

Preparations for LB Polls in Sindh

HYDERABAD: Polling agents carrying electoral material on the eve of local government elections in the city.



Photo: Online

Pakistan-US relationship is ‘deep’, not ‘artificial or crafted’: Masood Khan

Spokesman Report

WASHINGTON: Pakistan is keen to have strategic, political and economic ties with the United States and right now the two countries are investing in bilateral diplomacy to achieve these objectives, Ambassador Masood Khan has said.

“It is not an artificial or crafted relationship. There is a natural aspiration for it on both sides,” Masood Khan, the envoy to the US, said at World Affairs Council, a think-tank, in Seattle, Washington.

“But”, he added, “it is the people of Pakistan and the United States who provide the real strength to Pak-US relations.”

The presence of 1 million Pakistanis in the United States, comprising mostly of profes-

sionals, was “a strong bond and an abiding link” between the two countries, he said.

Ambassador Asif Chaudhry, a former ambassador at State Department and Vice President for International Programmes at Washington State University, moderated the event.

The roots of the Pak-US relationship were deep, and during the past year the two countries have clarified their intent to continue their cooperation in strategic stability, regional security and counter-terrorism, he said. “At the same time, we were promoting closer ties in trade, investment, agriculture, health, education and energy sectors.”

“The climate change is a shared challenge for both the United States and Pakistan and there exists a huge scope



of expanding our relationship in building a climate resilient infrastructure in Pakistan,” the Pakistani envoy said. “I remain confident that Pakistan and the United States remain relevant to each other in the years to come.”

On strengthening bilateral economic ties and investment climate in Pakistan, the Ambassador highlighted COVID-19, fuel and food

hyperinflation and the recent devastating floods as the major debilitating factors that affected Pakistan’s economy. He, however, emphasized that the economic prospects in Pakistan were “bullish”.

“The fundamentals of our economy are good. We will bounce back. We are part of international economic mainstream.”

Encouraging business

community to invest in Pakistan, Masood Khan highlighted recent impressive growth of the country in tech sector and 64% of the youth population below the age of 30 as a valuable asset of the country.

On a question about Pak-India relations, the Ambassador, while regretting absence of any communication between the two nuclear-armed neighbors, said that Pakistan was ready to talk but India has preferred non-engagement in recent past.

“We want the United States and particularly the US civil society to get involved, use its leverage to persuade New Delhi into a dialogue with Pakistan for resolving long-standing issues, especially Jammu and Kashmir dispute, on a negotiating table,” he said.

Qatar, UAE energy ministers say gas will be needed for long time

News Desk

ABU DHABI: The world will need natural gas for a long time and more investment is required to ensure supply security and affordable prices during the global energy transition, the energy ministers of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates said on Saturday.

Saad al-Kaabi, Qatari state minister for energy, told the Atlantic Council Global Energy Summit that a mild winter in Europe had seen prices come down, but that volatility would remain “for some time to come” given there was not much gas coming into the market until 2025.

“The issue is what’s going to happen when they (Europe) want to replenish their storages this coming year and the next year,” he said.



Kaabi later told reporters that Qatar, which is working to expand its gas output, has limited volumes going to Europe that it would not divert away, “but there is a limit to what we can do”.

Qatar is one of the world’s top producers of liquefied natural gas (LNG). The UAE is an OPEC oil producer that is sharpening its focus on the gas market as Europe

seeks to replace Russian energy imports after supply cuts since Western sanctions were imposed on Moscow over its invasion of Ukraine.

The Qatari minister said he believed that Russian gas would eventually return to Europe.

UAE Energy Minister Suhail al-Mazrouei, speaking on the same panel in Abu Dhabi, agreed that “for a very

long time, gas will be there” and that while more renewable energy would be installed, more investment was needed in gas as a base load.

“The whole world needs to think of resources and how to enable companies to produce more gas to make it available and affordable,” Mazrouei said.

Kaabi said it was unfair for some in the West as part of its green energy push to say African countries should not be drilling for oil and gas when it was important for their economies and the world needed more supply.

Mazrouei said the “unclear” strategy of many countries made it difficult for them to commit to long-term gas contracts which in turn made it hard for energy companies to secure financing to invest in developing production capac-

ity.

As competition for LNG heated up, Germany last year struck a 15-year supply deal for Qatar LNG from 2026, the first of its kind to Europe from Qatar’s North Field expansion project. QatarEnergy had signed a 27-year deal to supply China’s Sinopec.

Kaabi, who is also CEO of QatarEnergy, said negotiations were taking place with many players around the world.

“There are a lot of European and Asian buyers, and there is a potential that by the end of the year, the entire Qatar expansion will be sold out,” he said.

Qatar’s two-phase North Field expansion plan includes six LNG trains that will ramp up its liquefaction capacity from 77 million tonnes per annum to 126 million tonnes by 2027.

Punjab Assembly dissolved as Governor refuses to sign summary

Bureau Report

LAHORE: The Punjab Assembly stood dissolved constitutionally as Punjab Governor Baligh ur Rehman excused himself from signing the summary, saying he could not become a part of the process.

Taking to Twitter, Governor Punjab wrote: “I have decided not to become part of the process leading to the dissolution of Punjab Assembly.”

“I would rather let the Constitution and law take its own course. Doing so will not hamper any legal process as Constitution clearly provides a way forward,” Baligh ur Rehman wrote.

It is pertinent to mention here that Punjab Chief Minister (CM) Pervaiz Elahi forwarded the summary of dissolution on Thursday, and as per the Constitution, the assembly dissolves within 48 hours regardless of the governor’s decision.

According to Article 112 of the Constitution, the assembly stands automatically “dissolved at the expiration of forty-eight hours after the chief minister has so advised” if the

governor does not do it.

Meanwhile, Punjab Governor has penned down written a letter to Pervaiz Elahi and PML-N leader Hamza Shehbaz for caretaker chief minister.

If both the leaders failed to agree on any name, the decision will be made by the Election Commission. Moreover, Perviaz Elahi will continue to work till the appointment of caretaker chief minister.

Punjab Chief Minister (CM) Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi obtained vote of confidence from Punjab Assembly during a special session of the provincial assembly in the wee hours of Thursday.

Punjab Assembly Speaker Sibtain Khan chaired the session in which PTI leader and Member Punjab Assembly Mian Aslam Iqbal tabled a resolution expressing confidence in the Chief Minister.

As per details, 186 members of ruling coalition reposed confidence in leadership of Chief Minister while opposition alliance Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) boycotted the session.

UNSC unity key in face of women’s rights abuses by Taliban: UN envoy

Spokesman Report

UNITED NATIONS : The United Nations Special Representative in Afghanistan, Roza Otunbayeva, has called for a unified response from the Security Council in opposing Taliban policies to erode the fundamental human rights of women and girls in the country.

Addressing a private meeting of the 15-member Council, she reiterated that Taliban decisions including the ban on girls attending high school, preventing women from going to university, and barring them from doing humanitarian work, are all “grave violations of fundamental rights”, according to UN Spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric.

He told reporters at the noon briefing in New York on Friday that the Taliban had also “contradicted assurances” given, following their nationwide takeover of Afghanistan, about the role women would play in the country under their fundamentalist rule.

The UN Spokesperson said that the Council was also briefed by the Executive Director of the UN Children’s Fund UNICEF, “who focused her briefing on the situation of girls and children in Afghanistan.”



Ahead of the meeting, the Security Council members who are signatories and supporters of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, issued a statement “to express grave concern regarding the critical situation of women and girls in Afghanistan.”

The 11 nations urged the Taliban “to immediately reverse all oppressive measures against women and girls”, adhere to commitments made to the Security Council, respect women and girls’ rights, “and their full, equal and meaningful participation and inclusion across all aspects of society in Afghanistan, from political and economic, to education and public space.”

ANF recovers over 116 kg drugs in six operations; arrests six including a woman

City Reporter

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) Pakistan while conducting six counter-narcotics operations seized over 116 kg narcotics and arrested six accused including a woman.

According to an ANF Headquarters spokesman, ANF conducted a raid near Gadap Town Karachi and recovered 102 kg charras, 400 kg Betel Nut and 68 kg ‘Pan Masala’ besides netting three accused.

In another operation, ANF and FC recovered 10 kg charras from a Khyber area.

In third operation, ANF managed to recover 3.2 kg Ice drug from a car

and rounded up an accused, resident of Okara.

In fourth operation, ANF recovered 450 grams heroin from the possession of a female drug pusher resident of Jhelum nabbed from Dina.

ANF recovered 300 grams Ice drug from the possession of an accused arrested from Multan.

In sixth operation, ANF Lahore recovered 530 grams Ketamine from a parcel containing pillows being sent to Australia through a private courier company.

The spokesman said that separate cases have been registered against the accused while further investigations are under process.

FC to be deployed during LG polls in Karachi, Hyderabad

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: After GHQ excused itself from providing security for sensitive polling stations, the Ministry of Interior has ordered static deployment of Frontier Constabulary (FC) troops outside all highly sensitive and sensitive polling stations during local government elections in Karachi, Hyderabad and Thatta divisions.

“The competent authority, in exercise of the powers conferred under Article 220 Constitution, is pleased to authorize static deployment of available sufficient enough

of Frontier Constabulary to ensure smooth conduct said elections,” the Interior Ministry said in a letter.

Interior Ministry, in its letter to ECP, mentioned that the exact number of troops and area of deployment will be worked out by the electoral watchdog, Home Department, and Government of Sindh in consultation with FC authorities.

The development came after the armed forces refused to arrange static deployment at various polling stations in Karachi and Hyderabad, as part of second phase of LG elections, scheduled for January 15 (Sunday).

Meanwhile, the Election Commission of Pakistan has summoned an important meeting to make a decision on the second phase of local government elections in Karachi and Hyderabad divisions after armed forces excused from providing security for sensitive polling stations.

The Sindh government on Saturday once again urged the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to postpone the LG polls in Karachi and Hyderabad amid security threats.

In a letter to the election commission, the Sindh govern-



ment requested to postpone LG polls as the number of army and Rangers personnel required for elections, are not available.

According to sources, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC)

Sikandar Sultan Raja will chair the meeting. The meeting will be held at 1pm.

The Pakistan Army once again turned down a request for static deployment of troops outside the “sensitive and most sensitive” polling stations during the local government polls scheduled to be held in Karachi and Hyderabad divisions on January 15.

Through a letter, the Ministry of Interior on Saturday informed the Election Commission of Pakistan that the ECP’s request seeking additional deployment of Army and Rangers outside the polling stations had been taken up with

the military operations directorate, General Headquarters (GHQ).

“In response, MO Dte (military operations directorate), GHQ has stated that as already intimated given current deployment and very high number of sensitive and most sensitive polling stations, required static deployment and security cover to polling staff and material as desired by [ECP] is not possible,” a letter from the interior ministry to the commission read.

It is pertinent to mention here that ECP has categorised all 8,924 polling stations for the upcoming LG polls as either sensitive or most sensitive.

KP Assembly to be dissolved shortly, announces CM Mahmood

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR : Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Mahmood Khan announced on Saturday that the provincial assembly would be dissolved soon.

He revealed the plan while addressing a gathering where he said: "This is



my last address as chief minister". Mr

Khan said he would send the summary for dissolution of the assembly to Governor Haji Ghulam Ali shortly.

The KP chief minister, who is leader of Imran Khan-led PTI, also lashed out at the federal government for skyrocketing inflation and halting funding to the province. He claimed the federal government had stopped provid-

ing funds for the salaries of employees of the former FATA. He said no one was ready to repose trust in the coalition government internationally due to worsening situation in the country.

Earlier this week, Punjab Chief Minister Parvez Elahi sent a summary to Governor Balighur Rehman, advising dissolution of the assembly.

2nd Phase of LG polls in Sindh

HYDERABAD: Polling staff on the way after receiving polling related materials at public school in connection with local government election.



Photo: APP

Arts Council pays tribute to Javed Siddiqui

Bureau Report

KARACHI : Arts Council of Pakistan Karachi pays tribute to screen and dialogue writer and playwright Javed Siddiqui at Auditorium II on Friday evening. In which President Arts Council Mohammad Ahmad Shah, Famous broadcaster Zia Mohiuddin, famous poetess Zehra Nigah and Fatima Hasan were participated. Talking to the event Subcontinent's famous writer Javed Siddiqui said that I was a journalist but suddenly started writing films. I got married with the help of comrades but what happened was good that wife got very good, children are all talented but Sameer is my extension. Javed Siddiqui said that it is said on our side that the children would have divided the angels. So I wrote that what came into the heart of the angels brought me into this family like Muhammad Ali Johar, Shaukat Ali Johar my grandfather and many great people in whose compa-



ny, I trained and am here before you today said that "Dil Wale Dulhania Le Jayenge" has become my identity but I want to make my identity something else.

I wrote the dialogues and you liked them. Javed Siddiqui said that my prose is unconscious, poetry emerges from the best prose. He said that whatever I wrote for myself. My sketches are my own story. Many people say that one should not write like this, but I think that a writer should not be small. He said that when I arrived in Delhi in

1960, the progressive movement was not so active, but with it there were great people who did not discriminate against anyone.

About his children, Javed Siddiqui said that all are talented, but Sameer is my extension. Farida Javed said that Javed is not only a writer but also a very good person, I liked him and got married, on which my brother was angry for two years. Zahra Nigah said that when I read Javed Siddiqui's writing, I was sure that one day I would meet him. Javed wrote a lot but

people don't forget "Dil Wale Dulhania Le Jayenge", she said that the language was inherited from Muhammad Ali Johar.

President of Arts Council Ahmed Shah said that I wanted this great personality of our era. The man visited the Arts Council. Today on our stage are sitting the great men of the subcontinent who are the chain of communication of a divided India. He said that the relationship of love with Javed Siddiqui cannot be described in words.

He hoped that the conditions of both the countries will be good and the writers of both the countries will be able to meet with the people of these countries. Earlier, Javed Siddiqui cut the birthday cake along with wife Farida and son Sameer, niece Anaya, Zia Mohiuddin, Zahra Nigah, Fatima Hassan and Muhammad Ahmed Shah. The audience in the packed hall gave him a standing ovation and wished him a happy birthday

PM chairs cabinet meeting, stresses on availability of flour on subsidized rates all across AJK

Abdul Majeed Tahir

MUZAFFARABAD: Prime Minister Azad Jammu and Kashmir Sardar Tanveer Ilyas Khan while stressing the need for resolving flour crises on priority basis has directed the concerned authorities to ensure availability of flour on subsidized rates all across the state. Chairing the cabinet meeting here on Saturday the PM said that in view of the public difficulties government has decided to maintain subsidy on the flour. Contrary to the current food policy, the PM said that the government was giving more than 60% subsidy on flour as compared to the market rates.

"As per the current food policy only 20% subsidy could be given on flour but despite that it has been decided to give maximum subsidy instead of putting the burden on the people", he said. Prime Minister Sardar Tanveer Ilyas Khan said a record subsidy has been given on flour to ease the lives of ordinary citizens in the state. The purpose of providing subsidy, he said was to give relief to people having meager sources of income. He said that financially stable people should play their role and make sure that this relief reaches to the much deserved and downtrodden sections of the society.

The meeting also approved the recommendations of the cabinet committee to provide the provision of financial assistance to refugees living in the areas adjacent to the working boundary in Punjab. According to the new policy the government would provide financial assistance to the disabled refugees in the future on the pattern of LoC. Moreover the cabinet meeting, which was participated by all the cabinet members, gave formal approval to Azad Jammu and Kashmir Election Amendment Bill, Azad Jammu and Kashmir Flood Plan Regulation Act and Amendment of Local Government Act. In view of the prevailing food security, a committee has been formed to protect the agricultural land of Azad Kashmir, prevent its conversion and stop the use of this land for non-agricultural purposes.

Razzaq Nadeem urges to pay special to make full preparation for the examination

Abdul Majeed Tahir



MUZAFFARABAD: AJK Secretary Mr Razzaq Ahmed Nadeem visited Kotli district and attended a meeting with the officers of the Education Department.

In the meeting, Director of Education (Male) Mirpur Division Mirpur Sahibzada Abrar Shah, Director of (Female) Education Mirpur Division Dr. Rashida Khanum, District Education Officer male Kotli Usman Shaukat, District Education Officer female Kotli Saeeda Andalib, Numan Anjum Qureshi Deputy District Education Officer male Kotli, Sardar Idris Deputy. District Education Women Kotli and Hamza Ali Syed Focal Person Kotli held a meeting with Secretary Board Nauman Anjum Qureshi regarding all matters of the Elementary Board and took a briefing regarding elementary staff members, budget and administrative issues. Prepared and sent details for documents, building rent and other expenses.

Income Tax Return Elementary Boards Secretary Education issued instructions to move for guidance in all matters. In order to improve the quality of education in schools, the heads of the institutions urged to pay special attention to make full preparation for the examination according to DLPz and scheme of studies.

The Secretary Elementary and Secondary Education appreciated the good performance of both the District Education Officers in their curricular and co-curricular v and issued instructions to strive more to achieve targets.

FCCI R&D section of aggressively and critically analyzing the prevailing economic situation



Mian Rashid Asghar

FAISALABAD: The R&D section of FCCI is aggressively and critically analysing the prevailing economic situation so that viable recommendations could be finalized to put Pakistan back on the road to progress and prosperity by achieving an ambitious GDP growth target of 6%, said Engineer Ahmad Hassan Chairman FCCI Standing Committee on R&D. He said that Pakistan is actually a victim of the global recession as its economy is most vulnerable and has not enough cushion to absorb the rampant shocks. He said that covid-19 was the first major shock which disrupted the production as well as global supply chain rendering millions of workers jobless across the world. "It was followed by the ill impacts of the Russian- Ukraine war which also hit the global economy", he said and added that the last nail was the unprecedented floods prompted by climate change.

About macro financial stability of Pakistan, Engineer Ahmad Hassan said that the current account deficit is \$18bn while external debts are as high as \$125bn. He said that our foreign exchange reserves are constantly depleting despite pledges by the Geneva Conference and commitments of friendly countries. He regretted that only 1.5% of the population of Pakistan is discharging its tax liabilities.

"This situation has also exposed the incompetence of the political government and lethargic bureaucratic system which has a retrogressive impact on our growth. He also dwelt at length the issues of innovation and value addition, energy, agriculture and livestock, human capital development, entrepreneurship and ease of doing business, environment and climate change and said that Pakistan was ranked 47th out of 74 emerging economies and we must focus simultaneously on the political and economic issues with prudent policies of moving toward self-sufficiency.

DPO Shabir Hussain along with police force conducted a flag march in Wana Bazar



Adam Khan Wazir

WANA: A heavy contingent of police led by DPO South Waziristan Shabir Hussain conducted a flag march in Wana Bazar, Apart from SP Investigation Fazal Subhan and DSP Nadir Khan also participated in the flag march.

The DPO reviewed the police personnel posted at the new entry and exit road blockades at Wana Bypass Road and other places and also boosted their morale.

DPO Shabir Hussain won the hearts of the people who were afraid of terrorism by raising slogans of "Pakistan Zindabad and Allahu Akbar" along with the policemen deployed at the fresh internal and external blockades in Wana Bazar.

The DPO while instructing the officials posted at the entrances and exits of Wana Bazar said that display of weapons and black glass vehicles is completely prohibited in Wana Bazar.

People should fully cooperate with the police to establish peace in Wana Bazar and all areas of Lower Waziristan.

He said that the police will use their limited resources to end the scourge of crime, kidnapping, terrorism and drugs in Lower South Waziristan.

It should be noted that yesterday the dharna that has been going on for 7 days in Wana has been ended by the people on the conditions that the police must be ensured to maintain peace in Wana.

Old is gold because good sense and sensibility makes a person young even in the old age

Mian Rashid Asghar

FAISALABAD: Pakistan's most senior & popular Photojournalist, Zahid Hussain celebrated his 49th wedding anniversary with his wife Samina Zahid. His son Mohsin Hassan, a Journalist by profession, cut his wedding anniversary cake with his daughters and children. Zahid Hussain, a Lyallpurian, started his press photography career in 1969 with the daily Nawai Waqt Lahore, in 1970 he joined PPP leader Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's daily Musawat and in 1973 when the daily Musawat started its publication from Karachi, he was



transferred to Karachi. He covered the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) press freedom movement during the worst of General Zia-ul-Haq's Martial law. He also covered the MRD movement's struggle for

democracy during this period. He worked for Reuters, AP, Dawn as Chief Photographer and Editor Pictures for Jang Group of Newspapers.

During his wedding anniversary celebration, he expressed that, Photo-

journalism emerges real austheticism for media and due to this, Media's significance rises on top horizons to catch the media watchers. He further said that a complete book can be written by means of reading an exclusive photo between the lines

A real photo remains with us even to the last stages of life whom we cannot put off from our good recollections, These days Mr. Zahid Hussain is celebrating his happy married life with his wife and children at home in Karachi having a pictures of unforgettable moments picturized like photograph attractions.



Islamabad

15° – 23° Clear

SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr5:45 am
Zohr12:16 pm
Asr3:43 pm
Maghrib5:21 pm
Isha6:49 pm

EMERGENCY

Rescue (Police) 15
Bomb Disposal 15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/
Islamabad1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance 1122 &
& Rescue Services 4451122
Motorway Police 9266044
Motorway Police 9270601-20

Women Police Stations

Islamabad 9222596
Rawalpindi 9270601-20

ENQUIRY

Edhi Ambulance115
PIA Flight Info 114
PIA Cargo 9280979
Railway Inquiry 117
Railway Exchange 9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi 5555489
CAA 9281092

HOSPITALS

CMH 561111
MH 561116
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

CTD arrests five terrorists of banned outfit in Punjab IBOs

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: LAHORE: The Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) on Saturday claimed to have arrested five terrorists belonging to banned outfits from different cities of Punjab. As per details, the CTD Punjab carried out Intelligence Based Operations (IBOs) in Multan, Gujranwala and Lahore and arrested five terror suspects.

The arrested terrorist had already planned to carry out an attack in sensitive districts. Apart from suicide jackets, explosives, guns, ammunition and literature pertaining to terror activities were recovered from the five suspects.

In the last week, 22,800 went through security checks in 504 combing operations and 138 suspected terrorists were arrested. Whereas 67 kidnapped people were also released. Earlier, Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) officials had claimed to have killed two alleged terrorists belonging to a banned outfit during a gun battle in Multan.

CTD officials told media that two or three accomplices of the terrorists managed to flee from the location under the cover of darkness late in the night.

The terrorists were identified as Rizwan alias Doctor and Imran alias Saqi, whereas, weapons and explosive materials were also recovered from their possession by the security officials.

Sightsavers launched film 'Noor'

To raise awareness of the impact of vision impairment caused in children

Nazakat Hussain

ISLAMABAD: To raise awareness of the impact of vision impairment caused by uncorrected refractive errors (URE) in children, 'Noor', a film starring Sarwat Gillani and Umair Rana has been released by international development organization Sightsavers during a ceremony held in Islamabad.

Over 4 million children in Pakistan are estimated to have Uncorrected Refractive Error (URE), which include short and long-sightedness and affect child development, future opportunities, and can lead to children missing school. With over 2 million children already locked out of learning due to recent devastating floods. The impact of poor eye health will only increase this number if we don't act now.

The film, produced in collaboration with SeePrime and WhiteRice and directed by Umer Adil, reflects these issues, and revolves around a schoolgirl struggling with poor eye health and problems associated with it. It also focuses on the need to challenge societal stigmas associated with wearing glasses.

Ms. Zeb Jaffar, Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Education and Professional



Training graced the occasion as chief guest and appreciated Sightsavers' role in focusing on this important issue of eye health and linking it to educational outcomes and said that governments need to contribute and do their best for the future generations of our nation. She ensured her commitment to work in coordination with health ministry to address the issues of URE, early identification of eye problems and its treatment at schools' level.

Munazza Gillani, Country Direc-



tor Pakistan at Sightsavers, said: "Social drama films do more than raise awareness, they draw you into the story and lives of the characters. They can soften and dissolve barriers and prejudices, creating space for change to take place in the real-world."

"Good eye health equals opportunity and has a ripple effect on children, improving education, wellbeing, economics, and health outcomes. We hope that this film will encourage government, parents, and

teachers to recognize the importance of eye health and play their role in managing and addressing unaddressed refractive errors."

Sarwat Gillani, lead actor and Ambassador of Special Olympics Pakistan, said in her video message that she hopes that the project will help build a better and brighter future and that coming together for this cause will help address the stigma many people face around wearing glasses.

Fellow cast member Umair Rana added that it is the responsibility of

everyone to ensure good eye health in children, be it parents, teachers, or older members of society. Many people don't realize the wider impact of vision impairment but projects like this play an important role in reaching out to as many people as possible and raising awareness so that no one is left behind when it comes to eye health.

The premiere event was attended and appreciated by development, education and health sector practitioners, diplomats, public sector officials, school principals and the film cast. It has also been launched digitally on SeePrime and Sightsavers social media channels. The audience liked the film and considered this concept of using film and emotions to promote awareness, a great step in the right direction.

'Noor' is an initiative in Sightsavers' school health screening project, which trains teachers in basic eye health screening and provides services such as eye examinations, prescriptions, glasses, and surgery. It complements Sightsavers' 'Eye Health Equals' campaign which calls on governments, organizations, donors, and communities to ensure eye health is prioritized.

Capital Book Fair 2023

ISLAMABAD: Youngsters are reading books on a stall during Capital Book Fair 2023 at Art and Craft Village in Federal Capital. ONLINE PHOTO



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

Interference in election process won't be tolerated: Sikandar Sultan Raja

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) has said that the establishment of local bodies in Karachi and Hyderabad is indispensable for democracy.

The Chief Election Commissioner in his message regarding the local government elections said that the people should express their confidence in democracy by being a part of the local government elections, and the law and order situation should be ensured in the local government elections.

He further said that any kind of interference in the election process will not be tolerated, evil elements will be dealt with strictly, law enforcement agencies will fulfill the trust during the election process.

Second phase of Sindh LG polls set to be held on Jan 15



The 'much-awaited' second phase of the Sindh local government elections is to be held in 16 districts including Karachi and Hyderabad on January 15.

The second phase of by-polls will be held in Karachi Central, Karachi East, Karachi South, Karachi West, Malir, Keamari and Korangi.

According to the data available with Dunya News, with over 10.15 million population of the seven districts of Karachi, more than 8 million will exercise their right to vote among which more than 0.3 million voters are females and over 0.46 million male will cast ballots.

A total of 5,017 polling

stations will be set up in seven districts of Karachi out of which 1,502 polling stations have been declared sensitive.

Two candidates of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) including Khurum Sher Zaman from Karachi South Union Committee No. 11 Frere Town and Firdous Shamim Naqvi from Karachi East Union Committee No. 2 Solider Bazaar will be in the race for Karachi Mayor slot while Hafiz Naeem ur Rehman of Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) will contesting election from Karachi Central Union Committee No. 8 Al-falah.

On Monday, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) rejected a petition of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P), seeking use of new voter lists for the Karachi and Hyderabad local government elections.

Govt Announces Fee Schedule for Issuance of E-Passports

City Reporter

ISLAMABAD: The federal government on Saturday issued the fee schedule for the issuance of e-passports in Pakistan.

As per details, the fee schedule was issued for diplomatic, official and ordinary categories.

Initially, the e-passports will be issued only from Islamabad. The date for the launching of the service from other cities of the country will be announced later.

The normal fee for normal 36 pages e-passport with 5-year validity is Rs9000 and urgent is Rs15000.

The normal fee for normal 36 pages e-passport with 10-year validity is Rs13,500 and urgent is Rs22,500.

The normal fee for normal 72 pages e-passport with 5-year validity is Rs16,500 and urgent is Rs27,500.

The normal fee for normal 72 pages e-passport with 10-year validity is Rs24,750 and the urgent is Rs40,500.

Earlier, the government launched an online payment service for Passport seekers from Karachi.

People from the metropolitan would not need to stand in long bank lines as they can pay the passport fee using their smartphones. The passport fee would be payable using a phone application 'Passport Asaan Fee' or an online portal.

The service is already available in Islamabad, Rawalpindi and Lahore. People would receive an e-mail or SMS after their payment, which they can show as proof of payment at the passport office.

The 'Passport Asaan Fee' application can be downloaded from Google's Play Store.

44 million Pakistani children to be immunized with Polio drops in 2023

City Reporter

ISLAMABAD: The anti-polio campaigns in 2023 will immunize 44 million children across Pakistan. As per details, the federal government have made the calendar for the anti-polio campaign 2023.

In the upcoming year 2023, six campaigns will be carried out across the country to eradicate the polio virus.

The first anti-polio campaign will kick off in January. This will be followed by more vaccination drives in March, May, July, October and December.

Earlier, the National Polio Lab (NPL) has confirmed polio virus in environmental samples in Bannu.

Polio virus has been found in sewage sample from Bannu's Muslimabad Sokarai area. Type-1 wild polio virus has been detected in environmental samples in Bannu, sources said.

The NPL has detected Polio virus for the 11th time this year in samples collected from Bannu. Sewage samples were collected last month from Bannu for polio test.

This year, polio virus has been detected in 27 climatic samples as well, sources said. This year, polio virus has been confirmed in 37 sewage samples, sources said.

They added that in Punjab this year, poliovirus has been confirmed 10 times. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa virus of the crippling disease has been found in 24 samples and in Sindh and Islamabad in one sewage sample each, sources said.



'Governance reforms a must for climate resilient Pakistan'

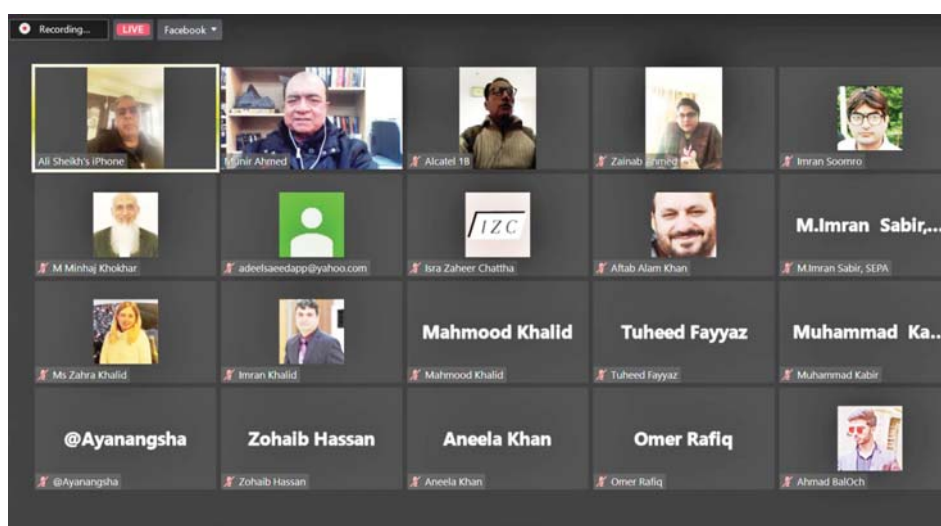
Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Speakers at a webinar on "the Geneva roadmap for a climate resilient Pakistan" said that it is unlikely to mature all the \$10 billion commitments for Pakistan's post-flood recovery and rehabilitation. So, Pakistan needs to go for institutional and governance reforms to combat the challenges of climate change in the long-run. A country-wide efficient adaptation plan shall be worked out on a bottom-up approach alongside religiously implementation of conservation strategies.

Development Communications Network (Devcom-Pakistan) organized the webinar on Saturday. The climate change expert Ali Tauqueer Sheikh was the keynote speaker. Other guest speakers included Devcom-Pakistan Executive Director

Munir Ahmed, Lahore Garrison University assistant professor International Relations Dr. Zainab Ahmed, Economist at Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) Dr. Khalid Mahmood, and climate advocacy specialist Zahra Khalid Haque.

Devcom-Pakistan Executive Director and a well-known climate advocacy expert Munir Ahmed introduced the subject of the webinar. He said the UN and Pakistan cohosted the 'International Conference on Climate Resilient Pakistan' on January 9 at Geneva to present a \$31.2 billion "Resilient Recovery, Rehabilitation, and Reconstruction Framework (4RF)", which lays out a multisectoral strategy for rehabilitation and reconstruction in a climate-resilient and inclusive manner. The other key objective was to secure interna-



tional support and forge long-term partnerships for building Pakistan's climate resilience and adaptation.

Munir Ahmed said it was the

first ever UN donor conference at Geneva to raise funds for any country. Pakistan needs to act wisely to safeguard its climate vulnerable communities with

a stronger local governance system. The inclusive bottom-up approach, and multi-stakeholder monitoring for transparency will support sustainable recovery and

rehabilitation.

Ali Tauqueer Sheikh said: Resilient development is not possible without institutional reforms. The urgency is staring us in the face with a current price tag of eight per cent GDP loss and projected GDP shrinking 20pc by 2050. In fact, resilience, reforms and economic development have become intrinsically linked.

He said the first order of business is to build political consensus that reforms for climate security are essential and cannot be postponed any longer. Not all international pledges will be delivered this month or during this fiscal year, even if many are recounted, recycled and repurposed existing commitments.

Dr. Zainab Ahmed said the most devastating floods of 2022 is an environmental issue but implications are geograph-

ic, economic, political, security and social. The resultant crisis multiplies the already existing water, food, energy and economic problems which connects with social problems translating into political crises.

Zahra Khalid Haque said the Geneva conference offered Pakistan a rare opportunity to leap towards climate-compatible development. The Geneva Roadmap relates to meeting the immediate challenges of recovery and reconstruction, requiring minimum funding of 16.3 billion dollars over a period of three years.

Dr Khalid Mahmood said Pakistan is at a difficult time in terms of economic management. With increasing geo-political uncertainty resulting in falling economic growth around the world our economy was also feeling the pressure of contraction.

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Pakistan calls for steps to ensure safety of UN peacekeepers amid new threats

Amid surging attacks against United Nations peacekeepers, Pakistan has underscored the need for ensuring the safety and security of Blue Helmets serving in hot spots around the world. “Security Sector Reform (SSR) is critical in laying the foundation for durable peace and preventing relapse of conflict,” Ambassador Aamir Khan, Deputy Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the UN, told a meeting of the Group of Friends reviewing the reform agenda.

As a leading troop contributor to UN peacekeeping operations, he said, Pakistan was “cognizant of the criticality of establishing an efficient security sector for successful transitions and timely withdrawal of the missions.”

In this context, the Pakistani envoy referred to the tragic loss of six Pakistani peacekeepers in a helicopter crash in March 2022 in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and called for bringing to justice the perpetrators of this heinous crime.

Mobilization of greater support and resources for the peacekeepers was crucial for restoring peace and stability in conflict situations, he added.

Ambassador Khan highlighted the support extended by Pakistani peacekeepers to the Security Sector Reform in Mali, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the Central African Republic, and commended the African Union and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for partnering with the UN in this regard.

“Such synergies augur well for the maintenance of peace and security in the Continent,” he said while reaffirming Pakistan’s strong commitment to UN Peacekeeping in Africa.

At the same time, Ambassador Khan said that SSR cannot be left to the military/police component alone, as diverse fields such as border management, customs, and civil emergencies warrant a substantial civilian contribution.

SSR in a conflict-affected country, he said, should be an integral part of the political solution for ending conflict and sustaining peace.

While SSR can neither be imposed nor seen to be imposed on a reluctant host government, the Pakistani envoy said successful and sustainable reform rests on the principle of national ownership.

“Inclusive participation of host authorities and capacity-building on professional grounds are vital ingredients of national ownership.”

The Group of Friends of Security Sector Reform (SSR) was formed in 2007, with the aim of offering member states a platform to discuss possible actions to shape and advance the reform agenda.

The Group is currently co-chaired by Slovakia and South Africa.

Overpopulation exerting pressure on socio-economic resources

Fakhar Alam

Alongside poverty and climate change, the developing countries including Pakistan were faced with the monster challenge of overpopulation that was exerting an extraordinary pressure on its socioeconomic resources.

According to the UN population report 2022, the world population had crossed the psychological barrier of eight billion population mark in November last year and is expected to reach 8.5 billion in 2030, 9.7 billion in 2050 and 10.4 billion in 2100 courtesy to modern innovations and research in medical and pharmaceuticals sciences that significantly reduced mortality rate.

The experts believed that if the population bomb was not wisely defused, then millions of people especially children and women mostly in SAARC, CARs and underdeveloped states would be exposed to hunger, starvation and malnutrition every year in the wake of global economic recessions and international conflicts including USSR-Ukraine, Kashmir and

Palestine that has already put peace of these regions at jeopardy.

The first national population census 1951 had revealed that Pakistan’s total population was only 75 million and 93 million in 1961(Incl East Pakistan), 65.3 million in 1972 (Excl East Pakistan), 80.68 million in 1981, 134.8 million in 1998 and it further jumped to a record 207.9 million in 2017, thus showing a massive increase of 132.9 million during 65 years with a substantial 1.91 percent annual growth rate recorded in 2021.

Being the fifth most populous country and the second largest population in Muslim world after Indonesia, Pakistan’s increasing population has already started exerting tremendous pressure on hospitals, educational institutions, agricultural production, forestry, roads, employment and socioeconomic resources.

He said about 20pc Pakistanis i.e 55 million were reportedly living below the poverty line mostly in underdeveloped districts including merged areas of Pakistan and in the prevailing shabby economic situation and high food requirements in post-flood era, there was a need to make a cut on unnecessary

expenditures, development budget, imports bill on luxury goods and ensuring strict implementation of an energy conservation plan.

Dr. Malik said Pakistan produces about 20 percent edible production of its total requirement and was spending approximately US\$ 4 billion annually on its import which was very high for an agricultural country. “I have lost my mother in her sixth pregnancy due to my family’s wish for a son,” Nargus Bibi, a resident of Pabbi, Nowshera told the scribe after tears rolled down over her face.

“The desire for a baby boy had deprived my entire family and four sisters from a loving mother, who had worked day and night for our happiness and made us orphans forever,” she said.

Dr. Riaz Khan, Head of the Children Department, Government Hospital Pabbi Nowshera said the chances of mortality of mothers and newborns increase due to lack of spacing among children, inadequate medical checkups and poor nutrition.

He said stunting and malnutrition in children mainly occur in the first three to six months of birth due to an unbalanced diet of lactating mothers.

“The nutritional status of

newborns and infants was directly linked with the health and diet of the mother before, during and after pregnancy. I can tell you that about 30 to 40 percent of children were impacted by stunting that could be avoided by adopting contraceptives and reproductive healthcare services in the country including KP.”

Director, the Population Welfare Department, Imran Shah said the KP’s first population welfare policy 2015 had been approved under which the contraceptive prevalence rate would be raised from 28pc in 2013 to 55pc in 2032 while efforts would be made to decrease the fertility rate from 3.9pc to 3.3pc birth per woman and attain replacement level fertility 2.1 births per woman during the said period through the cooperation of relevant stakeholders.

Besides KP reproductive healthcare rights act 2020, he said work on four ongoing development projects worth Rs721.348 million and two new schemes costing Rs54 million was underway focusing on strengthening of social welfare programs.

Rs390. 698 million was being spent on the promotion of social

welfare and family planning programs, Rs93.550 million on establishment of adolescents and reproductive healthcare centres, Rs19.041 million on the mobile service unit at Upper Kohistan and Palas Kolai and Rs1161.34 million for the establishment of 260 family welfare centres.

Under the new projects, the regional training Institute at Bannu would be established at a cost Rs 362.782 million while Rs127.767 million to be spent on franchising family planning programs under public-private partnership. He said social-cultural and religious barriers, lack of education, poverty, early child marriages and a desire for baby boys were one of the major constraints making negative effects on family planning program in KP.

Imran Shah informed that 120 family planning centers were approved for merged areas and mobile services were being extended to all those areas where family planning centers were not available.

He said the population bomb was a serious social issue and a collective effort was required especially by media, political leaders, religious scholars and civil society to defuse it before it make our lives miserable.



Cartoon by Amjad Rasmi.
(Courtesy of Asharq Al-Awsat)

Christians bearing brunt of growing Hindu supremacist juggernaut-II

APP Research

U P led the table with 121 hate crimes, followed by Chhattisgarh with 85 and Jharkhand with 39. Karnataka and Tamil Nadu were next, with 27 and 26 hate crimes, respectively. The attacks against Christians have increased after several states passed anti-conversions. “Christians are being suppressed, discriminated against and persecuted at rising levels like never before in India,” said Matias Pertulla, the advocacy director at International Christian Concern, a leading anti-persecution group. “And the attackers run free, every time.”

The most recent flare up in India — the 10th worst country in which to be a Christian, according to a 2022 report by religious liberty advocacy group Open Doors — began around Dec. 9, when Hindu mobs began attacking Christians in outrage over some locals converting to Christianity.

Many Christian villagers were assaulted and beaten with various makeshift weapons. At least two dozen people had to be hospitalized with injuries.

According to Open Doors, India’s anti-conversion law was introduced and tabled during this winter season — and they were worried that it would lead to more attacks against Christians and other minorities during the Christmas season.

“Increasing numbers of states in India have passed anti-conversion laws. In 11 states, now, these laws state that nobody can be forced or coerced into conversion to another faith—but, in reality, it is often abused to target Christians and other religious minorities, and stop believers worshipping, gather-

ing together or telling others about Jesus. Notably, anti-conversion laws are not used to stop forced conversion (or ‘reconversion’) to Hinduism. In these states, Hindutva is often prevalent — the ideology that all Indians should be Hindu,” the report said.

“Hindu nationalists are emboldened and sometimes use violence in place of dialogue,” Murry of the Open Doors commented. “Freedom of Religion Acts are instrumental in brutally suppressing and exploiting Christian minorities and punishing pastors and church workers.

In states where anti-conversion laws have been passed recently, there has been a rapid increase of incidents of persecution against Christians. In recent years, churches were being destroyed, bibles and other Christian literature being confiscated and Christian gatherings being banned.

“Mobs have verbally and physically attacked believers, even disrupting burial services and marriage ceremonies. Believers face public humiliation, beating, and head shaving,” the Indian media reported.

Some Christians were forced to participate in a religious ritual as part of “returning” to Hinduism under threat of violence or loss of property.

Hundreds of Christians are still living away from their homes, many currently staying in churches or sporting arenas.

According to the United Christian Forum, there was a 70 percent increase in attacks against Christians from 2020 to 2021.

“The persecution of Christians in India is intensifying as Hindu extremists aim to cleanse the country of their presence and influence,” reports Open Doors.

“The driving force behind this is Hindutva, an ideology that disregards Indian Christians and other religious minorities as true Indians

because they have allegiances that lie outside India, and asserts the country should be purified of their presence.” About 2.5 percent of India’s population are Christians.

Another Christian rights group reported that new Year’s Day, a 500-person mob assembled in the village of Gorra, a small community in the central Indian state of Chhattisgarh, and summoned the town’s Christians and attacked them. The attack on Gorra’s Christians was far from an isolated incident.

Weeks of coordinated attacks on tribal Christians in the central Indian state of Chhattisgarh have left nearly 1,500 people homeless and traumatized.

Right-wing Hindu residents in the Bastar division of the state have chased Christians from their homes and vandalized and demolished their houses and churches, enraged that their neighbors had refused to reject their faith.

This aggression came to a head in November, when Hindu right-wing groups organized mahapanchayats (regional council meetings) and began ruling and passing measures designed to evict Christians from their communities.

The councils banned Christians from worshipping within their own homes, prevented pastors from visiting Christian families in the village, and forbade local believers from carrying out their rituals like weddings or burying their dead in the village.

They also restricted Christians from buying or selling goods and from working. Locals blame Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the Hindu extremist organization, for inciting the attacks.

Concluded

Pakistan on the edge of Survival

Food! Crucial for survival and the most significant is nowadays becoming a rare commodity, ironically! while Pakistan is an agricultural country. People can be seen running behind the food trucks, fighting for a bag of wheat, a very common sight however the most alarming. In-fact Pakistan became a state of beggars, am not saying this however it’s the opinion of Pakistani Prime Minister Shahbaz.

Normally where inflation rises 4-6 percent, here it rises 30 percent, that means if a commodity costs 100Rupee last year today the same product you will get at Rupee 130. Let’s say onion and an economical household item increased 5 times in its price. Talking about the power crises, shopping malls have the instruction to switch off the lights before 8:30 pm, even in Islamabad, the Capital of Pakistan there comes a serious power shortage, the Unit price once charged as Rupee 8 is now embarked at Rupee 60. Natural or Sui Gas, if you find somewhere, then it’s a miracle.

We have such a shortage of money that the Pakistani embassy in the United States is forced to sell its US property in order to generate some cash. Moreover, PM Shahbaz has been reported as requesting the United Nations for aid. Since 1947 we have been facing serious Political, Economic and Climate disasters. 1971st Political sock, when the country split into two parts, side by side this affected the economy. From the time of creation 29 Prime Ministers came one after another, however none of them have completed their 5-years tenure, such a political unrest! Moreover, 18 times the elected Prime Ministers have been dismissed because of corruption or military coup.

Most recent example is of Imran Khan, World Champions against whom Shahbaz combined 7

political parties to cast a no-confidence vote. Therefore, Pakistan has had to see a self-created Economic crisis, because whenever a government changes, it changes the financial policy, they willfully take opposite decisions to prove the previous wrong, without regarding its effects on the country and economy. Moreover, such political uproars give way to domestic political instability, terrorism and threat of Taliban which again found embodiment in the country’s big picture.

Along, the constant influx of Refugees from Afghanistan and Kashmir, a foreign burden on an already bending economy, days are not far when we will be placed next to Sri-Lanka. If we see the statistics, from previous years constantly Pakistan’s Economy is falling whereas Loans are rising. According to

the World Bank this year Pakistan will encounter a 2 percent increase in its Economy while a 23 percent increase in Inflation.

As Pakistan Exports are \$ 30 Billion however Imports are around \$ 90 Billion, which leads to decrease in Foreign Reserves. The GDP is \$ 376 Billion, and Debt is \$ 274Billion, indeed that gives us a gift of Interest, for repaying the debt along with the interest 1/3rd of Pakistan’s budget consumed every year. Gloomily in the coming 3 months Pakistan has a liability of paying \$ 8 Billion when it has \$ 5.8 Billion in its reserves.

Simultaneously, Nature also seems to be showing its wrath on us in the mirror of the Climate disaster, last year Pakistan had encountered Floods that resulted in the loss of \$ 30 Billion along with uncountable lives. Pakistan was established by the blood and sacrifice of men although with such a hard fortune, whether the circumstances are the fruits of our own doings or master plan of some hidden agenda however it certainly calls for consideration.



Munaza Kazmi

Sanjrani eulogises envoy for taking Pak-China relations to new heights

Diplomat Desk

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani Saturday eulogised the services of outgoing Chinese Ambassador Nong Rong for taking Pak-China relations to new heights.

The senate chairman shared the remarks after the farewell dinner hosted in honor of the outgoing envoy. Both the dignitaries discussed important regional and international issues including bilateral relations were discussed.

Chairman Senate said that Pakistan-China friendship is an example for the whole world and this time-tested friendship has always met challenges together.

He said that the relations between



the two friendly countries are based on mutual respect and trust and China has supported Pakistan in

every difficult time.

Chairman Senate Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani said that the

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project is a gift from China to the people of Pakistan and acknowledged the active contribution of China to the relief and rehabilitation during the recent floods in Pakistan.

He said that the Pakistani Nation is grateful to the people and government of China for this generous assistance.

On the occasion, Nong Rong appreciated the comments of the Senate Chairman and said that the government and people of China are also proud of their everlasting friendship with Pakistan.

He said that China will continue to cooperate in the development of Pakistan and both countries will continue to support each other's position at regional and global forums.

Hamdan bin Mohammed reviews outcomes of Farmers' Souq

Spokesman Report

DUBAI: Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai and Chairman of The Executive Council of Dubai, and Chairman of the Higher Committee for Development and Citizens Affairs, said Dubai is committed to harnessing all its capabilities to develop its agricultural sector, as part of the directives of Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai.

Raising local agricultural production is a key priority of the leadership as part of advancing sustainable development and improving the quality of life of citizens and residents of Dubai, the Crown Prince said. "Meeting consumer demand for local agricultural produce is vital to achieving the goals of our food security strate-



gy," His Highness added. He expressed confidence in the ability of UAE nationals to raise the productivity of the local agricultural sector.

His remarks came as he was briefed about the second season of the Farmers' Souq, being held at the Palm Parks, and the efforts of the Higher Committee for Development and Citizens Affairs to promote the initiative. A popular family attraction, the Farmers' Souq launched by the Dubai Municipality

is a free agricultural, social and investment platform that seeks to gather Emirati farmers under one roof to sell local produce directly to consumers.

Sheikh Hamdan met Emirati farmers participating in the Farmers' Souq initiative and commended their efforts to provide high-quality agricultural produce to local consumers. He said such initiatives enable local farmers and small agricultural businesses to expand their

customer base. HH Sheikh Hamdan noted that their success reflects the growing capabilities of the local agricultural sector and the progress of Dubai's efforts to advance food security.

Eng. Dawoud Al-Hajri, Director General of Dubai Municipality, highlighted the keenness of the UAE leadership to support the local agricultural sector and further promote its sustainability. The Municipality is committed to providing local farmers and home-based businesses with a free platform and logistics support to market their products, he said.

The Farmers' Souq this season features over 50 kiosks displaying high-quality local Emirati farm produce including fruits, vegetables, dairy products, organic products, honey, dates, and herbal products. It is open from 5.00 pm to 8.00 pm every Saturday at the Palm Parks, until 11 March, 2023.

Israeli forces martyr two Palestinians in West Bank

RAMALLAH: Two Palestinians were martyred Saturday during an Israeli army raid in the occupied West Bank, the Palestinian health ministry said.

The two young men were shot dead by Israeli forces "during an assault on the village of Jaba, south of Jenin" in the north of the West Bank, the ministry said.

No further details were provided on the circumstances surrounding their deaths.

The Israeli army said in a brief statement that it had launched "counterterrorism activity" near the village, during which "suspects shot live fire" at them from a passing vehicle.

"The soldiers responded with live fire. Hits were identified," it said, adding that no Israeli soldiers were reported injured.

The Palestinian health ministry named the two young men killed as Ezzedine Bassem Hamamra, 24, and Amjad Adnan Khaliliya, 23.

A third Palestinian, 19-year-old Yazen Samer Jaabari, died of his injuries after he was shot by Israeli forces earlier this month, the ministry said.

Continued house detention of Mirwaiz denounced

Web Desk

ISLAMABAD: In Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), Anjuman Auqaf Jamia Masjid, Srinagar has strongly condemned the continued house arrest of its chief, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq in Srinagar.



In a statement issued in Srinagar, the Anjuman said that the Mirwaiz had been constantly remained under illegal and arbitrary house detention for the past three and a half years due to which he had not been able to fulfill his religious and political obligations.

It said that during this period, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq had not been allowed to offer Juma prayers for 177 consecutive weeks and this behavior of the authorities was tantamount to interfering in his religious affairs. It also deplored that the authorities are unmoved despite the repeated calls by the Anjuman and people from all walks of life to release the Mirwaiz.

The Anjuman reiterated its demand to the authorities to set its chief free so that he can perform his religious, political and social obligations.

It is to mention here that Mirwaiz has been under continued house arrest since August 05, 2019 when Narendra Modi-led fascist Indian government repealed the special status of IIOJK.

Meanwhile, the Jammu and Kashmir Hurriyat Front, a constituent of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference in a statement in Srinagar, also condemned the occupation authorities for keeping Mirwaiz Umar Farooq under continued house arrest and preventing him from offering Juma prayers. It said India has usurped all the basic rights of the people of the occupied territory and the matter requires immediate attention of the world community.

UK PM Rishi Sunak says will send heavy tanks to Ukraine



News Desk

ISLAMABAD: British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak on Saturday pledged to provide heavy tanks to Ukraine to help Kyiv's forces "push Russian troops back."

Sunak made the pledge to supply the tanks and additional artillery systems as a sign of the UK's "ambition to intensify our support to Ukraine," according to a readout of a phone call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

The move makes the UK the first Western power to supply the Ukrainians with main battle tanks.

Ukraine's European allies have sent Kyiv more than 300 modernized Soviet tanks since Russia invaded in February 2022.

But they have so far held off on dispatching the Western-made heavy tanks that Ukraine has repeatedly requested to push forward against Russian invaders.

France on January 4 said it would supply Kyiv with the French-made AMX-10 RC — a light tank model.

And Poland on Wednesday said it was willing to send Kyiv 14 advanced Leopard 2 battle tanks as part of an international coalition.

Zelenskyy thanked the UK on Twitter for making decisions that "will not only strengthen us on the battlefield, but also send the right signal to other partners."

Sunak's formal offer follows reports that he was preparing to sign off on sending four British Army Challenger 2 main battle tanks to eastern Europe immediately, with eight more to follow shortly afterwards.

The prime minister's office has not yet confirmed the exact numbers of tanks it will send to Kyiv.

A Downing Street spokesman said Sunak and Zelenskyy agreed on the "need to seize on this moment" after Ukrainian victories had "pushed Russian troops back."

China reports huge rise in COVID-related deaths

BEIJING: China said on Saturday nearly 60,000 people with COVID-19 had died in hospital since it abandoned its zero-COVID policy last month, a huge increase from previously reported figures that follows global criticism of the country's coronavirus data.

In early December, Beijing abruptly dismantled its strict three-year anti-virus regime of frequent testing, travel curbs and mass lockdowns after widespread protests in late November, and cases have surged since then across the nation of 1.4 billion.

A health official said on Saturday that COVID fever and emergency hospitalisations had peaked and the number of hospitalised patients was continuing to decline.

Between December 8 and January 12, the number of COVID-related deaths in Chinese hospitals totalled 59,938, Jiao Yahui, head of the Bureau of Medical Administration under the National Health Commission (NHC), told a media briefing.

Of those fatalities, 5,503 were caused by respiratory failure due to COVID and the remainder resulted from a combination of COVID and other diseases, she said.

While international health experts have predicted at least 1 million COVID-related deaths this year, China had previously reported just over 5,000 deaths since the pandemic began, one of the lowest death rates in the world.

Iran Welcomes Turkish-Syrian Rapprochement, US Rejects it

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian said on Friday his country was glad to see a rapprochement between its ally Syria and Türkiye, which has backed the political and armed opposition to Damascus over the last decade.

"We are happy with the dialogue taking place between Syria and Türkiye, and we believe that it will reflect positively between the two countries," said Amirabdollahian, during a diplomatic visit to the Lebanese capital Beirut.

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has said talks with foe Türkiye should be based on the aims of ending the occupation of Syrian land and halting support for what he called terrorism, an apparent reference to Ankara's forces in northern Syria and its support for rebels.

In his first publicly reported remarks on landmark talks overseen by his ally Russia, Assad also said the meetings "should be coordinated between Syria



and Russia in advance in order to... produce tangible results sought by Syria".

Assad made the comments, reported by Syrian state media on Thursday, in a meeting with Russian presidential envoy for Syria Alexander Lavrentiev in Damascus.

Türkiye has been a major backer of the political and armed opposition to Assad during the 12-year-long Syrian

conflict, and has sent its own troops into swathes of the country's north.

Moscow is supporting a rapprochement between Damascus and Ankara, hosting talks between their defense ministers last month and aiming for meetings between the foreign ministers and eventually presidents.

Lavrentiev said Moscow viewed the defense ministers' meeting "positively" and hoped to develop talks "to the level

of foreign ministers", Syrian state news agency SANA reported.

Assad said the results should be based on the principle of "ending" the occupation and support for terrorism, a term that Syrian authorities use to refer to all opposition armed groups.

A source with close knowledge of the negotiations said Syria wanted Türkiye to pull its troops from swathes of the north and to halt support to three main opposition factions.

The source said Syria was keen to see progress on those demands through follow-up committees before agreeing to a foreign ministers' meeting.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said on Thursday he could meet his Syrian counterpart Faisal Mikdad early in February, rejecting reports that the two could meet next week.

Such a meeting would mark the highest-level talks between Ankara and Damascus since the Syrian war began in 2011. There has been no official Syrian comment on when such a meeting might happen.

Indonesian workers protest against President's job decree

News Report

ISLAMABAD: Thousands of workers held rallies in Indonesia's capital Jakarta on Saturday, urging parliament to reject a presidential decree that critics say would erode employees' rights and environmental protections.

President Joko Widodo issued the emergency decree last month, replacing a controversial jobs law in Southeast Asia's largest economy, a move some legal experts say violated a court ruling.

The Constitutional Court had ruled the 2020 Jobs Creation Law was flawed, saying there had been insufficient public consultation before the law was passed. It ordered lawmakers to complete a renewed process by November.

Protester Damar Panca Mulia,

38, called the decree a government ploy to ensure the implementation of the job law.

"This regulation degrades worker's welfare, reduces labour protections and causes widespread damage — on agrarian issues, the environment, protection of women," he said. "Job creation should be in line with workers' welfare improvement, but this decree runs counter to it. That's why we oppose it."

Protesters held a banner saying "Say no to outsourcing", while others had signs reading, "Refuse job creation emergency decree because there is no emergency situation".

Joko Heriono, 59, said the regulation created uncertainty for workers as they could easily be fired and would get lower

severance pay.

Labour party chairman Said Iqbal said outsourcing and minimum wage regulation in the decree were among the issues of concern.

"We don't want the state to become only an agent for dirty entrepreneurs to weaken workers' welfare," Said told reporters. The Jobs Creation Law, revising more than 70 other laws, had been welcomed by foreign investors for cutting red tape.

Parliament will assess the legal standing of the decree in the current sitting, its deputy speaker said this week. Last week, a group of Indonesians asked the Constitutional Court to carry out a judicial review of the regulation.

During bilateral meetings between K.Tokayev, the Pres-



ident of Kazakhstan and Sh. Sharif, Prime Minister of Paki-

stan, that took place twice in 2022, as well as official visits of

Kazakhstan delegations to Islam-

abad headed by Y. Koshanov, Majilis Chairman of the Republic of Kazakhstan Parliament and S. Zhumangarin, Deputy Prime Minister—Minister of Trade and Integration of Kazakhstan in December 2022, the parties discussed the current difficult situation in the areas of Pakistan that suffered last summer from a natural disaster—floods.

Following the results of the negotiations, K. Tokayev, the President of Kazakhstan instructed the Government of Kazakhstan to provide the Islamic Republic with additional humanitarian assistance.

Earlier, in August 2022, the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan sent the first tranche of financial humanitarian assistance to the Government of Pakistan.

Govt may jack up fuel prices



News Desk

ISLAMABAD : The government is likely to jack up prices of petroleum products from January 16.

In this regard, the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) has prepared a working paper regarding the prices of petroleum products.

According to the sources, two proposals have been prepared by Ogra for January 16. By increasing the levy, the prices of petroleum products have increased, due to which the price of diesel may increase. The Rs30 per liter levy on diesel can be increased to Rs50.

According to the second proposal, the Ogra could also propose maintaining the prices of petroleum products.

The proposals will be taken to the government tomorrow and the final decision regarding the prices will be taken by Finance Minister Ishaq Dar in consultation with the prime minister.

It should be noted that the price of crude oil in the international market is \$97 per barrel.

Political tug-of-war in Punjab intensifies economic crisis

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: Former President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Dr. Shahid Rashid Butt on Saturday said Punjab Chief Minister has sent a summary to the governor to dissolve the assembly, which has aggravated the ongoing political crisis in the country.

Hopes of improving the economy have also died amid a political storm as all the attention of the rulers will be focused on politics, he said.

The political struggle will damage the economy and make the life of the people more difficult, he added.

Shahid Rashid Butt said that the move of CM Punjab has created a constitutional crisis in the country, while the new election will cost billions of rupees.

He said that the previous government tried four finance ministers, but the economic situation worsened instead of improving; the current government is also trying a second finance minister but to no avail as the situation is getting worse day by day.

The situation of food grains in the country is also continuously deteriorating and people are running after flour which is a glaring example of the incompetence of the authorities, he said, adding that policymakers are trying to calm masses with the an outdated method of statistics, he added.

The business leader said that the government is trying to keep the value of the dollar artificially low which is damaging the domestic economy.

It has contributed to the volatility and the illegal business of Handi is thriving in the current uncertain situation.

Increased political tensions have made it impossible for the government to take tough decisions which are necessary for the revival of the IMF program.

Some economic managers believe that they will convince the IMF to relax their conditions, which has nothing to do with reality.

If the IMF program is not restored, the weakening currency will collapse and the country will go bankrupt, he warned.

The resumption of the IMF programme is not all that is needed to address the current economic troubles but it is a vital stepping stone to acquiring more loans. It is not just the external debt, but mainly the massive internal debt that has brought the country close to bankruptcy.

The major problem is that this nation has been living beyond its means for a very long time and borrowing money even to run the state which is no longer an option now.

Ch Sarwar donates 10 kanals of land to The Diabetes' Centre

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD :A Memorandum of understanding was signed here today between The Diabetes' Centre and Sarwar Foundation headed by former Governor Punjab, Ch Muhammad Sarwar.

The MOU was to formalize donation of 10 kanal land by Ch Muhammad Sarwar to The Diabetes' Centre' for construction of a Hospital in near future.

Chair The Diabetes' Centre, Dr Asjad Hameed, CEO, Tahir M Abbasi, Dr Sana Moazam and Raja Zain Rahman attended the event from TDC. On the other hand, Ch Muhammad Sarwar and Rana Muhammad Mansha participated on behalf of Sarwar Foundation.

Management of TDC thanked Chaudhry Muhammad Sarwar for his contribution towards noble cause of making Pakistan a Diabetes free country.

4th Financial Crime Summit highlights critical challenges & proposes solutions

Spokesman Report

KARACHI: The 4th annual financial crime summit was held today in Karachi, with the theme 'Post-FATF Financial Crime Action Plan – Continuing the National Anti-Financial Crime Agenda'. The Summit was organized by Dellsons Associates, together with its Knowledge Partner, A. F. Ferguson & Co. (a member firm of the PwC network). The summit was attended by more than 400 people from across various sectors and included representatives from regulatory authorities, law enforcement agencies, banks and financial institutions, academia, media and others.

The Honourable President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Dr. Arif Alvi graced the event as the Chief Guest. Speaking at the Summit, Dr. Arif Alvi emphasized that the need of the hour is for the financial community to stay a step ahead of them (people committing financial crimes) at all times. With effective collaborations between various stakeholders, data sharing protocols can enable us to ensure sustainability and progress in the times to come. He appreciated the effort of Dellsons Associates and its Chairman, Ibrahim Amin and the knowledge partners A. F. Ferguson & Co. in continuing to organize the Summit annually on this critically important and relevant to the times subject.

In addition to the address of the President of Pakistan, the pre-lunch session of the Summit featured speech by Guest of Honor Salim Raza, former Governor SBP



and member Board of Directors, HBL, speech by Guest of Honor Kazi Rahat Ali, Secretary General, Pakistan Freelancers Association (PAFLA), and keynote speech by Nadeem Hussain, Chairman, Planet N Group.

Key highlights of the Summit included a number of speeches, presentations and panel discussions including from Presidents & CEOs of banks and non-bank insti-

tutions, Chief Compliance Officers of banks and key regulatory authorities and LEAs. The Summit also included presentation from Syed Faraz Anwer, Partner Consulting A. F. Ferguson & Co., on the results of the 2e financial crime survey held by the firm in 2022, as well as from few international speakers from consulting, academia and fintech backgrounds.

“This Summit was the need of the hour, especially with Pakistan exiting the FATF grey list in recent months,” declared Ibrahim Amin, Chairman of Dellsons, and added, “As a nation we have to ensure that the commitments made to FATF are strictly met and there is a robust post-FATF Financial Crime Action Plan in place, so that Pakistan never again risks being placed on the grey list.”

Syed Faraz Anwer, Partner Consulting, A. F. Ferguson & Co, while speaking at the conference mentioned that Pakistan is out of the FATF grey list due to concerted efforts of all the concerned stakeholders but the fight against financial crimes doesn't end here. Sustainability is now key in continuing our alignment with global standards and best practices to ensure that Pakistan doesn't get back into the grey list.

Graduation Ceremony

KARACHI: Federal Minister for IT and Telecommunication Syed Amin-ul-Haque in a group photo at a graduation ceremony held at Institute of Business Management on Saturday.



Gold keeps 'pedal to metal' in Pakistan

KARACHI: Gold continued to dazzle dollar-averse investors on Saturday — the last trading day of the week — as concerns over sluggish economic growth kept it under the spotlight for its safe-haven appeal.

Data released by All-Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association (APSGJA) showed that the price of gold soared by Rs1,200 per tola and Rs1,029 per 10 grams to settle at Rs187,300 and Rs160,580.

Cumulatively, the precious metal gained Rs7,300 per tola in the last three trading sessions.

Gold prices remained volatile during the week, with the precious commodity undergoing correction during the first three sessions; however, it regained its shine.

Irresponsible borrowing damaged economy

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: Former Vice President of FPCCI Atif Ikram Sheikh on Saturday said almost all the governments of the past borrowed irresponsibly and most of the loans were wasted for political interests instead of ensuring the country's development.

Now it has become impossible for Pakistan to repay the loans and the option of borrowing from one country or institution and repaying it to another is being used, he said.

Atif Ikram Sheikh who has also served as Chairman PVMA said that Pakistan has to repay twenty-one billion dollars this year, while a total of seventy billion dollars has to be paid in the next three years, which is very difficult.

The only way to repay loans is to increase exports and decrease imports, for which the environment is not conducive. Borrow-



ing will remain the only option unless the country has a current account surplus, he observed.

He said that borrowing has limits also as the credit of 78% of the total debt is the result of policies of a former government.

The business leader said that during the

last few years, the production of electricity has doubled, but industrial and agricultural production and exports cannot be increased.

Wrong policies have transformed the electricity sector into a monster for the country.

He said that privatization is necessary in the current situation but the political parties do not agree on it; foreign investors want better laws and protection which they do not get and no one is willing to pay taxes.

The IMF has asked Pakistan to impose new taxes to increase its revenue but the government is reluctant to put an extra burden on the people.

The ninth review for the release of next tranche has been pending since September, leaving Pakistan desperately reaching out to friendly countries for financing.

He warned that if reforms are introduced, the people will continue to run after flour and the number of people who sleep hungry at night will multiply.

Edible oil customers in South Asia, Africa would face brunt as demand is predicted to increase

Web Desk

JAKARTA: The world's vegetable oil supplies which are already under pressure from decreased production in Southeast Asia and Latin America have been expected to be further squeezed by an Indonesian initiative to restrict imports and increase domestic biodiesel usage.

With China relaxing Covid-19 restrictions and India increasing imports, edible oil customers, notably price-sensitive consumers in South Asia and Africa would face the brunt of the supply-side constraints that arrive just as demand is predicted

to increase.

With prices of essential commodities like wheat, corn and soybeans reaching all-time or multi-year highs due to last year's rapid inflation, Indonesia's new limits present yet another obstacle for nations that import food.

According to the Indonesia Biofuel Producers Association this year's B35 requirement would use 11.44 million tons of palm oil. More than half of the world's palm oil is produced in Indonesia, which tightened trade regulations this year by permitting exporters to transport just six times as much palm oil as they sell domestically.

ICCI signs Memorandum of Understanding with ICA and CFP to promote Chess Game

Tariq Khattak

ISLAMABAD : The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Islamabad Chess Association (ICA) and Chess Federation of Pakistan (CFP) to promote chess. Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President ICCI, Hanif Qureshi President, Chess Federation of Pakistan and Ejaz Ababsi, President, Islamabad Chess Association signed the MoU during a ceremony held at ICCI. Jauhar Saleem, Special Foreign Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs was the Chief Guest at the occasion.

Speaking at the occasion, Chief Guest Jauhar Saleem, Special Foreign Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that the cooperation of the business community was important to promote sports including chess and hoped that signing MoU by ICCI with ICA and CFP would be helpful in achieving this goal. He said that chess should be promoted in youth to



promote their mental capabilities. He assured that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would cooperate in promoting chess.

Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that Pakistan should produce chess playing products that can be exported

to 201 member countries of Chess World Federation. It would make significant improvement in our exports and bring benefits to the economy. He said that Pakistan has a lot of potential to excel in the chess game and more hard work with better focus is needed to produce chess masters. He hoped that the coop-

eration of ICCI with ICA and CFP would be helpful in promoting this game in the country and producing potential chess players.

Hanif Qureshi, President, Chess Federation of Pakistan said that Pakistan has won many gold and silver medals in chess and now the country is participating in world chess

events every month. He said that chess is 1500 years old game and its better promotion in Pakistan would ensure sustainable economic development of the country. They hoped that the cooperation of ICCI with ICA and CFP would be instrumental in producing talented chess masters in the region.

Zafar Bakhtawari, Chairman, Islamabad Chess Association said that Pakistan needs to promote sports in order to promote a healthy nation and develop national unity. He said that he would play a role in organizing a chess tournament among the diplomatic community and promote chess in trade bodies of the countries.

Faad Waheed Senior Vice President, Engr. Muhammad Azhar ul Islam Zafar Vice President ICCI, Raja Gohar, Asher Hafeez Convener ICCI Sports Committee and others also spoke at the occasion and highlighted the importance of promoting chess to integrate Pakistan with the international community.

Sidra Amin confident of good show in her maiden Australia tour

Sports Reporter

LAHORE: Pakistan women's ODI and T20I squads brace up for a challenge against a formidable Australia unit in their backyard in the white-ball series consisting of three ODIs and as many T20Is.

The three ODIs slated to begin on 16 January are part of the ICC Women's Championship 2022-25.

The first two ODIs will be played at the Allan Border Field in Brisbane on 16 and 18 January, where Pakistan is currently practicing over the past four days. For the final match of the series, the two teams will travel to Sydney to play on 21 January.

Pakistan enter the ODI series in good form, having acquired five wins from their six outings in the ICC Women's Championship. They clinched a 2-1 win over Sri Lanka in Karachi in June last year and later achieved a 3-0 sweep over Ireland in Lahore in November.

One of the star performers for Pakistan in both series was opening batter Sidra Amin. The right-handed batter is placed at the top of the batting charts in the ICC Women's Championship with a whopping tally of 495 runs in six games, 155 runs clear of second-placed Harmanpreet Kaur who has 340 runs to her name.

Sidra's runs have come at an average of 123.75, and an impressive strike-rate

of 88.55, demonstrating her attacking stroke-play.

She has scored 653 runs in her last 10 innings with three hundreds and two half-centuries. The hallmark of Sidra's batting dominance was her unbeaten 176 against Ireland in the ODI series opener in her hometown Lahore, recording the fifth-highest individual score in Women's ODIs.

All geared up to continue the momentum in 2023 and take up the challenge of scoring runs in the foreign conditions of Australia, the 30-year-old told PCB Digital on Saturday: "I am here in Australia for the first time, the conditions here are different to Pakistan as the ball rises a bit and I am trying to acclimatise as quickly as possible."

"We had our preparation camps in Lahore and Karachi where we played some practice games before coming to Australia."

When asked to reflect on her supreme run last year, Sidra deemed the past 12 months as special.

She claimed the string of quality knocks against different oppositions would give her a lot of confidence heading into the forthcoming series and she will be able to make the most of it.

On her role in the team and how important it is for an opener to give a good start from the front, Sidra said, "As an opener it is a challenging job to face two new balls in ODI cricket, you have



to see off the new ball and at the same time score runs and give a good start to the innings.

Muneeba and I will look to give a good start to the innings so the batters coming after us should have the momentum to take it forward.

"When you perform individually it helps your team, I will try to score runs which will ultimately benefit my team."

The message from coach and captain is very simple, go out and play positive cricket, score runs for the team and help the team do well."

The Lahore-born batter also opened up about the importance of facing a top-tier side like Australia, in terms of the advanced level of cricket on display and a shot at earning their first-ever win against the hosts.

"Everyone knows that Australia is a

great side, playing against them is a good omen. It will help us to learn a lot," said Sidra.

Pakistan ODI squad for Australia series:

Bismah Maroof (c), Aliya Riaz, Ayesha Naseem, Diana Baig, Fatima Sana, Kainat Imtiaz, Muneeba Ali (wk), Nashra Sandhu, Nida Dar, Omaira Sohail, Sadaf Shamas, Sadia Iqbal, Sidra Amin, Sidra Nawaz (wk) and Tuba Hassan.

Traveling Reserves: Aimen Anwar and Javeria Khan

Player Support staff: Ayesha Ashhar (team manager), Saleem Jaffer (bowling coach and interim head coach), Taufiq Umar (batting coach), Mauhtashim Rashid (fielding coach), Yasir Malik (strength and conditioning coach), Muhammad Zubair Ahmad (analyst), Syed Nazir Ahmed (media and digital content manager) and Rifat Gill (physiotherapist).

Australia series Itinerary

16 January – First ODI at Allan Border Field, Brisbane

18 January – Second ODI at Allan Border Field, Brisbane

21 January – Third ODI at North Sydney Oval No.1, North Sydney

24 January – First T20I at North Sydney Oval No.1, North Sydney

26 January – Second T20I at Blundstone Arena, Hobart

29 January – Third T20I at Manuka Oval, Canberra

Hurricane Phillips makes Pakistan wait for 500th ODI win as Fakhar's maiden home century goes in vain

Sports Desk

KARACHI: An electrifying half-century by Glenn Phillips helped New Zealand to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat and made Pakistan wait for their 500th ODI victory as the visitors won their maiden ODI series in Pakistan at the National Bank Cricket Arena on Friday.

Phillips clubbed four sixes and four fours in a 42-ball 63 not out and added 64 runs in 44 balls for the seventh wicket with Mitchell Santner (15) as the 2019 World Cup runners-up slipped from 160 for two to 205 for six before recovering to achieve the 281-run target with two wickets and 11 balls to spare.

The two-wicket victory meant New Zealand will remain on top of the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup Super League on 150 points irrespective of how the third ODI between India and Sri Lanka pans out on Sunday. India will remain second and Pakistan third with 130 points.

Likewise, on the ICC ODI Team Rankings, New Zealand have strengthened their position on top of the table, while Pakistan have maintained their pre-series ranking of fifth. Ironically, after winning the first ODI, Pakistan had a chance to top the ICC ODI Rankings and the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup Super League, but losses in the next matches upset all expectations and calculations.



Prior to this series, Pakistan and New Zealand had locked horns in five ODI series of three or more matches in Pakistan in 1984, 1990, 1996, 2002 and 2003 with the home side winning all five. In the three bilateral series played in the UAE, New Zealand won the 2009 and 2014 series, while the 2018 series ended in a 1-all draw.

Phillips was dropped on 51 by Mohammad Rizwan off Mohammad Nawaz, but by that time he had almost ended Pakistan's chances of becoming the third side after Australia (592) and India (534) to complete 500 ODI wins. Pakistan will now have an opportunity to achieve the feat in April when New

Zealand will return for five ODIs and five T20Is.

In the chase of 281 runs target, Finn Allen (25) and Devon Conway provided a 43-run start to New Zealand from 53 balls, before Conway (52) and Kane Williamson put on 65 runs from 73 balls for the second wicket. Williamson (53) and Daryl Mitchell (31) stitched a 52-run partnership for the third wicket in 61 balls before New Zealand suffered a middle-order collapse and lost four wickets for 45 runs, only to be first rescued and then steered home by Phillips.

Earlier, Pakistan opener Fakhar Zaman stroked his first ODI century at home and eighth overall in 65 matches,

as Pakistan recovered from 21 for two to 280 for nine in 50 overs.

Fakhar scored 101 off 122 balls with 10 fours and a six. He had reached his half-century from 65 balls with seven fours, while his second 50 runs came off 55 balls and included three fours and a six.

In the partnership with Mohammad Rizwan, Fakhar added 154 runs for the third wicket from 161 balls. The stand was broken when Rizwan was bowled by Ish Sodhi after scoring 77 off 74 balls with six fours.

Down the order, Salman Ali Agha struck four fours and a six in a 43-ball 45. He later snapped up two wickets for 42 runs, but ended up on the losing side. For New Zealand, Tim Southee took three for 56 and Lockie Ferguson bagged two for 63.

Scores in brief:

Pakistan 280-9, 50 overs (Fakhar Zaman 101, Mohammad Rizwan 77, Salman Ali Agha 45, Haris Sohail 22, Tim Southee 3-56, Lockie Ferguson 2-63)

New Zealand 281-8, 48.1 overs (Glenn Phillips 63 not out, Kane Williamson 53, Devon Conway 52, Daryl Mitchell 31, Finn Allen 25; Mohammad Wasim Jnr 2-35, Salman Ali Agha 2-42)

— Player of the match – Glenn Phillips (New Zealand)

— Player of the series – Devon Conway (New Zealand)

Jacks goes berserk as Pretoria Capitals thrash Sunrisers Eastern Cape

A Sports -

CENTURION: Pretoria Capitals' opener Will Jacks struck a quickfire 92 off 46 deliveries to lay a solid foundation for a big total before bowlers steer the side to a dominating 37-run victory over Sunrisers Eastern Cape in the sixth SA20 fixture.

Put into bat first, Pretoria Capitals piled on a mammoth 216/6 in their allotted 20 overs at the back of a brisk 92-run knock of their opener Jacks.

The Capitals had an unwanted start to their innings as they lost their opener Phil Salt cheaply, who could score a mere one before falling in the second over.

Jacks then anchored the innings with a valiant 34-run partnership with Rilee Rossouw but could not stretch the stand as the latter fell after scoring 20 off 15; resulting in the Capitals slipping to 47/2 in the fifth over.

Following two dismissals, Jacks spiced up the game with belligerent hitting with Theunis de Bruyn supporting equally.

The duo batted for nine overs together and added 111 runs at an astounding pace before Bruyn perished just eight short of his well-deserved half-century.

The right-handed batter scored 42 off a mere 23 deliveries, hitting two fours and four sixes.

Following Bruyn's dismissal, Jacks could not extend his stay at the crease and fell eight short of what could have been a magnificent century.

The right-handed batter, however, top-scored for his side with a 46-ball 92 and smashed seven boundaries and eight sixes.



Following his departure, the Capitals' batters James Neesham (18), Shane Dadswell (20*) and Miquel Pretorius (11*) made important contributions to power their side to a massive total.

Sisanda Magala and Otttniel Baartman took two wickets each, while Brydon Carse and Marco Jansen struck out a batter each.

Set to chase 217, Sunrisers Eastern

Cape could accumulate 179/7 in 20 Overs as none of their batters could match Jacks' brilliance.

The side had a deplorable start to the run chase as they lost two wickets for just 15 runs in the second over and then kept losing wickets at regular intervals which halted their expedition.

Skipper Aiden Markram pushed for the run chase with his brisk 46 off 29

deliveries but it was not enough.

Besides him, only Jansen (36) and JJ Smut (28) remained the notable run-getters while the rest of the batters remained clueless against the Capitals' bowling attack.

Parnell led the Capitals' bowling attack with 2/20 while Adil bagged 2/46. Neesham, Anrich Nortje and Eathan Bosch picked up a wicket apiece.

Sadam bats P&T Gymkhana to victory in 20-K Cup 2023



Sports Reporter

LAHORE: Superb batting by Sadam Khan batted P&T Gymkhana to a convincing 63-run victory over Pindi Gymkhana here at the Pindi Gymkhana ground on Saturday.

P&T Gymkhana, batting first, posted a decent total of 173 runs for the loss of seven wickets in allotted 20 overs. Sadam Khan emerged as top scorer with a sparkling knock of 60 runs off 31 balls that included 5 fours and 4 maximums. The other key contributors from the winning team was Yawar Bashir, who hammered 31-ball 32 runs while Manzoor Khan smashed unbeaten 29 runs off 12 balls.

Umar Anjum bowled brilliantly for Pindi Gymkhana as he clinched four wickets for 42 runs while Aneeq Mushtaq bagged 2 wickets for 23 runs and Asfand Mehran took one wicket for 29.

Outstanding bowling by Kramat Ali of P&T Gymkhana restricted Pindi Gymkhana to 110 runs for the loss 9 wickets in 20 overs.

Aneeq Mushtaq scored 28-ball 37 runs while Asfand Mehran hit 15 and Wasif Khan 14 runs. Kramat Ali grabbed four wickets for 17 runs and he was ably assisted by Imran Hassan, who bagged 3 wickets for 23 runs and Asad Raza and Manzoor Khan got one wicket each.

For his brilliant batting display, Sadam Khan was named player of the match. On Sunday (January 15, 2023), Apollo Club will compete against Valencia Gymkhana Cricket Club in the only match of the day at Pindi Gymkhana ground at 10:30 am.

Bangladesh stun Australia in U19 Women's T20 WC opener



A Sports -

BENONI: Bangladesh put on a collective team effort to down the strong Australian side in the opening match of the inaugural ICC U19 Women's T20 World Cup.

The inaugural edition of the U19 Women's T20 World Cup kicked off with a major upset as Bangladesh thumped Australia by seven wickets with 12 balls to spare.

After opting to bat first, Australia could raise a skimpy 130/5 in their allotted 20 overs despite a cautious half-century by Claire Moore.

Bangladesh bowlers put on a dominating show as they kept things tight for Australia right from the start as openers Kate Pelle (5) and Paris Bowdler (7) perished cheaply at a combined score of 22.

Moore and Ella Hayward then attempted to anchor the innings with a gritty 76-run partnership for the third wicket but remained too slow as they conceded 79 balls in the process.

Moore, who brought up her half-century in 47 balls, perished briefly after and remained the top-scorer for Australia with 52 off 51 deliveries.

Australia then lost a couple of more wickets in the death overs with Hayward also departing after a cautious 35-run knock in 39 balls.

The rest of the Australian batters fell clueless against the Bangladesh attack which halted the side from amassing a big total.

Bangladesh in response looked more comfortable in their 131-run pursuit as they lost just three wickets in the expedition.

Unlike the final result, the start to Bangladesh's pursuit remained quite rough for the Asian side as they lost their opener, Misty Saha, for a golden duck.

Opening batter Afia Prattasha and wicketkeeper-batter Dilara Akter then anchored the run chase with a solid 66-run partnership for the second wicket before both perished in the same over. Right-arm pacer Chloe Ainsworth provided a much-needed breakthrough to Australia as she removed Dilara and Prattasha on the first and last delivery respectively.

Dilara remained the top-scorer for Bangladesh with 40 off 42 deliveries, while Prattasha scored 24 in 22 balls.

Following their departure, Shorna Akter and Sumaiya Akter then charged on the Australian bowlers and stitched a match-winning 51-run partnership before steering their side to glory in 18 overs. Shorna remained unbeaten with her quick knock of 23 runs while Sumaiya struck 31 not out off just 25 deliveries.

Ainsworth led the bowling attack for Australia with 2/9, while Rhys Mckenna struck out a batter.

Meanwhile, in another fixture, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) registered a dominating four-wicket victory over Scotland to script a winning start to their World Cup campaign.

What's next for Shahid Afridi?

KARACHI: Following the conclusion of the ODI series against New Zealand in Karachi on Friday, Interim chief selector of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), Shahid Afridi, said that he is "available to help" after his short tenure potentially ended.

In the final match of the three-match series at the National Bank Cricket Arena in Karachi, Pakistan lost to New Zealand by two wickets.

The win earned the Kiwis a series win over the hosts with a lead of 2-1.

After the series ended, Afridi thanked the PCB for considering him for the top role and hoped that the fans were satisfied with his bold decisions.

"Thanks to the PCB for entrusting me with the chief selector's role for #PakvNZ series. Thoroughly enjoyed the responsibility. Hope, I lived up to the expectations of the fans with brave/bold decisions. Will always be available to help Pakistan cricket in any way I can," he wrote.