

Daily The Spokesman

A Leading National Daily



فرمان رسول ﷺ
عبداللہ بن عربیہ نے بیان کیا کہ ایک صحابی نے
نبی کریم صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم سے پوچھا کیا میں
بھی جہاد میں شریک ہو جاؤں؟ نبی کریم صلی
اللہ علیہ وسلم نے دریافت فرمایا کہ تمہارے
مال باپ موجود ہیں انہوں نے کہا کہ جی ہاں
موجود ہیں۔ نبی کریم صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم نے
فرمایا کہ پھر انہیں شہید کرو۔
(بخاری، حدیث نمبر 5972)

Barkat Rice Mills
(Pvt) Limited



Saudi envoy champions preservation of Arabic language's cultural heritage, global impact

Saudi Ambassador to Pakistan Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki praised the linguistic richness of Arabic as the language of the Holy Quran and Islam. In an eloquent address at an event marking 'World Arabic Language Day' here at the embassy on Monday, he highlighted the deep cultural heritage... (Details on Page 8)



Ethiopia's Parliament ratifies bilateral trade agreement with Pakistan

The Embassy of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan is pleased to announce that the House of the Peoples Representatives of FDRE has unanimously approved the bilateral trade agreement signed by the two countries on February 14, 2023 to boost bilateral trade. The trade agreement was submitted by the Standing Committee of the House on Trade and Tourism... (Details on Page 5)

Simultaneously published from Islamabad, Lahore and Multan

Jamadi-us-Sani 5, Tuesday, December 19, 2023

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Daily Spokesman Vol: 17, Issue: 249 Price Rs. 25.00 Pages 8

Condolence

KUWAIT CITY: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar meets with the new Amir of Kuwait His Highness Sheikh Meshal al-Ahmad al-Sabah to offer condolences over the sad demise of the Amir his Highness Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Monday.



Photo: PID

President for improving energy efficiency to curb climate change impacts



Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Monday called for improving energy efficiency, adopting sustainable practices, and changing attitudes and priorities to mitigate the adverse impacts of climate change. "Transitioning to renewable energy sources, improving energy efficiency, and reforestation are key to curb the adverse impacts on the planet's climate and ecosystems," the president said while addressing an event with respect to a project "Green Presidency of Pakistan" here at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

He said the modern world with changing priorities and attitudes, was becoming

dangerous which must be stopped to curb the adverse impacts of climate change. The Green Presidency of Pakistan is a flagship initiative under which a one-megawatt solar PV system was installed, along with effective implementation of energy conservation and efficiency measures. The president said the initiative would result in a reduction in energy usage by Aiwan-e-Sadr by 42.5%. This energy savings is equivalent to a reduction of 3,144 tonnes of greenhouse gases or a plantation of 142,090 mature trees. "It is a matter of great pleasure that, out of 129 projects from around the world, the Green Presidency Project of Pakistan has been conferred with the prestigious award of "International Energy Project of the Year 2023", he added. He also expressed gratitude to the Association of Energy Engineers USA for recognizing with the esteemed Best International Energy Project of the Year Award for 2023.

PM visits Kuwait to offer condolences on demise of Amir Nawaf

Spokesman Report

KUWAIT CITY: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar visited Kuwait on Monday to offer condolences over the sad demise of the Amir His Highness Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. During his meeting with the new Amir His Highness Sheikh Meshal al-Ahmad al-Sabah, the Prime Minister offered sincere and heartfelt condolences on behalf of himself, the leadership, Government and the people of Pakistan. He said Pakistani nation stood united with Kuwaiti brothers in this time of sorrow and grief.

PM visits Kuwait to offer

condolences on demise of Amir Nawaf 'The State of Kuwait had lost a visionary leader, who transformed Kuwait into a prosperous State. He will be remembered as well-wisher and friend of Pakistan. He made great contributions in advancing bilateral relations between the two brotherly states. His Highness Sheikh Meshal al-Ahmad al-Sabah expressed gratitude to the leadership, Government and the people of Pakistan for standing with the people of Kuwait in this time of grief. He expressed full support for Pakistan-Kuwait relations and affirmed his commitment to further augment this relationship.

Pakistan can't comprise national security by accommodating illegal aliens: PM

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Defending the incumbent government's decision to repatriate undocumented individuals, Caretaker Prime Minister (PM) Anwaarul Haq Kakar said that Pakistan could no longer continue to compromise its national security by accommodating such a huge number of aliens. "Our ultimate aim is to build a safer, more peaceful and prosperous Pakistan - with associated benefits for our own people, for the region, and the wider world," the interim premier said in an op-ed published in British Daily.

PM Kakar said that governments across the world were adapting to a new era of mass migration linked to conflict, climate change, and economic opportunism.

He said the UK Government's plan to deport illegal immigrants to Rwanda was a sign of that pres-

sure. Similarly, he said France was also struggling, while Italy has expressed fears that it might become "Europe's refugee camp". "After opening its arms to several million refugees in recent years, Germany is also feeling the strain, prompting the announcement of tough new deportation measures. The situation in the US is no easier", he pointed out.

"Pakistan's problem is of a different magnitude altogether," PM Kakar said, noting that over the last three to four decades, "between four and five million migrants (roughly the population of Ireland)" had arrived in Pakistan.

"Many have no right to remain. Despite being a non-signatory to 1951 Convention on Refugees (and its 1967 Protocol), we have generously accommodated the single largest caseload of refugees," the prime minister wrote. Unfortunately, PM Kakar said

that despite frequent opportunities to repatriate voluntarily, and multiple government attempts to register those who remained undocumented, a significant number had persistently refused to formalise their status, choosing instead to stay in the shadows.

He said that while Pakistan had benefited from many hardworking and law-abiding migrants, the overall socio-economic and security cost of this huge influx has been staggering.

"Many work on the black market, paying no tax, depressing wages for legitimate workers. They are also susceptible to exploitation by the criminal underworld, with all its disturbing links to terrorist organisations operating in the region," he remarked.

He said that since August 2021, at least 16 Afghan nationals have carried out suicide attacks inside Pakistan, while 65 terrorists killed

in encounters with security forces, mainly in the bordering region, were identified as Afghans.

"No responsible government can ignore such concerns. Whenever we raised this with the interim Afghan government, they advised us to "look inwards". We have finally decided to heed to their advice to put our house in order," the prime minister commented.

PM Kakar further said that the "abrupt withdrawal" of Western allies from Afghanistan in August 2021 had prompted a whole new influx of refugees to Pakistan.

"Hundreds of thousands of Afghan nationals crossed the border, claiming their lives were in danger. Again, we take their welfare very seriously, recognising that some do require special protection.

He said that Pakistan today stood at the crossroads of history. "We can no longer continue to

compromise our national security by accommodating such huge numbers of undocumented individuals. Our ultimate aim is to build a safer, more peaceful and prosperous Pakistan - with associated benefits for our own people, for the region, and the wider world," he concluded.

In November, the caretaker government had initiated a nationwide campaign to deport illegal foreign nationals, the majority of whom are Afghans.

While the decision had prompted criticism from Afghanistan and several other quarters, the government refused to budge, insisting the move was not aimed at any particular ethnic group.

Of the more than four million Afghans living in Pakistan, the government estimates 1.7m are undocumented. So far, thousands of Afghans have returned home from the Torkham and Chaman border crossings.

PPP to speed up development process in Balochistan after winning elections: Zardari

Correspondent

TURBT: President of Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians Asif Ali Zardari on Monday vowed that the PPP government after winning the upcoming general elections would speed up the development process in Balochistan. It would particularly start development projects in the fields of education, health and communication, besides ensuring supply of irrigation water to promote agriculture in the province, he said while addressing the party workers' convention, according to a Bilawal House press release.



Asif Zardari said in terms of development projects, "Balochistan will be the first now, as it has a lot of scope to move forward". The former president said that Balochistan was the heart of Pakistan. "Conflict does not bring prosperity," he said, adding "We will beautify the province which has many resources." He claimed that during the party's previous government in the province, he provided funds but did not monitor the development projects. "Now I will supervise the development projects myself," he vowed.

Imran Khan urges nation not to allow anyone to rob of their basic right to vote

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Founding Chairman Imran Khan urged his party's workers and people of the country that vote was their basic constitutional, legal and democratic right and they should not allow anyone to rob them of their basic right to vote on February 8, 2024 in any circumstances.

In his special message to the workers and people through the PTI Core Committee, the incarcerated PTI Chairman-for-life called upon the people that they should prepare themselves well for the upcoming general elections in order to make sure to cast their votes in a safe manner.

Imran Khan made it clear that the deferment of the elections or any attack on polls transparency was not in the interest of the country and the party's workers and people should plan together to prevent and foil any such attacks.

PTI Founding Chairman categorically stated that those who were hell-bent on pushing Pakistan into the darkness of destruction and lawlessness could not defeat PTI and the people standing behind it in the elections come what may.

Foreigners cannot stay in Pakistan indefinitely without visa: Solangi

Spokesman Report



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Monday said that foreigners including Afghan citizens could not stay in Pakistan indefinitely without a visa. Talking to "Hum News" the minister said that some foreign countries had criticized Pakistan for sending illegal immigrants back to their countries. "There are about 20,000 Afghans in Pakistan who worked with the US coalition forces," Murtaza Solangi said.

The minister said that the Taliban government was established in Afghanistan on August 15, 2021, but the US and its allies were not yet able to shift these 20 thousand Afghans to their own countries. He said that everyone knew the treatment of illegal immigrants across the world. When illegal immigrants were drowning in Greece, no one came to save them, Murtaza Solangi recalled. Pakistan's record about illegal residents was very good as compared to other countries of the world, Murtaza Solangi opined. The minister said that millions of Afghan citizens legally present in Pakistan had access to all facilities including health, education and business activities.

Jilani's telephonic conversation with the Foreign Minister of Iran

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Jilil Abbas Jilani held a telephone conversation today with Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian. They discussed matters of bilateral importance and the regional situation.

Foreign Minister Jilani expressed Pakistan's deep concern over the dire situation in Occupied Palestine especially in Gaza. He emphasized the urgency of a ceasefire, lifting of the siege, provision of uninterrupted humanitarian assistance including medical supplies to the people of Gaza,



and the resumption of diplomatic efforts for lasting peace in the Middle East based on a just solution to the Palestinian question.

The two Foreign Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to further reinforce Pakistan-Iran brotherly ties, rooted in history and culture and agreed to enhance exchange of high-level visits.

CM Naqvi extends the deadline to launch a grand operation against encroachments

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi has extended the deadline to launch a grand operation against encroachments for 24 hours. CM stated that the operation against encroach-

ments will now be launched on Wednesday morning. Mohsin Naqvi asserted that no leniency will be meted out to anyone. We are giving 24 hours further to the people so that they can remove encroachments and save themselves from legal proceedings.

Rais-ul-Ahrrar

PM AJK visits mausoleum of late Quaid-i-Millat

Abdul Majeed Tahir

RAWALPINDI: Prime Minister Azad Jammu and Kashmir Chaudhry Anwar ul Haq on Monday visited the mausoleum of renowned Kashmiri leader Rais-ul-Ahrrar Chaudhry Ghulam Abbas on the occasion of his death anniversary.

The AJK premier, who was accompanied by the government ministers including Dewan Ali Khan Chaghtai and Chaudhry Azhar Sadiq, laid a floral wreath at the grave of Quaid Millat Chaudhry Ghulam Abbas and offered Fateh for the deceased soul.

Former Prime Minister Sardar Attique Ahmad Khan was also present on the occasion.

President Muslim Conference and former prime minister of Azad Kashmir Sardar Atique Ahmad Khan welcomed Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwar Haq on his arrival at the mausoleum of Quaid-i-Millat.

Secretary Services and General Administration Zafar Mahmood Khan, Secretary Information and



Forests Ansar Yaqub, Secretary Physical Planning and others were present on this occasion. Meanwhile, a smartly turned contingent of AJK police also presented a salute to the deceased leader.

Golden Jubilee ceremony

FAISALABAD: Vice Chancellor Faisalabad Medical University Dr Professor Zafer Ali Chaudhry cut the cake along with others during ceremony regarding the Golden Jubilee ceremony in City.



Photo: Online

Cotton in Pakistan factories for 2023-24 season: PCBGA

By Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: Chaudhry Waheed Arshad Chairman Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association (PCGA) has released the data of arrival in cotton factories on December 15, 2023, according to which 80 lac 23 thousand 707 bales of cotton arrived in the ginning factories of the country till December 15, 2023. 39 lac 56 thousand 880 bales of cotton in the factories of Punjab province. 40 lac 66 thousand 827 bales of cotton have arrived in the factories of Sindh province. Till December 15, 2023, 78 lakh 65 thousand 618 bales of cotton were produced from the cotton coming to the factories. 302 ginning factories



are operational in the country. Exporters have purchased 289,326 bales of cotton this season, while the textile sector has purchased 70,84,870 bales of cotton.

The Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP) has not purchased cotton for the 2023-24 season. 247 ginning factories are operational in Punjab

province and 38 lakh 50 thousand 426 bales of cotton have been produced. 63 thousand 840 bales of cotton in Multan district, 92 thousand 660 bales of cotton in Lodhran district, 2 lac 15 thousand 627 bales of cotton in Khanewal district, 80 thousand 36 bales of cotton in Muzaffargarh district, 3 lakh 42 thousand 66 bales of cotton in Dera Ghazi Khan district, 31 thousand 725 bales of cotton in Rajanpur district, 2 lac 20 in this Layyah district One thousand 942 bales of cotton, 2 lac 12 thousand 956 bales of cotton in Vehari district, 1 lac 86 thousand 376 bales of cotton in Sahiwal district, 5 lac 84 thousand 385 bales of cotton in Rahim Yar Khan district, 5 Lac 31 thousand 826 bales of cotton

in Bahawalpur district, 10 lac 13 thousand 648 bales of cotton in Bahawalnagar district.

16 lac 81 thousand 194 bales of cotton in Sanghar district, 1 lac 35 thousand 900 bales of cotton in Mirpur Khas district, 1 lac 78 thousand 615 bales of cotton in Nawab Shah district, 3 lac 20 thousand 226 bales of cotton in Nau Shahro Feroze district, 3 lac 50 thousand 939 bales of cotton in Khairpur district, 63 thousand 200 bales of cotton in Jamshoro district. Cotton and 2 lac 25 thousand 190 bales of cotton in Hyderabad district and 1 lac 87 thousand 221 bales of cotton in Balochistan province. There is unsold stock of 649,511 bales of cotton

Al-Shifa to construct eye hospital in Gilgit

PPA

ISLAMABAD: The government of Gilgit-Baltistan has allotted prime land to Al-Shifa Trust to construct a state-of-the-art eye hospital.

The 20-kanal piece of land is situated on Karakorum Highway near Aga Khan Hospital, accessible to people from remote areas for treatment.

President of Al-Shifa Trust, Maj. Gen. (retired) Rehmat Khan, while briefing a board meeting of the trust, said that the GB government had issued the allotment letter during his recent visit to the area.

The site allocated for the eye hospital is just three kilometres away from the city, and the hospital will be able to treat 150 OPD patients per day and conduct 50 surgeries daily, he informed.

Rehmat Khan said that the hospital will be constructed with the help of the Rupani Foundation Pakistan, which has been reaching out to vulnerable populations for the last 16 years.



This hospital will be the first state-of-the-art hospital in the area, which will cost around 220 million rupees, and the Rupani Foundation will bear half of its cost while the trust will arrange the remaining cost through donations, he informed.

The trust's president said the hospital's groundbreaking ceremony will be held in March 2024, and the grey structure will be completed by July 2025.

He noted that people of GB are badly affected by eye diseases, and a large number are facing blindness due

to cataracts; therefore, it was necessary to provide them with a facility at their doorstep.

The hospital will also establish an attachment of medicines and mental health to treat general patients, he said, adding that training of paramedics will be started at Rawalpindi Eye Hospital. In this regard, a diploma course is being offered to the GB students on a preferable basis.

The trust has already started serving the patients, and arrangements regarding a series of camps have been finalized. A 2-day free surgical eye camp and general medical camp have already been organized at RHQ Hospital, Chilas, along with school screening activities in collaboration with FCNA (Pak Army).

The camp was visited by Section Commander Diamer Bhasha Dam, Col Irfan Ghazi, Mr M Iqbal, Medical Superintendent RHQ Hospital Chilas, and Dr Javid Ur Rehman, Provincial Coordinator for the Prevention and Control of Blindness, GB, he informed.

Meeting on HEC Privatisation

PNP

ISLAMABAD: The Caretaker Federal Minister for Privatisation, Fawad Hasan Fawad, chaired a meeting to review the progress on sale/privatisation of Heavy Electrical Complex (HEC) today at the Privatisation Division. The Minister directed the buyer, IMS Engineering to complete all formalities and paperwork required for completion of the transaction by the end of the month. All stakeholders including IMS Engineering, the Financial Advisor, Ministry of Industries and Bank of Khyber attended the meeting. The stakeholders discussed and finalised the roadmap for the conclusion and settlement of the sale agreement.

Election Commissioner reviews election arrangements for February 8, 2024

Qayoom Sarohi

KARACHI: Chief Secretary, Sindh Election Commissioner reviews arrangements for 8 feb polls. Newly posted Sindh Election Commissioner Sharifullah, called on Chief Secretary Sindh Dr. Muhammad Fakhre Alam here on Monday and discussing detailed arrangements for the upcoming general elections.



During the meeting Chief Secretary Dr. Muhammad Fakhre Alam informed the Provincial Election Commissioner that the Sindh government has made all necessary preparations for holding fair and peaceful elections. "Security and transport plans and other necessary arrangements have been made for the peaceful conduct of the elections" he added. He further stated that as per directives and requirement all facilities would be provided to the Election Commission for holding transparent elections.

During the meeting, Provincial Election Commissioner Sharifullah mentioned that the Election Commission has completed all necessary preparations to conduct the general elections on February 8, 2024. "The Election Commission is fully prepared for conducting free, fair, and impartial elections" he added. He added that as per directives of ECP CCTV cameras would be installed at polling stations to ensure transparency. The Provincial Election Commissioner further expressed that the Election Commission is committed to providing a secure environment for the elections. Joint Provincial Election Commissioner (Elections) Sindh, Ali Asghar Siyal, was also present during the meeting.

South Punjab PPP hails Hamid Saeed Kazmi on joining the party

Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: Senior Vice President of Pakistan Peoples Party South Punjab Khawaja Rizwan Alam, Former MNA Naveed Amir Jeeva, City President and Candidate NA 150 Malik Naseem Labar, District General Secretary Rao Sajid Ali, City General Secretary AD Khan Baloch, City Secretary Information Khawaja Imran, PYO Divisional President and Candidate Provincial Constituency 218 Malik Nadeem Akhtar said in a joint statement that Syed Hamid Saeed Kazmi had previously contested elections from Pakistan Peoples Party and became MNA and has been a Federal Minister. The circle of friends is wide across the country including the entire southern Punjab and rejoining the PPP will strengthen the party.



Likewise, the organizational leaders and workers belonging to PPP Multan also heartily welcome Hamid Saeed Kazmi on joining the PPP. Very soon, more personalities from South Punjab will announce their participation in the PPP because the participation of the people in the workers' convention across the country by Chairman Pakistan People's Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has proved that the sun of power will be the victory of the PPP on February 8. The people have come to know that Bilawal Bhutto Zardari is the only leader who can lead the country and nation from the torment of inflation and unemployment to the path of development.

Govt should immediately withdraw the cruel hike in gas prices: Yousuf Vohra

Abdul Majid

FAISALABAD: Central President Cloth Board Ittehad Group Pakistan Alhaj Naseer Yousuf Vohra has warned the federal government that if the brutal hike in gas prices is not withdrawn immediately, traders and people across the country will also besiege the offices of OGRA and They will force the federal government to stop this storm of oppression and let the wheels of the economy run, now the people can no longer bear the burden of inflation.



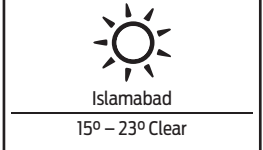
He has further said that traders across the country are protesting against the government's decision to increase gas prices. In this storm of unbearable cold and inflation, the government has increased gas prices several hundred times and the Consumers are receiving hugely lower gas bills and additional security deposit notices are also being issued. The federal government and all gas companies want to warn to withdraw the additional security notices issued to traders immediately. Go and withdraw the cruel increase in gas prices immediately. It will not be possible for restaurants, bakers and industry to run their wheels within the current gas prices and in this situation the nation will have to bear the burden of unbearable inflation in a situation when Karachi Industrial Area Association gas load shedding

Quaid-e-Millat's 56th anniversary held in AJK

Abdul Majeed Tahir

RAWALPINDI: The main ceremony of Rais-ul-Ahrrar Chaudhry Ghulam Abbas' 56th anniversary was held at Quaid-e-Millat's mausoleum in Faizabad. Azad Kashmir Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwar-ul-Haq attended the Quaid-e-Millat's mausoleum and recited Fatiha. Addressing the main ceremony of Quaid Millat's anniversary, former Prime Minister and Muslim Conference President Sardar Atique Ahmad Khan paid tribute to Quaid Millat Chaudhry Ghulam Abbas and said that Quaid Millat was a great personality. He thanked Ajk Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwar Haq for giving special orders regarding the arrangements for the anniversary of the Quaid-e-Millat. He said that the purpose of visiting the Quaid-e-Millat's mausoleum is to remember the sacrifices of our predecessors and to pay homage to their services in the freedom movement. Attended the graves and paid homage to them. He said that we are the heirs of the future of the state and we have to lead the freedom movement successfully, Quaid Millat was an institution, the founder and leader of the freedom movement within the state.





SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr 5:37 am
Zohr 12:03 pm
Asr 3:24 pm
Maghrib 5:02 pm
Isha 6:31 pm

EMERGENCY

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

Women Police Stations

Islamabad 9222596
Rawalpindi 9270601-20

ENQUIRY

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

HOSPITALS

CMH 561111
MH 561116
MH 561116
Cantt Hospital 9270907-11
DHQ 5556311-4
RGH 9290301-7
Holy Family 9290322-7
PIMS 9261170-79

Descon Engineering celebrates success

PNP

ISLAMABAD: Descon Engineering (DEL) marks a milestone achievement by successfully handing over plant relocation project (from Lahore to FIED-MC) to AkzoNobel on turn-key basis. The ceremony marked the official handover of a pivotal project by DEL Project Management Team (PMT) to AkzoNobel Operation team. This noteworthy event culminated with the seamless transition which was held at the project site that holds great importance for all parties involved.

Chief Executive Officer Descon Engineering, Taimur Saeed said, "This project exemplifies our commitment to excellence and the successful collaboration between DEL and AkzoNobel teams. I am proud of what we have achieved together. This accomplishment also reflects the dedication and vigilance of the team in adhering to the highest standards of safety protocols."

President of DEL's Construction Division Syed Abdul Moed, added, "We take pride in not only meeting but exceeding our clients' expectations, who have been extremely supportive throughout the project."

The seamless handover of the project to AkzoNobel marks not just the completion of a venture but the beginning of a new chapter. As DEL celebrates this momentous achievement, its commitment to excellence and collaboration truly stands out. Moreover the venture into the paint/coating industry underscores the company's commitment to diversification.

Jamal Shah inaugurates ten-day long exhibition of photographs & books

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Jamal Shah on Monday inaugurated ten-day long exhibition of photographs and books on Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah here at Heritage Museum, Lok Virsa.

National Heritage and Culture Division, Lok Virsa organized the exhibition in collaboration with National Library of Pakistan (NLP) and National Archives of Pakistan.

Executive Director Lok Virsa Muhammad Uzair Khan, Director General NLP Asif Khan Niazi and large number of students were also present on the occasion.

Addressing the ceremony, the minister said that National Heritage and Culture Division attached departments have

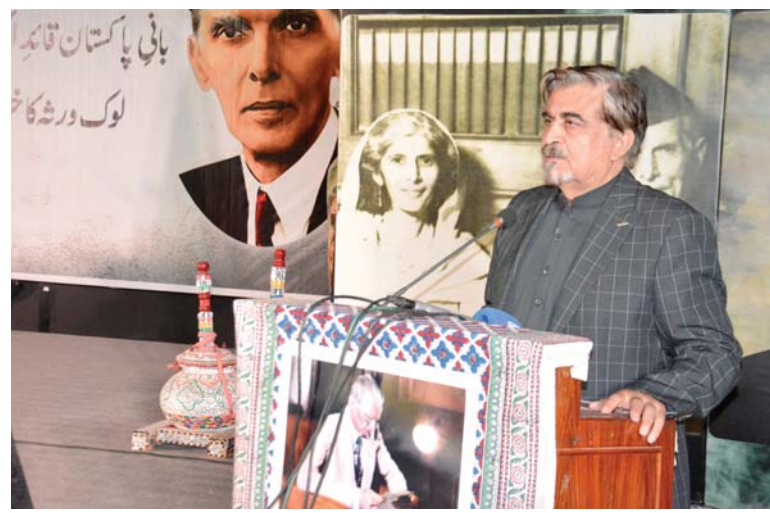
planned a series of events from December 17th to December 28th to pay rich tribute to Father of Nation and Founder of Pakistan, adding that these events include lectures, live performances, exhibitions, seminars, tableaus etc.

Jamal Shah said that these events are being organized with collaboration our cultural departments, community and local artists.

He said that these events are aimed at highlighting the heroic struggle of our Quaid and his associates in achieving a separate homeland for the Muslims of subcontinent.

"Our youth have tremendous potential and I advise them to make the country prosperous by adopting the teachings of the Quaid-i-Azam and Allama Muhammad Iqbal in letter and spirit", he said.

Jamal Shah said that our younger generation needs to work hard by follow-



ing the footsteps of Quaid-i-Azam. The minister appreciated Lok Virsa, National Library of Pakistan and National Archives of Pakistan for organizing

such a wonder exhibition and book fair.

Earlier, ED Lok Virsa in his opening remarks said that Lok Virsa in collaboration with NLP and NAP organized the exhibition under the aegis of the National Heritage and Culture Division.

He said that the exhibition is an effort to pay tributes to the father of Nation Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah for his valuable contribution towards the creation of Pakistan.

More than 200 rare photographs and 500 historical books relating to founder of Pakistan Muhammad Ali Jinnah and his companions were displayed.

The young singers also paid glowing tribute to the Father of the Nation by presenting 'Mili Naghmas' and got big applause from the audience.

The exhibition will remain on display at the Heritage Museum, Lok Virsa till 25 December.

After closing shelter Homes

ISLAMABAD: Vendors are sleeping in sun light on green belt along the Faisal Avenue, in Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Raja Farid

AIOU faculty board approves different programs of Social Sciences

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Faculty Board meeting of Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Allama Iqbal Open University held yesterday. Dean, Prof. Dr. Abdul Aziz Sahir presided over the meeting. Different scheme of studies of postgraduates, BS, MPhil and PhD programs and other academic related matters were discussed.

The meeting emphasized on aligning the quality of courses and the number of credit hours of all the programs with the policy of the Higher Education Commission and the University. All the teachers of the faculty participated in the meeting while the external members included Dr. Salman Basit, Dr. Naheed Qamar and Dr. Fauzia Aslam.

Prof. Dr. Abdul Aziz Sahir said that in the light of the



instructions of the Vice Chancellor, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood, special attention will be laid on quality education and all the programs will be aligned with the contemporary requirements as per the instructions of HEC.

He said that in the light of the directives of the Government of Pakistan, Fahm ul-Quran and Seerat-i-Taiba and Civic and Community

Engagement will be included as compulsory in all teaching programs. He said that the approval of BS Accounting and Finance by the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants is a positive news.

Now Pakistani students will not have to face educational problems abroad. Dr. Abdul Aziz Sahir added that as per the special direction

of the Vice Chancellor, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood, Department of Pakistani Languages prepared four new courses for the promotion of Pashto, Punjabi, Sindhi and Balochi language and literature, which will be an integral part of all the BS programs of the university. All the decisions of the Faculty Board will be approved by the next meeting of the Academic Council.

PPL holds eye camps for underprivileged communities

PPA

KARACHI: Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL) has recently organized 25 free-of-cost eye camps which have benefited nearly 27,000 underprivileged locals residing around the company-operated Sui, Mazarani, Gambat South and Adhi fields in Balochistan, Sindh and Punjab. The camps were held between November 18 and December 13 in partnership with Al Shifa Trust Eye Hospital.

Together, more than 16,000 locals were screened and treated at various healthcare facilities and Basic Health Units in relevant districts around PPL-operated fields. Around 9,000 were given glasses for vision correction and more than 1,500 patients underwent cataract surgeries.

The highest number of patients, around 10,000, were witnessed during the eye camps in Balochistan, at Public Welfare Hospital, Sui and District Headquarter Hospital, Dera Bugti. Besides, four camps were held in the vicinity of Adhi Field and 16 at government schools in Punjab benefitting 3000 students.

Further, eye camps are planned around Kandhkot in Sindh and in Dhok Sultan, Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The annual PPL eye camps have reached out to marginalized communities in remote areas of the country and provided quality consultation, latest onsite surgical technology, and medicines.



TCL P745: Elevate Your Home Theater with Cutting-Edge 4K UHD Google TV

PNP

LAHORE: TCL Pakistan's No.1 LED TV Brand announced the launch of its latest innovation, the TCL 85" P745. This exceptional 4K UHD Google TV promises an immersive entertainment experience, boasting stunning visuals, captivating audio, and a host of advanced features. Available in an expansive 85-inch display, the TCL P745 is now available for purchase on TCL's official website, flagship stores, and authorized dealerships across Pakistan.

Featuring Dolby Vision and Dolby Atmos, the P745 delivers a stunning, high-quality cinematic experience in 4K, wide color gamut with over one billion colors and immersive audio which will make you feel like you are sitting in a movie theatre instead of your living room. Dolby Vision is an advanced imaging technology that combines high dynamic range (HDR) with vibrant color capabilities to deliver ultra-vivid picture quality with greater brightness, higher contrast and a more extensive color range. Through wide color gamut, viewers will be privy to a palette of lifelike colors up to 90% gamut under the DCI-P3 standard. The TCL P745 also supports Dolby Atmos, which places sounds within a multi-dimensional space and puts the user in the middle of the action.

AKU-EB celebrates high achievers from the Sindh region

PNP

KARACHI: The Aga Khan University Examination Board (AKU-EB) hosted its High Achievers Ceremony to honour the outstanding academic accomplishments of students from the Sindh region. The event was hosted by Dr Sulaiman Shahabuddin, President, Aga Khan University, who welcomed students, parents and esteemed guests. The ceremony was graced by the esteemed presence of Mr. Amir S. Fancy, Chairman of Fancy Group, as the Chief Guest.

The event also highlighted the 10th Anniversary of the AKU-EB Bridge Scholarship, which is seen as a beacon of hope and opportunity for students to access quality education under the AKU-EB system. Rejoicing in the celebration, Mr. Amir S. Fancy invited students to dream big, emphasizing the role of service and giving back. Acknowledging the remarkable efforts of the high-achieving students, he invited them to embrace the journey of lifelong learning.

This year's results are also noteworthy in that AKU-EB is seeing an increasing number of High Achievers coming from outside of Karachi, including Hyderabad, Naushahro Feroze, Dadu, Larkana, Ubauro, Khairpur, and Sukkur. This is a testament of the impact of AKU-EB's efforts to improve access for talented youth across Sindh and Pakistan to achieve their potential.

Ramisha Ammed, an AKU-EB National High Achiever who secured admission into AKU's MBBS programme, spoke about her experience under the AKU-EB system. "Today, as we graduate, I can't help but feel the weight of the global challenges that surround us, from the urgent calls of environmental degradation and the looming threat of global warming, to the rapid advancements in information technology and artificial intelligence. It's easy to be overwhelmed by the magnitude of these challenges and opportunities, and the weight of the world can sometimes feel insurmountable. In the face of this all, AKU-EB has shaped us into individuals who are not just academically proficient, but socially conscious and compassionate."

The ceremony was concluded by Dr Shehzad Jeeva, CEO, AKU-EB, who thanked students, schools' leadership, and parents for their commitment to education. Dr Jeeva recognized the impact of the AKU-EB Bridge Scholarship across Pakistan and their remarkable success in academic and professional lives. He invited students to work hard and to understand that with every success comes a great responsibility; whether it be the responsibility to your family, to your school or to our nation, Pakistan.

The ceremony ended with a musical performance of 'Sohni Dharti' by students from the Aga Khan Higher Secondary School, Karachi.

PARC organizes National Workshop on Soybean Production in Pakistan

PNP

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC) organized "National Workshop on Soybean Production in Pakistan" on December 18, 2023. Dr. Kauser Abdulla Malik, the Federal Minister for the Ministry of National Food Security and Research, graced the event as the Chief Guest. Captain (Rtd) Muhammad Mehmood, Federal Secretary of MNFS&R, Ms. Florence Rolle, Country Representative of Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and Dr. Iqbal Ahmed Khan, Vice Chancellor of the University of Agriculture Faisalabad, were also in attendance. The workshop attracted participation of senior scientists and stakeholders from various provincial and federal Agriculture Departments, encouraging



a collaborative environment for knowledge exchange and discussions on soybean production constraints in the country. The event witness active participation of the delegates from Pakistan Poultry Association (PPA), Private Sector and Farmers.

While addressing the workshop, Federal Minister for

National Food Security and Research emphasized the need to integrate soybean cultivation into the agricultural landscape of the country while ensuring its ecological compatibility. Additionally, he emphasized the significance of ensuring that soybean production becomes economically feasible for farmers.

Federal Secretary for Ministry of National Food Security and Research, Captain (Rtd.) Muhammad Mehmood in his address said that Soybean is one of the major contributor in the import bill and we have to indigenize the production of Soybean, along with other commodities, to reduce the import bill.

In his keynote address, Dr. Ghulam Muhammad Ali extended a warm welcome to the esteemed guests and stressed on the plan for self-sufficiency in soybean production. He was of the view that all the resources are there to materialize the plan there is a need to fully harness the available resources.

Ms. Florence Rolle reiterated the organization's commitment to ensuring food and nutritional security and emphasized the significance of integrating farmers in the process to achieve self-sufficiency in agriculture sector. During discussions in the workshop, representative from PPA and the private sector, there was full-fledged endorsement for the self-sufficiency plan, accompanied by a commitment of unwavering support from their end.

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Welcome back the Military Courts - II

According to the National Corruption Perceptions Survey 2023, a significant 68 percent of Pakistanis believe that institutions like NAB, FIA, and the Anti-Corruption Establishment are exploited for political vendettas. Nationally, 60 percent express the opinion that accountability institutions like NAB, FIA, ACE, and the Ombudsman should be abolished due to their perceived failure in eradicating corruption.

On a broader scale, 75 percent of citizens at the national level opine that the private sector wields excessive power, leading to corruption. A majority of 36 percent of citizens believe that anti-corruption agencies have been 'ineffective', contributing to a 40% lack of merit in major corruption cases at the national level.

Provincially, 42 percent in Sindh, 43 percent in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and 47 percent in Balochistan assert that jobs are not based on merit. In Punjab, 47 percent attribute corruption to the bureaucracy's use of state institutions for personal interests, considering it the primary reason for corruption in Pakistan.

As countermeasures against corruption, 55 percent of Pakistanis advocate for immediate government disclosure of public officials' assets on websites at the national level. Additionally, 45 percent believe that accountability courts should ensure swift resolution of corruption cases within 30 days.

At the national level, 47 percent of Pakistanis perceive corruption as the main impediment to Pakistan's development. Furthermore, 62 percent connect corruption and unethical practices to environmental destruction and increased effects of climate change. A staggering 67 percent feel that provincial and local governments disregard their views in shaping environmental policies.

Surprisingly, 76 percent of Pakistanis at the national level have never utilized the Right to Information Act, as per the survey conducted by Transparency International Pakistan. The Corrup-

tion Perception Survey, undertaken eight times in the last 23 years, serves as a crucial barometer of Pakistani perceptions. Conducted from October 13, 2023, to October 31, 2023, in all provinces, the survey gathered responses from 400 people in each province, offering valuable insights into the prevailing perceptions of corruption in the country.

The prevalence of corruption, particularly within our lower judicial and police systems, essential pillars of any civilized society, poses a significant detriment to the overall well-being of the community. Unfortunately, the civilian judicial system in Pakistan has struggled to provide timely and transparent justice to its citizens. A pervasive issue is the protracted resolution of legal cases, some spanning generations and remaining unresolved. The burden on our courts is immense, with both the superior and lower judiciaries grappling with an overwhelming backlog of 2.144 million cases. In the year 2021 alone, 4.102 million cases were concluded, while 4.06 million new cases were filed, resulting in an overall pending caseload of 2.16 million at the beginning of the following year. Statistics sourced from the Supreme Court, Federal Shariat Court, and five high courts reveal that in 2020, 229,822 cases were disposed of, with 241,250 new cases instituted. The pending cases before superior courts at the year's end totaled 389,549, slightly exceeding the previous year's count of 378,216. Similarly, the district judiciary faced 1,783,826 pending cases at the beginning of the preceding year. Over the course of the year, they adjudicated 3,872,686 cases, while 3,822,881 new cases were filed, culminating in a total pending caseload of 1,754,947 by the close of 2021.

The establishment of military courts in Pakistan was prompted by a tragic terrorist attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar on December 16,

2014. In response, the 21st Constitutional Amendment, effective from January 6, 2015, introduced military courts with jurisdiction over the expeditious trial of cases related to specified acts. Since their inception, military courts have presided over approximately 717 cases, concluding 546 of them. Significantly, they have imposed death sentences on 310 terrorists and various terms of rigorous imprisonment on 234 others. This track record underscores the crucial role of military courts in delivering swift justice.

Military courts in Pakistan serve as specialized institutions dealing with anti-state elements and those posing threats to the national security of the country. In response to the May 9 attacks, carried out by militants targeting both civil and military installations, the government invoked the Military Act and Military Courts. It's essential to highlight that decisions rendered by military courts are subject to appeal in higher civilian courts, addressing concerns related to potential human rights violations.

A five-member Supreme Court bench, led by Justice Ijaz-ul-Ahsan, declared the verdict of trying civilians in military courts null and void. This decision, perceived as unjust, had adverse emotional effects on the families of martyrs and those who lost their lives in acts of terrorism. Subsequently, the caretaker federal government, acting on behalf of the Defense Ministry, filed an appeal challenging the Supreme Court's decision to invalidate the military trial of civilians. The Attorney General, representing the federal government, lodged an intra-court appeal in the Supreme Court, seeking the annulment of the decision against trying civilians in military courts. The appeal also requested a stay on the decision pending the verdict of the five-member bench on the appeal. Notably, the Senate of Pakistan also passed a resolution in favor of military courts.

In response to the intricate legal challenges, a larger panel was convened by the Supreme Court to adjudicate intra-court appeals contesting the verdict that had halted civilian trials in military courts. Headed by Justice Tariq Masood, the six-member bench comprised Justices Aminuddin, Hasan Azhar Rizvi, Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Musarrat Hilali, and Irfan Saadat. The uplifting news for the nation is that the Supreme Court, under the guidance of its current Chief Justice, temporarily suspended the decision to cease civilian trials in military courts, permitting the continuation of such trials. This positive development underscores the current Chief Justice's commitment to making judicious decisions and fostering a favorable public perception. Furthermore, the Chief Justice has introduced commendable initiatives, such as live proceedings, in a concerted effort to promote transparency and address issues of corruption within the judicial system. He is also committed to expediting legal processes and implementing cutting-edge technological tools. These groundbreaking efforts by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Pakistan and the upper judiciary are providing a positive trajectory for addressing and rectifying the shortcomings within lower courts and their systems.

Readers, every day, our military personnel and civilians make immense sacrifices in the ongoing battle against terrorism. Recognizing the identified deficiencies and delays within our lower judicial systems, as underscored by tangible on-the-ground realities and emphasized in recent corruption surveys, and acknowledging the potential advantages to terrorists and anti-state elements, the prompt and transparent alternative solution has been the reinstatement of military courts. The entire nation, along with the families of our martyrs, expresses satisfaction and joy over the Supreme Court's decision, eagerly anticipating the swift prosecution of terrorists and anti-state elements through these military courts.

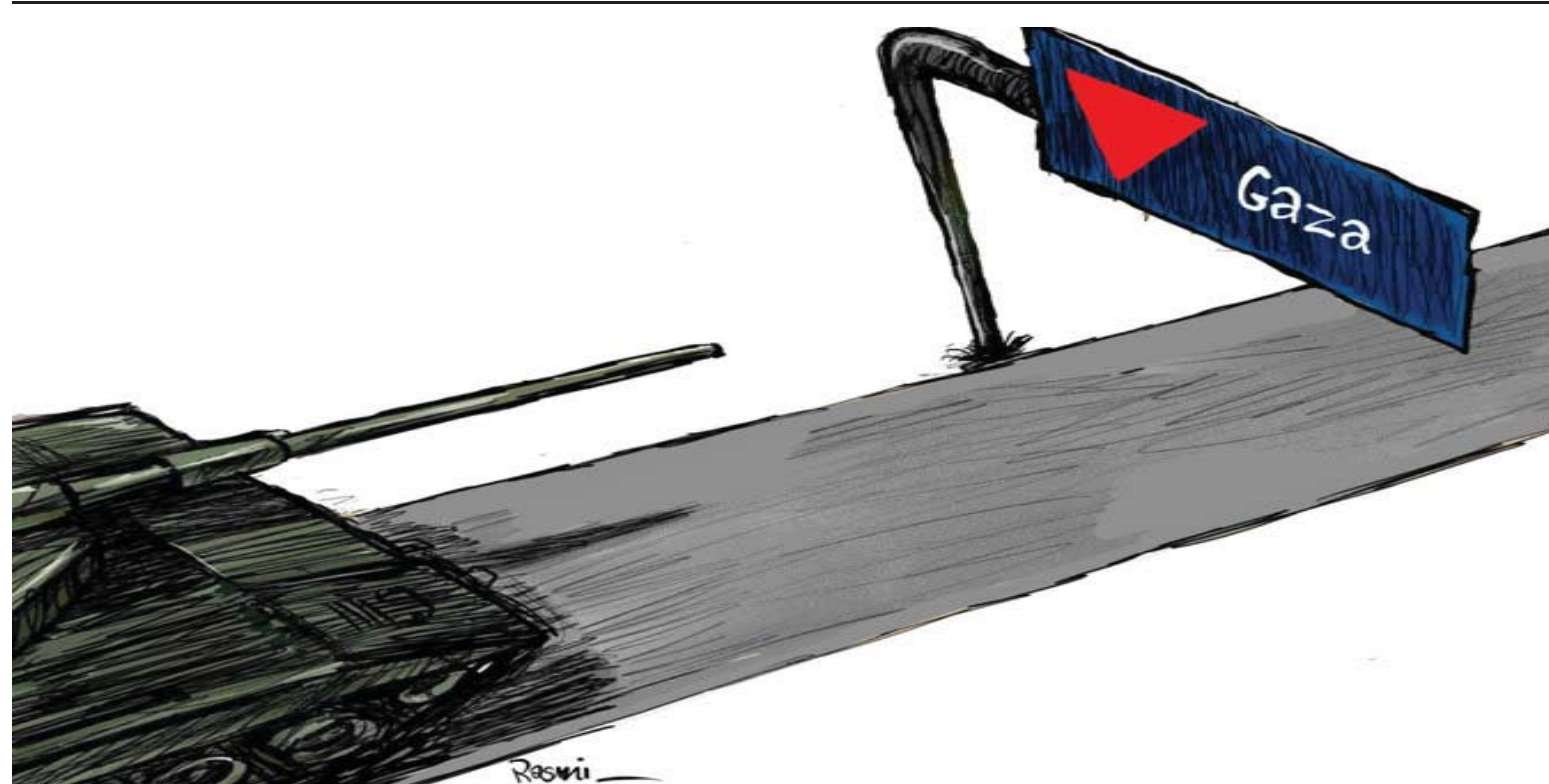
Pak, China focus on B2B cooperation

Pakistan Ambassador to China, Khalil ur Rahman said on Monday that engineering, construction, carbon neutrality, new energy, energy storage, mining development, green and sustainable development and other fields will be the key to future cooperation between Pakistan and China. "Now we have entered the second phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), our focus is more on business-to-business cooperation, investment and technology transfer between the two countries, which is also in line with the vision of the leaders of the two countries," he said in his speech at the Pakistan-China Exchange Conference on Investment Opportunity held at the Pakistani Embassy in Beijing.

The conference was aimed at strengthening cooperation in engineering construction, carbon neutrality, new energy, mining and other fields. With the theme of "New Opportunity, New Cooperation, and New Development", this conference is expected to present a higher level of cooperation. Ambassador Hashmi further said that the Pakistani government has stepped up efforts to facilitate investors and joint ventures in Pakistan. To this end, the government has established the Special Investment Facilitation Committee (SIFC) to provide "single window" facilities to foreign investors and businessmen by removing all systemic barriers. The Prime Minister of Pakistan himself chairs the SIFC Supreme Council. Mining and energy, particularly renewable energy, are priority areas for SIFC. Commercial Counsellor of Pakistan Embassy in Beijing, Ghulam Qadir introduced the policies and incentives to invest in Pakistan. "We are looking for Chinese investments in different areas, especially industries that are moving from China to Pakistan where we can export value-added products to the world," he said. He invited Chinese entrepreneurs to participate in the 3rd Pakistan Engineering and Healthcare Expo to be held in Lahore from January 18 to 20, 2024. This event will be attended by many Pakistani-related companies and exhibitors, and B2B meetings will be held. The expo is also expected to pave the way for more achievements in China-Pakistan cooperation. Vice Secretary General China Association of International Engineering Consultants, Lu Chang noted that over the past decade, CPEC has achieved fruitful results in providing employment and high-quality sustainable development. He also said that they are willing to go to Pakistan to participate in this healthcare expo and are ready to work hand in hand with Pakistani entrepreneurs.



Abdul Basit Alvi



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

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor' reshaping Pakistan's economic landscape'

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) stands as a testament to the robust bilateral relationship between Pakistan and China, heralding a new era of economic cooperation and infrastructure development. This ambitious initiative, conceived in 2013, has promised transformative economic gains while navigating multifaceted challenges.

CPEC, since its inception, has played a pivotal role in reshaping Pakistan's economic landscape. It is envisioned as a flagship project of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and has embarked on a monumental journey to bolster regional connectivity, enhance trade routes, and stimulate economic growth. With an investment of over \$60 billion, the project spans infrastructure, energy, transportation, and industrial cooperation, aiming to revolutionize Pakistan's economic landscape.

One of CPEC's significant contributions has been in addressing Pakistan's energy crisis. Energy projects including coal, wind, and solar power have added approximately 5,320 megawatts to the national grid, alleviating chronic power shortages that hindered industrial and economic progress. Notably, the Sahiwal and Port Qasim coal power plants

have been instrumental in meeting energy demands.

Infrastructure development under CPEC has ushered in a new era of connectivity. The construction of roads, including the Karakoram Highway realignment, and the development of Gwadar Port have opened up efficient trade routes, enhancing Pakistan's access to global markets. Furthermore, the establishment of economic zones aims to attract foreign investment, foster industrial growth, and create job opportunities.

It has also many other benefits in different sectors like:
 *Energy Sector: CPEC projects have contributed significantly to Pakistan's power generation, reducing electricity shortages.
 *Transportation Infrastructure: Improvements in road networks have increased connectivity between major cities and regions, facilitating trade.

*Gwadar Port Development: Gwadar's strategic significance has grown, positioning it as a key maritime trade hub in the region.
 *Job creation: CPEC initiatives have generated thousands of jobs, fostering employment opportunities for locals.

Despite its potential, CPEC encounters multifaceted challenges. Security concerns along the corridor have posed threats to

the seamless execution of projects, necessitating comprehensive security measures. Moreover, regional geopolitical dynamics, including the relationship with India and Afghanistan, add layers of complexity to the project's smooth operation.

Balancing the distribution of benefits among Pakistan's provinces remains a critical challenge. Ensuring that all regions benefit equitably from CPEC's initiatives is imperative for inclusive and sustainable growth. Furthermore, environmental implications and concerns regarding the debt burden stemming from CPEC projects require careful consideration and mitigation strategies.

To harness CPEC's full potential, addressing these challenges is imperative. Ensuring transparency in project execution, prioritizing local community engagement, and implementing sustainable development practices are pivotal. Efforts to enhance security along the corridor and foster a stable regional environment will be essential for continued progress.

In conclusion, CPEC signifies a paradigm shift in Pakistan's economic landscape, and it is undeniably stands as a game changer for Pakistan's economy offering unprecedented opportunities for growth and development. However, navigating challenges and leveraging these opportunities sustainably will be pivotal in ensuring that CPEC emerges as a catalyst for inclusive economic prosperity and regional connectivity.



Sohail Ahmad Baber

IT and Telecomm Scope in Pakistan

Due to a lack of accurate information, the field of IT and telecommunications is often misunderstood as a single technology. In reality, there are significant differences between these two technologies. Simply put, information technology involves the exchange of data using computers, while telecommunications technology facilitates communication between individuals using various means.

Telecommunications technology encompasses long-distance communication methods such as radio, telephone, television, satellite, microwave, data communication, and computer networking. It's essential to note that "telecommunications cannot function without information technology, and IT relies on telecommunications technology. Both technologies play a crucial and positive role in advancing business globally."

Recently, the Pakistani government telecommunications company, PTCL, acquired 100% shares of TeleNor, a Norwegian mobile phone company, for PKR 108 billion. This acquisition is expected to not only align the capabilities and skills of both entities but also contribute to the progress and strengthening of the telecommunications sector in the country.

TeleNor initiated mobile phone services in Pakistan 18 years ago, and it boasts a user base of over 40 million. The PTCL, being Pakistan's largest integrated information communication technology (ICT) company, holds a significant position in the national telecommunications infrastructure.

In the past year, there has been a substantial increase in revenue for the telecommunications sector in Pakistan, reaching PKR 694 billion. This growth is attributed to the remarkable progress in the field, resulting in the company earning PKR 694 billion in the financial year 2022-2021. According to the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) report for the year 2022, the sector attracted an investment of USD 2.073 billion,

with PKR 325.2 billion contributed to the national exchequer, including PKR 222.7 billion in taxes and PKR 102.5 billion from the auction of Next Generation Mobile Services (NGMS) licenses.

Despite challenges such as inflation and rising costs, a growth-friendly regulatory environment has led to an increase in the number of telecommunications users in Pakistan. The total number of telecom users (fixed and mobile) in Pakistan exceeds 197 million, contributing to 90% tele-density. Additionally, the verified SIM/subscriber count has surpassed 194 million, while broadband subscriptions have reached 124 million.

Moreover, Pakistan achieved the 5th Generation (5G) regulatory classification in the International Telecommunication Union's 2022 rankings. The country has been recognized as an emerging telecommunication market by the Global System for Mobile Communications Association (GSMA).

Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) has introduced measures to enhance digital inclusion, such as the 'Digital Gender Inclusion Initiative' and the inclusion of 'Category C holders in ICT in the Broadband Policy 2022. These initiatives aim to improve accessibility and availability of high-quality telecommunications services and basic infrastructure, fostering a conducive environment for telecommunication growth.

The telecommunications market in Pakistan is expected to grow from USD 4.38 billion in 2023 to USD 5.15 billion by 2028, with a CAGR of 3.28%. The development of 3G, 4G, and 5G services has been instrumental in Pakistan's progress. It's crucial to understand that information technology refers to the use of computers and other technologies to organize information, while telecommunications involves the use of communication devices and systems for the transmission of information.

Writer is associate with Department of Telecommunications in BZU Multan

Ethiopia's Parliament ratifies bilateral trade agreement with Pakistan

PPA

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan is pleased to announce that the House of the Peoples Representatives of FDRE has unanimously approved the bilateral trade agreement signed by the two countries on February 14, 2023 to boost bilateral trade.

The trade agreement was submitted by the Standing Committee of the House on Trade and Tourism to the Ethiopian Parliament for approval on the 8th regular meeting of the 3rd year of the House of the Peoples Representatives held the other day.

The bilateral trade agreement is aimed at boosting trade cooperation between the two countries for further strengthening the economic and commercial relations between Ethiopia and Pakistan.

H. E. Jemal Bekir Abdula, Ambassa-



sador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the FDRE in Pakistan, described approval of the agreement a major breakthrough in the bilateral relations of the two countries.

He said the landmark agreement

would give a major boost to the bilateral trade that currently stands at over 80 million USD. It would pave the way for establishment of joint action committee on trade and establishment of strong institutional linkages between the two

countries, he added.

He congratulated the business community of Ethiopia and Pakistan over the signing of the agreement.

The Ambassador said it was a welcoming news for business community of both the countries who had already explored each other lucrative markets through delegation exchange in the current year.

The New Year will open a new chapter in the history of bilateral trade and hopefully, bolster business and trade activity between the two countries, he said, while recalling visit of over 70 businessmen and investors to Ethiopia in March and trip of over 50 Ethiopian businessmen to Pakistan in May this year.

These developments coupled with commencement of the Ethiopian Airlines set the stage for the bilateral relations of Ethiopia and Pakistan to flourish and thrive in the changing global dynamism, the Ambassador noted.

Pakistan issues visas to Indian Hindu Pilgrims for visit to Katas Raj, Chakwal



PPA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan High Commission, New Delhi has issued 62 visas to a group of Indian Hindu pilgrims for their visit to Shree Katas Raj Temples, also known as Qila Katas, in Chakwal district of Punjab from 19-25 December 2023.

Expressing his views on the occasion, Charge d' Affaires, Mr. Aizaz Khan, wished the pilgrims a safe journey and memorable stay in Pakistan.

Under the Pakistan-India Protocol on Visits to Religious Shrines of 1974, each year thousands of Sikh and Hindu pilgrims from India visit Pakistan to attend various religious festivals/occasions. The issuance of pilgrimage visas to them is in line with the Government of Pakistan's efforts for facilitating visits to religious shrines and promoting interfaith harmony.

Pak Ambassador expresses condolence on death of Kuwaiti Emir



Spokesman Report

BRUSSELS: Ambassador of Pakistan to European Union, Belgium and Luxembourg Amna Baloch visited the Embassy of Kuwait in Brussels to express heartfelt condolences to the Ambassador of Kuwait, on the sad and untimely demise of His Royal Highness Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al Jaber Al-Sabah, the late Emir of Kuwait.

Ambassador Amna Baloch emphasized that Pakistan deeply mourns the loss of a true friend and a staunch supporter, who will be remembered for his unwavering commitment to regional stability, global development, and his visionary role in fostering harmony across borders.

In this hour of grief, Pakistan stands in unwavering solidarity with the people of Kuwait and the Royal family Ambassador added.

Ambassador Amna Baloch conveyed condolences on behalf of the Government & People of Pakistan by sharing the profound sense of loss felt by Pakistan.

As a gesture of respect, the Ambassador inscribed a message of solidarity in the condolence book at the Kuwait Embassy.

ICMA chief say ICMA degree is of international standard



Kiran Asim

MULTAN: ICMA International Pakistan President Shalzad Ahmad Malik and Advisory Board Member International Federation of Accounts Zia-ul-Mustafa Awan have said that receiving the ICMA degree is no less than a blessing, our degree is of international standard and This degree is recognized all over the world. The students who graduated from here are today in Pakistan and all over the world. It has happened that the future of those who have obtained degrees from here is very bright. He expressed these views while addressing the first convocation at ICMA yesterday.

This is the reason why here first parents, husbands and wives and now all children are doing ICMA. Director Samina Khan Kayani has said that we also teach the best discipline, ethics and religious education in the students and today's students are very lucky to start their good career. Apart from Yasin Shah Muhammad, the chairman of Karachi and Faisalabad also spoke.

Egyptian President el-Sisi wins third term in landslide victory

Egypt's President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi has won a decisive victory, securing a third term as the leader of the Middle East's most populous nation.

The National Elections Authority announced on Monday that Sisi garnered an overwhelming 89.6% of the vote in an election held between December 10 and 12, with an unprecedented turnout of 66.8%.

Over 39 million Egyptians cast their ballots in support of Sisi, a former army chief who has governed the nation for a decade. Despite various challenges, including the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza and a severe economic crisis, the result of the election was widely anticipated.

The absence of serious opposition can be attributed to a decade-long crackdown on dissent, leaving Sisi as the dominant figure. In the election, he faced three other candidates, none of whom were high-profile contenders.

The runner-up, Hazem Omar of the Republican People's Party, received only 4.5% of the vote, while other candidates had marginal support.

Sisi's victory marks a continuation of his tightening grip on power since coming to office after the 2013 overthrow of Egypt's first popularly elected president, Mohamed Morsi. The president was re-elected in 2018, winning with 97% support in both previous elections.



Pakistan and Norway celebrate 75 years of diplomatic relations

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Today marks the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Norway.

Pakistan and Norway have continued to grow over the past 75 years on the basis of mutual respect and shared values. The two countries enjoy a mutually beneficial partnership in political, economic, academic, environmental, social and cultural domains. There is a common desire to promote regional and global peace, security and sustainable development.

Pakistan-Norway relations are marked by high-level exchanges and contacts with frequent meetings at the leadership level. The two countries also actively collaborate in various multilateral fora.

The bilateral economic relations between Pakistan and Norway are robust and growing with sizeable trade in multiple product lines and substantial investments of leading Norwegian companies in Pakistan including Telenor Group, Scatec ASA and Jotun Paints. Cooperation in the fields of IT & ITES, ship-breaking and ship-recycling has recently emerged with great promise.

Pakistan appreciates Norway's



steady and generous development assistance in sustainable development including SDGs, climate action and renewable energy and its solidarity during times of natural disasters and calamities. Following last year's floods, Norway provided humanitarian assistance of 227 million NOK to Pakistan. NORPART programme of Norway's development agency Norad has helped advance bilateral academic cooperation with enhanced student mobility and curriculum development programmes.

Pakistani-origin Norwegians are the most vital link between Pakistan and Norway. Pakistani diaspora that

first arrived in Norway in early 1970s is today among the largest immigrant groups in Norway. They are a diverse multi-generational group that contributes in all walks of life including politics, liberal arts, business, education, science, research, medicine, healthcare, law, consultancy & engineering. As a country of origin, Pakistan takes pride in their socio-economic contribution in the country of their choice.

As we celebrate an important milestone in Pakistan-Norway relations, Pakistan strongly believes that friendship and cooperation between the two countries would continue to grow and flourish in the years to come.

Welcomes South Africa's position on its dual nationals who participate in the occupation war against our people: Palestine Ministry

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates welcomes the statement issued by the Ministry of International Relations and Cooperation in the friendly Republic of South Africa regarding the participation of some of its dual citizens who hold Israeli citizenship in the occupation war against our people, and considered this to contribute to violating international law and committing more international crimes, which exposes them to prosecution. In accordance with the law in South Africa. The Ministry calls on the rest of the countries to follow the same policy and declare positions similar to that of South Africa, in compliance with international law and in rejection of the participation of its citizens in the genocidal war against the Palestinian people.

Save the Children and UNFPA Collaborate to Advance Resilience and Reproductive Health in Punjab

PNP

LAHORE: Save the Children in collaboration with UNFPA held a series of inception meetings and consultations under its programme of Strengthening Resilience and Reproductive Health Integration in Punjab. This is in line with Pakistan's FP2030 commitments and national objectives, as outlined in the Council of Common Interests (CCI) Recommendations. Key government departments such as Department of Health, Primary and Secondary Healthcare Department, Women Development Department, Social Welfare Department, Rescue 1122, Punjab Police, other government stakeholders, and representatives from INGOs, NGOs and UN agencies participated in the consultations.

A Reproductive Health- Resilience



Reference Group has been established with IRMNCH as Chair and Save the Children and UNFPA as Co-Chairs of the Working Group. The first meeting of the Resilience Reference Group was held on December 7 in Lahore in which members endorsed priority activities and way forward.

Muhammad Nacem, Director

PQEI, Save the Children expressed optimism regarding the impact of these activities on the lives of women, children and communities who are the most vulnerable in humanitarian emergencies. He shared that Save the Children works with diverse partners to ensure women and girls affected by crisis have reproductive health

options. He further added that UNFPA and Save the Children are dedicated to fortifying resilience and reproductive health integration through strategic alliances, and effective strategies to foster awareness and informed policy decisions.

A series of radio shows and public service messages on priority thematic areas of maternal health, reproductive health in emergencies, inclusive health services, gender-based-violence and women & girl empowerment were aired on radio as pilot in the first phase. Experts were invited for a discussion to raise awareness among the masses on their respective thematic areas. The radio campaign in Punjab reached over 15 million people in Rawalpindi, Lahore, Faisalabad, Sialkot, Multan, Sargodha, Bhawalpur, Narowal and their surrounding regions

Israeli military aggression in Gaza Strip 'genocidal': Ministry of Foreign Affairs

PPA

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates condemns in the strongest terms the genocidal war committed by the occupation forces against our people in the Gaza Strip for the 73rd day in a row, which daily causes more destruction and massacres against Palestinian civilians, and strikes the foundations of their human presence in the Gaza Strip to turn it into a devastated barren land unfit for human life. To force citizens to continuously move from one place to another in search of any safe place that they cannot find throughout the Gaza Strip, in a tight spiral of death imposed by Israel on more than two million Palestinians

living in the Gaza Strip, in full view of the international community and the countries that claim to be concerned for humanity and its principles. And it's binding values.

At the same time, the Ministry strongly condemns the violations and crimes of the occupation forces and the orgies of settler militias in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, the most recent of which was the bloody storming of Al-Fara'a camp, which left 4 martyrs and a number of others injured, and the invasion of all Palestinian areas in the West Bank, accompanied by intimidation and intimidation. For Palestinian civilians, including women, children, the sick and the elderly. Therefore, hardly a day goes by

without the Israeli occupation revealing its criminal reality, and without revealing its criminal, substitutionary nature not only to the Palestinians alone, but to the entire world, as there are no limits or controls on the occupation's criminality against Palestinian civilians, from mass murder by bombing to the crime of starvation. And the thirst and deprivation of the most basic human civil rights, including obstructing the entry of aid and preventing the basic needs of the residents of the Strip, to what was reported in the Hebrew media regarding the death of a number of Gaza Strip prisoners detained near Beersheba, to the crimes of ethnic cleansing in its various forms, forced displacement and collective punishment,

are crimes. Extrajudicial killing, and the permissibility and control of the life of the Palestinian citizen without deterrence from law, morals or values, are crimes committed openly and documented by the occupying state that do not require much investigation, but rather require all international legal bodies, especially the competent international courts, to issue subpoenas and arrest warrants against those responsible.

About these crimes and their perpetrators, and the countries that provide protection and support to Israel under the pretext of self-defense must review their position from the perspective of the war crimes and crimes against humanity that they commit under this banner.

Bull & Bears
PSX 100-Share
Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index		
Current	Prev. Close	
65,204.67	66,130.02	
Day's High	Day's Low	
66,586.61	65,064.94	
Index Value	Change	
16,277,168,710	-925.35	
Percentage	Time	
-1.4%	18 Dec, 2023 5:00 pm	
Europe: FTSE 100 Index		
Index Value	Change	
7,614.48	+38.12	
Percentage	Time	
+0.50%	18 Dec, 4:35 pm GMT	
USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average		
Index Value	Change	
37,333.43	+28.27	
Percentage	Time	
+0.076%	18 Dec, 12:59 pm GMT-5	
Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average		
Index Value	Change	
32,758.98	-211.57	
Percentage	Time	
-0.64%	18 Dec, 3:15 pm GMT+9	
Open Market Forex Rates		
Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	188	190
Bahrain Dinar	753.27	761.27
Canadian Dollar	210	212
China Yuan	39.82	40.22
Danish Krone	41.4	41.8
Euro	309	312
Hong Kong Dollar	36.3	36.65
Indian Rupee	3.41	3.52
Japanese Yen	1.39	1.45
Kuwaiti Dinar	918.46	927.46
Malaysian Ringgit	60.66	61.26
New Zealand \$	175.83	177.83
Norwegians Krone	26.98	27.28
Omani Riyal	735.66	743.66
Qatari Riyal	77.81	78.51
Saudi Riyal	75.5	76.2
Singapore Dollar	210.5	212.5
Swedish Korona	27.56	27.86
Swiss Franc	325.79	328.29
Thai Bhat	8.12	8.27
U.A.E Dirham	77.8	78.5
UK Pound Sterling	359.5	363
US Dollar	283.2	286

Investment

TTP leadership destabilizing Pakistan from Afghan soil: 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 Monday that the incidents of terrorism increased as soon as the economic situation of the country improved and friendly countries decided to invest heavily in various projects. A stable Pakistan is not acceptable to enemies, so they have increased terrorist activities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan to fulfil their unholy designs, he said. Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that the martyrdom of 25 soldiers of the Pakistan Army in a single incident of terrorism is not an uncommon occurrence that has left the entire nation

in mourning. The government and the army are making efforts to crush the terrorists, which need to be accelerated as these terrorists are ruining the country, he added. Mian Zahid Hussain said that it has become necessary to send terrorists to hell while destroying their hideouts. Otherwise, they will continue to be trouble for twenty-five crore people and will not allow any development project to go ahead so that Pakistan becomes a bankrupt country. The business leader said that the leadership of TTP is playing with the integrity of the country by operating from a neighbouring country and carrying out terrorist activities in Pakistan. He underlined that condemning such incidents will not work, but a lot can be done in cooperation with the international community and friendly countries. Afghanistan will not remain safe if Paki-



stan is destabilized; therefore, the leadership of both countries should come together to find a solution to the problem so that peace, stability, and development in the region can continue unhindered. Mian Zahid Hussain further said that international organisations are taking an extraordinary interest in elections in Pakistan and are repeatedly expressing their opinion in this regard. Therefore, the elections should not be postponed under any circumstances. The current government has done valuable work for economic stability. Still, if political instability continues after the election, all measures taken to manage the country's economy will be futile. The country will again be forced to beg, and strict conditions of lenders would be imposed on those who have already been buried alive, he said.

Protest

ISLAMABAD: Traders associated with hotel industry holding banners are shouting slogans during protest outside OGRA Office against the unjust price hike of gas, in country.



Photo: Online

Clean Green

3rd Int'l Conference on Pakistan Hydropower will be held on Dec 20

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad is gearing up to host the 3rd International Conference on Pakistan Hydropower, a global gathering of energy experts organized by The Energy Update in collaboration with the Private Power Infrastructure Board (PIIB) and the International Hydropower Association (IHA). Scheduled for December 20, the conference carries the theme "Hydropower: A Renewable Energy Source for a Sustainable Future," promising pivotal discussions that could shape the trajectory of clean and sustainable power in the region, according to Chairman of the Organization Committee, Naecm Qureshi. Delegates from around the world are expected to participate in the conference, contributing their insights to lay the foundation for a cleaner and greener energy landscape. Distinguished guests, speakers, and panelists include Shah Jahan Mirza, MD PPIB; Engr. Muhammad Naecm, CEO Pakhtunkhwa Energy Development Organization; Eddie Rich, CEO International Hydropower Association (IHA); Lt. Gen Sajjad Ghani (Retd), Chairman, WAPDA; Chief Guest Dr. Shamsad Akhtar, Federal Minister for Finance & Revenue; Dr. Syed Sarfraz Ali Shah, Advisor to CM KPK for Energy and Power, Planning, Development, and Minerals; Dr. Munawar Iqbal, DG Hydro, PPIB; Dr. Kamil Tarar, Rep HPP France (Turbine manufacturers); N. A. Zuberi, CSAIL; Tauseef H. Farooqi, Former Chairman, NEPRA; Engr. Senator Ruksana Zuberi; Azam Joya, WAPDA; Zafar Iqbal Wattoo, RHC; Dr. Atiqur Rehman Tariq, UET Lahore; Engr. Imran Haleem, Chief Engineer, PEDO; Maria Rafique, CLO NTDC-Legal prospect, and others.

FPCI presidential candidate

Pakistan's energy problems can be solved by solar power, says Atif Ikram Sheikh

Tariq Khattak

ISLAMABAD: FPCI's presidential candidate, Atif Ikram Sheikh, said on Monday that solar energy can help the country save billions of dollars, but it is not promoted. The policymakers are discouraging solar power in a very systematic way that is not being depressed anywhere in the world, he said. Atif Ikram Sheikh, who has also served as VP FPCI, Chairman PVMA, and President ICCI, said in a statement issued here today that the current power policy is unsustainable and poorly designed. He said that almost one hundred billion dollars are spent on cooling during summer, which can be reduced by fifty percent if renewable energy is promoted, but this is unfortunately not the case. The country needs almost 18 thousand megawatts of additional electricity during summer, which is not used in winter. Still, capacity charges are paid to the power



plants, increasing the cost of electricity for the masses and the business community. Atif Ikram Sheikh said that the operational inefficiency has led to capacity payment obligations surpassing Rs 2 trillion, which compromises the country's GDP growth. Adopting energy-efficient practices in residential areas can significantly reduce electricity loads for which sustainable prac-

tices are needed, he observed. There is a need to change how buildings are designed and constructed, focusing on environmental sustainability and energy efficiency, which is the only way out, he underlined. Atif Ikram Sheikh said that Pakistan's location is a plus point for solar technology as we receive a large amount of daylight, which can produce around 95% of energy. Pakistan has 2.9 million MW of solar power potential, making it a viable source of energy to tap for producing power, he said. He said that currently, people are looking for a substitute for electricity as paying for inflated bills is making their survival difficult. Harnessing solar energy lessens Pakistan's reliance on imported fossil fuels, which are expensive and volatile on the market. This improves the country's energy security by minimizing disruptions in the energy supply.

SECP issues FAQs on category-wise voting for election of directors

PPA

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has issued a set of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) regarding the concept of category-wise voting for the election of directors. This concept was recently introduced through amendments in the Listed Companies (Code of Corporate Governance) 2019. The introduction of category-wise voting aims to address practical challenges faced by listed companies in election of independent directors and female directors, ultimately promoting diversity on the boards of listed companies. Following the regulatory amendments, SECP has issued FAQs to provide additional guidance to stakeholders and address common questions related to the implementation of this new concept. The FAQs explain important concepts such as the calculation of votes for each category, procedures for unopposed elections in a category etc. These FAQs are expected to simplify the understanding of the regulatory context, address practical concerns, and facilitate the implementation of the category voting concept. This initiative is anticipated to contribute to the promotion of best standards of corporate governance, ensuring diversity on the boards of listed companies, and encouraging greater inclusion of women.

Faisalabad Business Facilitation Center to start work soon: Bhatta



Abdul Majeed

FAISALABAD: Provincial Secretary Industry, Commerce, Investment and Skill Development Ehsan Bhatta has said that Faisalabad's Business Facilitation Center will start working very soon where NOCs related to 17 departments will be provided within a period of ten to thirty days. Addressing the business community at the Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry today, he said that at present 70% of the problems of the investors are related to the federal government, 30% to the Punjab and a few to the local level, for the solution of which the Business Facilitation Center plays a key role. He said about Faisalabad's Business Facilitation Center that it includes 17 provincial departments including Housing, Local Government, WASA, FDA, TEPA, Forest, Inhar, Labor and Social Security, as well as federal departments of electricity and gas where applications are received. After giving all the remaining work, the center will do it itself. Earlier, while welcoming the guests, the Acting President of the Chamber, Dr. Sajjad Arshad, said that Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry is the second largest chamber in the country in terms of industry, which includes more than 118 associations, sector and sub-sector representatives. He said that as Muslims, we are not disappointed but always have to decide the policy to change the situation. A short documentary about the Facilitation Center was also screened on the occasion while Shafiq Hussain Shah, Kashif Zia, Mian Muhammad Tayyab, Sanaullah Khan Niazi, Shakeel Ansari, Rana Fayyaz Ahmed and Aftab Butt participated in the question and answer session. Ms. Saima of PBIT also participated in the online meeting and informed about the facilities provided in the Business Facilitation Center and their procedures. Finally, also recorded his comments in the guest book.

Steel industrialists demand withdrawal of PHL Surcharge to save their industry from collapse

Tariq Khattak

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Pakistan Association of Large Steel Producers (Quality Producers) led by its Secretary General Syed Wajid I. Bukhari visited the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) to highlight the issues being faced by the large steel producers due to the levy of PHL Surcharge and other taxes on the electricity bills and demanded that the NEPRA should withdraw this surcharge to save the steel industry from collapse. Khalid Javed, Nasir Khan, Dawood Khan, Javed Iqbal, Rafaat Farid, and others were in the delegation. Addressing the delegation, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and

Industry said that the steel industry is making a significant contribution to the economic development of Pakistan through its vital role in construction projects, infrastructure building, and industrial development. He said that the government's handholding with this industry has the potential to make a significant increase in its exports. However, he said that this industry is currently facing great problems due to high taxes including the imposition of the PHL surcharge, and stressed that the government should rationalize high taxes on the steel industry to facilitate its revival and better growth. Speaking on the occasion, Syed Wajid I. Bukhari, Secretary General, Pakistan Association of Large Steel Producers (Quality Producers) said that the NEPRA had imposed an



additional surcharge (Rs.3.82 per unit from March-June 23 and Rs.3.23 July onwards) to cover the markup charges of PHL loans, which is unjustified. He said that this tax has further

increased the cost of production for the steel industry which would badly affect its business activities. Khalid Javed, Nasir Khan, Dawood Khan, Javed Iqbal, Rafaat Farid, and others also expressed concerns over the high taxes on the steel industry and urged that the government should rationalize them to save this industry from further troubles. Khalid Iqbal Malik, Group Leader ICCI said that the Prime Minister should intervene to save steel industry from further troubles. He said that the government should privatize DISCOs and renegotiate agreements with IPPs to save consumers from high electricity prices. Zafar Bakhtawari, former President ICCI and Secretary General UBG Pakistan also underscored the importance of the steel industry in the development of the national economy and stressed that the government should address its key issues for its sustainable growth.

Rustam-e-Punjab Dangal and Fastest Athlete of Punjab competitions will be held in next year: Wahab Riaz

Tahir Amin Malik.

LAHORE: Sports and Youth Affairs Department Punjab and Sports Board Punjab have carved out comprehensive sports system after the deliberations of four months under which a 2-year Annual Sports Calendar for 2024-25 has been formed to hold several major sports events in Nishtar Park Sports Complex.

This was revealed by Adviser to Chief Minister Punjab on Sports and Youth Affairs Wahab Riaz and Director General Sports Punjab Dr Asif Tufail at a crowded press conference at National Hockey Stadium. Director Sports Yasmeen Akhtar and other officials were also present on this occasion.

Addressing the press conference,

Adviser to Chief Minister Punjab on Sports and Youth Affairs Wahab Riaz said that the competitions of Rustam-e-Punjab Dangal and Fastest Athlete of Punjab will be organized early next year. The prize money of Rustam-e-Punjab Dangal will be Rs 40 lakhs. "Any individual who is interested in running can participate in the Fastest Athlete of Punjab competition through open trials. The winner will be given a stipend of Rs 70,000".

Adviser to Chief Minister Punjab on Sports and Youth Affairs Wahab Riaz shared that CM Punjab Syed Mohsin Naqvi directed the Sports Department to formulate a concrete programme to produce encouraging results in next national level competitions after Punjab finished 8th in the

National Games in Quetta. "Initially, we have divided our programme into two parts - U-16 and professional. "So far the events of 6 games have been held under the U-16 programme and Rs 10,000 stipend will be given to the players selected at the provincial level from these games".

Director General Sports Punjab Dr Asif Tufail further said that this initiative has been taken to reward and retain top athletes.

"Punjab Institutes of Sports Sciences has been established to produce talented coaches and trainers. It is a fact that every sports club registered with Sports Board Punjab will need a quality coach and Punjab's trained coaches will have plenty of opportunities to serve in these clubs".



Real Madrid defender David Alaba suffers cruciate ligament injury

Sports Desk

LAHORE: Real Madrid defender David Alaba will be sidelined for months after suffering a severe knee injury in his team's 4-1 win over Villarreal on Sunday in La Liga.

The Austrian centre-back went off hurt in the first half after attempting to challenge Villarreal forward Gerard Moreno.

"After the tests carried out on our player David Alaba, he has been diagnosed with a rupture of the anterior cruciate ligament in his left knee," said Madrid in a statement.

"The player will undergo surgery in the coming days." Alaba's injury adds to cruciate ligament injuries for goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois



and defender Eder Militao, while midfielder Eduardo Camavinga is also sidelined with a knee ligament rupture.

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Madrid have only two fit central defenders, in Antonio Rudiger and Nacho Fernandez.

Midfielder Aurelien Tchouameni returned from injury as a substitute against Villarreal and could be chosen to cover in defence by coach Carlo Ancelotti.

"It's a shame, it's very sad, and I've never had three cruciate ligament (problems) in four months," Ancelotti told reporters after David Alaba's injury.

"We have carried that and done more than what people thought."

Real Madrid are also without star forward Vinicius Junior, who has a hamstring injury, but Jude Bellingham, Rodrygo Goes and Brahim Diaz have helped fill in for the Brazilian.

All three scored along with Luka Modric in Madrid's convincing win over Villarreal.

A four-day workshop entitled 'Promote Leadership for Women through Sports' started

Sports Desk

LAHORE: With the support of US Consulate, Lahore, A Four-Day Workshop entitled "Promoting Leadership for Women through Sports" Under Idea-Sport Project has been started at Main Campus, Township, Lahore on December 18, 2023. The workshop was held in collaboration with University of Education, Lahore and Baylor University, Texas (USA). During these four days, the principals and other staff of 10 schools will be trained in sports like cricket, badminton, basketball, volleyball, so that by using this training, they can teach their students. In this regard, an inaugural ceremony was held, which was presided over by Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Muhammad Alam Saeed while the chief guest was Public Affairs Officer US Consulate, Lahore Monica Brinn. On this occasion, Dean Baylor University, Texas (USA) William Sterrett, Program Officer US Consulate, Lahore Summaya Tariq, Director of Sports Professor Dr. Muhammad Umar Saleem and all academic directors of the university and a large number of students were present.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, Vice-Chancellor Prof. Dr. Muhammad Alam Saeed said that the main objective of this workshop is to develop such skills in our young generation, especially women, through sports, through which they can solve their problems, conflicts in practical life, able to actively participate in teamwork, leadership and co-enrichment activities. He said that through this workshop the participants will be concerned about inclusive development of all aspects of Pakistani society, promoting diversity and inclusion in civil society, empowering women and girls and promoting inter-faith harmony.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief Guest, Public Affairs Officer, US Consulate, Lahore, Monica Brinn, said that the Idea Support Project would improve the capacity of Pakistan's partner institutions to develop their skills in partner schools and universities across the province of Punjab, Pakistan.

Zaka Ashraf congratulates Pakistan Women's team on historic ODI win over New Zealand



A Sports

LAHORE: The Chairman of the PCB management committee Zaka Ashraf has congratulated the Pakistan women's team on their historic first ODI victory over New Zealand in New Zealand.

Pakistan women's team registered the historic victory over New Zealand in the Super Over after the third ODI initially ended in a dramatic tie in Christchurch.

"I want to congratulate the entire squad, team management and support personnel for completing the tour to New Zealand with great success," said Zaka Ashraf.

"Today's ODI win is a testament to the skills and dedication of the players."

"I hope the team continues to give their best and bring similar results in the future as well."

Zaka Ashraf also announced that PCB will be hosting a special ceremony felicitating the Pakistan women's team upon their return from the tour of New Zealand.

Pakistan women's team set New Zealand to chase 12 runs in the super over and Sadia Iqbal successfully defended the total as she picked their two allocated wickets after giving eight runs.

Prior to that, New Zealand opted to bat after the coin flipped in their favour but could not get the desired start as they slipped to 43-2 inside 15 overs.

Amelia Kerr and captain Sophie Devine then raised a 56-run partnership for the third wicket, before Ghulam Fatima castled Devine to break the stand.

Kerr was then joined by Maddy Green and they built a solid partnership of 73 runs, completing their respective half-centuries in the process.

Ghulam Fatima once again broke the partnership by dismissing Kerr at a total of 169.

Ronaldo reacts to becoming Google's most searched athlete ever

After years of dominance on the football pitch leading to countless accolades, Cristiano Ronaldo has once again proved his unmatched will to win and surpass his colleagues by becoming the "most searched athlete" in Google's history.

Ronaldo, 38, has bagged five Ballon d'Or awards coupled with multiple Champions League titles to

his name. However, his latest triumph has been his dominance in the online world — Google's statistics to be precise, reported goal.com.

Taking to social media, Ronaldo posted a video of him echoing his famous celebratory phrase "sui".

"Grateful to be honoured as the most searched athlete in @google history," read the caption on his Instagram

account. The achievement is no surprise as the Portuguese star has around 615 million followers on Instagram alone as compared to his long-time rival Lionel Messi whose Instagram account has 495 million followers.

Although both Ronaldo and Messi are often pitted against each other on the pitch quite often, it seems that the Portuguese striker has no

comparison when it comes to appealing to the masses.

The Al Nassr star has staunch supporters spread across the globe and is the leading goal scorer in the history of men's football.

In 2023 alone, he has scored an impressive 50 goals — most by any player in this calendar year, surpassing the likes of Kylian Mbappe, Harry Kane and of course Messi.

'Unravelling Pakistan Cricket: From Glory to Controversy'

Harun Rashid Qureshi!

Pakistan is a permanent member of the International Cricket Council. Seventy-one years ago, on July 28, 1952, the status of Test cricket was granted, and the first captain of the national cricket team was Abdul Hafeez Kardar. Pakistan played its inaugural Test match in October 1952 against India in Delhi, where India emerged victorious in the five-match series, securing a 2-1 win. In those days, cricket players were predominantly well-educated.

Pakistan's highest and first civilian award, the Pride of Performance was bestowed in 1958 upon Abdul Rahman Chaghatai, followed by Hafeez Jalandhari, Abdul Hafeez Kardar, and Pakistan's first fast bowler, Fazal Mehmood. This list remains incomplete without acknowledging the history of Pakistan cricket and the little master Hanif Muhammad. All the stars of that era played cricket with great dignity, avoiding controversies even after retirement. The standard of cricket in Pakistan improved as educated players entered the field.

The famous cricketers of the past fifty years, their legacy is evident in their records on the world cricket website Cricinfo's "where are they now" section. Legends like Clive Lloyd, Sir Vivian Richards, Sir Ian Botham, Sir Richard Hadlee, and

the fastest fast bowler Dennis Lille transitioned gracefully into retirement, refraining from commenting on cricket and players' personal lives beyond their technique.

Turning to the golden era of Pakistan cricket, unmentioned examples exist, such as when Majid Khan gave trials for the Test team. His father, Dr. Jahangir Khan, a selection committee member, resigned upon learning Majid's inclusion in the trial list, setting a principled example. Shoaib Muhammad, son of Little Master Hanif Muhammad, embarked on his cricket journey during a period when his father and uncle Mushtaq Muhammad held influence in the cricket board. However, newspapers never reported the Muhammad brothers recommending Shoaib.

Faisal Iqbal played cricket based on his strengths, with media mentions focusing solely on his rela-

tion as Javed Mian Dad's nephew. Over time, the wounds of the body heal, but the soul takes longer. Unfortunately, the country's media and cricket stakeholders tarnished the gentleman's game, starting with spot-fixing. Despite global ridicule, no substantial lessons were learned.

Over the past few decades, Pakistan has produced rare cricketing gems. It remains perplexing why spot-fixing criminals were integrated into the national team, inviting global scrutiny of Pakistan's cricket system. Moving to the main point of

contention, renowned players like Clive Lloyd, Sir Vivian Richards, Sir Ian Botham, and Sir Richard Hadlee distanced themselves from cricket post-retirement. In contrast, some anonymous cricketers, with minimal match experience, started making negative comments about world-class players through vlogs. There are players with self-ev-

ident records, yet media anchors claim expertise in diverse fields while contributing to the deterioration of cricket and cricketers, mirroring the situation in politics. The country boasts nuclear power status, emphasizing merit even in sports, but instances of nepotism persist. The cricket board's chairman holds a political position, resulting in the politicization of the entire cricket system.

Ironically, national captains battle the system to replace talented players with friendly ones. The spirits of Dr. Jahangir and Little Master Hanif Muhammad are likely troubled by opportunists who have marred the gentleman's game. The standards set by Abdul Hafeez Kardar and colleagues now exist in stories and newspapers.

The story would be incomplete without mentioning Professor Baasul, currently holding two positions. Aziz's cricket reputation suffered, barring him from the national team.

The professor, part of the cricket board, approached a fast bowler convicted in a match-fixing case, suggesting a return to the national team through domestic cricket. The fast bowler declined, stating no plans to rejoin. The professor, undeterred, led a 17-member team to Australia for a national cricket competition at government expense, adding more stains to the game.



FEDERAL GOVERNMENT POLYCLINIC (PGMI), ISLAMABAD
2nd Time RE-TENDER NOTICE NO.F-2-5/2023-A (2023-24)

Sealed bids are invited through EPADS (PPRA) as well as in hard copies in accordance with Rule 36 (b) "SINGLE STAGE + TWO ENVELOPE PROCEDURE" of PPRA rules 2004 for purchase/services of following categories during the financial year 2023-24 from the reputed firms, manufacturers, importers and distributors having vast experience in the relevant fields, registered with Income Tax, Sales Tax Department and who are on Active Taxpayers List of Federal Board of Revenue: -

Sr. No.	Name of Tenders	Opening Date & Time
01	Local Purchase of Drug/medicines	02-01-2024 at 11:30 AM
02	Dental Material, Instrument and allied material	-do-
03	Surgical Disposable & Suture	-do-
04	Purchase of Sanitary Store Items	-do-
05	Pre-qualification of workshops for repair/maintenance of Vehicles	-do-
06	Out sourcing of Security Services.	-do-

Place of receiving tender documents: Deputy Director Central Procurement Cell (CPC) Ministry of National Health Services, Regulation & Coordination 3rd Floor Kohsar Block, Pak Secretariat, Islamabad

Tender document fee: **Rs.2,000 (Non-refundable) for each tender**, Original Tender receipt is mandatory to attach with Technical Bid, failing in which tender will be reject.

Time for submission of tender/bid: Up-to 11:00 AM (on dates mentioned against each tender schedule)

Amount of CDR: @ **Rs.2%** amount of quoted items in shape of demand draft/pay order in favour of Executive Director FGPC, Ibd

Note:-

- Tender documents can be obtained from Accounts Branch, FGPC on written request on letter pad along with copy Income Tax & Sales Tax Registration Certificate if applicable and proof of Active Taxpayer list of the FBR during working hours.
- Valid Drug Sale License / Drug Manufacturing license will be required for **Sr. No.1 & 3** and also where applicable.
- The firms will adopt "Single Stage + Two-Envelope" as per 36(B) of PPRA Rules, 2004
- The tender at **Sr. No. 05** firms will adopt and submit proposals in accordance with rule 15 as per PPRA rules, 2004.
- No tender document will be received after due date and time. Incomplete, conditional and without deposit at call bids will not be entertained. +
- Please get tender form (Soft copy) in USB on the date of purchasing tender documents and must be submitted in shape of soft copy with tender documents.
- The Executive Director reserves the right to accept or reject any tender / all tenders in accordance 33(1). of PPRA Rule 2004.
- All bidders are asked to apply and submit their bids on-line through E-Pak (EPADS) of PPRA as mandatory requirements without EPADS no bid will be entertained.**
- All bidders are asked to submit their bids in hard form in sealed envelopes clearly mentioning the name of bid till 11: a.m on bid opening date at Deputy Director Central Procurement Cell (CPC) Ministry of National Health Services, Regulation & Coordination 3rd Floor Kohsar Block, Pak Secretariat, Islamabad.
- Tender is also available at PPRA website "www.ppra.org.pk."

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Ceasefire

A pro-Palestine protest in The Hague.



Photo: via Twitter

Protests in Germany, Netherlands demand 'Ceasefire Now'

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: Demonstrations were seen in European cities on Sunday in support of occupied Palestine, with thousands gathering in Berlin for a vehicle convoy, and hundreds marching to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague.

Meanwhile, in Amsterdam, human rights organizations called for a ceasefire in Gaza, criticizing the Dutch government's perceived inaction.

In Berlin, demonstrators attached Palestinian flags and placards to their vehicles

stating "Freedom for Palestine" and "Stop the Genocide in Gaza," before forming a convoy that passed through central points in the city.

Organizers said over 3,000 vehicles participated in the convoy.

The police reportedly closed the road to traffic along the route, for "security measures".

In the Netherlands, hundreds marched to the ICC building in the administrative capital, The Hague. Demonstrators chanted slogans in English and Arabic such as "Ceasefire Now" and "Palestine free from the river to the sea."

Dutch Court Decision 'Disappointing'

A Dutch court on Friday rejected demands from human rights groups to halt the government from exporting F-35 fighter jet parts to Israel.

In Amsterdam, hundreds of protesters gathered at an event organized by human rights organizations Oxfam Novib, Amnesty International Netherlands, PAX, and The Rights Forum calling for a permanent ceasefire in Gaza.

Stefan Verwer, the communications director of Oxfam Novib, told Anadolu that "we want a permanent ceasefire."

"The best thing for the people in Gaza right now is for the bombings to stop and a cease-fire to be established. Tens of thousands of people have died, and the numbers continue to rise," he said.

Verwer reportedly said they have launched a global "ceasefire now" campaign, observing an increase in calls for a ceasefire internationally.

He noted that in a recent UN General Assembly vote, a call for a ceasefire was made, but some Western governments, including the Dutch government, either cast a neutral vote or abstained.

Verwer said Friday's "court decision disappointed us."

He said that although the court determined that Israel violated some rules of international humanitarian law, their request was rejected due to a legal loophole that allowed the sending of F-35 parts, Anadolu reports.

Pointing out that the Netherlands has a long-standing practice of not engaging in arms trade in regions where human rights violations occur, he emphasized that sending F-35 parts to Israel deviated from this practice, the report adds.

PTI's Sher Afzal Marwat released from Kot Lakhpat Jail

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)'s senior vice president Sher Afzal Marwat has been released from Kot Lakhpat Jail Lahore.

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader, who was arrested from outside LHC, last week, challenged his detention under Section 3 of the Maintenance of Public Order (MPO).

Earlier today, Lahore High Court (LHC) ordered the release of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)'s senior vice president.

The petition stated that PTI leader's arrest was made on political grounds and the PTI leader was not involved in any "illegal activity".

Justice Shahid Shehram Sarwat after nullifying the detention of the PTI leader, ordered the administration to immediately release the senior lawyer.

The Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) had also demanded the release of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leader Sher Afzal Marwat. The SCBA condemning



the arrest of Sher Afzal Marwat termed it as against human rights and they are concerned about the arrest.

Calling it for revision of 16MPO law for 'maintaining standards of justice', the SCBA has demanded the immediate release of the lawyer.

Last week, the PTI leader alleged an attempted "abduction" by KP police while en route to Gulabad near Chakdara for a party convention scheduled in Bajaur.

Before this, a first information report (FIR) was registered against the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) senior vice president and others for organizing a worker's convention in Swabi.

ECP reveals updated voters' registration statistics

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has unveiled the comprehensive data, outlining the total number of registered voters across the nation.

The ECP conveyed that 53.87 percent of the country's voters are male, while 46.13 percent are female.

The ECP's commitment to transparency is evident in this disclosure, providing citizens with accurate electoral information. According to the latest data, the total number of registered voters now exceeds 128.5 million.

Within this demographic, over 69.2 million individuals identify as male, constituting a significant portion of the electorate.

Simultaneously, the female voter count is recorded at over 59.3 million, showcasing a strong and active participation of women in the electoral process.

This disclosure aligns with the Election Commission's continuous efforts to keep an updated and easily accessible



record of the nation's voting population.

In Islamabad, the overall voter count is 1.083 million, with 568,406 male voters and 514,623 female voters.

In Punjab, the total voter count exceeds 73.278 million, with over 39.122 million male voters and more than 34.085 million female voters, according to the Election Commission.

In Sindh, the total voter count is 26.994 million, with 14.4612 million male voters and over 12.382 million female voters.

For Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the total number of voters is 21.928 million, with 11.944 million male voters and 99,83,722 female voters.

Saudi envoy champions preservation of Arabic language's cultural heritage, global impact



Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Saudi Ambassador to Pakistan Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki praised the linguistic richness of Arabic as the language of the Holy Quran and Islam. In an eloquent address at an event marking 'World Arabic Language Day' here at the embassy on Monday, he highlighted the deep cultural heritage embedded in the Arabic language. The ambassador underscored the significance of preserving Arabic, emphasizing its connection to religious rituals and its role in understanding Islam's principles.

The ambassador commended the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for its leadership in serving the Arabic language globally. He highlighted the establishment of the King Salman Global Academy for the Arabic Language, showcasing the Kingdom's commitment to preserving and enhancing the language's role on both regional and international fronts. Addressing the strong ties between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, he expressed gratitude for the fraternal relationship between the two nations, citing the leadership

of King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud. In conclusion, Al-Malki called on the audience to be ambassadors of the Arabic language, emphasizing the importance of preserving linguistic heritage. He wished for the continued security, prosperity, and growth of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and expressed hopes for Pakistan's ongoing stability and prosperity. Speaking to media persons, Saudi Cultural Attaché Khalid Altoom said World Arabic Language Day is marked annually on December 18, a UNESCO-designated day that serves as a tribute to Arabic, a language that spans continents and bridges diverse communities. "This date coincides with the day when, in 1973, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Arabic as the sixth official language of the organization," he said, shedding light on the historical perspective of the day. Keeping in view this year's theme, Arabic: The Language of Poetry and the Arts, Altoom said Arabic poetry, deeply rooted in the region's history, continued to captivate audiences with its eloquence and emotive power.

'Aafia Siddiqui sexually abused in US jail', reveals Talha Mahmood



Monitoring Desk

ISLAMABAD: Former federal minister and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-F (JUI-F) leader Senator Talha Mahmood on Monday revealed that incarcerated Pakistani neuroscientist Aafia Siddiqui told him she was sexually abused in US jail multiple times.

On December 4, Senator Talha Mahmood was also in the meeting between Aafia Siddiqui and Fowzia Siddiqui which continued for 44 minutes.

Aafia Siddiqui complained about the behaviour of jail administration and sexual abuse during the recent

meeting, Senator Talha Mahmood said while exclusively talking to ARY News.

"She repeatedly named a US official named J. Rebin during the meeting and upon inquiry it was found 30 complaints had already been filed against him out of which 9 proved right."

Senator Talha Mahmood said the best lawyers have been hired now to fight Aafia Siddiqui's case in the US.

The JUI-F leader said, that because of the incompetence and corruption, Pakistan is facing the current crises and went back politically.

Mahmood was of the view that there was no need to impeach the former prime minister and the PTI founder and expressed dissatisfaction over the performance of the 13-party coalition government.

Responding to a question, Senator Talha Mahmood said political parties need funds, but it is wrong to call him JUI-F's 'ATM machine'.

PHC reserves verdict on PTI plea seeking polls under judicial supervision

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) Monday reserved its verdict on the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) plea seeking the holding of the upcoming general elections under the judiciary's supervision.

Two-member PHC bench led by Chief Justice Mohammad Ibrahim Khan and comprising Justice Shakeel Ahmed presided over the hearing.

The development comes after the PTI's Advocate Muazzam Butt had moved the PHC seeking the holding of upcoming general elections slated for February 8, 2024, under the judiciary's supervision.

The plea challenged the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) notification for the appointment of returning officers (ROs) and district returning officers (DROs).

During the hearing, the PTI's Advocate Butt contended that the polling staff is to be posted two months prior to the elections.

"How will the [ECP] hold transparent polls if [they_] haven't made timely arrangements in this regard," he questioned.

Meanwhile, responding to the PTI's plea against ECP's notification, PHC Chief Justice Ibrahim said: "We are bound by the SC decision and cannot go against it."

The chief justice was referring to the Supreme Court's December 15 verdict wherein the apex court had suspended the Lahore High Court's (LHC) ruling — in response to a similar petition filed by the PTI — against the ECP's decision to appoint ROs and DROs from bureaucracy.

On Saturday, a three-member top court bench, led by Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa directed the ECP to issue the poll schedule and ensure timely elections on the said date.

Following this, the electoral body issued the election schedule on the same day.

During another hearing earlier in the day, the SC — while hearing the ECP's plea against the Balochistan High Court's decision to change the delimitations carried out by the polls organising body — suspended the order on delimitation and therefore effectively ruled out any possibility of delay in the polls.

No objections can be raised on the delimitations after the announcement of the schedule for the upcoming general elections, the apex court noted.

During today's proceedings, PTI's Butt further highlighted that the electoral body has been directed to consult with the chief justice if the transparency of the polls is in question.

WHO denounces 'destruction' of Gaza hospital, calls for ceasefire

News Desk

UNITED NATIONS: The head of World Health Organization (WHO), Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, has spoken out against the "effective destruction" of a hospital in northern Gaza by Israeli forces over the weekend, leading to the deaths of eight patients, including a nine-year-old child. Kamal Adwan Hospital was raided by the Israeli military over four days last week and the WHO, the Geneva-based UN health agency, said that many health workers were reportedly detained.

"Gaza's health system was already on its knees and the loss of another even minimally functioning hospital is a severe blow," Tedros wrote on the social media platform X. Less than a third of Gaza's 36 hospitals are at least partially functional, including only one in the enclave's north. "Attacks on hospitals, health personnel and patients must end. Ceasefire NOW," Tedros insisted.

The WHO chief said that many

patients at Kamal Adwan had to self-evacuate "at great risk to their health and safety" while ambulances were unable to reach the facility. UN humanitarian affairs coordination office OCHA said in an update that on Saturday Israeli forces withdrew from the hospital and according to media reports "an Israeli military bulldozer flattened the tents of a number of internally displaced persons outside the hospital, killing and wounding an unconfirmed number of people".

Tedros said on X that WHO was "extremely concerned" for the well-being of those displaced people. According to OCHA, the Palestinian Ministry of Health in Ramallah has called for an investigation into the incident. OCHA also quoted the Israeli army as saying that it had detained 90 people as part of the operation and "found weapons and munitions inside the hospital". Due to a telecommunications and internet blackout in Gaza which started last Thursday and continued into the



weekend, OCHA stressed that its latest update on the humanitarian situation in the Strip provided only "limited" information from the past 24 hours.

Gaza's health authorities have not updated their casualty numbers since the start of the blackout, which at that point stood at 18,787 fatalities and over 50,000 people injured since October 7. The UN Office reported continuing "heavy Israeli bombardments" across the Strip over the weekend in particular in Khan Younis in the south and in several areas of Gaza city in the north. Intense fighting raged between Israeli forces and Palestinian armed groups in Khan Younis and Rafah, as well as continued firing of rockets by Palestinian

armed groups into Israel, OCHA said.

The humanitarian situation in the enclave remains desperate as most of the population is displaced, crowded into a small area in the south, facing dire sanitary conditions and lacking food and water. Hopes for a scale-up of aid deliveries saw a boost with the announcement on Friday of the opening of the Kerem Shalom border crossing between Israel and Gaza, which was welcomed by the aid community.

The crossing reportedly opened on Sunday for the first time since October 7. Up until this moment only the Rafah border crossing in the south had been open since deliveries resumed on October 21.

"The fast implementation of this agreement will increase the flow of aid," UN emergency relief chief Martin Griffiths, who heads OCHA, said in reaction to the development, "but what the people in Gaza need most is an end to this war".