

Coalition partners meet today to bridge rift

ISLAMABAD: (news desk) In order to sort out differences between the ruling partners, PML-N and PPP teams will meet today to start negotiations on contentious issues that have led to a rift between the two sides.

"Although the two sides have already made virtual contact on the matter, they are meeting in person for the first time today (Monday)," said a source close to PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari on Sunday. The venue of the meeting has not been disclosed by the two sides. Besides complaints about not being a part of the decision-making process, the PPP has some reservations about the treatment

met out to the party by the Punjab government, with insiders claiming the PML-N government was not allowing it to freely hold party events in the province.

"First of all, the provincial government of Punjab does not give permission to the PPP to hold its political events and if it does so, it later raises objection to these events," the source said while elaborating on the differences.

The meeting between the two political parties comes days after PML-N stalwart and Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar held a meeting with the PPP chief on the order of the prime minister aimed at addressing the PPP's concerns.

In the meeting, it was decided that both sides would regularly meet to resolve their differences. Ahead of today's meeting, the PPP chairperson held a virtual meeting with members of his team and gave them instructions on how they should plead their case in the meeting. It said Mr Bhutto-Zardari also discussed some national issues with the team. During the meeting, the PPP chief recalled his concerns and reservations regarding the federal government's behaviour with the PPP.

A few days ago, PPP leader in Punjab Syed Hasan Murtaza asked the PML-N to consult his party on all major decisions in the

province. "PPP is only sharing the burden with the PML-N in Punjab. If decisions are made unilaterally, the burden will also have to be borne alone. We demand that the PPP should be taken into confidence in Punjab's governance matters," Mr Murtaza said in a presser after the party's executive meeting in Lahore on Thursday.

Days after the PPP chief played a key role in the passage of the much-hyped 26th constitutional amendment last month that changed the process of the appointment of the chief justice, he expressed annoyance with the government for lack of coordination.



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13 terrorists killed in North Waziristan operation

NORTH WAZIRISTAN: (news desk) At least 13 terrorists were reportedly killed and several others injured as militant hideouts near the Afghan border were targeted by security forces in the North Waziristan tribal district, in the early hours of Sunday morning.

Although there was no official word from Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), sources said 13 militants, including a key commander of the outlawed Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), were killed and several others wounded in two separate actions, which took place in the Gazum Mandi area of North Waziristan's Shawal tehsil.

The attacks were carried out on different hideouts of terrorists in the area, locals said, adding that the dead also included a key TTP commander, who was said to be the mastermind of a number of suicide attacks.

Sources also said that two other commanders, Gauhar and Abu Bakr alias Mohsin, were injured in the attacks.

Locals said a cloud of dark smoke billowed from their hideout following the security operation. They said many militants abandoned the bodies of their accomplices and fled.

Balochistan's uplift integral to national progress: chief secretary



QUETTA: (news desk) Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan has said the vast potential of natural resources, fisheries, tourism and livestock sectors of Balochistan can significantly contribute to both provincial and national development.

While addressing participants of the National Security Workshop, the chief secretary emphasised that the province's strategic location, with a 750-km-long coastline, the Gwadar Port and borders with Iran and Afghanistan, positions it as a vital economic and strategic asset for Pakistan.

"With its strategic location, abundant resources, and a rich cultural heritage, Balochistan has the potential to become an economic hub," he said.

Urgent hearing of challenges to 26th amendment sought

ISLAMABAD: (news desk) Seven senior lawyers in a letter have requested Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Yahya Afridi that their separate petitions challenging the 26th amendment be taken up urgently and heard by a full court bench of the Supreme Court. "Needless to say, the very creation of a legislative instrument cannot examine the vires of the instrument, that creates it," said a letter addressed to the CJP. Some of the petitions were presented

prior to the first meeting of the new Judicial Commission of Pakistan and formation of the "Constitutional Benches". They included specific prayers for interim relief as well as urgency applications for listing of the matter. Section 7 of the SC (Practice and Procedure) Act, 2023, explicitly requires... application pleading urgency or seeking interim relief to be fixed for hearing within 14 days from the date of its filing. "The delay is inexplicable," the

letter said. Signed by senior counsel Muneer A. Malik, Hamid A. Khan, Abid Shahid Zuberi, Salahuddin Ahmad, Khwaja Ahmad Hosain, Akhtar Mengal and Zainab Janjua, the letter requested the CJP to also order an inquiry into the unprecedented manner in which these petitions were dealt with by the court office and to ensure that all petitions were placed before the full court as already decided by the majority of the SC Practice and Proce-

dure Committee as per its Oct 31 decision on some of the earlier petitions. The letter said that despite the passage of more than a month and the overwhelming constitutional and public importance of the matter, far from being fixed for hearing, and even more surprisingly, none of the petitions have even been assigned a number by the registry. Nor have any office objections to the petitions been communicated by the SC registrar, the letter said.



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Falling turnout from 2013 to 2024 hints at wider voter 'apathy'

ISLAMABAD: (news desk) The voter turnout in general elections has decreased since 2013, despite more people being eligible to vote, highlighting widespread "apathy" among the population to exercise the democratic right, a new report has found. The turnout in the 2013 general election was 55.5 per cent, which re-

duced to 52pc in 2018 and 48pc in 2024, according to the analysis by the Free and Fair Election Network (Fafen). Till 2013, the voter turnout had increased in every election — from 41.7pc in 2002 to 44.4pc in 2008 to 55.5pc in 2013. In the 2002 general elections, 30 million votes were cast. The number grew by 18pc to 35.64m in 2008, by 32pc

to 54.73m in 2018 and by 12pc to 61.28m in 2024. Overall, total votes polled rose significantly from 30,012,407 in GE-2002 to 61,282,920 in GE-2024. However, notwithstanding the increase in absolute numbers, voter turnout in the country has exhibited notable fluctuations across recent general elections.

The report also highlighted a significant discrepancy between urban and rural turnout. In 2024, the voter turnout in urban areas was 43.8pc, significantly lower than 50.1pc in rural areas. The 2018 election was the first time when the Election Commission of Pakistan mandated the reporting of gender-wise turnout data.

23 vying for Quetta NA-262 seat in by-election

QUETTA: (news desk) The nomination process for the by-election in National Assembly constituency (NA-262) of Quetta has completed, with a total of 23 papers filed by independent and political party contenders. The seat had fallen vacant following the disqualification of Adil Bazai, a member of PML-N, due to his defection. According to the Election Commission, polling in the constituency that primarily comprises Saddar and Kuchlak tehsils of Quetta will take place on Jan 16. Returning Officer Naimatullah Tareen released Form 31, listing the names of all 23 candidates vying for the seat: Ahmed Nawaz, Sarbuland Khan Jogezi, Malik Ahmed Khan Kakar, Abdul Qasim, Ahmed Basal, Abdul Manan, Alauddin, Muhammad Ramzan Achakzai, Rahimuddin, Noor Ali, Azizullah, Muhammad Suleman, Muhammad Yousaf Khan, Saeedul Hasan, Malik Sikandar Khan, Rozi Khan Kakar, Malik Ajmal Khan Bazai, Muhammad Asif, Abdul Wali Khan, Naseebullah Bazai, Rehmatullah Kakar, Naseer Ahmed Khan, and Nawab Salman Khelji.

PM Shehbaz seeks Nawaz's counsel over JUI-F, PTI 'threats'

LAHORE: (news desk) Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif called on his brother and president of the ruling PML-N, Nawaz Sharif, at the latter's residence on Sunday. Though no official word was given on the meeting spanning over two hours, it is believed that both the brothers discussed JUI-F's deadline on the madrasah bill and its threat of a long march on Islamabad in case of failure of the federal government to convert the bill into law, as per the promise made in return for the party's support for the 26th constitutional amendment.

The two leaders also deliberated upon the PTI's threat of launching a civil disobedience movement and the task of taking legal action against PTI founder Imran Khan and other party leaders in the wake of violence on May 9, 2023 and Nov 26, 2024. The prime minister also shared the outcome of his recently concluded visit to Saudi Arabia with the party chief. Mr Naqvi briefed the prime minister about the developments taking place vis-à-vis cricket Champions Trophy to be held in the country early next year. The PM appreciated the principled stand of Mr Naqvi, who is also chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board that Pakistan will play in India only if the latter will play its matches in Pakistan in the Champions Trophy. "Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed full confidence in PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi regarding the Champions Trophy tournament," said a post from the Interior Ministry on X.

President Zardari summons NA session tomorrow

ISLAMABAD: (News desk) President Asif Ali Zardari has summoned a National Assembly session on Tuesday, amid expectations that a joint session of parliament will consider and pass the seminaries registration bill that he recently refused to sign.

The bill's rejection by the president infuriated Maulana Fazlur Rehman's party that has threatened the government of street protests if the bill is not signed. The bill had been passed by Senate and then National Assembly before being sent to President Zardari for his final nod. However, the president returned the bill to the lower house, objecting that it was against the gist of 18th Amendment. Under the constitution, if president raises some objections, the bill goes back to the house from where it has been forwarded. However, in case of objections, only the joint sitting of parliament can pass it again. A source in the government told Dawn that President Zardari is expected to call a Senate session soon, after the National Assembly's, and sessions of both houses will be in progress simultaneously. The development comes after Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif called the JUI-F chief Maulana Fazl to assure him that the government would expedite the seminaries bill approval.

Attaullah Tarar slams civil disobedience call as PTI shifts strategy

LAHORE: (news desk) Information Minister Atta Tarar on Sunday criticised the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf's (PTI) call for civil disobedience, mocking its proposer for being "disobedient since childhood".

"The shameful call for civil disobedience has come from someone who once set fire to electricity bills," Mr Tarar said, referring to PTI founder Imran Khan. "You have been disobedient since your childhood." Meanwhile, in a move that

signals a shift in its strategy, the PTI has decided to engage in dialogue with the establishment, postponing its planned civil disobedience movement until the outcome of the negotiations is clear.

Mr Tarar, speaking at a Christmas event in his constituency, said the public needed solutions to inflation, not disruptive measures like civil disobedience.

"The people have rejected the politics of civil disobedience and violence. There

will be no more chaos and mischief in the country," he said. "The people have resisted such tactics in the past and will do so again. Miscreants will fail to achieve their ulterior motives," he said. The minister also insisted that while the federal government was implementing the National Action Plan to root out terrorism, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government was not serious about maintaining law and order in the province.

He alleged that funds were being diverted to build a false narrative instead of addressing violence in areas like Kurram. Minus-Imran formula 'doomed to fail' Meanwhile, the PTI has reiterated its stance that efforts to sideline Imran Khan are futile. Hammad Azhar, PTI Punjab president, declared on Sunday that the "minus-Imran formula" had failed in the past and would fail again. In a post on his X account, Mr Azhar said Imran



Khan is the "most significant political force" in the country today, claiming the PTI leader's support base had grown even during his "illegitimate i

ncarceration". In another post, Mr Azhar said the establishment's key functionaries also did not appear on the same page.