



Saudi Ambassador invites ASP Shehribano Naqvi for royal visit

Saudi Arabia's Ambassador to Pakistan Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki has invited Gulberg ASP Syeda Shehribano Naqvi and her family to a royal visit after she saved a woman from a violent mob in Lahore's Achhra Market days earlier. Sources said that the envoy lauded the police officer for her brave effort during their meeting at the Saudi embassy. (Details on Page 8)



Mir Hamza roped in by Glamorgan for County Championship

Pakistan's left-arm pacer Mir Hamza on Friday, was signed by Glamorgan as their overseas signing for the upcoming County Championship 2024. Upon his recently signed contract with Glamorgan, Mir Hamza will be available for the opening seven fixtures of the County Championship, poised to run from April 5 to September 29. Hamza has represented Pakistan in five Tests, boasting the best bowling figures of 4/32... (Details on Page 7)

Simultaneously published from Islamabad, Lahore and Multan

Meeting

ISLAMABAD: Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf chairing the Command and Staff Conference held at Naval Headquarters on Friday.



Photo: ISPR

Pakistan Navy holds 'Command and Staff Conference': ISPR

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Command and Staff Conference of Pakistan Navy held at Naval Headquarters Islamabad, the Inter-Services Press Relations (ISPR) said.

In a statement, the army's media wing said that Chief of the Pakistan Navy, Admiral Naveed Ashraf, presided over the conference in which regional and international maritime security situation was reviewed.

The Naval Chief appreciated officers on the successful conduct of Naval Exercise

Sea-Spark 2024.

Admiral Naveed Ashraf directed to take immediate steps to provide relief and rehabilitation to the victims of recent torrential rains, flash floods, and landslides in Gwadar.

According to the ISPR, the Naval Chief was also briefed on ongoing and future projects of the Pakistan Navy.

The Naval Chief expressed his satisfaction with the operational preparations of the Pakistan Navy for the defense of the country's maritime borders, the ISPR concluded.

Fazlur Rehman says no to PML-N's offer, announces to sit in opposition

Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) Chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman on Friday rejected PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif's offers of 'important positions' and announced to sit in opposition "for now", citing sources.

Three-time Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif held a meeting with Maulana Fazlur Rehman at the latter's residence. The meeting was also attended by a number of PML-N leaders including Rana Sanaullah, Ishaq Dar and Ahsan Iqbal.

The meeting comes ahead of the key election of the prime minister, which is set to be held on Sunday. It must be noted that Fazl has refused to be a part of the coalition government and expressed reservations on the results of the Feb 8 general elections.



again refused to be part of the coalition government. Sources quoting Fazl said he refused to make promises immediately

and decided to consult the party members. Sources claimed that the PML-N offered JUI-F important

positions in the Centre - which was rejected by Fazlur Rehman. "Who is answerable to the injustice done to us in the recently-held polls," he asked.

Rejecting the offer, Fazlur Rehman said that they have decided to sit in opposition for now.

It is pertinent to mention here that JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman on Thursday said that his party will not participate in the election process for the National Assembly speaker, deputy speaker, prime minister, and president.

Speaking to the media after the inaugural session of the NA, Maulana Fazlur Rehman categorically stated that the JUI-F will sit on the opposition benches in the parliament.

We will not be part of the election of speaker and deputy speaker of the National Assembly and prime minister," he stressed.

Ayaz Sadiq becomes NA speaker, PPP's Ghulam Mustafa sworn in as deputy speaker

PPA

ISLAMABAD: PML-N's Ayaz Sadiq was elected as the speaker of the National Assembly for the third time while PPP's Ghulam Mustafa Shah was elected as his deputy amid a noisy session on Friday.

In his speech, Shah thanked his party leadership and coalition partners for putting trust in him.

Shah was elected as the deputy speaker of the National Assembly with 197 votes while his opponent Junaid Akbar, from the SIC, secured 92 votes.

Sadiq was elected after defeating the SIC's Aamir Dogar. A total of 291 votes were polled, out of which 290 were valid. Sadiq received 199 votes while Dogar received 91 votes.

Sadiq walked over to Dogar to shake his hand right after the announcement of the results.

In his speech, PTI's Dogar said that his party was ready for reconciliation if its "stolen" mandate was returned.



He urged the newly elected speaker to play a role in returning the PTI its mandate. "You played a role in 2013. We are ready to cooperate but first give our stolen mandate back to us and also our reserved seats," Dogar said.

He claimed that he would have received 225 votes, if Form 45 was used to compile results in general elections on Feb 8.

After being sworn in as the NA speaker, Sadiq called upon both sides of the

aisle to work together for the betterment of the country.

He appreciated Dogar for playing his part in the democratic process. "Amir Dogar sahib, you have always given me respect and called me 'Ayaz bhai'. God-willingly, I will prove to be an elder brother." Sadiq referred to some of the PTI backed MNAs as "friendly brothers with whom I have a relation other than politics".

He added that the government and the opposition were like "two wheels of a car".

Nomination papers for both slots were filed on Thursday after 302 members of the house took oath as MNAs.

Newly-elected members of the National Assembly were sworn in as lawmakers on Thursday amid uproar from the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) who raised slogans.

At least 23 reserved seats in the National Assembly have not been allotted to any political party.

China strongly condemns Israeli atrocities in Palestine

Spokesman Report

BEIJING: China on Friday strongly condemned killing of over 100 Palestinian civilians by Israeli forces in Gaza city. "China is shocked by the news and strongly condemns the incident," Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said during her regular briefing held here.



"We mourn for the victims and extend sympathies to the injured," she added. The spokesperson said, the Chinese side urges parties concerned, especially Israel, to stop fighting at once, earnestly protect civilians and ensure access for humanitarian assistance to prevent an even worse humanitarian disaster from happening. As per media reports, Israeli forces opened fire to a crowd of Palestinian civilians who were waiting for emergency food aid in Gaza City, northern Gaza, killing 112 people and wounding over 760 others.

PPP's Sarfraz Bugti elected unopposed Balochistan chief minister

Bureau Report

QUETTA: Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) leader Sarfraz Bugti was elected unopposed as the chief minister of Punjab on Friday.

Bugti was the sole candidate for the coveted slot as no other member of the provincial assembly submitted nomination papers.

The voting process for his election will be conducted tomorrow (Saturday) where Bugti will have to secure 33 votes in the House of 65

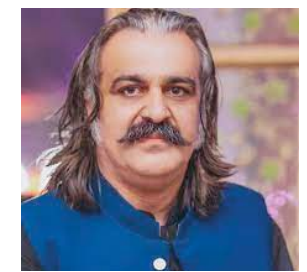


members.

It is pertinent to mention that the newly-elected chief minister of Balochistan served as the caretaker interior minister.

He later resigned from the post ahead of the general elections that were held on February 8.

Ali Amin Gandapur elected KP CM



Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) candidate Ali Amin Gandapur has been elected as Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP).

The newly elected speaker Babar Saleem Swati who took oath yesterday presided over the KP Assembly session.

In the 106 house, Pakistan

Tehreek-e-Insaf candidate Ali Amin Gandapur bagged 90 votes while PML-N candidate Dr. Ibadullah Khan managed to secure 16 votes.

Ali Amin Gandapur was named for the Chief Minister-ship of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa by PTI founder Imran Khan.

Gandapur's political journey began with his election to the Provincial Assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2013 as a member of the PTI.

Gandapur was the provincial revenue minister in the first Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and served as the minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan in former prime minister Imran Khan's cabinet.

Solangi bids adieu to Senate after receiving Upper House's acclaim for his cooperation

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Murtaza Solangi on Friday bid farewell to the Upper House of the Parliament after receiving acclaim from the Deputy to Chairman Senate on behalf of the House for his cooperation.

During the sixth meeting of the 355th session of the Senate, the Minister requested the Chair to defer the question hour session for the next meeting so that the upcoming Minister should take up the queries of the Senator after the new regime comes into power.

Solangi said the Prime Minister's election was going to be held on Sunday and the new government would be formed consequently.

Inquiry into NADRA data leak completed

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: An investigation, ordered by Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of parliament, into the leakage of citizens' data by the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) has been completed.

According to details, the investigative authorities have initiated departmental and disciplinary actions against the persons responsible for the "negligence".

A joint investigation team, headed by FIA Director Cybercrime, was constituted to investigate the March 2023 cyberattack, in which personal information of citizens, including military officials, was accessed and stolen.

The JIT submitted its report to the caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar following the completion of inquiry.

Exports witnesses 30% growth in February

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The exports from the country during the month of February 2024 grew by 30 percent and were recorded at \$2.575 billion as against the exports of \$1.984 billion in the corresponding month of the last year.

According to the Pre-Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) Customs-based data released

by PRAL, the trade balance improved in February 2023-24, narrowing by 18.2 percent compared to the same month of the previous fiscal year.

This positive development is attributed to a significant increase in exports and a moderate rise in imports, it added.

The data also showed that the trade deficit narrowed to \$1.628 billion in February 2023-24, compared to \$1.990 billion in

February 2022-23.

During the period from July-February 2023-24, the exports increased by 14.2 percent as it was recorded at \$20.341 billion as compared to the exports of \$17.815 billion in the same period of the last year.

Meanwhile, the imports decreased by 14.1 percent and reached \$34.213 billion as compared to the imports of \$39.810 billion in the same

period of the last year.

The government is committed for implementing policies that promote export-oriented industries, diversify export markets, and attract foreign direct investment. These efforts are expected to further improve trade balance in the coming months, it added.

Commenting on the positive development Minister for Commerce Dr Gohar Ejaz said

that exports from the country witnessed about 30 percent growth during three consecutive months as they grew by 28 percent in December, 27 percent in January and 30 percent in February.

Manufacturing and engineering exports grew by 15 percent, whereas the exports of agriculture and food commodities increased by 70 percent respectively, he added.

Women are contributing equally to the national trend of the country: Humira Tariq

✉ Quratul Ain Asim

MULTAN: Shaahor Development Organization, Awaaz Foundation, PDA, Shahid Mahmood Ansari, Humira Tariq for organizing the week-long events of International Women's Day in collaboration with Civil Society Forum and CSO Bridge Network. Gul Nasreen, Rukhsana Mehboob, Syed Naeem Kazmi, Zaman Akbar Tariq Bilal, Abu Bakr Khan and others while speaking at the press briefing said that women are contributing equally to the national trend of the country's development by showing high performance in various fields of life, highlighting the services of women and creating a protection-based environment.

To promote trends and create a favorable environment for women on the occasion of International Women's Day, weekly events are being organized in Multan under the objectives of these events. On the one hand, through these events, emphasis will be placed on the implementation of the laws of women protection, on the other hand, on the education of girls, and to express their



abilities as much as possible. To provide opportunities and encourage women. These events will be useful as a campaign to further push the trends forward. Seminars and symposiums in various women's institutions on the occasion of weekly events. Women's

Conference. Memorial public signature campaign related to women's rights. Awareness walk. And including the Women of the Year Awards ceremony, this week will include women's conventions at the county level. The fast will be held from March

3 to March 9. On the occasion of the press briefing, the participants saluted the courage and duty of ASP Madam Sher Bano. On the occasion of the media briefing, Adil Mehmood, Riaz Baloch also participated.

International Civil Defense Day Celebrate in Multan: Fatima Khan



✉ Kiran Asim /Arshad Raza Zaidi

MULTAN: Assistant Director of Civil Defense Rana Tariq Waheed and Civil Defense Officer Fatima Khan while speaking during the awareness walk organized with civil defense volunteers and civil society officials at the Civil Defense Headquarters on March 1st International Civil Defense Day said that in the era of modern technology. Citizens Defense training and the conscious awareness of the society is important to make the dear country stable in all aspects. Training on the style and civil defense organization of citizens. The awareness campaign is being launched during the walk rally by Chief Instructors Faheem Imdad, Abdul Qadir, Bomb Disposal Squad Commander Sheikh Mohammad Amin, Imran Mazhar, Group Warden Zazafar Malik, Khawaja Dilshad Ahmed, well-known poet Kaif Sahrai, social leader Sjad Ahmed Bhatti, Mohammad Jameel, Dr. Athar, Malik Muhammad Abu Bakr, AB Bhatta, Habib Khan, Kalb Abid Khan, Haji Rahim Bakhsh, Madam Iqra, Miss Sonia, Sameer Mashtaq, Qamber Abbas, Ajmal Rongha also spoke. The walk rally started from the Civil Defense Headquarters and ended at the Railway Road.

DG MDA visits Multan Chamber, listens to the problems of the members



✉ Arshad Raza Zaidi / Kiran Asim

MULTAN: Director General MDA visited the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Multan to listen to the problems of the members and answer their questions in the light of the laws. Town Planning along with Ali Raza of Chamber of Commerce and Industry Multan Visited and met President Mian Rashid Iqbal, Senior Vice President Nadeem Ahmed Sheikh, Vice President Sheikh Muhammad Asim Saeed and other members. Ali, Zafar Iqbal Siddiqui, Aurangzeb Alamgir, Malik Shakeel Arain, Sheikh Faheem Sattar, Ehtishamul Haq Secretary General Muhammad Shafiq were present on this occasion, the members discussed and asked questions on commercialization MDA limits and Multan Master Plan and other issues. It is our responsibility as MDA to listen to the problems of the holders and solve them.

On behalf of the House on this occasion a detailed discussion regarding parking was demanded that a special package should be given for the approval of colonies before 2005. President Mian Rashid Iqbal, Nadeem Ahmed Sheikh thanked DG MDA Zahid Ikram for his arrival and said that the government of MCCI members. And is playing a role in solving the problems related to other institutions so that the business May the problems be solved and the members get relief

Journalist injured by roof collapse in Wana



✉ Adam Khan Wazir

WANA: Like other parts of the country, South Waziristan Lower has been experiencing intermittent rain and snowfall for two days.

Due to which people have been confined to their homes, and the routine of life has been badly affected.

The roof of the room collapsed in the house of Naik Mohammad in Khushi Khel area of Wana, Lower South Waziristan District on Friday morning.

Due to which the former president of Wana Press Club and journalist Naik Muhammad was seriously injured, who was immediately shifted to District Headquarters Hospital, Wana,

BankIslami Unveils Extraordinary Financial Triumph with Unprecedented Results

✉ PPA

KARACHI: BankIslami, a leading financial institution, has announced its remarkable financial results for the year ended December 31, 2023. The bank reported a staggering after-tax profit of PKR 11.04 billion, showcasing its exceptional performance. Net profit and return surged by an impressive 97%, while profit after tax augmented by 149%.

The bank has declared a final cash dividend of 10%, which is in addition to the interim dividend of 17.5% announced in Q4 2023. This brings the total cash dividend payout to PKR 2.75 per share for the year of 2023 which reaffirms the bank's unwavering commitment to deliver a value to its esteemed shareholders.

There has been a phenomenal growth in the bank's net asset of 37.9%, due to its strategic allocation of excess liquidity into secured investments. This move propelled the investment portfolio from PKR 179.74 billion in December 2022 to an impressive PKR 314.08 billion in December 2023, marking a healthy growth of 74.7%. Meanwhile, the bank's financing portfolio witnessed a modest growth of 14.3%, influenced by the current economic condition, high policy rates, and stringent regulatory measures on consumer financing.

Looking ahead, BankIslami aims to strengthen its growth trajectory by expanding its deposit base, and enriching the customer experience by further growing its footprint. With its extraordinary financial triumph, BankIslami is poised to continue its success story and make a significant impact in the financial industry

Need attention

KARACHI: Commuters make their way wade through a road after heavy rains, in the Provincial Capital.



Photo: Online

Punjab Group of Colleges and University is encouraging students towards business

✉ Kiran Asim

MULTAN: Prominent industrialist and social leader and former president of Multan Chamber of Commerce and Industry Sheikh Fazal Elahi and Chairman Dry Port Trust Khawaja Muhammad Hussain have said that Punjab Group of Colleges and University is encouraging students towards business.

Giving lectures to students about new ideas He expressed these thoughts while speaking as a special guest at an awareness event for students to do their own business at the Constituent College of the University of Central Punjab



yesterday. He added that coming here Best ideas and innovative business ideas among students The idea of doing business through research and setting up industries

tries and making raw materials and raw materials in Pakistan will play an excellent role in the development of our country and it is the tradition of Punjab Group of Colleges to provide all the opportunities to the students to advance. Does it by knowing the best ideas and good thinking in them On this occasion, the admin director Prof. Osama Bashir Qureshi said that the purpose of inviting the industry and chamber presidents in this event today is that the chambers of Pakistan and Multan should make such a policy together with the educational institutions and they should guide the students on what kind of skills

they need in the future What kind of industries should be set up and the students should be aware of how these people have progressed today.

Share your experience with the students and tell them how to do business and our students will be job givers instead of job seekers. Pakistan will have industries and industries.

So people will also get employment opportunities and raw materials and more. Instead of importing raw material from other countries, export it to the whole world and our country will develop and we will not have to spread our hands before anyone.

Muslim Conference condemns Indian ban on Muslim Conference in Srinagar

✉ Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD/RAWALPINDI: This consultative meeting of the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference Core Committee was held at the Central Secretariat, Rawalpindi. Sardar Altaf, Sardar Manzoor Chaghatai, Central Chairman Youth Wing Sardar Usman Ali Khan, Sajid Abbasi, Muslim Conference Central Leader Sardar Abid Razzak, Sajjad Anwar Abbasi, Chaudhry Shaikat Ali, Raja Zafar Maruf, Khawaja Javed and other members of the committee attended the meeting. President Muslim

Conference and former Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan, while expressing his concern in the core committee meeting on the ban imposed on the Muslim Conference by the Indian government in occupied Jammu and Kashmir, said that the ban on the Muslim Conference in Srinagar is very sad and condemnable.

Play your role for this, otherwise due to the Hindutva mindset of the Indian government, South Asia may fall victim to a nuclear war at any time. It was said that this meeting pays tribute to the then Prime

Minister and President Muslim Conference Sardar Attique Ahmad Khan for making 394 Beldarans permanent in 2008 and making 25% quota permanent every year. Requests that the government of Azad Kashmir instead of shutting down the stores of the poor Beldars and forcing them to starve and commit suicide should make them permanent according to the law and the previous government decision of 2008. This meeting demands that the Azad government of Jammu state. Kashmir should take concrete and positive steps to control the financial

expenditure and not take away the jobs of Beldaran and Adhak employees. This meeting endorses the decision of Central Chief Organizer All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference Saqib Majeed Raja and officially announces that the Muslim Conference supports the protest of Beldarans and in all district headquarters in Azad Kashmir, Beldarans wherever they are. The protest camps have been set up, officials and workers will ensure their attendance and will support the demand of the Beldarans until they get reinstatement and employment.

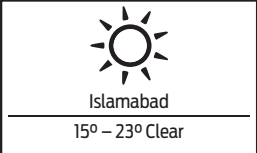
Job creation is crucial for reducing poverty: former minister

✉ PPA

KARACHI: The employment generation is crucial to reduce poverty, hunger and bagging to control the severe violation of human rights across the country.

This was stated by Ansar Burney, former minister for human rights at his book launching ceremony "Awaz: Echoes of Freedom and Justice" held at the Karachi Press Club recently.

He urged that the corporate sector, welfare organizations and philanthropists should work to provide education, skill and training to the unemployed population in order to make them productive citizens rather than focusing on expanding the free food network in different cities.



SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr	5:13 am
Zohr	12:20 pm
Asr	4:24 pm
Maghrib	6:05 pm
Isha	7:27 pm

EMERGENCY

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

Women Police Stations

Islamabad	9222596
Rawalpindi	9270601-20

ENQUIRY

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

HOSPITALS

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

DEPARTMENTS

CDA	9221334-43
CDA	9208301-04

Chief Minister urged to tackle escalating pilferage and thefts in small industrial estates

PPA

LAHORE: In light of the alarming surge in incidents of pilferage and thefts within the Small Industrial Estates, concerned stakeholders and industry leaders have come forward to implore the Chief Minister of Punjab, urging immediate action to quell these nefarious activities.

The Small Industrial Estates situated on Raiwind Road, nestled in the heart of Punjab's economic landscape, have long been regarded as bastions of small industries progress, fostering economic growth and employment opportunities. However, recent reports have shed light on a troubling trend of pilferage and thefts plaguing the region, casting a shadow over its reputation as a thriving industrial hub.

Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industry (LCCI) Executive Committee member Muhammad Ejaz Tanveer has voiced his apprehensions, citing a series of brazen thefts targeting warehouses and manufacturing facilities within the estates. Vital components, raw materials, and finished goods alike have fallen prey to these acts of criminality, posing significant challenges to the operations of numerous enterprises.

Moreover, Muhammad Ejaz Tanveer also stressed the importance of fostering closer collaboration between industry stakeholders, law enforcement agencies, and local authorities to devise comprehensive strategies aimed at deterring and apprehending perpetrators.

Increase taxes on cigarettes, not utilities

PPA

ISLAMABAD: The Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (SPARC), in a recent press release, shared statistics highlighting the significant burden tobacco use imposes on Pakistan, both in terms of public health and economic costs. Instead of increasing taxes on utilities such as electricity and gas, the government should prioritize increasing taxes on cigarettes to reduce the health cost burden and economic crisis.

Malik Imran Ahmad, Country Head of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids (CTFK), stated that Pakistan faces a considerable challenge in combating the tobacco menace. He also presented statistics showing a high prevalence of tobacco use in the country, with 31.9 million adults (15 years and above) consuming tobacco products, accounting for about 19.7% of the adult population.

He further added that tobacco-related illnesses, such as cancer, diabetes, and heart diseases, contribute to over 160,000 deaths annually in Pakistan. These deaths



not only affect individuals but also have broader impacts on families, communities, and the healthcare system.

Malik Imran proposed an immediate 30% FED increase in 2024, which can recover 19.8% of costs, narrowing the gap between health burdens and tax revenues. This tax proposal represents a clear 'win-win' in terms of health and revenue for the government and the people of Paki-

stan. Moreover, the recently initiated track & trace system on cigarettes is expected to reduce counterfeiting, restrain tax evasion, and maintain accountability.

Dr. Khalil Ahmad, program manager at SPARC, highlighted that low cigarette prices are the reason why children and youth initiate smoking. He added that smoking-related illnesses and deaths incur substantial economic costs, amounting to 1.6% of Pakistan's GDP each year.

These costs encompass healthcare expenses, productivity losses due to illness and premature death, as well as other indirect economic impacts. Additionally, he addressed that the tobacco epidemic requires comprehensive strategies encompassing public health interventions, strong tobacco control policies, and awareness campaigns.

By tackling tobacco use, Pakistan can mitigate economic losses associated with smoking-related illnesses, potentially alleviate the burden on its healthcare system, and keep youth safe from the harms of tobacco use.

Rain in Capital

ISLAMABAD: Motorists on their way at a road during rain, in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Raja Farid

Int'l conference on Research and Practices in Education concluded at AIOU

PNP

ISLAMABAD: A two-day 7th International Conference on Research and Practices in Education (ICRPE) concluded at Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU). Vice Chancellor AIOU, Prof Dr Nasir Mahmood presided over the closing ceremony. Dr. Nasir said that things are changing rapidly and we need to align our education system and curriculum accordingly. We should update our courses and curriculum keeping in view the recent and future trends in education. These conferences help researchers to magnify their research and find new topics. ICRPE is our flagship conference and i am very happy to see a large number of students, researchers and scholars participating in this 7th edition.

VC AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood thanked and congratulated the partner



organisations, collaborators and conference organising committee headed by Dr. Naveed Sultana over the successful event. Dr. Hafiz Tahir Jameel presented the summary of conference and

said that around 190 research papers and 35 posters were presented. 6 national and international expert and scholars delivered keynote address here in campus while 4 international speakers participated online. Dr. Naveed Sultana thanked Vice Chancellor for his support throughout the conference. Earlier, Dr. Islam from Punjab University delivered a keynote speech at Future of Teaching and Education.

The Bank of Punjab clinches 'Best SME Bank in Pakistan'

PPA

LAHORE: The Bank of Punjab is thrilled to receive the prestigious title of "The Best SME Bank in Pakistan" during the Global SME Banking Innovation Award 2024 Gala by The Digital Banker. This acknowledgment underscores our unwavering dedication to fostering the growth and prosperity of SMEs in Pakistan, showcasing our outstanding performance in pioneering digital innovation, advancing financial inclusivity, and offering steadfast support to this vital sector.



programs, and offer customized financing solutions to empower SMEs.

As one of the largest Commercial Banks in the country providing Collateral-Free Loans to SMEs, we recognise that genuine success stems from grass root level efforts and the uplifting of marginalised segments. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion are foundational to our strategy across all sectors. In our pursuit to address disparities and empower women in Pakistan,

BOP under its Naz Proposition initiative is actively engaging, recognising and harnessing the vast potential this segment offers.

Despite challenges, we've successfully extended a significant number of loans to women led businesses, addressing issues such as access to finance, lack of collateral, and volatile interest rates.

Another cornerstone of BOP's success lies in its tailored digital banking solutions for SMEs. Spearheading innovation, bank introduced the first End-to-End (E2E) digital lending product of the commercial banking industry in the market, empowering small entrepreneurs with seamless and efficient financial delivery to navigate the complexities of modern day busi-

ness landscape.

Expressing gratitude at this recognition, Mr. Zafar Masud, CEO of The Bank of Punjab, remarked, "We are honoured to be recognized as the Best SME Bank by The Digital Banker. This award validates our dedication to SMEs success in Pakistan. We remain committed to innovating and delivering cutting-edge financial solutions to empower small businesses and stimulate economic growth."

The Bank of Punjab's recognition as the Best SME Bank in Pakistan reaffirms its position as a leader in the financial industry, setting the stage for a future marked by continued innovation, inclusivity, and sustainable economic development.

Imran Qureshi unveils second exhibition titled 'Home' at COMO Museum in Lahore



PPA

LAHORE: Globally celebrated artist and Sitara-e-Imtiaz recipient Imran Qureshi unveils "Home" at COMO Museum, a solo exhibition running in parallel with his ongoing existing solo show, "The Garden" at Nasir Bagh.

Indeed, both exhibitions thematically blend elements of Lahore's cultural heritage while simultaneously addressing current global issues.

With "Home", Imran Qureshi examines the idea of a home and sets out to reimagine the house space of COMO Museum which was originally designed as a residence in the 1980s. The double-storied space is utilized in such a way that the viewing experience changes as the viewer moves through different levels of the museum.

The solo exhibitions "Home" and "The Garden" are both currently open for viewing and will continue to be on display till the summer of 2024.

PHP arrested 405 criminals, issued 8623 driving licenses in February

Abdul Majid

FAISALABAD: According to details, in the month of February, PHP conducted 1.40 million road checks through e-Police Post app across Punjab and arrested 405 ad criminals/judicial fugitives, including 13 of category "A" and 13 of category "B". There are 381 advertising criminals involved. Punjab Highway Patrol checked 1.70 million vehicles with the help of modern technology and recovered 292 stolen vehicles including 27 cars, 252 motorcycles and 13 other vehicles. 2 lakh 12 thousand 8 hundred 05 e-challans were issued for violations of traffic rules on the roads. Legal action was taken against 590 vehicles across Punjab for using gas cylinders. 92 thousand 4 hundred 13 overloaded vehicles were challaned for violation of approved axle load in view of road safety across Punjab. In view of the convenience of the citizens, last month PHP issued 8623 driving licenses.

04 Kalashnikovs, 09 rifles and 65 pistols were recovered after 78 cases were registered on the use of illegal weapons. Various types of assistance and guidance were provided to 7028 passengers who were facing difficulties on the roads across Punjab. Traffic flow was improved by removing 329 temporary and permanent encroachments.

44 missing children were reunited with their parents. First aid was provided to 154 people who were injured in various accidents. 2300 liters of alcohol, 23635 grams of hashish and 9120 grams of opium were recovered from drug dealers.

On this occasion, Additional IGP PHP Abdul Karim directed the officers and officials to perform their duties with more diligence and zeal. DIG PHP Dr. Muhammad Athar Waheed emphasized on the protection of life and property of the people and selfless service and declared service as the motto of Punjab Highway Patrol.

30% surge in targeted ransomware groups attacking governments, specific high-profile organizations, say Kaspersky experts

PNP

ISLAMABAD: Targeted ransomware groups have grown in numbers and are notorious for attacking governments, specific high-profile organizations, or selective group of people within an organization. An in-depth research by Kaspersky experts shows a surge in the number of targeted ransomware groups globally by 30% from 2022 to 2023. In parallel to this increase, the number of victims of targeted ransomware attacks spiked by 70% within the same time period.

Similar to regular businesses, targeted ransomware groups hire cybercriminals as employees to run extensive and intelligent operations to launch increasingly sophisticated targeted ransomware attacks.

Kaspersky researchers closely monitored about 60 targeted ransomware groups in 2023, compared to about 46 groups in 2022, and discovered incidents that indicated collaboration between targeted ransomware groups. In some cases, groups known for trading access points into corporate networks and systems, sold initial points of entry to advanced ransomware groups that are capable of launching more sophisticated attacks. Since cybercriminals have to cross multiple stages to launch a targeted ransomware attack, such collaborations allow them to save time and go straight into network reconnaissance or infection.

SECP amends VPS framework to allow fully funded defined contribution pension schemes

PPA

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP), to further broaden the scope of Voluntary Pension System (VPS), has amended the regulatory framework by allowing employers, both in the public and private sectors, to offer fully funded defined contribution pensions in a fail-safe environment to their employees.

To affect this, necessary amendments in the VPS Rules, 2005, along with corresponding amendments in the NBFCA&NE Regulations, 2008, have been notified. The introduction of Employer Pension Funds enables Group Companies, Holding Companies, Federal Governments, and Provincial Governments to provide comprehensive post-retirement income solutions to their employees.

The amendments aim to create a vibrant, futuristic pension landscape in Pakistan, allowing the public to manage post-retirement savings professionally and grow their investments according to their individual risk profiles and income needs.

In addition, for the eligible entities, i.e., asset management companies, life insurance companies, and investment advisors, who wish to offer employer pension funds under the VPS, a minimum asset manager rating criterion of 'AM2' has been introduced for eligible entities to strengthen their risk management and ensure quality of services. This enables licensed investment advisors to participate in the pension savings value chain by providing employer pension funds.

The upgradation of the regulatory framework for VPS has brought Pakistan on par with pension solutions like 401(k) retirement plans in the USA, allowing self-employed and informal sector workers to save for retirement as well as enabling the formal employment sector to offer efficient pension solutions.

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Proven Neutrality of Pak Army - III

False allegations against military personnel can originate from various sources, ranging from personal vendettas to deliberate attempts to discredit individuals or the institution as a whole. Regardless of the motives behind them, the consequences are profound and multifaceted. False allegations can irreversibly harm the lives and careers of those wrongly accused. Military service often demands sacrifices not only from the service member but also from their families. A false accusation can trigger investigations, legal proceedings, and public scrutiny, tarnishing reputations and undermining years of devoted service. Even if ultimately exonerated, the shadow of suspicion may persist, affecting future opportunities and relationships. Furthermore, false allegations corrode trust within the military community, which forms the foundation of effective teamwork, cohesion, and mission success. When individuals fear being falsely accused by their comrades or superiors, it undermines the bonds of camaraderie and mutual support crucial for military operations. Suspicion and division can weaken unit cohesion, compromising both morale and operational effectiveness.

False allegations erode public trust in the military as an institution. The military relies on civilian support and confidence to fulfill its mission and safeguard national interests. High-profile cases of false accusations can breed skepticism and diminish public confidence in the integrity of the armed forces. This can have widespread implications for recruitment, funding, and public perception of military interventions and operations. Moreover, false allegations divert valuable resources from genuine threats and

challenges facing the military. Investigations into misconduct, regardless of validity, consume time, manpower, and financial resources that could be better allocated to training, equipment, and readiness. Every hour spent pursuing baseless accusations detracts from preparations for the complex and evolving threats confronting modern militaries.

The reputation and integrity of a nation's military force often serve as a cornerstone of its identity, embodying values such as sacrifice, courage, and commitment to state defense. Consequently, numerous countries have implemented stringent laws aimed at safeguarding the honor of their armed forces and deterring actions that may tarnish their reputation or erode public trust. These laws are designed to bolster the morale and effectiveness of military personnel while protecting national security interests. Various countries have enacted strict regulations against defaming the army, and the reasoning behind such measures is evident.

Singapore is renowned for its rigorous defamation laws, which extend to the armed forces. The country's Seditious Act and Internal Security Act prohibit any form of speech or publication that could incite hatred or contempt towards the government, including the military. Criticism of the armed forces, especially by civilians, is deemed a threat to national security and can lead to legal prosecution. Such measures aim to maintain discipline within military ranks and uphold the professional reputation of the Singa-

pore Armed Forces.

In Thailand, where the military wields significant influence, laws against defamation of the armed forces are strictly enforced. The nation's lese majeste laws, intended to safeguard revered institutions like the monarchy, often encompass criticism of the military. Individuals who disparage the military or its leaders face severe penalties, including imprisonment and fines. These laws underscore the deep-seated reverence for the military in Thai society and its vital role in safeguarding national sovereignty and stability.

Turkey has a history of enforcing laws against insulting the military, particularly amid political dissent or criticism. Article 301 of the Turkish Penal Code prohibits the denigration of the Turkish nation, state institutions, or symbols, including the armed forces. Individuals found guilty of insulting the military or its leaders can be prosecuted, facing imprisonment or other punitive measures. These laws underscore the government's commitment to upholding the honor and prestige of the military, which occupies a revered position in Turkish society as a defender of the nation's interests and values.

China maintains strict controls over speech and expression, including criticism of the military. The country's National Security Law and other regulations prohibit actions that could undermine national security or social stability, including defamation of the armed forces. Individuals who disparage the military or spread false information about its activities may face severe repercussions,

including imprisonment. These measures reflect the Chinese government's efforts to maintain stringent ideological control and uphold the authority of the military as a pillar of the Communist Party's governance.

In contrast, in Pakistan, there is a lack of stringent action against elements operating against institutions, and whenever attempts are made to do so, self-proclaimed advocates of human rights step forward in support of these anti-state elements. If the group in question asserts that the former Commissioner Rawalpindi's statements are accurate, then they should also acknowledge his assertion regarding the neutrality of the Pakistan Army during elections. Additionally, another compelling argument supporting the Army's neutrality is that if they had supported specific parties, the election results would have been markedly different, potentially resulting in clear or two-thirds majorities. The defeat of many prominent political figures from these parties further indicates that they did not receive unfair support from institutions.

Readers, it is imperative for all elements to accept the realities and election outcomes. Any reservations should be addressed through legal channels and courts rather than through mob justice, protests, or unfounded allegations. The truth is evident and apparent to the nation and the world. The Pakistan Army's neutrality during the elections is corroborated by the election results and the statements of the former Commissioner Rawalpindi. Any attempt to drag this institution into controversies is condemned by the nation. The entire nation demands strict action against those who spread hatred and false propaganda against the Pakistan Army.



Analysis

Abdul Basit Alvi

Pakistan's pearls, precious stones see 47% increase in China's Market

Pakistan's pearls and precious stones saw a 47% increase in exports from Pakistan to China in 2023, signaling not only the growing demand for these natural beauties in the Chinese market but also the potential of Pakistan's mining and gemstone industry. Karim Jan, a Pakistani gem and jewelry exporter to China, told China Economic Net that Pakistan's northern and northwestern areas were rich in mineral resources, boasting gems like vibrant topaz, deep red rubies, green emeralds, and sapphires.

Extracting these gems is a delicate process, relying on the skilled hands and age-old techniques of local miners and artisans. Pakistan can further improve by utilizing Chinese skills. "As Chinese consumers increasingly seek out rare and high-quality gemstones, Pakistani gems, known for their unparalleled beauty and craftsmanship, are finding a prominent place in this competitive landscape. The reciprocal nature of this growing trade relationship promises a mutually beneficial future for both nations, with Pakistani gems shining brightly in the vast Chinese market," he stated. According to sources from Pakistan's Ministry of Commerce, Pakistan's Pearls and Precious Stones exported to China crossed \$4.34 million in 2023, whereas last year it was \$2.95 million, indicating an increase of 46.88%. He further mentioned that semi-precious stones under commodity code (71031000) were above \$3.72 million, marking an increase of 27.75% in 2023. He further stated that this remarkable achievement highlights the industry's resilience and the growing global appetite for its exquisite pearls and precious stones. As Pakistan continues to navigate the complexities of the international market, the focus on innovation, sustainable practices, and enhancing the skills of its artisans will be key to maintaining momentum. The success seen this year is a promising indicator of what's possible when tradition and modernity converge, ensuring that the luster of Pakistan's gem industry shines on the world stage for years to come.



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

Rainwater Harvesting – A vital solution to avert water scarcity

With the country fast approaching towards water scarcity, unchecked population growth and everyday rising demand of water for agricultural and human use can land the country in serious trouble during years ahead.

The long history of neglecting this sector had resulted in decline of per capita water availability of 5600 cubic meter in 1947 to around 1000 cubic meter presently ringing the alarm bells for experts and the policy makers. Rampant wastage of water during these decades, non-construction of any big project till early 2000s – after Tarbela and Mangla dams – and the chal-

he said. "Then there is also need for controlling water wastage and ensure its proper storage for agriculture and human use," PCRWR Chairman said. Talking of global rainwater harvesting techniques, he said, such a water collecting system and storage mechanism can be both simple and inexpensive and complex and costly. "This technique may consist of simple rain barrels or more elaborate structures with pumps, tanks, and purification systems."

He said the technologies to collect and store rainwater vary from region to region. "Therefore, keeping within our available resources, we need to research on easier and inexpensive modes of water conservation." Besides water table recharge, the non-portable rainwater can also be used irrigate agricultural land, flush toilets, car wash, laundry clothes and even for drinking if properly purified. Many countries already exploit techniques of artificial groundwater recharge through rainwater harvesting and storage of flowing water in underground tanks.

In recent years this technique has emerged as an effective nature-based solution to tackle serious challenges of water scarcity, rapid decline in water table and avert urban flooding that displaces people and cause damage to their properties and livelihood. Water and Sanitation Agency Managing Director Ghufraan Ahmad mentions to three such projects in Lahore where the rainwater is stored to meet the needs of local people.

"We have established three rainwater harvesting sites at Bagh-e-Jinnah, Lawrence Road, Sheranwala Gate and Kashmir road with a storage capacity of 1.4 million gallon and 1.5 and 1.5 million gallons capacity respectively," Ghufraan Ahmad said. "This water is used for watering greenbelt plantations across the city." He informed

that more underground water tanks would be constructed at different locations in the city with a plan to save 21 million gallons of water.

Moreover, the Punjab Agriculture Department in previous years had also completed 44 ponds for harvesting rainwater in Rawalpindi division to improve underground water table and use it for irrigation and other purposes in arid agriculture areas. Experts believe that rainwater harvesting techniques could help irrigate more land, improve groundwater table and provide drinking water. Therefore, International Water Management Institute and Punjab Irrigation Department have jointly launched a pilot project in Okara district to promote water-efficient farming and check the level and quality of subsoil water in the area.

"This project is hoped to valuably benefit the local farmers. It would enhance water efficiency and maintain soil fertility," stated Director of this 'On Farm Water Management Research' project Dr Habibullah Habib. "The farmers now need to benefit from laser and levelers, adopt furrow cultivation mechanism as well as drip irrigation to get maximum crops produce by using limited water resource," he added. Former Vice Chancellor Pir Mehar Ali Shah Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi, Dr Rai Niaz Ahmad has also underlined the need for ground water replenishment initiatives.

"We need artificial recharge wells at suitable sites across the country," Dr Niaz said as he also strongly recommended to amending by-laws for housing societies making rainwater harvesting mandatory for them. He said International Water Management Institute wants to propagate this concept of rainwater harvesting to improve groundwater level and is ready to extend technical support to organizations working in this sector. "We at Arid Agriculture University developed models for urban and agricultural rainwater harvesting systems," he informed. "Collective efforts for rainwater harvesting even in irrigated

Construction of run-of-the river dams imperative to avert looming water crisis - I

Fakhar Alam

Highly vulnerable to climate change and desertification, Pakistan is being faced with looming water crisis due to lack of rains and snowfalls besides fast melting of glaciers putting lives of millions people at risk due to emerging food security challenges.

Being the most water stressed country in world due to shortage of dams and runner of the river (ROR) projects despite plenty of suitable sites for construction of water reservoirs in northern parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan, the country's water availability has been consistently declining due to mismanagement of water resources, unchecked car washing stations, deforestation and climate change.

"Pakistan is mostly relying on glaciers for its water needs. However, the lack of rains and snow falls this year in winter signified the country's water vulnerability that may create food security challenges besides energy crisis in years ahead if we do not construct run of the river dams being cost and time efficient", said Tauheedul Haq, former Conservator of Forests while talking to APP.

Referring to the National Water Policy 2018, he said that per capita surface water availability has declined from 5,260 cubic meter per annum in 1951 to a significant 1000 cubic meters in 2016 and feared that this quantity would likely to further decrease by about 860 cubic meter in next few years if deforestation and population bulge continued and water of rivers were not stored through better water management.

With glaciers retreat, he said more glacial lakes would be formed especially in Chitral and Swat besides Gilgit-Baltistan with high chances of Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GOLF) as evident at Attabad lake GOLF that necessitated more runner of the river dams in Rivers Swat, Kunhar at Kaghan, Naran and Punjokora Dir Upper most suited for these kinds of hydel projects besides averting flash floods.

Dr Professor Zilakat Malik, former Chairman Economics Department, University of Peshawar said that climate change, 240.954 million population bulge and technological advancement started exerting pressure on energy resources in the country that was already facing about 7,000 megawatts (MW) shortfall affecting GDP growth.

He said the promotion of run-of-the-river (ROR) hydroelectricity would be required to bridge the widening demand-supply gap of electricity besides fulfilling the pressing demands of affordable energy of the consumers increasing with each passing day in the wake of mushroom growth of IT and agriculture sectors.

He said that the energy consumption share of industries has increased by 28 percent during July-April 2022 from 26.3 percent recorded in July-April 2021 while the share of the agriculture sector jacked up to nine percent from 8.9 percent during the same period. The 2022 devastating floods have adversely affected the country's agriculture, economy, livestock, and energy sectors as scores of mini micro-hydel stations were swept away by the gushing water that inflicted over USD 40 billion in economic losses to the government kitty.

To be continued

ISSI hosts Public Talk on 'Pakistan's Opportunity for Science Diplomacy in South Asia'

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Strategic Perspectives (CSP) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) hosted a public talk, titled "Pakistan's Opportunity for Science Diplomacy in South Asia" on March 01, 2024. Dr. Saleem H. Ali, Chair, Department of Geography, University of Delaware, USA was the keynote speaker. The talk provided significant insights into the opportunities available for Pakistan to conduct successful and effective Science Diplomacy, including in the South Asian region. Featuring as Discussant, Additional Secretary (PP/ACDIS) Mr. Kamran Akhtar highlighted the progress made by Pakistan within the context of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs's Science Diplomacy initiative.

Director CSP, Dr. Neelum Nigar, welcomed the participants to the discussion, underscoring the subject's significance for the region.

In his welcome remarks, DG ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood highlighted the importance of Science Diplomacy (SD) in today's interconnected world and lauded the Foreign Office's SD initiative which served as a key platform for facilitating the inter-face between the national science & technology stakeholders and international partners. He noted that this was helping to foster beneficial collaboration on key areas of focus with the relevant institutions, international organisations, and countries. Pakistan was also leveraging Science Diplomacy to implement SDGs.

Dr. Saleem H. Ali delivered a compelling presentation in which he outlined the pivotal role of science diplomacy, emphasizing how collaborative scientific efforts can transcend national boundaries to foster peace and

sustainable development. He underscored Pakistan's unique position, given its rich scientific heritage and strategic geographical location, suggesting that the country can play a leading role in utilizing science for diplomatic endeavours on a global scale, not just within South Asia.

Dr. Ali's vision for Pakistan's role in science diplomacy encompassed a proactive stance in international forums, the promotion of south-south collaboration, and the strategic harnessing of science and technology as essential tools for achieving peace and prosperity. His comprehensive framework positioned Pakistan as an important player in influencing the global scientific landscape and contributing significantly to international cooperation and progress.

The discussion additional depth through the valuable insights shared by Additional Secretary Kamran Akhtar,



and Mr. Muhammad Adeel, representing the Embassy of Pakistan in Brussels. Mr. Akhtar provided a detailed overview

of Pakistan's active involvement in various international scientific initiatives, notably the EU's Science for Diplomacy

(S4D) initiative, outreach to the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA), and the establishment of strategic university linkages geared towards fostering collaboration among the developing countries (south-south cooperation).

The event concluded with remarks by Chairman BOG ISSI Ambassador Khalid Mahmood. He underscored the need to enhance the role of science in diplomacy, emphasizing its potential to contribute to a different international image of Pakistan. Ambassador Khalid Mahmood highlighted the importance of tapping into the expertise of the highly talented and active Pakistani diaspora, noting their historically pivotal role in the country's development.

The public talk was attended by senior representatives of COMSTECH and COMSATS, academics, practitioners, and students.

Called on

Managing Director Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal Syed Tariq Mahmood-ul-Hassan was called upon H.E Nawaf bin Saeed Ahmad Al Maliky Royal Saudi Arabia Ambassador in Pakistan.



Photo: PID

Israeli outpost in al-Lubban Al-Sharqiya 'blowing up Palestinian lands'

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates condemns the efforts of colonists to establish a new colonial outpost of 6 caravans on citizens' lands in Al-Lubban Al-Sharqiya. It also strongly condemns the continuing escalation in attacks by Jewish colonial terrorist elements against citizens, their land, property, trees, homes and sanctities, and considers it a blatant challenge to the resolutions of international legitimacy and international law, and a belittling of the positions of Countries that reject settlement and have imposed sanctions on some of its elements involved in these attacks, and which claim to be keen on a two-state solution. The Ministry believes that the Israeli government does not give any weight to the international community and its decisions, and does not respect the positions and demands of countries in this regard as long as they are not translated into deterrent actions and penalties.

Pakistan's Sardar Ghulam Hasan wins Saudi Arabia's International Construction Award



News Desk

JEDDAH: A big honor for Pakistan, Pakistan's well-known business personality Sardar Ghulam Hasan won Saudi Arabia's International Construction Award 2024.

With the support of the Saudi Ministry of Commerce, the second annual International Construction Award ceremony was held in Makkah. Sardar Ghulam Hasan from Mansehra district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan won the award.

Sardar Ghulam Hasan named this award in the name of his country Pakistan and said that I have received this award after 34 years of hard work, I thank the Saudi government, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz and Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman, for receiving the award. Sardar Ghulam Hasan was born in Balakot Tehsil of Mansehra District, Sardar Ghulam Hasan was interested in social work since childhood, after moving to Saudi Arabia, he founded a construction company, in which he recruited the best manpower from all over the world including Pakistan. Sardar Ghulam Hasan has already started a free ambulance service for poor patients in his native Balakot, drinking water to remote areas. Construction of roads has started along with water supply.

Netanyahu's ignoring of the Nabulsi Roundabout massacre proves that he is the political face of the fascist Ben Gvir

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: Demands the imposition of deterrent sanctions on the Israeli government to force it to ensure the protection of civilians and secure their humanitarian needs.

After the horrific Rashid Street massacre, Netanyahu came out to us to repeat his broken record regarding the war of genocide against our people, admitting that he is facing international pressure and deliberately failing it, especially with regard to his indifference to protecting Palestinian civilians and securing their humanitarian needs. What is more dangerous is that he completely ignored the reality of the massacre he committed against defenseless civilians who were exhausted. Hunger and thirst due to his racist decisions, as if those who killed a group of sheep did not deserve any gesture, apology, or condemnation from the Prime Minister of Israel for slaughtering them. Rather, Netanyahu ignored the killing of more than 100 Palestinians and the wounding of more than 800 others.

The Ministry believes that this neglect is no different from the fascist Ben Gvir's description of our people as mobs or Gallant's description of them as human animals. Rather, it translates it into a different language that does not hide the extent of hatred, racism, and revenge in the occupation's dealings with our people and its denial of their right to life.

The Ministry confirms that Netanyahu and the pillars of his rule derive their audacity to continue slaughtering and displacing our people from the indifference and complicity of the major countries that provide protection for Israel and its crimes.

'Peak China' rhetoric untenable in face of Chinese economy's resilience

Xinhua

BEIJING: Every week, around 30 freight trains from China arrive in Duisburg, a city lying in Germany's Ruhr region and a major hub for China-Europe Railway Express (CRE). As existing facilities have reached capacity limits, a new terminal will be operational this summer to handle the freight from and to China.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Duisburg and other European cities with CRE service witnessed a surge in freight rail traffic with China. The recent Red Sea crisis also led to an increasing demand for the service.

CRE is a key project of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Since its inception a decade ago, the initiative has grown into a widely acclaimed global public good and platform for cooperation, opening up new space for the world's economic growth.

Despite the BRI's popularity, a rhetoric has emerged recently in some Western countries, which claims that China's comparative strength is peaking. One of the arguments the "Peak China" theorists claim is that China is facing a worsening external environment, rising geopolitical risks, a wave of foreign capital withdrawal, and a shift in global supply chains.

Data shows that China received 1.1 trillion yuan (around 150 billion U.S. dollars) in actual foreign investment in 2023. Despite a dip of 8 percent year on year, the figure only lost to the levels seen in 2021 and 2022.

This is something that deserves applauding given the grim picture in the whole world. The UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) revealed in a report in January that when a few European "conduit economies," intermediaries for foreign direct investment (FDI) destined for other countries, are excluded, global FDI flows show a decline as steep as 18 percent.

China's FDI fluctuated for several reasons. The country is still reeling from the COVID-19 pandemic, and disruptions to visits and exchanges affected the investment decisions of multinational companies. Moreover, the shrinking global cross-border investment has intensified worldwide competition for inbound investment and resulted in certain capital diversions away from China.

Generally speaking, the structure of foreign investment in China is optimizing. In 2023, China received 423.34 billion yuan of investment in high-tech industries, about 37.3 percent of paid-in foreign investment, an increase of 1.2 percentage points compared to 2022.

The uncertainty of China's external environment is indeed rising, as a result of the containment and suppression by some Western countries.

The past few years have witnessed a carousel of tactics targeting China, ranging from "decoupling" to "de-risking," "small yard, high fence," and most recently "friend-shoring."

On the pretext of national security, these countries have employed state power to stifle Chinese companies in an attempt to establish a "technological sphere of influence" and prevent China from getting advanced technology and equipment.

China's position as the "world's factory," however, remains unshakable. According to China Customs, the country's total trade in goods reached 41.76 trillion yuan in 2023, up 0.2 percent, in which exports totaled 23.77 trillion yuan, up 0.6 percent.

In comparison, a UNCTAD report in December predicted that global trade would drop by about 1.5 trillion U.S. dollars to below 31 trillion dollars in 2023, a 5 percent decline compared to the level in 2022.

Chinese companies are still expanding their overseas footprints. In 2023, China became the world's top automobile exporter for the first time, selling 4.91 million vehicles overseas, a year-on-year increase of 57.9 percent.

In Europe, following a battery factory launch in Germany in early 2023, China's electric vehicle battery maker Contemporary Amperex Technology is spending 7.34 billion euros to build a factory in Hungary, with production expected to begin in 2025.

China's economic relations with ASEAN, Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership countries, and Africa have become ever more active in recent years. Its trade volume with BRI partner countries reached 19.47 trillion yuan, accounting for 46.6 percent of its total trade value and outpacing its overall foreign trade growth.

In 2023, over 150 countries attended the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation held in Beijing, achieving 458 outcomes and agreements worth 97.2 billion dollars.

China is proactive in navigating a complex international environment, engaging in head-of-state diplomacy, developing a community with a shared future for humanity, bringing BRI cooperation to a new stage of high-quality development, and helping the BRICS deliver a historic expansion in its membership last year.

While promoting global peace, stability and prosperity, these measures also foster a favorable external environment for China's own growth.

COMSTECH, Huawei Enhance Strategic Partnership

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General COMSTECH, and Dr. Syed Khurshid Hasnain, Advisor COMSTECH, met with the Cyber Security and Privacy Protection team of Huawei at the Mobile World Congress held in Barcelona, to chart out the future of the strategic collaboration.

The collaboration between COMSTECH and Huawei aims to elevate the cybersecurity proficiency of OIC nations, focusing on areas like security management, security incident response, vulnerability management, and staying abreast of emerging security technologies and requirements.

Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary shared that by virtue of its

mission, COMSTECH intends to use the strengths and opportunities of Huawei Technologies, a technological giant, for the benefit of the member states.

Speaking on the scale and scope of the partnership, Prof. Choudhary described the relationship as a very flexible cooperation as the leadership of Huawei Technologies was both forward-looking and willing. He expressed the intention of expanding the cooperation to have Huawei Technologies introduced, implemented and used in areas such as healthcare, education, agriculture and cyber security.

COMSTECH and Huawei Technologies Pakistan recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding to bolster national cybersecurity awareness and fortify the capabilities of OIC member

states in cybersecurity. Under the existing MoU, Huawei will collaborate with COMSTECH to host cybersecurity training based on its practices and experiences, contributing to enhanced cybersecurity awareness and capacity building for selected OIC governmental employees. Additionally, participation in influential regional cybersecurity events like GISEC and GTTEX is on the agenda.

Prof. Choudhary added that the OIC world is very asymmetrical with many of the member states face a huge capacity deficit in not only technological competencies but also in the understanding of policies, regulations and strategies. To that end, the COMSTECH-Huawei partnership is broad-based, with COMSTECH wanting to leverage the Huawei



expertise to develop better understanding of national strategies of member states so they can have

their own digital transformation policies and legislations. Dr. Syed Khurshid Hasnain is

working closely with the Huawei Pakistan team to develop a matrix of activities including workshops,

national and international trainings, and implementation of some of the technologies.

Bull & Bears
PSX 100-Share
Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index	
Current	Prev. Close
65,325.68	64,578.52
Day's High	Day's Low
65,486.45	64,530.20
Index Value	Change
8,951,705,716	+747.16
Percentage	Time
+1.16%	1 Mar, 2024 5:00 pm

Europe: FTSE 100 Index	
Index Value	Change
7,682.50	+52.48
Percentage	Time
+0.69%	1 Mar, 4:35 pm GMT

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average	
Index Value	Change
39,044.35	+47.96
Percentage	Time
+0.12%	1 Mar, 1:10 pm GMT-5

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average	
Index Value	Change
39,910.82	+744.63
Percentage	Time
+1.90%	1 Mar, 3:15 pm GMT+9

Open Market Forex Rates

Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	181	183
Bahrain Dinar	737.97	745.97
Canadian Dollar	207	209.2
China Yuan	38.82	39.22
Danish Krone	40.23	40.63
Euro	302.5	305.5
Hong Kong Dollar	35.7	36.05
Indian Rupee	3.37	3.48
Japanese Yen	2.1	2.18
Kuwaiti Dinar	901.62	910.62
Malaysian Ringgit	58.49	59.09
New Zealand \$	168.97	170.97
Norwegians Krone	26.54	26.84
Omani Riyal	725.68	733.68
Qatari Riyal	76.74	77.44
Saudi Riyal	74.5	75.3
Singapore Dollar	207	209
Swedish Korona	27.13	27.43
Swiss Franc	314.07	316.57
Thai Bhat	7.74	7.89
U.A.E Dirham	76.3	77
UK Pound Sterling	354	359
US Dollar	279.4	282.3

As PM, Sharif will find the country facing many threats: 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 as Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif, he will have to govern a country facing many serious problems.

He said that bringing political and economic stability to a country divided by politics and facing an economic crunch would be a big challenge for him.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that Shahbaz Sharif had saved the country from bankruptcy by signing a standby agreement with the IMF, and now he will try hard to get a positive response from the IMF in its last review and enter a new agreement to improve things.

Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that the old agreement with the IMF was to save the country from bankruptcy, due to which the foreign exchange reserves and the deficit

remained more or less within the recommended limits of the IMF.

The new long-term deal with the IMF will include addressing the issues that have pushed the country to the brink of bankruptcy. Addressing these problems in the economy will be a challenge for Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif because the country's sluggish economy and weak control of the government are in the interest of many influential groups.

These groups have been squeezing the economy and the people for decades, and they will resist every move to streamline things, he added.

The business leader said that in the event of another agreement with the IMF, the lender would not allow the deficit to exceed 1.5 percent of GDP, which means the government would not be able to undertake major infrastructure projects and go for heavy spending, which will cause frustration among the public and newly elected members of parliament.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that in these circumstances it will be difficult to get help



from China and Arab countries. Still, there are bright possibilities of huge investment in the country under SIFC, due to which people will get employment.

Investments will make it possible to keep the value of the rupee stable and inflation under control, he said, adding that the business community is hopeful that the incoming

government will privatise the sick companies, the problems of electricity and gas will be solved, and the cost of doing business will be reduced.

Moreover, efforts will be made to increase exports and boost the tax-to-GDP ratio to improve the overall situation.

PPP and MQM will fully support the government in these measures, and the business community also hopes that the opposition will not take such irresponsible steps that make life miserable for the common man.

Mian Zahid Hussain further said that at present, the people and business community across the country are protesting due to electricity and gas bills and oil prices, and the incoming government can do a lot in this regard by reducing electricity, gas theft, capacity charges, and line losses.

There is strong hope from the new Prime Minister that he will present the best model of good governance according to the promises made in the election and by working hard day and night. He will be able to get the country out of dire economic difficulties.

Poverty

ISLAMABAD: An elder labourer is sitting under an umbrella during rain on a green belt alongside a road waiting for customers, in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Raja Farid

Exports grow at more than 25% for third consecutive month

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's trade balance improved in February 2023-24, narrowing by 18.2% compared to the same month in the previous fiscal year. This positive development is attributed to a significant increase in exports and a moderate rise in imports.

According to pre-PBS Customs-based data released by PRAL, exports increased by 30% to USD 2.575 billion in February 2023-24, from USD 1.984 billion in February 2022-23.

The data also shows that the trade deficit narrowed to USD -1.628 billion in February 2023-24, compared to USD -1.990 billion in February 2022-23.

For the period Jul-Feb

2024, the exports increased by 14.2% to USD 20.341 billion in 2023-24, from USD 17.815 billion in 2022-23. Imports decreased by 14.1% to USD 34.213 billion in 2023-24, compared to USD 39.810 billion in 2022-23. The trade balance deficit narrowed to USD -13.872 billion in 2023-24, compared to USD -21.995 billion in 2022-23, according to pre-PBS Customs-based data.

The Government of Pakistan remains committed to implementing policies that promote export-oriented industries, diversify export markets, and attract foreign direct investment. These efforts are expected to further improve Pakistan's trade balance in the coming months.

Ufone 4G provides free calls in Gwadar to help connect flood-affected families

PPA

ISLAMABAD: As Gwadar faces a large-scale natural disaster caused by catastrophic rains and flash floods, Pakistani telecom company, Ufone 4G has announced free calls to help connect local families, and assist in swift execution of rescue and relief operation in the affected port city.

The heavy downpour has inundated large parts of Gwadar, destroying homes and livelihoods, and rendering hundreds of families homeless. A considerably large section of the local population is associated with the fishing industry, whose boats were wrecked, and businesses decimated by the deluge.

As a responsible Pakistani corporate citizen, Ufone 4G



has always stepped up to help fellow Pakistanis affected by natural disasters. The free minutes will help the locals to connect with their loved ones,

alert authorities to their plight and request urgent rescue and relief assistance. The initiative is particularly crucial as the extensive flooding has disrupt-

ed communications channels and made it harder for people to find ways to recharge their mobile balance.

Ufone 4G users across the affected areas will receive 70 Ufone to Ufone and PTCL free minutes with a validity of 7 days. No call set up charges will be levied on these free minutes. The modest support will inspire resilience and fortitude amongst the people of Gwadar to confront and emerge stronger from this adversity.

The initiative mirrors the Ufone 4G sustained commitment to fostering social good and ensuring wellbeing of the communities it serves. The Ufone 4G family has expressed complete solidarity with the fellow citizens who are affected by this natural calamity.

PPA

LAHORE: The National Transmission and Despatch Company (NTDC) has accomplished the Motorway M-2 crossing work (36th - 37th km) near Sheikhpura Interchange, marking a crucial milestone in the construction of a new 220kV Transmission Line originating from the 500kV Grid Station Lahore North. The completion of this task involved seamless coordination with the National Highways & Motorway Police (NH&MP), and necessary approvals/NOC were secured from the National Highway Authority (NHA) and M/s Moore (Concessionaire). Notably, the project was executed within a single day, contra-

ry to the initially advertised two days, thanks to the deployment of additional resources to minimize traffic disruptions.

Part of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) financed program, this initiative is aimed to enhance the transmission capacity of 220kV Transmission lines being fed from the 220kV Grid Station Ravi, 220kV Grid Station Kala Shah Kaku, and 500kV Grid Station Sheikhpura. The primary objective is to address the rising load demand in the GEPCO and LESCO regions. The introduction of these new transmission lines will contribute towards reduction in transmission line losses and enhancing the overall system reliability.

Pakistan needs to tap into \$4.92 trillion D-8 Market: Atif Ikram Sheikh

PPA

KARACHI: Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh, President FPCCI, has represented Pakistan in the all-influential General Assembly meeting of the D-8 Chambers of Commerce and Industry (D-8 CCI). He apprised that the meeting was also attended by Iran, Turkiye, Egypt, Indonesia, Bangladesh and Nigeria.

Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh expressed his vision that Pakistan must tap into the export market of D-8 countries with a combined GDP of \$4.92 billion; and, tapping into these markets has the potential to correct Pakistan's regional trade deficit for a number of reasons: (i) Pakistan has friendly ties with the D-8 members

(iii) we have geographical contiguity or land-based access with some member countries (iii) land-based routes can be used for transshipment (iv) shipment to these countries takes lesser time and costs (v) with intra D-8 trade at merely 5 percent, there are low-hanging fruits to be grabbed in a short-span of time.

FPCCI Chief informed that General Assembly meeting of D-8 CCI discussed in detail roadmap and strategy for intra-alliance trade promotion; plan of activities for next three years; arbitration system; D-8 Preferential Trade Agreement (D-8 PTA); visa-related issues; transportation costs; value chain economic fruits; regional connectivity; curren-

cy swap agreement; barter trade and D-8 Halal Exposition in Indonesia. Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh noted that the D-8 bloc represents more than 5 percent of global GDP; which makes the alliance a significant one for the D-8 countries in particular and the entire region in general. He explained that only if we can capture the D-8 market in value-added textiles; IT & ITeS services; sports goods; rice, fruits & vegetables; surgical equipment; pharmaceuticals and construction materials, Pakistan can enhance its exports by \$5 - 10 billion within 2 - 3 years vis-à-vis D-8.

Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh stressed that D-8 countries have a cumulative population of more than 1.1



billion; and, Preferential Trade Agreement can usher a wave of economic prosperity; investments & JVs; industrial collaborations; tour-

ism & hospitality boost; establishment of cost-controlled trade routes and a collective voice in economic affairs in other international forums.

Pharma industry should focus on Africa, Central Asia and Afghanistan to increase exports: Dr. Nadeem Jan

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination Dr. Nadeem Jan has said that despite the short time, he made strenuous efforts to bring reforms in the health sector. Several steps were taken, including the digitization of DRAP, a new policy for the prices of medicines, and the search for new markets to promote exports.

He said that Pakistan's pharma sector has the potential to expand the country's exports. The industry should focus on exports to countries in Central Asia, Africa, and Afghanistan.

He expressed these views while talking to President ICCI Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari and other members during his visit to Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI).

On the occasion, ICCI President Ahsan Bakhtawari appreciated the performance of the caretaker government and stressed that the next government should continue these positive policies. He presented several proposals for cooperation between the ICCI and the Ministry of Health.

The ICCI president praised the digitalization process of DRAP. He stressed the need for the construction of nursing colleges in big cities, including Islamabad, in collaboration with the ICCI. He said that Japan, Europe, and the US need millions of trained nurses every year, while Pakistan is not even able to produce nurses to meet its own needs. He said that the government should pay special attention to this sector. Special institutes for the training of nurses should be set up in big cities, including Islamabad, in collaboration with the ICCI. He agreed with the federal minister's proposals for the provision of medicines to patients in government hospitals and the provision of Iftar and Sehri during Ramadan.

On the occasion, ICCI Vice President Engr. Azhar ul Islam said that health is a basic issue of human life, but this sector is facing severe financial problems in Pakistan. The Ministry of Health should involve the business community in policymaking so that the problems can be solved.

Fortune Barishal edge Comilla Victorians to claim maiden BPL title

A Sports

MIRPUR: A tight bowling display, followed by Kyle Mayers' 46 in the run chase powered Fortune Barishal to beat Comilla Victorians by six wickets and claimed their first-ever Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) title on Friday.

Put into bat first, the Victorians managed to pile 154/6 on the board despite Andre Russell's late fireworks.

The Victorians had a dismal start to their innings in the BPL 2024 final as they lost three wickets inside the batting powerplay with just 42 runs on the board.

Wicketkeeper batter Mahidul Islam Ankon then partnered briefly with Johnson Charles (15) for an anchoring 23-run partnership.

But the Victorians then lost two more wickets in quick succession and consequently slipped to 79/5 in 11.5 overs.

Ankon then joined forces with Jaker Ali for an important 36-run partnership before finally perishing in the 17th over.

He remained the top-scorer for the Victorians with a 35-ball 38, laced up with two boundaries and two sixes.

Later, Russell bolstered the Victorians' total with a belligerent 27-run cameo which came off just 14 deliveries and featured four sixes.

Ali, on the other hand, scored an unbeaten 20 off 23 deliveries, hitting two boundaries.

James Fuller led the bowling attack for Fortune Barishal with 2/43, followed by Mohammad Saifuddin, Kyle Mayers and Obed McCoy, who picked one apiece.



Chasing 155, Fortune Barishal amassed 157 for the loss of four wickets and six balls to spare, courtesy of strong contributions from the top order.

Barishal openers Tamim Iqbal and Mehidy Hasan Miraz laid a solid foundation for the run chase with a 76-run partnership.

The opening stand lasted in the eighth over Moeen Ali castled Tamim on 39. His 26-ball knock featured three boundaries and as many sixes.

Miraz followed his opening partner an over later after scoring an anchoring 29 off 26 balls.

Following the back-to-back dismissals, Kyle Mayers took the reigns of Fortune Barishal's run chase and put together a one-side partnership with Mushfiqur Rahim before both perished in the 17th over.

Mayers remained the top scorer for Barishal with 46 off 30 balls, hitting five boundaries and two sixes while Rahim

made an 18-ball 13.

But their 59-run stand had already put Fortune Barishal in touching distance, needing a further 11 runs in 18 deliveries.

Mahmudullah (seven) and David Miller (eight) combined for a sensible 13-run partnership and steered Fortune Barishal to their first BPL title.

For the Victorians, Moeen Ali and Mustafizur Rahman claimed two wickets each.

Pakistan Army, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa win opening day of women's baseball championship

PPA

Women's baseball teams of Pakistan Army, Pakistan WAPDA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa won their respective matches on the opening day of the 18th National Women's Baseball Championship 2024.

The 18th National Women's Baseball Championship under the auspices of the Pakistan Federation Baseball started at the National Coaching Center in Lahore. Apart from the four provinces, teams from Islamabad, Pakistan Army, Pakistan WAPDA, Pakistan Police and HEC are participating in the championship. Pakistan Army is defending the title.

On the occasion of the inauguration of the championship, Mr. Moazzam Khan, Executive Director Pakistan Federation Baseball was the chief guest. Syed Fakhr Ali Shah Secretary General Pakistan Federation Baseball along with



other officials welcomed the Chief Guest. After the national anthem, the chief guest was introduced with the players.

Three matches were played on the first day of the championship. In the first match, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa team defeated the Pakistan Police

team by 16-6. For Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Nida and Aiman Malik scored three runs each, Maria, Muqadas and Sidra Khattak scored two runs each while Hina, Mah Noor, Sidra and Rameen scored one run each and contributed to the victory. While for police team, Ale-

na, Iqra, Huma, Fazila, Allah Mafi and Mona scored one run each.

In the second match, Pakistan WAPDA defeated Islamabad 16-1 under mercy rule. For Pakistan WAPDA, Madeeha, Gul Feroza, Saiqa, Sidra Riasat, Iqra, Noreena and Ayesha scored two runs each while Hurraira and Iram scored one run. Chaman Mushtaq scored the only run for Islamabad.

In the third match, Pakistan Army defeated the Punjab team in a one-sided match by 17-0 in the second innings of the match under mercy rule. Three Army players including Zahida Ghani, Asia Siddiqua and Atiya Saif scored three runs each, while Maida Batool, Rabia Shahid and Samia Khalid scored two runs each, while Rashida and Fareeha Nayab scored one run each. Army's Zahida Ghani hit the first home run of the championship.

Two matches will be played tomorrow in the championship.

Karachi Kings' Tim Seifert eyes top-four finish in PSL 9

A Sports

KARACHI: Home side Karachi Kings' wicketkeeper batter Tim Seifert on Thursday, asserted that the team is confident and is focused on finishing the group stage of the HBL Pakistan Super League (PSL) 9 in the top four.

Seifert addressed the post-match press conference after Karachi Kings' narrow five-wicket defeat against Quetta Gladiators and stated that winning or losing is part of the game but his team's prime goal is the top-four finish.

"In this tournament, we had some close games. And obviously, we get a bit of a break now, a few trainings which would be good for the lads. But looking at the table, we are still very much in the tournament," said Seifert.

"And that is cricket, [especially] T20 cricket, sometimes it does come down to the last ball and there has to be a winner or a loser. So, unfortunately, we are on



the wrong side. "But boys are still very confident and we're still in the running to make the top four which is the main thing."

Tim Seifert further praised Sherfane Rutherford's brilliance with the bat which lifted the Gladiators to snatch a narrow victory from the Kings but at

the same time acknowledged that the Kings' bowlers made a few mistakes in execution.

"They hit the ball very cleanly but I think at the same time we probably didn't quite execute to them. Potentially gave them too many balls that they could hit for a six.

"And, you know close games like that, it does come down to one ball. I think, yeah, it was one of those games, where we were on top and then they came back.

"But, obviously, you take the hat off, they hit the ball very cleanly."

Tim Seifert further opened up about the different conditions but asserted that he now has a good understanding of the wickets and foresees a big score for Karachi Kings in the coming matches.

"Yeah, a bit different from back home in New Zealand, the wickets. But, I've played enough around the world like India and CPL [West Indies] which have similar conditions.

Matloob sole leader in 10th J.A. Zaman Open Golf

Tahir Amin Malik

The 10th J. A. Zaman Memorial Open Golf Championship presented by the Zaman Family in memory of the iconic J. A. Zaman continues to overwhelm and stir illustrious golfing expertise as professional golf champions of Pakistan endeavor for honors and wholesome prize money. Frontrunner at the end of the second round on Friday turns out to be the acclaimed Matloob Ahmed of Lahore Garrison Greens Golf Club with scores of 69 and 71, a total aggregate of 140, four under par. As the sole leader, Matloob seems to be radiating winning energy, yet a look at the overall standing of his avaricious adversaries gives a rather frightening feeling. Just one stroke behind him are placed M. Nazir of Rawalpindi and Kashif Masih of Lahore Garrison Greens. And two strokes in arrears are placed five potent champions of our national golf scene. These five are Shabbir Iqbal, the number one ranked golf professional, Ahmed Baig (Royal Palm) considered the most zealous and effective one, besides the foreign trained Minhaj Maqsood (Rawalpindi), the experienced M. Zubair (Karachi) and the effectively advancing M. Rohail (Gymkhana). These five are bunched together at an aggregate score of 142, two under par. Viewed in this situation the race for ultimate success looks extensively open and hence the flow of this prestigious championship is going to produce prime quality competition over the next two days.

A few other contenders lined up with impressive performances are Usman Ali (Garrison) and M. Rizwan (Gymkhana) placed at a score of 143, one under par. And placed at a par score of 144 are M. Alam (Garrison), M. Waqas (Margalla Greens) and Hamza Amin (Rumanza Golf Club).

In accordance with regulations, a cut was placed at the end of second round and top 52 performing golf professionals qualified to play the remaining two rounds. Fifty one participants stood weeded out.

Standings in the amateur category are Tipu Raja of Rawalpindi leading with a score of gross 68 followed by Hussain Hamid of Royal Palm at gross 72 and Muhammed Shoaib of Gymkhana, the current national amateur champion at gross 74.

Mir Hamza roped in by Glamorgan for County Championship



A Sports

Pakistan's left-arm pacer Mir Hamza on Friday, was signed by Glamorgan as their overseas signing for the upcoming County Championship 2024.

Upon his recently signed contract with Glamorgan, Mir Hamza will be available for the opening seven fixtures of the County Championship, poised to run from April 5 to September 29.

Hamza has represented Pakistan in five Tests, boasting the best bowling figures of 4/32 which came in the Boxing Day Test against Australia in 2023.

In his budding Test career, Hamza has taken nine wickets at an average of 45.

The left-arm pacer has vast experience in first-class cricket, having picked 434 wickets in just 110 matches at a brilliant average of just over 22.

Mir Hamza has an equally impressive record in T20 cricket, picking up 58 wickets at an average of 29 and the best bowling figures of 4/9.

Commenting on his signing, Hamza expressed his excitement to represent Glamorgan and to work with his former national team head coach Grant Bradburn.

"I am thrilled to be joining Glamorgan for the County Championship this summer," Hamza said.

"It will be exciting to work with Grant again after working with him with Pakistan, and I can't wait to join up with the squad, get to training and help this great Club push for a positive start to the season.

"I have heard many great things about Cardiff from my teammates who played there last summer and look forward to meeting all of the supporters."

Glamorgan head coach Bradburn welcomed Hamza's addition and expects that the left-arm pacer would add more value to the side.

"As Coach, I am excited for our group to add such an experienced performer in Mir Hamza.

"Having worked with Mir previously in Pakistan, I have full confidence that Mir will add huge value to our team both on and off the field."

It is worth mentioning here that Mir Hamza is currently representing former champions Karachi Kings in the ongoing Pakistan Super League (PSL) 9.

The left-arm pacer has thus far picked six wickets in four outings for the Kings.

Golden Eagles win 24th Punjab Seniors Cricket Cup

Tahir Amin Malik.

Under the auspices of Punjab Veteran Cricket Association the 24th National Seniors Cricket Cup Regional Final won by Golden Eagles after defeated Fraz Sports Sialkot by convincing margin 122 runs. In Al-Faisal Cricket Ground Lahore a large number of Cricket lovers, Organizers and players watched this final. Fraz Sports Sialkot Captain Ilyas won the toss and decided to field first Golden Eagles made 215/9 in a stipulated 30 overs. Imran

Khalid 62, Amir Sajjad 46, Rizwan Aslam 40 and Adil Nisar 19 were the main feature of the Golden Eagles Inning. From Fraz Sports Salman and Mudassar Ahmed got 2 wickets each while Tanveer, Zahid and Basharat took one wicket apiece. In reply Fraz Sports team all out, 93 in the 19th overs. Babar Hussain 29, Saiman Anwar 27 were the main scorers. From Golden Eagles Aqeel Arshad took 4 for 17 Imran Khalid 2/10, Amir Hayat 2/23 and Rehan 1/14 were the main successful bowl-

ers. The Chief Guest was Zahid Hussain Chairman Punjab Veteran Cricket Association who distributed the prizes among the players. He also presented the winning trophy to Golden Eagles team Captain Salman Khan with cash prize to Salman Khan Rs.15000/- on his pocket and for winning team 1 lac cash prize. Chairman Golden Banaspati Mian Tassadaq Rasool gave the runner up trophy to Fraz Sports Captain Ilyas and gave the cash prize to Salman Khan Rs 1 lac. Haroon Rashid declare best batsman,



M Tanveer best bowler, Babar Hussain best wicket keeper, and Abdullah Chaudhary declared best all rounder of the tournament. Golden Eagles Team player Imran Khan declared man of the match award after showing all rounder performance and he received the Rs 5000/- cash prize from Mian Tassadaq Rasool. On this occasion Amir Butt, Ceo Pakistan Veteran Cricket Association was also present who presented the shield to PVCA Chairman Zahid Hussain. Saifullah Director PVCA, Fraz Sports Sialkot

Ceo Haji Shahid, Mian Anjum Saeed, Farrukh Ilyas Raja, Amir Iqbal, ubaid Butt, Faiz Raheem, Dr. Manan, Anjum Adnan, Waleed Yaqoob, Coordinator PVCA, Media Coordinator Manzoor Ali Arif, Arshad Mehmood, Syed Qamar Abbas Kirmani, Qasim Shafique, Mian Yasir, Kamran Sohna, Cricket Organizers, and many players were present on this occasion. Muhaamad Asif and Adnan Irshad were the umpires in the final, Sajid Usman Scorer, Shahid Hussain, Ammar Hyder were the Commentators.

Inauguration ceremony

ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi inaugurating the Building Materials Exhibition and Conference organized by the Institute of Architects of Pakistan at Aiwan-e-Sadr on Friday.



Photo: PID

President calls for responsible use of technology for protecting environment, human health

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi Friday said technology should be used positively and responsibly for ensuring protection of environment, human health and prosperity.

In a virtual address at an event of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Pakistan in Karachi, he said doctors and physicians should take benefit from the fast changes in the field of science and technology. He said in the present time,

medical science was going through drastic changes and because of the progress made in the field of technology, research in medical science had become easy and less costly.

He urged the doctors and physicians to utilize informa-

tion technology for the correct and timely diagnosis of diseases as now it was possible to make diagnosis before onset of diseases due to research on human cells and genes.

He advised the students to develop the capacity for anal-

ysis instead of just memorizing information.

He appreciated the standard of education of the College of Physicians and Surgeons and said the college took remarkable measures for the progress in the field of dentistry.

At the initiative of Uzbekistan, 2027 will be declared the International Year of Sustainable and Resilient Tourism

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: On February 26, 2024, at the UN Headquarters in New York City, the General Assembly of the Organization unanimously approved the Resolution "2027 – the International Year of Sustainable and Resilient Tourism".

Over 80 member countries of the Organization are co-authors of the resolution initiated by the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Experts from leading countries such as Russia, China, the United States, Türkiye, Germany, the United Kingdom, the EU delegation, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Egypt, Brazil, and Argentina actively participated in the consultations to agree on the document's text. Represent-



atives of UN member states noted the timeliness and relevance of the presentation of this resolution.

The main goal of the document is entirely based on the thesis put forward by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev at the Samarkand session of the UNWTO General Assembly in October 2023

on the sustainability and flexibility of the tourism sector to new problems and challenges of our time.

The resolution enshrines the principles voiced by the President of Uzbekistan on the vital role of tourism in preserving the rich cultural heritage of various civilizations, strengthening peace and tolerance, and respecting peoples' values.

Particular attention is paid to developing green tourism to preserve the environment and biodiversity and reduce air pollution.

The document resolves to announce 2027 as the International Year of Sustainable and Resilient Tourism and calls on UNWTO and governments, UN agencies, and regional organizations to take comprehensive measures for its successful implementation.

The resolution highlights the importance of developing sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, which can contribute to achieving the SDGs, economic growth, full employment, rural development, and improving the livelihoods of rural people.

The resolution encourag-

es all stakeholders to actively promote sustainable and resilient tourism as an essential tool for poverty eradication, promoting the participation of women, youth, older persons, and persons with disabilities, expanding economic opportunities, and creating decent jobs and income sources.

The document resolves that UNWTO will inform the UN General Assembly at its 83rd session (2028) on the implementation of this resolution, with particular attention to the assessment of the implementation of the International Year.

According to experts, the resolution put forward by Uzbekistan will mark the beginning of a new stage in the development of the tourism industry at the global level.

Tenth child reportedly 'starves to death' in Gaza as famine fears grow

News Desk

UNITED NATIONS: Repeated warnings from humanitarian agencies over desperate food insecurity and imminent famine in Gaza came into focus on Friday amid reports from the enclave's authorities that a tenth child had died from malnutrition and dehydration. "The official records yesterday or this morning said there was a tenth child officially registered in a hospital as having starved to death," said UN health agency spokesperson Christian Lindmeier. "A very sad threshold... (but) the unofficial numbers can unfortunately be expected to be higher."

The development followed media reports overnight that four children had died in northern Gaza's Kamal Adwan Hospital, in addition to six other youngsters who died on Wednesday at the same facility and at Al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City.

The deepening food insecurity crisis in the enclave – which UN aid coordination office OCHA said had left one in four facing catastrophic levels of food insecurity – prompted renewed international alarm on Thursday, when more than 100 Palestinians were apparently killed and hundreds were injured trying to get aid from a relief convoy stopped

at a roundabout southwest of the city. Swift condemnation of the incident by UN Secretary-General António Guterres – who also called for an independent investigation – was echoed by other top UN officials, including UN relief chief Martin Griffiths, amid reports of continuing intense Israeli bombardment from air, land and sea across much of the Gaza Strip. "We saw pictures from Al-Shifa (hospital) where victims of the killings were lying next to each other waiting for any treatment," the UN World Health Organization (WHO)'s Lindmeier told journalists in Geneva.

"The system in Gaza – we've said it many times that it's on its knees – it's more than on its knees," the WHO official continued, explaining that all of Gaza's "lifelines have more or less been cut", notably water and electricity, since 7 October. OCHA spokesperson Jens Laerke meanwhile insisted that before the conflict "people had food; people were able to produce their own food."

Today, finding food within Gaza itself, whether from farming or fishing, "is almost impossible", Mr. Laerke continued. "Putting food on the table... has completely stopped. The very foundation for people's daily sustenance is being ripped away." Latest humanitarian food insecurity assessments – the IPC classifi-



cation index which is used as a reference by aid agencies – indicate that the entire population of Gaza – 2.2 million people – face "crisis" levels of food insecurity, the OCHA spokesperson said.

Of that number, around 1.17 million face "emergency" levels of food insecurity, and the plight for another 500,000 is "catastrophic." "We have a dire situation coming towards us at very high speed," Laerke said, his comments echoing a recent UN humanitarian warning to the Security Council that famine in the enclave is "almost inevitable" unless aid is massively scaled up. According to UNRWA, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, the quantity of aid supplies reaching Gaza in February was just half of January's total, "and we know that January was not enough at all", the WHO spokesperson said. Just last week, the Council heard briefings from top humanitarian organisations,

including medical charity Médecins Sans Frontières, which reported that a pattern of attacks by Israeli forces against hospitals and other civilian buildings, together with humanitarian personnel and convoys, was "either intentional or indicative of reckless incompetence".

Thursday evening, the Security Council held closed consultations, but were deadlocked over a presidential statement related to the aid emergency, according to media reports. Reiterating repeated UN calls for a ceasefire, Lindmeier maintained that Thursday's tragic aid convoy deaths had highlighted how desperate Gazans were for food, fresh water and other essentials after nearly five months of war.

"This is the real drama; this is the real catastrophe here, that food and supplies are so scarce that we see these situations coming up, and the food supplies have been cut off deliberately," he maintained, noting that Gazans were no longer able to provide for themselves. "The fields which were existing – the greenhouses, the little bit of agriculture – all that needs water supply, or water supply depending on electricity and pumping stations," he explained. "This is the real drama; this just underlines more and more that we need an urgent ceasefire now. If not now, then when?"

Saudi Ambassador invites ASP Shehribano Naqvi for royal visit



Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: Saudi Arabia's Ambassador to Pakistan Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki has invited Gulberg ASP Syeda Shehribano Naqvi and her family to a royal visit after she saved a woman from a violent mob in Lahore's Achhra Market days earlier.

Sources said that the envoy lauded the police officer for her brave effort during their meeting at the Saudi embassy.

ASP Naqvi rescued a woman from a violent mob that surrounded her for wearing a dress with Arabic calligraphy on it on February 26.

Ambassador Al-Malki told ASP

Naqvi that the Saudi government would bear the expenses of her travel to Saudi with her family as a royal guest.

Following her heroic efforts, Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir lauded her for her devotion to duty and professionalism in diffusing a volatile situation.

Viral videos had shown multiple police officials including Dolphin Squad members seen on the mob surrounded a woman for wearing a dress with Arabic calligraphy on it.

ASP Naqvi was then seen reasoning with the crowd after which she escorted the woman out of the shop with an arm around her.

IHC sentences DC Islamabad to 6 months in jail



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad High Court sentenced Deputy Commissioner Islamabad Irfan Memon to six months in jail for misconduct and contempt on Friday.

The deputy commissioner, who says he will appeal the verdict, is accused of ordering the arrest of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leader Shaheryar Afridi under MPO in contravention of court orders.

Justice Babar Sattar announced the verdict which had been reserved on February 21.

The court has also found other officials guilty and sentenced them to jail. However, the sentences have been suspended for a month and no one is being put behind bars immediately.

Islamabad's SSP operations has been given four month imprisonment while SHO Margalla has been sentenced to two months in jail.

The DC had ordered Afridi's arrest after the violent protests of May 9 under section (3) of the Maintenance of Public Order.

Islamabad High Court had ordered the release of Shehryar Afridi, who was being held under the MPO. However, the DC immediately re-ordered his arrest under the MPO citing he had received a 'source report'.

The court had ruled that the rearrests amounted to 'belittling' court orders.

Justice Sattar also said that the arrest orders under MP were synchronized to keep people in jail even after the court ordered their release.

PPP invites applications for Senate by-elections



Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) has invited applications from the party ticket aspirants for vacant seats in the Senate of Pakistan.

Secretary General PPP Syed Nayer Hussain Bokhari in a statement issued here said that the few seats of the Senate are now vacant.

"The PPP invites applications from the aspirants of the party tickets for the vacant seats of the Senate. The applications should be submitted by March 3," he added.

Syed Nayer Hussain Bokhari asked the aspirants to address the PPP president in the application.

"A bank draft of Rs. 100, 000 in the party's name must be attached with the applications supposed to

be sent to Bilawal House Karachi or Zardari House Islamabad by March 3," the PPP general secretary said.

Earlier in the day, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) announced the schedule for the upcoming Senate by-election on six vacant general seats.

As per the schedule, the elections will be held on March 14 at different assemblies. The Nomination papers for the vacant Senate seats can be submitted until March 3.

The scrutiny of these nomination papers is slated to take place by March 5, resulting in the final list of eligible candidates who will be contesting for the coveted Senate positions.

Candidates will have the opportunity to retrieve their nomination papers by March 10.