



Transparency in insurance sector vital to increase public investment: President Alvi

President Dr Arif Alvi, on Wednesday, termed due diligence and transparency in the bank insurance as vital for increasing quantum of public investments in the sector and thereby strengthening the economy. (Report on Page 8)



World must take notice as Modi regime brazenly violates UN resolutions: Sardar Tanveer

Prime Minister AJK Sardar Tanveer Ilyas Khan has said that the world community must take effective notice as India's apartheid regime was brazenly violating the UN resolutions that guarantee the right of self-determination to the people of Kashmir. The PM said this while talking to former APHC convener Syed Faiz Hussain Naqshbandi who called on him here today. (Report on Page 2)

Simultaneously published from Islamabad, Lahore and Multan

Relief Assistance

NDMA's sent Rescue & Medical teams has reached at Damascus, Syria. Pakistani Ambassador in Syria Air Marshal (Retired) Shahid Akhter received the team at Airport



Photo: PID

PM stresses collaboration with IAEA to reduce climate change losses



News Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday stressed greater collaboration with International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in terms of research on new high-yield and drought resistant varieties of crops.

In a meeting with Director General IAEA Rafael Mariano Grossi, the prime minister emphasized collaboration in view of the impact of climate change on Pakistan and related challenges including water, energy and food security.

Shehbaz Sharif noted the contribution of nuclear power generation to Pakistan's energy mix as a cleaner and more affordable source of energy.

The prime minister appreciated the ongoing cooperation between the IAEA and Pakistan in the areas of health, agriculture, industry, nuclear medicine and power generation.

He expressed Pakistan's full support for various projects

and programmes of the Agency and conveyed Pakistan's keenness to expand its footprints in the Agency's work both as a recipient and provider of expertise and technical assistance.

Director General Grossi was briefed about the crucial role being played by the 19 cancer hospitals being operated by the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) which were bearing the bulk of cancer burden in Pakistan and offering services to the general public at nominal rates.

The IAEA Director General agreed to the need for expanding applications of nuclear technology in countries like Pakistan to address a whole suite of climate-related challenges.

He expressed his appreciation for the good work of the agricultural research institutions in Pakistan, including NIAB which is one of the IAEA Collaborating Centers in Pakistan.

Acknowledging Pakistan's expertise in nuclear applications in various fields the Director General noted the important role Pakistan can play for supporting the Agency's work including its 'Ray of Hope' initiative for cancer treatment.

Finance Bill 2023-slew of additional taxes pushes the masses to the wall

Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Ishaq Dar Wednesday introduced the Finance (Supplementary) Bill 2023 or the "mini-budget" in the National Assembly as the coalition government rushes to fulfil the conditions of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to secure loan programme needed to avoid a default.

Addressing the lower house of parliament, the finance minister also announced to increase General Sales Tax GST rate from 17 to 18% and increasing the Federal Excise Duty (FED) on cigarettes.

Mini-budget proposals

Govt has increased GST on luxury items from 17% to 25% Increase in federal excise duty on cigarettes and fizzy drinks.

Govt hikes petrol prices by Rs22 per litre

ISLAMABAD: Hours after presenting a 'mini-budget', the federal government has jacked up the price of petrol by Rs22.20 per litre in a bid to appease the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for reviving \$7 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF).

Increase in federal excise duty on cement **GST has been increased from 17pc to 18pc**

Benzir Income Support Programme (BISP) handouts increased to Rs400bn from Rs360bn FDE on business and first-class

air tickets to now be Rs20,000 or 50% — whichever is higher

GST to not be imposed on essential goods.

Ishaq Dar's speech

Addressing the lower house of parliament, the finance minister compared the performance of the previous PML-N and PTI governments, saying that the nation was facing unprecedented crises due to previous government's "substandard" policies.

"During Nawaz Sharif's tenure, the GDP per capita increased while the Pakistan Stock Exchange's (PSX) market capitalisation was \$100 billion," Ishaq Dar noted.

He further said that the PML-N always tried to take fewer loans, adding that Foreign investment had also increased during the PML-N tenure. "In contrast,



during the PTI government, the loans hit record highs, and a common man's income also plunged."

"The PSX's market capitalisation declined to \$26bn during the PTI government", he said, adding that the decrease showed a lack of investor confidence in the previous government. He asked

the house to read the agreement done by the PTI government with the IMF.

The finance minister further said that only after a few months in power, the current government faced the daunting task of managing the floods, saying that the country endured an estimated Rs8,000 billion worth of damage.

ATC rejects Imran Khan's bail in ECP protest case

City Reporter

ISLAMABAD: An anti-terrorism court (ATC) on Wednesday rejected former prime minister Imran Khan's interim bail after he failed to appear before the court in a case pertaining to protests outside the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) following his disqualification in Toshakhana reference.

ATC Judge Raja Jawad Abbas Hassan announced the verdict over the non-appearance of former premier in the ECP protest case.

Earlier today, the court had rejected Imran's request for exemption from appearance on medical grounds and directed him to appear before in person by 1: 30pm.

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman was on interim bail in the case and the court provided him with

the opportunity to appear before it today.

During today's hearing, Imran's lawyer Babar Awan appeared before the court and presented his arguments.

Babar Awan maintained that his client could not travel on medical grounds but would still recovering from bullet wounds on his leg.

Awan requested the court to extend his client's bail till Feb 27 as the additional sessions judge had granted Imran's interim bail till Feb 27.

"I request the court to extend Imran's bail till Feb 27," he said, adding that his client tried to travel by could not make it.

"Imran Khan never run away from court or the country," Awan appealed for a last chance. "I am ready to submit surety bonds worth Rs10,000."

PTI to vote against finance bill in senate: Imran Khan

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan has castigated the incumbent government for presenting 'mini-budget', saying that his party would vote against the Finance Supplementary Bill 2023 in Senate.

Speaking to foreign journalists at his residence in Lahore's Zaman Park, the former premier said that the government would put more burden on inflation-hit people of Pakistan by passing 'mini-budget' from the parliament.

In response to a question, Imran Khan said that Finance Minister Ishaq Dar met President Dr Arif Alvi to seek the latter's nod for an ordinance. "The president would not be an obstacle on the finance bill," he said, adding that his party would vote against the bill in Senate.

Referring to elections, the PTI chairman said that the incumbent government was violating the constitution as it was responsible to hold elections within 90



days of assembly dissolution. "We sacrificed our provincial governments for general elections," he said, warning of default if elections are not held on time.

"These people [present rulers] are afraid that a government with public mandate will come into power," Imran Khan said, adding that they were trying to arrest and disqualify him. He also warned to move court if the government violates constitution.

Imran Khan claimed that Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) senior vice-president Maryam Nawaz and her social media team were putting pressure on the courts. "Maryam Nawaz has accused Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial of being biased," the former premier added.

"Qamar Javed Bajwa toppled my govt" The PTI chief also criticised former army chief Gen (retd) Qamar Javed Bajwa, saying that fundamental rights were violated during Bajwa's tenure.

"Bajwa had admitted that he toppled my regime," Imran Khan said, adding that the former army chief also admitted to record audios and videos. "Tapping prime minister's phone is a violation of the law", he added.

Speaking of his meeting with Bajwa, he said he only discussed about immediate elections during the meeting, wherein President Alvi was also present. "He [Bajwa] even wanted to appoint Aleem Khan as Punjab CM," he added.

FM, IAEA chief discuss use of nuclear technology for public use

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Director General of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Rafael Mariano Grossi met here Wednesday and discussed matters relating to nuclear technology.

The foreign minister emphasized using atomic energy in areas of public interest including health, electricity generation, agriculture, and industries.

The IAEA director general lauded the nuclear capability of Pakistan, the Foreign Office said. Rafael Mariano Grossi is on a visit to Pakistan from February 15 and 16.

During his two-day visit, the DG IAEA will hold high-level meetings and undertake visits to different institutions employing nuclear technology in the fields of health, agri-



culture, industries, and power generation.

The Foreign Office said, "The visit will provide an opportunity for Pakistan and the IAEA to explore avenues for further strengthening their ongoing cooperation in the area of peaceful applications of nuclear technology for the socio-economic development of the country."

Pakistan is a founding Member of the Agency since 1957 and enjoys longstanding and mutually beneficial collaboration with the IAEA.

Inflation in Pakistan could average 33pc in first half of fy23, says Moody's Economist

Commerce Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Inflation in Pakistan could average 33% in the first half of 2023 before trending lower, and a bailout from the International Monetary Fund alone is unlikely to put the economy back on track, a senior economist with Moody's Analytics told.

"Our view is that an IMF bailout alone isn't going to be enough to get the economy back on track. What the economy really needs is persistent and sound economic management," senior economist Katrina Ell said in an interview on Wednesday.

"There's still an inevitably tough journey ahead. We're

expecting fiscal and monetary austerity to continue well into 2024," she added.

Pakistan government and the IMF could not reach a deal last week and a visiting IMF delegation departed Islamabad after 10 days of talks, but said negotiations would continue. Pakistan is in dire need of funds as it battles a wrenching economic crisis.

An agreement on the ninth review of the programme would release over \$1.1 billion of the total \$2.5 billion pending as part of the current package agreed in 2019 which ends on June 30. The funds are crucial for the economy whose current foreign exchange reserves barely cover 18 days worth of imports.

Nutshell Conferences

KARACHI: Federal Minister for Climate Change, Senator Sherry Rehman in a Group Photograph with the participants of Inaugural Session of 6th Edition of the Future Summit Nutshell Conferences on Wednesday.



Photo: PID

Transparency in insurance sector vital to increase public investment: President Alvi

Bureau Report

KARACHI: President Dr Arif Alvi, on Wednesday, termed due diligence and transparency in the bank insurance as vital for increasing quantum of public investments in the sector and thereby strengthening the economy.

He addressing a conference titled "Transparency in Bancassurance and Role of Ombudsman" here at Governor House said that attractive insurance and banking products would not only enhance public confidence in the "bancassurance" sector but also assure increased liquidity in the economy.

Providing a regulatory framework for growth and transparency in banking and insurance industries was responsibility of state, the president maintained and urged the insurance industry



to improve checks and balances and filtering mechanisms to conduct due diligence before the issuance of insurance policies to policyholders, besides honouring insurance claims in a timely and transparent manner.

He stressed the need of strengthening the insurance sector and enhancing its contribution to GDP of the country and said that the share of the insurance sector in Paki-

stan's economy was less than 1% whereas in other countries of the region it was around 3%.

Dr. Alvi said that the insurance sector could offer profitable products for the general public to incentivise savings by individuals for profitable investments and to support the economy simultaneously.

He also called for moving the money parked in the real estate sector to other productive sectors of the economy to

keep the wealth of the nation in circulation. New products like crop insurance and social insurance should be introduced in the wake of the current climatic situation, he suggested.

Highlighting the significance of transparency, the president said that accurate information about the insurance policies should be provided to people at the time of selling the policy so that

confidence of people could be enhanced in insurance products and services.

Federal Insurance Ombudsman, Khawar Jameel, briefing about performance and growth of the organisation informed that monetary relief to the tune of Rs 2.57 billion had been provided to the complainants during the last year.

The event, organized by the Federal Insurance Ombudsman, was attended by the Federal Banking Ombudsman, Kamran Shahzad, Chairman Insurance Association of Pakistan Muhammad Hussain Hirji, and officials and representatives from the banking and insurance industry.

Earlier, the president also distributed the cheques among the complainants who got their insurance disputes resolved through Federal Insurance Ombudsman.

IHC stops banking court from issuing verdict on Imran Khan's bail plea

City Reporter

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday stopped a banking court from issuing a verdict on Imran Khan's bail plea in the FIA prohibited funding case.

A two-member bench, comprising Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani and Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri, issued the order on a PTI petition challenging the banking court's dismissal of its request for proceedings via video link. After hearing arguments,

the IHC instructed Imran to submit fresh medical reports and stopped the banking court from taking further action in the case till Feb 22.

At previous hearing, the banking court on Wednesday rejected Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan's plea for exemption from personal attendance and ordered him to appear before the court by 3: 30pm in the prohibited funding case.

Special Judge Banking Court Rakhshanda Shaheen rejected Imran Khan's plea seeking exemption from

appearance in the funding case.

Imran Khan's lawyer Barrister Salman Safdar appeared before the judge alongside PTI leaders Shibli Faraz, Azam Swati, Faisal Javed, Senator Saifullah Niazi, Aamir Kayani and others.

At the outset of the hearing, Barrister Safdar submitted Imran Khan's exemption plea in the prohibited funding case on medical grounds to the court.

"Imran Khan is over 70 years old and he is still recov-

ering from a bullet wound on his leg," he said and urged the court to grant him another three weeks' time.

After the completion of arguments, the judge dismissed Imran's request for leave and ordered him to appear before the court today at 3: 30pm.

The PTI chief had secured bail in a case registered under the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act in October last year.

The banking court on Dec 31 had rejected Khan's plea for attending the hearing of the prohibited funding case

via video link. The banking court gave final chance to Imran Khan to appear to attend the hearing.

The banking court judge said if the PTI chief Imran Khan didn't present before the court on February 15 or if a new plea is presented, then the court will suspend his bail.

However, the bail is now to be cancelled if the PTI chief fails to ensure his appearance in court today (Wednesday).

The PTI chief had challenged the banking court's order that was issued on January 31.

SC bars high courts from annulling ongoing investigations, FIRs

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Supreme Court of Pakistan (SCP) on Wednesday ruled that high courts could not annul the ongoing investigations and First Information Reports (FIRs) already lodged.

The apex court heard a plea filed by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) for annulling the case lodged against the officials of the Capital Development Authority (CDA).

The SCP ruled that high courts were not authorised to annul the investigations and the FIRs as they could not invoke Article 561-A of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC).

Closing ceremony of the art exhibition

News Desk

PESHAWAR: China Study Center, University of Peshawar (UOP) organized three days Art Competition/Exhibition on the theme "PAKISTAN-CHINA ALL WEATHER FRIENDSHIP" which focused on China, Pakistan-China Friendship, CPEC, BRI, Chinese Art, Cultural Heritage (buildings, monuments, landscapes, books, works of art, artifacts, traditions, language, calligraphy, culturally significant landscapes, and biodiversity) from February 13th to 15th, 2023 at China Study Center, University of Peshawar.

The Art Competition was divided into two categories i.e Poster and Painting. A total of 47 Art pieces were selected for the art exhibition at China Study Center, UoP. Students,

Teachers, and artists across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa participated in the Art competition and showcased their artworks in the exhibition.

In the closing ceremony Prof. Dr. Zahid Anwar Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Director China Study Center, University of Peshawar highlighted the purpose of this art exhibition i.e. enhancing people to people contacts and understanding of Chinese arts, culture, traditions, geography, architecture, civilization and Pakistan-China Friendship. He welcomed all the distinguished speakers, learned guests, participants, academicians, scholars, students, civil bureaucracy, Vice-Chancellors, and faculty members.

In a comprehensive speech, Syed Ali Nawaz Gilani Secretary-General Pakistan China

Friendship Association KP, (PCFA) said that Pakistan and China relations are higher than the Himalayas deeper than the Indian Ocean and Sweeter than Honey. He appreciated the efforts of participants who took part in the art competition organized by the China Study Center, University of Peshawar.

Mr. Ahmad Hassan, Chairman Governor Inspection Team, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in his keynote speech acknowledged the foresight, vision, and prudence of Prof. Dr. Zahid Anwar and the organizers in choosing the theme of this exhibition which is "Pakistan-China All Weather Friendship".

Madam BaoZhong, Political Counselor, Embassy of the People's Republic of China to Pakistan thanked Prof. Dr. Zahid Anwar Pro-Vice-Chan-

cellor and Director China Study Center, University of Peshawar for the invitation as a keynote speaker. I am very pleased to be here today at this important ceremony focusing on Pakistan-China Relations.

Prof. Dr. Johar Ali, Vice Chancellor Khushal Khan Khattak University Karak and Prof. Dr. Muhammad Idrees, Vice Chancellor University of Peshawar graced the occasion as a chief guest. He congratulated Prof. Dr. Zahid Anwar and his entire team for organizing such event for promoting Pakistan-China Relations. This kind of event is going to further enhance awareness among our students, faculty, academia, and people about Pakistan and China relations.

In the end Prof. Zahid Anwar thanked Prof. Dr. Muhammad Idrees, Prof. Dr. Johar Ali, Mr

PPP, MQM-P Talks: 'CEC to take decision regarding elections'

Spokesman Report

KARACHI: After holding talks with Muttahida Qaumi Movement Pakistan (MQM-P), Pakistan People's Party (PPP) leader Nasir Hussain Shah said that the central executive committee (CEC) will take final decision regarding the participation in the elections.

PPP and MQM-P concluded another round of talks today. Both political parties held talks after a PPP delegation visited MQM-P Bahadurabad headquarters.

Mustafa Kamal, while talking to the media, said that they discussed the MQM-P's demands and stance.

Nasir Hussain Shah said that they held consultations over MQM-P's stance regarding the union councils (UCs). He added that the govern-

ment will write a letter in this regard, whereas, they also discussed other issues with the MQM-P leadership.

Regarding the participation in the by-polls on the National Assembly (NA) seats, Shah said that PPP CEC will take a final decision in the coming day. He confirmed that PPP and MQM-P candidates have already submitted their nomination papers.

Shah said that MQM-P expressed reservations regarding the delimitations. "We tried our best to convince MQM-P for taking part in the local government (LG) polls."

Regarding the political situation, the PPP leader alleged that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan is spreading chaos in the country. He blamed Khan for the deteriorated economic situation due to his agreements.



DHAKA: High Commissioner for Pakistan to Bangladesh, Mr. Imran Ahmed Siddiqui speaks at the inauguration Ceremony of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan Corner at Pakistan High Commission on Wednesday.

PPP sets condition for not contesting NA by-elections

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) has made it clear to Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) that it will not contest by-elections on vacant National Assembly (NA) seats only if Awami National Party (ANP) and Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) boycott the upcoming polls, ARY News reported on Wednesday, citing sources.

According to details, the PPP has set condition for not contesting by-elections on vacant National Assembly (NA) seats, demanding that it will not contesting the upcoming polls only if Awami National Party (ANP) and Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) also boycott it.

Sources told ARY News that PPP demanded the coalition parties should jointly announce the boycott of by-polls as it refuses to leave field empty for ANP and MQM-P.

PPP leadership was divided on boycotting the polls as majority of the party members were against ANP and MQM contesting elections.

"The PDM would suffer a political damage if both the parties contest polls," sources said while quoting PPP.

A day earlier, it was reported that the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) decided against contesting the upcoming by-elections on the National Assembly (NA) seats, accepting the proposal tabled by Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM).

The decision to boycott the upcoming by-elections was taken during PPP's parliamentary board meeting, chaired by PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari.

The participants of the meeting were divided over the Pakistan Democratic Movement's (PDM) proposal, sources claimed. During the meeting, the party's senior leaders opined against contesting the elections.

However, sources claimed, the meeting decided in principle to boycott the by-polls and let the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) fight against no one. The candidates - who were nominated to contest the polls - were taken into confidence.

Bird flu threatens non-stop 'war' on poultry



News Desk

ISLAMABAD: Bird flu has reached new corners of the globe and become endemic for the first time in some wild birds that transmit the virus to poultry, according to veterinarians and disease experts, who warn it is now a year-round problem.

Reuters spoke to more than 20 experts and farmers on four continents who said the prevalence of the virus in the wild signals that record outbreaks will not abate soon on poultry farms, ramping up threats to the world's food supply. They warned that farmers must view the disease as a serious risk all year, instead of focusing prevention efforts during spring migration seasons for wild birds.

Outbreaks of the bird flu virus have

continued in North and South America, Europe, Asia and Africa, undefeated by summer heat or winter cold snaps, since a strain arrived in the United States in early 2022 that was genetically similar to cases in Europe and Asia.

Egg prices set records after bird flu wiped out tens of millions of hens last year, putting a staple source of cheap protein out of reach to some of the world's poorest at a time the global economy is reeling from high inflation.

Wild birds are primarily responsible for spreading the virus, according to experts. Waterfowl like ducks can carry the disease without dying and introduce it to poultry through contaminated feces, saliva and other means.

World must take notice as Modi regime brazenly violates UN resolutions: Sardar Tanveer

Abdul Majeed Tahir

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Azad Kashmir Sardar Tanveer Ilyas Khan has said that the world community must take effective notice as India's apartheid regime was brazenly violating the UN resolutions that guarantee the right of self-determination to the people of Kashmir. The PM said this while talking to former APHC convener Syed Faiz Hussain Naqshbandi who called on him here today. During the meeting the duo discussed in detail the prevailing political and human rights situation in the Indian occupied Kashmir.

On the occasion, Prime Minister

Sardar Tanveer Ilyas Khan appointed Mr. Naqshbandi as his Honorary Special Assistant on the Freedom Movement of Kashmir. Speaking on the occasion, the Prime Minister while voicing his serious concern over the fast deteriorating political and human rights situation in the IOK said that India has crossed all limits of barbarism and brutality in KASHMIR. Ambasting the Indian government for its destructive and dodgy role in IIOJK, the PM said that India was openly violating the resolutions of the United Nations that guarantee the right of self-determination to the people of Kashmir.

The PM said that a special session

of the Legislative Assembly of Azad Jammu and Kashmir would be convened in which the representatives of the All-Party Hurriyat Conference would be invited. He said that there is a need to mobilize the OIC regarding Kashmir. He said that influential world government should play their due role to resolve the lingering Kashmir dispute by using its diplomatic clout.

"The Indian government has not only established illegal domination over Kashmir, but has also started a plan to change the region's demography by settling non state subjects", he said. He said that instead of giving Kashmiris the right to self-determination, India has been shamelessly trying to

legitimize its occupation and strengthening its control over the territory by installing its henchmen in the territory. Former convener All-Party Hurriyat Conference Syed Faiz Hussain Naqshbandi appreciated the Prime Minister's efforts in highlighting the Kashmir issue and expressed the hope that concrete steps will be taken in this direction. Most Senior Minister Khawaja Farooq Ahmed, Education Minister Schools and Education Diwan Ali Chaghatai, Minister for Physical Planning and Housing Chaudhry Yasir Sultan, Member Kashmir Council Shuja Khurshid Rathore, Special Assistant Raja Sabeel Riaz and others were present.

Rama Temple

ISLAMABAD: A stunning view of Rama Temple (also known as Ram Kund Temple) is situated in Saidpur Village in Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

First batch of 5,000 quilts to be sent to Turkia and Syria after earthquake

Mian Rashid Asghar.

FAISALABAD: On the initiative of the divisional and district administration, with the support of the philanthropists of Faisalabad, the first batch of more than 5,000 new quilts in 12 trucks has been dispatched to PDMA for the relief of the earthquake victims of Turkia and Syria. These quilts would be sent to Turkia through NDMA. The Divisional Commissioner Silwat Saeed and Deputy Commissioner Ali Anan Qamar dispatched these trucks from Iqbal Stadium.

Speaking to the media representatives, the Commissioner said that after the terrible earthquake in Turk-

ia and Syria, the people of Faisalabad are also coming forward to help the victims and in the first phase, standard new quilts have been sent while financial aid is also being collected by the philanthropists of Faisalabad. She further said that the divisional and district administration will not leave the earthquake victims of the brotherly countries of Turkia and Syria alone, in this regard, arrangements for more needed items will also be made. She prayed for those who lost their lives in the earthquake and for the speedy recovery of the injured, and appealed to the people of Faisalabad to contribute generously to the relief of their brothers and sisters in this painful

moments.

The Commissioner also checked the quality of the quilts. The Deputy Commissioner said that the people of Faisalabad have always actively participated in the relief of the afflicted brothers and sisters and even today they have provided goods for the earthquake victims of Turkia and the Syria. He said that the assistance to the earthquake victims of Turkia will continue until their complete recovery. Additional Deputy Commissioner General Faisal Sultan, Caretaker Iqbal Stadium Naveed Nazir, In-charge District Emergency Operational Center Muhammad Sadiq and other officers were also present.

Majamal Khan commends PM for raising issues of education and health

Abdul Majeed Tahir

ISLAMABAD: The leader of social and human rights Maryam Idris met Lord Mayor Radharm Tajamal Khan, in the meeting special discussions were held on education and health issues, Kashmir issue, economic situation and the responsibilities of the young generation were also discussed. Radharm Chaudhry Tajamal Khan said that better education and health system are of great importance in building a strong society, we need to work on these two areas so that our young generation can go ahead and play their best role in the development of the country and nation. In the meeting, Maryam Idris congratulated Lord Mayor Tajamal Khan and said that his efforts are commendable.

Appreciating the efforts of Maryam Idris to highlight the issues of education and health, he said that it was a pleasure to see your work and this is the need of the hour, the role of women in the formation of a better society and the development of the country and nation is very important. If pregnant, our education and health system will be better than our nine The younger generation will get a chance to move forward, he said that parents play an important role in the formation of any society. But society is not only raising its voice on issues of human rights including education and health, but also playing its role for their solution, which is less appreciated, you should go further with this mission, by Maryam Idris.

He said that I am grateful to all my family, local residents and colleagues, including my parents, who are always walking with me. God willing, I will continue this mission. It is misleading the international community by presenting a false narrative, it is necessary for us not only to defeat these tactics of India but also to expose the atrocities and human rights violations in Occupied Kashmir to the world through research and social media. The pool of lies of India will have to be opened in front she remarked.

Unnecessary inflation has robbed the poor man of his daily bread, Asad Mahmood

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League Qayyum Central Secretary Information and Broadcasting Colonel (R) Asad Mahmood while giving an interview with private TV said that the responsibility of filling the national coffers is not the responsibility of the poor people. Bread has also been taken away. The rulers came out of their royal palaces and took immediate measures to provide relief to the people.



He said that if inflation is not controlled, there is a fear that a human tragedy will occur. Asad Mahmood said that the aura of Awe has deteriorated, if you go to the market, you will find that no one is following the rate list, and everyone has set their profit margin without any law. We understand that the government machinery does not want to give relief to the people. Bureaucracy, Price Control Magistrate Committees, Union Councillors, District Administration, and Committees including concerned Police Station in charge are all equal participants in this inflation. Colonel Retired Asad Mahmood says that this is the province whose ruler has yet to reduce his own protocol and royal expenses to end this inflation.

When the prime minister is not reducing his expenses, what will the provinces do? He asked, tell should we save the country or our own nose? When your country develops, the nose will automatically be saved. Instead of rubbing your nose in front of the ruling IMF, focus on the recovery of the country's economy and industry.

FCCI chairman calls for regular energy audit to curb inflated bills

Mian Rashid Asghar

FAISALABAD: "Save Energy" should be an order of the day to curtail inflated bills in addition to bridging the gap between demand and supply of electricity, said Haji Muhammad Aslam Bhatti, Vice President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI). Addressing an awareness workshop on "Energy Efficiency & Energy Management", he stressed the need to discourage waste of precious energy. He appreciated the efforts of the Research and Development (R&D) department to arrange this most relevant workshop in the prevailing circumstances as the cost of energy was jacked up exorbitantly.

He further said that maximum FCCI members should be sensitized to participate in such workshops of national importance. Engineer Ahmad Hassan Chairman FCCI Standing Committee on R&D said that the wide gap between demand and supply has necessitated its prudent use by every segment of the society. He said that major industrial and commercial organizations must conduct their energy audit on a regular basis to identify loops in their system and plug the same without any delay. He said that such measures would pay back them in the form of reduced billing.

He said that we could also avoid fatal electricity related mishaps due to the regular energy audit. He further said that the practical use of electricity could also cut down the production cost of their products and thus make their exportable surplus competitive in the international markets. Muhammad Salman Butt Advisor Aspire Consult Pakistan gave a presentation on leadership role, quality management system, operational transparency, reasons of analysis, energy flow map, process flow design and self-assessment tools.

AD LG SW Haleem Shah visited Wana, inaugurated four CRVS centers

Adam Khan Wazir

WANA: South Waziristan Tribal District Assistant Director Local Government Haleem Shah visited Wana



Inaugurated 4 Civil Registration and Vital Statistics/Birth Registration (CRVS) Centres/Offices will try hard to solve the problems of common people on priority basis.

On the other hand, the public appreciated the efforts of the AD local government, and pledged to provide all kinds of support.

On this occasion, Assistant Director Local Government Haleem Shah said that from where people can get birth, death, marriage and divorce certificates, the establishment of these offices will reduce most of the problems of people.

On this occasion, elected VC and NC chairmen from different areas of Wana were also present.

Assistant Director Local Government Haleem Shah said that these centers will provide facilities to all the people of Wana to submit farmers, Now no one will face any problem with birth, death, marriage and divorce certificates.

He added that our village secretaries will serve the people at their doorstep and no negligence will be tolerated, everything will be done on merit.

On the other hand, public circles appreciated the efforts of AD Local Government, and vowed to provide all kinds of support.

APHC-AJK chapter staged a protest demonstration against the Hindutva policies

City Reporter

ISLAMABAD: The All Parties Hurriyat Conference Azad Jammu and Kashmir (APHC-AJK) chapter staged a protest demonstration in Islamabad, today, against the Hindutva policies of Modi-led Indian regime to dislodge the people of Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir from their lands and properties to push for settler colonialism.

The demonstration held in front of the Indian High Commission was led by APHC-AJK Convener Mahmood Ahmed Saghar. The participants were holding banners and placards



bearing slogans against brutal measures of BJP regime in IIOJK and its anti-Kashmir policies.

Addressing the protesters, the speakers said the BJP regime is resorting to the brutal measures to disempower the people of Jammu and Kashmir

by grabbing their properties, lands, Waqaf properties, and demolition of their houses, shops and business complexes. They said, such brutal anti-Kashmir actions are meant to erase the Muslim identity of Jammu and Kashmir and convert the Muslim majority into a

minority.

The speakers said India is victimizing the people of Jammu and Kashmir for demanding their UN-mandated right to self-determination. They said Jammu and Kashmir belongs to its people and they will protect their rights by resisting New Delhi's move to settle the Indian Hindus in the territory.

The speakers urged the United Nations to take cognizance of India's brutalities in IIOJK and play role in the settlement of the Kashmir dispute in accordance with the aspirations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir and relevant UN resolutions.

Ex Na Speaker announces Inflation March at Swabi



SWABI: Former Speaker National Assembly Asad Qaiser has said that government is presenting Mini budget today in which 170 Billion rupees taxes will be imposed on poor people. He said that these taxes will suffer middle class along with the poor people. He expressed these views while addressing workers convention at Shah Mansoor Swabi.

Former Speaker announces

inflation march at Swabi in which people of swabi will be on road against historical inflation. He said people of Pakistan didn't accept the present assembly in which majority of seats are vacant.

He further said that only way out of present turmoil is free and fair elections. He said that it is people prerogative to elect their representatives who will have the mandate to present budget.



Islamabad

23° - 38° Clear

SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr 5:29 am
Zohr 12:22 pm
Asr 4:13 pm
Maghrib 5:52 pm
Isha 7:15 pm

EMERGENCY

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

Women Police Stations

Islamabad 9222596
Rawalpindi 9270601-20

ENQUIRY

Edhi Ambulance 115
PIA Flight Info 114
PIA Cargo 9280979
Railway Inquiry 117
Railway 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
Met Office 9250360-6

Welfare of people will be better if cabinet, officers' perks are removed: Sheikh Abdul Waheed



News Desk

RAWALPINDI: The socio-political figure of the country and leader of Pakistan Muslim League-N Rawalpindi, Sheikh Abdul Waheed, said that if the number of cabinet and the officers are removed from petrol, electricity, gas and other privileges, then there will be no kind of impact on the people. There will be no need to burden. Now is the time to put aside all the current and previous ministerial interests and think about the poor condition of the country and the people.

In one of his statements, he said that as a result of negotiations with the IMF, inflation increased further. A special strategy needs to be formulated to control it so that the burden on the public can be reduced. Sheikh Abdul Waheed said that the conditions of the IMF are a burden on the people, while the IMF also insisted on eliminating unnecessary departments, cabinets, advisers, officers and their luxurious privileges. On which the Government needs to consider, if the large number of cabinet and officers' petrol, electricity, gas and other privileges are abolished, then there will be no need to put any kind of burden on the people.

Increased inflation better than bankruptcy: Mian Zahid Hussain

Tariq Khattak

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain on Wednesday said the process of fulfilling IMF conditions for obtaining loans has been started, which is leading to a huge increase in inflation.

Inflation will go up to 27 to 35 percent and electricity, gas, petroleum products, and essential commodities will become more expensive which will hit the masses, he said.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that the life of the common man will become more miserable but there is no choice left.

Pakistan has to choose between a devil and a deep blue sea but inflation is better than bankruptcy because in case of default, commodities will disappear and inflation will increase manifold resulting in looting and disorder everywhere.

Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that the government has spent more than five and a half months in the agreement with the



IMF, waiting for the help of friendly countries, but now the implementation of the conditions of the international organization has started.

After the freeing of the dollar last month and a huge increase in the price of petrol, the burden of billions of rupees is being put on the consumers.

Now increased price of gas, expensive electricity, and enhanced taxation will cause unbearable inflation in the country which will affect every sector.

After that, a mini-budget will be introduced which will include a new tax of one hundred and seventy billion, a one percent increase in general sales tax, a one hundred and fifty percent increase in federal excise duty on cigarettes, and a twenty-five percent sales tax on luxury goods, etc.

Only after the staff-level agreement with the IMF will be possible after which the loan can be issued with the approval of the IMF board, which will stabilize the foreign exchange reserves to some extent and the value of the rupee will improve a little, he said.

Only after a deal with the IMF, it will be possible for Pakistan to get loans from other sources and Pakistan's global ranking will also improve, which is constantly decreasing.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that the government should start efforts for the 10th review of the IMF, but for the health of the economy, there should be a plan to pay off the debt along with borrowing, for which import substitution, eradication of theft in electricity and gas sectors and sale of sick units will be essential.

Petrol bomb

ISLAMABAD: Motorists wait to fill their vehicles' tanks at a petrol station, in Federal Capital, as the government has dropped another petrol bomb on the masses on Feb 16 (Thursday) after it already jacked up the prices by Rs35 per litre on Jan 29, two days ahead of schedule.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

In-House Session on 'Pakistan-Russia Relations: Recent Developments'

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Strategic Perspectives (CSP) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) organised an In-House Session with H.E. Danila Ganich, Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Pakistan. The focus was on "Pakistan-Russia Relations: Recent Developments."

The group of distinguished participants comprising of academics, area study experts, and practitioners included: Ambassador (R) Zamir Akram; Ambassador (R) Tasneem Aslam; Dr. Tughral Yamin, Institute of Policy Studies; Dr. Adam Saud, Department Head, Bahria University; Prof. Dr. Shabbir



Ahmed, Director, Area Study Centre for China, Russia & CARs, Peshawar University; Dr. Salma Malik, Department of Defence and Strategic Studies, Quaid-e-Azam University; and Dr. Farah Naz, School of Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH), National University of Science and Technology (NUST).

DG ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, in his welcome remarks, highlighted the evolution of Pakistan-Russia relations, recent bilateral exchanges, and the scope of cooperation in diverse fields.

Ambassador Ganich shared his perspective on the recent developments in bilateral relations and the international and regional context in which the relationship was evolving. This was followed by an interactive session with the participants.

Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman BoG of ISSI, made concluding remarks.

AIOU inks MoU with University of Religions and Denominations, Iran



City Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the University of Religions and Denominations, Iran. Vice Chancellor, AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mehmood, and Prof. Dr. Sayyed Abolhassan Nawab, President, University of Religions and Denominations, Iran signed the MoU. This signing ceremony was held at the main campus of AIOU during the visit of a delegation of academicians and religious scholars from Iran on a visit to Pakistan. The delegation was led by Dr. Sayyed Abolhassan Nawab, President, the University of Religions and Denominations, Iran.

Dr. Zahid Majeed, Director, International Collaboration and Exchange Program gave a detailed briefing on the profile of AIOU. Iranian delegates praised the education services being provided by AIOU. They said AIOU has a historical role in the history of Pakistan and their efforts are commendable to increase the literacy rate.

Vice Chancellor, AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mehmood said that the visit of this delegation will further strengthen the ties between Iranian and Pakistani universities. He said that after independence, Iran was the first country who recognized Pakistan and both countries supported each other in every difficult hour. Dr. Nasir Mehmood further said that there are about 25 thousand Pakistanis studying in different universities of Iran. He further said that if AIOU gets a suitable place in Iran to establish a center, then we can further strengthen our relations through education. Dr. Nasir Mahmood nominated Dr. Abdul Aziz Sahir and Dr. Zahid Majeed from AIOU while Prof. Dr. Sayyed Abolhassan Nawab nominated Dr. Ibrahim Amini as the focal person from the University of Religions and Denominations, Iran to frame a roadmap for further collaborations between both universities.

Registrar, AIOU, Raja Umer Younis, Principal officers and faculty members were also present in the event. Head, Iqbal Chair, Prof. Fateh Muhammad Malik said that the brotherly relations between Iran and Pakistan had started to be established right after Pakistan came into being. He said that Allama Muhammad Iqbal is very popular and well-known in Iran. Prof. Sahibzada Sajid Ur Rehman said that the Muslim Ummah is an ideological nation while other nations are based on color, race, language, and geography. He said that every citizen of Iran and Pakistan relates to each other in a relationship of brotherhood. Professor Dr. Abdul Aziz Sahir thanked the delegation in Persian language.



Photo shows President and Group CEO, PTCL & Ufone, Hatem Bamatraf posing for a group photo along with senior executives at a media briefing held to announce the group's financial results for the year 2022 at PTCL Headquarters Islamabad.

Tobacco Health Levy: A sustainable option to revive Pakistan's economy

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Health activists have urged the government to take sustainable steps such as implementing health levy on tobacco products to meet the criteria set by International Monetary Fund (IMF). In a press release shared by Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (SPARC), health activists dubbed Tobacco Health Levy as a Profitable and Sustainable option to solve Pakistan's financial woes and recommended government to take this route instead of taxing essential commodities.

Malik Imran Ahmed, Country head, Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, mentioned that government has repeatedly said that it has to take harsh decisions in order to fill the state's coffers and meet IMF's requirement. However there's one area where increasing taxation is logical and beneficial and that's tobacco sector.

Malik Imran mentioned that tobacco induced disease causes an annual economic burden of 615 billion which is 1.6% of Pakistan's GDP. On the other hand, the revenue generated from the tobacco industry is 120 billion. When a product is causing this much health loss, a levy must be implemented on it. Pakistan moved in this direction in 2019 by tabling a tobacco health levy bill but it hasn't seen the light of the day due to continuous interference of tobacco industry.

Dr. Ziauddin Islam, Former Technical Head, Tobacco Control Cell, Ministry of Health, said tobacco products are non-essential and hazardous items which cause 170,000 deaths every year in Pakistan. On an average, Pakistani smokers spend 10% of their average monthly income on cigarettes. Due to cheap and easy affordability nearly 12000 children begin smoking every day in the country. A struggling economy such as Pakistan can't afford this much loss of precious human and finance resources. Instead of taxing essential items which will raise inflation, government should impose health levy in addition to increase existing FED on tobacco products that are the major source of our health woes, and to reduce mortality and morbidity of tobacco related.

Monthly meeting of Hamdard Naunehal Assembly Karachi chapter held

Spokesman Report

KARACHI: A monthly meeting of Hamdard Naunehal Assembly Karachi chapter, comprised of national songs, speeches and Dua-i-Said, was held yesterday at Bait-ul-Hikmah Auditorium in Madinat al-Hikmah titled: "Decline of Ethics and Morality in Educational Institutions, who is responsible?" Dr. Asadullah Larik, Dean Faculty of Social Sciences & Humanities, Hamdard University was invited as a chief guest. Ms Sadia Rashid - President, Hamdard Foundation Pakistan, presided over the meeting.

In her presidential address, Ms. Sadia Rashid expounded on the fundamental nature of ethics as the bedrock upon which both spiritual and worldly accomplishments hinge. "As young people represent the future of our country, instilling within them the adequate ethical and moral principles is an imperative need of the pres-

ent moment. However, for this to be realized, the concerted efforts of entire society, including parents and teachers, must be brought to bear. The cultivation of a single generation, indeed, requires many years of tireless labor, arduous endeavor, and unwavering perseverance. The formative education of young minds commences in the domestic sphere, whereafter they proceed to institutions of learning, wherein they acquire moral and ethical instructions from their teachers," she said.

She also emphasized the significant role of teachers in the ethical and moral upbringing of students. Children use all of their cognitive abilities only when teachers and educational institutions create a suitable and calm environment for them."

She added that adults must eschew the use of indecent and unwholesome language and practices when teaching the young to communicate in a civil and morally upright fashion.



Dr. Asadullah Larik articulated that children should be introduced to high moral values at a young age since the habits formed in childhood tend to become deeply ingrained in their

character as they grow older. To instill virtues such as truthfulness, honesty, courage, kindness, respect for the elderly, good treatment of neighbors, respect for the rights of friends, and compassion

for the deserving, it is essential to cultivate these moral traits early on.

Dr. Larik further argued that reading material, such as books and magazines, plays a critical role in shaping a child's

personality. Thus, it is the responsibility of parents to provide their children with access to good literature and create a personal library for them. Furthermore, children should be made aware of the purpose of their lives, as a clear understanding of this concept can help them define their place in the world.

"Given the significant role of parents in shaping their children's personalities, they must take the lead in instilling passion, hard work, and curiosity in their offspring. By doing so, parents can help their children develop high ambitions for the future and attain them, paving the way for a fulfilling and rewarding life," he concluded.

Young speakers from different schools also spoke on the occasion. Later students of Hamdard Public School and other schools presented national songs, tableau and Dua-i-Said. Ms. Sadia Rashid and honorable chief guest Dr. Larik distributed shields among the students.

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We're (not) painting the roses red anymore

Rawan Radwan

For the past five years, Valentine's Day has been celebrated in Saudi Arabia in the grandest of ways, scenes I once honestly thought would only be possible in my dreams or across country borders.

Never did I think I'd see so many delivery trucks and cars zip through Saudi cities, delivering everything from long-stem roses to chocolates and plush toys on a day once deemed as anti-ethical to Islamic propriety.

Today, private dinners for two in the most romantic settings organized by event planners and cooked by Saudi chefs, local jewelry designers releasing special editions — and let's not get started on chocolate and dessert vendors — are being promoted left, right, and center.

Cliche or not, it works and pulls on every girl's heartstrings. When I think of Valentine's Day, I think of my parents and their epic love story that swells my heart.

Having lived Stateside for most of their marriage, my father, the love-struck romantic that he was, would come home

every February 14 with a red box, never flowers or roses, always a red box with gifts my mother still holds dear, even after his passing some years ago.

My mother still remembers every red box with unique gifts neatly placed amid a lavish collection of gold and white tissue paper. It's been over 25 years since she received a Valentine's Day gift, but she keeps every gift my late father sent her carefully on her dresser.

Similarly, a good friend told me of his parents' whirlwind love and their adoration for one another. On one Valentine's Day, his mother gave her husband a small card with the words "I love you Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, every day of the week" and signed it with the nickname he'd given to her, Misty. In return, he bought her the biggest card he could find and filled it with words of adoration, surrounding it with a giant bunny.

A memory that still brings tears to her eyes all these years after his passing.

These are the memories that last; these are the memories many are creating here in the Kingdom.

I, like many, was confused as to why birthdays and anniversaries were prohibited in Saudi

Arabia. It's celebrating love! I grew up surrounded by this love, these small gestures, gifts on birthdays and anniversaries, little notes on these special occasions from my siblings.

Taking that away from us was anti-ethical.

While some might say it's an overrated occasion, others believe it's one of many beautiful days to show love, how they want to, to their significant others.

Today, couples find new ways to express their love and devotion to one another through small or grand gestures, something that was once hidden from the public's eye in fear of being persecuted by the since-abolished Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice.

Many Saudis and expatriates would have to arrange for gifts weeks ahead, and in secret. Flower shops would remove all traces of red and pink roses, teddy bears were removed from vendors, and even cards weren't available for sale.

Some shop owners would close on what should have been the busiest day in the whole year.

The scenes would remind me of Disney's "Alice in Wonderland," based on Lewis Carroll's Alice books, when the cards were

painted red because it was the queen's choice.

We're no longer painting the roses red.

It changed in 2018 when Saudi cleric and former Director General of the Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice in Makkah, Sheikh Ahmed Qasim Al-Ghamdi, said that celebrating Valentine's Day was no different from Mother's Day, Teacher's Day, National Day, birthdays or marriage anniversaries. It was not "un-Islamic."

He said that "celebrating Valentine's Day does not contradict Islamic teachings as it is a worldly, social matter, just like celebrating the National Day and Mother's Day."

He added: "It is a humane and a social matter and congratulating people for it is not against Sharia."

"All these are common social matters shared by humanity and are not religious issues that require the existence of religious proof to permit it."

"There are many worldly things that we deal with morally that may be of interest to non-Muslim communities and became more common among Muslim communities because of their popularity."

"The Prophet dealt with many

worldly things that came from non-Muslims."

I was living in Europe at the time, for my studies. I couldn't believe my eyes or ears and thought it might be a joke or fake news until I read it on Arab News' website the next day and watched the whole interview on Al-Arabiya.

The news shocked everyone across the Kingdom and beyond. I was still skeptical until I spoke to my best friend a few days later, who was elated to have received a Valentine's Day gift from her husband.

She told me: "Finally! I get to celebrate the way we want to."

Such changes were appearing across the Kingdom, something that I experienced firsthand when I finally returned home after more than a decade abroad later that year. It was a welcome culture shock.

Walking down the Riyadh Boulevard last year, my mother and I were both in awe as large hearts were displayed on the district's big LED screens. I saw a small smile light up my mother's beautiful face as she recalled my father's gifts from all those years ago.

One thing's for sure, Valentine's Day is here to stay in Saudi Arabia.

Iranian President Raisi meets Xi in state visit to China

Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi met his counterpart Xi Jinping on Tuesday at the start of a three-day visit to China aimed at boosting trade and economic ties.

Raisi brought a large delegation to Beijing, including his central bank chief and ministers for oil and mining, and is expected to sign a number of "cooperation documents" with Xi, Tehran has said.

Iran and China have strong economic ties — especially in the fields of energy, transit, agriculture, trade and investment — and in 2021 signed a 25-year "strategic cooperation pact."

This is the first state visit by an Iranian president to China in more than 20 years. Raisi was greeted by Xi on a red carpet, after which he inspected Chinese military personnel.

Both countries face pressure from Western nations over their positions on Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which was launched almost a year ago, and Iran is already under strict US sanctions due to its nuclear program.

Iran has emerged as one of Russia's few remaining allies as Moscow has been pushed deeper into international isolation over the invasion.

Western countries have accused Tehran of supplying armed drones to Russia for use in the war in Ukraine, a charge it denies.

In December, Washington outlined what it said was an extensive relationship between Iran and Russia involving equipment such as helicopters, fighter jets and drones.

China is Iran's largest trading partner, IRNA said, citing the 10-month statistics of Iranian customs authorities. Tehran's exports to Beijing stood at \$12.6 billion, while it imported \$12.7 billion worth of goods from China.

Raisi is being accompanied by the country's foreign minister and ministers for the economy, roads and transportation, oil, industry, mining and trade and agriculture, according to Iranian state television.

His delegation also includes Ali Bagheri, Iran's deputy foreign minister for political affairs and its chief nuclear negotiator.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said Raisi would meet with Premier Li Keqiang and top Chinese legislator Li Zhanshu.

"China and Iran enjoy a traditional friendship, and it is the strategic choice of both sides to consolidate and develop China-Iran relations," Wang said.

Beijing wants to "play a constructive role in enhancing the unity and cooperation of countries in the Middle East and promoting regional security and stability," he added.

Raisi's first visit to China comes days after he declared victory over the nationwide protest movement triggered by the death in custody of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini, following her arrest for an alleged breach of Iran's dress code for women.

Authorities say hundreds of people, including dozens of security personnel, have been killed and thousands arrested during the protests, which they generally label as "riots."

The judiciary has sentenced 18 people to death in connection with the protests, according to an AFP tally based on official announcements. Four people have been executed, triggering international outrage.



Cartoon by Amjad Rasmī. (Courtesy of Ashraq Al-Awsat)

The role of public diplomacy in Saudi Vision 2030

Dr. Mohammed Al-Sulami

Almost every nation in the modern world depends on different tools, alongside standard political tools and channels, to promote its identity and introduce itself to the world in a positive manner free of stereotypes, clichés, biases, prejudices and preconceived notions that fail to acknowledge and recognize its rich history and reality. Such misconceptions are often popularized due to the negative influences of various media outlets, political or partisan positions of individuals or parties, or simply because of ignorance of all issues related to a particular nation.

When government officials speak about their homeland, its accomplishments and the various opportunities present, or work to correct misconceptions or stereotypes, their credibility is often initially questioned, despite the veracity of their statements. Since their professional duties include promoting and defending their homeland, their statements are assumed to be biased and, in most cases, are taken with a pinch of salt.

In addition to correcting misconceptions, presenting an accurate image of a nation's reality and communicating regularly with other countries is critical. To this end, it is important for a realistic, balanced and scientific strategy to be adopted. In this context, local media and communication outlets should play a vital role in enabling diplomatic missions to succeed in their outreach and help them achieve their objectives.

Saudi Arabia has already suffered several losses due to the activities of hostile Western political lobbies, mostly linked with countries that adopt belligerent positions toward the

Kingdom, most particularly Iran. The pro-regime Iranian diaspora, which has infiltrated the highest levels of Western decision-making circles, think tanks, research and academic institutions, provides recommendations and consultations to governments, and plays a central and active role in depicting the Kingdom in a negative light.

For at least the past four decades, Iran has experienced human capital flight, as the best and brightest move abroad, seeking freedom to exercise their creativity and develop their careers. This trend continues to the current day, with more and more Iranians emigrating due to the repressive political, social and security conditions in Iran and the greater academic and professional opportunities overseas. Most Iranian emigrants come from the ranks of the elite and the most promising university students, with official Iranian statistics suggesting that 200,000 Iranian students emigrate annually, causing Iran to lose \$2 billion a year.

Some of these young Iranian emigrants have risen to senior positions in various leading institutions and research bodies in their adopted nations, and have gone on to become tools of the Iranian regime's foreign policy in the West, whether willingly or through coercion, or sometimes due to nationalist or ethnocentric reasons. In this capacity, they work to distort and besmirch the image of other nations in the regions surrounding Iran, serving the regime and its interests, or assisting it in circumventing sanctions, sometimes through establishing front companies. Iran is not the only nation to engage in such activities prompted by various ideological and political motives.

In contrast, we find that Saudi students who emigrate to various nations worldwide to study focus primarily on successfully concluding

their studies as fast as possible and immediately returning to the Kingdom to live and work. There is no doubt that this is positive for the Kingdom, reflecting the fact that Saudi citizens of both sexes are extremely enthusiastic about contributing to building their homeland. Unlike young Iranian emigrants, young Saudis abroad find the prospect of returning to their homeland far more appealing.

This reality of most young Saudis traveling abroad only briefly to study before returning on graduation to the Kingdom means that there is far less of a Saudi presence in Western research institutions and think tanks than of Iranians. Hence, Saudis have far less chance to influence public opinion. Unfortunately, this absence has been seized on by governments and groups hostile to the Kingdom to paint a misleading image of it and to continuously depict it in a negative light.

Given these factors, considering the rapidly blossoming climate of transformation and openness in the Kingdom, along with the burgeoning opportunities in the tourism, investment and cultural sectors, it is vital to seriously consider how best to establish a more proactive form of international Saudi popular diplomacy and encourage NGOs to play an active role in dispelling misconceptions and negative stereotypes about the Kingdom. It is time for us Saudis to represent ourselves and showcase the Kingdom in all its modern, dynamic, multifaceted complexity, rather than depending on foreign PR firms that, in most cases, have little real insight or understanding of the Kingdom, or even depend on the same misinformation or simplistic clichés that we are attempting to escape from and challenge.

Dr. Mohammed Al-Sulami is president of the International Institute for Iranian Studies (Rasanah).

Need to develop flood resilient education system in Pakistan

Waseem Khokhar

Experts stressed the need to take immediate measures to recover the loss of learning during floods and develop a flood-resilient education system to prevent disruption to education in such calamities. This was stressed during the launch of the report on the post-floods education situation in Pakistan, "Towards a Resilient Education Recovery from Pakistan's Floods—Rapid Response Research," published by Pakistan Coalition for Education (PCE) in collaboration with Education Champion Network (ECN). A high-level policy discussion also took place on the sidelines of the launch organized by PCE in collaboration with the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (MOFEPT), Malala Fund, and ECN. Representatives from the World Bank, JICA, FCDO, International Rescue Committee (IRC), UNICEF, and the UNDP participated in the policy roundtable.

The initial findings from this research have been incorporated into the Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Government of Pakistan and UNDP's plan, "Pakistan Floods 2022: Resilient Recovery, Rehabilitation, and Reconstruction Framework (4RF)" in the section on education.

Speaking on the occasion, Waseem Ajmal, Additional Secretary MOFEPT said, "The 2022 floods have been devastating for Pakistan's development. In education, 3.6 million children were affected and over 34,000 schools were damaged or destroyed. All education departments, including MOFEPT, are now working to ensure education continues for those children affected by the floods, and this week the Honourable Minister will address the Education Cannot Wait for High-Level Financing Conference in Geneva to advocate for increased support for children affected by the floods in Pakistan. So I welcome this important and practical report at this crucial time, and I particularly welcome its focus on recovering lost

learning and building long-term resilience. I thank all involved for their efforts."

"Several districts across Pakistan that were affected by last year's catastrophic floods are the same as where massive flooding occurred in 2010 and 2011. However, there is no evidence to suggest that any meaningful measures were taken during the decade between these two calamities to protect against disruption in children's education during times of emergency," expressed Zehra Arshad, Executive Director PCE.

"To structure an effective response to educational needs, this important report asks for using rapid response mechanisms like a public-private partnership to help build schools at a faster pace and more importantly to ensure that all girls and boys who had to experience major learning losses can rapidly keep up with learning," said by Javed Malik, Program Director Malala Fund Pakistan office.

The author of the report Dr. Moizza Binat Sarwar said, "Given past examples from Pakistan, the rebuilding of damaged or destroyed infrastructure/schools has been the main strategy of education recovery. While this is important, evidence shows that merely building new brick-and-mortar buildings has had no significant impact on curtailing school drop-outs or improving learning outcomes." The author also highlighted the lack of focus on rebuilding shock-resilient infrastructure that can survive the onset of another natural calamity.

During an interactive discussion participants highlighted the need to address long-term learning losses, and the importance of standardizing Temporary Learning Centers (TLCs) that had been set up in several flood-hit areas. Participants also discussed the need to avoid duplication of efforts by different development partners to ensure a wider outreach and a more effective overall response.

Senior Education Specialist at the World Bank, Izza Farrukh stressed the need to abandon complicated Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) in favor of a simple curriculum and assessment to facilitate the learning of affected students.

Pakistani girl's letter to Chinese astronaut sparks conversation on space

Misbah Saba Malik

ISLAMABAD: Aasiya Ismail, a 16-year-old 10th standard student from Pakistan, had a lot of questions in mind when she came to know that Chinese astronauts will take Pakistani seeds to China's space station for space breeding.

"Pakistan Science Foundation (PSF) asked students of different schools to write letters to the astronauts who will help Pakistan bring a revolution in the agriculture sector by taking our very own seeds to space. I had many queries, but the most intriguing was about their role to end poverty," Ismail told Xinhua.

China helped Pakistan take seven herbal seeds to the Chinese space station for space breeding by exposing them to cosmic radiation and microgravity to

mutate their genes, and the PSF asked students to write a letter to Chinese astronauts in order to enhance their interest in science.

The teenager spent a month writing the letter after having researched about space breeding of seeds and the Chinese space station.

The letter was selected among all the letters received by the foundation for the astronauts.

In talks with Xinhua, Ismail said that as a teenager she feels scared for her future due to climate change-triggered food security challenges, so she asked the astronaut, "will space seeds end poverty and hunger in the world, because the countries like Pakistan are currently experiencing an economic and environmental crisis, which is feared to result in hunger, poverty, and indigence?"

Ismail got answers to all her questions at a recently held event to mark the successful return of the seeds here, during which a Chinese astronaut told her about the Chinese space station and the importance of Chinese seeds to meet the food security challenge.

"The mutant seeds may be screened to breed new varieties that are resistant to drought and waterlogging ... after long time efforts, China is now able to develop a wheat with denser plants, more ears, and higher yields," the astronaut told Ismail through a recorded video played at the event.

He also urged the 16-year-old and other young students to work hard and devote themselves to studies and in the future to play their part in the China-Pakistan cooperation.

Talking to Xinhua, Samina



Saeed, a physics teacher of Ismail, said that the Pakistani student's interaction with the Chinese astronaut would motivate other students to study deeply about science and about Pak-China

friendship.

The seeds were launched into outer space carried by the Shenzhou-14 spaceship on June 5, 2022, and after six months of flying, returned to the earth with the Shenzhou-14 astronaut crew on Dec. 4 last year.

Atia-tul-Wahab, a professor at the International Center for Chemical and Biological Sciences, University of Karachi, said her institute proposed the government to send the herbs' seeds to space.

"We sent some grains to the space and kept the same quantity in our laboratory. Now upon their return, we will closely examine them and do their tests at our laboratory. Then both seed varieties will be sowed separately to see the end results through comparison," she told Xinhua. (Xinhua)

German CG Visits Dowites 78 Operation Theatre Complex

Spokesman Report

LAHORE: Ruediger Lotz, Consul General of Germany at Karachi, visited the Dowites 78 Operation Theatre Complex. He was received by Prof Dr Shafiq ur Rehman, General Secretary, and the senior management of DOTs. He was accompanied by Mr. Muhammad Usman from AHK Dubai.

Prof. Shafiq-u-Rehman; General Secretary DOTs welcomed and presented a brief about the projects of Dowites 78 Operation Theatre Welfare Society including Foot & Wound Care Centre.

He briefed the audience about the goal which is to do complicated, costly surgeries free of cost in the best equipped OT Complex. He also shared with the German Consul General, the upcoming plan of expansion for Dowites 78 Foot & Wound Care Centre which is being managed together with the Dow Graduates of 1991.

Dr Nasrullah Memon, Additional Medical Superintendent CHK, presented



an overview of the Dr. Ruth KM PFAU Civil Hospital Karachi. The Principal, Dow Medical College, Dr. Saba Sohai, presented a brief introduction about the only Foot & Wound Care Centre of Karachi, which is catering to the local population as well as that of Balochistan and other areas of Sindh.

Dr. Ruediger Lotz in his remarks said that he was

impressed by the work being done by DOTs.

"I am extremely excited to visit the private & public sector hospitals in Pakistan and to build a relationship in a very dynamic region," said Consular Lotz. "I am happy to visit a hospital named after a committed doctor who was also German and to see that her legacy is being carried forward." He and his team

were taken on a visit to the OT complex where he saw an ongoing robotic surgery and also the treatment being given at the foot and wound centre.

A token of appreciation was presented to Dr. Ruediger Lotz by Dr. Bilal Ahmed; Director Dots, Dr. Shafiq-u-Rehman; General Secretary DOTs and Dr. Samia Khan from Dowites Batch of 91.

Unauthorized use of WFP-Usaid branded food

News Desk



ISLAMABAD: WFP is aware of the unauthorized use of WFP-US-AID branded food bags in Larkana, Sindh being used to sell non-WFP food in the open market.

The matter has been investigated by local authorities. WFP takes any unauthorized wholesale selling of its humanitarian food assistance extremely seriously and is committed to ensuring that it reaches those vulnerable people who depend on it for survival.

The WFP hotline at 0800 93732 remains available to report any unauthorized sale of WFP assistance.

PM Rishi Sonik visits the £10m Community Assessment Center in Oldham

Report Arif Chodhry

OLDHAM: The Oldham Community Diagnostic Center (CDC) in Rytton started operations in December 2022. The center provides immediate access to GP-pharmacist or hospital-referred patients for tests-scans-various checks.

More than 30,000 patients will be benefited in this center throughout the year-Prime Minister Rishi Sonik met the staff and patients at the center and also asked about the status of one of the patients Riaz Ahmed. Five promises were made to the public, one of them was to reduce the waiting list of patients in hospitals and today I have come to the diagnostic center based in Oldham which will reduce the waiting list of patients.

We will also set up more such centers across the country so that people on waiting lists across the country do not have to wait. On this occasion, Chairman NCA Professor Elaine Fairhurst said that we are happy to host the visit of Mr. Prime Minister Rishi Sonik. Facilitates all on-site testing



ACF Pakistan has successfully implemented the EU funded project



News Desk

ISLAMABAD: ACF Pakistan has successfully implemented the EU funded project Program for Better Nutrition Sindh to address malnutrition among children under five and pregnant and lactating women in 8 districts of Sindh. ACF Pakistan organized a Reflections and Takeaways Symposium at a local hotel in Islamabad. Mr. Zulfikar Mithani Country Director, ACF Pakistan welcomed the participants. Mr. Langrel, Team Leader-European Union spoke on the problems of malnutrition in Pakistan. Dr. Fatima Amin, Mr. Aftab Hamid, Sadia Gul shared their views on the negative effects of climate change and food insecurity as per the country's nutrition strategy.

Representatives of European Union, Department of Health, Ministry of National Health Services Regulations and Coordination, Pakistan Humanitarian Forum participated in the event. Representatives of UN agencies and local food producers as well as international non-governmental organizations also participated.

The event concluded with a session on government priorities, led by Dr Khawaja Masood, Nutrition Coordinator, Ministry of National Health Services Regulations and Coordination. Dr. Ranumal Lohanu, Provincial Head of Sindh thanked all the participants and partners for their invaluable participation in tackling malnutrition in Pakistan.

Roshan Packages keen to invest in Ethiopia

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Roshan Packages, a leading manufacturer of corrugated and flexible packaging, on Wednesday expressed keen interest to invest in the manufacturing sector of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

Roshan Packages Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Tayyab Ejaz discussed different options in this regard during a meeting with H.E. Jemal Beker Abdula, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

The ambassador briefed the CEO about political, economic and security situation in his country and said it was a right time to enter the market of Ethiopia which was a gateway to



Africa having 1.4 billion population.

He said Ethiopia was the fastest-growing economy in the world as the incumbent government had

implemented a reform agenda to transform the country.

H.E. Jemal Beker said the cost of production was cheap in Ethio-

opia which had been producing clean energy through water, solar and geo thermal sources. It was also a signatory of the Africa Continental Free Trade Agreement which enabled the manufacturers in Ethiopia to sell their products across the continent.

There has been full investment protection guarantee in Ethiopia, he noted.

He also invited the CEO to join in the Pakistani trade delegation flying to Ethiopia on March 5-10 for exploring trade, business and investment opportunities.

CEO Tayyab Ejaz said he would participate in the trade delegation and expressed his resolve for bringing the two countries more close.

Earlier, the ambassador visited different manufacturing plants installed by Roshan Packages and also planted a sapling on his arrival.

Two Pakistani institutions join hands to promote CPEC, BRI and Pakistan-China friendship

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: A memorandum of understanding (MoU) between China Study Centre, COMSATS University Islamabad, and Centre for BRI and China Studies - Institute of Peace and Diplomatic Studies, Pakistan, was signed at Junaid Zaidi Library, COMSATS University Islamabad.

The MoU is It focuses on joint research collaborations and the development of programs to avail government and non-government research funding, academic publications, and training to improve the scientific, academic, and research levels of both institutions.

There will also be an exchange of experienced scholars and promotion of China-Pakistan relations, friends of the BRI forum, and other import-

ant subjects of mutual interest. The exchange of information and opinions on topics related to politics, economics, social and strategic studies, international relations, foreign policy, regional and interregional development, and other topics and issues of common interest to both parties are also part of the memorandum.

Institute of Peace and Diplomatic Studies (IPDS), established in June 2014, is a Pakistan-based independent, non-governmental, not-for-profit Research, Advocacy, and Public Diplomacy Think and Do Tank. IPDS aims to provide strength to Pakistan's effective role in global diplomacy through innovative and innovative research, effective advocacy, dialogues series, education modules, consultancy services,

well-built & knitted public diplomacy initiatives, and engagements in the thematic areas of Peace and Diplomatic Studies. Centre for BRI and China Studies is an important flagship initiative of IPDS.

The COMSATS University Islamabad (CUI) was established in 1998, as COMSATS Institute of Information Technology (CIIT), as a project of the Commission on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development in the South (COMSATS), which is an inter-governmental organization with 27 member states in three continents: Asia, Africa, and Latin America. CIIT was a public sector degree-awarding higher education institution and was given a charter by the Federal Government in August 2000. Later, CIIT was upgraded to a Federally Char-

tered University in April 2018 under the CUI Act 2018.

The China Study Centre, since its inception in 2013, aims to offer multidisciplinary research in all realms of Chinese society, together with CPEC specifically and BRI in general. The Centre envisages preparing of human resources, a natural choice for Chinese enterprises in Pakistan. The acquaintance with the Chinese language and culture and enhancing bilateral relations between both countries is always the main concern of the center.

The MoU was signed by Prof. Dr. Sajjad Ahmed Madani, Registrar, CUI, and Muhammad Asif Noor, Director, IPDS, Farhat Asif, President, IPDS, and other faculty members from CUI were present on occasion.



Bull & Bears
PSX 100-Share
Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index		
Current	Prev. Close	
41,326.85	41,150.16	
Day's High	Day's Low:	
41,457.76	40,918.85	
Index Value	Change	
5,538,026,043	+176.69	
Percentage	Time	
+0.43%	15 February, 2023 5: 00 pm	
Europe: FTSE 100 Index		
Index Value	Change	
7,997.83	+43.98	
Percentage	Time	
+0.55%	15 Feb, 4: 35 pm GMT	
USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average		
Index Value	Change	
34,014.75	-74.52	
Percentage	Time	
-0.22%	15 Feb, 11: 47 am GMT-5	
Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average		
Index Value	Change	
27,501.86	-100.91	
Percentage	Time	
-0.37%	15 Feb, 3: 15 pm GMT+9	
Open Market Forex Rates		
Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	179.80	184.00
Bahrain Dinar	717	725
Canadian Dollar	194.80	199.50
China Yuan	39.00	43.00
Danish Krone	38.78	39.18
Euro	280.70	283.50
Hong Kong Dollar	34.34	34.69
Indian Rupee	3.25	3.36
Japanese Yen	2	2.05
Kuwaiti Dinar	880.68	889.68
Malaysian Ringgit	62	62.6
New Zealand \$	170.41	172.41
Norwegians Krone	26.53	26.83
Omani Riyal	700.35	708.35
Qatari Riyal	74.06	74.76
Saudi Riyal	69.75	70.45
Singapore Dollar	199	201
Swedish Korona	25.97	26.27
Swiss Franc	292.21	294.71
Thai Bhat	8.25	9.75
U.A.E Dirham	71.60	72.32
UK Pound Sterling	317.50	320.65
US Dollar	265.00	267.65

Telenor Pakistan commits to providing a safer internet for children

By Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: To highlight the importance of online safety for children and reinforce its commitment towards creating a safer digital future for generations to come, Telenor Pakistan celebrated "Safer Internet Day" at its 345 Campus in Islamabad. The event was marked with the launch of a special episode of Burka Avenger and attended by industry experts, academia and students.

In the last five years alone, Telenor Pakistan has been working towards building the capacity of children in Pakistan around safe use of the internet in partnership with Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi. Through Telenor's Safe Internet Program, they have upskilled over one million children in the country and over five million across Europe and Asia. Last year, the telecom operator partnered with UNICEF to upskill another 750,000 children, parents, and educators across Pakistan around Child Online Protection and to influence policy and regulatory reform in the next three years.

"Technology and digital applications provide significant opportunities to keep children and young people learning, entertained, and connected. However, it also increases their exposure to a host of risks. Telenor Pakistan will continue promoting digital inclusion, online safety, and new skillset to help young people navigate a connected world. However, online



safety content is competing for youths' attention in a world of social media and video games, and thinking innovatively to communicate our message is more important than ever." Irfan Wahab Khan, Chief Executive Officer Telenor Pakistan, said in his remarks.

He added that we could ensure our children are using the internet safely by supporting them and their caregivers to understand the risks presented by the internet and being alert to

signs of distress that may arise with online activity. "Keeping the digital safe is a shared responsibility, and all the stakeholders need to come together to keep the dialogue alive on creating a safer space for children," Khan added.

The event was preceded by a panel discussion led by industry experts on the topic "Making space for a conversation about life online," followed by the launch of a special episode of Burka Avenger on child online protection.

Burka Avenger is Pakistan's first animated female superhero, created by Unicorn Black. The animated series chronicles the adventures of Jiya, a schoolteacher by day and a burka-clad superhero by night. In each episode, she fights thugs who want to shut down the girls' school where she teaches. In this special episode, created in collaboration with Telenor Pakistan, the superhero comes up against villains who are cyberbullying the school children by catfishing the village children and leaking their personal information. A survey revealed that teenagers and adolescent participants access the internet unsupervised almost 80% of the time. With about 70 million active adolescent users online in Pakistan, there is almost always a danger of these young and inexperienced internet users falling prey to online predators or being influenced by disinformation propagated by malicious content creators.

The event was attended by experts from the public, development, and education sector, including students who shared their perspectives and its impact on their mental well-being. The panel discussion also shed light on social media platforms that are most popular among youth today and what online risks they expose children to. In addition, the panelists underscored the need to build the capacity of not only children but also caregivers and educators and strengthen legislation, curriculum and policy frameworks around online child protection.

Envoy to help business community in promoting trade with Senegal



By Tariq Khattak

ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) said that Pakistan has the potential to promote billions of dollars of exports with African countries including Senegal, for which it is important that Pakistan's private sector should be helped in getting better access to the African region. He said that the current era is the era of trade diplomacy, so he emphasized that Pakistani diplomats should pay special attention to promoting Pakistan's trade with foreign countries, which will boost our exports and help improve the economy. He expressed these views while talking to Saima Sayed, Pakistan's Ambassador-designate to Senegal during her visit to ICCI.

Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that the

bilateral trade between Pakistan and Senegal is much less than the actual potential of both countries, so he emphasized that our Embassy should cooperate in enhancing trade and exports with Senegal. He said that a delegation of ICCI will visit Ethiopia in March this year and suggested that the Embassy should consider cooperating with the Chamber in organizing a Business Opportunities Conference in Senegal to connect the private sectors of both countries with each other that would help in identifying new areas of business promotion between the two countries. He expressed his best wishes for Saima Sayed on her new assignment in Senegal and hoped that she will play an active role in increasing trade and economic ties between the two countries.

Faad Waheed, Senior Vice President ICCI said that Senegal can be an attrac-

tive market for Pakistan and suggested that a display center should be set up in the Embassy to display Pakistani products, which would help promote their exports to Senegal.

Saima Sayed, Pakistan's Ambassador-designate to Senegal, speaking on the occasion, said that she will cooperate with the business community in improving business relations with Senegal. She said that Senegal is an important country in West Africa, so by establishing close cooperation with it, Pakistan can gain better access to the West African market.

Former Presidents ICCI Khalid Iqbal Malik, Zafar Bakhtawari and Tariq Sadiq as well as Ameer Hamza, Sanaullah Khan and others also spoke at the occasion and gave useful proposals to improve trade and economic relations between Pakistan and Senegal.

Bilateral trade between Nigeria and Pakistan can be further improved: Nigerian HC



By Commerce Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Nigerian High Commissioner in Pakistan, H.E. MOHAMMED BELLO ABIOYE said prospects are very high to further improve bilateral economic and trade cooperation between Nigeria and Pakistan, however, he underscored the need of removing bottlenecks in enhancing present bilateral trade volume between the countries.

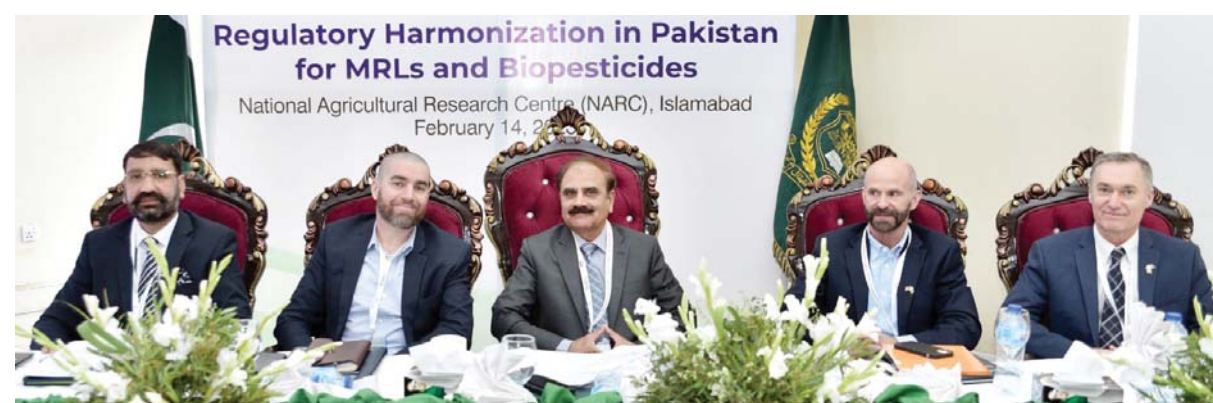
HC Mohammed Bello Abioye was talking with Mr. Sohail Altaf Former Vice President FPCCI during his visit to the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) Capital Office, Islamabad.

The Nigerian High Commissioner said trade and economic volume between Nigeria and Paki-

stan is very low, which should be improved by taking full advantage of available opportunities and bringing these relations to a new peak through the establishment of business-to-business contacts, launching of joint ventures, utilizing all resources, potentials and each other's experiences at an optimal level.

Mr Abioye emphasized the need to remove hurdles, especially problems that have been faced by the business community of both countries on a priority basis. He added that the issue of price non-competitiveness should be resolved as soon as possible. He also emphasizes the implementation of the MOU signed during the visit of the President of Pakistan to Nigeria, especially the establishment of the Joint Chamber of Commerce.

PARC is forging partnerships with CABI, USDA, and USAID



By Commerce Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Agricultural Research Council in collaboration with Center for Agriculture and Bioscience International (CABI), with support from USDA and USAID, organized a Stakeholder Engagement Workshop under the program "Regulatory Harmonization in Pakistan for MRLs and Biopesticides" at National Agricultural Research Center, Islamabad. The focus of the event was the importance of Maximum Residues Limits (MRLs) for pesticides. Maximum residue limit (MRL)

is the highest level of a pesticide residue that is legally tolerated in or on food when pesticides are applied as per Good Agricultural Practice. Various stakeholders involved in research commissioning and research implementation attended the workshop, including scientists throughout-NARC system, CDRI, ERP-IP-EP, Director, AZRC Umerkot and extension workers from provincial departments of agriculture, private sector and from leading agriculture universities of Pakistan.

During the event, Dr. Ghulam Muhammad Ali, the Chair-

man of PARC, commended the collaborative efforts of CABI and USDA in reducing the exposure of MRLs and aflatoxin in crucial commodities of Pakistan. He stressed the importance of eradicating such issues at the grassroots level to generate greater economic benefits for the country.

Dr. Babar E. Bajwa, Senior Regional Director-Asia at CABI, extended a warm welcome to all the participants attending the workshop. He highlighted that the CABI and PARC partnership aligns well with the contempo-

rary approaches taken by developed nations to address crop health challenges.

During the event, Mr. Ira Frydman, the Director of the Climate and Sustainable Growth Office at USAID Pakistan, commended the collaborative efforts of the implementation partners, which had successfully developed the first-ever aflatoxin biocontrol product.

The participants agreed that ongoing efforts are necessary to build a sustainable and robust research infrastructure to meet the needs of the country and tackle emerging challenges.

Lavish living of Pakistani politicians stuns western officials

ISLAMABAD: Former President of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt on Wednesday said the top officials of the rich Western countries are stunned by the luxuries of the Pakistani elite.

The officials of IMF, World Bank, and other international organizations are always surprised to see the expenses of Pakistan's political elite and bureaucrats when they visit the west to get loans, he added.

Shahid Rasheed Butt said that no one believes that these politicians and bureaucrats living like kings have come from a poor country.

No country or institution is interested in lending to a country where all resources are allocated to the elite, the people are treated as slaves, revenue is not raised and loans are taken to pay off the debt.

The business leader said that despite taking loans from the IMF twenty-four times, our rulers are so incompetent that they are unable to give a plan for the repayment of the loan and this task is also

fulfilled by the IMF.

IMF is not ready to trust Pakistan but on the other hand, it immediately approved a 4.7 billion dollar loan on a request of Bangladesh with some routine conditions because its reputation is much better than ours.

Shahid Rasheed Butt said that the government has increased gas prices by one hundred and thirteen percent in order to reduce the losses of gas companies, while the price of gas will be increased again in July. Corruption plays a major role in the causes of losses of gas companies but little attention is being paid to this problem.

In Pakistan, the price of gas for the fertilizer mafia is kept three times lower than in Bangladesh, but the price of the finished products in both countries is almost the same because the government policy in Pakistan benefits the capitalist.

Similarly, Bangladesh has no separate gas tariff for the export sector, but the undue favors in this sector in Pakistan do not seem to end.

CCP applauds Nepra's decision to maintain net metering regulations

By Commerce Reporter

ISLAMABAD: The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has welcomed the decision of the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) to maintain the existing NEPRA (Alternative & Renewable Energy) Distributed Generation and Net Metering Regulation, 2015. The decision comes after NEPRA proposed amendments to the net metering regulations, which raised concerns over competition.

The proposed amendments would have replaced the National Average Power Purchase Price (NAPP) with the National Average Energy Purchase Price (NAEPP), resulting in a decrease in the amount payable to distributed generators/prosumers (consumers/customers who both produce and consumes electricity). CCP had reservations over the proposed amendments and conveyed its concerns to NEPRA in Nov 2022. NEPRA assured to give due consideration to all stakeholders' views before reaching a decision on the proposed amendments.

The Competition Act, 2010, mandates CCP to review policy frameworks for promoting competition and making suitable recommendations for amendments to any law affecting competition in Pakistan to the government. CCP noted that the proposed amendments would have been detrimental to the distributed generators/prosumers, who made investments in solar systems based on policy provisions, agreement with their respective DISCOs, and a license from NEPRA.

The proposed amendments would have also placed distributed generators/prosumers at a disadvantage compared to other generation companies and IPPs. Moreover, DISCOs would have purchased electricity units from distributed generators at Rs. 9/kWh (existing rate is 19.32kWh) and sold them back to end consumers on the grid at a significant mark-up. However, NEPRA's recent decision would result in equal treatment of all players in the sector.

CCP supports NEPRA's decision and looks forward to continued collaboration to promote competition, fair play, and equal treatment for all the players in the sector.

Top seeds move to semi-finals of ITF World Junior Tennis Championships

Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: All the seeded players moved into the semi-finals of both Boys Singles and Girls Singles events of ITF Pakistan PPL – Syed Dilawar Abbas World Junior Tennis Championships 2023 after beating their respective opponents in the quarter-final stage at PTF-SDA Tennis Complex Islamabad on Wednesday.

Only one upset was caused by unseeded Yejun Lee of Korea when she eliminated the 7th seed of Maia Visan of Romania in the Girl's Singles quarter-final 6-1 6-0.

Yerzhan Kistafin Ambassador of the Republic of Kazakhstan to Pakistan visit-

ed PTF Complex to witness some of the matches. He appreciated the high standard of tennis and also interacted with players and parents from his home country as well as other countries.

Senator Taj Haider also visited PTF Complex and interacted with the players, coaches and parents and appreciated the efforts of PTF for conducting International tournaments in a highly befitting manner.

The following are the results:

Boys Singles Quarter-Finals: Cem Atlamis (TUR) bt Jihwan KIM (KOR) 6-0, 6-4; Yuan Lu (CHN) bt Dogan Can Sipahioğlu (TUR) 6-0, 6-2; Bugra Ozkok (TUR) bt Edward Kruppe (CAN) 6-0, 7-

5; Kamonpanyakorn Thadpong (THA) bt Mahatir Muhammad (PAK) 5-7, 7-6(3), 6-2;

Girls Singles Quarter-Finals: Yejun Lee (KOR) bt Maia Visan (ROU) 6-1, 6-0; Vlada Guryleva (RUS) bt Jinshu Xia (CHN) 5-7, 6-0, 6-4; Zeynep Erbakan (TUR) bt Pitchayapak Srimuk (THA) 6-2, 6-2; Defne Erbakan (TUR) bt Lilya Piskun (RUS) 3-6, 6-1, 6-3.

Boys Doubles Quarter-Finals: Keagan Jonathan (MAS) / Jihwan Kim (KOR) bt Ahmad Nael Qureshi (PAK) / Kritta-maet Thammakun (THA) 6-3, 7-5; Cem Atlamis (TUR) / Mikhail Khodorchenko (RUS) 1-6, 7-5 (10-6); Mahatir Muhammad Khan (PAK) / Nadir Mirza (PAK)

bt Asad Zaman (PAK) / Boda Zheng (CHN) 6-2, 6-2; Yash Bahalkar (GBR) / Hamid Israr Gul (PAK) Vs Teetawat Tavachphongsri (THA) / Kamonpanyakorn Thadpong (THA) (in progress).

Girls Doubles Quarter-Finals: Taira Abildayeva (KAZ) / Vlada Guryleva (RUS) bt Se Yeong Jang (KOR) / Yejun Lee (KOR) 6-3, 6-3; Anastasiya Kim (KAZ) / Jinshu Xia (CHN) bt Sheeza Sajid (PAK) / Phitchayapak Srimuk (THA) 6-1, 6-1; Defne Erbakan (TUR) / Zeynep Erbakan (TUR) bt Seun Baeg (KOR) / Maia Visan (ROU) 6-0, 6-0; Polina Bershteyan (RUS) / Lilya Piskun (RUS) Vs Soha Ali (PAK) / Amna Ali Qayyum (PAK) (in progress).

Asian Junior Squash C'ship

Aziz Boolani, CEO Serena Hotels, hosted a dinner in the honour of 21st Asian Junior Squash Champions at Islamabad Serena Hotel.



Karachi Kings' pacer Mir Hamza ruled out of PSL 8 remainder



A Sports -

KARACHI: Karachi Kings' left-arm pacer Mir Hamza has been ruled out of the remainder of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) eight due to an injury.

According to the details, Hamza fractured one of his fingers amid his side's opening clash against Peshawar Zalmi on Tuesday which resulted in him ruling out of the ongoing marquee league.

The Kings are yet to announce Hamza's replacement for the remainder of the league.

Taking to Twitter, Hamza's PSL franchise Kings confirmed that the pacer fractured one of his fingers due to which he has been ruled out of the ongoing season.

"Fast bowler Mir Hamza has been ruled out of [PSL 8] due to a fractured finger," wrote Kings.

"Our thoughts are with him, and we wish him a speedy recovery. The Karachi Kings family is with you, Mir!" Kings added.

Hamza was part of the Kings' Playing XI during their two-run defeat against Zalmi in their opening match of PSL 8 on Tuesday.

The left-arm pacer could bowl two overs in the thriller against Zalmi and picked up a wicket for 13 runs.

It is pertinent to mention that the Kings will lock horns with Islamabad United in their second PSL 8 fixture on Thursday.

Sikandar Raza Butt calls PSL 'the best league'

KARACHI: Zimbabwean all-rounder Sikandar Raza Butt, who is part of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) team Lahore Qalandars, said Wednesday that the PSL is the best league he has played in so far.

He said that the Shaheen Shah Afridi-led Lahore Qalandars will have to play better cricket than last year to defend the title.

In an interview with Geo News in Karachi, Butt said that the PSL is a very tightly fought competition. He said that the inaugural game was won by only one run, and the second by two runs.

Ihsanullah, Rossouw propel Sultans to thump Gladiators

A Sports -

MULTAN: Multan Sultans' young pacer Ihsanullah wreaked havoc over the strong Quetta Gladiators batting lineup before Rilee Rossouw powered the home side to a dominating nine-wicket victory with an unbeaten 78-run knock.

Set to chase a mere 111, the Sultans sealed the victory in style in the 14th over as Rossouw smashed back-to-back sixes to Mohammad Nawaz and finished as the top-scorer with an unbeaten 78.

The Sultans had a shaky start to the run chase as Shan Masood fell on the first delivery on the second over after managing to score a mere three.

Following the early hiccup, Sultans' skipper Mohammad Rizwan anchored the run chase with Rossouw as the duo put on a match-winning 108-run partnership and made sure his side claim two valuable points.

Rossouw was the core aggressor of the match-winning partnership as he scored a quickfire 78 off just 42 deliveries, laced with nine boundaries and three sixes, while Rizwan remained unbeaten on 34-ball 28. Nuwan Thusara, who provided the Gladiators with an early breakthrough, remained the only bowler to pick up a wicket for the touring side.

Put into bat first, the Sultans' pacers dominated a star-studded Gladiators' batting lineup and bunched them out for a mere 110 runs in the 19th over.



The Gladiators found themselves in trouble against Sultans' bowling attack right from the start as Sameen Gul handed the home side an early breakthrough in the second over by removing Martin Gupthill (7) with just 10 runs on the scoreboard.

Hard-hitting opening batter Jason Roy then put on a brief second-wicket partnership with young Abdul Wahid Bangalzai before the latter perished after scoring a mere one.

The Gladiators then began to lose wickets at an alarming rate with Ihsanullah running through their lineup with five wickets in his first three overs, and eventually ended up with the seventh-

best bowling figures of PSL's history.

The side slipped from 33/1 to 68/8 in the span of just 52 deliveries before experienced batter Mohammad Hafeez alongside Mohammad Hasnain began the recovery.

The pair added a vital 31 runs for the ninth-wicket stand before Hasnain perished in an attempt to hit back-to-back sixes. He scored 22 off 20 deliveries with the help of two boundaries and a six.

Roy, however, remained the top-scorer for the Gladiators with 27 off 18 deliveries, while Hafeez could score 18 off 15.

Ihsanullah led the bowling attack for the Sultans with 5/12, while Abbas Afridi and Sameen bagged two wickets each.

7th edition of National Women, Men Road Cycling Championship from Feb 17

Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: The 7th edition of the National Women and Men Cycling Road Championship Elite and Junior competitions are going to start from February 17 under the aegis of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Cycling Association and with the collaboration Pakistan Cycling Federation (PCF) on Northern Bypass here.

This was stated by President Pakistan Cycling Federation and South Asian Federation Syed Azhar Ali Shah here at the Conference Room of the Directorate General Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. President KP Cycling Association Nisar Ahmad, international technical official Sarmad Khan were also

present.

The 7th edition of the National Women and Men Cycling Road Championship will continue up till February 20 in which more than 110 national and international cyclists from all 12 units including Pakistan Army, Pakistan Wapda, Pakistan Railways, Crank Addicts, SSGC, PCF Technical Official team, POF Wah, Bikestan Cycling Academy, Gilgit-Baltistan, Islamabad, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Syed Azhar Ali Shah said that these races in different categories including Road Time Trials Individual and Team events of both Women and Men would start on the Northern Bypass Road

(Motorway) Peshawar for which all preparations and arrangements have been completed.

The arrival of the teams will be completed by Wednesday and on February 16 a practice round before the opening of the races in the morning at 8.00 a.m. This is a circuit race which is being played under Asian and UCI rules, Azhar Ali Shah said.

There will be a loop of 13.5 km, PCF President Syed Azhar Ali Shah said. Cycle races were organized in which DUCI changed the rules and separated the road and track races. Now it is our 7th year that we are organizing a separate national road race, he said. "We have not got any special sponsors from other organizations and only Pakistan

Sports Board (PSB) has extended a small support to the federation.

He said that races are being organized under different categories. He said that this race is also very important for the International Road Cycle Race to be held in Thailand in June because out of the race, a team of Pakistan would be short-listed purely looking after the performance of the cyclists.

Athletes from all over the country will be judged here and a team will be prepared consisting of athletes who give the best performance. In response to a question, he said, despite no sponsorship the federation only sent players but also some to the technical side as well.

He said that no progress has

been made yet regarding the velodrome to be built in Peshawar. This velodrome should be prepared with the help and consultation of the international technical officials of the world body. He said with the construction of the proposed velodrome, one can bring the international cyclists to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He said that there are thirty-five velodromes in India, while the only velodrome in our country is in Lahore. He said that due to lack of funds and politics, the construction of the velodrome could not be started yet, which is very regrettable. In the sports in which we are ahead, the infrastructure should be all over the country. He said that some people are still a hindrance in the

PSL Match: Peshawar Zalmi defeats Karachi Kings by 2 runs



Sports Reporter

KARACHI: Peshawar Zalmi defeated Karachi Kings by 2 runs in the second match of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) 8th edition at the National Bank Cricket Arena here on Tuesday.

Earlier, Karachi Kings had won the toss and chose to field. In return, Peshawar Zalmi scored 199 runs with loss of five wickets in their respective 20 overs.

However, Karachi Kings could only 197 runs with the loss of five wickets in 20 overs not taking full grasp of the opportunities presented before them in form of no-balls and subsequent awards of free-hits.

At one stage, Karachi Kings were looking favorites to claim the victory but Peshawar Zalmi bowlers responded back with taking wickets at right time.

Daraz celebrates two years of partnership with PCB; gears up to stream HBL PSL 2023



Bureau Report

KARACHI: As the HBL Pakistan Super League (PSL) goes live to grip cricket lovers across Pakistan, Daraz and Pakistan Cricket Board held an event at the National Bank Cricket Arena in Karachi to celebrate two years of their successful partnership. Last year, Daraz won PSL's exclusive digital streaming rights for the 2022-2023 seasons, which resulted in over 180 million accumulated views over the first season and allowed Pakistanis to watch the popular league free of cost on their smartphones.

Mr. Najam Sethi, Chair of the PCB Management Committee, and Ehsan Saya, Managing Director, of Daraz Pakistan, graced the ceremony as the chief guests. Also present at the event were Barrister Salman Naseer, Chief Operating Officer of PCB, and Muhammad Ammar Hassan, Chief Marketing Officer, Daraz Pakistan.

This year's season, which will be running from February 13 to March 19, will be available for free streaming on Daraz's app again and fans will be able to enjoy their favourite matches in high quality.

Commenting on the success of this partnership, Mr. Najam Sethi, Chair of the PCB Management Committee, stated: "The PCB is delighted to have quality commercial partners such as Daraz, who have supported the HBL PSL and other PCB events by using their reach to take cricket to the wider audiences, thus, supporting the PCB in the promotion of Pakistan cricket. The PCB values its partnership with Daraz and we hope to strengthen this relationship in the best interest of Pakistan and Pakistan cricket."

Ehsan Saya, Managing Director, Daraz Pakistan said "Our partnership with PCB has helped us live true to our mission of uplifting communities by ensuring Pakistanis are able to watch the much-loved Pakistan Super League by simply tapping on their smartphone screens. At Daraz, we were able to hit several milestones through this collaboration, and remain confident that this year's league will prove to be an even more exciting experience for us all."

Muhammad Ammar Hassan, Chief Marketing Officer, Daraz Pakistan shared "Our partnership with PCB was a very natural business step, considering cricket is the most followed sport and Daraz is the most followed e-commerce brand in the country. This partnership has truly proven to be fruitful, where Daraz has enriched the scope of digital viewership of PSL, as a result of which their overall reach has increased across Pakistan. We look forward to evolving this partnership with PCB in near future to explore new avenues such as merchandising, content promotion, etc."



development of cycling. He said that even before the international cycle race in Pakistan, tourism had been greatly promoted and now the proposals for the international cycle race have been sent to the government for which at least Rs. 60 million.

He said that there are more problems in the current economic crisis. Provincial Cycling Association President Nisar Ahmad said that this time the winners of

each event have been kept separate in the national competitions and the winners of all the events will be declared champions in their respective category.

He said that regular cycling events are organized throughout the year, which has greatly promoted cycling and our technical officials have also received training from different countries and awarded them with certificates at the international level.