

Daily The Spokesman

RAWALPINDI



Ahsan Iqbal reiterates commitment to CPEC's development, successful implementation

Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Friday reiterated a firm commitment of the incumbent government to the development of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and ensuring its successful implementation. (Details on Page 8)



Barrister Shehzad Elahi resigns as AGP

Barrister Shehzad Elahi on Friday resigned as attorney general of Pakistan, citing sources. Shehzad Elahi's resignation comes nearly seven weeks after his appointment was confirmed by President Arif Alvi on Feb 2. Elahi is the grandson of former president Fazal Elahi Chaudhry and enjoys a good reputation for his hard work, integrity and understanding of legal issues. He is also a corporate lawyer who has rich experience in commercial, tax and banking laws, civil, commercial, corporate, constitutional litigation, etc.

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Free Atta Scheme

LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif interacts with the beneficiaries of Free Atta Scheme.



Photo: PID

PM directs smooth, uninterrupted distribution of free wheat flour during Holy Ramazan

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday paid an unannounced visit to the distribution points of free wheat flour here and Kasur, and directed the authorities concerned to ensure hassle-free and uninterrupted supply of the commodity to the entitled people.

The free wheat flour is being distributed across Punjab and federal capital, under the Ramazan Package announced by the government to reduce the burden of inflation from the middle and low-income groups.

The prime minister, who was accompanied by Advisor Ahad Cheema and Special Assistant to PM Malik Ahmad Khan, interacted with the people including children at the distribution centers. He listened to the problems faced by them and issued instructions for their immediate redressal.

He directed the relevant

authorities to continue the free flour distribution till 25th of Ramazan as per the program announced by the government.

Prime Minister Shehbaz, who also distributed flour bags among the beneficiaries, inspected the process of flour supply with the officials checking the particulars of the people before guiding them to the distribution point.

He also visited the waiting room established to facilitate the beneficiaries of the flour scheme, particularly keeping in view the month of fasting.

"No citizen should face any difficulty during Ramazan. Special attention should be given to the facilitation of old-aged and persons with disabilities," he instructed and called for making arrangements to facilitate the women, particularly those coming with their children.

"Don't consider it just an official duty rather serve it as a humanitarian work to seek the blessings of Allah Almighty during Holy Ramazan."

President asks PM to direct authorities to assist ECP over KP, Punjab elections

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: In connection with the holding of the elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, President Dr Arif Alvi asked on Friday Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to direct the concerned authorities to assist the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).

In a letter, President Alvi mentioned the holding of elections in the two provinces as per the time-frame, in compliance with the Supreme Court's order dated March 1, 2023 was essential to avoid further complications, including contempt of court.

The president said he was writing the letter as events had taken place in the recent past involving glaring violations of fundamental and human rights that were highlighted by the print, electronic and social media

and needed to be brought to the prime minister's notice to ensure remedial measures and preventive action. The president said the elections of provincial assemblies, in case of their dissolution under Article 105 or Article 112, were required to be held within 90 days under Article 224 (2) of the Constitution.

He added that the Supreme Court of Pakistan vide its order dated 1st March, 2023 had directed the ECP to propose date(s) to the president for holding the poll within 90 days or on a date that deviates to barest minimum from aforesaid deadline.

He said the governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was also directed by the Supreme Court to appoint a date for holding the general election for the provincial assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as per above time-



frame.

Subsequently, the ECP had proposed holding of general elections between April 30 and May 7, 2023 and general elections for the Provincial Assembly of Punjab were announced to be held on April 30, 2023 and the same was notified by the ECP.

President Alvi said that it appeared that federal and care-taker governments in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa advised the heads of departments concerned to indicate their inability

to provide the necessary support for holding general elections.

He referred to Article 220 of the Constitution which states that "it shall be the duty of all executive authorities in the Federation and in the Provinces to assist the Commissioner and the Election Commission in the discharge of his or their functions."

He underlined that in his opinion, flagrant violation of the Constitution had been committed by the executive authorities

and government departments, and that the ECP had not implemented his announcement of holding general elections in Punjab on 30th April, 2023 and also blatantly violated the Supreme Court's order dated 1st March, 2023.

He also referred to Article 9 on 'security of person', Article 10 on 'safeguards as to arrest and detention', Article 10-A on 'right to fair trial', Article 14 on 'inviolability of dignity of man etc.', Article 15 on 'freedom of movement etc.', Article 16 on 'freedom of assembly', Article 17 on 'freedom of association' and Article 19 on 'freedom of speech', and said the spirit and mandate of these articles were being clearly transgressed.

"This has tarnished the image of Pakistan in the international community and is casting negative repercussions on the future

of democracy and state of human rights in Pakistan," he added.

President Alvi further highlighted that in the World Press Freedom Index of 2021, Pakistan ranked 145 out of 180 countries and dropped to 157 i.e., 12 points downwards in the World Press Freedom Index, 2022, which reflected the sorry state of affairs and "this year's actions and images" would further exacerbate the country's already dismal ranking.

He wrote that in recent months, media had been further suppressed and journalists had also been subjected to charges of sedition and terrorism to stifle dissent and criticism against the government. It appeared that a reign of terror had been unleashed against the media persons who had independent opinions, he added.

Banks to remain open for collecting Hajj applications on weekend: Ministry

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony on Friday informed that the fourteen designated banks collecting Hajj applications across the country would remain open on weekend - Saturday and Sunday 25th and 26th March.

The Ministry's Spokesperson Muhammad Umar Butt told APP that it was decided due to the paucity of time and due to a large number of people who intended to submit their Hajj applications and dues in the banks during their off days.

Imran's protective bail extended till March 27 by LHC

Bureau Report

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court gave relief to the former premier Imran Khan by extending his protective bail in five cases till March 27. The cases were filed against Imran Khan in Islamabad including "vandalism" at his recent appearance in the judicial complex. The Lahore High Court on Friday cancelled the reservations related to the plea of former premier Imran Khan seeking protective bail in five cases.

A two-member bench comprising Justice Tariq Saleem Sheikh and Justice Anwaar Hussain heard the petition filed by the former prime minister for renewal of his protective bail as he failed to appear before the relevant courts in the cases registered Raman and Khana police stations.

When asked if Supreme Court would intervene in the recent deci-



sion of the Election Commission regarding the postponement of elections, PTI chief said if the apex court failed to abolish this decision, then it would also be uncertain that if the polls would be held in October. Barrister Salman Safdar and Advocate Azhar Siddique represented the PTI chief in the case. A heavy contingent of police was deployed at the high court in order to avoid any untoward situation.

Barrister Salman said reservations were raised at the PTI's chief plea for bail, therefore petition was reappplied. He said extension was requested in the already given plea. Responding, Justice Tariq Saleem said the Islamabad High Court should be approached for this purpose.

At this, Imran's lawyer raised issue of Imran's security and said he also came at the LHC with security.

China rolls over \$2bn loan as Pakistan races to meet IMF demand for external financing

Commerce Desk

LAHORE: China has approved a rollover of \$2 billion State Administration of Foreign Exchange (SAFE) deposits for one year for cash-strapped Pakistan racing to secure assurance of external financing from friendly countries to revive the IMF deal.

Finance Minister Ishaq Dar confirmed the development to local media on Friday as the rollover of Chinese SAFE deposits was one of the conditions laid forth by the global lender for the South Asian country to reach the staff-level agreement.

ECP releases detailed verdict in prohibited funding case

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan announced a detailed verdict in the prohibited funding case.

As per the order, ECP announced decision of prohibited funding on April 2 and released show-cause notice on the same day giving the PTI's lawyer six weeks to submit response.

The PTI's lawyer raised reservation that show-cause notice was not released legally, then the ECP heard the arguments of both parties and gave the time of eight days for the scrutiny of record.

As per the rule six of political parties, ECP started confiscation of funding and issued formal notification at the start of investigation giving the PTI

ample time to present its point of view.

The Islamabad High Court did not turn the decision of the ECP when the PTI approached the IHC.

On Tuesday, the LHC granted protective bail to the former premier in two other cases registered under terrorism charges against him in Islamabad following last week's clashes at the Federal Judicial Complex (FJC) during his appearance in the Toshakhana case.

The first information reports (FIRs) were registered at the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) and the Golra police stations, accusing the PTI chief and his supporters of attacking police, torching security vehicles and creating unrest outside the judicial complex.

Military Awards

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi conferring the Military Awards upon military personnel in recognition of their services and professional excellence at the Investiture Ceremony to confer the Insignias of Military Awards, at Aiwan-e-Sadr on Friday.



Photo: PID

President confers military awards on armed forces personnel

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Friday conferred military awards on the serving and martyred armed forces personnel at a Pakistan Day investiture ceremony held here at the Aiwan-e-Sadr.

A total of 49 officers and soldiers of the Pakistan Army, Navy and Air Force received the military awards including the families of four martyred troops in the categories of Nishan-i-Imtiaz, Hilal-i-Imtiaz, and Sitara-i-Basalat. Two foreign dignitaries from friendly countries also received prestigious awards.

Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee Lt Gen Sahir Shamsad Mirza, Chief of the Army Staff General Asim Munir, Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Amjad Khan Niazi, Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Babar Sidhu, diplomats and senior official attended the ceremony.

President Dr Arif Alvi conferring the award of

Nishan-i-Imtiaz (Military) upon Commander of the Bahrain National Guard, General Shaikh Mohammad bin Isa bin Salman Al-Khalifa, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, Islamabad, on 24-03-2023.

Commander of Bahrain National Guards Shaikh Mohammed Bin Salman Al-Khalifa was awarded Nishan-i-Imtiaz (military) and Defence Attache of Saudi Arabia Major General (Pilot) Staff Awad Bin Abdullah Alzahrani was given Hilal-i-Imtiaz (military) in recognition to their illustrious services of strengthening defence ties with Pakistan.

Family members of the martyred military personnel received the awards of Sitara-i-Basalat from President Dr Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, Islamabad, on 24-03-2023.

The president conferred Sitara-i-Basalat on the martyrs of the Pakistan Army in recognition of their valour demonstrated while fighting terrorists in operation areas. The awards

were received by the family members of the martyrs, including Major Shujaat Hussain (30 Baloch Regiment, martyred in Angoor Adda, South Waziristan); Captain Bilal Khalil (Army Medical Corps, martyred in Noshki, Balochistan); Captain Faheem Abbas (72 Punjab Regiment, martyred in Jani Khel area of Bannu); and Sepoy Muhammad Waqas (18 Frontier Force Regiment, martyred in North Waziristan).

President Dr Arif Alvi conferred the Military Awards upon military personnel in recognition of their services and professional excellence at the Investiture Ceremony to Confer the Insignias of Military Awards, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, Islamabad, on 24-03-2023.

President conferred Hilal-i-Imtiaz (military) on Air Marshal Chaudhry Ahsan Rafiq (Air Headquarters), Air Marshal Waqas Ahmed Sulehri (AHQ), Maj Gen Khurram Nisar (Joint Services HQ), Maj Gen Qamar un Nisa Chaudhry

(Army Medical Corps), Maj Gen Irfan Ali Mirza (AMC), Maj Gen Muhammad Rafiq Zafar (AMC), Rear Admiral Javed Iqbal (Naval Headquarters), Rear Admiral Muhammad Sohail Arshad (NHQ), Rear Admiral Salman Ilyas (NHQ), Air Vice Marshal Muhammad Nadeem Sabir (AHQ), Maj Gen Syed Khurram Shahzad (AMC), Maj Gen Bilal Umair (AMC), Maj Gen Muhammad Wasim (AMC), Maj Gen Muhammad Subail Amin (AMC), Maj Gen Ariq ur Rehman Sulehria (AMC), Maj Gen Muhammad Aleem (AMC), Air Vice Marshal Salman Abbas Shah (AHQ), Maj Gen Muhammad Avas Dastgir (General Headquarters), Maj Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry (JS HQ), Rear Admiral Muhammad Faisal Abbasi (NHQ), Maj Gen Omar Ahmed Bokhari (GHQ), Maj Gen Inayat Hussain (GHQ), Maj Gen Kamal Azfar (Frontier Works Organization), Maj Gen Muhammad Aamer Najam

(National Defence University), Maj Gen Adil Yameen (GHQ), Maj Gen Fahim Amer (Inter Services Intelligence), Maj Gen Shahid Manzoor (JS HQ), Maj Gen Muhammad Kashif Azad (ISI), Maj Gen Tabassum Habib (GHQ), Maj Gen Kamran Ahmed Satti (GHQ), Maj Gen Adil Rehmani, Maj Gen Muhammad Hassan Khattak (ISI), Maj Gen Muhammad Shuja Anwar (General Officer Commanding), Maj Gen Majid Jahangir (JS HQ), Maj Gen Azhar Waqas (Rangers), Maj Gen Asif Mahmood Goraya (Army Air Defence), Maj Gen Akif Iqbal (ISI), Maj Gen Rashid Mahmood, Maj Gen Muhammad Irfan (GOC), Maj Gen Dilwar Khan (JS HQ), Maj Gen Abdul Moeed (GOC), Rear Admiral Muhammad Saleem (NHQ), Air Vice Marshal Shams ul Haq (AHQ), Maj Gen Chaudhry Muhammad Qamar ul Haq Noor, and Air Vice Marshal Muhammad Qaiser Janjua (AHQ).

At UN, Pakistan calls for respecting norms of accords like Indo-Pak Indus Water Treaty

News Desk

UNITED NATIONS: Pakistan Thursday stressed the need for trans-boundary water cooperation, citing the 1960 Indus Water Treaty between India and Pakistan — a lower riparian state — as an example of such successful cooperation that provides an effective mechanism to deal with issues related to shared water resources.

“Within the South Asia region, population growth and increasing water demand, coupled with climate change impacts and ecosystem degradation, has made water cooperation even more imperative,” Hasan Nisar Jamy, Pakistan’s chief delegate, told the UN Water



Conference, pointing that Pakistan shares surface and groundwater resources with two neighbouring countries.

“The Indus Waters Treaty, which governs sharing of the Indus basin’s waters, is one example of such successful

cooperation, which provides an effective mechanism for cooperation and management on water issues,”

Jamy, who is Secretary of the Ministry of Water Resources, said in the general debate.

Drawing attention to precedents and principles on the rights and obligations of both upper and lower riparians arising from bilateral and multilateral instruments, Pakistan’s chief delegate said, “These norms must be fully respected by the concerned Parties.”

“Unilateral actions can spiral into threats to regional stability and peace, and must be avoided, Jamy warned on the penultimate day of the three-day conference, the first in almost five decades taking place in New York to deal with water-related challenges.

Mariyum grieved over demise of mother of APP ED News Hanif Sabir

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Mariyum Aurangzeb on Friday expressed deep grief and sorrow over the death of the mother of Executive Director News of APP Hanif Sabir.

Expressing her heartfelt condolences to Hanif Sabir and the bereaved family, she said the death of his mother was a great tragedy for him.

She prayed to Allah Almighty to rest the departed soul in eternal peace and grant courage to the bereaved family to bear this loss with fortitude.

Elahi sees PML-N accepting defeat by ‘postponing’ Punjab PA elections

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Former Punjab Chief Minister Chaudhry Parvez Elahi said on Friday Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) was accepting its defeat by “postponing” the Punjab Assembly elections.

Lahore High Court Bar President Ishtiaq Ahmad Khan and Lahore Bar President Rana Intizar Hussain called on Mr Elahi. On this occasion, in connection with the constitutional issues related to the postponement of Punjab Assembly elections, discussions were made.

Mr Elahi claimed the incumbent government had violated Article 6 by postponing the elections.

Lashing out at the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), Mr Elahi said the job of the electoral watchdog was to conduct elections, claiming the ECP had exceeded its constitutional powers.



On Wednesday, former Punjab Chief Minister Chaudhry Parvez Elahi said the government’s negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) were of no importance.

Mr Elahi was expressing his views during his meetup with PTI stalwarts including Raja Bashaar and Mehmoodur Rasheed. He said, “The journey of progress, which was started during the tenure of former prime minister Imran Khan, has now been stopped by the

incumbent government.” “The country was facing consequences at the global level due to the wrong policies of its inept rulers. Nothing has been done by the rulers, who made claims about taking the country out of economic woes,” he added.

Speaking about the “growing popularity” of Mr Khan, Mr Elahi said, “Despite all the restrictions imposed on Imran Khan, his popularity graph is way above average. Imran continues to captivate

the attention of the international media.”

This is for the first time in the country’s history that people are quite concerned about managing to observe fasts, he lamented.

Bashing the political opponents, Mr Elahi said, “Despite the masses’ longing for free flour, the rulers are keeping themselves busy with the distribution of laptops.”

He claimed the PTI leaders and workers had been arrested to stop the party from staging its electoral campaign. “The masses will not let the incompetent rulers to escape elections, no matter what tactics they are resorted to,” Mr Elahi said.

Stressing the need for pouring onto streets against the “corrupt mafia”, Mr Elahi claimed Interior Minister Rana Sanullah and PML-N senior vice president Maryam Nawaz were running the campaign against the judiciary.

Ahsan Iqbal reiterates commitment to CPEC’s development, successful implementation

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Friday reiterated a firm commitment of the incumbent government to the development of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and ensuring its successful implementation.

“We are taking all necessary steps to address pressing issues and enhance the country’s exports, and we are grateful to China for its continued support in this regard,” the minister said while chairing a meeting to review progress on CPEC-related projects.

The meeting, according to a news release, also discussed progress on Special Economic Zones (SEZs), ML-1, Karachi Circular Railway and various new development initiatives that would be discussed in upcoming sittings of the Joint Working Groups.

During the meeting, the Planning minister emphasised the importance of strengthening the country’s export sector, directing the quar-

ters concerned to follow up on the PM’s proposal with regard to seeking Chinese professionals’ help in the development of Pakistan’s export sector.

Ahsan Iqbal said the top priority of the Government’s 5Es agenda was to enhance exports, and Pakistan could benefit from China’s expertise in that regard.

He instructed making SEZs a medium to enhance exports, adding the zones could foster collaboration and innovation, which could lead to the development of new products and services that were better suited to the demands of international markets.

The meeting also discussed proposals for upcoming sittings of JWG’s including the Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI), Solar projects and Identification study of pumped storage hydropower projects.

The meeting concluded with a strong emphasis on the need for close collaboration between Pakistan and China to ensure the successful implementation of CPEC and to achieve the common goal of regional prosperity.

Finance Ministry has no funds for elections: Khawaja Asif

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said that the finance ministry has no funds for elections.

Defence Minister Khawaja Asif and Information Minister Marium Aurangzeb addressed the international media in a joint press conference.

Khawaja Asif lambasted the PTI chief Imran Khan saying his assassination attempt allegation is a lie. He first extended the tenure of former army chief General retired Qamar Javaid Bajwa and now he is now blaming him, first, he blamed the US for his ouster, the Defence Minister added.

He further said that the former prime minister Imran Khan dissolved the provincial assemblies unconstitutionally but he was ousted from his seat constitutionally by a vote of no confidence and now he wants to not

appear before courts.

Defence Minister Khawaja Asif blamed the PTI chairman for imprisoning the PML-N leaders during his tenure. Khawaja Asif said that he was jailed during his 3-year tenure and our party leader also faced the courts in fake cases.

Imran Khan is creating crises every day but the government is tackling these crises and Pakistan will come out of all these crises soon, Khawaja Asif added.

Khawaja Asif further said that the former prime minister made a false narrative of US conspiracy but the Supreme Court interfered and saved the country from a constitutional crisis.

The terrorist attack increased in the last few months, as a result of the security situation the government cannot provide funds for elections and the deployment of the army is also not possible at this point in time.

NAB submits record of cases against Imran Khan in LHC

Bureau Report

LAHORE: The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) has submitted details of cases registered against Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief and former prime minister Imran Khan in the Lahore High Court (LHC).

The anti-graft buster, in its report, there are two cases registered against former prime minister Imran Khan, which are being investigated by Rawalpindi NAB.

One of the cases is related to retaining gifts from the Toshakhana and misuse of power while another probe is being conducted for alleged monetary benefits and concealing records from authorities.

It said both cases were currently at the inquiry stage, adding that a call-up notice had been issued to the political leaders.

The development comes as Khan moved the high court to seek details of all cases registered against him in the country.

Earlier, former prime minister Imran Khan decided to challenge the National Accountability Bureau’s summons in the Lahore High Court (LHC).

A team of NAB officials last week, served notices to Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi and summoned them to appear before the NAB on March 21.

SBP abolishes cash margin requirement on imported items

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) on Friday abolished the dollar cash margin requirement on imports from March 31.

Experts claimed that the government fulfilled another condition of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) by ending the dollar cash margin requirement on imports.

It is pertinent to mention here that the government imposed a cash margin requirement in August 2022 to limit imports of luxury and non-essential goods to deal with the country’s financial crisis.

The SBP has issued a notification to all financial institutions instructed to put an end to the dollar cash margin requirement on imports.

According to experts, a cash margin is a form of security to eliminate the risk of non-payment, adding that the cash margin imposed on imports has been withdrawn on IMF directives.

IRC warns against imminent humanitarian crisis as 4.5 million people in flood-affected areas

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: As the rehabilitation process after floods 2022 is still underway, The International Rescue Committee (IRC) stresses the need to invest in multisectoral inclusive rehabilitation programs that take into account the long-term needs of the flood-affected communities. The IRC foresees that critical gaps in recovery across nutrition and food security, health, shelter, education, and WASH if left unchecked are likely to result in long-term serious consequences for the flood-affected population in particular and Pakistan as a whole.

Since the onset of the floods in July 2022, the IRC has remained active in the flood-affected districts of Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, and Sindh provinces. Through efforts geared towards the provi-

sion of food baskets, non-food items, safe drinking water, dignity, hygiene, and winterization kits; the establishment of medical camps, and safe spaces; and the conduction of awareness sessions on life skills and psychosocial support the IRC has reached out to approximately 1,224,938 people.

In a press statement the Country Director of IRC, Shabnam Baloch said, "Pakistan is not new to the onslaught of floods but the magnitude of the climate carnage that we witnessed in 2022 is unprecedented. More than seven months after the floods, millions of women, men, and children continue to struggle against hunger and homelessness. Health, education, and social protection services remain disrupted in the majority of the affected areas further placing the lives, livelihoods, and prospects of millions in jeopardy."

Several months after the climate change-triggered floods devastated three-fourths of Pakistan, an estimated 4.5 million people continue to remain exposed to extreme conditions. As of February 2023, floodwaters were yet to recede from several districts in the south of the country. Some parts of Pakistan have seen people returning to their native lands, however, the conditions that they are returning to are far from welcoming.

While several donor organizations have come forward to support Pakistan in this time of crisis, the overall response by the international community has been lukewarm. As of February 2023, Pakistan had received only 36% of the \$871 million from international aid to meet the overall flood response challenge. "Every sector in Pakistan's flood response plan is currently



underfunded," added Ms. Shabnam. While this poses a chal-

lenge on its own, we also need to understand that mere financial

resources will not drive Pakistan out of the climate-induced crisis

that has arrived on its doorstep. "There is an urgency like never before to invest in interventions that are climate resilient and take heed of the magnitude of the threat that climate change poses to a developing country like Pakistan."

The Gates Foundation, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), Dutch Relief Alliance (DRA), Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC), Irish Aid, Malala Fund, UNICEF, IOM, Global Affairs Canada, and German Federal Foreign Office (GFFO) are among the key donors whose support proved instrumental for IRC to commence and sustain efforts in the flood-affected districts.

Heavy rain

RAWALPINDI: A street vendor is holding umbrella and selling melons on his loading motorcycle alongside a road during heavy rain in the city.



Photo: Online

10 kg flour bags free distributed under the Ramazan special package

Mian Rashid Asghar

FAISALABAD: As many as 692943 bags of 10 kg flour have been free distributed among deserved in last five days under the Ramazan special package. The commissioner Ms. Silwat Saeed chaired a meeting and said that the arrangements at the distribution centers should be completed in all respect. She asked the price control magistrates to be active in the field and to deal strictly with those involved in profiteering and high prices. She also asked the deputy commissioners to hold a price control committee meeting and fixed the prices of essential items. She directed to set the price lists while meetings should be held with the traders regarding the prices of essential commodities. She said that the Deputy Commissioners should closely monitor



the prices, demand and supply of commodities. She also reviewed about census campaign.

Meanwhile the Deputy Commissioner Ali Anan Qamar visited the distribution

sites and observed the process of flour distribution. He saw the alternate arrangements during the rain.

He met with people and asked them about the arrangements. Earlier the

WASA teams cleared the rain water inside the distribution centers by placing the sucker and jeter machines. The people were provided relief and they took their free flour bags from the centers.

PTI's focal person Azhar Mashwani Missing

Bureau Report

FAISAL-ABAD: Kidnapping or arresting of social media PTI's focal person Azhar Mashwani is an outlaw process which should be observed by the supreme judiciary, said media associations.

They said that, they had been hearing about that the worst kind of democracy is better than martial law but this governmental set-up in the form of democratic government is worst than all previous martial laws where such kind of dealing was not observed in the past.

They said they would wage protest round the world what is going on with the journalists' & others community in Pakistan!

There is dire need to observe all such kind persons under the laws who don't take care of law and humanity.



Sardar Attique expressed his deep concern regarding the flour crisis in AJK

Abdul Majeed Tahir



RAWALPINDI: President of All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference and former Prime Minister Sardar Attique Ahmad Khan expressed his deep concern regarding the flour crisis in AJK and said that the government of Azad Kashmir should take steps

to immediately control the shortage of flour. The strike should be ended as soon as possible. The issues of the contractors are to a large extent legitimate and worthy of attention. The Government of Azad Kashmir should take serious action to resolve the legitimate demands of the contractors and resolve them immediately.

Talking to party leaders Sardar Altaf Hussain, Major Sardar Nasrullah Khan, Sardar Manzoor, Sajid Qureshi, Sardar Asim Zahid Abbasi Rana Ghulam Hussain and others. Sardar Attique said that due to the strike of flour contractors, flour mills across Azad Kashmir were not getting flour. Due to this, a flour crisis has started in the state and the people are in dire straits for government flour. He said that the government of Azad Kashmir has given subsidy on flour for Ramazan and if this is not possible, at least it is necessary that the flour be supplied. Supply should be ensured everywhere. Steps should be taken to deliver the stock of flour in the mills to the people without delay. The government should consider giving Ramazan package within the available resources he added.

On the direction of Deputy Commissioner the Waste Management Company has decided to keep the city clean

Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: On the direction of Deputy Commissioner Umar Jahangir, the Waste Management Company has decided to do full enforcement to keep the city clean. Shahid Yaqoob ordered the enforcement cell to be activated as soon as he assumed charge. The enforcement cell headed by in-charge enforcement cell Faheem Lodhi yesterday issued notices to more than 10 contractors and shopkeepers who littered the roads and footpaths. On this occasion, the Enforcement Cell has also given an ultimatum to the litterers to pick up the debris within 24 hours.

The Chief Executive Officer of Waste Management Company Shahid Yaqoob said that those who throw away the debris and garbage have given the beauty of the city of Auliya, now the property of those who litter the city will also be sealed under the Local Government Act.

Shahid Yaqoob said that They are providing full support to WASA for drainage and sanitation in the rains, while the company has also started cleaning in the neighboring union councils outside the city limits, which will see a pleasant change.

Shahid Yaqoob appealed that the business community and citizens. Avoid littering on the highways and cooperate with the company regarding cleaning.

Pakistan Day was celebrated with zeal and fervour in WANA



Adam Khan Wazir

WANA: Pakistan day, marking the ratification of the Pakistan Resolution, was celebrated FC South with traditional zeal and fervour in Kotkai area of District upper South Waziristan.

Pakistan day celebrations commenced with a huge display of fireworks in Kotkai at midnight 22/23 March.

Flag hoisting ceremony was arranged at Government Boys High School Kotkai.

Prominent tribal elders and notables of Kotkai attended the activity. The series of events included speech competition by students followed by awareness walk of 3.2 km. After the awareness walk, car and motorcycle rally was arranged from Karama till kotkai city.

At the end cash prizes were distributed amongst individuals in best dressed with patriotic attire and best decorated shops in kotkai. Cash prizes were also given to the best speech participants.

Zain Qureshi says imported government in quagmire

Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: Senior Vice President of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf South Punjab and former member and National and Provincial Assembly Makhdoomzada Zain Hussain Qureshi has said that the imported government has become a victim of confusion after seeing the popularity of Imran Khan and Tehreek-e-Insaf. Thanks to the 9 months of government performance, they cannot face the people. Despite the orders of the Supreme Court, by postponing the election, these people are not only insulting the court but also taking steps against the constitution and law. How long will these people run

away from the election? Even if they don't want to, these people will have to conduct elections. Tehreek-e-Insaf will win.

He expressed these views while addressing the reception ceremony in connection with the public communication campaign in Union Council 54 of PP 217 today He said that due to the incompetence of the imported government, the country is stuck in the quagmire. The country's economy is under severe crisis. The consequences of which both the country and the nation are suffering. Inflation has reached a 70-year record level in the country's history. Lawlessness is rampant.

On the call of Imran Khan, the

people came out for their right and supported Imran Khan. He said that the first meeting of this year is being organized under the leadership of Imran Khan at Minar-e- Pakistan on March 25th at 9 pm. In which Imran Khan will announce the future plan of action. He said that the imported government have pushed the country towards darkness.

He said that a gang of robbers has been imposed in the country. These people are doing politics of interests and personalities. Imran Khan is doing politics not for himself but to save the country and for a better future of future generations. Imran Khan's performance of three and a half years and the performance of imported rulers for 11

months are in front of the nation. The time has come for the nation to decide. They accept looters or they need the leadership of Imran Khan. The nation has become conscious. Nation has verified the identity of all the parties involved in PPP-N-League and PDM. I will not be seduced by them.

The conscious people of Pakistan rejected PDM in 2018 and will reject them again with a clear majority. The coming time belongs to Tehreek-e-Insaf and Imran Khan. Tehreek-e-Insaf will once again come to power with the power of the people. Makhdoomzada Zain Hussain Qureshi attended various reception functions at Union Council 54. Met the elders, met the party workers



Islamabad
15° - 23° Clear

SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr 4: 44 am
Zohr 12: 14 pm
Asr 4: 37 pm
Maghrib 6: 22 pm
Isha 7: 46 pm

EMERGENCY

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

Women Police Stations

Islamabad 9222596
Rawalpindi 9270601-20

ENQUIRY

Edhi Ambulance 115
PIA Flight Info 114
PIA Cargo 9280979
Railway Inquiry 117
Railway Exchange 9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi 5555489
CAA 9281092

HOSPITALS

CMH 561111
MH 561116
MH 561116
Cantt Hospital 9270907-11
DHQ 5556311-4
RGH 9290301-7
Holy Family 9290322-7
PIMS 9261170-79
Polyclinic 9218300-09
Shifa International 4603666

DEPARTMENTS

CDA 9221334-43
CDA 9208301-04
Met Office 9250360-6
RDA 5555864
TMA 5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3
Islamabad Metropolitan Corporation 9209224
Potohar Town 9209224
Rawal Town 5773343

COMPLAINTS

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

Heavy Rain in Multan

Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: As heavy rain started in Multan from Thursday night, Managing Director Wasa Chaudhry Muhammad Danish issued a high alert in Wasa and called all the officers and staff of the sewerage, disposal station divisions to drain the rainwater in their respective areas. Meanwhile, Managing Director Wasa Chaudhry Muhammad Danish along with Director Works Arif Abbas visited different areas of the city and checked the drainage arrangements and inspected the working of the disposal station to keep the officers on high alert and complete the drainage operation. He ordered to ensure the presence in the field.

He directed the concerned sewage staff to remove the manhole covers on the roads, to run all the disposal stations at full capacity to collect water through skimmer machines. He also directed to run the disposal stations on generators during load shedding. According to the report, 40 mm was recorded at Chonggi No. 9 Disposal Station, 37 mm at Old Shujaabad Road, while 39 mm of rain was recorded at Kadi Jamandan Disposal Station. He also ordered to ensure the presence of all officers and employees in the field till the time of water drainage and to remain alert due to the forecast of future rain.

Pakistan to continue raising voice against HR abuses in IIOJK: FO

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan will continue to raise its voice against grave and systematic human rights violations in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), Foreign Office Spokesperson said here on Friday.

Addressing the weekly press briefing, the spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said, "We will also continue to extend political, diplomatic and moral support to our Kashmiri brothers and sisters for the just and peaceful settlement of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in accordance with the UN Security Council Resolutions."

"Last week in Srinagar in IIOJK, India's National Investigation Agency (NIA) arrested senior journalist and

human rights defender, Irfan Meraj. We are concerned about the safety and well-being of Irfan Meraj and dozens of Kashmiri journalists and human rights defenders, including Khurram Pervez, who are under incarceration in prisons across IIOJK and India."

"They are prisoners of conscience who are being victimized for shining a spotlight on the dire situation of human rights and fundamental freedom in IIOJK. We urge India to bring an end to the suppression of journalists and human rights defenders and to its policy of stifling freedom of expression and assembly in the occupied territory," she added.

Talking about the upcoming diplomatic engagements, the spokesperson said Pakistan-Malaysia Bilateral Political



Consultations will be held next week in Kuala Lumpur.

"Agenda includes discussion on political, security and military cooperation, trade and investment ties, cooperation

in science and technology, health, tourism and culture. The two sides will also exchange views on the regional and global issues including developments in the Asia-Pacific region, Climate Change, and Islamophobia."

To a question, she said Pakistan was in contact with the Afghan interim authorities on security and counter-terrorism matters including concerns regarding terrorist entities which had hideouts in Afghanistan.

"Our security agencies are in contact. If you recall, our Minister for Defence visited Afghanistan very recently, and all these matters were discussed. We expect the Afghan authorities to take action against these terrorist entities and to ensure that they do not pose a threat to Pakistani people and Pakistani security forces."

To another question, she said Pakistan and China were all weather strategic cooperative partners and the two countries cooperated on a range of issues including economic and financial matters.

"We are grateful to the Chinese government and people for the economic and financial support that China has provided to us in these difficult times. People of Pakistan will remember this for a long time."

Exchange of high-level visits was a hallmark of Pakistan-China friendship, she said adding, "Our two countries have been exchanging these high-level visits throughout the last seven decades. Now that COVID restrictions have been lifted, these contacts and engagements will pick up."

Ramazan Package

ISLAMABAD: A large number people stand in a queue to collect free wheat flour bags from Ramazan Package outside a utility store at Sitara Market, in Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

IMF being used as a weapon against Pakistan

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW) on Friday said the IMF is being used as a weapon against Pakistan.

The ever-increasing demands of the international institution have left our government helpless, it said.

IMF is ruining Pakistan's economy by delaying the deal at the behest of some powers, said Dr. Murtaza Mughal, President of PEW.

He said that the government has taken strict measures without caring about its political capital, but the IMF is not satisfied with this which points towards a possible conspiracy.

It is an open secret that the IMF is a tool of imperialism that imposes neo-liberal policies on borrowing states resulting in poverty and inequality, he added.

He observed that the lender work with other institutions to prevent poor and underdeveloped countries from making policies that can result in actual development. Ultimately their citizens have to suffer huge taxes and inflation.

A major power wants to establish its foothold in Asia through India, and if Pakistan moves away from China today or bows to India, the IMF will immediately restore the deal, he said.

Dr. Murtaza Mughal said that even the friendly countries have left Pakistan alone at the behest of an influential country and this nexus is not hidden from anyone.

He said that a powerful country is not happy with the reconciliation between Iran and Saudi Arabia, nor is it pleased with China's successful diplomacy and wants it to be subverted at any cost so that its political interests are fulfilled.

The reconciliation between Iran and KSA will hurt the interests of the western power and it will not be able to sell arms and ammunition worth billions of dollars, therefore, it can attempt to use Pakistan in this regard.

He warned that if at this critical juncture, the politicians do not show their senses and continue to sacrifice the national interest for the sake of power, then Pakistan will be completely trapped by world powers.

AIOU relaxes admission policy

City Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has relaxed the admission conditions for students willing to take admission in Associate Degree in Arts (BA) in the ongoing admissions of semester Spring 2023. As per the new policy, all the students who have passed the intermediate exam can take admission in this program. It is pertinent to mention here that the previous condition of intermediate passed with atleast 45% marks has been revoked.

Vice Chancellor AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood, wishes that a person who wants to continue studying should have given proper chance. Keeping this in view, he has provided an opportunity to the students with low marks in the intermediate to increase their education. Intermediate pass students can get admission in the Associate Degree (BA) by April 18.

FIVE terrorists arrested

Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: Counter Terrorism Department Punjab (CTD)'s major action on terror concerns 5 main terrorists of the banned organization were arrested.

The operation was conducted on secret information in Gujranwala, Dera Ghazi Khan The arrested terrorists include Abdul Muqit, Abid Waheed, Gul Zaman, Ramzan and Ikram Explosive materials, materials for making suicide vests, weapons have been recovered from the possession of terrorists The arrest of the terrorists of the banned organization was made possible during the investigation of 33 suspects 66 suspects arrested in 420 combing operation this week.

No effort will be spared to bring the evil elements involved in terrorism to the role of infidels

Secretary Livestock Punjab inspected for free wheat flour sale points

Raza Naqvi

ATTOCK: Secretary Livestock Punjab Mr. Maqsood Anwar on Friday while expressing his views during his surprise of inspection of free wheat flour sale points of District Attock has assured that available resources are being mobilized by the Punjab Government to extend maximum relief to is people during the holy month of Ramadan. He was also accompanied by Deputy Commissioner Attock Rao Atif Raza, ADCG Attock Mr. Adnan Anjum Raja, Addl Director Livestock Attock Dr. Abdul Hameed, Deputy Director Public Relations Attock Mr. Shahzad Niaz, Assistant Commissioners and other concerned officers of the provincial department. The visiting Secretary Livestock Punjab Mr. Maqsood Anwar also examined the record along with distribution process of free wheat flour at the sale points set up in Attock, Fatehajang, Hassanabdal and Hazro who was also briefed by the officer concerned on spot in details. On this occasion, Secretary Livestock Mr. Maqsood Anwar also interacted with the deserving people who apprised their multiple problems being faced at free flour distribution points in Attock. The Secretary Livestock has directed the district administration to make sure the smooth distribution of the commodity to the consumers without any interruption. He said that the government of the Punjab is fully committed to provide all basis amenities to its people within its available resources. The Secretary Livestock Punjab taking notice of the complaints of the deserving people has also advised the district management to resolve their genuine problems, he added.

Pakistan Day is a day of pledge renewal: Malik Abrar says

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: Malik Abrar Hussain, Central President of All Pakistan Private Schools and Colleges Association said that Pakistan Day is a day of pledge renewal. Which reminds us of the unparalleled sacrifices made in the path of the establishment of Pakistan.

In 1940, our forefathers dreamed of a separate homeland that was fulfilled in 1947. The role of Pakistan's armed forces in the integrity, survival and development of Pakistan is commendable.

He expressed these views yesterday while addressing the function organized under the title of Pakistan Day as a special guest. Malik Abrar Hussain further said that we pay tribute to the tireless efforts of the founder of Pakistan. Today, time has proved that the demand for a separate homeland for the Muslims of the subcontinent was absolutely correct And Allama Iqbal's dream was fulfilled by Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad

Ali Jinnah and blessed the Muslims of the subcontinent with a great Islamic state. Pakistan has bravely faced difficult situations in the past and in the future, all stakeholders will continue to work together for the development of the country in the same spirit. He said that the new generation needs time to be aware of the aims and objectives of the establishment of Pakistan and the problems faced because our children are our future and our asset.



He said that various programs are being organized in private educational institutions to educate the youth about the unparalleled sacrifices of the Pakistan Army. The purpose of which is to tell the future generations about the unparalleled sacrifices of the Pakistan Army, the protector of our borders and one of the great armies of the world.

He said that today we pledge that we will not hesitate to spend money for the development, welfare and better position of Pakistan in the community of nations.

The President of Pakistan awarded 'Hilal-i-Imtiaz' to Professor Dr. Talat Naseer Pasha

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: The President of Pakistan Dr. Arif Alvi has awarded the prestigious "Hilal-i-Imtiaz" to renowned scholar Professor Dr. Talat Naseer Pasha (S.I.) for his outstanding performance in the fields of science, engineering, and education. Dr. Pasha, who is also the Vice Chancellor of the University of Education in Lahore, has made significant contributions to the education sector, earning him the recognition of being one of the country's top scholars. Last year, during Pakistan's Independence Day celebrations, President Arif Alvi had announced the award for Dr. Pasha, recognizing his remarkable performance in field of science, engineering, and education.



The award ceremony took place on March 23, 2023, at the Presidential Palace during a grand event. Dr. Pasha has previously been awarded the "Sitar I Imtiaz" for his outstanding contributions in the field of veterinary sciences

in 2015. He was also honored with the "Best Teacher Award" by the Higher Education Commission in 2009. With over four decades of experience in teaching and administrative positions, Dr. Pasha is a distinguished scholar who has earned praise and recognition from educational and administrative circles across the country.

Women Ombudsperson Punjab conducted a hearing under the Property Rights Act

Mian Rashid Asghar

FAISALABAD: Women Ombudsperson Punjab Nabeela Hakim Ali Khan, while conducting a hearing under the Property Rights Act, provided a property share of Rs. 0.3 million to women within 2 months. She visited Faisalabad and heard the cases of the 8 parties. She also congratulated applicant Raheela Khan for getting a share of the property from the brothers. The women ombudsperson of Punjab issued a warrant for Mohammad Tayeb in the Asia Asim case, while in five cases, she sought reports from the relevant departments.



She dismissed the one case due to the lack of interest of the parties in one case. Staff Officer Hafiz Farooq Anwar

and the consultant were also with him. She said tha Women's Ombudsperson Punjab has protected women's rights and workplaces are now safe and dignified. The team is actively working. She said that women's rights are being protected under the Punjab Enforcement of Women, Anti-Harassment Act and Property Rights Act. She asked the women to apply to the Divisional Headquarters Office of the Women's Ombudsperson in case of exploitation of property, on which immediate action will be taken and a decision will be taken within 60 days. Provision of possession is being made by the concerned Deputy Commissioner and the police.

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IS An overview of Post-Disaster Housing Reconstruction

What we need to learn from World and Our Experiences-II

The housing reconstruction after 2005 Earthquake in Pakistan gave mixed results. Though the world appreciated the reconstruction efforts but few important issues were identified. Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA) being a federal institution, had almost all the bureaucracy and technocrats from the federation. The coordination and understanding of regional issues were bit weak for early years, that improved with the time. The house construction was with different strategies for rural area and cities. The new building codes were required to be developed and approved by relevant authorities and those were to be reflected into the proposed master plans of cities. This was time taking process that hindered the progress for city areas. Whereas the progress for rural area was quite good as communities were involved at every stage. Communities were almost leading the process.

For many of decision-making bureaucrats who will be leading the public sector institutions and departments. It is important that detailed strategy and action plan are also developed for 4RF understanding and implementation.

Effective Coordination and communication are very important for all the initiatives of public sector. The public sector departments work in silos and usually avoid to coordinate and evade building nexus. The complexity of the projects and dynamic nature of work make the effective coordination and clear communication as pre-requisite for achieving resilience and project targets. The coordination and communication action plan with clear information about who will be doing what, when, how and how much, and where is to be prepared in succinct way. It must provide clarity for means of coordination and communication in terms of meeting, official project steering committees, reviews and planning. The international case studies have well documented evidences about many failed projects that lost efforts, money and resources because of lack of communication and coordination.

Putting right and competent team for the projects and subproject cannot be over-emphasised. This is so critical for the make and break of the project(s). The project

leaders and managers have to be pragmatic, transformational and team builders. They can encompass social, engineering, procurement, financial analytic and local knowledge and experience; and build the team in a way that translate complex works into streamlined actions. This is to be fully and clearly supported by political leadership.

The rights to the land on which houses will be constructed is a vital issue along with the identification of the correct beneficiaries. One important step that government of Sindh has assured during the approval process of housing project by relevant fora that in all cases including no registry, sitting on the land of landlord or otherwise, land title will be given to the beneficiaries so that they could own the constructed house. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has also promised that the land title will be given in the name of women. This is important step for women empowerment, if translated into action.

For the clarity of the procedure, the comprehensive Beneficiary identification process, land-right / registry manual may be developed.

The logistic and supply chain of the material is an area of concern in housing projects. In the days of maximum demand, the rates of materials can rise substantially.

The access to construction sites, villages for house construction have to be ensured by rehabilitation of road network at urgent basis. The quality control and also stabilisation of rates can be achieved by government through some strategic work like bulk supply of materials and linking beneficiaries with market. The role of implementing NGOs is important to work on developing and enhancing social capital in the targeted area so that beneficiary is able to construct or restore house within the given budget with the community support.

The financial management for 727 Million US dollars and arranging the additional 1350 Millions USD are crucial both for the transparency and assurance of cash flow so that targeted houses are reconstructed or rehabilitated. For permanent house construction, though it will be politically beneficial to move on it very fast; but this hassle should not be done by compromising the resilience and quality. It must be understood that reconstruction takes time of more than 3 to 4 years. People in Pakistan get chance of construction house when they get commutation on retirement, women sell their gold and other assets to make it happen! Thus, a safe and strong house which can withstand the disasters should be the ultimate target not the haste that can only result in achieving number rather than quality.

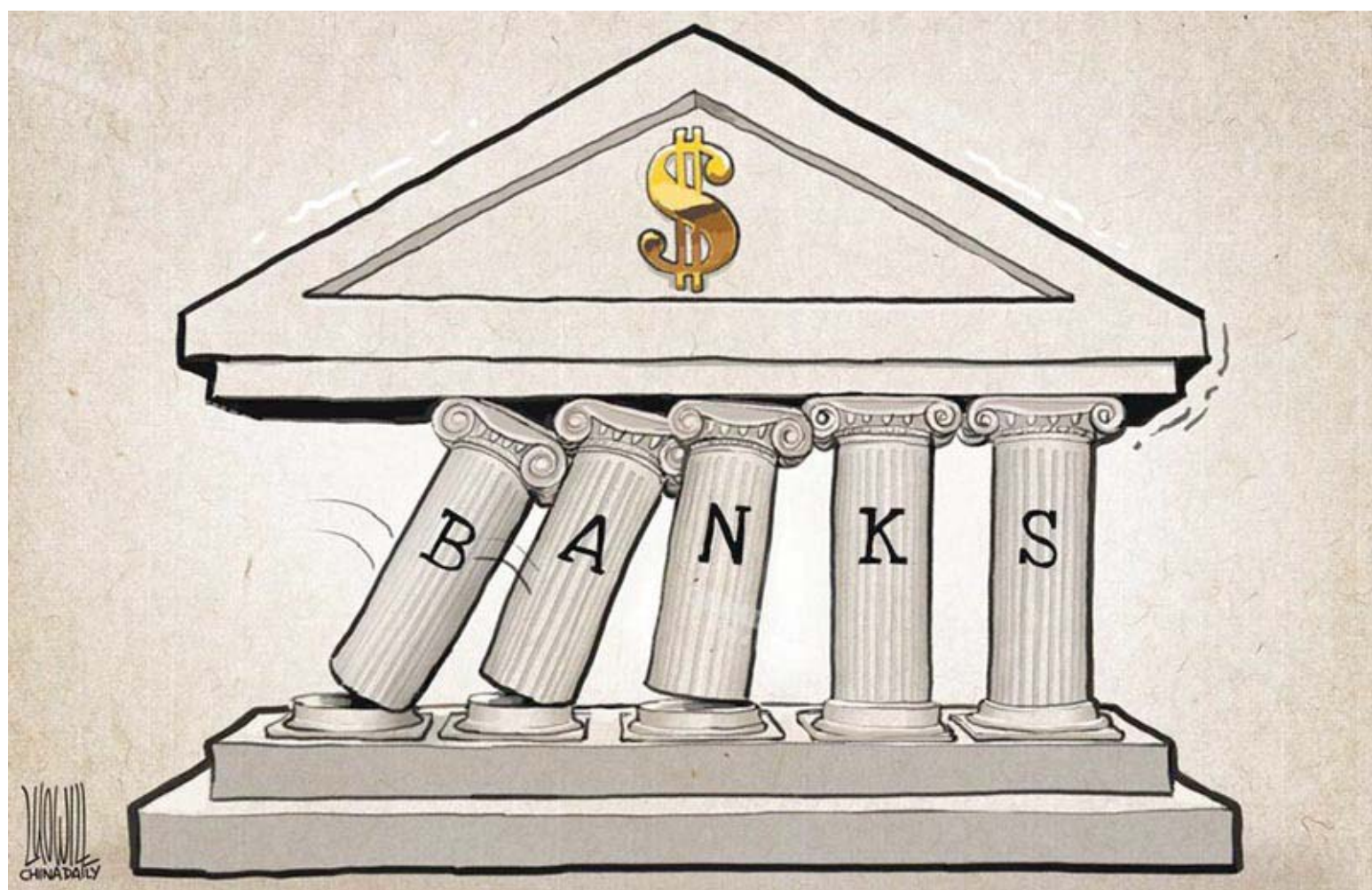
Concluded
 The writer is Development and Programme Management professional. He can be reached at ehsanleghari@gmail.com.



Analysis

Ehsan Leghari

The legislation and policy dimensions for disaster risk reduction and post disaster reconstruction are relatively better in Pakistan. Pakistan's Resilient Recovery, Rehabilitation, and Reconstruction Framework (4RF) have been approved and published in first week of January 2023. The translation of actions related to 4RF by implementing departments and ministries, is something that need to be worked out in details. The concepts of Resilience or/and Building Back Better and Safer are also new



Pakistan determined to build bright future

Despite challenges, Pakistan, as a resilient nation, is determined to craft a bright future for its people, Ambassador Masood Khan said Thursday at an event marking 'Pakistan Day'.

"We've had a long and arduous struggle since the creation of the state," he told a large gathering comprising senior diplomats, US government officials, foreign media representatives and Pakistani-American activists at the Pakistan embassy in Washington DC.

The ambassador paid tributes to the forefathers and founder of the nation Quaid-e-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah for a 'miraculous' struggle in transforming the vision of a separate homeland into reality.

"On this occasion," the Pakistani envoy said, "I want to send a message to the people of Jammu and Kashmir and I hope that one day they will also be able to realize the right to self-determination — our hearts go out to them."

Thanking the United States for always standing by Pakistan since its independence, Ambassador Masood Khan said that the Pak-US relationship had been strong as it was based on principles of reciprocity and friendship.

"This is a lasting legacy for the people of Pakistan and the United States. We cherish it, and we will continue to nurture it," he said.

Dr. Rand also recounted the collaboration of the two countries, especially during the recent devastating floods in Pakistan, the International Conference on Climate Resilient Pakistan held in Geneva and tackling the challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We want to strengthen climate-smart agriculture and to assist all Pakistanis in making critical investments in areas such as economic growth and restoration of damaged infrastructure.

"Both of our Governments resolve to continuing deepening our alliances and to work together for Green Alliance," Dr. Rand added

"We will continue to work together. We will explore how we can most effectively bring the private sector in public diplomacy, technical cooperation, public-private partnerships, export, import and trade. We will mobilize the whole US government to support this alliance."

Ambassador Masood Khan also thanked the United States for its assistance towards girls' education and women's empowerment. Pakistan, he said, attached the highest importance to the recognition and promotion of the education of girls and women in any part of that region and in any part of the globe.

The ambassador also paid tributes to the vibrant and dynamic Pakistani community in the United States for their valuable contributions toward the socio-economic progress of both Pakistan and the United States, saying 14 elected Pakistani Americans were representing their respective constituencies.

Paying tribute to leaders like Representative Suleman Lalani, Farooq Mughal, Ali Rashid, saying that the success of every Pakistani-American makes the nation proud.

"Your success is our success. Your success is the success of Pakistan and the United States. You contribute to the strengthening of relations between our two nations."

The Ambassador also thanked the US House of Representatives and State Assemblies for recognizing Pakistan Day and also acknowledging the contributions of the Pakistani-American community.

Biden Administration must insist on transparency in Kashmir

Abdul Majeed Tahir

Once again, the United States Department of State has issued its latest report on human rights practices around the world. The report was issued on March 20, 2023. The section on India (around 39 pages) contains graphic documentation of human rights violations being committed by the Indian military and paramilitary forces in Jammu & Kashmir. Dr. Ghulam Nabi Fai, Chairman, 'World Forum for Peace & Justice' underscored that the scale of gripping wrongdoing in Kashmir dwarfs what was witnessed in Bosnia and East Timor prior to international intervention, yet the world powers have watched the people of Kashmir suffer like spectators at the Roman Coliseum. That complacency gives at least the impression that Kashmiri lives and hopes are worth less than those of others.

This report Fai added at least takes the veil of secrecy off of India's crimes against humanity. Perhaps now the United Nations can share the outrage felt by the people of Kashmir.

Here are the excerpts of the report given below.

While as "Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP)" has reported that there are 8 to 10 thousand persons who have disappeared in Kashmir, Amnesty international echoed, "India: 'If they are dead, tell us' - 'Disappearances' in Jammu and Kashmir." The State Department report mentions the following regarding disappearances. "In March 2021, UN special rapporteurs asked the central government to provide details regarding allegations of arbitrary detention, extrajudicial killings, and disappearances in Jammu and Kashmir, including the status of Naseer Ahmad

Wani, who disappeared in 2019 after being questioned by army soldiers. The location of Wani was still unknown at year's end."

The report adds: "On July 29, the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearance and UN special rapporteurs expressed concern over continued allegations of lack of identification, protection, and preservation of large numbers of unmarked single and mass burial sites in Kashmir, including the failure to conduct proper forensic investigations, efforts to search for the forcibly disappeared, and the lack of progress in identifying the remains of individuals buried therein in accordance with international standards. The rapporteurs stated they were concerned by reports of intimidation and harassment against individuals and civil society organizations, including human rights defenders and journalists, who called for investigation and accountability."

As we know that Committee to Protect Journalist has said that news media in Kashmir is at the brink of extinction. The State Department report says that, "noted journalists working in Jammu and Kashmir continued to face barriers to free reporting through communications and movement restrictions...As of July 21, two journalists from The Kashmiri Walla, an online newspaper, remained in detention. In June, the State Investigation Agency in Jammu and Kashmir arrested Abdul Alaa Fazili, a one-time contributor to The Kashmiri Walla, under the UAPA for a November 2011 article.

The State Department report also added, "Kashmiri journalist, Aasif Sultan, detained since 2018, under the UAPA, was rearrested before his release on bail in April under the Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Act (PSA), which allows for detention for up to two years without trial...In Jammu and Kashmir, police arrested journalists Fahad Shah and Sajad Gul under the UAPA and PSA. According to

Human Rights Watch, at least 35 journalists had faced assaults, police interrogations, raids on their places of work, fabricated cases, and restrictions on movement in Jammu and Kashmir since 2019."

The report continued that "On July 2, immigration authorities at the Indira Gandhi International Airport in New Delhi prevented Pulitzer-award winning photojournalist Samma Irshad Mattoo (Kashmiri) from travelling to France, where she was scheduled to attend a book launch event. According to Mattoo, the immigration authorities did not state any reason for stopping her. In October, authorities prevented Mattoo again from boarding a plane on her way to the Pulitzer Prize ceremony in New York, despite her having a valid ticket and visa, without explanation according to media sources.

It is well documented that the bloody occupation has resulted in massive human rights violations, particularly targeting women and children. The sanctity of women has been violated, in a gruesome and unforgiving fashion. The State Department report says, "Women in Jammu and Kashmir, northeastern states, Jharkhand, and Chhattisgarh, as well as vulnerable Dalit or tribal women, were often victims of rape or threats of rape."

Dr. Fai warned that "Human rights will continue to be violated as long as political and civilian killings continue unabated, torture and rape remain widespread, civil liberties are suspended, and international human rights groups and United Nations Thematic Rapporteurs are prohibited from gaining access to Kashmir."

Dr. Fai urged the Biden Administration to insist on transparency in Kashmir to build moral suasion against the massive and systematic human rights violations there perpetrated by Indian occupation forces with impunity.

The Structural Culpabilities of Pakistan's Economy

Abdus Sattar

Though the Covid-19 pandemic, massive floods and the Russia/Ukraine war adversely affected Pakistan's economy, recent uncertainty regarding the tranche of US\$1.1bn has shambled it, showing the severity of dependence on the IMF. The SBP foreign exchange reserves depleted to US\$3.8bn. Inflation (CPI) jumped to 25pc while dollar and petrol prices touched Rs.282 and Rs.272 per liter, respectively; consequently, about 20mn people are expected to slip below the poverty line.

The fiscal deficit was US\$0.14bn in 1960 while US\$1bn in 1970. In 1980 it was US\$1.4bn and US\$2.4bn in 1990. But in 2000 it ballooned to US\$3bn and touched US\$9.5bn in 2010 while US\$21bn in 2020. Albeit it was US\$30bn in FY22 and remained US\$6.5bn during (July-Dec) FY23.

Pakistan trade deficit was US\$0.23bn in 1960 and US\$0.27 in 1970. It was US\$2.5bn in 1980 and US\$2.2bn in 1990. In 2000 it remained US\$0.92bn and US\$10bn in 2010. Albeit US\$24.4bn in 2020 and remained US\$31bn in 2021. It was US\$45bn in FY22 and US\$17bn during (July-January) FY23. It has been observed that countries with total factor productivity growth of more than 3pc had a GDP growth rate of more than 8pc. But in Pakistan, total factor productivity and GDP growth remained on average at 1.62pc and 4.81pc, respectively from 1972 to 2019. So slow annual average total factor productivity growth inhibited export expansion.

Dollar trading is around US\$50-60mn per day in the open market in Pakistan, with about 5mn dollars being smuggled to Afghanistan daily. It is claimed that citizens hoarded about US\$8bn to US\$10bn to take advantage of currency devaluation. The economy is also losing US\$2bn to US\$3bn per year due to smuggled goods.

Pakistan's total debt was about Rs.3tr in 1999 and jumped to Rs.63tr in 2022; its external debt was US\$3.41bn in 1970 and US\$10bn in 1980. This grew to US\$21bn in 1990 and remained at US\$33bn in 2000. In 2010 it was around US\$63bn, while US\$116bn in 2020 and remained US\$130bn in 2022. External debt servicing was about US\$3.44bn in the 1970s and US\$14bn in the 1980s, while it was around US\$28bn in the 1990s; albeit it remained US\$30bn during 2000-09. It escalated to US\$56bn during 2010-19 while remaining US\$10bn and US\$12bn in 2020 and 2021, respectively. So our external debt is about US\$130bn while debt servicing remained at US\$154bn during the last five decades.

Pakistan should minimize the privileges and increase revenues by considering the informal economy. Goods helping in domestic productivity enhancement should only be imported, while luxury items should be restricted. The resources should be diverted to enhance domestic productivity through investing in human capital, R&D, science & technology, and skilled manpower in agriculture, industry, tourism and IT sectors for export-led growth. Moving towards smart regulations, electronic portals, and one-window operation approvals could attract FDI. Pakistan should use its domestic coal reserves, which could reduce import bills to more than US\$20bn per year. Dollar rate differentiation, hoarding, smuggling, hundi and hawala should be restricted through strict measures. Dollar trade and transactions should be made through the banking channel. Government should take into confidence Pakistani expats by providing lucrative incentives for sending money through legal channels. Moreover, debt should be invested in productive projects. But it is only done through political stability, continuity and consistency of economic policies.

The author is a researcher at the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE).

UN 2023 Water Conference

Saida Mirziyoyeva addressed about consequences of Aral Sea tragedy

Spokesman Report

JANOBIOLYLARI,
Hurmatlihamkasblar,
Assalomualaykum!
Mr. President,
Your Excellencies,
Distinguished colleagues,
First of all, I would like to commend the Governments of the Republic of Tajikistan and the Kingdom of the Netherlands and all UN entities for co-hosting and convening the United Nations 2023 Water Conference.

est supplier of fish products to twelve republics. There was a cannery, gardens bloomed and people had healthy children and hopes for the future. Then everything changed. People broke the balance, and now there is a cemetery of ships on its dead shores.

Allow me to recite an extract from the elegy of a famous poet Yibrayim Yusupov:

Таўларшөгип, жергекирмегеншығар,
Жулдызлархәмбирденсөнбегеншығар.
Дуњяхешуақта-дакермегеншығар:
Бирмайдандагенизкурыпқалғанын...

The poem describes the tragedy of a sea turning into a desert in a blink of an eye. In Karakalpakstan, they still mourn the sea as they would a human.

The full sea remains only in the paintings of artists hanging in the Nukus Museum: shining and shimmering, giving life and freedom. It was only when it disappeared that people understood its value.

The crisis of the Aral Sea is a devastating reminder of the Kahn sequences of human environmental neglect. However, thanks to the efforts of caring people, it is now becoming a symbol of hope and renewal.

Our country has been making coherent efforts in addressing the negative Kahn sequences of the desiccation of the Aral Sea. At the 75th session of the UN General Assembly, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev proposed a special resolution declaring the Aral Sea region a zone of environmental innovations and technologies. The resolution was unanimously adopted in 2021 in co-sponsorship of 60 countries.

In 2018, we established the Multi-Partner Human Security Trust Fund for the Aral Sea region. Today with its financing we are implementing a number of projects totaling over \$14 million. Our country has set an ambitious task – to turn the dried-up floor of the Aral Sea into a garden, and now almost one and a half million hectare are covered with greenery. We are working tirelessly and urgently on this task because our country deeply understands the value of time in the fight against environmental catastrophe.

I want everyone to fall in love with Karakalpakstan and its people. They are incredible, beautiful, intelligent,



and make the invisible visible. We are already creating a new narrative for building a better future – namely, the Aral Cultural Summit.

The activities of the Aral Cultural Summit, initiated by the Art and Culture Development Foundation, will focus on preserving both biocultural diversity and cultural and linguistic diversity. I believe that art, design, and culture can play a crucial role in raising awareness, stimulating ties, bringing the future closer and ultimately creating positive changes.

Therefore, we have set ambitious goals, such as launching scholarship programs and grants, establishing interdisciplinary educational programs, and supporting works of art dedicated to the Aral Sea.

The Aral Cultural Summit unites artists with local farmers, creating sustainable ties in the field of biodesign for cultivation of new plants, and thereby designing a strategic plan for the next 10 years. This will become a center of change for the local community.

A sea of change is on the horizon and we hope you will embrace it with us.

hardworking, poetic and very talented people. They are also very courageous. Bear in mind that the climate of this region is very harsh. It's unbearably hot in summer, and the winters are too cold. And in such difficult conditions, Karakalpakstan grabs every opportunity to improve its situation: to earn, to create, and to contribute something new to its wealth of beautiful traditions.

Opportunities for women in the Aral Sea are very important to me. You are

aware that women are most vulnerable to environmental, economic, or political disturbance. Lack or absence of clean drinking water is a huge problem for women and the households for which they are responsible.

To support the people of this region, we have invested not only in experts from the various relevant fields, but also in the creative powers of artists and designers. Through their collective efforts, we have already started to attract attention, produce new stories,

Chinese, Pakistani scientists join hands to combat citrus diseases, insect pests

News Desk

BELJING: Chinese and Pakistani scientists are collaborating to develop biological control measures to enhance the quality and quantity of citrus fruits in Pakistan.



To this end, a research centre was launched in the two countries in 2018 to jointly explore green and sustainable solutions to the growing prevalence of citrus diseases across the South Asian nation.

Speaking to China Economic Net (CEN), Prof Dr Qiu Baoli and Prof Dr Shaikat Ali, director and deputy director of the China-Pakistan citrus pest management centre, said that while chemical measures can provide quick responses to citrus disease outbreaks, they also increase the resistance of pests against pesticides, posing grave environmental and health threats.

The researcher told CEN reporter that the centre, initiated by South

China Agricultural University and Sargodha University, has undertaken four strands of research work to produce environmentally friendly solutions.

The first line of research, Dr Qiu and Dr Ali noted, focuses on the use of "lure and kill" technology to dispel pests. For example, the researchers have investigated how different types of traps and lures will affect the efficacy of capturing pests in citrus orchards across six citrus-producing Pakistani cities.

Dr Qiu said that the researchers have also been developing technologies to

breed parasitic wasps and predatory insects, which are natural enemies for citrus pests. "So far, we have discovered 22 new species of predatory insects and reported 7 new genera and 2 new subgenera," he noted.

"In addition, the centre has been researching biological pesticides for emergency control. We aim to develop commercial formulas for entomopathogenic fungi targeting citrus pests and evaluate their toxicity under laboratory and field conditions," Dr Ali told CEN, adding that strides have been made in the investigation and evaluation of Pakistan's entomopathogenic fungal resources.

Dr Qiu noted, "To effectively combat the pests, we will also develop a comprehensive pest management approach that combines various pest control strategies. The technology mix will be tested in citrus orchards in Pakistan for demonstration and promotion."

China welcomes Saudi Arabia-Syria accord on reopening embassies

News Desk

BELJING: China on Friday welcomed the agreement reached between Saudi Arabia and Syria on reopening their embassies in each other countries.

"Syria's return to the Arab family will help to realize solidarity and revitalization of Arab states," Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mao Ning said during her regular briefing.

"Let me stress again that China firmly supports Arab states in strengthening solidarity, coordination, and strategic independence, and we support joint efforts to promote regional peace, stability, and development," she added.

According to media reports, the embassies of the two countries are expected to resume services in late April.

Pakistan-China's friendship shines at space exhibition in Beijing

BELJING: The commemorative flag of the 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan, which was carried into space, was displayed at an exhibition in China.

The 'Dreaming of the Universe and Asking the Sky: 30 Years of China's Manned Spaceflight Achievement Exhibition' was recently held in the West Hall of the National Museum of China, featuring an impressive collection of items that highlight China's success in space exploration.

Of particular interest is the commemorative flag on display, which celebrates the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan.

This flag was carried into space by the Shenzhou-12 spacecraft on June 17, 2021, and spent three months orbiting the earth before returning to the earth. It serves as a reminder of China's diplomatic ties with Pakistan. APP

APHC-AJK convener welcomes COAS's statement on Kashmir

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Convener of All Parties Hurriyat Conference Azad Jammu and Kashmir (APHC-AJK) chapter, Mehmood Ahmed Saghar, has expressed his appreciation for the recent statement made by Chief of Army Staff General Asim Munir regarding the Kashmir dispute.

In the statement issued in Islamabad, Saghar commended the Pakistani armed forces for their unwavering support towards the Kashmir cause and their commitment to the right to self-determination for the people of Kashmir.

He said that the army chief's timely statement had not only cleared the propaganda of freezing Kashmir for 20 years but it has revitalized and rejuvenated the passion of the freedom-loving people of Kashmir who have been scripting a new history of resistance while fighting against the Indian occupation forces.

Saghar said that the crystal clear and categorical statement by the Pakistan army chief had busted the lies being peddled by the Indian-funded networks that have been running a disinformation campaign against Pakistan for the past several years. History bears witness to the fact that the Pakistani armed forces have always supported the Kashmir cause, he added.

"The Kashmiri people owe a debt of gratitude to the Pakistan Army for its continued and consistent support of our struggle for the right to self-determination," Saghar said, adding Kashmiris firmly believe that, whatever the circumstances, Pakistan would never leave them alone.

Do Kwon: US charges Crypto fugitive after reported arrest

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: Fugitive South Korean cryptocurrency entrepreneur Do Kwon, accused of orchestrating a multi-billion-dollar fraud that shook global crypto markets last year, has been arrested in Montenegro and faces fresh criminal charges in the United States.

Do Kwon was arrested along with another South Korean national, Montenegro's interior ministry said Thursday, which added that the tycoon was apprehended on a South Korean warrant.

"Kwon Do-hyung and Han Chang-joon were arrested and brought to the state prosecutor's office in Podgorica for the criminal act of document forgery," an interior ministry statement said.

During passport control for a flight to Dubai the two "used falsified travel documents from Costa Rica, which was established also by Interpol checks", it said.

Inspection of their luggage also found travel documents from Belgium and South Korea, while Interpol checks discovered that Belgian documents were forged, the ministry added.

Police seized from them three laptop devices and five mobile phones. Their entry into Montenegro has not been registered, the ministry said. South Korea has issued a warrant for them for the offence of "criminal association", it added.

South Korea asked Interpol in September to circulate a "red notice" for the 31-year-old across the agency's 195 member nations.

Kwon and five others connected to Terraform are wanted for fraud and the implosion of its digital currencies in May 2022.

The US federal indictment charged the 31-year-old Kwon with eight counts, including securities fraud, commodities fraud and wire fraud. The charges follow a lawsuit a month ago from the US Securities and Exchange Commission.

Kwon's TerraUSD was designed as a "stablecoin," which are pegged to stable assets like the US dollar to prevent drastic fluctuations in prices.

However, around \$40 billion in market value was erased for the holders of TerraUSD and its floating sister currency, Luna, after the stablecoin plunged far below its \$1 peg in May last year.

Kwon is accused of "orchestrating a multi-billion-dollar crypto asset securities fraud", according to the US Securities and Exchange Commission.

Tourist's phone

A wild macaque fiddles with a tourist's phone while sitting on his shoulder in Zhangjiajie National Forest Park in Hunan province. As spring arrives, macaques emerge from the mountains and interact with tourists in the scenic area.



Photo: Wu Yongbing

Emirates to launch first A380 service to Bali

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: Emirates, the world's largest international airline, will deploy its signature A380 aircraft to Bali starting from June 1, 2023, marking a milestone in Indonesia's aviation history as the first scheduled A380 service to the country.

The new 2-class Emirates A380 service will replace one of the two daily services to Bali currently operated by a 2-class Boeing 777-300ER aircraft. The airline's debut A380 flight EK368, will depart from Dubai International Airport (DXB) at 03: 25 hrs, arriving in Denpasar

International Airport (DPS) at 16: 35 hrs local time. The returning flight, EK369, will depart Bali at 19: 40 hrs, arriving in Dubai at 00: 45 hrs local time. All times are local.

Tickets can be purchased on emirates.com, the Emirates App, at Emirates sales offices, and via both online and offline travel agents. Travellers are also encouraged to check the Emirates website for the latest travel requirements.

Highlighting the deployment of the world's largest passenger aircraft to Bali, Adnan Kazim, Emirates' Chief Commercial Officer, said: "The Emirates

A380 is synonymous with our fly better promise and world-class products and services, and we're excited to offer our travellers the opportunity to experience its uniqueness and unmatched beauty on flights to and from Bali. Needless to say that we've been working closely with our partners at Bali's Ngurah Rai International Airport to ensure our A380 operations will be seamless and smooth. We'd like to thank the authorities and our partners for all their support.

Bali continues to be one of the most popular tourist destinations in our network and strategic markets in Southeast Asia,

and the Emirates A380's debut in Indonesia underscores our long-standing commitment to its travel and tourism sector. We look forward to driving more inbound traffic to the island, while also offering leisure and business travellers more opportunities to connect to Dubai and beyond to cities across Europe and the Americas through Emirates' extensive global network."

Faik Fahmi, President Director of PT. Angkasa Pura I, said, "The scheduled operations of the Airbus A380 in Indonesia will be a historic moment for Indonesian aviation and Angkasa Pura I. We welcome the Emir-



ates A380 service, which will operate in early June, and are

honored to be the first airport operator to receive regular commercial flights of the aircraft in the country. This is the result of well-established coordination, synergy, and cooperation between Angkasa Pura I as the airport operator, Emirates, and the Ministry of Transportation of the Republic of Indonesia as the regulator. We hope the A380 operations in Indonesia, especially Bali, will have an increasingly positive impact on the tourism and economy sectors, and will further allow more opportunities for cooperation and investment in other sectors of the industry in Indonesia."

Bull & Bears PSX 100-Share Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index

Current	Prev. Close
39,942.05	40,376.10
Day's High	Day's Low:
40,440.70	39,922.89
Index Value	Change
1,028,926,958	-434.05
Percentage	Time
-1.08%	24 Mar, 2023 5: 00 pm

Europe: FTSE 100 Index

Index Value	Change
7,405.45	-94.15
Percentage	Time
-1.26%	24 Mar, 4: 35 pm GMT

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average

Index Value	Change
32,114.61	+9.36
Percentage	Time
+0.029%	24 Mar, 12: 56 pm GMT-4

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average

Index Value	Change
27,385.25	-34.36
Percentage	Time
-0.13%	24 Mar, 3: 15 pm GMT+9

Open Market Forex Rates

Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	187	189.4
Bahrain Dinar	751.6	759.6
Canadian Dollar	205	207.2
China Yuan	41.44	41.84
Danish Krone	41.31	41.71
Euro	304	307
Hong Kong Dollar	35.92	36.27
Indian Rupee	3.41	3.52
Japanese Yen	2.06	2.11
Kuwaiti Dinar	923.62	932.62
Malaysian Ringgit	62.85	63.45
New Zealand \$	177.56	179.56
Norwegians Krone	26.33	26.63
Omani Riyal	731.97	739.97
Qatari Riyal	77.43	78.13
Saudi Riyal	75.4	76.2
Singapore Dollar	208	210
Swedish Korona	26.5	26.8
Swiss Franc	308.97	311.47
Thai Bhat	8.3	8.45
U.A.E Dirham	77.2	78
UK Pound Sterling	345.5	349
US Dollar	283.20	286.00

IMF never-ending demands are hitting Pakistan's economy: Mian Zahid Hussain

Tariq Khattak

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain on Friday said political instability and the endless power struggle have destroyed the economy.

The political frictions have become a threat to national security which has become at stake, he said.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that terrorists are taking advantage of the faltering economy, they have stepped up their operations, and the martyrdom of a senior military officer while confronting terrorists is dangerous.

Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that if the terrorists are



will once again unleash terror across the country and no one will be safe.

Political leaders must stand on the back of the army while Afghanistan should be emphasized not to allow its territory to be used for terrorism, he added.

The business leader said that politicizing terrorism will lead the country to hell.

On the one hand, the country is going bankrupt, on the other hand, the demands of the IMF are not ending, he said.

The government has presented two mini-budgets to meet the IMF conditions, increased the GST rate, increased the price of petrol by Rs 57 per liter in a fortnight, increased the price of electricity by Rs8 per unit, increased the cost of gas by 124%, increased the bank markup by 5% and drastically reduced the value of the currency.

Inflation is crossing 40%, the poor and the middle class are suffering like never before while the profiteering mafia is also robbing the people, but despite this, the international organization is not satisfied and its demands are not ending.

Mian Zahid Hussain further said that it seems the IMF is not interested in lending to Pakistan. Loans have been given to Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, but Pakistan's case continues to be suspended.

In these dire situations, friendly countries have also turned their backs because they are tired of giving continuous loans and aid, while the IMF is asking Pakistan to guarantee the issuance of loans by friendly countries, which is not being met. Pakistan has to rely on its own resources including import substitution, privatization, and agricultural development.

ICCI delegation donates Rs.2 million for Earthquake Victims of Syria



Tariq Khattak

ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) leading a delegation visited the Syrian Embassy and presented a cheque of Rs. 2 million to H.E. Dr. Ramez Alraee, Ambassador of Syria for the earthquake victims of this country.

Speaking on the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that the people of Pakistan, including the business community, fully realize the problems being faced by the earthquake

victims of Syria and would not leave them alone in this difficult time. He emphasized that all sanctions on Syria should be lifted in this difficult time so that the earthquake victims can get the needed goods and items easily and the problems of Syrians reduce due to the improvement of its economy. He said that the donations of is the first step for the help of the earthquake victims of Syria by the business community and expressed the determination that the business community will continue its cooperation with them in the future so that they can restore their lives to normal. He said that the Syrian

President's visit to Iran and the United Arab Emirates will be a positive step towards strengthening unity among the Muslim world. He also discussed matters with the Ambassador for further improving bilateral trade and economic relations between Pakistan and Syria.

Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador of Syria Dr. Ramez Alraee, thanked the ICCI delegation for presenting the aid cheque. He said that the people of Syria will always remember the help and support extended by the government and people of Pakistan to them in these difficult times. He said that due to the sanctions on Syria, the

earthquake victims are facing severe difficulties, so the international community should play its role in lifting of these sanctions. He also thanked Pakistan for supporting Syria at international forums and reiterated that mutual cooperation between the two countries would become stronger with time.

Faaz Waheed, Senior Vice President ICCI and Engr. Azharul Islam Zafar, Vice President ICCI said that Syria has a great Islamic history and the Muslims have an emotional attachment to it. He said that ICCI will continue to cooperate with the people of Syria in every difficult time.

Standard Chartered launches First Sustainable Trade Export LC Programme

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Standard Chartered Bank (Pakistan) Limited (SCBPL) has launched Pakistan's First Sustainable Trade Export LC Programme. SCBPL is supporting Louis Dreyfus Company (LDC) export cotton sourced through the world's leading cotton sustainability certification programme, the Better Cotton Initiative (BCI).

With Standard Chartered's focus on helping companies accelerate to net-zero and closing funding gaps for sustainable and green finance in emerging markets, SCBPL was the bank of choice for LDC, given LDC's own commitment to work towards a safe and sustainable future in Pakistan.

Arslan Nayeem, Head of Client Coverage, CCIB, Standard Chartered Pakistan, said, "Whilst we strive towards our sustainable financing goals at a global level, we find it key to support local exports not only as an economically viable venture but also to integrate sustain-

ability and climate resilience in a manner that the Better Cotton Initiative encourages.

We are delighted to partner with Louis Dreyfus Company in this joint pursuit of our sustainability goals through this Sustainable Trade Export LC Programme. Sustainability and transition finance have become the need of the hour and a priority for many of our clients. Pakistan is a prime market for green and transition financing and the Bank is here to support clients cover funding gaps for such initiatives."

Bilal Yousuf Chabra, Country Head of LDC Pakistan, said, "Sustainable agriculture and production remain amongst the world's most pressing challenges. As a leading merchant and processor of agricultural goods, we are driven by our purpose of a safe and sustainable future. We are proud to be working closely with Standard Chartered Bank to build and strengthen our commitment in Pakistan, where we have been part of the community since 2015."

Price hikes

KARACHI: People are buying fruits for the Islamic month of Ramazan at Sadar Area, in Provincial Capital.



Photo: Online

Bank of AJ&K provides more than Rs311m rupees loans to customers

Commerce Desk

MUZAFFARABAD: Bank of Azad Jammu and Kashmir has provided loans worth more than 311 million rupees to the state customers under the special loan scheme "Gold Loan".

Today, in the released details regarding gold loan, it was said that any account holder of Bank of Azad Jammu and Kashmir can benefit from this scheme while this bank is the only financial institution in the region which is providing loan facilities to customers against gold at the lowest markup rate and very easy terms in the market.

Under the slogan "Gold is

also safe, needs are fulfilled", the bank gives loans against gold to the deserving customers with the fastest processing from which a large number of needy people are benefiting.

This is the reason the loan limit has been increased from Rs.5 lakh to Rs.10 lakh so that more and more customers can benefit from it. In the details, it was further said that the access of customers to loan schemes like advance salary loan, housing finance, personal loan, car financing, motorcycle loan, home appliances, SME, micro, commercial, tourism development and health care etc., is accelerating the social and economic development of the region.

Zong 4G defines its vision for Digital Transformation at its Annual Business Conference

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Zong 4G, Pakistan's leading connectivity provider, made a significant stride towards accelerating Digital Transformation with its Annual Business Conference 2023. The event marked the official resumption of offices after the pandemic and demonstrated Zong 4G's unwavering commitment to leading the way in Digital Innovation and Transformation in Pakistan.

The conference, themed "Accelerating into the Future with Digital Transformation," celebrated Zong 4G's remarkable achievements in 2022 and presented its strategic direction for the year 2023. The Chairman & CEO of Zong 4G, Mr. Wang Hua, applauded the employees for their exceptional efforts that resulted in the company's positive growth, creating over 46 million satisfied and happy customers.



Mr. Wang Hua reiterated that Zong 4G's success in the industry is due to its employees' contributions and resilience, taking the company to greater heights of success. Despite the challenging times, Zong's commitment to putting its employees at the center of its operations was further bolstered by providing them with additional financial endeavors.

Furthermore, he emphasized that in 2023, the company must continue

the momentum of Digital and Intelligent transformation to attain the vision of a Digital Pakistan. He also highlighted Zong 4G's critical role in providing high quality network services and contributing to Pakistan's economy. Moreover, while sharing Zong's sustainability contributions, he stressed that the company remains committed to reducing the digital divide and improving the livelihood of people in Pakistan.

"We are proud to lead the way in Digital Transformation in Pakistan and remain committed to our vision of providing the best Network and Services to our customers," said Mr. Wang Hua, Chairman & CEO of CMPak. "In 2023, our focus remains on advancing and delivering state-of-the-art technologies that enhance the lives of individuals and businesses throughout Pakistan. We aim to strengthen our collaborations with

local businesses and communities, while expanding our range of products to effectively cater to the needs of enterprises and SMEs. Our aim is to assist them in achieving their goals of enhancing operational efficiencies and fueling growth."

He concluded, "We look forward to playing a pivotal role to bridge the social divide and ensure that through our social endeavors, we create an inclusive Digital Pakistan."

Bank of Khyber opens a new branch at PIA Building Peshawar Cantt



Commerce Desk

PESHAWAR: Bank of Khyber, a prominent banking institution in the country, has announced the inauguration of its new branch at PIA Building Peshawar Cantt. The bank currently operates more than 40 branches and sub-branches in the provincial capital of Peshawar, with plans to expand its footprint and enhance its customer reach in the region by opening additional branches by the end of the year.

The opening ceremony was attended by Mr. Muhammad Ali Gulfaraz, MD/CEO of Bank of Khyber, and Mr. Ifikhar Ahmed, District Manager of PIA Peshawar. Mr. Sher Muhammad, Group Head Conventional, and his team also graced the occasion. Several distinguished traders and businessmen from the vicinity also attended the event.

"We are delighted to open yet another branch in the provincial capital, which is a major business hub of the region," said Muhammad Ali Gulfaraz, MD/CEO of Bank of Khyber. "With the increasing demand for banking services and untapped potential, BOK is committed to expanding its presence in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to increase its market share and enhance its brand reputation."

The new branch is expected to provide a range of banking services, including deposits, withdrawals, loans, and other financial products and services, to meet the needs of the local community. Bank of Khyber is dedicated to providing reliable and efficient banking solutions to its customers, and the opening of the new branch is a testament to its commitment to delivering quality services across Pakistan.

Chairman HEC lauds its sports teams for clinching medals in national championships

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, Chairman, Higher Education Commission (HEC) has lauded the HEC sports teams for clinching medals in different national championships.

HEC teams bagged silver medal in 60th National Badminton Championship, bronze medal in Women National Volleyball Championship and bronze medal in 14th Tug of War National Championship.

Similarly, HEC women team won bronze medal in 10th National Archery Championship whereas HEC men team secured 4th Position. In 17th HEC Women Baseball Championship, HEC team won bronze medal and HEC's player Aram Barkat was awarded 'Best



Player of the Championship' title. In National Swimming Championship, HEC men's team won bronze medal in 100-meter Freestyle. In his message, Chairman HEC appreciated the efforts of HEC sports

division, coaches, team managers and players for their remarkable performance in various national championships. He assured complete support for promoting sports and extracurricular activities in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) alongside academic pursuits so as to create a holistic educational environment for university students.

Since its inception in 2002, HEC has been playing a pivotal role in facilitating HEIs to promote sports activities along with providing higher education across the country. In this regard, one of the key initiatives of HEC is to organize intervarsity championships and prepare and supports university players for participating in national and international championships.

First ever 'Bankers Cup Cricket Tournament' to begin at Naya Nazimabad in Ramazan

Sports Desk

PAKISTAN: For the first time in the cricket history of Pakistan, major commercial banks will be participating in a cricket tournament that will be held this Ramazan at Naya Nazimabad. The tournament is being organized by the management of Naya Nazimabad as the ninth version of the renowned 'Ramazan Cricket Tournament' with the title, 'Naya Nazimabad Bankers Cup 2023'.

The event, completely endorsed by Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) will commence from March 21, 2023 and will continue till April 02, 2023. This year, a total of 12 teams will take part in the contest and



25 matches will be played. 25th match will be the final match that will be held on Sunday, April 02, 2023.

This year major commercial banks will be the partners for this venture. Bank Alfalah, Habib Metropolitan Bank, Faysal Bank, Bank of Punjab, Dubai Islamic Bank, United Bank Limited, National Bank

of Pakistan, Meezan Bank, Sindh Bank and Askari Bank will be participating as supporting partners for 'Naya Nazimabad Bankers Cup 2023'. Fatima Fertilizer will also be a major sponsor of the event.

Mr. Arif Habib, Chairman Arif Habib Group has stated that inclusion of renowned banks and their partnership in

this event will not only support department and club level cricket in Pakistan but will also create opportunities for young cricketers. This tournament is also very important to all brand partners and stakeholders because a Ramazan cricket tournament of such a magnitude has never been held in Pakistan, where a consortium of multiple major commercial banks have been taken on as event partners.

People will get to see quality cricket matches through thrilling games as famous cricket celebrities like Sarfaraz Ahmed, Asad Shafiq, Anwar Ali, Fawad Alam, Khurram Manzoor, Muhammad Irfan, Saud Shakeel, Khushdil Shah, Hyder Ali, Sohail Akhter, Khalid

Usman, Hassan Nawaz, Awais Zia, Musa Khan, Tabish Khan and many other established & emerging players will be playing in this tournament from various departmental and club teams.

Naya Nazimabad Bankers Cup 2023 will also provide young cricketers and emerging players a chance to show their talent on the international level as all matches will be broadcasted live by Pakistan Television via PTV Sports.

This event will be the highest prize money event of the Ramazan cricket festival in Pakistan with a sum of Rs. 2.0 million out of which 1.2 million will be awarded to the winning team and the runner ups will be awarded six hundred thousand.

Wahab Riaz visited the National Hockey Stadium



Sports Desk

LAHORE: Adviser to Chief Minister Punjab on Sports and Youth Affairs Wahab Riaz visited the National Hockey Stadium and reviewed the work of laying modern FIH approved synthetic turf on Friday.

Adviser to CM Punjab on Sports and Youth Affairs Wahab Riaz was accompanied by Director General Sports Punjab Mohammad Tariq Qureshi and Director Youth Affairs Syed Umair Hassan during his inspection visit.

Director General Sports Punjab Muhammad Tariq Qureshi briefed Adviser to CM Punjab on Sports and Youth Affairs Wahab Riaz about the laying of new synthetic turf.

Talking on this occasion, Adviser to CM Punjab on Sports and Youth Affairs Wahab Riaz said that the National Hockey Stadium is of historical importance. "Hockey is our national game and new synthetic turf will provide a modern facility to emerging hockey players. The work of laying new synthetic turf will be completed soon".

Adviser to CM Punjab on Sports and Youth Affairs Wahab Riaz further said that laying of new synthetic turf will improve the game of hockey players. "After the upgradation of the National Hockey Stadium, we will be able to hold international hockey events at this great venue," he added.

AAA Associates organized the 38th Early Bird Golf Tournament



Sports Desk

RAWALPINDI: AAA Associates has become the beacon of sports, especially golf as it has sponsored multiple golf events across the nation. Its interest as a private sector leading vertical real estate development firm shows its passion for the revival of sports in Pakistan. In this context, AAA Associates organized a grand golfing event at Rawalpindi Golf Club in which hundreds of players participated.

More than two hundred golfers competed in the senior amateurs, amateurs, veterans, and invitees categories. Other categories included ladies and juniors. Early Bird Patron in Chief, Ex-Chairman Joint Chief of Staff Committee (JCSC) Gen Aziz Khan, and Brig Abdul Salam Akhtar President of Early Bird were present as the chief guests. Syed Wajahat Ali Director of Corporate Sales AAA Associates was also present at the occasion.

The winners in the senior amateurs' category included Maj Shoaib and Khalid Masood, taking the first gross and first net prizes respectively. Whereas, Col Abjad took the second prize; Brig Mohsin and Mr. Farukh Waheed took the third gross and net prizes respectively.

In the veterans' category, the first net and first gross prizes were won by Brig Azhar Pervez and Brig M Aslam Khan respectively. The second gross and net prizes were won by Brig Arshad and Brig Tariq respectively. While the third gross and net prizes went to Brig Ghulam Nabi and Mr. Tariq Sadiq respectively.

The third prize in the Invitees category went to Brig Zahid Hussain and Maj Atif Gondal, while the second prize was won by Brig Zia Sarwar and Maj Gen Saeed Nagra. The first prize went to Maj Gen Abid Latif and Brig Amir Malik. The Junior Boys category winners included Mr. Bilal Amjad, and Mr. Abdullah Amir taking the first prize, with Mr. Ali Jami and Mr. Hassan Abbas winning the second prize. Among the ladies' category, the first prize went to Ms. Arooba Ali (AAA Associates), and Brig Nasira Shaheen, the second prize, to Ms. Amna Malak, and Mrs. Ayesha Azhar, and the third prize to Ms. Jasia Tasawar and Ms. Fatima Azhar were awarded.

The amateurs' category winners included Col Arshad Janjua and Lt Col Arif Kiyani taking the third prize. The second prize went to Squadron leader Furqan and Col Beshaam. The first prize winners included Maj Mustafa and Dr. Meer Yasir. AAA Associates has done an outstanding job in its sponsorship of impressive golfing tournaments of this magnitude. Its dedicated effort was the reason which made the 38th Early Bird Golf Tournament a successful event as well.

First T20I

SHARJAH: Pakistan have won the toss and elected to bat first against Afghanistan in the first T20I of the three-match series.



Four Pakistan players to debut in first Afghanistan T20I

Sports Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan have named a dynamic XI for the first of the three T20Is against Afghanistan at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium on Friday.

Opener Saim Ayub, middle-order batter Tayyab Tahir and right-arm quicks Zaman Khan and Ihsanullah will make Pakistan debuts.

Top-order batter Abdullah Shafique, all-rounders Faheem Ashraf and Imad Wasim, and Azam Khan mark their returns to the Pakistan side.

These eight players were named in the 15-member squad for this T20I series after a string of impressive performances in the domestic circuit and the recently-concluded HBL Pakistan Super League 8. The series comes with an opportunity for these players to carry their form in international cricket.

Karachi-born, 20-year-old Saim will open with Mohammad Harris, who has played five T20Is for Pakistan and announced his

arrival in the last ICC Men's T20 World Cup in Australia with his blazing strokeplay and bold intent, and has batted with him in Peshawar Zalmi during the HBL PSL 8.

Saim comes into the side after a highly impressive run for Sindh and Peshawar Zalmi. The left-hander played an integral role in crowning Sindh the National T20 champions as he made 416 runs in 12 matches at a strike rate of 155.22. He smashed 341 runs - that included five half-centuries, the joint-most in the season with Babar Azam - at a strike rate of 165.53 for Peshawar Zalmi in this HBL PSL at the top of the order. Speaking ahead of his debut, Saim told PCB Digital: "Whatever I had done in my life was to achieve this jersey and now I want to do justice with this opportunity. There's excitement and an element of nervousness as well as I never expected to play for Pakistan this early. But, since I have gotten this opportunity, I am going to do my best."

"It is very important to give a

good start to your team in T20 cricket no matter what opposition you are playing. You have to assess the conditions quickly and make your presence count and that's what I will be planning to do with Harris. We have been playing together in Peshawar Zalmi and we were batchmates as well. We enjoy good chemistry and our playing style is also similar - we look to dominate the opposition. So, it will be fun to play with him."

Abdullah and Tayyab make numbers three and four respectively. Abdullah, who has played three T20Is with his last being in December 2020 in New Zealand, comes into the side after making 268 runs at 144.08 for champions Lahore Qalandars. He scored two half-centuries, the last being in the final against Multan Sultans.

Tayyab has been in good touch over the last year. He marked his HBL PSL 8 debut with a whirlwind 65 and made 137 runs at 144.21 and was the best batter of the Pakistan Cup, which concluded in January. He also bagged

player of the final award for his match-winning 71 for Central Punjab. He made 708 runs in first-class Quaid-e-Azam Trophy at an average of 59 and recorded four centuries and one half-century.

"Whenever a cricketer starts his journey, he idolises the ones who wear the national colours and dream of doing the same," Tayyab said. "I am grateful to Almighty that I have been provided the opportunity to serve my country. My parents are going to be very happy when they see me play."

"There will definitely be some nerves when I play for Pakistan, but I will be able to overcome them as I have been playing competitive and quality cricket at the domestic level and in the HBL Pakistan Super League. I am very excited to make my Pakistan debut."

The middle order comprises captain Shadab Khan, Azam, Faheem and Imad.

Azam scored 282 runs at a staggering 161.14 for Islama-

bad United this HBL PSL. His highest score of 97 came against Quetta Gladiators at the National Stadium Karachi. This will be the 24-year-old's fourth T20I.

Faheem, Azam's HBL PSL teammate, provided balance to the side with his contributions with bat and ball. He made 215 runs at 149.30 and took eight wickets at an economy of 9.50 - in a league that has had the best run rate (9.20) in the last one year for any major T20 tournament around the world.

Imad's nine wickets for Karachi Kings came at an average of 28.22 and an economy of 7.93, but it was his sensational batting that turned heads as the left-hander scored 404 runs at a phenomenal average of 134.66 and a staggering strike rate of 170.46. The 34-year-old has an experience of 58 T20Is in which he has 55 wickets at an average of 23.49. His economy is 6.33.

Experienced speedster Naseem Shah will spearhead the pace attack that includes newcomers Zaman and Ihsanullah.

Zaman was outstanding with the new and old ball in the Powerplay and death overs and he is expected to execute the same role in Pakistan colours on Friday.

He defended 13 off the last over to help Lahore Qalandars to their second straight HBL PSL title and took 15 wickets at 23.60 runs per dismissal and an economy of 8.53 in the recent season. "It was my goal to play for my country and I am about to achieve it," Zaman, who hails from Mirpur, said.

"The presence of Umer [Gul, bowling coach] bhai has helped me immensely. We discussed how every pitch is different and spoke in detail, about the behaviour of Sharjah wicket. He told me that hitting the hard length will be helpful. I will definitely keep that in mind," Zaman added.

In Ihsanullah, Pakistan have a reliable pace bowler to carry them through the middle-overs. The right-arm pacer's thunderbolts kept batters on backfoot throughout the HBL PSL 8 as he peppered every opposition

with lethal bouncers. Ihsanullah was the first bowler in the tournament to pick a five-wicket haul and he went on to finish the tournament as the best player and best bowler for taking 22 wickets (the second most) at only 15.77 runs apiece and he leaked only 7.59 runs in the 45.4 overs he bowled, the most for a bowler with top-five wickets.

"My parents wanted me to play for Pakistan and I am delighted that their dream is coming true," Ihsanullah, who belongs to the village of Matta in Swat, said. "Definitely my experience of the HBL PSL will come in handy. There were players from all around the world and even from Afghanistan and I learned a great deal bowling to them, so it is going to be useful."

Pakistan XI for first Afghanistan T20I: Saim Ayub, Mohammad Harris, Abdullah Shafique, Tayyab Tahir, Shadab Khan (c), Azam Khan (wk), Faheem Ashraf, Imad Wasim, Naseem Shah, Zaman Khan and Ihsanullah