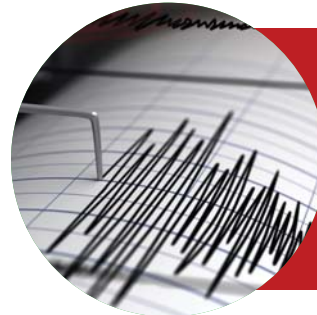




What to Expect from Kazakhstan's Chairmanship of Aral Sea Rescue Fund

Kazakhstan took over the chairmanship of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS) this year. During its three-year presidency of the IFAS, Kazakhstan will determine the course of the Aral Sea revival. The spokesman are published the article of Askhat Orazbay for the information of readers (Details on Page 5)



Earthquake jolts KP and Islamabad

An earthquake of 5.3 magnitude on the Richter scale jolted various parts of the country on Wednesday. NSMC confirmed that tremors were felt in various parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the federal capital, and the adjoining areas. Earthquake tremors occurred in the Upper and Lower Dir, Mohmand, Buner, Orakzai and Abbottabad areas of KP. According to NSMC Islamabad, the epicenter was in the Hindu Kush region, and the depth was 130 km.

Simultaneously published from Islamabad, Lahore and Multan

Meeting

ISLAMABAD: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Khan Gandapur calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.



Photo: Online

PM Shehbaz, CM Gandapur break the ice in 'positive meeting'

Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday, the first such engagement between the two since Election 2024.

Addressing a press conference in Islamabad on Wednesday, CM Gandapur said that his meeting with the prime minister was a positive start. He was accompanied by Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal and other PML-N leaders.

Gandapur, a Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader, went on to add that PM Shehbaz ensured to address the issues of the KP and extended complete support to the KP government. Gandapur urged PM Shehbaz to politically engage incarcerated former prime minister Imran Khan. "I have asked the prime minister to politically engage with Imran Khan. Political engagement will lead to a political solution," he added.

Hamid Khan and Zulfi Bukhari to contest Senate election

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek e Insaaf has started preparations to win maximum seats in the Senate of Pakistan. The election for half of the seats in the Senate are being held in first week of April. Reliable sources has revealed that renowned lawyer Hamid Khan and former SAPM to Prime Minister Imran Khan on overseas Pakistanis Zulfi Bukhari are the final candidates among others for the Senate. PTI has majority in the KP Assembly



while they can fetch some seats from Punjab as well keeping in view reasonable number of MPs in Punjab Assembly. Here it is worth mentioning that both Hamid Khan and Zulfi Bukhari have served the party always and they will play their role again in the Senate.

Dar receives congratulatory messages from world FMs

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar has received congratulatory messages from his counterparts of various countries on assuming his office. Foreign Minister of Czech Republic Jan Lipavsky, congratulating Ishaq Dar on his appointment as the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan said Czechia and Pakistan had long enjoyed friendly and constructive relations. Foreign Minister of Maldives Moosa Zameer also extended congratulations saying he was confident that the bilateral relations will continue to grow stronger under his leadership. Responding to his congratulatory message, Foreign Minister Dar posted on X expressed his gratitude to Moosa Zameer and said that he looked forward to working closely with him to promote cooperation between Pakistan and Maldives. Likewise Ukrainian FM Dmytro Kuleba congratulating Ishaq Dar on his appointment as Pakistan's 39th Foreign Minister wished him every success in his most responsible mission. "I look forward to expanding mutually beneficial bilateral and international cooperation between Ukraine and Pakistan", he added.

New Govt gears up efforts to start work on 5 new economic corridors

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Soon after the formation of the elected government, progress on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), particularly the five new economic corridors, including the Corridor of Job Creation, Innovation, Green Energy and Inclusive Regional Development, has been expedited. The newly-appointed Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Professor Ahsan Iqbal, chaired an important meeting on Wednesday to initiate work on the five new corridors in the second phase of CPEC, said a press release issued here on Wednesday. The meeting was attended by the Secretary Planning Awais Manzoor Sumra and senior officials of the CPEC Secretariat.

Pakistan, China march toward shared development, prosperity, progress: PM Shehbaz

Xinhua / Jiang Chao

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and China will carry shared values and march toward shared development, prosperity and progress together, Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said.

Chinese President Xi Jinping congratulated Sharif on his election as prime minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on March 3. In his response, Sharif thanked Xi for his warm congratulations and continued support for Pakistan.

"I deeply value his sentiments not only for the people of Pakistan, for our friendship, but our mutual cooperation," Sharif said during an interview with Xinhua at the Prime Minister's Office in Islamabad, the first exclusive one with foreign media since his inauguration. "For me, it's a very good start."

This year marks the 73rd anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan. Sharif said that over the past 70-plus years, the leaders of Pakistan and China have continuously cultivated and promoted bilateral friendship. The two countries have developed into all-weather strategic cooperative partners with a unique friendship



like "iron brothers" that has stood the test of time.

"This friendship now must achieve higher heights," he added.

Sharif, 73, served three terms as chief minister of Pakistan's eastern Punjab province and has extensive experience in regional economic development and governance. When talking about Chinese modernization, Sharif said Pakistan should emulate the model.

"It is a great success model and success story," the prime minister said, recalling how generations of visionary Chinese leaders have led their people to create unprecedented development miracles, lifting hundreds of millions of people out of poverty and providing vast rural populations with access to education, health-

care and employment.

Sharif said Chinese modernization has created growth centers and sectors competitive in the global market. "Despite challenges in recent years, China's growth has still gone steadily compared to other countries, which is a remarkable achievement," he added.

The prime minister said Pakistan could learn from the model to alleviate poverty, boost youth employment, and encourage small and medium entrepreneurship in agricultural, industrial, and information technology sectors across urban and rural areas.

As a prominent project under the Belt and Road Initiative, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was featured in Sharif's first parliamentary speech after reelection.

Pakistan is now ready to move toward the second phase of CPEC, Sharif said, aiming to promote technological development and agriculture through the corridor.

Pakistan has established the Special Investment Facilitation Council, which will cut red tape and remove delays and inefficiencies for CPEC projects, Sharif said.

The country is also planning to build

industrial parks and export zones and looks forward to Chinese joint ventures in sectors such as textile and steel, which combine Chinese technologies with Pakistan's labor assets.

"Through those joint ventures, high-quality products in agriculture, industry, IT, etc., are produced to create hundreds of thousands of jobs and wealth and increase our production and exports," he added.

"China has been extremely helpful in promoting Pakistan's economic progress, and CPEC has played a very important role, which we really appreciate deeply," said Sharif.

The prime minister said Pakistan is working toward electrifying its transport system to cut import fuel costs and spend the money on development instead. The country also plans to acquire clean energy technologies from China and others.

Sharif said he looks forward to revisiting China, calling it a tradition for Pakistan's new leadership after inauguration. "China is our second home," he said.

"We made solemn commitments that we would work together," said Sharif, "and we would be together through thick and thin."

Digitization of Tax System is the Top Priority: Finance Minister

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb visited the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) Headquarters in Islamabad today. Chairman FBR Malik Amjed Zubair Tiwana warmly welcomed the Minister who led an introductory meeting with the FBR board members to discuss the board's performance and future initiatives.

In the meeting, Minister Aurangzeb stressed the urgent need for digitizing the FBR to enhance transparency and efficiency in tax collection. These initiatives would focus on enhancing tax collection through improved FBR governance, comprehensive documentation of the economy, and full-scale digitization.



The government is considering strategies to broaden the tax base by incorporating wholesale/retail, real estate, and agriculture sectors into the tax framework.

Finance Minister Aurangzeb stated that digitization is a means to an end and implementing digital solutions are pivotal to modernizing our tax administration. He said that by leveraging technology and enhancing transparency, we can build a more equitable tax system that fosters economic growth and benefits all citizens.

PTI spokespersons receiving instructions from jail to harm Pakistan: Tarar

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Ataulah Tarar on Wednesday said that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf was conspiring against Pakistan by giving a false narrative to the European Union. "The spokespersons of PTI are getting instructions from jail to harm the country, but no one will be allowed to harm the economy," he said while addressing his maiden press conference after assuming charge as Minister for Information and Broadcasting here.

Lashing out at the PTI leadership, the minister said its conspiratorial elements were again trying to attack the country's economy as in the past too, PTI did a heinous act by writing a letter to the Interna-



He asked the question as to in what capacity were they writing this letter to the IMF. "Protecting the state of Pakistan and the national interest is our first responsibility. Strategies and steps are being taken for revival of the economy," Tarar maintained.

He said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had started working on a strategy to deal with the challenges faced by the economy as soon as he assumed office. He said it was an honour that yesterday, Bloomberg magazine mentioned Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif regarding his potential for betterment of Pakistan's economy. The minister said that Bloomberg also termed the choice of Muhammad Aurangzeb as finance minister as the best choice who as an economist had vast experience at global level.

CISS highlights need to end gender discrimination on International Women's

Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: On the occasion of International Women's Day, a ceremony was held by Amir Ayub, General Manager of Pearl Continental Muzaaffarabad. Executive Director of Center for International Strategic Studies Azad Jammu and Kashmir (CISS AJK) Dr. Asma Shakir Khawaja along his team of CISS was represented in the function. Dr. Asma Shakir Khawaja CISS AJK has said that on the occasion of Women's Day we have to highlight women's issues. There is an urgent need to end gender discrimination. Women are playing excellent roles in various fields of life. We have to raise our voices for women's rights. He said that it is possible to eliminate the problems only through practical measures. Good education, effective



role in politics and economic development are basic rights of women. For the betterment of the society, women have to be recognized with an equal role. International Women's Day celebrates the brave women Palestinian women

and Occupied Kashmir and Gaza who bravely face the situation despite the most difficult conditions of war.

He said that women should study the biography of Mothers of the Faithful and Sayyida Fatima al-Zahra, whose

lives are a beacon for Muslim women. He said that women in every field. They are continuing to perform their services with full honor and respect in life, while without their participation, the dream of national development cannot be realized. And it is very important to learn skills so that they can run the home system in a better way and be self-sufficient as well as help the family, for which the government is ensuring that they are provided with all possible facilities. Actively participated in the event, participating in discussions about women's empowerment and recognition of their important role in society. Dr. Abida Rafique concluded the event by summarizing key insights and thanking Pearl Continental Muzaaffarabad for its initiative to highlight the importance of International Women's Day.

District administration has fulfilled Nihban Ramadan target: DC Rizwan Qadeer

Kiran Asim

MULTAN: Deputy Commissioner Captain Retired Rizwan Qadeer has said that the District Administration Multan has continued to supply ration in a record number under the Nihban Ramadan package. They have been delivered to their homes. He expressed these views while visiting the steel silos warehouse yesterday. The Deputy Commissioner on this occasion also made a detailed review of the packing and sorting of the bags of the Nahban Ramadan package. Additional Deputy Commissioner Revenue Faizan Ahmed Riaz and District Food Controller Ahmed Javed also gave a detailed briefing. The Deputy Commissioner put flour, ghee, sugar and other in the ration bag. Checked the quality of the basin. Deputy Commissioner Captain Retired Rizwan Qadeer said that the district administration has



been given an ultimatum to complete the target of two and a half lakh bags in the first decade of Ramadan. Steel silos for timely preparation of ration packing in the warehouse Labor has also been increased while Assistant

Commissioners daily. Based on the fact that thousands of bags are being delivered to the tehsils, he clarified that the process of distribution of 3 lakh 37 thousand ration bags will be completed within the fixed deadline. The Deputy

Commissioner clarified that identity card scanning. Eligibility of ration bag is being checked through online system, it will not be possible to provide ration to any citizen who is not registered in the online system.

Punjab Govt provides best medical facilities to gas cylinder blast victims

Quratul Ain Asim

MULTAN: According to Public Relations Officer for Commissioner Multan Miss Iram Saleemi, Commissioner Multan Division Maryam Khan along with DC Rizwan Qadeer met the injured in the Haram Gate cylinder blast. They visited the injured in Burn Unit, Nishtar Hospital, presented flowers. Commissioner Maryam Khan said that Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz the family members Of Gas Cylinder Blast incident in Multan orders have been given for all kinds of assistance to the patients. The government and administration are with you in this hour of sorrow. The best medical facilities are being provided to the patients.



Vice Chancellor Nishtar University, MS Nishtar Hospital gave a briefing. Earlier, Commissioner Multan Division Maryam Khan, DC Rizwan Qadeer visited the houses of the victims of Haram Gate cylinder blast late at night. Condolences to the bereaved and assured all help.

Commissioner Maryam Khan said that Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has ordered an

inquiry into the cylinder incident. The district administration has also been instructed to make complete

arrangements for food and rituals for the relatives. On this occasion, Commissioner Maryam Khan also

ordered MD Vasa to change the lids of the gutters in the area. The lids were replaced.

India wants to end special status of Occupied Kashmir: Ch Yasin

Abdul Majeed Tahir

MUZAFFARABAD: President Pakistan People's Party Azad Kashmir and Senior Parliamentarian Chaudhry Muhammad Yasin has said that India has started trying to consolidate its usurpation of Occupied Kashmir by ending the special status of Occupied Kashmir. Rape has been used as a weapon of war, a conspiracy will be made to weaken Kashmiris economically by destroying their property, settling non-state persons and RSS goons in Occupied Kashmir under the guise of new domicile laws. Attempts are being made to change the demography of Occupied Kashmir. Thousands of acres of land are being seized and converted into military camps. The Kashmiri leadership is being imprisoned and punished in false cases. Occupied Kashmir is going to be turned into the world's biggest prison. India is trampling on UN resolutions and international laws. Freedom movement cannot be suppressed by hanging. The Kashmiri people are struggling to achieve their birthright of freedom and self-determination. Why do the nations of the world not see the atrocities of Indian occupying forces in Occupied Kashmir? Why is the world waiting for the last Kashmiri to die? Paying attention, he said that in the world now, matters are decided on the basis of interests instead of humanity, otherwise the world's longest issue on the agenda of the Security Council would have been resolved he remarked.



Sardar Attique demands urgent action on Israeli occupation of Gaza

Abdul Majeed Tahir

RAWALPINDI: President of All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference and former Prime Minister Sardar Attique Ahmad Khan has said that there is a hot market for cruelty and brutality in Palestine and Kashmir, the world has failed to stop the ongoing atrocities in Palestine. He condemned the atrocities of Israel against the Palestinians. Israeli bombing continued even at the beginning of Ramadan the Holy month. In Gaza, survivors of the rain of gunpowder are dying of starvation. He urged the UNSC and other peace loving countries to Press Israel for Rafah crossing should be opened, medicines were not available for thousands of injured, nothing is being done to stop Israeli atrocities. These views were expressed at Mujahid Manzil while talking to the Muslim Conference workers in Rawalpindi. He said that the forced evacuation of Palestinians from Gaza is a reflection of crimes against humanity. We must continue to support the principled position of ending the illegal occupation of Palestine. We have strongly condemned the increasing barbaric Israeli atrocities and aggression against the citizens in Gaza. Sardar Atiq Ahmad Khan urged the international community to take immediate action now. Stop the brutal massacre of Palestinians by Israel.



Azad Kashmir assembly speaker laments India's 'hypocrisy' in Kashmir

Abdul Majeed Tahir

MUZAFFARABAD: Speaker of Azad Kashmir Assembly Senior Parliamentarian Chaudhry Latif Akbar has said that all the efforts of Aman Asha (peace) by reducing tension between the two nuclear countries including Pakistan-India trade composite dialogue, trust-building measures have been undermined by Indian hesitancy. Pakistan has taken initiatives in every forum to eliminate the concept of global village and the culture of terrorism, extremism and intolerance and has shown itself to be a good neighbor country, he expressed these views while talking to the media representatives yesterday. Chaudhry Latif Akbar said that the innocent freedom fighters of Jammu and Kashmir and Palestine should play their vital role for the cease-fire of the oppressors, condemned for the increasing bloodshed of human beings, because the expansionist ambitions of English aggression from Islamic countries including Pakistan. Focus on diplomatic lobbying to thwart if both countries do not stop the worst atrocities, the escalating conflict could engulf the world peace due to which the conditions for the outbreak of a terrible war are rapidly developing.



There is a red alert for the lives of billions of people. He said that both Israel and India should learn from the destruction of Russia, which was too proud of its power, so war crimes against the rulers of both aggressive countries, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Netanyahu. Cases should be registered in the international courts of justice. India has ended the cruelty and brutality of nine lakh occupying forces in Occupied Kashmir and this is the case of Israel in Palestine.

Personhood rights demanded for The Indus River on World Rivers Day

Kamran Khamiso Khawaja

THATTA: Water experts and social activists of Thatta and Sujawal raised grave concerns over annihilation of the Indus Delta demanding personhood rights for the Indus River. The biggest river of the country has not been dealt with as it should be by the government authorities leading to mammoth challenges mainly sea intrusion and devastation of the deltaic region.

Many countries around the world have realized the importance of rivers and are working to protect the rivers from all possible threats. In 2017 New Zealand granted personal rights to the Wanganui River. Failure to implement 1991 water accord has obliterated the ecosystem of

the Indus River. The unique Indus delta with 17 creeks is facing numerous threats; the biggest among those is sea intrusion. Sea intrusion has spread fear among inhabitants of the coastal belt in Sindh.

If the required amount of water is not released downstream the Kotri Barrage, the sea will invade areas as far up as Kotri and Hyderabad.

Senior Journalist, columnist and writer Zahid Ishaque Sommo hailing from Jati town of district Sujawal warned of serious environmental crisis in the coastal region if measures are not taken for revival of Indus Delta by releasing the required quantum of water in Kotri downstream.

Sharing the devastation caused by inadequate supply of water in

the coastal areas of district Thatta and Sujawal he said that, till 1991 the Indus delta region was fertile providing vast opportunities of earning to fishermen as well as local growers.

The lands of the region were fertile, he said, adding that non-release of water turned a vast area barren in the coastal area. "Several freshwater lakes in the coastal region prominent among those are Karr, Jim, Tall and Khadi perished completely following the dearth of freshwater.

Corroborating the views of Sommo, noted agronomist and water expert Obhaiyo Khan Khushik said that few rivers of India had attained personhood rights but the Indus River still awaited that status. He lashed out at IRSA for formulating

faulty policies that have deprived the Indus River and the delta of its natural beauty.

He opposed construction of further dams on the Indus River and demanded that it should be dealt with as a living human being.

He said that the deltaic region has suffered massive damage as per the reports issued by various international organizations adding that 32 million acres of land had been pocketed by sea in the coastal areas of Sindh while in Jhirik and other areas the sea water had penetrated into the Indus River making it dangerous for human consumption. He said that IRSA should release at least 10 MAF water below Kotri.

A practicing lawyer and trainer Asifa A Rasool claimed that the



Climate change had caused more devastation in the coastal region than the wars could. She said that people in the coastal areas were forced to migrate owing

to unavailability of resources through which they could manage their household.

She urged IRSA to implement the water accord as per the jest

and soul. Attaullah Mirbahar, a local fisherman, disclosed that several fish species had become extinct amid ecological changes in the region.



Islamabad
15° - 23° Clear

SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr	4:58 am
Zohr	12:17 pm
Asr	4:32 pm
Maghrib	6:14 pm
Isha	7:37 pm

EMERGENCY

Rescue (Police)	15
Bomb Disposal	15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad	1122 & 1122 & 4451122
Emergency Ambulance	9266044
Motorway Police	927601-20

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

Benish Irshad joins Begin. Watch as COO

PPA
KARACHI: After over three years as chief operating officer of Brainchild, Benish Irshad has joined premium SVOD/TVOD OTT platform Begin. Watch in the same role.

As COO of Brainchild, Benish was instrumental in winning various new business pitches. She launched Publicis Media in Pakistan and has grown it into a power brand in the media investment management industry. In her new role as COO of Begin. Watch, she will be responsible for overseeing product development and licensee relationships.

Begin. Watch has secured sports streaming deals with the Professional Golfers Association, Saudi Premier League, All Elite Wrestling. Representatives from the SVOD/TVOD OTT platform are in talks with the Grand Slam tournaments, F1, soccer, and volleyball leagues for legal and licensed streaming deals.

On the entertainment side, Warner Brothers Discovery, Sony Pictures, and NBC Universal are reportedly on board as well. The content will become available once the mobile app is live. A subsidiary of MHL, Begin. Watch is quietly acquiring content across sports and entertainment for its launch across Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal.

Backed by venture accelerator Z2C Limited, MHL is a technology company building the rails for a transparent media supply chain. Begin. Watch represents the first business to consumer (B2C) venture directly backed by Z2C Limited, with both Pakistan Super League (PSL) and Coke Studio being indirectly backed through specialist advertising agencies.

Government will make all the policies with consultation of the business community: Jam Kamal Khan

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister of Commerce Jam Kamal Khan has said that the government is business friendly, will make all the policies with the consultation of the business community and will take all the chambers of the country along with it. The solution of the economic crisis is the first priority. We want the support of the business community for the stability of the business. We will provide facilities to the business community for ease of doing business. The mission of fully facilitating investment and local and foreign investors and under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has come with a strong determination to overcome the economic challenges facing the country. I would like to thank President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari and Secretary General UBG Zafar Bakhtawari for coming to congratulate me..

He expressed these views yesterday while talking to President ICCI Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari and Secretary General UBG Zafar Bakhtawari, who congratulated him on assuming the post of Federal Minister of Commerce, Federal Minister of Commerce Jam Kamal Khan. said will increase the volume of trade, especially in key sectors such as mining, livestock, and textiles. We urgently need to align with global standards and adopt modern methods, Jam Kamal

said that there is a need to move beyond the traditional trade approach and adopt proactive measures to improve Pakistan's position in the global market.

Speaking on the occasion, ICCI President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that people across the country, including the business community, have many expectations from the government. We know that there are difficult times and bad conditions. will fully cooperate with. The business community also expects that the government will consult the businessmen, especially the Chambers, in policy making, because the policy made with their consultation will benefit the country and the economy. We will lend our hand in the government's efforts



for economic stability, We will work together with the government to deal with the problem

of inflation, reduce interest rates, improve exports, increase foreign exchange reserves and revive the

economy. Pakistan has excellent potential to promote exports of IT, pharmaceuticals, textiles and other sectors, so the business community should work with the government to solve the problems of the export sector and create a favorable environment for export promotion.

On this occasion, Secretary General UBG Zafar Bakhtawari said that the business community will provide its full support to the government for economic stability, the business community is playing the most important role in the development of the economy. Will work with the newly elected government to promote ease of doing business in the country and improve the economy.

Beautiful view

ISLAMABAD: A view of traffic on Srinagar Highway during rain in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online

NSHS holds Quality Assurance & Accreditation Awareness Seminar

ISLAMABAD: NUST School of Health Sciences (NSHS) organised Quality Assurance & Accreditation Awareness Seminar on Human Nutrition & Dietetics (HND). Principal NSHS Dr Rizwan Ashraf received the honourable guests, Dr Abdul Ghaffar, Secretary National Agriculture Education Accreditation Council (NAEAC) and Mr Abdullah, Programme Coordinator NAEAC.

The session began with a comprehensive briefing on the facilities, infrastructure and R&D initiatives at NUST and NSHS. Dr Amir Ijaz, senior faculty from NSHS, gave an overview of the HND Department and the newly introduced BS HND programme. Ensuing was a talk by Dr Abdul Ghaffar on "Quality Assurance & Accreditation in Higher Education."

The Secretary NAEAC briefed the audience about the role and functioning of NAEAC, evaluation criteria of accreditation process (8 standards and 73 sub-standards) and impact of accreditation on quality improvement through the accreditation data of last 14 years.

He explained the overall process of accreditation and its significance in maintaining the quality of education.

He underscored the importance of ensuring the quality of education and



research facilities offered to students of Agriculture and allied fields, especially considering that many institutions are now offering degree programmes in these fields.

The talk was followed by a Q&A session. Principal NSHS thanked the honourable guests and assured to fulfill the accreditation requirements of

NAEAC in compliance with the quality standards. NUST School of Health Sciences (NSHS) is a constituent school of the National University of Sciences & Technology (NUST).

The school launched the BS Human Nutrition & Dietetics (HND) programme in February 2024. There are 50 students currently enrolled in the programme.

AIOU uploads merit lists of M. Phil and PhD programs

PNP

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has compiled merit lists of M Phil/MS and PhD programs, offered in semester spring. Transparency has been ensured throughout the process upon the special directives of Vice Chancellor, AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood.

Students can check their names in merit lists available on university websites or at respective departments. Late date for fee submission of these programs is March 17.

NUML professors remembered



PNP

ISLAMABAD: A condolence reference was organised by the National University of Modern Languages (NUML) to pay glowing tribute to its two former professors and heads of Departments; Prof. Dr. Zia ul Haq Yousafzai (Late) and Prof. Dr. Allah Baksh Malik (Late) for their remarkable efforts to promote education, research, and the university in the country. Condolence reference was organized by the Arabic department in collaboration with the department of Islamic Thought & Culture and department of Educational Sciences NUML. Founding and former Rector NUML Brig (Retd) Dr. Aziz Ahmed Khan was the chief guest while Rector NUML Major General Shahid Mahmood Kayani (Retd), Director General NUML Brig Shahzad Munir, Deans, Directors, Heads of Departments, and family members of the deceased professors also attended the ceremony.

Former Rector Dr. Aziz Ahmed Khan, in his address shared his memories and experience with both the deceased professors and said that both were wonderful personalities. He said that their contribution for NUML will be remembered ever. He thanked NUML administration for talking such steps to remember their professors.

Later, Rector NUML Major General Shahid Mahmood Kayani in his address appreciated the outstanding services of both the personalities and prayed for the deceased families to bear this irreparable loss.

Writer Amar Khan's Second Ramadan Special Ishqaway Teaser Drops

PNP

KARACHI: Amar Khan, The anticipation is palpable as the first teaser of Amar Khan's upcoming drama series as writer, tentatively titled "Ishqaway," has finally hit the screens. Following the resounding success of last year's Ramadan special and Amar Khan's first writing venture "Heer the Hero," which showcased Khan's remarkable writing talent, expectations are soaring high for her latest venture.



Khan's track record as a writer speaks for itself, with a string of critically acclaimed projects under her belt, including "Akkad Bakkad," "Dard-e-Dil," "Azaad Masi," and "Chashm-e-Num." Notably, "Black Wednesday" earned her the prestigious Best Film Award in the Peace Category at the 60 Seconds International Film Awards.

Now, with Ramadan fast approaching, fans can rejoice as Khan's new drama promises to bring an abundance of entertainment, even in the face of spotty Wi-Fi signals during the Sehri and Iftar rush. Produced by the renowned duo Abdullah Kadwani and Assad Qureshi of 7th Sky Entertainment and helmed by director Zahid Mahmood, this collaboration is already stirring excitement among viewers.

The recently released teaser has set the stage for what appears to be a lively and engaging storyline, accompanied by a peppy soundtrack. Moreover, the stellar cast, featuring Agha Ali and Nazish Jahangir in prominent roles, and veterans like Maria Wasti, Behroz Sabzwari, Mahmood Aslam, Maryam Noor, Naveed Raza, Ayesha Gul, Saleem Mairaj adds further intrigue to the project. While the teaser keeps much of the plot under wraps, it hints at a narrative rich in humor, romance, family dynamics, and perhaps a few twists and turns along the way. With Khan at the helm, audiences can expect a blend of heartfelt moments, relatable characters, and ultimately, a satisfying conclusion.

As the countdown to Ramadan begins, "Ishqaway" has already sparked conversations across social media platforms, with fans eagerly awaiting more glimpses into this promising series. With its winning combination of talent both on and off-screen, this drama has all the makings of a must-watch Ramadan special, promising to captivate audiences with its unique charm and storytelling prowess.

Using Novel Molecular Markers in Wheat Breeding will Improve Wheat Quality and Yield: Dr. Zhonghu He

ISLAMABAD: (PR&P, PARC) Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC) hosted an international seminar titled "Sino-Pak Research Activities on Wheat Genomics" at the National Agricultural Research Centre (NARC) as part of Sino-Pak collaboration for wheat genomics. The seminar aimed to improve wheat productivity through genomic research, focusing on improving regional and global food security. Renowned wheat scientist from CIMMYT-CAAS China, Prof. Dr. Zhonghu He, participated in the event as a guest speaker. Chairman PARC, Dr. Ghulam Muhammad Ali, technical members and more than 200 scientists and researchers participated in the seminar.



& salient achievements of the council in wheat research. Dr. Ali highlighted the importance of PARC's adoption of new breeding technologies to improve wheat productivity, in collaboration with CAAS, China, leading to the development of climate-resilient wheat varieties. He stressed the importance of germ-plasm exchange, training sessions, joint workshops, and seminars to facilitate the adoption of new breeding methods

Professor Dr. Zhonghu He presented recent advancement and utilization of molecular markers in wheat breeding. During his briefing, Dr. Zhonghu elaborated on China's development of innovative molecular markers and their integration into wheat breeding programs aimed at enhancing

quality, disease resistance, and yield to safeguard food and nutritional security. Subsequent to the seminar, Professor Dr. Zhonghu He from the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences (CAAS) and Dr. Shaukat, Director of the National Institute for Genomics and Advanced Biotechnology (NIGAB), formalized their commitment to enhancing collaboration between the two institutions by signing a Letter of Intention (LOI). Prof. He, along with Chinese delegates, also visited the wheat fields and planted a tree at NARC.

During the visit to National Institute for Genomics and Advanced Biotechnology (NIGAB), Chairman PARC briefed the delegation of CAAS about Innovative research activities in the fields and Labs.

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Army Chief Demonstrate Profound Affection for Balochistan - I

Nestled in the south-west of Pakistan lies Balochistan, a province of considerable strategic importance and a rich cultural legacy. As Pakistan's largest province by land area, Balochistan plays a crucial role in shaping the nation's socio-economic landscape, contributing significantly to its cultural diversity, and acting as a cornerstone for regional stability.

Balochistan's strategic significance cannot be overstated. Sharing borders with Iran to the west, Afghanistan to the north, and the Arabian Sea to the south, its geographical position makes it a vital trade gateway, linking Pakistan with Central Asia, the Middle East, and beyond. Notably, Balochistan is home to the strategic deep-water port of Gwadar, pivotal to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), enhancing trade and economic connections among Pakistan, China, and neighboring regions. Moreover, its mineral-rich terrain hosts substantial reserves of natural resources like natural gas, coal, copper, and gold, bolstering Pakistan's economy and geopolitical influence in the area.

Concerted efforts are underway to tap into its economic prospects through infrastructure enhancement, job creation, and poverty alleviation initiatives. Projects like the development of Gwadar Port and the CPEC corridor promise to transform Balochistan into a thriving economic center, attracting investments, fostering industrial growth, and generating employment opportunities. Additionally, endeavors in agriculture, tourism, and human resource development aim to fortify Balochistan's economic resilience and contribute to Pakistan's overall prosperity.

Beyond its strategic and economic significance, Balochistan boasts a diverse cultural landscape, home to various ethnic groups, each with its unique cultural heritage and linguistic identity. This cultural diversity enriches Pakistan's social fabric, promoting tolerance, pluralism, and mutual respect. Balochistan's cultural heritage is evident in its vibrant music, dance, cuisine, and crafts, reflecting the resilience and ingenuity of its people. Preserving and promoting this cultural legacy is vital not only for Balochistan's identity but also for fostering national unity and cohesion across Pakistan.

Terrorism in Balochistan takes on multiple forms, including assaults on security forces, sectarian violence, and deliberate targeting of civilians. The region has experienced a surge in terrorist incidents carried out by various groups, including Baloch separatists and proxies supported by foreign entities. These attacks not only endanger the lives and well-being of Balochistan's residents but also undermine the region's socio-economic development and stability. External interference and geopolitical rivalries have added complexity to the situation, perpetuating instability and violence in the region.

Balochistan has witnessed numerous devastating events over time, ranging from assaults on security personnel to sectarian violence and targeted assassinations, inflicting great suffering on its inhabitants and presenting significant challenges to regional stability and security.

One of the deadliest terrorist assaults in Balochistan occurred on October 24, 2016, when militants attacked the Police Training College in Quetta. The assailants, suspected to be associated with the Pakistani Taliban, indiscriminately opened fire on cadets and instructors, resulting in the deaths of at least 61 individuals and injuring over a hundred more. This brazen attack highlighted the vulnerability of security institutions in Balochistan to terrorism and emphasized the necessity for heightened security measures.

In July 2018, Balochistan was rocked by a horrific suicide bombing targeting a political rally in Mastung district. Claimed by the Islamic State (ISIS), the attack resulted in the deaths of over 150 people, including Siraj Raisani, a prominent political figure, and numerous civilians. The Mastung massacre underscored the danger posed by extremist groups operating in the region and the difficulties in securing public gatherings in volatile areas prone to terrorism.

The Hazara community has been relentlessly targeted by sectarian militants for years, with numerous Hazara individuals falling victim to targeted killings, bombings, and kidnappings, fostering fear and insecurity within the community. These attacks, often claimed by extremist groups, underscore the sectarian fault lines in Balochistan and highlight the urgent need for measures to safeguard vulnerable minority communities. Gwadar, a pivotal strategic port city in Balochistan, has experienced sporadic instances of terrorism aimed at infrastructure projects associated with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Militant factions opposed to development initiatives in the region have targeted Chinese laborers, security personnel, and infrastructure in an attempt to undermine Pakistan's economic interests and discourage foreign investment. These incidents emphasize the security challenges linked to large-scale development ventures in conflict-prone areas like Balochistan.

To be continued



Analysis

Abdul Basit Alvi

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Palestinian children's deaths

The head of the UN agency, UNRWA, mandated to help Palestinian refugees has said that more children have been killed in Israel's war against the Palestinians in Gaza than in four years of conflict around the world. "Staggering. The number of children reported killed in just over 4 months in #Gaza is higher than the number of children killed in 4 years of wars around the world combined," UNRWA chief Philippe Lazzarini said on X on Tuesday.

Lazzarini is the commissioner general of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). According to United Nations, some 12,193 children had been killed in conflicts worldwide between 2019 and 2022. The Gaza health ministry said that more than 12,300 children died in the Palestinian territory between last October and the end of February. "This war is a war on children. It is a war on their childhood and their future," Lazzarini said. At least 31,000 Palestinians, most of them women and children, have been confirmed killed and over 72,000 others injured so far since Oct 7. For months now, the United Nations and aid groups in the region have been voicing serious concern for either Israel failing to provide safe passage to humanitarian organizations or preventing aid from passing checkpoints and holding up aid along the border. Meanwhile, the Gaza media office said in a statement on Tuesday that Israel's military forces have in two weeks killed more than 400 desperate Palestinians who were waiting in lines to receive life-saving aid for their families in northern Gaza. People were waiting for aid trucks at the Kuwait Roundabout in Gaza City on Tuesday morning when the regime's forces attacked them.

At least eleven people were killed. The latest attack on hungry people in Gaza City has resulted in the death of more than 400 people since the "flour massacre." The flour massacre happened in late February, when Israel forces opened fire on Palestinians who were trying to get aid from a food truck along the coastal road on the southwest edge of Gaza City. Over 100 people were killed that day. Northern Gaza has largely been cut off from the rest of the territory since the regime started hostilities in early October. The blockade has driven hundreds of thousands of people to the brink.

The Operation Collateral Freedom-I

On the occasion of the World Day Against Cyber Censorship, celebrated globally on March 12th, the Paris-based media watchdog, Reporters Sans Frontiers (RSF), unveiled the launch of Operation Collateral Freedom (OCF). This initiative empowers over 100 media outlets in 32 countries to bypass censorship, marking a 20% increase from the previous year. Operation Collateral Freedom achieves this by creating mirror sites of blocked websites, ensuring constant synchronization with the originals and placing them in various online locations.

OCF helps the journalists to adapt to the evolution in censorship techniques, provides the media with IT resources through the Collateral Freedom app since August 2023, which allows them to mirror sites hosted on the online infrastructure used by RSF. So far 480 mirror sites on RSF's servers are currently enabling access to 100 censored media outlets.

Pakistani journalists grappling with censorship and social media restrictions have an opportunity to benefit from RSF's Operation Collateral Freedom. Through this initiative, RSF creates mirror sites of blocked media outlets, providing users access to content otherwise censored. Journalists can request their websites be mirrored and utilize the Collateral Freedom app for technical support, ensuring their content remains accessible despite censorship attempts. By staying informed about

RSF's efforts, collaborating with international partners, and advocating for press freedom, Pakistani journalists can effectively combat online censorship and ensure their voices are heard.

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) has consistently voiced concerns regarding restrictions, both official and unofficial, on press and media freedom in Pakistan. In an open letter to Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif on March 4th, RSF urged the government to take immediate steps to restore press freedom, significantly weakened in recent years. RSF highlighted that the 2024 electoral process witnessed a notable surge in violations against media freedom, emphasizing the critical need for prompt and effective measures to address these issues. RSF condemns the arbitrary shutdowns of the Internet and mobile services, as well as the blocking of social media platforms for political purposes, deeming such actions unacceptable in a democratic society and urged the government to provide an assurance that it will refrain from resorting to these authoritarian measures, which undermine freedom of expression and access to information.

RSF's assessment underscores Pakistan's standing in media freedom, ranking 150th out of 180 countries. Shockingly, between 2012 and 2022, 53 journalists lost their lives in Pakistan, with convictions secured for only 4% of these cases.

RSF highlights various forms of media coercion in Pakistan, including military interference, journalist

abductions by intelligence agencies, legislative misuse to muzzle journalists, arbitrary Internet shutdowns, and draconian media laws. The lack of investigations into these crimes perpetuate impunity, denying justice to victims. RSF emphasizes the urgent need for strengthened legislation to combat impunity and ensure respect for the rule of law, particularly concerning criminal activities by security services targeting journalists deemed "troublesome," such as abductions, secret detentions, and torture.

RSF underscores Pakistan's status as one of the most perilous environments for journalists, marked by extensive censorship and self-censorship. Urgently, RSF calls upon the new government to address this critical issue and honor commitments made by political parties during the electoral campaign. These include establishing a Safety and Security Commission for journalists, as pledged by the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), and revising the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) 2016, as promised by the Pakistan People's Party (PPP). RSF urges the government to combat harassment against women journalists, enforce laws protecting journalists, repeal restrictive legislation on information rights, ensure media independence, cease arbitrary Internet and social media shutdowns, and enable journalists to work safely while upholding the free flow of information.

RSF emphasizes the urgency for the federal government to enact the 2021 federal law on the protection of journalists and media professionals without delay.

To be continued



Analysis

Qamar Bashir

Counter-Narrative: Rethinking the Women's March in Pakistan

In recent years, the Women's March has become a global phenomenon, attracting attention and participants from various corners of the world. However, amidst the fervor and solidarity, it's essential to pause and reflect on the nuances of such movements, especially concerning the context of Pakistan.

While the intentions behind the Women's March are undoubtedly noble - advocating for gender equality, women's rights, and challenging societal norms - the effectiveness and appropriateness of replicating the Western model in a vastly different cultural landscape like Pakistan must be critically examined.

Firstly, the Women's March in Pakistan often faces criticism for its lack of inclusivity. While the organizers claim to represent all women, the reality is far from it. The voices and concerns of marginalized communities such as rural women, transgender individuals, and religious minorities are often sidelined in the mainstream discourse of the march. True empowerment cannot be achieved without ensuring the inclusion of all voices, regardless of their socio-economic status or background.

Moreover, the methods employed during the Women's March, including provocative slogans and attire, can be perceived as disrespectful and alienating to many within Pakistani society. In a country, where modesty and propriety are Paramount such tactics may only serve to further polarize and antagonize instead of fostering constructive dialogue and change.

From a religious perspective, the Women's March in Pakistan faces even greater scrutiny. Pakistan is an Islamic republic, where religious beliefs and values play a significant role in shaping societal norms and behaviors. Many voices within the country view the Women's March as an affront to Islamic principles, citing concerns about immodesty, promiscuity, and the erosion of traditional family values.

Furthermore, the Women's March in Pakistan has been criticized for its disconnect from ground realities and its failure to address the pressing issues faced by women in the country. While issues like wage disparity and reproductive rights are undoubtedly important, they often pale in comparison to more

immediate concerns such as access to education, healthcare, and protection from domestic violence. By focusing solely on global feminist agendas, the Women's March risks neglecting the specific needs and challenges faced by Pakistani women.

Additionally, the Women's March has been accused of being co-opted by political agendas, detracting from its original purpose of advocating for women's rights. In a country where political polarization runs deep, aligning the Women's March with a particular political ideology or party only serves to further politicize and delegitimize the movement in the eyes of many by detracting from its original purpose of advocating for women's rights.

It's essential to acknowledge that advocating for women's rights in Pakistan requires a nuanced and context-specific approach. Instead of blindly emulating Western models, there is a need for homegrown movements that take into account the cultural, religious, and socio-economic dynamics of Pakistani society.

It's crucial to acknowledge the hidden agendas behind the Women's March in Pakistan. While its proponents claim to champion women's rights, there are concerns about the ulterior motives driving the movement. Some fear that the march serves as a vehicle for destabilizing the social fabric of Pakistan, promoting Western values at the expense of indigenous traditions and beliefs. Additionally, the Women's March often overlooks the progress made in Pakistan regarding women's rights. Despite challenges, Pakistan has made significant strides in recent years, with increased female representation in politics, education, and the workforce. Focusing solely on the negative aspects of women's experiences can overshadow these achievements and discourage further progress.

In conclusion, the Women's March in Pakistan must be reevaluated in light of its lack of inclusivity, disconnect from ground realities, and alignment with Western feminist agendas. True progress can only be achieved through context-specific approaches that respect the religious and cultural sensitivities of Pakistani society. It's time to reconsider the Women's March and explore alternative avenues for advocating women's rights in Pakistan.



Analysis

Mutansar Shah Nawaz



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

What to Expect from Kazakhstan's Chairmanship of Aral Sea Rescue Fund

ASTANA: Kazakhstan took over the chairmanship of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS) this year. During its three-year presidency of the IFAS, Kazakhstan will determine the course of the Aral Sea revival. The spokesmen are published the article of Askhat Orazbay for the information of readers

On the commencement of Astana's Chairmanship in the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea

Dear reader!
My name is Askhat Orazbay and I am the Chairperson of the Executive Committee of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea (IFAS), in which Kazakhstan holds the chairmanship for 2024-2026.

I would like to share with the audience information about the activities of IFAS aimed at improving the situation in the Aral Sea basin and serving the interests of the peoples and states of Central Asia for 30 years.

In modern realities, with ubiquitous population growth, rapid economic development of states, and an increase in water consumption per capita, the burden on the environment is steadily increasing. Such an intensification of anthropogenic impact provokes and accelerates the processes of global climate change. In Central Asia, all these processes are proceeding at a faster pace than the global average. The ecological crisis in the Aral Sea basin is accompanied by progressive scarcity and pollution of water resources, land degradation and desertification of vast territories, loss of forests, eco-landscapes and biodiversity. On a huge area

of the dried-up bottom of the Aral Sea, a new desert has formed—Aralkum, with a size of more than 54 thousand square kilometers (for comparison: it is comparable to the territory of Croatia and much larger than Estonia, Denmark, the Netherlands and Switzerland).

In these tense conditions, it is highly relevant for the Central Asian States to elaborate new mechanisms for developing cooperation in the region. The main goal of the chairmanship of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the IFAS is to further increase the level of cooperation on the integrated use and protection of water resources, solving environmental problems, socio-economic aspects and introducing elements of a "green" economy in Central Asian countries.

During the period of Kazakhstan's chairmanship, we will continue to implement two main programs approved by the IFAS Board: Aral Sea Basin Program-4 (ASBP-4) and its systematic monitoring, as well as the Regional Environmental Protection Program for the Sustainable Development of Central Asia (REPPSD CA). The period of implementation of the both Programs—until 2030.

The environmental problem of the Aral Sea began to appear in the 1960s and 1970s, which has led to the fact that there is practically nothing left from the 4th largest lake on our planet. At first, the Aral Sea was divided into two reservoirs, then into three and ...

During the years of Independence, Kazakhstan, with the support of the World Bank, carried out comprehen-

sive work and was able to restore a little part – the Small Aral or the Northern Aral Sea, but this is only about 8% of its original value. The port city of Aralsk is still far from the water, which at first went 100 km away, but after the measures taken it came much closer.

Particles and dust of salts and toxic chemicals left on the drained bottom of the Aral Sea are found not only in the Tien Shan and Pamir mountains, but also far beyond the borders of our region. In order to reduce the removal of harmful substances, the countries of the Aral Sea region are actively engaged in phytomeliorative measures, planting of saxaul (Haloxylon) and other vegetation.

But are plantings on the former bottom of the reservoir so effective? What is the current state of ecosystems? As it is known, due to several low-water years in a row, the flow along the Syr Darya has decreased and the volume of water in the Northern Aral Sea has lessened from a maximum of 27 to 20 cubic kilometers. The catch of fish has declined and this has a negative impact on the employment of the local population. The morbidity rate of the population is growing again due to desertification and deterioration of water quality... Will the tragedy happen again? What are the moods and plans of the locals? There are a lot of questions and they are all interconnected.

I believe that we need to study the full range of problems and ongoing work, to update them and to try to solve them as soon as possible and more effectively.

In the Aral Sea Basin Program-4



Askhat Orazbay, Chairperson of the IFAS Executive Committee

(ASBP-4), which I mentioned earlier, the environmental direction is highlighted as a separate main area, consisting of 12 project proposals.

I would like to note that joint actions are envisaged to adapt to climate change, including measures to adapt the most vulnerable sectors: water and agriculture, drinking water, energy, biodiversity, forest, pastures and mountain ecosystems. It was envisaged to develop a regional action plan for adaptation to climate change and, thanks to the support of the Program of the German Society for International Cooperation GIZ "Green Central Asia", five of our countries have developed and adopted a Regional Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change in Central Asia.

It also provides for the dissemination of the best climate-adapted agricultural practices. We will have to develop a regional program for the protection of biological resources in Central

Asia, implement measures to preserve and restore ecosystems in the basins of our main rivers – the Amudarya and the Syrdarya, and continue systematic forest plantations in the Aral Sea region (Priaralye) zone and on the drained bottom of the Aral Sea.

The following environmental projects provide for the development of a system for monitoring the state of the environment and water resources in the Aral Sea region (Priaralye) and on the drained seabed; the development of environmental innovations and technologies in the Aral Sea region (Priaralye) zone.

I consider such a project as "Improvement of water quality in rivers and reservoirs, taking into account international standards, elimination and prevention of pollution, including industrial waste" to be very important. Kazakhstan and other countries are working on joining the Protocol on Water and Health to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, and Uzbekistan has recently joined it.

Reducing the risks of natural disasters associated with floods, mudflows and droughts in the Aral Sea basin, studying the state of glaciers in the upper reaches of transboundary rivers, developing transboundary eco-corridors, regional networks of specially protected natural areas for the conservation of biodiversity is far from an incomplete list of those projects that we must promote during our IFAS chairmanship.

If we talk about new initiatives that

will be carried out within the framework of Kazakhstan's chairmanship in the IFAS, then this is the creation of a long-term and sustainable regional cooperation mechanism for the effective use of water and energy resources in Central Asia, taking into account the interests of all countries in the region in the fields of irrigation, hydropower and ecology.

Systematic work is also needed to implement a unified automated system for accounting, monitoring, management and distribution of water resources in the Aral Sea basin. President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev at a meeting of the Council of Heads of States-Founders of the IFAS held on September 15, 2023 in Dushanbe, called on the parties to begin implementing these initiatives.

Strengthening regional cooperation with international development partners, UN structural entities, financial institutions and the donor community plays an important role. It is worthwhile to intensify activities within the framework of generally accepted international environmental conventions, action plans, declarations and joint statements.

In the period of 2024-2026 Kazakhstan will take measures to implement the instructions and agreements reached by the Heads of States at the IFAS Summit on September 15, 2023 in Dushanbe, as well as previously concluded agreements and commitments, which will ensure the consistency of Central Asia's actions to achieve the global SDGs and its positioning as a single region.

A typical Iranian Iftar Table

A Typical Iranian Iftar Table dressed and decorated during the month of Ramadan includes: Bread, Cheese, Walnut, Vegetable, Tea, Sholeh Zard (شله زرد), Dates, Syrup mixed with Flixweed & Psyllium, Aash (آش), Zubia Bamia Sweets (زوبیا بنامی), Shir Brenj (شیر برنج). Ingredients such as Saffron, Rose Water, Cardamom, Sugar and Vanilla, Almond and Pistachios are used for seasoning and topping



Emirati businessman donates Dh5 million to Sheikh Mohammed's Mother's Endowment campaign

Spokesman Report

Emirati businessman Gheyath Mohammad Gheyath, owner of the GINCO Group, announced a contribution of Dh5 million towards the Mothers' Endowment campaign launched by Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai.

The Dh1-billion fund was established to honour mothers by supporting the education of millions around the world.

Organised by Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Global Initiatives and coinciding with the holy month of Ramadan, the Mothers' Endowment campaign reflects the UAE's mission of extending aid to communities and vulnerable populations around the world.

Gheyath Mohammad Gheyath said that the campaign "allows philanthropists, institutions and businesses to compete for the good of communities and to support the UAE's humanitarian and charity



initiatives that positively impact lives across dozens of countries."

"Supporting the education of millions is no doubt the best gift to give our mothers, allowing more people to help create a better future for young generations where they can ensure sustainable and comprehensive development of their communities," he added.

Donation channels

The Mothers' Endowment campaign welcomes donations and contributions from institutions and individuals across six main channels. These include the campaign's website (Mothersfund.ae) and a dedicated call centre via the toll free number (800 9999).

Donations are also possible via bank transfers in the UAE dirham number with Emirates Islamic Bank (AE790340003708472909201). Donations via SMS are possible by sending the word "Mother" to the following numbers (1034, 1035, 1036, 1038) for Etisalat by e& users. Other possible platforms for donating to the campaign are the DubaiNow app by clicking the "Donations" tab, and Dubai's community contributions platform Jood (Jood.ae).

Envoy highlights Pakistan's commitment to gender equality, enabling environment for women

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Pakistan to France Asim Iftikhar on Wednesday underlined Pakistan's strong commitment to continue to striving for gender equality in all aspects of life and providing an enabling environment for women to achieve their full potential. Envoy highlights Pakistan's commitment to gender equality, enabling environment for women

The ambassador, addressing an event held by the embassy in collaboration with Zonta International Paris, highlighted the vital role of women in Pakistan's independence and national development and paid tribute to their remarkable accomplishments in diverse fields over the years. Held in connection with International Women Day, the event was attended by all walks of life including the diplomatic community, prominent representatives of the government, UNESCO, international institutions, civil society and media participated. Members of Pakistan-France Senate Friendship Group, Senator Vivette Lopez



and Pierre Cuyper also attended. Envoy highlights Pakistan's commitment to gender equality, enabling environment for women Ambassador/Permanent Delegate Asim Iftikhar providing a historical perspective, threw light on the central place of women in Islam that also provided an advanced and ahead of time framework of fundamental human rights including the rights of women.

Describing education as a key enabler, the ambassador underscored the importance of partnerships including with the civil society to promote shared objectives. He also lauded the work of women officers spearheading various wings of the embassy as a practical manifestation of government's affirmative action for gender equality and representation. Envoy A detailed presenta-

tion showcasing successful Pakistani girls and women from all walks of life throughout Pakistan's history was also delivered during the event, reaffirming Pakistan's solemn commitment to continue promoting women empowerment and gender equality across the board. Assistant Director-General for Education Stefania Giannini highlighted the role of UNESCO in

promoting SDG-4 Education globally. She also mentioned the Malala Funds-in-Trust for Girls' Education as a successful role model of partnership between Pakistan, UNESCO other partners for promoting girls' education in Pakistan and several other countries. President of the Zonta Club presented the vision and activities of the organization for education, visibility and promotion of women and girls. Recorded video messages from Sania Nishtar, CEO, GAVI and Mumtaz Zahra Baloch, Spokesperson, Ministry of Foreign Affairs were also played. Three outstanding Pakistani-French women Tabassum Saleem (civil service), Naghmana Kiani (social service) and Shaaz Malik (poet/writer) also shared their views on the occasion. The event was part of the embassy's program to mark the International Women's Day coinciding with the Pakistan Day celebrations in March and was an excellent opportunity to inform the French audience of the tremendous achievements and important role of women in Pakistan.

Spotify launches daylist in Pakistan



PPA

ISLAMABAD: Spotify's personalized listening experiences continue as it launches daylist, your day in a playlist, to music lovers in Pakistan.

Throughout the day, your mood changes, and so does the music you listen to. Spotify's daylist is a dynamic playlist that adapts to your day's evolving moods and moments. Whether embracing the thrill of a 'windows down thrill wave Thursday evening' or kicking off the day with the energy of a 'happy dance energy Friday morning', the daylist ensures that soundtracks evolve seamlessly throughout the day. The point is that you're ever-changing, and your playlists should be too.

Get started by searching for 'daylist' in your Spotify App—it is also accessible on mobile within the Made For You hub. 'daylist' refreshes several times daily, and on mobile, you can see the timing of your next update directly from the playlist page. As with all things Spotify, every playlist is a shareable experience. Users can send their favorite daylist moments to friends on social media using a ready-made screenshot, a personalized sticker, or a customizable sharecard.

For the best streaming experience, here is a pro tip. Save the daylist to 'Your Library' for convenient access to curated playlists throughout the day.

'daylist' is now accessible to both Free and Premium users in Pakistan and over 60 markets worldwide, all in English. Head to Spotify's For the Record for more details.

Bull & Bears
PSX 100-Share
Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index	
Current	Prev. Close
64,048.44	64,801.70
Day's High	Day's Low
65,043.37	63,856.51
Index Value	Change
5,313,768,010	-753.26
Percentage	Time
-1.16%	13 Mar, 2024 5:00 pm

Europe: FTSE 100 Index	
Index Value	Change
7,772.17	+24.36
Percentage	Time
+0.31%	13 Mar, 4:35 pm GMT

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average	
Index Value	Change
39,135.50	+130.01
Percentage	Time
+0.33%	13 Mar, 1:00 pm GMT-4

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average	
Index Value	Change
38,695.97	-101.54
Percentage	Time
-0.26%	13 Mar, 3:15 pm GMT+9

Open Market Forex Rates		
Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	182.7	184.5
Bahrain Dinar	742.53	750.53
Canadian Dollar	204	206.2
China Yuan	38.87	39.27
Danish Krone	40.92	41.32
Euro	303.3	306.2
Hong Kong Dollar	35.69	36.04
Indian Rupee	3.37	3.48
Japanese Yen	1.86	1.94
Kuwaiti Dinar	908.9	917.9
Malaysian Ringgit	59.59	60.19
New Zealand \$	171.66	173.66
Norwegians Krone	26.67	26.97
Omani Riyal	725.18	733.18
Qatari Riyal	76.7	77.4
Saudi Riyal	74	74.75
Singapore Dollar	206	208
Swedish Korona	27.27	27.57
Swiss Franc	317.89	320.39
Thai Bhat	7.88	8.03
U.A.E Dirham	75.75	76.5
UK Pound Sterling	355	358.5
US Dollar	278.8	281.5

Daraz kickstarts Ramadan festivities with spectacular offers at best prices

PPA

ISLAMABAD: In the spirit of the holy month of Ramadan, Daraz, Pakistan's leading online marketplace, will have two special campaigns—3.3 and 4.4, designed to bring festivities to every Pakistani home with unbeatable prices and exclusive offers with discounts reaching up to 75%. These will ensure that customers can prepare for the month of devotion and reflection without the worry of high expenses. The 3.3 campaign will run on the platform until the 19th of March, setting the stage for the 4.4 campaign, which will begin on the 20th of March and continue until the 4th of April.

He will prioritize relations with all nations including India: Mian Zahid Hussain

Tariq Khattak

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain said on Wednesday that the appointment of Ishaq Dar as Foreign Minister by Prime Minister Shabbaz Sharif is a good decision.

He said that Ishaq Dar understands the economy well and that he will start very effective economic diplomacy.

Mian Zahid Hussain said Mr. Dar would prioritize relations with all the countries, including India, and a favorable environment for foreign investment would be created in Pakistan.

Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that Ishaq Dar is a responsible politician who, instead of raising



slogans, is committed to working hard and has a good reputation.

He said the country's image will improve because of the efforts of Ishaq Dar, and econom-

ic relations with America, Europe, China, and Arab countries will take on a new dimension.

The business leader said that the endless tension between Pakistan and India will decrease as the focus of PML-N has always remained on economic development and improving relations with neighboring countries, especially India.

Mian Zahid Hussain said Ishaq Dar would follow that policy, unlike some failed politicians who consider increased tensions with India necessary for their popularity.

Some politicians do not miss any opportunity to spoil ties with India and other influential nations, but Ishaq Dar will not do so, he said, adding that he will take matters forward responsibly.

Unnecessary tension from neighboring countries has damaged Pakistan, while other countries have made incredible economic progress, significantly increasing their economic and

political power.

Now we have to come out of the past, face reality, and accept that those countries are also avoiding us whose friendship was cherished in the past, and the friendly nations are now looking at the issues from a geo-economic point of view.

Pakistan's economic importance is not vital for many countries because they are fed up with forwarding loans. Pakistan's importance now owes only to its being a nuclear power.

None of the leading global investors arriving in India to attend the wedding of business people will ever visit Pakistan. Still, if Pakistan is transformed into an economic powerhouse, all these people will be pleased to do business in Pakistan.

He said there is still time to pay attention to political and economic affairs, discount the past, and transform Pakistan into an economic hub through a successful foreign policy.

Hardwork

ISLAMABAD: A blacksmith is cutting the iron bars on his workshop at Golra area in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online

JS Bank, UNDP sign MOU for gender-inclusive and climate-resilient businesses

PPA

LAHORE: JS Bank joins hands with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to promote gender-inclusive and climate-resilient businesses in Pakistan. The collaboration is aimed at promoting private-sector financing, particularly projects aligned with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with a core focus on women and youth-led businesses.

In line with the theme of International Women's Day (IWD), this partnership underscores JS Bank and UNDP Pakistan's commitment to prioritize women-centric initiatives to foster gender impact within the realm of sustainable development and climate



resilience.

The memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed at JS Bank's head office in Karachi in the presence of the senior management, including Atif Salim Malik, Chief Operating Officer, and Syed Jafar Raza, Group Head, Investment, International & Transactional Banking from JS Bank and Samuel Rizk, Resident Representative and Ammara Durrani, Assistant Resident Representative from UNDP Pakistan.

Atif Salim Malik commented at the signing ceremony, "At JS Bank, we believe in the power of innovative ideas to drive economic growth and social change, particularly for women. As a financial service provider, it is our core responsibility to empower businesses that are

inclusive and sustainable.

Speaking at the ceremony, Samuel Rizk, Resident Representative UNDP Pakistan said, "For Pakistan's resilient recovery and inclusive growth, private sector's adoption of the sustainability agenda is crucial to driving job creation, skill development, innovation, and infrastructure.

The collaboration between UNDP and JS Bank marks a significant milestone in advancing sustainable development efforts in Pakistan, reiterating the need for climate-friendly practices in conducting business practices. Having inaugurated this collaboration, both organizations remain steadfast in fostering innovative, inclusive, and sustainable businesses in the country.

Auto industry sales in February 2024 in line with expectations: Mashood Ali Khan

News Desk

KARACHI: Auto expert and former chairman of the Pakistan Association of Automotive Parts and Accessories Manufacturers (PAAPAM), Mashood Ali Khan, said that except for tractors, sales of other vehicles decreased, including those of buses and trucks. "This industry is not going to work unless drastic changes are made in the policy," he said. "The industry is not working, so buses and truck sales remained low."

Khan said that an increase in the sales tax on cars by the caretaker government was also hurting the sales of cars. "The auto industry's results are not good. Prices are very high." He said that there was a need for an industry policy, as the industry has been ignored, which would not be beneficial for the country. "We need to cut down on car prices to increase



sales and make a win-win position for the customers, as a common person is not in the position to buy a car because of high inflation," he said.

According to brokerage Topline Securities, car sales, including non-PAMA members' car sales, clocked in at around 10,900, down 7 percent month-on-month while up 52 percent year-on-year in February 2024.

Indus Motors sales were down 26 percent month-on-month to 2,036 units in February, primarily due to the high base effect of last month and the launch of the new Corolla Cross.

Saleem Khan Tanoli appointed Convener, FPCCI Trade Promotion & Business Development

Tahir Amin Malik

LAHORE: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI) has appointed Saleem Khan Tanoli as the Convener of its Central Standing Committee on Trade Promotion & Business Development.

Saleem Khan Tanoli being the CEO of Fakt Exhibitions has a wealth of experience and a proven track record in promoting trade and fostering business development. His dedication to advancing Pakistan's commercial interests nationally and internationally aligns seamlessly



with FPCCI's mission to drive economic growth and prosperity.

In his capacity as Convener, Saleem Khan Tanoli will spearhead initiatives aimed at enhancing trade promotion strategies, identifying business development opportunities, and facilitating collaborations to bolster Pakistan's position in the global market.

China is helping Pakistan to overcome its debt trap: Consul General Faisalabad

Abdul Majid

FAISALABAD: Chinese debt is only 13% of the total foreign payable debt and its basic objective is to drag out Pakistan from the debt trap by extending necessary financial assistance, said Mr. Zhao Shiren, Chinese Consul General Lahore. Addressing the business community in Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI), he said that China has never pressured Pakistan for the repayment of the due loans while recently the Chinese government has rolled over the loan of \$2bn. He said that Pakistan has got excessive foreign loans while its GDP is only \$350bn.

"China is helping Pakistan to overcome its financial constraints", he added. Responding to a question about issuing multiple visas, Mr. Zhao said that a very limited number of multiple visas are being issued in addition to the single and double entry visas.

He said that multiple visas are being issued by assessing the financial status and its volume of trade with China. He said that eligible exporters from FCCI could contact him for multiple visas

enabling him to recommend their case to the Chinese embassy. He said that currently visas are being issued from Islamabad and Karachi while a proposal was under consideration to issue visas from Lahore also.

He said that 13 chambers of Punjab have been authorized to issue letters of support while the applicants could submit their applications through Gerry. About payment in local currencies, he said that both governments have agreed on this issue but the agreement is yet to be signed. Mian Muhammad Adrees former President FCCI however disclosed that he was already making payments in local currencies.

Responding to a question about gender equity, Mr. Zhao said that he was already making efforts for the mainstreaming of the female population of Pakistan. He proposed that both governments should enhance cooperation in this field. About the trade deficit between Pakistan and China, he said that Pakistan should enhance its exports to bridge this widening gap.

He said that Pakistan could easily enhance its exports to Saudi Arabia, UAE and China which has opened its domestic market for the foreign

products. He said that Punjab could export agriculture, industrial and finished goods under Pak China Free Trade Agreement. He said that very recently China has allowed the import of red chili and beef from Pakistan.

He said that China was also helping Pakistan by providing the latest technology. "China is providing technology for the production of hybrid rice and corporate farming", he said and added that Pakistan must make hectic efforts to bridge the trade deficit. He pointed out that during the last few years Pakistani exports to China have recorded a reasonable increase.

He said that China's global trade is around \$6trillion and in this context Pak China trade is very nominal. He said that China was helping Pakistan in energy and infrastructure sectors while under CPEC2 our focus would be on agriculture, relocation of industries, joint ventures and education etc. He said that Gwadar port is expected to be inaugurated in June this year while many projects in KPK and AJK are also nearing completion with Chinese help.

He said that the Chinese ambassador would visit Lahore and Faisalabad very soon to interact



with the local business community. Earlier Acting President FCCI Dr Sajjad Arshad welcomed the Chinese Consul General and introduced Faisalabad and FCCI. He said that half of Pakistan's population is living below the poverty line and China could help us to put Pakistan on the road to progress and prosperity. Mian Muhammad Adrees assured full support for the establishment of industries in Faisalabad with Chinese support.

He said that under the previous FTA, there were certain restrictions on Pakistani exports which have now been withdrawn. He said that China is a big market and our exporters must sneak into it by exporting quality products.

He said that we could also set up new industries with Chinese technology to export our surplus to the Chinese market as labor in China is very costly. He said that Pakistan could also export agriculture products and IT to China despite its big local market.

Multan Sultans beater Iftikhar Ahmed fined for showing dissent: PCB

Asim Tanveer

KARACHI: Multan Sultans' Iftikhar Ahmed has been fined five per cent of his match-fee for a Level 1 breach of HBL PSL's code of conduct during his side's HBL PSL 9 fixture against Quetta Gladiators at the National Bank Stadium in Karachi.

Iftikhar was found to have violated Article 2.5 of the HBL PSL Code of Conduct, which reads as: "Using language, actions or gestures which disparage or which could provoke an aggressive reaction from a batter upon his/her dismissal during a match".

The incident happened in the third over of Quetta Gladiators' batting, when Iftikhar used inappropriate language towards the batter who was dismissed.

Since Iftikhar pleaded guilty to the charge and accepted the sanctions proposed by match referee Ali Naqvi, there was no need of a formal hearing.

The charge was imposed by on-field umpires Rashid Riaz and Richard Illingworth.



Kabaddi is the game of youth, riders, japes and braves: Alhaji Vohra

Abdul Majid

FAISALABAD: The game of Kabaddi holds an important place in the culture of Punjab. Young Japhis score points with their strength and riders use the best pitches to create excitement in the game and the crowd applauds them all to cheer them up.

The 6th Baba Guranank Kabaddi Tournament was held at Shahkot Stadium, the special guests of which were Central President Cloth Barod Ittehad Group Pakistan and Chairman Pakistan Circle Kabaddi Federation Alhaji Naser Yousuf Vohra and President Kabaddi Association America Surind Singh Sahotra. While the guest of honor was General Secretary Kistan Circle Kabaddi Federation Muhammad Sarwar Advocate, former President District Bar Faisalabad, Divisional General Secretary Riaz Butt Advocate.

The decorations were brought to the venue. The players won the hearts of the spectators by spreading the color of Kabaddi. The guests were introduced to the two teams and divided into groups. Bhangras were thrown on the drum beat. The competition between PRB Kabaddi Club and Royal King Club of America was very intense had lived.

A few years ago, Nasir Yusuf Waher sent the official as well as the entire



kabaddi team to the England Kabaddi World Cup. Cash prizes of 1000 and 10000 rupees were given. A prize of 125 rupees was also given for Japhi in this

tournament. In the end, trophies and cash prizes were distributed among the winning teams. Bicycles and distributed lakhs of rupees to sportsmen. Pakistan's

biggest tournament in which Sikhs from Canada and America opened the mouths of notes to Kabaddi players in the name of Baba Guru Nanak.

Mohammad Irfan backs Virat Kohli amid reports of T20 World Cup snub

A Sports

LAHORE: Former Pakistan pace bowler Mohammad Irfan has commented on the speculations of India dropping star batter Virat Kohli from the ICC T20 World Cup 2024 squad.

The speculations arose after a report by The Telegraph India, which shed light on Kohli's possible exclusion from India's squad for the ICC T20 World Cup 2024, which is scheduled to be played in the West Indies and the United States of America (USA).

According to the report, the Indian selectors are considering the possibility of choosing Suryakumar Yadav, Tilak



Varma, and Rinku Singh instead of Kohli for the upcoming mega-event.

The selectors believe that these players are better suited for the shorter format and the conditions in which the tournament will be played.

However, Kohli's former rival, Irfan

has disagreed with the idea and showered high praise on the star batter.

"I have no doubts about it. You can't have a team without Virat Kohli because he is a tremendous batsman," said Irfan while talking to a local news channel.

The 41-year-old shed light on Kohli's performance during the ICC World Cup 2023, where the star batter was instrumental to India's dominant performance throughout the tournament.

"We witnessed it in the ODI World Cup last year, where he won 3-4 matches almost single-handedly. Had Kohli not stepped up on those occasions, India would have lost group-stage encounters against Australia and New Zealand,"

For the unversed, India crashed out of the ICC T20 World Cup 2022 after a humiliating ten-wicket loss in the semi-final against champions England.

Kohli and Rohit Sharma stayed out of the T20I format since then, before making a comeback in the format during the Afghanistan series last month.

Hardik Pandya led India in T20I during Sharma's absence, while Suryakumar Yadav took charge in the T20I series against Australia after the 50-over World Cup 2023.

Notably, the last global tournament team India won was in 2013 when they clinched the Champions Trophy under MS Dhoni.

Gaffaney and Illingworth to Officiate the Final of HBL PSL 9 as Match Officials for Playoffs and Final

Asim Tanveer

KARACHI: The Pakistan Cricket Board today announced umpire and match referee appointments for the HBL PSL 9 three playoffs and the final, which will be played from 14-18 March at the National Bank Stadium in Karachi.



The 14 March Qualifier involving table-toppers Multan Sultans and Peshawar Zalmi will be refereed by Roshan Mahanama. Aleem Dar and Richard Illingworth will be the on-field umpires, while Rashid Riaz and Faisal Afridi will be the third and fourth umpires, respectively.

Match Referee Muhammad Javed will lead the playing control team for the 15 March Eliminator 1 between Islamabad United and Quetta Gladiators. Ahsan Raza and Chris Gaffaney will be the on-field umpires, while Asif Yaqoob and Rashid Riaz will be the third and fourth umpires, respectively.

16 March Eliminator 2 featuring the loser of 14 March match and the winner of 15 March fixture will be refereed by Muhammad Javed. Richard Illingworth and Asif Yaqoob will perform on-field umpire responsibilities, while Ahsan Raza and Faisal Afridi will be the third and fourth umpires, respectively.

For the final scheduled on 18 March, Richard Illingworth and Chris Gaffaney will perform the duties of on-field umpires, while Ahsan Raza and Asif Yaqoob will be third and fourth umpires, respectively. Roshan Mahanama will lead the playing control team for the final.

200 new sports grounds to be built in Punjab: minister

Sports desk

LAHORE: Punjab Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs Malik Faisal Ayub Khokhar has said that 200 new sports grounds will be built in the province. He said this while talking during his inspection visit to various state-of-the-art sports facilities in Nishtar Park Sports Complex on Wednesday.

During his detailed visit, Punjab Minister for Sports inspected Punjab International Swimming Complex, Tennis Stadium, Tennis Stadium, Punjab Stadium, NPSC E-Library and Youth Centre, Gymnasium Hall and under construction International Squash Complex.

Project Director PMU Qaiser Raza, DSO Lahore Rana Nadeem Anjum, Deputy Director Zahoor Ahmed, Administrator Gymnasium Hall Mustafa Shah, Administrator Swimming Complex Amir Shah and Administrator Tennis Stadium Mohayyud Din gave detailed briefing to the provincial sports minister about the multiple functions and features of the above-mentioned sports facilities.

Malik Faisal Ayub Khokhar said that Nishtar Park Sports Complex has several international level sports facilities. "A new era of sports has begun in the Punjab province and now we will organise major sports competitions at these state-of-the-art sports facilities," he added.

"All officers concerned must pay attention to the maintenance and upgradation of these world class sports facilities. There will be no compromise on the quality of cleanliness," he added.

District Bar Association Faisalabad Eagle Clinched 10th All Pakistan Lawyers Cricket Tournament title



Sports Desk

KARACHI: The final match of the 10th All Pakistan Lawyers Cricket Tournament 2024 was held at the National Bank of Pakistan Sports Complex. 24 teams participated in this tournament on behalf of bar associations across the country. The chief organizer of which was Muhammad Ishaq Ali Advocate and Secretary Atif Nazir Chaudhry Advocate. Justice Abdul Mubeen Lakho of Sindh High Court participated in the match as a chief guest. The final of the tournament was played between District Bar Association Faisalabad Eagle and District Bar Association Faisalabad Tiger, in which District Bar Association Faisalabad Eagle scored 176 runs for the loss of 9 wickets while batting first, in reply District Bar Association Faisalabad Tiger could score only 139 runs and thus District Bar Association Faisalabad Eagle won the match by 37 runs and claimed the title of the tournament.

Barcelona beat Napoli to reach Champions League quarter-finals

Sports Desk

LAHORE: Barcelona survived a nervy second half to beat Napoli 3-1 on Tuesday and reach the Champions League quarter-finals 4-2 on aggregate at Estadi Olímpic Lluís Companys.

Xavi Hernandez's side came flying out of the blocks with goals from Fermin Lopez and Joao Cancelo but after Amir Rahmani pulled one back, the Catalans started to sweat.

Italian champions Napoli, who salvaged a 1-1 draw in the last-16 first leg, were finally beaten when Robert Lewandowski swept home from close range.

It is the first time that five-time winners Barcelona have reached the last eight of the Champions League since 2020, and they did so without injured midfield trio Pedri, Gavi and Frenkie de Jong.

Xavi said he was leaving at the end of the season in January and his team have gone on a run of nine games without defeat after that decision.

Teenage stars Lamine Yamal and Pau Cubarsi have been key to that form, and both excelled against Napoli on a night which offered some relief to Barcelona amid a bleak season.

Barcelona became the first team in the competition's history to start two players 17 or under in a knockout stage game.

Xavi demanded the fans turn their temporary Olympic Stadium home on the city's Montjuic hill into a pressure cooker, and they duly obliged. Over 50,000 spectators marked the club's largest attendance this season.

Francesco Calzona's Napoli wilted as the Spanish champions came out of the blocks flying.

Electric 16-year-old winger Yamal made strong inroads down the right

before the bright Lopez opened the scoring after 15 minutes.

Cancelo fed Raphinha who cut the ball back into the area for Lopez, who tucked home.

While he may lack the metronomic precision of Pedri, the midfielder provides thrust and an insatiable desire to shoot.

Two minutes later the Catalans doubled their lead against the shellshocked visitors, with Yamal starting the move by breaking loose in his own half on the counter-attack.

The winger played in Raphinha and although the Brazilian hit the post Cancelo was running in to roll home the rebound.

Napoli battled their way back in when Matteo Politano slipped in down the right, with Ronald Araujo playing him inside.

The Italy winger crossed for Rrahmani who slotted him cleanly

to pull Napoli back into the tie.

Napoli were almost level moments later but Barcelona goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen made a superb save, tipping over Giovanni Di Lorenzo's header.

The Italians started the second half strongly, with Barcelona forced back into their own half, aimlessly clearing the ball.

Xavi took action by bringing on Sergi Roberto and Oriol Romeu for Lopez and Andreas Christensen, aiming to freshen up the midfield and give his team new impetus.

Raphinha and Lewandowski drew saves from Alex Meret before Yamal struck from close range, but he was offside.

Danish winger Jesper Lindstrom headed narrowly wide for Napoli before Lewandowski settled the tie after Ilkay Gundogan and Sergi Roberto combined to set him up.



Second-half jitters showed Barcelona are far from their former glory but in the dynamic Yamal, Raphinha and

Cancelo they have the quality going forward to trouble any prospective quarter-final opponent.

New hopes

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the People's Republic of China Ambassador Jiang Zaidong calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday.



Photo: PID

PM reaffirms to ensure timely implementation of CPEC initiatives

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday paid emphasis that his government would work tirelessly to ensure timely implementation of the initiatives under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). He stressed that Pakistan was keen to move to the next phase of CPEC, including operationalisation of the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) to

facilitate Chinese investment in Pakistan.

The prime minister was talking to Ambassador of the People's Republic of China Jiang Zaidong who called on him at the Prime Minister's House, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. PM reaffirms to ensure timely implementation of CPEC initiatives Foreign Minister Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar, Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives

Dr. Ahsan Iqbal, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Syed Tariq Fatemi and the foreign secretary also attended the meeting. The prime minister said the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) had been created during his previous tenure to attract foreign investment in priority sectors including agriculture, IT, minerals and renewable energy. He said Chinese companies would find many profitable opportunities in

Pakistan. The prime minister thanked President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang for their warm messages of greetings on his re-election and assumption of office.

He reciprocated the warm sentiments expressed by the Chinese leadership and lauded their contribution and commitment to the strengthening of the iron-clad friendship between Pakistan and China. The Chinese Ambassador reaffirmed that the

Chinese leadership and government was looking forward to further deepening of Pakistan-China friendship. In this regard, he reiterated the invitation extended to the prime minister to undertake an official visit to China at his earliest convenience. While accepting the invitation, the prime minister said that he would undertake the visit at a mutually convenient date that would be worked out through diplomatic channels.

PM visits USC outlets to inspect Relief Package implementation

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday paid surprise visits to different Utility Stores across the federal capital to inspect the execution of the Prime Minister's Ramadan Relief Package. During the visit, the prime minister interacted with the beneficiaries of the scheme and inquired whether they faced any issues while benefiting from the package.

He instructed the authorities concerned to ensure that entitled beneficiaries of the Relief Package faced no problem in availing the facility. Speaking on the occasion, the prime minister said the federal government had announced a historical



ic Ramadan Relief Package worth of Rs 12 billion under which eatable items will be provided to the deserving families at subsidized rates during the holy

month of Ramadan at the Utility Stores outlets across the country. Besides, he said under the package, additional stipend will also be given to the families registered in Benazir Income Support Programme. During his visit, he expressed satisfaction over the availability of the subsidized items at the stores in sufficient quantity. He was of the view that the blessed month of Ramadan will bring peace, prosperity and development for the country. He also thanked the ministers and all the concerned officers and departments for making this relief package possible. Federal Ministers Ishaq Dar, Rana Tanveer Hussain, Attaullah Tarar and Khawaja Muhammad Asif accompanied the prime minister.

Iran FM congratulates counterparts on Ramadan urging end to war on Gaza

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian extended his congratulations to his counterparts at the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan by sending separate congratulatory messages to the foreign ministers of Islamic countries.

Hossein Amirabdollahian, extended his congratulations to his counterparts at the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan by sending separate congratulatory messages to the foreign ministers of Islamic countries. In his message, Amirabdollahian also called for the unity of Muslims worldwide to realize the lofty ideals of Islam, as well as the solidarity and cohesion of the Islamic world to confront the aggression and crimes committed by the Zionist regime against the Palestinian people. In this message, the top Iranian diplomat, referring to the all-out human blockade of the people of Gaza by the Israeli regime, emphasized the need for the Islamic world to deal with the warmongers effectively.

Race to rush aid to Gaza as EU warns hunger 'a weapon of war'

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES: Donor nations, aid agencies and charities pushed on with efforts Wednesday to rush food to war-torn Gaza by land, air and sea after the EU top diplomat said starvation had become "a weapon of war".

The Israel-Hamas conflict raging since October 7 has caused mass civilian deaths, reduced vast areas to a rubble-strewn wasteland and sparked warnings of looming famine in the Palestinian territory of 2.4 million people.

A Spanish charity vessel, the Open Arms, was on its way to Gaza from Cyprus, where it had set sail early Tuesday towing a barge with 200 tonnes of aid, in a first voyage meant to open a maritime corridor.

The flow of aid trucks from Egypt into Gaza has slowed recently — a trend variously blamed on Israel and its security checks of cargo, and on civil unrest in Gaza where desperate crowds have looted aid shipments.

About half a dozen Arab and western nations have airdropped food parcels on parachutes into Gaza, and Morocco has sent a planeload of relief supplies via Israel's Ben Gurion airport.

The UN World Food Programme, trying an alternative land route from southern Israel, sent an initial six aid trucks Tuesday into worst-hit northern Gaza, through a gate in the security fence, the Israeli army said.

The WFP said it had "delivered enough food for 25,000 people" and demanded that, "with people in northern Gaza on the brink of famine, we need deliveries every day. We need entry points directly into the north."

The European Union's foreign affairs chief Josep Borrell told the UN Security Council on Tuesday that the humanitarian crisis "is man-made". "If we look at alternative ways to provide support, it's because the land crossings have been artificially closed," he said, charging that "starvation is being used as a weapon of war".

Pentagon: Israelis must end Gaza siege and allow in aid by sea

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates welcomes the American and international efforts aimed at breaking the siege on the Gaza Strip and ensuring the sustainable entry of aid and humanitarian and relief needs to Palestinian civilians by all means, by sea, land and air, as one of the priorities, in addition to the immediate time for opening fire and preventing forced displacement.

The Ministry affirms, by virtue of the State of Palestine's membership in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the implicit American acceptance of the provisions of this agreement, that the arrival of aid by sea to Gaza contributes to stopping the famine that Israel uses as a weapon in its war and imposes on our people in clear violation of international law and the precautionary order of the International Court of Justice. This is in addition to the need to give the necessary attention to opening all land crossings to bring in aid.

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PM hopeful of Pak-Gulf trade to surpass \$1 bn annually



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday said that once the Pakistan-GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) Free Trade Agreement come into effect, the existing bilateral trade volume of USD 1 billion per annum had the potential to enhance manifold. The prime minister expressed these views during a meeting with Commander of the National Guard of the Kingdom of Bahrain General Sheikh Mohammad Bin Isa Bin Salman Al Khalifa who called on him to convey the greetings of King

of Bahrain Sheikh Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Bahrain Sheikh Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa.

The prime minister warmly welcomed General Sheikh Mohammad to Pakistan and thanked the Bahrain leadership for their messages of felicitations on his re-election as prime minister, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. The situation in Gaza was also discussed and both sides called for an immediate ceasefire and ensuring urgent provision of humanitarian assistance to the innocent Palestinians, particularly during the holy month of Ramadan.

IHC summons chairmen PTA, PEMRA in audio leaks case

City desk

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday again summoned chairmen of Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) and Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) in person in audio leaks cases of Bushra Bibi and Najam u Saqib.

The court directed the chairman PTA and members to submit their report along with their affidavits. The hearing of the case was adjourned till March 14.

Justice Babar Sattar heard the identical petitions. The court asked the chairman PEMRA to tell that what steps have been taken to stop spread of leaked audios on media without verification.

The court said that the PTA's lawyer has raised the objection that the bench couldn't seek affidavit from chairman PTA. The court said that this arguments of PTA's lawyer was based on misunderstanding.

It further said that the court has sought comments from PTA being a telecom regulator to inform that whether the department has given direction to telecom operators for phone tape. The PTA, in its written comments, has adopted the stance that it has no authority to issue such directions.

The court said that PTA's lawyer Irfan Qadir, however, has stated that the authority has such provision. It said that the statements of PTA and its lawyer were contradicting.

The court adjourned the case till tomorrow with above instructions.

Finance Minister Aurangzeb outlines plan for IMF, inflation and interest rates

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's new Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb has confirmed that the country will look to the International Monetary Fund for an Extended Fund Facility. He also said that the policy rate will come down as inflationary pressures ease.

Speaking to media representatives for the first time since assuming office, Aurangzeb said that the IMF team would be in Pakistan from March 14-18 and could extend its visit to March 21.

While the official purpose of the visit is the second review of the standby agreement, the government also hopes to begin a discussion on an

EFF program.

However, Aurangzeb did not specify what the size of the bailout package will be.

The minister also described the ongoing fiscal year as better than the previous one and added that the government would have to be in 'implementation mode' to make sure that structural issues in Pakistan's economy are addressed.

He said that addressing 'leakages' in the tax system is a priority and the tax to GDP ratio would have to be brought into double digits.

The minister added that it was unrealistic to rely on super taxes as a long term strategy and said 'wholesale, real estate, and agriculture' are taxable sectors.

NA passes resolution demanding Bhutto be declared national democratic hero

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly on Wednesday passed a resolution urging the Federal Government to officially declare former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto as a Shaheed and national democratic hero. The resolution, moved by Shazia Marri, recognized that the trial and subsequent conviction of former Prime Minister Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto were a gross miscarriage of justice.

The resolution saluted the struggles of Begum Nusrat Bhutto, Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, and the Pakistan People's Party workers who sacrificed their lives to establish this truth. It appreciated the determination with which President Asif Ali Zardari filed a presidential reference to reopen

the case 12 years ago, and Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, who single-mindedly pursued it.

The resolution lauded the Supreme Court of Pakistan for finally acknowledging and accepting the glaring injustice meted out to Shaheed Zulfikar Bhutto 44 years ago in its judgment.

In light of the historic judgment of the court, the resolution demanded that the unjust verdict given in the Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto case must be overturned. It also called for conferring the highest civil award, Nishan-e-Pakistan, upon Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

Furthermore, the resolution demanded the establishment of the Nishan-e-Zulfikar Ali Bhutto Award for workers and activists who have fought and sacrificed their lives for true democracy in Pakistan.