a majority from nearly 205 million Indonesians who will dip their finger in halal ink at more than 800,000 polling stations across the volcano-dotted archipelago. - APP

Rupee expected to trade in narrow range

It is widely expected to seek a bailout from IMF after new government takes charge

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The rupee is expected to trade in a narrow range in the coming weeks, as healthy dollar supplies from exporters offset the political uncertainty after a split election result, analysts and traders said on Saturday. The rupee gained slightly against the greenback in the interbank market this week, closing at 279.28 on Friday, compared with 279.42 on Tuesday. The market was closed on Monday for Kashmir Day and on Thursday for the general elections. The polls, which were marred by allegations of rigging and violence, produced a hung parliament, with no clear winner among the three main parties.

Israeli war crimes continue as death toll passes 28,000

NEWS DESK

GAZA CITY: The Palestinian health ministry in Gaza said on Tuesday that the Israeli occupation forces (IOF) committed 14 new horrific massacres in different areas of the Gaza Strip, killing at least 112 civilians and injuring over 173 others, while a large number of victims are still under the rubble of bombed buildings or lying on roads. In a brief statement, the health ministry said that the death toll from the ongoing Israeli bombardments, which started on October 7, climbed to 28,176 martyrs and the number of the wounded surged to 67,784 people. Every day, the Israeli army escalates its air and ground attacks on the Gaza Strip, which has been under relentless bombardment since a cross-border operation was launched by Hamas's armed wing, al-Qassam Brigades, on October 7. Besides the large number of casualties and the huge displacement of people, basic food, fuel, water and medical supplies have run out for the 2.3 million residents in Gaza due to the tight Israeli blockade and the massive destruction of infrastructure and facilities. Meanwhile, The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) has warned of the consequences of any military operation or attack on the city of Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, stating that there is no other place for people to go.

Raisi calls for 'Israel's' expulsion from UN

FOREIGN DESK

TEHRAN: Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi has restated Tehran's steadfast backing for the Palestinian people, emphasizing that Palestine remains at the vanguard of causes in the Muslim world, echoing the famous words of the Islamic Republic's founder, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. Speaking at a large gathering in Tehran on the 45th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, Raisi called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and highlighted that Western powers exerted strained efforts to deter Iran from supporting Palestine, but their attempts ended in failure. "The Westerners tried so hard to make Iran stop defending Palestine and the ideals of the Islamic Revolution, whether through war or economic blockade and sanctions, and repeatedly sent messages saying 'stop defending Palestine,'" he said. "The Islamic Republic of Iran is flagbearer of the fight against terrorism. What is happening today in Gaza and Palestine is enough for everyone to know US and Zionist regime.

Party but don't touch Rio works to make carnival safer for women

The January poll of 1,500 people found that 50 percent of women surveyed said they had suffered some form of aggression in previous carnivals

RIO DE JANEIRO: Avoid being alone in a crowd, opt for canned drinks over potentially drugged cocktails, scan a QR code to access emergency resources - as Rio enters carnival season, there has been a flood of advice on how women can stay safe. The "cidademarahilhos," or wonderful city of Rio, on Friday officially inaugurated its emblematic festival, becoming the scene of countless street parties, the traditional "blocos" that can draw hundreds of thousands of people. But there is a dark underside to all the joyful dancing, partying and music: a surge in cases of sexual harassment and rape. A recent survey by the Locomotiva Research Institute found that 73 percent of women in Brazil fear being sexually harassed during the public celebrations. The January poll of 1,500 people found that 50 percent of women surveyed said they had suffered some form of aggression in previous carnivals. - Agencies

Explosion injures 7 in Karachi hospital

Refrigerator's compressor exploded in store room of emergency department, says BDS

BUREAU REPORT

KARACHI: According to the rescue officials, the incident occurred inside the emergency ward of Sindh Government Hospital in the city's Liaquatabad area. "Soon after the blast, fire engulfed the entire ward [within no time]," the officials said. The hospital administrator also confirmed that at least seven people, including a two-year-old child, were injured in the explosion. After being informed, rescue teams rushed to the hospital and extinguished the fire. Dr Attique, the hospital's Medical Superintendent (MS), said that an emergency had

been imposed in the hospital, adding that the medical staff and the patients were being moved to another location. Meanwhile, Sindh Governor Kamran Tessori sought a detailed report from the MS about the explosion. He also prayed for the early recovery of the injured. Caretaker Sindh Health Minister Dr Khalid Niaz also sought a report about the incident and directed the concerned authorities to provide the best medical facilities to the injured. As per the bomb disposable squad, a refrigerator's compressor exploded due to a short circuit in the store room of the emergency department. The explosion injured "few people" and caused "minor damage", the report added.

Trump 'encourages' Russia to attack non-paying Nato allies

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump has said he would "encourage" Russia to attack any Nato member that fails to pay its bills as part of the Western military alliance. At a rally on Saturday, he said he had once told a leader he would not protect a nation behind on its payments, and would "encourage" the aggressors to "do whatever the hell they want". Members of Nato commit to defend any nation in the bloc that gets attacked. The White House called the comments "appalling and unhelpful". Addressing crowds during the rally in South Carolina, Mr Trump said he had made his comments about Russia during a meeting of leaders of Nato countries. He recalled that the leader of a "big country" had presented a hypothetical situation in which he was not meeting his financial obligations within Nato and had come under attack from Moscow. Mr Trump said the leader had asked if the US would come to his country's aid in that scenario, which prompted him to issue a rebuke. "I said: 'You didn't pay? You're delinquent?...' 'No I would not protect you, in fact I would encourage them to do whatever they want. You gotta pay.'" A White House spokesman said the former president was "encouraging invasions of our closest allies by murderous regimes", and labelled the comments "appalling and un-

hinged". He added that the statement "endangers American national security, global stability and our economy at home". Mr Trump, the favourite to run again as the Republican candidate in this year's US presidential election, has long been critical of Nato and what he sees as an excessive financial burden on the United States to guarantee the defence of 30 other nations. Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, after Mr Trump left office. He has since bemoaned the amount of US money sent to Ukraine, which is not a Nato member. The US has provided Ukraine with more financial support than any other country - totalling more than \$44bn (£34bn) since the 2022 invasion, according to White House figures from December. However, Republicans in Congress have since the turn of the year blocked all new funding - demanding tough measures to restrict migration into the US on its southern border, and then refusing the amended bill when it was presented earlier this week. Mr Trump celebrated that rejection during Saturday's rally, saying the proposals made by President Biden had been "disastrous". The two issues have now been successfully separated, meaning that senators are now able to debate the aid money separately. - Agencies

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