



**Abbasi urges PM to fast-track privatisation in energy sector**

Former prime minister, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, has strongly urged the Shehbaz Sharif-led new federal government to urgently implement the agenda of privatisation, particularly in the energy sector as the greater involvement of the private sector is key to overcoming serious national economic woes. (Details on Page 6)



**President of FPCCI invites Russia to take advantage of CPEC by developing a road network in the Wakhan Corridor**

Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh President FPCCI and H. E. Albert Khorev, Russian Ambassador to Pakistan have agreed to increase bilateral trade. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to fostering stronger cooperation to increase the bilateral trade volume. This commitment reflects the shared interest in fortifying the enduring friendship and ... (Details on Page 5)

Simultaneously published from Islamabad, Lahore and Multan

**Powerful Pakistan**

TAXILA: General Syed Asim Munir, COAS and chinese ambassador Jiang Zaidong visited Heavy Industries Taxila for the rollout ceremony of HAIDER tank (Pilot Project).



Photo: ISPR

**COAS visits HIT Taxila to attend launching Haider Tank**

**Spokesman Report**

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Syed Asim Munir on Wednesday visited Heavy Industries Taxila (HIT) as chief guest at the rollout ceremony of HAIDER tank (Pilot Project). The ceremony was attended by Ambassador of the Peoples

Republic of China H. E. Jiang Zaidong, key officials of Chinese state company NORINCO, high officials of Government of Pakistan & Pakistan Army, and various military and civilian officials of HIT, an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release said. During the ceremony, HIT unveiled its new Tank HAID-

ER, which has been indigenously manufactured in collaboration with NORINCO China and various industries of Pakistan. HAIDER embodies cutting-edge technology and impressive capability in the domain of tank warfare having remarkable firepower, protection and manoeuvre characteristics.

Crafted with state-of-the-art advanced technologies, HAIDER stands as a testament to Pakistani defence industry's relentless pursuit of excellence in defence innovation. The COAS was briefed in detail about the technical capabilities of the HAIDER tank and the progress being made in achieving indigenization in

arms and armament. The COAS also visited other manufacturing facilities within the Heavy Industrial Complex and appreciated the commitment of the officers and workforce in successful achievement of another technological milestone. Earlier on arrival, the COAS was received by Chairman HIT.

**Govt resolved to promote local languages, cultures of all regions: PM**

**City Desk**

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif extending greetings on the Saraiki Culture and Saraiki Ajrak Day being observed on Wednesday, reiterated that the incumbent government would play its role in promoting the local languages, literature, and cultures of all the regions in the country. The prime minister, in his message, said that all the colors of the Saraiki region were beautiful while being rich in different cultures and traditions. Calling the Saraiki dialect "very sweet" he said it was not only spoken in South Punjab rather in Balochistan and India as well. He said the Saraiki language and the Saraiki writers had immense contributions to litera-



ture, poetry, and music. The prime minister said that Saraiki culture was rooted in the thousands of years old Indus Valley Civilisation. He said that the saints like Hazrat Bahauddin Zakaria, Hazrat Shah Ruknuddin Alam, Khawaja Ghulam Fareed, Salman Taunsa-vi, Sakhi Sarwar Shah and Shams Tabraiz also enriched the Saraiki language through their words. Prime Minister Shehbaz said that the promotion of South Punjab's culture, literature, and art had always been among the government's priorities.

**Xi calls on political advisors to build consensus for Chinese modernization**

**Xinhua**

BEIJING: President Xi Jinping on Wednesday called on Chinese political advisors to build broad consensus to contribute to Chinese modernization, when he participated in a joint group meeting during the second session of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, urged political advisors from different political parties, organizations, ethnic groups, sectors,



and all walks of life to conduct in-depth research and actively offer suggestions based on the major strategic tasks laid out by the 20th CPC National Congress and the arrangements made by the Central Economic Work Conference. The meeting was attended by political advisors from the Revolutionary Committee of the Chinese Kuomintang, the sector of science and technology, and the sector of environment and resources.

**'Form 45 uploaded on ECP site was altered ridiculously'**

**PPA**

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Leader, Taimur Khan Jhagra, asserted that the Form 45 uploaded on the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) website was altered ridiculously. Addressing a press conference in Islamabad, he expressed concern over 'irregularities' in Form 45 and stated that the results of 100 seats in Punjab were manipulated against PTI. Salman Akram Raja pointed out that the outcome in his constituency was changed by manipulating the results, significantly affecting the voter turnout in favor of his rival candidate. He asserted that the results uploaded by the ECP exposed the extent of rigging, he insisted that such manipulations should not be tolerated for the sake of the country's integrity.

**Peshawar High Court bars MPs elected on reserved seats from taking oath**

**Bureau Report**

PESHAWAR: Peshawar High Court has stopped that 25 National Assembly members elected to reserved seats from taking oath. The stay order came in a case filed by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf against a decision of the Election Commission of Pakistan that denied it reserved seats in the assembly. A two-member bench comprising Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Justice Shakeel Ahmad announced the decision on Wednesday shortly after it was reserved. The court issued notice to the ECP in the case. It also asked the Attorney General and Advocate General for advice on whether the it has jurisdiction to decide the

matter. The case has been sent to the chief justice of the Peshawar High Court to fix it before a larger bench. Qazi Anwar appeared in the case on behalf of the PTI and told the court that the party's candidates had contested the elections as independent candidates after being denied the bat symbol by the Election Commission of Pakistan. Anwar told the court that successful candidates joined the Sunni Ittehad Council. However, 21 reserved seats for women and four seats for minorities that were the party's

right were awarded to other parties instead. Justice Ibrahim asked the lawyer if the ECP decision on reserved seats was limited to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, to which Anwar replied that only one decision had been issued. A dissenting note by an ECP member, who said that the seats should not be awarded to other parties, was also mentioned in the court. However, the judge questioned whether the seats would remain vacant in such a scenario. PTI's counsel argued that the ECP has notified members of other parties on the 25 seats and the court should stop these members from taking oath. The court then reserved its decision on whether to issue a stay order in the case.

**US calls on Pakistan to lift social media restrictions**

**Monitoring Desk**

ISLAMABAD: The U. S. State Department on Tuesday once again urged the Pakistani government to lift internet shutdowns in Pakistan, including restrictions on social media platforms. During a news briefing on Tuesday, the department's spokesperson Matthew Miller has condemned government-imposed shutdowns of internet platforms. "We have and will continue to emphasize the importance of respecting these fundamental freedoms during our engagements with Pakistani officials," he said. He underlined Washington's commitment to freedom of expression in Pakistan and condemned any government-imposed shutdowns of internet platforms. Replying to a question regarding irregularities in recent polls in Pakistan, Matthew Miller urged the newly elected government in Pakistan to hold a thorough investigation into alleged electoral irregularities in the country. "There was a competitive election in Pakistan. Millions and millions of people made their voices heard. A new govern-

**SC announces opinion on Zulfikar Ali Bhutto reference case**

**PPA**

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan on Wednesday announced its reserved opinion on the presidential reference against the 'controversial' death sentence awarded to Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, saying that the former Prime Minister Bhutto did not get a chance to a "fair trial". Headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa, a nine-member larger bench of the Supreme Court (SC) on

Monday reserved its verdict in a long-pending presidential reference, seeking to revisit the 1979 'controversial' death sentence awarded to former prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. The bench was also comprising Justice Sardar Tariq Masood, Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, Justice Yahya Afridi, Justice Amin Ud Din Khan, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhel, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Justice Syed Hasan Azhar Rizvi, and Justice Musarrat Hilali.

"Zulfikar Ali Bhutto did not get a fair trial and due process enshrined in Articles 4 and 9 of the Constitution," said CJP Isa while announcing the short order. A detailed opinion will be issued later by the SC, said CJP. The proceedings were broadcast live on the Supreme Court's website. In the last hearing, CJP Justice Qazi Faez Isa had observed that the court would announce a short order on the

reference in a couple of days after consultation. Previously, former chief justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, had conducted five hearings on the presidential reference — whose last hearing was held on November 11, 2012. Former President Asif Ali Zardari had approached the Supreme Court in 2011 through a Presidential Reference under Article 186 of the Constitution, seeking to revisiting the trial of the PPP Founder Zulfikar Ali

Bhutto. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was handed a death sentence during former military ruler General (retired) Ziaul Haq's regime. The first elected prime minister of the country was charged with the murder of a political rival Nawab Mohammed Ahmed Qasuri and a trial took place. Amid petitions and appeals of clemency, and mercy from several Heads of States, Bhutto was hanged on April 4, 1979.

**Imran Khan backs Corps Commanders' statement on May 9 riots probe**

**City Desk**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan on Wednesday backed the Corps Commanders' stance of bringing to justice the perpetrators of the May 9 riots. In a formal talk with the reporter at the Adiala jail in Rawalpindi, the former prime minister once again called for the formation of a judicial commission to investigate the May 9 riots. "I endorse the declaration of the CCC. Suspects involved in May 9 incidents should be punished severely," he said. Khan said that the perpetrators of the May 9 riots should be identified using CCTV footage similar to the United States Capitol Hill attack. "Neither we are anti-army nor want a clash with forces," he added. On the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) decision regarding reserved seats, Khan said that the ECP disregarded democracy by depriving the PTI of reserved seats.

**MQM-P's Rabita Committee dissolved**

**Dastagir Bhatti**

KARACHI: The Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan's (MQM-P) Rabita Committee has been dissolved as the party started 'restructuring' the organisation set-up. According to details, the MQM-P spokesperson stated in a statement that Convenor Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui chaired a meeting at which it was unanimously decided to reorganise the Rabita Committee in the first phase. He stated that the incumbent Rabita Committee had been dissolved after a decision made by the party leadership. The MQM-P spokesperson stated that following the restructuring of the Rabita Committee, the party's provincial committees, zones, towns, and UCs would be restructured in the second phase. "Convenor Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui also formed a Central Ad Hoc Committee," he said in a statement. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui would head the ad hoc committee, with members including Syed Mustafa Kamal, Dr. Farooq Sattar, Nasreen Jalil, Anis Kaimkhan, Kaifil Wara, and Rizwan Babar.

# Apex Committee reviews Azad Kashmir security after 'exceptional' year

**Bureau Report**

MUZAFFARABAD: The eleventh meeting of the Apex Committee (AC) of Azad Jammu and Kashmir was held here with Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwar ul Haq in the chair. The meeting was attended by senior minister Col. Waqar Ahmed Noor, General Officer Commanding 12 Division, Chief Secretary, Inspector General Police, representatives of security institutions, Secretaries, Divisional Commissioners, DIG Police, DIG Special Branch, Special Secretary Interior and others. On the occasion, the chief Secretary gave a detailed briefing about the security situation in the state.

The participants of the meeting reviewed the progress regarding implementation of the decisions taken in the previous Apex Committee meeting. During the meeting fresh measures were suggested to ensure full implementation of the revised National Action Plan.

The AC expressed satisfaction over law and order situation in Azad Kashmir. It was also decided that the state administration should keep a close



eye on the elements responsible for spreading communal hatred. Effective monitoring of the social media was suggested in order to stop the propaganda of anti-social elements. Speaking on the occasion, Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwar ul Haq said that the state's survival and its security was his government's top priority. He said it was incumbent upon all the institutions to work together to make the state

a cradle of peace. He directed the law enforcement agencies to ensure the implementation of cybercrime laws to deal with the challenges of social media and cybercrime.

The Prime Minister directed the Secretary of Religious Affairs to organize seminars in madrassas to spread the message of unity with the nation of Pakistan and extend their scope from the district level to the tehsil level.

He said that Prime Minister's Skilled Kashmir program will be started after March 15 2024.

The government, he said, has earmarked 1 billion 50 crore rupees for this program. He said that under this scheme youth will be taught essential skills so that they can get employment while on the other hand youth would be given interest-free loans to start their business.

## India will change ground realities by making an exhibition visit to Occupied Kashmir

**Bureau Report**

MUZAFFARABAD: Azad Kashmir Legislative Assembly Speaker Senior Parliamentarian Chaudhry Latif Akbar said that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi will change the ground realities by making an exhibition visit to Occupied Kashmir on March 7 with eight lakh occupying forces, paramilitary forces and administrative forces. It can't, but it is definitely a cunning trick to deceive the international community. The Kashmiris have failed in every strategy and have always rejected the packages given through forgery. Meanwhile, Speaker Legislative Assembly Chaudhry Latif Akbar congratulated Mian Shehbaz on being elected as the Prime Minister of Pakistan by a large majority and said that the agreement of the democratic forces and the Economic Charter will be a global breakthrough, so the United Nations should stop the bloodshed. He said that the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is probably forgetting that he took away the flag and anthem from the occupied Kashmir by abolishing the special status of the Occupied Kashmir with the constitutional terrorism of Article 370. A pretense of giving domicile to 40 million non-state persons was created to turn them into a minority. He said that India's threat of attacks on Pakistan and Kashmir is equivalent to killing me if the Indian forces advance towards the Pak land even without forgetting.

## All Parties Hurriyat praises Pakistan army for reaffirming support of Kashmir cause

**Abdul Majeed Tahir**

ISLAMABAD: The Convener of All Parties Hurriyat Conference Azad Jammu and Kashmir (APHC-AJK) chapter, Mehmood Ahmed Saghar, has expressed his appreciation for the statement made by Pakistan army wherein it reaffirmed the country's support to the struggling people of Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

During the 263rd Corps Commanders' Conference at the General Headquarters in Rawalpindi, which was presided over by Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir, the army top brass reaffirmed that Pakistan would continue to support Kashmiris politically, diplomatically and morally at all levels. It also expressed concerns over the continued repression of the Kashmiris in IIOJK.

Mehmood Ahmed Saghar in a statement issued in Islamabad commended the Pakistani armed forces for their unwavering support towards the Kashmir cause and their commitment to the right to self-determination for the people of Kashmir.

He said India should accept the facts and fulfill the promises made to the Kashmiri people and it is the responsibility of the conscientious people of the whole world to raise their voice against the injustices in Kashmir and play their role in granting the Kashmiris their birthright to self-determination.

## Federal Tax Ombudsman says concrete measures being implemented to address taxpayers' complaints



**Quratul Ain Asim/ Kiran Asim**

MULTAN: Federal Tax Ombudsman Dr Asif Mahmood Jah has said that concrete measures are being implemented in the Federal Board of Revenue for transparency and elimination of taxpayers' complaints. The main objective of the Federal Tax Ombudsman is to respect the taxpayers and the problems have to be solved immediately, the tax payer must be respected, the tax registration of consumer's complaint has been made easier. He expressed these views while addressing a dinner ceremony at the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Multan. On this occasion, Mian Rashid Iqbal, President of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Multan, Senior Vice President. Nadeem Ahmed Sheikh, Vice President Sheikh Muhammad Asim Saeed, Nazim Saleem, Dr. Khalil Ahmed, Khawaja Muhammad Younis, Muhammad Younis Ghazi, Ehtishamul Haque, Sohail Tufail Shabbir Fakhruddin, Muhammad Shafiq, Anwar Saleem Kane, Inran Ghazi, Malik Shakeel Arain, Sheikh Faheem Sattar, Naveed Iqbal Chughtai Sheikh Faisal Saeed, Jamsheed Naqvi, Haji Sajid and other officials and members, traders and representatives of tax bar and customs officials participated. On the occasion, Mian Rashid Iqbal, president of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Multan, said, "Federal Board of Revenue should increase the tax base and the department should improve its performance and to increase the tax net, the sectors outside the text net should be brought into the text net and not the taxpayers who are in the tax net. Unnecessary and ineffective laws should not be burdened. It is not possible to add to the national exchequer and it is an additional burden on the tax payers."

## Selfie

FAISALABAD: The degree holder girls taking a selfie after convocation of Agriculture University, Faisalabad.



Photo: Online

# Spring Festival and Handicraft Exhibition inaugurated at Industrial Home

**Asim Tanveer**

MULTAN: Under the direction of Director General Social Welfare Punjab, Mudassar Riaz Malik, under the leadership of Divisional Director Social Welfare Multan Naeem Ahmed, Manager Sanat Zar Multan, Dr. Muhammad Nasir organized a one-day event at the District Industrial Home (Sanat Zar) Multan Regarding international Women's Day. with reference to Jashan Baharan. Organized a hand-



icraft exhibition. Divisional Director Social Welfare Multan Naeem Ahmed inaugurated the Jashan Baharan exhibition by cutting the ribbon. In the exhibition, various districts of Multan Division set up their own

stalls, including Udyatzar Multan, Sanatzar Khanawal, Ssnatzar Wahari, Sanatzar Lodhran, Mini Sanatzar Shujaabad, Mini Sanatzar Jalalpur, Mini Sanaatzar Banda Sandela besides food Stalls, Society for Special Persons, Alnor International Education and others have their own Set up stalls. In the exhibition, Deputy Director MDA, Rana Ehsan Qadir, DSP, Madam Shabina Karim, SHO Woman Police Station, Madam Maryam Faiz, Madam Ayesha Jameel, Manager Industry Zar Khaniwal, Chaudhry Abdul Rahman Manager Industry Zar Wahari, Ghulam Mustafa Shah. Apart from Manager Udayat Zar Lodhran, other officers of the Department of Social Welfare Multan Division also took special part. The women showed keen interest in the items displayed at the stalls of the industrialists in the exhibition. On behalf of the participants, such events were welcomed for the success and motivation of women.

# Institute comprehensive reforms to ameliorate the deficiencies within Pakistan's criminal justice Apparatus in the year 2024

Pakistan experienced an astonishing 60% escalation in militancy-associated occurrences in 2023. The nation lamented the forfeiture of 78 lives monthly on average. Particularly noteworthy is that 57% of all incidents materialized in the northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, while 41% took place in the volatile southwestern Balochistan province. The violence predominantly afflicted the country's western frontiers, where 98% of the incidents unfolded in proximal regions.

Simultaneously, additional global urban hubs also contended with enduring criminality and militancy spurred by socio-economic dynamics. As of 2023, there were 27 ongoing conflicts globally, predominantly in Asia and Africa, encompassing civil strife, territorial contentions, interstate frictions, instability, and sectarian discord. Entities

like Daesh (ISIS) persisted in the global sphere, exhibiting differing degrees of backing and engagement worldwide.

In Pakistan, amidst persistent sectarian schisms, religious radicalism, and the proliferation of criminal syndicates, it behooves us to introspect upon the failings of the past year and contemplate viable remedies for the current annum.

Initially, deficient governance was endured and typified by a disdain for competence and a predilection for allegiance over expertise. Transparency and answerability continued to be deficient, facilitating the flourishing of corruption. There was no cohesive novel strategy to address these concerns, and existing strategies were neglected. Despite conspicuous indicators such as the urgent necessity to fortify institutions and procedural fairness, Pakistan chose expedient remedies that ultimately yielded detrimental outcomes.

Furthermore, there was a conspicu-

ous deficiency in the supremacy of legal principles. This compelled both individuals and establishments to turn to extrajudicial methods, thereby undermining confidence in governmental bodies. This deeply lamentable trajectory incurred substantial tolls, including the forfeiture of lives and assets, yet there was scant contrition extended. Such circumstances culminated in the radicalization of young individuals and pervasive disillusionment among the populace. It precipitated a disquieting surge in retaliatory assaults on law enforcement entities, met with militaristic responses and, undoubtedly, transgressions against human rights.

Persistent political instability, fueled by intellectual deceit and an erroneous grasp

of domestic matters, brought Pakistan perilously near to anarchy in the battle against terrorism. More worrisome was the utter lack of remorse for disseminating untruths, duplicity, and the extensive proliferation of misinformation in the quest for populist governance. There was scant concern for the consequent ramifications. In the dearth of accountability, certain entities have surfaced, harboring a readiness to incinerate their own nation in pursuit of dominion.

In the year 2024, it is imperative that we prioritize addressing the fundamental origins and thwarting primary facilitators of extremism. This necessitates bolstering governance and the adherence to legal principles, eliminating radicalization,

addressing economic fragility, combating online propaganda, and managing militant activities. Radicalization catalyzed a profound escalation in militant activities following the events of 2001, resulting in a staggering surge in militant assaults reaching into the thousands by 2013. It required the implementation of ten military interventions to restore a semblance of stability to Pakistan. It is crucial that we do not regress to those somber times. The implementation of de-radicalization initiatives and the cultivation of an encompassing counter-narrative are paramount.

Attaining political stability must be of utmost importance. We must additionally contemplate instituting a charter of commendable governance to uphold the supremacy of law and collaboration among political factions, thereby securing perpetuity of strategy and solidarity amidst challenges. In Pakistan, there

exist notable perils emanating from the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), Baloch Republican Army (BRA), Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), and Daesh. Engaging in dialogue with dissident factions has demonstrated inefficacy, and conciliatory strategies have consistently faltered. It is imperative that we fortify our remaining border regions without delay.

Crimes and contraband, acknowledged origins of terrorism financing, must be vigorously prosecuted within the legal domain. There is indisputably no room for leniency, as it undermines the reverence for legal principles and equity, consequently fostering heightened oppression and flawed legislative enactments.

A reformation of the penal adjudication framework this nation merits. The affliction endured in 2023 ought to metamorphose us, lest it inflict harm upon us in the ensuing years as well.



Mustansar Shah Nawaz

Islamabad  
15° - 23° Clear

**SERVICES**

**Namaz Timings**

Fajr ..... 5:07 am  
Zohr ..... 12:19 pm  
Asr ..... 4:27 pm  
Maghrib ..... 6:09 pm  
Isha ..... 7:31 pm

**EMERGENCY**

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

**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  
Met Office ..... 9250360-6  
RDA ..... 5555864  
TMA ..... 5770886  
Cantonment Board ..... 9270151-3  
Islamabad Metropolitan Corporation ..... 9209224  
Potohar Town ..... 9209224  
Rawal Town ..... 5773343

**COMPLAINTS**

Water Tanker Service E-7, F-10 & F-11 ..... 9204654  
G-5, G-6, G-7, G-8 ..... 9203883  
G-9, G-10, G-11, G-12, H-8 ..... 9266316  
Wapda Islamabad ..... 9217579-80

**Former PM Congratulates newly elected President Multan Press Club and his Panel**



**Kiran Asim**

MULTAN: Senior Vice Chairman of Pakistan People's Party and former Prime Minister and candidate Chairman Senate, Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani congratulated to President Multan Press Club Shakeel Anjum and his panel for winning in the Multan Press Club election. Former Prime Minister and Candidate Chairman Senate Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani said that I congratulate Shakeel Anjum on being elected President of President Press Club Multan for the 14th time.

Shakeel Anjum and his panel have always played a prominent role in Multan journalism and promoted positive reporting. Pakistan Peoples Party believes in freedom of expression and always supports the journalists community in difficult times, Yusuf Raza Gilani said. I hope the newly elected panel of Multan Press Club will discourage negative aspects and promote positive values.

# PNCA inaugurates much-anticipated group exhibition 'HerStory' to honor women artists

**Spokesman Report**

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) proudly inaugurated the much-anticipated group exhibition, "HerStory: Celebrating Women Artists," on March 6, 2024, at the National Art Gallery in Islamabad. The event was organized to commemorate International Women's Day and to honor the remarkable contributions of women artists from across Pakistan.

The opening ceremony was graced by the esteemed presence of Ms. Humaira Ahmed, Secretary of the National Heritage and Culture Division, along with H. E. Manuel Frederico Pinheiro da Silva, Ambassador of Portugal in Pakistan and M. Ayoub Jamali, Director General PNCA, inaugurated the exhibition. Ms. Humaira Ahmed's dedication to promoting and preserving cultural heritage resonated deeply with the theme of the exhibition, making her the ideal guest of honor for this prestigious event.

During her visit, Ms. Humaira Ahmed had the opportunity to meet with each

of the talented women artists featured in the exhibition. She took the time to appreciate their artwork and commend them for their creativity and dedication to their craft.

In addition to the inauguration ceremony, an artist talk was held featuring two distinguished speakers. Ambassador Ms. Naela Chohan, a renowned diplomat and women's rights advocate, shared her insights and engaged with the young artists, offering words of encouragement and inspiration. The second speaker for the artist talk was Dr. Mamoon Khan, Professor and Head of the Fine Arts Department at Fatima Jinnah Women University. The exhibition aims to shed light on the unique perspectives and experiences of women artists, celebrating their achievements and contributions to the cultural landscape of Pakistan. Through their artwork, these talented women artists explore themes of identity, empowerment, resilience, and cultural heritage, offering viewers a glimpse into their rich and varied artistic journeys.

"We are thrilled to host 'HerStory: Celebrating Women Artists' at the National

Art Gallery," said Mr. Ayoub Jamali, Director General of PNCA. "This exhibition is a tribute to the creativity, talent, and resilience of women artists in Pakistan, and we are honored to showcase their remarkable artwork to the public."

The success of the exhibition would not have been possible without the dedicated efforts of Ms. Mariam Ahmed, Director Visual Arts Division who is also the curator of the exhibition and her team, who worked tirelessly to bring the vision of "HerStory: Celebrating Women Artists" to life. Their commitment to promoting and supporting women in the arts is evident in the curation and execution of this landmark exhibition.

"HerStory: Celebrating Women Artists" will be open to the public from March 7 to March 31, 2024, at the National Art Gallery in Islamabad. Admission is free, and visitors are encouraged to explore and appreciate the diverse range of artworks on display.

For more information about the exhibition, including opening hours and featured artists, and more updates, please follow and like the PNCA official social media pages.

## Inauguration

ISLAMABAD: Portuguese Ambassador, Frederico Silva visiting an exhibition by women artists from all over Pakistan to commemorate Women's Day 2024 at PNCA, in Federal Capital.



Photo: Online

## PTDC Highlights Pakistan's Tourism Potential at ITB Berlin 2024

**PPA**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC), in collaboration with the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), Pakistan mission in Germany, provincial tourism departments, and private tour operator companies, proudly represents Pakistan at ITB Berlin 2024, a leading international travel expo of tourism.

From 5th to 7th March 2024, over 5,500 exhibitors from 170 countries are showcasing the potential of their



tourism destinations at Berlin, Germany. This year's theme is "Beauty has an Address".

Aftab ur Rehman Rana, Managing Director of PTDC, in his message on this occasion, informed that Pakistan's flag is

ism potential in this leading global travel show.

He stressed the pivotal role of Pakistan's participation in this global exhibition to build the image of the country as a safe tourist destination for foreign tourists. He emphasized that the event serves as a crucial platform to unveil Pakistan's untapped tourism potential and forge essential business-to-business relations with international stakeholders, particularly with European countries, which are key players in the global tourism industry.

## Pakistan is 'Empowering Youth Champions' by improving their understanding on Food Systems

**PNP**

ISLAMABAD: The two-day workshop centered on Building Capacity of Youth for Collective Action on Food Systems Transformation and promoting use of Pakistan Food System Dashboard concluded on Wednesday, providing a significant opportunity for its participants to equip themselves with the evolving need of understanding food systems.

Hosted by Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC), the Ministry of Food Sciences and Research, in collaboration with GAIN Pakistan (under PARC-GAIN partnership) alongside Health Services Academy (HSA) as the academic partner and DEMO as the implementing partners, the event empowered over 30 Youth Champions with essential insights and skills. These champions, hailing from Balochistan, Islamabad Capital Terri-



tory, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, and Sindh, are now poised to advocate for the Food Systems Dashboard within their respective communities.

The event commenced with impactful opening remarks, setting a tone of engagement and information sharing by Ms. Farrah Naz, the Country Director of GAIN Pakistan. The first day of the workshop featured sessions exploring Food Systems Transformation and the Global Dashboard. Dr. Shahzad Ali Khan, Vice Chancellor

of Health Services Academy, provided valuable perspectives, connecting theoretical knowledge with practical insights. Dr. Mubashir Hanif, Director of ORIC at HSA, and Dr. Shiza Hameed offered comprehensive insights into Global Policy and the Food Systems, while Dr. Nosheen facilitated discussions on various FSD policies.

The event also welcomed Dr. Fayyaz ul Hassan Sahi, Chairman of the National Agriculture Education

Accreditation Council (NAEAC), who shared insights on Pakistan's current agricultural situation and its intersection with academia. Ms. Iram Raza from Pakistan Agricultural Research Council, serving as the lead of Food System Dashboard team gave an insightful demonstration of the dashboard and its utilization.

In closing remarks, Head of Policy & Advocacy Mr. Faiz Rasool emphasized, "As efforts intensify to promote the FSD, the acquired knowledge and skills from the workshop are poised to contribute significantly to the betterment of the nation."

Dr. Ghulam Sadiq Afridi Member Social Sciences Division PARC informed as Secretary of Pakistan Food Systems Transformation secretariat, gave in-depth demonstration of Food Systems Dashboard and connected it with the data tools required to inform public policies.

## Housing and Works reviews development works in Sector G14 Markaz and Sector F-14/F-15



**PNP**

ISLAMABAD: Secretary Housing and Works Shahzad Khan Bangash and Director General Captain (R) Zafar Iqbal Federal Government Employees Housing Authority reviewed the development works of Sector G14 Markaz and Sector F-14/F-15 and planted commemorative saplings in Sector G14 Markaz. Director General Housing Authority Captain Retd Zafar Iqbal and Chief Engineer Imtiaz ul Haq Khattak briefed about the infrastructure of the projects. On this occasion, the project directors informed the Secretary Housing and Works Shahzad Khan Bangash about the current position of the sectors. Secretary Housing and Works appreciated the efforts of Director General FGEHA in Sector G14 Markaz and Sector F-14/F-15 of the Federal Government Employees Housing Authority and He also advised the officers to complete the projects as soon as possible and provide all facilities to the allottees and investors.

## First Sports event inaugurated at Government Graduate College for Women



Tahir Amin Malik

LAHORE: Inauguration ceremony of second sports event of Higher Education Department, Secretary Higher Education Department Khalid Saleem was Chief Guest.

The opening ceremony of the 2nd Higher Education Department's sports events at the provincial level was held at the Government Graduate College for Women Township, Lahore. Secretary Higher Education Department Khalid Salim attended the event as a chief guest. Special Secretary Higher Education Department Shahida Farrukh was the guest of honor and on this occasion, DPI Colleges Punjab Dr. Syed Ansar Azhar along with all the directors and deputy directors Punjab joined the ceremony. The event was hosted by Directorate Colleges Lahore under the chairmanship of Director Colleges Lahore Muhammad Zahid Mian and Principal Government Graduate College for Women Township, Lahore Prof Dr. Umbreen Javed Khan.

Speaking at the ceremony, Secretary HED Mr. Khalid Saleem said that having a healthy body is very important for a healthy mind. The purpose of organizing sports events in colleges is to divert the focus of students towards healthy activities instead of other negative activities.

Special Secretary HED Ms. Shahida said that the participation of women in sports and the expression of talent is very welcome. Special measures are being taken to increase the participation of women.

Director Colleges Lahore Prof Zahid Mian welcomed the players from all over Punjab in his address. He said that provision of all possible facilities will be ensured for the promotion of sports.

Apart from this, Secretary, Special Secretary, Additional Secretary (ESTAB), Additional Secretary (Boards), Additional Secretary (SI), DPI South, Secretary BISE Lahore, Sports Consultants HED, and Additional DPI participated in the event.

Keeping this central idea in mind, various women's games were made a part of the event. On this occasion, apart from the sports competitions, the students specially presented different types of plays to shed light on the social aspects. To highlight the role of women in sports, the students of Queen Mary Graduate College, Lahore presented a drama, while Government Graduate College, Pattoki, presented a drama on climate change. At the end of the function, prizes and certificates of honor were distributed among the students. On this occasion, DPI Colleges Punjab and Directorate Lahore appreciated the efforts of the host college and their principal for organizing a successful event.

## Over 40% of Pakistanis are obese, diabetes on alarming rise: experts



**PPA**

ISLAMABAD: The overweight, obesity and diet related NCDs are on alarming rise in Pakistan. More than 40% of people in Pakistan are obese or overweight. The prevalence of overweight among the children under 5 has almost doubled from 2011 to 2018. Pakistan is number 1 country in the world with prevalence ratio of diabetes where 33 million people are living with diabetes. If no urgent policy actions taken, number of people living with diabetes will increase to 62 million by 2045. Sugary drinks / ultra-processed products often high in sugar, salt or trans-fats are among the major contributors to obesity and many other non-communicable diseases. Women can play an important role to educate society to replace healthier foods with unhealthy ones. This was said in a program on world obesity day jointly organized by Pakistan Nutrition & Dietetic Society (PNDS) and Pakistan National Heart Association (PANAHA) at a local hotel in Karachi brought together the distinguished experts, health professionals, policy makers and media. Among the guests include President PANAHA, Maj. Gen. (R) Masud ur Rehman Kiani, General Secretary of Diabetic Association of Pakistan Professor Dr. Abdul Basit, President Pakistan Nutrition and Dietetic Society Ms. Fayza Khan, General Secretary Pakistan National Heart Association Mr. Sanaullah Ghuman, Nutritionists, health professionals, civil society, representatives of women and media.

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 (afrazalishah@gmail.com)  
 Islamabad Office: Rose Plaza, I-8 Markaz.  
 Karachi office: Flat No.C.3.A.One Comfort, Block No 11.  
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 Email: [spokesmanislambad@gmail.com](mailto:spokesmanislambad@gmail.com)  
 Whatsapp: 0346-5008408

# New Govt. and Macroeconomic Challenges - I

In one of his recent interviews, Ishaq Dar emphasized the necessity of strict fiscal and financial discipline for the country's future financial layout. He pledged to bring the previously untaxed real estate sector into the tax net. He mentioned his ousting in 2017, implying that his efforts to firmly impose financial discipline and tax the real estate sector were the reasons behind it. This move was perceived as an attempt to control the defense budget and regulate the real estate sector, which is often associated with influential entities.

Dar's assertive stance cost him the finance ministerial position, despite being the favored choice of the PML(N) government and enjoying unwavering support from Nawaz Sharif. His removal from contention for the finance ministry effectively ended his career in that capacity and marked the elimination of staunch supporters and loyal colleagues of Nawaz Sharif.

Furthermore, Dar's expulsion from power sent a clear message to the PML(N) government, Nawaz Sharif, and Shahbaz Sharif, asserting the dominance of those in power. It served as a warning for them to remain compliant or face consequences, including the threat of exposing electoral irregularities and potentially losing their majority in the National and provincial assemblies. Such actions could lead to public humiliation and international criticism for undermining the electoral process, a risk that neither PML(N) nor PPP would be willing to take, thus ensur-

ing their compliance throughout their tenure in power.

The selection of a Minister for Finance from the private sector or a politician nominated by a political party carries distinct advantages and disadvantages. A finance minister from the private sector brings expertise in financial management and economics, offering potential for efficiency and market confidence. However, they may lack political experience and accountability to the electorate, potentially leading to disconnect from public needs and resistance from bureaucratic structures.

On the other hand, a politician-appointed finance minister brings political acumen and representation, ensuring policy continuity and facilitating coalition building. Yet, they may face pressures of political interference, partisanship, and patronage, potentially compromising technical expertise and leading to suboptimal outcomes.

In both cases, the precarious and fragile economic and financial outlook of the country will not be a bed of roses for the new incumbent of the finance ministry, most likely a renowned banker from the private sector, which is also a vote of no confidence on the political nominees of the coveted slot.

Soon after assuming power, the new finance minister, amongst other pressing

challenges, will be faced with a daunting challenge of macroeconomic and fiscal consolidation given that Pakistan's macroeconomic landscape is marked by several critical challenges. It grapples with a burgeoning external debt burden, which stood at around \$126.3 billion by the end of 2022, significantly straining its financial resources.

This is compounded by a persistent fiscal deficit, which has hovered between -7.6% and -7.8% of GDP for last many years until it was brought down by stringent measures of the interim government from Rs 945.3 billion last year to Rs. 112.0 billion during Jul-May FY2023. The current account has posted a deficit of \$2.6 billion for FY2023, a reduction from the previous year's deficit of \$17.5 billion reflecting a stark imbalance between imports and exports.

The Pakistani Rupee has also experienced significant depreciation, moving from around 115 PKR per USD in early 2018 to over 307 PKR per USD in recent times, which increases the cost of imports and debt repayments. Furthermore, Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves have been critically low, with figures around \$8 billion at points in 2023, barely covering a few months of imports. The banking sector faces its own set of challenges, with non-performing loans and substantial

exposure to government debt, indicating a sizable portion of banks' assets tied up in government securities.

The challenge of reigning historic high inflation rates will remain high on the agenda of the government. Though due to stringent measures of the interim government Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation has declined to 29.4 percent in the month of June 2023 from 38.0 percent recorded in May 2023, the food inflation (urban) has declined from 48.1 percent to 40.8 percent, sensitive price indicator (SPI) also declined by 0.07 percent on the week ended 20th July, 2023 but the inflation nonetheless remain very high which is affected the entire population of the country especially the most vulnerable, poor and middle and middle middle classes of the society.

These macroeconomic anomalies have translated to real challenges for the Pakistani people. It has reduced economic activity and rising prices has disproportionately affected lower-income groups, pushing them further into poverty and widening the wealth gap.

Inflation makes basic necessities like food and healthcare less affordable, impacting health and well-being. Stagnant or declining economic activity translates to fewer jobs and lower wages, hindering upward mobility and reducing overall quality of life. The volatile economic environment creates anxiety and uncertainty for individuals and families, impacting mental health and overall well-being.

*To be continued*



Analysis

Qamar Bashir

## Xi emphasizes need to develop new quality productive forces

Chinese President Xi Jinping has highlighted the need to develop new quality productive forces tailored to local conditions for high-quality development, amid a new round of technological and industrial transformation. While taking part in a deliberation with his fellow deputies from the delegation of Jiangsu province at the second session of the 14th National People's Congress, China's top legislature, Xi emphasized that developing new quality productive forces did not imply neglecting or abandoning traditional industries.

Xi, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, cautioned against herd behavior or speculative bubbles in developing the new quality productive forces. He also called for selective promotion of new industries, models and new driving forces based on local resources, industrial foundations and research conditions, China Daily reported. Xi also underscored the importance of leveraging new technologies to upgrade traditional industries, promoting the high-end, intelligent and green transformation of industries. The country must seize opportunities to intensify innovation, nurture and strengthen emerging industries, and foster future industries with forward-looking planning, he said. Xi first proposed the concept of new quality productive forces during an inspection tour in Heilongjiang province in September. With innovation leading, new quality productive forces means advanced productivity freed from traditional economic growth models. It features high technology, high efficiency and high quality, and aligns with the country's new development philosophy. The term refers to new productive forces that emerge from continuous advances in science and technology, driving strategic future and emerging industries that could introduce breakthrough technological advancements in an era of intelligent information. During Tuesday's meeting, Xi said that Jiangsu has favorable conditions and capabilities for developing new quality productive forces. He emphasized the need for the province to focus on building a modern industrial system with advanced manufacturing as the backbone. As one of China's economic powerhouses, Jiangsu saw its regional gross domestic product increase 5.8 percent year-on-year to 12.82 trillion yuan (\$1.78 trillion) in 2023, ranking second among 31 provinces, municipalities and autonomous regions, following Guangdong province. The manufacturing industry's added value in Jiangsu reached 4.66 trillion yuan last year, accounting for 36.3 percent of the province's GDP. Xi called for a deeper integration of technological and industrial innovation, consolidating the leading position of traditional industries and accelerating the creation of strategically competitive emerging industry clusters in order to make Jiangsu an important stronghold for developing new quality productive forces.



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

## Embrace Election Results and Move Forward - I

Pakistan conducted its general elections on February 8. Various organizations conducted both pre and post-election surveys to gauge public sentiment. In the aftermath of an election, once the dust of campaigning settles and ballots are counted, a pivotal moment arises for understanding the essence of democracy. Post-election surveys emerge as indispensable tools, providing a comprehensive view of voter behavior, preferences, and the overall verdict of the electorate. These surveys act as reflective mirrors, illuminating the intricate interplay of political forces and offering invaluable insights for policymakers, analysts, and citizens alike.



Analysis

Abdul Basit Alvi

Post-election surveys serve multifaceted purposes, unraveling the complexities behind electoral outcomes. They delve into the motivations driving voter decisions, assess the impact of campaign messaging, and gauge satisfaction—or dissatisfaction—with incumbent politicians. By capturing voter sentiments immediately after an election, these surveys offer a snapshot of public opinion, shaping narratives and guiding future political strategies. Conducting post-election surveys requires meticulous planning and methodological rigor. Survey researchers employ various techniques, including random sampling and stratification, to ensure the representativeness of their samples. Moreover, surveys often include both closed-ended

questions—quantifying voter preferences—and open-ended inquiries, allowing for nuanced exploration of attitudes and beliefs.

Post-election surveys unearth a wealth of insights, illuminating the factors underpinning electoral outcomes. They reveal demographic trends, such as voting patterns among different age groups, ethnicities, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Additionally, these surveys shed light on the role of key issues—ranging from the economy to healthcare to national security—in shaping voter decisions, offering invaluable lessons for future campaigns and policy agendas.

Post-election surveys play a pivotal role in fostering accountability and transparency in democratic governance. By providing a platform for citizens to express their preferences and concerns, these surveys hold elected officials responsible to the will of the electorate. Moreover, they facilitate dialogue between policymakers and the public, fostering an informed and engaged citizenry—a cornerstone of democratic resilience. As technology and communication evolve, so too will the methodologies and techniques utilized in post-election surveys. Innovations such as online polling and data analytics present new avenues for comprehending voter behavior and sentiment. Nevertheless, the foundational imperative of upholding methodological rigor and ensuring the representativeness of survey samples remains essential in safeguard-

ing the integrity of democratic processes.

In the expansive realm of market research and public opinion polling, Ipsos stands as a formidable presence, renowned for its comprehensive surveys that delve into the intricacies of societal dynamics. With a global footprint spanning continents and industries, Ipsos surveys yield invaluable insights into consumer behavior, political sentiment, and cultural trends.

Established in 1975, Ipsos has steadily ascended as a frontrunner in market research and opinion polling. With a dedication to methodological excellence and a commitment to comprehending the nuances of human behavior, Ipsos has become a trusted ally for businesses, governments, and organizations navigating the complexities of an ever-evolving world.

Recently, Ipsos conducted a post-election perception survey concerning Transparency & Rigging. According to the findings of this survey, a majority (58%) of Pakistanis are of the belief that the polling day processes were conducted fairly and transparently. The remaining respondents expressed skepticism (24%) or neutrality (18%) regarding these processes. However, in KPK, only 33% of respondents perceive the election day processes as fair and transparent. There exists a divergence of opinions regarding the occurrence of election rigging, with 54% of Pakistanis viewing the elections as overall transparent, while 39% perceive them as rigged. The highest perception of rigging is observed in KP (73%), followed by Islamabad (49%), while the lowest perception is in Sindh (28%).

*To be continued*

## MWC Barcelona connects the mobile world

Syeda Shehrbano

The Mobile World Congress 2024 in Barcelona was an unparalleled success with more than a hundred thousand attendees and close to three thousand exhibitors, sponsors and partners from 205 countries and territories. The event brought together stakeholders from the entire mobile ecosystem, connecting regulators, mobile operators, service providers, government stakeholders, representatives from ancillary sectors and the media.

The event provided a glimpse into the myriad new possibilities that open with AI and 5G, innovations across industries and the thought leaders making the future a reality. New figures from GSMA Intelligence showed 5G connections are expected to represent over half (51%) of mobile connections by 2029, rising to 56% by the end of the decade – making 5G the dominant connectivity technology. 5G has been the fastest mobile generation rollout to date, surpassing one billion connections by the end of 2022, rising to 1.6 billion connections at the end of 2023 and 5.5 billion by 2030.

During the MWC 2024, Huawei announced a series of ground-breaking intelligent solutions to advance digitalization in various industries in the Middle East and Central Asia. The company showcased its commitment to innovation and sustainability with a host of solutions designed to transform industries and enterprises worldwide. From manufacturing and electric power to education and beyond, Huawei's new launches signify the start of a new era of intelligence, efficiency, and environmental consciousness, setting the stage for a brighter and smarter future.

The benefits of 5G are many and varied—5G has been a catalyst for building intelligence at the network edge, and with the next phase of 5G Advanced underlining the need for end-to-end AI integration, future mobile generations will learn fast, self-orchestrate, and open new possibilities of how we can interact with our devices. The trajectory from 5G to the commercial rollout of 5.5G by Huawei is at pace with the rapid growth in demand, with

technological advancements leading to positive business and societal outcomes.

With the number of connected IoT devices set to reach over 15 billion in two years, connecting everything requires network solutions that are open, seamless, sustainable, and secure. MWC explored the growing mobile ecosystem, covering subject areas from cloud hyperscaling and tower and fibre, to non-terrestrial networks and Fixed Wireless Access (FWA).

Generative AI (GenAI) continued to be a topic of keynote speeches and sessions as AI is poised to revolutionize how we work, live and interact. Huawei hosted the Industrial Digital and Intelligent Transformation Summit during the trade show, launching 10 industrial digital and intelligent transformation solutions and a series of new flagship products. With a focus on providing differentiated solutions to meet diverse customer needs, Huawei aims to accelerate digital and intelligent transformation across industries and SMEs.

The GSMA also announced the winners of the 29th annual Global Mobile (GLOMO) Awards during a ceremony hosted at the MWC. Six new categories were created especially this year in keeping with the rapid advancements in scope and scale of the industry: Best AI Innovation; Best Mobile Innovation for Enhancing the Lives of Children and Young People; Best Non-terrestrial Network Solution; Best Private Network Solution; the GSMA Foundry Innovation Award; and the Open Gateway Challenge.

The GLOMO Awards represent the connectivity industry's most prestigious accolade, honouring the companies, individuals and governments driving innovation and positive change in the mobile ecosystem and adjacent industries. With 30 awards available across six categories, the winners are chosen by a panel of over 220 independent judges representing the industry's most prominent subject matter experts.

Huawei won 6 of the 30 Awards, including the Best Mobile Innovation for Emerging Markets which went to Huawei and Ufone for a Microwave SuperHub Solution. The spectrum congestion remover is a game changer for operators.

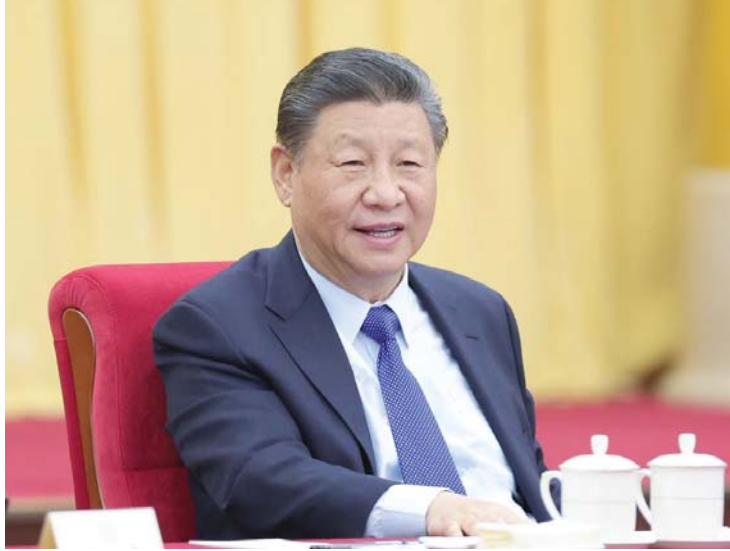
# Xi calls on political advisors to build consensus for Chinese modernization

Xinhua

**BELJING:** President Xi Jinping on Wednesday called on Chinese political advisors to build broad consensus to contribute to Chinese modernization, when he participated in a joint group meeting during the second session of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC).

Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, urged political advisors from different political parties, organizations, ethnic groups, sectors, and all walks of life to conduct in-depth research and actively offer suggestions based on the major strategic tasks laid out by the 20th CPC National Congress and the arrangements made by the Central Economic Work Conference.

The meeting was attended by polit-



Political advisors from the Revolutionary Committee of the Chinese Kuomintang (RCCK), the sector of science and technology, and the sector of environment and resources. Xi extended festive greetings and

best wishes to the country's women of all ethnic groups and from all walks of life ahead of International Women's Day, which falls on March 8.

Wang Huning, chairman of the CPPCC National Committee, and Cai Qi, director of the General Office of the CPC Central Committee, joined the discussion. Wang and Cai are both members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee.

At the joint group meeting, six national political advisors spoke on topics ranging from cross-strait cooperation in industrial and supply chains to internet core technologies and environmental protection.

After attentively listening to the political advisors, Xi made an important speech. He said the CPC Central Committee united and led the whole Party and Chinese people of all ethnic groups to fulfill the major economic and social development goals in 2023,

adding that political advisors contributed their efforts and wisdom to this hard-earned achievement.

On the work related to Taiwan, Xi urged the RCCK to unite all patriots from home and abroad, in and out of Taiwan to step up opposition against "Taiwan independence," expand support for national reunification, and jointly advance the peaceful reunification of China.

He called for active efforts to promote exchanges and cooperation in fields such as sci-tech development, agriculture, culture and youth development across the Taiwan Strait and deepen cross-strait integrated development.

Xi called on political advisors and all people in the science and technology sector to strengthen basic research and applied basic research, strive to achieve breakthroughs in core technologies in key fields, and create new drivers for developing new quality productive

forces.

Xi urged political advisors from the sector of environment and resources to make new contributions to ecological and environmental protection and sustaining high-quality development with high-level protection.

He called for fully and accurately implementing the guidelines of targeted, science-based and lawful pollution control, advancing green and low-carbon social and economic development, and promoting carbon emission peaking and carbon neutrality in an active and prudent manner.

Noting this year marks the 75th anniversary of the CPPCC's establishment, Xi emphasized the need for the CPPCC to promote the specialized consultative body's institutional development, and urged political advisors to enhance their ability to perform duties for new advances in the work of the CPPCC and the multi-party cooperation.

## Visit

**ISLAMABAD:** A high-level delegation of Saudi Arabia's Al-Ajlan Holding Group visited Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC).



Photo: Online

## Energy Summit: Insurance promotes investment in energy sector

PPA

**KARACHI:** Experts highlighted the critical importance of insurance for the sustainable development of multiple energy resources, including power, oil, and gas, aimed at promoting investment opportunities, innovations, and efficiencies within the sector in Pakistan.

Speaking at the Energy Summit here in Karachi, Chairman Lockton MENA Ata Khatib said the energy sector is transforming globally through innovation and technology to address the requirements of economies, keeping in view the overriding challenge of global warming and climate change.

He said the insurance of the energy sector, including power plants and refineries, is indispensable in compliance with international standards, giving confidence to foreign investors in the Pakistani market on a long-term basis.

Insurance coverage enhances investor confidence by offering assurance



against potential risks and uncertainties. Lenders and investors often require insurance as a prerequisite for financing renewable energy projects, recognizing its role in safeguarding their interests and ensuring project bankability, he added.

Dr. Jason Shirely, General Manager of ECP and Chemical Professionals, pointed out that Pakistan is highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, resulting in losses to power sector infrastructure.

Therefore, insurance plays a pivotal role in mitigating these risks and providing the financial security necessary for sustainable energy projects.

Climate change poses significant challenges to the sustainable energy sector, with extreme weather events becoming more frequent and severe.

Insurance solutions, including catastrophe risk insurance and climate-risk assessments, help energy companies build resilience, adapt to changing environmental conditions, and mitigate the impacts of climate-related risks on their operations, he added.

Zainab Khatib, Vice President of Lockton MENA, said the insurance stimulates innovation and promotes the adoption of new technologies in the sustainable energy sector. Insurers collaborate with energy companies to develop customized risk management and cybersecurity solutions tailored to the unique challenges of renewable energy projects, driving efficiency, sustainability, and growth.

The summit featured a diverse range of sessions, panel discussions, and networking opportunities focused on driving positive change and shaping the future of energy in Pakistan.

## Gender equality promotes social justice and sustainable development: Dr. Arshad Mahmood

PPA

**KARACHI:** The Employers Federation of Pakistan (EFP) hosted a momentous event ahead of International Women's Day, marking the launch of the EFP Gender Equality Policy Guidelines and honoring 40 organizations for their commitment to fostering gender-inclusive workplaces and empowering women. The ceremony, held at Karachi, witnessed the participation of over 200 guests, including representatives from employers, workers, development partners, and government officials.

Dr. Arshad Mahmood, Federal Secretary of the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. In his address, he emphasized the pivotal role of gender equality in promoting social justice and ensuring sustainable development. He reiterated the government's unwavering commitment to women's empowerment and gender equality, highlighting ongoing initiatives and programs aimed at creating an enabling environment for women to overcome barriers hindering their economic partic-



ipation.

Geir Tonstøl, Country Director of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Country Office Islamabad, emphasized the ILO's commitment to promoting equal opportunities for men and women in the workplace.

President EFP, Malik Tahir Javaid, underscored the significance of gender equality and women's empowerment in his welcome remarks. He expressed gratitude to stakeholders, including ILO, GIZ, and UNICEF, for their support in organizing the event and developing the policy guidelines.

Ms. Faiza Zia, Economic Cooper-

ation & Private Sector Development Advisor, GIZ emphasized the significance of such gatherings and stressed the ongoing necessity for sustained dialogue between employers and policymakers.

Syed Nazar Ali, Secretary-General of EFP, unveiled the EFP Gender Equality Policy Guidelines during the event. This comprehensive guideline is designed to assist organizations committed to creating inclusive workplaces.

Mr. Nazar also announced the winners of the EFP Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Awards.

With over 50 companies submitting applications for the contest, a rigorous evaluation by the Evaluation Committee, which included esteemed members such as Ms. Mehnaz Kaludi, Director of the EFP Board, Ms. Caroline Bates from the ILO, Ms. Kiran Zubair, Member of the Provincial Government Steering Committee for Business and Human Rights, and Ms. Tazeen Mohsin, Organizational Clinical Psychologist and EFP Advisor, resulted in 40 companies meeting the stringent criteria and securing positions in the Diamond, Gold, and Silver categories.

## Philip Morris International receives fourth consecutive CDP 'Triple-A' rating for climate, forest, and water

**ISLAMABAD:** Philip Morris International ("PMI" or "Company"), the parent company of Philip Morris (Pakistan) Limited, proudly announces its receipt of a "triple-A" rating from Carbon Disclosure Project ("CDP") for the fourth consecutive year, for its disclosure on climate change, forest and water security. The Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) is a not-for-profit organization that runs a "global disclosure system for investors, companies, cities, states, and regions to manage their environmental impacts. This recognition places PMI among the world's leading companies in climate change, forest conservation, and water security.

Maintaining its position on CDP's Climate A List for the past decade, PMI remains dedicated to transparency and performance as it progresses toward achieving its ambitious science-based targets. These targets include carbon neutrality for scope 1+2 by 2025 and net zero by 2040 for scope 1+2+3. PMI's efforts to halt deforestation,

moving to zero net deforestation in managed forests by 2030, have also been recognized by CDP, which placed the Company on its Forests A List for the fourth consecutive year. Additionally, PMI has secured its place on CDP's Water A List for the fifth consecutive year, highlighting the Company's ongoing commitment to water optimization targets.

"External recognition from organizations like CDP encourages us to continue our transformation journey and commitment to sustainability. Clear and transparent reporting of the progress helps PMI find new opportunities for action, identify and tackle growing risks, and get ahead of regulatory and policy changes." Said Scott Coutts, Senior Vice President of Operations.

In addition to its CDP rating, PMI is committed to advancing the adoption of the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures ("TNFD") recommendations.

## President of FPCCI invites Russia to take advantage of CPEC by developing a road network in the Wakhan Corridor

PPA

**ISLAMABAD:** Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh President FPCCI and H. E. Albert Khorev, Russian Ambassador to Pakistan have agreed to increase bilateral trade. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to fostering stronger cooperation to increase the bilateral trade volume. This commitment reflects the shared interest in fortifying the enduring friendship and economic partnership between the two countries.

H. E. Albert Khorev Russian Ambassador to Pakistan and Mr. Pavel B. Burlakov, Acting Trade Representative, yesterday visited the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry Capital Office in Islamabad and met Mr Atif Ikram Sheikh President of FPCCI, Mr.

Kairm Aziz Malik Chairman and Malik Sohail Hussain Chairman Coordination FPCCI & other members. During the meeting, the matters of enhancing cooperation in diverse fields, including tourism, trade, investment, technology, and exchange of business delegations were discussed.

On this occasion, President FPCCI Mr Atif Ikram Sheikh said that the total bilateral trade amounted to \$666.85 million in 2022-23. He said that Pakistan possesses trade potential in various product categories for export to Russia, including USD \$ 3.2 billion worth of Knitted apparel and USD \$ 987.3 million worth of cotton products. Additionally, opportunities exist to export leather apparel, citrus fruits, vegetables, salts, and primary polyethylene to Russia.

Atif Ikram Sheikh further said

that Pakistan's exports to Russia encompass a diverse range of products, including citrus fruit, leather apparel, ready-made garments, potatoes, home textiles, woven cotton fabrics, surgical and medical apparatus, woven fabric of synthetic staple fibre, and salt, among others. Key imports from Russia to Pakistan consist of wheat and meslin, dried leguminous vegetables, bituminous coal, and similar solid fuels manufactured from coal, he said, adding Pakistan looks forward to expanding trade, opening up new avenues for cooperation, and further strengthening the long-standing bonds of friendship between the two countries.

President FPCCI Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh invited Russia to take advantage of CPEC by developing road network in Wakhan corridor for linkages with Lowari

tunnel for exporting items and boosting trade through the warm water with the gulf region.

"Russia is the world's second and third largest producer of gas and oil respectively and we can learn and take guidance from Russian technology and experience in enhancing gas and oil exploration and production," Atif Ikram suggested.

Mr. Karim Aziz Malik, Chairman of the Capital Office, said that there is a huge trade and investment potential between Pakistan and Russia. "Enhancing economic trade and investment relations is a prime priority of Pakistan. He further said that Russia valued its relations with Pakistan and both countries had a "good level of cooperation and aimed to enhance it further." He said there is a "great potential between both economies that



needed to be explored more.

Malik Sohail Hussain emphasizes and advocates border trade with Russia and a currency swap agreement and said that Pakistan could export many products to Russia including textile goods, pharmaceuticals, surgical instruments, IT products and services, sports goods, leather products, fruits and vegetables. He further said that the

business community could play an important role in forging stronger relations between the two countries. He emphasized evolving institutional mechanisms to promote economic and commercial cooperation as well as to enhance awareness about trade and investment opportunities available in the two countries.

Russian Ambassador to Pakistan H. E. Albert Khorev invited

Pakistani businessmen to explore huge untapped Russian market where their merchandise could get a good place for having good quality. He said both countries should take sector-specific measures to enhance mutual trade that did not reflect its potential. He said there is a great potential for increasing trade between the two countries and for this purpose contact between the two governments, businessmen and people needs to be increased.

H. E. Albert Khorev assured that the Embassy of Russia will cooperate to increase bilateral trade and will help Pakistan in investment promotion, shifting of modern machinery, development in Oil and Gas exploration, mining, transport, and hydel power generation. He said Russian investors are showing interest in Pakistan.

## Bull & Bears PSX 100-Share Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index		
Current	Prev. Close	
65,656.62	65,726.04	
Day's High	Day's Low	
66,150.94	65,603.88	
Index Value	Change	
12,606,208,390	-69.42	
Percentage	Time	
-0.11%	6 Mar, 2024 5:00 pm	
Europe: FTSE 100 Index		
Index Value	Change	
7,679.31	+33.15	
Percentage	Time	
+0.43%	6 Mar, 4:35 pm GMT	
USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average		
Index Value	Change	
38,791.31	+206.12	
Percentage	Time	
+0.53%	6 Mar, 12:49 pm GMT-5	
Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average		
Index Value	Change	
40,090.78	-6.85	
Percentage	Time	
-0.017%	6 Mar, 3:15 pm GMT+9	
Open Market Forex Rates		
Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	181	183
Bahrain Dinar	743.07	751.07
Canadian Dollar	207	209.2
China Yuan	38.81	39.21
Danish Krone	40.71	41.11
Euro	302.5	305.5
Hong Kong Dollar	35.71	36.06
Indian Rupee	3.37	3.48
Japanese Yen	2.1	2.18
Kuwaiti Dinar	908.31	917.31
Malaysian Ringgit	59.16	59.76
New Zealand \$	170.65	172.65
Norwegians Krone	26.44	26.74
Omani Riyal	725.68	733.68
Qatari Riyal	76.76	77.46
Saudi Riyal	74.5	75.25
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	76.2	76.9
UK Pound Sterling	353.5	358
US Dollar	279.2	282.1

## New Hope

# People should reject political parties playing negative roles: Mian Zahid Hussain

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain said on Wednesday that the current tenure of Mian Shabbaz Sharif as Prime Minister would be better than the previous term.

During his first term as Prime Minister, he made a deal with the IMF and made tough decisions, laying the foundations for economic reforms that saved the country from bankruptcy, he said.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that PM Sharif's efforts saved the country from bankruptcy but caused political damage to his party.

Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that the PM would try hard to improve the country's economy. The business community is sure he will save



the country by sacrificing his reputation for economic stability.

The business leader said the Prime Minister wants to take everyone along to ensure the country's development. His determination in

this regard is commendable. In these circumstances, all political parties must cooperate with him in the country's interest.

However, he said, some parties are not concerned about the economy or the plight of the public, and they would continue to push personal interests.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that the PM should initiate efforts for the Charter of the Economy and the Charter of Reconciliation so that he can focus on national development.

He said the country is going through a critical period, so the Prime Minister should ensure merit and appoint qualified people to important positions so that the government can develop and the people can get some relief.

Suppose the important posts need to be filled on merit. In that case, it will not only affect the reputation of the Prime Minister. Still, it will cause more crises, damaging his popularity and economy, so he should refrain from taking any pressure.

Prime Minister Shabbaz Sharif does not believe in revenge politics and has expressed this many times. He will have to make tough decisions, privatize failed government institutions, end electricity and gas sector losses, reduce energy prices, and increase the tax base so the economy can be pulled out of the dilemma.

Strong and bold steps are also needed on the political front to reduce the political tension that has caused irreparable damage to the country's economy. Reducing political tension will increase the confidence of the public and the business community, which is essential for implementing his agenda.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that even in these critical situations, some political parties are already reacting negatively to the Prime Minister's efforts, which is condemnable because it will harm the country, so the people should reject them so the government can be bailed out.

## Congratulations

The President of the Alpine Club, Abu Zafar Sadiq and Raziuddin Ahmad, CEO/ Founder of Razi Sports Academy, congratulated Mr. Muhammad Tariq, Deputy Registrar Judicial on his promotion to BPS 20. SG Private Schools Association Islamabad Abdul Waheed Khan and Naveed Ahmad Khan, Editor, Daily The Spokesman / Daily IMROZE were also present.



## Shell Pakistan announces financial results for 2023

PPA

ISLAMABAD: The Board of Directors of Shell Pakistan Limited (SPL) announced the company's financial results for the year ended December 31st, 2023. The company posted a profit after tax of PKR 5.8 billion for 2023 compared to the loss of PKR 72 million in 2022.

In October 2023, Shell Petroleum Company Limited, a subsidiary of Shell (Shell), signed an agreement to sell its 77.42% majority interest in Shell Pakistan Limited (SPL) to Wafi Energy LLC. The completion of the transaction is subject to requisite regulatory approvals, completion of legal requirements and satisfaction of other closing formalities.

SPL acknowledges and

welcomes the Government's recent decision to increase industry margins and take robust measures to combat black market activities, which are aimed at stabilizing the currency.

Shell Tameer plays a keen role in upskilling and recognizing young entrepreneurs. Learning sessions were organized across Pakistan engaging universities and incubation centers, training over 700 individuals which included 560 startups. Shell Tameer also celebrated the 10th Tameer Awards, which had more than 400 applications, out of which 6 winners and 6 runners-up were announced.

SPL remains committed to operational excellence, safety performance, strengthen its financial position, and play a responsible role in society.

## 16th Annual CSR Summit & Awards-2024

# Abbasi urges PM to fast-track privatisation in energy sector

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Former prime minister, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, has strongly urged the 16th CSR Summit and Awards-2024 organized by the National Forum for Environment and Health (NFEH) here at a hotel on Wednesday. On the occasion, 77 companies were given awards for their outstanding philanthropic work in the last year for the welfare of the deprived communities in the country.

The former PM said that political stability, rule of law and constitution, and free and fair elections were the prerequisites for stabilising the economy.



Speaking as the guest of honour, Ambassador of Denmark to Pakistan, Jakob Linulf, shared with the audience the Danish success story of effectively tapping renewable energy sources in the country to decrease its reliance on fossil fuels for power production.

Speaking as the other guest of honour, the High Commissioner of Sri Lanka in Pakistan, Admiral Ravindra C Wijegunaratne, informed the audience about the massive global welfare initiative launched by the Sri Lankan nation by donating their eye cornea after death to restore the vision of

blind people around the world.

Speaker of Azad, Jammu & Kashmir Legislative Assembly, Chaudhry Latif Akbar, said the CSR initiatives by the corporate sector could go a long way in promoting the causes of community uplift, poverty alleviation, environmental protection, and slowing down the phenomenon of climate change to serve the needy people in Azad Kashmir.

MNA, Nafisa Shah, called for the adoption of a legal framework to formalise CSR initiatives in Pakistan.

NFEH President, Naeem Qureshi, said the CSR summit organised every year went a long way in promoting the causes of community uplift, reforestation, poverty alleviation, skill development, healthcare, and educational projects for the deprived people in Pakistan.

He urged the corporate sector to combine their CSR resource and initiatives to serve the underprivileged communities in the best possible manner.

# Bayer Pakistan launches collaboration with Greenstar Social Marketing

PPA

KARACHI: Bayer Pakistan's Consumer Health division held an MoU signing ceremony and "Train the Trainer" session in Karachi, marking the launch of EmpowHer - an important new partnership with Greenstar Social Marketing to improve diagnosis and prevention of intimate health issues among women in low-income communities.

The initiative aims to tackle a persisting challenge in women's health in Pakistan: limited health-care access, along with prevalent social taboos that hinder open discussion of intimate health topics leads to the unnecessary

suffering of millions of women.

In Pakistan, 82 million women aged 15+ may suffer from various intimate health issues. 75% of sexually active women may suffer from at least one episode of Vaginal Yeast Infection (VYI). VYI is one of the most common health problems that could affect as many as 3 out of 4 women at some point in their lifetime.

Dr. Galal went on to add, "The EmpowHer program aims to contribute to this goal by training and empowering Lady Health Visitors and other healthcare providers who serve women from lower-income communities. Through them, we hope to reach approximately 10 million women with

the awareness to better manage their own health. We are delighted to have on board with us in this effort, a well-known and trusted name in women's health, Greenstar."

"For our part, Greenstar is very pleased to partner on this project with a reputable multinational leader in healthcare such as Bayer," said CEO of GSM, Dr. Syed Aziz Ur Rab, "Greenstar's focus has remained on reducing morbidity and mortality of mothers and children in Pakistan by providing family planning and family health solutions. This also includes working on issues related to personal hygiene, nutrition, and communicable and non-communicable diseases."



## Hexing Energy's Success at Solar Pakistan Expo with Cutting-Edge Green Energy Solutions

PPA

LAHORE: Hexing Energy (PVT) Ltd., a leading provider of smart and sustainable energy solutions, concluded its successful participation at the International Solar Pakistan Expo. This three-day event served as a platform for Hexing Energy, a subsidiary of Hexing Group, which has been working in Pakistan since 1998, to showcase its diverse range of innovative products and solutions aimed at driving the transition towards a greener and smarter energy future in Pakistan.

During the Expo, Hexing Energy stood out with its pioneering technologies and its booth attracted a significant number of visitors, including industry professionals, government officials, and enthusiasts, all eager to explore Hexing Energy's latest offerings. The Governor of Punjab Muhammad Baligh Ur Rehman also visited the Hexing energy's booth and engaged in conversation with the management team regarding sustainable energy solutions.

The expo provided Hexing Energy with an exceptional platform to engage in discussions about innovative technologies, respond to inquiries, and establish valuable connections within the community. Throughout the expo, Hexing Energy effectively presented its high-tech revolutionary products including solar kits, comprehensive services ranging from system designs to localized technical support and advanced digital operation tools. They also showcased Livolt-ek inverters and batteries, highlighting the contribution of its subsidiary towards advancing renewable energy adoption in Pakistan.

"We are thrilled with the overwhelming response we received at the Solar Pakistan Expo," said Mr. Leo Xu, Director Global Marketing and Regional CEO of South Asia of Hexing Group. "It's inspiring to see the growing enthusiasm for green energy solutions in Pakistan, and we are proud to be at the forefront of this transformation. Our participation in this event reaffirms our commitment to driving sustainability and innovation in Pakistan's energy industry."

HBL PSL 9th Edition

# Lahore Qalandars defeat Islamabad United at home to get off the mark in HBL PSL 9

Asim Tanveer

RAWALPINDI: Lahore Qalandars finally secured their first win of HBL PSL 9 as they defended a competitive total against home-side Islamabad United at Pindi Cricket Stadium, Rawalpindi on Wednesday night. After posting 162 on the board, courtesy of a half-century by Rassie van der Dussen, the Shaheen Shah Afridi-led attack put up a lethal bowling performance to dismiss Islamabad United for 145 runs.

After being put to bat first, Lahore Qalandars posted 162-7 on the board in the first innings despite struggling with the regular fall of wickets. Naseem Shah backed up his maiden opening over in the previous game with another one today as Sahibzada Farhan failed to get off the mark in the first over.

In the fourth over, Hunain Shah reaped benefit of the pressure mounted on the Lahore opening pair in the previous over by Naseem as Farhan (2, 12b) was caught by Faheem Ashraf at deep backward point.

In the next over, Fakhar Zaman too departed after arun aball 10, including one boundary, when Colin Munro pounced a stunning catch at the rope while fielding at deep backward square. Shai Hope, batting at four, could only manage six off nine before he was caught by Jordan Cox to award Imad Wasim a wicket in the seventh over.

With the team struggling at 30-3 in 6.4 overs, captain Shaheen Shah Afridi walked in to bat next in an attempt to arrest the imminent collapse. Shaheen joined Rassie van der Dussen in the middle to produce a vital 25-ball fourth-wicket partnership that yielded 46 runs.

Shaheen smashed two sixes against



Salman Ali Agha in the eighth over, announcing his arrival at the crease. Over the next three overs, Shaheen hit a maximum each until Shadab Khan removed his counterpart in the 11th over. The Lahore captain had to return for a quickfire 30 off 14 balls, showcasing four maximums.

Sikandar Raza made just four off 10 before Azam Khan took an impressive catch to dismiss him. In the 16th over, Faheem conceded 17 runs courtesy of two sixes and a boundary. In the following over, van der Dussen (64, 44, 4x4s, 4x6s) brought up his half-century with a six.

Ahsan Hafeez Bhatti (13, 8b, 1x6) was caught by Munro off Naseem to bring David Wiese to the crease. The seventh-wicket stand between Wiese and van der Dussen yielded 31 off 15 to help Lahore get to a satisfactory total until the latter fell to Rumman in the penultimate over.

Rumman picked up two wickets while Hunain, Naseem, Imad, Faheem

and Shadab had one each. In return, Qalandars bagged five wickets inside the powerplay to mount pressure on the home side in their pursuit of 163. Jahandad took a brilliant catch while running back to long-on to dismiss Alex Hales for a two-ball duck, awarding Shaheen a first-over wicket.

In the next over, Salman (4, 3b, 1x4) was caught behind off Zaman's bowling. In the fifth over, Zaman shattered Shadab's stumps courtesy of a lethal yorker that breached his defenses.

The last over of the powerplay saw Munro (15, 16b, 2x4s) being run out after Jahandad perfected the throw to the keeper, who removed the bails with the batter still shy of the crease. Imad Wasim, the next batter in, hit a four on his first ball but was caught at slips by substitute fielder Abdullah Shafique on the very next ball.

Jahandad, introduced to the attack after the powerplay, backed up his earlier performance in the field with a catch and bowled to dismiss Jordan



Cox (7, 7b, 1x4) as United fell deeper in trouble with the scoreboard reading 39-6 in 7 overs.

Faheem Ashraf and Azam Khan (29, 19b, 3x4s, 2x6s) stitched a 35-run seventh-wicket partnership until the latter was dismissed by Ahsan. Naseem joined Faheem in the middle and the two batted together to add 42 to the total; the highest partnership for Islamabad in the innings.

In the 16th over, Naseem (27, 16b, 2x4s, 2x6s) hit Shaheen for two consecutive sixes. Immediately after, Shaheen got his revenge as he castled his stumps

to bag his 100th HBL PSL wicket – becoming the youngest and the fastest player to achieve the milestone.

Zaman picked up the last two wickets, removing Hunain and Rumman, to dismiss United for 145 in the penultimate over, with Faheem stranded on one end at an unbeaten 41 off 31, with four boundaries and a six.

Zaman accounted for four wickets, Shaheen picked up two while Ahsan, Jahandad and Wiese had one each to their name as Lahore won by 17 runs.

Scores in brief  
Lahore Qalandars beat Islamabad

United by 17 runs  
Lahore Qalandars 162-7, 20 overs (Rassie van der Dussen 64, Shaheen Shah Afridi 30, David Wiese 24 not out; Rumman Raees 2-19)

Islamabad United 145 all out, 18.5 overs (Faheem Ashraf 41 not out, Azam Khan 29, Naseem Shah 27; Zaman Khan 4-37, Shaheen Shah Afridi 2-32)

Player of the match – Rassie van der Dussen (Lahore Qalandars)  
7th March  
Fixture: Islamabad United v Karachi Kings, Pindi Cricket Stadium, Rawalpindi (7pm)

## Dismissal celebration

RAWALPINDI: Quetta Gladiators players celebrates after Karachi Kings Shan Masood dismissals during the Pakistan Super League (PSL) Twenty20 cricket match between Karachi Kings and Quetta Gladiators at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium on Wednesday.



Photo: Online

## Islamabad women's team clinched the trophy from the Peshawar team after a spirited battle

ISLAMABAD: The inaugural Unity Cup, a T20 cricket match between the women's teams of Peshawar and Islamabad, brought the spirit of empowerment and unity to the National Cricket Ground in Islamabad. Both teams performed exceptionally, exhibiting their skills with impressive boundary hits. Ultimately, the Islamabad women's team clinched the trophy from the Peshawar team after a spirited battle.

Hosted by the Institute of Research and Reforms International (IRR) in collaboration with the Rehman Malik Foundation under the leadership of Mr. Ali Rehman Malik, the Unity Cup exhibited the power of sports to inspire women and unite



communities.

Mr. Ali Rehman Malik, Chairman of IRR International and Rehman Malik Foundation expressed his delight at the event's significance, stating, "The Unity Cup exemplifies our commitment to empowering women and fostering solidarity among our people, a message that resonates deeply in these challenging times." He stated that he is continuing the legacy of his late father, Senator

A. Rehman Malik, by advocating for women's empowerment, minority rights, and the welfare of marginalized communities.

As the Peshawar and Islamabad women's teams battled it out on the field, spectators were treated to a spectacle of skill and determination. Umar Rehman Malik, the head of PPP Digital Media Islamabad, appreciated the initiative, highlighting the talent and capabilities of young women

champions from Islamabad and Peshawar. He said that in a moment of unity, players from both teams came together to symbolize the shared spirit of sportsmanship and camaraderie, reinforcing the message of inclusivity and harmony that the Unity Cup represents.

Riaz Ali Turi, Director at IRR International, emphasized that the Unity Cup celebrated women's cricket while also highlighting the importance of women's empowerment and unity. He said that this is a first-of-its-kind cricket match between Islamabad and Peshawar women and IRR International is committed to organizing such events in future.

## Overseas training for the softball players will be sponsored by Combaxx Sports: Omar Saeed

Sports Desk

LAHORE: Omar Saeed, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Combaxx Sports, an international brand of sports equipment, has said that softball is becoming the favourite sport of the youth in the country. Our organization will do its best to improve the infrastructure of this sport in Pakistan and for the welfare of the players. As a tech-

nical partner, every year Combaxx Sports will sponsor two athletes (one male and one female) nominated by the Softball Federation of Pakistan for training abroad.

He expressed these views on the occasion of a meeting with the delegation led by Softball Federation of Pakistan President Asif Azeem, Senior Vice President of the Federation Professor Dr. Farhan Essa, Chairperson

Yasmin Hyder, Vice Presidents Farah Saeed, Tehmina Asif, Dr. Hina Jamshed, Abdul Wahab Sultan, Director of Siccotel and Muhammad Zubair Macha, General Manager of Compaxx Sports were also present on the occasion.

CEO Combaxx Sports Omar Saeed said that we want to see sports flourishing in Pakistan and we wish that softball players, like other sports, can get

world-class equipment in their country.

Combaxx Sports will provide scholarships to 5 deserving softball players every month by providing financial support in addition to an annual awards ceremony for players who have won medals for Pakistan at the national and international levels and a women's sports event will also be sponsored every year.

Sports Desk

KARACHI: Zone-IV Whites beat Zone-VII Whites by 5 Wickets in their last match. Zone-IV Whites and Zone-VII Whites both winning 5 matches and got 10 Points each but on better net run rate Zone-IV Whites moved into Semi Final from Group "C". The Tournament is being organized by Regional Cricket Association Karachi.

Zone-VII Whites 256 all out in 43.3 overs. Syed Mehmood Shah 85 10x4 1x6, Hamza Ghanchi 68 10x4 2x6, Basit Khan 27, Fawad Khan 21. Ejaz Shah 3/10, Niamat Khan 3/40, Arsalan Farzand 2/47, Hamza Qureshi 2/59.

Zone-IV Whites 251/5 in 43.2 overs. Ejaz Shah 80 6x4 2x6, Muhammad Waqas 73 5x4 3x6, Arsalan Farzand 47, Talah Ahsan 33 not out. Basit Khan 2/24, Qadir Khan

2/68.

In the 2nd Match Zone-V Blues beat Zone-VI Reds by 3 Wickets at TMC Ground. Zone-VI Reds 214 all out in 43.5 overs. S. M. Thami 68 10x4, Ikram Khan 43, Abdul Rehman 33, Zain Anwar 29. Zohaib Abid 3/39, Syed Izzanuddin 3/54, Junaid Ilyas 2/23. Zone-V Blues. 215/7 in 34.4 overs. Zohaib Abid 95 14x4, Muhammad Asif 64 12x4 2x6. Nehal Rasheed

3/41, Tariq Khan 2/38.

In the 3rd Match at KCCA Stadium Zone-II Whites beat Zone-V Whites by 64 runs. Zone-II Whites 279/5 in 45 overs. Usama Butt 105 14x4, Ali Hasan 47, Hassan Jaffri 40, Sohail Khan 33, Saeed Khan 32. Waseem Ahmed 2/38.

Zone-V Whites 215/7 in 45 overs. Shah Raza 129 14x4, Rumail Ahmed 26, Sameer 23.

## 18th National Women's Baseball Championship

Tahir Amin Malik.

LAHORE: The 18th National Women's Baseball Championship, organized by the Pakistan Federation Baseball, concluded today at FC College, Lahore. The championship witnessed intense competition, with teams from the four provinces, Islamabad, Pakistan Army, Pakistan WAPDA, Pakistan Police, and HEC showcasing their exceptional skills and sportsmanship.

The closing ceremony, graced by Chief Guest Shaukat Javed, President Pakistan Federation Baseball, was a momen-

tant occasion where medals and trophies were distributed among the winning players. Secretary Pakistan Federation Baseball Syed Fakhr Shah, along with other distinguished guests, including Executive Director Moazzam Khan Klair, Sheikh Mazhar, Hamood Lakhvi, Jameel Kamran, Shahzada Butt, Mohsin Khan, and Organizer Secretary Amjad Khan, contributed to the celebration of the athletes' achievements.

In the final match between Pakistan Army and Pakistan WAPDA, Pakistan WAPDA emerged victorious by defeat-

ing Pakistan Army by 3 runs. WAPDA displayed outstanding performance, playing 7 innings and scoring a total of 13 runs, while Pakistan Army couldn't secure any score in the last innings.

The scoring details from WAPDA included Gul Feroza with 3 runs, Anila, Madiha, and Umm Hani with 2 runs each, and Ayesha Ejaz, Saiqa, Noreen, and Iram contributing 1 run each. On the Army side, Madiha scored 3 runs, Atiya Saif with 2 runs, and Zahida, Asia, Maimuna, and Saima Khalid with 1 run each.

The Pakistan Federation Base-

ball extends its heartfelt congratulations to Pakistan WAPDA for clinching the title and commends all participating teams for their dedication to the sport. The 18th National Women's Baseball Championship has not only showcased exceptional talent but also strengthened the spirit of camaraderie and sportsmanship within the women's baseball community.

Pakistan Federation Baseball The Pakistan Federation Baseball is the governing body for baseball in Pakistan, dedicated to promoting and developing the sport at all levels.



## Called on

ISLAMABAD: Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir NI (M) calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday.



Photo: Online

## PM, COAS discuss security, army's professional matters

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Chief of the Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir on Wednesday called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif here at the Prime Minister's House.

In the meeting, they discussed

the Pakistan Army's professional as well as the security-related matters, a Prime Minister's Office press release said.

The army chief also congratulated Prime Minister Shehbaz on assuming the office and expressed good wishes for him.

## Ninth round of Pakistan-EU political dialogue focuses on trade, security

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and the European Union in their ninth round of Political Dialogue here on Wednesday covered the entire gamut of bilateral relationship encompassing all areas of mutual interest with a focus on Strategic Engagement Plan (SEP), trade and development cooperation, security, climate action, migration and mobility.

Foreign Secretary Muhammad Syrus Sajjad Qazi led the Pakistani delegation while the EU side was led by Deputy Secretary General of the European External Action Service Enrique Mora.

Important regional and global developments were also discussed. Expressing satisfaction over the positive trajectory of the relations, the two sides agreed to continue working towards further deepening and broadening of Pakistan-EU bilateral ties in all areas of mutual interest by regularly holding meetings of institutional mechanisms and undertaking follow-up actions. Highlighting the impor-

ance of Pakistan-EU bilateral ties, the two sides agreed that regular high-level interactions have provided a new impetus to the relationship and underlined the necessity for close cooperation and dialogue amid rapidly changing geopolitical landscape.

Acknowledging GSP Plus as a successful template of trade for development and mutually beneficial cooperation, the Foreign Secretary underlined the need for fostering deeper collaboration with key stakeholders on both sides to bring diversification and sustainability in trade ties between Pakistan and the European Union.

The two sides also agreed to explore new opportunities under the EU's flagship programs; Global Gateway Strategy and Horizon Europe.

## Pakistan desires to expand trade, economic cooperation with friendly countries: President

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Wednesday said that Pakistan desired to expand its trade and economic relations with the friendly countries. The president expressed these views during separate meetings with Ambassador-designate of Pakistan to Portugal Dr Muhammad Khalid Ejaz and Ambassador-designate of Pakistan to Myanmar Imran Haider, who called on him at the Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Pakistan desires to expand

trade, economic cooperation with friendly countries: President Talking to ambassador-designate to Portugal, the president urged him to work for further strengthening of bilateral trade ties with his host country, adding that Pakistan was ensuring conducive environment for the economic and trade activities. The foreign investors should avail of such business-friendly environment in Pakistan, President Secretariat Press Wing, in a press release, quoted the president as saying. President Alvi also underlined the need



of enhancing political, cultural and people to people contacts between Pakistan and Portugal, besides strengthening of

exchanges at the political level. Portuguese IT companies could benefit from the skilled human resources of Pakistan in the respective sector, he opined. The president, during his meeting with ambassador designate to Myanmar, stressed upon further cementing of bilateral relations between the two countries. He stressed that both countries were required to enhance their cooperation in business sector to promote trade. Ancient Buddhism heritage in Pakistan could further bring the two countries closer in tourism and cultural sectors. On the occasion, the president also separately expressed his good wishes for the success of both envoys.

## PM seeks final implementation schedule for PIA's privatization

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Wednesday sought a final implementation schedule for the privatization of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA).

He was chairing a high level meeting on the PIA's privatization and restructuring of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR).

The prime minister directed the Ministry of Privatization to present the schedule about the PIA's privatization in the next two days after taking necessary steps.

He warned that no laxity and irresponsibility would be tolerated and said that complete transparency should be ensured in all phases of privatization.

During the meeting, the



participants reviewed the progress on the privatization of PIA and considered the next phases of the process.

The proposed roadmap for the system of automation of Federal Board of Revenue was also approved in principle.

The participants considered in detail the proposals for transparency in the system of FBR, infrastructure

reforms according to international standards, increase in taxes through incentives, eradication of corruption and smuggling, separation of inland revenue and customs departments, and decrease in tax rates.

The PM said that the roadmap should be implemented with clear-cut timelines. The targets should be determined realistically

but the implementation of reforms should be the fastest in the region, he said, adding the targets could be achieved with round the clock work as "we do not have time to waste as it is a matter of shining future of Pakistan and economic recovery".

Former caretaker minister for finance Dr Shamsah Akhtar gave a detailed briefing about the restructuring of FBR, automation and on different aspects of the loopholes in collection of taxes and the future strategy.

She informed the meeting that Pakistan's tax to GDP was 9.5 percent which was low as compared to other countries and it was very necessary to increase it for progress and development.

She said that 55.6 percent of the population did not

give any taxes while only 3.3 percent were paying taxes. Only 200,000 people were giving 90 percent of the taxes.

She said that recovery of Rs 1.7 trillion of taxes could not be made because of the legal process.

Senators Ishaq Dar and Musadiq Malik, Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Attaullah Tarar, Shiza Fatima Khawaja, Romina Khurshid Alam and Ali Pervaiz Malik; Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan Ahad Cheema; Deputy Chairman Planning Commission Dr Jehanzaib, State Bank Governor, FBR Chairman, Secretary Privatization and other high level officials attended the meeting.

Prominent banker Muhammad Aurangzeb took part in the meeting through video link.

## Palestinians 'beaten and sexually assaulted' at Israeli detention centres, UN report claims

Julian Borger in Washington

An internal UN report describes widespread abuse of Palestinian detainees in Israeli detention centres, including beatings, dog attacks, the prolonged use of stress positions and sexual assault.

The report was compiled by the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine (UNRWA) and is largely based on interviews of Palestinian detainees released at the Kerem Shalom crossing point since December, when UNRWA staff were present to provide humanitarian support.

The report, which has been circulated within the UN and seen by the Guardian, says that just over 1,000 detainees have been released since December. But it estimates that more than 4,000 men, women and children have been rounded up in Gaza since the start of the current conflict, triggered by Hamas raids into southern Israel on 7 October which killed about 1,200 Israelis,

mostly civilians.

Israel denies the abuse allegations, which it described as Hamas-inspired propaganda. It has named 12 UNRWA staff it claims took part in the 7 October attack, and claims that 450 of the agency's 13,000 workers in Gaza are members of Hamas or other militant groups.

The allegations, which are being studied by two separate UN inquiries, have so far not been substantiated. The UNRWA report says that its employees have been detained, many while carrying out aid work, subjected to abuse, and put under pressure to smear the agency.

Their Israeli jailers, it alleges, "Through beatings and other mistreatment and threats, sought to elicit operational information and forced confessions".

The UNRWA report said that among the 1,002 detainees released since December at the Kerem Shalom crossing, there were 29 children as young as

six (26 boys and three girls), 80 women and 21 UNRWA staff. Some had chronic conditions such as Alzheimer's or were cancer patients.

"Detainees reported being taken on trucks to large makeshift 'military barracks' housing 100-120 people each, where they were held, often for weeks at a time, in between periods of interrogation at a nearby location," the UNRWA document said, in allegations first reported by the New York Times. It claims the worst abuse occurs in these detention and interrogation centres before the detainees are transferred to the Israeli prison system.

Legislation passed by the Knesset since the Gaza offensive began and extended for three months in January, allows the security services to hold detainees for 180 days without providing access to a lawyer.

The UNRWA report says: "Methods of ill-treatment reported included physical beatings,

forced stress positions for extended periods of time, threats of harm to detainees and their families, attacks by dogs, insults to personal dignity and humiliation such as being made to act like animals or getting urinated on, use of loud music and noises, deprivation of water, food, sleep and toilets, denial of the right to practice their religion (to pray) and prolonged use of tightly locked handcuffs causing open wounds and friction injuries.

"The beatings included blunt force trauma to the head, shoulders, kidneys, neck, back and legs with metal bars and the butts of guns and boots, in some cases resulting in broken ribs, separated shoulders and lasting injuries," the report alleges.

"While in an off-site location, several individuals reported being forced into cages and attacked by dogs, with some individuals including a child exhibiting dog bite wounds on release."

The allegations in the report could not be independently



verified but are consistent with accounts given to the Guardian, and collected by human rights organisations.

The report included allegations of widespread sexual assault, although not rape. Women detainees reported being groped while blindfolded, and some male prisoners said they were beaten in the genitals.

"Another detainee reported being made to sit on an electrical probe, causing burns to his anus,

the scars for which could still be seen weeks later," the UNRWA report said. "He indicated that another detainee had also suffered the same treatment and died as a result of his infected wounds."

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) issued a blanket denial of the allegations in the UNRWA report.

"The mistreatment of detainees during their time in detention or whilst under interrogation violates IDF values and contravenes IDF

orders and is therefore absolutely prohibited," a written statement provided to the Guardian said.

It added: "IDF denies general and unsubstantiated claims regarding sexual abuse of detainees in the IDF's detention facilities. These claims are another cynical attempt to create a false equivalency with the systematic use of rape as a weapon of war by Hamas."

The statement denied any use of sleep deprivation and claimed that music was only played "at a low volume in a specific place where the detainees are waiting for questioning (in a place where guards are also present), in order to prevent the detainees from talking to each other while waiting for the questioning". Original story published by the Guardian. If you read it, then click the mentioned link <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/mar/05/gazan-detainees-beaten-and-sexually-assaulted-at-israeli-detention-centres-un-report-claims>