

# Daily The Spokesman

RAWALPINDI



## Pakistan stands with oppressed Kashmiris, Palestinians

Minister for Human Rights Riaz Hussain Pirzada says Pakistan has always stood for the rights of oppressed people of Palestine and Kashmir. He said we support the UN charter and want to move along with the international community. The Minister, however, regretted the double standards that exist on human rights in the world.



## Russia-Ukraine conflict may begin WW-III: Mahathir

Former Malaysian prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad has said that the current crisis between Russia and Ukraine can be interpreted as the "start of the third World War". "I hesitate to write this article. I may be accused of apologising for the Russians. I am not. I think the present war between Ukraine and Russia is caused by the Europeans' love of war, of hegemony, of dominance," he wrote in a series of tweets. (Report on Page 5)

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## Economy top agenda

WASHINGTON: Federal Minister for Commerce Syed Naveed Qamar and United State of Trade Representative (USTR) held a comprehensive dialogue focusing on wide spectrum of trade and investment issues.



Photo: APP

# Pak-US hold dialogue on wide spectrum of trade, investment

Private sector to play key role in improving Pak-US ties, says Commerce Minister

### Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce Syed Naveed Qamar and United State of Trade Representative (USTR) have held a fulsome and comprehensive dialogue focusing on wide spectrum of trade and investment issues of mutual interest including agriculture, textiles, digital trade, enhancing market access, cooperation on good regulatory practices including intellectual property and labor rights, and women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurship.

The federal minister led the Pakistani delegation comprising Secretary Commerce Muhammad Sualah Farruqi, Secretary BOI Asad Rehman Gilani and senior officials of Ministries of Commerce

and National Food Security to participate in the 9th Pakistan-US Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) Council Ministerial meeting, said a press release issued here Saturday.

The US side was led by United State of Trade Representative (USTR) Ambassador Katherine Tai.

Key issues discussed by our side included enhancing exports of Pakistani mangoes and dates to the US, increased market access for our textiles, increasing US investments in Pakistan's agriculture sector especially, in development of hybrid, climate resilient seeds and supporting Pakistan's IT and tech industry.

The two sides agreed to have regular follow-up engagements during 2023 to ensure progress

on all issues and achieving tangible results.

They also agreed to convene the next TIFA Council Ministerial meeting in Islamabad in early 2024.

Two Joint Statements, one on the TIFA Council Ministerial meeting itself and the other on US-Pakistan Efforts in Promoting Women's Economic Empowerment were issued after yesterday's meeting.

The last TIFA Council meeting was held in 2016. The convening of this meeting after seven years makes it an important milestone for robust bilateral engagement process this year, which has seen dialogues on a number of issues and still more dialogues are scheduled in coming weeks, including on energy and climate change.

The TIFA Council Ministerial meeting reflects mutual understanding and commitment on both sides to pursue a broad based agenda and making mutually beneficial trade and investment ties an important pillar of the bilateral relationship.

Meanwhile, Minister for Commerce Syed Naveed Qamar has said private sector and the business community had a key role in realizing the vision of enhanced trade ties between Pakistan and the United States.

Interacting with leadership of American Apparel and Footwear Association and representatives of Pak leading businesses at Embassy of Pakistan in Washington, he said that Pakistan was keen to strengthen its economic ties with the United States.

The Minister said that Government was committed not only to provide all possible facilitation to the business community but also to put in place policies that could fulfil the requirements of business community and the global market.

The Minister said that private sector should come up with innovative ideas and solutions to overcome existing challenges and secure greater market penetration. He said that diversification of the products while ensuring quality, affordability and competitiveness would help getting better market share to Pakistani products.

The Minister also encouraged US entrepreneurs to actively participate in TEXPO exhibition to be held during end of May this year.

## 21 truck relief convoy from Pakistan reaches Turkiye

ISLAMABAD: A 21-truck convoy carrying 275 ton relief assistance goods from Pakistan arrived at Malatya in Turkiye, one of worst hit cities by earthquake Saturday afternoon. The truck convoy carrying mainly winterized tents, blankets and other essential relief goods departed from Pakistan on February 11 and reached Turkiye via Iran.

The convoy was received by Deputy Mayor Malatya Hakan Ezgi, Ambassador Fazli Corman of Turkish MOFA, Pakistan Embassy Deputy Ambassador, Abbas Sarwar Qureshi, Commander Mehmet Bhaktiyar and officials from AFAD and local administration.

Under the directions of the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, an air bridge was established immediately between Islamabad and Ankara on February 6 to transport rescue teams and deliver essential

relief goods. As of now, 20 flights have brought relief assistance goods to Turkiye. A ship carrying earthquake relief goods is also scheduled to leave Pakistan for Turkiye soon.

Speaking on the occasion, Abbas Sarwar Qureshi stated that Pakistan and Turkiye have a glorious history of supporting each other under all circumstances. As per the wishes of the Prime Minister and people of Pakistan, relief assistance shall keep coming from Pakistan to brotherly Turkiye till complete recovery and rehabilitation, he added.

Deputy Mayor Hakan Ezgi said that the trucks have not only brought relief goods but tons of prayers and best wishes from Pakistanis whose hearts beat with the hearts of Turkish brethren. He thanked the people and government of Pakistan for quick response and solidarity with Turkiye in this difficult time. Agencies

## PM felicitates Kuwaiti Amir on national day

Shehbaz Sharif takes notice of accident at Bara Kahu bypass

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has extended profound felicitations to the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and people of the State on their National Day. In a tweet on Saturday, he said we Pakistanis are keen to further build on our excellent bilateral relations.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Saturday took notice of the accident during the construction of bypass at Bara Kahu in Islamabad.

He expressed grief over the loss of lives of two labourers in the accident and sympathized



with the bereaved families.

He directed provision of best medical facilities to the injured.

The prime minister sought details of the accident from the Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA).

He ordered immediate action against the individuals responsible for the negligence. Agencies

## Imran caught 'red handed': Maryam Nawaz

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) Chief Organiser Maryam Nawaz on Saturday said that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan was the first ever prime minister who was caught red-handed stealing over Rs 58 billion as his "chor Dako" narrative has fallen flat.

In a series of tweets, she alleged that former first lady Bushra Bibi used to demand bribe up to five-carat diamond and jewellery for signing a file. Imran had proved himself guilty of all forms of corrup-



tion, she said.

"Oh, how the mighty have fallen! Your squeals are not amiss as you have been the king of conspiracies, thriving (and) surviving on them with the help of your Godfather Faiz and his vestiges," she wrote on Twitter.

## Iran mulls increasing trade volume with Pakistan: CG

QUETTA: Iranian Consul General Hasan Golivand Darvesh said Iran would increase the annual trade volume with Pakistan from 1.5 billion dollars to 5 billion dollars.

He expressed these views while talking to Gwadar Development Authority (GDA) Director General Mujibur Rahman Qamrani during his visit to Gwadar on Saturday.

GDA DG informed Iranian Consul General about the implementation of the Gwadar Smart Port City Master Plan and the under-progress development projects.

The DG said the supply of 100 MW of additional electricity by Iran was a reflection of the strong friendship between the neighboring Islamic brother countries. He said the GDA had provided all basic facilities in Gwadar, including water, education, health, roads, sports fields, parks, and the international airport. Agencies

## 'Jail Bharo Tehreek'

# Imran condemns govt for treating PTI workers like 'terrorists'

Several pleas filed in LHC for release of the detained PTI leaders

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan Saturday strongly condemned the "fascist approach" of the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM)-led government for treating his party's workers and leaders detained during the "Jail Bharo Tehreek" (court arrest movement) like terrorists.

The movement, according to the PTI rationale, aims to counter the "attack on constitutionally-guaranteed fundamental rights" and the "economic meltdown" by the incumbent government.

The court arrest movement was launched on February 22. The party's senior leaders, including Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Asad Umar and Azam Swati, along with party workers voluntarily surrendered themselves to the Lahore police on the first day of the campaign — and later, some of the others followed suit.

In the tweet, Khan claimed that his party's leadership and workers are protesting against fascism, the violation of fundamental rights, and the crushing of the nation.

It is pertinent to mention here that in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa capi-



tal of Peshawar — considered a stronghold of the PTI — the party's court arrest movement ended with no detention.

While the police geared up for arrests and appealed to the PTI workers for surrendering themselves before the authorities, none of the members seemingly paid heed to their call.

Despite the "voluntary" arrests of leaders and workers, several pleas were filed earlier this week in the Lahore High Court (LHC) for releasing them.

PTI Senator Ijaz Chaudhry filed pleas for the recovery of at least eight PTI leaders — Umar, Omar Sarfaraz Cheema, Waleed Iqbal, Senator Swati, Murad Ras, Jaan Madni, Azam Niazi, and Ahsan Dogar.

"The leaders are not even being provided medicines and food." The

petition further said that the leaders are being kept in wrongful detention. "To defame and hurt them, fake cases can be made against them."

Chaudhry said that there was no reason to keep them behind bars and urged the court to direct police to produce the leaders before the LHC and not resort to any illegal steps.

In his petition, Zain Qureshi appealed to the LHC to order authorities to produce his father — the PTI vice chairman — who is being kept in wrongful detention.

"Shah Mahmood was taken into custody yesterday and I am not being informed about his whereabouts," Qureshi said

As Justice Shehram Sarwar Chaudhary heard the plea of Qureshi on Friday, he inquired the petitioner's lawyer about why the party members have been arrested.

At this, the lawyer said the party has started a "Jail Bharo" movement. Justice Chaudhary asked why they are playing with the courts. To this, the lawyer said: "We are not asking for bail, these are symbolic arrests and we are here to protect the rights of the leaders." Agencies

## Election date suo motu

# Ruling alliance files plea seeking formation of full court

ISLAMABAD: The ruling parties — Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) — Saturday demanded the formation of Supreme Court's full court bench to hear the suo motu notice taken over the apparent delay in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa general elections.

The plea — moved through Farooq H Naek, Kamran Murtaza, and Masoor Usman Awan — also sought the exclusion of Justice Ijazul Ahsan and Justice Sayeed Mazhar Ali Akbar Naqvi.

The development comes a few days after Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial took a suo motu notice of an apparent delay in the elections of the assemblies, which dissolved in Punjab and KP on January 14 and 18, respectively, and also formed a larger bench to hear the case. Agencies

## Pakistan's weekly inflation jumps to 41.54%

ISLAMABAD: The weekly inflation, measured by Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed an increase of 2.78 per cent to jump to 41.54pc on a year-on-year basis for the week which ended on Feb 23.

In previous week, the inflation increased by 2.89pc to reach 38.42pc. It is for the first time that inflation crossed 40pc mark in over five months.

During this week, major increase was observed in the prices of food items like bananas, chicken, sugar, cooking oil, vegetable ghee and tea prepared. A surge in prices of non-food items such as gas and cigarettes was also witnessed.

On the other hand, a slight

decrease was observed in the prices of onions, eggs, tomatoes, garlic, LPG and pulse gram (0.21).

"During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 33 (64.71%) items increased, 06 (11.76%) items decreased and 12 (23.53%) items remained stable," said PBS in its report.

The upward trend of inflation continues as the South Asian country is taking measures to meet the conditions of the IMF for revival of the loan programme. Earlier this week, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif warned that the inflation would further trigger after the approval of the IMF programme. Agencies

## Development projects

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar chaired a meeting on development projects of Capital Development Authority (CDA), at Finance Division on Saturday.



Photo: PID

# Dar directs CDA for early execution of housing projects for overseas Pakistanis

*PMAJK, Ishaq Dar discuss financial matters, pace of public welfare projects*

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar directed the Capital Development Authority (CDA) to ensure fast-track and early execution of housing projects for overseas Pakistanis by maintaining international standards and transparency through online system.

He gave these directions while chairing a meeting on development projects of the CDA, said a press release issued here.

Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Finance Tariq Bajwa, SAPM on Revenue Tariq Pasha,

Secretary Finance, Member (Planning & Design) CDA, Member (Estate) CDA, DG (Land) CDA and senior officers from Finance Division attended the meeting.

The meeting reviewed the progress on the development projects carried out by the CDA, especially related to housing projects for overseas Pakistanis.

The meeting was apprised that CDA has initiated a number of short-term and medium-term housing projects for overseas Pakistanis.

It was informed that one of these housing projects is in the completion phase and has been launched for registration.

Finance Minister while emphasising the importance of overseas Pakistanis in the economic and financial development of the country, further directed the authorities to extend maximum facilities in these projects to attract overseas Pakistan's investment in the country.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Sardar Tanveer Ilyas and Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar discussed important financial matters related to AJK and the pace of public welfare schemes and projects.

They discussed this in a called-on meeting here on

Saturday, said a press release. Prime Minister AJK apprised the finance minister of the initiatives of AJK government to enhance its revenue generation and sought the support of the federal government in this regard.

The meeting also discussed the ongoing and future development projects in AJK. Finance Minister Senator Ishaq Dar welcomed Sardar Tanveer Ilyas and expressed the federal government's commitment to the development and progress of AJK.

He further added that the welfare and development of the people of Kashmir were among the top priorities of

the government and no stone would be left unturned for its development. He offered the full assistance of Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to the AJK government in its quest to increase its own receipts.

Finance Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar highlighted the economic outlook of the country and said that despite the challenging situation, the government was determined to set the economy on stability and growth trajectory.

AJK PM Sardar Tanveer Ilyas thanked the finance minister for extending support for the progress of the people of Kashmir.

# Govt to cut down defence budget amid economic crisis

ISLAMABAD: The government on Saturday decided to decrease country's defence budget as the economy struggles to cope with rising debt, global inflation and political instability.

Sources said it had been decided to reduce the expenditure of the army by 35 per cent on petroleum products and 35 to 40 per cent on the utility bills. Reduction in expenditure on food allowance and food items in the defence budget would save more than Rs20 billion.

Sources further said a ban had also been imposed on all sorts of non-operational spending in the army and import of defence and military equip-

ment would be in local currency or currency swap. It has also been decided to increase modern technology and online meetings for trainings, and reduction all kinds of expenses had been implemented immediately to improve the country's economy.

Earlier this week, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif unveiled austerity measures that would save Rs200 billion per year. He admitted that the move would not significantly improve the economic condition of the country but it is a gesture to show the inflation-stricken citizen that the government remains empathetic to their concerns. He also announced that the minis-

ters, state ministers and special advisers to the premier would forego their salaries and perks as part of the austerity.

Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves, which fell to a critically low level of USD 2.9 billion a few weeks ago, have now risen closer to USD 4 billion, even as the country eagerly waits for the USD 1.1 billion tranches of funding from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

On Friday, Pakistan received a new \$4 billion loan from China to help shore up its foreign exchange reserves, in another step to help the Islamabad recover from an economic crisis.

The credit facility, made through the state-owned China

Development Bank has boosted Pakistan's forex reserves to \$4 billion and comes as the country is thrashing out a deal with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to unlock funds from a \$6.5 billion bailout.

Sources privy to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) said that the money was transferred by China Development Bank after the rollover agreement.

The reports further said that an agreement had been reached between Pakistan and China in this regard.

"The foreign exchange reserves of Pakistan have reached close to \$4 billion after receiving the money.

Previously, while addressing the cabinet, Prime Minis-

ter Shehbaz Sharif said that he was hopeful of reaching a deal with the IMF as soon as the country completes a series of steps demanded by the lender.

Pakistan is struggling with its worst economic crisis in decades and its foreign exchange reserves, at their lowest in 10 years, are only enough to pay for less than three weeks' worth of imports. Meanwhile, fiscal adjustments demanded by the IMF are fuelling decades-high inflation.

On Wednesday, the country's international bonds extended their decline with the 2027 dollar-denominated bonds dropping more than 1.2 cents in the dollar to trade just over 40 cents. Agencies

## Pendency of cases at SC shows decline

ISLAMABAD: As per statistics, a total of 24,303 cases were decided during the period from 2nd Feb, 2022 to 25th Feb, 2023 against the total institution of 22,018 new cases during the said period. The pendency/backlog of cases in the Supreme Court of Pakistan has thereby been reduced by 2,285 cases from 54,735 to 52,450.

The number of cases decided in the annual period ending February 2023 is the highest since 2018 when the total disposal was 16,961 cases.

The positive result is a manifestation of the extra-ordinary hard work of the Hon'ble Judges of the Supreme Court, introduction of a case management system and the constitution of Benches according to the needs of the caseload. Agencies

# IK trying to make national institutions controversial: Muqam

D.I. KHAN: Adviser to the Prime Minister on Political and Public Affairs Engineer Amir Muqam on Saturday said that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan was trying to make national institutions controversial under a conspiracy.

He stated this while talking to the media after offering condolence with PML-N Youth Wing's divisional president Roshan Zamir Laghari over the demise of his mother.

Amir Muqam, who is also the Provincial President of Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, termed the PTI's 'Jail Bharo Tehreek' as 'Jaib Bharo Tehreek'.

He said the nation especially the youth have realized that PML-N Supremo Nawaz Sharif was the leader who can steer the country out



of current crises.

He said the general elections in the country will be held on its time, adding that the coalition government of PDM was taking steps to steer the country out of economic crisis.

Amir Muqam said that the politics of Imran Khan was based on lies, adding that the PTI chairman tried to mislead the people over the name of cipher and brought them out to the streets.

He said that Imran Khan was speaking against the

national institutions under a conspiracy.

On this occasion, PML-N leader Dr. Abdullah Zafrī, PML-N Tank President Samiullah Khan Barki, Provincial Vice President Naeem Khan Wazir, Provincial Vice President Muhammad Akbar Khan alias Noni Khan Gandapur, Sheikh Arif, Allah Nawaz Kharal, Yameen Jan, M. Fawad, Zeeshan Raj and others were present.

Earlier, Amir Muqam also went to Miyakhel House where he condoled over the death of former Member of National Assembly Sardar Umar Farooq Khan Miyakhel (late).

Speaking on this occasion, the Advisor said Sardar Umar Farooq Khan Miyakhel has always served the area and a vacuum has been created after his death. APP

## Nation praying for "success" of PTI "fail Bharo Tehreek": Sharjeel



KARACHI: Sindh Information Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon on Saturday said that the entire nation was praying for the "success" of PTI's Jail Bharo Tehreek in Sindh.

In his twitter message, the minister said that unfortunately legs of those who announced the movement are trembling.

The minister encouraged PTI and advised them to come forward and make this movement a success in the Sindh province.

Sharjeel said that the Sindh government was ready to fully facilitate them.

The minister also offered PTI free "pick and drop" service and asked them to give list of aspiring leaders and workers. APP

# UN tourism body hails reopening of China for tourism

MADRID: The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) hailed the importance of the reopening of China for tourism, given the country's huge importance to the global tourism market.

"The reopening of China represents the 'missing piece' in the recovery of world tourism after the worst crisis in its history," the UNWTO said in a press release.

In 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic, China was the world's largest outbound tourism market. Chinese tourists made 166 million international trips, and spent 270 billion U.S. dollars, much of it in destinations in developing economies, according to UNWTO data.

Almost 3 trillion U.S. dollars in tourist revenues were lost globally between 2020 and 2022 due to the pandemic. Therefore, the organization said the lifting of Chinese trav-

el restrictions will benefit the entire world.

Chinese citizens made 6 billion domestic trips in 2019, the UNWTO said, adding this shows that tourism is a key driver of employment and economic growth, including for rural communities in China.

The trickle-down effect of China's reopening will also benefit other economic sectors, helping to create greater dynamism at local, national and global level, the UNWTO said.

A delegation from the UNWTO, led by Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili, traveled from the Spanish capital Madrid to Hangzhou, the capital of east China's Zhejiang Province, to attend an event celebrating the reopening of China for tourism. China's Minister of Culture and Tourism Hu Heping met with the delegation in Hangzhou on Friday.

APP

# PPP believes in serving nation: FM Bilawal



KARACHI: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari says Pakistan Peoples party has always served the country and its people.

Inaugurating the dynamic registry of deserving women through NADRA under BISP in Karachi on Saturday, he said it was the PPP that gave constitution to the country, made it nuclear power and launched Benazir

Income support Programme for poor and needy. He said Benazir Income Support Programme is the most transparent programme of the country that the world recognizes and trusts.

He said Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto was martyred at a time when she was struggling for the democracy and democratic rights of the country. Agencies

# WB promises 'concessionality' in debt restructuring

BENGALURU: The World Bank will "provide as much concessionality to the debt treatment" for distressed economies as possible, its president told a meeting with the International Monetary Fund, India, China, and other creditor nations on Saturday.

The remarks come amid calls by China, the world's largest bilateral creditor, that global lenders should take haircuts on loans extended to developing nations hurt by the impact of the Russia-Ukraine war and the Covid-19 pandemic.

The United States, meanwhile, has repeatedly criticised China over its "foot-dragging" on debt relief for dozens of low-and middle-income countries.

"The World Bank is committed to providing net positive flows in a way that maximizes concessionality in the restructuring process," David Malpass said at the Global Sovereign

Debt Roundtable in India's Bengaluru city on the sidelines of the G20 financial leaders' meet.

"We will provide as much concessionality to the debt treatment as possible."

Malpass also said that he noted "constructive remarks" by a deputy China central bank governor at a G20 meeting on Friday that "gave room to move forward" on settlement of debt issues.

Reuters reported earlier this month that India, the current president of the G20 bloc, is drafting a proposal for G20 countries to help debtor nations by asking lenders to take a large haircut on loans.

On Friday, Chinese Finance Minister Liu Kun told the G20 financial leaders that international financial institutions and commercial creditors should follow the principle of "joint action, fair burden" in debt settlements. Agencies

# Markets in Karachi ordered to close early

*Move aimed at saving energy amid economic crisis*

KARACHI: In compliance with the energy conservation plan — a policy approved by the federal government — Karachi' commissioner on Saturday ordered the closure of markets and shopping malls by 8:30 pm.

Karachi Commissioner Muhammad Iqbal Memon has directed the deputy commissioners to ensure instructions regarding the closure of wedding halls and restaurants at 10pm were being implemented. He also told them to implement Islamabad's orders regarding the energy crisis.

Earlier this week, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also unveiled a host of austerity measures to save Rs200 billion — aimed at keeping the country afloat as the nation buckles up to meet the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) conditions.

In a presser held to unveil the measures, as a follow-up to the government's energy conservation

plan announced earlier, the prime minister warned that the centre and provinces will cut the power supply of malls and markets if they don't shut down by 8:30pm.

The federal government, in January 2023, approved a new energy conservation plan under which markets/malls were asked to be closed by 8:30pm, while it also banned the usage of inefficient appliances that would save the country around Rs62 billion annually.

Given the worsening economic conditions of the country, Islamabad has been attempting to implement measures cutting down expenses across different sectors. The government's negotiations with the IMF continue since early February over policy framework issues as Pakistan hopes to sign a staff-level agreement that will pave the way for more inflows from other bilateral and multilateral lenders. Agencies

# Imran responsible for prevailing economic conditions: Shazia Marri

HYDERABAD: Federal Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Shazia Marri has blamed former Prime Minister and Chairman Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Imran Khan for the prevailing economic conditions, saying the incumbent government has tried to save the country from default.

Talking to the media at District Headquarters Hospital in Sanghar on Saturday, Marri said Khan used to tell lies to the people when he was the PM and that his same politics of lies continued at present.

Marri, who is also Chairperson Benazir Income Support Program (BISP), recalled that when the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) formed the federal government in 2008 the world was witnessing an economic meltdown. However, she added, through initiatives like



SANGHAR: Federal Minister Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety and Chairperson Benazir Income Support Program, Ms Shazia Marri address to media persons after inauguration of Benazir Nashonuma Centre.

BISP, the PPP's government ensured that the marginalized class of the country received the government's financial support.

She told that after the flood in 2022, an amount of over Rs.70 billion was released on

the instructions of PM Shahbaz Sharif to help the flood-affected people. "In order to deal with the prevailing challenges, all political parties including Khan's PTI, will have to sit together to mutually find out

agreed solutions," she observed.

The minister lamented that despite offering sacrifices of 80,000 lives of the common citizens, the security forces Pakistan still had to face the menace of terrorism. Thanks to the flawed policies of the Khan government, she added.

Commenting on the ongoing protest movement of the PTI, Marri said the court arrest protests were another drama of that party. "On one hand they are giving voluntary arrests and on another, the same people are seeking bail from the courts," she exclaimed, adding that the people had understood the political demagoguery of Khan.

The minister said that the BISP was helping the poor people in a transparent way through its programs which had won global recognition.

Earlier, Shazia Marri inaugurated Benazir Bhutto Nasho-

numa Center at Civil Hospital Sanghar.

Speaking on the occasion, the minister said the Center would provide nutritional supplements to mothers of newborns.

She informed that some 402 Centers of the Program had been opened across the country. "Through this program, we aim to make the newborn children and their mothers physically and mentally healthy," she told.

The minister said the PPP's Sindh government was trying to provide better health facilities to the public. In that regard, she added, a Center of National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICVD) would be opened in Sanghar district soon. She apprised that she would also hand over ambulances for the government hospital in Achro Thar. APP

## Finance ministry rejects rumours over stoppage of pay, pensions

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Finance on Saturday issued a rebuttal maintaining that rumours about the government's instructions to stop pay and pensions etc, were completely false.

"This is completely false as no such instructions have been given by the Finance Division, which is the concerned federal ministry. AGPR has confirmed that pay and pension have already been processed and will be paid on time. Further, other payments are being processed as per routine," a press release of the finance division said.

There were certain rumours doing rounds that the government had instructed to stop such payments.

In the meanwhile, Minister for Finance Ishaq Dar, on his Twitter handle, termed it as 'fake news' and said that spreading the same caused harm to the national economic interests.

"Kindly refrain from circulating such reports/news without verifying same from the concerned ministry," he further posted.

## Tree plantation drive inaugurated in Wana

Adam Khan Wazir

WANA: In South Waziristan Lower Wana officially inaugurated the tree planting campaign under the direction of Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Nasir Khan.

Fruit trees were distributed to various people in connection with the plantation drive.

Additional DC Finance and Planning Kashmir Khan and District Youth Officer Sardar Ali Wazir along with the former's and tribal elders were also present on this occasion.

Addressing the event, Additional DC Kashmir Khan said that planting trees is an ongoing charity, trees are human-friendly and the adverse effects of climate change can be avoided through increased forestation. After inaugurating the plantation drive, Additional DC (F&P) Kashmir Khan and District Youth Officer Sardar Ali distributed various fruit trees like Apricot, Peach, Mulberry and Apple among the people present.

On this occasion, the farmers said, that this time saplings will be planted as a continuous charity, which will help prevent climate change with the income.

Farmers thanked DC Nasir Khan District Youth Officer Sardar Ali and said that for the first time we are getting fruitful plants.

## Sardar Attique appointed new party convener for USA, Qatar, Muscat

Abdul Majeed Tahir

MUZAFFARABAD: President of All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference and former Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir Sardar Attique Ahmad Khan, according to powers delegated obtained under Article 26 Sub-section 3 of the party Constitution, convened the United States, Qatar and Muscat for the new organizational period 2023 to 2026 approved three new conveners.

According to the notification issued by the Secretary General of the Muslim Conference Ms. Mehrun-Nisaa, the President of the Muslim Conference has named Syed Aftab Hussain Shah as the convener of America, Sardar Ifthikhar Ahmad Khan as the convener of Qatar and Sardar Sajid Abbasi as the convener of Muscat.

## DC Attock directs LEA to remain vigilant over smuggling of flour

Raza Naqvi

ATTOCK: The Deputy Commissioner Attock Rao Atif Raza during his surprise inspection on the inter provincial bordering check post Attock Khurd on Saturday has directed the law enforcement agency to remain vigilant over the smuggling of wheat flour and fertilizer from Punjab to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He was also accompanied by Additional Deputy Commissioners Revenue, Finance & Planning Mr. Waqas Aslam Marth and Mr. Waqar Akbar Cheema include other fields' officials of the relevant organizations. The Deputy Commissioner Attock Rao Atif Raza directed the officials deployed on the inter provincial exit point to critically examine the loaded vehicles while crossing through this territorial belt and take prompt legal action against the smugglers involved in smuggling of wheat flour and fertilizer irrespective of their influence.

## Medical wastes to spread of AIDS & other diseases DI Khan

Adam Khan Wazir

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: Hospitals disposal of used equipment and waste according to regular and medical rules and regulations is not implemented, nor do most hospitals have a system to dispose of this waste.

Actions are not taken to prevent the practice of re-usability of goods but no satisfactory situation. The health department fails to implement the relevant laws.

According to the details, used syringes, drips, urine bags, blood bags and other used waste are dropped daily outside the major hospitals of the district sometimes, garbage collectors reach the various hospitals and intersections of Dera Ismail Khan for operating patients to pick up the disease-spreading medical waste, however, they carry their belongings.

According to the sources, the same medical waste is sold by big junk dealers it is designed to make many things reusable.

## Hyderabad Literature Festival

HYDERABAD: Secretary Culture and Tourism Munawar Ali Mahesar and other visiting stalls after inauguration of 8th Hyderabad Literature Festival at Sindh Museum.



Photo: Online

# Hussain (R.A) sacrificed each and everything under commands of Allah: MA Raza Qadri

Mian Rashid Asghar

FAISALABAD: By presenting a practical picture of Hussain's sacrifice, we can free Islam, Pakistan, Islamic Republics & whole the world from the sufferings and difficulties faced by them today. Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA) taught us all to sacrifice everything in the way of God for the sake of the Word of Truth. Because of truthfulness every living organism might obtain everlasting luxuries & tranquility. The context of Pakistan's current economic problems and crises there is a need to awaken the spirit of Hussain to get rid of perplexities, expressed by the Prof. Pir Muhammad Asif Raza Qadri, the divisional president of RPS. He highlighted these facts



and realities while addressing the birthday of Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA) at Gokhowal after the cake-cutting in the Seminar. Flashing the unique message of Hazrat Imam Hussain (R.A), he said that Hussain (R.A) did a lot for the betterment of the humanity to secure for eternal life successes.

He further elaborated that Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA) Radiyallahu Taala Anhu adopt-

ed the religion of Islam with his blood cultivation of trees. The religious, spiritual and family relationships of Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA) are a great proof of his greatness and virtues. The sacrifice of the great-grandson of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA) is a beacon light for Muslims until the Day of Resurrection. It is not possible to get the passion of Hussaini by

just making claims, but we have to present a picture of practical sacrifice for it. He pointed out that, We had to promote love, peace and tolerance by following the characteristic properties of Hussaini, because He taught us to keep the knowledge high to find real ways to get successful life. Sahabah and Ahl al-Bayt, may Allah be pleased with them & their Teachings should be made part of the educational curriculum.

He said that, Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA) was a tower of piety and courage. To end the current difficulties and crisis in Pakistan, every Pakistani should play his constructive as well as conducive role according to Hussain's teachings. Imam al-Maqam, may Allah

be pleased with him, became a martyr and revived Islam until the Day of Resurrection. Imam Hussain, may God bless him and grant him peace, refused to bow down to oppression and tyranny, he said and added.

Keeping in mind the significance of Islam and the interests of the Muslim Ummah, Hussain took martyrdom with his 72 Martyrs. Sacrificing everything for Islam and Pakistan by following the pure life of Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA) is the most important need of the time. On this occasion, Divisional General Secretary Hafiz Muhammad Yasir Qadri Al-Madani, Ahmed Nisar Qadri, Malik Arshad Jawar and Sultan Mubarak Ahmed expressed their views on this occasion.

# Spotify reveals who is listening what in Pakistan

The audio streaming platform showcases region-based listenership stats from each province of the country

Spokesman Report

KARACHI: Marking its 2nd anniversary in Pakistan, Spotify has revealed interesting insights about the local market, creatively highlighting a region-based breakdown of where audience interests lie. With all provinces unanimous in their love for Atif Aslam, making him the most streamed local artist throughout, the data offers a unique perspective for music listeners across the country.

**Sindh – What are music lovers listening to?**

With Atif Aslam being the most streamed local artist,

Young Stunners, together with Hassan Raheem, Asim Azhar and Abdul Hannan completed the top 5 local artist list. In terms of tracks, Pasoori remained the most streamed track in Karachi and Hyderabad, while it was the fifth most streamed song in Sukkur.

According to data revealed by Spotify, once again, music transcended land borders with King's "Tu Aake Dekh Le" being the second most streamed song in Karachi and Hyderabad. While "Iraaday" and "Bikhra", two stunning chart toppers from Abdul Hannan and Rovalio followed by AP Dhillon's "Excuses" completed the top 5 list for Karachi, Hyder-

abad had Bikhra, followed by Excuses and Kaifi Khalil's "Kahani Suno 2.0" in the top 5 tracks.

**The music being loved in Punjab**

The love for Pasoori continues to be unflinching across Pakistan. It comes as no surprise then that the track is amongst the top 5 most streamed songs in Faisalabad, Gujranwala, Islamabad, Lahore, Multan and Sialkot. Other tracks that completed the leading five list in most cities of Punjab included "Excuses" and "Insane" by AP Dhillon, "295" by Sidhu Moosewala and "Bikhra".

In local top tracks charts, Kaifi Khalil's "Kahani Suno 2.0" has

been a notable addition receiving love across the province. Ranked among the top 5 most streamed songs in Faisalabad, Gujranwala, Islamabad, Lahore, Multan and Sialkot. Other tracks that have garnered immense admiration from audiences across the province include "Bikhra", "Iraaday", "Ghalat Fehmi" by Asim Azhar, and "Gumaan" by Young Stunners.

As for the most streamed local artists, Atif Aslam at the top was followed by Young Stunners, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Hassan Raheem and Rahat Fateh Ali Khan.

**Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunk-**

**wa – The songs of Pakistan's western Provinces**

While Atif Aslam reigned supreme as the most streamed local artists in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Abdul Hannan made his way to the second berth Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with Young Stunners, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, and Asim Azhar completing the lineup. As for Balochistan, the list saw Asim Azhar make an appearance at the third spot after Atif Aslam and Young Stunners. Rahat Fateh Ali Khan and Abdul Hannan were the fourth and fifth most streamed local artists in the province.

In terms of top tracks, the local sensation, Eva B has made a mark for herself with Kana Yaari in Quetta, Balochistan. Other most streamed songs in both provinces remain the same as what audiences from Punjab are listening to.

**The Usurping Love for Korean Pop**

A surprising insight that Spotify's recent data revelations showcased was an unfathomable love amongst audiences for K-pop. BTS in particular, are amongst the top 5 most streamed artists in Sindh, Azad Jammu and Kashmir as well as Balochistan. Cities including Islamabad, Gujranwala, Hyderabad, Karachi, Peshawar and Quetta all showcased immense love for the teen band. In Sukkur, three out of the top five most streamed songs are K-pop.

This trend underlines the diversity in music tastes that the music streaming service is allowing listeners to explore. At the same time, it demonstrates how audiences are changing perspectives especially when it comes to music consumption in Pakistan.

Tracks like "Yet to Come", "Dreamers", the official FIFA Qatar World Cup 2022 soundtrack and "Dynamite" are amongst the leading K-pop tracks in the country.



Islamabad  
15° - 23° Clear

## SERVICES

## Namaz Timings

Fajr	5:19 am
Zohr	12:21 pm
Asr	4:21 pm
Maghrib	6:01 pm
Isha	7:23 pm

## EMERGENCY

Rescue (Police)	15
Bomb Disposal	15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad	1122 & 1122 & 1122
Emergency Ambulance	1122 & 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
RDA	5555864
TMA	5770886
Cantonment Board	9270151-3
Islamabad Metropolitan Corporation	9209224
Potohar Town	9209224
Rawal Town	5773343

## COMPLAINTS

Water Tanker Service	
E-7, F-10 & F-11	9204654
G-5, G-6, G-7, G-8	9203883
G-9, G-10, G-11, G-12, H-8	9266316
Wapda Islamabad	9217579-80
Sui Gas Complaint	119, 9272249
Wasa Water Tank	
Rawalpindi	0331-5022125

## Caretaker CM takes notice of kite flying in Pindi

RAWALPINDI: Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi expressed his severe indignation over kite flying and firing incidents in Rawalpindi and expressed his deep sense of sorrow and grief over the death of one person due to firing.

Mohsin Naqvi expressed his heartfelt sympathy and condolence with the heirs of the deceased youth.

The Caretaker CM directed to provide best treatment facilities to the injured.

Mohsin Naqvi took strict notice of kite flying and firing incidents and sought a report from RPO and Commissioner Rawalpindi in this regard. He asserted that police should ensure implementation on the Prohibition of Kite Flying Law, adding that indiscriminate legal action should be taken against the violators. Agencies

## On economic front

# Sanjrani for taking hard decisions to overcome challenges

Business Advisory Committee of Senate discusses austerity measures

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: A special session of the Business Advisory Committee of the Senate was convened by Chairman Senate Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani on Saturday at the Parliament House to review and discuss austerity measures in wake of current financial situation of the country.

At the outset, Chairman Senate observed that hard decisions have to be taken to overcome challenges on the economic front, said a press release issued here.

He also sought recommendations from parliamentary heads of various political parties in the Senate and called for putting weight behind the government decisions to strictly implement the austerity plan in the best interest of the country.

The committee was also briefed about the steps taken for the celebration of the golden jubilee of the senate. He said that all out steps have been taken to celebrate it in a simple way.

He informed that previous events and special sessions at four provincial assem-

blies were also planned and foreign dignitaries of friendly countries were extended invitations, however, keeping in view the current situation, all these measures have been reviewed.

The whole event will now take place in Islamabad and regrets would be extended to counterparts abroad.

He said that the Senate Secretariat is also working on a proposal to reduce the fuel limit for chairpersons of committees. Besides, no additional honorarium will be extended to employees of the senate during the current financial year, he said. There was also a proposal to impose a ban on foreign visits for three months. The chairman senate observed that all these steps will help reduce the burden on the national exchequer.

He said that Senate special session has already been summoned on 15, 16 and 17 March 2023. This will provide an ample chance to the senators to highlight the historical significance of the upper house, the Chairman Senate observed. He further informed that former members of the senate have also been invited.

Minister for Finance Senator Ishaq Dar



brushed aside the rumours about Pakistan's default. He said there are economic hardships and efficient steps have been taken to overcome them. He, however, said that it is a collective responsibility and the whole nation has to contribute. There is a need to avoid unnecessary expenditures. He said that his team is working day and night and soon will be

able to rid the country out of the economic mess.

The chairman senate while expressing satisfaction on the steps taken by Ishaq Dar and his team expressed his well wishes for him. He expressed the hope that the country will soon overcome the challenge. He called for national support to the austerity drive. He agreed with the

views of the Finance Minister.

The leader of the opposition Senator Dr. Shahzad Wasim had earlier appreciated the steps taken by Chairman Senate. Senator Yousaf Raza Gillani and Senator Saleem Mandviwalla also called for exercising financial control.

They said that Golden Jubilee is an important occasion and there is a need to celebrate it with simplicity due to financial situation of the country. Senator Moulana Abdul Ghafoor Haideri said that there is also a need to impose a cut on the perks and privileges of bureaucracy. Senator Azam Nazir Tarar and Senator Mushtaq Ahmed also apprized the committee of their point of view.

A large number of members of the committee attended the meeting via video link which included Deputy chairman Senate Mirza Muhammad Afridi, Senator Azam Nazir Tarar, Senator Faisal Sabzwari, Saleem Mandviwalla, Senator Yousaf Raza Gillani.

Besides, Senators Shahadat Awan, Mushtaq Ahmed, Secretary Senate Qasim Samad Khan and Senior officers of the Senate attended the meeting.

## Unfortunate incident

ISLAMABAD: Rescue workers are busy in removing debris after a flyover's pillar collapsed in Bharu Kahu area in Federal Capital. Two labourers were killed while three were injured as a pillar of an under-construction flyover in Islamabad's Bharu Kahu collapsed on Saturday, Islamabad police said.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

## Two labourers killed in Bhara Kahu bridge collapses

ISLAMABAD: The under-construction shuttering of a bridge at Bhara Kahu bypass collapsed on Saturday killing two labourers and injuring three others, who were trapped under the rubble, police said.

Minister for Interior Rana Sanaullah Khan immediately directed Chief Commissioner Islamabad Noorul Amin Mengal to ensure the completion of the rescue operation at the earliest. He further directed to provide the best medical assistance to injured persons. The minister also prayed for the departed souls and early recovery of wounded persons.

The minister directed the Chairman CDA to inquire about the reasons behind this incident and fix responsibility over the culprits.

As per the Islamabad Capital Territory Police's initial report, the shuttering of the pillar fell down after a truck collided with it.

According to the police, citizens were informed about the incident and they were advised to avoid using the route to prevent disruption in rescue work. The police said that the condition of the injured people, who were shifted to Polyclinic Hospital, was said to be unstable, while the rescue operation at the site of the incident was underway.

They said that senior officials of the police and administration including Islamabad Inspector General (IG) Dr Akbar Nasir and Chief Commissioner Noorul Amin Mengal were present at the incident site. APP

## DG ML&C inaugurates Food Testing Lab at RCB

RAWALPINDI: Director General (DG) Military Lands and Cantonments (ML&C) Major General Tariq Zameer (Hilal-e-Imtiaz Military) has inaugurated Food Testing Lab established at Rawalpindi Cantonment Board (RCB).

Director ML&C, Rawalpindi Region Tanveer Ashraf, President and Station Commander, Brig. Salman Nazir, Vice President, Malik Munir Ahmed, Cantonment Executive Officer RCB, Imran Gulzar, Additional CEO, Umair Mehboob, Deputy CEO Muhammad Tanveer, Assistant Secretary Cantt Board, Muhammad Riasat, Chief Cantt Eng. Attiqur Rahman, elected members and other officers were also present on the occasion. The DG appreciated the step taken to establish the Food Testing Lab at RCB. He said that the Lab would help control the adulteration, particularly in food items.

Adulterated food can cause deadly diseases, he said adding, awareness should also be raised about the diseases caused by the consumption of defective and contaminated food.

The DG said, the adulterators of the food items do not deserve any concession. Latest machinery must be used to check adulteration and quality of the food items, he added and said, it is the responsibility of the state to provide quality food to the citizens.

In order to facilitate the citizens, he said that the Lab would launch a free service to collect door to door samples of the food items.

The Lab will help check the quality of food items including milk, meat, carbonated drinks, oil and others and action would be taken against the violators of rules. Later, the newly constructed main entrance of the board was also inaugurated. APP

## Repair of CRBC canal to be completed within 45 days: Kundi

D.I. KHAN: Minister of State for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Faisal Karim Kundi on Saturday said the repair of the damaged parts of Chashma Right Bank Canal (CRBC) would be completed within 45 days.

In a statement issued here, the state minister said that WAPDA had prepared the feasibility of the remaining parts of the flood-affected canal.

Faisal Karim Kundi, who is also the Central Information Secretary of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), said the tender of third phase would be issued within the next two days. One tender would be Rs 160 million while two tenders would be of Rs 80 million each.

He said that WAPDA had assured to complete the repair work of the canal till Punjab within 45 days. Moreover, he said, Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari will inaugurate the dynamic survey of Benazir Income Support Program (BISP).

"Those who do not have BISP cards should participate in the survey so that they can be provided their right," said Kundi.

He said those who slash the BISP amount should be identified and highlighted so that action could be taken against them. APP

## PTI allots party ticket for NA-16 Abbottabad-1 by-poll

ABBOTTABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf on Saturday formally allotted a party ticket to Ali Asghar to file his candidacy for NA-16 Abbottabad-1 by-poll.

Despite the verdict of the Lahore High Court (LHC), which suspended the ECP's notification accepting the resignation of PTI members of the National Assembly, the situation in KP is not clear and PTI has formally allotted its ticket to candidates who are contesting by-elections.

On the other side, Pakistan Peoples Party candidate Saleem Shah and Pakistan Muslim League-N candidate Haji Mahabat Awan have requested the district election commission that they wanted to withdraw their nomination papers filed for the said constituency.

PTI's nominated candidate for NA-16 Abbottabad-1 has started his election campaign for by-election where local party leaders and workers have joined him. APP

## Private company to oversee security and parking issues at H-9 Bazaar

ISLAMABAD: In an effort to improve security measures and facilities for citizens at the H-9 weekly bazaar in Islamabad, the district administration of Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) has revealed plans to enlist the services of a private company.

Talking to APP here, an official of the ICT administration said the company will be responsible for managing security arrangements, addressing parking issues, and installing cameras

and fire extinguishing equipment throughout the bazaar.

He said that the H-9 bazaar is a popular destination for residents and visitors of Islamabad, known for its diverse range of vendors selling everything from clothing to food items.

ICT official stated that the proposal to hire a private company has been submitted to the Chief Commissioner of ICT for consideration. If approved, the move would represent a

significant step forward in addressing issues at the bazaar, he maintained.

He said that the proposed measures are expected to improve overall facilities for visitors and vendors, while also helping to reduce the risk of criminal activity. He said that with the private company taking on responsibility for security and facilities management, the ICT administration can focus on other critical areas of governance

and public service provision.

He said that citizens and visitors to Islamabad will undoubtedly welcome these efforts to enhance the security and safety of the H-9 weekly bazaar. With the proposal currently under consideration, it remains to be seen how soon the changes will be implemented, but the move represents a positive step forward for the city's ongoing efforts to improve security and public services, he said. APP

## Twin cities enthusiasts excited about PSL 8 matches at Rawalpindi

The cricket fans of the twin cities (Islamabad & Rawalpindi) would have a lot to cheer when the HBL Pakistan Super League (PSL) 8 begins at Pindi Stadium, hosting 14 matches of the tournament from March 1 to 12

ISLAMABAD: The cricket fans of the twin cities (Islamabad & Rawalpindi) would have a lot to cheer when the HBL Pakistan Super League (PSL) 8 begins at Pindi Stadium, hosting 14 matches of the tournament from March 1 to 12.

The Pakistan Super League 8, would be played across four venues from February 13 to March 19. The Multan and Karachi-leg matches would be held from February 13 to 26, before action shifts to Lahore and Rawalpindi where 20 matches will be played from February 26 to March 19.

The opening match between defending champions Lahore Qalandars and Multan Sultans will be played in Multan. The cricket matches in Rawalpindi would begin with the 17th game of the league with Peshawar Zalmi facing Karachi Kings on March 1.

Rawalpindi matches schedule - March 2: Lahore Qalandars vs Quetta Gladiators; March 3: Islamabad Unit-

ed vs Karachi Kings; March 5: Islamabad United vs Quetta Gladiators; March 6: Quetta Gladiators vs Karachi Kings; March 7: Peshawar Zalmi vs Lahore Qalandars and Islamabad United vs Multan Sultans; March 8: Women Exhibition match & Peshawar Zalmi vs Quetta Gladiators; March 9: Islamabad United vs Lahore Qalandars; March 10: Women Exhibition match & Peshawar Zalmi vs Multan Sultans; March 11: Women Exhibition match & Quetta Gladiators vs Multan Sultans; March 12: Islamabad United vs Peshawar Zalmi.

The fans who were very excited about the games didn't stay back in expressing their views on their favourite teams. An Islamabad United Fan, Aqeel Khan said, "I'm waiting for my favourite team to play at Pindi and I hope to see all of Islamabad United's games." Subhan Ahmed said, "I love to watch Peshawar Zalmi play. I'm supporting them and hope they win

the league a second time," he said.

Ayesha Raiz who cheers for Karachi Kings and Lahore Qalandars said, "I'll come with my whole family to watch the Kings play but most of my family members like Lahore Qalandars team and we wish them both all the success." Akhtar Hussain said, "I wish Rawalpindi hosts the ninth edition final of PSL next year. The die heart cricket lovers of Rawalpindi deserve to see a final at the Pindi Stadium. I request the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) and PSL management to please think about it." Usman Shabir said, "I'm from Multan and want to see them win the PSL final again. We wait every year to see our favourite teams coming into action in PSL. I welcome all the foreign players participating in the league and extend my warm wishes to them for making PSL more colourful." Meanwhile, the federal government has granted the status of state guests to all the participating teams and match officials and

VIP status to all foreign dignitaries, commentators and production crew.

Since it will be a high-profile event with the participation of international cricket players, match officials, foreign dignitaries, security consultants and broadcasters and media persons, the police have been directed to adopt all possible security measures.

The foreign guests, including players, will be provided top-level security during their stay and movements between the airport, hotels and the stadium in coordination with intelligence agencies, Pakistan Army and Rangers.

All vehicles, including buses and trucks entering Rawalpindi, Lahore and Multan will be checked thoroughly. The thorough screening will be carried out of workshops, petrol pumps, bus stops, bus and truck addas, parking stands, public parking areas, parking plazas and other such places. APP

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# Chinese path to modernization: The way forward

**Qaiser Nawab**

China's modernization journey is a unique one, and its leaders are dedicated to ensuring that it stays on track. Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, recently emphasized the need to advance reform and innovation to keep forging new growth drivers and strengths and fully invigorate social creativity.

Speaking at a study session at the Party School of the CPC Central Committee, Xi discussed that the Chinese path to modernization is not just about achieving a higher level of efficiency than that offered by the capitalist system but also about effectively maintaining a higher degree of social equity, providing 1.4 billion people a prosperous and dignified life, which is an important contribution to world development as well.

This study session was attended by some of the highest-ranking officials in China, including members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee, newly elected members and alternate members of the CPC Central Committee, as well as principal officials at the provincial and ministerial levels. Xi emphasized that the path to modernization in China is the modernization of common prosperity for all. The theory of the Chinese path to modernization marked a major theoretical innovation and was the latest significant achievement of scientific socialism.

In his report to the 20th CPC National

Congress in October 2022, Xi proposed and elaborated on the Chinese path to modernization. He reviewed the nation's efforts to attain rejuvenation in the modern era, including the Party's efforts in leading the establishment of the People's Republic of China, conducting reform and opening-up, and making historic breakthroughs to become the world's second-largest economy.

Xi's often-quoted verse, "The country is the people, and the people are the country," vividly embodies the CPC's people-centered governance concept. The CPC makes it plain that prosperity for everyone is a prerequisite for socialism and that inequality is undesirable. To ensure that no one was left behind, China waged and won a protracted war against poverty, an unmatched feat in human history.

China's historic achievements in eliminating absolute poverty and building a moderately prosperous society in all respects provided further institutional guarantees and more solid material foundations and ensured more proactive efforts in achieving Chinese-style modernization. Xi pointed out that only with the Party's leadership can the Chinese path to modernization see bright prospects and prosperity. He also reaffirmed Beijing's pledge to keep expanding high-level opening-up, deepen participation in the global division of labor and cooperation, and better utilize domestic and international resources.

The material and cultural-ethical advancements that make up modernization are the means through which China will reach its goal of modernization. A

significant component of modernization is the development of material goods. It paves the way for China to develop a great modern socialist country in all aspects. The Chinese route to modernization seeks to integrate material and spiritual civilizations, with humanism and humane concern as its foundation.

However, Xi also warned of various predictable and unpredictable risks and challenges ahead, and stressed the need to be more mindful of potential dangers, stay prepared to respond to challenges, and always have the courage and capacity to fight.

The general secretary also pointed out that the nation's great achievements in terms of rapid economic growth and social stability since the founding of the People's Republic of China, and especially since the start of reform and opening-up, proved that the Chinese path to modernization is the only correct way toward national rejuvenation. This pathway breaks the myth that modernization equals Westernization and displays a different vision for modernization, expanding the choices for developing countries in their modernization journey.

Advancing the Chinese path to modernization is a systemic project requiring coordination, systematic planning, and a holistic approach. In terms of its top-level design, insights into the general trends of global development and an accurate understanding of the common aspirations of the people are essential. Xi reiterated the need to coordinate development and security and said that the nation must pursue a holistic approach to national security, improve

its national security system, and enhance its capacities.

China will uphold independence, self-reliance, and strength, and remain committed to development based on its own strengths, and maintain a firm grasp on the future of its development and progress. Meanwhile, it will also continue to expand high-level opening-up, deepen participation in the global division of labor and cooperation, and better utilize domestic and international resources.

In conclusion, the Chinese path to modernization is a journey that the nation's leaders are committed to advancing. Xi has outlined the way forward, emphasizing the need to coordinate, plan systematically, and approach the process holistically. The theory of the Chinese path to modernization marks a major theoretical innovation and is a testament to China's journey toward modernization. Despite the various predictable and unpredictable risks and challenges ahead, China remains committed to its modernization journey and is ready to face any challenge that comes its way. Chinese modernization provides humanity with an alternative path to modernization. The CPC and the Chinese people have been offering humanity more Chinese insight, better Chinese input, and stronger Chinese might to assist in resolving its common issues and have made new and bigger contributions to the noble cause of human peace and development. Courtesy: China.org.cn

*The author is a highly esteemed international expert on the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Middle East, Central Asia, and Africa.*

## Pak-China step up cooperation on modern agricultural technology

In a move to promote China-Pakistan modern agricultural cooperation, a framework agreement on Belt and Road agricultural cooperation was signed at the China-Pakistan Symposium on Modern Agriculture Cooperation held last week at Northwest A&F University, China.

The agreement was signed by the Northwest A&F University, China National Machinery Industry Corporation (SINOMACH), and the Office of Foreign Affairs Commission, Shaanxi Provincial Party Committee.

The three sides agreed to work together in promoting international agricultural technology cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative, training agricultural talents, building overseas agricultural parks and enhancing agricultural industrial chain of BRI countries.

Professor Zhang Lixin from Northwest A&F University told China Economic Net (CEN) on Friday that to facilitate agricultural technology transfer, the university would establish a mechanism for expert exchange with agricultural universities and research institutes in BRI countries.

A resource-sharing platform was proposed at the symposium to share and promote success models. The cooperation on agricultural industrial chain will also be stepped up. Projects including agricultural mechanization, deep processing of food, cross-border agricultural trade, agricultural warehousing, international logistics and overseas agricultural parks will be promoted via Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Demonstration Base for Agricultural Technology Exchange, Yangling Area of China (Shaanxi) Pilot Free Trade Zone and Yangling Comprehensive Bonded Zone.

To support the above efforts, new scholarship programmes are in pipeline to train agricultural talents. The overseas agricultural project bases under SINOMACH, including those in Pakistan, will offer opportunities to local students and researchers for study, internship, employment, and entrepreneurship.

The university is also launching new research projects jointly with Pakistani partners. "We are going to cultivate green chillies in Pakistan, particularly in Sindh and Punjab", Abdul Ghaffar Shar, a doctoral candidate of Northwest A&F University who has been studying in China for nine years told CEN.

"I brought from China linseed back to Pakistan last month. It is a variety most Pakistani farmers are not familiar with but can produce much needed edible oil in the country. Experiment has started at Sindh Agricultural University, Tandojam", he added.

He said that delegations from Habib Bank Limited (HBL) and People's Bank of China (PBOC) Xi'an Branch also attended the symposium to concentrate on ways to facilitate Pakistani farmers to use China's high-yielding varieties.

## How 'earthquake diplomacy' can mend EU ties with Turkey

**Sinem Cengiz**

In what became known as "earthquake diplomacy," Türkiye and Greece put decades of enmity behind them and provided aid to each other after a series of powerful earthquakes hit both countries in 1999. The mutual solidarity created a new climate that led to Athens dropping its objections to Türkiye becoming a candidate for EU membership.

This month's earthquakes that killed nearly 45,000 people and devastated swaths of southeast Türkiye and northern Syria led to an outpouring of international support and solidarity. EU member states have provided all means of assistance, and are now organizing a donor conference in Brussels in March 16 to mobilize support for the victims of the earthquakes. Sweden, which currently holds the rotating presidency of the EU and has had difficulties with Türkiye for the past few months, will be the co-organizer of the conference.

Tensions have been high between Ankara and a number of EU states.

Türkiye and Greece have come close to a military collision over disputes in the Aegean Sea. Ankara has also refused to ratify Swedish and Finnish NATO membership bids, primarily because courts in Sweden have so far denied Turkish requests to approve the extradition of dozens of people that Ankara links to terrorist organizations. The dispute with Sweden is more serious than with Finland, especially after the burning of a copy of the Qur'an in Sweden. Nine Western capitals closed their consulates in Istanbul and warned their citizens of "security threats."

In the hours after this month's earthquakes, both

Sweden and Finland immediately responded to Türkiye's request for help — prompting the question of whether renewed "earthquake diplomacy" could soften Ankara's stance toward the NATO applicants. However, even if policy makers in Finland and Sweden hope for a change in the climate similar to that of 1999, the political context seems fundamentally different.

In the coming months, the earthquake will be the only topic on Türkiye's domestic and foreign agen-

July. Moreover, even if Swedish and Finnish humanitarian aid were not a "quid pro quo," there is little chance of an immediate move from Ankara on ratifying their membership while it is devoting all its attention to internal issues.

However, there are things that the EU countries could do to keep the relations with Türkiye on a positive track. For instance, Germany is granting three-month visas to earthquake victims with relatives in Germany; other EU states could do the same. Second, consistent assistance is essential to rebuild quake-stricken cities. Türkiye has completed the first phase of the disaster response, which was the rescue. It now needs support in rehabilitation and reconstruction, and EU member states' assistance is important. Finally, it was upsetting to see Turks working or studying abroad left emotionally alone after the disaster. More understanding and sympathy could be shown to Turkish students and scholars at EU universities; moral support is as important as material support at a time of such suffering.

European nations came to the rescue with their manpower and other support after the earthquakes, which was appreciated by the Turkish people. The EU states can build on this positive climate in their post-quake relations with Türkiye. Even if all the issues cannot be solved overnight, the humanitarian solidarity shown at this time could pave the way for some impetus in settling disputes that have been a source of tension for months. Courtesy: Arab News

*Sinem Cengiz is a Turkish political analyst who specializes in Türkiye's relations with the Middle East.*



## PML-N needs to mend its ways

The local Rawalpindi leadership of PML-N began to hurt the reputation of the party due to its poor strategy. The leadership has also suffered due to the childish actions of the local leadership. The local leadership held separate worker conventions, as a result of which the differences, grudges and grievances between the local leaders working at the local level came to the fore.

In the convention of Sajjad Khan, who holds a unique position in the public circles, the workers openly expressed that the party has been hijacked by a few PML-N local leadership of Rawalpindi, who is not only ignoring the loyalties of other party leaders for their own interests and to appear good to the party. Rather, the party by keeping their positive works for the party hidden are playing their role in dividing the PML-N, the debate was not even cold yet that the statement of former member of National Assembly and leader of PML-N Hanif Abbasi, who said in his speech during an event, if anyone is doing the best work among the women of Rawalpindi, it is Shazia Rizwan, president of PP-18.

The senior women leadership of Rawalpindi were enraged, who said that Hanif Abbasi does not mention the names of men or women working day and night for the positive image of PMLN, have the women of PML-N

never done any good work for their party, Tahira Aurangzeb, Seema Jilani or Sardar Naseem has never praised the local women of Rawalpindi, all the women of PML-N are dedicatedly serving the party, if anyone stands up for only one woman and says that only she is doing good work, then in fact it is the rest.

All PML-N's actions are tantamount to discouraging women. It has become very important to inform fairly, we have given our whole life to the party, if only one woman is praised then the rest of the women will not work from the heart, if anyone stands up for only one woman and says that only she is doing good work, then in fact he denied the loyalty of other members of PMLN, those actions are tantamount to discouraging women.

It has become very important to inform to senior leadership of PMLN fairly, we have given our whole life to the party, if only one woman is praised then the rest of the women will not work from the heart, if someone is important for you then you should keep a veil on them, if you are giving party ticket to Shazia Rizwan, but it does not mean that openly supporting one and ignoring the rest will affect the thinking of other women. PML-N women gave their whole life to the party, gave sacrifices, devoted his whole life to the party cause and loyalty to the top leadership, which was well rewarded.



# China plays constructive role in addressing Ukraine crisis: envoy

NEW YORK: Dai Bing (C, front), charge d'affaires of China's permanent mission to the United Nations, addresses a high-level Security Council briefing on Ukraine at the UN headquarters in New York. Xinhua

NEW YORK: China is ready to continue to play a responsible and constructive role in resolving the Ukraine crisis, a Chinese envoy said, while expounding China's position on the political settlement of the conflict in Ukraine.

Addressing a high-level Security Council briefing on Ukraine, Dai Bing, charge d'affaires of China's permanent mission to the United Nations, said that China issued earlier Friday a paper stating its position on the political settlement of the Ukraine crisis.

"We have always taken an objective and impartial stance based on the merits of the issue," he said.

Dai stressed that when handling and solving international disputes, universally recognized international law, including the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, must be upheld.

The sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of all countries must be effectively guaranteed. Observing universally recognized international law and the basic norms governing international relations bears on the stability of

the international system and international fairness and justice. They should be equally and uniformly applied in every place and on every issue without exception, he said.

"Some country, while stressing sovereignty and territorial integrity on the Ukraine issue, is blatantly interfering in other countries' internal affairs and undermining their sovereignty and territorial integrity," Dai said. "This reveals its double standard at full display. The international community is clear-eyed about this."

He underscored the need to pursue common security to facilitate a political solution to the Ukraine crisis, saying security is not an exclusive right enjoyed only by some countries.

The security of one country should not be pursued at the expense of others. Strengthening or even expanding military blocs will only undermine regional security and will never bring about peace, he said.

Russia, Ukraine and European countries are neighbors that cannot be physically moved away. To realize lasting peace and stability in Europe, the Cold War mentality and bloc confrontation must be abandoned, and the legitimate security concerns of all countries must be taken seriously and addressed properly, so as to build a balanced, effective

and sustainable regional security architecture, said Dai.

Highlighting diplomatic negotiations as the only right way to solve the Ukraine crisis, he said "conflicts have no winners" and called on the international community to promote peace talks with the highest sense of urgency and work to create enabling factors and platforms for the resumption of negotiation.

Bringing parties to the conflict back to the negotiating table is not going to be easy, but it is the first step toward a political solution, he said.

"We call on Russia and Ukraine to resume negotiations without any preconditions," the envoy said. "Ukraine is not an arena for fights between major countries. No one should seek to benefit from the conflict at the cost of the Ukrainian people."

Dai emphasized that it is imperative to never cross the red line of nuclear security under any circumstances.

Nuclear weapons must never be used, and nuclear war must never be fought. Faced with the risk that the Ukraine crisis could lead to an escalation of the conflict, major countries bear special and important responsibilities to maintain communication and coordination and to do everything they can to prevent a nuclear crisis, he said.

The international community should



China urges Russia-Ukraine talks, UN supports no nukes clause

jointly oppose armed attacks against nuclear power plants or other peaceful nuclear facilities, ensure strict compliance with the Convention on Nuclear Safety, among others, and support the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in playing a constructive role in promoting the safety and security of peaceful nuclear facilities, he added.

The humanitarian crisis is worsening and should be proactively and properly addressed, Dai said.

The international humanitarian

law is a code of conduct that must be strictly observed in conflict situations. Relevant parties should avoid attacking civilians or civilian facilities, protect the vulnerable, including women and children, ensure humanitarian access, and respect the basic rights of prisoners of war, he said.

The international community should increase humanitarian assistance, help restore civilian infrastructure, and ensure the basic livelihood of refugees and displaced persons, with a view to

preventing a humanitarian crisis on a larger scale, Dai said.

"At the same time, humanitarian operations should earnestly follow the principles of neutrality and impartiality and avoid politicization," he stressed.

The envoy also urged efforts to be made to manage the spillovers of the Ukraine crisis, which he said has far-reaching impacts, noting that developing countries that are not parties to this conflict should not pay an excessively high price for it.

Some relevant parties have been resorting to unilateral sanctions and maximum pressure, which cannot solve any issue, and can only undermine the stability of the global industrial and supply chains and exacerbate the global food, energy and financial crises, he said.

"We hope that the relevant parties will take responsible actions and stop abusing unilateral sanctions and long-arm jurisdiction," said Dai.

The Black Sea Grain Initiative and the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the United Nations and Russia on the export of food products and fertilizers have great significance for ensuring global food security and should be implemented fully and effectively in a balanced manner, he said. Xinhua

## Ukrainians pay tribute to people who lost lives in war

LONDON: Ukrainian community in London pay tribute to people who lost lives in war. People gather in front of Ukraine's embassy in London to show solidarity with Ukraine as they demonstrate to mark the one-year anniversary of Russia-Ukraine war in London, United Kingdom.

LONDON: As Friday marks the first anniversary of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, a commemoration ceremony was held outside the Ukrainian Embassy in London to pay tribute to the people of Ukraine who lost their lives due to the battle.

Demonstrators marched following a memorial service in front of the St. Volodymyr

statue, holding Ukrainian flags and banners reading "Save Ukrainian children," "Stop killing Ukrainians," "Stop kidnapping our children," and "Expel Russia from the UN" as well as photographs of the war.

Many Christian clergies also participated in the ceremony, where those who lost their lives in the war were remembered, prayers were offered, and hymns were sung.

In his speech, Vadym Prystaiko, the Ukrainian ambassador in London, thanked all the nations that supported his country in its fight against Russia and said "the West now realizes the threat posed by Russia."

A tribute in Holland Park Avenue consisted of dozens of toys attached to the railings, each representing a child who lost their life in the conflict. The toys, including teddy bears and dolls were placed by members of the Ukrainian community in London and passersby who wanted to pay their respect.

The display attracted a great deal of attention from people walking by, with many stopping to take photos and leaving messages of support.

Meanwhile, on Feb. 23, a group of activists poured hundreds of liters of yellow and blue paint onto the road outside the Russian Embassy in London, creating a

massive Ukrainian flag as a symbol of solidarity with Ukraine.

The campaign group Led By Donkeys, known for their high-profile activism and political stunts, stopped traffic as they used wheelbarrows and brushes to spread more than 300 liters of paint across the road, creating a 500-square-meter (5,382-square-foot) Ukrainian flag.

Russia launched what it calls "a special military operation" in Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022. It has so far resulted in the death of at least 8,006 civilians and 13,287 injuries, according to the latest UN figures. Anadolu Agency

## Russia-Ukraine conflict may begin WW-III: Mahathir



DUBAI: Former Malaysian prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad has said that the current crisis between Russia and Ukraine can be interpreted as the "start of the third World War".

"I hesitate to write this article. I may be accused of apologising for the Russians. I am not. I think the present war between Ukraine and Russia is caused by the Europeans' love of war, of hegemony, of dominance," he wrote in a series of tweets.

He said that Russia was the partner of the US, Canada and Western Europe in the war against Germany. "The moment Germany was defeated, the west declared that Russia, their partner was their new enemy," he added.

The former prime minister said that the west started preparing for war against Russia and NATO was set up to form a military alliance against Russia.

In response, he said, Russia then set up the Warsaw Pact and a Cold war ensued, adding that the world had to choose between the west and the east.

He said that after the Russians disbanded the Warsaw Pact and allowed the countries of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to leave the bloc, NATO did not disband. "Instead the countries freed from Russian hegemony were urged to join NATO as enemies of Russia. The pressure against the weakened Russia was heightened."

As the former socialist republics join NATO and the threat against Russia heightened, Mahathir said,

## Magnitude 6.1 quake shakes Japan's Hokkaido

TOKYO: A magnitude 6.1 earthquake struck off Hokkaido in northern Japan on Saturday night, the United States Geological Survey and the Japan Meteorological Agency said.

No tsunami warning was issued after the offshore quake, which shook the coastal cities of Kushiro and Nemuro.

Major Japanese media outlets carried no immediate reports of damage or injuries. The quake hit at 10:27 pm (13:27 GMT) at a depth of around 43 kilometres (27 miles), the USGS said.

An expert speaking on public broadcaster NHK warned residents to be vigilant against quakes for about a week. Earthquakes are common in Japan, which sits on the Pacific "Ring of Fire", an arc of intense seismic activity that stretches through Southeast Asia and across the Pacific basin.

The country has strict construction regulations intended to ensure buildings can withstand strong earthquakes, and routinely holds emergency drills to prepare for a major jolt. Reuters

## 112 illegal migrants sent back from Libya

TRIPOLI: The International Organization for Migration (IOM) on Thursday said 112 illegal migrants were sent from Libya to their country of origin.

"Today 112 migrants were able to return their country of origin through the European Union funded Joint Initiative," the UN agency said in a statement.

"The charter flight carrying men, women, and children, including five medical cases, departed from Sebha airport to Niamey, Niger this afternoon," it said.

The voluntary return program provides migrants in vulnerable situations with assistance including transportation, medical checks, documentation, and other logistical needs to return home safely.

Because of the insecurity and chaos in Libya since the fall of its late leader Muammar Gaddafi's regime in 2011, many migrants, mostly Africans, chose to cross the Mediterranean Sea to European shores from Libya.

So far, 2,850 illegal immigrants were rescued at sea and returned to Libya this year, according to the agency.

Rescued migrants usually end up inside overcrowded reception centers across Libya, despite repeated international calls to close those centers and release the migrants. Xinhua

## Massive winter storm creates havoc for US state of California



HOUSTON: A massive winter storm blanketed the state of California on Friday threatening treacherous blizzard conditions as far south as San Diego that could continue wreaking havoc through the weekend.

"A Blizzard Warning, the first issued by this office, is now in effect for the San Bernardino County Mountains from 4 AM Friday to 4 PM Saturday," the National Weather Service (NWS) in San Diego tweeted. "Travel will be VERY DIFFICULT TO IMPOSSIBLE due to the extremely heavy snow and extremely high winds expected."

Forecasters predict that up to 5 feet of snow may fall in the mountains of Big Bear Lake, about two hours northeast of Los Angeles, creating whiteout conditions and wind gusts of up to 75 miles per hour (120 kilometers per hour), with extreme weather conditions raising the risk of avalanches.

"This storm should not be taken lightly!" officials tweeted in the city of Big Bear Lake. "Stay home. Stay warm. Stay safe."

"We can potentially receive upwards of 3-5 ft (maybe more) of snow tonight," it said.

In Santa Clarita, about 40 miles (64 kilometers) north of Los Angeles, parts of Interstate 5 were closed Friday due to a mudslide, according to the California Department of Transportation. Heavy snow had fallen Thursday night when the storm began moving into the state.

In northern California, lack of visibility led to road closures along Interstate 80 between San Francisco and the state's capital of Sacramento. At least 3 million Californians were under a winter storm warning as of Friday and 150,000 customers were without electricity.

While the forecast for heavy snow has put much of the state on high alert, the southern coastal areas could also face threats from heavy rain and flooding, with the greater Los Angeles area possibly getting two to four inches of rainfall, according to the NWS. Anadolu Agency

## Protest

Demonstrators march after memorial service in front of St Volodymyr Ukrainian Embassy in London.



## Amid emotional aftermath

# Turkish quake survivors need mental health aid

Burak Akinci

ANKARA: As survivors of the earthquakes in Türkiye are facing devastating trauma and loss, psychological support is essential for healing after a disaster of such proportions that has affected millions, experts said.

Tens of thousands of people died in the massive earthquakes striking Türkiye and Syria on Feb. 6. The Turkish Enterprise and Business Confederation put the cost of the disaster in the country at 84.1 billion dollars, but the mental health consequences remain incalculable.

"The most vulnerable groups are women, children, people with prior mental health disorders, and people with disabilities," said Ankara-based psychiatrist Hande Karakılıç Ucer. Not to mention the children who have lost both parents to the disaster and been separated from their extended families, she told Xinhua.

Research conducted by the Turkish Health Ministry following the 1999 earthquake showed that children and adolescents are more prone to develop



ing mental health problems than adults are when they have been exposed to traumatic natural disasters. People around children should not act as if nothing happened, Ucer noted, referring to the danger of victims shutting down their emotions in face of the trauma.

"We have to be open with children and explain this disaster to them in a language that they can comprehend," she said, adding that "play therapy" and

establishing a daily routine are essential for children to survive a grieving period.

In Türkiye, the 7.7 and 7.6 magnitude quakes have claimed 44,218 lives, according to the latest statistics on Saturday. Expert psychologists and psychiatrists have been dispatched to the quake-hit regions to help residents cope with the profound impact. Experts also recommend survivors limit their consumption of bad news and disturbing social media

posts over the catastrophe.

"Media exposure can influence our behavior following a natural disaster, and trigger mental disorders," Ucer said.

Seda Ozcan is a 27-year-old earthquake survivor from Antakya, a city near the Syrian border leveled by the earthquakes. Since the disaster, she is experiencing debilitating anxiety attacks that keep her up at night and from going through normal daily tasks.

"It's not the earthquakes itself, it's the whole situation we are facing, homelessness, concerns about the future, it's hard," she told Xinhua in Ankara, to which her family has been evacuated.

Offering psychological support to those impacted by a disaster involves a long process, health professionals say, as tiding through stages of trauma takes time. The vastness of the quake-hit zone spanning over 10 Turkish provinces home to 13.5 million people adds to the challenge. "In six months, survivors will enter the disappointment phase, and then will they face the bitter reality of things, ultimately followed by the healing phase," Ucer said. Xinhua

**PBF expresses solidarity with security forces for peace in KP**

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Business Forum (PBF) has expressed complete solidarity with Pakistan valiant armed forces and law enforcing agencies and said the entire business community stands united against war on terror and any external threat besides creating business-friendly environment fully ensuring durable security for economic growth across the country.

In a statement issued here on Saturday, Senior Vice President PBF, Muhammad Riaz Khattak said that they were proud of armed forces for successfully flushing out terrorists from their hideouts and stamping out the menace of terrorism in the region paving way for complete restoration of peace in the country, a pre-requisite for economic growth and development in the country.

Riaz Khattak said that PBF expressed its satisfaction over the commitment and determination of the army chief General Asim Munir for attaching top priority to security to strengthen the national economy and his guidelines will give impetus to accelerate the pace of economic growth. He said that conspiracies hatched by foreign elements would be fizzled out adding that with the grace of Allah Almighty, the country would emerge strongest in the comity of nations.

He also lauded the services of armed forces personnel who sacrificed their lives while fighting terrorists.

"In the prevailing critical situation, we should stand united as a nation to brave internal and external challenges", he expressed. On this occasion, PBF provincial chief Umer Masood ur Rehman greeted the ISPR for successfully organizing different short stories of the armed forces and played a tremendous role to cope up the challenges of the hybrid war.

**Pak, Italy has great potential to further strengthen bilateral trade: envoy**

*Pakistan attaches great importance to sustainable tourism in both countries*

**Spokesman Report**

LAHORE: Pakistan and Italy will further strengthen economic ties and reinforce bilateral cooperation in all diverse fields, besides deepening mutual collaboration on the issues of common interest.

This was decided during a meeting between Italian Ambassador to Pakistan Andreas Ferrareso and APBF President Syed Maaz Mahmood held here today. The APBF secretary general Khurram Niaz Khan was also present in the meeting.

The Italian Ambassador called for strengthening the Italy-Pakistan partnership and deepening bilateral cooperation, stressing that Italy would always support Pakistan's stability and economic development. He observed that Pakistan and Italy can boost the bilateral trade volume from the current level, as tremendous potential exists to raise Pak-Italy bilateral trade.

Andreas Ferrareso stated that the business communities in both countries fully realize the importance and vast potential of trade between two friendly nations. He said that some key areas for cooperation between the two countries have already been identified, along with the agreements to nurture greater economic ties to gain mutual benefits.

APBF secretary general Khurram Niaz updated the Ambassador on the current status of the Italy Pakistan Trade & Economic Window (IPEW), which aims to increase bilateral trade. The ambassador appreciated APBF's efforts to promote economic ties between the two countries.

A business delegation to Italy was also final-



ized by the APBF President and the Italian Ambassador to explore new business opportunities and further enhancement in bilateral trade.

APBF President Syed Maaz Mahmood, while underlining the longstanding cooperation between Pakistan and Italy, stressed Pakistan's desire to deepen and broaden bilateral ties in the trade, investment and economic fields. He underlined the commitment of Pakistan to promote peace and stability in the region. Simultaneously, he stressed, the national effort was aimed at strengthening stability and promoting economic development.

Maaz Mahmood appreciated the Ambassa-

dor for his professional and significant contribution to strengthen friendship and bilateral trade between Italy and Pakistan.

The APBF president appreciated the strong diplomatic cooperation and efforts of the Italian government and assured that Pakistan wants to further enhance its socio-economic ties with Italy. The business community in both countries should work together to foster trade relations through bigger exhibitions and stronger business-to-business contacts, supported by the two governments.

He said that the APBF is always thankful to Italy for supporting Pakistan in getting the GSP

plus from EU.

Maaz Mahmood praised the Ambassador for his positive support for the Pakistani business community. He highlighted other opportunities that have great potential for both countries at all levels.

APBF wants to diversify Pakistan exports and find new partners for doing business. I believe that Pakistan really has a lot of potential to promote itself, and Italy is one country which provides excellent business opportunities, he said.

He appreciated Italy to help Pakistan out in the technical aspects of tourism management to boost Pakistan's tourism and hospitality industry. Pakistan attaches great importance to sustainable tourism in both countries, as Italy and Pakistan have great potential of adventure tourism, cultural tourism and the growth of intangible cultural heritage owing to their rich historical cities, he added. He said that Italy is filled with epicly gorgeous places like Golfo di Orosei, Sardinia, Piazza del Campo, Siena, Ortigia, Sicily, Grand Canal, Venice, Fioritura of Castelluccio di Norcia, Umbria and Marche in its cities like Rome, Milan, Palermo, Bologna and Florence etc.

He further added that Pakistan and Italy had a long history of cordial relations and cooperation in political, economic, cultural, and social spheres. It is a matter of great satisfaction that the two nations had unanimity of views on several issues of global importance, and mutual cooperation in all fields had been on the rise. Apart from business and trade, Italy has carried out significant projects in agriculture, health, culture, and tourism.

**NEPRA Chairman refuses to remove MDI fixed charges**

*Tausif H. Farooqui says the current account deficit is to be met by charging according to the allocations but not usage*

LAHORE: National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) Tausif H. Farooqui on Saturday refused to lift MDI Fixed Charges which were being charged from the business community over meager allocation of load and even if the factory was closed, the industrialists had to pay fixed charges to DISCOs.

He said that the current account deficit is to be met by charging according to the allocation. The rate of energy is to be determine on the cost of production which is already very high because we depend on the imported fuels and due to the devaluation of Currency, people have to bear expensive electricity.

He was speaking at the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry. LCCI President Kashif Anwar and Vice President Adnan Khalid Butt also spoke on the occasion while Executive Committee Members were present on the occasion.

Chairman NEPRA also called the working of cold storages as seasonal and told that the seasonal businesses can disconnect their electricity connections and reconnect when they need electricity but the cold storages are not a seasonal business, but they work throughout the year and met the need of vegetables, fruits and perishable items of the country.

LCCI President Kashif Anwar drew the attention of Chairman NEPRA towards the issue of MDI charges saying that a few months back, NEPRA has imposed Maximum Demand Indicator charges on all industrial and commercial consumers under which they are charged 50% of their sanctioned load. He said that electricity bill has to be paid without using the units. If they use electricity more than 50% of their allotted load, then they will pay the bill according to the units used instead of MDI charges. He said that this decision is badly affecting the business community whose industrial units are closed or work in their industry is done on a seasonal basis.

We have also taken up this issue with the CEO of LESCO and he has assured all possible support to the business community in this regard.

Chairman NEPRA said that at the rate at which Discos are charging MDI charges, they are paying 10% more to Central Power Purchasing Agency Guarantee limited (CPPA-G). This is a very low price that they are charging.

He said that NEPRA has allowed the seasonal industry to disconnect and reconnect four times in a year without any charges to which the President Lahore Chamber Kashif Anwar said that notification of disconnection and reconnection should be issued so that we have some legal protection in this regard.

Chairman NEPRA said that We are having a hearing next week on MDI. By joining it businessmen can let us know about their concerns. If businessmen are using more than 50% electricity, they are not charged any MDI. If one has high sanctioned load while usage is low then it needs to rethink.

He said that we have decided that the rate of net metering will remain at 19.90 rupees and will not be less than that. Even if it is given at 9 rupees, there was no loss, but since the decision has been taken, the rate will remain the same.

He said that NEPRA has issued licenses for 65,000 MW power supply while the total requirement is 23,000 MW across the country. We currently have an installed capacity of 43,000 MW. He said that 65% of electricity generation is done on imported fuels. We don't have Dollars. The rupee has devalued due to which coal has also become expensive. Due to Dollar alone, our cost has increased eight times and overall input cost has increased by sixteen percent. How is it possible that despite the 16% increase in input cost, we do not increase the tariff.

He said that NEPRA's job is to

provide affordable, reliable and sustainable energy. NEPRA has four functions including Licensing, Tariff, Monitoring and Enforcement and Consumer Affairs Department.

"We have resolved 97% of the complaints received by our department", he said adding that earlier NEPRA was passive and now reactive. "When I came, I had two commitments. One take and pay for electricity and second don't pay for not getting electricity. And further we have decided that we will not start any more projects on import based fuel", he said.

He said that any expenditure in the new energy policy will be done on comparative bidding. NEPRA has currently approved the country's first RFT of 600 MW. Apart from this, they are also doing a road show at the middle East Energy Conference on March 7.

Chairman NEPRA said that there is no scientific method to generate electricity in Pakistan.

To deal with the same thing, Inductive Generation Capacity Expansion Plan (IGCEP) has been brought in which capacity expansion plan will be given annually for ten years. This will create opportunities to generate electricity in Pakistan at minimum cost.

We want to reverse our energy production system i.e. 65% of energy we generate from imported fuel and 35% from renewable sources. Electricity generated from hydro is also called renewable. According to this calculation, if we produce 35% green energy, we can apply from GSP to GSP Plus, which will benefit the business community.

He said that NEPRA has decided that there is no need to come to NEPRA for purchase of more than one MW of electricity in the wholesale market. "I want to deregulate the market as a power regulator. That is why we have broken down the National Transmission and Dispatch Company (NTDC)", he added.

**ICCI for focusing on IT industry to increase its exports up to \$10b**

**Staff Reporter**

ISLAMABAD: The rapid adoption of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is very important for better socio-economic development and promoting Pakistan as a digital economy, therefore, the government should focus on this industry to increase its annual exports to at least \$ 10 billion per annum.

This was said by Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) while expressing views during a visit to the 22nd ITCN Asia 2023 being organized by the Commerce Gateway Pakistan Pvt. Limited at Pakistan-China Friendship Centre. ICCI is one of the strategic partners in this event.

Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that Pakistan has a huge pool of young talent and by providing them training and education in IT field, the country can make rapid increase in its IT exports. He said that Pakistan's neighbors are earning billions of dollars from IT exports, but our IT exports are still far behind our actual potential as Pakistan's exports of ICT services, including telecommunication, computer and information services, reached \$2.6 billion in FY 2022. He stressed that the government should make more conducive policies for



the IT industry to bring a new revolution in this high potential sector.

The 3-days action-packed has provided an excellent platform to the IT industry players to showcase the solutions for all important issues of the economy related to the government, cloud, data centre, cybersecurity, ERP, education, banking & finance, health & pharma, e-commerce, artificial intelligence, and robotics. The series

of conferences were also organized on the sidelines of the event to provide a learning environment for the like-minded people to share knowledge & experiences. The event also provided a good opportunity for the entire tech ecosystem of Pakistan along with the leaders from the public & private sectors to gather under one roof and witness the biggest tech festival of the country.

**Charter of economy needed to revive save country**

**Staff Reporter**

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW) on Saturday said wrong economic policies have damaged the country's economy and politicians have no other option but to focus on economic recovery.

Important economic matters should not be left to the incompetent otherwise they would damage the economy which will bankrupt the country, it said.

Continuity of policies should be ensured so that investors can take a sigh of relief and invest

in their own country instead of withdrawing capital from Pakistan, said Saifuddin Sheikh, Executive Director of PEW.

He said that the former government always delayed important decisions which severely affected the rupee and led to a sharp rise in inflation while breaching of promises resulted in a suspension of IMF programs which further weakened the economy.

Saifuddin Sheikh said that the resumption of the IMF program should be ensured while trying to get some relaxation in the



stringent conditions. He said that a World Bank's recent report said that Pakistan's inability to allocate talent and resources to the most productive uses

has stunted economic growth.

Yet it is also true that policy-makers have either been blind to this reality or not cared about enhancing overall productivity because it does not suit their own purposes, he added.

It has mentioned powerful "insiders" who regularly influence the policymaking process to maximize their own benefits. In the agriculture sector large landowners benefit from subsidy schemes or under-priced inputs that favor a narrow set of crops; making themselves richer at the cost of the entire sector.

**China unleashes great economic momentum after COVID-19 victory**

BELJING: After achieving a major and decisive victory in its COVID-19 prevention and control efforts since late 2022, China has put its economy back on the fast track, with the vigor of its development impacting the whole world.

At a meeting last week, the Chinese leadership noted that China's COVID-19 response has accomplished a smooth transition in a relatively short time, citing continuous efforts made in optimizing relative prevention and control measures since November 2022.

With enhanced social mobility and international exchanges, the world's second largest economy is on course for a robust economic comeback.

The strong resilience of the Chinese economy can be seen in certain key statistics.

In January, the country's manufacturing sector regained expansion after three consecutive monthly shrinkages, with the purchasing managers' index reaching 50.1, up from 47 in December, data from the National Bureau of

Statistics showed. A reading above 50 indicates expansion, while a reading below reflects contraction.

The national consumer price index last month rose by 2.1 percent year on year. Compared with the price surge of major developed economies in the world, China's overall price level runs in an appropriate range, making the country an important "stabilizer" of global prices.

According to an earlier State Council executive meeting, China aimed to consolidate and expand the momentum of economic rebound, accelerate the recovery of consumption and stabilize foreign trade and investment.

As China has optimized its epidemic prevention and control measures, the flow of people, goods and information has brought much vitality to the country.

As the world's second largest consumer market, China has been expanding its consumption, injecting new momentum into the global economic recovery.

After a three-year lapse, China's outbound group tour has restarted, with the first batch of four groups arriving in Thailand, the United Arab Emirates and other countries.

According to a forecast of the UN World Tourism Organization, the orderly restoration of the outbound travels will greatly promote the recovery of tourism in the Asia-Pacific region and even the whole world.

The labor market has also been buzzing. At the beginning of the Chinese Lunar New Year, which started on Jan. 22 this year, labor-intensive provinces like Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Fujian launched cross-province recruitment. Government departments have led teams to central and western provinces to offer job information from enterprises and explain the recruitment policies.

Yang Daoling, a researcher with the State Information Center, said that the average flow of people around 100 representative incubators in January increased by 17.6 percent from the



previous month.

The Spring Festival travel rush, a mass-migration event marking the celebration of the Chinese New Year, witnessed more than 1.5 billion trips made by rail, highways, waterways and civil aviation in 40 days. The figure marked a 50.5-percent increase over the same period in 2022.

Goods also moved at a faster pace. The country's courier companies hit the 10-billion-parcel

mark within the first 39 days of 2023, which is 40 days quicker than in 2019, before the COVID-19 epidemic struck.

This year's performance demonstrates the vitality, resilience and growth potential of China's express delivery industry, the State Post Bureau said, adding that it shows that consumer confidence is increasing, and the economic recovery is picking up pace.

The rebound of the Chinese economy has attracted global attention as well as sparking interest among international investors.

The foreign direct investment (FDI) into the Chinese mainland, in actual use, expanded 14.5 percent year on year to 127.69 billion yuan in January, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

High-tech industries saw a rapid FDI increase of 62.8 percent in January. Specifically, foreign investment in high-tech manufacturing surged 74.5 percent, while that in the high-tech service sector rose 59.6 percent.

