





# Jammu and Kashmir to observe black day on March 7 in protest at Indian PM's visit

Abdul Majeed Tahir

DHIRKOT: President of All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference and former Prime Minister Sardar Attique Ahmad Khan has said that the Kashmiri people should observe a complete strike and black day in opposition to the visit of India's fanatical Hindu extremists, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, to the occupied valley on March 7. Black flags will also be hoisted and displayed in every corner of the valley on the occasion. Before Modi's visit, the Indian army occupying the occupied Jammu valley has increased raids and sieges in the occupied valley. Modi's visit is like rubbing salt on the wounds of Kashmiris, India has crossed all limits of oppression in Kashmir,



Kashmiris will never surrender, Azadi Kashmir Movement will be successful. Talking to the Muslim Conference

workers, he said that Occupied Kashmir was turned into an armed cantonment during the Indian Prime Minister's visit to the occupied area, and a large number of Indian soldiers and police personnel have been deployed in the valley. Through all these measures, the Modi government is trying to fool the world by suppressing the voice of Kashmiris and showing that everything is good in Occupied Kashmir. Criticizing it as a cruel joke on Kashmiri people. The Modi government is subjecting the innocent Kashmiris to the worst cruelty and violence in the occupied territory and is continuously violating their fundamental rights. He termed the abrogation of Article 370 and 35-A as a direct attack on the rights of Kashmiris and strongly

condemned the increase in atrocities committed by Indian forces on innocent Kashmiris since August 5, 2019. He said that Modi Apart from distorting the population ratio in Occupied Kashmir, the government is making a sinister attempt to turn Jammu and Kashmir into a graveyard. Condolences to brother Raja Imtiaz Khan and son Ahsan Qurban and recited Fatiha. Later President Muslim Conference Sardar Atiq Ahmad Khan attended the lunch given by Raja Amjad Arif in Arja. Later President Muslim Conference and former prime minister of Azad Kashmir Sardar Atiq Ahmad Khan. In Khan Bagh, Syed Khalid Amir Gurdizi, Advocate, expressed his condolences on the death of his respected father and recited Fatiha.

## Driving License Classes for Women started in APWA Center



Kiran Asim

MULTAN: In APWA Center Multan, with the support of Motorway and Traffic Police, the launch of women driving classes demo was also given. Other courses under Vision Empowered Women Along with this, driving classes have been launched with the help of the Motorway Police to improve the skills and abilities of women in driving, in which women will be given car driving training along with a certificate and a driving license on completion of the course. In this regard, the car driving class last day On this occasion, under the patronage of SP Motorway Police Huma Naseeb, license in-charge Javed Olakh gave a detailed lecture to women about driving and traffic rules and also gave them a car demo, which taught the students the basic principles of driving and traffic. Aware of the laws, in this regard, Mrs. Farrukh Mukhtar and Mrs. Farah Faisal has said in one of her messages that Apuwa Multan is striving steadfastly to achieve the great goals of women's empowerment. Provided English courses, fashion designing and tailoring, computer, self-grooming classes We are going to equip our women with the necessary skills and abilities to pave the way for their socio-economic development so that they can set their own paths with confidence and flexibility. The eternal journey of transformation towards empowerment is where the beginning begins Women emerge as architects of their own destiny, empowered to realize their potential and play a meaningful role in society.

## DFP urges Kashmiri people to observe complete strike on Modi's visit to IIOJK

Bureau Report

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party (DFP) has urged the people of Kashmir to observe complete strike on Thursday against the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's scheduled visit to the territory.

In a statement issued here today, the DFP spokesman advocate Arshad Iqbal, while terming Modi's visit to the troubled region as an attempt to project a fake normalcy narrative on Kashmir, said that it was quite unfortunate that the Indian government was peddling lies to hoodwink the international community.

Reiterating his party's full support to APHC's call for a strike on 7 March, the DFP spokesman said that the people of Kashmir have neither accepted the India's belligerent occupation of their motherland in the past nor would they accept it in future.

Terming Kashmir as a UN recognized disputed territory, he said that rather than peddling lies the Indian government should accept the ground reality and pave the way for an amicable settlement of the lingering dispute in line with the UNSC resolutions.

## All Parties Hurriyat to protest Modi visit to Jammu and Kashmir



Abdul Majeed Tahir

ISLAMABAD: The All Parties Hurriyat Conference-AJK and Pakistan chapter has strongly criticized Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's proposed visit to occupied Jammu and Kashmir, labeling it as a cruel joke with the Kashmiri people.

APHC-AJK Convenor Mehmood Ahmed Saghar, General Secretary Sheikh Abdul Mateen and Secretary Information Imtiaz Wani in a joint statement in Islamabad said that the RSS-backed fascist Modi regime has perpetrated extreme brutality and violated the basic rights of Kashmiris.

They condemned the revocation of Article 370 and 35-A as a direct assault on Kashmiri rights and highlighted the intensified atrocities by Indian forces since August 5, 2019. The leaders lamented the loss of innocent lives, arbitrary arrests, and economic devastation caused by Indian forces in IIOJK. Additionally, they accused the Modi regime of attempting to alter the region's demography and transform Kashmir into a graveyard.

## Indian PM Modi's Srinagar visit strongly condemned: Chaudhry Yasin

Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: President Pakistan People's Party Azad Kashmir and senior parliamentarian Chaudhry Muhammad Yasin has said that the proposed visit of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Srinagar on March 7 strongly condemned. The visit of the killer of millions of Kashmiris and the visit of the butcher of Gujarat to the martyrs and invaders of the pure land of Kashmir. The arrival of this murderer under the shadow of the horns of a million Indian soldiers on the land is like rubbing salt in the wounds of Kashmiris. India's claim of secularism and democracy in the name of India is a lie. India has no right to be called democratic state after the massacre and lockdown in occupied Kashmir. The Kashmiri people are bravely fighting the oppression of India. The one million army of India has failed to subjugate and suppress the Kashmiris. Now the atrocities of Kashmiris are being highlighted at the global level. World powers including the United States have seen the real face of India. UN has also realized the seriousness of the problem. India is trying to throw dust in the eyes of the world under the guise of so-called democracy and hide the worst war crimes in Kashmir. The world knows that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is personally responsible for the massacre of more than 2,000 Muslims in Gujarat and is also responsible for the killing of thousands of civilians in Jammu and Kashmir he added.



## Planting

MULTAN: Federal Tax Ombudsman, Dr. Asif Mehmood Jah, planting a sapling at Collectorate of Customs Enforcement on Tuesday.



Photo: PID

# During the production of edible oil and vegetable oil in Pakistan, ensuring Vitamin A and D can prevent diseases: Shahzad Magsi

Spokesman Report

MULTAN: Nutrient deficiency diseases and other problems can be avoided by ensuring the Fortification of vitamins A and D during edible oil and Vegetable Oil production in Pakistan. Nutrition International On 5 March 2024, Nutrition International Punjab Food Authority and National Fortification Alliance Pakistan conducted a one-day training session at a local hotel in Multan. This training session was organized under the Edible Oil Fortification Program of Nutrition International. Officials of Punjab Food Authority and Edible Oil Mills from South Punjab participated in the training session.

Muhammad Shahzad Magsi, Director Operations-South, Punjab Food



Authority appreciated the support of Nutrition International for capacity building of Punjab Food Authority. He appreciated the contribution of Nutrition International in enhancing the capacity of PFA and called for provision of more testing equipment for better

implementation of standards. Zameer Haider, National Program Manager Food Fortification, Nutrition International, highlighted that edible oil Fortification is a proven and cost-effective strategy to address vitamin A and D deficiency in Pakistan.

Dr. Yasser Durrani gave training to the participants regarding food safety. Dr. Durrani emphasized the importance of purification, reiterated the key food safety issues in the edible oil value chain, discussed regulatory standards for fats and edible oils, and discussed the distribution system of fats and edible oils. He also emphasized on storage and responsible consumption to preserve nutrients and ensure food safety. The training session was attended by Mehr Muhammad Iqbal, Director General Health Services, South Punjab, and Mr. Malik Muhammad Farooq, Deputy Secretary, Technical, Primary and Secondary Health Department, South Punjab And Dr. Waseemul Hasan Ramzi, Director Health Services Multan also participated in his address to the participants.

# PSO's ECO street initiative turns plastic waste into a sustainable street

PPA

LAHORE: The Mayor Karachi, Barrister Murtaza Wahab and MD & CEO, PSO, Syed Muhammad Taha inaugurated the company's latest initiative, PSO ECO STREET, surrounding PSO House (Clifton, Karachi).

PSO ECO STREET, a sustainable plastic road, is part of PSO's ongoing efforts to reduce plastic waste and promote eco-friendly infrastructure. This significant initiative has turned approximately 49,428 square feet of traditional road into a symbol of green living, utilizing 5,000 kg of recycled plastic waste, primarily from lubricant bottles and cans collected from PSO's Lubricant Manufacturing Terminal (LMT) location in Karachi. The project's core objective is



two-fold: to significantly reduce the plastic footprint that burdens our planet and to demonstrate the viability and benefits of sustainable infrastructure. By incorporating plastic waste into road construction, PSO ECO STREET

is not only repurposing waste but also enhancing the durability of the road, setting a new standard for environmentally responsible construction.

Speaking on the occasion, Barrister Murtaza Wahab, expressed his views

and stated "This project not only beautifies our city but also demonstrates environmental responsibility and community engagement. We applaud PSO's commitment to sustainability, fostering a greener urban landscape, and inspiring other corporate entities to invest in our community's development."

In parallel with the road construction, PSO ECO STREET has committed to a comprehensive beautification of the surrounding area. The project included the reconstruction and renovation of road median, walkways, transforming them into welcoming spaces for the pedestrians. These areas now boast newly installed planters, graced with an array of indigenous trees and plants further enriching the local biodiversity.



**ISLAMABAD**  
15° - 23° Clear

**SERVICES**

**Namaz Timings**

Fajr	5:08 am
Zohr	12:19 pm
Asr	4:27 pm
Maghrib	6:08 pm
Isha	7:31 pm

**EMERGENCY**

Rescue (Police)	15
Bomb Disposal	15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad	1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance	1122 & 4451122
Motorway Police	92766044
Motorway Police	9276601-20

**Women Police Stations**

Islamabad	9222596
Rawalpindi	9276601-20

**ENQUIRY**

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

**HOSPITALS**

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

**DEPARTMENTS**

CDA	9221334-43
CDA	9208301-04

# U. S. Consul General Lahore Kristin K. Hawkin's Trip to Multan

Asim Tanveer / Kiran Asim

MULTAN: For the past 20 years, Pakistan has consistently ranked among the top 10 most vulnerable countries on the Climate Risk Index. U. S. Consul General to Lahore Kristin K. Hawkins, during her second visit to Multan, underscored the need for urgent action to adapt to climate change and highlighted U. S. efforts to support Pakistan through the "Green Alliance" Framework to address key challenges relating to climate change, food security, and energy.

Consul General Hawkins inaugurated the Multan Electric Power Company's (MEPCO) Customer Facilitation Center, as part of the U. S. government's ongoing assistance in Pakistan's energy sector. Since 2014, the United States has supported MEPCO in deploying more than 40,000 smart meters, helping improve electricity efficiency for residents in Multan. "USAID's partnership with MEPCO has delivered great results. We have introduced new approaches and technologies to improve customer service and to increase revenue. Consul General Hawkins said

While in Multan, Consul General Hawkins also visited a U. S.-funded fruit processing plant. Following the tour, Ms. Hawkins said We will continue to explore additional opportunities to



promote sustainable agricultural practices, improve productivity, and reduce the environmental footprint of the agricultural sector - including through modern tools, techniques, and technology. These innovations support Pakistani farmers, create jobs, lower costs, reduce pollution, and strengthen Pakistan's climate resilience." The United States, through a \$21 million dollar initiative titled the "Pakistan Agricultural Development Project," has trained 63,000 farmers on innovative agricultural

practices. This U. S. support for Pakistan is part of the U. S.-Pakistan "Green Alliance" framework. Through the "Green Alliance," the United States and Pakistan are working together to increase agricultural productivity and farmers' incomes, while also preserving soil and water resources. Together, through projects and partnerships like these, we can build a brighter and more prosperous future for the Pakistani people," said Consul General Hawkins.

## AIOU holds seminar on Islamic Criminal Law



PNP

ISLAMABAD: A one-day seminar on Islamic Criminal Law was held in Allama Iqbal Open University. Secretary, Chief Justice of Pakistan, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Mushtaq was the keynote speaker. Dean, Faculty of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Prof. Dr. Mohyuddin Hashmi hosted the event. Faculty members and principal officers participated in the event. During his address, Dr. Muhammad Mushtaq provided detailed explanations of pre- and post-independence criminal and punishment laws. He also discussed the Indian Penal Code and post-1977 era, Hudood ordinance, Qisas and Diyat, as well as the establishment and services of the Islamic Ideology Council and the Federal Sharia court.

Dr. Mushtaq said that criminal laws need to be harmonized with Islamic teachings. Dr. Mohyuddin Hashmi said that a conference on the objectives of Sharia will be held very soon in which Dr. Muhammad Mushtaq will be specially invited to express his views. He said that the faculty has started the series of keynote addresses in Islamabad for which 100 topics were selected, of which 23 have been delivered. Chairman, Department of Sharia, Dr. Hidayat Khan thanked the Vice-Chancellor, AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood for his full support in organizing this seminar. Dr. Hidayat Khan said that this seminar was in link with the celebrations of the Golden Jubilee of university.

## Abacus Wins 5 Best Practice Awards In Global Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Benchmarks 2023-24

PPA

KARACHI: Abacus, an international professional services firm committed to transforming clients through world-class technology, outsourcing, and consulting solutions, proudly announces a significant achievement as it wins 5 Best Practice Awards across all categories in the esteemed Global Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Benchmarks (GDEIB) for the year 2023-24. This accomplishment positions Abacus as one of the top 20 most inclusive companies in Pakistan.

Chairman Asad Ali Khan stated, "We are proud to be recognized for our commitment to diversity and inclusion. This achievement is a testament to the collaborative efforts of the entire Abacus team, and we remain steadfast in our mission to cultivate an environment where everyone feels valued and included."

CEO Abacus Fatima-Asad Said emphasized, "This recognition underscores our relentless commitment to cultivating diversity and inclusivity within our corporate fabric. It aligns seamlessly with the company's core values, echoing the strategic priorities set by our board of directors. This achievement signifies the company's dedication to fostering an environment where individuals from all backgrounds can thrive and contribute meaningfully."

We express our sincere gratitude to Zahid Mubarak, CEO HR Metrics & President SHRM Forum Pakistan, and the esteemed international panel of judges for their time and expertise in evaluating the submissions. The awards span across five distinct categories, exemplifying excellence in the following areas: Vision, Strategy & Business Impact; Leadership & Accountability; Recruitment, Work-Life Integration; Flexibility & Benefits; DEI Learning & Development.

## Grand Souq Lahore and Axis get the attention of international business community

PPA

LAHORE: Punjab Central Business District Development Authority (PCBDDA), also known as Central Business District Punjab (CBD Punjab), in collaboration with Star Marketing hosted a successful investor meetup in Dubai. The overarching objective of this gathering was to beckon foreign investment into Punjab, by introducing and highlighting two flagship projects of CBD Punjab, The Grand Souq Lahore and Axis.

The Grand Souq Lahore and Axis took the center stage as both projects emerged as stellar investment avenues in Punjab, capturing the attention of the esteemed attendees. In attendance were key figures from CBD Punjab, including COO Brigadier (R) Mansoor Janjua, Director Business Development CBD Punjab, Ali Waqar Shah, and Director Marketing CBD Punjab, Waseem Siddiq. Joining them were representatives from Star Marketing including Wasiq Naeem Group Chairman / CEO, Akhlaq Ahmed, Group Managing Director Ali Habib Regional Director Punjab and noteworthy members of the international business community.

These projects offer investors more than just a financial stake, they provide a unique chance to actively contribute to the burgeoning economy of Punjab. While addressing the event COO CBD Punjab, Brigadier (R) Mansoor Janjua, said "We are thrilled by the overwhelming response we have received from the international business community. This meetup has served as a valuable opportunity to showcase the exciting investment prospects that the authority has to offer. We look forward to collaborating with investors from around the globe to drive innovation and growth in the province of Punjab."

# MD PTDC highlights the potential of Buddhist Heritage Tourism in 2nd International Conference

PPA

ISLAMABAD: The 2nd International Conference and Art Exhibition on Buddhist Heritage, was held at Taxila Institute of Asian Civilizations, Quaid-i-Azam University Islamabad from 2nd to 3rd March, where Aftab-ur-Rehman Rana, Managing Director of PTDC and President of STFP, participated as a guest speaker at the closing session.

Mr. Rana emphasized Pakistan's significance as the birthplace of Mahayana Buddhism and the home to many renowned Buddhist philosophers and gurus. He highlighted Pakistan's vast Buddhist heritage, urging stakeholders to collaborate in promoting Buddhist religious heritage



tourism.

He said that Pakistan is a land of great Buddhist heritage and there are millions of Buddhists who can be attracted to visit Pakistan and to engage all the stakeholders to provide an ideal

environment for the promotion of Buddhist religious heritage tourism in Pakistan.

He stressed on the need to especially involve local communities living in the vicinities of heritage sites through the

sustainable heritage tourism in the protection and providing custodianship of the heritage sites as well as improving the economic well-being of locals through tourism.

He also highlighted the need to promote regional tourism with the neighboring countries that share Buddhist heritage.

The event jointly organized by Taxila Institute of Asian Civilizations, Quaid e Azam University Islamabad, Silk Road Centre, KP Archaeology & Museum Department, Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation and other national and international partners featured over 50 research papers covering topics such as Buddhist heritage conservation, education, peace, interfaith harmony and collaborative research partners.

# IRC climate impact report on the education of children in Sindh highlights urgent need for action

KARACHI: The International Rescue Committee (IRC) Pakistan, in partnership with the School Education and Literacy Department (SELD), unveiled a pivotal report at a provincial conference in Karachi. The report sheds light on the profound effects of COVID-19 and climate-related disasters on the education landscape of Sindh province in Pakistan.

Dr. Shireen Mustafa, Secretary SELD, in her remarks emphasized on the disproportionate impact of climate-related challenges on marginalized populations and the inadequacies within educational infrastructure.

Shabnam Baloch, Country Director IRC, in her opening remarks emphasized the need to reimagine our approach to education in the face of



climate-related challenges. She stressed the necessity for greater investments in resilient infrastructure, inclusive policies, and innovative strategies to ensure no child is left behind.

Key findings presented by Rahat Rizwan, Senior Education Coordinator IRC, revealed that children in affected areas have lost over a year of education due to pandemic-related

ed closures, with more than 2 million students experiencing disruptions from the 2022 floods. The report's recommendations underscore urgent action, calling for investments in resilient infrastructure, innovative technological solutions, and alternative strategies to ensure uninterrupted learning during crises. Moreover, the report highlights the concern-

ing 'gender digital divide', with discrepancies in access to digital educational content between girls and boys.

A key moment of the provincial seminar was a lively panel discussion on "Inclusion, for Every Child amidst Climate Impact in Pakistan," moderated by Lubna Javaid, Deputy Director Programs at IRC. The panel featured Abul Kabir Kazi (Managing Director SEF), Dr. Fouzia Khan (Chief Curriculum Wing), Naveed Ahmed Shaikh (PM SDG Unit), Muhammad Akram (Education Officer UNICEF), and Huma Imran Khan (Education Expert). The panelists deliberated upon safeguarding the right to education and refining policy frameworks to accelerate progress against sustainable development goals related to education.

# OIC holds extraordinary meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers to discuss ongoing Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people

Correspondent

JEDDAH: The Extraordinary Meeting of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) to discuss Israel's continued aggression against the Palestinian people was held at the OIC headquarters in Jeddah, today. The meeting was convened against the backdrop of relentless Israeli atrocities against the Palestini-

ans, its planned ground invasion of Rafah, and the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. The extraordinary meeting was attended by Foreign Ministers of OIC Member States. The OIC Secretary General also addressed the session.

Ambassador Syed Mohammad Fawad Sher, Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the OIC, delivered Pakistan's national statement. In his state-

ment, the Ambassador reiterated Pakistan's strong condemnation of the incessant Israeli atrocities against the people of Palestine and stressed the need for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire in Gaza. He also underlined the need for an unimpeded supply of humanitarian assistance.

Ambassador Fawad Sher emphasized that the OIC owed

its genesis to the Palestine issue and appreciated the OIC Member states for projecting the voice of the Palestinians. He called upon the OIC to undertake the following steps: form an OIC 'Core Group' to make renewed efforts to stop the war; immediately create a humanitarian fund for Gaza; push for the admission of the state of Palestine as a full member of the United Nations;

urge the UN Secretary-General to establish a Commission of Inquiry to investigate Israeli war crimes; make efforts toward holding an international conference to accelerate the realization of the two-state solution; in compliance of the resolution of the Arab-Islamic Summit of November 2023, place an embargo on the supply of weapons and ammunition to Israel; demand

the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza and halt all illegal settlements in Occupied Palestinian Territories and within the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound; create conditions of dialogue between Palestine and Israel through the OIC Core Group; urge all the donors that have suspended their donations to UNRWA to reverse their decision and call on all others to enhance

their contributions to UNRWA; call for the complete implementation of the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice and the deployment of an impartial international mechanism for the protection of Palestinian civilians. He also called for the implementation of the provisions of the resolution of the Joint Arab-Islamic Summit of November 2023.



Group Chairman/Chief Editor: **Almas Ayoub Sabir**  
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 Head Editorial Advisory Board: **Amjad Mehmood**  
 Bureau Chief Karachi: **Saleem Zaman Khan.**  
 (mszk786@gmail.com)  
 Bureau Chief Lahore: **Syed Afraz Ali Nazish**  
 (afrazalishah@gmail.com)  
 Islamabad Office: Rose Plaza, I-8 Markaz.  
 Karachi office: Flat No.C.3.A.One Comfort, Block No 11.  
 Gulshan-e-Iqbal, Main Rashid Minhas Road.  
 Lahore Office: 7-E,Samanberg, Johar Town.  
 Email: **spokesmanislambad@gmail.com**  
 Whatsapp: **0346-5008408**

**IS General Elections 2024**

# Pakistan's losses amplify as power disperses among collaborators

**P**akistani nation voted for their preferred political parties and candidates across the country in General Election 2024 on Thursday, February 8, 2024. Principally, the political party that secures majority seats of national and provincial assemblies is entitled to form federal and provincial governments for the next five years. After almost six months of chaotic influx and tons of doubts about elections in Pakistan, D-Day has passed. The nation was waiting for peace, socio-economic stability, and a prosperous future after the elections but the drama is yet not over. The director and producers were in dire need of changing the story's script as the public had shown interest in an unwanted direction.

Interim Government, Military establishment, Judiciary, and Election Commission of Pakistan were pivotal and allegedly controversial stakeholders with their minor to major roles in the arrangements of general elections. Free and fair elections are the beauty of democratic societies where people are free to elect public representatives of their choice. Amid the complaints about an equal level playing field for all political parties, the electoral process was completed oddly. The polling process was completed peacefully without any major provocation however; the declaration of results was an actual middle contrary to pre-election claims of the Election Commission. The result declaration process continued up to the third day while winning and losing candidates were equally baffled.

The majority of political parties have defensively shown their reservations about election results since the majority of them got a share in national or provincial assemblies and won't seem ready to lose the string of power. The ratio of shares was the major conflict point otherwise; all parties were familiar enough that nothing new happened in the general elections of 2024. The split mandate is gauged as an ideal situation for the military establishment in

Pakistan which enables them to deal with political parties on desired terms. A couple of decades before this phenomenon was not part of open public debate but courtesy of social media and its proactive use by political parties especially Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), now the public openly comments on the nexus of establishment and aide political parties. The rules, regulations, and procedures for pre and post-election activities in the country are comprehensively penned by fixing the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders. The constitution provides an opacity-free track while executing this mega activity. Regrettably, the implementation of rules and execution of responsibilities always remain questionable during elections in Pakistan. The ones who are primarily responsible for organizing free and fair elections are mostly found in a passive role during the elections while several other forces denoted as 'alien' allegedly seem proactive to manage the elections in a pre-designed manner. General elections priced about 54 billion rupees to the national exchequer which is quite a high price for an activity which always remains questionable and provides fuel to the losing candidates and parties to ignite the politics of agitation.

The mockery of constitution is a matter of no value for power elites in Pakistan and deliberate lacunas in the constitution assist them in playing with the system daringly. In the realm of governance, the constitution stands as the bedrock, outlining the principles and framework upon which a nation operates. However, amidst its sturdy provisions, lurk gaps and ambiguities—lacunas that often become breeding grounds for misuse, particularly by the political and power elites. These loopholes, rather than serving the public interest, are often exploited to consolidate power and advance

personal or partisan agendas. Ambiguity serves as a shield, enabling the power gurus to interpret the law to their advantage, even if it contradicts the spirit of the constitution. Additionally, the discretion provided by constitutional gaps allows selective enforcement of laws which helps in targeting opponents or dissenters. Similarly, electoral laws and procedures in Pakistan contain certain loopholes which are exploited for electoral gain to ensure continued dominance and sidelining opposition voices. The constitution serves as a bulwark against tyranny and ensures the rule of law, its effectiveness hinges on the integrity of its implementation. The misuse of constitutional lacunas by the political elite not only undermines the foundations of democracy but also perpetuates a system of privilege and inequality.

Most oddly, before general elections in Pakistan, a political party always remains under state oppression. During general elections in 2018, the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) was in similar circumstances as Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) faced in the recently held general election in February 2024. The back-to-back decisions from the Election Commission and the Supreme Court of Pakistan against PTI about the party emblem endorsed public perception of using tactics to keep them away from triumph. The current chaotic socio-political situation in Pakistan is a result of a seamless depressing state of affairs.

PML-N set to drive federal and Punjab governments, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) being the happiest one has conquered the Sindh and Balochistan governments along with constitution positions including the President of Pakistan, Deputy Speakers slots at National and Punjab Assemblies, Governors in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, PTI retained

their solo power in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, MQM (Pakistan) a self-surprised party with results going to grab share in federal government eyeing on desired ministries of IT and shipping along with slot of Governor Sindh. A few other parties like Istehkam-e-Pakistan (IPP), PML (Quaid-e-Azam), PML (Zia), and Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) are part of the government's alliance to taste the lust of power.

Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Awami National Party (ANP), Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA), Jameet-e-Ulama-Islam Fazal-ur-Rehman (JUI-F), Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP) and Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) are stunned with the results as they kept deprived from securing enough representation in national or provincial assemblies to become member of ruling alliance. JUI (F) is in the most traumatic situation for not being part of the federal or provincial governments. JUI (F) leadership seems furious to set the stage on fire with street protests and their anger is against 'election managers' rather than old aides in the PDM government.

The tragedy does not lie in the fact that the establishment selects a single party to lead the nation while the other political parties lament their lack of support from the establishment. Instead of the public's approval, and monitoring the actions of political parties during the power regime, the roles of hero and villain kept shifting according to the degree of obedience before establishment.

This is high time to respect public opinion and let it decide the people of Pakistan whom they want to rule the country as more than seven decades are enough for experiences and playing with destiny of the nation. Or else, there is a dire need to stop the melodrama of democracy in Pakistan to save a few billion rupees on a futile effort of elections. As a way forward, strengthening accountability and transparency mechanisms is essential to safeguard democratic principles and promote equitable governance in Pakistan.



Analysis

Amjad Mehmood

## Ceramics, art exhibitions

**C**eramic vases, ceramic kettles, and ceramic figurines... in Jingdezhen, the "Ceramic Capital" located in Jiangxi Province, southern China, ubiquitous china products and regular ceramic art exhibitions have been attracting domestic and international professionals and tourists alike. In its latest development, it is poised to come into the sight of more and more people around the globe.

At the ongoing two sessions, the yearly plenary meetings of China's top legislature and top political advisory body, Zhang Jingjing, Deputy to the National People's Congress of China and Dean of Jingdezhen Ceramic University proposed her suggestion of including Tang Ying Ceramic Workshop, named after an ancient master of ceramic production Tang Ying, into the construction of cultural centers in Belt and Road countries.

"Ceramics is a universal form of art. It can transcend language barriers and serve as a bridge of intercultural communication. Ceramics talks", Zhang told China Economic Net (CEN). She introduced that Tang Ying Ceramic Workshop has been inaugurated in UAE and Italy, and agreements have been reached with six partners including those in France and Germany. "Such workshops will also be set up in Cyprus and Thailand in 2024", Zhang added.

By providing non-academic education and training, opportunities for industry-university-research collaboration, cultural and artistic exchanges, vocational skills education, teacher exchanges and training, long-term and short-term practical training, ceramic art exhibitions, lectures on ceramic culture, and ceramic making experience, the workshops engage more and more people around the world. Amid the growing Chinese culture fervor worldwide, ceramics made in China are establishing their international brand.

In 2023, a series of ceramic exhibitions in Jingdezhen including the Jingdezhen International Ceramic Art Biennale attracted over 50 ambassadors and international artists as well as over 1.4 million online audiences.

The city will also host the 52nd International Congress on Ceramics in 2026. Relying on local ceramic prowess, the Jingdezhen Ceramic University, an internationally renowned ceramic academic institution, has been enrolling international students since the 1950s. Each year, over 100 international students from over 20 countries pursue studies at the International School where they learn ceramic artistry, sculpture, design, archaeology, and materials as well as knowledge in management and economics. "Students here are developing their skills beyond ceramics", Zhang said, adding, "Jingdezhen, with a history that dates back to over a thousand years ago, offers an immersive experience of Chinese culture".



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

## Foreign Policy Choices: USA or China, or Both... - I

**T**he new government, a continuation of the coalition that came into power in April 2022 and the interim administration established in August 2023, suggests continuity in bilateral relations with the USA and China. However, while there appears to be no major policy shift, the government, which assumed power with the support of PPP, MQM, and independent candidates, is primarily composed of PML(N), with Nawaz Sharif's influence in the background. This dynamic suggests the possibility of a reassessment of foreign policy priorities and potential minor adjustments.

First and foremost, the new government may prioritize a reassessment of its relations with the USA and China, recognizing their crucial role in the security, development, and prosperity of the country. The apparent tilt of the US towards India, coupled with its diminishing focus on bilateral relations with Pakistan and its disengagement from balancing relations between Pakistan and India, should be of significant concern for the new government.

Over the past decade, the multifaceted relationship between the United States and India has evolved and deepened across various sectors, including diplomacy, defense, trade, and technology. Both nations have strengthened strategic cooperation, evident in the signing of key defense agreements and increased

joint military exercises. Economically, bilateral investment and trade have flourished, with the US emerging as the top source of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in FY2023, totaling \$103 billion. India-US goods and services trade was estimated at \$191.8 billion in 2022, with a significant trade surplus favoring India. Specifically, US exports to India amounted to \$73.0 billion, while imports reached \$118.8 billion, resulting in a trade deficit of \$45.7 billion.

Proportionally, the US-Pakistan relationship has indeed grown increasingly strained over the past decade. The US accuses Pakistan of harboring militant groups and providing insufficient support in Afghanistan, leading to aid cuts. The 2011 raid that killed Osama bin Laden on Pakistani soil further exacerbated distrust. Disagreements over US-India ties and Pakistan's nuclear program add to the complexity. Events like the Raymond Davis incident in 2011 further deteriorated trust.

The US perceives China-Pakistan cooperation as potentially bolstering China's influence in a strategically important region. Concerns about China's growing military presence in the region, with Pakistan's perceived facilitation, have heightened US apprehensions. Additionally, US concerns about Pakistan-China military cooperation include worries about the transfer of sensitive military technology

from China to Pakistan. The US has expressed particular dissatisfaction with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects, citing concerns about transparency regarding the debt burden for Pakistan and the increasing leverage China holds over the country.

These strained relations are evident in the volume of trade and investment between the US and Pakistan. Total US exports to Pakistan amounted to \$3.2 billion, while total imports were a modest \$6.0 billion, resulting in a trade deficit of \$2.8 billion for the US. Furthermore, total US investment in Pakistan was a mere \$127 million in 2022, reflecting the diminished economic ties between the two countries. Certainly, here's a coherent paragraph summarizing the perceptions and allegations regarding the United States' involvement in Pakistan:

There have been persistent allegations of United States involvement in Pakistan's internal affairs, ranging from the installation of military dictatorships to meddling in domestic politics. Accusations include empowering certain political parties, manipulating election results, and dictating Pakistan's foreign policy to align with American interests. Additionally, the US has been accused of using foreign aid as leverage, providing assistance to governments perceived as compliant and withdrawing it as punishment for actions contrary to US objectives. Perceptions also suggest significant US influence over Pakistan's security policies, particularly in counterterrorism efforts and regional stability.

To be continued



Analysis

Qamar Bashir

## Operation Swift Retord, A lesson to India - III

**S**ince its establishment in 1947, Pakistan has remained steadfast in its adherence to the values of peaceful coexistence, religious tolerance, and cultural diversity. Despite having a predominantly Muslim population, Pakistan boasts a diverse array of ethnicities, languages, and religious beliefs. The Constitution of Pakistan ensures equal rights for all citizens, regardless of their background, fostering a sense of unity amidst diversity. Pakistan's dedication to pluralism and inclusivity serves as a shining example of peaceful cohabitation in a world grappling with sectarian tensions and intolerance.

Pakistan has consistently pursued diplomatic avenues to address regional conflicts and disputes, recognizing the significance of dialogue, negotiation, and compromise in resolving differences. Through active engagement in international forums such as the United Nations and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Pakistan has advocated for peaceful resolutions to conflicts across the Middle East, South Asia, and beyond. Pakistan's role as a mediator and facilitator in the Afghan peace process exemplifies its commitment to fostering stability and reconciliation in the region.

As a frontline state in the global fight against terrorism, Pakistan has shown unwavering determination in combating extremist groups and promoting regional security cooperation. Through military operations, intelligence sharing, and law enforcement efforts, Pakistan has

made considerable progress in dismantling terrorist networks and thwarting their activities. Pakistan's sacrifices in the battle against terrorism have garnered recognition and appreciation from the international community, reaffirming its commitment to maintaining peace and stability both within its borders and beyond.

Pakistan has consistently extended assistance to nations in need, offering humanitarian aid, disaster relief, and development assistance to alleviate suffering and promote sustainable progress. Whether responding to natural calamities, hosting refugees, or participating in peacekeeping missions, Pakistan has demonstrated compassion, generosity, and solidarity with the global community. Its contributions to international humanitarian endeavors underscore its dedication to fulfilling its obligations as a responsible member of the global community.

Recognizing the pressing need to address environmental concerns, Pakistan has initiated ambitious projects to combat climate change, conserve natural resources, and advance sustainable development. From reforestation initiatives to the promotion of renewable energy, Pakistan is actively taking steps to reduce carbon emissions, preserve biodiversity, and safeguard the planet for future generations. Pakistan's dedication to environmental preservation underscores its acknowledgment of the interconnectedness of global issues and its commitment to fostering a more sustainable and resilient world.

To be continued



Analysis

Abdul Basit Alvi



# Ethiopian Embassy Islamabad Commemorates 128th Adwa Victory Day

By Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: Senior Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N) leader Khawaja Muhammad Asif said "The main objective of Pakistan's government for enhancing cooperation with African countries is the expansion of trade with the African leading economies such as Addis Ababa". He talks to the Daily Spokesman on the occasion of Adwa victory day.

The Embassy of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on Tuesday celebrated the 128th Adwa victory day in Islamabad in the presence of a large number of government officials from different Ministries and Armed Forces, members of Parliament, the diplomatic corps, the business community, the civil society, media, and above all Ethiopian Diaspora in Pakistan.

Governor Sindh H. E. Kamran Tessori was the guest of honor at the ceremony and Former information minister Murtuza Solangi also attended the event.

Khawaja Muhammad Asif, the Chief

Guest on the occasion, congratulated the people of Ethiopia and Africa on the Adwa victory day.

He also stressed the need for the Pakistani business community to explore African markets, especially through Ethiopia, which was a gateway to the African continent.

Speaking on the occasion, H. E. Jemal Beker Abdula, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the FDRE to Pakistan, extended his felicitations to the whole of Africa, especially the people of Ethiopia, on the occasion of 128th Adwa Victory Day commemorated under the theme of "Adwa Black People's Victory".

He expressed gratitude to the people of Pakistan for gracing the 128th anniversary of the Black People's Victory in such a large number.

H. E. Ambassador Jemal Beker briefed the honorable participants in Islamabad on the historical role played by the Adwa battle in igniting movements for freedom, equality, and liberty in the whole of Africa and other continents against colonization.

On March 2, 1896, a united Ethiopia achieved the biggest victory on the



battlefield against the invading forces which, indeed, changed the course of history, humanity, and political and social narration at the global level, the ambassador noted.

Adwa's victory is an inspiration and spirit of Pan-Africanism that ignited anti-colonial movements all across the world, the ambassador remarked.

The Adwa victory symbolized Ethiopian unity and pan-Africanism, he said while highlighting the major initiatives

of the reformist Government of Ethiopia that further fostered regional integration in the region.

He said Ethiopia had built Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam which would further promote regional integration through energy export. Ethiopia was already sharing its resources with the people of neighboring countries and would continue to do so.

The ambassador said the Green Legacy Initiative of H. E. Dr. Abi Ahmed,

Prime Minister of Ethiopia, was also another major initiative of the government to boost collaboration with regional countries in mitigating global issues like climate change and food insecurity.

32.5 billion Seedlings of different fruits, plants, trees, and animal feed were planted during the last four years under the Green Legacy campaign, he added.

The ambassador also expressed resolve to further strengthen the bilateral

ties between the two countries through economic diplomacy.

He announced Hijra Trip II, another business delegation of the Pakistani business community to Ethiopia this year, to boost trade between the two countries.

Last year, the Embassy of Ethiopia mobilized a historic delegation of 75 business persons to Ethiopia, the ambassador added.

Photos by Raja Farid



## Called on

ISLAMABAD: The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Ambassador to Pakistan, Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki, called on President Dr Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr on Tuesday.



Photo: PID

## UK media 'misrepresents' pro-Palestinian voices as antisemitic, violent or pro-Hamas

LONDON: A new report has revealed that the mainstream UK media was heavily biased towards Israel and against Palestinians while attacking Muslims and non-Muslim supporters of Palestine's freedom, following the brutal October 7 attacks and Israel's ensuing attacks on Gaza.

Right-wing news channels and right-wing British publications were at the forefront of misrepresenting pro-Palestinian protesters as antisemitic, violent, or pro-Hamas, according to a report released by the Centre for Media Monitoring (CfMM), an affiliate of the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB).

In 150 pages, the report explains that emotive language in UK print and electronic media describes Israelis as victims of attacks 11 times more than Palestinians; most TV channels overwhelmingly promote "Israel's right" to defend itself, overshadowing Palestinian rights by a ratio of 5 to 1; in

broadcast TV, Israeli perspectives were referenced almost three times more than Palestinian ones; in online news, it was almost twice as much; 76% of online articles frame the conflict as an "Israel-Hamas war," while only 24% mention "Palestine/Palestinian," indicating a lack of context; Pro-Palestinian voices face misrepresentation and vilification by media outlets, perpetuating harmful stereotypes; and right wing news channels and right-wing British publications were at the forefront of misrepresenting pro-Palestinian protesters as antisemitic, violent or pro Hamas.

The report — 'Media Bias Gaza 2023-24' — critically examines media coverage surrounding Israel's war on Gaza in the first month after October 7 (7 October-7 November 2023), highlighting significant biases and distortions in mainstream media outlets including the extent to which core facts were presented.

The CfMM said the report scrutinised a vast array of data analysing 176,627 television clips from over 13 broadcasters and 25,515 news articles from over 28 UK online media websites.

It said the data was analysed for the framing of events, language utilisation, and the representation of Palestinian voices in mainstream media. The report aimed to assess the extent of bias and distortion in the portrayal of the conflict by various media outlets.

The report said there were 361 TV news clips where the term "beheaded" and "babies" were found; almost 50% of these were on the two right-wing British channels Talk TV (27%) and GB News (20%) with Sky News accounting for (14%) and of the 361 mentions there were only 52 which showed any sufficient challenge, rebuttal or questioning of the claims. The report said these were all unverified claims.

## ISSI hosts Seminar on 'Global Security Initiative (GSI): China's World View'

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The China Pakistan Study Centre (CPSC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) hosted a seminar entitled "Global Security Initiative (GSI): China's World View." Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, Chairperson Senate's Standing Committee on Defence, delivered the keynote address. Eminent speakers including diplomats and former and serving high ranking officials presented their perspectives. The seminar provided valuable insights into China's vision for global security and development and how China wishes to engage with different countries and global organizations through this pivotal framework.

Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, during his keynote address, highlighted that the Global Security Initiative (GSI) is part of composite whole i.e., China's vision of common destiny, based on the concept of indivisible security, UN Charter, international law and five principles of peaceful co-existence, which is in contrast with the cold war, zero-sum mindset. He highlighted that China's world view is rooted in the strategic culture of China and contemporary security scenario. He stressed that GSI reflects the strategic thought of China, which is derived from various sources and aspects of China's national experi-



ence including the Silk Road, the Great Wall of China, PLA's Long March, and "the century of humiliation" that the country recovered from. He lauded Pakistan's abiding friendship with China, citing steadfast support of both countries for each other's issues of core interest. He highlighted that the future belongs to connectivity and regionalism, not the Cold War. He suggested that the rise of multipolarity necessitates multi-lateral approach to global security issues, including laudable initiatives like GSI.

In his welcome remarks, DG ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood underscored the importance of China's flagship Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) that has been a global, innovative and successful venture of China laying down a comprehensive framework for cooperation and

development. He added that President Xi Jinping has since successively proposed three other major global initiatives, namely the Global Development Initiative (GDI), the Global Security Initiative (GSI), and the Global Civilisation Initiative (GCI).

Ambassador Sohail Mahmood highlighted how these initiatives not only indicate the depth of President Xi's thinking and vision as part of his philosophy of building a "Community with a Shared Future for Mankind" but also illustrate China's readiness to engage globally in three pivotal domains for humanity, that is, development, security, and civilization. In the backdrop of recent global and regional developments, Ambassador Sohail Mahmood noted that GDI, GSI and GCI are envisaged to serve as the building blocks for a world

aspired to be peaceful, prosperous and harmonious. GSI embodies China's commitment to global peace and development and reflects an entirely different paradigm — prioritizing cooperation over confrontation, placing premium on mutual respect and mutual benefit, and seeking win-win outcomes.

Earlier, Dr. Talat Shabbir, Director CPSC, in his introductory remarks stated that, the GSI promotes inclusive, multi-lateral cooperation to effectively address challenges. He added that the Global Security Initiative offers a beacon of hope in today's international landscape, providing a comprehensive framework to tackle complex security challenges. By emphasizing common, cooperative, and sustainable security, the GSI fosters collaboration among nations for peace, stability, and global prosperity.

Ambassador Masood Khalid, Former Ambassador of Pakistan to the People's Republic of China, in his remarks underscored the importance of GSI and noted that all the principles outlined in GSI are in full consonance with the UN Charter and reflect the aspirations of countries, and international and regional organizations. China is steadily progressing towards its goals of development and connectivity and GSI provides a workable framework for carving out a new architecture for revers-



ing the biased westernized model for security.

Major General (Retd) Dr. Muhammad Samrez Salik, Former Director General, ISSRA, remarked that in order to understand GSI it is important to understand the strategic culture and thought of China. He noted that Chinese strategic thought is based on benevolence and humane power, acceptance of others, and non-aggression which sets it apart from the Western thought. Summing up, he noted that the West has ruled the world through technology, economy and information dominance. While China is doing very well in the first two, in the domain of information and narrative-building, China needs to pace up its efforts to counter propaganda.

Mr. Shi Yuanqiang, Deputy Head of Mission, Embas-

sy of People's Republic of China in Islamabad noted that the contemporary world is witnessing profound changes in the international landscape. The interplay of traditional and non-traditional security threats, hegemony and power-play is rising. He stated that GSI focuses on dialogue over confrontation and cooperation over zero-sum policies. He stressed that GSI is creating space for collaboration and international peace through dialogue. In conclusion, Mr. Yuanqiang appreciated Pakistan's efforts in countering terrorism and its role in diplomacy and mediation in world conflicts.

Mr. Mohammad Aamir Khan, Director General (China), MoFA in his remarks expressed that the GSI is commendable as it speaks about the rights of the states, irrespective of their status as big or

small, in the international system. He noted that the challenge of insecurity has complex drivers, which are not limited to physical security only. He also referred to the undergoing regional security volatility in Europe and Middle East, rising unilateralism and protectionism. He stressed that security is incomplete without sanctity of the people's right to self-determination. He concluded that GSI aims to encourage peace, stability and international cooperation.

In his concluding remarks, Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman BoG, ISSI, underscored that the United Nations was established based on principles of security, development and respect for human rights. However, the powerful states used veto for their interests, ignoring the established principles. Similarly, the West has used IMF and World Bank for their dominance in global economic affairs. After the 9/11 attacks, an interventionist policy was witnessed with interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya etc. On the contrary, China introduced three initiatives that envisage the mutual respect of states and peaceful resolution of conflicts.

The Seminar was attended by noted academics, experts, think-tank representatives, practitioners, members of the diplomatic corps and civil society.

Photos by Raja Farid



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

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index	
Current	Prev. Close
65,726.04	65,951.72
Day's High	Day's Low
66,134.84	65,500.06
Index Value	Change
10,283,754,561	-225.68
Percentage	Time
-0.34%	5 Mar, 2024 5:00 pm

Europe: FTSE 100 Index	
Index Value	Change
7,646.16	+5.83
Percentage	Time
+0.076%	5 Mar, 4:35 pm GMT

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average	
Index Value	Change
38,689.45	-300.38
Percentage	Time
-0.77%	5 Mar, 1:08 pm GMT-5

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average	
Index Value	Change
40,097.63	-11.60
Percentage	Time
-0.029%	5 Mar, 3:15 pm GMT+9

**Open Market Forex Rates**

Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	181	183
Bahrain Dinar	743.19	751.19
Canadian Dollar	207	209.2
China Yuan	38.81	39.21
Danish Krone	40.6	41
Euro	302	305
Hong Kong Dollar	35.71	36.06
Indian Rupee	3.37	3.48
Japanese Yen	2.1	2.18
Kuwaiti Dinar	908.36	917.36
Malaysian Ringgit	58.86	59.46
New Zealand \$	170.65	172.65
Norwegians Krone	26.44	26.74
Omani Riyal	725.26	733.26
Qatari Riyal	76.72	77.42
Saudi Riyal	74.45	75.2
Singapore Dollar	207	209
Swedish Korona	27.06	27.36
Swiss Franc	316.04	318.54
Thai Bhat	7.78	7.93
U.A.E Dirham	76.3	77
UK Pound Sterling	352.5	357
US Dollar	279.3	282.3

*Karandaaz receives global recognition for Best Practices in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion*



**PNP**

ISLAMABAD: Karandaaz Pakistan, a leading impact investment platform that drives sustainable economic growth and strengthens financial and social protection systems for inclusion, has received the prestigious Global Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Benchmarks (GDEIB) Award 2024.

Expressing gratitude for this achievement, Karandaaz CEO Waqas ul Hasan expressed his enthusiasm, saying, "We are honoured to receive the GDEIB Award. It is a testament to our unwavering commitment to creating an environment where diversity is celebrated, equity is valued, and inclusion is at the heart of everything we do. At Karandaaz, we believe that a diverse and inclusive workplace fosters innovation and creativity, and ultimately drives our success in promoting financial inclusion in Pakistan."

Global Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Benchmarks (GDEIB) are the standards for organisations around the world. The Global DEI Benchmarks Standards help organisations determine strategy and measure progress in managing diversity and fostering inclusion.

Karandaaz Pakistan received the award for Best Practices in Category 3 i.e. DEI Structure and Implementation, a testament to its focus on diversity in the leadership and governance structures of the organisation. Equitable policies, systems, and inclusive product designs ensure everyone can access Karandaaz's services and technologies. This helps us become a global leader in diversity, equity, and inclusion.

# New IMF conditions unbearable for the masses: Shahid Rasheed Butt

**PPA**

ISLAMABAD: Former President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt, said on Tuesday that the Prime Minister's focus on the economy is commendable.

After taking the oath of office, the PM ordered to start negotiations with the IMF, make an action plan for economic improvement, increase investment, and solve the problems of the business community.

He added that the PM has also directed automation and transparency in the FBR, selling failed state-run companies, electricity and gas sector reforms, closing down or merging unnecessary departments, and making SIFC more

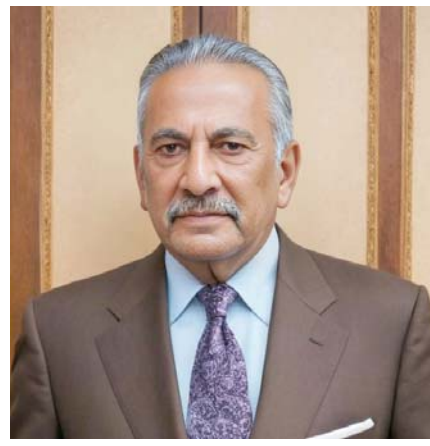
empowered.

Shahid Rasheed Butt said in a statement today that the Prime Minister's orders reveal his priorities, which is a ray of hope for the disappointed masses and the dejected business community.

He said that the new demands of the IMF would be unbearable for the people who have been braving unprecedented inflation for years.

The IMF has made several demands to the government, including the 18% GST on various items, including food, medicine, petroleum products, and stationery, to reduce the government's deficit.

The government should not increase taxes on items of daily use but seek alternative means to increase revenue. These measures include



expanding the tax net and reducing expenditures.

The government should expand the tax net, reduce spending, close loss-making companies, fire officials, and staff involved in the theft of electricity and gas and tax evasion. It should also reduce incentives worth billions of dollars for elites.

The business leader said that the country has reached this stage due to the elite; therefore, the burden should not be put on the masses. Now is the time to collect taxes from the wealthy class.

The Prime Minister and his party must navigate the difficult journey of reforms alone, as the coalition partners are interested in reaping the benefits. Still, they are waiting to bear the burden of reforms and unpopular decisions.

## Relief

ISLAMABAD: Citizens busy in purchasing grocery at a Utility Store in Federal Capital, as Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif announces Ramazan Relief Package in the country for the holy month of Ramazan.



Photo: Online

## Investment Boost in Pakistan

# ICCI hosts business opportunities conference in Dubai

**PPA**

DUBAI, UAE: The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) hosted a business conference in Dubai, aiming to attract investment to Pakistan. The conference drew a significant turnout, with over 400 attendees including investors and business leaders from Pakistan United Arab Emirates (UAE), around the world.

Abdul Rahman Al Muaini, UAE's Secretary of Economic Affairs, addressed the conference, emphasizing Dubai's cosmopolitan nature with a population exceeding 200 nationalities. He attributed the city's attractiveness to its modern business systems, extensive trade opportunities, and secure investment environment.

ICCI President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari expressed his gratitude for the conference's organization and highlighted the participation of over 170 Pakistani delegates. He emphasized Pakistan's commitment to fostering a business-friendly environment and its vast potential for investors.

Pakistan's Ambassador to the UAE, Faisal Niaz Tirmizi applauded the ICCI's initiative to bring investment in Pakistan. He expressed confidence that the conference would encourage Emirati investment



in Pakistan, further strengthening bilateral relations.

Group Leader founder group ICCI Khalid Iqbal Malik said that the purpose of this business conference is to increase business and trade opportunities between the two countries. The Government of Pakistan is providing a business and investment-friendly environment, Investors from all over the world, including UAE, should benefit from this.

Former president ICCI Sardar Yasir

Ilyas Khan said that we have built Centaur Mall in Pakistan which is running successfully. We are also investing in real estate and hospitality. Pakistan is a safe country for investment. On this occasion, ICCI Vice President Azharul ul Islam thanked the guests and other participants for attending the conference. Shamaila Shehzad, Javed Malik and others also addressed the conference. At the end of the conference, shields were also distributed among the guests and participants.

# Dubai-based Samana Developers forges strategic joint venture with DHA Pakistan

**PNP**

ISLAMABAD: Samana Developers, a leading real estate company in Dubai, has signed two joint venture agreements with Defence Housing Authority (DHA). The partnership will explore and develop mixed-use residential and commercial projects across various Defence Housing Authorities (DHAs) in Pakistan, with primary focus on DHA Islamabad and DHA City Karachi.

The agreements were signed on the sidelines of the busy International Property Show Dubai between Mr. Imran Farooq, CEO of Samana Developers, and Brigadier Muqem Ahmed Subhani, Director Joint Ventures Cell at Defence Housing Authority, along with the presence of high officials from both sides. The partnership marks the commencement of a new era of luxury developments across Pakistan.



The parties will delve into the feasibility and potential of transformative projects, covering a spectrum of developments, from infrastructure to entertainment arenas, hospitality hubs, and residential complexes. Simultaneously, Samana Developers initiated a strategic partnership with Pakistan Defence Officers Housing Authority City Karachi (DCK). This JV, also inked at the International Property Show, centres around

exploring and developing mixed-use entities within DHA City Karachi.

DHA City Karachi joint venture was led by Brig Syed Imran Naqvi (Retd), Executive Director Special Projects at DHA City Karachi, and Imran Farooq, CEO of Samana Developers, focuses on evaluating a substantial 7.4-acre land bank in the Healthcare District of DHA City Karachi, with an aim to bring forth residential and commercial projects aligned with the developmental vision of DHA City Karachi. Imran Farooq, CEO of Samana Developers, while expressing excitement about this significant milestone, commented: "Our entry into Pakistan's real estate market is a landmark moment. We are eager to contribute our expertise and resources to the development of high-quality projects in Pakistan, starting from Islamabad and Karachi, and setting new benchmarks for quality and innovation in Pakistan."

# SECP, Ministry of Education ink MoU a to foster financial literacy among students



**PPA**

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training to promote financial literacy among students at federal educational institutions.

The SECP Chairman, Mr. Akif Saeed, and the Special Secretary of Federal Education and Professional Training, Mr. Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani, signed the MoU. The MoU aims to integrate financial literacy topics into the curriculum of Federal Government schools and colleges, equipping educators with necessary skills through a teach-

er's training program, and conducting interactive seminars for students across all degree colleges in Islamabad.

Mr. Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani, Special Secretary of Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, emphasized the government's steadfast commitment to advancing financial literacy initiatives. He stressed the significance of integrating financial education into secondary and higher secondary level curricula to equip students with practical financial knowledge. Mr. Wani also highlighted the pivotal role of a financially literate youth population in driving economic growth through fostering a culture of savings, investment, and entrepreneurship.

# MOU between FPCCI and BCI to Improve the Quality of Exportable Cotton Products



**PPA**

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI) and Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) Pakistan have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish long-term, sustainable and mutually beneficial cooperation in areas of bilateral interest for promoting research, industrial linkages, trainings, education and employment opportunities between the two institutions.

The MoU was signed by President FPCCI, Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh and Country Director Better Cotton Initiative (BCI) Ms Hina Fouzia during the event at Islamabad. The MoU was signed as a witness by Ms. Quratul Ain Vice President FPCCI and Mr. Muhammad Shuaib, Manager, Supply Chain BCI.

Ms. Quratul Ain, Vice President FPCCI, Mr. Karim Aziz Malik Chairman FPCCI Capital Office, Malik Sohail Hussain Chairman Coordination FPCCI Capital office, Ms. Lena Staafgard, CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER, Better Cotton Initiative Pakistan,

Mr. Willems Jerpen, Head of Cooperation, EU Embassy and prominent businessman has also participated in the said ceremony.

The objectives of FPCCI-BCI MoU is to promote the production of better cotton internationally and to implement joint and synergetic activities to mainstream sustainability in cotton production.

President FPCCI Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh said that production of Cotton will generate ample income for more than 250 million people worldwide. Approximately half of all textiles are made of cotton. He further said that Pakistan is blessed with Cotton production. Pakistan has a supply base for almost all man-made and natural yarns and fabrics, including cotton, rayon, and others products of textile. Pakistan is the 8th largest exporter of textile products in Asia. It is 4th largest producer and 3rd largest consumer of cotton. It comprises of 46% of the total manufacturing sector and provides employment to all most 40% of the total labor.



# Babar steers Zalmi to second win against Sultans in HBL PSL 9

**Sports Desk**

RAWALPINDI: Multan Sultans suffered a four-run defeat in a last-over thriller against Peshawar Zalmi at Pindi Cricket Stadium, Rawalpindi on Tuesday night. Iftikhar Ahmed's unbeaten half-century went in vain as Peshawar Zalmi edged over the table-toppers in the 21st match of HBL PSL 9. After choosing to bat first, Peshawar Zalmi put up 204-5 on the board. Saim Ayub and Babar Azam gave the side a solid start courtesy of an 84-run opening partnership.

They took on Mohammad Ali in the third over to get 21 runs on the back of three boundaries and a six. In the following overs, Babar hit two fours each against Iftikhar Ahmed and Khushdil Shah, while Saim hit a boundary each against Khushdil and Chris Jordan, to help Zalmi end the powerplay at 71-0, which is the highest powerplay score of HBL PSL 9 so far. Usama Mir, introduced into the attack in the seventh over, was met with two consecutive maximums produced by Saim's bat. On the last delivery of the over, Usama got his revenge as he pinned Saim (46, 22b, 3x4s, 5x6s) leg-before wicket. Tom Kohler-Cadmore (5, 9b) stayed on the crease for two quiet overs until he was caught by Tayyab Tahir at deep mid-wicket to award Usama his second wicket of the innings. Haseebullah joined Babar in the middle to build a 51-run third-wicket stand, with at least one boundary hit per



over during the course of the partnership. Babar brought up his 85th T20 half-century in the 14th over, taking 35 deliveries to do so. In the next over, Usama outfoxed Babar and the right-arm batter had to walk back after an impressive knock of 64 on 40, with a tally of seven fours and two sixes. Jordan then rattled Haseebullah's (31, 20b, 3x4s, 1x6) stumps on the third ball of the 17th over as fourth wicket fell for Zalmi with 166 on the board. Rovman Powell (23 not out, 15b, 1x4, 2x6s) and Aamir Jamal (12, 5b, 1x4, 1x6) chipped

in with unbeaten scores to help Zalmi cross the 200-run mark in the final over. Usama bagged three wickets while Jordan picked up two. Saim opened the bowling for Zalmi and was taken for a boundary and a six by Mohammad Rizwan.

Mehran Mumtaz bagged his maiden HBL PSL wicket as he broke the 35-run opening partnership after dismissing Reeza Hendricks for a 10-ball five-run out in the fifth over. A quiet sixth over bowled by Naveen-ul-Haq meant Multan Sultans ended powerplay at 40-1.

At the start of the eighth over, Jamal gathered the ball at mid-on and targeted the non-striker's end to run out Rizwan (32, 24b, 2x4s, 1x6). In the following over, Salman Irshad dropped Tayyab at short third to deprive Mehran of his second wicket, who ended his four over spell with a wicket at the expense of 20 runs. To add insult to injury, Tayyab hit Salman two fours in the subsequent over. Aamir, bowling the 12th over, picked up two wickets to further trouble the Sultans; Dawid Malan (19, 19b, 1x4) fell to a magnificent catch by Asif at deep backward square while Saim plucked Tayyab (26, 18b, 4x4s) out at deep square.

Khushdil (11, 10b, 1x4) was caught behind on Naveen's bowling in the 16th over, bringing Jordan in the middle. The sixth-wicket partnership between Jordan and Iftikhar yielded an unbeaten 75 runs off just 28 deliveries, bringing Multan Sultans close to the target. Iftikhar, who brought up his half-century in the penultimate over, finished with an unbeaten 60 from 27 on the back four boundaries and five maximums. His partner, Jordan, hit an undefeated 20 on 12 with three fours and two sixes.

Mehran and Naveen had a wicket each and Aamir dismissed two batters.

Scores in brief: Peshawar Zalmi beat Multan Sultans by four runs

Peshawar Zalmi 204-5, 20 overs (Babar Azam 64, Saim Ayub 46; Usama Mir 3-32, Chris Jordan 2-33)

*Mohsin Naqvi assures meritocracy in team selection; fitness camp in Kakul Naeem Niazi*



**Sports Desk**

LAHORE: Chairman Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Mohsin Naqvi has said that merit will be the only criterion in team selection while there is no room for reference or choice in selection of players from now onwards.

Addressing the Pakistani cricketers participating in the HBL PSL-9 at a local hotel in Rawalpindi on Tuesday, he said teams will be selected on merit.

Chairman PCB shook hands with every cricketer and interacted with them. He inquired after injured fast bowler Haris Rauf and also spoke to veteran all-rounder Shoaib Malik.

"Good players will not have to wait for selection in the team and players who show good performance are our stars," he said, adding ups and downs in form were part of the game but PCB would support the players who performed in the domestic circuit.

The Chairman PCB said Pakistan Cricket team was capable of winning the major tournaments but the victory was only possible if the team was united. Naqvi said he wished to bring an end to petty politics within the team and see the eleven players as a well-knit unit.

He said success was inevitable if the 11 players entered the field in unity, adding that there was no shame in defeat if one went down fighting.

*Handball Men Provincial League concludes*

**Sports Desk**

SARGODHA: The Punjab Handball Men Provincial League organized by the Directorate of Sports University of Sargodha concluded and the prize distribution ceremony was held at Sports Gymnasium Sargodha, here on Tuesday.



The Punjab Handball Provincial League was organized in collaboration with the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan and hosted by the University of Sargodha, in which teams from five regions of Punjab participated in the handball competitions, while the team of Faisalabad region performed brilliantly and got first position.

In the closing ceremony of the league, Vice Chancellor University of Sargodha Professor Dr. Qaiser Abbas participated as the chief guest and awarded the trophy to the winning team.

Addressing the event, Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Qaiser Abbas appreciated the initiatives taken by the Higher Education Commission to attract the youth towards sports and congratulated the team of the Directorate of Sports University of Sargodha for organizing the sports competitions in an organized manner.

He said that the University of Sargodha besides providing opportunities for quality education and research, practical experiences and observations to the youth also engages them in recreational activities so that they remain physically and mentally healthy and achieve success in every field of life.

A large number of players including Chairman University Sports Committee Professor Dr. Masood Sarwar Awan, Chairperson of Department of Sports Sciences University of Sargodha Dr. Yasir Iqbal Waraich, Director of Sports Maher Ahmad Khan Haral, Director of Students Affairs Dr. Mahmood Al Hasan were present at the closing ceremony of Handball League.

*Arsenal's ruthless 6-0 victory stuns Sheffield United in Premier League clash*

Arsenal achieved a convincing 6-0 win over Sheffield United, etching their name in Premier League history.

The Monday night showdown at Bramall Lane witnessed Mikel Arteta's side showcasing their attacking ability, securing their seventh consecutive league win.

The Gunners wasted no time making a statement, with Captain Martin Odegaard setting the tone in the fifth minute. The relentless offensive onslaught continued as Jayden Bogle's own goal, and strikes from Gabriel Martinelli and Kai Havertz left Sheffield United's defense in disarray. Declan Rice added a fifth goal in the 39th minute, with the away fans jubilantly chanting, "We're gonna score in a minute."

The visitors' relentless attack reached its zenith when Ben White unleashed a left-foot thunderbolt into the far corner in the 58th minute, securing the Gunners' place in history. Although the opportunity to challenge the record for most goals in a league game slipped away, Arsenal's commanding victory solidified their goal difference superiority over title rivals Liverpool and Manchester City.

## Tent Pegging Championship

FAISALABAD: A rider in action during Tent Pegging Championship organized by University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF) at its Sports Ground in connection of Spring Festival celebrations.



Photo: APP

*Wapda, PAF win matches National Kabaddi C'ship*



**Sports Desk**

ISLAMABAD: Wapda and Pakistan Air Force (PAF) have earned victories in the 43rd National Kabaddi Championship organized by Pakistan Kabaddi Federation at Jinnah Stadium of Pakistan Sports Complex on Tuesday. In the first match, Pakistan Air Force defeated Higher Education Commission by 52-33 points, while in the second match, Wapda beat Pakistan Army by 41-38 points.

The league matches would be played on March 6 and 7, while the championship final and third place match on March 8. In the matches to be played on Wednesday, Pakistan Air Force would face Pakistan Army while Wapda will compete Higher Education Commission.

# WAPDA clinches Engro U20 National Volleyball Championship title

**Sports Desk**

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Wapda clinched the trophy after defeating Pakistan Air Force in the final by 3-0 in the Engro National U20 Volleyball Championship played at indoor hall of the PSB Coaching Center here on Tuesday.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Greens took third position after defeating Pakistan Boards by 3-2 before facing tough resistance in the thrill-packed match witnessed by capacity crowd present on this occasion.

Member Provincial Assembly Syed Qasim Ali Shah distributed the prizes WAPDA won the Engro National Under-20 Junior Volleyball Championship in the final played at PSB Coaching Center, the score was 25-21, 25-22 and 25-19.

On this occasion, Member of Provincial Assembly Syed Qasim Ali Shah was the special guest along with former Nazim Arbab Asim, Secretary General



of Pakistan Volleyball Federation Shah Naem Zafar, Organizing Secretary and Secretary KP Khalid Waqar Chamkani, Secretary Punjab MB Javed, Secretary Sindh Shahid Masood, Secretary

AJK Sardar Farooq, Vice President of KP Volleyball Association Faqir Muhammad Awan and other officials were present in the final match.

The WAPDA team was completely

overshadowed and easily won the straight sets final. In the match for the third position, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa won against the Pakistan Boards team by 3-2. 25-23, 23-25, 21-25, 25-25 and 15-11.

A total of 11 teams participated in this volleyball championship organized jointly by Pakistan Volleyball Federation and KP Volleyball Association with two teams each from Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa participated in the Championship while Islamabad, Gilgit-Baltistan Army, WAPDA and Air Force, Azad Jammu and Kashmir participated fully.

According to Khalid Waqar Chamkani, Secretary General of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Volleyball Association, the Under-21 players will be selected based on their performance in the Junior Volleyball Championship for which the camp will be held and they will be trained by Brazilian coaches who will later represent Pakistan in the Asian Championship.

# Islamabad United beat Peshawar Zalmi to move to third position

**Sports Desk**

RAWALPINDI: Mar 05 (APP): Islamabad United grabbed the third position in the points table of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) season 9 after securing a 29-run victory over Peshawar Zalmi at the Pindi Cricket Stadium Rawalpindi late Monday. Despite both United and Zalmi having accumulated seven points each in seven matches, the former hold a superior Net Run Rate (NRR). Multan Sultans currently lead the table with 12 points, followed by Quetta Gladiators in second place with 9 points.

Islamabad United managed to

restrict Peshawar Zalmi to 167/9 after setting a formidable total of 196/4. Peshawar encountered challenges right from the beginning of their chase, with Babar getting dismissed on a first-ball duck as a result of Alex Hales' run-out in the opening over delivered by Naseem Shah. Following that, Naseem also eliminated Saim Ayub on the final ball of the over, with Rummans Races getting rid of Mohammad Haris, leaving Peshawar at a precarious position of 3-3. During the Power Play's final over, Shadab Khan brought in Naseem's brother, Hunain Shah, who snatched two crucial wickets

— those of Tom Kohler-Cadmore and Rovman Powell. Aamer Jamal and Paul Walter initiated a strong sixth-wicket partnership for Zalmi during their run chase. Aamer Jamal particularly contributed a remarkable innings of 87 runs off 49 balls, including six sixes and eight fours, while Walter scored 30 off 29 deliveries. Earlier, Peshawar opted to field and got off to a good start as Saim Ayub sent Alex Hales back to the pavilion on the very first ball. Despite Colin Munro's initial aggression with a six and a four in the subsequent over, Ayub had the final say, dismissing him as well in an attempt to score another

boundary. At 28-2 in three overs, Shadab Khan and Salman Ali Agha formed a vital 65-run partnership for the third wicket in 44 balls. However, Agha's departure after a gutsy 37 off 25 balls, comprising four boundaries and two sixes, interrupted the momentum. Shadab continued his attacking display, joining forces with Jordan Cox to raise a 68-run partnership on 39 balls. Shadab's explosive innings of 80 runs off 51 balls, which included 10 boundaries and six sixes, came to an end when Luke Wood dismissed him, with Islamabad's total reaching 161 runs. Azam Khan provided an undefeated



cameo of 29 runs from 14 balls, propelling the team to a total of 196-4 in their allotted 20 overs,

with Cox also remaining unbeaten on 26 from 20 balls, including two boundaries and a six.

Peshawar Zalmi are now set to face Multan Sultans at the same venue on late Tuesday.



## Meeting

ISLAMABAD: Former President Asif Ali Zardari, Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, and Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday.



Photo: PID

## PPP delegation calls on PM; assures support to govt for economic stability

## Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) led by former President Asif Ali Zardari and party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif wherein they assured

the government of the party's support for the country's economic stability.

In the meeting held on Monday night, the delegation, also comprising Chief Minister of Sindh Murad Ali Shah, congratulated Shehbaz Sharif on assuming the office of the prime minister and expressed

good wishes for him.

PPP delegation calls on PM; assures support to govt for economic stability Asif Ali Zardari assured the prime minister that the PPP would stand alongside the government to achieve the economic stability, progress and prosperity of the country.

Prime Minister Shehbaz thanked Allah Almighty as well as the people of Pakistan for giving him another opportunity to serve Pakistan.

PPP delegation calls on PM; assures support to govt for economic stability He also expressed gratitude to the coalition parties in the

parliament for reposing trust in him, reiterating his resolve to work tirelessly for the country's progress and prosperity.

Senator Ishaq Dar, Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar and former Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Syed Mohsin Naqvi also attended the meeting.

## World must realize that deepening the humanitarian catastrophe and preventing the entry of aid is an official Israeli policy: Palestine

## News Desk

ISLAMABAD: The international parties have exhausted all their demands, appeals, and bets on the occupying state to stop targeting civilians, bring in aid, and secure their basic humanitarian needs. All we hear from all parties is positions and sayings repeated for the 151st day in a row since the war of genocide against our people, in addition to the decisions of the Council of Representatives. Security, the United Nations General Assembly, and the precautionary order issued by the International Court of Justice, which has not yet found listening Israeli ears, so what is the result?

The Ministry confirms, according to field data and the reality in the Gaza Strip, that the occupying state continues to copy and apply the destruction, humanitarian catastrophe and famine that it created in the north, center and south of the Gaza Strip, including Rafah and its area, without giving any consideration to the lives of civilians and their protection, especially since the scale of destruction committed by the army The occupation in Khan Yunis is similar to the one that took place in the northern Gaza Strip and its regions and is still continuing to this day. Indeed, Israel is

escalating the episodes of genocidal war at a rate worse than that due to the population density it has created in the center and south of the Gaza Strip, where the number of displaced Palestinians and citizens is approximately 1.7 million Palestinians who do not know Where do they go or are they displaced as a result of the continuous bombing that affects everything in the Gaza Strip and in the absence of any safe place there? This bloody scene, through which Israel turned the Gaza Strip into a mass grave for the living and the dead alike, has one essence, despite all international reactions and resolutions, including American ones. This essence is that deepening the humanitarian crisis, refusing to bring in aid, and pushing citizens to emigrate from the Gaza Strip are... An approved official Israeli policy that is often recognized by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu under the concept of intensifying military pressure under the pretext of releasing the hostages, because Netanyahu realizes that this pressure and the brutality of the bombing necessarily lead to deepening the humanitarian catastrophe, expanding the circle of famine, and imposing certain death on civilians, whether through direct killing or starvation.

## Ukraine says it has sunk a Russian ship

## Reuters

Ukraine sea drones hit and sank a Russian Black Sea Fleet patrol ship off occupied Crimea in an overnight attack, the Ukrainian military said on Tuesday.

The Ukrainian military intelligence agency said a special unit called Group 13 had fired Magura V5 maritime drones at the Sergey Kotov near the Kerch Strait, which connects the Sea of Azov to the Black Sea.

It said on the Telegram messaging app that the vessel had sustained damage to the stern, starboard and port sides, at an estimated cost of \$65 million.

"Right now this ship is on the seabed as a result of fire damage by unmanned boats," navy spokesperson Dmytro Pletenchuk said in televised comments, adding that a helicopter may have been on board.

Reuters was unable to verify the reports. The Russian defence ministry did not immediately reply to a Reuters request for comment.

Some Russian military bloggers confirmed the account. The Telegram channel VChK-OGPU reported attempts to tow the ship to port

but said it eventually sank.

Ukraine has in recent months stepped up attacks in the Black Sea and on Crimea, which Russia seized and annexed in 2014. Kyiv has reported a series of strikes, including the sinking of a large landing ship by naval drones in mid-February.

Pletenchuk said the Sergey Kotov had also been hit in September 2023 and that a similar patrol vessel had also been damaged in attacks since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine two years ago.

"They have four similar ships, two of them are no longer in service," he said.

Reuters was unable to confirm the earlier strikes.

Train and highway traffic was temporarily stopped and later resumed on a bridge spanning the Kerch Strait and linking the Crimean peninsula to the Russian mainland, Moscow-installed officials in Crimea said.

Russia controls close to one-fifth of Ukraine's territory. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said in November Kyiv had seized the initiative in the Black Sea and forced back Russia's fleet.

## Putin congratulates Shehbaz Sharif on election as PM

## News Desk

ISLAMABAD: President of Russia Vladimir Putin on Tuesday congratulated Shehbaz Sharif on his election as the Prime Minister of Pakistan.

The Russian president highlighted the friendly nature of Russia-Pakistan relations and wished Shehbaz Sharif every success in his important



capacity as head of government, the Embassy of Russia in Islamabad said on its X timeline.

## Saudi govt invites 30 Pakistanis as state guests for Umrah journey

## City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia on Tuesday organized a special event to honor pilgrims from Pakistan who are embarking on the sacred journey of Umrah in a gesture of goodwill and hospitality. This annual tradition, extended by the Saudi government, aims to facilitate the pilgrimage for individuals from across the globe, fostering unity and spiritual connectivity in the holy city of Makkah.

This year, 30 individuals from Pakistan have been graciously invited by the Saudi government to undertake the pilgrimage as state guests. The selected pilgrims will have the privilege of a 10-day stay in Saudi Arabia, where they will partake in the sacred rituals of Umrah. During the event, Saudi Ambassador Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki personally handed over essential travel documents to the pilgrims, ensuring a smooth and hassle-free journey. Additionally,

as a token of goodwill, Ambassador Al-Malki presented each pilgrim with a gift hamper containing Ahrām, traditional attire worn during the pilgrimage, symbolizing the warmth and generosity of the Saudi leadership. Expressing their heartfelt gratitude, the fortunate pilgrims conveyed their appreciation to the Saudi government and Ambassador Al-Malki for the invitation and hospitality extended to them. They fervently prayed for the continued peace, prosperity, and harmony between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, emphasizing the significance of such initiatives in strengthening bilateral relations and fostering mutual respect and understanding. As the pilgrims prepare to embark on this spiritual journey, they carry with them the aspirations and prayers of their fellow countrymen, cherishing the opportunity to connect with their faith and experience the profound spiritual significance of Umrah in the sacred land of Saudi Arabia.

## President Tokayev congratulates PM Shehbaz Sharif on appointment

## Spokesman Report

ASTANA, THE GULF OBSERVER: President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev of Kazakhstan has extended a heartfelt congratulatory letter to the newly appointed Prime Minister of Pakistan, Shehbaz Sharif. In his message, President Tokayev conveyed warm congratulations to Prime Minister Sharif on assuming the significant leadership role in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.



lic of Pakistan.

## Several officials tender resignations as Gandapur takes charge of KP

## City Desk

PESHAWAR: Advocate General of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Amir Javed was among the nine officials who tendered their resignations days after Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) Ali Amin Gandapur took oath as the chief minister of the province, sources said on Tuesday.

Apart from Javed, as many as eight additional advocates have also

tendered their resignation from posts, they added.

According to sources, all nine officials have sent their resignation letters to the newly-elected chief minister of KP, who is yet to make a decision.

The officials, who submitted their resignations, include Danial Khan Chamkani, Nisar, Saqib, Asif, Umar Farooq, Sultan, Mubashir and Javed Akhtar.

## Corps Commanders say...

Continued from Page 1

The forum reiterated that terrorists, their facilitators, and abettors, working on the behest of hostile forces to destabilise Pakistan, will be dealt with the full might of the state.

COAS Munir directed commanders to continue consolidating the gains of efforts against terrorism and militancy.

He also stressed that field commanders to continue maintaining high standards of professionalism, operational preparedness, and motivation during operations and achieving excellence during the training of the formations.

"In line with the resolve of the honourable Prime Minister of Pakistan, the forum committed that planners, instigators, abettors and perpetrators/ desecrators of Shuhada Monuments and attackers of military installations on 9 May, would certainly be brought to justice under the relevant provisions of the law and Constitution," according to the ISPR.

The CCC stated that malicious efforts to create distortions, confusion and disinformation were futile and only part of an organised campaign

being launched for "narrow political interests, to blur the abhorrent activities that took place."

The Corps Commanders raised concern over the spread of misinformation and fake news by certain elements to sow despondency and divisions within the society.

The military leadership urged Pakistanis to remain positive and united and participate in the progress and development of the country.

The participants of the conference expressed concerns over the plight of Kashmiris in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

While condemning the human rights violations by India, the Corps Commanders resolved that Pakistan would continue to support Kashmiris politically, diplomatically, and morally at all levels.

The CCC showed solidarity with the Palestinians as they continuously faced oppression by the Israeli forces.

COAS Munir said that the Palestinian people have unequivocal diplomatic, moral, and political support of the Pakistani nation. "We will continue to support the principled stance of our brethren for enduring resolution of the Palestinian issue."

## PTI to challenge ECP's decision on reserved seats in SC

## Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: PTI's Barrister Ali Zafar has announced that his party will challenge the Election Commission of Pakistan's decision not to allocate the reserved seats to the Sunni Ittehad Council.

"We have decided on the floor of the Senate that we will challenge this ECP order and will take all the legal ways against the decision," Zafar said in his speech at the upper house of Parliament.

"Constitutionally, the ECP cannot run its proceedings and all of them have to resign from their positions. Moreover, we also demand that the presidential and Senate elections should be postponed and adjourned because there is no space in the Constitution both of the elections are held with the [allocation of] reserved seats."

His reaction came after a five-member

ber ECP bench announced the 4-1 verdict on the SIC's plea seeking allocation of reserved seats in the national and provincial assemblies.

In his speech, Zafar read out Section 6(d) of Article 51.

"For the purpose of election to the National Assembly, members to the seats reserved for women which are allocated to a Province under clause (3) shall be elected in accordance with law through proportional representation system of political parties' lists of candidates on the basis of total number of general seats secured by each political party from the Province concerned in the National Assembly;

Provided that for the purpose of this sub-clause the total number of general seats won by a political party shall include the independent returned candidate or candidates who may duly join such political party within three

days of the publication in the official Gazette of the names of the returned candidates;"

The PTI leader also spoke about the Supreme Court verdict before elections that stripped the party of its iconic symbol: the bat. He described it as "unconstitutional and illegal".

He claimed that more than 180 independent candidates backed by the party won elections, however, the tally fell to 92 after the ECP issued the results.

Zafar explained that the winning candidates joined the SIC so that they could have the reserved seats and such members could have a chance to vote in elections for the prime minister, president, and senate.

According to him, the electoral body was supposed to give 23 seats under Article 51(6)(d). But the ECP denied the party of such seats. He added that the party had informed the ECP that it could

not keep the seats vacant as the assemblies would not be complete without it.

When he shared the ECP's decision to allocate such seats to other political parties, lawmakers from treasury benches started chanting "shame shame".

Zafar cited that if it was true that their share was given to other parties than it would be a "second constitutional mistake" by the ECP after nullifying its intra-party polls.

He further quoted articles 218 and 219 that demand the ECP to hold free and fair polls. But Monday's verdict proved that the ECP has failed and violated the Constitution in abiding by such rules, he added.

"Article 6 should be imposed on them [ECP]," he said and demanded all the members of the ECP should step down from their positions. He shared that lawmakers from the PTI have readied the resolution with such a demand.