



Imran Khan has no right to question govt economic policies: Marriyum

Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Thursday said Imran Khan had no right to question the economic policies of the current government which had been striving to undo the "mess" created by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) regime in its four-year tenure.



Pakistan expresses concern over regional instability driven

Pakistan's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Hina Rabbani Khar, has voiced concern over the "generous" supply of conventional and non-conventional weapons to India, saying it was severely straining South Asia's strategic stability, and threatening "our national security". "The largest country in the region continues to be a beneficiary of nuclear exceptionalism, in violation of established non-proliferation norms and principles," she said.

Simultaneously published from Islamabad, Lahore and Multan

Inquiry report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting of Federal Cabinet on Thursday.



Photo: PID

PM orders action as inquiry report on power breakdown suggests 'human & tech error'

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday directed the Power Division to hold a departmental action after the findings of an inquiry report held responsible the 'human and technical error' for the country-wide power breakdown of January 23.

The prime minister gave the order as the inquiry report of the massive power breakdown was presented in the cabinet meeting. Chairing the meeting, PM Sharif said the nation was awaiting strict action against those responsible for the incident that left the country in a power black-

out for several hours. The inquiry report also said that an abnormal increase in the frequency of the alternate current line tripped the automatic security system of power plants. It also said that the Kot Addu power plant had the facility of 'black start', however due to expiry of the contract of the plant, it

could not be made operational. Black Start is the procedure to recover from a total or partial shutdown of the transmission system which has caused an extensive loss of supplies. The prime minister ordered the authorities concerned to take necessary steps to line the power system with Supervisory Control

and Data Acquisition (SCADA). The federal cabinet was proposed that a special police force be deployed in areas with 60 percent and more line losses. The prime minister directed to constitute a special cabinet committee to finalize a strategy to end line losses, theft of electricity and solarization of tube wells.

COAS meets PM, discusses national security issues



Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir on Thursday called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

During the meeting, the overall security situation of the region was discussed while the professional matters of the Pakistan Army also came under consideration.

Earlier, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJSC) Gen Sahir Shamsah Mirza called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Dunya News reported.

The CJSC and premier exchanged views on overall security situation in the country and professional matters

of Pakistan's armed forces during the meeting at the Prime Minister's House.

Gen Sahir, who was promoted to the rank in November last, had earlier held a meeting with the prime minister following his promotion. The premier had congratulated Gen Sahir on assuming the responsibilities of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee.

He had also appreciated the professional capability and performance of Gen Mirza.

Calling the army a precious national asset, the prime minister said the leadership of the two most competent officers would further strengthen the country's defence.

Imran sees masses facing heavy price of regime change

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan said on Thursday the masses were facing a heavy price of regime change.

Taking to Twitter, the deposed premier went on to say, "A bunch of criminals have been foisted upon the nation by the former COAS."

Lamenting the persistent depreciation of the rupee, Mr Khan said, "The rupee has been depreciated by over 62 percent during the tenure of the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM)."

Mr Khan said the inflation rate in the country had increased to a record high in the country's 75-year history, as it has soared up to 35 percent.

Earlier, PTI Chairman Imran Khan and former Punjab chief minister Chaudhry Parvez

Elahi would hold a consultative meeting in Lahore to discuss the Supreme Court 3-2 verdict on elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to be held within 90 days.

The meeting would take place at the deposed premier's Zaman Park residence in Lahore while the apex court's verdict and the party's future strategy would be the centre of attention in the huddle.

Earlier in the day, Imran Khan suspended the court arrest drive of the party after the Supreme Court's verdict.

In a tweet, the former premier welcomed the judgement of the apex court, saying: "It was responsibility of SC to uphold Constitution & they have valiantly done that through their judgement today". He said the ruling was an assertion of the rule of law in Pakistan.

President urges bureaucracy to make fast decisions

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Thursday underlined the need for inculcating the spirit of fast decision-making in bureaucracy to improve service delivery and achieve the desired goals well in time.

He said that the slow decision-making process by the bureaucracy resulted in poor governance as well as hampering the progress of the country.

The President made these remarks while chairing a meet-

ing of the Board of Governors of the National School of Public Policy (NSPP), at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

The meeting was attended by the Special Secretary Finance Division Awais Manzoor Sumra, Special Secretary Establishment Division, Asmat Tahira, Rector NSPP Dr Ijaz Munir, and Secretary of Executive Committee of BoG of NSPP Nadeem Mahbub.

Members of BoG Javed Sadiq Malik, Muneer Kamal, Zaid bin Maqsood, Muhammad Hanif Channa, and Dr Hafeez Ahmad Jamali attended the meeting via



video link.

Speaking on the occasion, the

President underlined the need for imparting modern knowledge

and techniques to civil servants to ensure good governance and efficient service delivery.

The meeting also approved the upgradation of Computer Operators from BPS-11 to BPS-16 with the change of nomenclatures as IT Officers in all National Institutes of Management in the country.

The Board also accorded approval to the proposal for adopting special dispensation for the employees in BPS-1 to BPS-16 as per the Finance Division's Office Memorandum of 14 February 2023.

Maryam hits out at Imran over economic situation

Bureau Report

LAHORE: (Dunya News) PML-N senior vice president Maryam Nawaz slammed on Thursday Pakistan PTI chairman Imran Khan over the latter's tweet on the economic situation.

Taking to Twitter, Ms Nawaz took a jibe at the deposed premier and accused him of dragging the country into a quagmire. Berating Mr Khan for negotiating with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Ms Nawaz said, "Cruel deal that you [Imran] struck with the IMF. Then you breached the deal, plunging the country into economic turmoil".

"Mighty audacious of you to criticise those who are undoing your mess created through ruthless plunder, incompetence, and misplaced priorities," she added. Earlier today, PTI chief Imran Khan said the masses were facing a heavy price of regime change.

Taking to Twitter, the deposed premier went on to say, "A bunch of criminals have been foisted upon the nation by the former COAS." Lamenting the persistent depreciation of the rupee, Mr Khan said, "The rupee has been depreciated by over 62 percent during the tenure of the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM)."

China says 'lab leak' claims hurt US credibility

Spokesman Report

BEIJING: Beijing accused Washington on Wednesday of harming its own credibility after a top US intelligence official said his agency believed the pandemic "most likely" caused by a laboratory incident in Wuhan, China.

FBI Director Christopher Wray told Fox News on Tuesday that the Bureau has now assessed the source of Covid-19 was "most likely a potential lab incident in Wuhan." Chinese officials have angrily denied the claim, calling it a smear campaign against Beijing.

"The United States once again stirs up the laboratory leak theory, which will not discredit China, which will further lower its own credibility," foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning told a



regular briefing on Wednesday.

Wray's comments come after a report earlier this week said the US Department of Energy had determined that a leak from a Chinese lab was the most likely cause of the Covid-19 outbreak.

The department's findings are significant because it works with a network of national laboratories, including some that do advanced biological research.

But other agencies within the US intelligence community believe the virus emerged naturally in the world.

In Tuesday's interview, Wray also accused the Chinese government of trying to stall US efforts to investigate the causes of the pandemic.

"The Chinese government... has been doing its best to try to thwart and obfuscate the work here, the work that we're doing, the work that our US government and close foreign partners are doing," Wray said.

"And that's unfortunate for everybody." At Wednesday's press briefing, Mao reiterated a longstanding and unsubstantiated Chinese claim that the virus could have escaped from the US military research lab at Fort Detrick, Maryland.

Dar accuses Imran of economic woes

Commerce Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Ishaq Dar lambasted on Thursday Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan, saying the latter was responsible for economic woes

Taking to Twitter, Mr Dar lashed out at the deposed premier, saying, "Only Imran Khan had dragged the country to the quagmire." Continuing to berate Mr Khan, Mr Dar said, "Thanks be to Allah Almighty that the country got rid of Imran Khan."

Claiming that the government was trying its all-out efforts to undo the incompetence of Mr Khan, Mr Dar vowed to announce good news for the masses soon in connection with the country's economy.

Earlier today, Mr Dar said country's negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are about to conclude and Staff Level Agreement



with the fund is expected next week.

In a tweet, the finance minister said some Anti-Pakistan elements were spreading malicious rumours that Pakistan may default.

He said, these rumours were not only completely false but also belie the facts.

The State Bank of Pakistan's (SBP) foreign exchange reserves have been increasing and are almost US \$ 1 billion higher than four weeks ago despite making all external due payments on time, he added.

The finance minister said, the foreign commercial banks have started extending facilities to Pakistan.

Group photo with President

RAWALPINDI: President Dr. Arif Alvi and First Lady Begum Samina Arif Alvi in a group photo with the Board of Governors of Behbud Maternal and Children Hospital Rawalpindi on Thursday.



Photo: PID

Govt. to take strict action against those making propaganda against national institutions

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Interior Rana Sanaullah Khan on Thursday said the government has decid-

ed to take strict legal action against those criminal fugitives who are supporters of PTI and running a nefarious Indian agenda against the national institutions and

their heads.

On the directives of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, he said the government has decided to take strict legal action against those criminal

fugitives who are supporters of PTI and running a nefarious Indian agenda against the national institutions and their heads by sitting inside and outside the country.

Pakistan condemns this campaign of enemies of the country and to curb such practices, the minister said in a tweet.

IMF agreement need of the hour, says Miftah Ismail

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: Former finance minister Miftah Ismail on Thursday stated that the agreement with the international monetary fund (IMF) is the need of the hour, to overcome Pakistan's default.

Speaking to ARY News, the former finance minister Miftah Ismail said that the government have to control inflation but the IMF agreement is also the need of the hour to avoid default.

Miftah Ismail criticizes politicians for prioritizing politics over the state over the past three years, stating that Pakistani politicians are always fighting for power and have political enmities. He added that unfortunately, no one has done anything for Pakistan.

In reply to the question regarding inflation and the economy, Miftah Ismail stated that the current finance minister delayed in taking

some decisions, otherwise the situation will not that worst. "I was running the economy better or Ishaq Dar, the nation will decide," Miftah Ismail said. The former minister stated that Bangladesh and other countries have left Pakistan behind economically.

He said that politicians including Shehbaz Sharif, and Ishaq Dar as well as the opposition are not happy with the current position of the country. He advised that the politicians have to get out of their personal interests and move forward towards the betterment of Pakistan.

Last month, Finance Minister Ishaq Dar advised citizens to adopt austerity measures due to the economic crisis. Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjrani chaired a special meeting of the Business Advisory Committee which was attended by Finance Minister Ishaq Dar and other lawmakers.

Monetary Policy: SBP jacks up interest rate to 20pc

Bureau Reporter

KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) on Thursday raised the monetary policy rate by 300 basis points to 20 per cent.

"This decision reflects deterioration in inflation outlook & its expectations amid recent external and fiscal adjustments. MPC believes this outlook warrants a strong policy response to anchor inflation expectations around the medium-term target of 5-7 per cent," the statement said.

"MPC noted that reduction in CAD is important but requires concerted efforts to improve the external situation. It emphasized that any significant fiscal slippage would undermine monetary policy effectiveness in the context of achieving the price stability objective," the SBP added.

Pakistan is undertaking key measures to unlock the critical \$1.1 billion funding from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

IMF new conditions The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has asked Pakistan to implement demands before reaching a staff-level agreement for the revival \$7 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF) stalled for months.

Pakistan and International Monetary Fund (IMF) are expected to make progress on the revival of the loan programme as their virtual talks for staff-level agreement would be held on March 2.

Sources further claimed that Islamabad was continuously receiving new Memorandum of



Economic and Financial Policies (MEFP), while further demands were being tabled by amending the clauses of agreement.

The IMF has tabled four more conditions before reaching a staff level agreement, sources claimed, adding that the government was forced to implement surcharge of Rs3.82 on electricity permanently instead of four months.

Meanwhile, the lender also demanded to increase interest rate ahead of staff level agreement. In this regard, the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) preponed its Monetary Policy Committee on March 2 — two weeks earlier than scheduled.

The lender insisted that the country's interest rate should be in line with inflation — a demanded which has been agreed by the incumbent government.

Abdulaziz Hamad called on Ishaq Dar



Commerce Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Managing Director, Aljomaih Holding Company Limited, Abdulaziz Hamad Aljomaih Thursday called on Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar.

Special Assistant to Prime Minister (SAPM) on Finance Tariq Bajwa, SAPM on Revenue Tariq Mehmood Pasha, Secretary Finance and senior officers from the finance division attended the meeting, said a press release issued here.

The minister welcomed Abdulaziz Hamad Aljomaih and highlighted deep rooted brother-

ly relations with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

He also appreciated Aljomaih Holding Company's investments in Pakistan and said the present government provided conducive environment and maximum facilitations to the foreign investors.

Abdulaziz Hamad Aljomaih briefed the minister on Aljomaih Holding Company's profile and investments in Pakistan.

He also apprised the minister of the company's future investments and business plans in Pakistan.

Ishaq Dar extended all out support and cooperation to Aljomaih Holding Company Limited.

Saad directs to complete survey of illegal occupants on PR's commercial land

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Railways Khawaja Saad Rafique Thursday directed the official concerned to complete the survey of illegal occupants on the commercial land of the Pakistan Railway (PR) during the next seven days.

While chairing a meeting here, the minister said the Carriage Factory should find business from the market to earn more revenue.

The Management Committee on optical fiber submitted a report during the meeting.

Also, the deliberations on the action plan for the next 100 days of the department had come under discussion.

It was informed during the meeting that the Carriage Factory and Mughalpur Workshop would upgrade three trains to provide better facilities to the passengers.

AJK-GB Bus Service to Be Launched On March 23



Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: A bus service between the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and the Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) regions will be launched on March 23.

The AJK and GB governments announced the commencement of development work on the Shounter tunnel. The GB Chief Minister (CM) Khalid Khurshid said that the tender was issued for a 50-kilometre-long road linked to the Shounter tunnel.

Moreover, the AJK Prime Minister (PM) Sardar Tanveer Ilyas said that the government established a ministerial committee for the Shounter tunnel project.

Commander Royal Navy of Oman visits NHQ



Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Commander of Royal Navy of Oman Rear Admiral Saif Bin Nasser Bin Mohsin Al Rahbi called on Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi here on Thursday at Naval Headquarters.

Upon arrival at Naval Headquarters (NHQ), the Commander of Royal Navy of Oman was received by the Naval Chief, a Pakistan Navy news release said.

During the meeting matters of mutual interest, regional security situation, and the scope of military cooperation including defence, training, and security between the

two countries were discussed.

The naval chief highlighted Pakistan Navy initiatives for ensuring maritime security and peace in the region through Regional Maritime Security Patrols.

The naval chief thanked the dignity on Oman Navy participation in recently held EX-AMAN-23 at Karachi. The visiting dignitary lauded Pakistan Navy's efforts and commitments in support of collaborative maritime security in the region.

It is expected that the recent visit of Commander of Royal Navy of Oman will further enhance bilateral collaboration between the two countries in general and navies in particular.

Reporter's diary

Pakistan's brave soldiers: salute to their gallantry in fight against terrorism



Mian Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: The unsung heroes of Pakistan (including officers and the soldiers of our security forces have been fearlessly and gallantly combating terrorism for the last 32 years. I myself have worked with ISPR Reuters News Agency (British Media) and American Media and seen with my own eyes how our

brave soldiers in the deserts, mountains, narrow tunnels and places regardless of the weather how they work day and night to protect our country and nation.

Sacrifices of intelligence personnel have been the key in success against war on terror in recent years. The latest sacrifices by two intelligence officers in Khanewal and Two Army Officers



in Barkhan including Several Soldiers (Jawans) in January added another chapter of gallantry in the history of security personnel's heroism.

I have seen the war of terrorism from afar; these young men embrace martyrdom as their beloved. The Pakistani army has this distinction in the other militaries of the world, in a very low

budget only on the basis of Qalma and Nara-e-Takbeer. On this basis they offer their lives for the country.

They are the protector of the Pakistani nation just like angels walking on earth. My red salute to the audacious, courage, and bravery of the Pak Army and the martyrs.

Lt Gen (R) Amjad Shoaib acquitted in incitement case

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: A district and sessions court in Islamabad has acquitted Lt. General (retired) Amjad Shoaib in a case pertaining to inciting the public against state institutions.

As per details, the court ordered to immediately release Lt. General (retired) Amjad Shoaib from the case.

Earlier, the district and Sessions court remanded Lt. General (retired) Amjad Shoaib into police custody for three days.

Section 144 Imposed in Surroundings of Islamabad Courts

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD ADMINISTRATION ON THURSDAY SLAPPED SECTION 144 NEAR THE COURTS LOCATED IN THE FEDERAL CAPITAL, AMID SECURITY CONCERNS.

As per the spokesperson of the Islamabad Capital Police, the protests near the courts situated in the federal capital have been banned and only concerned lawyers and journalists will be allowed to visit the courts.

Gandhara Research Center-great gift from Korean Government: Engr Amir Muqam

By Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: Advisor to Prime Minister for Political, Public Affairs, National Heritage and Culture Engr. Amir Muqam on Thursday said that Gandhara Cultural Heritage Research Center is a great gift from Korean Government for the cultural heritage of Pakistan.

He expressed these views while addressing the inauguration ceremony of Gandhara Cultural Heritage Research Center here at Department of Archeology and Museum (DOAM).

Secretary, National Heritage & Culture Division, Mrs. Fareena Mazhar, Administrator (Minister) of the Cultural Heritage Administration of Rep. of Korea (CHA) Dr. Choi Eungchon, President of the Korea Cultural Heritage Foundation (KCHF) Mr. Choi Youngchang, Ambassador of the Korea Embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan H.E. Mr. Suh Sangpyo, Director of the International Cooperation Division, CHA Mr. Jo Dongjoo, Director General of the International Cooperation Department, KCHF Mr. Jeon Bumhwan and Director General, Department of Archaeology and Museums, Dr. Abdul Azeem were also present on the occasion.

Advisor to PM Engr Amir Muqam said that Gandhara Cultural Heritage Center at Islamabad was established



with the generous technical and financial support of the Government of the Republic of Korea.

Advisor to PM said that he was thankful to the Government of the Republic of Korea for taking keen interest and continuous support for the cultural heritage of Pakistan, adding that especially, for preservation and promotion of the Buddhist Heritage of Gandhara.

He said that there are potential areas of future cooperation between the Cultural Heritage Administration of Korea and Pakistan in the fields of archaeological research, museum

management, and conservation of cultural assets.

"We believe that in future our two countries can further collaborate in these areas to promote cultural understanding and cooperation between our nations", he added.

He highly appreciated the Korean team of the project and all officers and staff of the Department of Archaeology and Museums for their hard work to achieve this goal.

Speaking on the occasion, Korean Ambassador H E Mr. SUH Sang Pyo said that Pakistan was home to

the largest number of Buddhist sites and that promotion of religious tourism can greatly stabilize the economy of Pakistan.

He termed Pakistan as a friendly nation for Korea and said that the ancient cultural and religious artifacts in Pakistan were very unique. As per its contract with the Pakistan government, he said, Korea will provide modern equipment for the discovery of precious artifacts and cultural sites in Pakistan.

Administrator (Minister), Cultural Heritage Administration, Republic of Korea, Dr. CHOI Eungchon, said that he was truly delighted to attend this historic opening day of the Gandhara Cultural Heritage Research Center which is also the year of the celebration 40 years of diplomatic ties between Pakistan and Korea.

"I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all attendees from the Pakistan government", he added.

He said that to pass on the great cultural heritage of Pakistan and Gandhara to the future generation, Since 2021, The Korean Cultural Heritage Administration and the Korean Cultural Heritage Foundation have made an effort to protect it. "Pakistan and Korea has a deep historic connection for the vast amount of priceless Buddhist heri-



itage of Pakistan", he added.

He said that the strong ties which has been maintaining between Pakistan and Korea for a long time due to this historical background of Buddhist cultural heritage, it will be further more strengthened with the opening of the 'Gandhara Cultural Heritage Research Center'.

Federal Secretary National Heritage and Culture Fareena Mazhar said that Gandhara Cultural Heritage Center established at DOAM under five year "official development assistance" project of the cultural heritage administration

government of the Republic of Korea.

Earlier, Deputy Director General Korea Cultural Heritage Foundation Mr. Baek Kyunghwan presented the introduction of Gandhara Cultural Heritage Research Center.

Later, Advisor to PM for Political, Public Affairs, National Heritage and Culture Engr Amir Muqam also witnessed the handing over of equipment ceremony between DG Department of Archeology & Museum Abdul Azeem and President Korea Cultural Heritage Foundation Mr. Choi Youngchang.

President AJK calls on overseas Kashmiris to help in resolving Kashmir dispute

By Abdul Majeed Tahir

ISLAMABAD: President Azad Jammu and Kashmir Barrister Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry, while referring to the dire situation in the Indian-occupied territory of Jammu and Kashmir, has said that it was high time that the overseas Kashmiris should play their due role to help resolve the lingering dispute that has been the main cause and consequence of bloodshed and violence in the region. The AJK president expressed these views while talking to Pamela Malik, Ghazala Khan and Kanwal Khan of the Jammu and Kashmir Right to Self-Determination Movement UK here today.



Hailing the Kashmiri diaspora community's significant role in promoting the Kashmir cause at international level, the president said overseas Kashmiris owed even a greater responsibility vis a vis

resolving the Kashmir issue and highlighting the woeful plight of their Kashmiri brethren who have been terribly suffering under India's brutal suppression for the past several decades. Briefing the visit-

ing delegates about the prevailing political and human rights situation in the IoK, the president said that Kashmiris have been facing the brunt of India's prolonged military occupation with the utmost courage and resilience. Referring to the massive troops' concentration in the disputed territory, Barrister Chaudhry said that India had turned Kashmir into a military garrison by deploying over 900,000 military and paramilitary troops in the troubled region.

The massive troops' concentration, he said, had made the life of Kashmiris miserable. "Under the given circumstances, the onus of responsibility to draw world attention towards

Indian brutality and barbarism in Occupied Kashmir lies with the Kashmiri expatriate community", Barrister Chaudhry said, adding that it was a matter of serious concern that India's apartheid regime had intensified its efforts to bring material change aimed at converting Muslim majority state into a minority. He said that the Modi government had also changed the region's political landscape through bogus delimitation. In order to thwart India's nefarious designs in the region, the president said that concerted efforts were required to raise these issues effectively at the global level.

A peace walk and seminar organized on Civil Defense Day



By News Desk

KARACHI: A peace walk and seminar were organized on the occasion of Civil Defense Day in Federal Civil Defense Training School Karachi. Commandant Mehboob Ali Sheikh highlighted the importance of this day for the individuals working in the field of civil defense, who are always prepared to defend Pakistan.

Former Executive Director of Arts Council Karachi, Nadeem Zafar Siddiqui, appreciated the services of civil defense and urged citizens to receive training to meet the needs of the present time. Other notable speakers at the event included former Chief Engineer of KPT, Shakeel Ahmed Khan, former Commandants Ms. Alia Irfana, Sarfraz Hussain Jafri, and Arif Moin, former Chief City Fire Naem Yusuf, former Chief Fire Officer Mubeen Ahmed, Mr. Tariq Moin, Former Fire Officer KPT Saeed Akhtar Jadoon, and stage and film artist Nasir Khan, among others. The seminar provided a platform for the speakers to share their views on civil defense and its importance in safeguarding Pakistan's citizens.

MD NTDC meets DIG Hyderabad

By Bureau Report

LAHORE: A Delegation headed by Managing Director NTDC, Engr. Dr. Rana Abdul Jabbar Khan met DIG Police Hyderabad Range Pir Muhammad Shah to seek quick action against miscreants involved in theft of NTDC transmission line material of 220kV and 500kV transmission lines passing through Nooriabad, Lonikot, Jamshoro, Khanot and Daddu. During the meeting, MD NTDC asked DIG Police Hyderabad Range to assist NTDC security teams in lodging FIR and taking action against culprits involved in theft of national assets. MD NTDC apprised the police chief that 15 incidents of damage to trans-



mission towers have been reported which has caused a considerable financial loss to NTDC.

Engr. Dr. Rana Abdul Jabbar Khan also sought quick registration of FIRs, recovery of stolen material, occasional patrolling by local police in theft prone/

high risk zone for creating deterrence and inclusion of Anti-Terrorism Act clauses in the FIRs.

DIG Police Hyderabad Range, Pir Muhammad Shah assured his full cooperation and assistance in this regard and directed concerned districts police

officers including Hyderabad, Jamshoro, Thatta and Daddu to increase their patrolling activities in theft prone areas. He further said that all law enforcement agencies are on one page against the culprits and quick action will be taken against all those involved in this menace.

PRCS provides blood collection van to Punjab branch



By City Reporter

ISLAMABAD: The National Headquarters of Pakistan Red Crescent Society has handed over state-of-the-art Blood Collection Van to Red Crescent Punjab Branch to increase the capacity of its Blood Donation Center. Secretary General PRCS Muhammad Abaidullah Khan presented the keys and documents of Blood Collection Van to Secretary Red Crescent Punjab Branch Mohammad Zahid, in a simple ceremony held at PRCS NHQ here on Thursday.

The document was signed by Muhammad Abaidullah Khan on behalf of the National Headquarters and Muhammad Zahid on behalf of the Punjab Branch.

The Blood Collection Van was handed over to Punjab Branch on the directions from Chairman PRCS Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari in wake of his commitment to strength all Red Crescent branches and to bring innovations in departments and programs for efficient service delivery.

Four people can donate blood simultaneously in the blood collection van while its storage capacity is 92 units. It is pertinent to mention here that PRCS Chairman Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari during his visit to the Punjab Provincial Headquarters last month, assured the facilitation and provision of all possible support in addressing the challenges being faced by the branch. He also indicated the implementation and fulfillment of requests from the Punjab branch for the capacity building and strengthening of its programs.

On this occasion, Secretary Punjab Branch Muhammad Zahid on behalf of Chairman Red Crescent Punjab Branch Justice (R) Sheikh Ahmed Farooq thanked PRCS Chairman Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari and Secretary General Abaidullah Khan.

CECOS Holds an Annual Award Ceremony



By Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: An annual award ceremony for faculty members at CECOS University was held on Tuesday 2nd March, 2023 to recognize and celebrate the outstanding contributions of faculty members to the university community. The event was organized to honor individuals who have demonstrated excellence in teaching, research, service and other areas of academic and professional work at CECOS University.

The awards ceremony commenced with faculty members receiving various awards and accolades based on their performance and achievements. Faculty members were awarded for teaching excellence, research publications, grants, length of service awards, best employee awards and best researcher awards, leadership, and other categories. A total of 49 awards were given to faculty and staff members for their services at CECOS University which included 3 Umrah and 2 hajj passes.

Vice Chancellor of CECOS University, welcomed all the participants and guests. He congratulated all the award recipients, appreciated and valued their contributions, their hard work and dedication that made the university a better place. He also emphasized on working together towards the growth and success of CECOS University. He ensured that University will continue to grow and improve the quality of education and foster a culture of innovation and collaboration within the institution, providing entrepreneurial skills to the students and help commercialize the research leading to high quality education and researches.

A Hajj and Umrah lucky draw also took place during the award ceremony. The lucky draw was done to provide a fair opportunity for the selective faculty staff to fulfill their dream of visiting the holy land. The vice chancellor and president congratulated all the winners with a request to all the winners to proceed for Hajj and Umrah and to pray for the progression of organization. He also prayed that Allah grants these lucky individuals a safe and successful journey, and accepts their prayers and acts of worship.

The ceremony ended with President, Engr. Tanveer Javed speech. He congratulated each and every staff member for their hard work and dedication. Thanking them for their unwavering commitment to the success of the institution, and felt proud to have such a talented and dedicated team on board. He mentioned how the tireless efforts have helped CECOS University achieve new heights. He expressed his glee on performance of the organization and formally handed over the award to the faculty members, wishing them good luck.

AJK TEVTA reviews TVETA institutions' performance after 7 years



By Abdul Majeed Tahir

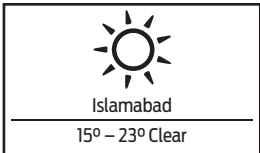
CHUAFFARABAD: Under the chairmanship of Secretary/Chairman AJKTEVTA Razaq Ahmed Nadeem, a meeting of Principal/District Coordinator was held with reference to improving the performance of TVETA institutions and carrying out important matters. In the meeting, Secretary/Chief Operating Officer Younis Mir, Directors, Deputy Directors, Assistant Directors and Principals/District Coordinators of TVETA institutions of all over Azad Kashmir participated in the meeting. Performance of institutions, admissions, staff related issues, quality train-

ing, tracer study of passed out students from TVETA institutions, NVQ registry system, monitoring of institutions, issuance of new trade, functioning of institute management committees and vocational counseling and job placement desk, progress of TVETA institutions and other activities, effective publicity on social print and electronic media and issues of institutions and way forward were reviewed.

The Secretary/Chairman Authority gave instructions to improve the performance of principals and institutions on important issues. Secretary/Chairman Azad Jammu and Kashmir Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority Razaq

Ahmad Nadeem said that the establishment of AJK TEVTA under Act 2007 is in process. This important National Building Department Act will be brought and updated according to contemporary requirements on which the initial work has been started and the problems related to the service of the employees of the authority will be solved on priority basis.

He said that We are like a team and it adds to our honor to perform for this institution according to our conscience. He directed that the progress of the department should be visible. Skilled base education has a lot of scope for which we all have to work together he concluded.



SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr5:13 am
Zohr12:21 pm
Asr4:24 pm
Maghrib6:05 pm
Isha7:28 pm

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META partners with PTA, TDAP and Pakistani content creators to help prevent

Spokesman Report

KARACHI: Meta has partnered with the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) and the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) to raise awareness about e-commerce scams and share tips on how to stay safe online. Pakistani content creators like Romaisa Khan and Bilal Munir are also collaborating with Meta to alert their followers on Facebook and Instagram. "At Meta, we are committed to connecting people, including making it easier for sellers and buyers to find each other online, but some people take advantage of others by running scams online," said Beth Ann Lim, Meta's Policy Programs Director for the Asia Pacific region. "We are pleased to partner with PTA and TDAP, as well as local content creators, to promote responsible use of the internet and support all users in Pakistan to connect with their favorite businesses safely." Starting February 7, Safer Internet Day, and

Karandaz Pakistan signs data sharing agreement with TASDEEQ credit bureau

Commerce Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Karandaz Pakistan signed a data sharing agreement with TASDEEQ, a private credit bureau operating in Pakistan. By joining hands with TASDEEQ, Karandaz will be enhancing the data offered through its data portal (<https://portal.karandaz.com.pk/>) to include enterprise credit information for more than 70 sub-sectors in Pakistan. The lending data will also be disaggregated by geography at the provincial, district and city level, and categorized by type of credit provider. Speaking about the partnership and what data access at this scale will mean for Pakistan, Mr. Waqas ul Hasan, CEO Karandaz, said, "Karandaz's Data Portal is a state-of-the-art platform through which information for financial inclusion, and macro and micro economic indicators can be obtained, layered, analyzed, and shared with relative ease. We

are constantly adding to the depth and breadth of the data points on this portal and our partnership with TASDEEQ is a testament to these efforts. This will be the first time that a private credit bureau in Pakistan will share aggregated information on a wide array of credit indicators on a publicly accessible data portal. I am very pleased with this partnership and the countless possibilities it opens up for researchers, academics, financial institutions and policy makers." Karandaz's interactive Data Portal collates and aggregates financial and economic data for Pakistan from multiple publicly available sources, including but not limited to State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) reports, several financial inclusion surveys, the Economic Survey of Pakistan, Population Census, Labor Force Surveys, etc. The portal provides stakeholders, including policymakers, private sector and public sector institutions and researchers



and students a wide range of data that can be layered and customized for analysis. As a private credit bureau licensed by SBP, TASDEEQ's core business is collecting credit data from a wide range of financial service providers. TASDEEQ's CEO, Mr. Mumtaz Syed, said on the occasion, "Our aim is to equip the financial industry within Pakistan with data and insights, promoting financial inclusion, and our partnership

with Karandaz exemplifies that. TASDEEQ is creating an ecosystem to address issues in access to finance by potential borrowers and lenders by leveraging Financial Institutions Data, Utility Data and Alternate Data."

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Talking about the need to improve access to information in Pakistan, Dr. Shamshad Akhtar, Chairperson Karandaz, said, "It is important to realize that development of emerging markets is contingent on the availability of information to support informed decision making and building investor confidence in underdeveloped markets. There is a strong need for the adoption of open data practices and to strengthen the right to information which is already available in our laws but not always practiced with the same spirit. Greater access to data will promote greater transparency and accountability in the government and private sector while supporting development outcomes. This partnership between TASDEEQ and Karandaz is the blueprint for a way forward not only because of public accessibility of vital data but also because data collection is a cost- and time-intensive exercise and such agreements can drive those costs down."

Poor Quality

ISLAMABAD: Workers are busy removing debris after the collapse new contracted Bhara Kahu interchange flyover bridge pillar with the help of heavy machinery, in Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

PTCL works with Vodafone to introduce end to end IoT Solutions in Pakistan

Commerce Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL) and Vodafone have agreed to cooperate to bring Vodafone's industry leading IoT products, services and solutions to the Pakistani market. PTCL and Vodafone will collaborate to develop and deliver a full suite of end-to-end IoT services aimed towards accelerating enterprise digital enablement and improving adoption of connected services in Pakistani society. Adopting IoT Solutions in a market like Pakistan comes with various advantages, such as enhanced efficiency and productivity with reduced costs. IoT Solutions create new business opportunities through innovation and redefine traditional business operation models towards a digital transformation. Vodafone is a world leader in the Internet of



Things, connecting over 155 million devices and platforms. Zarrar Hasham Khan, Group Chief Business Solutions Officer, PTCL & Ufone said, "PTCL is the largest ICT services provider having a massive footprint across Pakistan. Being a telecom company, we endeavor to play a pivotal role in driving the digital transformation in the country. We believe that to achieve this goal, strategic collaborations in the IoT segment need to foster as

the leading IOT company will allow us to help businesses of all sizes in Pakistan leverage the power of IOT for their digital transformation." PTCL being the backbone of connectivity in Pakistan believes in strategic business collaborations to undertake such engagements to adopt and be a part of the digital transformation journey. This collaboration will further open new avenues for both Vodafone and PTCL Group in the business field, along with various opportunities for collaborative development. In connection with its initial investment in Vodafone in May 2022, e& announced its aim at exploring opportunities for mutually beneficial strategic partnership with Vodafone in the rapidly developing global telecom market and supporting the development and adoption of next-generation technologies.

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We are planning to set up an organic agriculture support facility at NARC: Chairman PARC

City Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Under the program "Building The Policy Ecosystem For Organic Production Landscape In Pakistan", an Organic Agriculture Policy Review Workshop was organized at NARC, Islamabad. The workshop was conducted by CABI Regional Bioscience Centre Pakistan with the support of Laudes Foundation. The chief objective of workshop was to bring all the organic agriculture stakeholders on the same page to develop a national-level organic agriculture policy. The event was attended by all relevant stakeholders including representatives from federal government, Departments of Agriculture Extensions, Punjab, Balochistan, AJK, GB, and MNFS&R, investors, academia, certification bodies, associations, and



experts to discuss the current state of organic agriculture policy and make recommendations for its improvement. While addressing to the workshop, Chairman PARC, Dr. Ghulam Muhammad Ali explained the need and importance of organic agriculture for Pakistan and thanked the organizers for staging the event. Chairman PARC said that a lot of agriculture is already being practiced organically in Pakistan but it needs technical guidance from relevant authorities. He highlighted the poten-

tial for organic agriculture in Balochistan and emphasized on expanding agricultural exports while pointing out that organic products give greater value and we are planning to set up an organic agriculture support facility at NARC. Chairman PARC said that we should have a local certification authority that has acceptance at international level. Speaking at the occasion, Dr. Akmal Siddique, Advisor Ministry of National Food Security and Research, said that we all know how to do organic agri-

culture, but we need to have a policy addressing the true solutions and the policy should be specific, measurable, achievable and time bound. He said that Ministry of National Food Security and Research will pass an executive order to Institutions to develop a division, in which research scientists will develop individual farms on organic cultivation of their crop. Dr. Akmal emphasized on the need to develop Organic Agriculture Act and Indigenize the certification system. Dr. Yousaf Zafar, former chairman PARC and Senior Advisor/consultant to CABI has informed that Pakistan is on the map of certified organic cotton since 2019 and applauded Balochistan agriculture department for pioneering organic agriculture in Pakistan. The workshop concluded after comprehensive discussion with all relevant stakeholders.

Pakistan to follow Chinese model for sustainable future development of SME

News Desk

LAHORE: Dr. Shahid Javed Burki, World renowned Political Economist and the Former Finance Minister has emphasized upon enhancing ratio of domestic savings, tax collection and investments in SME sector for sustainable future development of Pakistan. It was stated by him at a seminar jointly organized by the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) and the Burk Institute of Public Policy (BIPP) today at SMEDA Head Office on "SME Sector Opportunities and Challenges in Pakistan. Mr. Farhan Aziz Khawaja, CEO SMEDA delivered address of welcome on this occasion. The seminar was also addressed by other economists including Mr. Shahid Najam and Mr. Babar Yaqoob Fateh Muhammad.

Secretary Industries, MD PSIC, Secretary P&D, Secretary Finance, Federal Ombudsman and a number of the government and business community representatives also attended the seminar online through internet.

Replying to a Question, Dr. Burki reiterated that no country can maintain sustainable economic development without enhancing domestic savings and tax rations, for which we need to revamp our fiscal system as well as support mechanism of SME growth.

Mr. Shahid Najam, Mr. Babar Yaqoob Fateh Muhammad and the other speakers also highlighted the need of SME development by overcoming the existing challenges through conducive policy framework. They said that SMEDA should be entrusted a lead role in economic development of Pakistan through political ownership, policy stability and conducive business environment. In this regard, the case of Turkey's SME development organization KOSGAP was also quoted, which is considered to be one of the best SME Development practice in the region.

CEO SMEDA Mr. Farhan Aziz Khawaja, in his address, thanked the guest-economists and acknowledged that BIPP is a world class institution to provide answers to the complex and wicked public policy questions in accordance with the "New Public Management" (NPM). He said that SMEDA was busy to implement a plan for capacity building of the educated youth through higher education institutes of Pakistan that will help young graduates to start SME businesses through Prime Minister's Youth Loan Program.

See Prime's "Noor" wins Best Health Film at Cannes for the month of January

Spokesman Report

KARACHI: Pakistan's film industry continues to make its mark on the global map in 2023. Noor, directed by Umer Adil and launched on the OTT platform See Prime, has won "Best Health Film" award in the January online edition of Cannes World Film Festival. 'Noor,' which tackles with the stigma around weak eyesight, is scripted by Farah Usman, and stars Sarwat Gilani, Omair Rana, Tanisha Shameem, Mizna Waqas and Tasneem Ansari in pivotal roles.



All monthly winners automatically enter the annual competition for a chance to receive a prestigious custom-made metal statuette, the "Luciole d'Or" (Golden Firefly), and an opportunity to have their film screened in Cannes, the cinema capital of the world.

The 17-minute short film features a child artist in the lead role and is a "heartfelt narrative bringing to light a world in which many still struggle at the hands of cultural myths and taboos, especially children, who in their vulnerability and innocence silently suffer the most." Seemeen Naveed, the executive producer See Prime stated, "More than 4 million children in Pakistan are missing school and are affected due to Uncorrected Refractive Error (URE). And that is the main purpose of Noor. I truly believe in showing and producing content that comes with a deep message for my audiences. This is a topic which no one talks about and once we launched the webisode, I knew this is an initiative will make us all proud. I'm proud that our content has been recognized on an international level, hoping to keep on producing and working with these gems."



Umair Nizam, Project Director ITCN Asia giving memento to Senior Project Expert at SquarePeg, a company founded by Zunaira Omar.

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What Should be Considered the Debts of IMF

Javed Ullah Raja

International Monetary Fund (IMF) organization came into being when the balance of payment deficit of European countries was created due to World War II. Its head quarter is in Washington. The head of the institution is from European countries while the World Bank is chaired by the United States. World country members are 190. Usually, the question that comes to mind is whether the loans of the International Monetary Fund are meant to give relief to the countries or to deal with the problems. Before starting this discussion, we think about what is a loan in general, as an individual loan. A loan is a request to borrow money from an individual or organization to get out of any problem or difficulty. A loan is useful to this extent to get out of some problems which arise temporarily. Although, this loan should be used to get rid of difficulties and as soon as possible, the money obtained from this loan should be returned according to the terms and conditions within specific or before time. If the loan is not paid within the stipulated period sometimes household items also have to be disposed off. And there comes a time when a person is forced to either mortgage everything or sell everything. Often we hear that such and such a person became bankrupt under the burden of debts. Therefore, whatever the amount of debt is small or big debt is not good. We can also judge in daily life those who obtain loans from banks or any other institutions their lifestyle and those who live within their own resources and suffer little and stay away from the burden of debt. They are living a comfortable life. Apart from this, their future life is also prosperous. Before the International Monetary

Fund loans, this discussion is necessary so that we can understand its characteristics. The amount of loans which it should be taken for the purposes it should be used for the same. This will reduce our debt size and will not increase the problem for the country. When any country faces a financial crisis due to a deficit in income and expenditure, it has to take a loan when they face a problem from IMF. The World Bank provides loans to the countries to temporarily get out of the natural disaster or economical problems. It is up to these countries whether they use it to fix their economy or not. On the one hand, it is a good move to provide an immediate amount of money to overcome any problems. As far as the repayment of loans is concerned, the terms of payment may be different for different countries. Loans may be unconditional or with conditions. In this regard, Critics express their opinion about IMF loans that the IMF is ruled by the big powers. Therefore, their conditions are kept strict for poor countries. General In these terms, rising interest rates increase poverty. Tax burdens increase public utilities and unemployment. Privatization of enterprises damages domestic assets. Removal of restrictions on foreign capital destabilizes in the stock market. By these restrictions the economic conditions of poor debtor countries worsen rather than improve. Benjamin Friedman, an expert at Harvard University, says that it is difficult to determine the impact of the IMF, whether its intervention improves the conditions of a country or not. Worse, the purpose of this institution is to provide loans and enable the process of pro-opposition to correct the economic and financial condition of the affected country and also the recovery process of the loans. The situation in our country is like this we have not considered debt as debt. Nor

have we removed the problems for which the objectives were obtained and we have not returned any debt timely. As a result of which our economy would get worse and worse. One thing that is important is that the IMF loans were not used for the purposes. Or some part of the loan was put as salt in the flour. In this way, loans are spent on our frivolities this is what is happening today. Due to this, when we get loans, we are tied up. To be honest, after the loans to the governments, the people are tied up. Our ways and methods are for bringing the country to the brink of destruction. Due to this, we have to approach the IMF again and again. So far we have received loans more or less 23 times since 1958. According to a report about Rs. 24.309 trillion, our government owes to domestic creditors, and about Rs. Public sector enterprises owe Rs 2.3 trillion. Pakistan's external debt is around 126.03 billion US dollars. It is fact to increase inflation due to loans. In the voice of public circles, what does the common man know about the IMF? The benefit of loans is when they get relief, while the people are free to grind more in the mill of inflation. This is the reason why people have always objected to these loans. People say that the World Bank and the loans will be beneficial when all kinds of inflation, like electricity, gas, medicines and basic necessities of life become cheaper. This will only happen when the country's economy stands on its own feet. On the contrary, the prices of everything go up. It is to be noted that Brazil took a loan in 2002 when the country was near to bankruptcy. The country not only revived the economy in two years but also paid back the debt. Hong Kong is a one of the debt free country in the world. Due to IMF loans, problems have been increasing in the country. The standard of

living of the people continues to decrease. The people are being tied by the rope of collecting taxes as due to the current debts of 170 billion taxes imposed. This is because our previous debts situation. By the monopoly of the great powers, strict conditions are being imposed, and they always watch on the smaller countries. For example, when presently Pakistan was offered a deposit of 700 million dollars by the China Development Bank, the United States immediately became concerned. As they never want small countries to do well economically. Debts are having negative effects on the economy of the countries. Every incoming government tries to blame the outgoing one that the economy is in a bad condition, and the treasury is empty, but no one has tried to fix it. Despite this, the same political parties are in power again and again. At present, the country is facing numerous problems. The value of rupee is depreciating. The standard of living of the common man is falling. Therefore, there is a need for such measures which will solve the problems. It should be controlled. Attention should be paid to the economic condition of the country. And instead of manipulation of papers, the country's economy should be put on its feet without false claims. Instead of artificially benefiting the people, there is a need to implement relief projects on a permanent basis. If the situation continues like this, in the future, we will not have the World Bank and other countries come forward to help us. Economists say that by artificially stopping the value of the dollar in the past, the country lost two billion dollars. The process has also been terminated by IMF implementing these conditions. With strict conditions apart from inflation, the prices of electricity, gas, and other commodities will increase further.

Pakistan demands just, expeditious resolution of Jammu and Kashmir dispute

Pakistan urged the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the international community to promote a just, peaceful and expeditious resolution of longstanding Jammu and Kashmir dispute as per the UNSC resolutions and aspirations of the Kashmiri people. "Foreign intervention and occupation, and the accompanying denial of the right to self-determination to peoples, are of the root cause of conflicts and disputes and of grave violations of human rights. This is manifest in Indian Illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK)," Minister for Economic Affairs Sardar Ayaz Sadiq said addressing the summit level meeting of the NAM Contact Group in response to COVID-19 on post-pandemic global recovery held here. The minister, who headed the Pakistani delegation at the summit, said the decisive condition for achieving all our development goals rested on the promotion of just and durable peace and security, nationally, regionally and globally. "It is impossible to talk about a post-pandemic global recovery against the backdrop of wars, conflicts and foreign occupation," the minister told the meeting attended by the delegates representing from around 70 countries and chaired by Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev as NAM chair. He said Pakistan deeply valued the NAM's fundamental ideals, especially its principled support for the right to self-determination of people living under foreign occupation. He said NAM, which numbered two thirds of UN member states, had a critical role to play in shaping the post pandemic global recovery. Proposing a comprehensive and cooperative strategy to "build forward better" which, the minister said, should include, ensuring global food security through the urgent provision of food supplies to the 250 million living in hunger. The strategy should also feature urgent and adequate concessional financing for developing countries facing liquidity challenges, reform of the international financial architecture, through a comprehensive debt solution and implementation of the climate change agenda and climate commitments, especially the fulfillment of the climate finance commitments and the launch of the Loss & Damage fund agreed at COP27. "Climate justice requires full adherence to the Principle of Equity and Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities," the minister said. He also suggested the mobilization of large-scale investment from the public and private sector to build sustainable and resilient infrastructure, in developing countries. He told the international gathering that the COVID-19 pandemic wreaked havoc worldwide, putting the lives of billions of people around the globe in turmoil, inflicting grave suffering and destabilizing the global economy. Besides exposing the fragility of the societies and economies to shocks, it has laid bare deep inequalities threatening the achievement of the SDGs, the said COVID-related challenges were further compounded by the inflationary spiral caused by supply chain disruptions and the impact of the war in Ukraine, the minister said. "The crowning blow to our endeavour for sustainable development was the devastating floods last summer – our worst disaster in history," he told the summit.

Pressure on settlers ...!



Can Pakistan get out of the current economic crisis?

Dr. Atiq ur Rehman

In today's most difficult economic conditions, every responsible citizen wants to know why the current economic situation has happened; is there a way out of this situation, and if so, what role can an ordinary citizen play in it? Here are some simple answers to these questions. The first question is, how the current situation developed. To understand the answer, consider the following facts (a) During the first 7 months of the current fiscal year, Pakistan's exports were recorded at \$16.43 billion, while remittance receipts were \$16.61 billion. In total, the inflow of dollars was \$33.04 billion. (b) During these months, outflow of dollars due to imports was recorded at \$33.45 billion, thus the current account deficit was only 0.42 billion dollars, which is 94% less than the corresponding period of the previous fiscal year. (c) In the above mentioned period, there was 7% a decrease in exports and 8% decrease in remittances, compared to the previous financial year. If either of these two had maintained their previous year's volume, the current account would have been in surplus. In normal circumstances, obtaining a new loan on repayment of the existing loan happens to be quite easy. If the loan transaction were continued as usual, such difficulties would not have arisen. But the No Confidence Move and termination of an elected government negatively affected the perception of the outside world about Pakistan's political system. The friendly countries and international financial institutions have given Pakistan a very tough time to issue new loans, which is why such a difficult situation has emerged. Now coming to the second question, is there

an opportunity to get out of the current situation? To understand this, keep the following facts in mind. (a) During the first seven months of the current fiscal year, Pakistan imported commodities worth \$7 billion for which all the inputs are available in Pakistan. This amount translates into PKR 1820 billion. These commodities are still being produced in Pakistan and all the resources for their production including manpower, technology and all the required equipment are present in Pakistan. But their production fell far short of domestic demand which led to imports of these goods. Pakistani imports during the current fiscal year includes cotton, wheat, vegetables, fruits, edible oil, textile products, pulses, etc. If these goods were produced locally instead of imports, not only foreign exchange would be saved, but millions of people would also get employment in the production of these goods. From cultivation of agricultural commodities to harvest, there is a difference of just a few months. If crops of edible oil are cultivated today, it is possible to obtain yield from the crops within six months. Therefore, if due attention is paid to the production of these agricultural commodities, not only a surplus current account is possible, but it is also possible to repay the loans. But for this purpose, agriculture needs very serious attention. If we start production of a crop in an area previously used for another crop, the production of the previous crop may reduce leading to imports of that crop resulting in import of the second commodity. There is a need to utilize such agricultural lands on an emergency basis which are not yielding any production at present. There is also a need to upgrade the marginal lands and to increase the yield per acre. Other major imports of Pakistan include

petroleum, natural gas and their products. It is not possible to eliminate the import of these goods, however, it is possible to reduce their imports. For this purpose, we need to focus on alternative sources of energy, especially on biogas and other biological sources. Biogas is such a source of energy that if the project is started today, it is possible to generate energy within just a couple of weeks. Each small and large biogas project will save dollars and will reduce dependence on imported gas and fuel. Now we look for the answer to the third question, what role the common man can play in improving the economic situation. My proposals in this regard are as follows Prefer Pakistani products even at the cost of quality, (b) If you own an agricultural land, never leave it idle. In current circumstances, leaving agricultural land idle is a national crime, (c) Start kitchen gardening and save money for your home, it will also reduce the demand for imports, (d) If you have organic waste in your surroundings, install a biogas plant. This can meet your gas and electricity needs in an environmentally friendly way (e) Invest the surplus money in some industry or agriculture instead of real estate and finally I request to highlight the positive aspects of the institution, region and country you live in, and avoid promoting the negative aspects. Especially unconfirmed and funny memes, hurting the repute of your nation must be stopped. By promoting a negative aspect, you are part of a crime of spreading a negative image of your country, and if the content of such promotion is also false, then you are guilty of the two crimes, perjury and false promotion of the country. (Writer attached with Kashmir Institute of Economics, University of Azad Jammu and Kashmir)

Recovery from COVID-19

Spokesman Report

Chairman of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev on Thursday suggested establishing a UN High-Level Panel on Global Recovery from COVID-19 to elaborate recommendations on global measures for the post-pandemic period. The NAM chairman, in his address at the plenary session of Summit of NAM Contact Group in response to COVID-19 being held here, said Azerbaijan would continue to provide financial and humanitarian assistance to NAM countries in need and call to support the post-pandemic recovery of Africa and Small Island Developing States. The summit was attended by several heads of state and the top leadership and government of about 70 countries, NAM members. The Azerbaijan president also announced that Azerbaijan, as the first donor, was allocating 1 billion US dollars for both Global Calls. He said that right after the beginning of the pandemic, NAM took the initiative to mobilize global efforts to counter COVID-19. "More cases of violation of sovereignty and territorial integrity and intervention in the internal affairs of states are observed. The decisions of the leading international organizations are not either implemented or the selective approach and double standards are being applied," he commented. He said as the second largest international institution after the UN, NAM should play a more visible and efficient role in the international arena and actively participate in reshaping the new world order. He also called for the implementation of UN's resolutions and suggested the composition of the Security Council should be expanded to make it more representative and more geographically fair.

"Some Security Council resolutions have been implemented within days. However, in the case of Azerbaijan, Armenia ignored the four Security Council's resolutions demanding immediate and unconditional withdrawal of its armed forces from the territories of Azerbaijan for almost 30 years," he commented. "In 2020 Azerbaijan itself restored its territorial integrity and historical justice by military-political means and enforced the Security Council resolutions' implementation. Probably, it was the first case in the world since the establishment of the UN", he noted. He said Azerbaijan conducted large-scale reconstruction work in the liberated territories with its own financial resources. The government of Azerbaijan spent about US\$4 billion for reconstruction work in 2021-2022. This year, we plan to allocate at least 1.7 billion USD for this purpose. "One permanent seat should be given to the Non-Aligned Movement, and the country holding the position of chair of the Movement should have this seat on a rotating basis," he suggested and called on NAM member countries to start consultations on this issue. "We also support the allocation of permanent seats for Africa in the Security Council," he suggested. President Ilham Aliyev also appreciated the NAM countries for their firm stance in supporting the position of Azerbaijan and not allowing one-sided and biased anti-Azerbaijani statements to pass in the UN Security Council both in 2020 and 2022. In his address, President of the 77th Session of the United Nations General Assembly Csaba Kőrösi said that the pandemic taught the world that no one was safe until all were safe. "Because closing our borders and taking individual measures are not enough. The only way out of the pandemic was through solidarity not only within the borders but across them too," he remarked.

Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan leaders note the importance of building up practical cooperation

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev has met with the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev, in Baku.

The Leader of Azerbaijan sincerely thanked the President of Uzbekistan for his support and personal participation in the Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement to be held on March 2, in the country's capital.

Shavkat Mirziyoyev, in turn, highlighted the effective chairmanship of Azerbaijan in this structure.

The Presidents reviewed in detail the implementation of the agreements reached the highest level. It was noted with deep satisfaction that thanks to systemic and productive contacts, the strategic partnership between Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan has reached a qualitatively new level, filled with concrete content.



Last year, the trade turnover between the two countries increased by more than 50 percent. The implementation of cooperation projects in such priority

areas as automotive, textile, and sericulture is in the active phase. Preparations are underway for promising projects in the oil and gas sector, transport, and logistics.

As part of the First Forum of Regions held in Tashkent in February this year, an Agreement on establishing a joint Investment Fund was signed.

The interest in the exchange of experience in the development of the activities of free economic zones and the system of tax administration was noted.

The importance of further enhancing cultural and humanitarian exchanges was emphasized.

The heads of state discussed current international and regional issues and considered a schedule of the upcoming events.

The meeting took place in a traditionally open, warm, and friendly atmosphere.

Number of children without critical social protection increasing globally: - ILO and UNICEF

News Desk

GENEVA/NEW YORK: The number of children without access to social protection is increasing year-on-year, leaving them at risk of poverty, hunger and discrimination, according to a new report released by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNICEF today.

More than a billion reasons: The urgent need to build universal social protection for children warns that an additional 50 million children aged 0-15 missed out on a critical social protection provision - specifically, child benefits (paid in cash or tax credits) - between 2016 and 2020, driving up the total to 1.46 billion children under 15 globally.

"Ultimately, strengthened

efforts to ensure adequate investment in universal social protection for children, ideally through universal child benefits to support families at all times, is the ethical and rational choice, and the one that paves the way to sustainable development and social justice," said Shahra Razavi, Director of the Social Protection Department at the ILO.

According to the report, child and family benefit coverage rates fell or stagnated in every region in the world between 2016 and 2020, leaving no country on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal of achieving substantial social protection coverage by 2030. In Latin America and the Caribbean, for example, coverage fell significantly from approximately 51 per

cent to 42 per cent. In many other regions, coverage has stalled and remains low. In Central Asia and Southern Asia; Eastern Asia and South-eastern Asia; Sub-Saharan Africa; and Western Asia and Northern Africa coverage rates have been at around 21 per cent, 14 per cent, 11 per cent and 28 per cent respectively since 2016.

Failure to provide children with adequate social protection leaves them vulnerable to poverty, disease, missed education, and poor nutrition, and increases their risk of child marriage and child labour.

Globally, children are twice as likely as adults to live in extreme poverty - those struggling to survive on less than US\$1.90 (PPP) a day - approximately 356 million children. A billion children

also live in multidimensional poverty - meaning without access to education, health, housing, nutrition, sanitation, or water. Children living in multidimensional poverty increased by 15 per cent during the COVID-19 pandemic, reversing previous progress in reducing child poverty and highlighting the urgent need for social protection.

Securing sustainable financing for social protection systems by mobilizing domestic resources and increasing budget allocation for children.

Strengthening social protection for parents and caregivers by guaranteeing access to decent work and adequate benefits, including unemployment, sickness, maternity, disability, and pensions.

US House panel approves bill giving Biden power to ban TikTok

WASHINGTON: The US House Foreign Affairs Committee voted on Wednesday along party lines to give President Joe Biden the power to ban Chinese-owned TikTok, in what would be the most far-reaching US restriction on any social media app.

Lawmakers voted 24 to 16 to approve the measure to grant the administration new powers to ban the ByteDance-owned app - which is used by over 100 million Americans - as well as other apps considered security risks.

"TikTok is a national security threat... It is time to act," said Representative Michael McCaul, the Republican chair of the committee who sponsored the bill.

"Anyone with TikTok downloaded on their device has given the CCP (Communist Party of China) a backdoor to all their personal information. It's a spy balloon into their phone."

Democrats opposed the bill, saying it was rushed and required due diligence through debate and consultation with experts. The bill does not precisely specify how the ban would work, but gives Biden power to ban any transactions with TikTok, which in turn could prevent anyone in the United States from accessing or downloading the app on their phones.

The bill would also require Biden to impose a ban on any entity that "may" transfer sensitive personal data to an entity subject to the influence of China.

TikTok has come under increasing fire in recent weeks over fears that user data could end up in the hands of the Chinese government, undermining Western security interests.

The White House this week gave government agencies 30 days to ensure that TikTok is not on any federal devices and systems. More than 30 US states, Canada and European Union policy institutions have also banned TikTok from being loaded onto state-owned devices.

The fate of the latest measure is still uncertain and faces significant hurdles before it can become law. The bill would need to be passed by the full House and US Senate, which is controlled by Democrats, before it can go to Biden.

"A US ban on TikTok is a ban on the export of American culture and values to the billion people who use our service worldwide," a TikTok spokeswoman said after the vote.

The Biden administration did not say whether it was in favour of moving ahead with the bill or not, or answer if it believed Biden has the legal authority now to ban TikTok.

Pakistan HC unveils portrait of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah



Spokesman Report

DHAKA: High Commissioner for Pakistan to Bangladesh, Mr. Imran Ahmed Siddiqui, unveiled a portrait of Father of the Nation, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah at the Chancery today during an event attended by the Pakistani community in Dhaka. The event was organized to pay

tribute to the services of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and other leaders of the Pakistan movement.

During the event, Mr. Siddiqui spoke, in detail, about the services of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and other icons of the freedom movement including Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, Dr. Allama Muhammad Iqbal and A.K Fazlul

Haq. He highlighted the numerous sacrifices made by these leaders, who fought against overwhelming odds and faced enormous challenges during their struggle for the creation of an independent state where people could freely pursue their dreams and ambitions.

The High Commissioner said that history has shown that only those nations that

remember the spirit of their freedom struggle succeed in achieving their development targets. "We are indebted to the leaders who fought tirelessly to secure freedom from foreign domination and majoritarian tyranny, underscoring the need for transmitting the message and legacy of founding fathers to the young generation.

Jammu Kashmir women to lead the fight for independence from India: Raja Najabat

Spokesman Report

LONDON: Brave Kashmiri women will prove to be a leaden wall against India's illegal usurpation and social exploitation. The illegal occupying Indian army, which could not cool down the spirit of Hurriyat despite the tactics like rounding up and torture of the Hurriyat activists, is now proving unable to end the freedom movement by committing heinous sexual assaults on Kashmiri women.

The movement for self-determination has started the series of International Women's Week celebrations in all parts of the state of Jammu and Kashmir and also in the United Kingdom from March 1, which will continue until March 11, with the aim of exposing the world to the war crimes committed by Indian forces in occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

These views were expressed by the founder of Jammu and Kashmir Tehreek Haq Khudarat International, the chairman of Satara Pakistan, Raja Najabat Hussain, while presiding over a meeting held in Oldham. Jammu and Kashmir Movement for Self-determination UK Counselor Yasmin Dar, Managing Director for Movement for Self-determination Harry Botha, Ms. Yasmin Alam, Ms. Elena Dar and Javed Tariq participated. Supporters of Jammu Kashmir Tehreek Haq Khudarat International and other sympathetic organizations will organize events in Muzaffarabad city of Azad Kashmir, Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan, in different cities of Great Britain in collaboration with different organizations.

Speaking in the meeting, Deputy Lord Mayor Manchester Councillor Yasmin Dar also strongly condemned India's military actions in Kashmir and said that aggression is always tolerated. It is time to eat and Kashmiri women will chew the noses of the occupying forces of India. Jammu and Kashmir Movement for Right to Self-Determination International is organizing an All-Parties Kashmir Conference on Tuesday, March 7, at 5:00 PM in Boothroyd Room, Portcullis House, London.

The guests, Senator Faisal Javed Member National Kashmir Committee of Pakistan Parliament, Spokesperson of Prime Minister Azad Kashmir, Parliamentary Secretary Professor Taqdees Gilani MLA will also participate in the conference, Chairperson of All Parties Parliamentary Group on Kashmir Debba Abrahams MP, Shadow Minister/ Senior Vice Chairman APPG on Kashmir Barrister Imran Hussain MP, Shadow Minister Dr. Afazal Khan MP Vice Chairman APPG Kashmir, Lord Qurban Hussain Secretary APPG Kashmir, Shadow Minister.

Andrew Gwynne MP Chairman Labor Friends of Kashmir, Shadow Minister Naz Shah MP Chairperson Labor Friends of Kashmir, Lord Wajid Khan of Burnley Convener Labor Friends of Kashmir, James Daly MP Co-Chairman Conservative Friends of Kashmir and other parliamentarians, Kashmiri Diaspora Well-known leadership and representatives of human rights organizations, media representatives and political and social leaders from all walks of life will participate.

Dubai SME helping to reduce the global issue of marine plastic pollution

Spokesman Report

DUBAI: SunKiss, the UAE homegrown developer of sustainable and environmentally friendly sun care products, will showcase the role it is playing in reducing plastic waste in the ocean during this year's Dubai International Boat Show, which takes place at Dubai Harbour until Sunday 5 March.

According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), over 300 million tonnes of plastic waste are produced annually, of which at least 14 million tonnes end up in the ocean every year, making up 80% of all marine debris and making the primary sources of ocean-based plastic pollution originate from the fishing industry, nautical activities and aquaculture.

Joanna Barclay, Managing Director of SunKiss, said: "Plastic pollution is a global issue which is impacting everyone but is becoming increasingly more problematic in the marine environment. Not only is it affecting ocean health and the health of marine species, but it also creates issues surrounding the food supply chain, impacts tourism, and contributes to climate change.

"At SunKiss, we are acutely aware of these issues and the need to reduce plastic usage drastically. As such, all our products are sustainably produced and have been developed to ensure that plastic usage is reduced by 90%. We have also worked hand-in-hand with the sailing industry to design a product line which helps further reduce waste by eliminating single-use plastics and focusing on refills."

At the Dubai International Boat Show, SunKiss will showcase a range of products designed in partnership with the yachting industry, seasoned hoteliers and wellness and spa experts, which provide sustainable and luxury guest amenities.

SunKiss has also developed Eco Refill, which provides yacht owners with a range of bathroom amenities in professional sizes, using 95% less packaging than standard-sized products and can be used in all public areas of the yacht. In addition, the company has also launched sustainable turn-down gifts, including aftersun gel and moisturiser, lip balm and hand care nourishment - the ideal remedy after a day onboard a yacht.

Further underscoring the company's sustainable credentials is that all products are designed and produced in the UAE. As a homegrown Dubai brand, the carbon footprint for supplying local companies is minimised and is dramatically less than competitors from Australia and the US. The formulas have been developed to be reef-friendly, vegan, and alcohol and paraben-free, making them safe and suitable for all requirements.

PTA with Azerbaijan under discussion to boost bilateral trade: Pak envoy

News Desk

BAKU: Ambassador of Pakistan in Baku Bilal Hayee on Thursday expressed the hope that the Pakistan-Azerbaijan trade would get a boost from current \$30 million after both the countries signed Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) which was currently under discussion.

The ambassador, talking to APP at Baku Congress Hall - the venue of Non-Aligned Movement Contact Group's summit on fighting against Covid-19 - being held here, said currently the bilateral trade consisted of 90% exports

from Pakistan with rice being the major commodity.

Attended by the delegates from around 70 states including heads of state from several countries, the summit was aimed at discussing the ways forward to deal with the challenges of the post-COVID new normal featuring food insecurity and economic issues like global inflation.

He said recently, Azerbaijan had exempted customs duty on the export of Pakistani rice which would ultimately increase rice export from \$30-40 million.

Highlighting the cultural and bilateral relations, the envoy said

Azerbaijan was the only country in Central Asia and South Caucasus having direct flight to Pakistan. Besides, the Pakistani nationals have also the facility of hassle-free online visa to Azerbaijan, he added.

Ambassador Hayee said Pakistan was an active member of the NAM and the summit was being held in a country with whom Pakistan had very "special relations."

He said Pakistan supported Azerbaijan at every forum throughout its struggle to get rid of foreign occupation from its territory.

"This is very different country, which loves Pakistan and we are trying to transform this love into tangible economic relationship with bilateral trade being the most important," he remarked.

He said being the second largest platform after the United Nations, the ambassador said NAM always sought a peaceful resolution of regional disputes.

He said at NAM, Pakistan always sought a peaceful resolution of the issues particularly those involved foreign occupation, like Jammu and Kashmir impacting a huge chunk of NAM population.



He said the development was always linked to the peace and in

case of any conflict, the development was always the first casualty.

He said Economic Affairs Minister Sardar Ayaz Sadiq represented Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif at the summit which would discuss the south-south cooperation and put forward strategies to overcome the post-COVID challenges remaining no more confined to health rather turned into the economic challenges.

He said NAM always strived for addressing the fundamental rights of the developing countries, instead of indulging into the bloc politics.

Bull & Bears
PSX 100-Share
Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index	
Current	Prev. Close
40,670.88	40,412.77
Day's High	Day's Low:
40,852.97	40,353.46
Index Value	Change
7,529,557,229	+258.11
Percentage	Time
+0.64%	2 Mar, 2023 5:00 pm
Europe: FTSE 100 Index	
Index Value	Change
7,944.04	+29.11
Percentage	Time
+0.37%	2 Mar, 4:35 pm GMT
USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average	
Index Value	Change
32,710.79	+48.95
Percentage	Time
+0.15%	2 Mar, 12:18 pm GMT-5
Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average	
Index Value	Change
27,498.87	-17.66
Percentage	Time
-0.064%	2 Mar, 3:15 pm GMT+9

Open Market Forex Rates

Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	181.5	184.5
Bahrain Dinar	695.48	703.48
Canadian Dollar	197.75	201
China Yuan	38.07	38.47
Danish Krone	37.51	37.91
Euro	288	290.85
Hong Kong Dollar	33.31	33.66
Indian Rupee	3.17	3.28
Japanese Yen	2.06	2.11
Kuwaiti Dinar	852.25	861.25
Malaysian Ringgit	58.47	59.07
New Zealand \$	163.77	165.77
Norwegians Krone	25.19	25.49
Omani Riyal	679.95	687.95
Qatari Riyal	71.84	72.54
Saudi Riyal	72.25	72.95
Singapore Dollar	191.5	193.5
Swedish Korona	25.09	25.39
Swiss Franc	278.58	281.08
Thai Bhat	7.54	7.69
U.A.E Dirham	74.5	75.25
UK Pound Sterling	324.5	327.7
US Dollar	287	289

Pakistan, Poland vow to enhance cooperation

Commerce Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar and Ambassador of the Republic of Poland, Maciej Pisarski here on Thursday discussed avenues of mutual cooperation in various sectors including investment and vowed to enhance the level of friendship and bilateral relations.

In a meeting with Polish Ambassador who called on him here, the finance minister highlighted cordial relations between the two countries, according to press statement issued by the finance ministry.

Dar said that Pakistan highly values its bilateral relations with Poland and underscored the importance of enhancement in trade, economic and investment relations between both countries.

The minister appreciated the Polish investments in Pakistan in energy sector and extended full support and cooperation of the government to enhance the economic relations between the two countries.

On the occasion, the Ambassador of the Republic of Poland shared sentiments of gratitude with the Finance Minister on offering the cooperation and support for enhancing and



strengthening bilateral relations between both the countries. He further shared that both countries enjoyed

excellent relations which needed to be further promoted especially on economic and trade fronts.

He also supported the policies and programs of the government for socio-economic development and growth.

Bank of Khyber inaugurates its new branch at Allama Iqbal Town Lahore

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Bank of Khyber, one of the growing banks of the country has opened a new branch in Allama Iqbal Town Lahore. Bank of Khyber has now 09 branches in the provincial capital and plans to further strengthen its presence and customer reach in the provincial capital by opening more branches by year-end.

The branch was inaugurated by Mr. Arif Saeed CEO-Service Industries and Mr. Muhammad Ali Gulfaraz, MD/CEO, Bank of Khyber. Ms. Madiha Kamran- Regional Head Corporate & Commercial Conventional banking Lahore along with her team also attended the branch inauguration ceremony.

At the occasion Tariq Gaba- Gaba Carpets, Mr. Mehboob Sb- CEO Clinix Pharmacy, Mr. Shakeel Mughal - Chief Operation Officer- Mughal Iron & Steel, Khawaja Irfan - Finance Manager Fatima Fertilizer Ltd, Sheikh Tariq- CEO, Ms. Hina Mustafa- CFO Imperial Ltd, Badar Ul Islam- Group CFO Service Industries, Muhammad Farooq- CFO KIPS, Sohail Ahmed- CEO Ahmed Construction and several other prominent traders and industrialist of the vicinity attended the event.



On the occasion, Mr. Arif Saeed said that "Bank of Khyber's excellent services are commendable, this new branch opening in Allama Iqbal Town will help customers manage and grow their businesses further. I congratulate the entire management of the bank and express my gratitude."

"We are happy to inaugurate one more

branch in the provincial capital, which is a rapidly growing market. Considering the vast potential of banking requirements yet to be explored, BOK is aggressively pursuing branch expansion in Lahore to increase its market share as well as build its Brand equity" said Bank of Khyber's MD/CEO, Muhammad Ali Gulfaraz.

United Group merges into Founder Group unconditionally

Tariq Khattak

ISLAMABAD: The Chairman Islamabad United Group (IUG), Faisal Muzamal Khokhar along with his colleagues including Syed Talib Hussain Hashmi, Malik Tariq Javed, Mohammad Azhar, Malik Nadeem Kakazai, Haji Abdul Rahman Mohmand, Wajid ur Rahman Mohmand, Ahmed Tareen, Sher Mohammad Khan, Chaudhry Ansar Farooq, Chaudhry Rashid Muzamal, Sheikh Faisal and Iftikhar Ahmed Kayani announced to merge into the Founder Group unconditionally during a ceremony.

Addressing the ceremony, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari congratulated IUG Chairman Faisal Muzamal Khokhar and his team for joining the Founder

Group unconditionally and said that they have taken a wise decision as the interests of the business community can be better protected through unity rather than division. He said that serving the business community and solving their problems is one of our priorities. This is possible only when there is unity and consensus among the business community of Islamabad.

Faisal Muzamal Khokhar, in his address, said that in view of the better performance of the Founder Group, he along with his colleagues decided to join them unconditionally to work unitedly for the welfare of the business community. He said that the love of the Founder Group members including Khalid Iqbal Malik, Khalid Javed, Zafar Bakhtawari and others has motivated them to join them.

Pakistan Banks' Association launches a national, blockchain based

Bureau Report

KARACHI: Pakistan Banks' Association (PBA), on behalf of all its member banks, signed the project contract for the development and execution of Pakistan's first, blockchain based, national eKYC banking platform with the Avanza Group. The signing ceremony was held at the PBA office in Karachi on March 2, 2023.

The ceremony was attended by PBA Chairman, Mr. Muhammad Aurangzeb, who is also President HBL; Mr. Akhter Javed, Director BPRD, SBP; Mr. Tawfiq Hussain, CEO PBA, the signatory for PBA; Mr. Waqas Mirza, CEO Avanza Innovations; and Mr. Omer Khan, CEO, Avanza Solutions (Pvt) Ltd; the signatory for Avanza.

The eKYC (electronic Know Your Customer) project is part of SBP's ongoing efforts to strengthen the control infrastructure for Anti Money Laundering (AML)/ Terrorist Financing (TF) in the country. PBA has been overseeing the planning and management of the project on behalf of the banking industry, under the aegis of the State Bank of Pakistan.

In addition to strengthening AML



controls, the deployment of this platform will bring about efficiencies at participating banks and will result in improvement in customer experience, especially at the time of account opening, thus facilitating financial inclusion.

Avanza Group's eKYC platform, 'Consonance', is being implemented for PBA. The platform will use blockchain technology through which banks will be able to

standardize and exchange, with customers' consent, their details via a decentralized and self-regulated network.

Once performed by a member bank, the eKYC data can be utilized by other banks for Customer Due Diligence (CDD), thus minimizing cost and effort in customer onboarding and improving the customers' account opening experience, thus facilitating financial inclusion.

Ufone 4G launches Super Card 899 for nonstop connectivity and unlimited calls

City Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani telecom company, Ufone 4G is proud to announce the launch of Super Card 899, a new addition to its Super Card portfolio that aims to bring more value, ease, and enablement to its users.

The new super card provides customers with an all-in-one offer that includes 20GB of internet, 450 off-net minutes, and unlimited on-net/PTCL minutes for the entire month for just Rs.899.

The card allows customers to enjoy uninterrupted data and unlimited calls without having to worry about running out of balance or recharging their accounts multiple times a month. The all-in-one package provides great value for money, saving customers the hassle of

subscribing to multiple packages for internet, off-net and on-net/PTCL minutes.

Customers can subscribe to the Super Card 899 by visiting their nearest retailer, through digital channels such as UPaisa, My Ufone App, or any mobile money service in Pakistan. Since it provides more value at an affordable price, Super Card 899 is an excellent choice for those looking to save money without compromising on connectivity, apart from enjoying uninterrupted data and unlimited calls with just one product for the entire month.

So, head to your nearest Ufone retailer or subscribe through digital channels to get your Super Card 899 today and experience the convenience, Befikari, and enablement it has to offer.

Mobilink Bank Signs GSMA Commitment to Address the Mobile Gender Gap

Bureau Report

KARACHI: VEON Ltd. (NASDAQ: VEON), Euronext Amsterdam: VEON), a global digital operator that provides converged connectivity and online services, today announces that Mobilink Microfinance Bank Ltd. (MMBL), its banking operation in Pakistan, has signed up to the GSMA's Connected Women Commitment Initiative, becoming the first microfinance bank, globally, to do so.

The GSMA Connected Women Commitment Initiative was set up in 2016 to accelerate digital and finan-

cial inclusion for women across Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Since the inception of the Commitment Initiative, over 40 mobile operators have made formal commitments and have collectively reached over 55 million additional women with mobile internet and mobile money services.

MMBL will leverage its extensive operations across Pakistan, with more than 16 million monthly active customers across Pakistan, 100+ branches, and over 200,000 branchless banking agents, to further the aim of the GSMA's Connected Women Commitment Initiative by

encouraging the adoption of digital technology amongst women, to foster their financial inclusion.

It will run various programs to deliver tailored offerings to increase the percentage of female customers and reach more and more women across Pakistan with digital financial services. The Bank aims to increase the proportion of female customer base by 15%, adding 600,000 customers by 2025.

"Female microentrepreneurs are key to Pakistan's successful future and the GSMA is rightly focusing on them," states Kaan Terzioglu, CEO of VEON Group. "The



Aamir Ibrahim, CEO Jazz, Claire Sibthorpe, Head of Digital Inclusion, Mobile for Development (M4D) GSMA, Sardar Mohammad Abubakar, Chief Operating Officer MMBL and Mohammad Ali Ibrahim, Head of Marketing and Communications MMBL, pose for a group photo at the signing ceremony as MMBL becomes the first microfinance bank globally to join GSMA's commitment to empower women through digital financial inclusion in Pakistan.

adoption of mobile technology and the use of digital operator services has the power to transform entire sectors of society and bring prosperity to millions. Through its existing strong relationships with women

across Pakistan, and its close relationship with Jazz Pakistan-our telco arm, MMBL is perfectly positioned to deliver on the ambitions of the GSMA's Connected Women Commitment Initiative."

BankIslami Announced 142% Growth in Profit

News Desk

KARACHI: BankIslami Pakistan Limited ("the Bank" or "BankIslami") announced its financial results for the year ended December 31, 2022 declaring a remarkable growth of 142% in profit before tax i.e. Rs. 8.23 billion as compared to Rs. 3.39 billion during last year. Profit after tax closed at Rs. 4.44 billion as compared to Rs. 2.13 billion closed during last year i.e. growth of 108% despite significant increase in tax rates. Year 2022 has been a great success for BankIslami, where it not only achieved highest ever profitability, but also announced its first ever dividend of 10% to its shareholders. This is a result of all round performance of the Bank where almost all of its segments have contributed very well. This deposits surpassed Rs. 400 billion landmark and closed at Rs. 415.91 billion, depicting a prominent rise of Rs. 71.1 billion and growth of 20.63%.

Despite increase in policy rates, around 50% of the increase in deposits was contributed by Current Account. This was outcome of the Bank's all out efforts in introducing new and innovative products, expanding its sales team across the country and pursuing aggressive marketing initiatives. The Bank also seized the opportunity of rising policy rate scenario by offering attractive term deposit products which enabled healthy growth of 27.5% (Rs. 29.72 billion) in term deposits.

Despite slowdown in economic activities at country level, the Bank was able to achieve growth of 12.20% in its Financing book (gross). Composition of Consumer financing in overall financing portfolio remained at 23.19% despite regulatory measures to curb the demand of auto financing. Financing to deposit ratio (ADR-gross) plunged to 52.98% as at December 31, 2022. Infection ratio of the Bank as at December 31, 2022 increased to 9.02% from 8.7% as compared to last year due to classification of certain corporate accounts. In view of prevailing economic situation, the Bank has recorded an additional general provision of Rs. 2.15 billion during the year, which improved the coverage ratio against delinquent accounts to 96.14% as compared to 89.57% at the end of last year.

HBL sponsored PSL to highlight positive image of Pakistan: Ali Habib

Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: Chief Marketing and Communication Officer, Habib Bank Limited (HBL), Ali Habib on Thursday said the purpose of HBL's investment in Pakistan Super League (PSL) season 8 was to highlight the positive image of Pakistan and promote healthy activities in the country.

Speaking at a morning show aired by a private TV channel, he said HBL had been working for the last 75 years

in Pakistan, and "we are investing in PSL just for the country's dignity without taking into consideration the profit and loss."

He asserted that Pakistan needs more events like HBL-PSL.

"We have to understand that the PSL is not merely a game but a soft diplomacy act" owing to which the image of Pakistan is improving in the world. The foreign players, who come to play in Pakistan, leave a good impression on their return, he added.

He said the HBL-PSL has become the 2nd largest cricket league in the world. Though there were many problems with the HBL-PSL, the good thing was that the series continues.

The HBL-PSL has a large network, including franchises, sponsors, management at district, provincial, and federal levels, and security administration which ensure Pakistan's message for peace and prosperity goes to the world, he added.

Ali Habib said HBL-PSL was playing an important role in scouting for

new talent and lures not only international players but also cricket returns into coming to Pakistan. An HBL-PSL match exerts considerable economic impact on the match-hosting city and provides livelihood and employment to many people.

He said tickets for all matches sell like hot cakes, people are eager to watch the match with their families.

"By seeing the smiling faces of the people, we feel that the purpose of HBL-PSL has been fulfilled," he added.

Waited & worked hard for my chance: Aamer Jamal



Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: Peshawar Zalmi all-rounder Aamer Jamal was brimming with joy for his outstanding performance with the ball in the Pakistan Super League (PSL) 8 match against Karachi Kings, saying he had worked hard and waited desperately for his chance.

"I worked on my bowling for every situation. Although the last over didn't go well but we were head in front of them (Karachi Kings). I'm happy that Zalmi won because of my performance and that is all that matters," he said in a presser at Pindi Stadium, Rawalpindi after the match late Wednesday.

Aamer Jamal finished with three for 43 to help Peshawar Zalmi down Karachi Kings by 24 runs in what was the first game of the HBL PSL 8 at the Pindi Stadium.

He said though the team's morale went down after we lost early wickets, Zalmi's head coach Darren Sammy backed us to be positive as the pitch was good to bat.

"One good partnership was needed to put up a decent total on the scoreboard and we planned accordingly to go to the end and not lose wickets," he said.

Speaking about not getting a chance in the team in previous matches, Jamal said, "The team comes first and I was not fitting in any of the combinations in the previous games. But I did my homework and wanted to do my best whenever got a chance," he said.

To a question, he said length matters to a bowler no matter on whichever pitch you play. "If a player could pick it early on which length to bowl on a particular wicket then he can execute," he said.

About match planning before games, he said we plan, by keeping in mind the teams we have to face on the day. "The crowd of Rawalpindi is very good and I didn't feel any pressure playing there. Even I have got 2 to 3 man of the matches awards in this ground."

On Skipper Babar Azam, Jamal said the prolific batter was a great captain. "Babar being a captain is very cool and calm."

He is very kind to every youngster and promotes and boosts them."

Combaxx-Roshan Khan National Team Squash Championship



Sports Desk

KARACHI: The Combaxx-Roshan Khan National Team Squash Championship being organized by Pakistan Navy in collaboration with Combaxx Sports got underway here yesterday at Pakistan Navy Roshan Khan Jahangir Khan Squash Complex, Karachi.

The following are the results of the matches played on the 1st day:

In the morning session Pool-A (Men's Category): The result was: [1] WAPDA 3-0 [6] Sindh.

Playing aggressively, Nasir Iqbal comprehensively beat Muhammad Ali 11-0, 11-0, 11-0 in three straight sets, while Noor Zaman defeated Huraira Zafar 11-7, 11-7, 11-6 in match that lasted for 17 mins.

On the other hand, Farhan Mehboob overcame Abdul Basit 11-5, 11-4, 11-5 in a 17-minutes encounter.

In the Pool-B (Men's category), the result was [2] Army 3-0 [5] Navy.

Ashab Irfan overcame Anas Khan 11-8, 11-7, 11-9 (19mins) after interesting contest.

Hamza Khan Beat Awais Younas 11-6, 11-7, 11-5 (14mins) while Fahim Ahmed defeated Noor Zaman 11-5, 11-7, 11-2 (14 mins)

In Women's category, it was [2] Army 3-0 [4] Punjab.

The match between Marium Malik and Rushna Mehboob was closely fought, won, by Marium beating Rushna Mehboob 11-13, 12-10, 9-11, 12-10, 11-5 in 37mins encounter. While Noor ul Huda Beat Fajar Hamid 11-4, 11-2, 11-5 (11mins) and Sana Bahadur defeated Tayyaba Abbas 11-3, 11-5, 11-4 (10mins).

In the Evening Session Pool - A (Men's contests: [4] Punjab 3-0 [7] Balochistan

Khaqan Malik beat Jahanzaib Yousof 11-5, 11-8, 11-5 (16mins) and Anaz Ali Shah outclassed Mazah Ali 11-2, 11-7, 11-3 (15mins) while Shoaib Hassan Beat Abdul Waqar 11-8, 11-7, 11-9 (27mins).

In the Pool-B (Men's Contests), the result was: [3] KPK 3-0 [5] Navy, with Mutahir Ali beating Anas Khan 11-9, 9-11, 11-7, 7-11, 11-8 in a sensational encounter, lasting for 45 minutes.

Shehzad Khan Beat Awais Younus 11-8, 12-10, 11-8 (18mins), while Nasir Khan Beat Syed Saad 11-2, 11-3, 11-4 (11mins).

Milking competition

FAISALABAD: Chairman International Goat and Bull Association Chaudhry Atta Gujjar giving trophy to winner during milking competition on the eve of World Buffaloes Day at Agriculture University in the city.



Photo: Online

First Rumanza Open Golf Championship

Tahir Amin Malik

LAHORE: In the First Rumanza Open Golf Championship in progress at the par-72 Rumanza Golf and Country Club Golf Course, Multan, known as a city of saints and in possession of the first designer Golf Course, 96 top professional golf players of the country completed their first round yesterday. Out of these 96 eligible national golf professionals, some competitors produced scores of excellence and sought acclamation while a large number of hopefuls ended up in agony, their scores ballooning to a level that lacks the winning touch.

Looking superb during the first round was Muhammed Minhaj Minhaj Maqsood of Rawalpindi Golf Club with a score of gross 68, four under par. As for Shahbaz Masih of Karachi Golf Club and Ahmed Baig of PAF they too were equally luminous, their golf playing capabilities oozing rounds of class. While Minhaj stands out all by himself with an exceptional round of gross 68, four under par, Shahbaz Masih and the phenomenal one of the national professional golf scene, Ahmed Baig are bracketed at gross 70, two under par.

From the word go Minhaj, Ahmed Baig and Shahbaz have taken command of the match and appear determined to make winning intentions clear.

Starting from the first tee, the sound one Minhaj Maqsood birdied the 2nd and 3rd holes, followed those up with another birdies on the 5th hole and then on the back nine, birdies on holes 13 and 17. Along the way he had 12 regulation pars and just one bogie on the 12th hole. In the first round, Minhaj's shot making has been heartening indeed and the rhythm in his swing brought delight to the onlookers. Two shots behind Minhaj are placed



Shahbaz and the formidable Ahmed Baig their score for the first 18 holes being gross 70, two under par. No doubt both these aspirants performed with precision, matching the calibre of Minhaj but a few missed putts left them a little behind.

Placed at a score of gross 71, one under par are Muhammed Munir of Rawalpindi and Ashiq Hussain of Multan. One stroke behind them are Syed Raza Ali Rizvi of Rumanza Golf Club and Muhammed Naem of Peshawar. These four have looked fairly spectacular in the first round and with their performance have added a dazzling touch to this championship.

Others who have managed to perform reasonably well are Muhammed Alam at 73, Muhammed Sharif, Talib Hussain Bilal Hussain Shah, Matloob Ahmed and Kashif Masih, all at gross 74.

The great Shabbir Iqbal was not too illustrious and is placed at a score of gross 76. In the amateur category Saad

Habib Malik of Rumanza Golf Club overwhelmed his playing partners, his adversaries and his club mates at Rumanza with a show of golfing perfection. His hitting off the tees was accuracy loaded and crisp indeed were his fairway shots. All this skillful handling of the Rumanza Golf Course challenges enabled him to come up with an outstanding score of gross 70. And the striking feature of his excellent play was that he played in the company of the superb one, Shabbir Iqbal and did not get overawed. With this kind of golf play, he stands out as a national hope in coming months.

Other amateurs who played well are Qasim Ali Khan placed at a score of gross 73, Salman Jahangir at gross 75, Rao Hassan at 78 and Malik Haseeb at 78.

Rumanza Golf Course playing conditions were a delight for the golf professionals of the country. Course set up was upto international PGA standards with the greens playing hard and fast running at 12.5 on the stimpmeter.

6th PGF Ladies Amateur Golf to tee off today

Spokesman Report

LAHORE: The Pakistan Golf Federation (PGF) backed 6th PGF Ladies Amateur Golf Championship tees off at the par 72 Lahore Gymkhana Golf Course.

First combination (flite) of three prime contenders comprises of Parkha Ijaz (Raya) Aania Farooq (Karachi Golf Club) and the highly skilled one Suneya Osama (Lahore Garrison). While Parkha is a zero handicapper, Aania Farooq plays to a handicap of two and Suneya has a handicap of three.

As these handicaps unwrap and serve as a reflection of their superb golf playing skills, the likelihood is that they will dominate the run of play where other noteworthy competitors like Rimsha Ijaz (handicap one), Daniya Syed (handicap 2 from Karachi), Abiha Sayed (Handicap 4) and Ghazala Yasmin (handicap 5) seek to deter their winning march and surface as the more remarkable ones.

First round of the 6th PGF Ladies Golf Championship is entirely committed for the golf category players whose handicap falls in the range 12 and below.

The overall competition for them will be over three rounds and 54 holes, 18 holes to be golfed on Friday, 18 holes on Saturday and the final 18 holes on Sunday.

Weather is as favourable as can be and so are the playing conditions at Lahore Gymkhana Golf Course. This was stated by Ayesha Hamid, the Lady Captain of Lahore Gymkhana Golf Course and the Tournament Director.

PNF to select team for Asian Jr Girls Netball C'ship



Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Netball Federation (PNF) has announced a four-member selection committee to pick the national junior team for the Asian Junior Girls Netball Championship.

According to the details, the selected team would participate in the Asian Junior Girls Netball Championship to be played in Korea in June this year.

The four-member selection committee has been approved by PNF President Mudassar Arain.

The selection committee would be headed by Muhammad Riaz while members include Ijaz ul Haq, Anwar Ahmed and Qurat ul Ain.

The national junior girls team selection would be held on March 12 at the PSB Coaching Center Karachi and girls from all over the country can participate in the trials.

Matthew Wade confident Karachi Kings will make it to playoffs

City Reporter

RAWALPINDI: Karachi Kings' wicketkeeper batter Matthew Wade has expressed confidence in his side's ability to make it to the playoffs, terming the next three matches 'important'.

Wade, who scored a fighting half-century in the run chase against Peshawar Zalmi, shared his disappointment over failing to finish the game but stated that his side would get another opportunity to bounce back.

"It would have been nice if I had finished the game, that's our

job as a top order player. As I said, the rate was crazy enough high, we need 12 or 13 [runs per over]. I felt like if they gave me the ball up, I would hit areas I thought I could hit and was going to take it down straight but missed it. That's kind of the game, it's T20 and it happens," Wade told the media in the post-match press conference.

"Yeah it is disappointing that I couldn't go on and pose a bigger score but we'll get another opportunity in a few days, we have to bounce back, we have to win the next three games and win them

well and give ourselves a chance for the finals," he added.

The wicketkeeper batter asserted that the Kings' net run rate in the tournament had the capability of spicing up the race for the playoffs as his side lost their matches by minimal margins.

"We are not playing our best but we've been there and there about as we've lost by minimal margins and our run rate is probably capable in the tournament at the moment," shared Wade.

"So, pretty much every game from here, we have to win, let's



how we're looking at it anyway and if we can bank three, we'll have the chance to play the finals," he added.

It is worth mentioning that the Kings slipped to fifth with four points in seven matches in the PSL 8 standings with a narrow 24-run defeat against Peshawar Zalmi.

Kings' pacer Mohammad Amir's magnificent figures of 4/26 and Inad Wasim's gritty 57-run knock went in vain.

The 2020 champions next face Islamabad United on Friday in a must-win clash.