

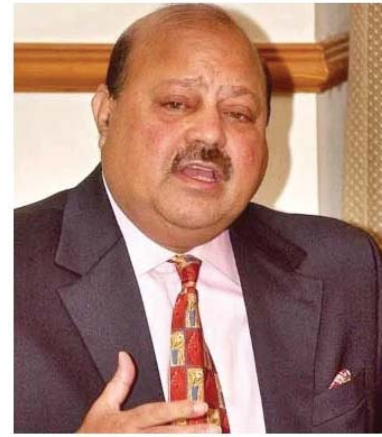
AJK to mark Kashmir Day with renewed commitment to end Indian occupation

Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: President Azad Kashmir Barrister Sultan Mehmood Chaudhry and prime minister Ch. Anwar ul Haq has said that Kashmir Solidarity Day, being observed annually on 5th February, serves as a powerful recognition of an age-old and unbreakable social, cultural and religious bond between the people of Pakistan and the people of Kashmir. In their separate messages issued on the eve of Kashmir day, the duo, while expressing their solidarity with the people of the Indian occupied territory of Jammu and Kashmir, said that the government and people of Azad Jammu and Kashmir stand shoulder to shoulder with their brethren in their struggle for the right

to self-determination. Kashmir Day, they said, would be celebrated in Azad Kashmir with a renewed commitment to strengthen the ongoing freedom struggle. They assured the Kashmiri people on the other side of the line of control (LoC) that the people of Pakistan and Azad Kashmir would stand shoulder to shoulder with them till they achieve their cherished goal of freedom from India's occupation. Lauding the Kashmiris' resilience and courage, they said, "Time is not far away when the people of Occupied Kashmir will achieve their cherished goal of freedom". They also paid eulogizing tributes to the Kashmiri martyrs who sacrificed their precious lives for the noble cause of freedom.

Denouncing India's belligerent military occupation and its sledgehammer policy against the Kashmiris, the president and prime minister noted that India has miserably failed in its attempts to break the Kashmiris' resolve despite using all possible means of oppression and suppression. "The Indian forces have used all means of oppression and suppression to subdue innocent and hapless Kashmiri people, but they stood firmly to their ground with the utmost courage and resilience," they said. Referring to the ultimate goal of the Kashmiris' ongoing struggle, they said, "The people of Jammu and Kashmir have aligned their fate with the state of Pakistan at a time when Paki-



stan had not yet come into being". "Kashmiris are proud of this historic decision", they said.

Hailing Pakistan's unwavering commitment and its consistent support to the Kashmir cause, they

pointed out that the people of Pakistan have always supported the Kashmiri people through every thick and thin. In his message, President Barrister Sultan Mehmood Chaudhry said that New Delhi must shun its policy of intransigence and pave the way for an early settlement of the long-running dispute through dialogue and diplomacy. He said that the Kashmiri people consider the state of Jammu and Kashmir as an indivisible entity. Barrister Sultan Mehmood Chaudhry said, "We want to make it clear to the international community that the Kashmiri people won't accept any solution to the Kashmir issue that is contrary to their wishes and aspirations".

Convocation

HYDERABAD: Graduates taking selfie during 20th Convocation of ISRA University in the city.



Photo: Online

February 8 day of examination for the people's Pakistan: Sardar Attique



Abdul Majeed Tahir

ISLAMABAD: President of All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference and former Prime Minister Sardar Attique Ahmad Khan has said that February 8 is a day of examination for the people of Pakistan. The workers should meet the test of February 8 and raise the green crescent flag in the country. The time demands that Pakistan should be put on the path of reconstruction and development and the economy of Pakistan should be strengthened. PML-N laid a network of motorways, laid a network of roads and provided employment opportunities to the people. All of us with one soul and full strength, let the candidates of the Muslim League-N succeed by keeping the election symbol of the lion in front of them. He expressed these views while addressing the public meeting held in the constituency of Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry, the nominated candidate for the National Assembly of League-N. Earlier, when the President Muslim Conference reached the meeting place at Barkati Islamabad, the President Muslim Conference was given a rousing welcome and they were taken to the meeting place in the form of a rally. On this occasion, the central leader of the Muslim Conference, Sardar Abid Razzak, Major Retired Nasrullah Khan and other workers were present. And take the concern forward. Sardar Attique Ahmad Khan said congratulate the Muslim Conference workers from all over Azad Kashmir, including Pakistan, who are present in this meeting. The workers should ensure that on the 8th date, Muslim League-N's success will be brought to Talwa and within the four provinces of Pakistan. League-N will be the government. People should vote for Muslim League-N. This is a vote for the economy of Pakistan. It is a vote for the development of Pakistan's democracy. It is a vote for a strong defense and bright future of Pakistan. People should make Tariq Fazal Chaudhry successful with a huge majority on February 8. On this occasion, Tariq Fazal Chaudhry thanked President Muslim Conference Sardar Attique Ahmad Khan and said that we welcome Sadr Muslim Conference for participating in the meeting and thank them for their cooperation.

Victory of PPP in Lahore certain: Bazal Naqvi

Bureau Report

Azad Jammu and Kashmir Minister for Social Welfare and Women's Development Syed Bazal Ali Naqvi has said that the victory of Chairman Pakistan People's Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari from NA-127 Lahore is certain. Syed Bazal Ali Naqvi said that the People's Party's manifesto is a people-friendly manifesto. Inshallah Pakistan People's Party will get a landslide victory in the elections and Bilawal Bhutto Zardari will be the Prime Minister of Pakistan. He said that Lahore martyr Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Shaheed Bay The people of Lahore are the city of Nazir Bhutto's fans. The people of Lahore have enthusiastically participated in Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's election campaign and the success of Chairman Pakistan People's Party is certain. He said that People's Party has brought the country out of crisis in every period. He said that Bilawal Bhutto is the hope of the young generation, the way Punjab has responded to the voice of Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Ms. Asifa Bhutto Zardari, it has shaken the ranks of political opponents he optimistically remarked.



Multan Traders announce full support to Jahangir Tareen in NA 149

Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: The Central Organization of Trade Unions of Pakistan, under the leadership of Central Chairman Khawaja Sulaiman Siddiqui, more than 100 Trade Unions Full Support to the Jahangir Khan Tareen, the candidate of NA-149, the head of the Istahkam Pakistan Party. Candidate of NA 150 of PML-N Haji Javed Akhtar Ansari. Candidate of Provincial Constituency 217 Sheikh Tariq Rasheed. Shahid Mehmood Khan, the candidate of Provincial Constituency 215, has announced his support and election campaign. He made this announcement during a press conference in the local hotel of Gulgasht Colony in the presence of Jahangir Khan Tareen and other candidates. That Central Senior Vice Chairman Sheikh Akram Hakim. Central Senior Vice President Haji Babar Ali Qureshi. Multan President Khalid Mahmood Qureshi. Syed Jafar Ali Shah. Mirza Naeem Baig. Saif Saeed Qureshi, Akmal Khan Baloch, Nasir Chauhan, Khwaja Rizwan,



Mian Maqbool Qureshi, Muhammad Shahbaz Qureshi, Mukhtar Hussain Qureshi, Khwaja Ahmed Rafiq Jami, Maulana Haq Nawaz Rafiq Siddiqui, Chaudhry Tahir Gujjar, Rana Ashraf, Khwaja Ajmal, Khwaja Irfan Siddiqui, Khwaja Aqeel Siddiqui, Yakub Rajput., Chaudhry Irshad, Malik Shahzad, Abdul Rehman Free, and others were also present on this occasion. Jahangir Khan Tareen said that I pray that the government completes five years so that the economy of the coun-

try improves. The business community is the backbone of the stability of the country's economy. If I leave the seat from Multan or Lodhran, I will not leave my responsibility and Multan will work side by side with the business community for the development. I am grateful to the business community for showing confidence in Insha'Allah, I will also play a full role to fulfill their trust, until India moves forward, the relations cannot improve and the persecution of the oppressed Kashmiris should be stopped. In response to a question, he said that in the previous era, I did 100 Percent work, if successful in Multan, I will do 500 Percent work. On this occasion, Khawaja Sulaiman Siddiqui said that Jahangir Tareen and PML-N will work day and night for the success of the candidates. Makhdoom also went to Shah Mehmood Qureshi, then he did nothing. There are trees, but Jahangir Tareen gave full support to the merchant community and freed the merchant community from the imprisonment of 50,000. Demonstrate responsibility for candidate success.

Pakistan Ulema Council announces support to PMLN across the country

Abdul Majeed

FAISALABAD: Pakistan Ulema Council will support Muslim League (N) in 88 National Assembly and 150 Provincial Assembly constituencies of Pakistan Muslim League (N) in Punjab province. And it is and will continue to strive for economic and economic stability. This was said by the leaders of Pakistan Ulema Council and Pakistan Muslim League (N) while addressing a joint press conference. The command of the Holy Qur'an is that "We cooperate in good affairs and the role of an accountant in non-Sharia affairs" and following the order of the Holy Qur'an, the leadership of the Pakistan Ulema Council has decided. That we declare our support and support to Pakistan Muslim League (N) and its allied parties across the country. There are thousands of direct votes related to the Pakistan Ulema Council on 88 seats of the National Assembly and

more than 150 seats of the Provincial Assembly in the province of Punjab, so in this regard, the Pakistan Ulema Council has informed the local leadership and people of the Pakistan Muslim League in all constituencies. Coordinators have been appointed to communicate with God willing, February 8 will be a day of good news for the people of Pakistan. Since our honorable leader Hazrat Maulana Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi Sahib is in caretaker government, Hazrat Maulana Muhammad Rafiq Jami, Maulana Haq Nawaz Khalid are present here in his place. We have a clear declaration that as long as the Muslim League (N) and its allied parties remain the defenders of religion, homeland, belief in the end of Prophethood, honorable prophethood and ideology of Pakistan, our cooperation will continue. Allama Abdul Haq Mujahid (Multan), Maulana Muhammad Rafiq Jami (Faisalabad), Maula-

na Noman Hasher (Rawalpindi), Maulana Muhammad Shafi Qasmi (Sahiwal), Maulana Asad Zakaria Qasmi (Karachi), Maulana Haq Nawaz Khalid (Faisalabad), Maulana Asadullah Farooq (Lahore), Allama Zubair Abid (Lahore), Allama Tahirul Hasan (Faisalabad), Maulana Obaidullah Gormani (Faisalabad), Maulana Muhammad Ashfaq Patafi (Muzaffargarh), Maulana Abu Bakr Hameed Sabri (Islamabad), Maulana Tahir Aqeel Awan (Rawalpindi), Maulana Naib Khan (Islamabad), Hafiz Abdul Hadi (Islamabad), Maulana Aminul Haque Ashrafi (Faisalabad), Maulana Habibur Rahman Abid (Faisalabad), Qari Kaleem Najam (Faisalabad), Qari



Abu Bakr Siddique Usmani (Faisalabad), Qari Abdul Hakeem Athar (Lahore), Maulana Muhammad Aslam Qadri (Lahore), Qari Mubashir Rahimi (Lahore), Maulana Ibrahim Hanafi (Lahore), Maulana Ishaq (Sahiwal), Maulana Muhammad Ahmad Makki

(Muzaffargarh), Qari Muhammad Qasim Sangi (Muzaffargarh), Mufti Imran Muawiya (Muzaffargarh), Muhammad Zulqarnain (Rajampur), Maulana Muhammad Farooq (Lahore), Maulana Anwarul Haque Mujahid (Multan), Maulana

Abdul Malik Asif (Multan), Pir Qari Muhammad Abu Bakr Naqshbandi (Multan), Maulana Pir Hameedullah Multani (Multan), Maulana Arshad Usmani (Bahawalpur), Qari Azizur Rahman Rahmani (Leh), Maulana Qari Ghul...



Islamabad
15° - 23° Clear

SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr	5:38 am
Zohr	12:22 pm
Asr	4:03 pm
Maghrib	5:41 pm
Isha	7:06 pm

EMERGENCY

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

Women Police Stations

Islamabad	9222596
Rawalpindi	9270601-20

ENQUIRY

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

HOSPITALS

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

DEPARTMENTS

CDA	9221334-43
CDA	9208301-04
Met Office	9250360-6
RDA	5555864
TMA	5770886
Cantonment Board	9270151-3
Islamabad Metropolitan	

Aamir Dogar says time to end oppression on February 8

Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: Tehreek-e-Insaf candidate NA 149 Malik Amir Dogar on PP 215 Moeen Riaz Qureshi, PP 216 Malik Adnan Dogar while addressing the meetings held in UC 69, 36, 21, 14, 2 said that oppression has changed on February 8. By sealing the sign of Ghariyal, we have to prove that we are united for the release of Imran Khan and himstand with the ideology of February 8 election day, break the idol of fear and cross all the obstacles, stamp the candidates of Tehreek-e-Insaf and make them successful with a huge majority so that the rights of the people in the National and Provincial Assembly are elected as usual. And boost the country's economy while fulfilling the responsibility of conservation They can play their role in saving the people from inflation, poverty and unemployment. The whole world is focused on the elections in Pakistan and the whole world is praying for the victory of the movement and Imran Khan. Aamir Dogar added that while solving the problems of the people during his tenure Development works in the constituency, which include the construction of Malik Salahuddin Dogar Block Emerson College, installation of water filtration plants, construction of four-walled cemetery, construction of Salahuddin Dogar Sports Hostel, sewage system New Lines and others.

Kashmir Solidarity Day a reminder that Kashmiris are not alone in their struggle for right of self-determination: Mushaal

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to Prime Minister for Human Rights and Women Empowerment Mushaal Hussein Mullick has said that Kashmir Solidarity Day serves as a reminder that the people of Jammu and Kashmir are not alone in their struggle against the Indian illegal occupation. She was addressing a press conference along with senior Hurriyyat leaders Farooq Rehmani, Ghulam Muhammad Safi and Mehmood Ahmad Saghar. The Special Assistant to the Prime Minister emphasized the unwavering support of the people of Pakistan, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), the Pakistani and Kashmiri Diaspora, and the global community for their Kashmiri brethren in their just struggle for the right of self-determination. She described the people of Jammu and Kashmir as a barrier against Modi's attempts to create

an Akhand Bharat. She characterized the Hindutva regime of India and the Zionist regime of Israel as significant threats to world peace. She asserted that both Modi and Netanyahu were in a race, with Modi pursuing a brutal genocide in Kashmir and Netanyahu in Palestine.

Expressing deep concern over the situation in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), Mushaal said that the authentic political leadership were unjustly incarcerated under various pretexts. She lamented the Indian government's ban on representative political parties that voice the aspirations of the people in IIOJK. She expressed her fear that her husband Mohammad Yasin Malik, a prominent figure in the political landscape of IIOJK, might be unfairly targeted and made a scapegoat for Modi's electoral triumph.

The Special Assistant to the Prime Minister asserted that

India was actively altering the demographics of the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) by indiscriminately granting Kashmiri domiciles to non-Kashmiris. She emphasized that the move by India was aimed at influencing any potential future plebiscite as outlined in the United Nations resolutions. She highlighted the historical stance of the people of IIOJK in boycotting farce elections in the region. She cautioned that any potential increase in turnout during the upcoming September elections could be attributed to the illegal settlements and the illegal issuance of Kashmiri domiciles to non-Kashmiris.

Mushaal expressed concern about the eradication of Muslim heritage under the auspices of the Modi government. She said that the inauguration of the Ram Mandir by Modi at the site where the historic Babri Masjid once stood was seen by RSS and



extremist Hindus as a triumph for Hindutva.

The Special Assistant to the Prime Minister asserted that India was involved in acts of terrorism within Pakistan. The available evidence regarding

recent targeted killings in Pakistan consistently points towards Indian involvement, she added. She further said that RSS had established a transnational terror network, actively conducting operations in various coun-

tries, including the United States, Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom. She urged the international community to intervene and make concerted efforts to curb the expansion of the RSS terror network.

Kashmir Solidarity Day

ISLAMABAD: Participants take part during a cycle rally in connection with Kashmir Solidarity Day, outside National Press Club in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online

Digital Show "Shaam Ki Chai" Season 3 Set to Traverse the 1947 Partition through Dialogue

PNP

LAHORE: Shaam Ki Chai, the acclaimed digital show conceived and hosted by Canadian-Pakistani powerhouse Nitasha Syed, is set to launch its highly anticipated Season 3, mid-February.

Building on the success of the first two series of the show, Nitasha Syed's third season of "Shaam Ki Chai" promises an immersive exploration into the historical discourse surrounding the 1947 Partition, focusing on lesser-known narratives that have been largely overshadowed by mainstream



accounts.

Indeed Nitasha Syed herself is a seasoned Sr. Product Manager with a background in software engineering, who

conceived Shaam Ki Chai with a passion for her Pakistani roots. Growing up in Canada, Nitasha felt a deep connection to her heritage but was

disheartened by the prevalent negative portrayal of Pakistan in the media. Determined to change the narrative, Nitasha conceived Shaam Ki Chai—a platform celebrating Pakistan's untold stories, challenging biases, and inspiring hope and understanding.

In the preceding seasons, Nitasha highlighted the accomplishments and narratives of the Pakistani diaspora, spotlighting their significant contributions to the global community.

Shaam Ki Chai Season 3, will launch soon on the Shaam Ki Chai YouTube channel.

Turgay Evren unveils new composition 'Where is Mercy' at Kashmir Council event

News Desk

SPAIN: Renowned Turkish songwriter Turgay Evren unveiled his latest composition, "Where is Mercy," at a compelling event hosted by the Kashmir Council Spain. The song, which passionately addresses the struggles faced by the people of Gaza and Kashmir, is a testament to Evren's commitment to raising awareness through evocative lyrics.

Turgay Evren has previously penned impactful songs on Kashmir, including "Kashmir Is My Name," "Daimi Bahar" (Turkish, Urdu, Kashmiri), "We Will Never Regret" (Arabic, Urdu, Kashmiri), "I Am Kashmir," "Only One Man" (Syed Ali Geelani), and "Jails of Kashmir." Each composition serves as a testament to his unwavering support for the Kashmiri cause and his dedication to shedding light on human rights violations and the plight of those in Kashmir.

The event featured distinguished speakers who lauded Turgay Evren for his continuous efforts in advocating for the Kashmir and Palestine causes through his powerful lyrics.

Altaf Ahmed Bhat, Chairman of Jammu Kashmir Salvation Movement (JKSM), Fahim Kayani, President of Tehreek e Kashmir UK, Yasmin Qureshi, Member of Parliament, Saqib Tahir, President of Pak Federation Spain, Raja Shafiq Tabasam, President of Tehreek e Kashmir Spain, Raja Nadeem, President of Kashmir Council Spain, expressed deep appreciation and dedication to Turgay Evren for his tireless work in addressing the Kashmir cause, human rights violations, and the issues faced by the incarcerated in Kashmir through his soul-stirring songs.

Election contesting to free the tribes of Waziristan from the mafia: Independent candidate



Adam Khan Wazir

WANA: Saeed Anwar Mehsud, an independent candidate from South Waziristan Upper/Lower Constituency NA-42, said while addressing a press conference at District Press Club Wana on Monday.

He said, South Waziristan is ruled by occupation mafia, I have entered the field to free the tribes of Waziristan from occupation mafia.

He said that all the tribes of Waziristan are equal to me, I am contesting elections to take away their rights from the occupation mafia and thieves and robbers. He further said that the brave tribes of Waziristan should be careful, on January 22, the theft of 3750 votes by a candidate was caught with the help of friends, still 1200 votes missing.

Saeed Anwar said that Maulana Jamal Uddin brought funds worth four and a half billion in Upper Waziristan but it was wasted.

He said that if Allah makes me successful, I will take account of the occupation mafia one by one. He further said that Deputy Commissioner of Upper Waziristan and DPO of Lower Waziristan are obstructing my campaign.

LUMS Students and Recruiters Network at Annual Career Fair 2024

PNP

LAHORE: Ranked at top in graduate employability in Pakistan by QS Employability Rankings, 95% of LUMS 2022 graduates were employed within 6 months. The dedicated efforts of the LUMS Career Services Office (CSO) and University's 1,800 strong network of recruiting partners plays a pivotal role in this. The Annual Career Fair, hosted by the CSO, is instrumental in connecting leading employers with LUMS' diverse population of students from various disciplines. Over 200 nationally and internationally reputed organisations participated this year at the LUMS Annual Career Fair 2024 to engage with 1000+ students.

While meeting with the partnering organisations, Dr. Ali Cheema, Vice Chancellor, LUMS, highlighted, "I would like to welcome all the national and multinational organisations to LUMS for the Career Fair 2024. This serves as an invaluable platform for our students to connect with potential employers, explore diverse career paths, and lay the foundation of their professional journey. We believe that engaging with industry experts will not only open doors to exciting opportunities, but also empower our students to thrive in a dynamic and competitive global landscape."

The LUMS Career Fair continues to be a platform that provides opportunities to students to interact with varied employers and find out about hiring practices as well as placements.

No zoo in Islamabad violating IHC verdict please

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The concerned citizens and experts have urged the Capital Development Authority (CDA) to refrain from violating the Islamabad High Court (IHC) verdict on the Islamabad Zoo. Moving a summary to the Federal Cabinet to reestablish the zoo in Islamabad will be a sheer violation of the IHC verdict, and it should be challenged in the court.

They said CDA will be opposed for its connivance to cage the wild animals or to chain them again. It is the worst form of cruelty in the absence of technical and financial capacity of the CDA to regain the land to establish the zoo.

An online discussion on the subject was organized by the Devcom-Pakistan (Development Communications Network) and DTN on Saturday afternoon.

The well-known biodiversity expert Z. B. Mirza Said: CDA cannot fool the

cabinet to take a favourable decision on its summary in the presence of IHC verdict that had clearly asked "to end the cruelty against the animals, and free the animals in their habitats".

Another senior biodiversity expert Dr. Ejaz Ahmed said: Though zoos play an important role in education and awareness regarding different species and their behavior, if animals are kept with care. But we have seen that due to poor management and care, the majority of species are depressed and kept in a very unhygienic environment which results in their poor health conditions and strange behavior.

Rina Saeed Khan, Islamabad Wildlife Management Board chairperson, said: The reopening of Islamabad zoo should not be brought onto agenda of last cabinet meeting without thoroughly consulting law and climate change ministries.

She said the IWMB Board has also approved detailed plans, in consulta-

tion with international experts of Join Hands, an INGO, to open a Visitor Information Centre for the public as part of the Margalla Wildlife Centre. On January 29th 2024, without consulting or informing IWMB, CDA Board decided to "reclaim" the Islamabad zoo and re-open it as a zoo "of international standards" during their meeting. The CDA Board was misinformed that "IWMB had failed to make use of the facility". The CDA Board has now approved the proposal and asked officials concerned to approach the federal government with their request to take back administrative control of the now closed zoo. This is clearly against the IHC orders.

An environmentalist and Devcom-Pakistan Executive Director Munir Ahmed said: IHC verdict cannot be violated in any case by anyone, the concerned citizens will protest against it if done by the CDA or the Federal Cabinet. In the past,

we have seen caged animals living in miserable conditions. CDA had failed to impart any wildlife education previously, and it has no technical, managerial or financial capacity to run the zoo again. So, citizens will not allow CDA to repeat the same misery again. IWMB can do the children's learning about the wild animals through screening of films and pictorial lectures once the government gives funds to make the new Visitors Centre at the location of the old zoo. It has turned into a wonderful park now where relevant tableaux can also be staged.

An environmental journalist Afia Salam said: Make wildlife learning centres not zoos. Things change, people and their opinions change. What was ok then, may NOT be right now. Like many other things, this goes for the question of having a zoo or not. There is a resurgence of conversation about 'recreating' a zoo in Islamabad. This after the previous one had to be

Group Chairman/Chief Editor: Almas Ayoub Sabir
 Vice Chairman: Asim Nazir Ahmad
 Managing Editor: Naveed Ahmad Khan
 Head Editorial Advisory Board: Amjad Mehmood
 Bureau Chief Karachi: Saleem Zaman Khan. (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
 Whatsapp: 0346-5008408

Wakhan; a Corridor of Connectivity between Gwadar Port and Central Asia

Dr. Hasan Yaser Malik

Located at cross roads of Afghanistan, energy rich Tajikistan, an emerging world power China and geopolitically located Pakistan. The Wakhan Corridor is an ancient and a strategic pass linking China to West via Silk Route. Wakhan Corridor is attached to Tajikistan in north, China in east and Pakistan in south. However facets like quest for Great Game, Chinese Communist Revolution of 1949, Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan and NATO invasion of Afghanistan till 2021 have unfortunately kept infrastructural development in Wakhan as a fallacy. Opening up of Wakhan Corridor will surely improve trade and diplomatic relations; between Pakistan, China, Afghanistan, Central Asia and Europe. Wakhan-Chitral River Route starting from Broghoil Pass to Gwadar Port along Chitral River can also link Jalalabad with Chitral. Wakhan Corridor at junction of Hindu Kush, Himalayas, Karakoram and Tian Shan Mountains, is encompassing an area of 14080 sq. km with length of 220 km and width ranging from 16 to 64 km. The area consists of rugged mountains and there is only one rough road leading to China via Wakhjir Pass, road was constructed in 1960 and is till 100 km short of Chinese Border. On the other side China has constructed a carpeted road only up to 10 km short of Afghan border. Wakhan Corridor has a mosaic consisting of 12,000 Wakhis and Kyrgyz

Muslims. Russian occupation of Afghanistan in December 1979 compelled 1300 of them to take refuge in Pakistan across the Hindu Kush Range. However now due to contemporary regional geo-political and economic interests it should be developed in to a trade corridor up to Europe.

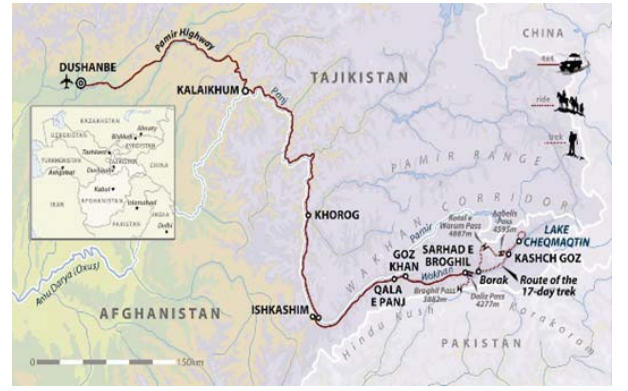
Due to Wakhjir and Tegermansu Passes China can dominate the corridor's economic and geo-politics. Recently Beijing is busy projects of social and infrastructural development in Afghanistan with a view to secure and extend its trade routes passing through it to Gwadar Port and Middle East. Opening up of linkage with Afghanistan will not only add to a sympathetic tone from entire Muslim population of Tajikistan, Pakistan and Afghanistan population for China but will also help to diminish the much projected Chinese brutalities against Muslim in its Xinjiang Province.

Central Asian Region is physically attached to Wakhan Corridor hence Pakistan must utilize its geo-political location and diplomatic position by linking the corridor with its northern highlands along the Chitral River and by improving existing route to Jalalabad from Chitral. This 250 km long route should start from Baroghil Pass linking Mastuj, Booni, and Chitral and should link Jalalabad.

The proposed route will also serve as alternate to Karakorum Highway for China and Pakistan as a safeguard against any aggression by India as the proposed route will be 135 km away from India as compared to Karakorum Highway and will be out of Indian claimed

Gilgit Baltistan. The proposed route will also provide as an alternate to Karakorum Highway in case of any natural calamity as the area is prone to earthquakes and formation of Lake Issyk-Kul in 2010 is just one such example. Moreover this will also reduce the traffic on Karakorum Highway. The route should also be linked to Karakorum Highway by improving the existing route from Shandur to Gilgit via Gahkuch and Singul for mutual support. It will also serve as an alternate to Wakhjir Pass as it remains closed for five months a year due to extreme weather conditions and will emerge as on geo-political Manoeuvre space.

Afghan Government could not do much for social development of the corridor due to its self-sustaining tribal culture, rugged mountain terrain, regional geo-politics, cold climate and lack of funds. However now considering the economic and geo-political facets it will be prudent to develop it as a trade corridor even by involving the European nation like Germany to extend and strengthen the existing trade links. Germany is the biggest European economic power and has enhanced its trade relations with China through



8,000 Km long Leipzig-Chongqing Railway. Moreover presently around 5,000 German companies are working in China and 900 Chinese companies are functioning in Germany. Berlin is also making efforts to enhance peace and stability in Afghanistan to pursue its interests in Central Asia, Russia and ultimately to Indo-Pacific Region through Gwadar. Germany has provided Generalised System of Preference Plus to Pakistan since 2014 and has been making efforts to support Pakistani trade with EU for provision of greater market access. It will be prudent for regional countries and Germany to have an access to Gwadar Port through Wakhan Corridor which will be another pragmatic extension of Chinese Belt Road Initiative in the region, hence linking Pakistan to Europe.

Writer is Ph. D; International Relations and Fellow Research Member with Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transportation (UK)

US airstrikes in Iraq, Syria

The UN Security Council is set to hold an "urgent" meeting Monday afternoon on the US strikes in Iraq and Syria, which it reportedly launched in retaliation for the death of three American soldiers, diplomats said. They said Russia requested the meeting to discuss the attacks launched by Washington against Iran-backed groups it has accused of attacking US troops in the region.

Russia's deputy permanent representative to the UN, Dmitry Polyansky, said on social media that his country has "called for an urgent UN Security Council meeting to discuss threats to international peace and security from the US strikes against Iraq and Syria." Earlier on Saturday, Russia's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, Maria Zakharova, said the airstrikes had been deliberately designed to inflame tensions in the region. The attacks once again demonstrated the aggressive nature of Washington's foreign policy, she said, noting that the US "is purposefully trying to drive the largest countries in the region into conflict." "Washington, believing in its impunity, continues to sow destruction and chaos in the Middle East. The largest US air raid in the region since 2003, led by Joe Biden's 'act of retaliation' for the unidentified drone attack on the American base in Jordan has no justification." "We strongly condemn the new blatant act of American-British aggression against sovereign states. We are seeking urgent consideration of the current situation through the UN Security Council," she said. The US started air strikes on Friday against Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps-Quds Force and Iranian-backed militias in Iraq and Syria after a suicide drone attack killed three American troops in Jordan late last month. In all, more than 85 targets were hit with more than 125 precision munitions, US Central Command (CENTCOM) said in a statement. The strikes have also evoked criticism from the targeted countries. Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani's office said sixteen people had been killed, among them civilians, and 25 others injured in the aerial assaults. He denounced the attacks as a "new aggression against Iraq's sovereignty," denying that they had been coordinated with the Baghdad government beforehand. Syria said those regions that were targeted by the US strikes "are the same regions where the Syrian army fights remnants of the Daesh terrorist group, and this confirms that the US is in cahoots and allied with this group."



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

Kashmir Solidarity Day and the Proportion of Kashmiri Personnel in the Armed Forces of Pakistan and India - I

India asserts that Kashmir is an integral part of its territory and incorrectly portrays Kashmiris as supportive of their claim, presenting the situation in occupied Jammu and Kashmir as completely normal. On the other side, there are advocates for an Independent Kashmir who treat both India and Pakistan impartially. They argue that both countries mistreat Kashmir and its people without adequately acknowledging the sacrifices and services of Pakistan and the Pak Army for Kashmir. They also overlook the atrocities committed by India against innocent Kashmiris. These anti-Pakistan voices do not align with the majority of Kashmiris, as evident from the fact that the proportion of people from Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) in the Pakistan Army is much higher than the proportion of people from occupied Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) in the Indian Army.

In the Pakistan Army, six serving General officers and a number of senior officers are Kashmiris, while the Indian Army has no General officer from Kashmir, and very few in its officer cadre are Kashmiris. In terms of total strength, approximately 8-10% of lower-ranking personnel in the Pakistan Army are Kashmiris, whereas only about 1% in the Indian army are Kashmiris.

Nestled amidst the breathtaking Himalayan and Karakoram ranges, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) occupies a distinctive position in South Asia's geopolitical landscape. The region has reaped the benefits of the unwavering dedication of the Pakistan Army, playing a pivotal role in securing its safety, promoting developmental endeavors,

and contributing to the overall welfare of the local populace.

The primary role of the Pakistan Army in AJK is to ensure the security and defense of the region. Given the historical context and ongoing geopolitical dynamics, the army stands as a strong defense against potential external threats, providing a sense of security and stability for the people of AJK. The Pakistan Army consistently exhibits its commitment to aiding the local population during natural disasters and emergencies. Whether responding to earthquakes, floods, or other crises, the army plays a crucial role in offering disaster relief and humanitarian assistance, underscoring its dedication to the well-being of the people.

Actively engaging in infrastructure development projects in AJK, the Pakistan Army contributes beyond security concerns, actively fostering social and economic progress in the region. From constructing roads and bridges to establishing schools and healthcare facilities, the army's involvement in the region is multifaceted. Through various welfare programs, the army connects with local communities, with initiatives focused on education, healthcare, and skill development aimed at improving the standard of living for AJK residents. The army's role extends beyond a purely military function, actively participating in community-building endeavors.

The Line of Control (LoC) dividing AJK from Occupied Jammu and Kashmir necessitates vigilant border management. The Pakistan Army assumes a critical role in securing the LoC, preventing infiltration, and safeguarding the territorial

boundaries of AJK. Acknowledging the significance of education and skill development, the Pakistan Army in AJK is actively involved in educational initiatives and training programs, empowering the local population with tools to excel in various professional fields.

The Pakistan Army, a formidable force in South Asia, derives its strength from a diverse cadre of individuals who serve with unwavering dedication. Within this esteemed institution, the substantial and historically significant presence of Kashmiris goes beyond mere numerical statistics; it represents a profound connection rooted in duty, identity, and shared historical narratives.

The historical bonds between Kashmir and Pakistan have been shaped by cultural, religious, and geopolitical affinities. The significant presence of Kashmiris in the Pakistan Army is rooted in a shared identity, fostering camaraderie and a sense of belonging among individuals from the region. Many Kashmiris perceive military service as a noble calling, viewing it as a means to contribute to the defense and prosperity of the nation. Their strong sense of duty and patriotism drives them to join the armed forces, showcasing their commitment to safeguarding Pakistan's sovereignty.

Kashmiris in the Pakistan Army serve in diverse capacities, demonstrating versatility and skill across different branches. Whether in infantry, artillery, engineering, medical, or other specialized roles, individuals from Kashmir contribute to the multifaceted nature of the military, bringing diverse talents to the nation's defense. The geopolitical importance of Kashmir amplifies the role of Kashmiris in the armed forces, symbolizing the unity of Pakistan and emphasizing the strategic significance of the region in South Asian geopolitics.

To be continued

Reconstitution of AJK Public Service Commission - I

The constitutional institution of Public Service Commission (PSC) fell vacant due to completion of tenure of the preceding PSC 8 months ago. Such institutions ought to be made functional without any loss of time. Earlier governments used to exploit such opportunities for nepotism and political accommodation. This time, although some delay occurred, but the decision taken by the Prime Minister has compensated the delay with the establishment of an ideal PSC based purely on merit and absolute impartiality. There seems no interference of political gain by making the composition above board and with minimum strength but admirable quality.

The AJK, PSC has suffered serious setbacks in the past, although the selection of Chairman and members was not below standard as the earlier chairmen also held so high a profile as Chief Justice of Supreme Court, a Lt. General, and an Air Marshal. Their selections however, were tarnished by nepotism and political accommodation. The high ranks and large membership were of no use for the nation except disbursing high pay, perks, and privileges. That is why some of the Chairmen and members were prematurely removed with unhealthy remarks of inefficiency because they had badly failed to select candidates in time, and the vacancies in departments caused irreparable loss to government performance in addition to the fact that ad-hoc appointees also suffered the pain and torture of uncertainty of career despite their satisfactory output. The ad-hoc appointees were backmailed for seeking extension after every six months. It should be borne in mind that ad-hoc employees are appointed under the legal provi-

sions of Civil Servants Acts, 1976, as a stop gap arrangement.

Ad-hoc appointees should be dealt with sympathetically as they are under duress of uncertainty of their career for the faults and defaults of the PSC. Justice demands that their length of ad-hoc service should be assigned due weight e.g 5 year service may be allocated one mark in their interview. There are examples of victimization of ad-hoc employees. An ad-hoc lady lecturer of Muzaffarabad was appointed in 2010 and was posted at Athmaqam Girls College for 7 years, transferred to Khoi Ratta district Kotli for 3 years and then posted in Girls College Leepa up to date with

14 years ad-hoc service. So inefficiency of the PSC is explicit. Inordinate delays in selection process of candidates was exploited by political authorities who attempted to bypass the jurisdiction of PSC twice. In the year 1992 a law was promulgated to regularize a large number of favorite ad-hoc appointees. The law was challenged before the High Court and was declared repugnant to fundamental rights and discriminatory. The judgement was upheld by the Supreme Court and as a consequence about 600 regularized ad-hoc employees were removed from service. Besides, 34 officers had also been declared permanent by exercise of power under section 22 of Civil Servants Act 1976. The Supreme Court also set aside these 34 appointments and held that the direction of the government postulated under section 22 of the Act is available post-facto to the induction of the person in civil service, but does not come in play at the stage of initial recruitment. In second attempt in 2021, again a similar law has been enacted but not implemented so far.

To be continued



Ch Muhammad Latif

Dazzling drone fleets fly high in China

Xinhua

GUIYANG: At the ancient resort town of Shexiang in southwest China's Guizhou Province, 500 drones with twinkling lights soared into the sky, forming patterns resembling a dragon, a phoenix and a lotus successively, as curious tourists pulled out cell phones to capture the incredible spectacle.

The drone fleets were hired by the local tourism company in charge of the resort management.

Yuan Yuan, chairperson of the company, said the performance was held four times last month, with the tourist number hitting a record high of 100,000 when it debuted on Jan. 18.

"Even a small squid barbecue stall raked in a revenue of approximately 8,000 yuan (about 1,127 U.S. dollars) on that day, more than 10 times the usual amount," she added.

Long Lipin, manager of the drone performance company called Digital Intelligence Culture, said the company based in the provincial capital of Guiyang has put on 12 drone fleet shows since last August, earning a total business revenue of 1.55 million yuan as of the end of 2023.



Drones form a phoenix pattern in the sky at the ancient resort town of Shexiang in Dafang County, southwest China's Guizhou Province, Jan. 18, 2024. (Xinhua)

From official celebrations such as the opening ceremony of the Hangzhou Asian Games to commercial promotions, birthday parties and marriage proposals, drone fleet performances have become increasingly popular in China, with the market size constantly expanding in recent years.

Lu Lingyue, general manager of a

leading drone performance company in east China's Jiangxi Province, said the company organized 175 fleet shows in 2023, about twice the number in 2022, with performances held in more than 100 cities at home and abroad.

"Beyond catering to universities and corporate clients for events such as founding anniversaries, we are witnessing a growing number of individual clients for personal celebrations like birthday parties and marriage proposals," said Lu, adding that enthusiastic fans occasionally engage drone fleets as a unique way

to express their affection for their idols.

The aerial vehicles created messages such as "Happy Birthday, Tan Jianci," and visual displays, including an image of a man passionately singing into a microphone, according to multiple videos uploaded on the microblogging site Weibo.com.

On Douyin, the Chinese version of TikTok, searching for "marriage proposals with drones" yields over 1,000 short videos, with some amassing more than 1 million likes.

The Central Economic Work Conference held in December 2023 called for nurturing strategic emerging industries including the low-altitude economy.

Lu said that the Chinese government is actively fostering the growth of the low-altitude economy and has implemented a series of regulations, such as a provisional regulation involving the management of unmanned aerial vehicles, which have contributed to the industry's orderly and systematic development.

"We expect the market size to reach at least 4.5 billion yuan in 2024," Lu said.

Oil prices gain after OPEC+ maintains output cuts

Reuters

SINGAPORE: Oil prices rose in early trade on Friday following a decision by OPEC+ to keep its oil output policy unchanged, clawing back some losses from the previous trading session triggered by unsubstantiated ceasefire reports between Israel and Hamas.

Brent crude futures rose 50 cents, or 0.6%, to \$79.20 a barrel at 0155 GMT, while U.S. West Texas Intermediate crude futures gained 40 cents, or 0.5%, to \$74.22 a barrel.

Both contracts settled more than 2% lower on Thursday due to the unverified ceasefire reports between Israel and Hamas. However, a Qatari official said there was no ceasefire. He said Hamas had positively received a ceasefire proposal made earlier this week.

In the region, attacks by Yemen's Houthi forces on vessels in the Red Sea have continued to disrupt global trade, spurring geopolitical tensions and shipping concerns.

On Thursday, two OPEC+ sources said the group has kept its oil output policy unchanged, and will decide in March whether or not to extend the voluntary oil production cuts in place for the first quarter.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies led by Russia, known as OPEC+, has outputs cuts of 2.2 million barrels per day (bpd) in place for the first quarter, as announced in November.

ANZ Research analysts said in a Friday note those production cuts should keep supply tight in the first quarter, with non-OPEC production increases set to normalize and US output growth slowing in 2024 to 300,000 barrels per day (bpd) from 800,000 bpd last year.

Also supporting oil prices were the US Federal Reserve's decision to keep the benchmark overnight interest rate in the 5.25-5.50% range, and comments by Chair Jerome Powell who said that interest rates had peaked and would move lower in coming months.

Lower interest rates would reduce consumer borrowing costs, which can boost economic growth and oil demand.

Ambassador holds Khuli Kachehri in Almaty



Spokesman Report

ALMATY: Pakistan's ambassador to Kazakhstan Nauman Bashir Bhatti held a Khuli Kachehri in Almaty. In a post on X, he appreciated contributions made by members of Pakistani community towards forging stronger cultural and economic ties between Pakistan and Kazakhstan.

They discussed challenges faced by community members and measures undertaken by the embassy for their resolution.

Ex-Trump official Mike Gill dies days after being shot in carjacking spree

Mike Gill, a member of former President Donald Trump's administration and a married father of three, has died days after he was shot during a deadly carjacking rampage in Washington, DC last Monday night.

His wife, Kristina Gill, released a written statement to FOX 5, saying, "It is with profound sadness that I wish to inform the community of the passing of my husband, Mike Gill. His sudden departure has left a void in our lives that can never be filled."

"In this time of grief, we are grateful for the outpouring of love and support from family, friends, and the community, and extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has reached out to offer condolences and assistance."

His wife remembered him as a "devoted husband, father, son, brother, and friend" who "brought people together, and made them feel included, supported, and loved."

She continued: "Above all, Mike spoke with pride and love about his family, especially our children, Sean, Brian, and Annika. For those who wish to honour Mike's memory, we ask that you cherish the moments shared and keep him in your thoughts and prayers."

Last Monday, at 5:45pm, 28-year-old Artell Cunningham entered and shot Gill, who was sitting in his vehicle in northwest Washington. The attack on Gill was the first of many reported in a carjacking rampage.

At the time of his death, Gill was senior vice president for Capital Markets at the Housing Policy Council. He previously worked as chief of staff at the Commodity Futures Trading Commission during Donald Trump's administration.

The CEO of the American Investment Council and Gill's friend for 15 years, Drew Maloney, said: "Mike was not just a close friend; he was an extended member of our family."

"Our daughters' friendship blossomed into a beautiful bond, and it was a testament to Mike's warmth and kindness that he welcomed us into his life with open arms. Through countless holidays, celebrations, and shared moments, our families became intertwined, and I am so grateful for our enduring friendship."

Pak HC calls upon ensuring Kashmiris' right to self determination

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan High Commissioner in Malaysia Syed Ahsan Raza Shah on Sunday urged the international organizations and human rights bodies to ensure right of self-determination to the oppressed Kashmiris in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) under the relevant United Nations' resolutions. He was addressing a Kashmir solidarity day event held at the International Institute of Advanced Islamic Studies (IAIS) jointly organized by collaboration of Majlis Perundangan Pertubuhan Islam Malaysia (MAPIM) and High Commission of Pakistan in Kuala Lumpur with the collaboration of IAIS, a press release said.

Pak HC calls upon ensuring Kashmiris' right to self determination. The high commissioner apprised the participants that for last seven decades, the Indian state had systematically converted Jammu and Kashmir into the largest open prison, where it had been oppressing the innocent Muslims through worst forms of human rights abuses and ethnic cleansing. Ahsan Raza said the illegal Indian armed forces continued to use rape as a weapon of war;



they had blinded hundreds of Kashmiri children and youth by firing pellet guns directly at the faces; similarly, torture, illegal detentions, implication in fictitious cases, indiscriminate use of force under the impunity of draconian laws and systemized campaigns to rob the Kashmiris of their distinct cultural and religious identities marked the reality of India's brutal occupation of the occupied territory. Emphasizing the seven-point agenda presented by international Human Rights and Muslim Rights activist Cikzu Azmi Abdul Hamid to resolve Kashmir issue, the high commissioner said it was a landmark guideline for ensuring peace in Kashmir and getting rid of human rights violations going on in IIOJK. He

also expressed concern over the sheer barbaric and inhumane brutalities, destruction and killings of innocent Palestinian brothers and sisters, said that the situation in Palestine served as a painful reminder of the similar sufferings of our Kashmiri brethren at the hands of an RSS-led, Hindutva-inspired, Islamophobic and fascist BJP regime that was hell-bent on persecuting the Indian Muslims through worst forms of oppression. Mentioning the construction of a Hindu temple on the site of centuries-old Babri mosque, Ahsan Raza deplored that India's judiciary had not only acquitted the criminals responsible for this despicable act but also allowed the construction of a temple on the site of the demolished

mosque. Similarly, he said, three days back on February 1, the BJP government illegally demolished a 600-years old mosque in Delhi in a fraudulent pretext of operation against encroachments and did not even spare the adjacent Muslim graveyard. He lauded the Malaysian people and the government for supporting the collective cause of the Ummah. Sharing their remarks on the event, international human rights activist, Azmi Abdul Hameed who also holds the position of President MAPIM, said the dehumanization of Kashmiris continued in IIOJK for the last 76 years. Like Israel depopulated Palestine, he said, India was following the same tactics in Kashmir. Earlier presenting welcome address, Chairman IAIS Prof. Dr. Masjee Malik urged the international bodies to play their proactive role for permanent resolution of Kashmir issue. Sharing her remarks on the occasion Prof. Hijh Ruhanas Binti Harun, from the National Defence University of Malaysia said the purpose of the Kashmir solidarity day was to give a message that the world had not forgotten Kashmiri people. A documentary based on the ongoing atrocities in IIOJK and sufferings of Kashmiri people was also played on

Government Friendship Award

BEIJING: Chinese State Councillor Shen Yiqin presents the Chinese Government Friendship Award to Kazakh ophthalmologist Saulebek Kabilbekov.

中国政府友谊奖颁奖仪式
Ceremony of the Chinese Government Friendship Award



Photo: Xinhua

Envoys of Pakistan, Japan discuss ties



Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's ambassador to Iran Muhammad Mudassar Sunday held meeting in Tehran with Japanese Ambassador Tsukada Tamaki and discussed matters of mutual respect.

In a post on X, he said, "I met Japanese Ambassador HE Tsukada Tamaki today. We had excellent exchange of ideas on a range of global & regional issues with a view to promote greater understanding & explore views to help promote peace & development."

China continues to strengthen financial sector's role in serving real economy

Xinhua

BEIJING: China is continuing to make concrete efforts to deepen the financial sector's role in serving the real economy as the fundamental goal of high-quality financial development, experts and insiders observed.

"Since last year, financial institutions have continued to strengthen the allocation of resources in key areas and weak links such as scientific and technological innovation, infrastructure, private small and micro enterprises, and green development, and have shown obvious characteristics of serving high-quality development," said Dong Ximiao, chief researcher at Merchants Union Consumer Finance Company Limited.

Chinese political advisers have also called for efforts to continuously improve the capacity, quality and efficiency of the financial

sector, and promote the sector's high-level opening up to provide support for the building of a nation with a strong financial sector.

These are the latest developments echoing the commitments made at a central financial work conference held in Beijing at the end of October last year. The conference noted that more financial resources should be leveraged to support scientific and technological innovations, advanced manufacturing, green development, micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as innovation-driven development strategies and coordinated regional development strategies.

As these policies took effect, many enterprises got energized. At the beginning of this New Year, Yan Bing, customer manager of China Everbright Bank Nanjing Branch, has visited a dozen enterprises without stopping and issued

loans of nearly 200 million yuan (about 28.15 million U.S. dollars).

Yan, in particular, issued a loan of 10 million yuan to Yangzhou Daika Wheel Manufacturing Co., LTD., making it the Nanjing branch's first enterprise loan issued this year for small and medium-sized enterprises that specialize in a niche market, meeting the financing needs of the enterprise's business expansion.

"Last year, China Everbright Bank selected 'science and technology finance' as one of the three new business development tracks," said Yan, introducing characteristic products to optimize the credit model, improve the approval efficiency, and strengthen its service to scientific and technological enterprise customers.

Other banks and financial institutions are also vying for opportunities emerging in serving the real economy. Industrial and Commer-

cial Bank of China (ICBC), for instance, has chosen to issue loans of 900 million yuan for the first phase of construction of the Jinqimen nuclear power project in east China's Zhejiang Province, which was approved by the State Council on Dec. 29, 2023.

Li Duo, head of the ICBC's credit and investment management department, said that the ICBC strongly supports sectors including clean energy, green transportation, energy conservation and environmental protection; adopts differentiated policies in terms of assessment, authorization and pricing; and strives to channel financial resources to green and ecological industries.

Green finance is gradually becoming an important avenue for supporting the real economy, data showed. Currently, the balance of green loans of the ICBC has exceeded 5 trillion yuan. At the



end of 2023, the scale of green loans of China Everbright Bank increased by 114.47 billion yuan or 57.44 percent compared with the end of the previous year.

"The growth rates of green loans, inclusive loans to small enterprises, loans to technology-based small businesses, and medium and long-term loans to the manufacturing sector were much higher than the average growth rate of all lending in

2023," the People's Bank of China (PBOC) Governor Pan Gongsheng was quoted as saying by an earlier report.

The PBOC, the nation's central bank, had announced earlier this year that it will establish a credit market department to support the "five priorities" of technology finance, green finance, inclusive finance, pension finance and digital finance.

Pan said the bank will further

leverage the dual functions of monetary policy tools in terms of quantity and structure, and strengthen tool innovation to encourage financial institutions to focus on the five priorities.

In 2023, China's outstanding yuan-denominated loans issued to the real economy surged 10.4 percent to 235.48 trillion yuan, accounting for 62.3 percent of the total outstanding social financing of 378.09 trillion yuan. The proportion increased by 0.5 percentage points from the previous year, said the PBOC.

"In 2024, we will focus on building a standardized, transparent, open, dynamic and resilient financial market, further optimize the financing structure, market system and product system, and provide better and more efficient financing services for the development of the real economy," said the central bank governor.

KR rises for 12th week amid improved macroeconomic indicators

TLTP

KARACHI: Pakistani rupee continued making slight gains against the US dollar in the interbank market for the 12th consecutive week and improved by Rs0.18.

According to details, the rupee opened at 279.59 against the greenback in the interbank market on Monday last and closed at 279.41 on Friday, registering a rise of 0.06 percent week-on-week. Overall, the local unit has improved by Rs7.62 during the previous 12 weeks. Out of the last 37 sessions, the rupee has surged in 33 sessions and lowered in three sessions, while it remained unchanged in one session.

The rupee improved by Rs8.88 during the current fiscal year 2023-24 and Rs2.45 in the current year. The rupee improved by Rs2.36 in January, after gaining Rs3.31 in December. The local unit shed Rs3.69 against the US dollar in November after gaining Rs6.26 (+2.23 percent) against the greenback in the month of October.

However, the local unit lost traction against the greenback in the open market and closed the week in the range of Rs281.7 per dollar against Rs281.17 during the previous week, according to the Exchange Companies Association of Pakistan. With this, the difference between rupee-dollar exchange rates in the inter-bank and open markets widened to Rs2.29 (0.81 percent). The gap remained well below the ceiling of 1.25 percent recommended by the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Market talk suggests that the rupee will remain stable around current levels until the general elections scheduled for February 8, 2024. The rupee-dollar exchange rate will take cue for future direction from the new government's economic policies.

The recent positivity arises from improved macroeconomic conditions in the form of increased liquidity in the foreign exchange market due to tighter enforcement of regulations, a shrinking money supply, a balance of payments surplus on account of low import demand, and a moratorium on Chinese debt repayments.

Unity Foods collaborates with Vital Green for agricultural advancement in Pakistan



PPA

ISLAMABAD: Unity Foods is transforming Pakistan's agriculture with strategic collaboration! Unity Plantations, a subsidiary of Sunridge Foods within the Unity Foods Group, has officially signed a crucial agreement with Vital Green Limited. This marks a significant stride in elevating the agricultural value chain and ensuring the provision of top-notch farm inputs. A key initiative toward fostering sustainable growth and fortifying Pakistan's agricultural sector.

PIA's 16 flights cancelled over 'operational' reasons

PPA

KARACHI: As many as 16 flights of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) have been cancelled over 'operational' reasons. As per details, PIA's four flights to Gilgit from Islamabad including PK-601, 602, 605 and 606 were cancelled due to a shortage of planes.

Four flights to Islamabad from Karachi, two flights from Islamabad to Sukkur, two flights to Dubai from Islamabad, two flights of PIA bound for Quetta from Lahore and Dubai-bound two flights of private airlines were cancelled.

Earlier, Pakistan International Airline (PIA) grounded nine aircraft over shortage of parts.

Sources privy to the development said that out of 31 planes in the fleet, nine aircraft have been grounded due to the non-availability of spare parts. The grounded aircraft includes five Airbus-320s, three Boeing-777 and one ATR craft.

Uncertainty persisted about the future of the national airline as it is mostly relying on the State Bank of Pakistan, sources claimed, adding that leasing companies have termed Pakistan's CCC rating against business policies.

BFC will transform Rawalpindi into a business hub: RCCI

PPA

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) has termed that the establishment of Business Facilitation Center (BFC) will transform Rawalpindi into a business hub. It is a key initiative towards ease of doing business (EODB) which will provide seamless interaction between the business community and 36 different departments.

Saqib Rafiq, President RCCI, while addressing the opening ceremony of the Business Facilitation Center in Rawalpindi, said that the establishment of BFC was a long-standing demand of Rawalpindi Chamber which was fulfilled, a dream that was fulfilled by the efforts of Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi.

Saqib Rafiq further said that the Punjab Chamber of Commerce Coordination Committee established by the Chief Minister had suggested that we should have a one-window facility where there is no red



tape but a warm welcome for the investor. Provincial Minister SM Tanveer, Secretary

Industries Ehsan Bhatta worked proactively and made the Chief Minister's vision a reality. The joint efforts of the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce, Commissioner Rawalpindi Liaquat Ali Chhatta and DGRDA Saif Anwar Jhapa went successful for the establishment of the business center and completed it within the stipulated time frame.

He said that this is an important step to facilitate investment and industrialization in the region. This will increase business activities. He thanked the provincial government for the upgradation of and the initiation of other projects including the link road of Rawat Industrial Estate.

Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi was the chief guest of the opening ceremony. On this occasion, provincial cabinet members and officials of district administration, officials of Chamber of Commerce, former presidents, president of Small Chamber, Women Chamber, representatives of Anjuman Tajran Rawalpindi and a large number of businessmen were also present on the occasion.

Sunday Bazaar

RAWALPINDI: People are buying vegetables in a Sunday weekly bazaar at Committee Chowk area in the city.



Photo: Online

Business Community announces to support PML-N in elections

PPA

ISLAMABAD: The business community of Islamabad during an election meeting organized by Zafar Bakhtawari former President ICICI and Secretary General UBG Pakistan, announced their support for the PML-N in the coming election. They said that Nawaz Sharif always played a role in the development of the country and provided many facilities to the business community during his regime. They hoped that this time too, he would make the people prosperous and the country developed and solve all the problems of the business community on a priority basis.

Speaking on the occasion, PML-N candidate from NA-46 Anjum Aqeel Khan thanked the business community for declaring their support for him and said that his party recognizes the role of the business community in the development of the country and always works for their welfare.

Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce said that the business community would work with the PML-N government to make Islamabad a business-friendly, beautiful, and green city. He stressed that PML-N should consult with the business community on important matters of the economy before finalizing policy decisions.



Zafar Bakhtawari Former President ICICI and Secretary General UBG Pakistan said that after the support of the business community, the victory of Anjum Aqeel Khan in the election is certain. He said that the entire business community will vote for PML-N on February 8 to give Pakistan competent and honest leadership.

Raja Javed Iqbal President G-9 Markaz, Akhlaq Abbasi President G-10 Markaz, Ahmed Khan President F-10 Markaz, Naem Akhtar Awan President G-11

Markaz, Sardar Tahir Mehmood President Islamabad Estate Agents Association, and Ch. Zahid Rafique Secretary General, Muhammad Nauman President D-12 Markaz, Ms. Afraz Sial, Syeda Aeliya Kazmi others also extended their support. While announcing that the future of the country is related to PML-N and Nawaz Sharif, there is full hope that PML-N will make the country an economic power again and lead it on the path of development.

Dinner in honor of SPL team 'Karachi Ghazis' by GFS Builders



PPA

KARACHI: GFS Builders and Developers hosted a dinner at a local hotel in honor of the players of the team "Karachi Ghazis" who performed prominently in the Sindh Premier League. Irfan Wahid Chief Executive Officer, Mansoor Wahid Managing Director, Mohsin Wahid Director Sales & Marketing and other members of GFS Builders & Developers were also present.

On this occasion, Chief Executive of GFS Builders Irfan Wahid said that GFS Builders has played a significant role in the promotion of sports and especially for the promotion of cricket, our organization will continue to play its key role so that in the coming young generation we can produce the best cricketers, which is possible only through a series like SPL at the provincial level. The purpose of organizing games in this way is to highlight other sports including cricket so that the best cricketers can be brought in Pakistan in the future. Irfan Wahid

said that I am grateful. Long live the Sindh Government, which has played an important role in the promotion of sports, with the help of which we have got the opportunity to collect the best players from various teams of Sindh.

While Mansoor Wahid MDGFS Builders also expressed his views and said that the land of Sindh has produced legendary players like Javed Miandad, Saeed Anwar, Sarfaraz Ahmed for Pakistan and God willing, the land of Sindh will play its role in producing the best players in the future. Which can be made easier by organizing games like Sindh Premier League, he assured the players of his and his organization's full support and also announced the future cash prizes for those who show the best performance.

It should be noted that on this occasion, the entire team of GFS Builders and other dignitaries of the city participated to appreciate the hard work and dedication of the entire team of "Karachi Ghazis".

High fuel prices push inflation to over 38%: DFPA

PPA

ISLAMABAD: The Disposable Food Packaging Association (DFPA) has warned the record inflation and high cost of doing business continued to hurt economic growth, demanding a careful policy to keep it in control, as weekly inflation has surged to new highs for the third consecutive week.

Quoting the data, the DFPA President Ahsan Shahid revealed a year-on-year increase of 38.66 percent in short-term inflation for this, marking an

alarming trend in rising prices. The ongoing depreciation of the Pakistani rupee, coupled with soaring petrol prices, sales tax burdens, and mounting electricity bills are identified as the primary contributors to the persistent inflationary trend.

But the most important factor contributing to inflation is the steep increase in petroleum products. These price hikes have led to elevated transport costs and have subsequently driven up the cost of moving goods, affecting consumers across the country.

Pakistan Exports Set to Establish Permanent Presence in EU

Shujaat Ali

The establishment of The Pakistan Trade Pavilion (PTP), a permanent expo site in the vibrant European capital of Lisbon, strategically addresses the challenges hindering Pakistani manufacturers' access to the European market, poised to become a game-changer.

Azfar Bukhari, a distinguished British-Pakistani figure renowned for his extraordinary endeavors, is the pioneer of this revolutionary project, promising to reshape the trajectory of Pakistani exports.

Despite Pakistan's privileged duty-free access to the entire EU bloc under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP+) status, its products have faced obstacles such as limited visibility, industry dispersion, economic instability, and unfavorable perceptions.

The PTP, strategically located in Lisbon, seeks to be a pivotal instrument in overcoming these constraints, providing a platform for Pakistani enterprises to thrive on the international stage.

The pavilion serves as a centralized platform, showcasing a diverse array of products manufactured in Pakistan. Introduced by the internationally acclaimed figure Azfar Bukhari, honored by the Sindh Assembly for his extraordinary services, the initiative is already garnering attention. Emphasizing the significance of tourism, culture, and heritage in fostering economic growth, PTP aims to alter negative perceptions and showcase Pakistan's rich cultural treasures, creating a dynamic trade environment benefiting both Pakistan and its international partners.

PTP's strategic location in Lisbon

aspires to provide a vital link between Europe and Africa, serving as an ideal platform for potential expansion into other European cities and the growing African market. With a commitment to high-quality products, timely deliveries, and adherence to European standards, the pavilion aims to foster trust among buyers and increase demand for Pakistani products.

Azfar Bukhari, known for challenging racial comments by British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and advocating for Pakistan on the international stage, played a pivotal role in persuading the

Portuguese side to secure a permanent display center for Pakistani products. The initiative could be transformative for Pakistan's exports, ensuring direct access to the world's single-largest market, comprising the entire EU bloc.

Bukhari revealed that he is waiting for the formation of the Government after the General Elections in February 2024. The entire idea was already tabled with the cabinet, who even offered an important role in Trade and Investments, applauding the idea as revolutionary in Pakistani exports. However, Bukhari refused to accept such an offer and renewed the assurance of his best cooperation to formally materialize this endeavor with the new Government after elections.

PTP's EU integration strategy facilitates Pakistani businesses in establishing sub-offices in Europe, overcoming travel barriers, and connecting with potential clients. A European sub-office not only grants work and residency rights but also offers a path to European citizenship after five years, ensuring a lasting presence in the Euro-

pean market.

The long-term success of PTP hinges on ongoing collaboration among all stakeholders, celebrating Pakistan's diverse traditions, landscapes, and hospitable spirit. By expanding business opportunities and fostering lasting relationships with international buyers, the Pakistan Trade Pavilion is poised to make a significant contribution to Pakistan's export sector, economic development, and job creation.

In an era where global trade dynamics are evolving, PTP stands as a testament to Pakistan's commitment to innovation and international collaboration. The pavilion's potential to reshape the future of Pakistan's trade is underscored by its unique features and strategic positioning, making it a beacon of hope for the nation's economic growth on the global stage.

Sports Board Punjab holds a historic cash and motorbikes award ceremony at Alhamra Complex

Sports Desk

LAHORE: Sports Board Punjab organized a historic mega cash and motorbikes award ceremony at Alhamra Complex, Shahra-e-Quaid-e-Azam on Saturday.

Cash prizes of around Rs 3 crore, 90 lakh were distributed among 480 male and female athletes who achieved top positions in different national and international sports competitions in recent past.

Adviser to Chief Minister Punjab on Sports and youth affairs Wahab Riaz, Provincial Ministers Amir Mir, SM Tanveer, Bilal Asghar, Mansoor Qadir, Azfar Nasir, Advisor Kunwar Dilshad Punjab chief Secretary Zahid Akhtar Zqaman, CCPO Lahore Bilal Siddique Kamyana, Secretary Sports Punjab Raja Jahangir Anwar, Director General Sports Punjab Dr. Asif Tufail and several other dignitaries were also present at the mega event.

Adviser to Chief Minister Punjab on Sports and youth affairs Wahab Riaz, Secretary Sports Punjab Raja Jahangir Anwar and Director General Sports Punjab Dr. Asif Tufail also distributed cash prizes and motorbikes in the grand ceremony which was attended

by hundreds of leading male and female athletes of the province.

Leading position holders of 34th Quetta National Games, Pink Games, Asian Athletics Championship 2023, Rising Punjab Games, Ramzan Sports Series, Junior Asia Cup Hockey Oman, World Snooker and Chess Championship were awarded cash prizes at the historic ceremony.

Cash prizes of 48 lakh rupees were given to 20 players for outstanding performance in the Ramazan sports series. Cash prizes of Rs 1 crore 23 lakh 50 thousand were given to 176 players who got prominent position in Rising Punjab Games. Rs 1 crore 1 lakh cash prizes were given to 122 athletes who performed prominently in the 34th National Games.

132 women athletes who performed prominently in Pink Games 2023 were given Rs 50 lakh cash prizes. A collective prize of 36 lakh rupees was given to the silver medal winning team in the Junior Asian Hockey Tournament.

Javelin thrower M Yasir who won bronze medal was given Rs 1,000,000. A total of Rs 4.8 million were awarded to hockey players in the shape of Rs 20,000 per month stipend for a year.

Para-athlete Haider Ali, who won a



gold medal in the Paralympic Games, was also awarded a cash prize of Rs 20 lakh. As many as 150 Tehsil sports officers were given motorbikes and cash prizes were also given to 11 Tehsil Sports Officers who have shown the best performance in Sports Clubs Registration.

Adviser to Chief Minister Punjab on Sports and youth affairs Wahab Riaz presented an in-depth overview

of Punjab Sports department's performance, major events and achievements during the last one year period.

Adviser to Punjab Chief Minister on Sports and Youth Affairs Wahab Riaz said the Directorate General Sports & Youth Affairs Punjab implemented a sports calendar to streamline the sporting activities in Punjab. "Over the last 8 to 10 months, various calendar activi-

ties took place across Punjab, including the U-16 Talent Hunt Programme, Rising Punjab Games, Pink Games, and Ramzan ul Mubarak Sports Series".

He said that these kinds of measures have never been taken in the history of Punjab province. "The top performing athletes in various national and international sports competitions are our true heroes and they deserved to be

honoured fully".

Adviser to Punjab Chief Minister on Sports and Youth Affairs Wahab Riaz further said that Sports Board Punjab has taken several unique measures for the true promotion of sports culture which have never been taken in the past. "We have completed a perfect Annual Sports Calendar besides initiating sports club registration campaign in all parts of the province. "Sports clubs have been registered for the first time in the history of Punjab," he added.

Adviser to Punjab Chief Minister on Sports and Youth Affairs Wahab Riaz said that the TSOs have showed best performance in registration of sports clubs. "All possible measures are being taken for the development of sports culture in all parts of the province".

Following TSOs were given cash award of Rs 50,000 each: Shabina Hamid TSO Faisalabad, Saeed Ahmed TSO Rawalpindi, Adnan Saleem TSO Sialkot, M Asim Bhatti TSO Bahawalpur, M Umair TSO Rahim Yar Khan, M Rehmat Ullah Sial TSO DG Khan, Saima Manzoor TSO Sargodha, Maqbool Ahmad TSO Nankana Sahib, Malik Tassawar Hussain TSO Jaranwala and Farman Kausar TSO Gujranwala.

Patrick Kruger helps Sunrisers Eastern Cape edge Paarl Royals in a last-over thriller

A Sports

GQEBERHA: Patrick Kruger's blistering cameo powered Sunrisers Eastern Cape to a thrilling five-wicket win over Paarl Royals in the 30th SA20 fixture at St George's Park on Sunday.

This victory propelled Sunrisers Eastern Cape to the top of the SA20 points table, while Paarl Royals are in third position.

Royals won the toss and opted to bat first, but could not get the desired start as Jason Roy departed in the third over.

Jos Buttler then played a 38-run cameo off 22 balls which included four boundaries and two sixes before falling prey to Liam Dawson.

Royals lost two more wickets in quick succession, slipping to 76-4 in 10 overs, before Dane Vilas and Wihan



Lubbe joined hands for a crucial partnership.

They added 49 runs for the fifth wicket but Ottniel Baartman halted their progress as he got Lubbe (27) caught behind with 125 runs on the board.

Vilas also followed his partner back to the pavilion as he fell in the next over after scoring 34 off 25 featuring four boundaries. Andile Phehlukwayo scored an unbeaten 16, while Codi Yusuf smashed one boundary in the two balls he

faced to drag their team's total to 159/7 in 20 overs.

Baartman led the bowling honours with two wickets, while Dawson, Daniel Worrall, Beyers Swanepoel and Simon Harmer contributed with one wicket each.

Zone-VI Green win in Khansortium Karachi Region Senior Inter District Cricket Tourney

Sports Desk

KARACHI: Zone-VI Green defeated Zone-I Greens by 17 runs in their match in the Khansortium Karachi Region Senior Inter District Cricket Tournament at Oval Cricket Academy NBP Cricket Stadium. The tournament is being organized by Regional Cricket Association Karachi.

The highlights of the days play was brilliant Centuries by Haider Abbas unbeaten 112 and Shayan Ahmed 101.

Scores in Brief:

Zone-VI Greens 304/4 in allotted 45 overs. Haider Abbas scored unbeaten 112 with the help of 11 fours and 2 sixes, Raam Ravi 58 6x4 2x6, Ghulam Ashraf 53 6x4 3x6 not out, Usman Raheem Shah 31, Habib ullah 23. Muhammad Zohaib (ob) 2/44.

Zone-I Reds 287/9 in 45 overs. Shayan Ahmed 101 12x4 2x6, Hammad Mughal 52 3x4 5x6, Rameel Aftab 30, Muhammad Zohaib 21. Usman Raheem Shah (sla) 2/20, Maaz Khurram (mf) 2/44, Tayab Hussain (sla) 2/48.

Sean Abbott's all-round exploits power Australia to crush West Indies



A Sports

SYDNEY: Sean Abbott exhibited his all-round skills, scoring a half-century and taking three wickets to power Australia to a crushing 83-run victory over West Indies in the second ODI at Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG) on Sunday.

This victory gave Australia an unsoundable 2-0 lead over West Indies in the three-match ODI series.

West Indies reduced Australia to 50-3 inside eight overs after opting to field as Alzarri Joseph dismissed openers while Matthew Forde castled Steve Smith.

Cameron Green looked comfortable against West Indies pacers, but he miscued one to Oshane Thomas which was caught by Forde. Green played an anchoring 33-run knock from 41 balls, featuring five boundaries and one six.

Marnus Labuschagne (26) also departed in the next over, leaving Australia reeling at 91-5, before Matthew Short (41) and Aaron Hardie (26) knitted a 51-run stand to help the hosts stabilize.

However, Gudakesh Motie sent both batters back to the pavilion in quick succession to halt Australia's comeback.

Abbott then played a counter-attacking knock, scoring his maiden half-century in international cricket to help lift his side's total to 251.

He constructed a 57-run one-sided partnership with debutant Will Sutherland (18) before Romario Shepherd got the breakthrough.

Shepherd also ended Abbott's 69-run knock, which conceded 63 balls featuring one boundary and four sixes.

Adam Zampa (8) and Josh Hazlewood (4) remained unbeaten to see Australia score 258/9 in their allocated 50 overs.

Motie led the bowling charts for the visitors with figures of 3-28, while Shepherd and Joseph picked two wickets each.

West Indies while chasing lost three wickets in nine overs with only 34 runs on the board as Hardie, Hazlewood and Abbott collected one each.

Captain Shai Hope (29) and Keacy Carty knitted a partnership of 53 runs to help their side get out of jail but Hazlewood struck again to pull things back.

Meanwhile, Carty top-scored with 40 off 51, laced with two boundaries and one six before he was caught behind off Abbott.

West Indies failed to recover from there and kept losing wickets at an alarming rate, adding a meagre 77 runs for the last five wickets.

Except for Roston Chase (25) and Joseph (19, none of the lower-order batters managed to reach double figures as their innings was wrapped up at 175 in 43.3 overs.

Hazlewood and Abbott picked three wickets each for Australia.

Perera, Farooqi aid MI Emirates thump Desert Vipers in ILT20

A Sports

ABU DHABI: Kusal Perera's quick half-century, followed by Fazalhaq Farooqi's four-wicket haul guided MI Emirates to a thumping 30-run victory against Desert Vipers in the 21st ILT20 fixture here on Sunday.

MI Emirates were invited to bat first and lost opening batter Muhammad Waseem (7) in the third over with 22 runs on the board courtesy of Mohammad Amir.

Andre Fletcher also fell soon afterwards without adding

much to the total, while Kusal Perera remained unfazed on his end, keeping the scoreboard ticking.

Ambati Rayudu joined hands with Perera and together they constructed a quick 75-run partnership to raise the team's total to 127 before Wanindu Hasaranga struck.

Perera played a fiery innings of 65 runs in 46 balls with the help of eight boundaries and one six before he swept Hasaranga straight in the hands of Ali Naseer.

Rayudu on the other end

scored an anchoring 44 off 38, laced with five boundaries and one six but fell to Amir with the scoreboard reading 163 in 18 overs.

Captain Nicholas Pooran played a quick-fire 15-ball cameo, scoring 39 runs which included three boundaries and four sixes before falling in the last over.

MI Emirates finished their innings at 188/5, with Tim David (2) and Odean Smith (1) remaining unbeaten.

For the Vipers, Amir picked two wickets, whereas Hasa-



ranga, Matheesha Pathirana and Nathan Sowter claimed one each.

MI Emirates bowlers did not let the Vipers settle down in the pursuit with quick four wickets with a meagre 16 runs on the board inside four overs.

Azam Khan scored 19 off 10 with the help of three boundaries and one six before Fazalhaq Farooqi ended his brief stay. Meanwhile, Hasaranga fell

to Waqar Salamkheil to leave Desert Vipers reeling at 45-6 in seven overs.

Ali Naseer and Sherfane Rutherford (18) knitted an anchoring 37-run stand from 30 balls before Smith removed the latter.

With the Vipers needing, 107 runs from 48 balls, Naseer was joined by Luke Wood in the middle and they took charge of the chase.

Shubman Gill's ton keeps India in control as England chase 399

Sports Desk

VISAKHAPATNAM: Shubman Gill struck form with a century as India left England a record victory target of 399 on day three of the second Test on Sunday.

England, who lead the five-match series 1-0, reached 67-1 at stumps after opener Ben Duckett fell for 28.

Left-hander Duckett put on an attacking 50-run stand with fellow opener Zak Crawley, batting on 29 before Ravichandran Ashwin got him out for his 497th Test wicket.

Nightwatchman Rehan Ahmed, on nine, joined Crawley with England needing another 332 for victory.

The highest fourth-innings target successfully chased

against India is England's 378 at Edgbaston in 2022, and the most successful in India was when the hosts got 387 against England in 2008.

Spinners Tom Hartley and Ahmed combined to bowl out India for 255 after Gill's 104 on a day of bowling and fielding brilliance.

Veteran pace bowler James Anderson struck early to remove the openers, and India slipped further after a stunning catch by captain Ben Stokes before Gill stabilised the innings.

Shubman Gill hit his third Test ton, and first in his 12 innings since March 2023, to pull India out from 122-4 with two key stands including 89 runs with Axar Patel.

He reached the hundred with

a single off debutant spinner Shoaib Bashir and raised his bat to a cheering Sunday crowd.

He soon attempted a reverse sweep and departed when Bashir got him caught behind, a dismissal that was turned down by the umpire but replays showed the ball grazed the batsman's glove before wicketkeeper Ben Foakes took a sharp catch.

Gill had two lucky escapes on four, both close lbw calls and one successfully reviewed, but then batted fluently with his flicks and drives until his exit.

England kept chipping away, as Hartley, who returned figures of 4-77 with his left-arm spin, sent back Axar lbw for 45 to leave India six down by tea.

Ashwin played a stubborn knock of 29 before Ahmed

took him down to wrap up the innings with his third strike.

Earlier, in the first session, Shreyas Iyer made 29 and was out after a moment of magic by Stokes.

Iyer attempted a big hit off Hartley but Stokes sprinted back from mid-off and dived at full stretch to pull off a screamer of a catch.

Anderson, in an excellent morning spell of fast bowling, rattled Rohit Sharma's stumps with a superb delivery that pitched and moved away from the right-hander.

The old warhorse then got the left-handed Yashasvi Jaiswal caught at first slip, for his 695th Test wicket.

India had a lead of 143 at the start of their second innings and began the day on 28-0.



Tree plantation

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi pray after formally inaugurating the tree planting campaign in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting on Sunday.



Photo: Online

Caretakers leaving, new govt coming after Feb 8 elections: PM

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar Sunday said the caretaker government would be leaving and the new government would be formed after the elections on February 8, putting behind all the speculation and conspiracy theories of the past months.

In an interview with a private television, he said from day one there was no doubt that the elections would be held on time and now this would be happening in the coming days after all the speculations.

The caretaker government performed its duties according to the constitutional mandate and he would take responsibility for all the decisions taken during its tenure, he added.

To a question, he said, "Our democ-

cracy is evolving and we are a transitional democracy with all its flaws and weaknesses."

Parliament would be formed after the polls and it would take up necessary constitutional and legal reforms to strengthen democracy according to suggestions from different strata of society, he remarked.

The prime minister said terrorism was a serious issue and its surge happened due to the withdrawal of the United States and NATO forces from Afghanistan, who left behind modern weapons which came in possession of terrorist groups.

"We have taken up a clear position against the terrorist groups and the law enforcement agencies are steadfastly taking on the terrorists with bravery," he observed.

The prime minister said during his



tenure, he represented Pakistan at the United Nations and interacted with the world leaders and explained Pakistan's perspective to them.

He said he also met with the Chinese leadership, policymakers and think tanks at the Belt and Road Forum in China to exchange ideas on achieving shared prosperity for humanity.

"We signed 10 memorandums of understanding with China on increas-

ing cooperation especially on the projects of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)."

He appreciated the army chief for the swift, appropriate and measured response in the aftermath of the attack on Pakistani soil from Iran.

Pakistan de-escalated the situation with Iran and now there was realization that both countries could not afford deterioration in the bilateral relations, he added.

To a question, he said his government increased aid to Gaza threefold and with institutional input, advocated the cause of Palestine from the platform of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

The Islamic world should unite behind the people of Palestine and the Palestinians should decide for themselves their future course, he opined.

SAPM inaugurates welfare projects worth Rs 1.8 bln for Balochistan

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Jawad Sohrab Malik on Sunday inaugurated a series of welfare projects worth Rs 1.8 billion for Industrial and Mine workers in Balochistan.

He said these initiatives, funded by the Workers Welfare Fund (WWF), are poised to significantly enhance living standards and educational opportunities for mine and industrial workers across the province, said a news release issued here.

He further said the cornerstone of these projects is the establishment of a Girls High School with Staff Residences in Muslim Bagh, Balochistan, designed to provide quality education to the children of 5,605 mine and industrial workers, symbolizing a substantial leap towards gender inclusivity and educational accessibility in the area.



Constructed over 63,000 square feet and with an investment of Rs 700 Million, the school and residences represent a beacon of hope for the future generation of Balochistan, he said and stressed on ensuring that the project is completed within 24

months.

Addressing the pressing need for adequate housing, Malik also laid the foundation stone for 100 worker residence quarters in Muslim Bagh. This housing project, covering 5 acres and costing an estimated Rs 900 Million

will provide secure and comfortable homes for 100 families, directly tackling the housing shortage that plagues the workers' community. The project is set to complete with 24 months.

In a gesture of continued commitment to education, SAPM celebrated the completion of an educational project in Sibi, Balochistan, initially slated for completion in 2016. This school now opens its doors to the children of approximately 4,000 mine workers, further underscoring the government's dedication to workers' welfare.

"These projects are not just buildings; they are the foundation of dreams for many families. They stand as a testament to the government's unwavering commitment to uplift the lives of our workers and their families," stated Malik during the inauguration. "We are determined to continue this journey, ensuring that every worker and their children have access to the resources they need to thrive," he added.

PTI UK chapter condemns Justice Minallah's London heckling

News Desk

LONDON: PTI's UK chapter has issued a statement condemning an incident on Saturday evening where Justice Athar Minallah of the Supreme Court of Pakistan was heckled in London.

"PTI UK strongly condemns the treatment towards Honourable Justice Athar Minallah. Those involved do not represent the PTI, nor does PTI UK endorse such behavior," the party chapter stated on the social media platform X.

Videos circulating on social media showed Justice Minallah being harassed in the streets of London, escorted to a car by a group, with others shouting slogans both in support of the PTI and against the army.

Justice Minallah was invited as a guest to the 'Future of Pakistan Conference' at the London School of Economics.

In the statement, Jahanzeb Khan, the senior vice president of PTI UK, mentioned, "It has come to our attention that there are individuals often referred to as 'PTI supporters' by certain journalists sympathetic to the N league in London."

He alleged collaboration between these journalists and N league journalists, orchestrating situations involving these individuals to create commotion during visits by Pakistani government officials to London.

The post was also shared by the party's official account and PTI Secretary General Omar Ayub Khan.

Maulana is expanding. Watch for him in Sindh

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: He is telling the people with utmost disdain that irrigation water – the lifeline for farmers – would be disconnected, if they don't vote for his party. It is yet another show of unchecked power where the influential social and political "elders" directly control the lives of poor and restrict their freedoms, including the right to vote.

Then there is another person who mocks the rival by saying that they can't win the February 8 elections because they couldn't even secure the results of by-polls held last year.

Both cases involve the leaders of the same party – the PPP. The latter is Bilawal Bhutto Zardari – the party chairman former – and the former is the husband

of his paternal aunt.

However, there has been no hullabaloo, no outrage by the social suspects on neither mainstream nor social media because the culprits are from the so-called progressive PPP which champions the cause of democracy. Just imagine if some other party member threatens to cut irrigation water in case the voters opt for rival candidates.

Similarly, Bilawal is openly implying that those in government should never by-elections because they have the resources. Did he admit that the PPP uses the same tactics in Sindh? It clearly seems so.

But why no anger? Because the people who are responsible for triggering the outrage outflow can't see their myth of Sindh belongs to the PPP being

washed away by the truth. The "grand old party" is still their darling for the being first love.

Absence of alternative thanks to the spineless and unimaginative approach adopted by the likes of PML-N and the existing socioeconomic structures have enabled the PPP to sustain its hold over Sindh. Why would people vote for others when they have to live there even after the polling day as there won't anyone to help in the case of consequences?

However, the people always choose the best for themselves when there is a viable option. Karachi and other urban centres of Sindh are an example. But a change is slowly brewing in some parts of Sindh, notwithstanding its nature and the results we get on February 8.

AIMS Education System initiative

Solangi terms plantation of trees as national, moral duty

Muhammad Amin

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting and Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Solangi on Saturday termed plantation as a national and moral duty as trees were very important for human life and they play a significant role in environmental protection.

Formally inaugurating the tree planting campaign in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MOIB) he said it was the duty of all human beings to keep the environment green.

"Along with planting trees and saplings, steps are also necessary to protect them," Murtaza Solangi remarked. The cooperation of the AIMS Education System and Private Schools Association in the

plantation drive was a commendable initiative, he added. It should be noted that the saplings for the plantation campaign had been gifted to the Ministry of Information by the Private Schools Association, which will be planted in various offices of the Ministry of Information including the PTV headquarters.

The event were attended by MD PTV Mubasher Tauqeer Shah, senior officials of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Naveed Ahmad Khan, Editor, Daily The Spokesman, Zafron Ellahi, President, Abdul Waheed Khan General Secretary of the Private Schools Association and a large number of students. The minister of information formally started the plantation campaign by planting saplings in the lawn of PTV headquarters.

Pakistan sends 5th tranche of humanitarian aid to Gaza



Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has dispatched 5th tranche of humanitarian assistance for Gaza, consisting of winterized tents, tarpaulins and

blankets via PAF C-130. "The flight will land in Al-Arish, Egypt, where the Pakistani Ambassador will receive the aid for onward delivery," Ministry of Foreign Affairs posted on its official X handle on Sunday.

Will bury politics of hate if voted to power: Bilawal



Correspondent

HYDERABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said on Sunday he would end the politics of hatred and division if his party voted to power.

He, while addressing a public meeting during the election campaign, said "people know about the origin and past of the political

parties who want to compete with us."

He said "I am here with the brothers and sisters of Hyderabad as also I am grateful for your trust on me. Your vote to the PPP would start an era of progress as the regions has seen enough of the divisionary politics."

He said the people of the area have been suffering and making sacrifices but they have never bowed down to tyrants, dictators.

He said he has brought a public economic contract to the people besides pledging to increase the amount of Benazir Bhutto Income Support Card while adding he would build three million houses for the people in the country.

Karachi rains enough to compare the performance: Shehbaz to Bilawal

Bureau Report

LAHORE: PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday mocked PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari over his repeated invitation for a live debate, as he cited the example of heavy rain paralysing the daily life in Karachi, which, he said, was enough to compare the performance of two parties.

Media persons were reporting just few weeks ago that the PML-N leadership could not face the people and had decided to stay at home, he recalled and noted that the massive rallies held in different towns and cities were a proof of how much love and support the masses had for Nawaz Sharif – the three-time prime minister who is eyeing a record fourth stint in office.

Addressing a press conference, he said it seemed that the people would give a clear mandate to the PML-N to govern the country for the next five years.

About the alleged political victi-



misation of the PTI founder, Shehbaz said the same person used to claim that he won't spare anyone and send everyone to prison, as the rivals were booked in bogus cases, at a time when he himself resorted to corrupt practices.

Democracy doesn't mean that a person involved in illegal activities should be forgiven, he asserted in response to a question.

Millions of voters would decide their future through use of ballot on February 8 which his party was going to accept, Shehbaz said, as he listed the achievements of his party under Nawaz Sharif's government in the past.