





# PM orders state disaster management to be more active after natural calamities

**Bureau Report**

MUZAFFARABAD: A high-level meeting of the State Disaster Management Commission was held here with Prime Minister Azad Jammu and Kashmir Chaudhry Anwar ul Haq in the chair. During the meeting, DG State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA) Raja Tahir Mumtaz Khan gave a detailed briefing to the participants regarding the SDMA's budget and its performance, role and responsibilities during natural calamities. The meeting approved a grant of 69.950 million rupees from the State Disaster Management Fund for the purchase of relief goods. Speaking on the occasion, Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwar ul



Haq stressed the need for making the SDMA more active to deal with natural calamities. He said that training and refresher courses should be arranged for the SDMA employees so that they

could be fully prepared to deal with any kind of emergency situation. The PM said that protection of life and property of the people was the government's first and foremost responsibility. He directed that Rescue 1122, Civil Defense and the SDMA should be merged to form a single body to further improve its performance.

The Prime Minister also directed the authorities concerned to conduct seismic study of Mirpur and Muzaffarabad. He said that a task force headed by the Inspector General of Police should be formed to prepare a plan of action to keep the SDMA machinery operational at all times. The Prime Minister said that rescue organizations would be provided with more

machinery so that they can perform their duties better during any natural calamity. He directed that the organization should ensure the availability of 20 percent of its equipment and supplies in Poonch and Mirpur divisions apart from Muzaffarabad so that it can be used in any difficulty. In order to ensure transparency, the PM said that the purchase of all machinery and relief items should be made through tendering. The meeting was attended by senior Minister Col. Retd Waqar Ahmad Noor, Chaudhry Azhar Sadiq, Nisar Ansar Abdali, Chaudhry Amir Yasin, Advisor Sardar Ahmad Sagheer, Chief Secretary Dawood Muhammad Barich, Inspector General Police Sohail Habib Tajik, and others.

*DG State Disaster Management issues directions to admin to make advance arrangements in view of possible snowfall*

**Abdul Majeed Tahir**

MUZAFFARABAD: The State Disaster Management Authority has directed the administration and other related institutions to make advance arrangements in view of the forecast of more rains and snowfall in Azad Kashmir from the night of February 25. Director General State Disaster Management Authority Raja Tahir Mumtaz Khan has said that in view of the weather situation, instructions have been issued to the District Disaster Management Authorities, Rescue 1122, Highways other relevant departments to monitor the situation all the time and the central control room. should be kept on board, should be kept in touch with the administration by completing advance arrangements to deal with any unexpected situation.

While ensuring that where there is a high risk of flood or landslides, Rescue 1122, Fire Brigade, Ambulance and Civil Defense etc. are available at all times. He said that all concerned agencies have been directed to liaison with the law enforcement agencies and NHA, DDMA's have been directed to monitor possible flooding in the drains. It has been directed to take advance measures to reduce the possible damages caused by thunder and hailstorm by coordinating with the concerned departments to secure the rotten electric poles, solar panels, hoardings and buildings under construction. Director General SDMA appealed to the citizens to take precautionary measures in case of severe weather conditions he added.

*Former PM Gilani hails new face of Pakistan People's Party after election*



**Bureau Report**

ISLAMABAD/ MUZAFFARABAD: Vice Chairman of Pakistan People's Party, former Prime Minister of Pakistan, newly elected Member of National Assembly, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, has said that political landmines of palace conspiracies equal to the Himalayas were laid against the People's Party in every era and its mandate. All the resources and the government machinery were used indiscriminately to bulldoze the martyr Ms. Benazir Bhutto and her life was made a torture by establishing bogus cases. Mohterma Ms. Faryal Talpur was transferred from hospital to jail in the dark of night, and those who founded the vengeful regime are going through the same process today. Shaukat Javed Mir Chaudhary Shafi Nadeem Mian Khurram Rasool, while talking to officials and workers from all over the country along with the Central Deputy Secretary Information nominated candidate for Assembly Constituency 7 Shaukat Javed Mir Center Leader Chaudhary Shafi Nadeem Advocate, told the former Prime Minister of Pakistan Yousuf Raza Gilani. Congratulating himself and his sons on their wonderful success, he said that they have created a new history by sacrificing the prime ministership in loyalty to the party. proved that the people-friendly philosophy of politics of martyr Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, daughter of the East, Ms. Benazir Bhutto, is ruling the hearts and minds of the people. We are grateful to the party leaders by participating in the Wali and Wadi Lipa rallies, for which we are grateful. Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani said that the People's Party is following the policy of national dignity, national security, trust building and integrated relations between institutions. People's Party is not a symbol of hatred, welfare, humanity, a strong federation and a symbol of national unity and harmony and a guarantee of prosperity

*PMLQ spokesman urges all political parties to play pivotal role in nation's affairs*

**Aziz Ur Rehman Mujahid**



GUJRAT: Pakistan Muslim League (Q) has urged upon all political parties to get united to play a role to the democratic process on track and solve the teething issues confronted with the country.

In a statement issued here on Friday, PMLQ spokesman, Ghulam Mustafa Malik, said PMLQ will play a vibrant role in Pakistan parliamentary process and get Pakistan out of the current political and economic crisis. He said PMLQ has maintained its position with 10 seats and its elected member Punjab assembly except Chaudhary Salik Hussain will take oath in the Punjab assembly today. Ghulam Mustafa said PMLQ has maintained its 2018 position with 10 members. He added that Chaudhary Salik Hussain will retain national assembly seat to play a role in the lower house of the parliament and vacate seat of the Punjab assembly. Chaudhary Salik Hussain had won a national assembly and a Punjab assembly from Gujrat in 2024.

*Demand for release of 24 stoppage salaries of forest guards in SWL*

**Adam Khan Wazir**

WANA: Negehban associated with the Forest Department in District Lower South Waziristan Wana held an emergency press conference on Friday at the District Press Club Wana against the stoppage of salaries and the high officials of the forest department were demanded to release the salaries immediately.



They said, that the salaries of our forest guards have been stopped for the last 24 months, orders should be issued by the government to release the salaries, because due to the recent exorbitant inflation, the Negehban of Wana have been forced to starve.

On this occasion, Malik Meraj Wazir, Jalal Wazir, Haji Sarfaraz and Ajab Noor Wazir said while talking to the media that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Forestry Department had promised to pay the fixed salaries for the said 24 months but unfortunately, the top officials of the forest department have transferred the funds of the Negehban to AIP.

They added that if our closed salaries are not released by next Friday, then they will announce a boycott of the polio campaign while protest demonstrations and sit-ins will be held in Tank Dera Ismail Khan.

## Gilgit Baltistan

ISLAMABAD: CEO GBC Rehmat Hussain and Aerospace Engineer Sahar Raki meet with Governor GB. Discussion about the current situation of Gilgit Baltistan



Photo: Online

## Strong and stable Pakistan is the guarantor of the freedom of Kashmiris: Sardar Attique

**Abdul Majeed Tahir**

RAWALPINDI: Various delegations met the President of All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference and former Prime Minister Sardar Attique Ahmad Khan at Mujahid Manzil and congratulated the President-Muslim Conference on the successful tour of the UAE.

Sardar Attique Ahmad Khan said that while talking to the delegations on this occasion.

A strong and stable Pakistan is the guarantor of the freedom of Kashmiris. Every Kashmiri wants Pakistan to be economically and economically strong. Different delegations need to go abroad and highlight the issue of Kashmir. Modi is a murderer of humanity, Modi is involved in terrorism in the occupied valley. We stand with the



people of Kashmir, he said, strongly condemning the serious violations of human rights at the hands of the Indian army in Occupied Kashmir and demanding the United Nations to stop the serious violations of human rights at the hands of the Indian Army in Occupied Kashmir. Make sure and implement the approved resolutions of the United Nations. He said that the Indian forces in Occu-

ped Kashmir have not left any tactic of oppression that has not been tried on the innocent and helpless Kashmiri people. Modi will gain political advantage in the upcoming elections. He is visiting Occupied Kashmir to discuss the people of Occupied valley. These visits will not help him. and The Kashmiri people already know such a treacherous person. said that we make it clear to India that it should

not be an obstacle to the basic right of Kashmiris, the right to self-determination, but should show seriousness and solve this problem through negotiations in the light of the United Nations resolutions. He said that Pakistan's Kashmir has an important role in security and economic development. Indian Judiciary has always given judgments against Kashmiris. India is currently heating up the market of

oppression and persecution in Occupied Kashmir. Demography of occupied Kashmir is changing. India is currently trying to change the demography in Occupied Kashmir. He said that they will not hesitate to make any sacrifice to fulfill the mission of freedom given by Mujahid e Awwal Sardar Muhammad Abdul Qayyum Khan. Kashmiris are unpaid soldiers of Pakistan are currently engaged in the struggle for the realization of Pakistan. The struggle of Kashmiris will continue until Kashmir is freed from the domination of India and becomes a part of Pakistan. Syed Abbasi, Sardar Intiaz Abbasi, Maulana Riaz Abbasi, Zahran Dawlat Abbasi, Raja Yasin Luqman, Ahsan Jilil Abbasi, Waqas Mushtaq Advocate, Raja Shoaib, Ashfaq Abbasi and others held meetings.

## Women discuss STEAM at Sujawal Youth Festival to bridge gender gap

**Kamran Khamiso Khowaja**

SUJAWAL: The speakers at the different sessions of the second day of the three-day Sujawal Youth STEAM Learning Festival mulled over changing patriarchal norms to foster gender equality in the education system.

Discussing 'Super Women: Gender Gap in STEAM education SDG 4, 5 and Widening GPI' Sidra Sadozai emphasized the irreplaceable role of mothers, asserting that the children showcasing their talents at festivals owe their presence to the support of their mothers. She advocated for encouraging the participation of women in all aspects of life to foster integrity. They underscored that women would be instrumental for diverting society to persistent progress.

Makal Shah, hailing from a Syed family, broke societal taboos by entering the development sector in 2004. Despite confronting multiple hurdles, preventing her from attending university due to stereotypes, she became the sole woman in her family to contribute to this field. She stressed the need to eliminate gender-based segregation in schools, emphasizing the importance of creating an environment that encourages participation from all genders to bridge the gender gap.

Sonal Dhanani highlighted the positive impact of women leadership in schools on increasing girls' enrollment. She urged the government to design strategies and advocacy to update curricula for STEM learning, praising the projects showcased by girls in festivals, which deserve appreciation

and can encourage more participation in STEM fields.

Kapil Dev praised Dr. Soomar Khoso's exemplary work in a remote village but acknowledged challenges in schools, emphasizing the need for qualified teachers and advanced facilities. He raised concerns about the lack of security and demand for girls' education, advocating for increased female representation in policy-making and leadership roles. "Changing patriarchal norms will play an instrumental role in bringing gender equality in the education system," he added.

Khushboo shed light on the challenges in sending girls to schools in remote areas, proposing a strategy akin to polio vaccination workers going door-to-door. She suggested that government initiatives should active-

ly promote girl education, engaging with communities to overcome societal barriers.

In a discussion on 'jobs of tomorrow? Be your own boss. Are we preparing our students?' Hameed Dipali highlighted that there is still no concept of career counseling in the school framework. Children lack exposure to various fields and the job market because our education system is unaware of market demands. Consequently, youngsters often fall short of meeting job criteria due to a lack of practical knowledge.

Yaqub Pechi added that our mindset still revolves around government jobs, and we need to empower our young cadre to take risks and foster entrepreneurial growth. Schools themselves fail to encourage students to pursue business or startup ventures.





Islamabad  
15° - 23° Clear

**SERVICES**

**Namaz Timings**

Fajr ..... 5:21 am  
Zohr ..... 12:21 pm  
Asr ..... 4:19 pm  
Maghrib ..... 5:59 pm  
Isha ..... 7:22 pm

**EMERGENCY**

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

**Women Police Stations**

Islamabad ..... 9222596  
Rawalpindi ..... 9270601-20

**ENQUIRY**

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

**HOSPITALS**

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

**DEPARTMENTS**

CDA ..... 9221334-43  
CDA ..... 9208301-04

*FIA achieves significant milestones in reclaiming illegal property in Faisalabad District*



PNP

FAISALABAD: In 2023, ACW accomplished significant milestones in reclaiming properties under the Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB), totaling 5332 Acres, 05 Kanals, & 04 Marlas, valued at Rs. 29274 million. Notably, outstanding dues amounting to Rs. 835.998 million were also recovered from tenants. These achievements merited Civil Awards for key officials of FIA, including the former DG FIA Mohsin Hassan Butt, ADG ACW Mr. Basharat Shehzad, and Director ACW Saqib Sultan Al Mehmood.

Building upon this momentum, in January 2024, Faisalabad Zone achieved a substantial breakthrough, successfully retrieving illegal property spanning 988 acres in Pak-Pattan District. The retrieved property, valued at Rs. 2272.4 million, was promptly handed over to ETPB authorities.

Moreover, the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) Cell, which operates within the ACW, showed remarkable efficiency by participating in 286 meetings held by 8 sub-committees and the main PAC. The compliance report reveals a commendable response to a total of 58 paras, resulting in 45 inquiries, 06 cases 05 arrests, and the recovery of an impressive amount of Rs.4053.42 million. Chairman PAC expressed his written appreciation for the excellent work of FIA in his letter to the Prime Minister of Pakistan.

# Public-private dialogue calls for swift, equitable transition away from coal power plants

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Experts at a public-private dialogue called for opting innovative financing mechanisms and technological transformation to upscale renewable energy resources for a just and clean energy transition in the country.

The dialogue titled: "Beginning of the End Transitioning away from Coal: Forging an Orderly, Equitable and Just Energy Transition in Pakistan", was organized by Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) as part of its Clean Energy Transition Programme here. The aim of the dialogue was to share the preliminary findings of an ongoing SDPI study with the stake-

holders. Ali Nawaz, Director-General (Coal), Private Power and Infrastructure Board (PIPB), Ministry of Energy (Power Division) said that if we do a regional comparison, the coal power generation in Pakistan is way less than other regional countries.

Asad Ullah, Specialist (Market Pricing & Simulations), Central Power Purchasing Agency (CPPA-G), pointed out that the energy access and affordability are the leading challenges in the country.

Ehtasham Khattak, Senior Project Officer of Asian Development Bank, said the objective is not only to transition away from coal but to transition towards the low carbon fuels. "It

is incumbent upon the government to address concerns of the communities whose resources are being utilized for power generation," he added.

Michael Williamson, a representative of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), said the Clean Energy Transition is the toughest question faced by the regions and states along the Pacific region and beyond. Zafar Mahmood, Director-General (Fuel) Energy Wing, Ministry of Planning Development & Special Initiatives, stressed the need to focus on its domestic energy resources.

Dr Khalid Waleed, Senior Energy Expert, SDPI, in his detailed presentation, cited various solutions to shift

from coal to Clean Credit Initiative. Basit Ghauri, Manager Research & Networks, Renewables First, said the country's nationally determined contributions (NDCs) for shifting over renewables was already five times more than the global threshold making it a leading country in achieving the ambitious goal.

Aqeel Jafri, Director Policy, PPIB said that the government is cautious about environment and it had three objectives that are accessibility, affordability, and security in energy sector.

Aman Ullah Mangrio, Energy Finance Expert, said that the political and fiscal commitments are crucial for energy transition.

# Iranian Ambassador highlights humanitarian collaboration in meeting with PRCS Chairman

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Dr. Reza Amiri, the Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan, reaffirmed the crucial importance of humanitarian service, expressing a steadfast dedication to advancing humanitarian efforts in Pakistan through cooperation with the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS). In a meeting held at the PRCS National Headquarters, Dr. Amiri and the Chairman of the Red Crescent, Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari, emphasized the significance of joint efforts in improving public health services across Pakistan.

Dr. Amiri detailed strategies for fostering bilateral collaboration with the aim of bolstering fraternal ties, particularly through healthcare endeavors in Pakistan in partnership with PRCS. He highlighted PRCS's advancement under the dynamic and forward-thinking leadership of Sardar Shahid

Ahmed Laghari, affirming Iran's eagerness to contribute to public health infrastructure. He underscored the potential for setting exemplary precedents in the realms of education and healthcare.

Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari, while conversing with Iranian Ambassador Dr. Reza Amiri, emphasized the importance of Iran's participation in public health projects and the provision of dialysis facilities for individuals afflicted with kidney diseases. Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari expressed gratitude to the Iranian Red Crescent for sending relief supplies to the flood-affected individuals in Balochistan. He stressed the urgency of cooperation from Iran in training and enhancing the skills of medical professionals.

Dr. Amiri commended the humanitarian aid extended by the Pakistan Red Crescent to flood victims and conveyed assurance

in pursuing continued collaboration with the organization. Both leaders articulated shared interest in extending healthcare amenities to travelers across the Pakistan-Iran border, covering a stretch of around 900 kilometers. Additionally, PRCS exhibited a keen inclination to offer services in first aid, vaccination, restoring family links, and other pertinent health interventions at the Pak-Iran border.

The meeting also explored opportunities for cooperation and partnership between the Iranian Red Crescent, the Pakistan Red Crescent, and other humanitarian organizations in Iran. Dr. Amiri received briefings on various sectors during his visit, alongside Secretary General Abidullah Khan and other officials.

The meeting concluded with discussions on opening new avenues of cooperation, promoting contact, and implementing joint



programs to fulfill the mandate of the Red Crescent. Both leaders also discussed improving visa

and transportation facilities for tourist and religious delegations. Chairman Laghari presented Dr.

Reza Amiri with a commemorative shield and souvenir as tokens of appreciation.

## The 'Raye Aama

ISLAMABAD: Rai Riaz Hussain former press secretary to the four prime ministers of Pakistan presented his autobiography "The 'Raye Aama' رائے نامہ" to Prof Dr Najiba Arif Chairperson Academy of Letters, Aisha Masood Malik writer and Anchorperson and Dr Raja Mazhar Hameed MD National Book Foundation were also present.

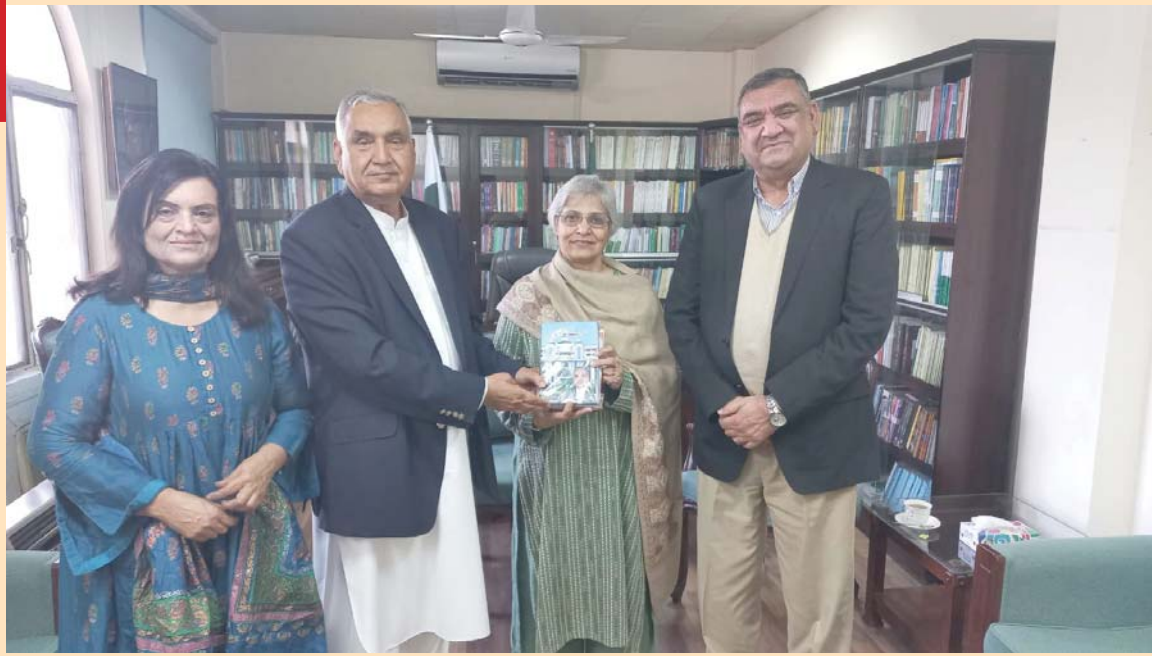


Photo: Online by Raja Farid

# NUST, Tameer-e-Khalaq Foundation to Foster collaboration for Climate Change Initiatives

PNP

ISLAMABAD: Tameer-e-Khalaq Foundation (TKF) and National University of Science and Technology (NUST) have officially entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to enhance collaboration and participation in activities related to climate change initiatives. The MOU outlines the framework for joint efforts in priority areas of mutual interest.

Sana Maqbool, Director ICON, NUST and Muhammad Usman Aslam, Head of Climate Change Initiatives, DRR & Strategic Partnerships TKF signed MOU in NUST, Islamabad. Through combining resources and expertise, academic and humanitari-



an organizations are forming a strategic partnership to confront the issues posed by climate change in Pakistan.

Usman Aslam expressed his enthusiasm for the partnership stating that, "We believe that effective collaboration

between educational institutions and humanitarian organizations is essential for tackling the complex issues of climate change. Through this MOU, we aim to combine our efforts and resources to create sustainable solutions and contribute to

building a resilient future for Pakistan."

NUST and TKF are committed to leveraging their combined strengths to drive meaningful impact in raising climate change awareness, adaptation, and mitigation in the region.

## PAC organized painting exhibition at Attock



PNP

RAWALPINDI: Punjab Arts Council organized First Punjab Painting Competition 2024 at Government Post Graduate College Attock. Dozens of candidates from 16 to 35 years of age participated in the competition. Topics such as early marriage, small family prosperous Pakistan, poverty in Pakistan, civilization and culture of Punjab and natural beauty of Pakistan were kept in the district-level painting competitions. Sara Hafeez, Umm Salma and Saleha Tariq won the first, second and third positions respectively in the painting competitions. Deputy Commissioner Attock Mr. Rao Atif Raza was the chief guest of the prize distribution ceremony. Director Arts Council Waqar Rahmad, former Principal Government Post Graduate College Professor Majid Bhatti, Deputy Director Colleges were also present with him on this occasion. Chief Guest Deputy Commissioner Attock Rao Atif Raza said that civilization and culture is the mirror of any nation. The flowers of peace and security bloom in the society with the promotion of positive civilizational and cultural values. I congratulate the Punjab Arts Council for organizing painting competitions. Painting competitions bring out the creativity of the youth. In the end, he wished all the best for the divisional and provincial competitions to the position holders. Director Arts Council Waqar Ahmad said that painters speak their words with the help of colors.

## Senator A. Rehman Malik's second death anniversary commemorated

PNP

ISLAMABAD: The second death anniversary of former Interior Minister and senior leader of the Pakistan People's Party, Senator Abdul Rehman Malik, was commemorated with utmost devotion and respect at Rehman Malik House Islamabad on Friday.

On this occasion, Ali Rehman Malik stated that he and his brother Umar Rehman Malik are committed to move forward the mission of their late father, which is serving the country, its people, and especially the vulnerable sections of society. He emphasized that his father's exemplary life serves as a role model for him.

Umar Rehman Malik expressed that his father's absence is deeply felt with each passing day, but in his legacy of service to Pakistan and its people, they find solace and strength. He emphasized that it will forever remain a beacon of inspiration, guiding them through every moment. They have requested fellow Pakistanis to recite Surah-e-Fatha for their beloved father and pray to Almighty Allah for his departed soul.

## AIOU launches spring plantation campaign

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has launched spring plantation campaign of the year 2024. Vice Chancellor AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood



inaugurated the campaign by planting apricots in the lawn adjacent to the new ICT building. Speaking on the occasion, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood said that planting is the most important need and to contribute towards fulfilling this need Allama Iqbal Open University tries to play its full role every year. He said that the gardener of the university has maintained this tradition for which they deserve congratulations. Deans, principal officers and faculty members have planted Japanese fruit, pear, peach, plum, apricot, sweet and citrus trees.

Director Follow-up and Coordination, Prof. Dr. Syed Amir Shah, while briefing the Vice Chancellor on the planting campaign, said that as a result of the hard work of gardeners, AIOU secured first position in all three categories of flower exhibition in Rose and Jasmine Garden organized by the Islamabad Horticulture Society and CDA. Dr. Nasir Mahmood announced a cash prize of Rs. 10,000 for gardeners. AIOU is planting eight different fruits and several types of flowers in this campaign. In the end, the Vice Chancellor, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood gave certificates of appreciation to the gardeners.



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## Seeking IMF's help; PTI's misguided move

The decision by the former PTI chairman to petition the IMF for an electoral audit of disputed election results struck many, including myself and various opinion leaders, as a startling and misguided move. This request, especially coming from a party with a strong legal cadre, seemed out of place given the IMF's well-defined mandate. The IMF focuses on international monetary stability and economic support, dealing with financial assistance, economic stability, and growth through policy reforms. It does not involve itself in a nation's electoral matters or judicial grievances, which are sovereign issues. The appeal to the IMF for electoral scrutiny not only deviates from its established role but also risks diminishing our standing by misunderstanding the scope of international institutions.

The decision by PTI's leadership to seek IMF intervention in electoral matters might reflect a profound mistrust in national institutions. This disillusionment could stem from various grievances: the establishment's overt antagonism, the Election Commission's invalidation of PTI's internal elections and subsequent stripping of its election symbol, which critically weakened the party's standing. Additionally, the overwhelming legal challenges faced by the PTI chairman, with over 200 cases lodged against him, and a perceived judicial ineffectiveness, where court orders seem disregarded and the only recourse for arrested and humiliated PTI members appears to be public disavowal of their allegiance, further exacerbate this trust deficit.

The erosion of trust in the judiciary was compounded when the Supreme Court confirmed the Election Commission's decision to strip PTI of its election

symbol. This sentiment deepened with a landmark ruling that invalidated Imran Khan's marriage to Bushra Bibi, a decision unprecedented in the context of Islamic jurisprudence. Successive convictions of Imran Khan in high-profile cases, such as the Cypher, Toshkhana, and the legality of his marriage, further alienated PTI supporters, especially as numerous other legal challenges loom on the horizon.

The disillusionment with the country's institutions extended to the pre-election phase, where PTI faced considerable obstacles in organizing public gatherings. When these events did proceed, media coverage was often suppressed. The shift to digital campaigning saw further challenges, with internet and mobile services being disrupted or throttled. This not only targeted PTI but also impacted businesses, trade, and the broader populace, exacerbating the already compromised reputation of the nation.

Critics argue that while such actions might not directly harm the establishment, judiciary, or government officials who would continue to receive their salaries, the real hurt of economic fallout from a halted IMF negotiation, prompted by PTI's request, would be borne by the common people. This could exacerbate unemployment and inflation, already at record highs, pushing millions more into poverty.

They suggest learning from past experiences, like the repercussions of alleging foreign involvement in regime change, which cost PTI its government and led to legal troubles for its members. Instead of risking further isolation and legal action by engaging with international bodies like

the IMF in domestic political disputes, they advocate for a more cautious approach that avoids giving the government and establishment reasons to target PTI and its leadership.

Critics might argue that soliciting foreign intervention in political and electoral issues could be perceived as undermining national sovereignty, potentially fueling nationalist and anti-PTI sentiment. Such a move risks politically isolating the PTI both within Pakistan and on the international stage, as it could be viewed as an excessive measure or a misuse of international institutions for domestic political conflicts.

This strategy could arm opponents with grounds to accuse PTI of treason, leading to possible legal actions against its leaders, a ban on the party, and the nullification of its electoral achievements in 2024.

Furthermore, there's concern that this approach could prompt a coordinated media and civil society backlash against PTI, labeling the act as unpatriotic and anti-state.

Prime time TV shows might be pressured to denounce PTI's actions, while ad campaigns across traditional and social media could further condemn the party.

Engagement of civil society groups to criticize PTI could lead to a significant loss of the political capital the party gained following its strong performance in the 2024 elections, especially if media outlets that had previously shifted their support towards PTI due to perceived election rigging and the treatment of its members reverse their stance.

Media analysts might critique PTI for its

tendency to repeat past mistakes without considering the broader implications for national sovereignty and dignity. Despite PTI's professed commitment to upholding the country's honor, its actions, perceived as impulsive, often put its narrative and principles at risk. This pattern of behavior, as observed by commentators, suggests a cycle where lessons from previous setbacks are not fully absorbed or integrated into future strategies, challenging the party's ability to maintain its narrative consistency and political credibility. Now that the arrow has been fired, and damage has been done, the PTI should adopt a comprehensive and sustained strategy to damage control.

They should give positive spin to this blunder by framing PTI's decision to internationalize the issue of electoral integrity in Pakistan to the party's commitment to transparency and fair play, highlighting how this unprecedented step could pave the way for more accountable electoral processes. The narrative could focus on the need for impartial oversight in the face of domestic challenges and frame the move as a proactive approach to safeguarding democracy.

This spin would portray PTI as a forward-thinking party willing to explore all avenues to ensure the sanctity of the electoral process, thus aligning its actions with global best practices for democratic governance.

Open dialogue, transparency in their actions, and a unified front from leadership at all levels will be crucial in navigating criticism and reinforcing the party's commitment to strengthening Pakistan's democratic processes.

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



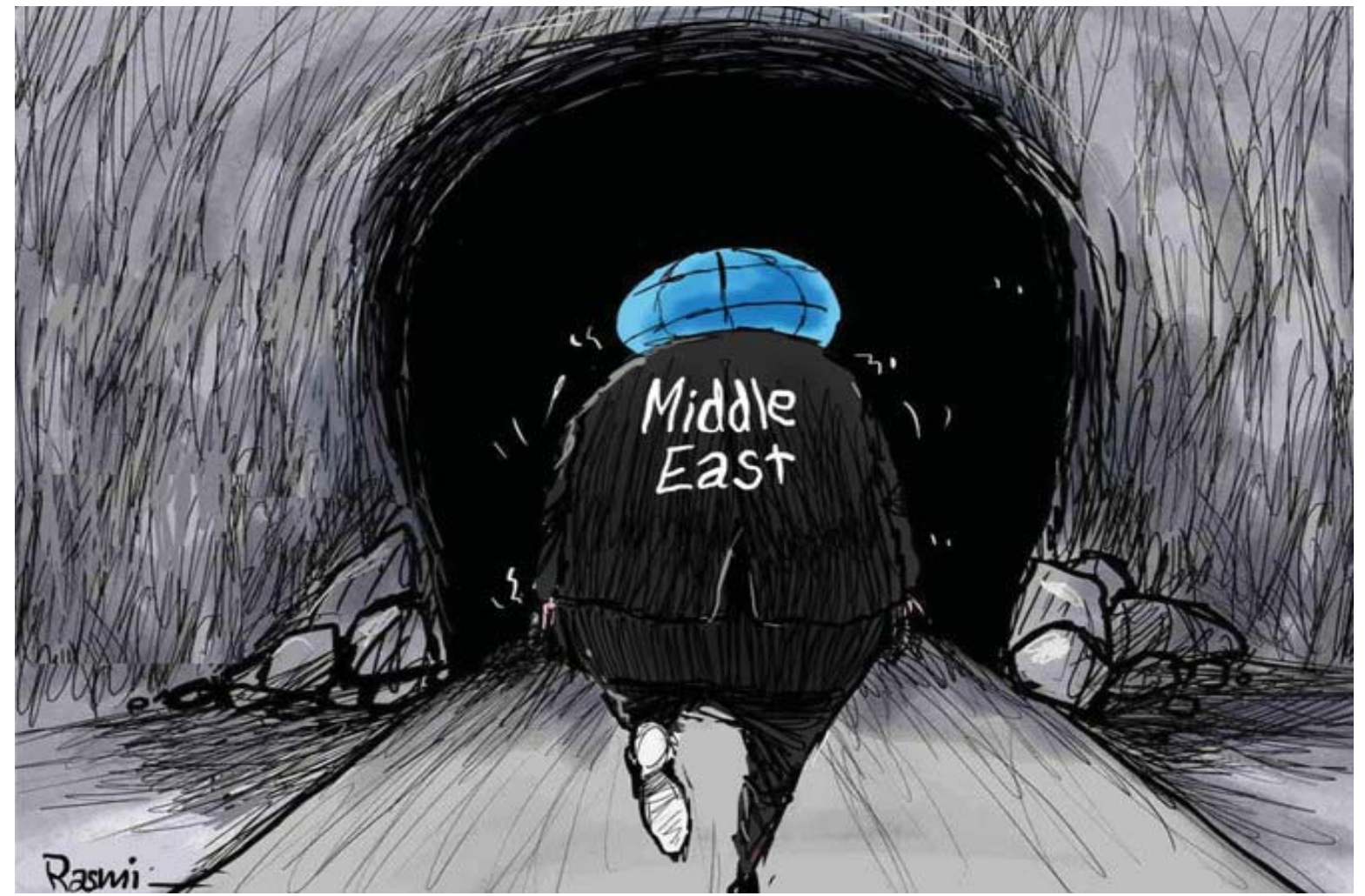
Analysis

Qamar Bashir

## Urgent plea to world leaders to end carnage in Gaza

In a collective appeal, heads of UN humanitarian bodies and global non-governmental organizations (NGOs) implored world leaders to help prevent further deterioration of the crisis in Gaza where deadly Israeli attacks have left tens of thousands of Palestinians – mostly women and children – dead. Since October 7, more than three-quarters of the enclave's population have been displaced from their homes, many multiple times, it was pointed out.

There are widespread shortages of food, water and sanitation, and the health system continues to be systematically degraded, with catastrophic consequences, said the heads of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), the coordinating body of global humanitarian organizations. "Diseases are rampant. Famine is looming. Water is at a trickle. Basic infrastructure has been decimated. Food production has come to a halt. Hospitals have turned into battlefields. One million children face daily traumas," they noted in a statement on Wednesday. The situation is particularly dire in Rafah, at the far south of Gaza. "Rafah, the latest destination for well over one million displaced, hungry and traumatized people crammed into a small sliver of land, has become another battleground in this brutal conflict," the IASC heads said. "Further escalation of violence in this densely populated area would cause mass casualties. It could also deal a death blow to a humanitarian response that is already on its knees," they warned. The IASC principals highlighted the risks aid workers face daily in their efforts to help people in desperate need, adding that they can "only do so much." "Humanitarian workers, themselves displaced and facing shelling, death, movement restrictions and a breakdown of civil order, continue efforts to deliver to those in need," they said. "But, faced with so many obstacles – including safety and movement restrictions – they can only do so much." The principals underscored that no amount of humanitarian response will make up for the months of deprivation that families in Gaza have endured. "This is our effort to salvage the humanitarian operation so that we can provide, at the very least, the bare essentials: medicine, drinking water, food and shelter as temperatures plummet," they said. For that, they stressed the need for 10 indispensable elements: an immediate ceasefire; protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure; immediate release of hostages; reliable entry points for aid; security assurances and unimpeded access; a functioning humanitarian notification system; roads cleared of explosive ordnance; and a stable communication network. In addition, they called for the UN agency assisting Palestine refugees (UNRWA) to receive the resources it needs to provide life-saving assistance as well as a halt to campaigns seeking to discredit the UN and NGOs doing their best to save lives. "We are calling on Israel to fulfill its legal obligation, under international humanitarian and human rights law, to provide food and medical supplies and facilitate aid operations, and on the world's leaders to prevent an even worse catastrophe from happening," the humanitarian leaders added.



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

## Collaborative Civil-Military Initiatives Promote Conditions to Deter Talent Migration - III

Abdul Basit Alvi

In the aftermath of Japan's economic bubble burst in the early 1990s, many citizens opted to endure tough times rather than seeking refuge elsewhere. Strong cultural ties, a sense of national identity, and a collective commitment to rebuilding the economy contributed to a shared determination to weather the storm. Iceland faced a severe economic crisis in 2008, marked by a banking collapse and currency devaluation. Despite the turmoil, a significant portion of the population chose to stay in the country, driven by the

close-knit community, a sense of national pride, and the belief in the potential for recovery. During the global financial crisis of 2008, Ireland experienced a severe economic downturn that resulted in job losses and financial instability. However, a substantial number of Irish citizens chose to remain, displaying a commitment to their homeland. The Irish resilience and community spirit played a pivotal role in steering the country towards economic recovery. In the late 1990s, South Korea faced a financial crisis that led to a significant economic downturn. Navigating economic crises poses challenges for nations and citizens, but it also opens avenues for individuals to contribute to collective recovery efforts. A crucial means of contribution during economic downturns is supporting local businesses. Opting to make local purchases stimulates the economy, sustains small businesses, and preserves jobs within the community, thereby significantly aiding economic recovery. Job loss-

es and heightened job market competition are common outcomes of economic downturns. Individuals can invest in their personal and professional growth by acquiring new skills and advancing their education, not only enhancing their employability but also contributing to the overall skill development of the nation's workforce. Economic crises

serve as breeding grounds for innovation. Individuals can explore entrepreneurial opportunities, identifying market gaps and creating novel solutions. By fostering an entrepreneurial culture, citizens contribute to economic diversification and job creation. Engaging in volunteer work and community service holds profound significance during tough economic times. Whether assisting local charities, supporting community initiatives, or participating in civic projects, volunteering fosters a sense of community and addresses social challenges that may exacerbate economic issues.

During economic crises, practicing financial responsibility becomes paramount. Individuals can contribute to overall stability by managing their finances wisely, avoiding unnecessary debt, and saving for the future. Responsible financial behavior on an individual level enhances the nation's economic resilience. Active citizen engagement involves advocating for policies promoting economic recovery and addressing systemic issues. Individuals can participate in community forums, engage with policymakers, and support initiatives aiming to create a more robust and equitable economic system. A focus on sustainability and environmental conservation contributes to long-term

economic recovery. Initiatives promoting green technologies, energy efficiency, and environmental responsibility benefit not only the planet but also stimulate growth in emerging industries.

Civic engagement is a powerful tool for change. Individuals can actively participate in the democratic process by staying informed about economic policies, voting in elections, and holding elected officials accountable. A politically engaged citizenry contributes to the formulation of policies aligning with the nation's economic interests.

Readers, in conclusion, the details outlined above provide a nuanced understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of living and working overseas. Despite the financial challenges faced by Pakistan, the situation is gradually improving.

The nation is advancing towards political steadiness with high hopes pinned on the incoming government. Collaboration between the military and civilian authorities is exceptional, with the military committed to offering comprehensive support to address both internal and external challenges alongside the government. With the concerted efforts of figures like General Asim Munir, who is actively addressing issues and fostering positive change, the country is witnessing positive signs. Efforts to reduce the prices of the dollar, petrol, and goods, along with substantial foreign investments, indicate a positive trajectory. The solution lies not in leaving the country but in staying, finding opportunities within the current situation, and contributing positively. Choosing to remain in Pakistan presents an opportunity to play a role in spreading positivity, productivity, and patriotism, contributing to the collective spirit needed for the nation's progress.



Analysis

Abdul Basit Alvi

## 'World Mother Language Day'

International Mother Language Day will be celebrated on February 21 across the world including Pakistan. The main purpose of celebrating this day is to promote linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism. The purpose of which is to protect and promote mother tongues. The culture, history, art, and literature of a nation owes to its mother tongue. The obsolescence of a language means the obsolescence of this entire culture. The mother tongue is the language of any person that he inherits from his home and family, but experts say that when parents do not teach their children the mother tongue, if taught, the process of language obsolescence begins. The International Day of Mother Languages is known as 'Mother Language Day' in English. It is written in English because it is probably spoken and understood a little in every country of the world. Which language is spoken the most is a different matter. According to statistics, the most widely spoken Chinese language in the world is Mandarin, which is spoken by about one billion people. Next comes Spanish, which is spoken by about 400 million people, and third is English, which has about 335 million speakers. These figures are for people whose languages are their mother tongues. On February 21st every year, Mother Language Day is celebrated around the world. Whenever mother tongues are mentioned, Mother Language Day will be celebrated. According to an estimate, 6500 languages are spoken in the world. Chomsky also says that the specific part of the human brain related to language keeps changing. As other biological systems change over time, this part of the brain also evolves and changes. Therefore, its demand has increased in the later stages as compared to childhood. This part of the brain, which initially develops in the embrace of the mother and her voice, is later ready to learn other languages and accept other languages. Linguists say that languages that end it is important to record and save in modern ways to help in understanding these languages and the culture associated with them in the future. Like today, the World Mother Language Day is also celebrated in Pakistan.

Several regional and native languages are spoken. The most spoken language is Punjabi which is spoken by 48 percent of the people while Sindhi is spoken by 12 percent, Saraiki 10 percent, English, Urdu, Pashto 8 percent, Balochi 3 percent, Hindi 2 percent and One percent use the Brahvi language. Several languages are spoken, written and understood in Pakistan. According to an estimate, more than 65 languages are spoken in Pakistan. English is the official language of Pakistan, all contracts and official work are done in English, while Urdu is the national language of Pakistan. Among the provincial languages of Pakistan, Punjabi and Saraiki are recognized languages in Punjab Province, Pashto

in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, Sindhi in Sindh Province, Balochi in Balochistan Province and Shina in Gilgit-Baltistan Province. Balti, Bati, Bhaya, Brahvi, Brushski, Chalusu, Damiiri, Dehwari, Dhataki, Doma-ki, Farsi, Dari, Gwarbati, Ghera, Goriya, Govuru, Gujarati, Gujri, Gurgla, Hazaragi, Hindko, Javgali, Jindavara, Kabutra, Kuchi, Kalami, Kalasha, Kalkoti, Kamveri, Kashmiri, Kati, Kshetrani, Khowar, Indus Kohistani, Koli (three tones), Lahinda Lasi, Luarki, Marvari, Memini, Oud, Armri, Pothwari, Phalula, Sansi, Savi, Sheena (two tones), including Torwali, Oshojo, Waghri, Vakhi, Vanisi and Yadgha. Some of these languages are considered globally endangered because the number of speakers of these languages is relatively small. These endangered languages mostly belong to the Indo-Persian branch and the Indo-European language family. Chitral district of Pakistan holds the distinction of being the most multilingual region in the world with a total number of languages spoken in the district—threats to mother tongues include the spread of dominant languages, economic, social and political pressures, lack of education and resources and cultural assimilation. are These can lead to language shift, where speakers of one language abandon it in favor of another. It is therefore important to continue to promote and protect linguistic diversity and multilingual society, and to raise awareness of the importance of mother tongues.



Analysis

Tariq Khan Yousafzai



# ISSI hosts Roundtable on 'SCO: Pakistan's Policy Priorities and Opportunities'

PPA

ISLAMABAD: China-Pakistan Study Centre (CPSC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies (ISSI) hosted a Roundtable, entitled "Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Pakistan's Policy, Priorities and Opportunities." Ambassador (R) Babar Amin, Pakistan's first-ever National Coordinator for SCO, delivered a keynote address. Eminent discussants from academia and think-tanks presented their perspectives. The Roundtable provided valuable insights into Pakistan's upcoming pivotal role in the SCO in the run-up to Council of Heads of Government (CHG) summit to be hosted by Pakistan as well as its vision for regional cooperation and economic integration.

In his welcome remarks, DG ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood underscored the significance of SCO as a trans-regional platform. He highlighted the importance of SCO in contemporary global milieu, opportunities for Pakistan as the country prepares to take a leading role in the Organization, and the challenges that should be kept in view regarding SCO's objectives and role in future. He highlighted that since its establishment in 2001, SCO has grown to become a 'big family' of 26 countries, including member states, observers

and dialogue partners. He added that, commutatively, SCO accounts for 60% Eurasian landmass 40% of global population, and nearly 30% of global GDP. The Organization continues to carry the "Shanghai Spirit" of mutual trust, equality, respect for diversity and pursuit of common development, as opposed to any zero-sum perspectives or notions of geopolitical confrontation or civilizational clash.

Ambassador Babar Amin, in his keynote address, outlined Pakistan's strategic objectives within the Organization. He highlighted Pakistan's efforts to strengthen bilateral relations with Russia through the SCO platform and emphasized the importance of connectivity and infrastructure development, particularly in addressing energy crises. He noted that Pakistan can act as a natural partner with SCO for promoting connectivity, trade and economic cooperation in the region.

Ambassador Babar Amin said that the key strategic priorities for Pakistan within the SCO include establishing itself as a credible partner, particularly in contrast to India's selective engagement and perceived alignment with Western preferences.

Dr. Liaqat Ali Shah, Executive Director of the Centre of Excellence for

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), emphasized the multifaceted nature of SCO's agenda, aligning with the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Dr. Shah stressed the potential for synergy between SCO and BRI, and in extension, with CPEC, is essential to promote regional integration.

Addressing the challenges and opportunities of financial integration within the SCO, Dr. Shazia Ghani, Senior Research Associate at the Grenoble Centre of Research on Economy, France, emphasized the importance of understanding the diverse economies of SCO member states and the necessity for exportable surplus to leverage economic potential effectively.

Prof. Dr. Syed Hussain Shaheed Soherwordi, Chairman of the Department of International Relations at the University of Peshawar, advocated for a redefinition of power relations within the SCO, stressing the primacy of economics over traditional security paradigms.

Earlier, in his opening remarks, Director of China Pakistan Study Centre Dr. Talat Shabbir highlighted Pakistan's upcoming assumption of the rotating annual chairs for the SCO's governing bodies including the Council of Heads of Government, Council of Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure, and the Council



for Heads of State. In his concluding remarks, Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman of the Board of Governors at ISSI, underscored

the dual focus of the SCO on economy and security, likening it to a cart with two wheels. He emphasized the importance of multilateralism in addressing con-

temporary challenges and urged the SCO to embark on non-traditional projects to foster regional cooperation and development.

## Harmony visit

President Dr Arif Alvi offering a bouquet of flowers at Kartarpur Sahib, during his visit to Kartarpur Corridor, in Narowal, on Friday.



Photo: PID

## Kashmir Council EU chief condemns Indian violation of women in occupied Kashmir

Sohail Anjum Malik

Chairman Kashmir Council EU (KC-EU) Mr Ali Raza Syed has said that the horrible and forgettable incident of Kanan-Pushpora is part of the painful history of women of occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

In a statement on anniversary of the Kunan-Pushpora's terrible incident, he emphasized that the female victims of human right violations in Indian illegal occupied Kashmir, specially victims of Kunan-Pushpora are still waiting for the justice.

It is essential to recap that it was night of February 23, 1991, the personnel of the 4 Rajputana Rifles of Indian Army cordoned off the two villages Kunan and Pushpora in north Kashmir's Kupwara district under garb of house to house search and gang raped dozens of the women of these villages.



Ali Raza Syed said, Kashmiri women have been the worst victims of violations by Indian troops in the occupied territory of Kashmir for last seven and half decades as a large number of Kashmiri women lost their men. Kashmiri women face the severe hardships because their life has been directly affected by India state terrorism.

Ali Raza Syed called upon international community, specially European Union to pressurize India in order to strictly punish its security personnel involved in human rights violations specially violence against the women in the occupied territory.

He specifically urged for setting of an international tribunal for trial of culprits involved in Kunan-Pushpora incidents and called for end of miseries of women in the occupied Kashmir.

Chairman Kashmir Council EU Mr Ali Raza Syed said, beside these two terrible episodes of Kunan-Pushpora, there are thousands of women in the occupied Kashmir who are waiting for their husbands, fathers, sons and brothers forcibly disappeared by Indian forces. Many of these men were killed in extra judicial killings or there is no solid information about them so far.

## Immediate cease-fire in Gaza is imperative: Chinese envoy

Xinhua

UNITED NATIONS: A Chinese envoy said Thursday that an immediate cease-fire in Gaza is imperative and that the essence of any Security Council action is to achieve an immediate cease-fire.

The U. S. veto of an Algerian-drafted resolution on Tuesday meant that the Security Council missed yet another opportunity to push for a cease-fire in Gaza. The continuation of the conflict even for another day would cause even more civilian casualties and lead to a greater catastrophe. An immediate cease-fire in Gaza is an urgent imperative to save innocent lives and to prevent a wider war, said Zhang Jun, China's permanent representative to the United Nations.

"An immediate cease-fire is the common wish voiced by the international community and the consensus of the Security Council's overwhelming majority," he told the Security Council.

China is aware that the United States has tabled its own draft resolution. China hopes that the United States will show a responsible attitude, respond positively to the international call, and respect the established consensus among Security Council members, said Zhang.

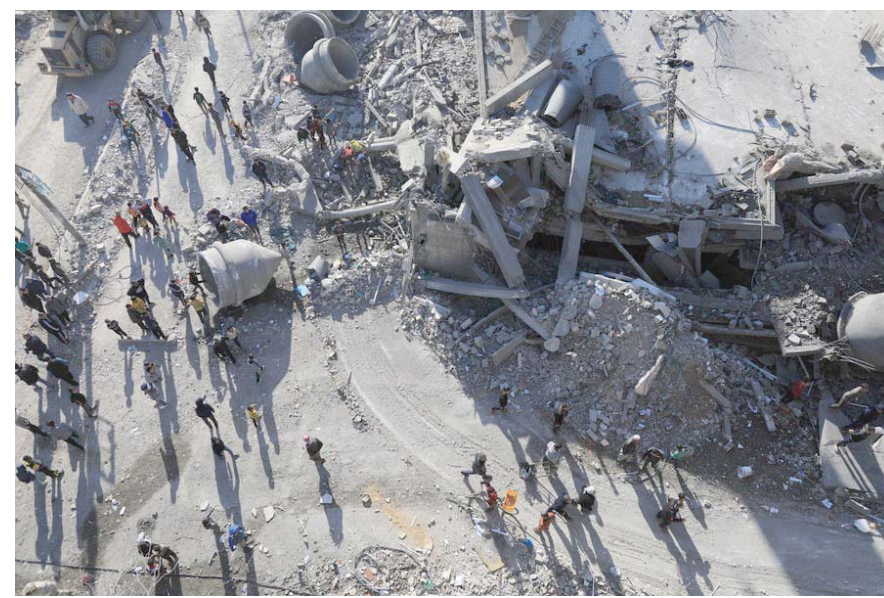
"We need to point out that the essence of any action of this council is to achieve an immediate

cease-fire. Any message sent out via our action must be clear, unequivocal, unambiguous, and unmistakable, rather than prevaricate or beat about the bush," he said. "At this point, the Council needs to demonstrate a strong resolve rather than negotiating skills only."

The military offensive into Rafah must cease immediately, he said. People are seen in a destroyed building after an Israeli airstrike in the southern Gaza Strip city of Rafah, on Feb. 22, 2024. (Photo by Yasser Qudih/Xinhua)

Over 1.5 million Gazans are packed into Rafah, having nowhere else to go. Escalated Israeli military incursions into Rafah will result in unthinkable civilian casualties and humanitarian disasters and cause irreparable damage to regional peace. China strongly opposes such actions. Israel should immediately cancel its plans to attack Rafah and halt its collective punishment of the Palestinian people. The International Court of Justice's order of provisional measures aimed at preventing genocide must be effectively implemented without delay, he said.

It is imperative to ensure sufficient unimpeded humanitarian deliveries into Gaza. Israel must take concrete action to open all land, sea, and air routes into Gaza, provide all that is required by humanitarian agencies for their relief operations, and ensure the safety and security of the staff



and facilities of humanitarian agencies, he said. Zhang also called for efforts to prevent the conflict in Gaza from spilling over to the wider region.

Exchanges of fire between Lebanon and Israel and between Syria and Israel are escalating.

Tensions in the Red Sea are continuing. And the specter of wider war is looming over the Middle East. China calls on the parties concerned, especially those with significant influence, to exercise calm and restraint and to refrain from acts that would aggravate the tensions. Parties should

endeavor to stop war through peace and break the vicious circle of violence and conflict, he said.

The political horizon offered by the two-state solution must be given a new lease on life. Independent Palestinian statehood is not a gift given by one party to another in charity, but an inalienable right of the Palestinian people, said Zhang.

China is gravely concerned by the recent repeated public dismissal of the two-state solution by some Israeli politicians and their rejection of any international effort toward independent Palestinian statehood. Gaza is an inalienable part of Palestine, and the two-state solution is the bottom line of international justice and the only viable path toward the settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli issue. China urges Israel to stop without delay eroding the foundation of the two-state solution, halt the forced displacement of Palestinian civilians, and cease the searches, arrests, and raids in the West Bank, he said.

The historical wrongs suffered by Palestine must be righted. Palestine's aspiration for independent statehood must be fulfilled. China supports Palestine in becoming a member of the United Nations as soon as possible, and calls for the convening of a larger, more authoritative, and more effective international peace conference to push for a comprehensive, just, and lasting solution to the question of Palestine, he said.

## Chinese FM calls for SCO's role as 'stabilizing anchor' amid turbulence, changes

Xinhua

BELJING: Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Thursday said that all members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) should jointly pursue the organization's sound development and make it a stabilizing anchor amid the changes of the world.

Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, made the remarks

at a reception in Beijing in celebration of the 20th anniversary of the SCO Secretariat.

Noting that changes unseen in a century are unfolding at a faster pace and the world has entered a new period of turbulence and transformation, Wang pointed out that there is a greater need for carrying forward the Shanghai Spirit and such a cooperation platform as the SCO.

He said that all member states should work together to make the SCO bigger and stronger. China

will continue to take the SCO as a diplomatic priority, provide convenience and support for the work of the Secretariat as always, and support Kazakhstan's work during its rotating presidency of the SCO.

China is ready to work with all parties to ensure that this year's Astana Summit will produce fruitful results, open up new prospects for the development of the SCO, and contribute more to lasting peace and common prosperity of the world, Wang said.

Over the past 20 years, the SCO has grown from six member states to a big family of 26 member states, observers and dialogue partners, creating a new cooperation model featuring solidarity and coordination, openness, win-win results, inclusiveness and mutual learning among countries with different social systems and development paths, said Zhang Ming, secretary-general of the SCO.

Zhang said the Secretariat will continue to provide solid support



for the SCO's development. More than 200 people, including diplomatic envoys of SCO countries and representatives of international organizations in China, attended the reception.



**Bull & Bears**  
PSX 100-Share  
Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index	
Current	Prev. Close
62,815.81	61,914.34
Day's High	Day's Low
62,945.36	61,849.67
Index Value	Change
10,663,704,987	+901.47
Percentage	Time
+1.46%	23 Feb, 2024 5:00 pm

Europe: FTSE 100 Index	
Index Value	Change
7,706.28	+21.79
Percentage	Time
+0.28%	23 Feb, 4:35 pm GMT

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average	
Index Value	Change
39,175.76	+106.65
Percentage	Time
+0.27%	23 Feb, 1:17 pm GMT-5

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average	
Index Value	Change
39,098.68	+836.52
Percentage	Time
+2.19%	22 Feb, 3:15 pm GMT+9

**Open Market Forex Rates**

Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	181	183
Bahrain Dinar	743.88	751.88
Canadian Dollar	207	209
China Yuan	38.89	39.29
Danish Krone	40.38	40.78
Euro	302	305
Hong Kong Dollar	35.76	36.11
Indian Rupee	3.37	3.48
Japanese Yen	2.1	2.18
Kuwaiti Dinar	908.79	917.79
Malaysian Ringgit	58.6	59.2
New Zealand \$	171.68	173.68
Norwegians Krone	26.43	26.73
Omani Riyal	726.53	734.53
Qatari Riyal	76.76	77.46
Saudi Riyal	74.35	75.1
Singapore Dollar	207	209
Swedish Korona	26.53	26.83
Swiss Franc	317.87	320.37
Thai Bhat	7.79	7.94
U.A.E Dirham	76.1	76.8
UK Pound Sterling	352.5	356
US Dollar	279.6	282.4

**Standard Chartered Pakistan posts record profit before tax of PKR 89.2bn**

ISLAMABAD: Standard Chartered Bank (Pakistan) Limited, the country's largest and oldest international bank announced its Annual Results for 2023 today.

The Bank delivered a record performance in 2023 with a Profit before tax of PKR 89.2 billion, which is 78 per cent higher than last year. Profit after tax registered a growth of 115 per cent to close at PKR 42.6 billion, highest ever since its incorporation.

Overall revenue grew 72 per cent whereas client revenue increased by 78 per cent year on year with positive contributions from all segments. Operating expenses increased 29 per cent from last year in line with prevalent inflationary trend. Moreover, prudent risk approach coupled with recoveries of bad debts led to a net release of PKR 163 million in loan impairments during the year.

Mr. Rehan Shaikh, Chief Executive Officer, Standard Chartered Bank (Pakistan) Limited said: "We are incredibly proud to announce our exceptional performance in 2023, delivering highest ever profit for the franchise. These results are a testament to the work we have put in over the last few years to transform and grow our business. The results also signify the strong foundations, resilient and innovative business model, trust of our clients and the value that we are creating for our shareholders."

We aim to build on this success by taking action to deliver sustainably higher returns with a focus on driving income growth and improving operational leverage. We will continue to pursue simplification and digitisation of our business with a goal to further improve our productivity, client and employee experience and create capacity to reinvest in incremental growth initiatives.

**Mian Shahbaz Sharif should form a broad-based govt: Mian Zahid Hussain**

Tariq Khattak

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain, said on Friday that Mian Shahbaz Sharif should form a broad-based government after consultations.

After forming the government, the PM should direct immediate negotiation for a new loan from the IMF to save the country from bankruptcy, he said.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that various international and local institutions and experts are sounding the alarm about Pakistan, while some unsuccessful and frustrated political elements within the country are also engaged in efforts to damage the country, which is condemnable.

Speaking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that the burden of local and foreign debt on Pakistan is continuously increasing. The only short-term way to pay these debts is by taking new loans to

repay old ones.

Borrowing has become necessary as domestic production, exports, remittances, and investment etc. cannot solve the problem of a shortage of funds.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that it is important for Pakistan to remain under the supervision of the IMF due to increasing debts, but the results of this will be more inflation, unemployment, a decline in public services, and cuts in development projects.

He said that the economic situation has made the lives of people difficult, while another IMF deal will add to the miseries of the masses.

The business leader said that in this critical situation, there has not been a notable reduction in government expenditure that was expected, nor has there been a significant increase in revenue.

There has been no progress towards direct taxes, efforts to reduce the budget deficit, or the negative effects of the current situation on the people.

He informed that presently Pakistan's exter-



nal debt has reached 124.6 billion dollars, and since 2011, domestic debt has increased six times to 146.4 billion dollars. Gross external and domestic debt and liabilities increased from \$145.7 billion to \$222 billion.

According to a report, Pakistan's per capita debt has increased from \$23 dollars to 1123 dollars, while per capita GDP has decreased

by 6% due to the practice of borrowing and irresponsible spending.

Even in these circumstances, there is no urgency on the part of policymakers to increase agricultural and industrial production in the country, to make the youth skilled, or to stop the series of unnecessary projects.

The emphasis of the top authorities is on consumption, he said, adding that if the government wants to improve the social security, health, and education sectors and give some relief to the people, it has to make effective reforms and reduce the deficit while expanding the tax net.

An increase in the tax-to-DP ratio, a reduction in wasteful expenditure, and an improvement in the business environment to attract investment are necessary steps.

Mian Zahid Hussain further said that on the one hand, the country's economic situation is very critical, and on the other hand, the founder of PTI wants to stop the IMF from forwarding a loan to Pakistan. He should condemn the events of May 9 and return to the national mainstream.

**Environmental violation**

ISLAMABAD: A view of smoke rising in garbage dump on green belt along Islamabad Expressway needs the attention of concerned authorities, in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Raja Farid

**CEO ZONG, visits Chairman PTA to discuss the future of Telecom in Pakistan**

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Zong's Chief Executive Officer Mr. Huo Junli, Chief Technical Officer Lu Jianhui, Chief Regulatory Officer Kamran Ali met with Chairman PTA Maj Gen (R) Hafeez Ur Rehman on 21st February 2024 at the PTA Headquarters Islamabad. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss critical aspects shaping the future of the telecommunications industry in Pakistan. Key agenda items included addressing challenges encountered by the sector and devising relevant strategies to mitigate them, as well as outlining the framework for the upcoming spectrum



auction.

The strategic session delved into topics such as network infrastructure development, enhancing 4G coverage, advancing leadership in data services, and exploring various IoT solutions. Furthermore, recommendations aimed at enhancing performance across all telecom sectors were presented and thoroughly deliberated upon. Overall, the session was characterized by its strategic focus and productive outcomes.

**FPCCI, Miracle Salt Collective discuss ways to promote salt trade in international market**

PPA

ISLAMABAD: The special focus being given by the government of Pakistan to regularize salt trade and develop a branding mechanism to sell the commodity in international market at competitive price will definitely give a new impetus to the industry, this was stated by Malik Sohail, Chairman Coordination of FPCCI on behalf of President FPCCI Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh in a meeting with President and Chairman of Board of Directors of Miracle Salt Collective Inc. USA who visited FPCCI Capital Office, Islamabad along with CEO of the company Mr. Robert Harrison and Mr. Tad Ballantyne, Vice President Global Financing, Mr. Jaffery Meilander, VP Operation and Martyn Element. The meeting was attended by a large number of people from mineral and mining and other sector of Pakistan prominently Dr. Afshan Malik, Adviser to President FPCCI, Mr. Arham Ikram Convener FPCCI Standing Committee, Mr. Mr. Shokuat Masood, Mr. Johar Ali raki former Vice President FPCCI, Mr. Ahmed Khan President IIA, Mr. Shakeel Munir, Zahid Maqbool Former President ICCI, M. Arif But, Farukh Alvi, Syed Arique Ahmed Gilani, Ghulam Nasir, Abdul Wahab Bezinjo and other.



While highlighting the pivotal role of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI) to enhance trade and economic activities of Pakistan both on national and global level, Malik Sohail informed that on behalf of President FPCCI Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh lauded the MOU signed between Miracle Salt Collective Inc. USA and Pakistan Mineral Development Corporation (PMDC) and said that it will go along way to explore new opportunities and open new avenues.

Sohail Malik said that Pakistan possesses one of the world's largest salt deposits

stretching over 209 km area lying between Jhelum and Kohat districts and the Khehra salt mines in Jhelum is the second largest salt mine in the world but Pakistan is remained on 20th place in the list of salt exporting countries.

On the occasion, the President of Miracle Salt Collective Inc. USA Mr. Ahmed Khan who is a non-resident Pakistani shared his views that Pakistan have abundant natural resources and pink salt is a unique and revolutionary thing. Despite of huge deposits of pink salt, Pakistan have not so far benefited from it.

**Incoming government to focus on promoting ease of doing business: Qaiser Sheikh**

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh, newly elected Member National Assembly of PML-N and former Chairperson, NA Standing Committee on Finance and Revenue said that the incoming government would focus on promoting ease of doing business to facilitate the better growth of business and investment activities in the country. He said this while talking to the business community during his visit to the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Speaking on the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that Pakistan needs to promote trade and exports to revive its economy and stressed that the new government should extend maximum facilitation to the private sectors in realizing the actual export potential of the country. He said that the loss-making commercial state-owned entities are a huge burden on the national exchequer and stressed that



the new government should expedite their privatization to reduce their losses and improve their performance.

Faad Waheed, Senior Vice President ICCI said that the new government should focus on promoting industrialization to create new jobs and improve exports.

Engr. Azhar ul Islam Zafar, Vice President ICCI said that the new government should withdraw tax on immovable property under Section 7E as it has badly affected the business activities in the real estate sector, which is harmful to the economy.

Zafar Bakhtawari, former President ICCI and Secretary General UBG Pakistan said that the new government should focus on establishing direct air links of Pakistan with major export markets to improve its exports. He said that PIA should be privatized to turnaround it from huge losses.

**The dysfunctional power sector is bankrupting the country**

Tariq Khattak

ISLAMABAD: Dr. Murtaza Mughal, President of Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW), says the maladjusted power sector is bankrupting both the public and the productive sectors.

In March, consumers will end up paying an additional Rs7 per unit on top of the standard cost, which will be another serious blow for them, he said.

He said that investors and consumers in the solar sector are being discouraged steadily to benefit IPPs, which should be stopped.

Dr. Murtaza Mughal said in a statement issued here today that earlier, electricity bills used to decrease in the winter, but now they are continuous-

ly increasing in this season as well.

Now, preparations are being made to charge consumers an additional seven rupees and thirteen paise per unit in the month of March in the name of a fuel cost adjustment (FCA). This increase will be imposed on the masses against electricity consumed during the month of January.

The rising cost of insurance due to Houthi raids in the Red Sea is one of the reasons given for the higher FCA. Higher diesel and petrol prices are also cited as contributing factors, but policymakers should consider that it is becoming intolerable for consumers.

The main problem is that almost all consumers cannot afford the high cost of electricity, but instead of

reducing theft, corruption, mismanagement, and incompetence in the power sector, the policy of continuously increasing electricity rates is being followed, which is having a very negative impact on the masses and the economy.

He said that people are being charged more than they can afford, which is an injustice. On the other hand, the policy of discouraging investors and users of solar energy is also going on vigorously, he observed.

Investors and the public have invested billions of rupees in this sector, for which they are being punished, which is deteriorating the investment environment.

Dr. Mughal said that net metering was provided to solar consumers so



that they could sell surplus power to the government. Now the profits of these consumers are being continuously reduced to push people back to expensive electricity instead of solar energy.

Such a radical change in government policies scares investors and makes them reluctant to invest in Pakistan. Due to such measures, investment in the country has remained negligible.

Dr. Mughal said that the disastrous effects of IPPs have caused irreparable damage to the country's economy, but despite this, the influential people in every government are supporting IPPs to reap benefits.

The continuous increase in the price of electricity leads to an increase in theft and a decrease in its use, and people start choosing other ways, which leads to problems in capacity payments to IPPs, but no government is ready to initiate reform in this regard, he observed.



HBL PSL 9th Edition

# Luke Wood and Arif Yaqoob bowl Zalmi to a close win against Multan Sultans

Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: Peshawar Zalmi got the better of mighty Multan Sultans in their backyard as they registered a five-run win over the home team after a thrilling game played on Friday night at Multan Cricket Stadium. Luke Wood, player of the match, played a vital role both with the bat and ball for Zalmi. Multan Sultans meanwhile lost their first game of the tournament after winning their first three games.

Multan Sultans' chase of 180-run total began with an early end when skipper Mohammad Rizwan copped a three-ball duck as Wood drew first blood for his team. Yasir Khan, promoted to open the batting in this game, stitched a watchful 45-run second-wicket partnership with Reeza Hendricks.

Salman Irshad bringing an end to Yasir's (43, 37b, 6x4s) outing meant that experienced Dawid Malan joined Hendricks in the middle, with the required

rate creeping above 10. Malan departed for 52 off 25 balls after contributing to a 70-run third-wicket partnership. In the following over, Salman landed a yorker from hell as he breached Hendricks' (28, 27b, 2x4s) defenses to rattle his stumps.

Drama ensued in the 17th over with Sultans needing 50 off four overs. Babar Azam brought debutant Arif Yaqoob for the last over of his spell. On the second ball, he dismissed Khushdil for just five. Usama Mir dramatically hit the next two balls for towering sixes only to get caught on the following ball at deep midwicket.

David Willey, the next batter in, hit the last ball of Arif's over towards cow corner, where sub-fielder Dan Mousley took a brilliant catch on the edge of the boundary.

Wood returned to deliver a fine penultimate over, removing Abbas Afridi for 11 off six while only giving away two runs.

Multan required 22 off the last over with Iftikhar Ahmed on strike.

Iftikhar, for a moment looked well on the course to repeat his heroics from the last game, but fell on the penultimate delivery, after hitting two fours and one six. With six needed on the final ball, Shahnawaz Dahani went for a heave but found his stumps rattled by Naveen.

Arif was the pick of the bowlers with three scalps while Wood, Naveen and Salman chipped in two wickets each. Paul Walter returned with one wicket.

Earlier, Peshawar's skipper Babar won the toss and elected to bat first. The opening batters got off to a steady start before Saim Ayub succumbed to Shahnawaz, caught at deep square for a rusty 11-ball seven. Zalmi finished the powerplay with 46 runs on the board for the loss of a solitary wicket.

After Babar and Haseebullah Khan took it upon themselves to keep the run flow intact, Usama

struck in the ninth over, casting Zalmi skipper's stumps. The duo put on a 46-run second-wicket partnership before Babar departed for 31 off 26 balls, which included five fours as well.

Haseebullah, playing his first HBL PSL 9 game, looked in sublime touch but Usama outfoxed him as well after he raced to 37 off 18 balls, comprising four boundaries and two sixes.

Paul Walter (16, 8b, 2x4s, 1x6), who chipped in with a cameo was undone by Willey in the 13th over while Mohammad Haris departed for a run-a-ball 19 in the 15th over.

Rovman Powell contributed a quickfire 23 off 11 balls, including three fours and a six, before Willey dismissed him as well. Asif Ali returned for a 13 off 10. Wood's unbeaten contribution of 17 on 12, comprising a six and a four each, helped Peshawar finish 179-8 after 20 overs.

Among the Multan bowlers Ali, Willey and Usama bagged



two wickets each. Shahnawaz and Abbas chipped in with one wicket each.

**Scores in brief:**  
Peshawar Zalmi beat Multan Sultans by five runs  
Peshawar Zalmi 179-8, 20

overs (Haseebullah Khan 37, Babar Azam 31; Mohammad Ali 2-23, David Willey 2-28, Usama Mir 2-36)  
Multan Sultans 174 all out, 20 overs (Dawid Malan 52, Yasir Khan 43; Arif Yaqoob 3-43, Luke Wood 2-13, Salman Irshad 2-39, Naveen-ul-Haq 2-44)  
Player of the match – Luke Wood (Peshawar Zalmi)  
24 February fixture: Karachi Kings vs Lahore Qalandars at Gaddafi Stadium Lahore

## Bringing maximum ATP, ITF activity to Pakistan is my top priority: Aisam Qureshi

Newly elected president of the Pakistan Tennis Federation (PTF), Aisam ul Haq Qureshi, committed to significantly enhancing the presence of ATP and ITF tournaments in Pakistan, leveraging his international experience and connections for the advancement of the sport locally.

During a press conference at a local hotel, Aisam said: "My primary mission is to utilize my extensive network and rapport with the global tennis community to bring a higher level of international tennis activity to Pakistan. This initiative will not only provide our promising athletes with invaluable exposure to top-tier competitions but also assist in elevating their standings in the global arena."

Addressing the need for broader access to ITF junior events beyond Islamabad, he acknowledged the concerns of various PTF units. "Expanding ITF junior events to include the Punjab Lawn Tennis Association and Sindh Tennis Association is a priority. This is just the beginning, as we



aim to extend these opportunities to all the units of the federation progressively," he explained.

Aisam's vision for Pakistan tennis includes securing more sponsorships, grassroots development, and producing players of international repute, akin to his and Aqeel Khan's success. "My goal is to

cultivate a respectful and nurturing environment for both players and coaches, propelling them to achieve excellence and honor for our country," he emphasized.

The PTF president also pledged to enhance player welfare by increasing prize money at both junior and senior levels and offering significant incentives

and match fees to Davis Cup participants. "Acknowledging and rewarding our players is essential for their growth and international success," Aisam remarked.

Highlighting his strategy for international collaboration, Aisam shared his enthusiasm for creating opportunities for Pakistani players to train abroad and inviting international athletes to compete in Pakistan.

"These exchanges are vital for broadening our players' horizons, improving their skill sets, and boosting their performances both domestically and internationally," he said.

The PTF chief closed his remarks by reflecting on his personal connection to the sport and its athletes. "The players are not just competitors; they are my brothers. I am wholeheartedly committed to their welfare and development based strictly on merit. My vision is to professionalize and revolutionize tennis in Pakistan, ensuring our athletes have the support and opportunities they need to thrive," he concluded.

## Sialkot and Faisalabad High Performance Centres hand over to PCB



Tahir Amin Malik

Sports and Youth Affairs Department will hand over state-of-the-art Sialkot and Faisalabad High Performance Cricket Centres to Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) for the promotion of cricket among the young generation here on Friday. Punjab Cabinet, in this regard, gave an approval in a Cabinet meeting on Feb 18, 2024.

In this connection, a MoU signing ceremony was held at National Hockey Stadium where Director General Sports Punjab Dr Asif Tufail and PCB COO Salman Naseer signed the MoU documents in the presence of Adviser to Punjab Chief Minister on Sports and Youth Affairs Wahab Riaz.

Deputy Secretary Liaqat Ali, Project Director PMU Qaiser Raza, Deputy Directors Zahoor Ahmed, Tariq Khanzada, Ikram Bari, PCB's Director Nadeem Khan, Senior General Manager Domestic Junaid Zia, Director Khayam Qaiser, General Manager Gaddafi Stadium Ali Bokhari, General Manager Legal Ms Maham were also present on this occasion.

State-of-the-art Sialkot High Performance Cricket Centre was built at an area of 55 kanal with the cost of Rs 1141 million while the Faisalabad High Performance Cricket Centre was constructed at an area of 17.86 kanal with an amount of Rs 1065 million.

## Dutch hockey club wins three-match friendly series



Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Dutch Hockey Club Billy Ozendaal emerged victorious in the three-match series against Higher Education Commission (HEC) team by pulling off win in the third and final match here at Naseer Bunda Hockey Stadium on Friday. The match was tied at 2-2 within the scheduled time.

The Dutch team won the match with three goals to two on penalty strokes. The diplomats from various countries watched the match along with Olympians, sports enthusiasts, university students from the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Among the attendees were the Ambassador of Dutch to Pakistan, Henny de Vries, the Australian High Commissioner, Neil Hawkins, Acting Ambassador of Romania to Pakistan, Eduard-Robert Preda, Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan to Pakistan, Totuiaev Ulanbek Asankulovich, the High Commissioner-designate of Brunei Darussalam, Colonel Pengiran Haji Kamal Bashah and Ambassador of Morocco to Pakistan and Dean of the African Corps Mohammed Karmoune were present on the occasion.

## Ahmed qualifies for ITF World Jr final

Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: Ahmed Nael Qureshi of Pakistan moved in the boys singles final of ITF Pakistan Zainab Ali Naqvi Memorial World Junior Championship Leg-2 here at PTF-SDA Tennis Complex on Friday. Ahmed Nael beat Jacob Kailiang Shen of Hong Kong by 6-4, 6-3 in the semifinal. He would face Shijie Chen of China in the final.

In other boys singles semifinal, Shijie Chen (CHN) beat Kaigaog Kang (CHN) by 6-2, 6-4. In girls singles semifinals, Kira Kalinowskaya (BLR) beat Stefaniya Neporent (BLR) 6-4, 6-1; Paramee Tadkaew (THA) beat Ekaterina Pestereva (RUS) 6-4 (Retd). In boys doubles final, Dong Hyeon Euom (KOR), Jiwan Park (KOR) beat Kaigaog Kang (CHN), Oscar Reilly 6-4, 5-7 (10-8). The girls and boys singles final would be played on Saturday.

## Joe Root's ton recovers England to 302/7 against India

A Sports

RANCHI: Experienced batter Joe Root scored a gutsy century to recover England from a dismal Day 1 of the fourth Test against India here at JSCA International Stadium Complex on Friday.

Opting to bat first, the touring side amassed 302/7 on the opening day of the Ranchi Test. England are fighting to stay alive in the five-match series, led by India 2-1.

The visitors had a shaky start to their innings as debutant pacer Akash Deep took three wickets to reduce them to 112-5.

But, Joe Root, who had just 77 runs to his name in the previous six innings, found his form at the right time and launched an astounding recovery.

Root put together an anchoring 113-run stand with wicketkeeper batter Ben Foakes, who scored 47.



Right-arm pacer Mohammed Siraj broke the threatening partnership by getting Foakes caught at short midwicket. He smashed four

boundaries and a six amid his crucial knock.

Siraj then struck again to castle England's opening Test hero Tom Hart-

ley on 13 as England slipped further to 245/7.

But Joe Root, undeterred by the back-to-back dismissals, stood his ground firm and knitted another vital partnership for England when he added an unbeaten 57 runs for the eighth wicket with Ollie Robinson.

The experienced batter brought up his century by smashing Deep for a boundary and received a standing ovation from England fans and players.

Joe Root smashed only nine boundaries during his fighting knock, showcasing utmost patience and resilience on a cracked pitch.

At the closure of play, Root was unbeaten on 106 while Robinson had made 31 not out.

Akash Deep led the bowling attack for India with three wickets, followed by Siraj, who bagged two while Ravindra Jadeja and Ravichandran Ashwin made one scalp each.

## Cholistan Jeep Rally Pre-Paired Category Competition Continues

Racer Zain Mehmood in first position. Nader Magsi in second and Sahibzada Sultan in third Position

Kiran Asim and Arshad Raza Zaidi

BAHAWALPUR: Cholistan Jeep Rally, pre-paired category competition continues, vehicles start reaching the finishing point, former runner-up racer Zain Mehmood in first position, Nader Magsi in second place and Sahibzada Sultan in third place, Cholistan Jeep Rally, pre-paired category competition continues.

Vehicles start reaching the finishing point Bahawalpur. The 19th Cholistan Jeep Rally was formally inaugurated

Prepared category 1st stage vehicles moving towards midpoint Fort Jamgarh. The racers of the prepared category will cover a distance of 231 km in the first



stage After a 15-minute stay at the mid-point

Fort Jamgarh, we will proceed back to the finishing point

The second stage race in the prepared category will be held on February 25.

In the prepared category, a tough competition between Nader Magsi, Faisal Shadikhel and Zain Mehmood.

On February 24, there will be a competition of 68 stock category vehicles. Jeep rally fair is also going on in Cholistan desert

Tourists will also enjoy various cultural programs today. Cultural programs of Goat Show, Kabaddi, Tug of War, Mulla Khan will be organized

A large number of domestic and local tourists continue to visit Cholistan.

Camps were also set up on the sand dunes, and tourists flocked to the local food stalls.



## Inauguration

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training, Madad Ali Sindhi attended the opening ceremony of a model school in Sector E-7 on Friday.



Photo: PID

## Gaza ceasefire talks underway in Paris, source says

Reuters

PARIS: Gaza truce talks were under way in Paris on Friday, in what appears to be the most serious push for weeks to halt the fighting in the battered Palestinian enclave and see Israeli and foreign hostages released.

A source briefed on the ceasefire talks, who could not be identified by name or nationality, said talks had begun with Israel's head of Mossad intelligence service meeting separately with each party - Qatar, Egypt and United States.

"There are budding signs

of optimism about being able to move forward toward the start of a serious negotiation," the source said. Egypt's Al Qahera TV News also reported that the talks had begun.

An official from Hamas said the group had wrapped up ceasefire talks in Cairo and was now waiting to see what mediators bring back from the weekend talks with Israel.

Mediators have ramped up efforts to secure a ceasefire in Gaza, in the hope of heading off an Israeli assault on the Gaza city of Rafah where more than a million displaced people are sheltering at the southern edge of the enclave.

Israel says it will attack the city if no truce agreement is reached soon. Washington has called on its close ally not to do so, warning of vast civilian casualties if an assault on the city goes ahead. Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh met Egyptian mediators in Cairo to discuss a truce this past week on his first visit since December. Israel is now expected to participate in talks this weekend in Paris with U.S., Egyptian and Qatari mediators.

Two Egyptian security sources confirmed that Egyptian intelligence chief Abbas Kamel would head on Friday to Paris for the talks with the

Israelis, after wrapping up talks with Hamas chief Haniyeh on Thursday. Israel has not publicly commented on the Paris talks.

The Hamas official, who asked not to be identified, said the militant group did not offer any new proposal at the talks with the Egyptians, but was waiting to see what the mediators brought back from their upcoming talks with the Israelis.

"We discussed our proposal with them (the Egyptians) and we are going to wait until they return from Paris," the Hamas official said.

The last time similar talks

were held in Paris, at the start of February, they produced an outline for the first extended ceasefire of the war, approved by Israel and the United States. Hamas responded with a counterproposal, which Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu then rejected as "delusional".

Hamas, which is still believed to be holding more than 100 hostages seized in the Oct. 7 attack on Israel that triggered the war, says it will free them only as part of a truce that ends with an Israeli withdrawal from Gaza. Israel says it will not pull out until Hamas is eradicated.

## Two Years of Unity and Resistance

Today we mark a sad anniversary - two years of Russian full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine - the bloodiest one, Europe has seen in 80 years. Enslaving Ukraine was supposed to be just the first step in a bigger plan: rolling back the history and dividing the world into zones of influence again. Due to courage of Ukrainians, this plan failed.

The two years of heroism and resilience of Ukrainians in defending its sovereignty and freedom has amazed the world. Putin's invasion was intended to be a blitzkrieg, destroying the Ukrainian state within days or weeks. After two years, Ukraine is still standing and fighting back, having liberated more than half of the newly occupied territories, lifting Russia's naval blockade by sinking nearly a third of Russia's Black Sea fleet, uniting a global coalition of its supporters.

It is also important to recall, that Ukrainian resistance has been going on much longer than two years. The Russian aggression against Ukraine started February 19, 2014 with the temporary occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. February 26, is being commemorated in Ukraine as the Day of Resistance to the Occupation of Crimea.

In revenge for its military losses on the battlefield, Russia continues terrorising Ukrainian civilians by attacking critical infrastructure and residential areas with missiles, bombs and attack drones, turning beautiful country into ruins. Cities of Bakhmut, Avdiivka, Maryinka and Vuhledar as well as many others stand as remnants of the past, inhabitable no more and virtually erased. Nearly all major Ukrainian cities bear the scars of indiscriminate missile and drone attacks.

Hundreds of thousands of human lives, both military and civilian, including women

and children, have been tragically lost. Millions of people have been displaced, forced to flee their homes and seek refuge either within Ukraine or abroad.

Ukrainian law enforcement agencies launched investigations into 125,307 war crimes and crimes of aggression as well as 16,297 crimes against national security. They include the killing of 11,868 (including 526 children) and the wounding of 18,950 civilians (among them 1,223 children).

The Russian occupiers have deported nearly 200 300 thousand Ukrainian children to Russia. 4,390 Ukrainian kids who are orphans or lack

parental care were illegally transferred to Russia. So far, 536 of kidnapped children have been returned and reunited with their families. On February 2, 2024 the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children was launched.

Russian aggression destroys the Ukraine's cultural heritage on a scale unseen since World War II. Many heritage structures have either been destroyed or sustained major damage. After these two years it becomes increasingly clear that Russia has lost its aggressive war in terms of strategy. Nonetheless, it demonstrates commitment to protracted war of attrition, hoping to win with the use of its still considerable resources, war fatigue and nuclear blackmail.

Ukraine is suffering the most in this war; therefore, no one wants peace more than Ukrainians. The path to the peace lies through battlefield success and throwing occupiers out of Ukrainian soil. The peace will come only after Ukraine territorial integrity has been complete-

ly reinstated within the internationally recognized borders. Idea of accepting "new territorial realities" being imposed by Moscow, is unacceptable.

At the same time, Ukraine remains committed to peace diplomacy. The ten-point Peace Formula of the President of Ukraine is rapidly gaining support of the world and remains the only realistic and comprehensive plan to restore Ukraine's territorial integrity and to lay foundation for comprehensive, just and lasting peace for Ukraine as well as for the entire international community.

These 10 points were reflected in the UN GA Resolution «UN Charter principles underlying a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine» adopted on 23 February 2023 by 141 votes. They

include not only the end of hostilities and withdrawal of Russian troops, but also food security, nuclear safety, environmental protection, energy security, justice, human rights, and respect for the UN Charter.

The fourth meeting of national security and foreign policy advisors on the implementation of the Peace Formula was held in Davos on January 14. Representatives of over 80 countries and international organizations participated in the meeting. The presentation of all 10 points of the Peace Formula was completed at the moot.

The Presidents of Ukraine and Switzerland agreed to start preparations for the Global Peace summit to be held in Switzerland. The Summit will give rise to a string of thematic meetings in different countries at the ministerial, parliamentary, expert and other levels to elaborate detailed proposals for the heads of state and govern-

ment to develop and agree on a single solid joint peace plan.

The Inaugural Peace summit will show global unity behind basic principles: sanctity of peace; respect for existing borders; prevailing force of law over the law of force. No disparities and imbalances can be used as an excuse for an invasion.

After agreeing on a joint peace plan, the Second Global Peace Summit will be held in the line with the point 10 of the Peace Formula - "Confirmation of the end of the war". The Russian Federation will be invited to the Summit for negotiations on ending its war on the basis of the peace plan. That time, Russia will be presented with consolidated position of the global majority, grounded on principles of international law and UN Charter, contrary to Russian approach, based on brutal force or coercion.

Countries from all parts of the world - Asia, Africa and Latin America, including Pakistan - are welcome to attend the Summit to lay the foundations of the new world's security architecture. The Peace Formula is the only real peace proposal on the table, thus we urge all peace-loving nations to join efforts in putting it into action.

Ukraine is grateful to every nation and individual who has been standing with us all along. We appreciate their support and will keep it in our hearts forever. It is the Unity that allowed us to survive and resist the invasion. We urge all our partners to stay resolved and united in supporting Ukraine.

The lesson that should have been learned over the past two years, is that, only unity and resolve are effective in resisting the aggressor. Appeasement has never worked, and never will. As the Russian full-scale aggression hits its two years mark, our message is: believe in Ukraine.

Author is Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ukraine to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

### Telephone call between the Foreign Ministers of Pakistan and Iran



Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani received a telephone call from the Foreign Minister of Iran, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, today.

Iranian Foreign Minister, on behalf of the leadership and people of Iran, congratulated the caretaker government on the successful conduct of Pakistan's parliamentary elections 2024. FM Jilani deeply appreciated the warm wishes from the brotherly people of Iran.

Reflecting on close fraternal ties between the governments as well as peoples of Pakistan and Iran, the two Foreign Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthen bilateral cooperation across all areas of mutual interest.

### Pakistani business, media tycoon Zafar Siddiqui passes away in Dubai

ISLAMABAD: Renowned Pakistani businessman and media tycoon Zafar Siddiqui breathed his last on Friday in Dubai after succumbing to his battle with cancer.

He worked as an accountant with Klynveld Peat Marwick Goerdeler (KPMG) for 18 years, initially as a partner and later as the managing director of one of its consulting practices.

## Air Chief expresses grief over the sad demise of Air Chief Marshal (Retd) Hakimullah Khan Durrani

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force expresses heartfelt condolences on the sad demise of former Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal (Retd) Hakimullah Khan Durrani. "May Allah bless the departed soul; and give strength to the bereaved family to bear this irreparable loss. Ameen!" CAS



## Ashrafi stresses religious diversity as key to Pakistan's harmony



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister's Special Representative on Religious Affairs and Pakistani Diaspora in Middle East and Muslim Countries, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi, on Friday emphasized the country's diversity of faiths in a significant development regarding religious harmony in Pakistan.

Ashrafi who is also the Chairman of Pakistan Ulama Council reiterated that Pakistan, as enshrined in its Constitution and law, upholds the rights of individuals from all religious backgrounds.

In the aftermath of the recent verdict by the Supreme Court of Pakistan regarding a religious matter, he emphasized the significance of the review petition filed by the Punjab government in addressing apprehensions within the framework of the Constitution and law.

Additionally, the court has provided clarity on the issue of the finality of Prophethood, a fundamental aspect of faith for the majority population of Pakistan, he added.

Ashrafi highlighted that the review petition represents a vital step in the legal process, aimed at addressing any concerns that may have arisen following the court's decision.

He stressed that the matter at hand is fundamentally constitutional, underlining the importance of upholding the rule of law and preventing any attempts to disrupt harmony or incite anarchy within the country.

"It is the responsibility of the state to safeguard the legal rights and properties of minority communities in the country," Ashrafi declared, reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to protecting the rights of all its citizens, regardless of their religious affiliations.

## All possible facilities to be ensured for Hujjaj intending Hajj 2024: minister

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed Friday said that all possible facilities will be provided to Pakistani pilgrims during this year's hajj where special training programs were also being conducted at the district level through camps managed by the religious affairs ministry.

In an exclusive interview with PTV news channel, he said that under the supervision of the Pakistan Hajj mission special catering companies were being arranged to feed pilgrims under a government scheme and will ensure quality and safety standards at every step.

Minister said that this year Pakistan Hajj mission is offering simplified transportation services to Pakistani pilgrims with standard buses ensuring round-the-clock, adding that, the transport department will fully dedicate themselves to the sacred duty.

A comprehensive transportation guidelines had also been issued at each building, he added. The caretaker government had introduced several new services for the pilgrims to help them perform the rituals with comfort and ease, he mentioned.

Monitoring Cell has been put in place to closely monitor and address any potential issues of the private Pilgrims, he said, adding, furthermore, various other specialized units, such as a Wheelchair Desk have been established to cater to the specific needs of different groups of pilgrims.

Replying to a question, he said in a bid to improve the Hajj pilgrimage experience for travelers in 2024, the federal government has also unveiled a comprehensive update to the Hajj



package, adding that, first time in history government has introduced a shorter 20 to 25-day Hajj program in which we will provide pilgrims with a more concise and efficient experience.

This change is expected to make the pilgrimage more accessible to a broader range of people, he added. Every pilgrim will also receive a specially designed bag featuring the Pakistani flag, a QR code for easy identification, and relevant information, he mentioned. In a move toward greater administrative efficiency, the government had launched a dedicated mobile app for online registration of Hajj applications, he said, adding, this app is streamlining the administrative aspects of the pilgrimage, making it easier for pilgrims to apply and manage their journey.

To another question, Aneeq said that every pilgrim will be given a mobile SIM of a Saudi company for free which will have 180 minutes for international calls.

He further said that the Caretaker government reduced the price of the official Hajj package by Rs0.1 million, adding, this year hajj is more affordable as compared to last year. He also appealed to all pilgrims that all representatives of Pakistan should express maximum restraint and good behaviour as there would be Muslims from every nook and cranny of the world.