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Post-election scenario



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 upholds 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 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.

Chief Editor's Profile: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti is a career journalist. He started off as District Correspondent of Daily The Muslim in 1988 from Gujrat. Later he moved to Islamabad and joined Pakistan Observer as Sub-Editor / Op-ed Writer, in 1993. In 1995 he again moved to The Muslim as Sub-Editor and he left The Muslim in 1997 to join THE Nation as City Editor and Diplomatic Correspondent, where he remained till 2002. His association with the The News spans over three years from 2002 to 2005 as columnist. In 2005 Mr. Bhatti switched over to Khabrain Group as Columnist / Special Correspondent. In 2010 he was made Resident Editor of The Post, a sister publication of daily Khabrain. In 2010, he launched his own publication Centreline. He has authored two books on European Union. He also served in Pakistan Telecommunication Company (PTCL) as Media Advisor/ Director Communication. He launched Diplomatic News Agency (DNA) in 2012. In May 2020 he launched Pakistan's First & only Diplomatic Newspaper Daily Islamabad POST.

Palestine
Ambassador,
staff visit South
Africa embassy

World must take note of genocide in Gaza: envoys



DNA

*High Commissioner
Mthuthuzeli
Madikiza says
South African
decision to engage
the International
Court of Justice
(ICJ) was
rooted solely in
humanitarian
principles, free
from any political
or regional
motives. Palestine
ambassador thanks
SA for unflinching
support*

ISLAMABAD: In a resolute demonstration of unwavering solidarity with the Palestinian cause, the High Commissioner of South Africa, Mthuthuzeli Madikiza, announced the South African government's decision to bring the Gaza genocide case before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) was based on his country's strong resolve and commitment to upholding and protection of human rights. This move underscored the nation's commitment to seeking justice and addressing the acute humanitarian crises inflicted upon Gaza by Israeli aggression.

High Commissioner Madikiza articulated these sentiments during a warm reception extended to a delegation from the Palestine embassy, headed by Ambassador Ahmad Rabaei and comprising diplomats, members of the Palestine committee and the students representatives. The visit aimed to express sincere gratitude for South Africa's steadfast and bold support in the face of the ongoing challenges in Palestine.

The High Commissioner emphasized that resorting to suppression, the killing of innocent people, and causing destruction on trivial pretexts is fundamentally unjustifiable. He firmly stated that the South African decision to engage the Interna-

“ Ambassador of Palestine said, this collaborative effort between South Africa and Palestine exemplifies a shared commitment to upholding international law and advocating for the rights and well-being of the Palestinian people ”

tional Court of Justice (ICJ) was rooted solely in humanitarian principles, free from any political or regional motives. He underscored that the plight of those



who suffer, akin to the challenges faced by the concerned parties, serves as a poignant reminder of humanity's shared history. He noted a burgeoning wave of support for the people of Palestine and warmly acknowledged Pakistan's endorsement of South Africa's decision in favor of involving the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

Ambassador of Palestine said, this collaborative effort between South Africa and Palestine exemplifies a shared commitment to upholding international law and advocating for the rights and well-being of the Palestinian people. As discussions progress at the ICJ, it is anticipated that this legal recourse will contribute to fostering a just resolution and bringing global attention to the pressing issues affecting Gaza.

He expressed gratitude on behalf of the people and government of Palestine, emphasizing the profound debt owed to the unwavering support received from the people and government of South Africa. This steadfast commitment has significantly fortified our stance on the issue, contributing to our increased strength and resilience. Ambassador Rabaei commended the articulate speech delivered by the South African high commissioner and extended heartfelt thanks for the warm welcome received at their mission.

The Palestinian ambassador expressed heartfelt gratitude to Pakistan for its unwavering support of the South African decision. He emphasized that this support not only acknowledges the shared values between Palestine and Pakistan but also serves as a significant morale boost for the Palestinian people.



DNA

Palestine says ICJ judges assessed facts of law

South Africa terms ICJ verdict victory for the rule of law

DNA

RAMALLA: Palestine welcomes the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice today. The ICJ judges assessed the facts and the law. They ruled in favor of humanity and international law. We call on all states to ensure that all provisional measures ordered by the Court are implemented, including by Israel, the occupying power. This is a binding legal obligation. States now have clear legal obligations to stop Israel's genocidal war on the Palestinian people in Gaza and to make sure that they are not complicit.

The ICJ order is an important reminder that no state is above the law. It should serve as a wake-up call for Israel and actors who enabled its entrenched impunity.

Palestine reaffirms its eternal gratitude to the people and government of South Africa for taking this bold step of active solidarity and will continue to work closely with South Africa and other countries to ensure that justice is served. January 26, 2024 marks a decisive victory for the international rule of law and a significant milestone in the search for justice for the Palestinian people. In a landmark ruling, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) has determined that Israel's actions in Gaza are plausibly genocidal and has indicated provisional measures on that basis. For the implementation of the international rule of law, the decision is a momentous one. South Africa thanks the Court for its swift ruling.

The United Nations Security Council will now be formally notified of the



Court's order pursuant to Article 41(2) of the Court's Statute. The veto power wielded by individual states cannot be permitted to thwart international justice, not least in light of the ever-worsening situation in Gaza brought about by Israel's acts and omissions in violation of the Genocide Convention. Third States are now on notice of the existence of a serious risk of genocide against the Palestinian people in Gaza. They must, therefore, also act independently and immediately to prevent genocide by Israel and to ensure that they are not themselves in violation of the Genocide Convention, including by aiding or assisting in the commission of genocide. This necessarily imposes an obligation on all States to cease funding and facilitating Israel's military actions, which are plausibly genocidal. Above all else, the provisional measures are directly binding

on Israel, which is required pursuant to the Court's order and to the Genocide Convention itself, to stop all acts by it that are plausibly genocidal, such as those raised by South Africa in its Application and request for the indication of provisional measures. There is no credible basis for Israel to continue to claim that its military actions are in full compliance with international law, including the Genocide Convention, having regard to the Court's ruling. South Africa sincerely hopes that Israel will not act to frustrate the application of this Order, as it has publicly threatened to do, but that it will instead act to comply with it fully, as it is bound to do.

South Africa will continue to act within the institutions of global governance to protect the rights, including the fundamental right to life, of Palestinians in Gaza – which continue to remain at urgent risk including from Israeli military assault, starvation and disease – and to obtain the fair and equal application of international law to all, in the interest of our collective humanity.

Notably, South Africa will continue to do everything within its power to preserve the existence of the Palestinian people as a group, to end all acts of apartheid and genocide against the Palestinian people and to walk with them towards the realisation of their collective right to self-determination, for, as Nelson Mandela momentously declared, "our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians". The indication by this Court of provisional measures pursuant to the Genocide Convention marks a significant historical step towards that goal.

Which countries backed South Africa's genocide case against Israel at ICJ?

Here are countries which welcomed the ICJ case that says Israel is committing genocide against Palestinians in Gaza

DNA

THE International Court of Justice (ICJ) based in The Hague will hold its first hearing in South Africa's genocide case against Israel on Thursday, with several countries welcoming the move amid a global chorus for a ceasefire in Gaza. South Africa filed the lawsuit end of December, accusing Israel of genocide in its war on Gaza and seeking a halt to the brutal military assault that has killed more than 23,000 Palestinians, nearly 10,000 of them children. The 84-page filing by South Africa says Israel violated the 1948 Genocide Convention, drawn up in the aftermath of World War II and the Holocaust. Both Israel and South Africa are signatories to the United Nations Genocide Convention, which gives the ICJ – the highest UN legal body – jurisdiction to rule on disputes over the treaty. All states that signed the convention are obliged to not commit genocide and also to prevent and punish it. The treaty defines genocide as “acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group”.

Which countries have welcomed South Africa's ICJ case against Israel?

The Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC): The 57-member bloc, which includes Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan and Morocco, voiced their support for the case on December 30.

Malaysia: In a statement released on January 2, the Malaysian Ministry of Foreign Affairs welcomed the South African application. It reiterated a call for an independent Palestinian state “based on the pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital”.

Turkey: Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs

spokesperson Oncu Keceli posted on X on January 3 welcoming South Africa's move.

Jordan: Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi said on January 4 that Amman would back South Africa.

Bolivia: On Sunday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bolivia dubbed South

“**The Maldives, Namibia and Pakistan: The three countries expressed support for the genocide case filed by South Africa during a UN General Assembly session on Tuesday. The Arab League: The 22-member alliance also affirmed its support for the South African case on Wednesday in an X post made by Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul-Gheit. Colombia and Brazil: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Colombia and Brazil expressed the country's support in individual press releases on Wednesday**”

Africa's move as historic, becoming the first Latin American country to back the ICJ case against Israel.

The Maldives, Namibia and Pakistan: The three countries expressed support for the genocide case filed by South Africa during a UN General Assembly session on Tuesday. The Arab League: The 22-member alliance also affirmed its support for the South African case on Wednesday in an X post made by Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul-Gheit. Colombia and Brazil: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Colombia and Brazil expressed the country's support in individual press releases on Wednesday.

Besides countries, many advocacy groups and civil society groups worldwide have also joined South Africa's call. These include Terreiro Pindorama in Brazil, Asociacion Nacional de Amistad Italia-Cuba in Italy, and Collectif Judeo Arabe et Citoyen pour la Palestine in France, reported independent outlet Common Dreams.

Which countries filed the ICC request earlier?

Bolivia also pointed out it had earlier filed a request to International Criminal Court (ICC) Prosecutor Karim Khan alongside South Africa, Bangladesh, Comoros, and Djibouti to investigate the situation in Palestine. Khan said he received the request on November 30. The ICC and the ICJ are sometimes conflated with one another. Both the courts are located in The Hague, Netherlands. While the purpose of the ICJ is to resolve conflicts between states, the ICC prosecutes individuals for committing crimes, according to the University of Melbourne's Pursuit platform. While states cannot be sued at the ICC, the prosecutor can open an investigation where crimes, including genocide, were likely committed.

2024 is one of the most important years in Azerbaijan



ADIL ALIYEV

IN 2023 Azerbaijan hosted the main conference of SPECA which celebrated its 25th anniversary last year. And President Ilham Aliyev unveiled Azerbaijan's potential and investment strategic plan. Now more than ever, our country has a strategic role from the East to the West and is located on the Silk Route. Obviously, it requires highways and other infrastructure, and Azerbaijan has constructed them, and today these policies play an important role in attracting investment to Azerbaijan.

The integration into the world market

The President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev is a prominent and modern statesman recognized throughout the world, he made great efforts for Azerbaijan and the people of our country. Today, as a result, Azerbaijan flourishes day by day. He continues to build upon Heydar Aliyev's strategies actively and creates others. President Ilham Aliyev has had success in implementing different policies on the world stage. He took part in the implementation of economic reforms in the country, and the expansion of economic and cultural ties of independent Azerbaijan with foreign countries. President Ilham Aliyev played an important role in the integration of the Republic of Azerbaijan into the world market. Many fields of our economy are attractive to foreign investors from different countries, and this business friendly environment encourages them to invest in Azerbaijan.

Moreover, today Azerbaijan is the guarantor of Europe's energy security and provides some parts of Europe with gas.

Climate Change Conference

Azerbaijan regularly hosts various forums, organizations, events every year. Our country hosted Eurovision Song Contest, the First European Games, the 4th Islamic Olympic Games, and other events. This year Azerbaijan will host COP29 by securing the votes of countries and it is an example of the high trust shown to Azerbaijan. It is a big responsibility to host such kind of event, which is globally important and each country attaches great importance to this event. There is no doubt that our country will host COP29 at the highest level.

COVAX and other initiatives

President Ilham Aliyev is the main guarantor of our country's success and his policies focus on the development of Azerbaijan. Also, Ilham Aliyev has many diplomatic tasks and he is well-known in the world as an intellectual, noble leader. Azerbaijan has constantly raised the issue of fair distribution of vaccines among the countries of the world in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic. President Ilham Aliyev focused on this problem during his speech at the thematic discussions of the UN General Assembly. He expressed his support and welcome the COVAX Facility, the COVAX Advance Market Commitment Forum, and other related constructive initiatives that serve to ensure affordable, equitable, universal, and timely access. In this context, it should also be noted that President Ilham Aliyev effectively represented the Non-Aligned Movement in the UN General Assembly. The NAM is the second largest organization in the world after the UN and has 120 member states. Azerbaijan's membership and presidency of the Non-Aligned Movement is an indicator of the increasing international reputation of our country, and the initiatives and activities showcased during Azerbaijan's presidency have in turn contributed to the revival and increasing relevance of the organization.

Patriotic War

One of his main powers is related to his management skills. He commanded the Azerbaijani Army in the war against Armenian occupation. Armenia's latest military attack on the 27th of September 2020

caused a war between the two countries. The Iron Fist has been the symbol of our journey to victory. Under the leadership of President Ilham Aliyev Azerbaijani Army defeated Armenia on the battlefield and liberated its ancient and eternal lands, which was under occupation for more than 30 years. Azerbaijan implemented United Nations Security Council resolutions which demanded immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of Armenian forces from all occupied territories of Azerbaijan. Armenia was defeated by Azerbaijan on the battlefield. On 10th November 2020, the Statement by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and President of the Russian Federation was signed to end the war. During the occupation, Armenia destroyed many areas, monuments, and culturally and historically significant places. Our Government started large scale restoration and reconstruction works in Karabakh right after the war and even these restored territories such as Shusha, Aghdam, Zangilan became a venue for the international events.

The Great Return

After the war, Azerbaijan started recovering destroyed areas from all damage and started building new cities and villages. Today we've been building new buildings, roads, and other infrastructure in Karabakh. Already, two International Airports – Fuzuli and Zangilan have been built in and used in Karabakh, and a new one is being built right now in Lachin. After the war, Azerbaijan commenced Great Return program and started to relocate the former IDPs to their homeland after 3 decades. They have been provided with all the necessary things to live comfortably.

The 7th of February marks the snap presidential election in Azerbaijan and I am quite certain that the nation will support the current President yet again and our country will become even more successful under his leadership. President Ilham Aliyev said "We are stronger together!" Thanks to Mr. President's foreign and domestic policies, Azerbaijan has great power, and we protect our unity!

The writer is the Deputy Chairman of Milli Majlis of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Chair of The Sports and Youth Committee

Ilham Aliyev re-elected President of Azerbaijan

**Ansar M Bhatti
In Azerbaijan**

BAKU: Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev has registered a landslide re-election win by securing 92.05 votes. The Presidential election took place on February 7, 2024. Seven candidates were in the run for the coveted slot of President of Azerbaijan. President Ilham gained huge popularity after Azerbaijan regained control over the occupied territories of Nagorno-Karabakh. He had emerged as a hero after this victory, probably that is why he deemed it appropriate to go for early election.

The Pakistani delegation deeply appreciated the warm hospitality extended to them throughout the entire exercise. The bond between Pakistan and Azerbaijan, forged during their shared challenges in the conflict with Armenia, was evident in

the overwhelming support from the Azerbaijani people. The moment the locals learned about the Pakistani delegation's presence, they expressed their gratitude with a heartfelt standing ovation, echoing the solidarity and friendship between the two nations. The gesture resonated not only with the polling staff and local observers but also with the voters, creating a memorable and meaningful connection between the two nations. Before the Patriotic War, Pakistan was relatively unknown to most Azerbaijanis, with only a handful of people, particularly the elderly, being familiar with it. However, in the aftermath of the war, the awareness of Pakistan has significantly increased, and now, nearly every Azerbaijani, regardless of their age group, recognizes and acknowledges the country.

Pakistan and Azerbaijan enjoy fraternal relations. These relations are established

on our past historical traditions. It is no coincidence that Pakistan is one of the first states to recognize the independence of Azerbaijan after Azerbaijan declared its independence. Pakistan wholeheartedly supported Azerbaijan in its Patriotic War against Armenia, in which the valiant Azerbaijani forces inflicted sheer defeat upon the Armenia forces and liberated its territories occupied by Armenia. In a demonstration of unwavering solidarity, Azerbaijan wholeheartedly stands by Pakistan in the Kashmir issue. Strengthening the bond between the two nations, Azerbaijan has initiated direct flights from Pakistan to Azerbaijan, marking yet another milestone in their flourishing bilateral relations. This move not only fosters greater connectivity but also underscores the mutual commitment to deepening diplomatic and people to people ties and fostering cooperation between the two countries.



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Henry Kissinger and American Diplomacy



Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer

HENRY Alfred Kissinger became the Secretary of State on September 21, chosen by President Richard M. Nixon. He held this position from September 23, 1973, to January 20, 1977. This was a big deal because he was the first person to be both Secretary of State and National Security Adviser. He had been the National Security Adviser since President Nixon started in 1969. But things changed on November 3, 1975, when President Gerald R. Ford removed him from the National Security Adviser role, although he still remained the Secretary of State. Kissinger was born in Germany as Heinz Alfred Kissinger. Life became hard for his Jewish family when the Nazis took over, so they moved to the United States

in 1938 and settled in New York. That's when Henry's name was changed to Henry. During World War II, Kissinger became a citizen of the United States and worked in the U.S. Army as someone who translated German. After the war, he went to Harvard University and got a bachelor's degree in 1950 and a Ph.D. in 1954. He continued working at Harvard, and in 1957, he became the Associate Director of Harvard's Department of Government and Center for International Affairs. In the 1950s and 1960s, Kissinger gave advice to different government groups, like the National Security Council's Operations Coordinating Board, the Department of State, the Operations Research Office, and the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. In 1968, when Richard Nixon became the President, he picked Kissinger to be his National Security Adviser. After they worked closely together during Nixon's first term as President, Nixon did something unusual by appointing Kissinger as both the new Secretary of State and keeping him as the National Security Adviser. Kissinger started working for the government just two weeks before Egypt and Syria surprised Israel with an attack in 1973. This event, known as the October War, had a big impact on Kissinger's time as the Secretary of State. First, he made sure that the U.S. sent military supplies

to Israel by air, helping Israel in the war and causing OPEC countries to stop sending oil to the U.S. Later, when a ceasefire was agreed upon through the United Nations, Kissinger traveled between Middle Eastern countries to make agreements for them to stop fighting. This led to agreements between Egypt and Israel in January 1974 and between Syria and Israel in May 1974. Kissinger's efforts also played a part in OPEC deciding to end the oil embargo. When President Nixon resigned due to the Watergate scandal in August 1974, Kissinger stayed in his roles under the new President Ford. He helped Ford get used to dealing with other countries and continued the policies started by Nixon and himself, like improving relations with the Soviet Union, establishing relations with China, and working on Middle East peace. Kissinger was also a key figure in the negotiations for the Helsinki Accord in August 1975, a deal signed by 35 countries to improve relations between the East and West. In September 1975, he helped with another agreement between Egypt and Israel, bringing them closer to peace. During his time as Secretary, Kissinger faced controversy for influencing U.S. policies toward countries like Chile and Angola. He also dealt with new international issues like the law of the sea, which became important for U.S. foreign policy in the following decades.

“A Future of Renewed Hope and Optimism” Malaysia-Pakistan Strategic Partnership

Mohammad Azhar Mazlan

AS we ushered in the New Year 2024, I would like to take this opportunity to extend my warmest greetings to the people and the government of Pakistan, the diplomatic community, and the ASEAN fraternity in Islamabad. It is with a great sense of honour that I write this article on the very topic that is close to my heart, i.e. Malaysia-Pakistan relationship, looking towards 2024 while reflecting on 2023.

1. Over the past year, Malaysia and Pakistan have been witnessing growing engagements in multifaceted areas, including political, economic and trade, defence and security, tourism and education, health, human resources, and public administration. Both countries have elevated our relations to a strategic partnership in March 2019. The prospect of 2024 for our two brotherly nations forging ahead hand in hand towards peace, progress and prosperity offers a future full of hope and optimism for our nations and its peoples.

2. Since my arrival in Pakistan a year ago, the generous hospitality and warm reception extended to my spouse, and I not only reflected the strong ties and commonalities between our two nations but also it touches our hearts at a personal level. It was truly heartening for us to witness the tremendous goodwill, respect, and genuine connections between the people of Malaysia and Pakistan. And for that, thank you Pakistan!

3. I wish to cite some of 2023's highlights between Malaysia and Pakistan. Both Prime Ministers, the Honourable Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim, and His Excellency Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar, Prime Minister of Pakistan met in November 2023, at the sidelines of the Joint Arab Islamic Extraordinary Summit in Riyadh.

4. During their meeting, apart from discussing our common position on Palestinian-Israeli conflict, both leaders took stock of Malaysia-Pakistan bilateral relationship, with a particular emphasis on enhancing economic ties. The two leaders agreed to revitalize the Joint Commission Meeting at the Ministerial level to be held

possibly in 2024 at a mutually agreed date.

5. Earlier in March 2023, Malaysia and Pakistan convened the 2nd Bilateral Consultations at the Deputy Secretary-General's level of the Foreign Ministry. Both sides discussed wide ranging topics, among others, from political and security, cooperation in trade and investment, science and technology, health, tourism, and cultural exchanges.

6. On defence and military cooperation, Malaysia and Pakistan co-hosted the 14th Meeting of Pakistan-Malaysia Joint Committee on Defence



Cooperation (JCDC) in November 2023 in Islamabad. During this meeting, His Excellency Datuk Seri Isham Ishak, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Defence, led the Malaysian delegation. This visit underscores the strategic alliance and shared commitment between the two nations to further enhance security ties.

7. As we look forward to the year 2024, our economic landscape is promising. Malaysia-Pakistan annual bilateral trade volume has surpassed USD 1.8 billion. I believe this figure presents an enormous room and opportunities for both sides to further strengthen trade and investment, especially in intensifying collaboration in, among others, the palm oil and the halal industry for mutual benefit of our two nations and peoples.

8. For the cooperation in halal industry, Malaysia has set a target of USD 12 billion for export revenue in the halal food industry by 2025 to benefit from the global halal food market. Currently, Malaysia's exports in the halal industry are USD 7.65 billion. I see there are huge opportunities for cooperation in the halal food market. This sector in Malaysia has an extensive network of value-added industries and multinational companies such as Nestlé and Unilever that could connect Pakistan to the global supply chain and huge markets like ASEAN.

9. Both Malaysia and Pakistan also have strength in the agriculture sector. There is immense potential for collaboration, especially in the palm oil industry. Malaysia, as one of the world's largest producers and exporters of palm oil, while Pakistan, with its growing sizable population and increasing consumption, presents a significant market.

10. Establishing a robust trade relationship in palm oil will contribute to food security in Pakistan while supporting Malaysia's palm oil industry. This collaboration can be strategically aligned with sustainable and ethical practices of palm oil production championed





by Malaysia through the Malaysian Sustainable Palm Oil (MSPO) Certification Scheme. Currently, Malaysia accounted for 25.8% and 34.3% of the world's palm oil production and exports, respectively.

11. Additionally, I would like to highlight that trade engagement between companies from both sides were vibrant and multifaceted. Among others, during the Malaysia International Halal Showcase (MIHAS) held in Kuala Lumpur in August 2023, 11 Pakistani companies participated in the event, while five (5) Malaysian companies participated in the ASEAN Trade Show hosted by Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) also in August 2023. I look forward to and expect more active and productive exchanges in 2024.

12. On the High Commission's side, my team and I have been actively engaged in dialogues and strategic sessions with not only senior federal and provincial officials but also various prominent trade and commerce chambers in key economic hubs across Pakistan, including Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Karachi, Faisalabad, Sialkot, Lahore, Mardan, and Okara.

13. These engagements were instrumental in setting a robust connection and further strengthening relationship for Malaysia within the specific region in Pakistan. In line with this effort, it is timely for Malaysian companies to utilize Pakistan's Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) to further diversify economic activities between our two nations. I also would like to encourage Pakistani investors to invest in Malaysia in various areas, taking advantage of Malaysia's conducive environment and central location in the heart of the Southeast Asian region.

14. In terms of capacity building, Pakistan is one of the recipient countries for the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme (MTCP). Since its establishment in 1980, 764 participants from Pakistan have benefited from a range of MTCP courses covering diverse areas comprising Islamic tourism, anti-corruption, counterterrorism, palm oil industry, Islamic finance, technical training, and the halal industry. In August 2023, I had the opportunity to host a dinner with former Pakistani MTCP participants to further engage and expand future efforts in technical cooperation.

15. In higher education, as of December 2023, there are over 5,000 Pakistani students currently enrolled in Malaysian public and private higher education institutions. It is my fervent hope that more Pakistani students will choose Malaysia as their preferred destination for studies. I want to assure Pakistani parents and aspiring students that the facilities and the environment in Malaysia are top-notch, as we offer quality education, cultural richness, and a comfortable and Islamic-friendly environment for Pakistani students.

16. On the other hand, I am pleased to note the positive developments in people-to-people connections and tourism activities between Malaysia and Pakistan, particularly in the promotion of highland tourist destinations. These destinations have attracted immense interest among adventure and pleasure seekers in Malaysia.

17. Drawing from my own experience, highland destinations such as those in the Gilgit-Baltistan region, including the Himalayas, Karakoram Range, and Hindu Kush Mountains, could be further promoted. The development could take inspiration from the Malaysian experience of developing our highlands namely Genting and Cameron Highlands as a tourism and amusement hub. I can assure you that the majority of Malaysians are highly interested in visiting Pakistan, espe-

cially its hidden gem of majestic rivers and mountains.

18. I would like to share that, during Pakistan's 1st International Tourism Investment Expo 2023 in August 2023, Malaysia's tourism booth received more than 1,000 local visitors and the majority expressed interest in visiting Malaysia. For 2023, Malaysia has received a total of 26 million tourists from all over the world. This is the highest number of tourist arrivals among countries in Southeast Asia.

19. In this regard, I would like to invite Pakistanis to visit and enjoy Malaysia's tourism destinations. Malaysia is home to world-class islands, golden beaches, blue sea, and pristine rainforests as well as having one of the highest skyscrapers in the world right in the middle of Kuala Lumpur.

20. On air connectivity, in November 2023, Malaysian owned airline Batik Air (formerly known as Malindo Air) launched a new direct air route Kuala Lumpur to Karachi sector flying thrice weekly. This is apart from the weekly flights for Kuala Lumpur to Lahore sector. I am confident that with seamless connectivity, it would further enhance people-to-people contacts as well as business engagements between our two countries.

21. On regional cooperation, Malaysia stands committed to further strengthening closer and meaningful ties between Pakistan and ASEAN. The coming years hold immense promise for ASEAN. As the outgoing Chair of ASEAN Committee in Islamabad (May 2023 to January 2024), I am optimistic that our collective efforts will contribute to the prosperity of the entire region and beyond.

22. The ASEAN region, with a combined young dynamic population base of 670 million, has immense potential. Evidently, Pakistan, with its 240-million population, offers a huge market for ASEAN and vice versa. With an aggregate GDP exceeding USD 3 trillion, ASEAN is now ranked as the fifth-largest economy globally, poised to move up to the fourth spot by 2050.

23. While Pakistan is forecasted to be the 16th largest economy by 2050. Over the years, ASEAN-Pakistan cooperation has expanded in key sectors, including trade and investment, agriculture, education, culture and tourism, capacity building, and technical cooperation. In 2022, the total trade between ASEAN and Pakistan approached a significant milestone of USD 11 billion. Considering the immense potential, I am optimistic that the figure could increase to USD 20 billion by 2030.

24. To conclude, I wish to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the people and government of Pakistan for their generous hospitality and close cooperation. The year 2023 has been a year marked by achievements, challenges, trials and tribulations as well as new opportunities between Malaysia and Pakistan.

25. With renewed hope and optimism, I look forward to the continued peace, progress and prosperity of our two nations and the community of nations in the years to come. Premised on peaceful coexistence among the international community, together, let us build a better world for our next generation by working hand in hand to strengthen the bonds of friendship and cooperation for our mutual benefit. My sincere best wishes for a brighter and promising future. **Thank You.**

Malaysia-Pakistan Dosti Zindabad!

His Excellency Mohammad Azhar Mazlan is the High Commissioner of Malaysia to Pakistan

ASEAN to be made more visible: Amb Maria Malaysia hands over ACI chairmanship to the Philippines

It was honour for Malaysia to serve as the Chair of the ASEAN
Islamabad Committee, says Ambassador Mazlan

Ansar M Bhatti

ISLAMABAD: The High Commissioner of Malaysia to Pakistan, Ambassador Mohamad Azhar Mazlan officially handed over the Chairmanship of the ASEAN Committee in Islamabad (ACI) to the Ambassador of the Philippines to Pakistan, Ambassador Maria Agnes M. Cervantes during a ceremony held at the High Commission of Malaysia in Islamabad on 22 January 2024. The ceremony, attended by all ASEAN Heads of Mission in Islamabad, marked a significant transition in leadership within the ASEAN Committee. The outgoing Chair, Malaysia, expressed his gratitude for the opportunity accorded to him to lead the committee and extended congratulations and heartfelt wishes to the incoming Chair, the Philippines, for a successful tenure. During the event, High Commissioner Azhar Mazlan stated, "It has been an honour and privilege for Malaysia to serve

as the Chair of the ASEAN Committee in Islamabad. As a group, the committee has put its collective efforts and worked towards culminating the bonds between ASEAN member states and Pakistan. In this regard, I would like to expressed my utmost gratitude to all ASEAN Heads of Mission for their support, and I am confident that under the leadership of Her Excellency the Ambassador of the Philippines, she will continue these efforts with dedication in carrying the ASEAN's flag and make ASEAN more visible in Pakistan". The incoming Chair, Ambassador of the Philippines, expressed her appreciation for the warm welcome and pledged to build upon the achievements of Malaysia's leadership. "I am deeply honored to accept the responsibility of chairing the ASEAN Committee in Islamabad. I look forward to working closely with my fellow ASEAN Heads of Mission to further enhance collaboration and promote the interests of our

Member States in Pakistan.

Malaysia conveyed its best wishes and steadfast support to the Philippines for a successful and fruitful term as Chair and expressed optimism for a more vibrant and dynamic ASEAN Committee in Islamabad in 2024. Apart from successfully organising the ASEAN Day celebration in August 2023 and several important engagements with the stakeholders in Pakistan, the Committee in collaboration with the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) also established the permanent installation of the ASEAN Book Corner at the ISSI library in October 2023. This establishment aims to provide avenue for intellectual discourse and exchange of views to advance further the interest of both sides in the context of regional cooperation. It also symbolises the deep understanding and connection between ASEAN and Pakistan diplomatic relations, moving forward.





Armed Forces Day of Thailand celebrated

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador of Thailand to Pakistan Chakkrid Krachaiwong has said Thailand and Pakistan have cultivated a long-standing friendship with over 70 years of our diplomatic relations and connection through Gandhara civilization. 'As a major player in South Asia, Pakistan can play a crucial role in ensuring peace and security in the region amidst the current global volatility.' The Thai Ambassador expressed these remarks while speaking on the occasion of the Thai Armed Forces Day. Lt. General Muhammad Aqeel, Inspector General Communication and Information Technology, Pakistan Army, was the chief guest. The Defence and Military Attache of Thailand Col. Thanaei Permpul also spoke on the occasion. The ambassador further said, he would like to extend his heartfelt appreciation to all guests for honouring the occasion with their presence.

The purpose of celebration the Armed Forces Day is to recognize the bravery of men and women. These dedicated individuals, some of whom have made the supreme sacrifices deserve our most respect. It is imperative that we also recognize the families who stand as a pillar of the strength supporting their loved ones.

The ambassador said, the military and security cooperation between Thailand and Pakistan is one of the important aspects of our cooperation, contributing to the promotion of stability and security for the global community. He thanked the defence and military attaches representing various countries who play a very important role in building trust and confidence, which is the cornerstone of the lasting peace.

He thanked the government of Pakistan for taking care of the foreigners very well. He said that whoever he interacted expressed his or her satisfaction the way they had been accepted and facilitated in Pakistan.

He said he was optimistic that cooperation or friendly tie between the defence and military attache in Pakistan will continue to deepen and contribute to the wellbeing of the global community.

Colonel Thanaei expressed his gratitude to Lieutenant General Mohamed Aqeel, the Inspector General of Communication and Information Technology, for honoring the occasion as the chief guest. He highlighted the strategic locations of Pakistan and Thailand within the region, emphasizing the potential for leveraging this advantage. Colonel Thanaei envisioned that by harnessing this strategic positioning, the two nations could synergize their power for mutual benefit.

He also talked about various exchange programs and hoped to further cement military ties with Pakistan even in the days to come. The Thai children also presented a spell-binding cultural performances and received huge applause from the audiences.







Republic Day of India celebrated







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ISLAMABAD: Editor Daily Islamabad POST/Centreline/DNA News Agency, Ansar Mahmood Bhatti met with the newly-arrived Ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina Mr. Emin Cohodarevic, at his office. Both sides discussed matters of mutual interest. The Ambassador is keen to further strengthen bilateral relations. – DNA

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Stephanie lauds humanitarian efforts of Rotary Pakistan in various areas

There is a place for you in Rotary if you have the heart and the hands for service, says Rotary International President 2024-2025 Stephanie Urchick





Ansar M Bhatti

ISLAMABAD: Rotary International President Elect Stephanie Urchick has lauded Rotary Pakistan’s humanitarian projects, particularly Smart Villages, and how it encompasses all 7 areas of humanitarian focus of Rotary International. She expressed particular admiration for the efforts of frontline polio workers in Pakistan. “Polio will be gone in Pakistan because of the commitment of polio workers,” she commented. She expressed these views while talking to a group of senior journalists. The press talk was facilitated by Imran Ghaznavi. Stephanie Urchick further said that the aim of the Rotary was to empower people and give them a hope. She said she was amazed to see resilience and steadfastness of the people living in the smart villages established by the Rotary. “I was deeply moved when a little girl gifted me a piece of handicraft especially prepared for me”, she added. She spoke about how Rotary International has changed and adapted to the changing times, and how there is a place in Rotary for those with the heart and hands for service. Mr. Tom Gump similarly spoke about his admiration for service efforts by Rotary Pakistan, especially regarding sanitation, water treatment plants, and mobile libraries. Rotary Pakistan leaders also emphasized the importance of youth in Pakistan and how Rotary Pakistan is working to gen-

erating leadership and nation-building among youth in Pakistan. The distinguished dignitaries included Rotary International President Elect 2024-25 Ms. Stephanie Urchick and her Aide Mr. Thomas Gump. They were accompanied by senior Rotary Pakistan leaders, Mr. Faiz Kidwai (Rotary International Director), Mr. Masrur Scheik (District Governor of Rotary District 3272) and Mr. Imran Ghaznavi (ARPIC). Faiz Kidwai spoke about the humanitarian aims of Rotary International, and how the groundbreaking Rotary Pakistan Smart Villages project is engaged at the grassroots level in Pakistan to transform the poorest of communities, bring development to small towns and villages, and empower their residents. The Rotary Pakistan Smart Villages project is not only providing essentials such as homes and shelters, but has long-term and far-reaching goals, such as infrastructure, education and health. Water treatment plants, kitchen gardens, and solar-generated electricity has already been brought to these villages. Trainings to provide vocational and financial management skills are also provided at the Smart Villages in order to foster entrepreneurship and move towards de-urbanization in Pakistan. 20 of these Rotary Pakistan Smart Villages are to be completed by June 2024, after which this project will be expanded all over Pakistan based on the needs of the most deserving communities.

Serena Hotels join hands with Mashal for a noble cause



Serena Hotels sponsored Mashal's Fund-Raising Event Serena Hotels, under the Cultural Diplomacy initiative collaborated with Bestway Cement Ltd, to host a fundraising event titled 'Muddat hue ha yaar ko mehman kiye hue'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Serena Hotels sponsored Mashal's Fund-Raising Event Serena Hotels, under the Cultural Diplomacy initiative collaborated with Bestway Cement Ltd, to host a fundraising event titled 'Muddat hue ha yaar ko mehman kiye hue' for the Mashal Association at Serena Hotel in Islamabad on Thursday 25th January 2024. Mashal Association is a social welfare organization which has been working for educating and empowering girls and women from under privileged families since

1988. It was founded by (late) Begum Shahida Azim and has gone from strength to strength with time, with a higher secondary school for girls with 300 students, a medical Center and a vocational training center. Its Welfare Complex caters to the needs of about 9 surrounding villages/ communities that live in and around Margalla Town which is the outer edge of Islamabad. The audience experienced the true essence of the Urdu language as Adeel Hashmi who is a famous, talented and a prominent name of Pakistani Showbiz industry narrated selected pieces from Urdu literature, and he

was accompanied by Ustad Raees Khan on his magical violin.

The event witnessed a significant presence of dignitaries, official representatives from the corporate sector, members of the business community, and media personnels. Serena Hotels takes great pride in the privilege of organizing and hosting events that play a significant role in encouraging the cultural and traditional essence of Pakistan. These events serve as platforms where diverse facets of the country's rich heritage are celebrated, embraced, and shared with a wider audience.



Diplomats participate in Islamabad Hockey League

Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: Rising Stars Hockey Club organized Islamabad Hockey League 2024. High Commissioner of Australia Neil Hawkins, High Commissioner of Malaysia Azhar Mazlan, High Commissioner of Brunei Kamal Ahmed, Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan Ulanbek Toutiaev and Charge D Affaires of Romania Eduard Preda also participated in the League matches.

The diplomats, as they addressed the gathering, expressed sincere appreciation for the commendable efforts of the Club in hosting an inclusive hockey league. They lauded the initiative for providing an equal platform for both genders, enabling girls to showcase their prowess in the game. The diplomats conveyed their optimism that such impactful events would continue to be organized in the days ahead, fostering a culture of inclusivity and sportsmanship. Notably, the diplomats praised the evident enthusiasm and dedication exhibited by the younger participants and the girls, emphasizing the remarkable skill and stamina required to excel in the sport. Their admiration extended to the broader significance of encouraging the youth and promoting gender equality within the realm of sports. The diplomats were unequivocal in their support for the continuation of such initiatives, recognizing the pivotal role they play in nurturing talent and fostering a sense of empowerment among aspiring athletes.







The stolen elections-2024



Qamar Bashir

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, rig-

ging 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.

The writer is the former Press Secretary to the President, Former Press Minister at Embassy of Pakistan to France Former MD, SRBC

Independence Day of Sri Lanka celebrated





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ISLAMABAD: Monal Group has become the official catering partner of the Peshawar Zalmi team for the upcoming Pakistan Super League. In this regard representatives of Monal and Peshawar Zalmi signing MoU. – DNA

Floral Art Society Pak elects new office bearers

DNA

ISLAMABAD:FASP Magnolia Chapter's General Body Meeting was held at the Presidency. The First Lady, Mrs Samina Alvi very graciously hosted the occasion. A competition titled, "Imposed Class" was arranged.

The members were divided into two categories, Novice and Experienced. The same props and plant material was provided to the contestants and they were asked to create their own designs. Nusrat Bilal, Shaista Khawar, Wiqarunnisa Boolani and Aisha Zahid were the esteemed judges.

The competition ended in one hour and the formal meeting started with Farah Khursheed's welcoming words. The President, Wiqarunnisa Boolani appreciated everyone's efforts and thanked, the First Lady, Mrs Samina Alvi for taking the time out from her busy schedule and hosting the event. Two of the judges, Aisha Zahid and Shaista Khawar were then invited on the stage to express their views.

The following results were announced by the President, Wiqarunnisa Boolani.

For Experienced Category:

1st: Ghazala Abdullah

2nd: Huma Ehsan

3rd: Nahida Raza

Very Highly Commended: Sadia Amir

Highly Commended: Faiezah Shahid

Commended: Nageen Malik

For Novice Category:

1st: Samina Tariq

2nd: Farah Khursheed

3rd: Shakila Khalil

Very Highly Commended:

Faheema Yusuf

Highly Commended: Shazia Imran

Commended: Nazneen Malik Dad

The First Lady delivered the prizes to the winners. A small token of love was given to the honourable judges and the birthday girls.

The meeting ended on a cheerful note with the guests enjoying the delicacies.





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

as a platform for exercising political rights, the event transcended its primary purpose and evolved into a vibrant social gathering. Attendees, both old acquaintances and new friends, seized the opportunity to reconnect, share stories, and celebrate the joyous occasion together. The atmosphere was filled with laughter, music, and the taste of Indonesian cuisine as participants enjoyed the bazaar featuring food stalls, a musical event, health facilities, and a children's play area. "This event is designed not only as a political event, but also as a moment of sharing happiness for Indonesians despite political differences," said Mr. Arrozi M. Munib, Head of Indonesian General Elections Committee in 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 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.







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Sui Northern Gas

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