



KSE-100 index breaches 66,000 points mark in a historic first

Bulls maintained their grip on the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) as the benchmark index shot past the 66,000 mark on Friday — for the first time in history — by gaining over 1,500 points. The benchmark KSE-100 index hit an all-time high of 66,273.73 points. However, it closed at 66,223.63 points after gaining 1505.56 points or 2.33%, compared to yesterday's close of 64,718.07 points.



President of the Maldives says 'Pakistan is important to the Maldives' foreign policy

"We will not tilt towards any particular country. We want to be in the middle and pursue the 'Maldives First' policy. This means, for me, the Maldives, the interest of the country, along with the country's people's interests, come first. To be tilted towards any particular country would not be in our country's interest. Similarly, it would also not be in the region's interest," said Dr. Mohamed Muizzu, the newly-elected President of the Maldives. (Details on Page 8)

Simultaneously published from Islamabad, Lahore and Multan

Metting

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar chairs a meeting of prominent members of the Pakistan Stock Exchange, renowned businessmen and investors in Karachi on Friday.



Photo: PID

Security forces kill five terrorists in Tank IBO



Adam Khan Wazir

RAWALPINDI: The security forces have killed five terrorists amid intense exchange of fire during an intelligence-based operation (IBO) conducted on the night of December 7 and 8 in the general area Mullaazai of Tank District.

The killed terrorists remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities against law enforcement agencies as well as extortion and

target killing of innocent civilians, an Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release on Friday said.

A cache of weapons, ammunition and explosives was also recovered during the operation. "Sanitization operation is being conducted to eliminate any other terrorists present in the area, as the security forces of Pakistan are determined to wipe out the menace of terrorism from the country," the ISPR said.

Govt's economic reformative steps reignited investors' confidence: PM

Spokesman Report

KARACHI: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Friday said that the investors had regained confidence after the successful signing of a standby agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the execution of the annual budget 2023-24 and improvement in the fiscal and external accounts.

The prime minister, addressing the ceremony marking the first auction of the Government Ijarah

Sukook bonds issued by the Pakistan Stock Exchange, said it was the collective responsibility of the stock brokers, SECP, and other participants to promote upcoming primary market auctions to market it a remarkable achievement for the entire market ecosystem.

He congratulated all the stakeholders on the auction of the Government Ijarah Sukook through PSX, instead of the State Bank of Pakistan, which was aimed at simplifying the partici-

pation in government securities auction, diversifying the investors' base, and enhancing transparency.

He lauded the market participant for their interest in the auction through PSX particularly the participation of the retail market.

He told the gathering that the stock exchange was a dynamic force and a heartbeat that resonated with the aspirations of business and progress.

The prime minister, who later rang the gong of the stock

exchange said it did not only herald the market transactions but also a symphony of progress and prosperity.

"The gong's echoes reverberate not only within these walls but across the financial corridors of the nation, symbolizing our commitment to fostering an inclusive and robust financial ecosystem that welcomes diverse voices and promotes economic prosperity shared by all," he remarked.

He said initially, Pakistan's economy faced multiple challeng-

es at the start of 2023-2024, but the government addressed structural and macroeconomic issues to rectify the situation.

In her address, Caretaker Finance Minister Shamshad Akhtar welcomed the prime minister to launch Government Sukook Auction through PSX.

She said the Ijarah Sukook was a monumental and innovative product being launched for the first time beyond the State bank which had total control over government securities.

India's Russian oil imports seen rising on lower prices

Reuters

NEW DELHI: Easing global oil prices would help India boost imports from Russia, a senior government official said on Friday, as a lower than \$60 a barrel price of Russian oil will enable buyers to use Western services such as insurance and ships.

The Group of Seven large economies known as G7 and some other nations have imposed a ceiling of \$60 per barrel for oil at Russian ports to cut Moscow's revenue seen as funding its war in Ukraine.

Russia's flagship grade Ural in Baltic ports has plunged since late November below that level, reflecting subdued global oil prices that are headed for a seventh straight weekly decline.

US criticizes Israel on Gaza civilian toll as UN to hear ceasefire demand

Reuters

SOUTH GAZA: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, in his strongest public criticism of Israel's conduct of the war on Hamas in south Gaza, said there was a gap between the government's declared intentions to protect civilians and the casualties.

"As we stand here almost a week into this campaign into the south... it remains imperative that Israel put a premium on civilian protection," Blinken said at a press conference following a meeting with British Foreign Secretary David Cameron in Washington on Thursday.



"And there does remain a gap between... the intent to protect civilians and the actual results that we're seeing on the ground," Blinken said.

Israel says it must wipe out the Hamas after its attack on Israel two months ago and is doing

everything possible to get civilians out of harm's way, including warnings about military operations.

US President Joe Biden spoke separately by phone with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Jordan's King Abdullah on Thursday. Biden

"emphasized the critical need to protect civilians and to separate the civilian population from Hamas including through corridors that allow people to move safely from defined areas of hostilities," the White House said.

More than 17,170 Palestinians have been killed and 46,000 wounded, according to the Gaza health ministry, since Oct. 7, when Israel began bombarding Gaza in response to a cross-border rampage by Hamas who control the enclave. The Hamas attack killed 1,200 people, with 240 people taken hostage, according to Israel's tally.

PPP, ANP discuss seat adjustment, electoral alliance

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Awami National Party (ANP) top leaders have held discussions on forming an electoral alliance and seat adjustment ahead of the general elections.

ANP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) President Aimal Wali Khan met PPP Parliamentarians President Asif Ali Zardari and PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari at the Zardari House Islamabad today.

The meeting was also attended by Nayyar Bokhari and Faisal Karim Kundi.

They discussed on electoral alliance and seat adjustment in KP province for the forthcoming general elections.

Aliens not allowed to take part in Pakistan's politics: Bugti

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Minister for Interior Sarfraz Bugti on Friday, announcing the government's policy on aliens having the Afghan Citizen Card, UNHCR Card or refugee status, said that no such refugee would be allowed to participate in any kind of political activity in Paki-



stan. The government was hunting the foreign nationals who were involved in political activities in Pakistan and they would

be straightaway deported without any relaxation, he said while addressing the press conference.

Bugti said the government had initially identified 10 such aliens and their number was going to increase in the coming days. Even if they had Proof of Residence Card, Afghan Citizen Card, UNHCR Card and refugee status or tourist and busi-

ness visas they would not be spared, he added. The minister said politicking was the right of Pakistanis only and they would independently participate in political activities in the wake of general elections in February. He said the government would provide the services of para-military forces to the Election Commission of Paki-

stan. Although the para-military forces were engaged in different operations across the country yet maximum security would be ensured for the general elections, he added. The minister said there were general threats to the political leadership, but the Interior Ministry only received a specific threat about Maulana Fazl-ur-Rehman.

TV channels bound to establish bureau offices in provincial capitals: Solangi



Bureau Report

QUETTA: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi on Friday said that license holder TV channels were bound to establish bureaus in all four provincial capitals under the PEMRA rules.

Expressing solidarity with the media fraternity during the protest demonstration held outside the Quetta Press Club (QPC), he said he would take up the issue with the owners of the TV channels to restore the sacked media workers, besides ensuring maximum security to those already working in different news organizations.

The Balochistan Union of Journalists (BUJ) organized

the protest demonstration against the forced dismissal of workers from Bol TV, Daily Entikhab and Daily Dunya.

The QPC president, BUJ president, and representatives of all media channels attended the demonstration.

BUJ President Irfan Saeed on the occasion urged the federal and provincial governments to take steps for ensuring protection of the journalists' rights since the employment opportunities were already limited in Balochistan.

Balochistan Caretaker Information Minister Jan Achakzai regretted forced expulsion of journalists from the TV channels and said it was crucial to devise policies for the protection of media workers' rights.

IMF board to meet on Jan 11 for Pakistan loan program approval

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The executive board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) will meet on January 11 to consider the final approval to disburse the next \$700 million tranche from its current loan programme with Pakistan.

Last month, the IMF said it had reached a staff-level agreement with Pakistan on the first review of a \$3 billion bailout, which will unlock \$700 million in funding for the country.

The funds to be issued are a second tranche of the bailout. Pakistan has been facing an acute balance of payment

crisis, with its foreign exchange reserves diminished, along with historically high inflation.

On November 16, Pakistan and International Monetary Fund (IMF) reached a staff-level agreement on the first review under Pakistan's Stand-By Arrangement (SBA). It is pertinent to mention here that Pakistan is operating under a caretaker government after an IMF loan programme, approved in July, helped avert a sovereign debt default.

Under the \$3 billion standby arrangement (SBA), Pakistan received \$1.2 billion from the IMF as the first tranche in July.

Former PM says PPP always took revolutionary steps for the sake of common man

Kiran Asim

MULTAN: Former Prime Minister and Senator Syed Yousuf Raza Gillani country's economy, the People's Party always took revolutionary steps so that the common man could be prosperous. It has been brought to completion, employment has been given to the unemployed youth under the Benazir Income Support Program, they have been working day and night to ensure the provision of financial assistance to deserving women.

He expressed these views in a meeting held with the dignitaries of the area at the residence of the well-known political and social leader



Malik Shafqat Raza Maitla in Jalalabad area of Muzaffarabad. Barrister Syed Mudassar Shah. Malik Zahid Maitla. Malik Fayyaz Ahmad Riaz

was also present

On this occasion, the dignitaries of the region also announced the support of Syed Yousuf Raza Gillani and running the electoral imam. Syed Yousuf Raza Gillani further said that Multan is my home.

As Prime Minister, implemented mega projects for the development and prosperity of southern Punjab including Multan, education and health. So that the People's Party will get a huge mandate and make Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari the Prime Minister and the dear country of Pakistan can once again go on the path of development and prosperit has said that for the stability of the y.

Shahid Mehmood Ansari calls for end of violence against women



Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: Social leader Shahid Mehmood Ansari has said that by ending violence against women and creating a favorable environment for children including women, we can move towards a better society. And with the cooperation of civil society, it was done in media forum while the members of the organizing committee, Chaudhry Mansoor Ahmed (Advocate), Malik Amir Nawaz, Sheikh Tariq Bilal, Iqbal Khan Baloch, Malik Fanwak Hayat and Riaz Khan Baloch were present. The speakers further said on women in Pakistan. The 16-day celebrations to end the violence are ongoing.

And along with this, social activities involving public awareness are also going on the occasion of International Children's Day, Awareness Development Organization, Awaz Foundation, Pakistan Development Organization, Civil Society Forum, Department of Social Welfare are starting the activities. In order to foster a favorable environment for women and children. Accordingly, weekly events will be held at the community level as well as in various institutions. On the occasion of the same events, awareness activities regarding World Volunteers Day and Prevention of Human Exploitation will also be held.

Insight of Pakistan's first South Asian female to study intelligence in UK

Correspondent

BAHAWALPUR: Starting from a city of South viled to grasp the potential opportunities for its youth, to the international level at United Kingdom, the journey of Zunaira Khan withholds many chapters of twists, successes and failures. This small town girl has become the first Pakistani female to hold the degree of intelligence and security and the first South Asian to conduct research on women's role in intelligence in Cold War and Contemporary times. She has set new standards for future generations to opt the subject that is designed particularly for men and believes that women will break the stereotypes. She dedicates this achievement to her family and to all women who are struggling in different fields to acquire equality.

OGDCL achieves another major gas condensate discovery

PPA

ISLAMABAD: As a result of the aggressive exploration strategy, the Oil & Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) has successfully discovered gas and condensate at Dars West Well #02, located in the Tando Allah Yar district of Sindh province.

Mr. Ahmed Hayat Lak, MD/CEO of OGDCL, expressed his satisfaction with the outcome, stating, "This discovery underscores OGDCL's commitment to pioneering exploration in pursuit of national energy security. OGDCL remains steadfast in its commitment to leveraging innovative strategies and technical expertise for the benefit of our nation. This discovery not only strengthens our hydrocarbon reserves but also contributes to Pakistan's energy security and economic prosperity."

This successful endeavor is a testament to OGDCL's commitment to an aggressive exploration strategy and its in-house expertise. The discovery at Dars West Well #02 not only enhances OGDCL's hydrocarbon reserves but also contributes to the country's overall energy resources.



easypaisa and Telenor Pakistan join forces to financially empower millions

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's leading digital financial services platform easypaisa and Telenor Pakistan have joined forces to solidify their commitment towards advancing innovation in the realm of digital financial services. Through this renewed partnership both entities will focus on development of cutting-edge solutions, aimed at fostering a broader acceptance of digital financial services throughout the country, ensuring ease and convenience for customers.

The Leadership team and senior management of Telenor Microfinance Bank (TMB)/easypaisa along with Chairman of the Board, Irfan Wahab Khan and senior management from



Telenor Pakistan attended the signing ceremony.

Acting CEO, TMB & easypaisa, Kashif Ahmed, commented on the partnership, "Our collaboration with Telenor Pakistan marks a pivotal moment in our journey towards reshaping the future of digital financial services in Pakistan."

CEO, Telenor Pakistan,

Khurram Ashfaq, shared his views on the partnership and said, "This collaboration signifies a significant step forward in our commitment to driving innovation and financial inclusion in Pakistan."

The agreement reached at this milestone moment lays the groundwork for sustained creativity, ongoing

product development, and mutual growth. The combined efforts will contribute to creating a more interconnected and prosperous future. The ultimate goal is to bring about positive and transformative changes in the digital financial services landscape, benefiting individuals and businesses alike.

Sports chief announces end of school sports tournament in Attock

Raza Naqvi

ATTOCK: Deputy Commissioner Attock Rao Atif Raza has said that the district administration is taking all possible steps for the promotion of sports. Speaking at the final as a special guest. CEO Education Malik Mohsin Abbas, District Education Officer Secondary Sajida Mukhtar, Principal Government Boys Higher Secondary School Syed Kazim Shah and other officers were also present on this occasion. He told DC Attock on this occasion. It is said that the tournament is being organized with the support of Department of School Education Attock, Headmasters Association Attock and Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education Rawalpindi. The tournament started from November 17 in which boys high schools from across the district participated. In the final, Government Boys High School Thatta defeated Government Boys High School Khor Char Safar. Competitions will be held.

COMSTECH and Ida Rieu Schools Launch 'Special Teacher's' Training Program

PPA

ISLAMABAD: COMSTECH and Ida Rieu Schools for the Blind & Deaf have launched Special Teacher's Training Program. This program is offering a dedicated 3 months training to special teachers by experts in this field. Special Education Teachers from all OIC member states can benefit from this program.

The program was discussed and agreed by Ms. Nadira Panjwani, HI,

SI and Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, (Mustafa (PBUH) Prize Laureate, H. I., S. I., T. I., Coordinator General COMSTECH.

This program is open for Nationals of OIC member states and observer states with age limit of 28-40 years. Applicants holding teaching experience of 1-year at least/relevant educational background will be given preference.

The training is for a period of 3 months. COMSTECH will provide return economy class tickets to successful international applicants and will cover their visa fee. All research/learning/practice activities will be conducted in English. Detailed process of application is available on COMSTECH website

Ida Rieu Schools for the Blind & Deaf are schools and colleges run by the Ida Rieu Welfare Association (IRWA). IRWA came into existence in 1922 in Karachi with the vision of imparting education and training to the blind and deaf children to make them useful citizens of community.

COMSTECH is the only OIC institution hosted by the Government of Pakistan, chaired by the President of Pakistan. COMSTECH was established in 1981. The core mandate of COMSTECH is to strengthen cooperation among OIC member states in science and technology. The ultimate aim is to build and nourish a scientific culture in addition to using S&T as a major contributor to socio-economic development and rapid industrialization of member countries.

Zong 4G reinforces its commitment towards Service Leadership through a series of activities in December

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Zong 4G, a leading telecommunications company, is set to elevate its commitment to excellence with the launch of its Customer Experience Campaign including nationwide Market Visits on Tuesday, December 5th, 2023. The initiative underscores Zong 4G's unwavering dedication to delivering top-notch services



while immersing customers, employees, and stakeholders in an innovative

and enriching experience.

The company-wide initiative is poised to incorporate diverse elements aimed at cultivating a culture centered around exceptional customer service. In pursuit of excellence, through this campaign Zong 4G will proactively engage with customers through a myriad of touchpoints, including Customer Service Centers, Franchises, Contact Center, and Social Media platforms.

"We believe that prioritizing customer experience isn't just a trend; it's the cornerstone of our success," said the official spokesperson of Zong 4G.

"Satisfied customers aren't just clients; they are advocates who drive our growth. This is all about recognizing their significance by putting them at the forefront and ensuring customer delight," said the Chairman and CEO, Mr. Huo Junli.

Solidarity walk with disabled people on International Day of Persons with Disabilities



Kiran Asim

MULTAN: On the occasion of International Day of Persons with Disabilities, a walk organized by Mainstream Association and Hands Mainstream ILC Multan. A Grand Walk was organized by Mainstream Association and Hands Mainstream ILC Multan in connection with the International Day of Special

Persons with Disabilities, Nadir Khan President Mainstream Association said that we disabled people should be equal in life.

We want independence, not poverty. CTO Multan Rao Naeem Shahid Said. Hundreds of people are disabled every day Due to Over speeding and traffic accidents specially participated in the walk in solidarity with disabled people

and said that Nadir Khan's services for disabled people are not hidden from anyone, we are here to convey the message that we are with him. On this occasion, he also presented flowers specially to Nadir Khan and disabled persons. In the walk, Wardens of City Traffic Police Multan, Multan Police Protection Center, Rizwana Malik MD Main Stream, Sadia Nawaz EM Hands

Pakistan, Ahmed Ali Bhatti CEO Mix Institute, Rizwana Tabasim Chairman Innerwell Club, Civil Society Representatives, A large number of students, heads of various NGOs, transgenders and disabled people participated. On this occasion, the participants carried different kinds of banners and placards with messages about the rights of persons with disabilities.

KP Minister assurance to LG chairmen to solve development projects & public problems in the merged districts

Adam Khan Wazir

WANA: A representative delegation of Tehsil chairmen and tribal elders from the merged districts met Dr. Amir Abdullah, the caretaker minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for merged districts affairs, industry, craft and technical education, on Friday in his office.

On this occasion the Minister discussed with them regarding the development process in the merged districts, public problems and possible cooperation for their solution.

Tehsil Chairman Said Badshah from Bajaur, Tehsil Chairman South Waziristan Lower Maulana Saleh Wazir, Tehsil Chairman North Waziristan Ahmed Said, Tehsil Chairman Upper Kuram Ihsan Ullah, Tehsil Chairman South Waziristan Upper Taj Malook and Tehsil Chairman Orakzai Moulana Tahir Orakzai are among the delegation were included.

During the meeting, the caretaker minister expressed his views on the recommendations of the chairmen of various merged districts, that the relevant authorities will be contacted for the purpose of including the consultation of local public representatives in the identification of new schemes under the risk project of the World Bank in the merged districts.

However, we are trying to make it possible to release the funds in an appropriate manner for the ongoing projects in the merged districts. He said that thanks to our repeated efforts, the TMAs of the merged districts have received money to pay back salaries.

He assured that concerned development sector ministers and administrative secretaries will be asked to include the opinion of local body chairmen in the PC One of the new proposed projects in the merged districts.

On the question of solarization of mosques in the merged districts, the caretaker minister had this to say, at present, two solar energy projects are running in the merged districts, one of which is nearing completion and the initial work on the second is our effort.

He said, these projects can be executed with reasonable funds, so that people can start benefiting from their fruits soon.

The caretaker minister added that the money has been released for the Ghulnai road, on which the stopped work has become legitimate.

In this way, efforts are on to release funds to start work on important communication projects in Orakzai and Waziristan.

Islamabad
15° - 23° Clear

SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr 5:31 am
Zohr 11:59 am
Asr 3:21 pm
Maghrib 4:59 pm
Isha 6:28 pm

EMERGENCY

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

Women Police

Stations
Islamabad 9222596
Rawalpindi 9270601-20

ENQUIRY

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

HOSPITALS

CMH 561111
MH 561116
MH 561116
Cantt Hospital 9270907-11
DHQ 5556311-4

AIOU to hold
convocation on
January 31

ABC

ISLAMABAD: The Convocation of Alama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) will be held on January 31, 2024, at the Jinnah Convention Center, Islamabad. The President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Dr. Arif Alvi, who is also the Chancellor of the University, will be the chief guest at the event. The ceremony will be hosted by the Vice Chancellor, AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood. Federal ministers, secretaries, senior officials of HEC, vice chancellors of various universities, rectors, renowned journalists, eminent social personalities, deans, professors, principal officers, faculty members, and students of AIOU will participate in convocation.

It is pertinent to mention here that 2024 marks the golden jubilee year of Allama Iqbal Open University. The Vice Chancellor, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood, has decided to celebrate this occasion by organizing convocations at provincial levels to involve the students in the celebration. AIOU has already completed the preparations for convocations in Muzaffarabad, as well as all the provincial capitals (Karachi, Lahore, Quetta, and Peshawar). Students from Islamabad, Gilgit-Baltistan and Rawalpindi Division (Attock, Chaklala, Jhelum and Rawalpindi) will participate in the convocation on January 31, 2024 held at Jinnah Convention Center, Islamabad. Graduates of BA, B. Sc, BBA, B. Com, B. Ed, M. Ed, MA/M. Sc, MPhil, and PhD programs are advised to check their eligibility for the convocation on the <http://convocation.aiou.edu.pk> website. Eligible students can register themselves on the same link until December 20th.

COP28

Imperative to recognize the profound impact of culture on climate action efforts: Jamal Shah

PNP

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Jamal Shah has said that to address the pressing challenges of our time, it is imperative that we recognize the profound impact of culture on our climate action efforts.

Virtually addressing UN Climate Change Conference (COP28), held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, the Minister said that culture is not a bystander in our fight against climate change; it is a key player that can shape the narrative and drive meaningful action.

"As we chart the course for a sustain-

able future, let us celebrate and leverage the cultural diversity that defines us. By doing so, we can build a global movement that transcends borders, uniting us in a common purpose to safeguard our planet for future generations" he added.

He said that in this regard Pakistan makes following four suggestions:

a) Collection of data and evidence concerning climate change's impact on heritage sites, landscapes and traditional practices & indigenous knowledge;

b) Creation of awareness regarding climate-change related impacts and disasters and remedial measures;

c) Strengthening of regional



and global collaboration and d) Capac-

ity building of vulnerable countries to meet the challenges of climate change.

Minister for National Heritage and Culture said that culture is the heartbeat of society, shaping our values, attitudes, and behaviors.

"Today, I implore you to consider the power of culture as a catalyst for positive change in our collective journey towards a sustainable future", he added.

He said that culture is not a mere backdrop; it is a dynamic force that can either hinder or propel climate action.

"Our diverse cultural backgrounds offer a rich tapestry of ideas, innovations, and traditions that can inspire sustainable practices", he added.

He said that it is crucial to harness this cultural wealth to create solutions that resonate with communities worldwide, adding that let us acknowledge the indigenous knowledge embedded in various cultures, passed down through generations.

He said that indigenous peoples have long been stewards of the environment, practicing sustainable lifestyles that honor the delicate balance between humanity and nature, adding that their wisdom must guide our policies and actions, ensuring that our strategies are not only effective but also respectful of the interconnectedness of all living things.

Group photo

Islamabad: Group Photo of Journalists with Syed Zeshan Ali Naqvi Senior Leader PML-N / Expected Candidate NA 46 from Pakistan Muslim League N at Serenity Resort Shah Allah Ditta Islamabad.



Photo: Raja Farid

SIF, PNCA organized child rights, mental health and climate change Secours awareness event

PNP

ISLAMABAD: Islamique France (SIF) in collaboration with Pakistan National Council of Arts (PNCA) successfully an awareness raising event on Child Rights, mental Well-being and effects of climate change through a unique event of puppet show at PNCA. The two-day event, hosted at the prestigious Pakistan National Council of Arts in Islamabad, proved to be an impactful platform for raising awareness and inspiring positive change.

Distinguished guests, including Mr. Haroon Ur Rehman-Director Child commission Institute (CPI)- MOHR shared about CPI unit and 112helpline can be used to register child abuse cases and in case security they facilitate custody support to children as well. Mr. Awais Ahmed-representative from DIG security office Islamabad police shared about safe city initiative that Child Protection Cell has established. Gender



Crimes cell has established women and Child protection police station, where all staff are women and the complaints can be lodged through 15 known as Pukar helpline. Mr. Imtiaz Ali-National legal aid coordinator from non-profit Sahil said if police investigated properly than like Zainab case and other cases will be resolved and victim can get quick justice. Dr. Roomi S. Hayat-CEO of Institute of rural management (IRM), shared that we need

to work on awareness at three levels from family, society and institutional level and we need to work more on implementation of laws because Noor case from Islamabad is still pending and their family is seeking justice.

Mr. Sharafat Ali- member child protection member of Advisory shared that Adult literacy program and parent counselling should be started because kids are aware but how to reduce victim blam-

ing is also a big need nowadays & Mr. M. Ayub Jamali DG PNCA has shared that like PNCA, social media and media channels should make some good messages for awareness on child protection. The event commenced with recitation and the national anthem, followed by opening remarks from Dr. Altaf Abro, Head of Mission. SIF shared that SIF is currently working 33 districts of three provinces and Child protection is one of the major components of SIF Pakistan. Ms. Feroza Zahra, Country Program Coordinator, delivered a compelling address on the Importance of 16 Days of Activism that started from 25 November to 10 December and is globally celebrated to address the gender-based violence. The audience were captivated by the thought-provoking speeches from guest speakers, each sharing valuable perspectives on child rights, protection, and the role of children in climate change adaptation.

PEC condemns murder of engineer Asim Long, his wife in Islamabad



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: On the night of December 4, 2023 in Islamabad Bhara Khu, a story of terrorism and brutality was told, in which an innocent and very noble officer of PEC, Assistant Registrar PEC Engineer Asim Long and his wife Riday Noor were killed.

He was shot and killed while his one and a half year old daughter was miraculously unharmed. In this regard, on December 8, 2023 at Islamabad Press Club, members of the management committee of Pakistan Engineering Council, governing.

The members of the body, the chairman of the Contractor Association of Pakistan and other members and the officers of the PEC administration held a press conference in which Engineer Ejaz Hussain Ansari Vice Chairman PEC, Engineer Zahid Arif former Vice Chairman PEC, Engr. Azhar ul Islam, Engineer Dr. Samreen Hussain, Engineer Imran Khan Cheema, Engineer Khadim Hussain Bhatti, Engineer Dr. Ashfaq Ahmed Sheikh and Muhammad Muqarrab Iqbal, representing the Pakistan Engineering Council, strongly condemned this brutal terrorist incident and demanded the officials of the federal institutions to conduct a full investigation into the incident and arrest the killers immediately.

The Chairman of Contractor Association of Pakistan, Engineer Syed Ashfaq Hussain Shah, Engineer Sikandar Hayat Khattak and other members of CAP strongly condemned the incident and reiterated their solidarity with the bereaved. After the press conference, Islamabad. Outside the press club, employees of Pakistan Engineering Council, Young Engineers Association of Pakistan, members of the Contractors Association of Pakistan and civil society representatives staged a peaceful protest in large numbers.

The participants of the protest demanded the security agencies of the government of Pakistan and the authorities to fully follow up this brutal case and bring the killers to justice as soon as possible. Nationwide protest will be called by Civil City and Engineering Community.

Spotify hosts Wrapped 2023 event in Karachi



PPA

ISLAMABAD: With 2023 coming to an end, Spotify Pakistan hosted an electrifying event in Karachi to mark the highly anticipated Wrapped campaign for the year. Focusing on the theme of "food" this year, the event welcomed hundreds of guests including artists, influencers, and media representatives, creating an immersive experience to celebrate the diversity and richness of Pakistan's music as well as cultural scene.

Attendees were treated to an unforgettable evening, filled with live performances from Asim Azhar, Young Stunners, Talal Qureshi and Natasha Noorani, curated experiences, and an exclusive glimpse into the highlights of Spotify Wrapped 2023.

The atmosphere was alive with the beats of the most streamed tracks and the energy of the most beloved genres thanks to DJ Neha and Mouseeki Machine, showcasing the impact of music on cultural connections.

Spotify Pakistan took Wrapped 2023 beyond the digital realm, bringing the celebration closer to its audience and providing a platform for artists to connect with their fans. The event not only highlighted the year's most popular genres but also created a space for artists to share their musical journeys.

The vibrant gathering served as an opportunity for influencers and media representatives to delve into the intricacies of Spotify's Wrapped campaign, understanding how it reflects the diverse music tastes of Pakistani listeners. The event encapsulated the essence of Spotify Wrapped 2023, emphasizing the platform's commitment to celebrating the unique music landscape of Pakistan.

Pakistan Tobacco Industry Interference Index 2023 Launch

PPA

ISLAMABAD: The 2023 Global Tobacco Industry Interference Index exposes strategies employed by the tobacco industry, such as the promotion of electronic products and concealing environmental harm. Across the globe, governments remain under the influence of formidable tobacco companies, impeding endeavors to curb tobacco consumption. Nevertheless, the index urges governments to prioritize transparency in their dealings with the tobacco industry, emphasizing that this approach can prevent manipulation of tobacco control policies and implementation processes in accordance with Article 5.3 of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC).

Amongst distinguished speakers were Mr. Sana Ullah Ghuman from (PANA), Mr. Khuram Hashmi,



Senior Technical Advisor (Pakistan), Vital Strategies, Ms. Sania Ali Khan Focal Point - Pakistan STOP, A Global Tobacco Industry Watchdog, Dr. Wasim Janjua Advisor, SDPI, Mr. Shadman Aziz, Project Manager, Association for Better Pakistan (ABP), Islamabad and Mr. Mazhar Arif, Executive Director, Society for Alternative Media and Research (SAMAR), along with media and civil society organization.

Dr. Waseem Janjua presented the WHO FCTC shadow report. Pakistan has been a signatory to the FCTC since 2005. However the implementation leaves much to be desired. The report highlights the shortfalls in Articles 5, 6, 11, 13 and 15 as well as MPOWER measures.

The report recommends resisting tobacco industry influence and strict implementation of existing laws and

regulations." Zeeshan Danish project coordinator of the SAMAR said that in post NTCS scenario, it is a timely report and hoped that the government would implement its recommendations. "The tobacco industry is channeling various marketing tactics while building a positive image of its new tobacco and nicotine products to trap the young generation.

Tobacco Industry and its front groups are building a narrative by engaging various channels including social media. Adoption and implementation of sustained tobacco control measures are need of the hour to protect youth from the hazards of traditional and new tobacco products," he said. He further seconded World Health Organization (WHO), officially launched campaign "Stop the Lies" as a vital initiative to protect people from the tobacco industry, its deadly products, and false propaganda.

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Can Pakistan leverage China in Strategic Minerals? - II

China is the world's leading producer of rare earth elements, accounting for over 80% of global production. The country is also a major producer of strategic minerals such as chromite, tungsten, and molybdenum. China has a well-developed mining industry and is investing heavily in the development of new technologies for extracting and processing rare earth elements.

Australia is the world's second-largest producer of rare earth elements. The country is also a major producer of strategic minerals and possesses a strong mining industry and is a reliable supplier of rare earth elements and other strategic minerals to the global market.

Russia is the world's third-largest producer of rare earth elements. The country is also a major producer of strategic minerals and has a strong infrastructure for supporting the mining industry.

These three countries are all major players in the global market and are investing heavily in the development of new technologies for extracting and processing these minerals playing an important role in the development of new high-tech products.

While Pakistan should explore its options with Russia and Australia, its strategic alliance with China presents a substantial opportunity to leverage Chinese expertise and resources in the exploration, production, and utilization of rare earth elements (REEs), strategic

minerals, and radioactive elements.

Collaborating with China will allow Pakistan to benefit from its advanced exploration and development techniques. Joint efforts in identifying, mapping, and extracting these resources from Pakistan's abundant reserves can optimize the utilization of these minerals for technological and industrial applications.

China's advanced production techniques and experience can be shared with Pakistan, enhancing local capabilities in refining, processing, and manufacturing products utilizing these elements. This knowledge transfer can stimulate local industries, fostering innovation and technological progress.

Pakistan can harness China's expertise in utilizing these elements in manufacturing high-tech products. This collaboration can aid in creating a diverse range of products, from electronics to clean energy technologies, thus boosting Pakistan's technological capabilities and industrial diversification.

Leveraging Chinese investments and infrastructure development initiatives can facilitate the establishment of specialized facilities for processing and utilizing these elements. This not only supports local industry but also encourages foreign investments drawn by the potential of these resources.

Engaging in joint research and development initiatives with Chinese institutions can drive innovation and knowledge exchange. This collaboration can lead to the creation of new technologies, processes, and applications, fostering a culture of innovation and advancement in Pakistan.

Whereas seeking collaboration, joint ventures and other such modes of cooperation with other countries is of paramount importance but at the same time

into global best practices. Concurrently, forging public-private partnerships within the country accelerates comprehensive exploration projects and fast-tracks the development of these resources. Such collaborations pool resources, expertise, and funding, amplifying the potential for accelerated growth and utilization of these invaluable resources.

The establishment of a robust regulatory framework remains pivotal, ensuring responsible utilization while addressing environmental concerns. Transparent and stable regulations attract investments and maintain sustainable practices, ensuring a balance between resource exploitation and environmental preservation. Bolstering infrastructure, including laboratories and refining facilities, further supports efficient resource utilization, making Pakistan an attractive hub for investment and technological advancement in this sector.

Moreover, fostering technology transfer agreements, advocating eco-friendly practices, and raising public awareness solidifies Pakistan's position on the global stage. These collective efforts not only fortify industrial capabilities but also position the nation at the forefront of economic growth, technological innovation, and sustainable development.

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



Analysis

Qamar Bashir

Balochistan's youth delegation concludes visit of China

A six-member delegation comprising youth from various cities of the Balochistan province concluded its 10-day visit to China. The delegation led by Mir Masood Khan Khetran visited Zhengzhou, Henan Province, and Beijing, the capital city, upon the invitation of the Chinese government.

The delegation members belonging to Gwadar, Turbat, Panjgoor and Barkhan held interactions with senior Chinese officials and paid visits to the Chinese enterprises during their stay in China.

Talking to APP before departure from Beijing, Mir Masood Khetran said that the delegation visited three to four cities in the Henan Province and held meetings with the heads of various companies.

"We met with senior officials and city mayors in the Henan Province and also held a meeting with the head of the Foreign Relations Department of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in Beijing," he added.

He said that the Chinese officials and heads of companies expressed very positive views about Pakistan and their intentions to invest in the country, especially in the Balochistan province, for mutual benefits.

Referring to the massive socio-economic development of China during the last 30 years, Mir Masood Khetran said, "The way the Chinese government and the people developed infrastructure, roads, and transportation networks, and preserved national heritage and culture is highly appreciable." Expressing satisfaction over the ongoing development projects under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in Gwadar and other areas of Balochistan, he said the Gwadar Port and other projects in the province would greatly help the Pakistani and Chinese economies and the two peoples.

"Pakistan and China can jointly achieve development and prosperity. The Chinese companies are ready to bring massive investment into Balochistan and help us achieve prosperity," he added.

Mir Masood Khetran opined that the Federal Government needed to ensure education and health facilities as well as employment opportunities for the people in the province.

He said, "Electricity shortage is one of the main concerns for the people, and I asked the government to take concrete measures to overcome this problem for the benefit of the people in the province."



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

UNICEF faces major challenges 77 years on

The 77th anniversary of the founding of UNICEF will be marked next week. While the organization has made significant and remarkable progress since its establishment, more work has to be done in order to prevent violence against children and to fully protect the rights, safety, well-being and health of children around the world.

UNICEF has come a long way. The UN General Assembly established the UN International Children's Emergency Fund on Dec. 11, 1946, in order to provide relief, food, clothing and support to children living in countries, particularly European nations, that were devastated by the Second World War. In 1953, it became a permanent agency of the UN and the organization's name was subsequently changed to the UN Children's Fund, although it retained the original acronym.

Nearly two decades after its establishment, UNICEF's role shifted from solely providing food and relief to children to also advocating for children's rights and education. UNICEF also played a key role in the drafting of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was later adopted by the UNGA. Three critical pillars of the convention are protecting children from any type of discrimination, prioritizing the best interests of the child and ensuring the rights of children to life, development and survival.

The significance of this convention is that it expands children's rights, as it includes a wide range of rights, ranging from social, cultural, educational, political and civil rights to economic rights.

The agency has accomplished much in the years since its establishment. UNICEF has saved many lives and supported communities in more than 190 countries and territories. Its projects in water, sanitation and hygiene have

reduced preventable childhood diseases and death. Its campaigns to eradicate yaws, leprosy and trachoma were very effective. Tens of thousands of maternal and child welfare centers in many countries receive UNICEF supplies and technical training. It was even awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1965 for the "promotion of brotherhood among nations."

UNICEF has provided aid for mothers and children during conflicts, played a role in decreasing infant and child death rates, increased life expectancy in developing countries and raised the percentage of children going to school and receiving education. It was at the forefront of fighting the Zika virus in 2016 and it helped nearly 1.5 million children in Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe who were left without homes, schools and food due to Cyclone Idai in 2019.

UNICEF has become one of the largest social welfare organizations in the world. It provides immunization and disease prevention programs, offers emergency relief in the wake of natural disasters, promotes education and children's rights and improves childhood and maternal nutrition, as well as sanitation.

Nevertheless, one of the shortcomings of the agency is that it has often failed to protect children during times of war, partially due to the fact that it does not have any enforcement power to mandate compliance with rules, laws and rights. And children are the ones that bear much of the brunt of war.

In other words, in spite of UNICEF's work and in spite of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, millions of children still face violence. For example, UNICEF this week acknowledged: "The escalation of hostilities in the Gaza Strip is having a catastrophic impact on children and families. Children are dying at an alarming rate — more than 5,000 have reportedly been

killed and thousands more injured. Well over 1.7 million people in the Gaza Strip have been displaced — half of them children. They do not have enough access to water, food, fuel and medicine. Their homes have been destroyed; their families torn apart."

UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell added on the resumption of fighting in Gaza after last week's temporary ceasefire: "The Gaza Strip is once again the most dangerous place in the world to be a child. After seven days of respite from horrific violence, fighting has resumed. More children will surely die as a result."

In another conflict-affected country, Sudan, children are also bearing the brunt of a war that has been going on for more than seven months. Millions of children are being exposed to violence, abuse and exploitation, while more than 1,200 children under the age of five have died in nine camps in the country because of a deadly combination of measles and malnutrition.

Another tragedy is that the recruitment of children as soldiers has been seen in Sudan. "The recruitment of children by armed groups for any form of exploitation — including in combat roles — is a gross violation of human rights, a serious crime and a violation of international humanitarian law," said Siobhan Mullally, the UN special rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children.

In conclusion, UNICEF has evolved from being a relief agency to advocating for children's rights and education. Its humanitarian efforts have helped millions of children and their families around the world. But millions of children still face violence and their rights are violated on a daily basis. Since the agency lacks enforcement power to mandate compliance, it is often unable to protect children in times of war, such as in the Gaza Strip today.

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Analysis

Dr. Majid Rafizadeh

Nuclear power deserves a place in the clean energy mix - I

New technologies and their adoption have become more than just a business or an economic decision. They now have political and geopolitical importance too. This is very clear when we dig into the energy sector. We notice that the debate is not centered on facts and the simple equation of energy output versus emissions or negative impact in a time of greater environmental focus. It is measured by political gains and geopolitical agendas. There is a lot of hypocrisy and manipulation, to say the least.

In the political debate, the nuclear option has been sabotaged by elitist environmental thinking. They say that it is a dirty energy source despite the fact it does not emit carbon dioxide. In reality, it is one of the cleanest sources and should be a foundation of the energy mix, on top of which renewable energies can be added. This is why it was a good omen to see a special meeting on nuclear energy taking place this week during the UN's COP28 climate summit in the UAE.

The resulting commitment by the US and 21 other nations to triple nuclear energy capacity by 2050 is a significant step toward achieving carbon emissions reduction targets. This pledge, supported by countries like France, the UAE, Ghana, South Korea, the UK and Canada, underscores the crucial role nuclear power must play in meeting national climate pledges and the targets set by the 2015 Paris Agreement. More importantly, it highlights the fact

that nuclear energy should stand as one of the key pillars of the energy mix.

For decades, there have been attacks on nuclear energy by progressive and green parties. They are mainly based on two points: cost and security. The reality is that reducing the lifespan of nuclear plants without linking it to their actual capacity explodes the cost. Amortizing a plant over 30 years instead of 70, which is possible with the replacement of key components and some developments, makes a huge difference. Regarding security, the focus is mainly on nuclear waste and general operations.

Here too, the risks have been greatly exaggerated. Despite historical incidents such as Three Mile Island and Chernobyl, advancements in technology and stricter regulations have made nuclear power safer than ever.

Those who attack the nuclear power industry also avoid answering a simple question: how clean is the renewable energy supply chain from production to use and disposal? According to the US-based Solar Energy Industries Association, the turnover speed of solar panels is surpassing initial projections. And, with the current exorbitant costs associated with recycling, there is a genuine risk that all discarded panels, as well as similarly challenging-to-recycle wind turbines, may end up in landfills. So, basically, all energy sources have a waste issue. But the solution for nuclear waste is far better managed.



Analysis

Khaled Abu Zahr

To be continued

BISP chief calls for unique, innovative thinking to address economic challenges

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Dr. Muhammad Amjad Saqib, has emphasized the need for unique and innovative thinking to address the current economic challenges facing the country. He urged the affluent citizens of Pakistan to stand in solidarity with the less privileged, emphasizing the role of increased charity to eradicate the societal menace of interest.

While delivering a compelling speech at an event organized by the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) in Islamabad, Dr. Muhammad Amjad Saqib underscored the importance of social training for those in need, highlighting the significance of empowering them with the necessary skills for self-sufficiency. The event was attended by Chairman PTA Major General (retired) Hafeez Ur Rahman HI (M), Member Finance



PTA Muhammad Naveed and other higher officials of PTA.

Dr. Amjad Saqib also addressed the issue of resource distribution, asserting that the problem lies in the unfair allocation rather than scarcity.

“Western economic theory is not the solution to our problems”, he said. Dr. Amjad Saqib called for an understanding of sustainable development goals in the context of Islamic teachings.

Furthermore, Dr. Amjad Saqib urged the implementation of ‘Mawakat’ to aid impoverished families, showcasing his commitment to supporting the underprivileged. Dr. Amjad Saqib stressed the pivotal role of technical training and small businesses in uplifting children from impoverished backgrounds.

Chairman PTA Major General (retired) Hafeez Ur Rahman affirmed unwavering support from the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA). During a motivating interaction, he extended encouragement not only to the PTA staff individually but also at the organizational level, urging them to wholeheartedly contribute with sincerity towards the welfare of the less fortunate and the overall betterment of society.

In the end, Dr. Amjad Saqib presented his book to Chairman PTA, further highlighting the partnership between the two organizations.

Urumqi welcomes first shipment of Pakistani frozen fish



News Desk

BEIJING: A shipment, consisting of 388 kilograms of various Pakistani seafood varieties, including frozen puffer fish, frozen catfish, and frozen sardines, is being efficiently and orderly unloaded at Urumqi Diwopu International Airport on December 6.

This marks the first import of seafood through Urumqi Aviation Port this year, China Economic Net reported on Friday.

After the import, this batch of frozen fish will be promptly transported to Nanjing, China, to be exhibited at the first “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Frozen Product Trade and Exchange Conference”.

Guan Jiangbo, head of the Comprehensive Business Division at Urumqi Diwopu Airport Customs, mentioned that this import of frozen fish enriched the variety of goods being imported through the port. “In the future, we’ll promote the import of high-quality goods, meeting the diverse demands of Chinese consumers,” he added.

Chai Ye, from the importing company based in Nanjing, termed this batch of frozen fish as an “exploratory move” by Pakistani merchants for participation in the exhibition. “If the market response is favorable, they plan to import more frozen seafood from Pakistan to the Chinese market.”

Pakistani students to visit Japan under the Japan-SAARC Exchange Program



PPA

ISLAMABAD: On the invitation by the Government of Japan, a group of seven Pakistani undergraduate students and a working youth will be visiting Japan from December 11 to 19, 2023 under the Japan-SAARC Network Program of People-to-People Exchange known as JENESYS (Japan-East Asia Network of Exchange for Students and Youths). The theme for this year’s visit program is Connectivity / Economic Cooperation.

JENESYS is a youth exchange program between Japan and the Asia Pacific region launched by the Japanese Government which aims at promoting mutual trust and understanding among the peoples of Japan and the Asia-Pacific region.

Under the JENESYS 2023 program, youth from SAARC countries during their stay in Japan will be provided opportunities to learn and deepen further their understanding of Japan’s economy, society, history, politics, and diplomatic relations, and also experience Japan’s diverse culture through lectures and visits.

The Embassy of Japan held a pre-departure orientation session for the visiting group to give them useful information before their departure for Japan.

While speaking on the occasion, H. E. WADA Mitsuhiro, the Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, congratulated the young students upon their selection for visiting Japan under this youth exchange program which, he said, will be a life-time opportunity for the young minds to learn more about Japan. People-to-people exchange, especially that of youth is essential for promoting mutual understanding and friendly relations between the countries. The Ambassador hoped that the visiting Pakistani students will find ample opportunities to learn and enjoy the life, culture and historical heritage of

US embassy in Baghdad targeted with several rockets; no casualties reported

The US embassy in Baghdad on Friday morning was attacked by two rocket salvos but there were no casualties reported, an embassy spokesperson said.

According to the spokesperson, the attack was likely carried out by Iran-backed militias in Iraq but no group immediately claimed responsibility.

The incident marks the first known rocket attack targeting the embassy since the beginning of strikes against US forces on military bases in neighbouring Syria and Iraq by a loose coalition of militias supported by Iran in mid-October, Reuters reported.

Operating under the banner of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, the armed groups have connected more than 70 of these attacks to Washington’s support for Israel in its deadly assault on Gaza.

ICCI and NBF discuss collaboration for joint investment projects

Tariq Khattak

ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) leading a delegation held a meeting with Sabir Ahmed, Managing Director, National Police Foundation (NPF) during a visit to his office and discussed with him the options of collaboration on some joint investment projects. Muhammad Karim Khan Secretary, Capt. (R) Atta Muhammad Director Welfare/Security, Syed Ali Mohsin Director Housing and Ishfaq Ahmed Director Finance, National Police Foundation were also present in the meeting.

Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that ICCI is working on the establishment of a new industrial zone in the region to boost industrialization and the NPF should collaborate with ICCI in this important project of national importance. He said that the local industry is facing a



shortage of skilled manpower while the NBF is already running vocational training centers across the country and proposed that ICCI and NPF should join hands to produce skilled workers for local industry to improve its productivity.

Sabir Ahmed, Managing Director, National Police Foundation welcomed the ICCI delegation and briefed them about the welfare, housing, and other projects of NPF. He also briefed the ICCI delegation about its mega construction project

Broadway Center and said that ICCI members should explore this project for business activities. He said that despite being an agricultural country, Pakistan is importing agricultural products worth US\$ 11-12 billion per annum, which is unfortunate, and stressed that NBF and ICCI should consider collaboration for bringing investment in corporate farming to reduce agriculture import bill.

Zafar Bakhtawari, former President ICCI and Secretary General UBG Pakistan

said that Pakistan is facing a serious issue of connectivity as many airlines of the world are not coming to Pakistan. He said that ICCI has planned to launch an airline in the private sector to connect Pakistan with major export destinations to boost Pakistan’s trade and exports and stressed that the NPF should join hands with ICCI in this vital project of national importance.

Raja Muhammad Imtiaz, Ameer Hamza, Saif ur Rehman Khan, and others were in the ICCI delegation.

SECP Commissioner Insurance Highlights Takaful Potential at 6th Annual IIAL Conference

PPA

ISLAMABAD: The SECP Commissioner Insurance, Aamir Khan, emphasized the significant transition of Pakistan’s financial system towards Shariah compliance. This shift, aligned with the cultural and religious values of the people, is expected to provide a significant boost to Takaful in Pakistan, as indicated by the recent decision of the Federal Shariah Court of Pakistan.

Khan was speaking at the 6th Annual IIAL Conference 2023, organized by the Islamic Insurance Association of London (IIAL). During his online keynote address, Mr. Khan pointed out the increasing potential for Islamic financial systems, citing the growth of Islamic assets in Pakistan. Khan further highlighted the flourishing Takaful segment, generating a total revenue of PKR 62 billion, representing an 11% growth over the previous year.

Mr. Khan outlined the five-year strategic plan proposed by the SECP for the insurance sector in Pakistan, with the aim of raising the insurance penetration rate from 0.87% to 1.5% of the GDP. In the Takaful sector, the goal is to increase its contribution to 30% of the total insurance sector. A key focus of this plan is digital transformation, aiming to target a digital distribution channel market share exceeding 5%.

Pointing out challenges faced by the Takaful sector, Mr. Khan highlighted several issues, including the need for re-takaful support due to the transition towards the Islamic financial system, insufficient underwriting expertise, the impact of climate change, and limited awareness.

In conclusion, Mr. Khan emphasized that addressing these challenges requires knowledge sharing. He proposed collaboration between the London market, renowned for insurance and reinsurance expertise, and the Takaful sector in Pakistan, facilitated by SECP. Such collaboration, he believes, can lead to the transfer of knowledge, supporting Takaful companies in developing underwriting capacity for specialized and emerging risks through innovative product solutions.

Called on

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Polio Oversight Board, Dr. Chris Elias, called on Federal Health Minister Dr. Nadeem Jan.



Photo: APP

Xinhua releases report on Belt and Road cooperation from human rights perspective

Xinhua

BEIJING: The China Foundation for Human Rights Development and New China Research (NCR), Xinhua’s think tank, issued a report on Thursday titled “For a Better World — Looking at the Past Decade of Jointly Pursuing the Belt and Road Initiative from a Human Rights Perspective.”

The report explores the relationship between the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the development of human rights in the world.

By using a large number of cases and data, the report demonstrates the positive role of the BRI in helping local people better realize their rights to survival and development and achieve broader human rights protection in the past decade, and summarizing the inspiration of the BRI for global human

rights governance.

The report says that cooperation under the BRI proposed by China conforms to the historical trend of economic globalization, the requirements of the times for the transformation of the global governance system, and the strong desire of people in partner countries to live a better life. It is an initiative for common development and for promoting and protecting human rights.

It points out that jointly pursuing the BRI provides a practical model for promoting development through cooperation and advancing human rights through development, actively assisting underdeveloped countries in overcoming development bottlenecks such as infrastructure deficits, fostering the economic and social development of co-building nations, ensuring

and improving people’s livelihoods in the process of development, continually strengthening the foundation of human rights development, and thereby better protecting and promoting human rights.

Over the past decade, the BRI has become a very popular international public good, a global cooperation platform, and a path to happiness, aiding partner countries in promoting human rights protection and achieving a better life, says the report.

The report focuses on improving people’s access to basic life necessities and healthcare, promoting the right to work, raising the income levels of residents, improving living conditions, enhancing education standards, supporting cultural development, respecting religious customs, protecting the ecological environment, and



promoting rights and interests of special groups.

Dozens of typical cases were selected in the report to show that Belt and

Road cooperation has brought tangible benefits to partner countries and local people.

Actual achievements and the idea of putting people first, promoting cooperative development, embracing openness and inclusivity, and upholding fairness and justice in the framework of the BRI have contributed to China’s efforts in advancing global human rights cause and offered Chinese wisdom for improving global human rights governance.

The full text of the report has been released globally in both Chinese and English through relevant websites, journals, social media and other platforms.

The NCR, mainly focusing on policy research, is the only media-based think tank among China’s national high-end think tanks. It has produced a series of influential studies.

Bull & Bears PSX 100-Share Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index

| Current | Prev. Close |
|----------------|---------------------|
| 66,223.63 | 64,718.07 |
| Day's High | Day's Low |
| 66,273.73 | 65,055.17 |
| Index Value | Change |
| 26,235,572,841 | +1505.56 |
| Percentage | Time |
| +2.33% | 8 Dec, 2023 5:00 pm |

Europe: FTSE 100 Index

| Index Value | Change |
|-------------|--------------------|
| 7,554.47 | +40.75 |
| Percentage | Time |
| +0.54% | 8 Dec, 4:46 pm GMT |

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average

| Index Value | Change |
|-------------|-----------------------|
| 36,113.32 | -4.06 |
| Percentage | Time |
| -0.01% | 8 Dec, 11:53 am GMT-5 |

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average

| Index Value | Change |
|-------------|----------------------|
| 32,307.86 | -550.45 |
| Percentage | Time |
| -1.68% | 8 Dec, 3:15 pm GMT+9 |

Open Market Forex Rates

| Currency | Buying | Selling |
|-------------------|--------|---------|
| Australian Dollar | 187.2 | 189 |
| Bahrain Dinar | 755.82 | 763.82 |
| Canadian Dollar | 209 | 211 |
| China Yuan | 39.82 | 40.22 |
| Danish Krone | 41.14 | 41.54 |
| Euro | 307 | 310 |
| Hong Kong Dollar | 36.37 | 36.72 |
| Indian Rupee | 3.41 | 3.52 |
| Japanese Yen | 1.39 | 1.45 |
| Kuwaiti Dinar | 922.14 | 931.14 |
| Malaysian Ringgit | 60.82 | 61.42 |
| New Zealand \$ | 175.33 | 177.33 |
| Norwegians Krone | 26.12 | 26.42 |
| Omani Riyal | 738.71 | 746.71 |
| Qatari Riyal | 78.07 | 78.77 |
| Saudi Riyal | 76 | 76.8 |
| Singapore Dollar | 211 | 213 |
| Swedish Korona | 27.32 | 27.62 |
| Swiss Franc | 324.5 | 327 |
| Thai Bhat | 8.08 | 8.23 |
| U.A.E Dirham | 77.2 | 78 |
| UK Pound Sterling | 358.5 | 362 |
| US Dollar | 283.5 | 285.8 |

LCCI for establishment of Traffic Police Desks at Universities & colleges

PNP

LAHORE: The Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry has appealed to the Inspector General of Police Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar and Chief Traffic Officer Mustansar Feroze to establish Traffic Police Desks at various universities/colleges of Lahore enabling the students to conveniently get their driving licenses at their doorstep.

"A mechanism should also be evolved at the earliest to dismiss the cases against the students as the criminal record will gloom their future and would make it almost impossible to apply for the government jobs and travel abroad, President of the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry Kashif Anwar said in a statement.

He said that there are no two opinions about the fact the implementation of traffic rules and regulation is a must but parallel it is also important to manage the things in a winsome manner. He said that instead registering FIRs against the youth, penalties may be increased temporarily, awareness campaigns may be launched and facilities for driving license issuance may be enhanced. Kashif Anwar said that the establishment of Traffic Police Desks at various universities/colleges of Lahore would be a great favor to the students and related community because this way these desks would share the burden of other service centers and would enable students to have license with quite ease.

The LCCI President also expressed appreciation for the collaboration between LCCI and the Lahore Police in providing efficient services to LCCI members and general public at LCCI premises.

Kashif Anwar hoped that Inspector General of Police Dr. Usman Anwar and CTO Lahore Mustansar Feroze would take a prompt action and would not only order to establish Traffic Police Desks at various universities/colleges of Lahore but would also evolve a strategy to dismiss the cases against the students for not having the licenses.

Export target

Tax revenue must be doubled to run the country: Mian Zahid Hussain

Tariq Khattak

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain said on Friday that the size of the economy has to be increased to one trillion dollars to increase exports to one hundred billion dollars.

Currently, the size of the economy is 350 billion dollars, and the volume of exports is 27.50 billion dollars. In comparison, the volume of non-textile and agricultural exports is only about ten billion dollars.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that the tax system is of fundamental importance in expanding the size of the economy, which needs to be improved through reforms.

Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that if the increase in the price of electricity and gas continues, it

will be impossible to export as much as last year.

The business leader said that increasing the current tax revenue by at least 100% and increasing the tax-to-DP ratio to at least 17% is necessary to improve things; otherwise, the country will have to run on borrowed money.

He noted that the tax system has to be simplified, and the concept of non-filer and unregistered has to be eliminated to ensure economic development.

The need for interaction between taxpayers and tax collectors has to be reduced with the help of technology, which will reduce corruption and complaints and increase taxpayers' confidence in the system.

Mian Zahid Hussain added that reforms are needed in FBR in light of feedback from the business community so that things can proceed better. If smuggling is not eradicated, doing documented business in the country will become challenging.



Apart from this, the under-invoicing, over-invoicing, and misdeclaration must also be eliminated. Mian Zahid Hussain further said that the system of betting, hoarding, profiteering, and handi has to be rooted out so that

the people can get some relief.

He said that the failed government institutions should be sold immediately, the size of the government should be reduced, electricity and gas theft should be stopped, and their prices should be reduced so that the cost of doing business can come down and the economy could function properly.

Mian Zahid Hussain further said that due to the speed at which the reserves of gas are depleting, threats are looming over the fertilizer industry, while the effects of the shortage of domestic gas are becoming prominent in the industrial sector. The industrial sector has been affected for years as gas has to be bought at a higher price.

To combat this threat, foreign oil and gas exploration companies should be encouraged; their security should be ensured to operate in Pakistan, thereby reducing the import bill of energy and continuing the gas supply to industry and agriculture.

Winter vegetables

ISLAMABAD: A street vendor is arranging carrots on his hand cart at Fruit and Vegetables Market in Federal Capital. ONLINE PHOTIO by



Photo: Online by Raja Farid

Pakistan Wins u8 Awards inn APICTA



PNP

ISLAMABAD: Muhammad Zohaib Khan, Chairman of Pakistan Software Houses Association (P@SHA), has informed that Pakistani IT firms have won major awards on Friday in the Asia-Pacific Information & Communication Technology Alliance (APICTA) Awards 2023 held in Hong Kong.

As per details, Pakistani IT companies have won 8 awards in APICTA 2023 in total; and, most notably,

Superwomen Pakistan won the Gold award in Superwomen category. The girls have made Pakistan proud, Zohaib Khan added.

Other merit awards won by Pakistani companies include: Dermavision by NUST; SSG Automated Reader by FAST NUCES; FlowHCM by Impetus Systems; Koyal by F9; Brainbox by Excellence Delivered; Socialchamp by Social Champ and Collision Resilient Caged Quadcopter by Ace Aeronautics.

Nestlé Pakistan inaugurates N4HK room in Narowal

PPA

LAHORE: Nestlé Pakistan inaugurated the Nestlé for Healthier Kids (N4HK) room in Government Boys High School Narowal to foster and promote nutrition awareness. N4HK is Nestlé's global nutritional awareness initiative which supports, teachers and caregivers on their journey to raise healthier kids through a curriculum-based education program promoting healthy nutrition, hydration, hygiene and active lifestyle.

Speaking on the occasion, former federal minister and member of National Assembly from Narowal, Ahsan Iqbal said, "We are honored that Nestlé Pakistan has extended the reach of its N4HK initiative to Narowal. We are confident that the awareness imparted on nutrition to teachers and students alike will play a very important role in promoting healthy habits and a better nourished future generation."

Talking at the event, Jason Avanceña, CEO, Nestlé Pakistan said, "The N4HK program outreach in Narowal is an endorsement of our mutual endeavor to promote healthy nutrition with trainings



for more than 250 teachers with an aim reach out to 15,000 students till 2025," he said.

The N4HK program is part of Nestlé's commitment to United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3 of Good Health and Well-Being, to ensure that children understand the value of nutri-

tion as they grow older. So far the program has reached out to 360,000 kids, trained more than 2300 teachers and has developed 14 N4HK Rooms with 11 partners from private and public sector. N4HK has presence in Punjab, the Federal Capital, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh and most recently, Gilgit Baltistan.

Government should adopt tobacco harm reduction strategies as part of tobacco control regulatory framework

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan should consider adopting tobacco harm reduction strategies as part of tobacco control in public health regulatory frameworks.

By adopting tobacco harm reduction strategies more than 1.2 million precious lives can be saved in Pakistan. According to a recently published international research report "Integrating harm reduction into tobacco control", authored by various doctors and researchers from different countries including Dr. S. Abbas Raza, Consultant Endocrinologist at Shaukat Khanum Hospital

and Research, integration of harm reduction measures as the main pillar of the comprehensive tobacco control framework, particularly in Pakistan is the need of the time.

According to health experts, to address the smoking epidemic in the UK its government utilized the latest modern scientific innovations in the tobacco harm reduction field. Rather than demonizing THR products, the UK promotes it as a proactive and innovative way to keep people away from smoking and give chance to thousands of smokers to switch to less harmful alternatives.

Various European coun-

tries including Sweden have seen a remarkable decrease in smoking figures due to successful implementation of tobacco harm reduction strategies and allowing adult consumers to choose less risky alternatives to conventional tobacco products. EU has declared the goal of making its countries smoke-free till 2040. According to international health experts, EU country's major focus is adopting tobacco harm reduction which is proactively used to drive down smoking rates and significantly reduce smoking-related mortality and morbidity.

While on the other hand, our neighboring country India

has banned THR product in 2019. This has been proved a major failure in India, driving consumers to the black market and putting them at risk of consuming riskier products than the ones available on the legal market.

Alternative tobacco harm reduction products are the result of many years of technological development and research, powered by innovation. There is a low awareness and lack of understanding about the scientific evidence that demonstrates the reduced risk potential of available nicotine alternatives compared to traditional tobacco usage.

PSX Honours Indus Motor with the Prestigious Top 25 Companies Award



Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) honoured Indus Motor Company (IMC), with the highly coveted, Top 25 Companies Award 2022, which was presented by the Prime Minister, Mr Anwaar ul Haq Kakar, to the Company's Chief Executive, Mr. Ali Asghar Jamali, at a ceremony at Karachi. This accolade recognises IMCs excellence in its financial performance, operational and governance accomplishments, sustainability, and ESG related initiatives.

The PSX's evolving award criteria aims to encourage companies to adopt practices that not only drive financial growth but also contribute

positively to society and the country. The event provides an opportunity to showcase the top 25-award winning businesses to the world.

Expressing his views, IMCs Chief Executive said, "Indeed we're very proud of this achievement yet at the same time, humbled at having received this top award from PSX, that is an epitome of corporate success. It is a testament to our relentless pursuit of excellence and our continued commitment to Toyota's cornerstone, Customer First principle that promises to deliver world-class products and services for our valued customers and stakeholders, whilst upholding our responsibility as a socially responsible company."

Engro Corporation and its listed subsidiaries recognized among top 10 recipients at PSX awards

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Engro Corporation and its subsidiaries Engro Fertilizers, Engro Polymer & Chemicals and Engro Powergen Qadirpur, were presented the prestigious Pakistan Stock Exchange Top 25 Companies awards by the caretaker Honourable Prime Minister Mr. Anwaar ul Haq Kakar at a ceremony held in Karachi.

Chairman Engro Corporation Hussain Dawood, who was invited to address the distinguished guests, appreciated the Government for recognizing the pivotal role of private sector towards the economy of Pakistan. He said that the corporate sector is fully aligned with the direction being set by the Government to create a conducive business environment and restore investor confidence.

Group photo

ISLAMABAD: Chief of Staff Vice, Admiral Ovais Ahmed Bilgrami in a group photo with participants of 6th Maritime Security Workshop (MARSEW) during visit to Naval Headquarters Islamabad on Friday.



Govt eager to take advantage of technology for enhanced access to healthcare: PM

Bureau Report

KARACHI: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Friday said that the government was eager to take advantage of modern technologies for enhanced access to preventive and curative healthcare for the people, particularly the most vulnerable ones.

The prime minister, addressing the HealthTech Summit held by the Aga Khan University, said the advent of modern technology in the health sector was an exciting time for patients, healthcare providers as well as the government.

He said the government needed support from the experts and professionals using modern technologies in the health sector as the provision of universal health coverage was the constitutional



responsibility of the government. "Through technology, our dream of providing quality health services will be fulfilled," he added.

The prime minister also highlighted the role of the private sector and philanthropists in fulfilling the dream of universal health coverage.

He said the potential of technology to reshape healthcare was immense as gene thera-

py was no more a fiction but a reality. Digital technology and artificial intelligence were powerful tools for healthcare providers to ensure the diagnosis far quicker than ever, he added.

Calling the AKU a national asset for Pakistan, the prime minister lauded the institution's global ranking as well as its services during COVID-19 in the form of training thou-

sands of professionals and setting up health clinics in the flood-hit areas.

He said the AKU graduates were positively impacting society as ethical leaders and innovators and urged other institutions to emulate the best practices of the institution.

He said the services of the AKU in Pakistan and across the borders, were testimony to the vision and generosity of Prince Aga Khan who believed that the people of Pakistan deserved the best of education and health facilities.

Prime Minister Kakar said the technology had implications for the entire way of life including ethics, religion and democracy.

He also highlighted the challenges posed by modern technology tools which necessitated the role of regulations

and the government. However, he said instead of containing the change, one should engage with it to use it productively.

President AKU Sulaiman Shahabuddin, in his address, apprised the gathering about the summit and its significance. He also thanked the prime minister for attending the summit which he said manifested the government's commitment to the health sector.

Lt. General (ret'd) Dr Nigar Johar called for collaborative efforts to leverage modern technology as digitalization had brought improvements in multiple fields.

She said the coordinated approach for public-private partnership at national, regional, and international levels for the achievement of universal health coverage, was inevitable.

International silence over the killing of Palestinian civilians: MOFA

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates condemns in the strongest terms the genocidal war waged by Israel against our people in the Gaza Strip for the 63rd day in a row, and whose targeting of civilians and displaced persons is expanding day after day, including targeting shelter centers such as schools, hospitals, and associations, including those affiliated with the United Nations, and the use of... International prohibited weapons, including white phosphorus, were

used against these centers to evacuate them from the displaced and push them to flee again and again towards the southern Gaza Strip. This is in light of the occupation forces storming UNRWA schools and other international organizations sheltering the displaced, in the ugliest deepening of the humanitarian catastrophe imposed on civilians in the Gaza Strip. In light of the deprivation of Palestinian families of their basic human needs, such as electricity, water, lunch, medicine, and fuel, 90% of families in the northern Gaza Strip spend their entire day without

any food, as the World Food Program said, noting that the Israeli bombing continues around the clock and includes all areas of the Gaza Strip, including... He emphasizes daily that there is no safe place in the Strip.

The Ministry also strongly condemns the terrorism of the occupation army and armed settler militias in the occupied West Bank, as happened in Al-Far'a camp this morning, and the attack carried out by terrorist settler elements wearing military uniforms on the village of Khallet Al-Dabaa in Masafer Yatta, south of Hebron.

The Ministry calls on the UN Security Council to assume its legal and moral responsibilities towards what Palestinian civilians are exposed to and vote in favor of the draft resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire, protecting civilians, and ensuring access to their basic humanitarian needs in a sustainable manner. It stresses that the failure of the draft resolution in the Security Council means continued international silence on the killing of civilians. The Palestinians and the deepening of the humanitarian catastrophe among them.

IG Punjab Dr Usman Anwar approved the promotion of 40 inspectors

Kiran Asim

MULTAN: Promotion Board meeting chaired by IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar. Additional IG Punjab Sultan Ahmad Chaudhry, DIG Establishment One Dr. Inam Waheed, DIG Establishment Two Zeeshan Asghar and other senior officers participated in the meeting.

Inspectors who meet the rules and regulations and merit were promoted to the post of DSPs.

Better service delivery and serve the people, May Allah be your supporter Congratulations to the promoted officers of IG Punjab.

President of the Maldives says 'Pakistan is important to the Maldives' foreign policy'

Spokesman Report

KARACHI: "We will not tilt towards any particular country. We want to be in the middle and pursue the 'Maldives First' policy. This means, for me, the Maldives, the interest of the country, along with the country's people's interests, come first. To be tilted towards any particular country would not be in our country's interest. Similarly, it would also not be in the region's interest". This was stated by Dr. Mohamed Muizzu, the newly-elected President of the Maldives, in an exclusive interview with the U.S. award-winning magazine SouthAsia.

In this exclusive interview, Dr. Mohamed Muizzu shed light on how Pakistan had helped the Maldives in the

past on many occasions. He said that "Pakistan is important to the Maldives' foreign policy". With reference to India, he said for the last five years, the Maldives' foreign policy has been heavily tilted towards India, which is not helping the archipelago at all, mainly because of the presence of the Indian military troops in the Maldives.

"When it comes to the foreign policy challenges facing the Maldives, I think the former government's foreign policy strategy was not according to how the people of the Maldives wanted it to be. The election outcome shows that the Maldives people do not want our foreign policy tilted towards any particular country."

In reply to a question about asking India to get its troops



out of the Maldives will trigger diplomatic tensions between both countries, the Maldivian President said that India will not have any problems because he has given his assurance to New Delhi that by asking for their troops to be removed from the Maldives, he wouldn't allow any other country to take its

place. "There will be no situation in which the Maldives will allow foreign military troops from any country to be stationed in our country," he added.

With regard to critical challenges for the new Maldivian government, the Maldivian President said there are many

challenges facing the archipelago, one of them being the economic situation. "There is a huge debt on every person, while the per capita GDP is lower than anticipated. We need to bring back investors' confidence and expand and diversify our economy. So, economic recovery and expansion is a big challenge, particularly in increasing the revenue we generate from our economic activities," he said.

His exclusive interview appeared in the December 2023 issue of Monthly SouthAsia (www.SouthAsia.com.pk), which also carries the Cover Story titled "The Necessary Antibiotics" comparing the role of Pakistan's Armed Forces in the country's economic development with the democratically elected leadership.

Participants of 6th Maritime Security Workshop visit Naval Headquarters

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Participants of 6th Maritime Security Workshop visiting Naval Headquarters, Islamabad. The delegation was led by Commandant Pakistan Navy War College Rear Admiral Javed Iqbal.

Upon arrival, a detailed briefing was given to the participants on maritime challenges in the region and responses of Pakistan Navy including PN contributions towards promotion of maritime awareness and prospects of Blue Economy. Later on, Chief of Staff Vice Admiral Ovais Ahmed Bilgrami interacted with the participants of the workshop.

During the interactive session, the Chief of Staff dilated upon issues related to maritime security and PN efforts to enhance maritime awareness in the country. He

underscored Pakistan Navy initiatives in enhancing maritime and coastal security, operational readiness, PN initiatives for supporting quality education, health sector and socio-economic uplift of coastal community. The admiral, urged the participants to extend their all-out support and contribution to exploit these untapped maritime resources in their individual capacity as policy maker, investor, academia and media influencer.

The workshop participants comprises of senators, parliamentarians, policy makers, bureaucrats, academia, entrepreneurs as well as representatives from media. The participants highly appreciated PN role & efforts to befittingly meet maritime related challenges being faced by the country and also proposed valuable suggestions.

PTI's Sher Afzal Marwat released shortly after arrest reports

Fakhar Alam

SWABI: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Senior Vice President Sher Afzal Khan Marwat has been released.

As per details, PTI Lawyers Forum senior vice president Adeel Butt has confirmed the release of Sher Afzal Marwat.

Earlier, reports emerged that PTI's Sher Afzal Khan Marwat has been arrested.

As per details, PTI senior lawyer Sher Afzal Khan Marwat was arrested at Ouch when he was on his way to Bajaur from Chakdara.

Prior to this, a first information report (FIR) was registered against Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Senior Vice President Sher Afzal Khan Marwat and others for organizing a worker's convention in Swabi.

In October, a case was lodged against him in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) for provoking the public against state institutions through social media.

The charges against him fall under sections 120-B (punishment for criminal conspiracy) and 153-A (promoting enmity between different groups) of the Pakistan Penal Code.

Last month, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) granted protective bail to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's senior vice president Sher Afzal Marwat in two cases registered against him in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP).

Sher Afzal Marwat appeared before the IHC Chief Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kiani and his lawyer Malik Naved Hayat for protective bail.

Marwat was recently appointed Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's senior vice president.

No substance in former PTI chairman's accusations about illegal immigrants: Solangi

Bureau Report

QUETTA: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Friday said there was no substance in the former chairman of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) 'accusations' with regard to illegal immigrants who had returned to their countries on the voluntary basis.

"The accusations by PTI former chairman in his tweet are baseless. About 0.5 million illegal immigrants have left the country voluntarily and none of them was forced out of the country," he said while addressing a press conference along with Provincial Information Minister Jan Achakzai.

The minister said Pakistan was

acknowledged for its hospitality in the world and added the tweet was just a tactical move to gain political mileage, over other political parties in the backdrop of upcoming general elections.

To a query, he said the caretaker government was fully determined to conduct free, fair and transparent elections in the country. "There should be no doubt regarding the conduct of general elections in the whole country on 8 February 2024," Murtaza Solangi remarked.

It was the responsibility of the caretaker government to meet the financial, administrative or security requirements of the ECP, which it would discharge along with four provincial governments, he added.

Pakistan, Netherlands unveil joint commemorative postage stamp

Export Advisory Council Charts Course for Pakistan's \$100 Billion Export Vision

City Desk



PPA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and The Netherlands on Friday unveiled the commemorative postage stamp to mark 75 years of the establishment of bilateral relations between the two countries. Ambassador of Pakistan to the Netherlands Suljok Mustansar Tarar and Secretary General at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of The Netherlands Paul Huijts unveiled the special commemorative postage stamp issued by Pakistan Post.

Secretary General Paul Huijts was accompanied by Ambassador Wouter Jurgens, Director for Asia & Oceania Department and other senior officers of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Ambassador Suljok Mustansar Tarar in his remarks focussed on the growing momentum of bilateral cooperation and high-level interactions.

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Commerce is pleased to announce the successful convening of the inaugural meeting of the Export Advisory Council in Islamabad. Chaired by the Commerce Minister, Dr. Gohar Ejaz, the meeting marks a pivotal step towards realizing the ambitious goals outlined in Dr. Ejaz's "Vision Pakistan: Road to \$100 Billion Exports."

Comprising prominent figures in the export sector, the council boasts members including Mussadiq Zulfarnain, Fawad Anwar, Shahid Surti, Mian Ahsan, Yaqub Ahmed, Aamir Fayyaz Sheikh, Shahid Abdullah, and Ahmed Kamal. The collective wisdom and expertise of these industry leaders were harnessed during the meeting to address pressing challenges faced by Pakistan's exports.

During the deliberations, the council focused on identifying practical solutions to enhance the competitiveness of Pakistan's textile industry on the global stage. The members of the private sector actively contributed their perspectives, shedding light on critical issues and proposing strategies for their resolution.