





# President asks chambers to support women entrepreneurs in availing low interest loans

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi Thursday called upon business chambers to encourage women entrepreneurs to avail loans from banks on low interest rates and hire more female workers for their workforce in industries. He was addressing the Women and Young Entrepreneurs Recognition Ceremony of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI).



He said the banks had allocated substantial business loans for women entrepreneurs on low interest rates. He said it was appreciable that women were given more representation in the Parliament, giving them an opportunity to resolve issues as decision makers. Female parliamentarians needed to work for women empowerment and help the female population in

meeting financing needs from the banks, which were giving loan of Rs 1.5 million at five percent interest rate, he added. He appreciated the banks for increasing the number of female employees, saying the reason for hiring more women was that they were more efficient, trustworthy and focused on their work. Twenty to 40 percent of employees of State

Bank and private banks were now women, he remarked. On the same pattern, the president said, business chambers should encourage their members to hire more women at workplaces. As was done in Sialkot in the football industry, women should be given a harassment free atmosphere and transport facility to induce a sense of security, he continued. Simi-

larly, he said, persons with disabilities should be given more jobs as uplifting downtrodden sections of the society ultimately led to more prosperity and progress in the society. He cited the example of China which pulled 500 million people out of poverty by investing on their health and education. He lamented that more than 20 million children were out of school which was hindering progress of the nation. Pakistan needed 50,000 more schools to bring the children back to schools but it would take a lot of years and money to build the infrastructure, he noted. He said as an out of box solution, mosques should be used to educate the out-of-school children. The mosques should also be centers of basic health to deal with the diseases of obesity, malnutrition, stunting, blood pressure and diabetes, he added. He said Pakistan

## Balochistan will have a representative if PPP comes to power: Bilawal Bhutto

News Desk



KHUZDAR: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Thursday urged people to vote for "arrow" on February 8, for Balochistan's development.

"Few forces are targeting Pakistan People's Party ahead of the election," Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said while addressing a public rally in Khuzdar while referring to the recent attacks on the party candidates in the province.

Bilawal claimed, "They do not want PPP to form government in Balochistan, because only PPP can solve problems of the province."

The PPP leader said while being a foreign minister he raised the issue of Balochistan at international forums.

Commenting on the missing persons issue, Bilawal said the issue must be resolved. "All issues cannot be settled at gunpoint."

Read more: PTI founder promoted 'hate politics', says Bilawal

He regretted the behaviour of the caretaker government with the people, protesting for the recovery of missing Balochs in Islamabad.

PPP will start development projects in Balochistan especially in the backward areas of the province after coming into power.

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari appealed people of Balochistan to vote for the Pakistan People's Party to end the politics of hate in the country and uplift the province.

## Constitute the inspection committees to check the animal's health

PPA

LAHORE: Provincial Minister Ibrahim Hasan Murad presided over the important meeting of Livestock Department in new minister block on Thursday. In the meeting PAITS, MVD tracking system, disease control compartments, Animal tracking system in Punjab and South Punjab, ongoing development schemes and demand & supply of BN hybrid fodder reviewed in details. The minister directed strong field mechanism should be developed for field monitoring staff while login for random check of farmer's feedback should be implemented. He said that the monthly review task committee will be constitute by the department to check and monitor the progress of the all tasks and also needed Fast follow-up on drafted PAITS rules to Law Department regarding mandatory registration of animals, Fast Registration of animals on PAITS in south Punjab. He also directed to revise the Scheme regarding the procurement of animal tags for farmers also revise the Scheme regarding marketing of PAITS and BN-hybrid project. He further directed to Protein test of BN-hybrid (Sample collection from different areas) from different Labs to check the Nutrition level and Field hospitals analysis and bench marking according to animal's population. He ordered to Constitute the Inspection Committees to check the animal's health, nutrition on livestock farms and in this regard submit a report within 3 days.

## KP political figures receive threats ahead of elections

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: The Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) on Thursday released a list of political figures who received threats ahead of the general election 2024.

According to the Counter Terrorism Department, 15 politicians from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) have received threats from terrorists.

Here's the CTD list of Political leaders who received threats,

MNA Mohsin Dawar  
Ex-provincial minister Imtiaz Qureshi  
Senator Hidayatullah

Former PML-N MNA Amir Maqam  
Former PTI MNA Pir Mansoor Shah and Shah Muhammad  
JUI-F's Malik Adnan Wazir and Ehsanullah

Senator Bakhti Afsar  
Senator Maulana Abdur Rasheed

The CTD spokesperson stated that the police officials of concerned districts have been informed about the threats and directed for additional security of the listed politicians.

It is pertinent to mention here that at least six people were killed and 13 others sustained injuries in three violent incidents in Balochistan's Sibi, Quetta and Chaman and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Bajaur district within span of a day.

The wave of violence began in Sibi when four people were killed and five others sustained injuries in a blast that occurred at Jinnah Road Sibi near political party's rally on Tuesday. The police said that the explosive material was installed in a motorcycle which led to explosion. The law enforcers have cordoned off the area and called bomb disposal squad.

## Murder convict sent to gallows in Hassanabdal

Raza Naqvi

ATTOCK: A murder convict sent to gallows on Thursday over killing his teenage cousin over property dispute in Bhadian village in the limits of Hassanabdal Police station on September 13, 2022. The judge also imposed a fine over convict as damages.

According to the FIR registered under section 302 and 311 of Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) at Hassanabdal Police station, the accused Hasnain Ellahi had shot dead his cousin Afsana Bibi over property dispute as she was in litigation with her cousin over occupation of her share in the property. The victim was going back to her house in a rickshaw with her mother after attending hearing of a case at a local court complex when the suspect on a motorcycle intercepted them and shot the girl. The suspect fled however police later arrested him from his hideout through human and digital intelligence. Later during the trial, the prosecution produced substantial evidence against the accused which established involvement of Mr Hasnain in the cold blood murder of the girl and subsequently sent the convict to gallows. The convict was also ordered to pay Rs 0.2 million as damages.

## PTI district President urge people to avoid imitators

Kamran Khamiso Khawaja

SUJAWAL: The District President of Pakistan Tahreek -E- Insaaf Advocate Syed Imran Ali Shah has urged their office bearers as well as general public to avoid independent candidates projecting themselves as PTI candidates.

He said while talking to this Correspondent on Thursday morning that few independent candidates including a current office bearer of PTI Sujawal have been posing themselves as the candidate of Pakistan Tahreek -E- Insaaf during their election campaigns. He reiterated that party has awarded tickets to Advocate Syed Mumtaz Ali Shah for NA-224 having electoral symbol of "Clock" while Danish Decdar Ali possesses the ticket for PS: 73 with electoral symbol of "dice".

Without disclosing the name of office bearer who is in violation of the party, s code of conduct he said that; He had informed the provincial leadership of the party regarding the transgression and the ongoing state of affairs in the district.

## Group photo

ISLAMABAD: Group Photo of Kohsar University Delegation at National Emergencies Operation Center (NEOC) of NDMA on Thursday.



Photo: Online

# Jammu and Kashmir's PM demands U. S. help in Kashmir dispute

Bureau Repor

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Azad Kashmir Chaudhry Anwar Haq has said that America should play its due role to help resolve the Kashmir dispute to ensure peace and stability in South Asia.

The AJK premier made these assertions while talking to advisor to US President on culture Shahid Ahmed Khan who called on him here today. Speaking on the occasion, Prime Minister Haq, while stressing the need for early and amicable settlement of the long running Kashmir dispute, said that a deeper engagement on the part of

the united states of America was imperative to resolve the long-drawn-out conflict that has now assumed dangerous proportions.

Referring to the worsening political and human rights situation in the Indian occupied territory of Jammu and Kashmir, he said, "India has occupied 900,000 troops in Occupied Kashmir, who are



involved in gross violations of human rights". He said that India has forcible occupation the territory against the wishes and aspirations of the Kashmiri people. The PM also apprised Mr. Khan about the illegal detention of Hurriyat

leaders, forced disappearances, and continued bloodshed and violence in Occupied Kashmir. He said that it was high time that the US should come forward in a big way to help resolve the Kashmir dispute, which he said was the main

cause and consequence of the unrest in the region. The AJK premier, on the occasion, appreciated the role the US played in the rescue and relief operation in Azad Kashmir during the 2005 earthquake. Lauding the scholarship program offered by the US government to Kashmiri students, the Prime Minister said that it gives the students an opportunity to understand the American culture. He also appreciated the role of the American government in the development projects in Azad Kashmir under the USAID. The Prime Minister also presented a commemorative shield to the visiting guest.

# 'Kashmir Solidarity Walk', discussion organized at Rawalpindi Women's University

PPA

RAWALPINDI: A "Kashmir Solidarity Walk" was organized at Women's University, Rawalpindi, in which a large number of students, teachers and administrative staff participated. A discussion about Kashmir was also held on this occasion.

According to Kashmir Media Service, All Parties Hurriyat Conference Azad Jammu and Kashmir (APHC-AJK) chapter General Secretary Sheikh Abdul Mateen, who was the chief guest of the programme, spoke about the ongoing atrocities of the



Indian troops in illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir besides throwing light on the background of the Kashmir

dispute. He said despite all the military aggression of India, the morale of the Kashmiris is

high and they will continue their struggle for securing their right to self-determination.

Sheikh Abdul Mateen said Pakistan is an important party to the Kashmir dispute, which is advocating the right to self-determination of Kashmiris at the international level. He said the people of Kashmir are extremely grateful to Pakistan for its moral, political and diplomatic support.

Vice Chancellor of the University Dr Anila Kamal, while explaining the importance of Kashmir Solidarity Day, said people of Pakistan

are standing side by side with their brothers and sisters of occupied Jammu and Kashmir in the struggle for freedom from Indian yoke.

A commemorative shield of the university was also presented to Sheikh Abdul Mateen. Director of Quality Enhancement and External Linkages Dr Baqir, Director of Students Affairs Miss Khadija and Chairman of Media Department Dr Nauman Ansari were also present on this occasion.

The event was hosted by the Focal Person of Pakistan Studies Department, Muhammad Shuzab Askari.





Islamabad  
15° - 23° Clear

**SERVICES**

**Namaz Timings**

Fajr ..... 5:39 am  
Zohr ..... 12:21 pm  
Asr ..... 4:00 pm  
Maghrib ..... 5:38 pm  
Isha ..... 7:04 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**

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Railway Exchange ..... 9270831-5

*Bank Alfalah records an impressive year of growth*

PPA

ISLAMABAD: The Board of Directors of Bank Alfalah Limited (BAFL), in its meeting held on February 01, 2024, approved the Bank's financial results for the year ended December 31, 2023.

Bank Alfalah delivered exceptional performance during 2023. The Bank has crossed significant milestones of 1,000 branches and Rs. 2 Trillion in deposits, improving its industry ranking in terms of deposit base, total assets and branch footprint. The Bank posted a profit after tax of Rs. 36.456 billion as compared to Rs. 18.206 billion last year, showing over 100% growth. The earnings per share (EPS) stands at Rs. 23.12 (2022: Rs. 10.27). This reflects strong growth momentum in line with the Bank's strategy. The Board of Directors has declared final cash dividend of Rs. 5.00 per share (50%). This is in addition to an interim cash dividend of Rs. 3.00 (30%).

Deposits closed at Rs. 2.085 trillion as at December 31, 2023, representing a 40.2% increase over the previous year. This performance is a clear depiction of the Bank's focus on improving the deposit base while having customer-centricity at the forefront, and a diversified product suite catering to market demand.

The Bank reported its advances at Rs. 777.287 billion while upholding robust credit discipline amid challenging market conditions, and has sufficient provision against non-performing loans with a coverage of 112.2%, including general provision.

The Bank exercises sound capital management and remains adequately capitalised with CAR at 16.74% as at December 31, 2023, well above the regulatory requirement.

# Kashmiri artists highlight Indian human rights violations in IIOJK: Mushaal

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Human Rights and Women Empowerment Mushaal Hussein Mullick has emphasized the significant role played by Kashmiri artists and musicians in shedding light on Indian human rights violations and expressing the resistance and struggle for freedom of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. She was addressing a Seminar and Exhibition "Reflections of Resilience: Showcasing Kashmiri Identity & Solidarity through Art" organized by The India Study Center (ISC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad. The event brought together young Pakistani and Kashmiri artists, creating a platform for an artistic exploration of Kashmiri identity and resilience and expressing solidarity with the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJK).

Addressing the event, Special Assis-

tant to Prime Minister expressed her pleasure for the creative initiative and acknowledged its impact on engaging and empowering the youth of both Pakistan and Kashmir to express support for the Kashmiri freedom struggle through art.

Mushaal said that Musicians from Kashmir had composed songs that reflected the sentiments of resistance in the people of IIOJK which resonated locally and globally. She said that visual artists, filmmakers, and photographers from the region were recognized for their contributions in depicting the harsh realities of life in Kashmir through political cartoons, illustrations, documentaries, and powerful images. She also acknowledged the literary contribution of Kashmiri poets and writers for providing a voice to the Kashmiri people through verses, novels, short stories, and essays.

The Special Assistant to Prime Minister underscored the vital role played by Kashmiri artists and activists in utilizing



social media platforms to share their work and raise awareness about human rights violations by India and the ongoing struggle for freedom by the people of IIOJK.

Mushaal underscored the impactful role of cultural events, concerts, and art festivals in engaging diverse audiences, expressing solidarity with people of IIOJK and constructing a compelling

narrative to deepen global understanding of the Kashmir struggle. Special Assistant to the Prime Minister underscored the significance of Pakistan's educational institutions and universities organizing cultural festivals, with a specific focus on inviting Kashmiri talent to showcase their skills on international platforms. She highlighted that the organization

of art exhibitions featuring the works of talented Kashmiri artists has the potential to resonate beyond national borders.

Mushaal Hussein Mullick inaugurated the Kashmir art exhibition, witnessed the artwork depicting the lives of Kashmiri people under the Indian oppression and distributed awards among the winners of Kashmir art competition.

## Attention please

ISLAMABAD: A view of garbage dump in a Nalla on a green belt alongside Islamabad Expressway near Kurri Road needs the attention of concerned authorities



Photo: Online by Raja Farid

## Al-Shifa to begin genetic testing to prevent childhood eye cancer

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital announced Thursday that genetic testing is being planned to prevent and control eye cancer in children. To this end, a genetic testing lab is under construction and will start functioning in five months.

Pakistan is witnessing a high prevalence of eye cancer in children as compared to neighboring countries; therefore, the trust has decided to redouble its efforts to combat the menace, it said.

Prof. Dr. Tayyab Afghani, consultant and HOD of Orbit and Oculoplastic Department at Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital, said that about 700 children with eye cancer are treated annually at various trust facilities.

This number is double that of neighboring India. India registers only 2000 children per annum with eye cancer while its population is five times larger than Pakistan, he added.



He informed that genetic testing of parents can help control this occurrence in future generations. Genetic tests can be done on a tissue sample removed during a biopsy or surgery.

These tests provide information about how likely cancer will be possible in chil-

dren, he informed.

Prof Dr. Tayyab Afghani said timely detection could restore sight as the problem gets more complicated and may cause vision loss, loss of the eye, or even total blindness.

Eye cancer should not be taken lightly, and a doctor must be consulted without delay as the number of people with eye cancer is on the rise. Still, he added that patients are brought to hospitals only in the final stages of the problem.

Afghani said most children facing eye cancer belong to low-income families living in remote areas, and health-care facilities are not available to them as specialized eye hospitals are not located near them.

He said that some tumors are incurable, while others may severely disfigure eyes, requiring complex surgical procedures. However, eye problems due to cancer need more time and effort to be treated.

## Government will introduce new currency notes to prevent

Bureau Report

MULTAN: Renowned industrialist, Investment Board member, Group Chairman of S. M. Food and Volka Food International, Chaudhry Zulfiqar Ali Anjum, speaking to the media, stated that the government has decided to change the existing currency notes to prevent counterfeiting, which is a commendable step. Counterfeiting of existing currency notes is a significant issue, causing substantial financial loss to the general public and workers.



According to recent reports, a few days ago, the State Bank of Pakistan Governor mentioned that a fundamental decision has been made to introduce new currency notes with advanced technology to prevent counterfeiting. The new notes will be printed with international security features, including new serial numbers, design, and high-security features. The design framework for the new notes has already begun, and it is expected to be completed by March. This change is anticipated to be instrumental in addressing the issue of counterfeiting.

The well-known industrialist emphasized that the current currency notes have been in circulation for a long time, leading to their deteriorating condition. The presence of fake notes in the market causes financial harm to ordinary citizens. The transformation through this process will bring tax-evaders to light, and it is hoped that the new currency notes will be more robust and stable, contributing to their longevity.

As a result of the currency notes' change, individuals hiding their income will be compelled to legalize their cash holdings, enabling the government to track their income and collect income taxes. Those evading taxes will also be forced to legalize their income, providing the government with an opportunity to collect taxes, ultimately advancing our country towards documentation.

## Innovation and digitalization in regional agriculture trade called for promoting food security

PNP

ISLAMABAD: Innovative indigenous solutions, and digital integration of agriculture data can play a pivotal role to unlock the potential of regional agriculture trade and support progress towards food security and SDG2, said speakers at a report launch.

The report titled, "Potential of Innovation for Food Security and regional Trade in agriculture", was launched by Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) in collaboration with Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI).

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Vaqar Ahmed, SDPI Joint Executive Director, remarked that recurrent climate events, pandemic and supply chain disruptions have caused food price inflation shocks and exacerbated food insecurity in Pakistan and across the region. Considering these novel challenges, agricultural productivity and regional food security can be leveraged by technological innovations and strengthening regional agricultural trade. He highlighted that 2022 floods have severely undermined the ability of 73% of households in flood affected areas to afford basic nutrition stalling the progress towards SDG2. Moreover, the situation is much worse for Afghanistan with 95% of the population unable to meet their nutritional demand.

Dr Haroon Sarwar, Economic Consultant, Ministry of National Food Security & Research, lauded SDPI's initiative to provide a platform for startups working in food security in the form of a Hackathon in 2023. The participation of startups from Balochistan and even Afghanistan was a promising sign for food security. He emphasized that the current problems confronting agriculture in Pakistan and region is the poor access of small holding farmers to finances. He said that bridging the gap between small farmers and financial institutions can help scale up their profitability and ultimately reduce food insecurity in the country.

Dr Samreen Babar, Associate Professor, Bahria University, said that the Hackathon organized by SDPI provided a platform to students and startups to pitch their innovative ideas and bridged them to mentors for guidance.

Rija Tayyab, Corporate Affairs and Sustainability Manager, Roshan Packages, said that the youth have much more at stake when it comes to climate crisis.

## Google supports the upcoming general election 2024 in Pakistan

PNP

ISLAMABAD: Supporting elections is a critical part of Google's responsibility to our users and the democratic process. As Pakistanis take to the polls to vote in the National election to elect representatives for the National Assembly and Provincial Assemblies on February 8th, we're committed to working with government, industry, and civil society to connect voters with helpful and authoritative information, and keep our platforms safe from abuse.

We know that in the run-up to elections, people need useful and relevant information to help them navigate the electoral process. We make reliable information easily available with helpful product features, showing data from trusted, nonpartisan organisations on how and where to vote across our products.

Farhan Qureshi, Google's Country Director for Pakistan said "In the lead-up to the election, we have focused our efforts on supporting Pakistanis who are expected to cast their vote by helping them connect to useful and relevant election-related information online. We have also invested in the news ecosystem and trained journalists and newsmen on reporting authoritative and credible news ahead of the election cycle. Recently, we launched a Google Trends Pakistan General Election page to make it easier for the media to find this data for their stories."

## Hashoo Group joins hands with M/o FE&PT's NEST to launch Hospitality Scholarships

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Continuing its mission to promote accessible education and employment opportunities for the economic upliftment of Pakistan, the country's leading hospitality and tourism conglomerate, Hashoo Group, has collaborated with the National Endowment Scholarships for Talent (NEST) of the Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training M/o FE&PT, Government of Pakistan, Islamabad. This collaboration will introduce dedicated Hospitality Scholarships in Pakistan to promote the Hospitality & Tourism Sector, marking the first time in the country.

The hospitality sector is one of the highest employment-generating sectors, both



internationally and locally. Through this impactful initiative, underprivileged students across Pakistan will be eligible to receive scholarships for their two-year Diploma/Associate Degree Program in hospitality and tourism offered by Hashoo School of Hospitality Management (HSHM). Additionally,

this partnership will provide a gateway for underprivileged students of the Hashoo Foundation—the corporate social responsibility arm of the Hashoo Group, to benefit from the Nursing, Arts, & Culture Scholarships program that NEST offers.

Hashoo Group and NEST

will also actively explore opportunities nationwide to support talented and underprivileged students who could greatly benefit from financial assistance on their educational journey. The main objective of NEST is to provide scholarships to needy yet talented students who need additional resources to contin-

ue their studies. Mr. Waseem Ajmal Chaudhry, Chief Executive Officer-NEST/Federal Secretary M/o Federal Education & Professional Training, Government of Pakistan, Islamabad, expressed his point of view by calling this partnership a step in the right direction, empowering underprivileged youth. He added that enabling hospitality and tourism-related scholarships to NEST's ambit is a constructive gesture that has diversified NEST's role. The organization serves as a transformative force, bridging educational gaps by providing scholarships to talented students in underserved areas. To date, NEST has granted 6000+ scholarships across diverse fields, making a positive impact on education and employment opportunities for these students.



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 (mszk786@gmail.com)  
 Bureau Chief Lahore: **Syed Afraz Ali Nazish**  
 (afrazalishah@gmail.com)  
 Islamabad Office: Rose Plaza, I-8 Markaz.  
 Karachi office: Flat No.C.3.A.One Comfort, Block No 11.  
 Gulshan-e-Iqbal, Main Rashid Minhas Road.  
 Lahore Office: 7-E,Samanberg, Johar Town.  
 Email: [spokesmanislamabad@gmail.com](mailto:spokesmanislamabad@gmail.com)  
 Whatsapp: 0346-5008408

# Hereditary Politics: How come a small number of families control so much of Pakistan's politics?

The prevalence of multiple family members being nominated for seats in the upcoming general elections in Pakistan on February 8 raises concerns about political dynasties and potential concentration of power within certain households. This phenomenon can impact the diversity of representation and raise questions about the fairness of the electoral process.

Hereditary politics in Pakistan reflects a complex interplay of historical legacies, societal expectations, and the enduring influence of powerful political families.

Legacy connections and familial ties have played a significant role in shaping political landscapes, fostering a pattern of political dynasties.

This entrenched pattern can impede the emergence of diverse voices and hinder the infusion of fresh perspectives into the political landscape.

Political dynasties and familial connections in candidacy are not unique to Pakistani politics; similar patterns are observed in various countries. This practice raises questions about political diversity and meritocracy within parties.

The recurrence of such occurrences over decades suggests a deeply ingrained trend to assess the impact of such dynastic politics on governance and

representation.

Indeed, hereditary politics is a widespread phenomenon, not limited to Pakistan. South Asian countries, in particular, often grapple with a high prevalence of family-dominated political systems. Pakistan's elevated rate of hereditary politics underscores broader challenges in the region regarding political dynasties and their impact on democratic principles, governance and representation.

Hereditary or dynastic politics in Pakistan can be attributed to a concentration of power within a few influential families, particularly in Punjab. The continued influence of these families in policymaking and resource allocation has contributed to the persistence of dynastic politics over the past three decades. Despite societal changes, it seems that these conditions remain largely unchanged in the present political landscape.

Reasons That Perpetuate Family Politics

Family politics can persist due to issues like competition for attention, power struggles, unresolved conflicts,

generational differences, and the desire for control or power within the family dynamic. Additionally, lack of communication and transparency can contribute to the perpetuation of family politics.

The political landscape in Pakistan has undergone changes over the years, and various leaders have aimed to address issues such as feudalism. While Zulfikar Ali Bhutto expressed intentions to end the feudal system in the 1970s, the effectiveness of such efforts can be influenced by various factors. It's essential to consider the complexities of socio-political dynamics, feudalism, assessing the current situation requires a nuanced understanding of political developments and societal factors.

There are many factors behind why politicians who practice traditional politics get votes in every election, such as the system of strong communities in Punjab or the sardari system in Balochistan.

In Sindh province and South Punjab, there are also 'Peeri Mureedi' and big madiyas, where if a member of Peeri's family is contesting an election, it is not

possible for the murid to come and vote for someone else on the Election Day.

Does hereditary politics have a negative impact on democracy?

Hereditary politics can pose challenges to democracy by potentially limiting diverse representation and impeding meritocracy. It may concentrate power within certain families, potentially undermining democratic principles of equal opportunity and fair competition for all citizens to participate in Governance.

Is there any mechanism that can help who is eligible to enter politics absolutely, active engagement in social and political activities helps build a foundation for entering politics? Understanding local issues and collaborating with communities, political parties, or local governments can provide valuable experience and connections.

Is Traditional politics a barrier to creating opportunities for newcomers in politics?

Traditional politics can sometimes pose challenges for newcomers by maintaining established power structures and networks. However, evolving attitudes and movements toward inclusivity can gradually break down these barriers, creating more opportunities for new voices in politics.



Analysis

Kiran Asim

## Prioritize to Gaza people's lives

China on Thursday called on the international community, especially major donors, to prioritize the lives of the people in Gaza, reconsider the decision to suspend funding, and continue to support the work of United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. "As the ongoing Palestinian-Israeli conflict drags on into the fourth month, Gaza faces unprecedented humanitarian disaster. Under the current circumstances, there's no other choice than a ceasefire that can deescalate the crisis and there's no other task that is more pressing than protecting civilians," Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Wang Wenbin said during his regular briefing.

He said that the UNRWA had made an important effort in easing the humanitarian situation in Gaza, playing an indispensable and irreplaceable role. "Data shows that two thirds of the over two million people in Gaza received assistance from UNRWA," he added. "Ensuring the normal and orderly operation of the UNRWA means preserving the most basic life guarantee for the people in Gaza and the last string of hope for the almost desperate refugees." The spokesperson said that the Chinese side noted that the UN had launched an investigation and adopted measures concerning the allegation that UNRWA personnel were involved in the October 7 attack. "UN Secretary-General António Guterres said that UNRWA is the "backbone" of all humanitarian response in Gaza." "We support the UN in conducting an independent, just and objective investigation. Collective punishment against the people in Gaza should be avoided," he added. Wang Wenbin said, "We must not deny all of the work of UNRWA because of the moves by certain individuals. We must not allow more collective punishment against the people in Gaza. We must not sit idly by and see the humanitarian situation in Gaza get worse." It may be mentioned here that the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, which brings together the World Health Organization (WHO), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and other UN agencies and non-governmental bodies, in a joint statement issued on Wednesday said that suspension of funds for the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) by relevant countries would result in disastrous consequences and asked these countries to reconsider their decisions. The statement called on the world "not to abandon the people of Gaza."



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

## The Fairest Elections - II

Returning to the demand for providing a level playing field to all without discrimination, the question arises as to whether this demand should extend to individuals involved in terrorism. The intersection of democracy and counterterrorism efforts has led certain countries to grapple with the issue of whether individuals with known ties to terrorism should be permitted to participate in electoral processes. Balancing the principles of democratic participation and national security, many nations have opted to restrict or prohibit individuals associated with terrorist activities from running in elections.

In the face of persistent threats from extremist groups, Egypt has implemented stringent measures to prevent individuals linked to terrorism from participating in elections. The government contends that these measures are crucial for maintaining stability and preventing the infiltration of extremist ideologies into the political sphere.

Existing laws of United States prevent those engaged in terrorism-related activities from holding public office. This underscores the U. S. commitment to balancing security concerns with democratic principles, ensuring that individuals actively involved in terrorism are not entrusted with public responsibilities.

The United Kingdom has implemented measures to counter the influence of extremist ideologies, including legal restrictions on individuals with ties to terrorism. Such individuals may be barred from standing for public office to prevent the dissemination of radical views within democratic institutions. The U. K. underscores the necessity of striking a balance between security and democratic values.

Sri Lanka, having confronted challenges of terrorism in its recent history, has enacted laws to prevent individuals associated with terrorism

from contesting elections. These measures are part of broader efforts to maintain stability and prevent the resurgence of extremist activities.

The democratic process, characterized by its principles of fairness and inclusivity, encounters challenges when individuals associated with disruptive activities seek a level playing field in elections.

Affording a level playing field to individuals involved in riots conveys a disconcerting message regarding the sanctity of the rule of law. Those engaging in violent or disruptive conduct undermine the fundamental pillars of a democratic society founded on principles of order, justice, and respect for the rule of law. Riotous activities are often linked to public disorder, property damage, and threats to public safety. Permitting participation in elections by individuals engaged in such actions may heighten the risks of further unrest, creating an environment where electoral processes become arenas for violence rather than peaceful civic engagement.

The involvement of terrorists and rioters in elections has the potential to corrode trust in the democratic process. Citizens rightfully expect candidates to uphold the values of civil discourse, respect for differing opinions, and a commitment to peaceful coexistence. Allowing those associated with violent activities to contest elections may undermine public faith in the political system. Granting a level playing field to rioters risks normalizing violence as an acceptable means of expressing political dissent. This normalization establishes a hazardous precedent, potentially encouraging others to resort to disruptive and violent tactics to advance their political agendas, further destabilizing the democratic landscape.

Riotous activities often contribute to social polarization and divisiveness. Permitting individuals associated with such behavior to participate in elections may perpetuate and exacerbate

existing divisions within society. The political discourse may become increasingly hostile, hindering the ability to find common ground and address critical issues collaboratively. The inclusion of rioters in the electoral process may compromise the core democratic values of peace, tolerance, and respect for diverse perspectives.

Democratic systems are founded on the idea that individuals can peacefully express their views and compete for support without resorting to violence or coercion. Allowing rioters into the political arena challenges this foundational principle. While democracy encourages the participation of diverse voices, there are inherent challenges when individuals associated with riotous activities seek a level playing field in elections. The consequences of such a decision extend beyond the electoral arena, impacting public safety, civic trust, and the overall health of democratic institutions.

Governments and electoral bodies must carefully consider the implications of allowing rioters to participate in elections, weighing the principles of inclusivity against the potential risks to the democratic process. Striking a balance between ensuring a broad representation of political views and safeguarding the foundations of a peaceful and just society is essential for maintaining the integrity of democratic governance. As societies grapple with these complex issues, it becomes imperative to navigate the fine line between political participation and the preservation of the values that underpin a robust and resilient democratic system.

These elements assert that the majority constitutes authority and is always correct. In democratic societies, the principle of majority rule is often celebrated as a fundamental aspect of fair and representative governance. However, it is essential to examine the idea that the majority should always translate to authority. Throughout history, there have been numerous instances where the decisions of the majority have resulted in injustice, discrimination, and the marginalization of minority voices.

To be continued



Analysis

Abdul Basit Alvi

## MotoGP Racing: A Historical Overview and Introduction

Bilal Shafi

MotoGP, or Grand Prix motorcycle racing, stands as the pinnacle of global motorcycle competition. Rooted in Europe, its inception dates back to 1949 when the International Motorcycle Federation established the foundational rules and regulations. Originally featuring a 500cc engine, the racing landscape evolved in 2002 with the introduction of the MotoGP category, integrating both two-stroke 500cc and four-stroke 900cc engines.

The Genesis of MotoGP: 1949 World Championship: The inaugural motorcycle world championship in 1949, orchestrated by the International Motorcycle Federation, marked a historic milestone. Preceding the Second World War, the concept of a motorcycle world championship emerged in 1938, with eight races held in the European Championship. Edward Kulje, Ted Miller, and Cluge etched their names in history by securing victories in various categories, with Cluge earning the title of European champion.

This pivotal moment laid the foundation for international racing, leading to the 1949 World Championship, featuring races across different engine classes. Six races of the 500cc class, five races of the 350cc class, four races of the 250cc class, three races of the 125cc class, and sidcar events comprised this championship, setting the stage for the contemporary MotoGP championship.

1950s: A Shift in Power and Geoff Duke's Impact: Post-World War II, Great Britain emerged as a dominant force in 1950, with Les Graham, Freddie Firth, AJS, and Velocette clinching titles. British engines showcased durability, with Norton and Gileras making notable strides. In 1951 and early 1952, Geoff Duke's adoption of a single-piece leather outfit revolu-

tionized racing attire, leaving a lasting impact on the sport.

However, the balance of power shifted to the Italian team in 1957, with Galera, Mondial, and Guzzi withdrawing from racing. MV Agusta, led by Surtez, secured victories, ushering in the golden age of racing. The 1960s saw Giacomo Augustini dominating alongside notable riders such as Hailwood, Redman, Taveri, Phil Reid, Bill Evie, and Hugh Anderson.

Evolving Dynamics: The Advent of Two-Stroke Motorcycles: The 1970s and 80s witnessed a transformation in racing dynamics, marked by the growing popularity of two-stroke motorcycle events. Grid compositions evolved, with the current MotoGP class accommodating 20 to 24 riders and Moto2 and Moto3 featuring approximately 36 riders. Qualifying rounds on Saturday afternoons determine the starting positions, emphasizing uninterrupted driving from start to finish.

Innovations and Rule Changes: Flag-to-Flag in 2005: In response to changing weather conditions, MotoGP introduced the flag-to-flag rule in 2005. When rain hits any part of the track, a white flag signals that riders can change their bikes. The second bike must mirror the first, with only tire differences allowed, enhancing performance in adverse weather conditions.

Points System and Recognition: MotoGP employs a points system, awarding riders based on their finishing positions, with the race winner receiving a maximum of 25 points. The system extends to the fifteenth position, encouraging competitive spirit and ensuring recognition for racers across the board.

As MotoGP continues to evolve, its rich history and dynamic racing elements contribute to its status as the epitome of motorcycle racing on the global stage.

Writer is Media Sciences Student in Szabist University. He can be reached at [bilalshafi\\_mi@gmail.com](mailto:bilalshafi_mi@gmail.com)



ISSI holds Seminar and Exhibition

# 'Reflections of Resilience: Showcasing Kashmiri Identity through Art'

PPA

ISLAMABAD: In connection with commemoration of Kashmir Solidarity Day, the India Study Centre (ISC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) organized a Seminar and Exhibition on the theme of "Reflections of Resilience: Showcasing Kashmiri Identity Through Art." The primary purpose of the event was to go beyond the political and diplomatic lenses and to view the Kashmiri resistance from the art, literary and cultural prisms.

The Seminar brought together Kashmir movement's political figures, academics, artists, and think-tank experts to share their insights on the distinct Kashmiri identity and the Kashmiri struggle for self-determination.

The Chief Guest on the occasion was Ms. Mushaal Hussein Mullick, SAPM on Human Rights & Women Empowerment. The Seminar commenced with remarks by Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, Director General, ISSI. This was followed by a short documentary on Kashmiri resistance towards illegal Indian occupation. The speakers included: Dr. Memoona Khan, HoD Fine Arts Department, FJWU, Rawalpindi; Sardar Waheed Khan, Commissioner, Muzaffarabad, Azad Jammu & Kashmir; and Mr. Altaf Hussain Wani, Chairman, Kashmir Institute of International Relations (KIIR). A

young Kashmiri artist, Zohaib Zaman, presented musical rendition of a patriotic Kashmiri song.

Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, in his remarks, expressed gratitude to the speakers, attendees, and the students who took part in the accompanying art competition. He emphasized that art transcends the traditional boundaries of resistance and showcases the political struggle of Kashmiris under Indian illegal occupation and relentless oppression. The art Exhibition, organized today, underscores the power of artistic expression and encapsulates the essence of the Kashmiri struggle, he said.

Ambassador Sohail Mahmood underlined that art is the voice of the unheard and each stroke of the brush or each word flowing from the pen is a reminder of the conflict-stricken land and the trauma, resilience and collective struggle of the Kashmiri people. In this context, he recalled the poetry of Agha Shahid Ali, the cartoons of Mir Suhail, the artworks of Malik Sajad, and the novels of Basharat Peer and Mirza Waheed. The DG ISSI advised not to assume art as just brushstrokes, but rather as an expression of emotions and lived experience of a people enduring unabated repression but still fighting for their rights. He termed artists as torchbearers of the stories of Kashmir that must touch global consciousness.

Ms. Mushaal Hussein Mullick appre-

ciated ISSI's initiative to engage the young Pakistani and Kashmiri artists, to explore the heritage and culture of Kashmir. She said today's innovative event expresses solidarity with the Kashmiri people in a most meaningful way and helps uplift the spirits. She shared her own passion for the arts and highlighted her personal contribution to depicting both the beauty of Kashmir and the travails of its people under occupation. She also compared the struggle of the Kashmiri people with that of the Palestinians.

Ms. Mullick said that art is freedom of expression, but only one percent of Kashmiri businesses have the license to export Kashmiri culture and artworks. She proposed collecting and disseminating Kashmiri art through the social media for the whole world to see. She also recommended using artificial intelligence, theatre, music, commercial films, infographics, literature, Kashmiri festivals, and coffee table books for the projection of Kashmiri struggle. She stressed that if there is no space left for peaceful expression, Kashmiris will only have one recourse, i.e. of armed resistance, a right which was recognised by international law.

Dr. Memoona Khan, in her presentation, showcased the powerful artwork of various resistance artists from history. She observed that the valiant yet heart-wrenching struggle of Kashmiris is going on through physical means but



other mediums such as art is also being used to portray their resistance. She believed that among the types of books, the book of art is the most powerful.

Sardar Waheed Khan apprised the participants of the historical political struggles of the Kashmiri people. He stressed the importance of Kashmiris and Pakistanis working together for the promotion of the Kashmir cause, along with Kashmiri diaspora living around the world.

Mr. Altaf Hussain Wani opined that art is internationally recognized and has a wider reach and, therefore, must

be promoted. He highlighted the work of prominent cartoonist Mir Suhail and his depiction of the struggle of Kashmir through art. He recommended that Pakistan must continue reaffirming solidarity with and standing by the Kashmiri people.

After the remarks, prizes and certificates were distributed among the winners and participants of the art competition. The Seminar's proceedings were closed with remarks by Chairman BoG ISSI, Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, who stressed a peaceful resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir

dispute in accordance with the United Nations (UN) Security Council resolutions and the aspirations of the Kashmiri people. The Seminar highlighted the importance of creating awareness about the Jammu & Kashmir dispute and the need for international attention to resolve the ongoing conflict.

Later, the participants saw the Exhibition and display of paintings, illustrations, artworks, and handicrafts, which was inaugurated by the chief guest SAPM Mushaal Hussein Mullick, flanked by other speakers and distinguished guests.

## Amazing view

ISLAMABAD: A beautiful view of Islamabad city looking neat and clean after the heavy rain late night in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online

## Rise Announces 2024 Global Mentoring Programme

PPA

LONDON: Rise, the award-winning advocacy group for gender diversity in the broadcast media technology sector, is excited to announce its 2024 global mentoring programme.

This year's mentoring initiative will span the UK, Europe, ANZ, APAC, India, and North America, aligning with Rise's mission of fostering inclusivity and diversity in the industry on a global scale. The 2024 activity will build on the successful delivery of two mentoring programmes in 2023, which supported 125 mentees globally.

Each regional cohort will follow a shared agenda, with the incorporation of tailored enhancements

to ensure its relevance to the unique dynamics of the local territory. The schedule will feature a combination of scheduled masterclasses and networking events, as well as the inclusion of responsive content based on feedback from participants. The participants will also have the opportunity to connect with other mentees across Rise chapters, creating a truly global networking experience.

Rise is actively seeking both mentees and mentors across all regions covered by the programme to expand its community. Interested parties are invited to submit applications via the Rise website from February 1st 2024 to February 29th 2024. The programme runs for a 6-month period, and

mentees are expected to commit to regular meetings with their mentors, attend scheduled events, and actively engage in the mentoring relationship.

Donna Smith, Managing Director at Rise said: "The impact of the Rise mentoring initiative extends far beyond the duration of the programme, it offers a valuable community that is invested in the growth and development of all participants. Previous mentees have shared inspiring success stories, highlighting career advancements, expanded networks, and increased confidence. The programme will continue to evolve based on the needs of both our mentees and mentors as well as our sponsors and supporters."

Carla Maroussas, Programme Mentoring Manager at Rise said: "I am thrilled to unveil our 2024 edition of the initiative. This year's programme is not just a continuation; it's a global call to action for aspiring individuals in the broadcast and media technology industry."

The Rise mentoring programme is made possible due to invaluable support from leading industry organisations that share its commitment to empowering women in the broadcast and media technology sector. Sponsorship opportunities for the mentoring schemes and other Rise activities are still available. To find out more and to discuss how you can get involved, please contact:

## Qatari envoy calls on Feds Minister to discuss technical, education ties

PPA

ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador-designate of Qatar to Pakistan, Ali Mubarak A. E. Al-Khater called on the Federal Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training Madad Ali Sindhi in his office today on 1st February, 2024.

Madad Ali Sindhi welcomed the Qatar delegation and said that the two countries have cultural, linguistic and people to people love for each other. Madad Ali discussed exchange of expertise and knowledge regarding Vocational and Technical Training. He said that the two countries can benefit from the experience of each other. He acknowl-

edged and praised the long standing cordial relation between the two countries.

Madad Ali welcomed exchange of teachers and students to further mutual cooperation. He said that there is significant potential in cooperation between the two countries. He said that Teacher's Training and quality of education have been given the highest priority since he has taken the office. He said that Pakistan and Qatar should enhance their bilateral ties specially in exchange of technology, education and research. He said that digitalisation of the education sector can address numerous challenges of today and tomorrow. He highlighted

the E-Taleem and Teleschool platforms developed by the Ministry of Education in its bid to develop digital solutions to prevalent problems in the public education sector.

Madad said that Pakistan has always collaborated with muslim countries and looks forward to enhancing bilateral and multilateral cooperation with Qatar. He appreciated the developments in the education sector of Qatar and said that through exchange of expertise Pakistan can learn from their road to progress. Madad acknowledged the booming construction and hospitality sector of Qatar and expressed his desire to enhance collaboration in these fields.



Ambassador of Republic of Qatar to Pakistan said that People of Qatar

have deep affiliation with Pakistan. He said that University to University cooperation and Technical Institution to Technical Institution collaboration is the way forward. Madad said that the two countries should exchange expertise on the development of digital learning platforms, in order to benefit from the experience of each other.

Madad Ali Sindhi praised the current governments efforts in modernising the education system of Pakistan. Federal Minister thanked the Ambassador and highlighted the cordial and friendly relations between the two countries. Minister said that the two countries have shared history and literature.

## COMSTECH Organizes Kazakhstan Alumni Forum Meeting

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: COMSTECH organized 4th meeting of Kazakhstan Alumni Forum on Thursday at COMSTECH Secretariat. Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General COMSTECH said that the Ambassador of Kazakhstan in Pakistan H. E. Yerzhan Kistafin is one of the best in his cadre and he is behind the formation of Kazakhstan Alumni Forum.

He introduced the experts invited to deliver the lectures. Prof. Choudhary said that the leadership of Kazakhstan is playing very important role in the world affairs. He appreciated the role of Kazakhstan in played for the COMSTECH. He said that Kazakhstan have high ranking world class institution.

Prof. Choudhary said that each one of us has a story of love and affection with Kazakhstan. Prof. Choudhary appreciated the bios-



security and biosafety idea of the President of Kazakhstan.

Many participants shared their thoughts and suggestions. They suggested the establishment of a good language institution in

Pakistan to teach Kazakh and Russian languages to the students. They also suggested that Kazakh students should also come to Pakistan and spend 6 to 12 months in Pakistan to complete their study.

They also suggested to organize seminars about the education opportunities being offered by Kazakhstan to Pakistani students, liaison between Pakistani and Kazakh relevant regu-

latory and education institutions, online admission and exchange of high-tech delegations between the two nations. They appreciated the excellent education system of Kazakhstan.

H. E. Yerzhan Kistafin, Ambassador of Kazakhstan thanked Prof. Choudhary for organizing the 4th meeting at COMSTECH. He talked about key recent initiatives such as the establishment of

Kazakh house in Lahore, starting of direct flights from Lahore to Kazakhstan and events organized recently for solidifying the relationship between Pakistan and Kazakhstan. He said the direct connection between Pakistani educational institutions and Kazakh institutions have been made possible. He thanked the alumni for their comments and suggestions. He suggested them to share your experience with others who are willing to study in Kazakhstan.

During the meeting Prof. Dr. Shoab Ahmed Khan and Prof. Dr. Atia-tul-Wahab delivered presentations on applications of artificial intelligence in healthcare sector, and aromatase inhibitors for breast cancer treatment respectively. Both the presentations were highly appreciated by the participants.

Forty Kazakhstan alumni registered to join the meeting.



## Bull & Bears PSX 100-Share Index Fluctuation

### Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index

Current	Prev. Close
62,393.73	61,979.18
Day's High	Day's Low
62,480.23	61,764.69
Index Value	Change
8,983,054,068	+414.55
Percentage	Time
+0.67%	1 Feb, 2024 5:00 pm

### Europe: FTSE 100 Index

Index Value	Change
7,622.16	-8.41
Percentage	Time
-0.11%	1 Feb, 4:35 pm GMT

### USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average

Index Value	Change
38,339.79	+189.49
Percentage	Time
+0.50%	1 Feb, 12:17 pm GMT-5

### Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average

Index Value	Change
36,011.46	-275.25
Percentage	Time
-0.76%	1 Feb, 3:15 pm GMT+9

### Open Market Forex Rates

Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	182	183.8
Bahrain Dinar	743.39	751.39
Canadian Dollar	205	207
China Yuan	39.21	39.61
Danish Krone	40.68	41.08
Euro	301.5	304.5
Hong Kong Dollar	35.45	35.8
Indian Rupee	3.37	3.48
Japanese Yen	2.1	2.18
Kuwaiti Dinar	908.51	917.51
Malaysian Ringgit	58.52	59.12
New Zealand \$	171.76	173.76
Norwegians Krone	26.76	27.06
Omani Riyal	727.03	735.03
Qatari Riyal	76.83	77.53
Saudi Riyal	74.6	75.6
Singapore Dollar	207	209
Swedish Korona	26.74	27.04
Swiss Franc	325.49	327.99
Thai Bhat	7.85	8
U.A.E Dirham	76.5	77.4
UK Pound Sterling	355	358
US Dollar	279.6	281.8

## Faysal Bank and Total Parco sign agreement for digital payments acceptance

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Faysal Bank Limited and Total Parco, signed an agreement for the provision of cashless transactions across Total Parco's extensive retail network.

Through this alliance Faysal Bank's state-of-the-art point-of-sale card acceptance solution will provide Total Parco's customers the ability to make payments via cards as well as NFC solutions.

Commenting on the partnership, Mr. Yousaf Hussain, President & CEO, Faysal Bank, stated, "At Faysal Bank we are privileged to have a multi-faceted relationship with Total Parco. This arrangement with Total Parco, is a testament of our agenda to increase the acceptance and digital footprint across the country through Faysal Bank's sharia-compliant financial solutions."

Speaking at the occasion, Mr. Asif Iqbal, CEO Total Parco, said, "At Total Parco, we acknowledge the needs of our customers

# Ethiopia, Pakistan discuss economic cooperation

PPA

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on Thursday explored different avenues for economic cooperation during a bilateral meeting took place here in Islamabad at the Ministry of Finance.

H. E. Dr. Eyob Tekalign Tolina, State Minister of Finance, led the Ethiopian delegation while the Pakistan side was led by H. E. Dr. Shamshad Akhtar, Finance Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan H. E. Jameel Ahmad and senior officers of the Ministry of Finance of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan were also present during the highly level engagement between the two countries.

Both sides had a productive discussion on the matters of mutual interest including the bilateral cooperation in financial sector of both countries.

The two countries expressed the resolve to bolster economic cooperation between the two brotherly countries.

Earlier, H. E. Dr. Eyob Tolina, State Minister of Finance, FDR Ethiopia along with his delegation was called on Dr. Inayat Hussain, Deputy Governor State Bank of Pakistan.

During the meeting, cooperation between the two countries in the banking sector came under discussion.



## Meeting

ISLAMABAD: The CDWP meeting presided over by Deputy Chairman Planning Commission Mohammad Jehanzeb Khan on Thursday, Secretary Planning Manzoor Sumra, senior officials from Planning Commission and Federal Ministries/Divisions participated in the meeting, while Chairman/ACS (Dev) from Provincial Governments also participated in the meeting.



Photo: PID

## ICCI and Bahria University to collaborate to promote entrepreneurship

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) along with a delegation met with Vice Admiral (R) Asif Khaliq, Rector, Bahria University, and discussed prospects of collaboration between the two institutions to promote entrepreneurship and improve the competitiveness of the industrial sector.

Speaking on the occasion, Vice Admiral (R) Asif Khaliq, Rector, Bahria University briefed the ICCI delegation about the initiatives of his institution. He said that Bahria is working to groom today's youth into tomorrow's leaders. He said that Bahria is providing an environment for promising minds to come together, develop new ideas, and make significant contributions to the country's economic development. He said that academia has cutting-edge research while industry faces many challenges, therefore, close cooperation between Bahria and ICCI would help resolve issues of industry and produce innovative products for



exports. He said that Bahria is ready to join hands with ICCI for the mentorship of students to give them practical skills and experience that would improve their employability.

Speaking on the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry stressed for close academia-industry linkages to address industrial problems and improve industrial productivity. He said that universities are producing good research and close collaboration between academia-industry would help tailor such

research works to meet industry needs. He said that academia-industry linkages can lead to the commercialization of academic research, promote innovations, and accelerate the economic growth of the country. He said universities should play a role in producing IT professionals who could significantly contribute to improving the country's IT exports.

Faad Waheed, Senior Vice President ICCI said that ICCI and Bahria should join hands to develop curricula and training programs that align with the needs of the industry.

## Business Facilitation Center will transform Pindi into business district: Saqib Rafiq

PPA

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) President Saqib Rafiq has stated that the Business Facilitation Center (BFC) will transform Rawalpindi into a business district.

RCCI President Saqib Rafiq in a statement lauded the Punjab Government especially personal commitment and interest of Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi towards providing facilitation to the business community and termed it a vital step towards facilitating investment and industrialization in the region.

He remarked that the establishment of the Business Facilitation Center for the business community in six cities of Punjab including Rawalpindi is a key initiative towards ease of doing business which will provide seamless interaction between the business community and 36 different departments.



The centre will process investor applications for necessary permits, and departmental representatives will be available for prompt assistance to enhance the city's business, he added.

At BFC Rawalpindi, representatives of 18 departments, including Wapda, Nadra, SNGPL, environment, livestock, tourism, local government, PHA, Wasa, irrigation and police and other concerned departments have been stationed who are responsible for guiding and taking prompt action on requests of the business community.

## Fly Jinnah announces the launch of Int'l Operations

PNP

KARACHI: Fly Jinnah, Pakistan's low-cost carrier, announces the commencement of its international operations with the launch of its inaugural flight connecting Pakistan's capital city Islamabad with the city of Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates starting from February 17th, 2024. This step marks a significant milestone in the carrier's growth journey after a successful year of serving domestic routes in Pakistan.

Fly Jinnah will connect both cities with non-stop double daily flights, offering customers seamless and convenient travel options.



The new service will also provide customers in Islamabad with the opportunity for further connectivity via Sharjah Airport's wide network.

Fly Jinnah added two new Airbus A320 aircraft to its existing fleet to support the launch of its international operations. This strategic expansion brings the total number of aircraft in Fly Jinnah's fleet to five, enhancing the airline's capacity to cater to the increasing demand for reliable and affordable air travel.

## Makkah Halal Forum 2024

# Saudi Commerce Minister Witnesses FPCCI-MANAFEFA agreement

PPA

KARACHI: Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh, President FPCCI, has represented Pakistan's private sector in Makkah Halal Forum 2024; and, has apprised that the global Halal foods market size has reached a whopping \$2.5 trillion. It doesn't stop there as it will continue to grow at 13.5 percent per year for the next 10 years - resulting in an expected more than two-fold increase in the global market size to \$5.8 trillion by the year 2033.

The highlight of FPCCI delegation's visit was signing of FPCCI-MANAFEFA Agreement; which was witnessed by H. E. Mr. Majid bin Abdullah Al Qasabi, Commerce Minister of Saudi Arabia. MANAFEFA Partnership is a coalition of

Makkah Chamber, Madina Chamber, Jeddah Chamber, Taif Chamber and Islamic Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture. The agreement is aimed at enhancement of Pakistan's export to OIC countries in general and Saudi Arabia in particular, he added.

Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh explained that Pakistan has got all what it takes to swiftly claim its share in the global Halal foods market as all food products produced in Pakistan are Halal; and, no extra labor or costs will incur if we target more of that produce to exports. Interestingly, Halal foods market is growing in most of the countries - irrespective of whether Muslim or not.

President FPCCI highlighted that tapping into GCC countries holds the key to multiplying Pakistani Halal foods

exports; i.e. Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain and Oman; for the reason that Pakistan has very warm and brotherly relations with these countries - and, these countries are willing to help us to deal with our economic woes.

During the visit, Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh held important meetings with Sheikh Abdullah Saleh Kamel, President Islamic Chamber of Commerce, Industry & Agriculture (ICCIA); Sheikh Khalifa Bin Jassim Bin Mohd Al-Thani, President Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Qatar & VP ICCIA; Mr. RIFAT Hisarickioghlu, President TOBB & VP ICCLA; Mr. Alhaji Dalbatu Abubakar, President CONSCCIMA; Mr. Ali Adji Mahamat Seid, President CCIAMA and Mr. Faman Toure, President CCI-COTE



DIVOIRE.

Notably, FPCCI delegation also

comprised of Mr. Karim Aziz Malik,

Chairman Capital Office, FPCCI &

Malik Sohail Hussain, Chairman Coordination, FPCCI.



# Rovman Powell Dubai Capitals edge Desert Vipers ILT20

Sports Desk

DUBAI: Ben Dunk's brisk half-century, followed by Rovman Powell's unbeaten 40 led Dubai Capitals to an enthralling four-wicket victory over Desert Vipers in the 17th match of the ILT20 here on Thursday.

Put into bat first, the Vipers registered a decent total of 169/6 in the allotted overs, courtesy of their openers Rohan Mustafa and Alex Hales.

The duo gave the Vipers a flourishing start with an 81-run opening partnership.

Mustafa led the stand with clean hitting and notched up his half-century in the process but failed to stretch his sensational knock.

He perished in the ninth over after scoring 50 off 33 deliveries with the help of four boundaries and three sixes.

Meanwhile, Hales stood his ground firm and put together a cautious 35-run partnership with skipper Colin Munro but fell agonizingly short of his well-deserved fifty.

He fell victim to Jason Holder in the 14th over, scoring a 32-ball 49 which



featured two boundaries and four sixes.

Following Hales' dismissal, the Vipers lost three more wickets in quick succession and as a result, slipped to 127/5 in 16.4 overs.

However, Adam Hose and Wanindu Hasaranga added a quickfire 36 at the death to bolster the total.

Hasaranga perished on the penulti-

mate delivery after scoring 12 off seven while Hose remained unbeaten with his quick cameo. He smashed two boundaries and three sixes on his way to a 17-ball 35.

For the Capitals, Sikandar Raza, Akif Raja, Holder, Scott Kuggeleijn and Dushmantha Chameera picked one wicket apiece.

In return, the Capitals amassed the 170-run target on the last delivery of the innings.

The home side had a shaky start to their innings as they lost Rahmanullah Gurbaz (4) on the third delivery.

Substituted in to bat at number three, Ben Dunk took on the strong Vipers' bowling attack and scored at a brisk rate.

He smashed seven boundaries and two sixes on his way to a 30-ball 59.

However, Dunk's dismissal in the ninth over, dented the Capitals' march towards the pursuit.

But Rovman Powell held his nerves calm and steered his side to glory with a sensible knock. His 32-ball 40 featured three boundaries and a six.

Wanindu Hasaranga and Shaheen Afridi bagged two wickets each for the Vipers while Mohammad Amir Mustafa struck out a batter apiece.

The four-wicket victory lifted Dubai Capitals to the second in the ILT20 standings with six points in six matches while Desert Vipers remained at the bottom with four points in as many matches.

# Dhananjaya de Silva believes aggression is key to halt Sri Lanka's Test slide

Sports Desk

LAHORE: Sri Lanka needs more on-field aggression to reestablish its Test prowess, new captain Dhananjaya de Silva said on Thursday ahead of their one-off Test against Afghanistan.

The island nation is dead last on the World Test Championship (WTC) rankings and their last match in October at the same ground saw a humiliating innings and 222-run loss to Pakistan in their worst-ever home defeat.

They slipped to eighth in the global Test rankings last week after Australia's loss at home to the West Indies, and de Silva said his side had failed to make an impact with their cautious play.

"I have been telling the guys the last few days the need to play aggressive cricket," he told reporters.

"Test matches are won by taking 20 wickets so you can't be defensive in your mindset. You've got to set up attacking fields."

Sri Lanka's first Test for the year starts Friday in Colombo and is not part of the World Test Championship but offers a



valuable opportunity to trial the team's overhaul.

De Silva was one of three captains appointed last month to lead Sri Lanka's Test, ODI and T20 teams — the first time the island has had separate skippers for all three formats.

The middle-order batsman and handy off-spinner takes charge ahead of a full tour slate for the year including a three-

Test series in England.

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Three uncapped players are among Sri Lanka's 16-member squad as part of the generational refresh.

"This year is going to be a very big one for us in 'Test match cricket,'" de Silva said. "Start off with a win and then obviously the long-term goal is to improve on our

rankings."

Afghanistan are making a name for themselves in white-ball cricket but have had fewer chances to impress in five-day matches since being granted Test status in 2017.

Captain Hashmatullah Shahidi said that more chances to play five-day games would make his side a force to be reckoned with.

"We have a good domestic structure in place," he said.

"The good thing is a lot of young players are coming through. We do not get many chances in Test match cricket," he added.

"More Tests means we will know more about the game. That's the only way we can improve... It's a good opportunity for the players here and we are ready for the game."

Afghanistan will be without star leg-spinner Rashid Khan, who is recovering after back surgery.

Notably, this will be the first time Sri Lanka and Afghanistan will face off in a Test match. Both teams will also play three ODIs in Kandy and three T20 matches in Dambulla after the one-off Test in Colombo.

# Babar Azam credits Sarfaraz Ahmed for his success

A Sports

LAHORE: Former Pakistan captain Babar Azam credited his predecessor Sarfaraz Ahmed for his success in international cricket and emergence as one of the top batters in the world currently.

Babar hosted a Space session on X, formerly Twitter, and answered the questions from his fans, submitted by using the hashtag "Ask Babar".

"Are you as excited as I am for the live Twitter Space? I'll be answering questions already submitted using #AskBabar. Send your questions and tune in. I will answer as many questions as possible," wrote Babar.

While answering the questions Babar Azam opened up on his relationship with Sarfaraz Ahmed and asserted that the latter played a major role in his success.



"[Sarfaraz Ahmed] backed me and supported me a lot. Wherever I am

now, is because of him," said Babar. Follow us on our Official WhatsApp

channel

Remember, Babar made his T20I debut for Pakistan under Sarfaraz's captaincy and received notable support from then-captain Sarfaraz, especially in the longest format.

Babar Azam continued to reveal about his bond with Sarfaraz Ahmed and shared that the wicketkeeper batter has immense love for his bats.

"Saifi bhai likes my bats a lot and he always says that it's my bat now and you should choose another one for the match," reveals Babar.

In an interview last year, Sarfaraz Ahmed also asserted that the two cricketers share a strong relationship.

"My relationship with Babar, Rizwan and other players is very good. We played together for five years. Babar, Imam, Hassan, Shadab, Faheem, Rumman, Anwar, we all share a very good bond," he shared.

# Lewis Hamilton set for Ferrari switch for 2025 season: reports

Sports Desk

LAHORE: Seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton is about to make a surprise switch to Ferrari for the 2025 season, according to reports on Thursday.

The Italian team want the 39-year-old Briton to partner their current driver Charles Leclerc, according to a number of reports in Britain and Italy.

The BBC reported that Mercedes team staff were called to a meeting with boss Toto Wolff at their UK headquarters on Thursday to be told Hamilton will leave at the end of the 2024 season and head to one of Formula One's most storied names.

Reports in Italy say the move could be announced officially as early as Thursday evening.

A move to Ferrari would raise eyebrows because Hamilton has signed a two-year contract with his current team Mercedes for the 2024 and 2025 seasons, but that deal reportedly contains a clause allowing him to leave after one season.

Several reports say Lewis Hamilton's agreement with Ferrari was put together hastily as the team was in talks with Spanish driver Carlos Sainz, whose deal runs out at the end of this season, about a contract extension.

Hamilton won the last of his world titles in 2020 but lost the 2021 championship in controversial fashion to Max Verstappen when the race director ignored the safety car rules in Abu Dhabi, effectively blocking the Briton's route to victory in both that grand prix and the



championship.

The Dutch Red Bull driver, who is 13 years younger than Hamilton, has dominated the F1 scene ever since.

Hamilton finished sixth in the drivers' standings in 2022 and third in 2023.

Ferrari, who have admit-

ted they held discussions with Hamilton in 2019 about joining them in the future, declined to comment on the reports they were negotiating a switch for the 2025 season.

A Ferrari spokesman said: "We do not comment on rumours." Mercedes did not reply when

contacted by AFP.

Lewis Hamilton has never hidden his anger at the 2021 incident in Abu Dhabi, believing he was robbed of an eighth title that would have put him ahead of Ferrari legend Michael Schumacher.

He has made clear his frustration with the performance of his Mercedes car in the last two years and might believe a move to Ferrari would enable him to reignite his challenge for that elusive history-making title.



Chess Association Punjab (CAP) President Dr Naem Rauf chairs an important meeting of CAP Executive Council at a local hotel.

## Omar Associates Clinched RCA Karachi Inter Departmental Cricket League title



Sports Desk

KARACHI: Omer Associates won the RCA Karachi Inter Departmental Cricket League Tournament after beating Barrington Crescent Associates by 6 Wickets at KCCA Stadium. The Tournament is being organized by Regional Cricket Association Karachi.

On this occasion the Chief Guest Nadeem Omar President Regional Cricket Association Karachi distributed the Prizes. Nadeem Omar Congratulated the Tournament Committee specially Chairman Tournament Committee Khalid Nafees, Tournament Secretary M. Touseef Siddiqui and Azam Khan for Organizing a beautiful Tournament and assured full cooperation in future for the promotion of Cricket in Karachi. In the end Nadeem Omar distributes the Prizes among the players.

Winner Trophy and Cash Award Rupees Two Lacs received by Yasir Mushtaq Captain Omar Associates, Runner-up Trophy and Cash Award Rupees One Lac received by Faraz Ahmed Khan Captain Barrington Crescent Associates. Cash award received by Asad ul Haq Best Batsman, Latif Ahmed Best Bowler both Top Link, Hashir Ansari Best Wicket Keeper Ixex Pakistan, Rupees Ten thousands each received by Saqib Khan Man of Final Match, Waleed Azeem Player of the Tournament both of Omar Associates. On this occasion Ali Hussain, Syed Irshad Ahmed Gilani Vice Presidents, Khalid Nafees Chairman Tournament Committee, M. Touseef Siddiqui Tournament Secretary Azam Khan, Zonal and Regional office bearer, distinguish Guest and Large number of players attended the ceremony.

Earlier Final Match reduced on 30 overs due to heavy over-night rain. Omar Associates beat Barrington Crescent Associates by 6 Wickets. Barrington Crescent Associates 107 all out in 29.5 overs. Muhammad Asghar 21. Saqib Khan (mf) 4/15, Muhammad Asad (sla) 2/21, M. Tariq Khan (sla) 2/26.

Omar Associates 109/4 in 19.5 overs. Ram Ravi 49 3x4 1x6, Yasir Mushtaq 26. Faraz Ahmed Khan (sla) 2/19, Muhammad Asghar (sla) 2/31.

## Shahid Afridi lights up Sindh Premier League with half-century



A Sports

KARACHI: Former Pakistan captain and star all-rounder Shahid Afridi stole the show in the ongoing Sindh Premier League (SPL) with an enthralling half-century.

Representing Benazirabad Lal in the ongoing tournament, Afridi announced his arrival in style as he smashed a quickfire 50 in just 32 balls.

His entertaining knock featured four boundaries and as many sixes.

Pakistan Test batter Sohaib Maqsood supported Shahid Afridi with a 48-ball 57 and powered Benazirabad Lal to a decent total of 157/6 in the allotted 20 overs.

But their efforts went in vain as Mirpurkhaas Tigers emerged triumphant, courtesy of Umar Amin and Qasim Akram's quickfire half-centuries.

Amin top-scored for the Tigers with a 37-ball 88 which featured six boundaries and eight sixes while Akram struck seven boundaries and two sixes on his way to a 20-ball 50.

Earlier this week, Shahid Afridi came out in support of his former teammate Mohammad Hafeez and stated that he should be given more time in his role as Pakistan's team director.

While speaking to the media on Tuesday during a private ceremony, Afridi asserted his weight behind Hafeez saying that he cannot change things overnight.

"[Mohammad] Hafeez has played a lot of cricket, he should be given more time [as team director]," said Afridi.

"If someone thinks that everything will change in one series, it is wrong thinking."

Notably, Mohammad Hafeez replaced Mickey Arthur as the director of the Pakistan cricket team in November last year.

In his first assignment, Pakistan suffered a clean sweep at the hands of Australia in the away Test series, followed by a 4-1 loss in the T20I series against New Zealand.

Shahid Afridi also shed light on Pakistan's performance on the aforementioned tours.

"We missed some opportunities during the New Zealand and Australia tours, failing to perform at our level best," added Afridi.



## Credentials

ISLAMABAD: The Ambassadors-Designates of Russia, Italy and Mongolia presenting their diplomatic credentials to President Dr. Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, on Thursday.



Photo: PID

# President for expanding trade, economic & cultural relations with Russia, Italy & Mongolia

## Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has urged the need to further expand trade, economic, cultural and people-to-people relations with Russia, Italy and Mongolia. He said that Pakistan offered immense investment opportunities for foreign investors and they should benefit from Pakistan's business-friendly environment by investing in various sectors

of its economy.

The President expressed these views while talking to the ambassadors-designates of Russia, Italy and Mongolia, who separately called on him and presented their diplomatic credentials at Aiwan-e-Sadr, today. Speaking to the Ambassador-designate of the Russian Federation to Pakistan, Mr Albert P. Khorev, the President expressed Pakistan's desire to further strengthen bilateral

relations with Russia in the fields of trade, economy, tourism and culture. He expressed the hope that the new ambassador would further promote bilateral ties between the two countries.

Talking to the Ambassador-designate of Italy to Pakistan, Ms Marilina Armellini, the President highlighted the need to further enhance bilateral trade between the two countries. He said that Italian

investors should benefit from the investment opportunities under the Special Investment Facilitation Council in various sectors.

He stated that the Pakistani diaspora in Italy was playing an important role in the development of Italy and was acting as a bridge between the two countries. He also asked the ambassador to help in expediting the issuance of visas to Pakistani students. Speaking

to the non-resident Ambassador of Mongolia to Pakistan, Mr Tuvshin Badra, the President said that both countries needed to further promote, trade, economic, and cultural relations for the mutual benefit of the two sides. The President congratulated the newly appointed envoys and expressed the hope that they would play their role in further improving bilateral ties with Pakistan.

# Aneeq discuss various aspects of upcoming Hajj arrangements with Saudi Envoy

## PPA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Religious Affairs Aneeq Ahmed discuss various aspects of upcoming Hajj arrangements with Saudi Envoy Nawaf Saeed ul Maliki today at Saudi Embassy.

Both leaders deliberated on finalizing the arrangements for the next pilgrimage. Minister Aniq Ahmed highlighted the comprehensive preparations being made ahead of schedule this year.

Pakistani Hajj pilgrims will now be able to complete their Saudi visa bio-metrics using the Bio App from the comfort of their homes.

Aneeq further told that



his ministry will announce a detailed training and bio-metric schedule for the

pilgrims next week.

Pakistan has implemented several unique and exemplary measures for the convenience of its pilgrims this year. Saudi Ambassador Nawaf Saeed Al-Maliki congratulated Pakistan for its inclusion in the top three countries receiving awards for best coordination and providing the best hajj services.

He praised Minister Aniq Ahmed for ensuring excellent facilities for the pilgrims and acknowledged the commendable role of the Pakistani Ministry of Religious Affairs and Hajj Mission in providing services and facilities to the honored pilgrims.

# ECP convenes emergency meeting on law & order situation

## City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has convened a meeting today to discuss law and order situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan.

Caretaker Interior Minister, Interior Secretary, Chief Secretaries and Inspectors General of both provinces as well as representatives of intelligence agencies have been invited to attend the meeting.

It is pertinent to mention here that at least six people were killed and 13 others sustained injuries in three violent incidents in Balochistan's Sibi, Quetta and Chaman and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Bajaur district within span of a day.

The wave of violence began in Sibi when four people were killed and five others sustained injuries in a blast that occurred at Jinnah Road Sibi near political party's rally on Tuesday. The police said that the explosive material was installed in a motorcycle that led to explosion. The law enforcers have cordoned off the area and called bomb disposal squad. Separately, scores of armed attacks in Chaman, Quetta and other areas in Balochistan left a political activist dead and four others injured on Wednesday. Unidentified assailants opened fire at the Awami National Party (ANP) office in Chaman leaving a party activist Zahoor Ahmed dead, while another worker was injured.

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# ECP announces public holiday on Feb 8

## City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has announced February 8th (Thursday) as a public holiday, aiming to provide voters the opportunity to cast their votes conveniently.

The ECP spokesperson said in a statement that the declared holiday, referencing sections (4) and 8 © of the Election Act 2017, is granted to

empower voters in exercising their right to franchise freely and conveniently. With the general elections 2024 a week away, reports are suggesting that educational institutions across the country would get eight holidays in February.

With the formal commencement of the election campaign, candidates from all political parties have started holding corner meetings and door-to-door canvassing as general elections 2024

are all set to be held on Feb 8.

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) also set in motion the printing of ballot papers [Form 33], featuring the names of candidates alongside their respective electoral symbols.

The printing is slated for completion by February 3. Subsequently, the ECP will oversee the secure delivery of the ballots to every district, entrusting the task to the Pakistan Army.

Meanwhile, reports circulating on

social media suggested that educational institutions across Pakistan would get eight holidays from Feb 4 to Feb 12.

According to the reports, February 4 is Sunday, February 5 is Kashmir Day, while there will be holidays from February 6 to 10 on the account of Pakistan vote.

While, February 11 will be Sunday again and thus schools, colleges and universities will re-open on February 12 after eight holidays

# Caretaker govt fully prepared & committed to hold elections on February 8: Solangi



## Bureau Report

KARACHI: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Thursday said that the caretaker government was fully prepared and committed to conduct general elections on February 8.

He was addressing a seminar on "Challenges and Roadmap for the New Government", organized by the Press Information Department.

The minister said that as the government's spokesperson, he had been reiterating the caretaker government's commitment for holding elections as per the schedule given by the Election Commission of Pakistan.

"The election process should

continue in any case and major issues facing the country, including economy, foreign policy, local governments, governance and civil service reforms, should also be discussed to find their solution," he remarked.

Solangi said that despite many flaws in the democratic system and electoral process, everyone was in agreement that the electoral process should not be stopped and elections should be held.

He said that since the formation of the caretaker cabinet on August 17, 2023, the government had been consistently reiterating its commitment that the elections would definitely be held and also on the scheduled date of February 8.

Today the security and weather problems were real, but elections in the past were held despite such issues, he added.

He reiterated that the 2008 and 2013 elections had security issues, while the first adult franchise polls were held on December 7, 1970 in bitterly cold weather.

The minister said that the country was facing multiple challenges and problems today.

# Cipher Case: PTI founder approaches IHC

## City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) founder on Thursday approached the Islamabad High Court (IHC), seeking a verified copy of the cipher verdict.

Barrister Ali Zafar filed the application on behalf of the PTI founder.

The application asserted that the cipher case was conducted against legal requirements and was replete

with legal defects.

It further stated that the defence counsel was not allowed to cross-examine the prosecution witness, and the trial court issued the verdict in violation of Section 367 of the Criminal Code.

The petitioner urged the court to provide copies of all evidence, including interim and final verdicts.

The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) and the state have been made parties in the petition.

# PTI to hold intra-party elections on February 5

## City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Thursday announced to hold its intra-party elections on February 5.

The intra-party elections schedule was released by Federal Election Commissioner Raouf Hassan on PTI's official X account.

On Dec 22, the electoral watchdog stripped Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) of its electoral symbol 'bat' symbol in a decision on founding member Akbar S Babar's petition

challenging the intra-party elections to be in line with the rules.

Following the decision, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) moved to Peshawar High Court, from where it got temporary relief as the decision of the electoral body was nullified, but it did not last for long, as the ECP filed a review on the decision, which was accepted by the two-member bench of PHC.

Later, PTI challenged the decision of the Peshawar High Court in the Supreme Court, but the court also upheld the decision of the high court.

# Firdous Ashiq Awan faces criticism during corner meeting, viral video

## News Desk

SIALKOT: The Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) candidate, Firdous Ashiq Awan, on Thursday faced strong criticism from the female residents of Sialkot's NA-70 constituency.

The former Pakistan Tehreek-e-

Insaf (PTI) candidate, Firdous Ashiq Awan, is contesting the general election 2024 as the IPP nominee from Sialkot's NA-70 constituency. In today's corner meeting, the candidate faced strong criticism from women attendees after she exchanged heated words and removed the garland from her neck.

# MQM-P candidates to use airplane for election campaign

## Bureau Report

KARACHI: For the first time in Pakistan, the candidates of Muttahida Qaumi Movement Pakistan (MQM-P) from different regions in Sindh have opted to conduct their election campaign via an airplane.

MQM-P rented a Skywing aircraft for February 3 and 4 that will be utilized in key constituencies, including Hyderabad, Mirpurkhas, and Nawabshah for the party's election drive.

The political party has also secured the necessary permissions from the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) for the use of the aircraft in the electoral mission.

# PTI files petition in SHC against likely arrests of party workers

## Bureau Report

KARACHI: The PTI has filed a petition in Sindh High Court (SHC) against likely arrest of over 4000 party workers.

Wahab Baloch advocate has filed petition in the high court on behalf of PTI leader Dr. Masroor Sial.

Petitioner said that these ploys being used to deny the PTI to win in the election. Petitioner claimed that 4,000 PTI workers will be arrested on the election day from polling and pleaded to the court to issue a restraining order against likely arrest of the PTI leaders and party workers.