



## Ashrafi reiterates Pakistan's unequivocal stance on Palestine

Special Representative to the PM on Religious Harmony and Pakistani Diaspora in the Middle East and Islamic Countries, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi on Wednesday reiterated Pakistan's unequivocal stance on the Palestine issue, making it clear to the international community. (Details on Page 8)

DAYS REMAINING

5

## Only 5 days left for illegal immigrants to leave Pakistan

Foreign citizens residing illegally in Pakistan now have only 5 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

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## Anti-Power Theft Campaign 2023

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar chairs a review meeting regarding the Anti-Power Theft Campaign 2023, on Wednesday.



Photo: PID

# PM for accelerated efforts to curb power theft

Recent accords with China to add new chapter to CPEC, says PM Kakar

### Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar has directed to expedite the anti-power theft campaign in Azad Kashmir, Quetta and Sindh. He gave these instructions, while chairing a review meeting regarding the anti-power theft campaign, in Islamabad on Wednesday. The meeting was appraised that 19,415 people, involved in power theft, were arrested while 39,836 cases have been registered since September this year. It was

said that 189 officers involved in the theft of electricity have been suspended. The meeting was briefed that the most successful anti-power theft campaign was observed in Mardan, where electricity-theft have reduced from 43 percent to 13 percent. Besides, billions of rupees have been collected since inception of the drive, which has been continuing with the cooperation of the federal and the provincial governments. The Prime Minister commended the Ministry of Energy, power distribution companies and

provincial and federal authorities concerned for the positive outcome of the campaign. He also directed to accelerate solarization of agricultural tube-wells in the country. Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar instructed the officials concerned to submit a comprehensive report regarding the resistance against the anti-theft campaign and other problems being faced in Balochistan. Meanwhile, caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Wednesday said Pakistan was committed to the implementation of projects recently concluded with China in diverse sectors.

He said the recent agreements between the two countries would add a new chapter to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). In a meeting with Chinese Ambassador Jiang Zaidong, he said China's Belt and Road Initiative was the guarantor of the development and prosperity of the entire region. The prime minister expressed gratitude to Chinese President Xi Jinping and the Chinese leadership for the warm welcome and arrangements during his recent visit to China.

"Pakistan will take strong steps to implement the Memorandum of Understanding and agreements signed during my recent visit to China," he said. He said the friendship between China and Pakistan was "higher than the towering mountains and deeper than the deep seas". He mentioned that the people of both countries were benefiting from the fruits of CPEC. The Chinese ambassador assured the prime minister of China's full cooperation in the development and economic stability of Pakistan.

## Govt plans various initiatives for development of IT, telecom sectors

Pakistan's software exports are to the tune of 2.5 million dollars

### Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: The Federal government has planned a number of initiatives for development of Information Technology and Telecommunication sectors in the country. Addressing a news conference flanked by Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi in Islamabad on Wednesday, Caretaker Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication, Dr. Umar Saif said the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) deliberated in detail different initiatives to bring foreign investment in the IT and Telecom sectors. He said Pakistan's software exports are to the tune of 2.5 million dollars.



He said under this initiative, the government has planned to impart training to two hundred thousand youth in different IT skills within next two years. Turning to Freelancers, he said the government is establishing a viable infrastructure to formalize the freelancing and provide conducive environment to them. He said for this purpose, the government has decided to launch 'Pakistan e-Rozgar' programme, under which IT companies will be given interest-free loans to formalize online freelancing. He said a comprehensive mechanism is also being chalked out to ensure timely payments to the freelancers from the foreign companies. About development of Telecommunication Sector, the Minister said Pakistan maintains the 7th largest Telecommunication market with a huge potential of investment. He said presently we are giving 274 Megahertz (MHz) Spectrum, and we want to give additional 300 MHz to increase its connectivity, bandwidth and scope.

The Minister said the universities in Pakistan are producing seventy-five thousand IT graduates annually and the government has decided to launch Co-op Programme for these graduates. He said under this programme, a test of international standard will be introduced to impart Apprenticeship training to these graduates to meet international requirements. The Minister said the

### Election date may be announced next month: Kh. Asif

ISLAMABAD: Senior leader of Pakistan Muslim League-N, Khawaja Muhammad Asif on Wednesday said that election date may be announced next month. Political parties will gear up election campaign after announcement of election schedule in Pakistan, he said while talking to a private television channel. We are fully prepared for general elections, he said adding that Nawaz Sharif will lead the campaign to win the next elections with full support of people. Nawaz Sharif had given clear statement during public address at Minar-e-Pakistan that we should work together for the prosperity of Pakistan, he said.

## Israel bombards Gaza as world leaders call for pause in conflict

Gaza's death toll soars to 6,546 amid Israeli airstrikes, 2,704 children among victims, Health Ministry says

GAZA: Israel's military intensified its bombing of southern Gaza overnight after one of the deadliest days for Palestinians since the conflict began as world leaders called for a halt to fighting to allow aid into the besieged enclave. The Palestinian death toll from ongoing Israeli airstrikes on the Gaza Strip has soared to 6,546, the Health Ministry said Wednesday. "The fatalities included 2,704 children, 1,584 women, and 364 elders," the ministry spokesman Ashraf al-Qudra told a press conference in Gaza City. He said 17,439 other people were injured in the assaults, while 1,600 people remained trapped under the rubble, including 900 children. The spokesman said 73 medics were killed and 25 ambulances

destroyed in the Israeli attacks. "Gaza's healthcare system went out of service" amid relentless attacks and critical shortages, al-Qudra said. Amid concerns the Israel-Hamas conflict will spread across the Middle East, Israel's military said its jets struck Syrian army infrastructure and mortar launchers in response to rockets launched from Iran ally Syria. The military did not provide further details. It did not accuse Syria's army of firing the two rockets, which set off air raid sirens in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights. Citing a military source, Syrian state news agency (SANA) said the Israeli attack killed 8 soldiers and wounded 7 more in an "aerial aggression" near the southwestern city of Deraa. The United States and Russia are

leading international calls for a pause in fighting between Israel and Hamas to allow aid into Gaza where Palestinians are living in harrowing conditions. US President Joe Biden and Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman spoke by phone on Tuesday and agreed on broader diplomacy "to maintain stability across the region and prevent the conflict from expanding," the White House said. Deadly clashes have intensified between the Israeli military and Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, and resurged between Israel and Lebanon's Hezbollah armed group along the Israeli-Lebanon border. Iran, which has sought regional ascendancy for decades, backs both Hezbollah and Hamas, and has warned Israel to stop its onslaught on Gaza.

### IMF team to visit Pakistan on Nov 2

ISLAMABAD: An International Monetary Fund (IMF) delegation is scheduled to visit Pakistan for talks regarding the initial assessment of the country's \$3 billion standby arrangement (SBA) on November 2. The finance ministry, too, has started preparing for the upcoming talks with the global lending institution. The development was confirmed by the IMF's resident representative, Esther Perez Ruiz, as the cash-strapped nation, currently functioning under a caretaker administration, endeavours to steer towards economic revival after the IMF approved its loan programme in July this year. The loan programme averted a sovereign debt default with Pakistan receiving its first \$1.2 billion tranche.

### At United Nations

## Pakistan reiterates strong condemnation of Israeli airstrikes Gaza

### Spokesman Report

NEW YORK: At the UN Security Council meeting on the situation in Middle East, Pakistan has reiterated its strong condemnation of Israeli airstrikes and military action in Gaza. In his remarks, Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the UN Munir Akram said the Israeli attacks on civilians, civilian objects and infrastructure, blockade of water, food and fuel as well as the forced transfer of people from the occupied territory, are flagrant violations of international humanitarian law and amount to war crimes. He said those responsible for these atrocity crimes must be

held accountable. Munir Akram said any attempt to create a false equivalence between Israel, the occupying power, and the Palestinians, the victims of this occupation is untenable legally, morally and politically. He called for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire. He said the perpetuation of Israeli occupation will not bring peace to the Holy Land, stressing durable peace will emerge from the internationally agreed two-State solution and from the creation of a secure, viable, contiguous, and sovereign state of Palestine on the basis of the pre-June 1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

## Chinese defense ministry slams U. S. report

BELJING: A Chinese defense spokesman on Wednesday criticized a report recently released by the U. S. Department of Defense for its disregard of facts and distortion of China's national defense policy and military strategy. Wu Qian, a spokesman for the Ministry of National Defense, expressed strong dissatisfaction with and firm opposition to the U. S. 2023 Report on Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China, saying that the report hypes up the baseless

"China's military threat." He stressed that China is committed to peaceful development and pursues a defensive national defense policy. China's military development "targets no specific countries or objectives" and is "legitimate, legal, reasonable and moderate," Wu said. On military-to-military relations between China and the United States, Wu said the U.S. side is singlehandedly responsible for the current difficulties and barriers facing the two militaries. Xinhua

## FM Jilani, Kyrgyz president discuss bilateral ties

BISHKEK (KYRGYZSTAN): Caretaker Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani on Wednesday called on President of Kyrgyzstan Sadyr Zhaparov wherein the two sides exchanged views on the current state and prospects of Kyrgyz-Pakistani bilateral cooperation. The meeting took place on the sidelines of the 22nd meeting of the Council

of Heads of Government (CHG) of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization being held in Bishkek. The meeting will be attended by the Heads of Government of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, vice-president of Iran and foreign ministers of Pakistan and India. SCO Observer States name-



ly Belarus and Mongolia as well as Guest State Turkmenistan will also

attend the meeting. In a post on X, Foreign Minister Jilani said that in the meeting, he conveyed warm greetings of Pakistan leadership and people. Both sides expressed a mutual desire to build stronger economic, political, and educational relations. The Kyrgyz leader noted that Pakistan occupied an important

place in the system of international and regional relations, and Kyrgyzstan was interested in developing cooperation in bilateral and multilateral formats, according to Kabar, the national news agency of Kyrgyzstan. He emphasized great opportunities for increasing the volume of mutual trade between the countries.

## Group photo

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi in a group photo with senior members of the Pakistan Girl Guides Association on Wednesday.



Photo: PID

# No elections in January, says President Alvi

*'Spirit of forgiveness builds nations,' says Dr. Arif Alvi*

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has said that he does not believe the general elections will take place in January next year, but at the same time, he called for the transparent polls when they are staged.

Political analysts have also raised concerns about a possible delay in the polls past January, with several noting that no political party seems in the "election mode", while others mentioned that politicians have also cautioned about the "harsh weather" during winters that could hamper the polling process.

During an interview with a private TV channel, President Alvi said: "I don't believe the elections [will take place in

the last week of January]. I think that the supreme judiciary has taken notice of it and it will issue an apt order."

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) announced last month that it would hold polls in the last week of January 2024, but did not give an exact date — prompting fears of another delay.

The general elections were supposed to be held within 90 days after the dissolution of the National Assembly in August. However, they were delayed after a fresh census was approved, warranting new delimitations.

Alvi, during the interview, also called for free and fair elections, saying that it is crucial for Pakistan's develop-

ment. "...everyone is also calling for a level-playing field."

Ahead of the sought-after elections, he said that there is a need for the nation to become one. "Spirit of forgiveness builds nations," he added.

Commenting on his party affiliation, Alvi said that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan is his leader.

"I've found the PTI chairman to be honest in [his] financial dealings [...], he is a patriotic Pakistani," the president said while responding to a question regarding Khan's sentence in the Toshakhana case.

Taking a jibe at the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) with regard to pre-

valent economic turmoil, Alvi credited the coalition government for making Khan more popular.

The president, while taking a dig at Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), said that the party is in search of a "new narrative".

The PML-N — via various public surveys — has been handed the narrative to work with the rest of the political stakeholders, he added.

Reacting to the president's interview, the former ruling party welcomed Alvi's remarks terming them as a comprehensive overview of the current political and economic turmoil in the country.

"We welcome the president's remarks on transpar-

ent elections in relation to the overwhelming significance of the public mandate," a statement issued by the PTI said.

Free and fair elections are the key to the preservation and continuance of democracy in the country, it added.

The statement also reiterated the demand for a "level-playing field" for all political stakeholders with regard to election campaigns and media coverage.

The party also appreciated Dr Alvi's remarks of finding Khan a "patriotic" and an "honest man", terming it as proof of vindication for the former prime minister — who was removed from power via a no-confidence motion in April last year. Agencies

# Four decades of Pak-Korea friendship celebrated

*Seminar on '40 Years of Friendship- Past, Present and Future between Republic of Korea and Pakistan' held*

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), in collaboration with the Embassy of the Republic of Korea (ROK), held a Seminar on "40 Years of Friendship- Past, Present and Future between Republic of Korea and Pakistan" on Wednesday. Chief Guest on the occasion was Muhammad Ali, Minister for Energy, Power & Petroleum. Speakers in the inaugural session included Dr. Talat Shabbir, Director, China Pakistan Study Centre ISSI; Ambassador Park Kijun, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea; and Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, Director General, ISSI.

During the Inaugural Session, the Speakers celebrated Pakistan-RoK 40-year diplomatic relationship, while highlighting the myriad facets of the strong partnership in various fields, including economic, educational, cultural cooperation, and 'Gandhara connection'.

Dr Talat Shabbir in his introductory remarks said that the enduring friendship and collaboration between Pakistan and South Korea, nurtured over four decades, had led to significant progress in bilateral relations. Ambassador Park Kijun, in his remarks, emphasized the historic nature of the occasion, underscoring the robust and amicable ties existing between the two nations. He highlighted the vast potential for mutually beneficial collaboration in diverse fields.

DG ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood was of the view that the completion of four decades of Pakistan-Republic of Korea diplomatic ties was, truly, a matter of celebration. He emphasized the extremely friendly and cordial nature of bilateral ties; the steady upward trajectory of the partnership since its inception; and its comprehensive scope, encompassing high-level political and diplomatic exchanges, trade, investments, educa-



tion, science & technology, defence, cultural cooperation, and people-to-people interactions. The growth in bilateral trade and investments and the increase in Pakistani students studying in South Korea were also noted. Both nations shared an interest in a peaceful and prosperous South Asia and had collaborated in multilateral forums. While celebrating the progress made thus far, Ambassador Sohail Mahmood stressed, it was essential to craft a vision for a robust economic partnership centred essentially on enhanced trade, investments, technology, and green

transition. The keynote address by Minister for Energy, Power & Petroleum Mr. Muhammad Ali emphasized the importance of sustainable energy solutions, research, innovation, and human resource development in advancing shared goals. He highlighted Pakistan's intrinsic strengths and economic growth potential. The Minister also stressed that, looking ahead, the next 40 years held great promise with new initiatives on the horizon and a steadfast commitment to sustainable solutions, as both nations were driven by a shared vision

of prosperity, sustainability and development.

The Working Session I was held to reflect on the 40-year friendship between Korea and Pakistan. The speakers included: Ambassador Nabeel Munir, Ambassador of Pakistan to the Republic of Korea; Ambassador Mumtaz Zahra Baloch, Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and former Ambassador to RoK; Ambassador Shaikat Mukadam, Former Ambassador to the Republic of Korea; and Raja Amer Iqbal, Former President of Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce & Industry. Ambassador Nabeel Munir highlighted how the two countries shared family values, a deep sense of community, and a millennia-old bond manifested through the Buddhist tradition and Gandhara civilization. He also emphasized the extensive cooperation between Pakistan and Korea, including in the fields of trade, defence, IT, human resources, and infrastructure.

# IHC issues written order regarding hearing on Nawaz's petitions

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday issued written order regarding hearing on petition of PML-N's leader Nawaz Sharif for revival of his appeals in graft references.

The order was issued by the division bench comprising Chief Justice Aamer Farooq and Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb.

It said that the court had sought arguments from respondents on maintainability of the petition seeking restoration of appeals.

It said that the former prime minister had surrendered before the court in line of the order dated October 19, adding that the court was serving notices to NAB on his two petitions. It said that the NAB had sought time to take instructions in this case from the authority.

The order said that the NAB prosecutor had stated that they had no objection on protective bail of the petitioner. After this, the court was extending the protective bail of Nawaz Sharif till October 26. APP

# French investors keen to invest in Pakistan: French envoy

*Shahid Ashraf Tarar hosts Ambassador Nicolas Galey*

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: A meeting was held between Caretaker Minister Shahid Ashraf Tarar and the Ambassador of France to Pakistan Nicolas Galey to discuss emerging investment opportunities in transport, rail, and shipping sectors. The caretaker minister highlighted certain projects for investments in Pakistan and said that there are golden opportunities for the French.

He added that Sukkur-Hyderabad Motorway (M-6) is an excellent investment opportunity. Similarly, Pakistan Railways is trying to build a route from Kohat to Kharlachi in order to connect with Afghanistan, and French investors are welcome to explore.

French Ambassador Nicolas Galey stated that France and Pakistan have



a long history of relations and mutual cooperation, and French investors are showing interest in Pakistani projects. A French rail transport company Alstom is setting up its permanent representation in Pakistan and this is a step to boost further investment. He said that he will further encourage French investors and bring huge investments to Pakistan.

The Caretaker Minister said that

Pakistan National Shipping Corporation is also expanding its horizon with huge scope of foreign investment opportunities. He concluded by saying that the democratic evolution in Pakistan, that began in 2008, is an ongoing process that ensures stability. The future of investments and business is bright in Pakistan especially with the actualization of the Gawadar Port.

# Upcoming general elections

## ECP invites int'l observers, media to monitor

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Wednesday gave another indication that it would be holding elections in January as it extended an invite to international observers and media to monitor poll process to ensure transparency and impartiality.

In a two-page invite, sent under Section 238 of the Elections Act, 2017, the ECP explained the process for international observers and media to avail accreditation cards and visas to enter the country for the nationwide polls.

"The Election Commission has announced General Election is tentatively scheduled in the last week of January 2024. The Election Commission of Pakistan, has an Open Door Policy for accreditation of any national and international Observer subject to the fulfillment of codal formalities (Section 238 of the Elections Act 2017)," said the ECP.

The law makes it clear that observers will not be allowed to monitor polls till they have an accreditation which will be issued after the relevant documents and security clearance have been granted.

For the visa process, the ECP has explained that it may be obtained via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs "Pakistan Online Portal". Along with the visa application, those wishing to come to the country for the polls will also need to attach the "accreditation application form" that is available on the ECP's website.

"After completion of codal formalities as per law, ECP will issue accreditation cards to security cleared inter-

national observers/media and arrange briefings for observers in ECP Secretariat," added the commission. It also advised them to follow the advisories of the Foreign Office and the interior ministry.

"We believe that the presence of international observers will add a valuable dimension to the electoral process, ensuring its transparency and impartiality while lending credibility to our electoral process. In this connection, all necessary arrangements will be made available for international observers to carry out their duties effectively and independently," said the ECP.

The watchdog hoped that the international observers and media would give a "positive and valuable output" during the "important event" in Pakistan's "democratic history".

The country has been gripped in political uncertainty ever since the Imran Khan government was removed through a no-confidence motion in April 2022. A coalition government that took over after Imran Khan's ouster dissolved the National Assembly on August 9.

Following the premature dissolution of national and provincial assemblies, the ECP was required to hold elections within the 90-day time period, meaning the polls should take place no later than November 6.

However, the ECP said it was constitutionally bound to draw fresh boundaries ahead of the elections as the Council of Common Interest (CCI) had approved the census, hence holding elections within the stipulated time period was not possible.

# Ashrafi reiterates Pakistan's unequivocal stance on Palestine

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Special Representative to the Prime Minister on Religious Harmony and Pakistani Diaspora in the Middle East and Islamic Countries, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi on Wednesday reiterated Pakistan's unequivocal stance on the Palestine issue, making it clear to the international community.

He extended his appreciation for the Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Syed Asim Munir, who reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering moral, political, and diplomatic support to the Palestinian people, emphasizing that this support would persist through all challenges.

Ashrafi, who also holds the position of Pakistan Ulama Council Chairman, highlighted the significance of a recent meeting between General Asim Munir and Palestinian Ambassador Ahmad Jawad Rabei. He underscored that "this meeting serves as a testament to Pakistan's steadfast commitment to its policies on Palestine."

He firmly stated that the Pakistani government and its armed forces were fully aligned on the issue of Palestine and categorically condemned any acts of terrorism against the Palestinian population. He emphasized Pakistan's support for an independent Palestinian state, with its capital in Al-Qudus (Jerusalem). He said General Asim Munir had rightly given the call to the international community to play an active role in compelling Israel to cease its continued atrocities against innocent Palestinian people. He condemned Israeli attacks on the civilian population, particularly on children, women, and hospitals, labelling these actions as war crimes.

In a message to the Palestinian people, Ashrafi assured them of Pakistan's solidarity, stating, "Although we are far away physically, our hearts beat with you." He expressed optimism that Palestine would soon attain its long-awaited independence, emphasizing that the resilience of the Palestinian people would not be swayed by the current Israeli barbarism. APP

# British Council invites applications for SAFCA 2024

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The British Council, in partnership with Edinburgh Napier University, is inviting applications to the South Asia Festivals & Culture Academy (SAFCA) in response to the growth of independent and established arts and culture festivals. This pioneering initiative bridges the gap between festival enthusiasts and industry experts, facilitating an exchange of knowledge and insights online in India and neighbouring South Asian countries. The South Asia Festivals Academy's Intermediate Course starts in January 2024, with applications open until November 19, 2023.

SAFCA features a series of short courses specifically designed to equip festival managers with the skills essential for success in the ever-evolving festival landscape. These courses cover international programming and curation, leadership and governance, financial management, operations and staffing, marketing and audience development, risk management and health and safety, equality, diversity, and inclusion, as well as environmental sustainability.

"Festival skills are important, and festival managers from around the world must have the knowledge necessary to increase the sustainability and growth of festivals worldwide. The South Asia Festival Academy is a fantastic opportunity for artists, performers, and those working in or interested in the festival sector to develop their business skills in an inclusive environment and learn

from international festival experts. Festivals are universally recognised as avenues for artistic expression, cultural advancement, and inclusivity along with an impact on local economies. They hold immense cultural value in the UK and Pakistan, and we are committed to strengthening the arts along with providing the best Education for every generation of Pakistani" said Maarya Rehman, Deputy Director British Council in Pakistan.

The intermediate course offered by SAFCA is the culmination of three years of experience, having evolved to align with academic BA Hons courses and adapt to the unique South Asian festival and cultural context. The programme is taught by festival academics and experts from both the UK and South Asia. Designed for festival directors, founders, entrepreneurs, and senior managers of arts and cultural festivals across South Asia, this is a 10-week immersive, structured skills development programme.

The Intermediate Level course is open to festival directors, founders, entrepreneurs, and senior managers in the arts and culture sector across South Asia.

Applications will be considered from those who can demonstrate active experience in a senior leadership role and possess 5-10 years of experience working within the festival and culture sector. The full cost per student is £750, with the British Council providing a subsidy of £500 per student, reducing the total fee to £250.

# Peace cannot be established without the solution of Kashmir and Palestine problem: Sardar Attique

**Abdul Majeed Tahir**

**PALANDRI:** President of All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference and former Prime Minister Sardar Attique Ahmad Khan said that the present Azad Kashmir is the result of the sacrifices of our great leaders. Completing the mission of Ghazi Millat and Mujahid Awwal is our first duty. Peace cannot be established without the solution of the Kashmir and Palestine problem. The establishment of non-state parties in Azad Kashmir weakened the position of the government of Pakistan on the Kashmir issue and the process of division of the nation also began

in Azad Kashmir. Pakistan is capable of rising from all odds. He said India has emerged as a terrorist country. These views were expressed while addressing as Chief guest on the every of AJK government Foundation Day function at Cadet College Palandri. Principal College Brigadier Asif Mohsin also addressed the ceremony. On this occasion, the senior leaders of the Muslim Conference, Sardar Abid Razak and Sardar Wajid Bin Arif Advocate were also accompanied by the President Muslim Conference. Sardar Attique Ahmad Khan said that in 1947, the people of the state of Kashmir committed their future to Pakistan by approving the Treaty of Accession to Pakistan under the



the creation of Pakistan. Later, the Maharaja signed the Standstill Agreement between India and Pakistan. India rejected it and Pakistan accepted the Maharaja's offer. Thus, on 16 August 1947, a Pakistani ticket was issued from Srinagar post office and the Pakistani flag was hoisted on government buildings, but India continued its cunning tactics and started sending soldiers in civilian clothes to different parts of the state, thus the people of Azad Kashmir felt threatened. And started an armed struggle, as a result of which a revolutionary government came into existence on 24 October 1947 at the place of Janjahal Hill. He said that the establishment of this region of Azad Kashmir was implemented under the

concept of base camp. The first priority of the governments of this region should be the independence movement. He said that today the journey of construction and development in Azad Kashmir is going on rapidly because of the vision and planning of the Kashmiri leadership. President Muslim Conference Sardar Attique Ahmad Khan distributed prizes to prominent position holder cadets. On this occasion, Principal Cadet College presented shield to President Muslim Conference. He also answered the questions in the Questions Answers session.

## Green Pakistan

**ISLAMABAD:** A worker is watering the plants at Nursery at Sector H-9 in Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Raja Farid

## Pakistan Health Parliament highlights urgent need for urgent action on mental health in Pakistan

**City Desk**

**ISLAMABAD:** The Pakistan Health Parliament successfully organized a symposium dedicated to exploring contemporary mental health challenges in Pakistan and outlining a strategic path forward to address these pressing issues. This insightful event featured renowned speakers, experts, and a diverse audience, all committed to fostering a healthier, more mentally resilient Pakistan. Mr. Sikandar Zaman, the founder and chairman of the Pakistan Health Parliament, warmly welcomed attendees and set the stage for the symposium. He shared his vision for the Pakistan Health Parliament as an institution dedicated to bridging communities, patients, healthcare providers, policymakers and researchers. The organization's mission is to shape policies that ensure equitable



access and quality health outcomes through dialogue and innovation. Prof. Dr. Aftab Alam Khan, The Chairperson of Mental Health Council

at Pakistan Health Parliament shone a spotlight on the major mental health challenges and their profound impact on Pakistani society. Accord-

ing to latest research, 25% of Pakistanis have mental health illnesses. We can earn Rs.5 in spending Rs.1 on mental health i.e. we can increase our economic activity 5 times in terms of revenue. Joining forces with Dr. Sabahat Hameed, they emphasized the need to address women and youth mental health issues. Distinguished guest speakers from various renowned institutions enriched the symposium with their expertise, including the Brig (R), Rashid Qayyum SI (M)-Head of Psychiatry at PAF Hospital and Fazaia Siddiqui-Head of Behavioral Sciences at the National University of Science and Technology, Dr. Shahzad Ali Khan-Vice Chancellor of Health Services Academy and Dr. Nadeem ul Haque-Vice Chancellor of Pakistan Institute of Development Economics.

## The prevalence of cataracts is rising as the population grows

**Tariq Khattak**

**ISLAMABAD:** With the rising population and an increase in average age, the number of cataract patients is increasing in the country, said Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital on Wednesday. The population is also growing rapidly, as is the number of people with diabetes, which is also pushing up the rate of the disease, said Brig. (R) Prof. Dr. Sabihuddin, Head of the Cataract Department at Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital, Rawalpindi. He informed that because cataract is an age-related degeneration, it cannot be controlled and that it is completely incorrect that the symptoms return after surgery. According to Prof. Dr. Sabihuddin, the government should come forward, support all such initiatives, and strengthen the eye departments in all state-run hospitals, including those established at the district level, as the increasing number of patients cannot be handled by the current

facilities. He advised that it should be operated on only when it matures and eyesight becomes too low to perform normal activities. However, he added that before deciding on cataract surgery, an opinion from an ophthalmologist must be sought. He added that Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital has thirty air-conditioned operation theatres, twenty-five expert doctors, six anaesthetists, and state-of-the-art diagnostic facilities, and almost 90 to 100 surgeries are performed daily. He added that surgical camps are frequently organized in the far-flung areas under the outreach programme and almost 100 surgeries are conducted on a daily basis. "We have the best facilities and doctors to treat the complicated cases," he said, adding that ophthalmology and cataract surgery are the largest departments of the hospital, which provide specialized care to patients with different eye diseases.



The department deals with 60% of the patients. The main objective of this department is to treat cataracts. It also treats all simple and complicated types of lens diseases, and patients are referred to other departments for further treatment. Prof. Dr. Sabihuddin said that those who can afford it do not need to go abroad for laser treatment, as Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital has all the latest technologies and expertise available at cheaper rates. For bladeless surgeries, we have

Femto machines and laser experts. Femto LASIK is one of the most efficient and advanced bladeless laser eye treatments. The surgeon can easily correct refractive errors using this procedure. For the removal of glasses, Al Shifa is also using intra-ocular lenses through LASIK technology, and our Advanced Refractive Laser Center offers the latest solution for vision correction. Now everyone can get rid of glasses permanently with a quick and pain-free procedure. It is pertinent to mention that Al Shifa eye hospitals in Rawalpindi, Sukkar, Kohat, Muzaffarabad, and Chakwal are performing 50 thousand cataract Surgeries free of cost every year. So far, the trust has completed 1 million surgeries since the start of the Cataract Department, he said. Govt should step up as existing facilities insufficient to handle influx of eye patients he concluded.

## Infinix Unveils ZERO 30 5G



**LAHORE:** Infinix, Pakistan's highest selling smartphone brand hosted an unprecedented grand launch of its flagship ZERO 30 Series featuring 60FPS 4K video recording. This monumental event, hosted in Lahore, stands as the crowning achievement of the brand's unwavering commitment to the Pakistani market, where it has consistently introduced groundbreaking products across all its series throughout the year - and now, the vlogging champion ZERO 30 series. The anticipated event was attended by an array of esteemed guests representing various facets of the tech, lifestyle, media, and influencer. In a true spectacle, the stunning Kinza Hashmi, the brand ambassador for Infinix ZERO 30 Series, took center stage and unveiled the flagship ZERO 30 Series. She was joined by prominent figures in the Infinix leadership team, including Saad Shams, Head of Marketing for Infinix Pakistan, Simon Feng, CEO of Infinix Pakistan, and Joe Hu, CEO of Transion Holdings. Saad Shams, Head of Marketing, Infinix Pakistan, shared his excitement, saying, "Infinix's journey in Pakistan has been nothing short of incredible. With the ZERO 30 Series, we're taking another leap towards reshaping the smartphone vlogging landscape. This launch event is a testament to our dedication to our Pakistani audience, and we're thrilled to provide them with cutting-edge technology and exceptional experiences." Simon Feng, CEO of Infinix Pakistan, added, "At Infinix, we believe in the power of innovation and community. Our ZERO 30 Series is a testament to our commitment to our consumers in Pakistan. We look forward to setting new industry standards and delivering remarkable products that enhance the everyday lives of our users."

## Anjuman Tajran Sindh Hyderabad demands immediate solution of traders' problems

**HYDERABAD:** An emergency meeting of Anjuman Tajran Sindh Hyderabad was held under the chairmanship of the central leader of the association, Javed Shams, in which the central president of Hyderabad Salahuddin Ghoori, central leader general secretary Anjad Arain, for the immediate solution of the legitimate problems of the business community. Central Leader Ali Raza Arain, Central Leader Sajid Solangi, Muhammad Tahir Arain, Muhammad Taqi Sheikh, Muhammad Ali Rajput, Syed Fahimuddin, Khalid Malik, Mehboob Abro, Ghulam Mustafa, Abdul Ghafoor Sarohi, Mama Asghar Panhor, Mahfouz Khan Zafar Khanzada, Media Coordinator Haji Muhammad, Yasin Arain and others participated, Javed Shams while addressing the meeting said that Anjuman Tajran Sindh is the only association of Sindh traders community which is working for their welfare without any discrimination, he said that the problems faced by traders We are deploying all our resources to provide relief to them, he said that due to unannounced loadshedding and over-billing in Sindh, businesses have been completely destroyed, addressing HESCO officers. Said that he should correct his qiblah, otherwise there will be a shatterdown protest in the whole of Sindh. They will be exposed by holding a press conference. On this occasion, other officials of Anjuman Tajran Sindh Hyderabad also expressed their views.

## Pakistan has always stood with Kashmiris in its quest for independence: Sardar Faheem



**Bureau Report**

**HAVELI KAHOTA:** Sardar Faheem Akhtar Rabbani, Minister of Government of Azad Government State of Jammu and Kashmir, has said that in 1947, in the freedom struggle of Kashmir, Chaudhry Ghulam Abbas, Ghazi Millat Sardar Ibrahim Khan, Mujahid Awwal Sardar Abdul Qayyum Khan, the way in which the Kashmiri people were fully supported in the freedom movement of Kashmir. Represented in a manner that resulted in the liberation of this region on October 24, 1947. The Kashmiris, under the leadership of Ghazi Millat Sardar Ibrahim Khan, had decided to stay with Pakistan before the establishment of Pakistan on July 19, 1947, until Jammu and Kashmir became liberated. The oppressed Kashmiris do not get their basic right of self-determination. We will not meet with China. A large number of students and students of Civil Society Anjuman Tajran Schools and Colleges participated along with Mayor Municipal Corporation Sheikh Arif. Speaking on this occasion, Government Minister Sardar Faheem Akhtar Rabbani further said that Pakistan is our destination, the nation of Pakistan has always stood with Kashmiris, where Kashmiris stand, our Pakistani brothers are with us. The oppressed Muslims of Palestine are being 8bombaraded, which we strongly condemn and hope that the international world and human rights organizations will take notice of the oppression and oppression in Palestine, the Muslims of Kashmir and Palestine. Deputy Commissioner Haveli Sajid Aslam, speaking at the ceremony, said that today is a very important day for the Kashmiris, the freedom movement of Kashmir and the freedom of Kashmir is the completion of Pakistan, we will not sit doing from China till the completion of the mission left unfulfilled by our predecessors and the complete independence of Occupied Kashmir.



Islamabad  
15° - 23° Clear

**SERVICES**

**Namaz Timings**  
Fajr ..... 4:57 am  
Zohr ..... 11:52 am  
Asr ..... 3:44 pm  
Maghrib ..... 5:23 pm  
Isha ..... 6:47 pm

**EMERGENCY**

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

**Women Police Stations**

Islamabad ..... 9222596  
Rawalpindi ..... 9270601-20

*Kashmir will not sit down until its independence: Rehana Khan*



**Bureau Report**

**MUZAFFARABAD:** Chairperson Women's Commission of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Ms. Rehana Khan said that today we are breathing in free air, it is because of the sacrifices of our elders. They will not let the sacrifices of their ancestors go in vain. The day is not far when the people living in Occupied Kashmir will also be freed from Indian atrocities and will be with us. Due to the sacrifices of our people, on October 24, 1947, the independent government was inaugurated under the leadership of Ghazi Millat Sardar Muhammad Ibrahim Khan.. Today is the day to renew that we will not sit down from peacefully until the independence of Occupied Kashmir, which resulted in the liberation of this region on October 24, 1947. The Kashmiris under the leadership of Ch. Ghulam Abbas Ghazi Millat Sardar Ibrahim Khan and Mujahid Awwal Sardar Muhammad Abdal Qayyum Khan had decided to stay with Pakistan before the establishment of Pakistan on July 19, 1947, as long as the Muslims of Jammu and Kashmir were not allowed to do so. The basic right of self-determination is not found.

# Ultra-processed foods have negative health impacts on our bodies: experts

**Spokesman Report**

ISLAMABAD: Excessive consumption of Ultra-Processed foods in our diet has significantly increased the risk of Cardio Vascular Diseases, Type 2 Diabetes, Obesity and many other fatal diseases. They have excessive amount of sugar, salt, unhealthy fats. The lack of essential nutrients and fiber in ultra-processed foods deprives our bodies of the substance required for optimal well being. Front of pack nutrition labeling on ultra-processed foods is a strategy effectively implemented in other countries to guide consumer toward healthier food choices. Government must implement mandatory front of pack warning labels on ultra-processed foods. This was stated by health professionals during a session on "Health Harms of Ultra-Processed Foods and Way Forward" organized by Pakistan Academy of Family Physicians at a local hotel in Islamabad. Those who attended the session include President of Pakistan Academy of Family Physicians Dr. Mazhar Mirza, Consultant at Global Health Advocacy Incubator (GHAi) Mr. Munawar Hussain, Ex-Commissioner Mr. Abdul Hafeez, General Secretary Pakistan Kidney Patients Welfare association Mr. Ghulam Abbas, representatives of civil society and electronic and print media.

Dr. Mazhar Mirza said that Pakistan is facing a rapid increase in non-communicable diseases in recent years. One of the major reasons of this swift increase in NCDs is our unhealthy dietary patterns. Consumption of ultra-processed foods has increased significantly in Pakistan. These foods often high in sugar, salt and



unhealthy fats leads to obesity, type 2 Diabetes, heart, kidney and many other fatal diseases. We are now in emergency like situation and government shall take immediate policy action on front of pack nutrition labels on ultra-processed foods. He said that Pakistan Standards and Quality Control Authority (PCQCA) under Ministry of Science and Technology should regulate ultra-processed foods to reduce its consumption and promoting healthier food choices.

Mr. Munawar Hussain consultant at Global Health Advocacy Incubator said that 60% of all deaths in Pakistan are due to non-communicable diseases. Pakistan has the 3rd highest burden of diabetes worldwide and if no immediate policy action taken number of people living with diabetes will increase to 62 million by 2045. Cardiovascular diseases, stroke and diabetes is among the major killers of Pakistanis. The increased consumption of ultra-processed products is among the major dietary risks factors of these chronic diseases and taking several lives. Front of pack nutrition labels and warning signs

on ultra-processed foods are the evidence based strategy to educate people to make informed choices about the food they eat. He emphasized media to raise their voice for the mandatory front of pack nutrition labels and warning signs on all ultra-processed foods.

Sana Ullah Ghuman, General Secretary at Pakistan National Heart Association said that media and civil society are the main pillars of a vibrant society. Media shall play its role for awareness raising among public and policy makers on health harms of ultra-processed foods and mobilize a support for enactment of evidence based policies to reduce consumption of ultra-processed foods and sugary drinks. The front of pack nutrition labels and warning signs on foods high in salt, sugar and fats are proven to be effective policy actions to reduce its consumption with significant health and economic gains for the countries. This is the time, and the policy makers including national and provincial food regulatory bodies in Pakistan must act to save thousands of lives in the country.

## National Day

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Austria to Pakistan Andrea Wicke cut the cake along with the Ambassador of European union to Pakistan Dr Riina Kionka during the celebrations of the National Day of the Republic of Austria at the Residence of Austrian Ambassador on 24 October in Federal Capital.



Photo: Online

# LDF entitlement not charity for climate vulnerable countries: Sherry Rehman

**City Desk**

ISLAMABAD: Former Federal Minister for Climate Change Senator Sherry Rehman on Wednesday said the Loss and Damage Fund (LDF) is an entitlement for the climate vulnerable countries and not a charity which the developed world must understand to ensure climate justice.

She was addressing at a Pre-COP28 national consultation titled "Community resilience to disasters and climatic hazards- Amplifying voices of the vulnerable people from the frontline" as keynote speaker organized by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) in partnership with Oxfam, Strengthening Participatory Organization (SPO) and other partners.

Senator Sherry Rehman said the global climate change discourse has shifted inwards with the focus on indigenous solutions to cope with the risks of environmental degradation.

In Pakistan, she said there is a hope that it will receive something from the international community because it has emerged as the most vulnerable country due to climate change despite very low carbon emissions.

The Senator said this cynicism must end that if the country is not getting compensation for its losses at the hands of climate catastrophes, then it should halt climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts. "These are the rights of the country like Pakistan to address its climate vulnerability if there is no help from the world community. Don't let your minds affected by cynicism and colonization," she said.



In his welcome remarks, Executive Director, SDPI, Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri said it is easy to make policy for the vulnerable communities, but it is they who are the best teachers to guide policy decisions for preventive and mitigation measures during climate catastrophes due to their direct exposure to the natural hazards and their local knowledge for that it is of paramount importance. "Pakistan should also establish its own loss and damage fund to address the inequalities due to climate crisis as there are areas that are variably impacted due to climate disasters" he suggested.

Executive Director, Civil Society Coalition for Climate Change (CSCCC) Aisha Khan said it is necessary to observe the geography of the country to learn about the socio-economic realities that vary from community to community and area to area for informed climate action. She mentioned that the communities' voices exist, but it did not matter and for that it is necessary to empower those voices through inclusive engagement.

Speaking on the occasion, Chairman BoG, SDPI Ambassador (R) Shafqat

Kakahel extended his felicitations to SDPI, SPO and Oxfam for partnering on climate change and natural disasters.

The climate crisis would have direct impacts on communities and the best characteristic of this effort is the effective engagement with the local communities. "This is the first time, I witnessed local communities presenting their stories before the civil society and partners which should be considered in the future endeavors as well," he added.

CEO, National Disaster Risk Management Fund (NDRMF) Bilal Anwar said the country needs a new social contract based on the latest vulnerabilities emerging with every passing year as it was crucial to amplifying the voices of communities impacted by natural disasters.

The indigenous knowledge and observations in the communities needs to be incorporated in the mainstream policy discourse and interventions by promoting a bottom to top approach, he added.

Chairman Federal Flood Commission (FFC) Ahmed Kamal said after

2005 earthquake, the country had started community-based disaster risk management efforts. "We need to do knowledge sharing of local knowledge from local to regional and global levels to ultimately achieve community resilience," he added.

Deputy Executive Director, SDPI, Dr Shafqat Munir said the SDPI along with Oxfam started efforts to influence climate and disaster risk reduction (DRR) agenda in Pakistan before COP-28 and has published four policy papers on various aspects of climate action. The whole of society approach, he said was key to achieve the task of climate resilience within the minimum available resources.

Country Director, Oxfam Pakistan, Syed Shah Nawaz Ali said there is a need to realise our individual responsibilities to ensure effective climate action and it is crucial to understand the climate challenge.

"We need to incorporate the suggestions and experiences of the impacted communities into our policy endeavors for an extended role to be played by the partners for the local communities," he added.

Consultant SPO, Saadullah Ayaz said Pakistan is among the most impacted countries due to climate change and repeatedly battered by climate disasters, whereas the gender inequality in our society further aggravates this crisis.

Director Punjab Emergencies Services Department, Dr Rizwan Naseer via videolink presented a short documentary on the Rescue 1122 journey and advocated the need for basic life support training for all.

## Arab Equestrian Federation announces groundbreaking move to include Tent Pegging in the Olympics



ISLAMABAD/OMAN: Sahibzada Sultan Muhammad Ali Takes Strategic Steps as Head of Asian Equestrian Federation's Tent Pegging Chair Upon assuming the leadership of the Tent Pegging Chair at the Asian Equestrian Federation, Sahibzada Sultan Muhammad Ali embarked on a significant mission to advocate for the inclusion of Tent Pegging in the Olympics. His efforts led him to Amman, where he engaged in discussions with the President of the Asian Equestrian Federation, Hamad bin Abdulrahman Al Attiyah. During this meeting, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was officially executed between the International Tent Pegging Federation and the Asian Equestrian Federation, hosted in Oman.

This groundbreaking MoU also opens doors for Tent Pegging's potential inclusion in the Asian Games. Sultan Mohammad Ali, Head of the Tent Pegging Chair at the Asian Equestrian Federation, expressed his commitment to advancing the global presence of Tent Pegging as a sport. It is noteworthy that Sahibzada Sultan Muhammad Ali was recently elected as the leader of the Tent Pegging Chair at the Asian Equestrian Federation, representing 24 countries in this prestigious role.

## Riphah International University hosts 4th Int'l Lifestyle Medicine Conference



**Spokesman Report**

ISLAMABAD: Riphah International University successfully hosted its 4th International Lifestyle Medicine Conference on October 24, 2023, at the Pearl Continental Hotel in Rawalpindi. The conference, themed The Foundation of Wholesome Healthcare aimed to raise awareness about the pivotal role of lifestyle medicine in modern healthcare practices. The event served as a platform for healthcare professionals to explore national and international training programs, thereby fostering an understanding of the significance of incorporating lifestyle medicine into their practices. Dr. Shagufta

Feroz, Director of the Riphah Institute of Lifestyle Medicine, warmly welcomed the participants and provided an overview of the conference objectives. Mr. Hassan Muhammad Khan, Chancellor of

Riphah International University, emphasized the necessity of such gatherings in bolstering the training standards within the healthcare sector. Additionally, Mr. Saqib Rafique, President of the

Rawalpindi Chambers of Commerce and Industry and Chairman of the Rawalpindi Waste

Management Company, commended Riphah International University dedicated efforts to enhance healthcare practices and align healthcare professionals with the evolving demands of the healthcare landscape. The conference featured workshops tailored to the diverse needs of healthcare professionals from various institutions associated with Riphah International University. As an institution committed to promoting quality healthcare practices, Riphah International University continues to offer essential platforms for the comprehensive training and global exposure of healthcare professionals, equipping them to address the challenges prevalent in the field of healthcare.

## PIO assures fair distribution of advertisement

**Staff Reporter**

ISLAMABAD: Principal Information Officer (PIO) Dr. Tariq Mahmood Khan on Wednesday said that all-out efforts would be made to ensure fair distribution of advertisements among the regional newspapers.

He made these remarks during a meeting with a delegation of the Regional Media Association, that included its Chairman Chaudhry Qurban Hussain, Vice Chairman Atiq Khan, President Faraz Khattak and others. The delegation welcomed the initiative of the PIO regarding the distribution of advertisements.

On the occasion, the PIO said that measures were being taken to bring improvement in the regional newspapers and fair distribution of advertisements would be ensured for all newspapers.

## SC to take up case about general elections on Nov 2

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court (SC) will take up the case pertaining to the holding general elections within 90 days after dissolution of the assemblies for hearing on November 2. A three-member SC bench headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa and comprising Justice Athar Minallah and Justice Amin ud Din Khan will hear the case.

In the last hearing, the court had sought replies from the Federation and the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). The Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA), Pakistan Tehreek e Insaaf (PTI) and others have filed petitions for holding of general elections in 90 days of the assemblies' dissolution. APP

## Court declares 10 key PTI leaders as absconders

ISLAMABAD: An Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) on Wednesday declared the ten leaders of PTI as absconder while issuing perpetual arrest warrants against them in case pertaining to the vandalizing at judicial complex.

The declared court absconder include Murad Saeed, Asad Umar, Ali Amin Gandapur, Shibli Faraz, Farukh Habib, Hammad Azhar, Omar Ayub Khan, Ali Nawaz Awan, Hassan Khan Niazi, Umar Sultan and Muhammad Asim. ATC Judge Abul Hasanat Muhammad Zulqarnain heard the aforesaid case and declared the accused absconder due to continuous absence from proceeding.

The court instructed the police to present the accused before it after arresting them. APP

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# Supreme Court upholds fundamental rights - II

Moreover, a highly regarded lawyer emphasized that this ruling finally eradicated a longstanding "black law" that had encroached upon the fundamental rights of the Pakistani people.

An astute analyst forcefully contended that military court trials stand in stark violation of the fundamental rights granted to the citizens of the country. These trials, shrouded in secrecy, take place behind closed doors, where no one, not even the media, is permitted to bear witness to the court proceedings. Furthermore, the involvement of army officers, who often lack proper training and experience in civilian legal matters, as judges in these trials is a matter of grave concern. Decisions are rendered with arbitrary brevity, often without the formalities of charge sheets, evidence presentation, legal deliberations, or reference to past legal precedents. This approach, devoid of due process, undermines the right to a proper defense and fair trials, ultimately failing to uphold the rights of the accused.

Another perspective framed the existence of military courts, particularly in countries like Myanmar and Pakistan,

as an unfortunate anomaly. These tribunals are commonly associated with hardcore terrorism cases, and some argue that they should never be extended to civilian matters. It's crucial to underscore that even under military rule, the army typically lacks the authority to arrest civilians, further emphasizing that civilian trials should be conducted within the established civilian legal framework. This assertion encapsulates the prevailing view that military courts are an exception, not the norm, and are primarily intended for addressing the most extreme cases, rather than civilian matters.

In a momentous press talk, a distinguished and elderly senior lawyer aptly characterized the day as a historic milestone in the nation's annals. He hailed the Supreme Court's decision as not only a landmark but also as one of the most remarkable in the country's judicial history, predicting that it would be etched in golden words. This decision, pertaining to a case of great importance, was deemed a pivotal moment that would fortify the

pillars of democracy, the constitution, and the entire legal and justice system of the nation.

He illustrated this point with a poignant anecdote: When a King once asked an archbishop, asserting his sovereignty, the archbishop's response was resounding. He reminded the King that it was the law that had elevated him to his position, and without the foundation of law, there could be no King. This story encapsulates the enduring principle that all institutions, regardless of their power, must now acknowledge that they operate within the framework of the law. They are obligated to honor and uphold the law and constitution, affirming the primacy of these principles over any individual or institution, and thereby securing the rule of law in the country.

The Supreme Court's decision stands as a monumental milestone in Pakistan's legal history, one that extends far beyond the realm of jurisprudence. By striking down the controversial amendment allowing military courts to try civilians, this ruling reaffirms the supremacy

of law and the constitution. In doing so, it safeguards fundamental rights, securing the very essence of a democratic society. But the significance doesn't end there; this decision carries a profound impact on the social and economic well-being of the people, promoting an environment where justice, fairness, and equity can thrive. Moreover, it has the potential to elevate the reputation and rating of the judiciary, fostering a renewed sense of trust in its ability to uphold justice. Paradoxically, this decision indirectly bolsters the armed forces, relieving them of a role that has, at times, blurred the lines between civilian and military authority. It allows the military to concentrate on their core objectives, ensuring the nation's defense and security, while reinforcing their image as the guardians of the constitution. In essence, this is a decision that echoes far beyond the courtroom, resonating throughout the entire fabric of the nation, underlining the importance of the rule of law, justice, and the enduring strength of democratic principles.

*Writer is Former Press Secretary to the President, Former Press Minister at Embassy of Pakistan to France Former MD, SRBC*



Analysis

Qamar Bashir

## BRI facilitates fruitful medical cooperation between China, Pakistan

China proposed the idea of building an economic belt along the Silk Road in Kazakhstan in 2013, which, combined with the proposal of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, eventually became the Belt and Road Initiative. As a primary hub along the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, Hainan has made use of favorable supporting policies and its unique advantages to pioneer the country's high-level opening up. In the past 10 years, China has seen increasing medical cooperation with countries and regions jointly building the Belt and Road, including Pakistan. Through a series of mechanisms, tens of thousands of health professionals have been trained in areas such as health management, public health, and medical research. In Hainan, for instance, the Belt and Road Tropical Medical Alliance was established in 2018, led by Hainan Medical University. The alliance currently has several member units from Pakistan. So far, the alliance has successfully organized five medicine forums. More than 120 universities, medical institutions, and research institutes from more than 30 countries and regions have joined the alliance. Medical cooperation between China and Pakistan has brought opportunities for many students from Pakistan.

This summer, in the city of Dongfang, Hainan Province, a number of students from Pakistan and China formed a medical team at a local health center to provide cardiopulmonary resuscitation training and other medical services to villagers. These students of Hainan Medical University used what they learned in class to assist the professional medical experts. They took the patients' blood pressure and registered their information, and experienced other things done by grassroots doctors. "This university has given me a lot of education," said Malik Usman Haider, 27, a student from Pakistan studying medicine at Hainan Medical University. "In the future, I want to stay here. China has given me so much and the government helps me, and the university also helps me a lot, so I want to give them something in return. It is a way to say thank you."

"I want to become a good doctor in the future," said Fraz Ahmad Shams, 28, also from Pakistan and an MBBS student at Hainan Medical University. "Maybe I will come back to China to do my master's degree." Xia Qianfeng, dean of the Tropical Medical School under Hainan Medical University, said that in the future, the Belt and

Road Tropical Medical Alliance will continue to work together with all member units to build a bridge of friendship with the world, and provide more opportunities for public health cooperation.



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

## Public concerns regarding SC's decision on civilian trials in military courts - I

In a recent development, the Supreme Court, through a reserved judgment, invalidated the practice of trying civilians in military courts. This decision was made by a five-member larger bench, presided over by Supreme Court Justice Ijaz-ul-Ahsan. The bench also included Justice Muneeb Akhtar, Justice Yahya Afridi, Justice Mazhar Ali Akbar Naqvi, and Justice Ayesha Malik.

The public's response to this decision has been severe, as there are concerns that it may not align with the principles of justice and the practical realities on the ground. In any nation, the judicial system serves as the linchpin of justice, upholding citizens' rights and maintaining the rule of law. However, Pakistan's judicial system, while essential, grapples with substantial challenges that hinder its capacity to deliver prompt and equitable justice.

One of the most acute issues within Pakistan's judicial system is the persistent and protracted delays in court proceedings. Cases can remain stuck within the legal system for extended periods, sometimes spanning years or even decades, before a verdict is reached. These enduring delays not only frustrate litigants but also deprive individuals of timely justice, gradually eroding their confidence in the legal system.

The caseload backlog in Pakistani courts has reached alarming proportions. Courts are overwhelmed by the sheer volume of pending cases, causing judges and court staff to grapple with a herculean task of effectively managing their caseload. This backlog not only exacerbates delays but also raises the risk of justice being sacrificed in favor of expedience.

It is a source of great concern that the country's superior and lower judiciaries are grappling with a substantial backlog of 2.144 million cases. In 2021, a staggering 4.102 million cases were resolved, and an additional 4.06 million new cases were filed. At the outset of 2021, the cumulative backlog before all the courts stood at 2.16 million cases. In the preceding year, the Supreme Court, Federal Shariat Court, and five high courts in the nation collectively disposed of 229,822 cases while 241,250 new cases were introduced in 2020. By the end of the year, pending cases before the superior courts

amounted to 389,549, only slightly down from the 378,216 cases at the beginning of 2021.

Similarly, the district judiciary commenced the year with 1,783,826 pending cases in 2021. Throughout the year, they adjudicated 3,872,686 cases, with an additional 3,822,881 fresh cases being lodged. By the close of the year, the total pendency at the lower judiciary stood at 1,754,947 cases. According to statistics compiled by the Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan, the Supreme Court had 46,695 pending cases at the start of 2021, which increased to 51,766 by year-end. The apex court decided 12,838 cases, with 18,075 new cases being filed in 2020.

In summary, the public's apprehensions regarding the Supreme Court's recent decision on civilian trials in military courts are rooted in a broader context of systemic inefficiencies and challenges within Pakistan's judicial system. Delays and mounting caseloads represent substantial obstacles to the prompt and fair delivery of justice, necessitating comprehensive reforms to ensure the legal system effectively serves the needs of the citizens and maintains their faith in the rule of law.

The Federal Shariat Court was established back in 1980 during a military regime, primarily tasked with the responsibility of assessing and determining whether any existing law or legal provision aligns with the tenets of Islam. Additionally, it was entrusted with the responsibility of hearing appeals in cases involving rape and unnatural offenses. However, the court's caseload has been significantly reduced over the years. This decline in cases before the Federal Shariat Court can be attributed to the enactment of the Protection of Women (Criminal Laws Amendment) Act in 2006. This Act considerably limited the court's jurisdiction by transferring appeals and applications for revision related to the trial of offenses away from the Offence of Zina (Enforcement of Hudud) Ordinance of 1979. These appeals are now filed before the high courts.

At the start of 2021, the Federal Shariat Court had 178 pending cases. During the year 2020, it resolved 139 cases and received 118 new cases. By comparison, the Lahore High Court adjudicated an impressive 149,362

cases in 2020, with an additional 148,436 new cases being instituted during the same period. As a result, the total pending cases at the Lahore High Court as of December 31st stood at 187,255.

The Sindh High Court disposed of over 31,000 cases in 2020, but nearly 34,000 new cases were also filed during the same period. Consequently, the total pending cases at the Sindh High Court exceeded 84,000. Similarly, the Peshawar High Court received 23,941 cases and rendered decisions in 20,528 cases throughout 2021, with the pendency standing at 44,703 cases. The Balochistan High Court, which started the year 2021 with 4,194 pending cases, concluded 7,287 cases and saw the introduction of 7,182 new cases in the previous year. This left the court with 4,108 pending cases.

In 2021, the Islamabad High Court resolved 7,918 cases and received 9,433 new cases, leading to a total of 17,456 pending cases by the end of 2020. The lower judiciary in Punjab had a busy year, deciding 2,904,745 cases, while also encountering 2,826,774 new cases during 2020. The resulting backlog totaled to 1,313,669 cases. In Sindh, the district judiciary disposed of 344,701 cases, with 346,109 new cases filed in 2021, leaving 117,790 cases pending by December 31st.

The subordinate courts in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa managed to adjudicate 475,927 cases in 2020, while 500,417 new cases were initiated in the same period. The total pending cases reached 256,873. Similarly, the district judiciary in Balochistan resolved 59,652 cases, received 59,289 new cases, and ended up with 15,675 cases pending trial. The lower courts in Islamabad disposed of 87,661 cases, but they also saw the introduction of 90,292 new cases in 2021, resulting in a total pendency of 50,940 cases.

In light of these challenges and the overwhelming caseloads, the National Judicial Policy was introduced in 2009 with the aim of reducing judicial backlogs, ensuring judicial independence, and combatting corruption within the system. Despite these efforts, the accessibility of the judicial system in Pakistan remains a significant concern, particularly for those in rural and underprivileged areas. The associated costs of legal representation, travel, and accommodations often prove to be prohibitive, limiting access to justice for many citizens.

To be Continued

## The other side of the Hamas-Israeli war

In 2002, Venezuela announced the abandonment of the petrodollar. A coup against Hugo Chavez took place. In the same year, the law was reversed. The dollar remained stable.

In 2003, Saddam announced that oil payments would be made in euros instead of dollars.

Israeli intelligence provided the US with a fake report of weapons of mass destruction, Iraq was invaded, Saddam was killed, and the dollar remained stable.

The US Senate admitted that the report was fake.

In 2009, Libya decided to issue a gold-backed currency. Several African countries decided to join. The currency was to be issued in 2011.

In 2011, NATO and America attacked Libya, Gaddafi was killed, gold was stolen. Wikileaks confirmed that America did not want Libyan currency instead of dollars. Libya was attacked by creating a false narrative.

In 2010, the BRICS meeting was held, in which the BRICS countries decided to issue a new currency. The status of Syria became central because the oil pipelines of almost all the Gulf countries reach Syria. Today, Israel openly admits that they have given weapons and training to ISIS, which is killing people in Syria, and they have been fighting a war against the Bashar al-Assad regime for twelve years.

In 2014, Putin annexed the warm-water port of Crimea, annexed by the Russian state through a referendum, so that Russian LNG would flow from Crimea to Syria

and be delivered to Europe and the United States.

The year 2020 saw the BRICS meeting, in which more than forty countries agreed to trade and pay for oil in currencies other than the dollar without launching a common participating currency.

Major oil producing countries Egypt, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain are ready to give up the dollar.

It seems that Israel's war is actually an American proxy war and a matter of American survival for which America and Israel are willing to go to some extent.

That is why the United States vetoed the ceasefire resolution in the United Nations in the past few days. Because of Syria's central position in the new BRICS bloc, Israel is bombarding Damascus unjustly at the moment, while Syria has not yet fired a single shot in Al-Quds storm.

That's why Putin made a statement that the United States wants to topple the Bashar regime for ten years, but we are with Syria. China has therefore included Syria in the One Belt One Road

Western analysts are openly writing about American and Israeli hypocrisy. On the one hand, Arab countries are threatened to refrain from jumping into this war. On the other hand, Israel bombards every neighboring country

After all, what is the purpose of US and Israel to increase the war?

The presence of the US Navy and Air Force deepens the impression that the real target of this war will not be Iran but Syria.



Analysis

Kiran Asim

# Turkey's Erdogan says Hamas is not terrorist organisation

Turkish President Erdogan defends Hamas as a liberation group, criticises Western support for Israel in Gaza

ANKARA: Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan, in his strongest comments yet on the Gaza conflict, said on Wednesday the Palestinian group Hamas was not a terrorist organisation but a liberation group fighting to protect Palestinian lands and people.

NATO member Turkey condemned the civilian deaths caused by Hamas' Oct. 7 rampage in southern Israel, but also urged Israeli forces to act with restraint. As the violence and the humanitarian crisis in Gaza have worsened, Ankara has strongly criticised Israel's bombardment of the territory.

"Hamas is not a terrorist organisation, it is a liberation group, 'mujahideen' waging a battle to protect its lands and people," he told lawmakers from his ruling AK Party, using an Arabic word denoting those who fight for their faith.

Unlike many of its NATO allies and the European Union, Turkey does not consider Hamas a terrorist organisation and hosts members of the group on its territory. Ankara backs a two-state solution to the decades-old Israel-Palestinian conflict.

Erdogan also slammed Western powers for supporting Israel's bombing of Gaza and called for an immedi-



ANKARA: Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan attends a meeting at the Turkish parliament on Wednesday.

ate ceasefire, the unhindered entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza, and for Muslim countries to work together to stop the violence.

"The perpetrators of the massacre and the destruction taking place in Gaza are those providing unlimited support for Israel," Erdogan said. "Israel's attacks on Gaza, for both itself and those supporting them, amount to murder and mental illness."

Erdogan's comments drew a swift rebuke from Italy's Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini, who said they were "grave and disgusting and did not help with de-escalation". He urged Italy's foreign minister to lodge a formal protest with Ankara.

The fighting in Gaza comes at a time when Turkey is working to mend its ties with Israel after years of acrimony, focusing on energy as an area of

cooperation.

Indicating that those normalisation efforts were now suspended, Erdogan accused Israel of taking advantage of Turkey's "good intentions" and said he had cancelled a previously planned visit to Israel.

"I shook the hand of this man named Netanyahu one time in my life," Erdogan said, referring to his meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly last month.

"If he (Netanyahu) had continued with good intentions, our relations might have been different, but now unfortunately, that will not happen either because they took advantage of our good intentions," he added.

Erdogan accused the West of hypocrisy for failing to respond to what he called Israel's "intentional massacre" in Gaza with the same decisiveness as it did to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Earlier on Wednesday, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said in Doha that Israel's planned ground invasion of Gaza would turn the violence there into a "massacre", adding that countries supporting Israel were "accomplices" to its crimes. Reuters

## Three dead as Cyclone Hamoon hits Bangladesh coast



DHAKA: At least three people were killed and over 60 others injured in southeastern Cox's Bazar region as Cyclone Hamoon crossed Bangladesh's coastal belt on Tuesday night, said officials.

The cyclone also caused serious property and environmental damage in the coastal region.

"We got reports of three casualties in different parts of Cox's Bazar due to the effects of Cyclone Hamoon. Some 63 people were also injured. Of them, 18 remained in hospitals," Muhammad Shaheen Imran, deputy commissioner of Cox's Bazar, told Anadolu on Wednesday.

About 30,000 houses got damaged, but the report was not complete yet, he added. The cyclone also disrupted the power supply and mobile network in the district, he added.

The Cox's Bazar authority evacuated over 40,000 people to government shelters before the cyclone made landfall.

Over 500 people were displaced in Cox's Bazar as their houses were seriously damaged, Cox's Bazar disaster management and relief officer Md Jahangir Alom told Anadolu.

Bangladesh earlier evacuated about 1.5 million people from its 10 coastal districts. A depression over the west-central Bay of Bengal and adjoining area had moved north-northeast and intensified into a severe cyclonic storm named Hamoon.

The cyclonic, however, weakened and crossed the Bangladeshi coast early Wednesday, according to Bangladesh Meteorological Department on Wednesday. Anadolu Agency

## Gaza families wear ID bracelets to avoid burial in mass graves



GAZA: With so many bodies, Palestinians in Gaza are burying the unidentified dead in mass graves, with a number instead of a name, residents say. Now some families are using bracelets in the hope of finding their loved ones should they be killed.

The El-Daba family has tried to reduce the risk of being struck down during the heaviest-ever Israeli bombardment of Gaza. Israel launched the air strikes after Hamas fighters attacked Israeli towns on Oct. 7 in a rampage that killed 1,400 people and hostages were taken.

Ali El-Daba, 40, said he had seen bodies ripped apart by the bombing and were unrecognisable.

He said he decided to divide his family to prevent them from all dying in a single strike. He said his wife Lina, 42, kept two of their sons and two daughters in Gaza City in the north and he moved to Khan Younis in the south with three other children.

El-Daba said he was preparing for the worst. He bought blue string bracelets for his family members and tied them around both wrists. "If something happens," he said, "this way I will recognise them."

Other Palestinian families were also buying or making bracelets for their children or writing their names on their arms.

Mass burials have been authorized by local Muslim clerics. Before burial, medics keep pictures and blood samples of the dead and give them numbers.

The Israeli military has told people to leave the north of the Gaza Strip, one of the most densely-populated places in the world, and head south because it is safer. But air strikes have hit across the Hamas-ruled enclave.

An Israeli military spokesperson said: "The IDF (Israel Defense Forces) has been encouraging residents of the northern Gaza Strip to move southward and not to stay in the vicinity of Hamas terror targets within Gaza City."

"But, ultimately, Hamas has entrenched itself among the civilian population throughout the Gaza Strip. So wherever a Hamas target arises, the IDF will strike at it in order to thwart the terrorist capabilities of the group, while taking feasible precautions to mitigate the harm to uninvolved civilians."

Israel's military intensified its bombing of southern Gaza overnight after one of the deadliest days for Palestinians since Oct. 7. World leaders have called for a halt to fighting to allow aid into the besieged enclave, which is running out of water, food, fuel and medicines.

A total of 756 Palestinians, including 344 children, were killed in the past 24 hours, Gaza's health ministry said on Wednesday. It said at least 6,546 Palestinians had been killed by Israeli bombardment since Oct. 7, including 2,704 children. Reuters

# University of Wollongong launches VC's Leadership Scholarship for Pakistan

Spokesman Report

CANBERRA: The University of Wollongong (UOW) has extended its most prestigious Vice-Chancellor's Leadership Scholarship for Pakistan. The programme is aimed at inspiring a new generation of young, passionate leaders and providing them the knowledge, skills, and worldviews to be future leaders. Two Pakistani students will be awarded the scholarship every year.

The Scholarship was launched at a momentous ceremony by the High Commissioner for Pakistan to Australia, H. E. Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri together with the Vice-Chancellor and President of the UOW, Professor Patricia M. Davidson and former Captain of the Australian Cricket team and Global Brand Ambassador of the UOW, Adam Gilchrist.

Speaking at the occasion, the High Commissioner thanked the Vice-Chancellor for extending the Leadership Scholarship to Pakistan. Commending the initiative, he stated, "I am sure these scholarships will provide a tremendous opportunity for outstanding emerging leaders from Pakistan to study at one of



Australia's top universities."

Highlighting the significance of the programme, the High Commissioner observed, "This initiative will not only enable our future leaders to develop academically and professionally but also experience diverse Australian culture and

build lasting positive relationships with Australia."

Emphasizing the robust education sector cooperation between Pakistan and Australia, the High Commissioner stated, "Pakistan and Australia enjoy excellent bilateral relations with strong

education sector cooperation. Currently, more than 27,000 Pakistani students are enrolled in various Australian universities, with approximately 1,000 of them studying at the UOW."

Describing the youth as Pakistan's greatest national asset, the High Commissioner thanked the UOW for being an invaluable partner in its human resource development efforts.

Speaking at the occasion, Vice-Chancellor Patricia Davidson, said, "We are proud to extend the reach of our Vice-Chancellor's Leadership Scholarship program to Pakistan. This initiative aligns with our vision of creating a brighter future through education."

In his remarks, Adam Gilchrist said, "I'm excited to be a part of this expansion. These scholarships will empower talented students from Pakistan to pursue their dreams and make a positive impact on the world."

The High Commission will continue its engagement with major Australian universities to create more opportunities for Pakistani students and further strengthen education sector cooperation between Pakistan and Australia.

# Iran bans 12 actors from work over hijab violations: minister

'Those who do not follow the law, will not be allowed to work'

TEHRAN: Iranian authorities have banned a dozen women actors from working for failing to observe the Islamic republic's strict dress code which includes mandatory headscarves, an official said Wednesday.

"Those who do not follow the law, will not be allowed to work," Iran's Culture and Islamic Guidance Minister Mohammad Mehdi Esmaili told reporters after the weekly cabinet meeting.

On Tuesday, Iranian media reported that a dozen actresses who were found to be violating the hijab law — among them Taraneh Alidoosti, Katayoun Riahi and Fatemeh Motamed-Aria — "will not be allowed to play roles in movies."

Alidoosti and Riahi were among the public figures who were briefly detained during last year's widespread protests



over the death in custody of 22-year-old Iranian Kurd Mahsa Amini.

Amini had previously been arrested

for allegedly violating Iran's strict dress code for women.

Read also: Iran sentences women

journalists on charges over Amini protests. Her death triggered months-long demonstrations which the authorities labelled as "riots" fomented by foreign governments.

Since last year's mass protests, women have been increasingly flouting the dress code which requires head coverings and modest clothes.

Covering the neck and head has been compulsory for women since 1983, following Iran's 1979 Islamic revolution.

Iran has stepped up measures over the past few months against women and businesses who breach the hijab rules.

In September, lawmakers voted in favour of toughening the penalties, which include jail sentences of up to 10 years, for women who violate the dress code. AFP

# Qatar's PM: Hostage release talks progressing, hopeful for breakthrough 'soon'



DOHA: Qatar's prime minister said on Wednesday that negotiations the Gulf Arab state is leading to secure the release of hostages held by Hamas in Gaza are progressing and he is hopeful there will soon be a breakthrough.

Qatar's foreign ministry urged de-escalation and warned that an Israeli ground assault on the densely populated enclave would make freeing hostages "much more difficult."

"There is some progress and some breakthrough and we remain hopeful," said Sheikh Mohammed Bin Abdulrahman al-Thani at a

press conference in the Qatari capital. Wealthy gas-producer Qatar has had an open dialogue with both Israel and Hamas, which has brought about the release of four hostages captured in the Oct. 7 rampage Hamas led into southern Israel, including two Israeli women on Monday.

"If they are able to get along between the two parties I think we will see some breakthroughs hopefully soon," said Sheikh Mohammed, who is also the minister of foreign affairs and who was speaking alongside his Turkish counterpart. Qatar foreign ministry officials

said an Israeli ground invasion of Gaza would complicate efforts to free the hostages.

"Obviously, a land incursion into Gaza would make it difficult to maintain the safety of the hostages, and in our efforts at mediation with both sides, we urge all parties in this conflict to de-escalate immediately," said Majed Al Ansari, the foreign ministry's spokesperson.

Also speaking in Doha, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said an Israeli ground operation into Gaza would turn the fighting there into a massacre.

Fidan said that those supporting

Israel's actions under the pretence of solidarity were "accomplices to its crimes".

Some 222 people aged from 9 months to 85 years were seized on Oct. 7 when Hamas and other fighters went on a killing spree through southern Israel, shooting motorists, hunting down civilians, including children in their own homes, and burning and stabbing people to death, according to survivors' accounts.

Israel has responded with a bombing campaign and a siege of Gaza.

The Palestinian health ministry

said on Wednesday at least 6,546 Palestinians had been killed by Israeli bombardments since Oct. 7, including 2,704 children. Some 756 were killed in the previous 24 hours alone.

"The number of children being killed since the start of this war is exceeding the number of children killed in the other war between Ukraine and Russia and yet we didn't see the same reaction (in the international community)," he said, stressing that the only way to reach a peaceful solution in Gaza was to keep communication channels open. Reuters

**Bull & Bears**  
PSX 100-Share  
Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index	
Current	Prev. Close
51,177.13	51,027.94
Day's High	Day's Low
51,483.84	51,023.31
Index Value	Change
12,634,761,441	+149.19
Percentage	Time
+0.29%	25 Oct, 2023 5:00 pm
Europe: FTSE 100 Index	
Index Value	Change
7,414.34	+24.64
Percentage	Time
+0.33%	25 Oct, 4:35 pm GMT+1
USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average	
Index Value	Change
33,134.11	-7.27
Percentage	Time
-0.022%	25 Oct, 12:44 pm GMT-4
Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average	
Index Value	Change
31,269.92	+207.57
Percentage	Time
+0.67%	25 Oct, 3:15 pm GMT+9

**Open Market Forex Rates**

Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	175.25	177.00
Bahrain Dinar	741.19	749.19
Canadian Dollar	204	206.00
China Yuan	39.63	39.73
Danish Krone	39.55	39.95
Euro	296.10	299.00
Hong Kong Dollar	35.62	35.97
Indian Rupee	3.36	3.47
Japanese Yen	1.57	1.66
Kuwaiti Dinar	901.32	910.32
Malaysian Ringgit	58.24	58.84
New Zealand \$	162.53	164.53
Norwegians Krone	24.93	25.23
Omani Riyal	723.93	731.93
Qatari Riyal	76.56	77.26
Saudi Riyal	74.75	75.35
Singapore Dollar	202	204.00
Swedish Korona	25.04	25.14
Swiss Franc	312.57	313.07
Thai Bhat	7.70	7.74
U.A.E Dirham	78.00	78.80
UK Pound Sterling	344	347.4
US Dollar	280.4	283

**TCL Pakistan**  
Opens 4th Flagship  
Store in Lahore



**Commerce Desk**

LAHORE: Pakistan's leading LED TV brand, TCL Pakistan, is delighted to announce the opening of its 4th flagship store in Lahore, located at Shadawal Chowk in Johar Town. Committed to providing local consumers with the utmost convenience and premium shopping experiences, TCL is celebrating this milestone with flat 10% Off-limited time offer on its latest range of Mini LED TVs, QLED TVs, UHD TVs, AC soundbars, and complimentary gifts.

Majid Khan Niazi, Head of Marketing TCL Pakistan, expressed his enthusiasm for this significant expansion, saying, "We are thrilled to extend our footprint in Lahore with the opening of our new store in Johar Town."

# Indonesia to start direct flights with Pakistan for trade promotion

**Spokesman Report**

ISLAMABAD: H. E. Adam M. Tugio, Ambassador of Indonesia said that his country is to start direct flights with Pakistan in near future that would help boost people to people contacts and bilateral trade ties between the two countries. He said that Indonesia is keen to further strengthen trade and economic ties with Pakistan and launch of direct flights would be helpful in achieving this goal. He said that an Indonesian Corner would be inaugurated soon in the National Book Foundation of Pakistan that would create better awareness about Indonesia in Pakistan and improve bilateral ties between the two countries. He said this while addressing the business community during his farewell visit to Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry.

H. E. Adam M. Tugio said that Pakistan and Indonesia have good potential to explore untapped potential of cooperation in Halal herbal medicines. He said that Pakistani pharmaceutical products are quite affordable and can penetrate the Indonesian market. He said that Indonesia would organize a Pakistan-ASEAN specific expo in Jakarta next year and the Pakistani business community should participate in it. He lauded the ICCI for sending its delegation to attend a trade expo in Indonesia and stressed that ICCI should send its regular delegations to Indonesia to explore all untapped areas of business collaboration between the private sectors of two countries.

Speaking on the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that Indonesia and the ASEAN region offer a lot of potential to Pakistan and stressed that Pakistan should focus on these countries for trade and exports. He said that ICCI would encourage more trade delegations to Indonesia to explore new business



opportunities with it. He said that Indonesian investors should also be encouraged to invest in Pakistan's tourism infrastructure and other sectors. He said that Pakistan, Indonesia and Nigeria are big markets of Muslim world and they should sign an FTA to strengthen their trade ties that would bring prosperity to their nations. He reaffirmed ICCI's commitment to strengthen liaison with the Indonesian Embassy to improve business linkages between the private

sectors of both countries. Faad Waheed, Senior Vice President ICCI lauded the efforts of H. E. Adam M. Tugio for improving trade ties between Indonesia and Pakistan and hoped that his successor would take forward these efforts to bring both countries even closer. He highlighted Pakistan's prospective industries for cooperation with Indonesia including IT, tourism, pharmaceuticals, textiles, cooking oil and others.

Engr. Azhar ul Islam Zafar, Vice President ICCI briefed the Indonesian Ambassador about the successful recent visit of ICCI delegation to Indonesia and thanked them for the great hospitality extended by the Indonesian authorities. Hamayun Kabir, Faseeh ullah Khan, Malik Mohsin Khalid and others also spoke on the occasion and shared useful proposals to further improve bilateral cooperation between the two countries.

## Nomination

KARACHI: FPCCI Presidential Candidate Atif Ikram Sheikh Submitting the documents to the Election Commission in Karachi.



Photo: Spokesman

# NBP Records Pre-tax Profit of PKR 70.6 Bn, 46% up YoY

**Commerce Desk**

KARACHI: The Board of Directors approved the results of the National Bank of Pakistan for the nine-month period ending September 30, 2023 in its meeting held on October 24, 2023.

The strong financial performance of the Bank is a consequence its continued efforts in serving the national agenda of extending financing to priority sectors as well as extending access to financial services to those segments of the country's populace that lack facilities. The Bank's results are a balance of a focus on prudent financial management and the Bank's tradition of serving the nation which has led to NBP being a Bank that is trusted by its stakeholders.

The Bank demonstrated an exceptional performance by reporting a profit before

tax of PKR 70.6 Bn, depicting an impressive 46% increase YoY as compared to PKR 48.3 Bn for 9M'22. These results were driven by robust performance in revenue streams as well as an effective cost management. Despite a persistently challenging environment, the Bank's profit after tax doubled to PKR 38.2 Bn, reflecting a substantial increase of 99.1% over the PKR 19.2 Bn in the same period of the previous year. Consequently, Earnings Per Share closed at PKR 17.9, up from PKR 9.0 in 9M'22. This outstanding performance was a result of an efficient portfolio mix, mature risk profiling, effective risk management, and maintaining a stable funding pool that contributed to an improved and sustainable operating performance.

In an environment of rising interest rates, gross interest income recorded a YoY

increase of 119.4% to close at PKR 728.7 Bn, a significant rise from PKR 332.2 Bn for the same period in 2022. Similarly, the Bank's cost of funds also increased by 141.7% YoY, closing at PKR 608.1 Bn. Consequently, net interest income closed at PKR 120.6 Bn, representing a YoY increase of 49.6%. Despite the challenging business environment and lackluster stock market performance for most of the review period, the Bank generated total non-fund income of PKR 24.7 Bn, slightly below the PKR 25.3 Bn of corresponding 9 month period of previous year. While equity investments of the Bank generated dividend income of PKR 3.4 Bn (9M22: PKR 3.4 Bn), a 1.2% decrease YoY, Fee and commission income earned through branch banking operations stood at PKR 14.9 Bn, marking a 3.4% increase YoY.

# MCB impressive increase of 71% in Profit Before Tax

LAHORE: The Board of Directors of MCB Bank Limited (MCB) in its meeting under the Chairmanship of Mian Mohammad Mansha, on October 25, 2023, reviewed performance of the Bank and approved the interim financial statements for the nine months' period ended September 30, 2023. The Board of Directors has declared a 3rd interim cash dividend of Rs. 8.0 per share i.e. 80%, in addition to 130% already paid, bringing the total cash dividend for the nine months period ended September 30, 2023 to 210%.

Through focused efforts of the Bank's management in building no-cost deposits and optimizing its earning assets mix, MCB successfully sustained its growth momentum in core earnings to post historically high nine months Profit Before Tax (PBT) of Rs. 88.1 billion; registering an impressive increase of 71% on a year-on-year basis. The Profit After Tax (PAT) was recorded at Rs. 44.1 billion (+122%) and translated into an Earning Per Share (EPS) of Rs. 37.25 compared to an EPS of Rs. 16.75 reported in the corresponding period last year.

Strong volumetric growth in current account and timely repositioning of the asset book resulted in a 73% increase in net interest income for the period under review as compared to corresponding period last year.

Non-markup income increased to Rs. 22.6 billion (+12%) against Rs. 20.3 billion in the corresponding period last year with major



contributions coming in from fee commission income (Rs. 14.2 billion), income from dealing in foreign currency (Rs. 5.9 billion) and dividend income (Rs. 2.0 billion).

Improving customer and interbank flows, diversification of revenue streams through continuous enrichment of service suite, investments towards digital transformation and an unrelenting focus on upholding high standards of service delivery supplemented a broad-based growth of 38% in income from fee commission; with trade and guarantee related business income growing by 95%, cards related income by 48%, branch banking customer fees by 12% and income from home remittance by 18%.

The Bank continues to manage an efficient operating expense base and monitor costs prudently. Amidst a persistently high inflationary environment, currency devaluation, rapidly escalating commodity prices and continued investments in human resources and technological upgradation, the operating expenses of the Bank were reported at Rs. 37.4 billion (+23%). The cost to income ratio of the Bank improved significantly to 29% from 37% reported in corresponding period last year.

# AI Everything at GITEX GOLBAL 2023

**Syeda Shehr Bano**

Embedded within the massive GITEX GLOBAL 2023 extravaganza was AI Everything, spanning a total of 10 halls and featuring 3,500+ AI companies and startups. Ground breaking conferences from the world-leaders in AI, startups and traditional businesses at the frontier of AI development and experts with an eye to the future came together to show why AI adoption is a priority.

According to PwC's Global Artificial Intelligence Study, AI could contribute up to \$15.7 trillion to the global economy by 2030 provided strategic investment in different types of AI technology is made. Labour productivity improvements will drive initial GDP gains as firms seek to "augment"

the productivity of their labour force with AI technologies and to automate some tasks and roles. The greatest economic gains from AI will be in China (26% boost to GDP in 2030) and North America (14.5% boost), equivalent to a total of \$10.7 trillion and accounting for almost 70% of the global economic impact.

Adoption of AI has skyrocketed in 2023, with all industries exploring new ways to utilize the latest available technology to improve efficiency, cut operating costs and improve business sustainability. Recent massive leaps forward in AI development and software have made variants such as ChatGPT and Google's Bard far more accessible to the public. As AI is becoming mainstream, GITEX GLOBAL provided a platform for the latest thoughts and ideas on the AI wave

encompassing the world. AI has entered into core production systems and has started creating greater value, with AI adoption expected to reach 20% by 2026 in major industries. These latest technologies will revolutionize multiple industries and raise the bar for global productivity and competitiveness.

The event also served as the launch pad for intelligent industry solutions designed to meet the specific needs of different industries, including public services, finance, oil & gas, electric power, transportation and ISP. Huawei showcased the latest breakthroughs in intelligent ICT innovations that unlock the immense potential of Cloud, namely the Intelligent Cloud-Network to accelerate intelligent upgrades, which fully unleashes computing power with super-connectivity for unsurpassed AI

productivity in the AI era, the Pangu model 3.0 and Huawei Cloud Stack 8.3.0.

I attended a fascinating session-the keynote on 'Pangu Large Models Accelerate AI for Industries', Dr. Zhu Shengqiao, Vice President of AI Business of Huawei Cloud Middle East and Central Asia. Dr. Shengqiao said, "AI has become an integral part of our society, permeating every aspect of our lives. Its adoption in industries is undergoing a rapid transformation. This remarkable shift is being driven by the emergence of large AI models meticulously trained on massive datasets. It is not just a technological advancement, but a fundamental shift that will shape the future of industries, and Huawei Cloud is at the forefront of enabling this transformation."

Huawei Cloud Pangu models are designed to focus on the practical



needs of specific industry scenarios. The newly-launched Pangu Models 3.0 use a 5+N+X three-layer decoupled, hierarchical architecture, consists of 5-L0 foundation models, N-L1 industry-tailored models, and X-L2 AI applications, offering a powerful foundation for a vast range of models and applications. The L0 layer of foundation models consists of NLP, CV, multimodal, prediction, and scientific computing, which provide general skills to power an endless possibility of

industry-specific applications. Pangu models have been pre-trained with open datasets from more than 10 industries, including Finance, Government, Meteorology, Healthcare, Education, Automotive, and Utilities. The data volume of each industry exceeds 50 billion tokens. As AI spreads to all aspects of human existence, the emergence of large AI models meticulously trained on massive datasets, is a fundamental shift in technological advancement.

