



**Pakistan joins OIC FMs call for immediate ceasefire in Gaza**

Pakistan Thursday joined call of the Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire and cessation of Israeli aggression in Gaza and the provision of unimpeded and adequate humanitarian, medical and relief aid, provision of water and electricity, and the opening of humanitarian corridors to deliver urgent aid. (Details on Page 8)



**United Nations and Embassy of Denmark host International Women's Day Gala**

Today the UN Resident Coordinator Office in Pakistan, UN Women and the Embassy of Denmark hosted an International Women's Day (IWD) Gala in Islamabad highlighting the importance of investing in women to shape a better future for all in Pakistan. The gala, titled "Empowering Women: A Smart Investment for Pakistan", was building on this year's IWD's theme, "Invest in Women: Accelerate Progress." (Details on Page 5)

Simultaneously published from Islamabad, Lahore and Multan

**Called on**

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Joint Chief of Staff Committee General Sahir Shamshad Mirza calls on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday.



Photo: PID

**CJCSC Gen Sahir calls on PM Shehbaz**

**Spokesman Report**  
The CJCSC congratulated the prime minister on assuming his office and expressed best wishes for him. During the meeting, the professional and security matters of the armed forces also came under discussion.

**PM thanks world leaders for good wishes on assumption of office**

**City Desk**  
ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday expressed gratitude to the world leaders for extending felicitations and prayers for him on the assumption of office. The prime minister took to X to thank the leaders including Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Amir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Iranian President Dr. Ebrahim Raisi and Kenyan President William Ruto. "I wish to thank my brother, His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Crown Prince and Prime Minister of brotherly Saudi Arabia, for the warm wishes and prayers on my assumption of the office of Prime Minister," the prime minister said. He also thanked Kenyan President William Ruto for his wishes, saying that Pakistan and Kenya enjoyed close and cordial relations. The prime minister said that he looked forward to continued collaboration for further enhancement of bilateral ties and economic cooperation.

**PM-Privatisation**

**PM for removing hurdles to expedite privatisation process**

**Spokesman Report**  
ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday stressed for expediting the privatisation process of those State Owned Enterprises (SOEs), causing constant dent to the national exchequer, to stabilize the national economy and provide maximum relief to the common man. "Obstacles in the process of privatisation be removed at the earliest so that the country and the nation can get rid of losses of billions of rupees and improve the economic condition," he said while chairing a high level meeting on privatisation. The prime minister also directed to take immediate

steps for enhancing the capacity of departments linked with the privatisation process. Reviewing the complete list and progress report of all the institutions involved in the privatisation process, the prime minister directed to submit the detail of actions and goals with a clear determination of time frame. He also directed the Privatization Commission and the Ministry to present pending issues related to the privatization to the cabinet soon after its formation for timely decisions as there was no room for further delay. The prime minister said that the country and its people were compelled to pay the heavy price of loss-making institutions,



urging the quarters concerned to play their sincere role in getting rid of them. He made it clear that quality, transparency and national interest would be kept supreme,

suggest solutions exhibiting professionalism and passion as it is a matter of Pakistan's betterment." The meeting was apprised that March 5 was the last date for receiving bids for outsourcing the airport. The meeting was attended by Senators Ishaq Dar and Musadik Malik, Shaza Fatima Khawaja, Rumina Khurshed Alam, Ahad Cheema, Ali Pervaiz Malik, Rana Ehsan Afzal, Deputy Chairman Planning Commission, Federal Board of Revenue Chairman, Secretary Privatisation Commission, Secretary Ministry of Law and other high officials. Renowned Banker Muhammad Aurangzeb participated in the meeting through a video link.

**SJC opines Justice Sayyed Mazahar Ali Akbar Naqvi was guilty of misconduct**

**City Desk**  
ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Judicial Council held on Thursday that former apex court judge Justice Sayyed Mazahar Ali Akbar Naqvi was guilty of misconduct and should have been removed from the office of judge. "SJC rendered its opinion in respect of the nine complaints against Sayyed Mazahar Ali Akbar Naqvi under Article 209(6) of the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan and opined that he was guilty of misconduct and should have been removed from the office of judge," said a press release by the SJC secretary. The decision comes around two months after Naqvi resigned from the SC, citing that it was no longer possible for him to continue due to circumstances which were "a matter of public knowledge". He took the step after the Supreme Court rejected his request to stay proceedings against him in the SJC over alleged misconduct. But the SC on Feb 21 declared that the SJC can continue proceeding against the apex court judges despite their resignation or retirement. Headed by CJP Isa, the SJC consists of Justice Tariq Masood, Justice Ijazul Ahsan,



Continued on Page 8

**Ishaq Dar to be made foreign minister: sources**

**Naveed Ahmad Khan**  
ISLAMABAD: PML-N leader Ishaq Dar would be made the foreign minister, sources told Aaj News on Thursday, as Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif makes his team to spearhead the country. Former caretaker foreign minister Jalil Abbas Jilani would be the adviser to the PM on foreign affairs and Tariq Fatemi would be the special assistant to the PM on foreign affairs. They added that three had a meeting with PM Shehbaz in Islamabad. A team under the leadership of Dar would work for foreign affairs. Dar's new portfolio was decided after he was out of the race for new finance minister. The chief executive officer of Habib Bank Ltd, Muhammad Aurangzeb, is likely to be tapped for a top position in the finance team of newly elected PM Shehbaz Sharif, sources within the PML-N earlier this week told Aaj News. He is expected to be made the adviser to the prime minister on finance.

**Two terrorists killed in separate operations in Khyber, DI Khan: ISPR**

**Adam Khan Wazir**  
D. I. KHAN: Troops patrol near the military checkpoint following an attack by militants in the Sari Norang area of Lakki Marwat district on February 2, 2013. AFP Two terrorists were killed in separate operations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Wednesday, the military's media wing said on Thursday. In a statement, the Inter-Services Public Relations said that security forces killed a terrorist ring leader who was identified as Shmrooz Sheenay during intelligence based operation in the Khyber district. "In another operation conducted by the security forces in Dera Ismail Khan district, terrorist Mansoor was also successfully neutralised," it added. The statement stated that weapons, ammunition and explosives were also recovered from the site of the incident. The terrorist remained "actively involved in numerous terrorist activities against security forces".

**Fazl says Parliament becomes a symbolic institution**

**Bureau Report**  
LAHORE: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman said that the Parliament has become a 'symbolic institution' and democracy is losing its ground. Addressing the party's Punjab general council, Maulana Fazlur Rehman said that the Parliament is being brought into existence according to Western interests. He said that he invited the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) to join the opposition or it might become a target of the JUI-F's movement. "After the General Elections 2024, I toll PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif not to form the government and instead sit in opposition," he added. He said that individuals in villages and rural areas are frequently pushed to vote for specific candidates against their choice. "Our party is frequently told to withdraw its candidate in favor of someone else. If we present evidence, there will be no refuge for you," he said.

**CTD foils 'terror attack' on Adiala jail**

**Monitoring Desk**  
ISLAMABAD: Aleem Malik is ARY News correspondent for power division, water resources, ministry of commerce and other business-related issues RAWALPINDI: In a joint operation, Punjab Counter Terrorismism Department (CTD) and police foiled an attempt to attack Adiala jail, arresting 3 terrorists with explosives and the jail map on Thursday night, ARY News reported quoting Rawalpindi police. According to City Police Officer, (CPO) Syed Khalid Hamdani, CTD personnel and police conducted a joint operation and arrested three terrorists with sophisticated weapons including explosives, Improvised Explosive Device (IED), and a map of the prison. The law enforcers conducted IBO after they received information about the presence of the terrorists in the area, he said. The arrested terrorists belonged to Afghanistan and wanted to conduct terror activities in the area, the CPO said and informed that police and law enforcement agencies were conducting search operation in adjoining area of Adiala jail.

**Donkeys in demand after soaring fuel prices**

**Web Desk**  
Sudan has seen a sudden spike in the demand for donkeys after a whopping increase in fuel prices, according to international media. People in the war-weary country have been turning to donkey carts as petrol stations run out of fuel. "I escaped war in Khartoum and reached al-Qadiri. Like others, I also did not get a job here. That's why I decided to buy this donkey cart," Hasan Abubakar Hasan, who is now homeless, said. A video shared by The Independent Urdu on Facebook showed that a large number of donkeys were present in al-Qadiri at a Friday Bazaar. People have switched to old modes of transportation with the increase in fuel prices, it added. Thousands of people have been killed in Sudan's civil war since last April, according to United Nations experts. Media reports say the war has also disrupted the food supply in the country.





# PM AJK says will end regionalism and nepotism in Azad Kashmir

Bureau Report

Prime Minister Azad Kashmir, Chaudhry Anwar ul Haq, while reiterating his commitment to eliminate the scourge of regionalism, financial malfeasance, corruption and nepotism from society, has said that he would spare no efforts in rooting out the decades old status quo. Prime Minister Haq expressed these views while addressing at the inauguration ceremony of Shah Sultan Burj here today. Speaking on the occasion, the PM said that his sole mission was to serve the masses. "Rather than making announcements I prefer to see things happen on the ground", he said, adding that things have begun to change and this change can be visible on the ground soon as the coalition government had taken a number of initiatives to correct the system and improve governance in the state. "A lot of improvement will be seen on the ground by the end of June", he said, adding that the government has done a lot of work to improve education,



health, hydel and tourism sectors. "Additional thirty kanals of land has been provided to Abbas Institute of Medical Sciences", he said, adding that Ambor area would be converted into a health city. He said that so far 43 billion rupees have been spent on different development projects in Azad Kashmir.

The PM said that the Public Service Commission, Accountability Bureau and Anti-Corruption have been made

active. The government, he said, has doubled the budget for medicines. Serving humanity, he said, was his first and foremost priority. He said that along with the development of Azad Kashmir, the government will continue its efforts to strengthen the freedom movement in Occupied Kashmir and fulfill the dream of our forefathers to join Pakistan. On this occasion Senior Most Minister Colonel Retired Waqar Ahmed Noor, Opposition Leader

Khawaja Farooq Ahmed, Ministers Faisal Mumtaz Rathore, Sardar Javed Ayub, Raja Muhammad Siddique Khan, Diwan Ali Khan Chagatai, Nisar Ansar Abdali, Akmal Sargala, Sardar Mir Akbar Khan, Chaudhry Muhammad Rashid, Chaudhry Yasir Sultan, Javed Butt, Faheem Akhtar Rabbani, Malik Muhammad Zafar and others were present.

Meanwhile: Prime Minister Azad Jammu and Kashmir Chaudhry Anwar ul Haq on Thursday inaugurated the 120-meter Shah Sultan Burj being built in the capital city Muzaffarabad at a cost of 528.321 million rupees. The authorities concerned gave a detailed briefing to the AJK premier regarding the quality of work and timely completion of the project. On this occasion, senior Minister Col. Retired Waqar Ahmed Noor, Leader of Opposition Khwaja Farooq Ahmed, Ministers Faisal Mumtaz Rathore, Sardar Javed Ayub, Raja Muhammad Siddique Khan, Dewan Ali Khan Chaghtai, Nisar Ansar Abdali, Akmal Sargala, and others were present.

## Sardar Attique says women play pivotal role in development of human society

Abdul Majeed Tahir



RAWALPINDI: Former Prime Minister and President of All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference Sardar Attique Ahmad Khan has said that I congratulate the women of Pakistan and Azad Kashmir all over the world on their International Day. International Women's Day is a day to

recognize the key role of women in the evolution of human civilization and acknowledge their services in the development of human civilization. He said that history is a witness that the development of human society was not possible without the constructive role of women. A mother with attributes keeps a human being in her womb for several months and gives birth to him, nurtures him. When a woman takes the form of a sister, she teaches a person to respect others in the society, and when she becomes a mercy and brightens the court of a person in the form of a daughter, she makes her a responsible member of the society. Women were given equal rights 14 hundred years ago. Heaven under the feet of the mother and the daughter as the mercy of the house. Islam encourages women to play a positive role in every field of life without degrading their dignity. The current human society is full of examples of women's services in every field. In the world of the 21st century, women are engaged in the development of human civilization alongside men. Pick up any sector today and we will see women performing their domestic responsibilities well and in leadership roles in every sector, which is a welcome development. Be it Fatima Jinnah or Begum Rana Liaquat Khan in the Pakistan Movement. Be it Ms. Benazir Bhutto Shaheed and other referendum women, the central role of women in the development and evolution of Pakistan cannot be denied at any cost. Almost half of Pakistan's population consists of women.

## All preparations completed to highlight International Women Day in AJK: Shaukat Javed Mir

Abdul Majeed Tahir

MUZAFFARABAD: International Women's Day is being celebrated today with great devotion and ideological enthusiasm in the four provinces of Pakistan and the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Demands will be made to implement the provision of justice to women who are victims of oppression in Jammu and Kashmir Palestine and to stop the violations of the Geneva Convention. Several events have been organized in the capital Muzaffarabad. The biggest event is the People's Party in the Central Press Club. A seminar organized by Azad Kashmir Women's Department will be held as the special guest of Speaker Legislative Assembly Chaudhry Latif Akbar. Regarding preparations and arrangements for the International Women's Day yesterday, People's Party Azad Kashmir's Central Deputy Secretary of Information, Shaukat Javed Mir, nominated candidate for Assembly Constituency Seven, said that the dignified and long-lasting protection of the legitimate rights of women is the protection of chador and the protection of four walls. The great philosophies of Islamic teachings are preserved in life. Shaukat Javed Mir said that Ms. Fatima Jinnah, Ms. Benazir Bhutto, martyr mother of democracy, Ms. Nusrat Bhutto Bandra, Naika Indira Gandhi, Begum Rana Liaquat Ali, women who patiently fought and made sacrifices around the world. Shaukat Javed Mir said that the coalition government in Azad Kashmir under the leadership of Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwar-ul-Haq has made a break in standing alongside men by representing five women in the cabinet.



## SC raises the prestige of judiciary: Habibullah Shakir



Mustansar Shah Nawaz

MULTAN: Senior leader of Pakistan People's Party and Former Justice of Lahore High Court Habibullah Shakir Advocate has said that the Supreme Court of Pakistan has raised the prestige of the judiciary by deciding the case of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and raised our morale. Today the judiciary is correcting its mistakes. He expressed these views in the press club during the conference, Nasheed Arif Gondal, Zoar Hussain Qureshi, Tariq Chaudhry, Manzoor Qadri, Salim Shehzad, Chaudhry Yasin, Malik Siddique Tahim, Khalid Zafar Vance, Mian Ashfaq Hussain Advocate Supreme Court were also present on this occasion. Habibullah Shakir further said that We appreciate the decision of the Supreme Court. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto had said that The trial is being murdered, the right to appeal was taken away from us, today the judiciary has increased courage. But Benazir Bhutto was also martyred and today Sahib Bilawal Bhutto They are struggling and Bilawal Bhutto is fighting for the survival of the country and the nation. We are all Pakistanis. We have made sacrifices. will be given but it was their crude imagination which appeared in the form of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto then 27Ms. Benazir Bhutto was martyred in December 2007 and today the struggle continues under the leadership of Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. Because during the Zia-ul-Haq era, Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto had fundamental rights Deprived of and violation of the constitution and law, it is enough to give an opinion in the nine-member bench of the Supreme Court and this is a unanimous decision. Because of the decision of the Supreme Court, the Bhutto family and their fans The value of fans has increased, this is a historic decision.

## Ration in Multan Division accelerated during Ramadan-DC Khanewal

Waqar Paracha

KHANEWAL: Commissioner Multan Division Ms Mariam Khan Said Punjab government's Ramadan Nigehban Package for providing ration has further been accelerated. An 18-kilogram ration bag, reaching every household with dignity, has been presented to the citizens by the Punjab government and administration, receiving commendation. Commissioner Multan Division, Mariam Khan, suddenly visited Khanewal city to check the distribution of rations and personally distributed them. She checked the online app and verified the process of citizens' verification. Commissioner Mariam Khan also met with the public and addressed their concerns. Ration distribution would be done among more than 900,000 individuals in the division, with over 25,000 bags distributed so far. All ration bags are being provided to the relevant individuals through QR codes and identity card scans, says Ms Khan.

DC Khanewal Wasim Hamid Sindhu stated that the task of inspecting the quality of food hampers has been entrusted to the Food Authority. Efforts are being made to ensure the distribution of ration bags to all deserving individuals before the prescribed period. Assistant Commissioner City Semal Mushtaq, along with other officials from relevant departments, were also present on the occasion.



## Tent-pegging competition

FAISALABAD: Vice Chancellor of University of Agriculture Dr. Iqar Ahmad Khan giving trophy to winner of tent-pegging competition during Jashn-e-Baharan festival at Agriculture University, in the city.



Photo: Online

## Spring Festival held at Women University Katchery Campus Multan

Kiran Asim

MULTAN: According to Dr Anum Zahra Spokeswoman Women's University Multan Said Vice-Chancellor Prof Dr Kalsoom Pracha on Thursday inaugurated two days Jashn-i-Baharan (spring festival) here at the Katchery Campus, the Women University Multan, comprising traditional sports gala, music, handicraft and eatery exhibitions etc. This colorful event is organized by the Directorate of Sports, Women University Multan in collaboration with the Population Welfare Department and SSDO.

Registrar Prof. Dr Mamoon Khan, Controller Examinations Dr. Hina Ali, District Population Welfare Officer, Mr.



Khizar, Deputy District Officer Population Welfare Muhammad Hassan, Director Academics, Dr Maryam Zain, all chairpersons were also present on the occasion.

On the occasion, Vice Chancellor Prof

Dr Kalsoom Pracha said that because of modern gadgets people had become self-indulgent and were forgetting their own culture and traditional sports of Punjab.

She said it was heartening to see

youngsters participating in the competitions of traditional sports like cricket, tug of war, badminton and cultural tableau, as well as science and flower exhibitions, Mushaira, variety show and musical night organised as part of the festival. VC Prof Dr Kalsoom Pracha along with Registrar Prof Dr Mamoon Khan also visited different stalls setup by departments displaying items of food, art jewellery, clothes and plants.

Director Sports Prof. Dr Mamoon Khan said the university was committed to fostering a sports culture. She highlighted the state-of-the-art facilities provided by the university such as sports complex urging society to break away from the trend of spending more time on screens than on sports grounds.

## Army chief guest says Kashmiri people have right to decide their own future

Abdul Majeed Tahir

MUZAFFARABAD: The National Workshop Kashmir organized with the mutual cooperation of Pakistan Army and Government of Azad Kashmir has come to an end. Commander Rawalpindi Corps attended the closing ceremony of the four-day workshop as the chief guest. General Officer Commanding Murree Division was also present on this occasion. In the workshop, the civil and military officials briefed the participants on various topics.

The Corps Commander said in a special conversation with the participants that the Kashmiri freedom movement does not need the Indian constitution and laws and the Kashmiri people will decide their own future according to the United Nations resolutions. Nowadays, where access to information has become very easy thanks to social media, it is very difficult to access correct



information because lies are presented as truth and confusion and chaos are being created in the minds. The Corps Commander explained to the audience that the main objective of the two-nation theory under which Pakistan came into being was to provide a state to the Muslims of India in which they could live their lives according to Islamic principles and values. The state of Pakistan is a chaman which is a collection of different nations and cultures in which Kashmir has a unique and

distinct status due to its high traditions and magnificent civilization. The relationship of Pakistan Army with Kashmiri people is very polite and respectful and like one soul and two hearts. Nowadays, the facts are distorted on social media, in which various accusations are being made against the Pakistan Army. Talking about the discipline in the Pakistan Army as an institution, he told the participants that the Pakistan Army There is a very comprehensive and systematic system of discipline and self-accountability in which every year a considerable number of officers and men are held accountable and punished, which not only affects their progress. Some people are also dismissed from service without any benefits. The Corps Commander said that all of you are among the talented and knowledgeable people of the society, so you are expected to search for facts and truth instead of believing in social media and propaganda without research.

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Islamabad  
15° - 23° Clear

**SERVICES**  
**Namaz Timings**  
Fajr ..... 5:06 am  
Zohr ..... 12:19 pm  
Asr ..... 4:28 pm  
Maghrib ..... 6:09 pm  
Isha ..... 7:32 pm

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

**Women Police Stations**  
Islamabad ..... 9222596  
Rawalpindi ..... 9270601-20

**ENQUIRY**  
Edhi Ambulance ..... 115  
PIA Flight Info ..... 114  
PIA Cargo ..... 9280979  
Railway 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

**AIOU holds seminar on Women's day**



PNP

ISLAMABAD: A seminar was organized at Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) on account of International Women's Day. Social worker, gender expert and renowned writer Dr Fauzia Saeed was the keynote speaker and chief guest. In-charge, Department of Gender and Women Studies, Dr. Atifa Nasir delivered the welcome speech and informed the participants about the history, aims and objectives of celebrating International Women's Day.

Dr. Fauzia Saeed highlighted the various chapters from her book "Tapestry-Strands of Women's Struggles Woven into the History of Pakistan" in the seminar. She said that the role of women in the history of Pakistan, efforts of freedom struggle and compilation of immortal stories in book form will be a torch for the new generation. Dr. Fauzia Saeed added that from 1940 to 2016, women associated with prominent political and social circles were included in the book to acknowledge their services. She added that this book contains enough material for researchers which students can use. Many faculty members, principal officers and students participated in the event.

**PM-Election**

**Coalition partners to elect Asif Zardari as President: PM**

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Thursday said Asif Ali Zardari would be elected as President of Pakistan as coalition partners had overwhelming majority in the National Assembly, Senate and provincial assemblies.

Speaking at a dinner hosted in honour of leaders of allied parties, he said Asif Zardari would be the candidate of the allied parties in the presidential election on March 9.

The coalition government secured two thirds of the votes in the recent general elections and it would be reflected during the presidential election, he added.

He said the coalition federal government was formed again with consensus and unity besides formation of Pakistan Peoples Party government in Sindh, Pakistan Muslim League(N) government in Punjab and a coalition government in Balochistan.

"We have to respect mandate of the people," he said adding, "the world is looking towards Pakistan and seeing how the new government will overcome challenges and resolve issues."

He thanked his coalition partners, Quaid PML Nawaz Sharif and leaders of allied parties for electing him as the prime minister once again.

The Prime Minister said his government was facing Himalaya like challenges and the facts about economy were troublesome.

"Our gas and electricity circular debt had hiked to Rs five trillion. The debt of PIA had ballooned to Rs 825 billion. The annual theft of electricity amounted to Rs 500 billion".

He said these figures showed the gravity of the economic situation.

He said the government refunded Rs 65 billion to the exporters, adding the tax base should be expanded while burden on those who were already taxed,

should be reduced.

He pointed out that Pakistan's tax to GDP ratio was just 9.8 percent whereas this percentage was higher in other countries.

He said state owned entities were making losses of hundreds of billions of rupees and the government was paying these losses by taking more loans.

He informed that Rs 1.7 trillion taxes were stuck in courts due to legal disputes, vested interests and collusion.

"We have to unite to take Pakistan out of the present economic difficulties. If we cannot take Pakistan out of this situation history will not forgive us," he remarked.

"Our target is to change condition of the nation and we have to present our proposals to friendly countries to attract investment."

In his remarks, co-chairperson of Pakistan Peoples Party Asif Ali Zardari said his party would support the prime minister as he would work to steer Pakistan on the path of progress



He was of the view that Pakistan could make economic progress with growth in the agriculture sector.

He mentioned that history was amended with the Supreme Court judgment in the reference on judicial murder of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

Speaking on the occasion, Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said last time during his presidential tenure, his father Asif Zardari gave up his powers in favour of the Parliament.

Asif Zardari would be elected as the civilian president for the

second time, he noted.

He said economy and reconciliation in Pakistani politics would be priority of the coalition government.

He thanked the political parties for supporting Asif Zardari for the presidential election.

**Adwa Victory Day of Ethiopia**

Mr. Karim Aziz Malik, Chairman, Capital office, FPCCI, H. E Ambassador of Ethiopia to Pakistan, Jemal Bekir Abdula and Dr. Afshan Malik, Advisor to President FPCCI posing a group photo on the occasion of 128th Adwa Victory Day celebrated in Islamabad.

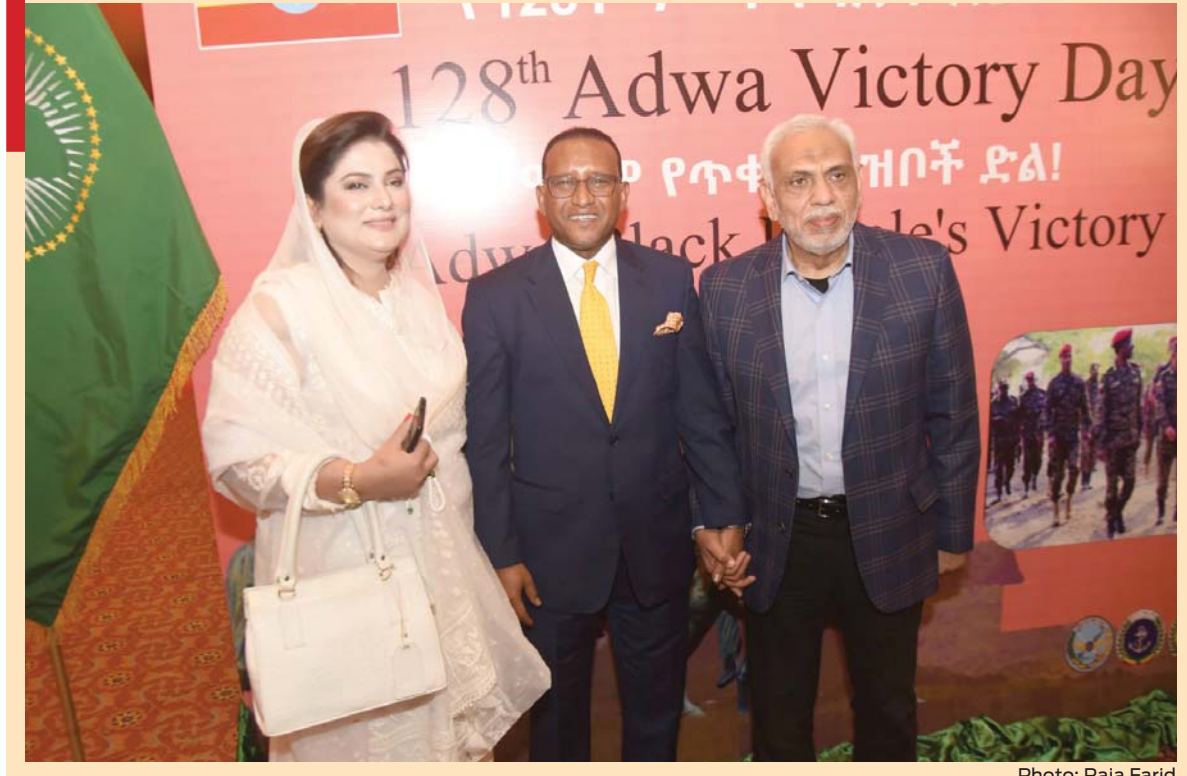


Photo: Raja Farid

**PIMA joins hands with Cheezious for 'Every Order Counts' Initiative**

PNP

ISLAMABAD: Cheezious, a proud Pakistani brand, has proudly partnered with PIMA in a collaborative effort to support families in Palestine. This strategic alliance adds substantial credibility to Cheezious' commitment to social impact, positioning the brand as a beacon of corporate responsibility. By aligning with key stakeholders, Cheezious invites a broader community to join hands in this noble cause.

This initiative is not just a partnership; it's a testament to Cheezious' dedication to making a meaningful impact beyond its culinary offerings. The strategic collaboration



with PIMA reflects Cheezious' earnest commitment to social responsibility and global welfare. The campaign, rooted in a strategic communication approach, focuses on resonating with the audience by conveying a powerful core message: "Every Order Counts - Cheezious Donates Rs 50 to Families in Palestine." This

initiative, are not merely placing orders for delicious meals; they are becoming integral contributors to a cause that transcends borders and brings hope to families in need.

"Head of Marketing at Cheezious Zohaib Hassan said, our partnership with PIMA is not just about making a difference; it's a

commitment to creating a positive impact on a global scale. Through the 'Every Order Counts' campaign, we invite our customers to be active contributors to a cause that extends beyond delicious meals. The collaboration with PIMA adds depth to our commitment to social impact and also the collective efforts that will make a meaningful difference in the lives of families in Palestine."

This initiative is a testament of fostering positive change and making a lasting impact. PIMA & Cheezious invites its customers, stakeholders, and the community to join hands in this noble cause, turning every order into a beacon of hope for families in Palestine.

**Attock Press Club demands end to illegal building allotment of district administration**



Attock Press Club

ATTOCK: Chief Patron and senior journalist of Attock Press Club Syed Raza Naqvi led the demonstration which was attended by various groups and unions of the journalists and their respective office bearers from Attock, Hazro, Fatehjang, Hassanabdal and Jand. The angry and charged protesters chanted slogans against the district administration and for their just demands. "Sada haqithayrakh", "zulum kay zabty hum nahee mananty" and "sahahfizandahai" were more prominent slogans which echoed in the deputy commissioner building.

Mr Naqvi was of the view that the press club was registered in 1993 under the societies registration act 1860. He said that district council through a resolution has allotted building to press club in 1986 and the same is illegally occupied by district administration since 2012 without any amended resolution by the district council as well as written order.

Sheikh Javaid Akhter, Chairman Attock Press Club has said that even journalists were not put to wall like being done in the democratic government. He rules out any differences among the ranks of journalist community adding that they are united on one legitimate stance that they would be handed over their building back without any further delay.

"District administration humiliates the journalist community at each and every level", alleged Nadeem Raza Khan. He said that deputy commissioner Atif Raza skip facing media persons since February 8 election as the journalist community have questions unanswered over the role played by the district administration during security of nomination papers and finalization of results.

The journalist community announced to boycott all the media coverage of the district administration in print and electronic media till acceptance of their demands.

At the end, the journalist community unanimously adopted a resolution in which they demanded from newly elected chief minister Maryum Nawaz and provincial minister for information Maryum Aurangzeb to intervene in to matter and directs the deputy commissioner Rao Atif Raza to hand over back the building to the journalist community failing they would stage sit in till completion of their just demands.

**SSGC issues gas supply schedule for Ramadan**

KARACHI: With the month of Ramadan less than a week away, the Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC) has announced a "load-shedding marred" gas supply for the holy month.

In a statement, the SSGC said that it would only be able to provide gas between 3:00am to 9:00am (Sahar) and 3:00pm to 10:00pm (Iftaar) in Ramadan.

**Call for an Increase in Tobacco Tax to Help National Economy**

PPA

ISLAMABAD: The Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (SPARC) organized an event to launch a tobacco taxation simulation model published by the Social Policy and Development Centre (SPDC). This significant event, attended by leading healthcare activists, called for a Tobacco Tax Hike in 2024 to recover healthcare costs and save lives.

Muhammad Sabir, Principal Economist at the Social Policy and Development Centre (SPDC), said that Pakistan presently operates with a two-tiered Federal Excise Duty (FED) structure for cigarettes, categorized by price tiers. Following a substantial increase in 2022-23, the FED share in retail prices reached 48% and 68% for

low and high tiers, respectively. However, the leveling off of the FED share in 2023-24, due to the absence of rate adjustments, could adversely affect revenue and public health efforts.

Sabir added that a proposed 26.6% FED increase in 2024 could recoup 19.8% of the costs, narrowing the gap between health burdens and tax revenues. A 26.6% FED hike could potentially lead to 517,000 fewer smokers, a 12.1% increase in tax revenue, and a 19.8% recovery of health costs. Beyond 2023-24, the government should integrate cost recovery into tobacco tax policies through automatic adjustments, implement a uniform FED rate across all cigarette brands, and prescribe tax increases for the next three years.

Dr. Ziauddin Islam, Former Technical Head, Tobacco Control

Cell, Ministry of National Health Services and Regulations and Coordination, stated that recent statistics reveal that in Pakistan, 31.9 million adults aged 15 years and above, approximately 19.7% of the adult population, are current tobacco users. The use of tobacco leads to over 160,000 deaths annually in Pakistan, amounting to 1.4% of the nation's GDP each year. It is imperative to revitalize Pakistan's cigarette taxation system.

He added that the costs associated with smoking-related health issues have surpassed the revenue generated from cigarette taxes. In 2022-23, taxes covered only 16% of these costs, a significant decline from 19.5% in 2019. Initial data for the first quarter of 2023-24 suggests that cigarette revenue may not even reach 19% of smoking-related health costs,

emphasizing the urgent need for action before the fiscal year concludes. This delay in recovering health costs demands immediate attention.

Dr. Khalil Ahmad Dogar, Program Manager at SPARC, said that the suggested tax hike promises a clear 'win-win' situation for both health and revenue for the government and the people of Pakistan. New governments shouldn't fall into any tricks of the tobacco industry. Civil society will support the government in debunking any myths propagated by the tobacco industry. Concerns about illicit trade have been countered by research showing that tobacco companies manipulate reported production to influence tax policies and evade taxes. Additionally, the recently implemented track & trace system aims to



reduce counterfeiting, combat illicit trade, and ensure accountability.



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# Maryam Nawaz: A Trailblazer in Politics and Governance - I

**M**aryam Nawaz is widely regarded as a bold and tenacious figure, unafraid to confront political and non-political adversaries, including the judiciary and the civil administration. She has demonstrated remarkable courage in standing up to powerful forces, refusing to yield even when faced with threats of arrest or imprisonment. Her fearless demeanor and unwavering resolve have earned her a reputation for being unyielding in the face of adversity. She confronts her opponents with a fierce determination, akin to that of a lioness protecting her pride, and is not hesitant to take them to task with ruthless precision.

Maryam Nawaz emerged as a unifying force in orchestrating a coalition against the formidable government led by Imran Khan. Through her eloquence, persuasive arguments, tireless efforts, and thorough preparation, she managed to unite previously disparate factions into the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM). Her skillful leadership played a pivotal role in toppling the Imran Khan administration, ultimately leading to the appointment of her uncle as Prime Minister.

Maryam Nawaz spared no effort in fiercely advocating for her father, who had been labeled a fugitive, an absconder, and a convicted criminal, resulting in a lifetime disqualification from holding public office. Through her relen-

less determination, she navigated legal challenges and successfully facilitated his return as a VVIP figure, minimizing any potential risks. She remained steadfast until all legal proceedings against her father were dismissed, ultimately securing his eligibility to contest elections once again.

In the absence of her father in exile and with much of the PML(N) leadership imprisoned during PTI's government, Maryam Nawaz took on the responsibility of keeping the party alive and active. She organized and led massive public gatherings, meticulously planning each event with careful attention to detail. From her attire selection to her elegant gestures, and the incorporation of engaging videos and songs, she captivated the public's attention and successfully galvanized support for the party. Her leadership during this challenging period played a crucial role in maintaining the party's relevance and connection with the people.

During the 2024 election campaign, Maryam Nawaz emerged as the front-line leader of the PML(N), spearheading successful public gatherings nationwide. With remarkable agility, she traversed from city to city, energizing supporters with her impassioned speeches and meticulous preparation. Her dedication to detail extended to her attire, always

adorned with a firmly placed dupatta on her head, symbolizing her connection with tradition and culture. Each public meeting under her stewardship became a resounding success, showcasing her ability to inspire and mobilize the masses.

Through her relentless dedication, astute political insight, adept utilization of modern technology, and effective leveraging of social media platforms, Maryam Nawaz amassed unprecedented political capital within the PML(N). Surpassing even seasoned stalwarts such as her uncle and father, she positioned herself as the natural heir to the legacy of Nawaz Sharif and emerged as a leading contender for the future Prime Ministership of the country. Her strategic approach and forward-thinking methods have solidified her status as a formidable force within Pakistani politics, poised to shape its trajectory in the years to come.

In a hypothetical scenario where the elections were solely between PTI and PML(N), Maryam Nawaz's political prowess could have likely secured a comfortable one-third majority in parliament. However, as a prominent TV anchor noted, these elections were perceived as a contest between the people and the establishment, leading to repercussions for parties seen as aligned with the latter. Consequently, PML(N)

suffered setbacks, falling short of the desired one-third majority. This outcome dashed Maryam Nawaz's fervent desire to see Nawaz Sharif return as Prime Minister for a fourth term.

Nevertheless, this electoral anomaly resulted in Shahbaz Sharif ascending to the Prime Ministership, thereby automatically positioning Maryam Nawaz as a leading candidate for the role of Chief Minister. Despite the setback at the federal level, this development affirmed her prominent position within the political landscape, potentially paving the way for significant influence and leadership at the provincial level.

Maryam Nawaz's ascension to the role of Chief Minister of Punjab marks a historic milestone in Pakistani politics, garnering praise both domestically and internationally. Born in 1973 into one of Pakistan's most influential political dynasties, Maryam initially stayed away from politics until 2013, when her father, Nawaz Sharif, became Prime Minister for the third time. Since then, she has emerged as the apparent political heir of the Sharif family, while her brothers managed the family business.

Her appointment as the first woman Chief Minister of Punjab signifies a significant step towards gender inclusivity in Pakistan's political landscape, echoing the nation's past milestone with Benazir Bhutto's prime ministership in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

*To be continued*



Analysis

Qamar Bashir

## Starvation claiming a growing number of young lives in besieged Gaza

**D**ays from the beginning of the holy month of Ramazan and with no ceasefire agreement in sight for Gaza, UN humanitarian officials reiterated deep concerns Thursday that a growing number of children are dying of starvation. "The situation is appalling. Every minute, every hour, it is getting worse," the UN agency for Palestinians, UN-WRA, said in a tweet on X, formerly Twitter.

A maximum of 150 lorries have been reaching Gaza every day. In the north, one in six children under the age of two is acutely malnourished and media reports have indicated that at least 20 youngsters have died from starvation in recent days, including a 14-day-old baby. On Thursday, the UN Security Council was holding consultations on the situation behind closed doors at which Senior Humanitarian and Reconstruction Coordinator for Gaza, Sigrid Kaag, was expected to brief. Well over 30,000 people, mostly women and children, have now been killed amid intense daily Israeli bombardment across Gaza since Oct 7. Negotiations initially in Qatar and this week in Cairo for a ceasefire linked to the release of the remaining approximately 100 hostages and far greater aid access throughout Gaza have so far not resulted in an end to the violence nor alleviated the humanitarian catastrophe. UN aid teams on Thursday planned to explore the feasibility of using an Israeli military access road to northern Gaza to transport a minimum of 300 aid trucks every day. The UN's top aid official in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), Jamie McGoldrick, announced the aid convoy initiative on Wednesday. He explained that it would enable trucks laden with humanitarian supplies to reach vulnerable people in the north of the enclave without having to negotiate obstructions and insecurity. "We have to use this military road, this fenced road at the side, on the eastern side (of Gaza), to allow material to come from the crossing point at Kerem Shalom and Rafah, all the way up to the north and into the north, and to a crossing point there," said McGoldrick, Humanitarian Coordinator Ad Interim for the OPT, in a video briefing to reporters in New York. "We have to get up at least 300 trucks a day. Right now, we're lucky if we are getting about 150." Ahead of the start of Ramazan on Sunday, the veteran humanitarian official noted that relief supplies entering Gaza in February had fallen by half compared with January, despite the "enormous and growing needs for over 2.3 million people living in appalling conditions".



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

## Pakistan's nascent govt grapples with an economy teetering on the brink of abyssal decline

**P**akistan grapples with a myriad of challenges encompassing economic recession, elevated unemployment rates, and political tumult. The principal constituents contributing to Pakistan's economic and societal affliction are the policies implemented by the Pakistan Democratic Movement coalition government, including exchange rate restrictions and import controls, coupled with the delays in the execution of the International Monetary Fund's Extended Fund Facility program.

The precipitous decline in economic expansion to -0.2 percent in the fiscal year 2023, contrasted with the robust 6.1 percent recorded in 2022, was chiefly attributable to the lethargic performance of both the industrial and service sectors. This recessionary trend was further compounded by a surge in unemployment, culminating in a historic pinnacle of 8.5 percent in 2023, surpassing the 6.2 percent threshold witnessed in 2021.

The interim administration precipitated by the removal of erstwhile Prime Minister Imran Khan has been ineffective in fostering economic equilibrium within the nation. Superfluous postponements of the 2024 electoral processes, compelled solely by judicial intervention, coupled with political subterfuge, have exacerbated both economic and political unpredictability.

The interim government achieved a noteworthy feat by adeptly brokering a successful negotiation with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a Stand-By Arrangement amounting to US\$3 billion, thereby reinstating creditor confidence and bolstering support for external sector requirements. The IMF Executive Board, in its January 2024 session, granted approval for the disbursement of US\$700 million, culminating in a cumulative total of US\$1.9 billion.

The nascent administration shall henceforth be confronted with a myriad of formidable challenges. The new government's economic rejuvenation agenda will face considerable obstacles due to fiscal imbalances, substantial debt repayments, and deficiencies in the balance of payments. Additionally, addressing mounting unemployment, particularly among the youth, and historically elevated inflation contributing to a notable surge in poverty is imperative for ensuring societal well-being.

A stable and effectively operating democratic system is essential for structural reforms and institutional restructuring. The government ought to adopt a strategy to overhaul its economic framework and attain a growth rate of 7-9 percent in 2024. These actions would lay the groundwork for sustained long-term reforms.

The government ought to curtail extravagant spending across various sectors, including the 200 state-owned enterprises that incurred losses surpassing 500 billion rupees (US\$1.8 billion) in 2020. It is imperative to enhance fiscal governance by establishing protocols governing public finance management to mitigate the burden of debt servicing costs, which have escalated to over 7.3 trillion rupees (US\$2.5 trillion) in 2024. Subpar fiscal stewardship has led to insufficient allocation towards human capital development and other essential requisites.

The intricate tax structure necessitates streamlining through the reduction of superfluous documentation requisites, the diminution of compliance expenditures, and the enhancement of tax administration efficiency, thereby fostering incentives for economic activity.

The government ought to cultivate an equitable and competitive milieu to stimulate private

sector investments, amplify productivity, and propel innovation and expansion. This entails mitigating the burdensome expenses incurred from the pervasive utilization of Non-Objection Certificates and assorted permitting prerequisites. The approximate yearly toll of bureaucratic entanglements on the economy stands at about 39 percent of GDP. This, in turn, dissuades investments and diminishes productivity, thereby constricting GDP growth.

Fostering gainful employment, particularly for the younger demographic, necessitates the facilitation of private sector involvement in industrious pursuits, while enabling heightened financial inclusivity and technological integration holds the key to unlocking Pakistan's latent e-commerce capabilities.

The new government must prioritize the enhancement of the labor force's quality through substantial investments in the cultivation of skills, education, healthcare, and mindset. Ensuring ubiquitous internet access and imparting advanced information and communication technology skills to the youth are imperative for Pakistan's competitiveness on the global stage.

The imperative arises to reexamine the function of technical vocational institutions in order to align them with workforce demands. Concurrently, fortifying the labor market necessitates a recalibration of the social protection strategy, emphasizing graduation-based initiatives over the mere expansion of unconditional cash transfers.

In tandem with these initiatives, the new government must substitute its inefficient 'bricks and mortar' economic paradigm with a comprehensive model grounded in structural reform and market orientation. Although enacting reforms necessitates the expenditure of political and social capital, their enduring advantages for the nation significantly surpass these burdens. The nascent government must herald 2024 as a year dedicated to reform.

## Embrace Election Results and Move Forward - II

**R**egarding the discontinuation of mobile phone connections, opinions are split, with 33% of respondents considering it a positive decision and 29% viewing it negatively. The remaining respondents preferred to remain neutral. The highest satisfaction with the discontinuation was reported in Balochistan, and the lowest was in KPK. It is noteworthy that the majority opinion asserts that the elections were not rigged and were conducted fairly and transparently.

In the fabric of democratic society, the acknowledgment of the opinion and choice of the majority holds profound significance. Whether in matters of governance, social norms, or collective decision-making, the consensus of the majority often steers the course of our shared existence. Majority opinion mirrors the collective will of a group, community, or society at large. It arises from the amalgamation of individual perspectives, preferences, and values, culminating in a consensus that carries considerable weight in shaping public policies, cultural norms, and societal attitudes. Embracing majority opinion necessitates acknowledging and respecting the prevailing views of the majority, even if they diverge from one's own beliefs or preferences. At the core of majority opinion lies the fundamental principle of democracy—the concept of governance by the people. Within democratic societies, decisions are reached through mechanisms that mirror the desires of the majority, such as electoral processes, referendums, and legislative deliberations. Embracing majority opinion is crucial for upholding the legitimacy of democratic institutions and ensuring that governance accurately reflects the interests and

values of the populace. By accepting majority opinion, social cohesion is nurtured, fostering unity and solidarity within communities. When individuals align their actions and attitudes with the prevailing views of the majority, it cultivates a sense of common purpose and shared identity. Through acknowledging the validity of diverse perspectives and accommodating differing opinions, societies can bridge divides and foster a culture of mutual respect and understanding.

In the realm of ideas and innovation, embracing majority opinion can catalyze progress. By rallying around the consensus of the majority, societies can mobilize collective efforts toward common objectives, whether it entails advancing scientific knowledge, confronting societal issues, or fostering economic growth. Moreover, by acknowledging the wisdom inherent in diverse viewpoints, societies can tap into a rich tapestry of ideas and perspectives, igniting creativity and innovation.

While accepting majority opinion is pivotal for promoting cohesion and democracy, it is not without its challenges and intricacies. The concept of the "tyranny of the majority," whereby the rights and interests of minority groups are marginalized, poses a significant threat to democratic principles. Furthermore, the proliferation of misinformation, polarization, and echo chambers in today's digital era can distort perceptions of majority opinion, underscoring the importance of critically evaluating sources of information and engaging in constructive dialogue.

Elections serve as the cornerstone of democracy, affording citizens the opportunity to elect their representatives and influence the trajectory of their collective future.

*To be continued*



Analysis

Abdul Basit Alvi



Empowering women

# United Nations and Embassy of Denmark host International Women's Day Gala

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Today the UN Resident Coordinator Office in Pakistan, UN Women and the Embassy of Denmark hosted an International Women's Day (IWD) Gala in Islamabad highlighting the importance of investing in women to shape a better future for all in Pakistan.

The gala, titled "Empowering Women: A Smart Investment for Pakistan", was building on this year's IWD's theme, "Invest in Women: Accelerate Progress." It emphasized that empowering women economically and ensuring women's and girls' rights across all aspects of life is the only way to secure a prosperous and just economy, and an inclusive and fair society.

"Let today be not only a celebration of the amazing abilities and achievements of women and girls across Pakistan, but also the turning point where we committed to reinforce our collective efforts to their advancement and well-being," said Mr. Mohamed Yahya, UN Resident & Humanitarian Coordinator



in Pakistan, in his welcome remarks. "When women overcome challenges, achieve gender equality, and fully participate in society, everyone wins."

Pakistan has put efforts towards gender equality and women empowerment over the years, and has passed a number of pro-women legislations. Women's labour force participation doubled from 13 per cent in 1992 to 22.5 per cent in 2018, but it remains among the lowest rates in South Asia and in the world. Most women workers are concentrated in the informal

economy while women's key role in agriculture remains undervalued and, often, unpaid or underpaid.

"As we gather to celebrate International Women's Day, it is with immense pride and gratitude that we acknowledge the remarkable contributions of women in Pakistan and across the globe, said Ms. Nilofar Bakhtiar, Chairperson of the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW)." We celebrate the resilience and achievements of women and girls around the world. Let us remember that



gender equality is not just a women's issue but a human rights issue that requires the effort of all genders and we must continue to advocate for justice, equality, and dignity for all."

Achieving gender equality is one of the pillars of the cooperation agreement between the United Nations and the Govern-

ment of Pakistan, and is at the heart of the United Nations' Global Goal 5.

Fang Wang, wife of Ambassador of Denmark to Pakistan and Acting President of Islamabad Foreign Women's Association welcomed all guests during the ceremony and thanked them for attending the event.

During the gala, which was hosted at the Residence of the Ambassador of Denmark, representatives of the Government of Pakistan, Ambassadors, Representatives of UN agencies and leaders from the Private Sector pledged to drive progress toward gender equality and the empowerment of women.

"As we celebrate women this year, we must put a special emphasis on their economic empowerment. We will spotlight the significant positions and impactful contributions made by women and girls in reshaping the economic terrain, said Mr. Lansana Woneh, UN Women Country Representative at the Gala which showcased speeches, video screenings, and the debut of a women empowerment song.

International Women's Day is a globally recognized occasion that celebrates the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women around the world. It serves as a day to honor women's contributions to society and reaffirm commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment. This year's theme, "Invest in Women: Accelerate Progress," highlights the importance of investing in initiatives promoting women's economic empowerment, access to education, healthcare, and participation in decision-making processes.

Photo: Raja Farid

## U. S. Consul General Lahore Kristin Hawkins Inaugurates English Language Program

Asim Tanveer

DERA GHAZI KHAN: U. S. Consul General Lahore Kristin Hawkins inaugurated the English Access Scholarship Program for 150 students from Dera Ghazi Khan in partnership with Ghazi University.

This program provides English language skills to economically disadvantaged students, primarily between the ages of 13 to 20. The Access Program also provides leadership skills and other training to improve participants' job prospects.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of U. S. government-sponsored English language programs in Pakistan with more than 27,000 graduates success-



fully completing the course from across Pakistan. "English language skills open doors of opportunity, both in careers and personal lives," noted Consul General Hawkins.

The U. S. Mission in Pakistan sponsors English language programs in three cities across Punjab, including Faisalabad, Multan, and DG Khan. Consul General Hawkins said, "We all

know that Punjab has immense economic potential. Empowering Punjab's youth will not only help the local population, but also will have a positive impact on the Pakistani economy. Today our Access alumni work in every profession you can think of - government, business, science, the arts, and many others.

In South Punjab, Consul General Hawkins also met

March 6 with students at Islamia University Bahawalpur who have received U. S.-funded scholarships to complete their studies. The United States has a long-standing partnership with Islamia University Bahawalpur, having funded the construction of the Faculty of Education building approximately a decade ago and funding the studies today of students who were affected by the devastating 2022 floods. During her visit Consul General Hawkins also toured the famous Derawar Fort. Consul General's visit to the famous heritage site demonstrates the United States' respect for Pakistan's rich and diverse cultural heritage.

## Faysal Quraishi and Narkin's set to redefine fashion landscape with collaborative collection

PPA

KARACHI: Esteemed actor Faysal Quraishi is poised to redefine the landscape of style with the unveiling of the brand new FQ Collection in collaboration with renowned clothing brand Narkin's. This highly anticipated collection will be presented from now until the culmination of Ramadan, offering a sophisticated amalgamation of elegance and refinement for discerning fashion enthusiasts. The official signing ceremony for the collaboration took place in Karachi at Koel Cafe on the 7th of March 2024.

Faysal Quraishi, celebrated for his iconic performances on screen and now his burgeoning influence in the realm of fashion, has forged a partnership with Narkin's



to curate a collection that epitomizes modern luxury and timeless refinement. Drawing inspiration from his distinctive aesthetic and innate sense of style, the FQ Collection serves as a testament to Quraishi's dedication to creativity and innovation in the realm of fashion. Narkin's, renowned for its commitment to excep-

tional craftsmanship and contemporary designs with reliable quality assurance, is honored to collaborate with Quraishi on this exclusive venture. Together, they endeavor to redefine the concept of style and offer discerning consumers a meticulously curated selection of apparel that transcends fleeting trends

and celebrates individuality. The FQ Collection, making its debut in conjunction with the sacred month of Ramadan, encapsulates the essence of grace and refinement, rendering it an ideal choice for those seeking attire that effortlessly transitions from day to night.

Expressing his enthusiasm for the collaboration, Faysal Quraishi remarked, "I am delighted to work on this partnership with Narkin's to introduce the FQ Collection, a labor of love that reflects my personal style and vision for contemporary fashion. This collaboration represents a harmonious fusion of creativity and craftsmanship, and I am confident that it will resonate deeply with fashion connoisseurs across the region."

## Talking down China will backfire, misjudging China will miss opportunities: FM

Xinhua

BEIJING: Spreading pessimistic views on China will end up harming oneself, and misjudging China will result in missed opportunities, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said Thursday.

China's development is driven not only by a reasonable growth in quantity but also an effective upgrade in quality, Wang told a press conference held on the sidelines of the ongoing session of the national legislature.



expanded 5.2 percent year on year in 2023, contributing to about one third of global economic growth.

Wang said that China

remains strong as an engine for growth and the "next China" is still China.

With an ultra-huge market of over 1.4 billion

people embracing bursts of new demands and business patterns, China is quickly expanding the space for its development and international cooperation, Wang said.

The country's door of opening up keeps widening, with more substantial progress made in higher-standard and institutional opening up, he said.

"China cannot do without the world in achieving development, and the world needs China even more for development," he added. Enditem

## China supports Palestine in becoming full member of UN: FM

Xinhua

BEIJING: China supports Palestine in becoming a full member of the United Nations (UN), Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said Thursday.

Noting that the failure to end the humanitarian disaster caused by the Palestinian-Israeli conflict today in the 21st century is a tragedy for humanity and a disgrace for civilization, Wang called on the international community to act to give priority to an immediate ceasefire.

The foreign minister said the Palestinian people have the right to live in the world, calling for the release of all those held captive.

Restoring justice to the Palestinian people and fully implementing the two-state solution is the only way to



break the vicious circle of Palestinian-Israeli conflicts, Wang said.

"We support Palestine's full membership in the UN, and urge certain UN Security Council member to stop laying obstacles to that end," Wang

said, adding that China calls for a more broad-based, more authoritative, and more effective international peace conference to work out a timetable and road map for the two-state solution.

## ISSI hosts 'Next-Generation International Security Experts Conference 2024'

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: As part of the vision to engage the youth, and to encourage critical thinking and promote culture of research among them, the India Study Center at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) organized the ISSI's first-ever "Next-Generation International Security Experts Conference 2024." Students and young researchers from various Universities and think-tanks presented their papers on issues of importance for Pakistan and those affecting regional security.

Director India Study Centre Dr. Khurram Abbas said that the objective of this event was to promote culture of policy-oriented research among the young scholars. He highlighted that the conference will have a diverse pool of speakers as they hail from the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJK), Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Turkiye, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, South Punjab, and Islamabad. He added that based on the papers presented at this conference, ISC will publish a book in June 2024.

In his welcoming address, Director General ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood said that in a

rapidly transforming global environment as well as turbulent times regionally, it is important to go beyond the traditional approaches and employ fresh thinking in policy research, which can primarily come from the young and imaginative minds. He added that, given its size in Pakistan's demographic landscape, the youth is an indispensable stakeholder as far as the future of Pakistan is concerned.

In his remarks, the chief guest Ambassador Imran Ahmad Siddiqui, Additional Secretary (Asia Pacific) at Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said that South Asia is the most populous region in the world but unfortunately the

least developed one. Nations these days do not negotiate individually, but in regional groups. Unfortunately, due to political reasons, the countries of South Asia cannot speak with one voice at the international platforms. The second session, titled "Strategic Stability in South Asia", focused on nuclear diplomacy in the age of emerging technologies, Artificial Intelligence, Implications of U. S. Integrated Deterrence on South Asian Strategic Environment, and India's Astro-Politics and its implications for Pakistan.

The 'Mentors' for the young scholars in the three sessions included Dr. Muhammad Khan,



Chairman, Social Sciences Department, International Islamic University, Islamabad; Dr. Adil Sultan, Dean, Faculty of Aerospace

and Strategic Studies, Air University, Islamabad; and Dr. Adam Saud, Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Bahria University, Islamabad.

In his concluding remarks, Chairman Board of Governors, Ambassador Khalid Mahmood said that ISSI being a premier think-tank of Pakistan organises roundtables and seminars on a regular basis. However, this conference was a novel experiment. ISSI always makes efforts to associate young scholars, but in this event all participants were young scholars which made it unique. He hoped that such events will take place on a regular basis.



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

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index		
Current	Prev. Close	
65,603.08	65,656.62	
Day's High	Day's Low	
65,874.15	65,187.68	
Index Value	Change	
8,818,913,658	-53.54	
Percentage	Time	
-0.08%	7 Mar, 2024 5:00 pm	
Europe: FTSE 100 Index		
Index Value	Change	
7,692.46	+13.15	
Percentage	Time	
+0.17%	7 Mar, 4:35 pm GMT	
USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average		
Index Value	Change	
38,803.75	+142.70	
Percentage	Time	
+0.37%	7 Mar, 12:27 pm GMT-5	
Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average		
Index Value	Change	
39,598.71	-492.07	
Percentage	Time	
-1.23%	7 Mar, 3:15 pm GMT+9	
Open Market Forex Rates		
Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	181	183
Bahrain Dinar	742.73	750.73
Canadian Dollar	207	209.2
China Yuan	38.81	39.21
Danish Krone	40.88	41.28
Euro	303.2	306.2
Hong Kong Dollar	35.71	36.06
Indian Rupee	3.37	3.48
Japanese Yen	2.1	2.18
Kuwaiti Dinar	908.18	917.18
Malaysian Ringgit	59.16	59.76
New Zealand \$	170.65	172.65
Norwegians Krone	26.44	26.74
Omani Riyal	725.37	733.37
Qatari Riyal	76.76	77.46
Saudi Riyal	74.6	75.35
Singapore Dollar	207	209
Swedish Korona	27.06	27.36
Swiss Franc	316.94	319.44
Thai Bhat	7.78	7.93
U.A.E Dirham	76.3	77
UK Pound Sterling	352	356
US Dollar	279	281.8

# Azfar Ahsan calls on Saudi Investment Minister to discuss matters of mutual interest

PPA

RIYADH: Muhammad Azfar Ahsan, former Minister for Investment of Pakistan & Founder of Nutshell Group, met H. E. Khalid Al-Falih, Investment Minister, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, at the Ministry of Investment, Riyadh. They discussed possible opportunities for collaboration between both countries for future projects.

The meeting focused on investment prospects across diverse sectors such as mining and agriculture. A project on food security was specifically discussed in the context of achieving stability and prosperity. They emphasized the need for consistency in partnerships for navigating complex geopolitical dynamics and fostering regional stability.

Muhammad Azfar Ahsan and H. E. Khalid Al-Falih expressed optimism about the prospects for deeper cooperation and mutual prosperity. They emphasized the enduring strength of the relationship between the two countries aimed at unlocking untapped potential and fostering sustainable economic development.



Muhammad Azfar Ahsan and H. E. Khalid Al-Falih expressed optimism about the prospects for deeper cooperation and mutual prosperity. They emphasized the enduring strength of the relationship between the two countries aimed at unlocking untapped potential and fostering sustainable economic development.

## PPL signs MoU with FWO for Strategic Collaboration in mining sector



PPA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL) has embarked on a significant milestone by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Frontier Works Organization (FWO) to foster strategic cooperation and collaboration for the EL 207 Project situated in Eastern Chagai, Balochistan. This endeavor marks PPL's proactive diversification into the mining sector, aimed at expanding and fortifying its presence within Balochistan.

The signing ceremony, held at the Prime Minister Secretariat on March 6, witnessed the participation of key stakeholders. Mr. Imran Abbasi, MD & CEO of PPL, and Major General Abdul Sami, Director General of FWO, formally sealed the partnership by signing the MoU.

This collaborative effort between

## Seasonal planting

ISLAMABAD: Mar07- Program Manager of SPARC Dr Khalil Ahmed Dogar addressing during a seminar at a local hotel, in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Raja Farid

## Mastercard, CARE International launch Strive Women to support women-led businesses



PPA

ISLAMABAD: To coincide with International Women's Day, Mastercard's Center for Inclusive Growth and CARE International in Pakistan are announcing the launch of Mastercard Strive Women — a new program that aims to strengthen the financial health and resilience of small businesses in Pakistan with a focus on those led by women.

Strive Women, a global initiative that will run in Pakistan, Peru and Vietnam, recognizes that women-led small businesses are critical contributors to economies,

communities and households worldwide. The program will focus on strengthening the financial health of small businesses by working with local partners in each market to deliver tailored financial products and support services while addressing unique gender barriers that women-led businesses face.

"Mastercard has been powering the economy and empowering the people of Pakistan for more than two decades. We are proud to play our role in shaping the country's ambitious digital future, driving financial inclusion and fueling its economy."

## PTCL Group in collaboration with PPAF bridges digital gap by equipping women with smartphones under 'Ba-Ikhtiar' program

PPA

ISLAMABAD: In celebration of International Women's Day, Pakistan's largest telecommunications and integrated ICT services provider, PTCL Group, joined hands with Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) and National Rural Support Programme (NRSP) to empower 100 women entrepreneurs in Haripur, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This initiative is part of the "Ba-Ikhtiar" program, a year-long endeavor to bridge the digital divide and equip women with the essential tools and financial knowledge necessary for building sustainable businesses. Under "Ba-Ikhtiar", PTCL Group distributed smartphones with pre-loaded SIM cards, provided one-year free data packages and facilitated the setup of UPaisa mobile



wallets in collaboration with U Microfinance Bank (UBank). In the second phase, the Group will facilitate digital marketing and financial trainings to empower participants to unlock new opportunities online.

Recognizing the critical role technical proficiency plays in entrepreneurial success, the "Ba-Ikhtiar" program equips women entrepreneurs with the requisite knowledge and skills through comprehensive training sessions in financial management and digital marketing. Through these training sessions, PTCL Group strives to empower women to confidently navigate the digital landscape and promote their businesses online, leading to an expanded customer base.

Speaking about the initiative, Syed Atif Raza, Chief Marketing Officer, PTCL & Ufone 4G, stated, "At PTCL Group, we passionately believe that innovation is the cornerstone of social progress. Our

vision extends beyond providing connectivity solutions. We actively forge strategic partnerships, like the one with PPAF, NRSP and UBank, to invest in long-term development. The Ba-Ikhtiar program exemplifies this commitment. We are deeply invested in empowering women entrepreneurs by equipping them with the tools and resources they need to thrive. By fostering their success, the Group contributes directly to Pakistan's overall social and economic well-being."

Emphasizing the need to empower young women, especially those belonging to marginalized areas, CEO of PPAF, Nadir Gul Barech, stated, "embracing digital technology is essential for women to unlock a world of opportunities and drive their personal and professional growth.

## SECP notifies amendments to Corporate Restructuring Companies Rules, 2019

PPA

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP), under the auspices of the federal government, has notified amendments to the Corporate Restructuring Companies Rules, 2019. The amendments made in light of promulgation of the Corporate Restructuring Companies Act, 2021, are aimed at fostering conducive environment for Corporate Restructuring Companies (CRCs).

Corporate Restructuring companies specialize in acquiring nonperforming assets (NPA) from distressed financial institutions, leveraging their expertise to efficiently manage and recover these NPA assets. The CRC sector is key in minimizing

stressed assets in the banking sector through market-led solutions, easing balance sheet burdens and enhancing economic stability. The subject Rules have been amended in consultations with the State Bank of Pakistan, International Finance Corporation and public at large.

Notable provisions of the amendments include the establishment of trusts, comprehensive procedures for liquidation of trusts by CRCs, provisions pertaining to the Corporate Restructuring Board (CRB), encompassing its composition, processing/approval of Schemes being presented by CRCs, appointment matters, governance, code of conduct, functions and budgetary allocation for operational efficacy.

## Global Entrepreneurship Conference at LUMS Fosters Innovation and Collaboration

PPA

ISLAMABAD: LUMS Centre for Entrepreneurship (LCE) partnered with IDEA Lab at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and the non-profit Umeed, to host a three-day global event from March 4 - 6, 2024. The MIT-LCE Global Entrepreneurship Conference at LUMS brought together a dynamic community of entrepreneurs, academics, students, investors, and influential figures.

Dr. Tariq Jadoon, Provost, LUMS, welcomed the guests, expressing, "This conference is a means of learning, sharing ideas, and experiences. We are honoured to have our

colleagues from the US share their experiences for creating entrepreneurial ventures and creating value through ideas."

The event began with opening remarks from esteemed guests including, Ms. Dina H. Sherif, Executive Director, Legatum Center for Development and Entrepreneurship, MIT; Ms. Georgia Perakis, John C Head III Dean (Interim), and Ms. Johanna Hising DiFabio, Assistant Dean, Executive Degree Programs, MIT Sloan School of Management.

Furthermore, the Conference consisted of sessions by Mr. Hassan Ajwad Abbas, Vice President-Global CU Programme Management, Ericsson and CEO, Umeed; Mr.

Roberto M. Fernandez, Professor Post Tenure, Organisation Studies, MIT Sloan School of Management; Mr. Humberto Lopez-Mata, Director International and Regulatory Affairs, Delta Air Lines; Ms. Aiman Khan, Senior Programme Manager, Bruce Power; Mr. Daniel Dart, Seed Investor and General Partner, Rock Yard Ventures; Mr. Thomas Westering-Bui Chief Commercial Officer, AI Solutions & Strategy, Aiforia, and Mr. Humaira Shaikh Senior Manager, Branded Channels Retail Product Development, LEGO Group.

Ms. DiFabio commended the core MIT Executive MBA team for their instrumental role in organising the conference, stating, "The MIT Exec-



utive MBA team in Pakistan inspires me. They are committed to driving positive change by uplifting under-

privileged communities and crafting innovative solutions, especially in Pakistan."

## Telenor Pakistan's first female sales trainee program Parvaaz begins with a two-day bootcamp



PPA

ISLAMABAD: Telenor Pakistan conducted a two-day orientation bootcamp on 6th and 7th March, for its newly onboarded Parvaaz female sales trainees. Parvaaz, the industry's first-of-its-kind sales trainee program, is dedicated to cultivating diversity and inclusion within sales roles, empowering fresh female graduates to challenge conventional views of sales as a male-dominated field. Held at the Telenor 345 headquarters, this bootcamp marks a significant milestone in Telenor Pakistan's ongoing commitment to nurturing diversity and inclusion in the workplace. With 11 onboarded sales trainees having placements in major cities including Peshawar, Faisalabad, Lahore, Karachi, Islamabad, and AJK, the program aims to create a more representative workforce while tapping into fresh talent pools.

Commenting on the initiative, Areej Khan, Chief People Officer at Telenor Pakistan, stated, "As someone deeply invested in this initiative, I've found it incredibly rewarding to engage with fresh female talent during the bootcamp. This program underscores our firm belief that diversity is not only a social activity but a strategic business imperative for us, ensuring that females, that constitute half of our customer base, are represented in our workforce and decision making. It's heartening to see that others in the industry are now recognising the importance of such initiatives and embracing diversity in their own ways. Parvaaz adds yet another dimension to our commitment to innovation and diversity, reinforcing Telenor Pakistan's role as a trailblazer in promoting gender equality and empowering women in the workplace."

The Parvaaz Sales Trainee Program is a testament to Telenor Pakistan's mission of driving innovation and fostering diversity.



Director General Sports Punjab Dr Asif Tufail greets newly-elected SJAL office-bearers

Sports Desk

LAHORE: Director General Sports Punjab Dr Asif Tufail congratulated the newly-elected office-bearers of Sports Journalists Association of Lahore (SJAL) on Thursday.

It is pertinent to mention here that senior sports reporters Aqeel Ahmed, Yousaf Anjum and Afzal Iftikhar were elected unopposed as SJAL President, Secretary and Treasurer respectively during SJAL's General Council meeting held at National Hockey Stadium.

In a felicitation message Director General Sports Punjab Dr Asif Tufail said that sports journalists have always played a key role for the promotion of sports. "SJAL is rendering remarkable services for the coverage of different sports events in Lahore".

Director General Sports Punjab Dr Asif Tufail expressed his hope that Sports Board Punjab and SJAL will continue to work together for the promotion and development of sports culture in future.



Youth engaged in Eco Hike BY PSB

Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: A large number of Youth from different colleges of Federal Directorate of Education is engaged in Eco Hike. The Hike was held in connection with the Spring Sports Festival being organized by Pakistan Sports Board. Hiking, Climbing, Cycling, Basketball other sports activities are being conducted the relevant sports federations and associations.



Alpine Club of Pakistan (Islamabad Alpine Association) at Trail 5, Margallah Hills, More than 600 young students participated in this Hike. The participants were briefed about the importance of Hike and other sporting activities by Mr. Abu Zafar Sadiq, President, Alpine Club of Pakistan.. They were also given orientation on environment care posed climate change challenges. The students also picked up trash from the trek and disposed off.

At the occasion, Rizwan Ahmed Sheikh, Senior Joint Secretary, Ministry of IPC, were the Chief Guest at the occasion. He appreciated the role of FDE and educational institutions for their participation in such healthy activities. He assured that Pakistan Sports Board and IPC Division shall encourage continue to organize such sporting festivals to engage youth in healthy activities.

Mr. Tanvir Ahmed, Director General, Federal Directorate of Education, was the Guest of Honour. He motivated the youth students for participation in sporting activities and advised them to make it their daily schedule. He also assured that every kind of support for promotion of healthy activities among the student shall be extended by FDE.

Prof. Naeem ur Rahim, Principal, IMCB G-10/4, Islamabad, Mr. Aftab Jahan, Incharge Environment Club, IMCB F-10/4, Islamabad, Mr. Abu Zafar Sadiq, President, Alpine Club of Pakistan, Mr. Karar Haideri, Secretary, ACP, representatives of Islamabad Alpine Association, Ms. Jaweria Waseem, AD, PSB and representatives of different colleges were also present at the occasion..

The representatives of the colleges were presented shields whereas participants were awarded certificate by Mr. Rizwan Ahmed Sheikh, Senior Joint Secretary, IPC Division, Chief Guest and the Guest of Honour Mr. Tanvir Ahmed, Director General, Federal Directorate of Education,

PAF, Army win matches in National Kabaddi C'ship

Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Air Force and Pakistan Army earned victories in the National Kabaddi Championship at Jinnah Stadium of Pakistan Sports Complex on Thursday. In the first match, Pakistan Army defeated Higher Education Commission by 50-32.



In the second match, Pakistan Air Force beat Pakistan Wapda 42-40 after a tough competition.

The final match of the championship would be played between Wapda and Pakistan Air Force, while the teams of Pakistan Army and Higher Education Commission will compete for the third place.

Four teams of Pakistan Air Force, Pakistan Army, Wapda and Higher Education Commission participated in the championship.

Secretary General of Pakistan Kabaddi Federation, Rana Muhammad Sarwar, and a large number of spectators were also present on this occasion.

Aqeel earns victory in National Ranking Tennis

Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: Top seed Aqeel Khan defeated Hamza Roman in men's single of 4th Chairman POF Board, National Ranking Tennis Tournament at POF Tennis Complex on Thursday. On the fourth day of the tournament, in Men's Single Aqeel beat Hamza Roman with 6-0, 6-1.



Shoaib beat Barkat Ullah with 6-3, 6-2, Yousaf Khalil beat Muzammil Murtaza with 6-2, 6-1 and Abid beat Abdullah Adnan with 6-1, 6-1. In Boys under 18, Faizan defeated Ehsan Bari with 4-1, 4-1. Hamza Roman beat Salar with 6-4, 7-5. In the girls Under 18, Soha Ali beat Sheeza Sajid with 0-6, 6-2, 6-4. Lalarukh Sajid defeated Mahrukh Sajid with 6-4, 7-6(4). The tournament was being organized under the auspices of POF Sports Control Board and Pakistan Tennis Federation. Top-ranking male and female players are participating in contests during the tournament. The semifinals and finals would be played on March 8 and 9.

Faheem inspires Islamabad United to crucial triumph as Karachi Kings lose plot in must-win clash

Asim Tanveer

RAWALPINDI: On the back of a dogged performance with the bat and ball, Islamabad United secured a vital five-wicket win against Karachi Kings on Thursday night at Pindi Cricket Stadium, Rawalpindi.

In doing so, United also became the franchise with the most consecutive wins against one opposition in HBL PSL history, as they beat Kings for the eighth time on the trot.

Shadab Khan-led United now sit in the second position on the points table with nine points edging Gladiators and Zalmi with better net run rate while Kings are stationed at fifth with six points.

Chasing a modest total of 151, United's opening batters put on a 28-run opening partnership before Mir Hamza drew the first blood for the Kings removing Colin Munro (9, 11b, 2x4s) followed by the prized scalp of Alex Hales (18, 13b, 2x4s, 1x6) as well.

Islamabad accumulated 47 runs in the powerplay losing two wickets with Salman Ali Agha and Shadab Khan in the middle. The duo kept the scorecard ticking and at the halfway mark United required 73 off 60 balls.

Blessing Muzarabani, bowling the 13th over, brought an end to the

58-run third-wicket partnership as he got Salman caught behind for 33 off 30 balls, including a boundary and a six. Zahid Mahmood took a simple return catch in the 15th over to jolt United again as Azam returned for a meager nine off eight balls.

Islamabad needed a mere 36 off the last five overs when skipper Shadab (34, 26b, 4x4s) was undone by Hamza as Seifert pounced another catch. Faheem Ashraf announced himself with a towering six to the crease.

Haider Ali and Faheem bailed out United with an unbeaten 36-run sixth-wicket partnership that sealed the deal for them. Haider looked in sublime touch, hitting the winning runs in the penultimate over, as he racked up a fluent unbeaten 26 off 16 balls with two fours and a six.

Faheem, named player of the match for his heroics with the ball and fine efforts in the field, too returned with an unbeaten 12 on eight as United bagged a crucial win with five wickets in hand and eight balls to spare.

Hamza picked up a three-wicket haul while Muzarabani and Zahid bagged one each.

Earlier, Islamabad United won the coin toss and asked Karachi Kings to bat first. The Kings' opening pair of Shan Masood and

Tim Seifert got off to a steady start with a 34-run opening partnership, which was broken by Faheem in the fifth over.

Shan's (10, 12b, 1x4) lean form in the HBL PSL 9 continued as he top-edged a length delivery against Faheem with Imad Wasim taking a fine catch.

After Kings accumulated 38-1 in the powerplay, Faheem returned to remove Seifert, who had raced to 26 off 19 balls comprising five boundaries, in the seventh over courtesy of a spectacular catch by Munro at deep cover boundary.

Veteran batter, Shoaib Malik struggled to get off the blocks and skied one off the bowling of Imad returning for a paltry six-ball one leaving Karachi Kings 45-3 after eight overs. Tymal Mills, returning to the United side in place of Naseem Shah, struck on the second ball of his spell to dismiss Mohammad Nawaz (5, 3b, 1x4).

James Vince and Kieron Pollard got together in the ninth over and brought a semblance of stability to the Kings' innings with a 58-run fifth-wicket partnership off just 33 balls.

Pollard took apart Shadab, hitting him for three sixes across two overs, while Vince hit Mills for three consecutive boundaries in the 14th over. On the following

ball, Mills took his revenge and brought an end to Vince's 29-run outing aided by five boundaries.

Faheem returned to complete his quota of four overs as he sent down two economical overs, the 15th and 17th of the innings, yielding only nine runs and rounding off his four-over spell for just 16 runs.

Hunain Shah struck in the 17th over to remove Pollard for 39 off 28 balls on the back of three boundaries and as many sixes. Muhammad Irfan Khan (16, 13b, 1x4, 1x6) also followed Pollard in the next over as Mills outfoxed him.

Karachi scrapped their way to 150-7 in the allotted overs. Mills picked up three wickets. Faheem chipped in with two wickets while Imad and Hunain bagged one each.

Scores in brief

Islamabad United beat Karachi Kings by five wickets

Karachi Kings 150-7, 20 overs (Kieron Pollard 39, James Vince 29; Tymal Mills 3-34, Faheem Ashraf 2-16)

Islamabad United 151-5, 18.4 overs (Shadab Khan 34, Salman Ali Agha 33, Haider Ali 26 not out; Mir Hamza 3-41)

Player of the match - Faheem Ashraf (Islamabad United)

8th March fixture: Peshawar Zalmi vs Quetta Gladiators, Pindi Cricket Stadium, Rawalpindi (7pm)

Lahore Qalandars secure 1st win of PSL9

Sports Desk

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 a run a ball 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-wick-

et 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 balls 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 caught 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)

Thursday's fixture: Islamabad United v Karachi Kings, Pindi Cricket Stadium, Rawalpindi (7pm).

Advertisement for FCCI (Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry) featuring contact information, services, and a list of members.



## Defence Exhibition-2024

PN Mission commander presents souvenirs to Commander-in-Chief of Russian Navy and Fleet Commander of Turkish Navy during Doha International Maritime Defence Exhibition-2024.



## President Alvi appoints three judges



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Thursday approved the appointment of a judge of Supreme Court as well as the Chief Justice of Balochistan High Court. The president appointed Justice Naem Akhtar Afghan as Supreme Court judge who was serving as Chief Justice of Balochistan High Court.

The president approved the appointment under Article 175 A of the Constitution. The president also

approved the appointment of senior most judge Justice Muhammad Hashim Khan Kakar as Acting Chief Justice of Balochistan High Court. The president made this appointment of the Acting Balochistan High Court chief justice in accordance with the Article 196 of the Constitution. President Alvi also appointed senior most judge Justice Malik Shehzad Ahmed Khan as Chief Justice of Lahore High Court, in accordance with the Article 175 (A) of the Constitution.

## PM-Ramazan-Package

## PM announces Rs 7.5 billion relief package for poor people

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Thursday announced a historic subsidy based Ramazan relief package 2024 of Rs 7.5 billion for the poor and middle classes.

He was chairing a high level meeting on Prime Minister's Ramazan Relief Package and Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP).

Senator Ishaq Dar, Ahd Cheema, Shiza Fatima Khawaja, Romina Khursheed Alam and high ranking officials attended the meeting.

The PM was given a detailed briefing on the Ramazan relief package.

During Ramazan ul Mubarak, under the package more than 39.6 million families will be provided edible goods on lower rates.

Under the Benazir Income



Support Programme, 88 percent of the eligible families will be given 19 edible items including flour, rice, pulses, ghee, cooking oil, sugar, sherbet and milk on lower than market rates. The rate of subsidy on these goods would be 30 percent which was more than the inflation rate.

Subsidy of Rs 77 per kilo would be given on the 20 kilogram flour bag and Rs 70

subsidy on every kilogramme of ghee.

The Prime Minister's Ramazan relief package would be distributed among the needy families through 4775 utility stores across the country and the supply would continue till the end of Ramazan.

Those who would face any difficulty in registration for the Ramazan relief programme, would be facilitated and regis-

tered at the spot and their complaints would be resolved.

The prime minister said it was priority of the government to distribute edible items to the poor and low income class on lower than market rates.

He said no compromise would be made on the quality of the edible items being provided under the relief package.

The quality of the eatables

would be strictly monitored, he added.

The prime minister said it would be ensured that the people should not face any difficulty while availing the Ramazan package.

He directed to increase the counters for distribution of Ramazan package especially cheap flour besides mobile units.

He said strict action would be taken against those who were resorting to artificial price hikes and hoarding during the holy month of Ramazan.

The PM instructed that the deserving people should be properly guided through an awareness campaign across the country about the relief package so that they could avail the facility and should not face any difficulty in getting the edible items.

## Pakistan joins OIC FMs call for immediate ceasefire in Gaza

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Thursday joined call of the Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire and cessation of Israeli aggression in Gaza and the provision of unimpeded and adequate humanitarian, medical and relief aid, provision of water and electricity, and the opening of humanitarian corridors to deliver urgent aid.

Speaking during the weekly press briefing, the Foreign Office Spokesperson said, "As we move towards the holy month of Ramazan, we call for urgent relief to the people of Palestine and unrestricted access to Palestinians to pray in the holy Al-Aqsa Mosque."

She said, "Pakistan welcomes the Extraordinary Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers held yesterday in Jeddah and supports its strong condemnation of the unprecedented Israeli aggression against civilians in the besieged Gaza Strip and the entire Occupied Palestinian Territory."

"The CFM has held the occupying power, fully responsible for the ongoing genocide of civilians in Gaza."

The Spokesperson said, Pakistan had sent six shipments of humanitarian assistance to the people of Gaza. "While five of them went through, the Rafah crossing, one was air dropped, with the help of Jordanian authorities. Our assistance has been in the form of medicines, tents and food for the people of Gaza."

"The issue is not of the availability or lack of availability of humanitarian assistance. The issue is that the humanitarian assistance that the international community wishes to send to the people of Gaza is not



reaching them because of the siege of Gaza and the restrictions imposed by the Israeli occupation authorities. We urge the United Nations Security Council to play its mandated role under the UN Charter and take action so that there is ceasefire in Gaza and the siege is lifted and humanitarian aid flows into Gaza," she explained.

She said, "As the world celebrates International Women's Day tomorrow, we would like to remember the strong women of Kashmir who have faced the brunt of Indian atrocities in Indian Ille-

gally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. They have endured widespread devastation and confronted obstacles that impede their access to essential needs and their capacity to lead a dignified life."

"The Kashmiri women widowed and orphaned because of fake encounters by Indian forces do not even get time to mourn for their dead husbands and fathers and are forced to become the sole breadwinners for their families. Women heading households face additional difficulties in the society and face hurdles in finding respectable jobs," she added.

Women activists including Hurriyat leaders; Aasiya Andrabi, Naheeda Nasreen and Fehmeeda Sofi remain incarcerated in different jails of IIOJK and India, she mentioned.

The Spokesperson said, the Kashmiri women deserved to

live their lives as they choose and enjoy their rights and freedom including the right of peaceful assembly and freedom of expression.

She said Pakistan will continue to extend political, diplomatic and moral support to our Kashmiri brothers and sisters for the just and peaceful settlement of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in accordance with the UN Security Council Resolutions.

She told that Pakistan and Tanzania will hold the inaugural session of Pakistan-Tanzania Bilateral Political Consultations in Dares Salam on 12 March 2024. Additional Foreign Secretary (Africa), Ambassador Shehryar Akbar will lead the Pakistan delegation while the Tanzanian delegation will be led by Director Asia and Australasia, Ministry of Foreign Affairs & East African Cooperation, Ambassador Salvatore Mbilyiny.

## India tries to block IMF loan for Pakistan

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: As Pakistan attempts to seek a fresh IMF loan programme to meet its 6-8 billion US dollar financing needs, India has made a poor attempt at blocking the facility for Islamabad.

India's nominee, executive director Krishnamurthy Subramanian, demanded 'stringent monitoring' of any emergency funds provided to Pakistan by the IMF during a recent review of Pakistan's ongoing \$3 billion short-term Stand-By Arrangement (SBA), Indian newspaper The Hindu reported.

"India has usually abstained from voting on loans sought by Pakistan and did the same last July when the SBA was approved," the newspaper said adding that in mid-January, Subramanian "abstained from voting again, following which the IMF released a \$700 million tranche



to Pakistan."

"However, this time, the Indian government requested Mr. Subramanian to convey to the IMF board the need to put in place 'checks and balances and ensure a stringent monitoring' of Pakistan's utilisation of IMF money," The Hindu reported.

"Such monitoring is imperative to ensure that funds received to meet development imperatives are not diverted towards defence spending and repayment of external debt owed to third countries," the newspaper quoted the Indian executive director as saying.

## SJC opines Justice

Continued from Page 1

Lahore High Court Chief Justice Muhammad Ameer Bhatti, and Balochistan High Court CJ Naem Akhtar.

References against Justice Naqvi were filed in the SJC early last year after his name surfaced in connection with an alleged audio leak.

The council issued a show-cause notice to Naqvi in connection with 10 complaints lodged against him in October last year. The SJC directed the judge to submit a reply within two weeks. In a preliminary reply submitted in November, Justice Naqvi had cited "serious prejudice" against him. He had demanded that CJP Isa, Justice Masood and BHCJ Akhtar should recuse themselves and not hear the matter.

## PHC larger bench extends stay order against reserved seats till March 13

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: A five-member bench larger of the Peshawar High Court has extended the stay order against members of parliament elected to reserved seats till March 13.

A five-member bench led by Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim will heard on Thursday. The bench also includes Justice Aijaz Anwar, Justice SM Atiq Shah, Justice Shakeel Ahmad and Justice Syed Arshad Ali.

The additional attorney general asked for the case to be adjourned as the attorney general could not appear in the case.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's lawyer, Qazi Anwar, argued that the issue was centered

around the presidential election which is set to take place on March 9.

Lawyer Babar Awan told the court that the party which had won 93 seats in the provincial assembly had not been given any reserved seats while a party which had won one seat was given two reserved seats.

The court then extended the stay order till March 13.

PTI's Barrister Ali Zafar said that the decision would be applicable to both the National Assembly and the KP assembly. However, he added that the party would approach the Lahore High Court for reserved seats in the Punjab Assembly.

The development comes a day after the Peshawar High Court stopped reserved seat members from taking oath in the

legislature.

A two-member bench comprising Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim and Justice Shakeel Ahmad had stopped the MPs from taking oath. They had also sought a reply from the Election Commission of Pakistan over the issue and had referred the matter to the chief justice so it could be fixed in front of a larger bench.

The case was filed by the Sunni Ittehad Council against an ECP decision to deprive it of reserved seats in the National and provincial assemblies.

The ECP had maintained that the SIC had not contested the elections as a party and had not submitted lists for reserved seats either.

This story is being updated.

## Internet restrictions: VPN demand surges '6,000% in Pakistan'

Web Desk

ISLAMABAD: Internet privacy company Proton said on Wednesday it would offer a network of free VPN servers for use in many countries holding elections this year that have a history of censorship and repression.

Switzerland-based Proton said its aim was to help local populations circumvent government censorship, and to prevent interference or misinformation during the election campaigns.

The company maintains that tracking demand for its VPN services is a means of early detection of government crackdowns and attacks on free speech.

Proton said it had seen major surges in demand in a number of places over the past 12 months. It said it had seen demand hikes of



4,700 per cent in Nepal, 6,000 per cent in Pakistan, 25,000 per cent in Gabon and 100,000 per cent in Senegal, "all in response to political or civil unrest."

In a year when around half the global population will head to the polls, Proton said it was vital to provide broad access to virtual private network services, which can be used to skirt internet censorship and freely access information.

Venezuela, South Sudan, Sri Lanka and Turkey were among the countries where the company said it would provide its free servers.