



## Shafina Shah: 'Ms. Pakistan World 2023' a star ready to shine on horizons of global entertainment industry

Miss Shafina Shah, is a British-Pakistani from Leicester, United Kingdom, and was recently crowned for the title of "Ms. Pakistan World 2023" in a beauty pageant held in a private hotel in Lahore. Ms. Pakistan World is a global beauty competition for women of Pakistani heritage. (Special Report on Page 3)

**DAYS REMAINING**

# 8

### Only 8 days left for illegal immigrants to leave Pakistan

Foreign citizens residing illegally in Pakistan now have only 8 days to leave the country or face deportation. Foreigners living illegally must leave Pakistan by October 31 or law enforcement agencies will ensure their arrest and deportation. In the recent meeting of the Apex Committee of the National Action Plan, it had been decided to take strict action against the illegal immigrants living in Pakistan and the trade and properties of illegal immigrants

Simultaneously published from Islamabad, Lahore and Multan



SANAA, Yemen: Yemenis gather during a pro-Palestinian protest to express solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza, on Sunday.

Photo: Web

## Palestine envoy lauds China for promoting peace in Palestine, Israel talks

ISLAMABAD: Acting Ambassador of Palestine Nader Al Turk has lauded China for showing its readiness to play a constructive role in easing tensions between Palestine and Israel and promoting peace talks.

Addressing a webinar titled, "War Crimes Gaza: The impact, consequences, and international response & responsibility", the envoy called out the "double standards" of the so-called civilised world and international organisations responsible of ruthless killings of innocent children, women and elderly men living in Gaza, said a press release issued here on Sunday.

The webinar was jointly hosted by the Center of South Asia and International Studies (CSAIS) Islamabad and the Institute of Legal Studies Lahore.

Nader shared the perpetual miseries of Palestinians and called for immediate justice in terms of two state solution, guarantor of durable peace and

stability in the Middle East a rest of the world.

He urged to regional countries and the Muslim world to come forward to stop Israel from state terrorism and indiscriminate bombardment on civilian society and installations in Gaza.

Interestingly he maintained that his country did not have any religious or ethnic issue with Jews but facing lots of onslaughts from the fanatic Zionists, creating serious issues for humans and humanity.

He rightly highlighted the biased stance of the USA, UK and some western countries strongly supporting Israelis and ironically honoring their false, fake and fabricated propaganda and tall claims like assignment of children and attack on hospital in Gaza by Palestinians themselves. Furthermore, he shared that in persuasions of naked aggression Israeli forces attacked on Orthodox Church showing no respect to other religions.

### At United Nations

# Pakistan stresses on two-State solution to end Palestinian crisis

Munir Akram says two-state solution is the only option for a durable peace in the Holy Land

### Spokesman Report

NEW YORK/ISLAMABAD: At the United Nations, Pakistan has stressed the need to resuscitate the two-State solution of Palestinian crisis for durable peace in the region.

Speaking in a debate on the contributions of regional mechanisms for peace and security in the Security Council, Pakistan's Ambassador to the world body, Munir Akram said the two-state solution is the only option for a durable peace in the Holy Land.

He expressed the hope that after the Security Council's failure, the General Assembly will take action and demand an immediate ceasefire; full, unhindered, and sustain-



able humanitarian access to the suffering people in Gaza, and ensure that they are not

displaced within or outside Gaza.

Speaking about the Security Council's shortcomings, Munir Akram said these arise mainly due to the veto power of the five permanent members.

He said the Security Council, which has the primary responsibility to promote world peace, has failed to "stop the slaughter in Gaza", as it also failed in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Pakistani envoy said the Security Council's failures can be addressed by making it more representative and democratic, by enlarging the voice of the majority of small and medium sized states, and more accountable through the democratic method of periodic elections.

## Trials of May 9 accused commenced in military courts, SC informed

Conducting, concluding military trials termed "imperative" by govt

ISLAMABAD: The military trials of civilians, involved in the May 9 mayhem following the arrest of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan in a corruption case, have already begun, the federal govt informed the Supreme Court.

The government told the court about the development related to trials in the military court in a miscellaneous application following orders of the top court on August 3, highlighting that at least 102 people were taken into custody due to their involvement in the attacks on military installations and establishments.

The development comes a day before a five-member apex court bench — headed by Justice Ijazul Ahsan, and comprising Justice Munib Akhtar, Justice Yahya Afridi, Justice Sayed Mazhar Ali Akbar Naqvi and Justice Ayesha Malik — is scheduled to hear pleas challenging the trial of civilians in military

courts. "The accused persons were taken into custody during the month of May this year and have been in custody since then. The accused have been taken into custody under the Pakistan Army Act, 1952 read with the Official Secrets Act, 1923 for attacking military installations/establishments," the government stated, in its application.

The application mentioned that since these trials have already begun, it is important that they are conducted and concluded to ensure fairness towards the "accused persons".

"To safeguard the interests of the accused persons, it is imperative that their trials are conducted and concluded so that those who may merit acquittal can be acquitted and those who may merit minor sentences and have already served the time in custody can also be released," it further read.

## China's extended Belt and Road commitment

To reshape int'l transport routes, deliver prosperity

BELJING: As China has pledged to build a multidimensional Belt and Road connectivity network, railways, ports and corridors will continue to be a prominent part of future cooperation.

According to an official announcement made at the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation, China will participate in the construction of the trans-Caspian international transportation corridor, and collaborate on a new logistics corridor across the Eurasian continent linked by direct railway and road transportation.

It will also vigorously integrate ports, shipping and trading services under the "Silk Road Maritime," and accelerate the building of the New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor and the Air Silk Road.

"I think the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is the most emblematic initiative for infrastructure and cooperation in the world today. It's very important to have a blueprint for the future," Velia Govare, correspondent with La Nacion from Costa Rica told Xinhua on the sidelines of the forum.

In addition to building the Belt

and Road connectivity network, China has also extended its commitment in seven other prospects including supporting an open world economy, boosting green development, carrying out practical cooperation, advancing scientific and technological innovation, supporting people-to-people exchanges, promoting integrity-based Belt and Road cooperation, and strengthening institutional building.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the BRI. Over the past decade, brand new airports and harbors, railways, roads, and industrial parks have been built under the initiative, creating new economic corridors and new growth drivers.

Citing flagship projects such as the China-Laos Railway, the Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Railway, and the Mombasa-Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway as examples, Vice Commerce Minister Guo Tingting said these cooperation projects have helped BRI countries improve infrastructure construction, promote connectivity, enhance people's well-being, and strengthen development capacity.

As a Chinese saying goes, "building the road is the first step towards

prosperity." For some landlocked countries, BRI projects have proven to precisely accommodate their development demands and help them embrace new opportunities.

With only a 3.5 km-long railroad to Thailand, the economic development of Laos, the only landlocked country in Southeast Asia, had long been restricted. The 1,035-km China-Laos Railway was a game changer.

Since its launch in December 2021, the rail line has recorded over 20.9 million passenger trips and transported 25.36 million tonnes of cargo as of the beginning of September this year.

From land-locked to land-linked, today, Laos has become a hub in the Indo-China Peninsula. Up to 25 provincial areas in China have launched cross-border freight train services that connect to the new railway, transferring commodities to countries including Laos, Thailand, Myanmar, Malaysia, Cambodia and Singapore.

Not only is the land connectivity of landlocked countries with other regions steadily improving, but BRI cooperation has also helped them reach seaports.

## Solangi clarifies about live coverage of PML-N rally by PTV

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi on Sunday gave an explanation on the live coverage of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz public meeting in Lahore.

In a statement on the social networking site X, he said that PTV had only three days ago, on the 16th anniversary of the Karsaz tragedy covered live the speeches of all the leaders, including Bilawal Bhutto.

It should be noted that



Nawaz Sharif's address from the rally last night was broadcast live by almost all TV channels, including PTV.

However, PTV's live broadcast of Nawaz Sharif's rally was criticized by some persons on social media. APP

## 2nd aid convoy enters Rafah crossing en route to Gaza

Aid convoys enter Gaza as UN seeks streamlined inspections to maintain relief flow amid the blockade



CAIRO: A second convoy of aid trucks entered the Egyptian side of the Rafah border crossing on Sunday, heading towards the Gaza Strip, according to Egyptian security and humanitarian sources at Rafah.

A total of around 19 trucks carrying medical and food supplies had been inspected by UNRWA, the UN's Palestinian refugee agency, the sources said.

The first convoy of 20 trucks of badly needed supplies entered Gaza on Saturday.

Israel imposed a total blockade and launched air strikes on Gaza in response to a deadly attack on Israeli soil by Hamas on Oct. 7. The Rafah crossing

had been out of operation since shortly afterwards, and bombardments on the Gaza side had damaged roads and buildings.

UN officials say a higher continuous pace of at least 100 trucks a day would be required in Gaza to cover urgent needs. Before the outbreak of the most recent conflict, several hundred trucks had been arriving in the enclave daily.

UN humanitarian chief Martin Griffiths told Reuters on Saturday that work was underway to develop a "light" inspection system, whereby Israel could check the shipments but ensure a sustained flow. Reuters

## Cars and bikes show

ISLAMABAD: Visitors look a heavy bike during cars and bikes show at Lake View Park in Federal Capital.



Photo: Online

# Ashrafi calls for global support for Palestine, unity among Muslims

*The PUC Chairman hinted that if this war continued, it would ultimately engulf the entire world*

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Ulema Council Chairman, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi unequivocally expressed support for Palestine and called on the global community to acknowledge the rights of the Palestinian people.

He, addressing a recent conference organized to express solidarity with Palestinian people under the auspices of Pakistan Ulema Council here, raised questions about the alleged military aggression in Syria and Lebanon and said Pakistan stood with Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, and Syria, in case of any aggression from Israel.

Ashrafi hinted that if this war continued, it would not be confined to Egypt and Lebanon, it would ultimately engulf the entire world.

He called on the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to provide a roadmap for the Palestinian cause urging everyone to break their silence, warning that "if Palestinian children are targeted today, it may be children from other regions tomorrow." With the Presidency of the OIC now in the hands of Saudi Arabia, he expressed hope that it would take concrete steps to support Palestine.

He mentioned that Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir reiterated Pakistan's position in the Corps Commander Conference the other day, reemphasizing their unwavering support for Palestine. Highlighting the enduring blockade of Gaza, he said it had been a prison for sixteen years raising questions about the



incident on October 7, which he attributed to the denial of Palestinian due rights.

Ashrafi called for international human rights organizations to investigate the hospital attack in Gaza, stressing that the suffering of Muslim children remained unseen. He emphasized that children were children, regardless of their origins

expressing concerns over America's intention to cover up this disastrous incident.

He acknowledged improved relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran and Syria and Arab nations. He reaffirmed the commitment to maintaining unity within the Ummah, rejecting any sectarian division. "We will not allow anyone to

divide the Muslim Ummah based on the Shia-Sunni divide," he stated. He emphasized the importance of global unity among Muslims and discouraged any division, highlighting the need to stand up against imperialism and extremist groups that aimed to divide and weaken the Muslim Ummah.

Ashrafi warned that colonial powers sought to establish extremist organizations to disrupt the unity of Islamic countries, referencing bomb blasts and terrorist attacks as part of this conspiracy.

He shared insights into past attempts to incite religious tensions in Pakistan, noting that the national security institutions and scholars had worked together to thwart such nefarious designs.

# Govt announces three-pronged strategy to eliminate polio virus

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Minister for National Health Services Dr Nadeem Jan has announced the three-pronged strategy to successfully interrupt the circulation of polio virus in the country and include in the ranks of the polio-free country.

Addressing a ceremony in Islamabad today, he said localized operational hubs are being established in Bannu as three



out of four polio cases have been surfaced over there. He vowed

to make these hubs well-resourced by providing additional resources and health experts.

Highlighting the effectiveness of an integrated approach to combat the circulation of polio virus, the Health Minister said polio drops are being administered to the children less than five years country wide with the supplementary doses of vital vitamins.

Nadeem Jan said government has devised a communi-

cation strategy with the major focus to remove all the misconceptions in the minds of general public related to the inoculation of polio drops.

Paying rich tribute to the polio workers, who are offering voluntary services by putting their lives into the risk, he said their services will be used further in nutrition, family planning and Health Hygiene after the eradication of polio virus in the country.

## Fawad Chaudhry meets IPP patron-in-chief Jahangir Tareen

LAHORE: Former information minister Fawad Chaudhry met Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) Patron-in-Chief Jahangir Khan Tareen on Sunday.

IPP Information Secretary Dr. Firdous Ashiq Awan told APP that Aun Chaudhry was also part of the meeting.

She said the meeting discussed political situation in the country and the upcoming general election.

Sources said Fawad Chaudhry would become active in politics from the IPP platform now after keeping in low profile for many months.

# HEC-World Bank project achieves tremendous physical, financial targets

ISLAMABAD: The Higher Education Development in Pakistan (HEDP), a five-year project (2019/20-2023/24) being implemented by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) with support from the World Bank to expand upon key higher education priorities in Pakistan, has achieved over 80 per cent of its physical and 70 per cent of financial targets.

This was revealed in the seventh HEDP Steering Committee (SC) meeting held at the HEC Secretariat yesterday.

The Steering Committee is the highest forum of the project comprising senior officials from federal ministries, provincial higher education departments, vice-chancellors, and

private sector representatives. The committee members reviewed the progress made so far on the project.

Chairing the meeting, Executive Director HEC Mr Awais Ahmed termed the project a key investment for higher education supported by the World Bank and said that, like every project, this project also has yearly financial and physical targets.

"I am glad to share that the project has a good standing in achieving more than 80% of its physical targets and more than 70% of its financial targets," he underlined.

He explained that all the six components are progressing well on their deliverables, called performance-based

conditions—may it be research grants, quality assurance cells, IT initiatives, capacity building and financial autonomy.

He expressed his satisfaction that despite financial, procurement and procedural challenges, the project stands at good financial and physical progress. Project Coordinator Prof. Dr. Mehmood ul Hassan Butt gave an overview of the HEDP project, its history, progress, plans, and the recently held World Bank Mission that improved the project ranking as satisfactory.

He along with his team briefed the committee on the key project initiatives, including the physical and financial progress of all the 11 performance-based conditions.

In addition, it was appraised that the project is based on the HEC Vision 2025 and is just a launching pad for several futuristic initiatives that eventually will be taken over by the HEC staff to sustain these initiatives.

Technical heads of the project components updated members on the progress of each of the six components of the project including 28 Innovator Seed Funding grants awarded this year.

In addition, a new grant called Rapid Technology Transfer Grants (RTTG) – focused on addressing Pakistan's current financial distress by encouraging industry-academia collaborations to enable import substitutions.

# PPP censures PML-N for 'changing narrative' on polls

*Nawaz Sharif should've talked about polls, Kundi complains*

KARACHI: The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) has censured the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N) "changed" narrative on elections, as the party's supremo, Nawaz Sharif, avoids the mention of elections in his much-awaited address upon his return to the country after a four-year exile.

PPP leader Faisal Karim Kundi said the PML-N has changed its narrative, even though they had earlier always spoken in favour of general elections ahead of the party supremo's arrival back home.

The politician slammed the three-time former prime minister for shying away from speaking about polls in the country which, according to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), have been scheduled to take place at the end of January 2024. "Nawaz Sharif should have talked about the election, but he did not," the PPP leader said, sharing his views on a private TV channel.

Speaking to the reporters at Dubai airport a day earlier, PML-N supremo Nawaz put his weight behind the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), saying his party is ready to accept "the ECP's decision regarding elections".

The PPP leader maintained that had Nawaz believed people would vote for him, he would have mentioned the elections in his speech.

Following his return from self-imposed exile, the PML-N supremo spoke about the alleged victimisation he and his family endured during the six years, particularly during the Imran Khan-led government of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).

While he spoke at length about the myriad of issues Pakistan is facing at the moment and made promises to resolve them once in power, the 73-year-old did not mention his party's plans to contest the upcoming elections, which are expected to take place in the last week of January next year, as per the ECP.

"Today, the PML-N ripped the law apart," he said, likening Nawaz's homecoming to a coronation ceremony.

Taking a jibe at the way Nawaz has returned to Pakistan without fear of being tried by courts for his past convictions, the PPP leader also criticised the relief extended towards the PML-N.

He said the former premier was presenting his CV at his welcome gathering in a bid to appear as a suitable candidate for leading the country for the fourth time.

He lamented that the interim administration in Punjab, the sole purpose of which is to ensure a free and fair conduct of general polls, had assisted in organising the PML-N supremo's welcome rally.

# 12,000 Afghan refugees return to Afghanistan from Pakistan



Newly-returned Afghan refugees are pictured in Kandahar Province, Afghanistan, Oct. 21, 2023. More than 12,000 Afghan refugees have returned to south Afghanistan from Pakistan over the past months, deputy head of Refugees and Repatriation Directorate in south Afghanistan's Kandahar province Momin Agha said. Xinhua

SPIN BOLDAK: More than 12,000 Afghan refugees have returned to south Afghanistan from Pakistan over the past months, deputy head of Refugees and Repatriation Directorate in south Afghanistan's Kandahar province Momin Agha said.

According to the official, on average 820 families, or more than 4,000 individuals, return home from Pakistan via the Spin Boldak border crossing that connects Kandahar to Baluchistan of Pakistan each week,

and the number of returnees is on the rise.

More than 2.5 million Afghan refugees have been living in Pakistan, with the same number in Iran, who have escaped foreign invasions and conflicts in their homeland Afghanistan over the past four decades.

Reportedly, more than 200,000 Afghan refugees have returned to their homeland from neighboring Pakistan and Iran over the past year. Xinhua

## 'Fuel adjustment plan'

# 26 PIA flights cancelled

*As PIA operations affected due to unavailability of fuel*

KARACHI: The flight operations of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) have been severely affected with multiple flights cancelled due to the unavailability of fuel amid the prevailing financial crunch faced by the national carrier.

As many as 26 flights have been cancelled from Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, Quetta, Bahawalpur, Multan, Gwadar and other cities after the Pakistan State Oil (PSO) slashed its fuel supply to the PIA, sources said.

The national carrier's administration is looking into the matter and expects the fuel supply to be restored today once credit lines are available, a PIA spokesperson said while adding that the affected passengers are being provided with alternate flights.

As many as 18 flights were cancelled from Karachi, of which three were Islamabad-bound, whereas two Karachi-bound flights were also cancelled from Lahore and the federal capital, respectively.

Meanwhile, only three flights will take off from Karachi today as per the fuel adjustment plan of the PIA. The national carrier's flight operations have been partially restored

following the administration's efforts, confirmed a PIA spokesperson later in the evening.

Jeddah-bound PIA flights took off from Karachi, Islamabad, Lahore and Multan airports, whereas another Riyadh-bound flight took off from the federal capital.

The national carrier has been facing dire financial circumstances as the Federal Bureau of Revenue (FBR) froze all of its bank accounts for non-payment of taxes back in July earlier this year following which the airline was unable to cater to clear its dues owed to the PSO.

In September, the PIA had asked for an emergency bailout of Rs22.9 billion which was rejected by the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC).

The ECC also rejected the request for deferment of the payments of Rs1.3 billion per month, which PIA pays to FBR against Federal excise duty (FED), and Rs0.7 billion per month which PIA pays to the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) against embarking charges.

Earlier this month, PIA flight PK 790 was stopped in Canada on ground handling and fuel company complaints.

# PM says Awami Action Committee talks will be held within ambit of law and constitution

**Bureau Report**

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Azad Kashmir Chaudhry Anwar ul Haq has said that the negotiations with Awami Action Committee would be held within the ambit of law and constitution.

Speaking to a private TV channel, the PM, while referring to the government's austerity drive, said that besides curtailment of expenditures the government took a number of initiatives including improving quality of infrastructure, standard and quality of education and healthcare facilities in the state.

The Prime Minister said that the expenses of the PM House have been reduced to a large extent. "Similarly, discretionary posts were abolished, road infrastructure was improved, flour and timber was eliminated and 11 billion rupees of development budget was spent transparently", the PM said,



adding that 22 new ambulances were added to the health sector fleet.

The PM said that he had pleaded and presented the case of his people effectively at every forum.

He said that the issues related to Mangala Dam affectees and Neelum

Jhelum Hydropower Project would also be resolved. He said that an endowment fund worth 5 billion rupees has been established out of which financial assistance would be provided to widows, orphans and divorced women and the disabled.

The PM said that he was enjoying the full support of the caretaker prime minister of Pakistan. "God willing, we will resolve all the problems", he said.

In response to a question, the PM said that he has been able to run an unnatural alliance successfully. He said that after the removal of constitutional bar on cabinet size, the portfolios to ministers would be assigned soon.

In response to a question, the PM while condemning the Israel's naked aggression against Palestinians said that Israel can't suppress Palestinians legitimate struggle.

He said that India must take a leaf out of the history that it cannot break the will of Kashmiri people by using its military might.

The PM Haq also termed the former prime minister of Pakistan Mr. Nawaz Sharif's home coming as a positive development.

## Nadeem Raja dies in car accident

**Abdul Majeed Tahir**

Former assembly candidate and former government secretary and Director General Information Dr. Mahmoodul Hasan Raja passed away in a tragic accident after returning from attending the meeting of Pakistan Muslim League (N) leader Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif in Lahore. He died in a car accident on Sunday morning while three others were injured. According to the details, former assembly candidate and former government secretary Dr. Mahmoodul Hasan Raja was returning to Kotli after attending the meeting of Muslim League-N in Lahore, when his car met with an accident while cutting a bend between Khaliqabad and Kakra. Dr. Mahmoodul Hasan was driving the car at the time of the accident. As soon as the accident was reported, the rescue teams reached the spot on the instructions of Deputy Commissioner Yasir Riaz and started rescue operations with Rescue 1122, Civil Defense and local people. The injured were brought to DHQ Hospital Mirpur where Deputy Commissioner Yasir Riaz and other officers and a large number of public also reached the spot. The funeral prayers of the deceased offered at Mirpur was attended the government ministers Javed Iqbal Badhanvi, Chaudhry Qasim Majeed, Member of Assembly Chaudhry Muhammad Rafiq Nair, Commissioner Chaudhry Shaikat Ali, Commissioner Muzaffarabad Sardar Adnan Khurshid, Central Chairman Zakat Council. Chaudhry Mohammad Siddique, Deputy Commissioner Yasir Riaz, SSP Raja Irfan Saleem, Former Chief Justice Azam Khan, Former DG Information Raja Azhar Iqbal, MS Dr. Aamir Aziz, Chief Electronics Engineer Tahir Ratial, Former Deputy Commissioner Raja Qaiser Aurangzeb, D. SP Raja Nadeem Arif, Dr. Ijaz Raja, Dr. Adnan Marghoub, prominent banker Raja Arif, Sardar Nasir Mahmood Khan and hundreds of others participated. Later, the deceased body was sent to Kotli with full honors where his funeral prayers were offered at Kotli Stadium on Monday, October 23 at 11 am.



## Visa Consultant an important step facilitating international relations, Governor GB

**City Desk**

RAWALPINDI: Gilgit-Baltistan Chitral (GBC) Visa Consultant Kashandar Inauguration, Governor GB Mehdi Shah cut the ribbon, various people participated in the ceremony. Eminent personality Rahmat Shah welcomed Governor Gilgit-Baltistan Mehdi Shah. Speaking on the occasion, Governor Gilgit-Baltistan Mehdi Shah said that the opening of Visa Consultant is an important step towards building and facilitating international relations. The event was attended by dignitaries, community leaders, and aspiring applicants, shed light on the region's evolving diplomatic and migration landscape.

## IMAGINE-Institute of Futures Studies Celebrates UNESCO Approval for "UNESCO Chairs in Futures Literacy and Futures Studies"

**City Desk**



KARACHI: IMAGINE-Institute of Futures Studies is thrilled to announce a momentous achievement as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has favorably approved the establishment of "UNESCO Chairs in Futures Literacy and Futures Studies" at Iqra University, Karachi Pakistan.

This remarkable milestone marks a significant step forward in the promotion of Futures Literacy and Futures Studies within Pakistan and beyond. IMAGINE, in collaboration with Iqra University, is poised to lead the charge in driving the exploration of sustainable futures, fueled by imagination and visionary thinking. "We are deeply honored and excited by UNESCO's approval of our initiative," said Prof. Dr. Shams Hamid, Dean Social Sciences and Founding Director, IMAGINE-Institute of Futures Studies. "This achievement is a testament to our unwavering commitment to fostering a brighter and more sustainable future through the power of foresight and innovation."

The approval from UNESCO paves the way for the formalization of an agreement between UNESCO and Iqra University, Karachi, Pakistan, in the coming weeks. This historic endeavor is set to establish the very first "UNESCO Chair in Futures Literacy and Futures Studies" within Pakistan, marking a groundbreaking development in the field. Futures Literacy and Futures Studies have gained increasing importance in today's ever-changing world, where the ability to anticipate and shape sustainable futures is of paramount significance. IMAGINE's commitment to this cause is unwavering, and this approval by UNESCO further underscores the institute's dedication to advancing the field.

"We look forward to the formalization of this agreement with great enthusiasm and optimism," Professor Dr. Shams Hamid added. "This achievement not only represents a significant stride in our mission but also opens doors to extensive collaboration, research, and knowledge exchange in the domain of Futures Literacy and Futures Studies." IMAGINE-Institute of Futures Studies extends its gratitude to all supporters, partners, and individuals who have been instrumental in making this achievement possible. Together, we aim to shape a more informed and visionary world for the generations to come.

## Digital Media Journalists Association seeks to protect the truth and prevent fake news in Pakistan

**City Desk**

RAWALPINDI: In modern digital and social media, the trend of suppressing the truth and facts in false propaganda is increasing rapidly due to which good and high moral values are being lost. The primary duty of a responsible media is to separate the truth from the lie and the falsehood from the facts so that the lies, that are the basis of the evils created in our society can be controlled.

These views were expressed by Khalid Nawaz Sudhrai, Patron-in-Chief of Pakistan Digital Media Journalists Association while talking to the office bearers of the association. President of the organization Shaikat Rehman Malik, Senior Vice President Nisar Chaudhry, General Secretary Taj Muhammad Jan, Secretary Finance Iqbal Ahmed Awan, Syed Asif Ali Shah, Khalid Chaudhry and others were present on this occasion.

Khalid Nawaz Sudhrai said that the main objective of our association, which is consisting of working journalists, is to tell the truth to the people without mixing the lies in to the ground realities. He said that we will work selflessly to protect the rights of journalists associated with the association and will try to provide a free and safe environment to the digital media associated with us to deliver factual news and information to the public.

## Solidarity

KARACHI: Supporters of the Majlis Wahdat-e-Muslimeen march towards the US consulate during protest rally against Israeli airstrikes on Gaza, and to show solidarity with Palestinian people, in Provincial Capital.



Photo: Online

# Sardar Attique condemns Israel's attack on Gaza hospital

**Bureau Report**

RAWALPINDI: President of All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference and former Prime Minister Sardar Attique Ahmad Khan has condemned the death of hundreds of people, including women and children, as a result of the Israeli attack on a hospital in Gaza, saying that the Zionist state of Israel has invaded the small territory of Palestine, Gaza.

Innocent children, women and hospitals are not safe from Israel's brutality, on which the criminal silence of the international conscience and human rights institutions is shameful. They should play their role to stop it, if this is not done, history will never forgive them, he expressed these views while talking to the Muslim Conference delegations in Mujahid Manzil Rawalpindi and the



representative of the English daily The Spokesman Islamabad. He said that Israel has crossed all limits by committing humanitarian atrocities in Gaza, but despite all its military and modern weapons, it cannot defeat the Palestinian people's desire for martyrdom and spirit of jihad. President Muslim Confer-

ence Sardar Attique Ahmad Khan said that Israel

is committing crimes against humanity and war crimes because of its power. Israel's attack on the hospital in Gaza is unacceptable. Innocent children, Israel's heavy bombardment of women and the elderly is inhumane and illegal.

He said that thousands of innocent civilians have been targeted by the ongoing bombing by the Israeli forces in Palestine, Israel should immediately end the blockade of Gaza and ensure the delivery of food and medicine. He praised the role of OIC and especially the government of Saudi Arabia has raised a lively voice in favor of the Palestinian people. Steps should be taken to increase further.

President Muslim Conference said that Pakistan's announcement of aid for the Palestinian brothers and sisters, which includes rations and necessities of life, is welcome. The people of Kashmir also came forward to help them and the Palestinians Go ahead to help the brothers. He said that may Allah raise the ranks of the Palestinian martyrs and give the injured a speedy recovery he added.

# Political leaders demand to speed up bifurcation process of Lower SW

**Adam Khan Wazir**

WANA: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's previous provincial government cabinet approved the division of South Waziristan into two districts on 12 April 2022.

one district was named Upper Waziristan while the other district was named Lower Waziristan, but despite the official notification issued on September 13, 2022 the district of Lower South Waziristan is still deprived of its fruits.

Due to the slowness of the bifurcation process, public problems started increasing, the bifurcation process should be expedited, demand of ANP leader Noorzaman Wazir and tribal elders.

ANP senior leader Ayaz Wazir says that South Waziristan has been divided into two districts, Upper and Lower Waziristan, but unfortunately the line departments offices of Lower South Waziristan district are still in Tank district.

He said that until the offices of all the departments of Lower South Waziristan district are shifted to Wana and the people are not made easily accessible to these offices, then it is of no use.

Informed sources say that the heads of some departments have been appointed in Lower South Waziristan, but on the one hand, they cannot work due to lack of offices and on the other hand, the staff of the District Account Office are sitting 160 km away in Tank district due to

which the official work of Lower South Waziristan district has come to a complete standstill.

In this regard Pakistan people party local president Aman Ullah Wazir said that new problems are arising for the common people day by day due to which the problems of the people are increasing enormously.

He said that the Deputy Commissioner of Lower South Waziristan has been appointed, but he does not have access to development funds and other resources, as is the case with other departments.

Political leaders have strongly demanded the Caretaker Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Anwar Ulhaq Kakar, from the provincial government and top military officials.

That all the offices of the Lower South Waziristan district should be shifted to Wana, and other departments including the district administration should be equipped with their funds and legitimate resources and powers, so that the people can get relief in this regard.

It should be noted that the credit for dividing South Waziristan into two districts goes to PTI's former MPA Naseer Ullah Wazir and his father, former customs officer Haji Nasr Ullah Wazir.

Before the election, Naseer Ullah Wazir had promised the Wazir Tribe in his constituency PK 114 that I will make every possible effort to give you a separate district. Ultimately, they succeeded in establishing a separate district.

## Blend of Glamour & Humanity

# Shafina Shah: 'Ms. Pakistan World 2023' a star ready to shine on horizons of global entertainment industry

Interview by Amjad Mehmood

**M**iss Shafina Shah, is a British-Pakistani from Leicester, United Kingdom, and was recently crowned for the title of "Ms. Pakistan World 2023" in a beauty pageant held in a private hotel in Lahore. Ms. Pakistan World is a global beauty competition for women of Pakistani heritage. The event was used to be held in Toronto, Canada, but has now relocated to Pakistan, where it has been held yearly since 2020. Kuwait-born Canadian Pakistani and founder of Miss Canada Pakistan Inc., Sonia Ahmed founded the pageant in 2002 under the moniker 'Miss Canada Pakistan'. Initially, the event was conducted in Canada because of security concerns and general public's attitude toward pageants in Pakistan.

The British-born Shafina has a blend of Indian and Pakistani heritage in her blood as her late father Haji Ismail Raj Muhammad Patel known by his screen name Raj Patel (an actor & director) was from Gujarat, India while her mother Atiya Shah (actress) is from Kohat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Following her parents' legacy of acting, she discovered her passion for acting at an early age and started drama classes. She is a versatile actress, Model, TV presenter, and social worker. She completed her graduation in Nutrition, Health & Lifestyle from Sheffield Hallam University, UK. Besides her artistic work, she is a strong supporter of humanity and social work across the globe.

In an exclusive interview with Daily Spokesman, she said her journey for 'Ms. Pakistan World' title was a mix-up of highs and lows since she was confused to decide about her participation in a beauty pageant in Pakistan. She added that the overall impression of Pakistan built by the Western media is totally against reality as she found everyone very supportive and full of hospitality. She traveled to Pakistan first time in February 2023 and her trip was amazing with memorable moments in different cities. She particularly mentioned the memories of her visit to Kohat, the birthplace of her mother where she visited her grandmother and met with lovely people. She said her friends in the UK gave her confidence to participate in the beauty pageant and then she decided to send her nomination being a British-Pakistani. Following the set rules for competitors, she cleared all the stages which included interviews, photoshoots, and scrutiny of personality traits. After a very tough competition with other beautiful participants, she passed all stages and was crowned the title of Ms. Pakistan World 2023 in May 2023 at Lahore in a fabulous ceremony held by the pageant organizers. She said it was possible with the support of her mother, grandmother, and friends who gave her the confidence to participate. She also admired the perfect arrangements from the organizer, especially Ms. Sonia Ahmed.



"Cleft Hospital brings back smiles on children faces"

Shah accepted the role of ambassador earlier this year with OPSA (Overseas Plastic Surgery Appeal), a registered charity organization working for Pakistani children who have cleft lips and palates. Miss Shah aimed to perform her role to raise awareness and spotlight OPSA surgical missions in Pakistan.

of her association with OPSA and its amazing team members.

She said Cleft Hospital Pakistan situated at Julyani, Main G. T Road, Gujrat is a state-of-the-art hospital with all necessary facilities. She visited the hospital and was highly satisfied with the treatment and facilities being provided to patients. The hospital has a capacity of 700 surgeries in a calendar year while over 24,000 surgeries are already successfully completed. She said the hospital has maintained excellent standards under the able command of Patron, Professor Abdul Rasheed Gatrud, OBE, and Chairman, Dr. Ijaz Bashir who have very golden hearts full of passion and humankind. Introducing more about the hospital she said the hospital also offers plastic surgery, cleft dentistry, cleft audiology, cleft speech therapy, pediatrics, and ENT services. The hospital is well equipped with laboratory facilities including pathology, screening and imaging, DNA, etc., She said the treatment is completely free for poor people while the patients who can afford the charges are billed marginally. She said the hospital's team is performing their roles professionally with zeal and commitment. They give a reason to live to poor people who otherwise lost hope of a normal life. In a similar context, a delegation of OPSA and Cleft Hospital including Miss Shafina Shah, has a meeting with the President Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Dr.

Arif Alvi to apprise him about Cleft Hospital's performance and to seek his support at the government level to enhance the working capacity of hospital as over 2400 babies per month are borne with cleft lips in Pakistan. She said the hospital has several unique success stories to share and families from abroad are visiting Cleft Hospi-



Mr. Naveed Ahmad Khan, Editor, Daily The Spokesman presenting newspaper to Miss. Shafina Shah

tal Gujrat for treatment.

Miss Shafina shared a story of a school in Kohat that needed monetary support to enhance education standards for which she is planning to launch a fundraising drive soon in the United Kingdom and in Pakistan as well. She said she has plans to increase her interaction with the Pakistani community in the UK to boost her charity work. She said helping needy and deserving people is a collective effort and everyone should take part and support generously to noble causes.

Miss Shafina Shah aiming to continue her career in the entertainment industry to inspire the world with her talent and skills along with her resolve to bring positive change in society through social work. Talking about feeling about Pakistan, she added, that she naturally connects with her motherland and has plans to visit Pakistan frequently in the future to serve society as much as she can to the best of her abilities. She said women's empowerment is quite essential in any society and she would like to see Pakistani women progressing well in every walk of life including the entertainment industry. She urged

younger girls to participate in beauty pageants being held at national and international levels. Sharing her political thoughts, she said although she is not actively following politics and usually stays away from political affairs however, she likes to PTI Chairman as most youngsters in the United Kingdom are big fans of Imran Khan.

Talking about recent barbaric Israeli attacks on innocent Palestinians she recorded her protest and said this was inhuman and highly irresponsible conduct of the Israeli government to bomb the innocent people, women, and children everywhere in Gaza city including hospitals. She said access to all basic necessities is a fundamental right of Palestinians and Israel is indulging in criminal activities by cutting the supply lines of the city.

She concluded that the world is very beautiful and it's the collective responsibility of human beings to make the world more colorful and a better place to live with positive energy, harmonious conduct, and caring attitude towards others.

Photos by Raja Farid

"My Mother, Grandmother & friends gave me confidence to participate in beauty pageant in Pakistan"

Miss. Shah while talking about her family's support in career said that her mother and grandmother always encouraged her in acting, modeling, and hosting. She had exciting experience of working with Bollywood superstar star and romance king Shahrukh Khan. She also worked for B4U and in the theater play which was themed about dementia. She is also trying to learn singing while she passionately loves dancing and choreography. She has her role in the movie Animal (2023) while she has a lead role in the film 'Lahore to London' directed by Waqar Iqbal. She also participated in the popular Matchmaker podcast serving to Muslim community in Glasgow. Talking about Pakistani dramas she commented that the standard of Pakistani dramas has improved significantly and she watches dramas in her leisure time. On an inquiry about her acting in Pakistani dramas, if a role is offered she replied she would love to act in drama but obviously, she will read the story and assess the character first. She also shared her thoughts about working in Bollywood, that art has no boundaries, and based on a good offer from any popular film or drama industry, she may consider the offer to perform and showcase her talent.

In continuation of her proclivity towards social work, Miss Shafina

"Art has no boundaries & I would love to work in any film or drama industry to showcase my talent"

"I have plans to visit Pakistan and do more social and charity work for well-being of needy people"

Group Chairman/Chief Editor: **Almas Ayoub Sabir**  
 Vice Chairman: **Asim Nazir Ahmad**  
 Managing Editor: **Naveed Ahmad Khan**  
 Head Editorial Advisory Board: **Amjad Mehmood**  
 Bureau Chief Karachi: **Saleem Zaman Khan.**  
 (mszk786@gmail.com)  
 Bureau Chief Lahore: **Syed Afraz Ali Nazish**  
 (afrazalishah@gmail.com)  
 Islamabad Office: Rose Plaza, I-8 Markaz.  
 Karachi office: Flat No.C.3.A.One Comfort, Block No 11.  
 Gulshan-e-Iqbal, Main Rashid Minhas Road.  
 Lahore Office: 7-E,Samanberg, Johar Town.  
 Email: **spokesmanislamabad@gmail.com**  
 Whatsapp: **0346-5008408**

# Return of Nawaz Sharif, a day of hope... - II

**M**aryam Nawaz Sharif was well aware that her father's once-impossible return to Pakistan was riddled with uncertainties and complicated by legal issues, with a looming risk of his arrest shortly after setting foot in the country. This apprehension was explicitly articulated by the caretaker interior minister, who initially stated that Nawaz Sharif, being a convicted individual, was likely to be apprehended upon his return. However, following a stern rebuke from PML(N) leadership and reprimand from the establishment, the minister promptly retracted his initial statement.

One of the primary challenges Maryam Nawaz Sharif faced was gaining the support of a truncated parliament, which consisted of numerous parties, some of which had a history of intense rivalry with the PML(N), particularly the PPP. Maryam strategically utilized parliament to pass crucial laws, including the Supreme Court Practices and Procedure Act of 2023, which provided her father with an opportunity to appeal his conviction and lifetime disqualification. She was well aware that these laws could not supersede or bypass the constitution, but this was a necessary step to pave the way for Nawaz Sharif's return. Collaborating closely with the establishment, Maryam secured a safe return for her father, facilitated his protective bail, and set the stage for his reentry into politics and a potential fourth term as Prime Minister.

In exchange for this favor, the PML(N) granted the establishment an extensive range of powers, legitimizing their involvement in civilian matters. This

involved appointing both active and retired military officers to key civilian positions and providing legal cover for their roles in financial and economic disciplines.

The Official Secrets (Amendment) Act, 2023 broadens the definition of national security breaches and grants intelligence agencies the authority to conduct raids and detain individuals. The Pakistan Army (Amendment) Act, 2023 allows the military's intelligence agencies to search individuals or places without a warrant and criminalizes defamation of the armed forces. The National Security Act, 2023 establishes a National Security Council and provides the government with the power to detain those deemed threats to national security. The amendments to the Board of Investment Act, 2023 include involving the army chief in trade and investment decisions, and the National Logistics Corporation Act, 2023 gives the army a monopoly on logistical support. The E-Safety Bill, 2023 addresses online offenses, while the Cantonments (Amendment) Bill, 2023 refines existing frameworks.

In tandem with these efforts, Maryam successfully lobbied for a significant softening of the Accountability Law, leading to the dismissal of numerous NAB cases against her family, including allegations of financial corruption, money laundering, and misuse of public funds. This led to the exoneration of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the dismissal

of a seven-year prison sentence and a substantial fine for Maryam herself, and the clearance of Suleman Shehbaz in a money laundering case. A reinvestigation by the FIA also found Shehbaz Sharif and his son Hamza "innocent" in another money laundering case. These calculated moves were instrumental in achieving her objectives.

Simultaneously, while skillfully negotiating with the establishment, Maryam engaged in a determined campaign against a non-compliant judiciary. She openly defied the Supreme Court's directive to hold Punjab Assembly elections within 90 days of dissolution, effectively sowing divisions among Supreme Court judges and emboldening other stakeholders to disregard the court's orders. This strategic maneuver created a pretext for delaying the elections, ensuring that the PML(N) could participate when fully prepared and in a position of strength, aligning with Maryam's political objectives.

The Pakistani government employed a multi-faceted approach to manipulate the media landscape in favor of the Pakistan Muslim League (N) (PML-N) and against Imran Khan. This strategy included media censorship through various coercive tactics, offering financial incentives to compliant outlets, appointing PML-N sympathizers to key media positions, legally harassing critical journalists, and even resorting to violence and intimidation. As a result, the media's bias in favor of the PML-N was palpable

in their coverage of Imran Khan, often depicting him negatively while downplaying or ignoring stories critical of the PML-N.

Having brought her father back safely, Maryam has now set the stage for Nawaz Sharif to make his move. However, the path ahead is riddled with complexities, and the outcome remains uncertain. Nawaz Sharif, who has had a tumultuous history with the Pakistani military, having been ousted from power on three occasions, will need to tread carefully and find common ground with the military if he aims to secure a fourth term as Prime Minister.

Addressing Pakistan's pressing economic challenges, including high inflation and a growing debt burden, will be paramount in improving the lives of ordinary citizens. The deeply divided political landscape in Pakistan necessitates Sharif to build a broad coalition, reaching out to opposition parties and finding consensus on a range of issues.

Moreover, considering his age and past health issues, Sharif's physical well-being will be a critical factor in managing the demands of the office.

In the face of these multifaceted challenges, Nawaz Sharif's future as Prime Minister hinges on his ability to unite the nation and effectively navigate these complexities. Failure to do so could once again lead to his removal from office by the military, mirroring his past experiences.

*The author is Press Secretary to the President (Rtd), former Press Minister at Embassy of Pakistan to France and former MD, SRBC.*



Analysis

Qamar Bashir

## UN calls for 'urgent' help for quake-hit Afghan families

**T**he relief wing of the United Nations Saturday called for "urgent" assistance for Afghan families in Herat, who have lost everything to a series of devastating earthquakes, as temperatures dropped into single digits. With about two-thirds of the affected areas assessed, more than 21,500 homes are confirmed destroyed and a further 17,000 severely damaged, according to the UN Humanitarian Affairs Coordination Office (OCHA). Over 154,000 people have been impacted.

That number includes about 7,500 pregnant women, many of whom lost family members. The deaths of their loved ones have taken a devastating toll, the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) said. The agency has deployed psychosocial counsellors to help them cope with overwhelming loss.

They need someone to listen to them and help them cope with their trauma, said counsellor Faiza Zarie, adding that the availability of psychosocial support is critical. Women also face other challenges heightened risks of preventable maternal death, gender-based violence and hunger. UNFPA is working to address reproductive health needs.

It issued a funding appeal for \$11.6 million to continue delivering life-saving sexual and reproductive health supplies and services. Access to medical care has also been severely affected, with at least 40 facilities reported damaged, a region that was already largely deprived of essential health services before the disaster.

The World Health Organization (WHO) warns that services for about 580,000 people have been severely disrupted. Health workers are also affected by the disaster either from loss of family members or from fear of collapsing health facilities, which makes it even harder for them to provide the health care their communities need, Alaa AbouZeid, WHO team leader emergencies in Afghanistan, told reporters in Geneva, from Kabul.

The health consequences are staggering, she added. The UN agency has been one of the first responders on the ground, supporting hospitals with medicines and supplies and organizing mobile health and nutrition teams. Sustaining health services will require extra resources, and WHO and partners have launched an appeal for \$7.9 million to provide support for the next six months.



Cartoon by Amjad Rasmi. (Courtesy of Asharq Al-Awsat)

## Kashmir under the suppression of Indian Forces

**O**ver years several emotional but equally fractured dialogues have been exchanged in United Nation.

Additionally, numerous regional wars between India and Pakistan happened over the matter of Kashmir, but sadly result is nothing achieved. Till date Kashmir is bleeding, civilians disappearing, houses burnt, and women sexually assaulted.

However, from the childhood I know Kashmir is in constant struggle, but with the advancement of Narendra Modi's government in 2014 and its re-election in 2019 profoundly impacted Kashmir. Casteist and heteronormative TEA BOY selling tea on the railway station of Vadnagar nurture in his heart the same disease that British planted in 1857.

Modi lead government incorporates the notion of populism, false-nationalism (because Hindustan was always the place of numerous religions, moreover Buddhism was once the dominant religion), authoritarianism and majoritarianism. Its barbarous action against minority groups and vulnerable communities has demonstrated abject disregard for democracy. Hindu nationalists have sought to weaponize religion and politics to inflame Hindu majority. Muslims in Kashmir and their allies have been repeatedly portrayed as enemies of India, and as potential terrorists.

Article 370 and 370A that certifies Kashmir with some autonomy and legislative, was unilaterally modified by the Indian government lately, to seize Jammu and Kashmir's legislative jurisdiction and independence. However, resulting the disgusting mindset of

TEA BOY Indian government openly nullified both Articles, on which United Nation is silent as of Palestine, Syria and Iraq.

In response to persistent oppression, Kashmiri civilians continue to take to the streets in large numbers, in the form of silent protest. Women torn with grief holding in their hands files of their missing husband, father with their weak hands bearing banners of their lost sons, a 7 years old child with hope in his eyes asking soldiers, if they know where his dad is. Such a state in Kashmir that a young lady is unable to fathom if she's still married or been windowed months ago.

Heartbreak, rage, resilience and resistance is a life of Kashmiri, constant fear, lockdowns and curfew is the background of Kashmir to whom people call Heaven on Earth. Where local social movements for justice routinely met with extreme suppression from Indian forces.

In 2019, millions of additional troops were reportedly deployed in Jammu and Kashmir. Following August 5, Kashmir witnessed the reported toucher of children, the elderly and women; sexualized violence; illegal and mass detentions; house arrests of political leaders; curtailment of freedom of speech, movement, and dissent; falsification of social facts by the State; and closure of sacred places. People were afraid to approach the courts lest the extra-legal detention be converted into formal detention. The impact on political economy was devastating.

The height of inhumanity that, following the seize of 2019, Indian soldiers reportedly forced 12 civilian men to remove their clothes and line up, naked, on the main road

in Pulwama, beat them severely, and electrocuted their genitals. The tortured were reportedly forced to lie naked atop each other. Additional and similar undertakings of torture were also reported. Several people died from inhaling tear gas and pepper gas grenades reportedly fired by police personnel during a civilian protest. At the 44 Rashtriya Rifles camp in Shopian, armed forces personnel reportedly tortured three men and broadcast their cries over loudspeaker. Moreover, police reportedly shot pellets and teargas at religious processions in Srinagar during the holy month of Muharram, injuring more than 100 people.

Even at the time of COVID in 2020, situation was the same, where life has given no value what you expect of health condition or any service. However, on the other hand everything was done to suppress the Muslims majority let's say, a boy with disabilities named Hazim Shafi was reportedly killed by Central Reserve Police Force personnel in Kupwara. Police and paramilitary reportedly stormed Nasrullah Pora Village in Budgam, attacking residents and looting and vandalizing properties. Assaulted women and tied men to trees. Armed forces personnel reportedly shot bullets and pellets at a civilian demonstration in Awantipora, killing Jahangir Wani injuring at least 25. And to alter the demographic setup, Indian government banished certain legal barriers to permanent residency in Kashmir.

The vicious actions of Modi contrasting with India's own constitution and fractured the very basic notion on which Hindustan was known to the world.

*Munaza Kazmi holds MPhil in Management Sciences. She's a travel writer, a published author, & co-author of scientific contributions.*



Analysis

Munaza Kazmi

## Digital Economy 2.0: A Game Changer for Pakistan - II

**T**his strategic partnership will extend to cutting-edge technologies and capacity building for IT services, all with the aim of fostering high-quality development within the digital economy. The collaboration signifies a milestone in the enduring China-Pakistan friendship, further solidifying their all-weather strategic cooperative partnership.

The move towards strengthening cooperation in the IT sector reflects the commitment of both China and Pakistan to drive innovation and digital transformation in the new era. The two nations share a vision of a shared digital future that will propel Pakistan into the digital age and facilitate comprehensive economic growth and progress.

Indeed the Digital Economy is a Key Driver of Growth. Truly, the digital economy stands as a formidable engine propelling global growth into the future. In this age of technological marvels, China and Pakistan have joined hands in a visionary partnership, acknowledging the profound impact of the digital realm on the world's economic landscape. It's a recognition that transcends borders and speaks to the very heart of their collaboration - the digital domain as a pivotal catalyst for progress.

This venture is more than just a bilateral agreement; it's a platform for international harmony and collaboration, echoing the harmonious melody of progress that spans the globe. With this partnership, the two nations are sowing the seeds of collective advancement and working towards a shared dream of a digital future that knows no boundaries.

In the digital age, the concept of a connected world becomes a living reality. The digital economy is more than a driver; it's a vehicle steering us towards a new era of shared prosperity. China and Pakistan, in their shared vision, are constructing a framework that nurtures global economic synergy.

This is a symphony of collaboration that harmonizes diverse nations and leads them towards the common goal of development.

As this digital journey unfolds, the building blocks of this brave new world come together. It's a world where geographical limitations fade into insignificance, where cooperation transcends borders, and where economic growth becomes a collective endeavor. In their pursuit of a shared digital future, China and Pakistan are not merely nurturing their own economies but are also unlocking the door to international cooperation and progress.

Within this grand design, the focus on digital infrastructure is paramount. The infrastructure they are constructing is more than just wires and data centers; it's the bedrock of modernization and technological evolution. The digital highway they envisage stretches beyond their own borders; it's a route of opportunity for international cooperation and development. This infrastructure is the bridge that connects nations in the digital realm, uniting them in a shared journey towards a brighter future.

Furthermore, this partnership extends its embrace to cutting-edge technologies. In a world that is constantly evolving, innovation is the key. By engaging in joint research, technological exchange, and capacity building, China and Pakistan are planting the flag of progress on the peaks of innovation. They understand that breakthroughs in areas like artificial intelligence, blockchain, and quantum computing are not just ambitions; they are necessities for the future. And in the digital era, services are king. China and Pakistan are working together to enhance the quality and capacity of IT services. It's not just about offering convenience to their citizens; it's about elevating their position in the global digital landscape.

*To be Continued*



Analysis

Syed Ali Nawaz Gilani

# Move South or risk being seen as 'terrorists', Israel tells Gazans

At least 55 Palestinians killed in overnight airstrikes as Israel amps up offensive; death toll since Oct 7 past 4,300

GAZA: Amid continued Israeli bombardment, Palestinians said they received renewed warnings from Israel's military to move from north Gaza to the south of the strip, with the added threat that they could be identified as sympathisers of a "terrorist organisation" if they stayed put.

The message was delivered in leaflets marked with the Israel Defense Forces name and logo from Saturday and sent to people via mobile phone audio messages across the Gaza Strip, a narrow territory that is just 45 km (28 miles) long.

"Urgent warning, to residents of Gaza. Your presence north of Wadi Gaza puts your life in danger. Whoever chooses not to leave north Gaza to the south of Wadi Gaza might be identified as an accomplice in a terrorist organisation," the leaflet said.

Israeli airstrikes continued through the night, killing at least 55 Palestinians in Gaza, raising the total number of casualties since October 7 past 4,300.

Israeli officials claim surprise offensive by Hamas on October 7 left 1,400 dead and 212 hostages were taken. The occupying state has pounded Gaza with airstrikes besides enforcing a "total siege" since then. Israel has massed troops and armour on the border with Gaza ahead of an expected land incursion, aiming to annihilate Hamas, after several inconclusive wars dating to its seizure of power there in 2007.

"We are going to go into the Gaza Strip... to destroy Hamas operatives

and Hamas infrastructure," Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Herzi Halevi told troops in a video distributed by the Israeli military on Saturday. "We will have in our mind the memories of the images and those who fell on Saturday two weeks ago."

The Israeli military said in a statement it had "no intention to consider those who have not evacuated... as a member of the terrorist group". It added that it did not target civilians.

"In order to minimize civilian harm, the IDF sent a request to the residents of the northern area of the Gaza Strip to evacuate southward of Wadi Gaza," it said.

Israel has previously urged Palestinians to move south, although Palestinians said they had not previously been told they could be considered "terrorist" sympathisers if they did not. They also say making the journey south remains highly risky amid airstrikes and say areas of the south have also been hit.

Gaza's Health Ministry said on Saturday that Israel's air and missile strikes in retaliation had killed at least 4,385 Palestinians, including hundreds of children, with more than a million of the tiny territory's 2.3 million people displaced.

It added that more than 30 homes had been destroyed in the hours after an Israeli military spokesman said that raids would be increased.

Meanwhile, fears that the Israel-Palestinian conflict might spread through the Middle East ratcheted higher on

Sunday, with the US sending more military assets to the region as Israel pummelled targets in Gaza and elsewhere.

An Israeli missile attack targeted Damascus and Aleppo international airports in neighbouring Syria early on Sunday, killing a civilian worker and putting the airports out of service, Syrian state media reported.

Israel said its aircraft struck Hezbollah targets in Lebanon on Saturday and that one of its soldiers was hit by an anti-tank missile in cross-border fighting that the Iran-backed group said killed six of its fighters.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken cautioned Lebanon's caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati on Saturday that the Lebanese people would be affected if his country were drawn in, the State Department said.

Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said Washington would send more military assets to the Middle East to support Israel and strengthen the US defence posture in the region following "recent escalations by Iran and its proxy forces".

A Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system and additional Patriot air defence missile system battalions will be sent to the region, and more troops will be put on standby, Austin said.

Washington has already sent a significant amount of naval power to the Middle East in recent weeks, including two aircraft carriers, their support ships and about 2,000 Marines.



Drones and rockets targeted two military bases housing US forces in Iraq last week, the latest in a series of attacks after Iraqi militants warned Washington against intervening to support Israel against Iran-backed Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

A deadly blast at the Al-Ahli hospital in Gaza on Tuesday was likely caused by an errant rocket fired from Gaza, not an Israeli strike, Canada's National Department of Defence said, reaching similar conclusions to the US and France.

Israeli aircraft struck a compound beneath a mosque in the Jenin refugee camp in the occupied West Bank early on Sunday that the military said was being used by militants to organise attacks.

Meanwhile, in southern Lebanon, at least 27 people have been killed, according to an AFP tally. Most have been combatants but at least four civilians, including a Reuters journalist, have also been killed.

Israel has ordered dozens of northern communities to evacuate, and several thousand Lebanese have also fled border regions for the southern city of Tyre. On Sunday, the Israeli defence ministry said they were evacuating 14 additional communities from the area. Israel has levelled blame at Lebanese group Hezbollah for dragging Lebanon into the conflict.

The first humanitarian aid convoy allowed into the enclave since war broke out arrived through the Rafah border crossing on Saturday. The United Nations said the 20-truck convoy brought life-saving supplies that would be received by the Palestinian Red Crescent.

But the UN humanitarian office said the volume of goods that entered on Saturday was just 4% of the daily average of imports into Gaza before the hostilities and a fraction of what was needed after 13 days of siege of the crowded enclave.

Biden, long a firm supporter of Israel, cheered the arrival of the aid after days of intense negotiations. He said the US was committed to ensuring more aid gets to Palestinians running out of food, water, medicines and fuel. "We will continue to work with all parties," Biden said in a statement. Reuters/AFP

## Israeli airstrikes

GAZA: The picture shows destroyed buildings after Israeli airstrikes in the southern Gaza Strip city of Khan Younis. The death toll of Palestinians from Israeli airstrikes on the Gaza Strip has risen to 4,651, the Hamas-run Health Ministry said on Sunday. Meanwhile, 14,245 Palestinians were wounded in the coastal enclave, the ministry said in a statement.



Photo: Xinhua

## Six dead in traffic accident in south-central Nepal

KATHMANDU: At least six people were killed and three others injured after a jeep plunged into a river in south-central Nepal's Palpa district.

The jeep was heading toward Rani Mahal, a famous tourist destination in the district, when it skidded off the road in a narrow gorge.

The driver was injured after jumping off the jeep before it plunged into the river, said Raj Kumar Chapagain, a district police officer.

Security forces were mobilized for the rescue operation, and two injured passengers were rescued and sent to a local hospital for treatment, Chapagain told Xinhua.

"As the jeep fell in a narrow gorge, the rescuers find it difficult in rescue," he said, adding that it was not clear how many passengers were aboard the jeep.

Road accidents are common in mountainous Nepal, and hundreds of lives are lost annually. Agencies

## Iranian FM reiterates call for ending Israel-Hamas conflict

TEHRAN: Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian reiterated his country's call for an end to the Israel-Hamas conflict and denounced Israeli actions targeting civilians during the ongoing conflict.

Amir-Abdollahian made the remarks during separate phone conversations with the foreign ministers of Luxembourg and Oman on Saturday, according to statements posted on the website of Iran's Foreign Ministry on Sunday.

During the call with Luxembourg's Foreign Minister Jean Asselborn, Amir-Abdollahian condemned Israel's attacks on Gaza and underlined the gravity of the humanitarian crisis in the Palestinian enclave.

Asselborn said he was aware of the dire situation in Gaza and hoped that a political solution could be prioritized to end the tensions as soon as possible. He also hoped that Iran could play a "constructive and active" role to restore peace in the region. In the phone conversation with Omani Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr Albusaidi, the ministers discussed ways to halt the conflict, lift the siege on Gaza, and provide humanitarian assistance to Gaza. They both strongly opposed the forced displacement of Gazans to the southern part of the coastal enclave.

The Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) launched a surprise attack on Israel on Oct. 7, firing thousands of rockets and infiltrating Israeli territory, to which Israel responded with massive airstrikes and punitive measures, including a siege on the enclave with supplies of water, electricity, fuel, and other necessities being cut off.

The ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict has killed more than 6,000 people on both sides and left many others in an acute humanitarian crisis. Xinhua

## Iraqi PM, French president call for ceasefire in Gaza Strip

BAGHDAD: Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' al-Sudani and French President Emmanuel Macron on Sunday called for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip to avoid repercussions for regional and world peace.

During a phone call, the two leaders discussed the rapid developments in the region due to the ongoing conflict between Palestinians and Israelis, especially the bombing of the Gaza Strip that affects civilians, according to a statement issued by al-Sudani's media office.

The two sides emphasized that the continued escalation between Palestinians and Israelis had serious repercussions on regional and international peace and security, the statement said, adding that they agreed to maintain communication and joint efforts for a ceasefire and contain the conflict in order to reach comprehensive and just solutions.

For his part, Macron pointed out the need to take serious action to prevent the expansion of the conflict and save the lives of civilians, the statement said.

The statement added that al-Sudani and Macron agreed on the necessity of securing an immediate ceasefire and opening safe corridors for humanitarian aid to reach the besieged residents of Gaza.

On Oct. 7, the Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) launched a surprise attack by firing thousands of rockets against Israeli targets, prompting extensive airstrikes from the Israeli side. Hamas militants also infiltrated Israeli territory and took a significant number of hostages during the attack.

More than 1,400 people in Israel were killed in the attacks launched by Hamas, according to figures released by Israel's military. Israeli attacks have killed 4,651 Palestinians, according to figures released by the Hamas-run Health Ministry. Agencies

## Bombay court rejects plea seeking ban on Pakistani artists

DUBAI: The Bombay High Court has ruled against a petition aimed at banning Pakistani artists from working or performing in India, reported Indian media.

The legal petition, initiated by Faaiz Anwar Qureshi—a self-proclaimed cine worker and artist—demanded that the Indian government ban any form of professional association with artists from Pakistan, according to Livemint.

The petition specifically called for a prohibition on the employment, solicitation of work, or collaboration with Pakistani cine workers, musicians, singers, lyricists, and technicians by Indian citizens and companies.

The division bench comprising

Justices Sunil Shukre and Firdosh Pooniwalla, categorically rejected the plea. The court stated that such a move would be a backward step in fostering cultural harmony and unity, both within India and across its border with Pakistan.

The court further observed that patriotism isn't demonstrated by hostility towards foreign nationals, particularly those from neighbouring countries, according to Indian media.

Read First batch of Pakistani media departs for India to cover CWC

"A true patriot is a person who is selfless, who is devoted to the cause of his country, which he cannot be unless he is a person who is good at heart. A person

who is good at heart would welcome in his country any activity which promotes peace, harmony, and tranquillity within the country and across the border," Indian news wires quoted it as saying.

"One must understand that in order to be a patriot, one need not be inimical to those from abroad especially, from the neighbouring country," the court said.

Highlighting the unifying power of the arts, the bench stressed that activities like music, sports, culture and dance transcend national and cultural boundaries. Such activities, they noted, are instrumental in fostering a sense of unity and peace between nations.

The court also brought up the issue of Pakistan's cricket team's involvement

in the current World Cup in India. It hailed the Indian government's proactive measures to allow so, in accordance with Article 51 of the Indian Constitution, which fosters global peace and security.

The petitioner also asked the court to stop issuing visas to Pakistani artists and to penalise those who ignored the ban.

He argued that the presence of Pakistani artists in India during the World Cup could diminish job opportunities for Indian artists. The bench, however, found no merit in these arguments, stating that the judiciary cannot mandate the government to formulate specific laws or policies. Reuters

## US business leaders urged to explore Chinese market

EXTON: The Chinese market is not an "option" but a "must" as nearly 90 percent of American companies doing business in the world's largest consumer market are earning profits, Chinese Consul General in New York Huang Ping said on Friday.

"China is not the source of risk but the source of opportunity. To shut out China in the name of 'de-risking' is to throw away opportunities, stability, cooperation and development," said Huang when addressing business leaders at the Chester County Economic Development Council (CCEDC) in Exton, Pennsylvania, about 150 km southwest of New York City.

Senior executives from major multinational enterprises like Microsoft, Apple, Tesla, Pfizer, Starbucks and ADM have visited China this year, expressing their optimism about the Chinese market and their hope to strengthen cooperation with Chinese companies, said Huang. "These have shown that the Chinese market is not an 'option' but a 'must.'"

Half of Tesla's global deliveries came from its Shanghai gigafactory last year, which rolls out one electric vehicle every 40 seconds on average, according to Huang. Starbucks now operates more than 6,500 stores in China.

The Foreign Policy Association released a report titled "The Business of America and China

Is Business, calling on U.S. policymakers to view China from a correct perspective and strengthen U.S.-China economic and trade cooperation.

According to statistics, the average return on U.S. direct investment in China was 14.7 percent between 2000 and 2020, far higher than that of U.S. outbound direct investment of 9.7 percent. Exports to China have supported more than 1 million jobs in the United States. Over 70,000 American companies are doing business in China, and nearly 90 percent are earning profits.

The American Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai released its 2023 China Business Report, showing 52 percent of respondents



expect greater revenue in 2023 than the previous year, while 31 percent of respondents are increasing investment in China, or 6 percentage points more than last year.

The senior Chinese diplomat expressed confidence that Pennsylvania's cooperation with China will be further strengthened as the Chinese economy keeps a good momentum of steady growth with remarkable resilience.

"Pennsylvania's cooperation with China is at the forefront of China-U.S. sub-national cooperation. China has become Pennsylvania's third largest export market and largest source of imports," he said, adding that the pioneers in Philadelphia took the lead in opening up trade with China more than 200 years ago.

Michael Grigalonis, CCEDC president and chief operating officer, agreed.

"We were very committed. Prior to the (COVID-19) pandemic, one of our real priorities

was our relationship with China, (especially) developing economic ties. And of course, as you say, that pandemic hit, and we got on to other priorities, but there're still some successes that are in place, and things that we can build on in the future," said Grigalonis.

F. William Bogle, chairman of the Pennsylvania Global Business Advisors, who first visited China in 1983, also encouraged business leaders to visit and explore opportunities in China.

"I've been to China a total of 28 times now. But every time it's always something new. It's very exciting," said Bogle, sharing the photos he took 40 years ago in China. Xinhua

*Counter steps vital as debt escalates rapidly to Rs64tr: FPCCI Presidential Candidate*



**Commerce Desk**

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) Presidential candidate for the upcoming polls of 2024 Muhammad Ali Sheikh has called for taking corrective measures as rapid escalation in debt is widely seen as unsustainable, yet serious steps are now vital to curb this alarming trajectory, by keeping check on government expenditure and high cost of debt servicing, as the federal government debt has surged to a staggering Rs64 trillion.

Quoting the State Bank of Pakistan report, the FPCCI Presidential candidate nominated by the BMP, said that the federal government's debt has soared by Rs14.5 trillion, constituting a substantial 29.2% rise compared to the same period last year. He said that the debt burden is gradually increasing because of insufficient tax revenue collection that forced the government to borrow from the domestic and external resources to finance the soaring fiscal deficit.

In its monthly report on Foreign Economic Assistance (FEA), the Economic Affairs Division (EAD) said against its annual target of \$17.6bn, total FEA in the July-September quarter amounted to \$3.527bn when compared to just \$2.234bn of the same period last year, an increase of 58pc. Total inflows recorded by the EAD in September came in at \$321 million against \$316m in August.

Major FEA during the first quarter flowed in at \$2.89bn in July soon after Pakistan reached an agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a fresh short-term program.

*Today's market analysis on behalf of Rania Gule Market Analyst at XS.com*

**PPA**

DUBAI: Natural Gas Prices Decreased this Week, and currently, natural gas is trading at \$3.26 per million British Thermal Units (MMBtu). Gas supplies to Europe remained higher than average despite the closure of gas imports from Israeli occupation through Egypt. With European gas storage tanks filled up to 85%, it seems that the European Union is prepared to face the early cold temperatures before the arrival of winter. Even with geopolitical tensions threatening to escalate in the Middle East, one of the world's largest natural gas demand sources, Europe, seems to have the capacity to sustain itself for an extended period.

At the same time, the U. S. Dollar Index (DXY) has been fluctuating with high volatility and instability. Geopolitical tensions in Palestine are supporting the flow of liquidity into safe-haven assets. On the other hand, yields on U. S. Treasury bonds have risen to their highest levels in years, with 10-year U. S. Treasury bonds surpassing 5% at one point. A fundamental rule in financial markets is that yields above 5% represent a turning point, where high yields on bonds and securities may begin to harm the economy and potentially lead to a recession shortly, weakening the strength of the U. S. dollar.

I believe that the market drivers influencing natural gas prices are the escalating events in the Middle East at present. The latest data from the Egyptian Ports Authority shows that liquefied natural gas (LNG) vessels are departing ports with only partial loads of LNG due to the closure of gas fields in the occupied Palestinian territories.

With the increasing frequency of nightly shelling in Middle Eastern countries and the deployment of drones by a U. S. military carrier, the United States could be drawn into war, which could lead to an increase in gas prices in the near term. According to estimates from the Institute of Energy Economics, Japan (IEEJ), the world will need \$7 trillion to ensure an adequate supply of gas until 2050.

Today, the markets are eagerly awaiting some important data in addition to geopolitical news and developments in the Middle East conflict. The Baker Hughes Gas Rig Count report is scheduled to be released this evening at approximately 17:00 GMT. It's worth noting that the previous figure was 117, which is still far from the high number of 167 in 2022.

# UNCTAD's 8th World Investment Forum in Abu Dhabi concludes successfully

**PPA**

ABU DHABI: The prestigious World Investment Forum (WIF) successfully wrapped up its 8th edition in Abu Dhabi under the overarching theme of 'Investing in Sustainable Development'. The event, which ran from October 16 to 20, saw robust participation from global thought leaders, investors, experts, and stakeholders spanning multiple nations.

Over its five-day duration, the biennial forum welcomed more than 8,000 participants, including 1,100 speakers, interventions by two Royal Highnesses, five heads of state and government, 69 ministers and deputy ministers, 57 high-level representatives of international organizations, policymakers, and legislators. The event also witnessed the participation of 80 international partner organizations, and 700 CEOs and executives from various investment institutions from 160 countries, all of whom actively engaged in 157 diverse events. And from civil society, the forum successfully integrated the voices of thought leaders, academia, non-governmental and not-for-profit organizations, as well as the media. UNCTAD has a proud tradition of inclusivity and multi-stakeholder dialogue:



as you have seen this week, the WIF is no exception. UNCTAD's obligation to ensuring geographical and gender parity is demonstrated by that 34 percent of registered participants, speakers and panelists being women, with more than 60 percent being from the global south.

UAE's Minister of State for Foreign Trade,

His Excellency Dr. Thani Al Zeyoudi, remarked on the event's resounding success saying, "This year's forum underscores the UAE's steadfast commitment to economic advancement and sustainable growth."

His Excellency Ahmed Jasim Al Zaabi, Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Department of Economic Development (ADDED), has

extended his gratitude to all attendees and collaborators for making the 8th WIF a benchmark event for dialogue on sustainable investment.

H. E. Al Zaabi adds: "As catalyst for economic diversification and growth, ADDED remain committed to provide a vibrant, globally competitive, and entrepreneurial ecosystem to generate opportunities for all, enabling them to reach their full potential."

Pedro Manuel Moreno, Deputy Secretary-General, UNCTAD, emphasized the significance of the timing of the forum saying, "The World Investment Forum coincided with the midpoint of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Since the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, the SDG investment gap in developing countries has increased from \$2.5 to \$4 trillion."

His Excellency Ahmed Khalifa Al Qubaisi, CEO of the Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said, "By hosting the World Investment Forum, one of the world's largest investment forums, the Emirate of Abu Dhabi has established its position as a prominent hub for hosting major international conferences and forums of global significance."

## Sanitary items

KARACHI: A vendor is selling secondhand sanitary items at Jubilee area in Provincial Capital.



Photo: Online

## Zonergy Corporation showcases Smart Energy Products at Solar & Storage Live UK 2023

**Spokesman Report**

ISLAMABAD: The Birmingham International Convention and Exhibition Center was ablaze with innovation from October 17th to 19th, 2023, as Zonergy showcased its latest, state-of-the-art optical storage products at the esteemed Solar & Storage Live UK event. These products cater to a broad spectrum of work and lifestyle needs for our local customers and partners, capturing the spotlight and earning high praise.

The booth emerged as the hub of attention for both UK and European customers and exhibitors throughout the event. It served as a bustling arena for stimulating discussions, networking, and forging dynamic business connections.

Attendees expressed substantial interest in our comprehensive range of industrial, commercial, and household energy storage solutions, with particular enthusiasm for our Powercube series, a modular chemical commercial energy storage system that promises to revolutionize the industry.

Renowned as Europe's premier new energy exhibition, the UK Solar and New Energy Exhibition offers a prominent stage for companies to showcase their product excellence and amplify their brand impact.

Zonergy remains resolute in its commitment to fine-tuning product offerings and bolstering our local team's presence in the UK and across Europe.

## Anjum Nisar says smuggling eats vitals of Pak economic fabrics

**Commerce Desk**

LAHORE: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry's Businessmen Panel (BMP) has suggested the government to reduce the tariff rates on smuggling prone items to the lowest level to curb smuggling, as Afghanistan's imports through Pakistan under the transit trade facility has gone up nearly two-thirds to \$7.3 billion in the last fiscal year.

The FPCCI former president and Businessmen Panel (BMP) Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar observed that the total elimination of smuggling only through administrative measures at the borders was difficult and the remedy lies in reducing incentive for smuggling by reducing tariff rates.

Smuggling is eating vitals of Pakistan economic fabrics and needs to be curbed through fiscal and administrative measures.

It renders industrial products uncompetitive and discourages legal imports thus make colossal losses to the trade, industry and government exchequer.

Despite efforts of Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) with limited resources cannot control smuggling from boarders of Iran and Afghanistan.



This will result in higher government revenue, provide impetus to local trade/industry and generate employment opportunities.

He said that elimination of smuggling, which is causing loss of billions of dollars to the national exchequer, could help reduce dependence on debts.

Mian Anjum Nisar said that the government could save billions of dollars annually by eradicating the menace of smuggling. Then there would be no need for dependence on loans to meet the budget deficit, he added. He said that smuggling had become a big

threat to economic growth. The BMP Chairman urged the authorities concerned to stop harassing traders and establish an effective monitoring system at borders to stop the illegal trade.

He said that smuggled goods through the borders of Afghanistan, Iran China, India and the Afghan Transit Trade form a chunk of the informal economy.

He said that high rate of taxes and duties give way to smuggling. Therefore, there was dire need to bring down the rate of duties and taxes especially on smuggling-prone items.

## PIAF calls for serious steps as Pakistan exports continue to fall

**Bureau Report**

LAHORE: Raising grave concern over the continued falling trend of Pakistan exports the Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIAF) has said that the country's textile exports fell for third month in a row due to growing production costs and liquidity crunch, indicating that the government has failed to win the confidence of the business community due to multiple reasons. In the first quarter of FY24, the total exports dipped 3.63pc to \$6.91bn this year from \$7.17bn over the last year.

Quoting the figure, PIAF Chairman Faheemur Rehman Saigol observed that the textile and clothing exports shrank 9.95 per cent in the first quarter (July-September) FY24 to \$4.12 billion

from \$4.58bn in the corresponding period last year. In September, the textile and clothing exports contracted 10.88pc to \$1.36bn from \$1.52bn in the same month last year.

The PIAF chairman advocated the need for raising the country's tax base so that tax-to-GDP ratio improves from current poor level. He urged the trade officers to explore opportunities to diversify exports of goods and services in their respective areas, asking them to meet the challenges faced by Pakistan in European markets. He also suggested the ministry to devise strategies for promotion of Pakistani products, calling upon trade officers to take advantage of opportunities offered by China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

## Business Facilitation Center in Punjab, a key initiative towards ease of doing business: Saqib Rafiq

**Commerce Desk**

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) President Saqib Rafiq has termed the establishment of Business Facilitation Center in Punjab will be a key initiative towards ease of doing business which will provide seamless interaction between the business community and 36 different departments.

RCCI President Saqib Rafiq while addressing a Zoom meeting on Business



Facilitation Center (One-Roof) with Minister Industries, S. M.



Tanveer lauded the Punjab Government initiative towards providing

facilitation to the business community and a vital step towards facilitat-

ing investment and industrialization. The meeting discussed the progress on one-window operation facility in alignment with the recommendations of the six major chambers of commerce and industries in Punjab.

Presidents from the Chamber of Commerce including Lahore, Gujranwala, Sialkot, Faisalabad and Multan, Secretary Industries, DG IPWM, CEO PIEMDC, CEO FIDEMC, CEO PBIT, MD PSIC, among others, were also present in the meeting.

