



Pope Francis thanks Kazakh President Tokayev for contribution to peace and harmony

Kazakh Head of State Kassym-Jomart Tokayev made his first official visit to the Holy See upon the invitation of Pope Francis, Kazinform News Agency cites Akorda. During the audience, the Kazakh leader expressed gratitude to the Supreme Pontiff of the Catholic Church for his tireless and dedicated efforts... (Details on Page 5)



Netanyahu continues to kill Palestinian civilians: Palestine

Foreign Affairs and Expatriates/Netanyahu continues to justify the extermination of our people and the liquidation of their rights as an alternative to a political solution to the real causes of the conflict. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu continues to kill Palestinian civilians and push them to flee their homeland by destroying their homes, facilities, and all components of their human and national existence for the 105th day in a row. (Details on Page 8)

Simultaneously published from Islamabad, Lahore and Multan

NSC meeting

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar chairs a meeting of the National Security Committee on Friday.



Photo: PID

Raisi attends SNSC meetings to discuss operations in Iran, Pakistan

IRNA

TEHRAN: An Iranian informed source has said that Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi took part in two meetings of the Supreme National Security Council to evaluate recent attack on terrorist hideouts in Pakistan, as well as Islamabad's response.



so-called Jaish al-Adl terrorist group set up training and military headquarters in non-residential areas of Pakistan's mountainous regions with the aim of getting prepared for future terrorist attacks on Iran, but the Wednesday night missile strike by the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) hit a heavy blow to them.

The informed source told IRNA on the condition of anonymity that during the two meetings, which were held Thursday morning and afternoon, Iranian officials underlined the need for preserving national security with the use of all available means.

The source also said that the Islamic Republic gives importance to security cooperation with neighboring states, when it comes to fighting terrorism.

As to Pakistan's retaliatory attack on Iran, the source noted that this strike was conducted by small explosive drones, which targeted Pakistani residents of the joint Iran-Pakistan border-line.

According to the source, the

Pakistan's sovereignty, territorial integrity absolutely 'inviolable': NSC

Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: Following Iran's airspace violation, the National Security Committee (NSC) on Friday reiterated the steadfast resolve that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Pakistan are "absolutely inviolable and sacrosanct", noting that any attempt by anyone to breach it on any pretext will be responded with full might of the state.

Caretaker Prime Minister (PM) Anwaarul Haq Kakar chaired NSC meeting - held to review the overall security given the situation between Pakistan and Iran.

The meeting lauded the professional, calibrated and proportion-

ate response by the Armed Forces of Pakistan against "unprovoked and unlawful violation of Pakistan's sovereignty", said a statement issued after the meeting.

The meeting was attended by the caretaker ministers for Defence, Foreign Affairs, Finance and Information, Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, Chief of the Army Staff, Chief of Naval Staff and Chief of Air Staff as well as heads of intelligence agencies.

During the meeting, the participants were briefed about political and diplomatic developments bearing upon the prevailing situation between Pakistan and Iran, and its impact on the overall secu-

rency milieu in the region.

The forum also took stock of 'Operation Marg Bar Sarmachar', which was successfully executed against Pakistani-origin Baloch terrorists residing in "ungoverned spaces inside Iran".

An update on the situation along the borders and necessary full preparations done to comprehensively respond to any further violation of national sovereignty was also deliberated.

The forum reiterated the unflinching resolve that sovereignty and territorial integrity of Pakistan were absolutely inviolable and sacrosanct and any attempt by anyone to breach it on any pretext would be responded

with full might of the state. The meeting reaffirmed that the security and safety of the people of Pakistan was of paramount importance and no stone would be left unturned to ensure it.

The forum expressed that "Iran is a neighbourly and brotherly Muslim country, and existing multiple communication channels between the two countries should be mutually utilised to address each other's security concerns in the larger interest of regional peace and stability."

The NSC impressed upon Pakistan's commitment to sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries in accordance with the

United Nations Charter and international norms.

The committee also reiterated the resolve to deal with the menace of terrorism, in all its forms and manifestations, with an iron hand.

The NSC also highlighted that Pakistan had suffered far more than any other country due to the scourge of terrorism.

The meeting also concluded that in line with the universal principles governing the conduct of good neighbourly relations, the two countries would mutually be able to overcome minor irritants through dialogue and diplomacy and pave the way to deepen their historic relations further.

Foreign Minister's telephone call with the Iranian Foreign Minister

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani spoke with the Foreign Minister of Iran, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, today.

Underscoring the close brotherly relations between Pakistan and Iran, the Foreign Minister expressed Pakistan's desire to work with Iran based on spirit of mutual trust and cooperation.

The Foreign Minister stressed that respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty must underpin this cooperation.

The two Foreign Minis-



ters agreed that working level cooperation and close coordination on counter terrorism and other aspects of mutual concern should be strengthened. They also agreed to de-escalate the situation.

The return of Ambassadors of the two countries to their respective Capitals was also discussed.

Iran fully committed to territorial integrity of Pakistan: Ambassador Moghadam

Spokesman Report



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan Reza Amiri Moghadam on Friday said that Iran was fully committed to the territorial integrity of the brotherly country of Pakistan. The ambassador, in a post on social media platform X, said, "Threats like terrorism are common, also interests. Uniquely non-competitive interests and complementary economy provide a fertile ground to promote geo-economy, security, and welfare in the region."

Cabinet praises armed forces for 'professional response' to Iran

Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: The federal cabinet has lauded the high professionalism with which the Armed Forces responded to breach of Pakistan's sovereignty by Iran's "unprovoked airspace violation".

The Federal Cabinet meeting, held under the chairmanship of Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar, was apprised of the details of the attack, as well as Pakistan's response.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs briefed the Caretaker Federal Cabinet about the situation arising from the Iranian attack on Pakistan on 16 January, 2024.

Addressing the federal cabinet, the Prime Minister affirmed that Pakistan is a law abiding and peace loving country and it sought friendly and cooperative relations with all countries, particularly its neighbors.

The prime minister said that Paki-

stan and Iran are two brotherly countries that have historically enjoyed fraternal and cooperative relations marked by respect and affection.

Anwaarul Haq Kakar said that it is in the interest of both countries to take steps to restore the relationship to what it was prior to 16th January, 2024.

The prime minister said that, in this regard, Pakistan would welcome and reciprocate all positive measures from the Iranian side.

Pakistan struck terrorist hideouts in Iran's Sistan-Baluchestan province, less than 48 hours after Iran violated its airspace.

According to a statement issued by the military's media affairs wing, "hideouts used by terrorist organisations namely Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF)" were struck in an intelligence-based operation code-named 'Marg Bar Sarmachar'.

"The targeted hideouts were being used by notorious terrorists including Dosta alias Chairman, Bajjar alias Soghat, Sahil alias Shafaq, Asghar alias Basham and Wazir alias Wazi, amongst others," it added.

Pakistan Armed Forces remain in a perpetual state of readiness to ensure safety of Pakistan citizens against acts of terrorism, ISPR added.

Meanwhile, Iran's IRNA news agency reported that nine people were killed in the attack targeting a village in the city of Saravan, with Iranian Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi saying all the dead "were foreign nationals".

On Tuesday, Iran launched attacks in Pakistan targeting - according to Irani regime - bases for the militant group Jaish al-Adl in the border town of Panjgur in Balochistan, prompting strong condemnation from Islamabad and downgrading of diplomatic ties.

IHC disposes of plea regarding security of Baloch protesters

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Friday disposed of a petition regarding provision of facilities and security to the Baloch protesters in capital.

IHC's Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani, who heard the case, instructed the authorities to ensure the security of the protesters.

Advocate General Islamabad Ayaz Shaukat, State Counsel Abdur Rehman and petitioners' lawyers appeared before the court.

The court asked the authorities to provide the details to the petitioners' lawyers pertaining to the FIRs registered against the

Yemen army targets US ship in Gulf of Aden

IRNA

TEHRAN: The spokesman for the Armed Forces of Yemen Brigadier General Yahya Saree has announced targeting a ship belonging to the US sailing through the Gulf of Aden.

According to Al-Masirah TV channel, Brigadier General Yahya Saree said on Friday that the Yemeni armed forces targeted the US-owned ship, Chem Ranger, sailing through the Gulf of Aden with appropriate naval missiles, resulting in a direct hit.

The spokesperson said that the Yemeni armed forces operations will persist until the war



on Gaza is stopped and the siege on Palestinians in the Gaza Strip is lifted.

He reiterated, "We continue to implement our defensive and offensive measures within the legitimate right to defend Yemen, supporting and backing our steadfast brothers in Gaza."

The spokesman warned that the response to the aggressions and attacks of the US and Britain against Yemen is inevitable.

PTI-backed candidate 'arrested' from Faisalabad

Bureau Report

FAISALABAD: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) backed candidate from PP-118 in elections 2024 and former minister Khayal Ahmed Kastro has been arrested outside a local court in Faisalabad.

According to details, he was arrested by the police from outside a local court where he has appeared for bail in the case pertaining to May 9.

The party sources said that Khayal Ahmed Kastro was manhandled by the police before the arrest as plain-



clothes persons dragged him into the car.

The family of the candidate condemned the 'illegal' act and said that Khayal Ahmed Kastro was awarded a bail by the court.

"The arrest is aimed at halting the PTI-backed candidate from contesting the poll," they added.

Diplomats engage to normalise Pakistan, Iran ties

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani and Iranian diplomats engaged Friday in a flurry of diplomatic activity to normalise relations of the two countries and de-escalate tension. The signs of rapprochement became public when Iranian diplomat Seyed Rasoul

Mousavi in a post on X told that "an hour ago, foreign ministers of Iran and Pakistan had a very good phone conversation to return relations to a high level. I hope that with the help of my colleague Rahim Hayat we can set a new record in de-escalation for two brotherly and friendly countries in the Guinness World Records

by returning the ambassadors to the capitals and mutual visits of the foreign ministers."

In another post on X, he said, "I believe that the statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of our country is the end point on the waves of tension created between Iran and Pakistan. Leaders and high officials of both

countries know that only terrorists and enemies of both countries benefit from the existing tension between the two neighboring countries.

Today, the main problem of the Islamic world is to stop the crimes of the Zionists in Gaza."

This was followed by a post of Additional Foreign Secretary

of Pakistan for Afghanistan and West Asia Rahim Hayat Qureshi who thanked Iranian diplomat Seyed Rasoul Mousavi and Iran's ambassador to Pakistan Reza Amiri Moghadam and members of their team for the constructive efforts made for the early de-escalation between the two brotherly countries.

'Hamdard Shura' stands as a significant accomplishment in the national services of Shaheed Hakim Mohammed Said

PPA

KARACHI: The Hamdard Shura Thinkers' Forum was established by a prolific visionary, Shaheed Hakim Mohammed to guide the nation, allowing intellectuals and visionaries to discuss and provide academic and practical recommendations on the country's challenges. Pakistan faces various internal and external challenges, so it becomes imperative that through this forum we foster patriotism, awareness, and national spirit among the people. These views were expressed by General (r) Moinuddin Haider, the Speaker of Hamdard Shura Karachi chapter, during the joint session of Hamdard Shura held online, chaired by Ms. Sadia Rashid, the President of Hamdard Foundation Pakistan. The speakers and deputy speakers from all four centers i.e. Rawalpindi/Islamabad, Lahore, Peshawar and Karachi participated in the meeting.

Moinuddin Haider voiced concern about the external challenges confronting the nation, such as the Pakistan-Iran border dispute. He underscored the importance of Pakistan reconstructing its diplomatic and commercial ties with neighboring countries. Strengthening the nation's defense should be a priority. Additionally, discussions should address the complexities and obstacles in implementing a uniform national curriculum.

Dr. Adnan Sarwar Khan, the Speaker of Hamdard Shura Peshawar, emphasized the importance of discussing the golden rules and orders of Shariah, with a specific focus on women's inheritance. "Despite being an Islamic state, the infringement upon women's rights is a stain on our society. The prevalence of political and social intolerance, along with violence, has become widespread. It is imperative to raise awareness from this platform.

Lahore, Mian Muhammad Akram said that it was important to promote business ethics in the country through the monthly meetings of Hamdard Shura. The current artificial inflation has led to a surge in the prices of essential food items, with inflationists being directly responsible for increased crime and corruption. Stringent legal actions should be taken against these elements. The rising trend of youth turning towards narcotics is alarming and needs discouragement.

Umar Zaheer Mir from Lahore requested the members to discuss the importance of alternative energy sources, particularly solar energy. "To stabilize the economy, further promotion of Islamic banking is essential. We must promote it through the monthly meetings of Shura. Moreover, considering the majority of the population is under 30 years of age, Hamdard Shura should discuss the necessity to introduce short-term courses aimed at their skill and moral training.



Professor Niaz Irfan, Speaker of Hamdard Shura Rawalpindi/Islamabad, called for highlighting the preservation of the Islamic identity of the nation and the promotion of the Urdu language in the country. To raise awareness about the significance and practicality of modern scientific advancements, such topics should be delib-

erated upon in this esteemed forum dedicated to Shaheed Pakistan Hakim Mohammed Said.

Ms. Sadia Rashid in concluding remarks highlighted that the establishment of the Hamdard Shura Thinkers Forum stands as a significant accomplishment in the national services of Shaheed Hakim Mohammed Said.

His foresighted vision recognized the necessity of a think-tank that could impartially assess diverse issues and offer recommendations with practical solutions. These recommendations are intended to benefit relevant state departments. The esteemed members of the Shura have provided valuable and comprehensive suggestions.

Majawaz chief says Khanewal not afraid of 'fake government'

Asim Tanveer/ Waqar Paracha

KHANEWAL: The chief organizer of Muslim League (N) Maryam Nawaz has said that there are ups and downs in politics, but a leader is one who does not run away from fear. In 2018, when the selected fake government was brought in by rigging, even then, the brave people of Khanewal did not allow anyone except the lion to enter. Members of Khanewal National and Provincial Assembly stood firm with Nawaz Sharif. She was addressing a large public meeting at the Railway Ground. She said that the people of Khanewal have proved that they are always standing with Nawaz Sharif by coming to the meeting even in severe cold and fog. Maryam Nawaz said that in 2013, she fought oppression and excess but did not let her



and Khanewal's head bow down and in 2018 also fought against the fake government and instead of running away, Khanewal stood with the Muslim League-N. She said that PML-N and Nawaz Sharif are not responsible for inflation. She said that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who was elected Prime Minister three times, has national secrets in his chest, but he never played with national security. He never brought national secrets to the public. Maryam Nawaz asked the public if Nawaz Sharif had

said to attack the national monuments, law enforcement agencies and open the heads of the police. Did Nawaz Sharif say to hold a fake intra-party election? When Nawaz Sharif was fired for not taking 10,000 dirhams from his son, did he not keep a single national secret in front of the public, did not wave a fake cipher, but quietly went home and to the people. She said that PML-N's intra-party elections are shown live, while PTT's fake intra-party elections were held in a small village of PK and buried their

own party. She said that retaliatory actions were also taken against us.

On this occasion, Maryam Aurangzeb, Abdul Rehman Kanjo, former Provincial Transport Minister Haji Irfan Ahmed Khan Daha, former MNA and National Assembly candidate Muhammad Khan Daha, Mian Muhammad Aslam Boudla, Chaudhry Iftikhar Nazir, Mukhtar Shah and Dr. Ghazala Shaheen, former MPs. Candidates of Provincial Assembly Rana Salim Hanif, Osama Fazal, Amir Hayat Haraj, Haji Attaur Rahman, Chaudhry Ziaur Rahman, Rana Irfan Mehmood, Babar Hussain Japanese and Syed Muhammad Murtaza Hussain were present. At the end of the meeting slogans of Nawaz Sharif Zindabad, PML-N Zindabad were raised and Maryam Nawaz thanked the people of Khanewal for participating in the meeting.

FIA Rawalpindi Zone arrests human smugglers

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), Rawalpindi Zone on Friday arrested human smugglers in two different raids. FIA team, under supervision of SI Shams Khan Gondal SHO, Inspector Sarwat Durrani, ASI Niaz Mir, and FC Kashf ur Rahman, arrested Muhammad Zahid s/o Khan Bahadur, r/o Qasimabad Rawalpindi, in a raid.

Zahid was wanted to FIA in the FIR No. 18/2024, dated 17-01-2024, under sections 18, 22 EO Golra Mor, for being allegedly involved in human smuggling. Zahid allegedly deceived Farrukh Ammar while extorting a hefty sum of Rs. 400,000 on the pretext of sending his son abroad for employment but deceived him. The operation was headed by Deputy Director AHTC Rawalpindi, Kamran Amir Khan (PSP, QPM) upon the directions of Director FIA Rana Abdul Jabbar in a drive against human smugglers.

Mehfil-e-Mushaira titled 'Bayad-e-Farzana Naz' held at PAC



City Desk

RAWALPINDI: Punjab Arts Council in collaboration with Khayak Literary Forum Islamabad organized a Mehfil-e-mushaira titled "Bayad-e-Farzana Naz" in the memory of renowned poetess (late) Farzana Naz. The event was presided over by the distinguished poet Afzal Khan, while the Director Arts Council, Waqar Ahmed, participated as a special guest in the literary ceremony. Director Arts Council Waqar Ahmed said that Farzana Naz was related to the book and she was also the author of the book. She also died in the book fair. The book is a symbol of the life of the individual and the nation. It is through the book that humanity is connected with its past of millions of years, can recognize its ancestors, can be proud of the achievements of its forefathers. President Mahfil Afzal Khan said that Farzana Naz had made her place in the literary world in a very short time. She was a friendly, smiling, polite and loving poet. Farzana Naz revealed the realities of daily life in her poetry, her mystical style in his poetry will always keep him alive in the world of knowledge and literature. Farzana Naz's husband, Ismael Bashir, praised her literary contributions and spoke highly of her in eloquent terms. Saeed Raja, Mehnaz Benjamin, Anjum Salimi, Ahmed Raza Raja, Naseer Ali Naseer, Rida Naqvi, Basmal Hashmi, Umer Ashraf, Toubia Sahil, Iqra Ansari, Jawaid Jadun, Taimoor Zulficar, Zeshan Murtaza, Muneeb Kiyani, Shoaib Kiyani, Rukhsana Sehar, Shafiq Hayat Shafiq, Ahmed Raza Raja, Atif Butt, Abdul Sami, Zartash Fatima, Arshad Malik, Shahzad Mehdi, Naveed Malik, Ashfaq Meer, Musab Saud, Ahmed Nasir, Maryam Safaa Afeefa Khan, Fayaz Hussain Shah, Harith Raja, Masoor Abbas, and Mumir Sial presented their poetry in mehfil-e-mushaira. A large number of people from various cities participated in the literary event, making it a significant and memorable gathering in the literary sphere.

CCPO Lahore chairs crucial meeting to ensure robust security for general elections

PPA

LAHORE: An important meeting of senior police officers convened at the CCPO office, chaired by Capital City Police Officer Lahore Bilal Siddique Kamyana. The primary agenda involved a thorough review of security measures for the upcoming 2024 general elections. SP (Security) provided a detailed overview of the security plan during the meeting.

CCPO Lahore directed the concerned officers to formulate a comprehensive security plan ensuring the tran-

quil execution of the elections. He assured full support to the Election Commission, district administration, and other governmental institutions to guarantee peaceful electoral proceedings. Discussions during the meeting encompassed various issues related to the security plan for polling stations, polling campuses, returning officers, and district returning officers' offices in the provincial capital.

Effective monitoring through control rooms to enforce the ban on aerial firing, display of weapons,

and the use of loudspeakers under Section 144 was emphasized to maintain law and order. CCPO Kamyana affirmed that stringent legal actions would be taken for any violation of the election code of conduct, particularly emphasizing zero tolerance for the display of weapons and aerial firing.

Addressing security concerns, CCPO Kamyana urged the timely completion of arrangements, including the installation of CCTV cameras, barriers, barbed wire, metal detectors, walk-through gates, and ladies'

search cabins in and around polling stations. He highlighted the importance of effective patrolling by the Dolphin Force teams on the polling day. Kamyana also called for the deployment of traffic police to ensure the convenience of the public on election day.

DIG (Operations) Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, DIG (Investigation) Imran Kishor, DIG (Security) Kamran Adil, SSP (Admin) Atif Nazir, SSP (Operations) Syed Ali Raza, and SP (Security) Akhlaqullah Tarar were Present at the meeting.

PTA intensifies crackdown against franchisees involved in issuance of SIMs

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) Zonal Office in Lahore, in close collaboration with the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Cyber Crime Circle, conducted a raid against franchisees of a mobile phone company involved in the illegal issuance of SIMs.

During the raid, two active SIMs and 151 suspected SIMs were discovered within the SIM stock, said a news release.

The FIA team confiscated these SIMs, along with four BVS devices, as evidence. Additionally, two individuals were apprehended on the premises by the FIA team.

Independent candidate Moulana M Alam vowed to solve collective issues of SWL

Adam Khan Wazir

WANA: Maulana Mehmood Alam Wazir, an independent candidate from South Waziristan Lower and Upper Constituency NA-42, said while holding a joint press conference here on Tuesday along with other Ulemas.

He said, we do not believe in empty slogans, we will end the deprivations of the people of Waziristan by winning the National Assembly seat.

Maulana Abdul Ali, Maulana Gulzar, tribal elders and workers were present in large numbers on this occasion.

NA 42 Constituency candidate Maulana Mehmood Alam Wazir made this clear while addressing the press conference that in the previous periods, despite the fact that the Wazir tribe was given a ticket by the party, the Ulema used to stand in the competi-



tion to contest the election as an independent from Mehsud Constituency, so no objection has been raised by the Constituency Wazir tribe at that time.

He said that despite the violation of the constitution of the party, neither

the central nor the provincial party has taken any action against these Ulemas.

He said that this time I am contesting the election as an independent because most of the problems of Wazir, Suleman

Khel and Dottani tribes are serious. He promised, solving their problems is among the top priorities.

Maulana Mehmood Alam said that I will not allow anyone to bargain on these collective rights and interests.

Maulana Mehmood Alam said that after winning the election, he will be functional the non-functional government educational institutions and I will work hard to provide quality education to the people.

He also said that due to poverty, our male and female students here are unable to study after matriculation.

Therefore, a university campus will be established here in Waziristan to spread quality education.

Maulana Mehmood Alam said that there are land disputes between tribals in our Lower and Upper Waziristan and their solution is the first priority.

Motorway sections temporarily closed due to dense fog

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: In response to the prevailing dense fog conditions, several sections of major motorways in the country have been temporarily closed.

According to National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP), the closed sections include M-1 from Burhan to Swabi and Rashakai to Peshawar toll plaza. M-2 from Kot Momin to Lillah, Islamabad toll plaza to Thallian, Chakari to Neela Dullah, Kot Momin to Pindi Bhattian, Farooqabad to Pindi Bhattian, Thokar Niaz Baig to Farooqabad and Balkasar to Kallar Kahar, PTV News reported.

M-4 Faisalabad Interchange to Pindi Bhattian, Gojra Interchange to Faisalabad interchange, Abdul Hakeem to Gojra and Abdul Hakeem to Sher Shah and M-5 from Rahim Yaar Khan to Rohri and Zahir peer to Uch Sharif have been closed.

The commuters were urged to stay informed and plan their travel accordingly. For the latest updates and information, individuals are advised to contact the National Highway and Motorway helpline at 130 or check their official social media platforms.



Islamabad
15° - 23° Clear

SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr 5:44 am
Zohr 12:18 pm
Asr 3:48 pm
Maghrib 5:25 pm
Isha 6:53 pm

EMERGENCY

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

Women Police Stations

Islamabad 9222596
Rawalpindi 9270601-20

ENQUIRY

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

HOSPITALS

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

DEPARTMENTS

CDA 9221334-43
CDA 9208301-04
Met Office 9250360-6
RDA 5555864
TMA 5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3
Islamabad Metropolitan
Corporation 9209224
Potohar Town 9209224
Rawal Town 5773343

COMPLAINTS

Water Tanker Service
E-7, F-10 & F-11 9204654
G-5, G-6, G-7, G-8, 9203883
G-9, G-10, G-11, G-12, H-8 9266316
Wapda Islamabad 9217579-80
Sui Gas Complaint 119, 9272249
Wasa Water Tank
Rawalpindi 0331-5022125

Foundation University declares the result of second professional MBBS



PPA

ISLAMABAD: The Foundation University has declared the result of Second (2nd) Professional MBBS (Annual) Examination 2023. Out of 143 candidates who appeared in the said examination, 132 were declared successful with a pass percentage of 92.31.

Ms. HAFSA AZHAR, Roll No. 3369 Reg. No. 87/MBBS/FUI/2021 of Foundation University Medical College, got 1st position in the examination securing 697 out of 800 marks, Ms. SHABNAM IJAZ, Roll No. 3551 Reg. No. 129/MBBS/FUI/2020 of Foundation University Medical College, got 1st position in the examination securing 885 out of 1000 marks and Ms. MEHROZ MUSTAFA, Roll No. 3684 Reg. No. 122/MBBS/FUI/2022 of the Foundation University Medical College, got 1st position in the examination securing 520 out of 600 marks.

Mushaal leads consultative session to advance interfaith harmony across Pakistan

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to Prime Minister has highlighted the core principles of equality saying that all citizens of Pakistan are equal before the law regardless of their faith, caste and race. She was addressing a consultative session on the promotion interfaith harmony in Pakistan. The consultative session was attended in equal representation by members from all faiths and organizations working for interfaith harmony. Special Assistant to Prime Minister actively listened to the participants to gain insight into challenges faced by minorities across Pakistan. In response, she provided assurance that meaningful and effective measures would be taken to address these issues.

In her address, Mushaal Hussein Mullick, said that Pakistan derives its policies regarding

minorities from the golden principles laid out by the founder of Pakistan Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah in his address to the 1st constituent assembly of Pakistan. She highlighted that Pakistan's first cabinet comprised of members of all faiths which was a powerful illustration of Pakistan's commitment to unity in diversity. She also drew attention to the representation of unity in the national flag's colors.

The Special Assistant to the Prime Minister underscored the universal teachings of co-existence, humanity, and peace inherent in all faiths. She expressed concern over the misrepresentation of religions by certain factions which was leading to the promotion of hatred on a global scale. In particular, she highlighted the menace of Zionist and Hindutva ideologies and emphasized that both posed a significant and grave

threat to global peace.

Mushaal emphasized the empowerment of district-level interfaith committees. She said that instructions to district administrations would be issued to convene regular meetings of these committees. She further said that empowerment of these committees would ensure that the challenges faced by minorities were promptly and effectively addressed at the grassroots level.

The Special Assistant to the Prime Minister made an announcement regarding the establishment of two churches in AJK, one in Mirpur and the other in Muzaffarabad. She expressed her commitment to restoring and refurbishing temples all across the country. She stressed collaborative efforts and action oriented measures to promote interfaith harmony for the lasting peace in the country.



Sajji

ISLAMABAD: A vendor is busy preparing traditional chicken Sajji at his roadside workplace at sector G-8 in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online

Minister for Culture unveils calligraphy exhibition 'Mashq-e-Ishq'

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture, Jamal Shah on Friday unveiled the grand opening of the captivating calligraphy exhibition, "Mashq-e-Ishq," by the esteemed Lt. Gen. (R) Humayun Khan Bangash here at Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA).

The event witnessed a diverse audience eager to explore the exquisite world of calligraphy by the seasoned artist.

Lt. Gen.(R) Humayun Khan Bangash, M. Ayoub Jamali Director General PNCA and number of people were present on the occasion. The exhibition drew attention to the remarkable artistic journey of Gen. Humayun Bangash.

The event highlighted the significance of "Mashq-e-Ishq" as a celebration of Gen. Bangash's unparalleled contributions to the art of calligraphy.

Gen. Bangash's artistic trajectory, showcased in the exhibition, served as an inspiration, revealing that artistic expression knows no age constraints. Undiscovered until the age of 70, Gen. Bangash emerged as a highly accomplished calligrapher in



a remarkably short period, showcasing the synergy of discipline, creativity, and passion.

The Federal Minister anticipates more surprises from Gen. Humayun Bangash in the realm of creativity, emphasizing that art, as a serious and intimate engagement

with life, knows no age limits. He hopes that "Mashq-e-Ishq" will stand as a testament to the diverse talents and unwavering support shaping the artistic landscape.

The exhibition will continue till the 28th January, 2024. Daily timings 10 am till 4 pm. Gallery is closed on Saturdays.

SAPM Jawad Sohrab meets Qatari minister of Interior



Spokesman Report

DOHA: SAPM Jawad Sohrab Malik meets Qatar's Minister of State for Interior Affairs, H. E. Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Faisal Al Thani; Both Leaders Reviewed Cooperation in the Security fields

A significant meeting was held between the Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (SAPM OP&HRD) Jawad Sohrab Malik and the esteemed Minister of State for Interior, Qatar H. H. Abdul Aziz Bin Faisal Bin Mohammed Al Thani, marking a momentous occasion for bilateral collaboration and economic development.

During the meeting, the SAPM congratulated the Minister of State Interior, Qatar on the successful hosting of the FIFA World Cup-2022. He emphasized the exemplary nature of the World Cup-2022 and its high standards, setting a benchmark for other countries to follow. The SAPM highlighted the crucial role of the Pakistani diaspora in Qatar's infrastructure development and expressed the intention to continue providing highly skilled and professional manpower to support Qatar's economic modernization.

The Minister of State for Interior, Qatar acknowledged the significant role of the Pakistani diaspora in Qatar's development, emphasizing the shared values of Pakistanis and Qataris. H. H. highlighted the longstanding ties in trade, economy, and defence cooperation between the two countries. Regarding the QVCs, H. H. mentioned that the proposal is under consideration, and a feasibility study is underway to determine the potential opening of additional QVCs in Pakistan. Moreover, topics of mutual interests and reviewed cooperation in security fields were discussed along with ways to support and develop them. During the meeting the SAPM was accompanied by the Ambassador of Pakistan to Qatar and Community Welfare Attaches.

COMSTECH Organizes Public Lecture on Game Changing Technologies

PPA

ISLAMABAD: COMSTECH organized a public lecture on game changing technologies on January 18 at COMSTECH. Prof. Dr. Javaid Leghari, former Chairman Higher Education Commission, Senator, former Acting Coordinator General COMSTECH and President of the Forum for Dialogue and Diplomacy, Houston.

Prof. Leghari said that in the rapid evolving landscape of innovation, we find ourselves on the cusp of a new era driven by groundbreaking technologies that have the potential to revolutionize every aspect of daily lives.

He said that Artificial Intelligence, Virtual Reality, Metaverse, Quantum Computing, Robotics and automation, and drones are some of these game changing technologies.

Prof. Leghari discussed the examples of the use of artificial intelligence, virtual reality, metaverse, robotics and automation.

Prof. Leghari said that in today's world skills are becoming more important than degrees. He informed that technology companies are not asking for degrees, they are looking for skills, and 3, 6, or 9 month's skill development course is more effective than a degree.

He suggested COMSTECH to keep follow these technologies developments and take these technologies to the OIC member states for the better uplift of the socio-economic and science and technology development at the rapid speed.

Prof. Leghari informed that these technologies are changing the world at a very fast pace, and we have to focus, learn, and practice these game changing technologies to keep up with the rapidly changing world.

Advisor COMSTECH on Media and Outreach, Mr. Murtaza Noor presented souvenir to him on behalf of COMSTECH. The lecture was attended by more than 50 participants from different backgrounds in-person at COMSTECH lecture room.

Prof. Dr. Javaid Leghari is a former Senator and Chairperson of the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan. He has served as acting Coordinator General of COMSTECH, founding president of SZABIST, Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering and Director of Space Power Institute at SUNY Buffalo, and Commissioner at the Ministry of Education, UAE. Currently, he is the President of the Forum for Dialogue and Diplomacy, Houston.



Empowering street children and transforming communities: CIRCLE and GODH Unite for Impact

PPA

LAHORE: CIRCLE, a dynamic women-centric tech-enabled non-profit, founded in 2018, is on a mission to revolutionize the lives of 1 million low-income women across Pakistan by 2025. Specializing in digital literacy, financial inclusion, and entrepreneurial skills, CIRCLE stands out not only for its ambitious goals but also for its commitment to gender diversity - founded by women, with over 60% female board members and more than 90% female team members.

Since its inception in 2018, CIRCLE has been actively engaged in conducting both online and in-person training sessions for women and girls from low-income households. The organization boasts cutting-edge programs such as the Digital Literacy Program (DLP), Digital Acceleration Program (DAP), She Loves Tech (SLT), Tech Karo, and



Elevate.

The Digital Literacy Program, launched in 2018 with the support of UN Women during the pandemic, has already made a substantial impact, training 5042 low-income women across 60+ locations in the country. This success showcases CIRCLE's commitment to bridging the digital divide and empowering women through technology.

In a groundbreaking collaboration, CIRCLE has joined forces with the

Grass-Root Organization for Human Development (GODH), a Lahore-based non-profit civil society organization. Established in 1998, GODH has been tirelessly working on pro-poor community issues, particularly the rights and protection of children.

Key figures and officials contributing to this initiative include Sadaf Aabid, emphasizing the importance of digital literacy for livelihood improvement; Nazir Ahmad Ghazi, address-

ing issues faced by slum communities; Muhammad, Superintendent of the Health Department in Lahore, highlighting government efforts; Nadeem Ashraf from the National Commission for Human Rights, addressing human rights violations; Sana Khawaja, Community Manager, shedding light on community issues and livelihoods; Mansoor Ahmad, DG Literacy, emphasizing the necessity of education; Ahmad Majeed, Child Law Expert, addressing child marriage, child labor, and harassment; and Andlees Rizwan, Assistant Director NADRA, highlighting the importance of legal documentation.

This collaboration between CIRCLE and GODH signifies a powerful alliance working towards meaningful change. By combining efforts, both organizations aim to create a positive impact on education, digital literacy, health, hygiene, livelihoods, and overall community well-being.

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Cost-Push Inflation, Monetary Tightening and Pakistan's Stagnant Economy

Uzma Noreen

The second edition of IMF's World Economic Outlook (2023) forecasted Pakistan's GDP growth rate to 2.5% and raised the country's anticipated inflation rate to 23.6% for FY24. Amid slowly declining global core inflation, IMF advised central banks to avoid prematurely easing monetary policy. The IMF's recommendation of a tight monetary policy across globe is a universal prescription, kind of one-size-fits-all solution, rather than taking into account the local economic situation of different economies. For instance, despite the economic depression that the Pakistan is experiencing, IMF recommendations of fiscal austerity and maintaining an incredibly high interest rate would reduce public and private investment hence deepening Pakistan's stagflation. Moreover, monetary contractions have welfare implications (increase poverty, worsen the inequality and unemployment) as highlighted in Social Footprint of Monetary Policy by Javed (2021). He stated that, "In 2018-19, the SBP raised the interest rate from 6% to 13.2% in less than a year in order to manage the growing current account deficit and balance of payment crisis. The GDP growth rate decreased from 4.8% to 1.9% as the economy slowed down, and large-scale manufacturing saw a steep decline. Industries were shut down. Poverty struck millions of people. The balance of payment was settled at the cost of millions losing their jobs and livelihoods. There can be serious repercussions for a society when large distributional and intergenerational

issues are ignored in policy decision". Even though Central banks around the globe have been using demand management strategies such as interest rate instrument to dampen the inflation, but this kind of monetary policy fails to account for supply shock disruptions. State Bank of Pakistan also raise the policy rate to control inflation, however, since inflation in Pakistan is not demand push but caused by supply side factors particularly food shortages and hike in energy product prices. In the face of supply shocks, which can lead to cost-push inflation, central bank might choose to look through and tolerate a temporary deviation from their inflation target. For example, in 2011 UK saw a few instances of cost-push inflation when it increased above 5%, primarily as a result of a substantial increase in global energy prices and depreciation of the pound. The monetary policy committee of Bank of England, however, did not raise the interest rate, when the shock subsided and the inflation rate returned to the target level of 2%. As mentioned, Pakistan's high and persistent inflation is mainly cost-push, rendering interest rates an ineffective instrument, so advising monetary tightening will entail real economic losses for the society and exacerbate the country's economic problems. In addition, interest rate inflating would raise the cost of borrowing for the formal sector already suffering from low-capacity utilization due to an import crunch. Keeping a record high interest rate make it difficult for businesses to grow as cost of doing business is rising. Many existing firms have been closed due to unsustainable borrowing cost, which further increase the economic losses in the form

of unemployment and low output. As per the Forbes Report (Aug 2023), globally Pakistan is among top ten countries with very high interest rate. While in the Asian region, Pakistan has the highest interest rate (i.e. 22%) as compare to India (6.5%) and Bangladesh (6.5%). The high credit cost affect the competitiveness of already struggling export industry in the region. Also, high interest rates is widening the fiscal deficit with significant increase in domestic debt in addition to raising the interest payment manifold (Since now the share of the floating rate debt is higher as compare to fixed rate). So, it is evident that IMF policy recommendation of old instrument of stabilization policy in the form high interest rate is actually worsening the debt sustainability indicators for Pakistan economy. IMF analyst also observed that lower average inflation forecasts are linked to more sustainable budgetary positions. However raising interest rate would only increase the cost to the government thus making the fiscal position more unsustainable. So how could this policy guideline of contractionary monetary policy in the form of high interest rate ensure the fiscal sustainability?. The IMF Report also highlights that fiscal support measures could be useful in reducing inflation or at the very least smoothed out a severe inflationary shock. Nevertheless, the report doesn't discuss the effects of the monetary tightening and fiscal austerity measures that IMF recommended to developing economies like Pakistan in order to use its funding facility. "It is generally argued that monetary policy actions transmit their effects on key macroeconomic indicators with a considerable lag and with a high degree

of volatility and uncertainty. Empirical evidence reveal that the interest rate influences the rate of inflation with a lag of 12 to 18 months, and the magnitude of this impact is very small while some studies show positive relation. Additionally, empirical data for Pakistan demonstrates that the recent increase in interest rates has not significantly reduced inflation". For instance, despite sacrificing growth, SBP's monetary tightening failed to achieve the target of price stability. Since the policy of increasing interest rate to reduce inflation has failed, so the interest rate should be reduced to boost the business activity. Further, it will also help the government to improve fiscal outlook in the short term. However, monetary policy itself is unable to achieve the targets unless fully supported by fiscal policy, deregulatory measures, and enhancing supply side shift factors like investment, enhance the productive capacity, and competition. Even though fiscal space is very limited at this time, but certain measures (along with reducing policy rate) which includes widening tax base (rather than increasing tax rates), reforming power sector (major source of circular debt), promoting public private partnerships (PPP) and coordinated monetary and fiscal policies would help to achieve the growth, employment and price stability targets. As highlighted by PIDE Reform Agenda, "moving to a high and sustainable growth trajectory calls for breaking away from the past, which is possible only if we undertake deep-seated structural reforms in almost all areas influencing growth".

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248 people killed in IIOJ&K during last year

A total of 248 people had been killed in multiple incidents of violence across Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) by the Indian forces, according to an annual review report titled 'Human Rights Situation in IIOJK released by Legal Forum for Kashmir (LFK). The armed action of India's occupying forces against the native population as a result of heightened military presence has resulted in the killing of 82 indigenous freedom fighters from January to December 2023, said a press release.

According to the LFK annual report, January-December 2023 saw a new trend of state repression and counterinsurgency operations in the war-trampled region of IIOJK. On the ground, the violations of International Human Rights law (IHRL) and International Humanitarian law (IHL) led to appalling human tragedies. Indian occupying authorities and the occupying forces stationed in IIOJK have perpetrated a series of 'Atrocity crimes': Indian occupying forces persisted in their repressive policies and disregard for international law and the principle of the Right of Self-determination. A total of 260 Cordon and Search Operations (CASOs) were reported by the local media which are just a fraction of the total Search Operations launched by the occupying forces. The report said that at least 70 encounters took place during which vandalism, and destruction of 138 civilian properties were reported. Also, 171 instances of Internet shutdown in IIOJK were reported. India's Infamous anti-terror investigation agencies National Investigation Agency (NIA) & State Investigation Agency (SIA) have attached 200 properties across IIOJK in the year 2023. It further said that Indian occupying authorities annihilate the critical voices of Kashmiris by pervasive surveillance to monitor their daily lives, violating the rights to freedom of expression, opinion, and privacy rights of Kashmiris. To intensify restrictions on social media users in IIOJK, police have been given free access to track accounts of all Kashmiris in the name of monitoring anti-India activities. Police claimed to have secured direct cooperation from social media giants, including WhatsApp, X, Snapchat, Instagram, Telegram, and TikTok, it added.

LFK reports the torture and custodial death case at Dhera Ki Gali and Buffliaz in the Poonch-Rajouri belt of IIOJK. According to the families, the three men - Mohammad Showkat, 22, Safer Hussain, 45, and Shabir Ahmad, 32, were detained by IOF at the hilly Topa Pir village in Poonch district on December 22, 2023. The torture victims and the families of the deceased testified that before the custodial death of three civilian's Indian army stripped them naked and used chilli powder over the sensitive body parts to inflict more bodily harm. The report said that India has accelerated its efforts to dominate every means of dissent and seize properties of native inhabitants, paving the way for outsiders to settle in the region. In the name of "retrieving state land", the occupational authorities and their auxiliaries seized over 178005.213 acres in Kashmir region and 25159.56 acres in Jammu as alleged "encroached" by the residents.



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

Pak Army's practical contribution towards Human Welfare of Pakistan - III

The FWO's collaboration with the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) in December 1985 marked a significant expansion of its scope. It actively participated in engineering design and construction, completing the Uranium mining facility at Baghalchur in February 1987. The organization played a crucial role in the construction of the Khushab Nuclear Complex, commencing in 1986, and subsequently established a swift Army Bridge Camp/Base Depot near Khushab. In addition to its involvement in nuclear-related projects, the Frontier Works Organization (FWO) undertook the construction of a uranium mining and milling facility in Thola Dagar, Punjab, in October 1990. Operating under the Pakistan Army Corps of Engineers (PACE), along with the Special Development Works (SDW), the FWO played a crucial role in constructing tunnels at Chagai, Balochistan, in anticipation of the Chagai-I nuclear test in May 1998 and Chagai-II in the Kharan Desert. Simultaneously, the National Logistic Cell (NLC), established in 1978, became a vital entity for the swift movement of imported wheat from Karachi. Primarily composed of manpower from the Pakistan Army, the NLC operates under the Ministry of Planning and Development, collaborating with the Planning Commission of Pakistan. Beyond its role in transportation during emergencies and wars, the NLC plays a pivotal part in the nationwide construction of roads, bridges, and grain storage facilities. The Pakistan Army has played a crucial role in providing valuable assistance during natural disasters and in the construction of roads and bridges. Establishing communication infrastructure in Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan exceeded

the capabilities of civilian organizations. The Special Communication Organization (SCO) has been instrumental in preventing the isolation of Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan from the rest of the country by providing telephone, telegraph, and satellite communication services. Additionally, the SCO operates with a strategic defense orientation and significantly contributes to the country's economy. The Pakistan Ordnance Factories (POF), a substantial industrial complex, stands out as one of the country's largest manufacturers of engineering tools, weapons, and ammunition. It plays a pivotal role in the national economy as the leading exporter of arms and ammunition. Heavy Industries Taxila (HIT), in collaboration with China, is actively involved in the production of defense-related goods, employing both military and civilian personnel in the manufacturing of armored personnel carriers (APCs), tanks, and artillery guns. In 1998, the Pakistan Army was enlisted to revitalize the Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA). Serving officers were brought in to manage the offices of the electricity board and vigilance wings, with the primary objective of recovering the organization from financial losses by extracting funds from defaulters. The Pakistan Army Medical Corps, serving as a military administrative combatant staff corps, functions as a primary military medical command within the Pakistan Army. Beyond its crucial role in supporting the Pakistan Army in both wartime and peacetime, the corps engages in diverse activities, including providing health services to civilians through a network of Combined Military Hospitals (CMHs), participating in disaster relief efforts, and establishing health centers in remote

areas to ensure widespread access to healthcare for all Pakistanis. The CMHs, situated in various cantonments, are staffed by doctors from the Pakistan Army Medical Corps, with administration overseen by General Duty Medical Officers (GDMOs) and specialist doctors responsible for patient care and management. Known for its rapid response capabilities in the aftermath of natural disasters, the Pakistan Army consistently ranks among the first responders, delivering immediate relief and support to affected populations following earthquakes, floods, or other calamities. This swift intervention is crucial in minimizing the impact of disasters and safeguarding lives. A core responsibility of the Pakistan Army in the face of natural calamities is the execution of search and rescue operations. Specially trained personnel are dispatched to affected areas, skillfully locating and rescuing individuals trapped in debris or stranded in flooded regions. Precision, skill, and a profound commitment to human life underscore these operations. The Pakistan Army plays a critical role in delivering emergency medical services during natural disasters by deploying mobile medical units to affected areas. These units offer prompt medical care to the injured, set up field hospitals, administer essential medications, and conduct medical camps to address the health needs of the affected population. Integral to the army's assistance during natural calamities is the distribution of relief supplies. Essential items such as food, clean water, blankets, and shelter materials are provided to those affected, ensuring that fundamental needs are met in the aftermath of a disaster. This collaborative effort often involves coordination with other government agencies and humanitarian organizations. Beyond immediate relief, the Pakistan Army actively engages in rehabilitation and reconstruct-

After India, Iran learnt a bitter lesson - II

Iran, with its significant influence in the region, had the opportunity to exercise leadership by working alongside other Muslim countries to douse the flames of conflict. Such actions could have fostered a much-needed sense of unity and purpose among nations already burdened by war and strife. In these pressing times, the focus should be on humanitarian assistance, diplomatic efforts to resolve conflicts, and steps towards lasting peace, rather than engaging in actions that further ignite the volatile landscape of the Middle East. In the wake of the highly charged and volatile episode between Iran and Pakistan, it is imperative that both nations exercise prudence and seek a path towards de-escalation. The hope is that this unfortunate incident will soon be relegated to the background, paving the way for the restoration of normal diplomatic channels. It is crucial for Iran and Pakistan to collaboratively develop a robust, credible strategy to dismantle safe havens for militants within their borders. This approach should be transparent, verifiable, and based on mutual trust and cooperation. To effectively counter the menace of terrorism, both nations must engage in regular, in-depth dialogues at various levels, particularly among intelligence agencies and military units. These discussions should aim to foster understanding, share critical information, and coordinate efforts more efficiently. Additionally, conducting joint and coordinated operations along the border regions could prove instrumental in uproot-

ing the entrenched terrorist networks that threaten the security and stability of both countries. Such collaborative efforts would not only signify a commitment to combating terrorism but also demonstrate a shared dedication to regional peace and security. By joining forces, Iran and Pakistan can set a powerful example of how cooperation and strategic partnership can overcome challenges and contribute to a safer, more stable region. The urgency of re-establishing a constructive and cooperative relationship between these two nations cannot be overstated, especially in a region that has long been plagued by conflict and instability. The leadership of both countries should recognize that their people aspire not for war and conflict, but for growth, development, and peace. The path to a prosperous future lies in creating conditions that enable citizens to lead happy and contented lives. This can only be achieved by avoiding war and channeling resources towards the betterment of their nations. Iran and Pakistan have the opportunity to exemplify how countries can contribute positively to regional peace, emphasizing diplomatic engagement over military confrontation. Such efforts would not only benefit their own citizens but also set a precedent for conflict resolution and humanitarian consideration in international relations.



Abdul Basit Alvi



Qamar Bashir

The writer is former Press Secretary to the President, Former Press Minister at Embassy of Pakistan to France and Former MD, SRBC

Pope Francis thanks Kazakh President Tokayev for contribution to peace and harmony

Kazakhstan Today

Kazakh Head of State Kassym-Jomart Tokayev made his first official visit to the Holy See upon the invitation of Pope Francis, Kazinform News Agency cites Akorda. During the audience, the Kazakh leader expressed gratitude to the Supreme Pontiff of the Catholic Church for his tireless and dedicated efforts for the development of mankind around the world. Your prayers to achieve peace inspired and gave hope in the hearts and minds of not only thousands of Catholics but also many of our fellow citizens practicing different religions. Today's polyethnic and multi-confessional Kazakhstan, historically located at the crossroads of civilizations, is home to the largest Catholic community in Central Asia, said the Kazakh President.

As Tokayev said, followers of all religions contribute greatly to building Just Kazakhstan. We have established our own model of peace and national dialogue based on the principle of unity in diversity. In our country, people belonging to different religions



may perform prayers in their temples. Protection of the right for religious freedom is an integral part of my political course, stressed the Kazakh leader. Referring to the Pope's annual "To the City and the World" speech, Tokayev expressed his full solidarity with the Pope's words saying "Peace is primarily a gift of God... But it is also a great responsibility which rests on all of us". Fully sharing your endeavors, I am

certain that despite our differences we need to unite to promote the idea of peace, continuous dialogue between cultures and religions, development for the benefit of people of all religions. We still have time for good will, room for talks, opportunity for wisdom, stated the Kazakh Head of State. As for the bilateral relations, Tokayev noted that Kazakhstan values its long partnership relations with the Holy See

based on true friendship, accord, and mutual respect. In addition, the active political dialogue as well as the consistent work to harmonize and expand the legal framework is held.

The Kazakh leader thanked Pope Francis for his active efforts aimed at ending hotbeds of conflicts and disputes around the world. Indeed, the current geopolitical turbulence undermines the entire global security architecture, causing enormous human suffering and economic hurdles. Kazakhstan as the responsible state makes a significant practical contribution to maintain global peace and security.

Our country takes part in UN peacekeeping missions in different hotspots around the globe, said the Kazakh Head of State. For his part, the Pontiff thanked Tokayev for contributing to the peace and harmony. At the end of the audience, the Kazakh Head of State expressed gratitude to Pope Francis for the informative talk and confirmed Kazakhstan's intention to continue cooperation with the Holy See to promote tolerance, harmony, and brotherhood.

ISSI welcomes President of counterpart Italian think-tank



PPA

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Strategic Perspectives (CSP) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) hosted a fruitful in-house session with Mr. Andrea Margelleti, President of the Centre for International Studies (Ce. S. I.), Italy. The meeting brought together key representatives from both organizations, including Director General ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood; the Director and Research team CSP; and members of the Italian mission in Pakistan.

The exchange of views covered key global and regional developments of mutual interest. There was a particular focus on Pakistan-Italy relations, which both sides acknowledged as robust and enduring in nature. They expressed gratification that the bilateral relationship was steadily expanding across a broad spectrum.

In the global and regional arena, the two sides discussed Ukraine and the security issues in Europe; developments in the Asia-Pacific; situation in the Middle East since 7 October 2023; regional stability in South Asia; post-August 2021 Afghanistan; and recent developments in West Asia.

These in-depth exchanges underscored the shared commitment of both institutions to actively promote and contribute to mutual understanding on issues related to global peace and stability. The dialogue reflected a shared recognition of the intricate interconnections between regional and international dynamics, underscoring the importance of cooperative efforts in fostering a more secure and harmonious global environment.

The session concluded with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad and the Centre for International Studies. Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, on behalf of ISSI, and Mr. Andrea Margelleti, representing Ce. S. I., signed the MoU, reaffirming their commitment to deeper collaboration between the two think-tanks on various research initiatives and academic endeavors in the future.

China's industrial economy makes solid progress in 2023

Xinhua

BELJING: China's industrial economy made sound progress last year, with multiple areas including the automotive sector and 5G technology recording notable development.



In 2023, China remained the world's top manufacturing hub, achieving this feat for a 14th consecutive year, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT) said Friday.

The country's large manufacturing enterprises, each of which has an annual main business turnover of at least 20 million yuan (about 2.8 million U.S. dollars), saw their combined value-added output increasing 5 percent year on year in 2023, said Xin Guobin, vice minister of the MIIT, at a press conference.

The total value-added industrial output of large enterprises went up 4.6 percent year on year in 2023, an increase of 1 percentage point compared with 2022, Xin said.

By the end of November last year, the number of large industrial enterprises in the country had reached 483,000, up by 32,000 from the number recorded at the end of 2022, he added.

Specifically, the electrical machinery and equipment and automotive industries managed double-digit growth last year, while sectors such as iron and steel, non-ferrous metal ores mining and petrochemicals saw accelerated recovery.

China's booming automotive sector, one of the country's important pillar industries, logged massive growth, set multiple historic records and made great contributions to the steady development momentum of China's economy last year.

China's auto exports surged 57.9 percent year on year to a record high of 4.91 million vehicles in 2023, and China is expected to become the world's No. 1 auto exporter, said Xin.

This growth was propelled by a surge in the exports of new energy vehicles (NEVs), which soared 77.6 percent to more than 1.2 million units last year.

Total auto sales increased by 12 percent year on year to top 30.09 million units in 2023, while output was in excess of 30.16 million units, up 11.6 percent compared with the 2022 level.

In 2023, production and sales of NEVs exceeded 9.58 million and 9.49 million units, surging 35.8 percent and 37.9 percent year on year, respectively. The market share of NEV sales in the year stood at 31.6 percent.

Meanwhile, China secured positive results in terms of 5G innovation and development last year, with the number of 5G base stations increasing to nearly 3.38 million, said Xin.

By the end of 2023, the country had more than 10,000 ongoing 5G-powered industrial internet projects, while 5G pilot applications were launched in key areas such as cultural tourism, medical care and education to help restore and expand consumption, he said.

The number of 5G mobile phone users in China reached 805 million by the end of last year.

According to the estimates of research institutions, 5G has helped create an economic output of 1.86 trillion yuan in 2023, an increase of 29 percent compared with the figure registered in 2022, Xin said.

Role of media in diplomacy

BRUSSELS: Ambassador of Pakistan to Belgium, Luxembourg and the European Union Amna Baloch Friday met with Barbara Dietrich, CEO of Diplomatic World Magazine and held an interesting exchange of views on the role of media in diplomacy.



Photo: Online

President of Uzbekistan to pay a state visit to China



UzDaily

TASHKENT, UZBEKISTAN: President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev will make a state visit to China from 23 to 25 January.

According to the press service of the President of Uzbekistan, Chairman of the People's Republic of China Xi Jinping invited Shavkat Mirziyoyev to China.

During his stay in Beijing, high-level negotiations and several bilateral meetings are planned.

The agenda includes issues of strengthening Uzbek-Chinese relations, focused on a comprehensive strategic partnership, as well as expanding full-scale practical cooperation.

The head of state will also visit one of the regions of China and hold meetings with heads of leading Chinese companies and banking and financial institutions.

China, Russia join hands to unlock potential of ice-snow economy

Xinhua

HARBIN: From winter tourism to testing vehicles for severe cold weather and from winter sports to the exchange of ice carving skills, cooperation between China and Russia in the ice and snow economy is steadily gaining momentum.

In early January, the surface of the Heilongjiang River was blanketed in white snow. Tourists from the two countries ventured across the floating ice bridge that links Heihe City in northeast China's Heilongjiang Province with Blagoveshchensk City in Amur Oblast, Russia.

Sitting on opposite riverbanks, the two cities have seen a travel boom

since the resumption of mutual visa-free group tourism in September 2023.

This winter, numerous hotels in Heihe are hosting a continuous stream of Russian tourist groups. "My family and I have come to Heihe with the main purpose of enjoying authentic Chinese cuisine and seizing the chance to admire the local snow sculptures," said Victor Kutukov, a tourist from Russia.

Apart from tourists, engineers are also frequent visitors to Heihe. "I spend most of my time here during the winter," said Aleksei Ivanov, who hails from Russia and is a technical consultant for test drives in extreme cold weather.

This aerial photo taken on Jan. 14,

2023 shows tourists playing at the Ice and Snow Carnival park on the Songhua River in Harbin, northeast China's Heilongjiang Province. (Xinhua/Xie Jianfei)

At Heilongjiang Red Valley Automotive Test Co., Ltd., where outdoor temperatures plummet to below minus 20 degrees Celsius, vehicles perform maneuvers like braking and turning on specialized test tracks. The collected data will serve as vital references for adjusting vehicle parameters before the launch of a new car.

The company now owns over 10 testing grounds, said the general manager, Zhao Xinhong, adding that they have built cooperation partnerships with over 100 car manufacturers and insti-



tutes from home and abroad.

Zhao said they plan to build a test facility in Russia during the next testing season as part of their joint efforts to enhance technical, training and internship activities.

China and Russia have also seen vibrant exchanges in the field of winter sports, featuring a series of events such as ice hockey friendship matches and ice and snow car challenges.

A regional sports university alliance was also established in 2023 in the provincial capital of Harbin, serving as a platform for exchanges and fostering the cultivation of high-quality sports talents between the two countries.

Memory

January 20 – Heroic Chronicle of the History of Azerbaijan

PPA

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of Azerbaijan in Pakistan organized a seminar titled "January 20 – Heroic Chronicle of the History of Azerbaijan" dedicated to the commemoration day of January 20 martyrs. The event brought together the teaching staff of Pakistan National University of Modern Languages (NUML), representatives of local think tanks, and embassy personnel.

Ambassador Khazar Farhadov, addressing the gathering, highlighted that this year marks the 34th anniversary of the January 20 tragedy. He expressed deep respect for the memory of the heroic martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan.



Ambassador Farhadov underscored that the event, known as Bloody January, is not only a tragedy but also represents the pinnacle of the Azerbaijani people's struggle for freedom and independence.

Reflecting on the January 20 tragedy, Khazar Farhadov

emphasized the mass protests by the Azerbaijani people in response to the USSR leadership's discriminatory policies, the deportation of hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis from their historical lands in Armenia, and groundless territorial claims against the Kara-

bakh region of Azerbaijan. He described the national liberation movement initiated by the Azerbaijani people as a response to these challenges, highlighting the Soviet army's unprecedented massacre against the civilian population.

Ambassador Farhadov recounted the strong condemnation of the crime by National Leader Heydar Aliyev in 1990 and his demand for a political and legal evaluation of the massacre. It was under the leadership of Heydar Aliyev that the January 20 tragedy received a political and legal assessment at the state level. The ambassador further emphasized that President Ilham Aliyev, continuing this legacy, led the Azerbaijani Army to free lands from Armenian occupation, restoring sover-



eignty and territorial integrity. Professor Jamil Asghar Jami, Dean of the Foreign Languages Faculty at NUML, and Mohammad Shakil Ahmed, Executive Director of Pakistan's Global Strategic Institute for Sustainable Development, spoke at the

seminar, recognizing the Azerbaijani people as "a great nation with a great past." They highlighted the January 20 event as a symbol of the freedom struggle of the Azerbaijani people and expressed respect for the martyrs who sacrificed for the

independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. The speakers also acknowledged Azerbaijan's recent victory in the Patriotic War, commending the spirit of the martyrs who contributed to the nation's achievements.

Bull & Bears
PSX 100-Share
Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index

Current	Prev. Close
63,282.22	63,202.40
Day's High	Day's Low
63,911.85	63,214.86
Index Value	Change
5,395,720,982	+79.82
Percentage	Time
+0.13%	19 Jan, 2024 5:00 pm

Europe: FTSE 100 Index

Index Value	Change
7,461.93	+2.84
Percentage	Time
+0.038%	19 Jan, 4:35 pm GMT

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average

Index Value	Change
37,674.10	+205.49
Percentage	Time
+0.55%	19 Jan, 12:34 pm GMT-5

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average

Index Value	Change
35,963.27	+497.10
Percentage	Time
+1.40%	19 Jan, 3:15 pm GMT+9

Open Market Forex Rates

Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	182	183.8
Bahrain Dinar	744.22	752.22
Canadian Dollar	205	207
China Yuan	39.18	39.58
Danish Krone	40.77	41.17
Euro	305	308
Hong Kong Dollar	35.8	36.15
Indian Rupee	3.37	3.48
Japanese Yen	2.02	2.11
Kuwaiti Dinar	908.9	917.9
Malaysian Ringgit	59.36	59.96
New Zealand \$	170.82	172.82
Norwegians Krone	26.59	26.89
Omani Riyal	726.88	734.88
Qatari Riyal	76.92	77.62
Saudi Riyal	74.45	75.2
Singapore Dollar	207	209
Swedish Korona	26.72	27.02
Swiss Franc	322.17	324.67
Thai Bhat	7.85	8
U.A.E Dirham	76.5	77.3
UK Pound Sterling	355	358.5
US Dollar	279.5	281.5

Circular debt reaching Rs6 trillion

IMF may seek clarification from Pakistan: Mian Zahid Hussain

Tariq Khattak

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain said on Friday that it is astounding that the circular debt of the power and gas sectors has reached almost Rs6 trillion.

It also indicates that the strategy of reducing the amount of circular debt by increasing tariffs has yet to be successful, and the IMF may seek clarification about it as the figures differs from what the lender was told.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that even though electricity and gas prices keep increasing, the debt is getting bigger and hurting the masses and the economy.

The veteran business leader said that the public was told the continuous increase in

energy prices would help eliminate the circular debt, but this policy has backfired.

Now, the circular debt equals 5.4% of the country's economy, which, if not controlled, will lead to an economic meltdown, he said.

The business leader said that according to the official data, the circular debt reached 5.725 trillion rupees by November 2023, in which the power sector debt was 2.703 trillion rupees, while the debt of the gas sector reached 3.022 trillion.

The revelation of a rampant increase in debt could strain relations with the IMF, as they were told otherwise during meetings held two months ago.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that the IMF may seek an explanation from Pakistan as to how there was a sudden difference of Rs1.5 billion in the figures.

He continued by stating that 29 million household consumers currently receive a



subsidy of 631 billion rupees on natural gas, of which the government pays 168 billion rupees, and the remaining amount comes from industrial and commercial consumers.

If this subsidy is removed, gas will become more expensive for domestic consumers, but many products will become cheaper, which will relieve them while boosting industrialization and exports.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that the industrial sector is currently in a terrible condition as it is being supplied with the most expensive electricity in the region, affecting production and exports.

He furthered that payments to many foreign power companies have been stopped due to the circular debt. The friendly countries are putting pressure on Pakistan for payments and making future loans conditional on these payments, which has become a severe issue.

He said that almost one hundred and fifty thousand people employed in the power sector are ruining the economy, and if they are not controlled, the economy will sink rapidly.

Handmade item

FAISALABAD: Students are buying traditional handmade items on a stall during 'Gur Mela & Cultural Festival' at Agriculture University in the city.



Photo: Online

ICCI and UNICEF sign MoU for economic empowerment of marginalized people

PPA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) have signed an MoU to collaborate on many initiatives to promote the economic empowerment of marginalized people and make progress towards achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Pakistan. Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President ICCI, and Abdullah A. Fadil, UNICEF Representative Pakistan signed the MoU during a ceremony held at ICCI.

Speaking on the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry lauded the efforts of UNICEF Pakistan to address issues in health, education, child protection, skills development, climate change, nutrition, water, sanitation, hygiene and social protection and other fields. He assured that ICCI would support UNICEF in its initiatives to advance children's rights and economic empowerment of neglected segments of society.

Abdullah A. Fadil, UNICEF Representative in Pakistan thanked ICCI for signing the MoU and added that UNICEF Pakistan would like to strengthen its cooperation



with ICCI to undertake joint initiatives in the areas of education, youth entrepreneurship, climate change, and others.

ICCI and UNICEF will advocate jointly for the formulation of conducive policies and regulatory frameworks for creating an enabling environment to promote business and investment activities, empower marginalized people of society, and improve their living standards.

Engr. Azhar ul Islam Zafar Vice President ICCI, Khalid Iqbal Malik Group Leader, Zafar Bakhtawari former President ICI & Secretary General UBG Pakistan, Ms. Josiane Khoury Partnerships Manager UNICEF, Faseeh Ullah Khan, Maqsood Tabish, Raja Muhammad Imtiaz, Sheikh Muhammad Ejaz, Ch. Muhammad Ali, Khalid Chaudhry and others were also present on the occasion.

NEPRA renews power supply & distribution license of K-Electric

PNP

ISLAMABAD: NEPRA has renewed the power distribution and supply licenses of K-Electric for a period of 20 years. This non-exclusive license renewal follows KE's request for a non-exclusive license ahead of the liberalization of the power sector.

KE's previous 20-year license had reached its term in July 2023. Subsequently, NEPRA had provided KE with an interim distribution license for six months, which was nearing its expiration in January 2024.

The decision for renewal followed a comprehensive hearing that concluded on 28 November 2023.

SECP, ADB to host workshop on 'Women in Finance Thought Leaders'

PPA

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange of Pakistan and the Asian Development Bank are partnering to host a "Women in Finance Thought Leaders Workshop," featuring experts from the microfinance sector, ADB, Women's World Banking, IFC, and Google.

The workshop aims to foster a collaborative environment for thought leaders to discuss strategies for women's empowerment

through microfinance and address challenges and opportunities in financial inclusion.

The event will feature a series of interactive sessions and panel discussions to highlight how non-bank microfinance institutions (NBMFIs) can aid women in achieving financial independence. The workshop focuses on fintech's potential to boost women's financial inclusion, tackle non-bank microfinance sector issues, and bridge the gender

finance gap.

The workshop is expected to attract a diverse audience, including policymakers, financial institutions, microfinance practitioners, researchers, and development partners.

The event's insights will shape policies promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, as SECP, as the regulator of NBMFIs, is dedicated to promoting gender inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

My Zong App and JoChaho collaborate to make online shopping in Pakistan affordable

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Zong 4G, Pakistan's leading telecommunication operator has joined hands with JoChaho.pk to offer compelling discounts on online shopping through My Zong App and give users a chance to win exciting prizes through a lucky draw.

JoChaho.pk is an emerging e-commerce marketplace operating online in Pakistan, providing a wide range of products for users to shop. The product categories vary from electronic appliances to mobile accessories, gadgets, etc. MZA and JoChaho's collaboration is an effort to provide users with the best discounts and to provide users with the chance to become JoChaho's lucky draw winner.

MZA users can avail this offer by simply logging on to their app and clicking on the 'JoChaho' banner

which will lead users directly to JoChaho's landing page. After installing the JoChaho app and creating an account, MZA users can avail a flat 10% discount on all products (Valid only for MZA's users). Furthermore, after the purchase, users will be able to enter JoChaho's lucky draw. 15 Lucky Winners will be randomly selected, each of whom will get a chance to win exciting prizes like motorbikes, smartwatches, TVs, mobile phones, etc.

As Zong's spoke person says: "Through this collaboration, My Zong App, wants to bring forth new offers for its users so that they can enjoy online shopping while ensuring ease of access and affordability. Users can now shop from a variety of products and get them delivered to their doorstep through the 'JoChaho' app. So, what are you waiting for? Log onto your MZA app today and enjoy this offer!"

Unity Foods receives top edible oil importer award 2023



PPA

KARACHI: Unity Foods was honored as the top Importer of Edible Oil in Pakistan for the year 2023 during the 6th Pakistan Edible Oil Conference held in Karachi. Mr. Kamran Tessori, the Governor of Sindh, bestowed the award

upon Mr. Safdar Sajjad, the Executive Director of Unity Foods Limited.

As we celebrate this remarkable achievement, Unity Foods remains dedicated to fostering growth, sustainability, and continued success in the industry, inspiring others to follow in their footsteps.

Infinix Shines as the most innovative mobile phone brand at CES 2024

PPA

LAHORE: Infinix, a trendy tech brand crafted for young consumers, was honoured with the prestigious "Most Innovative Mobile Phone Brand" at the 2023-2024 Global Top Brands Awards during the Consumer Electronics Show 2024 (CES), one of the world's largest and most influential tech events in the consumer electronics industry. This esteemed accolade recognized Infinix's exceptional contributions to mobile phone technology and its unwavering commitment to pushing the boundaries of innovation.

During the award ceremony, Benjamin Jiang, CEO of Infinix, emphasized



the brand's relentless dedication to innovation, stating, "Innovation is at the core of Infinix's DNA. We consistently strive to meet the demands of today's young consumers for innovation and practical solutions. Through collaborations with leading technology institutions and extensive research, our expert team has developed cutting-edge technologies that have brought us countless groundbreaking ideas."

High cost of doing business dangerous for trade and industry: DFPA

PPA

LAHORE: The Disposable Food Packaging Association (DFPA) has said that high cost of doing business has proved to be dangerous for businesses, as ever-increasing cost of production is the real threat to the economy amidst frequent upward revisions in policy rate and continuous fluctuations in rupee against dollar.

The DFPA President Ahsan Shahid, in a statement issued here today, said that constant hike in power tariff has pushed the electricity prices higher and added to the already soaring cost of trade and industry. He asked the government to shut down all expensive oil-based power plants to ensure availability of cheaper energy for consumers. He condemned the government for shifting power distribution companies' inefficiencies' burden to the consumers by jacking up the tariff under the guise of Fuel Charges Adjustment.

Ahsan Shahid observed that the aggressive economic measures, high borrowing rates, inflation, oppressive taxation and unstable currency have been negatively affecting running businesses.

The DFPA President stated that the significant jump in electricity prices and hike in gas tariffs to meet the IMF condition will put additional burden of billions of rupee on consumers. He observed that it is unfortunate that the authorities in all governments continued to approve billions of rupees' additional burden on consumers through a direct tariff increase and an indirect increase through the withdrawal of subsidies given to exporters and farmers earlier.

Ahsan Shahid said that the economic managers did not have any pragmatic plan to address this liability, apart from asking for more loans to repay existing debt. Likewise, the target for current financial year's exports is too low to meet the country's revenue. The conventional approach of focusing solely on improving exports while pursuing a passive and imprudent foreign policy towards neighboring countries, poses a significant challenge in meeting export targets.

Zaka Ashraf steps down as PCB Management Committee chairman

Sports Desk

LAHORE: Expressing disappointment over the working conditions, Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Management Committee chairman Zaka Ashraf has stepped down from his post after serving for at least seven months.

Sources told that Zaka Ashraf submitted his resignation as Chairman Management Committee and Member Board of Governor (BoG).

In a statement, Ashraf said he was working for the betterment of Pakistan cricket.

However, expressing disappointment over the working conditions, he said it was unable to work amid such circumstances. "It's not prime minister's prerogative to nominate new chairman," he added.



Ashraf-led PCB Management Committee was formed in July 2023 Prime Minister (PM) Anwaarul Haq Kakar, using his prerogative as patron for a four-month period, by caretaker of the PCB.

Later, the caretaker federal cabinet granted a three-month extension to the Pakistan Cricket Board Management Committee Chairman Zaka Ashraf.

According to the notification issued by the Inter-Provincial Coordination Ministry after the approval from the cabinet, the powers of the PCB Management Committee have been restricted.

The notification states that the PCB Management Committee cannot make any high-level appointments, the Management Committee will conduct the election of the Board of Governors and the Chairman.

The PCB Management Committee would deal with day-to-day affairs and cannot make policy decisions. The notification also stated that the PCB Management Committee would not get an extension beyond three months.

Saad optimistic of leading Pakistan to glory in U19 WC

Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan skipper Saad Baig, was hopeful of leading his team to glory in the U19 World Cup at South Africa.

Saad has led Pakistan U19 in 17 One-Day matches where the team ended up winning 10 games.

Saad Baig, who hails from Karachi, started his career at Customs Cricket Academy in Karachi and was part of their touring party on the trip to India. He received a lot of support from his parents and straightaway impressed in the PCB's Under-13 Regional Tournament 2018-19 where he scored 128 runs and bagged four dismissals behind the stumps.

He was the leading run-scorer in the National U16 One-Day Tournament 2019-20, accumulating 206 runs in four games.

Saad had a stellar run in the year 2022 where he was the second leading



run-scorer in the National U19 One-Day Cup, pounced eight catches and stumped one batter. He was rewarded with a call-up to Pakistan U19 for the home series against Bangladesh U19 and was appointed captain of the team.

"My father used to play cricket and he took me to the academy. My first breakthrough was an U15 tour to India where I did very well with the bat and gloves. It gave me a lot of confidence to excel at all age group levels.

I believe if you are exposed to quality cricket at the club level and good coaches, then you can kickstart a great career. My alma mater, St Paul's High School, has also played a great role where my coach Sir Lenny used to train me even in summer breaks," he told PCB Digital.

Saad brings stability to the middle-order and has shown the ability to bat for longer periods while also churning runs at a healthy rate. He stitched an unbeaten 125-run partnership with

Azan Awais in a successful chase against India U19 in the ACC Men's Asia Cup 2024. Behind the stumps, Saad has a trusted pair of hands which provides confidence to all bowlers. His decision-making is deemed sound as he commands respect from his teammates.

Saad would be hoping to contribute to Pakistan's success by being on top of his game in all three facets - batting, leadership and wicket-keeping.

Saad was aware of Pakistan's 17-year-long U19 World Cup trophy drought and looks excited to bring back the trophy home. "I'm glad the PCB has trusted me with the leadership role of a very talented bunch of players," he said. "The journey so far has been very good and I want to continue making fine memories. My next goal is to win the U19 World Cup for Pakistan as I know it's been a long time since we lifted that trophy in 2006."

Rickelton's 94* powers MI Cape Town to stun Paarl Royals in SA20



A Sports

CAPE TOWN: Ryan Rickelton scored an unbeaten 94 and muscled home side MI Cape Town to a resounding eight-wicket victory over Paarl Royals in the 11th match of the SA20 here on Friday.

Put into bat first, Paarl Royals posted 172/8 on the board despite a flying start. Jason Roy came out all guns blazing for the Royals as he attacked Kagiso Rabada in the third over, smashing three consecutive sixes and a boundary.

Roy looked to dominate Rabada in the fifth over also as he smashed the right-arm pacer for two back-to-back sixes but faltered on the third delivery and handed over a straight-forward catch to Rassie van der Dussen at short fine leg.

He smashed five sixes and a boundary on his way to 14-ball 38.

Coming out to bat at number three, Wihan Lubbe (1) failed to bank on the flourishing start and perished in the next over.

Skipper David Miller (20) then joined Jos Buttler at the crease and the duo added 43 runs for the third wicket before both perished in successive overs, causing the Royals to slip to 107/4 in 12.1 overs.

The Capitals then lost their way towards a big total and only added 65 runs for the loss of four wickets in the remaining overs.

For MI Cape Town, Thomas Kaber picked up three wickets while Sam Curran, Kagiso Rabada, George Linde and Olly Stone struck out a batter apiece.

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Chasing 173, MI Cape Town comfortably knocked off the winning runs for the loss of just two wickets and 19 balls to spare, courtesy of Ryan Rickelton's brilliant knock.

The left-handed batter smashed seven boundaries and six sixes on his way to an unbeaten 94 which came in just 52 deliveries.

He gave MI Cape Town a commanding start when he put together an 80-run partnership with Rassie van der Dussen, who scored 41 off 28 deliveries with the help of four boundaries and two sixes.

The eight-wicket victory lifted MI Cape Town to third in SA20 standings with nine points in four matches while Paarl Royals remained second with 13 points in as many matches.

Three more matches decided in Peshawar PFL Season-I

Sports Desk

PESHAWAR: Three more matches were decided on the fourth day of the ongoing Peshawar Premier Football League Season I being played here at Tehmas Khan Football Stadium on Friday.

District Sports Officer Miss Gul Rukh was the chief guest on this occasion and before the start of the matches, the players were introduced to her. Chief Organizer of the Peshawar Premier League Khalid Khan, Match Commissioner and FIFA Referees including Syed Imtiaz Ali Shah, Zahid Khan, Ikram Khan, Abdur Rehman and a large number of Friday spectators were also present and witnessed the matches.

In the first match, Dara 90 Group recorded a victory against Khyber Club by 4-0 in a one-sided affair. Dara 90 Group took the lead in the 7th minute through a field attempt when right winger Shehzad netted a fine goal to



make the tally 1-0 and after 10 minutes Luqman doubled the lead through another fine move made by centre striker Jabbar along with inner strikers Tahir, Iqbal and Niamat Ullah.

The four strikers played well and after exchanging the ball they reached the danger zone where Luqman netted a fine goal to double the lead. With the two early goals lead, Dara 90 Group dominated the first session.

In the second half, Khyber players did some resistance to reduce the margin and they got some good goal-fetching attacks but

due to poor finishing, they failed to utilize and thus the first half ended 2-0 in favour of Dara 90 Group Football Club.

Dara 90 Group Club kept up the pressure and succeeded in getting two more goals in the 53rd and 69th minutes through Siraj Khan and Bilal Afzal on the field attempt. Khyber team players tried their hardest to reduce the margin but failed and thus Dara 90 won the match.

In the second match, SDFC beat FC Buner Red by 2-0 in another one-sided match. Rehan and Sajid

scored one goal each for the SDFC club while FC Buner Red failed to score any goal. There were some occasional attacks but none of them could be materialized and thus SDFC won the match by 2-0.

In the third match, Dara Dostan Atish Club beat Akhakil Club 1-0. Both Dara Dostan Atish Club and Akhakil Club played well and made some beautiful moves but despite it all the first-half was ended in a goalless draw.

It was the second half in which Dara Dostan Atish Club took the lead through Murad Ali on the field attempt. It was a very superb goal right from the 25-year distance and gave no chance to the rival goalkeeper to stop the ball. Akhil Club tried their hardest to level the tally but they failed due to tight marking and defensive approach adopted by Dara Dostan Atish Club. Zahid, Ikram, Abdur Rehman and Syed Imtiaz Ali Shah supervised the matches.

Zone-II Whites, Zone-I Whites Qualify For Quarterfinals of A. S. Natural Stone U-19 Inter Zonal Cricket

Sports Desk

KARACHI: Zone-II Whites moved into Quarter Final after beating Zone-I Whites by 58 runs from Group "C" at Young Fighter Ground While Zone 1 Whites reached the quarter-finals by securing the second position despite the defeat the tournament is being organized by Regional Cricket Association Karachi.

Scores in Brief: Zone-II Whites beat Zone-I Whites by 58 runs at Young Fighter Ground. Zone-II Whites scored 202/9 in 45 overs. Aun M. Jaffri 42, Shaheryar Usmani 38, Waheed Khan 27, Burhan Mehmood 20. Fahad Khan (ob) 4/15, Farman Ahmed (ob) 2/23. Zone-I Whites 144 all out in 35.4 overs. Dawar Malik 36, Farman Ahmed 35, Aleem Mohsin 33. Ahmed Aleem (sla) 4/23, Syed Rehan Shah (mf) 4/32.

Australian Open: Novak Djokovic adds another feather in his cap



Serbian tennis star Novak Djokovic has become the second player to win more than 30 consecutive singles matches at the Australian Open in the Open Era after Monica Seles (33 consecutive wins between 1991 and 1999).

Djokovic achieved the unique feat after winning his 31st consecutive match during the mega tournament on Friday. He defeated Tomas Martin Etcheverry 6-3 6-3 7-6 (7-2) to reach the fourth round.

Djokovic is on track to win his 25th Grand Slam title, which would take him ahead of the all-time record held by Australian Margaret Court.

He will face France's Adrian Mannarino or American Ben Shelton in the next round.

Djokovic had needed four sets to beat both Dino Prizmic and Alexei Popyrin in his first two rounds in Melbourne but the 36-year-old looked in better form against Etcheverry. He played some good groundstrokes from the deep and consistently found angles to keep his opponent on the move.

"It was a great match, I think. The best performance I had during this tournament," said Djokovic in his on-court interview. "Obviously I'm pleased with the way I played throughout the entire match, particularly the first two sets."

"He stepped it up, raised his level of tennis probably one or two levels in the third set and we went toe-to-toe. In the tie-break I guess I just found the right shots, the right serves, and closed it out in straights."

Etcheverry did well during his wins against Andy Murray and Gael Monfils in straight sets this week in Melbourne but the Argentine didn't have many answers for Djokovic.

Sabalenka stuns Tsurenko in Australian Open



Belarus' Aryna Sabalenka, the reigning champion, etched her name in the tournament's history books by securing an emphatic 6-0, 6-0 victory against the 28th seed, Lesia Tsurenko in a swift and stunning performance at the Australian Open.

The match unfolded on Rod Laver Arena, where Sabalenka, adorned in vivid red, demonstrated a tennis masterclass that lasted a mere 52 minutes.

From the first serve, Sabalenka exuded an unwavering determination, surging forward with every stroke. The Ukrainian contender, Tsurenko, found herself overpowered and outmaneuvered at every turn. Sabalenka's aggressive playstyle resulted in a paltry 11 points for Tsurenko in the first set, while the Belarusian amassed an impressive 27 points.

The second set mirrored the first, with Sabalenka maintaining her relentless assault. Tsurenko attempted to salvage points on her own serve, but Sabalenka firmly shut the door, breaking her opponent's serve three times. The Belarusian's relentless attack included 10 winners in the second set, culminating in victory as Tsurenko faltered with a forehand into the net.

Sabalenka's journey in the 2024 Australian Open has been nothing short of spectacular. The defending champion's remarkable form echoes her breakthrough 2023, where she claimed the Australian Open title and reached the finals at both Roland Garros and Wimbledon. Sabalenka's opponents in Melbourne have yet to pose a significant challenge, as she dispatched German qualifier Ella Seidel and 16-year-old Brenda Fruhvirtova with ease.

As the tournament progresses, Sabalenka's next challenge awaits in the form of unseeded American Amanda Anisimova, making a return to Grand Slam competition after an eight-month hiatus.

Sabalenka expressed excitement at facing Anisimova, anticipating a fierce battle between two formidable competitors who share a history of tough encounters.

Rizwan's unbeaten 90 in vain as New Zealand beat Pakistan in 4th T20I

Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: Mohammad Rizwan's unbeaten 90 goes in vain as New Zealand beat Pakistan by seven wickets in the fourth T20I at the Hagley Oval in Christchurch on Friday.

This was New Zealand's fourth win in the five-match series, and they now lead by a margin of 4-0. The fifth and final T20I of the series will take place at the same venue on Sunday.

After being put into bat, Pakistan scored 158 for five in 20 overs, courtesy of an undefeated 90-run knock

from wicketkeeper-batter Rizwan, according to information made available here by Pakistan Cricket Board.

The opening batter struck six fours and two sixes during his 63-ball innings. He added a 51-run partnership with Babar Azam (19, 11b, 2x4s, 1x6) and knitted a 40-run partnership for the fifth wicket with Ifkhar Ahmed (10, 14b).

Left-handed Mohammad Nawaz was the other contributor with the bat, scoring an unbeaten 21 off nine balls, and hitting three sixes in the 19th over of the innings.

For New Zealand, Lockie Ferguson and Matt Henry bagged two wickets apiece.

In turn, captain Shaheen Shah Afridi led from the front and struck twice in the first over of the run-chase, and again in the third over to put the hosts in a spot of bother leaving them three for 20 in 2.4 overs. At that stage of the match, Daryl Mitchell and Glenn Phillips got together and stitched an unbroken 139-run partnership for the fourth wicket to help New Zealand achieve the target in 18.1 overs.

Mitchell scored an unbeaten 72 off 44 balls, laced with seven fours and two sixes. Right-handed Phillips scored a 52-ball 70, hitting five fours and three sixes.

For the losing side, Shaheen ended up with match figures of three for 34 in four overs.

Scores in brief: New Zealand beat Pakistan by seven wickets

Pakistan 158-5, 20 overs (Mohammad Rizwan 90 not out, Mohammad Nawaz 21 not out; Matt Henry 2-22, Lockie Ferguson 2-27)



New Zealand 159-3, 18.1 overs (Daryl Mitchell 72 not out, Glenn Phillips 70 not out; Shaheen Shah Afridi 3-34) Player of the match - Daryl Mitchell (New Zealand)

Aggression

GAZA: Palestinian women mourn for a relative buried in debris following Israeli bombardment in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip.



Photo: AFP

UN women's agency says two mothers killed every hour in Gaza

News Desk

NEW YORK CITY: About 70 per cent of the people killed during the war in Gaza were women and children, and on average two mothers have lost their lives every hour since the conflict began, UN Women said on Friday.

The agency called for an immediate ceasefire and no effort to be spared to ensure women and girls receive proper protection and have safe access to fast, unrestricted and "gender-responsive" humanitarian assistance.

"At least 24,620 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza, about 16,000 of whom were women or children," said Sima Bahous, the executive

director of UN Women. This is three times the number of people killed in the territory in the previous 15 years combined, she added.

"It is now more than 100 days since the horrors of the Hamas attacks on Israel of Oct. 7 and the horrors that have followed, especially in Gaza," and evidence continues to emerge that women and children are the "first victims of conflict," she said.

"We are failing them. That failure, and the generational trauma inflicted on the Palestinian people over these 100 days and counting, will haunt all of us for generations to come. Without change, these last 100 days, (which) have seen unparalleled destruction

rained on the people of Gaza, will be mere prelude to the next 100.

"However much we mourn the situation of the women and girls of Gaza today, we will mourn further tomorrow, without unrestricted humanitarian assistance and an end to the destruction and killing."

Bahous said women and girls in Gaza are being deprived of safety, medicine, healthcare and shelter, they face imminent starvation and famine and, most of all, they are deprived of hope and justice.

A "gender alert" issued by UN Women on the effects of the crisis in Gaza on women and girls said that the major-

ity of those killed, wounded or displaced in the territory are female. It found that of the 1.9 million people who have been displaced, nearly 1 million are women and girls. They are forced to seek refuge in precarious shelters at a time when "nowhere and no one is safe in Gaza."

It added: "The impossible decisions regarding whether to evacuate, how and when to do so, and where to go, are entrenched with gender-differentiated fears and experiences, as gendered risks, including attacks and harassment, emerge along displacement routes."

UN Women estimates that at least 3,000 women have become widows and the

heads of their households during the conflict and are in urgent need of protection and food assistance, and at least 10,000 children have lost their fathers. There are fears that many such families will need to resort to desperate coping mechanisms, including early marriage.

The agency also reiterated its "deep concern at the accounts of unconscionable sexual violence and other gender-based violence during the Oct. 7 attacks." It repeated its calls for those responsible to be held accountable, for all of those affected to receive justice and support, and for the immediate and unconditional release of all Israeli hostages held by Hamas.

Netanyahu continues to kill Palestinian civilians: Palestine

Foreign Affairs and Expatriates//Netanyahu continues to justify the extermination of our people and the liquidation of their rights as an alternative to a political solution to the real causes of the conflict

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu continues to kill Palestinian civilians and push them to flee their homeland by destroying their homes, facilities, and all components of their human and national existence for the 105th day in a row.

At the same time, he continues to sell illusions to the Israeli street, to international public opinion, and to countries, and seeks to market many pretexts and arguments to justify his continuation of the genocidal war

and deepening the catastrophe. Humanity and the refusal to establish a state for the Palestinian people, the latest of which was the broken cylinder that Netanyahu resorted to deliberately exaggerating the dangers to which the State of Israel is exposed, and instead of Netanyahu recognizing the root of the conflict and its main cause, which is Israel's occupation of the land of the State of Palestine and the search for political solutions to end the occupation and conflict, Netanyahu is fleeing, as usual, and due to his hostility to peace, and is resorting to destroying the Palestinian people and the foundations of their survival in their homeland, in a blatant illusion that he claims



AFP

to confront these dangers. The truth of the matter is that Netanyahu, since he came to power in 2009, has been practicing a radical and real coup against the agreements signed with the Palestinian side and denying him his national rights. Just and legitimate, as stated in the

United Nations resolutions, it establishes the separation between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, works to marginalize and liquidate the Palestinian issue in various forms, and tries to dedicate it as a population issue in need of some relief programs and foreign humanitarian aid,

meaning that it did not waste any opportunity to sabotage the peace process and thwart all forms of negotiation with the Palestinian peace partner. Rather, he also worked to weaken it and undermine its credibility, and replaced the culture of peace, negotiations, and political solutions to the conflict with an endless cycle of violence and wars. As an alternative to Netanyahu's recognition of the Palestinian state to achieve security and stability in the region and the world, he deepened the settlement and Judaization of Jerusalem, separating it from its Palestinian surroundings, and oversaw the acceleration of the pace of the declared and undeclared gradual annexation of the West Bank.

NDMA rings alarm bells over degraded air quality due to hazardous ratio of pollutants

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) on Friday cautioned the twin cities' residents to gear up their guards against increasing air pollution that had spiked up to dangerous levels jeopardizing public health particularly elderly, women, children and people with respiratory diseases.

The NDMA in an advisory said that air pollution in Islamabad and its adjoining areas has increased to a dangerous level which is harmful to health.

The Authority advised to take precautionary measures,



limit movement, wear a mask while going out and use plenty of water.

The Air Quality Index (AQI) of the federal capital since

January remained beyond 200 AQI and was 240 today.

The NDMA advisory underlined that sensitive individuals (children, elderly, indi-

viduals with respiratory or heart conditions) should limit prolonged outdoor exertion and limit outdoor activities, especially if an individual falls under sensitive groups.

However, the public was advised to wear masks in crowded or polluted areas, also wear sunglasses to protect their eyes from pollutants and reduce irritation, use public transportation or carpool to reduce emissions, keep windows and doors closed to reduce indoor exposure, drink plenty of water to help flush out toxins from the body.

Moreover, the public should be vigilant for symptoms such as coughing, shortness of breath, or chest discomfort

and seek medical attention if symptoms worsen.

"Follow proper waste disposal practices to prevent outdoor burning. Stay informed about air quality forecasts and plan activities accordingly. Support and participate in local initiatives aimed at improving air quality," it added.

As per the advisory, residents of Islamabad are cautioned to remain vigilant due to a spike in the Air Quality Index (AQI), reaching a level of 240. The current PM2.5 concentration in Islamabad is recorded at 37.9 times the annual air quality guideline established by the World Health Organization (WHO).

ECP monitoring teams impose over Rs 120,000 fines for election code violations

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) monitoring teams have imposed fines totaling over Rs 120,000 on individuals for violating election code in various areas of the country.

Najeebullah Kakar, the District Monitoring Officer in Ziarat, Balochistan, has fined Noor Muhammad Damar, a PML(N) Provincial Assembly (PB-07) candidate, Rs 40,000 for breaching the election code of conduct.

Furthermore, the District Monitoring Officer Mardan has imposed fines, including Rs 25,000 for Provincial Assembly candidate Zulfqar Khan (PK-58), Rs 10,000 for Gohar Ali Shah, an ANP candidate in (PK-54) Mardan, and another

Rs 10,000 for a candidate in (PK-61) Mardan. Additionally, Jamshed Khan (PML-N) received a fine of Rs 10,000.

District Monitoring Officer, Hari-pur Sardar Farhd Ali, has levied fines of 5,000 each on Qasim Shah, Tehsil Chairman of Ghazi, Khan Nawaz Khan, Vice Chairman of Khirbara,



and Chaudhry Azhar Ali, Vice Chairman of Kala Katha for breaching the election code of conduct.

Monitoring teams are swiftly removing prohibited advertising materials from main highways across the four provinces and Islamabad. In violation of the code of conduct, the District Monitoring Officer in Swat has fined the respective candidate Rs 20,000.

District Monitoring Officers across different cities have issued notices to candidates found in violation of the code of conduct. Additionally, these officers conducted meetings with election candidates in various districts, emphasizing the swift action that will be taken in case of any violations. The Election Commission's clear instructions dictate the strict implementation of the code of conduct.

Latif Khosa replaced as PTI founder's lawyer in NCA £190m case



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Lawyers of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder in NCA £190m case, Sardar Latif Khosa and Sardar Shahbaz Khosa will no longer represent him in the case.

The sources privy to the development told that Barrister Ali Zafar would now be the defense counsel in the case. The PTI founder did not direct Latif Khosa to step down from the case but he did so owing to

busy schedule in connection with campaign for the General Elections 2024.

Latif Khosa is contesting the election from NA-122 where he is facing the challenge of Pakistan Muslim-Nawaz's (PML-N) Saad Rafique.

Meanwhile, Sardar Shahbaz Khosa will continue counselling the PTI founder in the Toshakhana case.

Earlier, an accountability court on Friday deferred the indictment of the former prime minister and his wife Bushra Bibi in NCA £190m case.

The indictment that was scheduled for today was deferred until January 24. AC judge Muhammad Bashir conducted a hearing of the case in the Adiala Jail.

The indictment was deferred due to the absence of the PTI founder's lawyer Ali Zafar in the case.

Now January 24 has been fixed for the indictment of the former prime minister and notices have been issued to the concerned parties in this regard.

Dr Nadeem condemns attack on polio officer

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Health Dr. Nadeem Jan on Friday strongly condemned the attack on polio officer Dr. Abdul Rehman in Bajaur.

"I am deeply saddened by the martyrdom of Dr. Abdul Rahman on polio duty," Dr. Nadeem Jan said in a statement.

He said that he was in constant

contact with the family of Dr. Abdul Rahman after receiving the news of the attack.

"I instructed to transfer Dr. Abdul Rehman to Islamabad for the best medical treatment but before transferring to Islamabad, he expired."

He said that Dr. Abdul Rahman's killers will be arrested and set a lesson.

He said that such cowardly acts cannot shake our resolve.

Amna Baloch, Finnish envoy discuss ties



Spokesman Report

BRUSSELS: Ambassador of Pakistan to Belgium, Luxembourg and the European Union Amna Baloch Friday met here with Permanent

Representative of Finland to European Union Markku Keinänen.

They discussed matters of regional and global importance and strengthening of engagements of Pakistan and Finland.