

Daily The Spokesman

A Leading National Daily



فرمان رسول ﷺ نے فرمایا انسان سے صرف مومن ہی محبت رکھے گا اور ان سے صرف منافق ہی نفرت رکھے گا۔ جس جو شخص ان سے محبت کرے اس سے اللہ محبت کرے گا اور جو ان سے نفرت کرے گا اس سے اللہ تعالیٰ اس سے نفرت کرے گا (معلوم ہو کر انصار کی محبت نشان ایمان ہے اور ان سے دشمنی رکھنا ہے ایمان لوگوں کا کام ہے۔) (صحیح بخاری، حدیث نمبر 3783)

Barkat Rice Mills (Pvt) Limited

PPP will continue to support freedom of press: Zardari

Asif Ali Zardari on Tuesday said that the PPP will continue to support the freedom of the press. In a message on the eve of World Press Freedom Day, he said that Quaid-e-Awam, Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (ZAB) was a supporter of freedom of expression and he taught the common people how to voice their views by giving them political consciousness.



Human capital vital for economic growth: Murad Shah

Sindh CM Syed Murad Ali Shah has said that the pivotal role of human capital in sustainable economic growth and inclusive development cannot be overstated, however, the benefits of human capital investments often take a considerable time to materialize and may not always be immediately visible. This he said while speaking at the launching ceremony of World Bank's report on 'Pakistan Human Capital Review: Building Capabilities throughout Life'. (Details on Page 2)

Simultaneously published from Islamabad, Lahore and Multan

Shawwal 12, Wednesday, May 3, 2023

www.dailyspokesman.net

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Daily Spokesman Vol: 16, Issue: 27

Price Rs. 25.00 Pages 8

AJK dev priority

ISLAMABAD: A delegation led by the Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Mr. Anwar-ul-Haq calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday.



Photo: PID

PM assures all possible coop for AJK's development

Shehbaz Sharif orders strict action against smugglers of wheat, urea & sugar

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has assured all possible cooperation of the Government of Pakistan for the development of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. He was talking to a delegation led by AJK Prime Minister Anwar-ul-Haq in Islamabad on Tuesday.

Shehbaz Sharif gave assurance to the delegation that issues pertaining to the development funds of Azad Kashmir will be resolved at the earliest.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said Pakistan is standing by the people of Jammu and Kashmir in their struggle for freedom and

the government of Pakistan will continue extending its moral, political and diplomatic support for Kashmiris' right to self-determination. He said India's illegal action of 5 August 2019 is a gross violation of human rights and the international community, especially the United Nations, should take notice of this.

Shehbaz Sharif said Pakistani nation will always stand by its Kashmiri brethren in their struggle for freedom. He said we exposed the Indian atrocities on Kashmiris in at every international forum.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has directed immediate and stern action

against smugglers of wheat, urea and sugar and taking them to the task. He was chairing a review meeting regarding the prevention of smuggling of wheat, urea and sugar in Islamabad on Tuesday.

The Prime Minister said he will not take a back seat till the elimination of the scourge of smuggling from the country. He said a handful of black sheep will not be allowed to plunder the national exchequer and harm interests of the people of Pakistan.

Shehbaz Sharif said with the blessings of Allah Almighty and efforts of the government, wheat production was recorded in the highest in the last one

decade. The Prime Minister said the government is planning to produce more wheat next year as compared to this year. He added that a comprehensive plan has been started to ensure an uninterrupted supply of urea to farmers for the upcoming crop.

He said with the blessing of God, the government is striving hard to make Pakistan, once again a wheat-exporting country. He said no person involved in smuggling will be spared and a steering committee has been constituted to curb check pilferage of wheat and other commodities. The Prime Minister will himself chair the steering committee.

He directed Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah to immediately visit Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan and compile a performance report of the concerned officers in collaboration with the provincial administrations and present it to him. He said officers involved in smuggling should be dismissed from the service and after taking departmental action against them.

The Prime Minister said real culprits should be brought to justice by conducting a thorough examination of the goods confiscated from smugglers. He said the number and capacity of anti-smuggling courts should be enhanced.

Sanaullah says elections on May 14 'impossible'

LAHORE: As the ruling alliance and opposition Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) are all set to hold make-or-break talks on the timing of general elections Tuesday, Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah has once again reiterated that holding polls on May 14 is not possible.

PTI Chairman Imran Khan has linked the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM)-led government demand to hold elections across the country simultaneously with the dissolution of all legislatures including the National Assembly before May 14.

Referring to the PTI chief's demand, Sanaullah said all assemblies should be allowed to complete their constitutional term and added that negotiations are not held with conditions attached.

The interior minister said that Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo Nawaz Sharif allowed the party to hold talks with PTI despite reservations.



During the talks with PTI, the security czar said the PDM's negotiating team proposed that the agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) should be finalised and the incumbent set-up be allowed to present the upcoming federal budget instead of caretaker setup before going into the elections.

"If these two demands are accepted, then what is the need to dissolve the assemblies just a few weeks before their term," he remarked.

On the other hand, PTI leader Asad Umar warned that the country and allied parties of the coalition government will suffer "if the last chance to dissolve the assemblies is wasted".

Three terrorists killed in Tank, DI Khan's IBOs: ISPR

RAWALPINDI: Three terrorists were killed including a commander whereas two were injured in separate intelligence based operations (IBOs) conducted by the Security Forces in Tank and DI Khan on Monday.

According to the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release on Tuesday, the Security Forces had conducted two intelligence based operations in Tank and DI Khan on reported presence of terrorists in the area.

During conduct of the operations, after intense fire exchange, three terrorists were sent to hell including terrorist commander Jabbar Shah alias Shah Alam while two terrorists were injured.

The sanitization of the surrounding areas was being carried out to eliminate any other terrorists found in the area.

"Security Forces of Pakistan are determined to eliminate the menace of terrorism," the ISPR said. APP

LHC grants Parvez Elahi protective bail till May 15

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Monday granted former Punjab chief minister Parvez Elahi protective bail in an anti-corruption case registered against him and directed the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader to refer to the relevant court.

Elahi reached the high court accompanied by numerous party workers and lawyers. The former CM — who had managed to evade two attempts to arrest him at his residences in Lahore and Gujrat — appeared before Justice Asjad Javaid Ghural's bench.

During the hearing, Elahi's lawyer argued that cases were being filed against him on a "daily basis". The court registered, "file for the protective bail again."

Earlier, the court rejected Elahi's request to stop the police from arresting him. His plea was filed by his son Rasikh Elahi, against the police action on his house last week. During the hearing, Justice Sardar Muhammad Sarfraz Dogar also issued notices to the inspector general of the Punjab Police and the director general Anti-Corruption Establishment. Agencies

Inflation surges to record high

Economist says inflation will continue to remain elevated

ISLAMABAD: Amid the unceasing political and economic turmoil in the country that continues to make the lives of citizens miserable, monthly inflation has soared to an all-time high, data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) showed Tuesday.

Inflation, measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), clocked in at 36.4% year-on-year in April. It was recorded at 35.4% last month and 13.4% in April 2022.

This is the highest inflation ever, according to data available since 1965, Arif Habib Limited said. Meanwhile, inflation rose by 2.4% month-on-month.

According to Bloomberg, Pakistan has the fastest rising prices in Asia, which have left behind even Sri Lanka where inflation was measured at 35.3% in the previous month.

Sana Tawfiq, an economist at Arif Habib Limited, said the headline inflation was in line with expectations. The prices of wheat, vegetables and fruits drove up food inflation, she said.

Meanwhile, the month-on-month inflation was driven mainly by food, clothing, household equipment and recreation sub-indices. Housing was down due to a decline in electricity

charges, she commented.

The economist said inflation was likely to remain elevated before receding in the second half of the current year with the high-base effect kicking in. "The risks associated with overall inflation are: weaker currency, international commodity prices and domestic food prices."

Pakistan's inflation has been elevated for months as the economic crisis worsened, the rupee depreciated sharply and devastating floods during last year's monsoon season destroyed crops. The situation was exacerbated by the huge drop in the country's foreign exchange reserves that left it with less than a month's import cover.

The Pakistani rupee has been one of the world's worst-performing currencies this year, depreciating 20% against the US dollar. This has made imports, including food and fuel, much more expensive while the country desperately looks for ways to finance its balance-of-payments deficit.

The government has been in talks with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for months to revive a stalled loan programme that would disburse over \$1 billion as well as unlock

funding from other multilateral institutions and friendly countries.

Measures taken by the government to revive the loan programme, including increasing taxes, removing subsidies and hiking the benchmark interest rate to a record high of 21%, have also contributed to elevated inflation levels.

According to the latest PBS data, inflation in urban and rural areas rose to 33.5% and 40.7% year-on-year, respectively. Food inflation continued to remain high, making life even more difficult for citizens. Prices of non-perishable food items jumped to 51.5% while perishable food items rose to 29.23% compared to April last year.

The biggest jump was recorded in the alcoholic beverages and tobacco sub-index which surged to 133.53%.

Meanwhile, transport increased to 56.77%, housing and utilities to 16.94%, clothing and footwear to 21.62%, furnishing and household equipment maintenance to 40.53%, restaurants and hotels to 39.03%, miscellaneous to 38.84%, recreation and culture to 68.6%, health to 18.77%, education to 8.5% and communication to 6.75%. Agencies

IK used his 'intelligence only to steal national wealth': Marriyum



Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Tuesday said Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan did everything at the behest of others during his over three-year government but "used his intelligence only to steal the national wealth".

The minister, in a news statement, said Imran Khan resorted to loot and plunder ruthlessly causing unprecedented damage to the national exchequer as well as the people. He not only benefited his wife Bushra Bibi and her friend Farah Gogi, but also sugar, wheat, electricity and gas mafias to fill their pockets with ill-gotten money, she added.

"You (Imran Khan) were misleading 220 million people and you were misled by the former army chief," the minister said while reacting to Imran Khan's statements.

Dar rejects news about OGRA's petrol-price reduction proposal

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Tuesday rejected some reports circulating in both press and electronic media that the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) had recommended a decrease in the price of Motor Spirit Oil (MSO - Petrol) for first fortnight of the current month, terming them 'baseless and untrue'.

"Some reports have been circulating in the press and electronic media stating that OGRA made recommendation to the government for a reduction in the price of Motor Spirit/Petrol with effect from



1st May, 2023, which are baseless and untrue," the minister clarified on his Twitter handle.

Meanwhile, OGRA spokesman Imran Ghaznavi in a brief press statement said the authority did not recommend any decrease in the prices of MS/Petrol. "The recent decrease in international price was offset against the outstanding exchange rate adjustment, and as such, there was no room for a decrease in the local prices of MS/Petrol."

PSX gains 346.79 points

ISLAMABAD: The 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed a bullish trend on Tuesday, gaining 346.79 points, with a positive change of 0.83 per cent, closing at 41,927.64 against 41,580.85 points on the previous day.

A total of 220,030,472 shares were traded during the day as compared to 268,083,264 shares the previous day, whereas the price of shares stood at Rs 6.494 billion against Rs 8.975 billion on the last trading day.

As many as 377 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 187 of them recorded gains and 163 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 27 companies remained unchanged.

The three top-trading companies were Fauji Foods Ltd. with 22,595,208 shares at Rs 6.74 per share, Silk Bank Ltd. with 15,573,000 shares at Rs 1.21 per share, and Maple Leaf with 8,694,059 shares at Rs 28.41 per share.

Islamic Architectural Heritage

ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervez Ashraf witnessing the photo exhibition on Islamic Architectural Heritage of Hungary on Tuesday.



Photo: PID

NA Speaker calls for expanding scope of bilateral ties with Hungary

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervez Ashraf along with Hungarian Ambassador Béla Fazekas inaugurated a photo exhibition containing artifacts of Islamic architectural arts at the National Assembly in Islamabad today.

The photo exhibition, arranged with cooperation of the Embassy of Hungary, is part of the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan.

Speaking on the occasion, Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervez Ashraf said this exhibition of Islamic cultural heritage is evident of the rich culture of Hungary.

He said peaceful existence of Christians and Muslims was well demonstrated by the law adopted by the Hungarian parliament in 1916 granting Islam the status of a legally recognized religion of the country.

The Speaker welcomed the joint

initiative of Hungary and Türkiye to preserve the Islamic cultural heritage of Ottoman Empire in Hungary.

He said Pakistan highly values its relations with Hungary which are based on commonality of views and shared values of democratic pluralism. He stressed on the need of further enhancing the bilateral relations.

Raja Pervez Ashraf appreciated the government and people of Hungary for preserving Islamic heritage.

In his remarks, Hungarian Ambassador to Pakistan Béla Fazekas said Hungary became part of Ottoman Empire in 1526. He said Hungary receives an impact of the Empire on its architecture.

The Ambassador said Hungary and Türkiye initiated a project in 1990 to restore and preserve mosques and buildings constructed during the Ottoman's rule.

He said this exhibition will promote friendly relations between the countries and their parliaments.

Bench hearing SC bill case

SAPM Tarar urges to include seven senior judges

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Interior Attaullah Tarar on Tuesday urged the Supreme Court to include seven senior most judges of the apex court in the bench hearing Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) bill case.

Addressing a press conference along with Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan, Tarar said that the apex court stayed the Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) which had not become a law yet.

This was a question mark on the powers of Parliament, he added.

He said that according to the Constitution legislature and judiciary had separate roles.

"The role of the Parliament is to draft law and this is why it is called legislature. If a law is not yet being shaped and its implementation is stopped then it is unconstitutional," he added.

He said that the six bar councils including Pakistan Bar Council (PBC) had raised observations on apex court judge Justice Sayyid Mazhar Ali Akbar Naqvi's inclusion in the eight-member larger bench hearing the Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure).

The Attorney General for Pakistan also supported PBC's stance in this regard and stated that references were pending against Justice Naqvi in the Supreme Judicial Council, he added.

He urged that Justice Naqvi should not be included in the bench until he was proven guilty or innocent.

Justice Naqvi should recuse himself from the bench after filing of references in the SJC, he added.

Attaullah Tarar demanded that seven senior most judges who were not made part of the larger bench should be included.

He said that the Parliament passed the Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) bill to restrict the suo motu power of the Chief Justice but the same judge initiated proceedings on the bill and issued a stay order.

Tarar said that the bail pleas of PTI President Chaudry Pervaiz Elhai were fixed for hearing before Justice Asjad Javed Goral which was big discrimination.

"Goral's brother is a ticket holder in Elhai's party and he had relations with him. It is surprising that Elhai's bail plea not fix before another judge. This clearly shows that one political party is being facilitated while the powers of the parliament are being compromised," he said.

Meanwhile, Malik Muhammad Ahmad said courts were providing maximum relief to the Chairman Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) in every court case.

He blamed that the son of former Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice (ret'd) Saqib Nisar was involved in selling of PTI tickets.

He alleged that the PTI misused the donations of Shaukat Khanum Hospital and was also involved in money laundering.

Parliament is a supreme and powerful pillar of the state, he added. APP

Sherry urges world to restructure Int'l financial system



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Climate Change Sherry Rehman has urged the international community to restructure international financial system to address climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Speaking at the Petersburg Climate Dialogue in Germany, she said international financial infrastructure must be restructured to make climate finance accessible to developing countries.

Sherry Rehman said amid the rising climate crisis and vulnerabilities of impacted communities it is imperative for making the Climate Fund more accessible to developing countries bearing the maximum burden of environmental degradation.

She added that developing countries like Pakistan face the challenge of securing the necessary climate funds to meet their environmental goals.

According to the Standing Committee on Finance of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 78 developing countries need 6 trillion dollars by 2030 to meet their financial needs under the Paris Agreement.

UN will stay in Afghanistan but funding is drying up

DOHA: The United Nations will stay in Afghanistan to deliver aid to millions of desperate Afghans despite the Taliban's restrictions on its female staff, but funding is drying up, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Tuesday.

Guterres, speaking to media after a meeting of envoys from more than 20 countries in Doha to discuss a common international approach to Afghanistan, also said concerns over the country's stability were growing.

"We stay and we deliver and we are determined to seek the necessary conditions to keep delivering... participants agreed on the need for a strategy of engagement," Guterres said.

The ban on female Afghan UN staff signalled by Taliban authorities last month was a violation of human rights, he said.

"We will never be silent in the face of unprecedented systemic attacks on women's and girls' rights," he said.

Also read: UN says Taliban envoy can meet Pakistan, China ministers next week

He warned of a severe shortfall in financial pledges for its humanitarian appeal this year, which is just over 6% funded, falling short of the \$4.6 billion requested for a country in which most of the population live in poverty.

He stressed the meeting had not been aimed at recognising the Taliban's administration—which no country has formally done. Reuters

President asks MoFA to expose Indian designs

Behind planned G-20 Summit in IIOJK

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has asked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to intensify its efforts to expose India's nefarious designs and the ulterior motives behind its planned move to hold the G-20 Summit in the UN-recognized disputed territory of the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

The President expressed these views while conveying the letter of the Convener of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference, Mehmood Ahmed Saghar, to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for appropriate action on the



issue raised by him on Tuesday.

In his letter to the President, Mehmood Ahmed Saghar had

sought the urgent attention of Pakistan towards the Indian government's highly controver-

sial move to convene a meeting of the members of the G-20 countries in Srinagar and its far-reaching consequences on the Kashmiris' ongoing struggle for the right to self-determination.

Expressing serious concern over the India's plan, the APHC Convener termed the move as a part of a "multi-faceted and multi-front campaign" that New Delhi has been waging to create confusion about the Jammu and Kashmir dispute.

He said that India wants to dilute Kashmir's international and legal status, strengthen the notion that Kashmir is nothing but its internal matter, deflect

the world's attention away from the real issue, hide ground realities, and promote its so-called normalcy narrative.

The APHC Convener appreciated the efforts of Pakistan that has expressed strong indignation over India's decision to hold the G-20 Tourism Working Group meeting in Srinagar on 22-24 of this month.

Mehmood Ahmed Saghar said that Pakistan is an important party to the dispute, and expressed the hope that it would continue to play its role and use its political and diplomatic clout effectively to thwart the Indian conspiracies.

Parliament will not allow any extra constitutional step: Khawaja Asif

ISLAMABAD: Defense Minister Khawaja Asif said the parliament is the supreme institution and being defender of the constitution will not allow any extra constitutional step.

Speaking in the National Assembly today, he said the parliament will not surrender its authority. He said we should get united for the sanctity and dignity of the house by rising above our differences.

The Defense Minister said the elected representatives come to the parliament with the mandate of the people. He said the foundation of our career is based on public service.

Khawaja Asif said the Supreme Court has sought proceedings of this house which are not hidden from anybody. He said we should provide the court with the proceedings but the parliament should also seek record of their matters.



Khawaja Asif said we are holding dialogue with our opponents but it does not come in the precinct of the court to dictate us for negotiations.

The Defense Minister said that a house committee should also be constituted to examine the cases decided by the judiciary in the past. He said the facts should come before the masses.

Taking the floor, Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Shazia Marri said the Supreme Court should not interfere in the matters of the

parliament which is the mother of all institutions in democracy. She said the judiciary should also understand the sanctity and respect of the parliament.

Responding to the points of a member, Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Shazia Marri said that the government will continue to raise the plight of oppressed Kashmiri people at all the international forums.

She said our stand on the Kashmir dispute is very clear. She said Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has brought more clarity to the foreign policy. She said the Foreign Minister will visit India to attend the SCO meeting. Aslam Bhootani was of the view that the house should not provide its proceedings to the Supreme Court. He said we respect the court but it should also respect the parliament.

Muhammad Abu Bakar said the parliament should defend the consti-

tution.

Noor Alam Khan said under the constitution, no court can seek proceedings of the parliament. He however said that the public accounts committee has the authority to seek records of the accounts of courts and other institutions.

The house today adopted a motion authorizing the Speaker to constitute a special committee to investigate into the recent audio leak of the son of former Chief Justice of Pakistan Saqib Nisar.

It was moved by Shahida Akhtar Ali.

Responding to a calling attention notice, Parliamentary Secretary for Communications Shahida Akhtar Ali said that work for the reconstruction of the Amri Indus River Bridge damaged by rains will soon be started. She said this project will cost seventeen million rupees and will be completed in a matter of two to three months.

PTI will not participate in ANP's all parties conference: Asad Qaiser

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Former Speaker National Assembly and central leader PTI Asad Qaiser has said that PDM incumbent government is root cause of all the problems country facing today. He said ANP is part of PDM government that's why PTI will not participate in ANP's all parties conference. He expressed these views while talking to the media representatives.

The Ex Speaker has said that if elections are not held in Punjab and Kpk by 14th May it will be clear violation of constitution. He said that PTI is not agreed with the agenda of the ANP's All-Party Conference.

Like No Other Bloc

\$8.03 trillion SCO trade offers enormous export potential: Irfan Iqbal

Our Correspondent

KARACHI: Irfan Iqbal Sheikh, President FPCCI & Chairman of Pakistan Chapter of SCO Business Council, has emphasized that Pakistan must aggressively promote its trade, investment and economic ties with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) nations; as the formidable bloc has a cumulative GDP in upwards of \$23.5 trillion and their total trade volume is \$8.03 trillion.

Additionally, SCO members comprise of approximately 42 percent of world population; 23 percent of global land mass; 25 percent share in the gross domestic product (GDP) of the world and accounts for 32 percent of Pakistan's total trade

at present.

Mr. Irfan Iqbal Sheikh specifically pointed out the need to establish currency swap mechanism to capitalize on the true trade potential with the SCO member countries; and, at the same time, stabilize Pak Rupee through taking the pressure off the meager dollar reserves.

It is pertinent to note that, representing Pakistan, Irfan Iqbal Sheikh was speaking at the high-profile SCO Business Council's Board Meeting as its country chief for Pakistan. The board meeting was attended by the representatives of economic giants like China, Russia, India and a number of Central Asian countries.

Irfan Iqbal Sheikh apprised that his will mean broadening of

export markets, becoming part of major supply routes of the world, major joint ventures & industrial collaborations, transfers of technology & knowledge and foreign direct investment (FDI) by major retail, energy, industrial, construction, telecommunications groups & conglomerates from SCO countries.

President FPCCI noted that Pakistan has many close & strategic allies in SCO; and, these bilateral & multilateral relations should be translated into commercial & economic relations through people-to-people, business-to-business and chamber-to-chamber relations; and, joint trade promotion activities. He added that an economic bloc with a GDP of \$23.5 trillion

can uplift Pakistan out of all its economic shortcomings.

Irfan Iqbal Sheikh highlighted that Pakistan has implemented land-based logistics convention, i.e. TIR and is looking forward to expand and integrate with SCO alliance's land-based trade as SCO offers enormous potential for Pakistani exports in goods. He offered to collaborate on regional trade exhibitions and exchange of trade delegations. Pakistan can multiply exports of its world-class products & services to SCO countries; namely, value-added textiles; IT & ITES services; surgical instruments; sports goods; cultural artifacts; rice, fruits & vegetables and precious stones & minerals.

Human capital vital for economic growth: Murad Shah

CM Sindh says the benefits of human capital investments often take time to materialize

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has said that the pivotal role of human capital in sustainable economic growth and inclusive development cannot be overstated, however, the benefits of human capital investments often take a considerable time to materialize and may not always be immediately visible.



This he said while speaking at the launching ceremony of World Bank's report on 'Pakistan Human Capital Review: Building Capabilities through-out Life' at a local hotel on Tuesday.

Murad Ali Shah said that the role of human capital in sustainable economic growth and development could not be ruled out, but the benefits of human capital investments often take time to materialize and may not always be immediately visible.

Human Capital Review (HCR) is part of the World Bank's broader 'Human Capital Project' that was launched in 2018, the CM said and added that the Review assessed the challenges and opportunities to improve Pakistan's human capital outcomes.

"Several priority outcomes that require improvement, including early childhood development, child malnu-

trition, out-of-school children, learning poverty, and labor market outcomes of the poor are analyzed to inform human capital development policies," he elaborated.

Murad said that the Human Capital Review made by the world shows that Pakistan could realize substantial economic growth by controlling its population growth rate, investing more in the supply and quality of health and education, and bringing women into the labor force.

Giving an example, he said that if Pakistan invested in human capital at the level of its aspirational peers, while ensuring its full utilization over the next 25 years — to 2047, the 100th anniversary of its founding—its GDP per capita could grow eight times more than under business as usual.

The chief minister said that unprecedented shocks, like the COVID-19 Pandemic and the devastating floods of 2022, have exacerbated the human capital challenges faced by the country and reversed several human capital gains that were made in the past few years.

He added that the human capital index in Pakistan was 0.41 which indicated the country's sub-par human development outcomes, however, there was immense potential to synergize efforts and undertake substantial investments centered on human capital enhancement for improved outcomes.

Talking about his government, the chief minister said that the Sindh government took several initiatives to tackle the COVID-19 Pandemic such as creating a dedicated fund, repurposing the development portfolio, holistic public health response, direct cash grants, ration distribution, and proactive communication that demonstrated how effective governance could yield desirable laudable results.

Murad said that the 2022 floods in Pakistan have caused catastrophic impacts in Pakistan, especially in Sindh. "The devastation in Sindh has severely affected 24 districts that have been

declared 'calamity-hit with more than 2.1 million houses damaged," he said and added every conceivable sector and facet of life has been adversely affected.

The Sindh government has undertaken several initiatives for post-flood resilient recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction for the people of the province in a climate-resilient manner, Murad Shah said and added that in addition to providing Immediate Shelter, food, water, health, and education to the affected population, his government has devised a comprehensive strategic action plan.

Talking about the plan, he said that it included providing long-term/low-cost Climate-Resilient Housing, -reviving agricultural activity & Livelihood including Livestock, - rebuilding damaged Irrigation infrastructure, -rehabilitating damaged provincial highways and internal road Infrastructure, restoring water & Sanitation facilities, and - rehabilitating damaged education and health facilities.

The CM said that 29.3 percent of the population in Sindh was under the poverty line in the calamity-hit districts and another 9.3 percent have been added due to the floods.

Cotton production target for next year set

Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: The cotton production target has been set for the cotton year 2023-24, the total target is 1 crore 27 lakh and 70 thousand bales, said Cotton Commissioner Dr. Zahid Mehmood

Dr. Zahid Mehmood said that the meeting of the Federal Committee for Cotton was held today in the Ministry of National Food Security and Research under the chairmanship of Federal Secretary for National Food Security and Research Zafar Hasan, in which all the honorable members of the committee participated. In the meeting, the cotton production target for cotton year 2023-24 was set, in which estimated production of 83 lakh and 36 thousand bales for Punjab, 4 million bales for Sindh, 4 lakh 30 thousand bales for Balochistan and 4 thousand bales for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

In the meeting, the total target of cotton cultivation area was set at 68 lakh 34 thousand acres, in which 49 lakh 86 thousand acres of Punjab, 16 lakh 59 thousand of Sindh, 5 thousand of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and 1 lakh 81 thousand acres of Balochistan will be cultivated.

Cotton Commissioner Dr. Zahid Mehmood said that the year 2023-24 will be the year of improvement of cotton and the Ministry of National Food Security and Research should make every effort to achieve the set target of cotton with the cooperation of the relevant agriculture departments of the four provincial governments.

World Immunization Week Privilege Workshop held

Bureau Report

LAHORE/ FAISALABAD: A World Immunization Week Privilege Workshop was organized at Kahnah Indus Hospital.

Vaccination is a safe and effective method against deadly diseases. Kahnah Indus Hospital Polio is still a threat to the future of many children, vaccination is a safe and effective method against diseases. Measures are being taken to protect children from diseases. The government is committed to ensure the supply of safe and effective vaccines, said SMA Professor Faizul Hasan while addressing the participants at the World Immunization Week Privilege Workshop at Kahana Indus Hospital.

A large number of people including OPD Coordinator Rizwan Sarwar, Consultant Medicine Dr. Z and other staff members participated in the participants, led by SMA Professor Faizul Hasan of Kahana Indus Hospital. Health Network Dr. Abdul Bari and Government of Punjab. An awareness session on World Immunization Week has been organized at Kahana Indus Hospital under the direction & routine of every year the last week of April is celebrated as World Immunization Week in which a vaccination drive is conducted across the province to create awareness among people about the importance and effectiveness of vaccination to prevent 12 dangerous diseases.

Islamic Social Sciences Forum to host 3rd Int'l Conference on Divine Economics

Staff Reporter

MUZAFFARABAD: The third International Conference on Divine Economics, hosted by the Hadi Foundation's Islamic Social Sciences Forum, is anticipated to bring significant changes to the world of economics. The conference will take place in the capital city of Azad Jammu and Kashmir from May 5 to May 7. The event aims to challenge the conventional approach to economics by exploring the role of religion, ethics, values, and spirituality in the economy and society.

The conference will provide a unique platform for prominent researchers, academicians, and experts from around the world to present their latest findings and challenge Western economic theory, which neglects the importance of religion, ethics, and values in economic ideas. The University of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, State and other banks, financial institutions, and AERC are among the organizations collaborating in organizing the event.

The opening session of the conference will be chaired by the Vice-Chancellor of UAJK, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Kaleem Abbasi, and attended by distinguished guests, including Qasim Nawaz, Executive Director of the State Bank of Pakistan.

Action against violators

KARACHI: A traffic police official issuing challan to vehicle violation on the traffic rule.



Photo: Online

Good governance initiative starts in AJK

Abdul Majeed Tahir

MUZAFFARABAD: In the Azad Jammu and Kashmir, the implementation of the orders of the Prime Minister of the Azad State of Jammu and Kashmir Chaudhry Anwarul Haq regarding good governance has started. The process has reached the final stage, the report of illegal recruitment in the education department from 2019 to 2021 has been prepared, while the government committee established in this regard has also started work by holding meetings under the chairmanship of commissioners and deputy commissioners in the three administrative divisions of Azad Kashmir. Institutions



were enabled up to the level. According to the details and in the light of the instructions of the Prime Minister and in the light of the notification issued by the Department of Services and General Administration, all the relevant secretariats have started implementing the orders of the Prime Minister from the subordinate departments, which has significantly improved the situation of good governance in the AJK territory. There has been an improvement which has been welcomed by the citizens by

all walks of life.

According to the citizens, Azad Kashmir has got an honest, capable, worthy and honorable leader in the form of the Prime Minister, who is free from corruption and whose heart is full of pain for the people. At present, the three commissioners and DIGs of Azad Kashmir are in touch with the administration and the police and are submitting reports on the implementation of the Prime Minister's orders to the higher authorities. At the district level, the officials of the finance department, health department and education department are checking the attendance of the staff in the field and action has been taken against the staff and

officers who are absent and do not adhere to the office hours.

In Kotli, the DHO on Tuesday suspended 16 officials who were absent from medical institutions in Sarsawah and Panjeera. Among those suspended are five civil dispensaries Kalah, three civil dispensaries Panjeera and eight rural health centers Sirsawah, while ten employees have been questioned. They also include the description of two doctors of grade 17 and grade 18 who were not found on duty as reported. They said that Kotli district. Strict action will be taken against the absent staff in the rest of the tehsils as well. All employees across the district should ensure their attendance.

NEPRA concludes public hearing on KE's generation tariff petition

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) concluded its public hearing today on KE's tariff petition for its existing power generation plants. During the hearing, KE's leadership shed light on details regarding issues framed by the Regulatory Authority on its Generation Tariff Petition.

It is pertinent to note that this hearing and its decision is expected to not have any impact on the consumer tariff charged in monthly bills issued to customers, which is governed by the uniform or 'equal' tariff policy.

Rs251b allocated for projects of South Punjab: Captain (R) Saqib Zafar



Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: The Additional Chief Secretary South Punjab Capt. (Retd) Saqib Zafar has said that the fast-track development of the region was the top agenda of the South Punjab Secretariat. He said 251 billion rupees have been allocated for the projects of South Punjab under the Annual Development Programme and 78 percent of the funds released for the schemes have been spent.

He has directed the administration to prepare a development plan for D.G Khan District keeping in mind the needs of the future ten years. He has clarified that in case of lapse of funds of development projects, the concerned officer will be held responsible. He has directed to get the wheat procurement target and to launch a crackdown against the elements involved in wheat and flour smuggling and hoarding.

He was presiding over a review meeting regarding the Annual Development Program, wheat procurement campaign and cotton harvest, held at Commissioner's Office Dera Ghazi Khan. All the administrative Secretaries of South Punjab and Commissioner D.G Khan Dr. Nasir Mehmood Bashir attended the meet-

ing. Deputy Commissioner D.G Khan Shahid Zaman gave a briefing on this occasion.

Additional Chief Secretary South Punjab Capt. (Retd) Saqib Zafar said the delay in the completion of the projects increases their cost, so the completion of the development projects be ensured within the specified period. He said every penny of the nation and it must be spent with utmost integrity and site of schemes be visited to ensure high quality of construction projects.

Capt. (Retd) Saqib Zafar said restoration of flood-affected infrastructure in D.G Khan and Rajanpur be ensured on priority basis. He said the emergency block of DG Khan Institute of Cardiology will be made functional by June 30. He further said South Punjab is leading the wheat procurement campaign, therefore no negligence regarding food security will be tolerated. He directed to accelerate procurement campaign to achieve the target. Additional Chief Secretary South Punjab also directed to provide full support to the cotton farmers and said the government has fixed minimum support price of cotton at Rs 8500 per 40 kilograms.

Chairman BoD NTDC lauds NTDC management

For setting up a state-of-the art training center at TSG New Kot Lakpat Lahore

Our Correspondent

LAHORE: Chairman Board of Directors NTDC, Mr. Naveed Ismail has appreciated the NTDC management for setting up a state-of-the art training center at the TSG training center in Lahore. This would be a significant step towards advancing the skills and knowledge of the company's workforce.

He was addressing a meeting during his visit of TSG center Lahore. He said that the increasing demand for electricity requires the cooperation of skilled and well-informed professionals who can keep up with emerging technologies in the power sector, and for this reason, the training center needs to be aligned with international standards and make it an advanced institute of excellence.

Engr. Ismail told the gathering that he will always support an enhancement



LAHORE: Chairman BOD NTDC Engr. Naveed Ismail visited NTDC TSG training center at New Kot Lakpat Lahore. MD NTDC Engr Dr. Rana Abdul Jabbar Khan also briefed him about training center.

in budget for training & development and the BoD has already advised to at least double the T&D budget. He also emphasized on the recognition of

NTDC in the sports arena and advised that NTDC should establish its own identity / setup for sports related activities.

While addressing the gathering, Managing Director NTDC, Engr. Dr. Rana Abdul Jabbar Khan, highlighted the efforts that have been made over the years to establish a state-of-the-art TSG Training Center. He briefed the Chairman on the progress made over the last two years and pledged continued efforts towards the achievement of the vision of Chairman BoD NTDC.

During the visit, Chairman BOD also laid the foundation stone of a masjid in the TSG Training center and visited the Model Grid, Operation Training Simulator Room, Protection Relay Room and Simulator classroom. He also witnessed the demonstration of a live line washing activity on an energized transmission line. DMD (P&D) NTDC, Company Secretary, GMS, Chief Engineers, Managers, CFO and senior officers of NTDC were also present during the visit.



Islamabad
15° - 23° Clear

SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr 3:47 am
Zohr 12:05 pm
Asr 4:53 pm
Maghrib 6:51 pm
Isha 8:24 pm

EMERGENCY

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

Women Police Stations

Islamabad 9222596
Rawalpindi 9270601-20

ENQUIRY

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

HOSPITALS

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

DEPARTMENTS

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

AIOU to close admissions tomorrow

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has set tomorrow (May 4, Thursday) as the last day of its 2nd phase admissions of post-graduate programs for the semester spring 2023. Programs offered in this phase include Associate degree (BA, B.Com), Associate degree in (Education, Human Resource Management and, Islamic Banking and Marketing), B.Ed (1.5 Years, 2.5 Years and 4 Years), BS (ODL programs), BBA and Postgraduate Diploma programs.

Admission forms and prospectuses for these programs are available on the university's website (www.aiou.edu.pk). Students have been instructed to apply online and submit fee by the evening of May 4 to avoid the late fee charges. (Continuing students) have been allowed to enroll till May 11 without late fee charges.

Moreover, the university has completed the process of admissions for matriculation and FA programs and appointment of tutors. Books have been dispatched to the students, and they are instructed to prepare the assignments as per the schedule and send them to the respective tutors in time. It is pertinent to mention here that the assignments received after the due dates will be considered late and will not be acceptable.

MOFA to facilitate business community in promoting Pakistan's exports

ICCI is planning to promote tourism and intends to celebrate Africa Day

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that Pakistan needs a great boost in exports to improve its economy and said that MOFA should cooperate with the business community in this regard.

He said this while talking to Director General OIC & Economic Diplomacy Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Asma Rabbani during a meeting with her along with a delegation. Director ED Bilal Akram Shah and Assistant Director ED Hira Fatima were also present on the occasion.

Ahsan Bakhtawari said that the close cooperation of Pakistani foreign missions with the private sector is the key to promote exports. He said that the Ethiopian Ambassador in Pakistan is very active in promoting business interests of his country and stressed that our ambassadors should also work hard to explore new markets for exports.

He said that ICCI is planning to promote tourism and intends to celebrate



Africa Day to highlight exports potential for Pakistan in the African market, so MOFA should cooperate with ICCI in this regard. He also highlighted the importance of close links between the Chambers of Commerce and the Foreign Missions of Pakistan to improve the economy.

Addressing the delegation, Asma Rabbani, DG OIC & ED, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, lauded the role of the business community in the development of the economy. She said that a better understanding of the international market is important for exports promotion and assured that MOFA will cooper-

ate with the business community for better access to the global market. She said that MOFA will act as a bridge between Pakistani missions and chambers of commerce for closer ties to promote business and economic interests of Pakistan in the international market. She stressed the need for strong linkages between MOFA, Ministry of Commerce, BOI and ICCI to improve Pakistan's economy. She said that ICCI should prepare comprehensive proposals to promote Pakistan's exports in Africa, Central Asia and other markets, which would be considered for implementation.

Learning has no boundaries

ISLAMABAD: Master Ayub is teaching the students at Open Air School as good gesture, at Sector F-6 in Federal Capital.

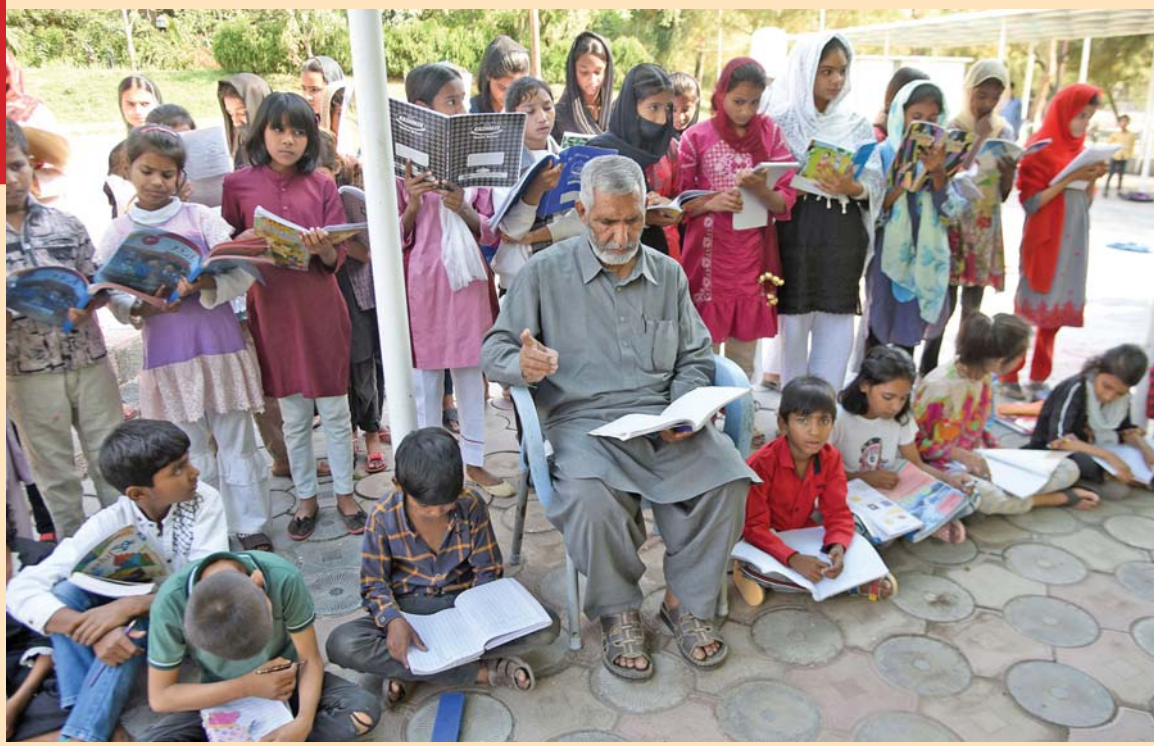


Photo: Online by Raja Farid

Corona vaccine clinical trial continues at MIH

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Amidst the surge in COVID-19 pandemic, Maroof International Hospital Clinical Trial Unit is conducting a clinical trial involving a covid-19 vaccine LVRNA021 (mRNA based) booster dose targeting the Delta BA.5 strain as well as Omicron variant B.1.1.529.

Maroof International Hospital is part of a multicenter phase III study for the COVID-19 booster vaccine LVRNA021. The trial has been approved by the National Bioethics Committee (NBC) Pakistan and the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP).

LVRNA021 vaccine is co-de-



veloped by AIM Vaccine Co., Ltd., Ningbo Rongnan Biological Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd LiveRNA Therapeutics Inc. It is an mRNA-based vaccine targeting different variants of COVID-19 encoding the SARS-CoV-2 protein of the Delta and Omicron BA.5 strain (Delta: BA.5-1:3) as well. The phase 1 and phase 2 Investigator Initiated Trials (IIT) of the SARS-CoV-2 bivalent mRNA vaccine (LVRNA021)

have been completed and the study results demonstrated a favorable safety profile. The results have proved that the vaccine is well tolerated, safe and immunogenic, supporting the next stage of clinical trials.

These trials are also being conducted at 7 different sites in many cities including Islamabad, Lahore, Peshawar and Karachi for recruiting volunteers in Pakistan.

The trial participants are selected after necessary blood tests and after meeting the eligibility criteria mentioned in the trial protocol and standard operating procedures as approved by DRAP, NBC and Maroof ethics committee.

Beaconhouse launches Pakistan's first incubator for school going students



Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Beaconhouse, Pakistan's educational institutions has launched the country's first business incubator for students aged 10-19 years. SparkTank by Beaconhouse is a unique platform for students from all public and private schools of the country. This ground-breaking initiative aims to develop the values of innovation and entrepreneurship from an early age.

After successful events in Lahore and Karachi, the launch of SparkTank concluded on its third day with an exciting event in Islamabad. Hundreds of applications had been received from across Pakistan and shortlisted students got the unique opportunity to showcase their business ideas, products and services to a diverse audience including entrepreneurs, investors, industry experts, and members of the startup community. An exclusive entrepreneurship exhibition showcasing more than 30 ventures was also set up where students participated amongst successful startups including Vceela, Tarsil, Milkify, The Stem Educators, Modulous Tech, Asani.io, Tameer Ghar, Raw Easy, Dollat, Youniform, PayMob, Triisum, HomeVism, Mountainshop, Recce, VisionRD, Kyther Tech, Chattha Bio Care, LearnOBots, and Stem-Minds.

Keynote speakers at the three events were leading computer scientist and CEO Khudi Ventures, Umar Saif; Head of National Incubation Center Karachi, Omar Abedin; and Pro-Rector Research, Innovation and Commercialization at NUST, Rizwan Riaz. Panellists and prominent guests included Jehan Ara TI, founder Catalyst Labs; Pir Saad Ahsanuddin, founding partner of Boston Equity Partners and co-founder Cinepax; Monis Rahman, chairman and CEO Naseeb Networks; Furqan Kidwai, founder & CEO of Dawai; Sameer Chishti, General Partner of SparkLabs; Faisal Aftab, founder and General Partner of Zayn Capital; and Amneh Shaikh, founder Polly and Other Stories, amongst others.

Speaking about the initiative, Kasim Kasuri, CEO Beaconhouse School System said, "We are thrilled to launch SparkTank by Beaconhouse. As the first business incubator for primary and secondary school students, we aim to provide a platform for young entrepreneurs from all over the country. By promoting entrepreneurship from an early age, we can equip the youth with the skills and mindset necessary to tackle the challenges of the future. The response we have received so far has been overwhelming, and I am really looking forward to seeing the potential of students who will now enrol into the incubator."

Students can apply online on SparkTank's website to enrol into a 3-month incubation programme. It offers an extensive range of services to support students at every stage of the business development process—from conducting market research to developing a prototype, and ultimately to launching and scaling their businesses—all at zero cost. Students will be guided by a dedicated team of experienced mentors, educators, and professionals to promote creative thinking and business acumen.

NUST students display mural art on a huge canvas

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: In a stirring display of artistic prowess, creativity and teamwork, NUST Marketing & Communications joined by a spirited team of students has successfully unveiled the first-ever wall mural at NUST on as large a canvas as the rear of Power Zone, one of the vast sports and fitness complexes at the university's Islamabad campus.

It has taken months of unparalleled commitment and perseverance for the team to realise the mural that features a mesmerising blend of colours, shapes, and designs. From bold and vibrant brushstrokes to delicate and intricate patterns, the mural is a true testament to the power of collaboration and imagination, and a reminder of the incredible things that can happen when people work together to achieve a common goal.

To celebrate the culmination of this unprecedented initiative at the university and recognise the magnificent work of the project team, an event was organised at the mural site, which was graced by the presence of Engr Javed Mahmood Bukhari, Rector NUST, members of faculty and staff and students from different NUST institutions. Rector NUST extolled the artistry and dedication of the student team and NUST Marketing & Communications in executing this joint enterprise.

Rector NUST also presented shields and certificates as a token of appreciation to students and staff.

Forwarding divisive, blood-soaked agenda

Raising Hindu militias reflects Modi's criminal intent: Mushaal

Our Correspondent

ISLAMABAD: Chairperson of Peace and Culture Organization, Mushaal Hussein Mullick lambasted the supremacist Narendra Modi-led hindutva regime for raising 5,000 well-equipped and well-trained hindu militia in line with notorious RSS militants in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK) to trigger a communal strife to divert world's attention from Kashmir freedom movement that entered into a decisive phase.

Mushaal, who is wife of incarcerated senior Hurriyat leader Yasin Malik, said in a statement on Tuesday that the notorious Indian authorities raised hindu militia to terrorize Muslims and suppress the Kashmiris' ongoing freedom struggle.

The chairperson said that the BJP was playing with fire by creating a pretext for religious conflict in IOJK, as they wanted to forward their divisive and blood-soaked agenda.

She said that the arming hindus with the criminal intent to quell the legitimate and rightful freedom movement of Kashmiris would exacerbate communal tensions in the disputed region, which was classified as the world's most militarized zone with a 1:8 military and civilian ratio.

The hurriyat leader contended that the world powers and human rights organizations should now accept that Modi had criminal mindset and a real and potent threat for regional as well as world peace; hence they should isolate him and boycott the G20 summit.

Mushaal stated that the BJP was promoting religious conflict in the troubled region to crush the Kashmiri struggle after exhausting all brutal and inhuman tactics to defuse the flames of the struggle for right to self-determination.

She went on to say that the new militia units, known as Village Defense Guards, would only exacerbate Kashmir's woe, as such groups were also raised in the 1990s, who were involved in ruthlessly killing of innocent Kashmiris, besides committing other heinous crimes including murder, rape and extortions.

Ethiopia's successful peace process offers lessons for Sudan: Envoy

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan H.E. Jemal Beker Abdula on Tuesday said Sudan could learn from successful peace process of his country for ending the conflict which had entered into third week.

Addressing to Pakistan-based ambassadors from the member states of Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) here, he said dialogue was only way forward for resolving disputes to bring lasting peace in the region.

The meeting of the ambassadors of IGAD member states was called by the Sudan's Envoy in Pakistan to brief his counterparts about the latest situation



in his country.

Referring to the speech delivered by Prime Minister of FDRE H.E. Dr. Abiy Ahmed in an event recently held at Addis Ababa to commemorate conclusion of Ethiopia's Peace Process, he said

the prime minister had also urged the warring parties in Sudan to learn from Ethiopia's peace process for ending their conflict.

"It is on record how much Africa in general and Ethiopia in particu-

lar suffered from the Tigray war, but it is determination of our people and support of the whole Africa and other international partners which steered us out of the conflict," the ambassador said.

"Peace in Sudan is imperative for peace in entire Africa, so there is a dire need to end this conflict now through dialogue," he said while expressing Ethiopia's desire to help Sudan in resolving its issues.

The ambassador said Ethiopia has not only been supporting in evacuation process of stranded nationals from Sudan but also extending humanitarian support to the people of Sudan in such trying times.

He said Ethiopia had faced same kind of challenges but peaceful dialogue was the only option for all stakeholders to bring lasting peace to Sudan.

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China's mediating role between Palestine and Israel

It is a very welcome move that the neighboring country China is making efforts to establish peace in the Middle East. China has been moving forward to mediate between the two countries to resolve the conflict between Palestine and Israel, which has been unresolved for years. With this mediating role of China, the progress in the peace talks has been made. China promises to help end years of tension between Israel and Palestine.

It should be remembered that in 1948, after the basic civil war of Israel, Quds was divided into eastern and western areas. But east Quds is still not recognized in favor of Palestinians, while west Quds is occupied by Israel. Despite this, since the time of partition in the United Nations, several resolutions have been approved in favor of the Palestinians, which is the ongoing conflict and various attempts to find a solution reflect the violation of human rights. But they could not be implemented until today, because Israel has the support of World superpowers, behind which Israel is oppressing and torturing the Palestinians. These abuses include occupying Palestinian territories, reducing populations, locking women and children inside their homes, and engaging in atrocities such as killing families. And a long period of seventy years the freedom and autonomy of the Muslims of Palestine is not being recognized. That the Jews not only want to inflict mountains of oppression on the Muslims by approaching, but also want to expel the Muslims from there and occupy the first Qibla of the Muslims.

It is worth noting that during the conversation between the Chinese Foreign

Minister and the Israeli Foreign Minister, when the Chinese Foreign Minister made a good move on the part of both countries to reduce the tension between Saudi Arabia and Iran, Israel mentioned Iran's nuclear capability. Which is already a concern, not only to Israel but also to the world powers? The world powers themselves are equipped with all kinds of modern nuclear capabilities, but they are also worried about the use of this technology for the development of the Islamic world. Because they do not want to see the development of the countries of the Islamic world. China's progress in resolving all these issues, including Palestine, Israel, Arab countries and the Middle East, is welcome; on the other hand, the nuclear programs of the Muslim world are also closely watched by the world powers.

Allah says in Surah Al-Maida, verse 51 of the Holy Quran:

Translation: O you who believe, do not make friends of Jews and Christians, they are friends of each other, and whoever among you befriends them, then he is one of them. Indeed, Allah does not guide the unjust.

At this time, the closeness of all these countries to each other is not without any danger because they cannot be ignored by the superpowers behind and watching all of them. The enemy is slow to strike, even if years pass, but they never stop from Muslim hostility. After the peace agreement between Saudi Arabia and Iran, a summary of the efforts to negotiate peace

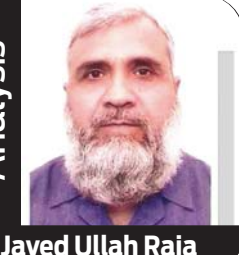
in Palestine and Israel shows that during the talks with the Palestinians, Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen said that the threat we are seeing in Iran's nuclear program "and demanded for... Therefore, it was said that China will help prevent Tehran from acquiring nuclear weapons. Eli Cohen also said that Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyadh al-Maliki said that China is willing to play a role in this. The Muslim enemy uses various tactics and methods to achieve their goals. Since our religion Islam teaches peace and reconciliation, we Muslims cannot even understand the tricks of the enemy. It is certain that any nuclear-capable Islamic country in the world is highly disliked by the world and the big powers.

Behind the Israel there are major world powers supporting it. And then the countries of our Islamic world agree with the big powers. These great powers of the world have captured the Islamic countries. Thus the Muslim world cannot do anything of its own accord. These are the reasons why today in Palestine, Kashmir, Bosnia and Herzegovina mountains of persecution are being heaped on Muslims everywhere, because disbelief is united and the Muslim world is divided and scattered. What is the power that can stand even in front of an Islamic country? History is a witness that on many occasions a few hundred people defeated millions. Today, our Islamic world is free and rich in resources, but we listen and believe everything they say.

Today, it is a sign of the hatred of the Islamic world by the world powers that the aggression and atrocities of the Indian army in Kashmir, the persecution of Israel in Palestine and the bombings of Gaza continue to persecute the Muslims. In addition, there are incidents of atrocities against Rohingya Muslims in Burma. In countries like Afghanistan, Syria, Libya and Yemen, the persecution of Muslims continues. Also, Muslims in India are being targeted and their rights are being violated. Attempts are even made to declare Muslims as terrorists. Attacks on Muslims through various terrorist attacks in Afghanistan and Pakistan are an argument for anti-Islam. It is important to mention here that incidents of persecution of Muslims are not only found in these countries but also in other regions of the world. There are many examples of atrocities on Muslims in Europe, America, Africa and other countries. Apart from these, it is also important to be aware of the attacks of non-Muslim organizations targeting Muslims around the world. For example, Muslims are targeted in bombings in New Zealand, Norway and Great Britain.

Therefore, today the Muslim world needs to come closer to each other and understand the moves of the enemy by mutual agreements. The first Qibla and the third largest mosque of the Muslims demand from the rulers of the Muslim world gather on one platform and call for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state based on the principle of Palestine's right to self-determination and the restoration of peace for Muslims all over the world.

Analysis



Javed Ullah Raja

CPEC: A decade long saga of undeterred cooperation

As China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project matures to decade-long affable cooperation between Pakistan and China, both nations are celebrating this initiative as part of the Belt and Road Initiative.

It was almost ten years back when China signed a multibillion-dollar CPEC Framework Agreement with Pakistan under its remarkable Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) that remained central to Pakistan's economic growth and greater regional connectivity.

China had sent a loud and clear message of friendship and cooperation across borders by agreeing to invest US\$ 46 billion under CPEC, at a time when no country was willing to invest even a single dollar in Pakistan. This portfolio later extended to US\$ 62 billion.

The launch of historic China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) program during the visit of then Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif to Beijing in July 2013, endorsed the all-weather and time-tested friendship between the two countries. The IDCPC Minister, in response appreciated Planning Minister's role in furthering the CPEC projects during current and earlier tenures.

Senior Chinese leadership including Assistant Foreign Minister Nong Rong, Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong and Vice Chairman of China's National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), Li Chunlin spoke highly of Ahsan Iqbal terming him "Mr CPEC" and 'key role player' in making CPEC a success.

After an unpleasant era of Pak-China bilateral ties during the PTI government, both China and Pakistan are once again on way to maintain momentum of overall economic cooperation.

The CPEC's next phase envisages industrial cooperation and Business to Business links. As 2023 is year of CPEC's decade, a delegation of Chinese scholars will be invited to Pakistan to observe progress on CPEC.

Recently, almost 11 sessions of CPEC's top forum, Joint Coordination Committee (JCC) have been held including the April 10 most important and latest 'progress review' during Ahsan Iqbal's meeting with Vice Chairman NDRC, Li Chunlin.

The meeting resolved, "As year 2023 marks the Decade of CPEC and the strong partnership between Pakistan and China, both Pakistan and China are celebrating 10 Years of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and CPEC on July 5, 2023 whereby high-level Chinese delegations are scheduled to visit Pakistan to witness achievements made since the inception of CPEC."

Both sides expressed a desire to sign minutes of the 11th Joint Cooperation Council (JCC) meeting before end of April 2023 to pave way for relevant Technical Joint Working Groups (JWGs) to hold meetings by mid-May 2023 and workout tangible outcomes for 12th JCC Meeting planned for July 2023.

Total planned investment under CPEC is US\$ 62 billion between FY2015 and FY2030 out of which projects worth \$27.4 billion have been realized mostly in energy sector like power generation, coal mining and transmission lines.

During last 10 years, over 30 projects directly or indirectly generated 200,000 jobs, more than 6,000 MW of electricity added to national grid, 809 kilometers highway built and 886 kilometers of transmission lines installed for the first time in country's history.



The future of work will be disruptive, but it need not be dystopian

Saadia Zahidi

It is hard to overestimate how tumultuous the last few years have been for workers around the world. A pandemic led to lockdowns for most people and then cautious, partial returns to work or job losses in industries that never fully recovered. Almost immediately, this was followed by the disruption of war and soaring energy and food prices, causing a decline in real wages. Technology adoption, already accelerating before and during the pandemic, potentially poses a new wave of transformation, especially to white-collar work through the rise of generative artificial intelligence. And now a strong push for a much-needed green transformation is also leading to expectations of future displacement in carbon-intensive roles in favor of growth in emerging green jobs and skills.

Each new change alone would be difficult for affected workers to navigate, but together they have disrupted livelihoods broadly and created widespread uncertainty about the future. When uncertainty is this high, forecasting can help, not to generate firm predictions but to provide ways of thinking about the challenges ahead and preparing better for the multiple futures that may unfold.

This is not surprising. Generative AI is expected to be adopted by nearly 75 percent of surveyed companies and is second only to humanoid and industrial robots in terms of expectations of job losses, most likely to affect bank tellers, cashiers, clerks, secretaries and accounting. Yet the biggest threat to jobs is still seen to come not from technology, but slowing economic growth, the rising costs of inputs and weaker purchasing power among consumers.

We also find that almost half of an individual's skills — 44 percent — will need to change on

average across all jobs. The skills with the highest share of companies reporting growing demand include analytical and creative thinking, followed by technological literacy, curiosity and lifelong learning, resilience and flexibility, systems thinking and AI and big data. Skills with less demand include global citizenship, sensory processing abilities and manual dexterity, endurance and precision.

In the Middle East and North Africa, the change in core skills will be 43 percent, lower than the global average, and companies are prioritizing analytical thinking, creative thinking and AI and big data for reskilling and upskilling workers.

For many individuals, the concurrent shift in the wider economic environment, the integration of new technologies at work and the expectation of future uncertainty translates into frustration with current job prospects, fear about future ones and despair about growing economic disparity in the future. For many companies, there is concern about the talent required to thrive in the new context: 60 percent of companies are concerned about skills gaps and 54 percent worry about being able to attract talent. And for governments, particularly those that have underinvested in education and lifelong learning systems thus far, human capital will become the key impediment to navigating the new economic landscape.

How, then, should learners, workers, employers and governments prepare for the future of jobs?

In a technology-intensive, greener and potentially deglobalizing world, local skills development will matter more than ever.

For today's students, analytical and interpersonal skills as well as the ability to understand and work with technology will be critical. Every student — regardless of their chosen fields — should aim to build these generalist skills to be ready for a rapidly changing future.

For today's workers in declining fields, there

is a major reskilling and transition effort needed, whereas for those in changing or growing fields there is a need for upskilling and developing the ability for constant learning. The good news is that skilling is possible fast and online learning can offer a level playing field: Workers from all education levels — including those without college or graduate education — take the same time to acquire online skill credentials.

However, it cannot be on individual learners and workers alone to negotiate a complex new terrain. Governments must provide resources and a roadmap. This presents a major and unprecedented dual challenge for policymaking. Governments must balance support for innovation with the regulation needed to make new technologies safe and, at the same time, support workers through safety nets, care systems and job centers, while making major investments in skilling systems, rapid certifications and partnerships with the education sector, businesses and nonprofits alike, to drive change at scale.

Employers must play their part through investment in reskilling and upskilling. Most expect to see a return on investment within one year, making training the most effective and responsible course of action. The best employers go further, supporting workers' transitions outside the company when required, prioritizing safety and well-being, fostering diversity, equity and inclusion, and placing a premium on taking a skills-first approach over one that prioritizes qualifications or job history. Employers that take these actions close skills gaps faster and are proven to enhance loyalty, productivity and motivation.

There is no doubt that the future of work will be disruptive. But it need not be dystopian. Instead, it can be an opportunity to lay the foundations for putting people firmly at the center of the new global economy. (Courtesy: Arab News)

Saadia Zahidi is Managing Director of the World Economic Forum.

The roots of Sudan's internal crisis

Seyid Ould Abah

Since April 15, Sudan has been experiencing a violent confrontation between the two armed heads of power, foreshadowing a dark moment in the country's history.

This pivotal country, at the crossroads of the Sahel, East Africa and the Near East, has experienced deep political crises since its independence in 1956, with successive military coups and civil wars.

Initially devised by British colonial engineering as a multiethnic and multifair central state encompassing disparate geographical and cultural spaces, the country has long suffered from the domination of the political-military elites of the north and center over the peripheral provinces, including the Christian south, which finally gained its independence in 2011 after decades of armed conflict.

The secession of Southern Sudan, however, did not end the country's internal problems, with other rebellions emerging in Darfur, Kordofan and the Blue Nile province. These local conflicts have their origins in the distant past and are intertwined with complex regional challenges, including problems in the sub-Saharan Africa region.

The internal crisis is by no means limited to the struggles of the political clans, which we can classify into two main camps: The Forces of Freedom and Change that were supposed to manage the transitional period and the components of the Democratic Bloc, made up of the political-military movements close to the ruling military council.

The alternative envisaged is not confined to the (impossible) persistence of military rule or to the (largely utopian) transition to civil democracy. Both schemes leave the crucial questions of

the Sudanese political equation unanswered.

The main issue at stake concerns the modalities involved in any new restoration of the Sudanese state model, which is in deep trouble. Some people are already speaking of a new and inevitable division of Sudanese territory, with the "state of the river and the sea" (the north, the center and the east) having to separate itself from the "ungovernable" peripheries, which are said to be the causes of the "Sudanese disease." This approach, though a minority in Sudanese politics, reflects the turbulent and critical landscape, fueled by ethnic and tribalist ideologies that are resistant to the idea of a central national state. The two major nationalist parties — the Mahdist National Umma Party and the Khatmithe Democratic Unionist Party — are no longer able to provide a framework for internal political debate. These two parties, which in the past shared the representative apparatus of Sudanese democracy, no longer have a voice that is strong enough to pacify the boiling political scene.

The militarization of the political game can be seen in several phenomena, including the ideological reformation of the national army undertaken by Bashir, the formation of community support groups as the RSF and the rise of armed rebel movements in areas of conflict with the central government.

The ongoing confrontation at the top of the military regime can only be understood if these two aspects of Sudanese political life are taken into consideration: The obstacles to the emergence of a united and supportive nation and the endemic violence due to the intense militarization of the local political field. (Courtesy: Arab News)

Seyid Ould Abah is a professor of philosophy and social sciences at the University of Nouakchott, Mauritania, and a columnist in several media outlets. He is the author of several books on philosophy and political and strategic thought.

COP28 chair urges tripling of renewables capacity by 2030

Al Jaber's call marked a public endorsement of a target laid out by the International Energy Agency

DUBAI: Sultan Al Jaber, the president of this year's UN climate talks hosted by the United Arab Emirates, on Tuesday called on participants to drastically ramp up their use of renewable energy.

"We will accelerate delivery in sectors like renewables that must triple capacity by 2030 and double it again by 2040," Al Jaber said in a speech at the opening of the Petersberg Climate Dialogue — a meeting of climate diplomats in Berlin.

Al Jaber's call marked a public endorsement of a target laid out by the International Energy Agency. Last month at a closed-door meeting with G7 leaders in Japan, he had also raised the target.

At the same time, he did not call for a complete end to the use of fossil fuels.

Rather, the COP28 chair said the focus must be on removing the emissions they produce while stepping up renewables.

"We must be laser focused on phasing out fossil fuel emissions, while phasing up viable, affordable zero-carbon alternatives," said Al Jaber in his speech ahead of the climate summit in November.

Earlier this year, the UN's climate expert panel said the world risks crossing the key 1.5-degree Celsius



us global warming limit in about a decade, urging a dramatic reduction in planet-heating emissions.

While solar and wind power are already increasing dramatically, the UN report said that existing fossil fuel infrastructure will be enough to push the world beyond 1.5C, absent the use of costly and emerging technology to capture and store the carbon pollution.

Also read: India, China propose 'multiple pathways' on cutting use of fossil fuels

The COP28 chair also used his speech to call on developed countries to deliver a long promised

\$100-billion climate package for developing countries.

"This is holding up progress. And as part of my outreach, I am requesting donor countries to provide a definitive assessment on the delivery of this commitment before COP28," Al Jaber said.

In 2009, the chaotic UN climate summit in Copenhagen saw rich nations promise \$100 billion a year by 2020 to the Global South, but last year the OECD said the amount delivered was still \$17 billion short.

At the same time, the funding needed for developing countries to stop burning planet-heating fossil fuels and prepare for tomorrow's climate disasters has already far outstripped that sum.

Campaigners are pushing for a redesign of the global financial architecture to help countries cope, as many emerging nations grapple with rising costs, soaring debts and extreme weather events.

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock, who is hosting the Petersberg dialogue, however, reported that the pledged sum may finally be in reach.

"The good news is we are on the way to finally reaching this \$100-billion sum this year," she said. AFP

Int'l police arrest 288 in massive dark web bust



THE HAGUE: A global crackdown has halted a major "dark web" marketplace, with international police arresting 288 suspects and recovering more than 50 million euros (\$54.8 million) in cash and virtual currency, Europol said on Tuesday.

"In an operation coordinated by Europol and involving nine countries, law enforcement have seized the illegal dark web marketplace 'Monopoly Market' and arrested 288 suspects involved in buying or selling drugs on the dark web," the Hague-based agency said in a statement. AFP

Muslims, Jews, Sikhs get coronation role as King Charles reaches out

LONDON: Rabbi Nicky Liss won't be watching King Charles III's coronation. He'll be doing something he considers more important: praying for the monarch on the Jewish sabbath.

On Saturday, he will join rabbis across Britain in reading a prayer in English and Hebrew that gives thanks for the new king in the name of the "one God who created us all."

Liss, the rabbi of Highgate Synagogue in north London, said British Jews appreciated Charles' pledge to promote the co-existence of all faiths and his record of supporting a multifaith society during his long apprenticeship as heir to the throne.

"When he says he wants to be a defender of faiths, that means the world because our history hasn't always been so simple and we haven't always lived freely; we haven't been able to practice our religion," Liss told The Associated Press. "But knowing that King Charles acts this way and speaks this way is tremendously comforting."

At a time when religion is fueling tensions around the world — from Hindu nationalists in India to Jewish settlers in the West Bank and fundamentalist Christians in the United States — Charles is trying to bridge the differences between the faith groups that make up Britain's increasingly diverse society.

Achieving that goal is critical to the new king's efforts to show that the monarchy, a 1,000-year-old institution with Christian roots, can still represent the people of modern, multicultural Britain.

But Charles, the supreme governor of the Church of England, faces a very different country than the one that adoringly celebrated his mother's coronation in 1953.

Seventy years ago, more than 80 percent of the people of England were Christian, and the mass migration that would change the face of the nation was just beginning. That figure has now dropped below half, with 37 percent saying they have no religion, 6.5 percent calling themselves Muslim and 1.7 percent Hindu, according to the latest census figures. The change is even more pronounced in London, where more than a quarter of the population have a non-Christian faith.

Charles recognized that change long before he became king last September.

As far back as the 1990s, Charles suggested that he would like to be known as "the defender of faith," a small but hugely symbolic change from the monarch's traditional title of "defender of the faith," meaning Christianity. It's an important distinction for a man who believes in the healing power of yoga and once called Islam "one of the greatest treasuries of accumulated wisdom and spiritual knowledge available to humanity."

The king's commitment to diversity will be on display at his coronation, when religious leaders representing the Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh traditions will for the first time play an active role in the ceremonies.

"I have always thought of Britain as a 'community of communities,'" Charles told faith leaders in September.

"That has led me to understand that the Sovereign has an additional duty — less formally recognized but to be no less diligently discharged. It is the duty to protect the diversity of our country, including by protecting the space for faith itself and its practice through the religions, cultures, traditions and beliefs to which our hearts and minds direct us as individuals."

That's not an easy task in a country where religious and cultural differences sometimes boil over.

Just last summer, Muslim and Hindu youths clashed in the city of Leicester. The main opposition Labour Party has struggled to rid itself of antisemitism, and the government's counterterrorism strategy has been criticized for focusing on Muslims. Then there are the sectarian differences that still separate Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland.

Such tensions underscore the crucial need for Britain to have a head of state who personally works to promote inclusivity, said Farhan Nizami, director of the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies.

Charles has been the center's patron for 30 years, lending his stature to Nizami's effort to build an academic hub for studying all facets of the Islamic world, including history, science and literature, as well as religion. During those years, the center moved from a nondescript wooden structure to a complex that has its own library, conference facilities and a mosque complete with dome and minaret.

"It is very important that we have a king who has been consistently committed to (inclusivity)," Nizami said. "It is so relevant in the modern age, with all the mobility, with the difference and diversity that exists, that the head of this state should bring people together, both by example and action."

Direct flights resume

AUCKLAND: Tourists pose for photos at the Auckland International Airport in Auckland, New Zealand. The direct flights between Beijing and Auckland in New Zealand officially resumed on Tuesday as an Air China aircraft carrying over 200 Chinese tourists landed at the Auckland International Airport.



Photo: Xinhua

Direct flights resume between Beijing and Auckland

AUCKLAND: The direct flights between Beijing and Auckland in New Zealand officially resumed on Tuesday as an Air China aircraft carrying over 200 Chinese tourists landed at the Auckland International Airport.

The services had been suspended for more than three years due to the COVID-19 pandemic travel restrictions.

The Chinese tourists were welcome by a special ceremony featured with traditional Maori dance and singing at the airport on Tuesday afternoon.

The restart of Beijing-Auckland flights was a "big happy event" for both countries, said Chinese Ambassador to New Zealand Wang Xiaolong, who was present at the ceremony, adding that New Zealand was one of the top destinations for Chinese students and tourists before the pandemic.

The resumption of flights has provided more convenience for the exchange of people and goods between the two countries and will inject new impetus into the development of bilateral relations, he said.

"It inspires me tremendously that despite the COVID-19 pandemic, our cooperation remains robust and dynamic. China is by far New Zealand's biggest trading partner and our bilateral trade hit a record high of 40 billion New Zealand dollars (248 billion U.S. dollars) in 2022," he said.

Scott Tasker, Chief Customer Officer of Auckland International Airport, said that the people-to-people connection is an important part of China-New Zealand relations, and the resumption of air routes will strengthen the connection between the two countries.

Currently, direct flights are conducted between Beijing and Auckland four times every week, according to Air China.

Xue Jun, general manager of Air China's Asia-Pacific headquarters, said that "I believe that with the continued support of our travel partners, passenger traffic between New Zealand and China will rebound and the air transportation bridge between our two countries will be even stronger."

Liu Yang, chairman of a travel agency in Beijing who was on board the Air China flight, said that the resumption of flights is very convenient for tourists in China, and many of his customers are looking forward to visiting New Zealand.

Taliban say issues 'difficult to resolve'

Without presence in UN-led talks on Afghanistan

KABUL: The Taliban said on Tuesday that resolving issues in Afghanistan would be difficult without their participation at the UN-led meeting on the country in Qatar.

Envoys from the US, China, Saudi Arabia and other countries gathered in Doha on Monday for two days of closed-door talks on Afghanistan hosted by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

The meeting aims at "achieving a common understanding within the international community on how to engage with the Taliban" on various issues, including women's and girls' rights, the UN said.

Suhail Shaheen, the Taliban's ambassador-designate to the UN, told Arab News: "Now, when there is no more representative of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan to present their views and to present the position of Afghanistan, so it will be difficult to resolve the issues that are palatable and acceptable to all sides."

He added that the Taliban's absence was one of the meeting's "shortcomings."

"The delegation of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan should be invited in order to seek a true solution for issues,"



he said.

"But in such cases when there is no presence of our delegation, instead of solving the issue it will create or widen more the gap between the two sides."

"Right now, we do not know exactly what the demands are."

The Taliban was open to "positive interactions" with the international community, its deputy spokesman Bilal Karimi told Agence France-Presse news agency on Monday, adding that the US "puts pressure" on countries and prevents them from "formal and open engagement" with the Afghan government.

The Taliban government has imposed increasing restrictions on

women since taking over Afghanistan in 2021, including banning them from working for the UN and limiting educational opportunities for girls.

The Taliban previously said that the ban on Afghan women working for the UN was an "internal issue" that would not create obstacles to the global organization's operations. The UN said it faced an "appalling choice" about whether it could continue its mission in the country amid widespread condemnation and calls to reverse its decisions.

The UN last month launched a review of its operations in Afghanistan following the ban on its Afghan women workers, which is expected to continue until May 5. Arab News

Dubai welcomes 4.67 million overnight visitors in Q1

On track to becoming the most visited international destination

ISLAMABAD: Dubai welcomed 4.67 million international overnight visitors in the first quarter of 2023, compared to 3.97 million tourists during the same period in 2022. This marks a 17% YoY growth and the city's best Q1 performance since the pandemic, placing it firmly on track to becoming the most visited international destination, according to the latest data published by Dubai's Department of Economy and Tourism (DET).

The growth, which sets the city on course to full tourism recovery, contributes to the goal of the Dubai Economic Agenda D33 launched by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai this January, to consolidate Dubai's

status as one of the world's top three cities.

His Highness Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai and Chairman of The Executive Council of Dubai, said: "The remarkable growth in international visitation achieved by Dubai in the first quarter of 2023 demonstrates the city's emergence as one of the key destinations leading the way in the rebound of the global tourism sector. This achievement has been made possible by the far-reaching vision of the leadership to transform Dubai into one of the world's fastest-growing metropolises and the globe's pre-eminent hub for travel, talent, entrepreneurship and investment. The Dubai Economic Agenda recently launched by His High-

ness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, charts an ambitious new path for Dubai to enhance its contributions to shaping the future of the global economy. The tourism sector is not only the strongest pillars of our economy but also a key enabler of Dubai's distinctive role in the world as a bridge between markets, cultures and regions. In the years ahead, Dubai will continue to introduce new pathbreaking initiatives to offer a distinctive proposition for travellers and achieve its goal of becoming the world's best place to live, visit, work and invest in."

The latest industry results—announced at the ongoing 30th edition of Arabian Travel Market

in Dubai World Trade Centre, positions Dubai as the fastest recovering destination globally, achieving 98% of pre-pandemic levels in Q1 2023, and exceeding the projection made by the United Nations World Trade Organisation that international tourist arrivals could reach between 80-95% of pre-pandemic levels this year, especially in Europe and the Middle East.

The number of visitors in Q1 2023 was just two percentage points short of pre-pandemic volume of 4.75 million tourists that arrived in Dubai in the first three months of 2019, a remarkable achievement since turning the tide in July 2020 by reopening the city to international tourists, and in spite of current global economic headwinds. The industry perfor-



mance also capped an exceptional first quarter for Dubai, which saw the city being crowned again as the No.1 global destination in TripAdvisor Travelers' Choice Awards 2023, making it only the

second time in history a city has won the coveted award for two years in a row.

His Excellency Helal Saeed Almarri, Director General of Dubai's Department of Econo-

my and Tourism, commented: "Q1 2023 has set us off on a very strong trajectory for the year and is driving us closer towards realising the vision of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE, and Ruler of Dubai to make Dubai the most visited and re-visited destination. The positive industry performance is an endorsement of our well-defined strategy, and a testament to the unwavering support of our tourism industry partners and stakeholders. The coming decade will see our industry going through extraordinary phases of transformation, in terms of infrastructure, technology, attractions and experiences, as we focus on achieving the goals of the Dubai Economic Agenda 2033."

Bull & Bears
PSX 100-Share
Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index		
Current	Prev. Close	
41,927.64	41,580.85	
Day's High	Day's Low:	
41,990.15	41,580.85	
Index Value	Change	
5,079,893,101	+346.79	
Percentage	Time	
+0.83%	2 May, 2023 5:00 pm	
Europe: FTSE 100 Index		
Index Value	Change	
7,773.03	-97.54	
Percentage	Time	
-1.24%	2 May, 4:35 pm GMT+1	
USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average		
Index Value	Change	
33,623.93	-427.77	
Percentage	Time	
-1.26%	2 May, 1:39 pm GMT-4	
Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average		
Index Value	Change	
29,157.95	+34.77	
Percentage	Time	
+0.12%	2 May, 3:15 pm GMT+9	
Open Market Forex Rates		
Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	188	190
Bahrain Dinar	754.65	762.65
Canadian Dollar	212	214.5
China Yuan	40.99	41.39
Danish Krone	41.76	42.16
Euro	313.5	316.5
Hong Kong Dollar	36.15	36.5
Indian Rupee	3.47	3.58
Japanese Yen	2.05	2.1
Kuwaiti Dinar	926.13	935.13
Malaysian Ringgit	63.62	64.22
New Zealand \$	175.01	177.01
Norwegians Krone	26.41	26.71
Omani Riyal	737.03	745.03
Qatari Riyal	77.95	78.65
Saudi Riyal	75	75.8
Singapore Dollar	212.3	214.3
Swedish Korona	27.47	27.77
Swiss Franc	316.59	319.09
Thai Bhat	8.28	8.43
U.A.E Dirham	77.5	78.3
UK Pound Sterling	359	362
US Dollar	286.35	289.25

The silent, deep human capital crisis facing Pakistan: WB

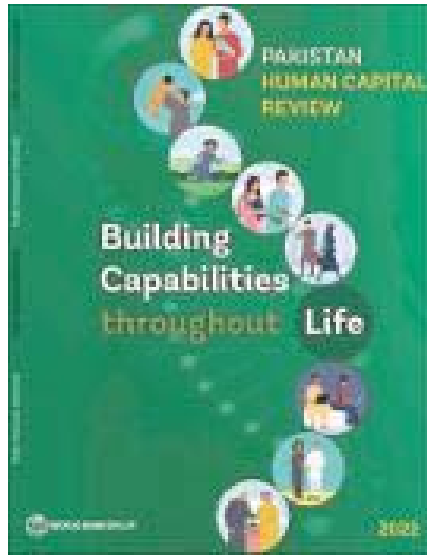
World Bank's report says Pakistan needs to substantially increase its investments in human development

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The World Bank's report, Pakistan Human Capital Review (HCR), Building Capabilities Throughout Life, underlines the need for Pakistan to significantly increase investments in human capital to address the severe gaps it faces in education and health outcomes particularly.

While the country has reached middle-income status and made significant progress in reducing poverty over the past two decades, low human capital outcomes limit Pakistan's further progress, capping its growth and development prospects.

"Strong human capital is essential for sustainable economic growth, to prepare the workforce for the more highly skilled jobs of the future, and to compete effectively in the global economy," said Mamta Murthi, the World Bank's Vice President for Human Development. "Investing in human capital can also build resilience and adaptive capacity to withstand the effects of climate change, while developing the skills and ingenuity needed for a green and inclusive economy and to reduce inequality."



Through an analysis of new and existing data, the report documents and quantifies Pakistan's human capital crisis. Its Human Capital Index (HCI) of 0.41 means that a baby born in Pakistan today will only be 41%

as productive as they could be if they enjoyed complete education and full health. The country's HCI is lower than the South Asian average of 0.48, Bangladesh's 0.46 and Nepal's 0.49. Indeed, Pakistan's human capital outcomes are more comparable to Sub-Saharan Africa, which has an average HCI of 0.40. Another facet of Pakistan's human capital crisis is its low utilization due largely to low female labor force participation.

"With over 20 million school-age children out of school, high levels of child malnutrition, and low empowerment of women, Pakistan's human capital challenges are among the most serious in the world—it is a human capital crisis that is profound, silent and with far reaching negative effects on the potential of the country and its people," said Najy Benhasine, the World Bank's Country Director for Pakistan. "The Human Capital Review shows that Pakistan can realize substantial economic growth by bringing its population growth rate under control, investing significantly more in the supply and quality of health and education, and bringing women to the labor force."

The report provides a wide-ranging assessment of the key challenges and opportunities

for Pakistan to improve its human development outcomes, while underscoring the need for a long-term commitment and sustained human capital investments.

The HCR puts forward several recommendations for Pakistan to boost its human capital, including the need for long-term planning that goes beyond the tenure of any government and political cycle; making family planning a priority across all human development initiatives; investing more smartly in people and developing avenues for them to deploy their human capital more productively; making child malnutrition a national priority; and introducing measures to reduce out-of-school children and improve learning outcomes.

"Pakistan needs a healthy, skilled, and resilient population to ensure high economic growth that is both sustainable and inclusive," said Lire Ersado, the lead author of the report and World Bank's Human Development Practice Leader for Pakistan. "With the right policies and investments, the growing working-age population can become healthier, more educated, more skilled, and more productive—and can earn more if the economy generates more and better jobs."

Shareholders rejoice as Lucky continues to break profitability records

KARACHI: Continuing its remarkable legacy of surpassing one milestone after another, on a consolidated basis, Lucky Cement Limited, achieved its highest ever profit after tax of PKR 48.5 billion, for the nine months period ended March 31, 2023 of which PKR 11.6 billion is attributable to non-controlling interests. This represents an impressive 82.9% increase compared to the same period last year. The resultant earnings per share (EPS) for the period comes out to PKR 115.24. The remarkable increase in profit includes gain on disposal made by Lucky Core Industries, a subsidiary company, of approximately 26.5% of the issued and paid-up share capital of NutriCo Morinaga (Private) Limited resulting in a gain of PKR 17.2 billion.

Moreover, following the successful completion of the Company's first buy-back of 10.0 million shares, the Company announced yet another buy-back of 23.8 million of its own shares. This buy-back plan is subject to obtaining the necessary approval from the members of the Company. The primary objective behind this strategic move is to bolster the Company's valuations. By repurchasing its own shares, the Company aims

to optimize its capital structure and unlock additional value for its stakeholders. This buy-back initiative showcases the Company's proactive approach in managing its financial resources, fostering investor confidence and reinforcing its commitment to maximizing long-term shareholder value. The Company has announced to hold an Extraordinary General Meeting of its members on May 24, 2023.

On a consolidated basis, the Company attained a gross revenue of PKR 340.1 billion showcasing a significant 28.0% increase compared to the revenue of PKR 265.7 billion in the same period last year (SPLY). The noteworthy growth in gross revenue is mainly attributable to the commencement of commercial operations of Lucky Electric Power Company Limited in March 2022. On an unconsolidated basis, the Company reported a gross revenue of PKR 91.5 billion, which signified an increase of 15.7% as compared to the SPLY.

The Company reported a net profit after tax of PKR 11.1 billion. Moreover, the EPS for the period is calculated at PKR 34.73, as compared to an EPS of PKR 34.97 during the SPLY. This marginal decline in the

Company's profitability is attributed to lower dividend income from subsidiaries during the current period.

Representative of Lucky Cement expressed gratitude for the Company's success and attributed it to the blessings of the Almighty, when contacted for comments on the financial results for the nine months ended September 30, 2023. "Commencement of profitable operations of Lucky Electric Power Plant, part sale of NutriCo Morinaga, acquisition of Lotte Chemicals Pakistan, Capacity expansion of 3.15 MT in cement, addition of solar power plants for our own consumption and completion of share buyback were the major events in recent times for us. Our employees embody a deep-rooted sense of urgency to grow and operate efficiently, which is evident when you talk to any one of them", added the representative.

Aligning with its growth strategy, the Company had announced the commencement of operations of Line-2, at Pezu Plant on December 22, 2023. This addition increases the production capacity of the Company's cement production by 3.15 Million Tons Per Annum (MTPA), thereby, bringing the total capacity to 15.30 MTPA.

FBR awards contract of Transaction Advisor for PPP projects to UHY Hassan Naeem & Co



Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Federal Board of Revenue awarded the contract of Transaction Advisor for Public Private Partnership projects to M/S UHY Hassan Naeem & Co for construction of residential buildings in Islamabad, Karachi and Lahore for FBR

employees. The award ceremony was held at FBR Headquarters in Islamabad which was graced by Chairman FBR Asim Ahmad, Member Admin/HR and other senior officials. The contract was signed by Chief Projects Shahid Soomro and Ibne Hassan from UHY.

Emirates boarding pass unlocks hundreds of offers this summer



Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Emirates has today announced the return of its popular My Emirates Pass. Starting from 1st May 2023 to 30th September 2023, My Emirates Summer Pass enables customers to get even more from their trip with five months of exclusive offers at hundreds of locations in Dubai and the UAE. Emirates customers flying to or through Dubai can simply show their boarding pass and a valid form of identification to hundreds of retail, leisure and dining outlets, as well as famous attractions and luxury spas, to enjoy fantastic discounts throughout Dubai and the UAE.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and expatriates of the State of Palestine

ISLAMABAD: The ongoing international investigation committee calls for an investigation into the circumstances of the crime of execution of the martyr Khader Adnan.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Palestine, condemns in the strongest terms the heinous crime committed by the occupation authorities, which led to the martyrdom of Sheikh Khader Adnan, and holds the Israeli government and its relevant arms fully and directly responsible for this crime.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Palestine, while following up the case of the martyrdom of Sheikh Khader Adnan as a result of the policy of medical negligence and while he was engaged in an open-ended hunger strike for the 86th day.

Pakistan's battered currency is slowly recovering

Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt says Saudi-Iranian relationship is great success of China

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Former President of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt on Tuesday said the country's ruined currency is recovering slowly which is encouraging.

If the IMF loan is received, the recovery of the rupee will be accelerated, while if the loan is not received, the recovery process will come to a halt and its value may fall further, he said. Shahid Rasheed Butt said in a statement issued here today that one dollar was being traded at 288.44 rupees on April 11, but now it is available for 283.84 rupees.



He said that foreign exchange reserves have also increased to more than four and a half billion dollars, which is good for the economy. The business leader said that Saudi Arabia and Iran will reopen

embassies in each other's countries after seven years, which is a great achievement for China.

This development has reduced American influence in the region, it will balance the situation in the region, increase trade, and cut the military budget. It is expected that due to the improvement of relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran, Syria and Yemen will see some stability and the political situation in many other countries will improve, he said.

China is also pushing for a ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine, and Beijing should also consider mediation between Pakistan and India so that the two countries

can become friends instead of enemies. This will end hostilities and improve the living standards of more than one and a half billion people. It will be a difficult task for China, but not impossible.

Shahid Rasheed Butt said that Pakistan has always been in need of political and economic support from America while India is also very close to the US while both countries are on the same page to counter China's influence. He said that it is in China's interest to help establish better relations between Pakistan and India for development, elimination of terrorism and smooth sailing of CPEC.

Arabian Travel Market 2023

Accor signs strategic partnership with Amsa Hospitality

Spokesman Report

DUBAI: Accor, a world-leading hospitality group, has signed a master development agreement with Amsa Hospitality, the Saudi startup company redefining Arabian hospitality in both local and international markets, to develop and franchise 18 hotels across second-tier cities within Saudi Arabia over the next ten years.

The agreement will see Amsa Hospitality, the Hallmark of Arabian Hospitality, develop a range of Accor's economy and midscale brands, including Ibis Styles, Mercure, Mercure Living, Novotel, Novotel Living, and the recently launched Handwritten Collection, while also acting as the third-party operator by

leasing and franchising the assets. Speaking at a press conference today (Tuesday, 2nd May) at Arabian Travel Market, Mohammad Alathel, Amsa Hospitality's Chief Executive Officer, said: "Amsa Hospitality is committed to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 success, a vision that set the path for our development locally, regionally and globally. "As such, we are attached to the Kingdom's ambitious plan for the development of the country's second-tier cities. Such an enterprising strategy must be accompanied by quality hospitality, offering the best international standards.

"Committed as we are, we believe that Accor is the finest hospitality company to deliver the high level of



guaranteed quality we are looking for, together with their wide choice

of brands, giving us the ability to propose the optimum hospitality regarding each city environment.

"This long-term partnership between Amsa Hospitality and Accor will bring first-rate modern hospitality—a know-how Accor is renowned for—together with Amsa Hospitality's commitment to bringing centuries-old Arabian traditions of welcoming and generosity to today's world, true to our 'Hallmark of Arabian Hospitality' motto."

As part of the agreement, Amsa Hospitality will be responsible for hotels in several cities in Saudi Arabia, including Ha'il, Jubail, Taif, Al-Ula, Tabuk and Jazan, amongst others. Each hotel brand will cater to a different target audience. These

Inflation is falling in tens of countries, increasing in Pakistan: PEW

Saifuddin Sheikh says poverty growing quickly due to poor governance and elitism

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Saifuddin Sheikh, Executive Director of Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW) on Tuesday said inflation is decreasing in dozens of countries, but it is increasing continuously in Pakistan and there is no possibility of a reduction.

The main causes of inflation in Pakistan which has made life difficult for the majority include poor governance and endless elitism, he said. Saifuddin Sheikh said that all the resources are being spent on the welfare of the elite therefore poverty is increasing and the middle class is disappearing in the country.

In a statement issued here today, he said that the burden of wrong priorities and benefitting the elite falls on the poor who are reeling under inflation.

The price of flour, meat, rice, chicken and sugar along with other items is continuously increasing in the country and their export and smuggling are also growing rapidly.

He noted that the statements regarding action against the profiteer mafia by the top authorities are meant to feed the public a lollipop of satisfaction, which has nothing to do with reality.

All the important policies are designed to benefit the elite which increases the suffering of the people instead of reducing it. Due to the selfishness of the elites and the avoidance of necessary reforms, the economy has not been able to develop and instead of reducing poverty, it is increasing it, he added.

Politicians and other influential consider it their right to plunder national resources while paying tax is considered as an insult. Businessmen also prefer to get subsidies and packages through various pretexts instead of competing in the international market and when they have a lot of black money, they get the government to announce an amnesty scheme, he observed.



Two changes expected in Pakistan for 3rd ODI against NZ

Ihsanullah is suffering from pain in his right arm and is expected to be rested along with Abdullah Shafique

LAHORE: Pakistan is expected to make two changes in their playing XI for the third ODI against New Zealand on Wednesday at National Bank Stadium, Karachi.

Ihsanullah is suffering from pain in his right arm and is expected to be rested along with Abdullah Shafique, who only managed seven runs in the second ODI.

Shaheen is likely to return to the playing XI after resting in the second ODI. Iftikhar Ahmed is also expected to make his ODI comeback, after he replaced the injured Haris Sohail in the squad for the final three ODIs of the five-match series.

Haris landed awkwardly during a fielding drill that injured his left shoulder.

While talking to a local news channel on Monday, Iftikhar shared his plans and spoke about his batting position.



"I am ready to play any role for the team's success and bat at any number. I frequently play in the middle order, and whenever I do—sometimes I get to

play two overs or three or even five overs. But most importantly, as a professional, I strongly believe that whether I get to play two balls or three, it should always

be for the team and the team's interest. This is my only and sole focus right now," Iftikhar said. Speaking about his comeback, the 32-year-old seems focused on lending all his skills toward the team's win.

"As far as my comeback is concerned—so I won't really call this a comeback. In the last match we played, which I was a part of—we chased 365 against Australia. Then against West Indies, I was benched despite being part of the team. So, in my opinion, this all is dynamically a part of the cricketer's life. My aim is to contribute to the team's success and make it wins," he further added.

Pakistan are leading the series 2-0 and will play its third ODI against Kiwis on Wednesday, May 3, at National Bank Stadium, Karachi, eyeing to claim a series win.

Nepal to be part of Pakistan's group in Asia Cup 2023

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Nepal qualified for the Asia Cup 2023 and will join Pakistan and India in Group 1, after a seven-wicket win over the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in the final of the ACC Men's Premier Cup in Kirtipur on Tuesday.

Nepal chased down a target of 118 runs in 30.3 overs with Gulshan Jha top-scoring with 67 runs in 84 balls. His unbeaten knock included three fours and six maximums.

Earlier, UAE were dismissed for only 117 runs in 33.1 overs after Lalit Rajbanshi claimed figures of 4-14 in 7.1 overs.

The Premier Cup is an integral part of ACC's new pathway structure and featured 10 Associate nations with the winner directly qualifying for the Men's Asia Cup 2023 — which will take



place in September later this year.

While Group 1 includes, Pakistan, Nepal, and India. Group 2 will feature defending champions Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Afghanistan.

The top two teams from each group will qualify for the Super Four stage of the tournament, similar to last year's format. The 2023 edition, however, will see the competition returning

a neutral venue.

His announcement caught Pakistan by surprise, with officials warning it could "split" the international cricket community.

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) said Shah's comments "can impact Pakistan's visit to India for the ICC Cricket World Cup 2023 and future ICC Events in India in the 2024-2031 cycle".

The Pakistan board said it has not received any official communication from the Asian Cricket Council (ACC), and noted that hosting rights for the 2023 Asia Cup had been given to Pakistan under Shah's leadership. Despite being considered one of sport's greatest rivalries, India and Pakistan have not met on home soil in any version of the game since 2012, and only play each other in multinational tournaments on neutral grounds.

to the ODI format.

It must be noted that in October last year Pakistani cricket authorities hinted they may pull out of next year's World Cup in India, a day after Indian officials there said they would not send a team to the 2023 Asia Cup in Pakistan.

Indian cricket board secretary Jay Shah had said that India "can't" send a team to Pakistan, adding the tournament would be moved to

Danish wants Pakistan to regain lost glory in squash



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's top player Danish Atlas Khan has offered his unconditional services to put the country once again on the path to success, saying there was no shortage of talent in the country but a stern roadmap was needed to help regain lost glory in the game.

Danish, who is also the nephew of former world squash champion Jansher Khan, speaking about his plan for the revival of the game, said the Pakistan Squash Federation (PSF) was making all-out efforts to promote and encourage the game and players in the country.

"However, other stakeholders must also come forward to help encourage and promote, not only squash but all sports. We should take all departments on board to promote all sports in the country. Wapda, PIA, NBP, Railway, banks, all government departments should include senior and junior players as to support the games," he told APP.

He was of the view that in the past, departments used to support players which resulted in giving us many world champions in squash, hockey and cricket.

"Sports cannot grow or flourish, without the support of departments. We should form academies on the grassroots level as well," he said.

Danish, who has won 32 gold medals for Pakistan, said PSF was providing players with squash facilities and spending hefty amounts on making squash courts.

PSF funds should also be increased so that it can be utilized for the betterment of players. He said there should be squash courts in schools as to promote the game at the grassroots level.

"The more courts and academies there will be, the more talent will come to the fore. In Egypt, players are picked from schools to train in academies with modern techniques and skills and improve their physical fitness."

Danish, who won the silver medal in the World Junior team championship in Ecuador in 2010 as a team captain and bronze medal in World Junior Championship, said, "If we want to compete with international players then we have to train like them and use the same track they have been working on".

He said the coaches should also be qualified as they have to pass training onto the players. "I have also offered my unconditional support to PSF and for the promotion of the game in the country and I hope we will get a world champion soon," he said. APP

FIFA threatens Women's World Cup broadcast blackout in Europe



LONDON: Europe's top soccer nations face a broadcast blackout for this year's Women's World Cup unless media can improve on their "disappointing" offers for the rights, FIFA President Gianni Infantino said.

Offers from "Big 5" European countries were not acceptable to football's world governing body and a "slap in the face" of the players and "all women worldwide", Infantino said.

The 'Big 5' nations are Britain, Spain, Italy, Germany and France. "To be very clear, it is our moral and legal obligation not to undersell the FIFA Women's World Cup," Infantino said at a World Trade Organization meeting in Geneva.

"Therefore, should the offers continue not to be fair, we will be forced not to broadcast the FIFA Women's World Cup into the 'Big 5' European countries." The World Cup, being co-hosted by Australia and New Zealand, starts on July 20.

Infantino said broadcasters had offered only \$1 million-\$10 million for the rights, compared to \$100 million-\$200 million for rights to the men's World Cup.

Due to the time-zone difference, Women's World Cup matches will be held outside prime-time viewing hours for European markets but Infantino said that was no excuse.

"Maybe... it's not played on prime-time in Europe, but still, it is played at 9 a.m. or 10 a.m., so it is quite a reasonable time," he said.

Some 1.12 billion viewers tuned into the 2019 Women's World Cup in France across all platforms, according to a FIFA audit of the tournament. Reuters

Rizwan breaks silence on personal milestones controversy

LAHORE: Pakistan wicketkeeper-batter Mohammad Rizwan has said that "personal milestones" don't bother him and that he is not focused on such achievements.

Speaking at a press conference ahead of the third ODI against New Zealand on May 3, Rizwan said: "For me, personal milestones don't matter. What matters is the plan which is given to us by the captain. Our captain always asks us to perform and that is the only thing that matters to us. Everyone has their opinion and we respect that."

The wicketkeeper-batter suffered massive criticism after Pakistan lost the last T20I against New Zealand on April 24 in Rawalpindi.

Rizwan scored 98 not out as Pakistan posted 193-5 in 20 overs. However, fans and followers noticed that Rizwan slowed down while nearing his second T20I century. Pakistan could only score 28 runs in the last three overs.

In the last over of the innings, Imad Wasim tried to take a single to give Rizwan, who was batting on 98, a strike so that he could get to his hundred.

Fans and followers of the game didn't like this mindset. While explaining this matter during the press conference, Rizwan said the message from the dressing room was that something around 180 would be good enough to win the match.

"We came out from a phase where we were 50-3. The message we got from the dressing was that something around 180 would be good on this pitch. So, our discussion was to score runs accordingly," he shared.

"There was no conversation about taking a single. When we were near 190, Imad said it was good enough on this pitch and that's why he went for a single there," he recalled.

Imad tried to take a single on the fourth delivery of the last over but unluckily got run out. In the end, Rizwan also couldn't complete his century.

"Had we won, no one would have criticised us. Still, we accept that it was our mistake and the criticism is on point," he maintained.

"Also, we remained unlucky as there was a due factor and also we misfielded quite often. We lost, that's why we are facing a lot of questions," he added.

"I don't focus on personal milestones. I am sure Fakhar Zaman was also not thinking about his 3,000 runs. Maybe, he had something about this at the back of his mind, but I am not sure," he clarified at the press conference. Agencies

Belgian Brecel crowned Snooker World Champion

LONDON: Belgium's Luca Brecel claimed the Snooker World Championship title after defeating four-time champion Mark Selby 18-15 in Sheffield on Monday.

Brecel, 28, had never won a match at the Crucible Theatre before this year's tournament but shocked seven-time champion Ronnie O'Sullivan 13-10 in the quarterfinals, winning the last seven frames consecutively.

After coming from behind to defeat Chinese rookie Si Jiahui in the semifinals, Brecel established a final showdown with Selby and managed to hold a 9-8 overnight lead, even though his 39-year-old opponent made the first-ever 147 in a World Championship final last night. Xinhua

Celebration

SHEFFIELD: Luca Brecel of Belgium celebrates with the trophy after the final against Mark Selby of England at the World Snooker Championship in Sheffield, Britain.



Photo: Xinhua

Sana Mir breaks silence for remarks related to Babar, Fakhar

LAHORE: Pakistan women's former captain Sana Mir has issued a clarification over her comments about Pakistan's opening batter Fakhar Zaman's performance after cricket fans perceived that she spoke against national team skipper Babar Azam.

The ex-women's team skipper, while speaking on a television show, stressed her aim was to highlight the necessity of having a balanced team with both stable and impact players. Mir emphasised that she did not undermine any particular player's skills.

"I had led the Pakistan team for over eight years and teams are formed in such a way that you have to mix and match. It's not possible to have 11 Shahid Afridis, nor 11 Fakhar Zamans or 11 Babar Azams in a team," she said.

"You have to strike a balance

where one player provides stability and the other complements him. That's why I always emphasize the importance of a player scoring a century while playing above his strike rate when chasing 350 runs," she said.

The former women's team captain noted that every play, may it be those who at a run-a-ball rate, was important. However, she added that the team also required players who can contribute with impactful innings to achieve a big target.

She cited the example of Fakhar, who has a unique style of playing, and said that the team needs his contribution along with other players who can perform even if their strike rate is not high.

"Obviously, a player who scores a run-a-ball century has his own speciality, but along

with him, you need three small innings from impact players so that you can chase 350 runs."

"If someone has scored 50 runs on 30 balls or 60-70 runs on 40 balls, then you need this kind of performance along with a run-a-ball century."

"But the kind of player Fakhar Zaman is, you also need one or two more performances from him even if the other players' strike rate is not high," she said.

"So it is necessary to have both kinds of players, especially on tours when you are aiming for big targets. When an impact player scores a hundred, it is very important, but people tend to take things out of context," Mir added.

She said that the national side's captain, Babar, has improved his strike rate and wicket-keeper-batter Moham-

mad Rizwan's ability to finish matches is also a positive sign for the team.

"Babar Azam has improved his strike rate, and the way Mohammad Rizwan finished both matches scoring 50 runs on 30 balls, your team is going in a great direction."

"These things should be taken with context. Obviously, while commenting, we also prepare for the fact that people will take things out of context and express their frustration in different ways," she added.

Earlier, Mir, during the post-match analysis said praised Zaman's performance and also explained his importance to the team. But fans mistook it as an indirect jibe at Babar and criticised Mir on social media.

"We were talking off-air as well that his [Fakhar] runs are



always for the team. If he scores a century, he does it at a strike rate of 125, which is important when you are chasing a target close to

350, and not at a strike rate of 100," Mir had said.

"That is the reason why he is crucial for this team, because

where we already have players who play at run-a-ball, his role becomes crucial to chase 300-run-plus targets." Agencies