



PM announces zero tolerance against power thieves, tax evaders

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday expressing resolve to streamline the country's economy by bringing strict reforms in all public departments, said the government will adopt zero tolerance policy against power thieves, tax evaders and corrupt elements. (Details on Page 8)



Govt, institutions' role crucial to thwart enemies' inimical designs: Rehama

Rehama Khan on Wednesday said the government and national institutions' role was crucial to thwart the inimical designs of country's enemies who want to create political instability and anarchy in the country. She was addressing the seminar conducted by the CDS, a think tank, on the theme 'Disinformation: The Undermining Force Within—Revealing its Structural Threats to Society and National Security.' (Details on Page 8)

Simultaneously published from Islamabad, Lahore and Multan

Called on

Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir in a conversation with Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud on Wednesday.



Photo: ISPR

General Munir discusses regional security in meeting with Saudi crown prince

Spokesman Report

RIYADH: Pakistan's Army Chief General Asim Munir called on Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud in Riyadh on Tuesday.

According to a statement by the Inter-Services Public Relations, General Munir discussed wide ranging issues including bilateral cooperation and regional security.

Prince Khalid bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Defence Minister of KSA; General Fayyadh Bin Hamed Al-Ruwaili, Chief of General Staff (CGS) Saudi Armed Forces and Engineer Talal Abdullah

Al Otaibi, Assistant Minister of Defence of KSA and other senior military leadership were present in the meeting, ISPR said.

The meeting was announced by the Saudi Ministry for Foreign Affairs as well.

"Prince Mohammad Bin Salman highlighted that KSA and Pakistan have historic brotherly and strong relations, and both countries have always stood up for each other," ISPR said.

"The Crown Prince also expressed desire to further strengthen the bilateral ties and that KSA will always standby with Pakistan in future as well," ISPR said.

Security forces kill eight terrorists as attack on GPA complex foiled

Amanullah Baluch

GWADAR: Security forces thwarted an attack on the Gwadar Port Authority (GPA) Complex, killing all eight terrorists, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said on Wednesday.

"Own troops employed for security responded immediately and effectively engaged the terrorists, and in ensuing fire exchange, all eight terrorists were sent to hell. A large quantity of arms, ammunition and explosives was also recovered from the killed terrorists," the military's media wing added.

The ISPR said two brave soldiers — Sepoy Bahar Khan (age 35 years, resident of district DG Khan) and Sepoy Imran Ali (age 28 years, resident of district Khairpur) — having fought gallantly, sacrificed their lives and embraced Shahadat during the exchange of fire.

The ISPR said that security forces of Pakistan, in step with the nation remain determined to thwart attempts of sabotaging peace and stability of Balochistan, and such sacrifices of our brave soldiers further strengthen our resolve against terrorism.

Earlier, in a post on social media platform X, Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti said eight militants were "neutralised by security forces", adding: "The message is loud & clear. Whosoever chooses to



use violence will see no mercy from the state."

Located at the center of the city, GPA Complex has several offices related to the Gwadar Port Authority, law enforcement agencies, and staff houses.

GPA develops commercial structures like Bank Branches, Stevedores, Agency Offices, Cargo Storage Sheds, Marine Repair Workshop etc. to facilitate the investors as well as for revenue generation on a 69 acres of land. GPA initiated the construction of the following infrastructures with an estimated cost of Rs. 2381.884 million.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif stated that Pakistan will not tolerate any more cross-border terror attacks on its soil.

Chairing the federal cabinet meeting in Islamabad today, PM Shehbaz Sharif said security of the geographical frontiers of Pakistan is a redline.

Pakistan desires to have cordial relations with the neighboring fraternal countries to promote trade and economic relations. However, it is not acceptable that the land of the neighboring country is used for terrorism in Pakistan, he added.

US Congressional hearing

Donald Lu rubbishes PTI founder's cipher 'conspiracy theory'

Monitoring Desk

ISLAMABAD: US Assistant Secretary of State Donald Lu once again rejected former Prime Minister Imran Khan's cipher allegations and termed it as a "conspiracy theory, lie and complete falsehood".

Testifying today before a subcommittee of the US panel, Lu said: "Imran Khan's cipher conspiracy theory is a lie [and] it is a complete falsehood."

"It is not accurate. At no point does it accuse the US government or me personally of taking steps against Imran Khan. And thirdly, the other person in the meeting, the then-ambassador of Pakistan to the US, has testified to his own government that there was no conspiracy."

The hearing titled 'Pakistan After the elections: Examining the future of Democracy in Pakistan and the US Pakistan relationship', was announced by the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee where Lu was questioned



about the allegations and his assessment of them.

Lu further said that then Pakistan's envoy to Washington Asad Majeed also testified to his government that there was no conspiracy.

"We respect the sovereignty of Pakistan, we respect the principle that Pakistani people should be the only ones to choose their leader through democratic process," he remarked.

Pakistan election rigging allegations
In his address to the Congress

leaders were disadvantaged by the inability to register specific candidates and political parties."

Lu also said that authorities shut down internet services despite a high court order not to interrupt internet on election day.

"Despite the threat of violence, over 60 million Pakistanis voted, including over 21m women. Voters elected 50 per cent more women to Parliament than they had in 2018.

"In addition to record numbers of female candidates, there were also a record number of members of religious and minority groups and young people running for seats in their Parliament."

"More than 5,000 independent election observers were in the field. Their organisations' conclusion was that the conduct of the elections was largely competitive and orderly while noting some irregularities in the compilation of results."

"We as a partner of Pakistan have called for that to be done

transparently and fully and for those found responsible for irregularities to be held accountable. We can see a process whereby that is happening," he added.

The US diplomat further said that the ECP had formed a high-level committee sifting through thousands of petitions complaining "about the rigging in Feb 8 general elections".

It is pertinent to mention here that the former Pakistani prime minister publicly accused the US diplomat of delivering a warning to the then-Pakistani ambassador in Washington, Asad Majeed, suggesting that the removal of Khan from office would help improve ties.

Khan and his PTI government were removed from power in April 2022 through a vote of no confidence, a first in Pakistan's history.

Since then, the US has repeatedly denied Imran Khan's allegation that it was involved in any conspiracy to remove him from PM office.

Two terrorists, two injured in North Waziristan operation: ISPR

Adam Khan Wazir

RAWALPINDI: On night 19/20 March 24, Security Forces conducted an intelligence based operation in North Waziristan District.

During conduct of operation and after intense fire exchange, two terrorists were killed, while another two got injured.



Weapons, ammunition and explosives were also recovered from killed terrorists, who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities in the area.

Sanitization operation is being conducted to eliminate any other terrorist found in the area as Security Forces of Pakistan are determined to wipe-out the menace of terrorism from the country.

PM directs formulation of constitutional, legal amendments package for judicial reforms

City desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday directed the special committee concerned to formulate a package of constitutional and legal reforms to bring in judicial reforms in the country.

The prime minister, chairing the maiden meeting of the special committee on legal and judicial reforms, also instructed the committee to formulate a strategy to simplify the civil and criminal laws for ease of the common man.

The committee comprises Law Minister Azam Nazeed Tarar, President of Supreme Court Bar Association Shehzad Shaukat, representative of Pakistan Bar Council Ahsan Bhoon, former Law Minister Zahid Hamid, senior legal expert Shahid Hamid and Attorney General Mansoor Awan, a PM Office press release said.

Expressing his desire to provide quick and easy justice to the common man, the prime minister called for easing the taxation matters for the people, particularly the business community.

PTI's 'cipher drama' exposed at US Congressional hearing: Ata Tarar

City desk

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Ata Tarar on Wednesday said today's US Congressional hearing had completely exposed the "cipher drama" orchestrated by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan against the country, just for the sake of his personal interests.

"The PTI chairman's deceit and hypocrisy has been exposed before the whole world today as [US Assistant Secretary of State] Donald Lu testified before the Congress and called the cipher a complete falsehood," the minister said while addressing a news conference.

Ata Tarar condemned the PTI's conspiracy in the strongest terms lashing out the party for their all the anti-state moves including May 9 riots and protests outside the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Headquarters for derailing Pakistan talks with the lender on final review of the stand-by agreement.

IMF says staff-level agreement reached with Pakistan to unlock \$1.1 billion

Commerce desk

ISLAMABAD: Hours after talks between Pakistan and International Monetary Fund concluded, the Fund officially said a staff-level agreement has been reached regarding the stand-by agreement. The agreement will lead to \$1.1 billion being released.

"The IMF team has reached a staff-level agreement with the Pakistani authorities on the second and final review of Pakistan's stabilization program supported by the IMF's US\$3 billion," Nathan Porter, who led the IMF delegation, said in a statement.

The statement added that the agreement would be subject to approval by the IMF's executive board after which the SBA's final tranche worth \$1.1 billion will be released.

IMF also said that Pakistan's economic situation has improved over the course of the reviews, particularly with help from friendly countries. "Pakistan's economic and financial position has improved in the months since the first review, with growth and confidence continuing to recover on the back of prudent policy management and the resumption of inflows from multilateral and bilateral partners," IMF said.

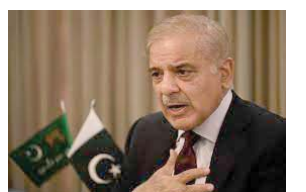
PM, cabinet members forego salaries, perks to promote austerity

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and members of the federal cabinet on Wednesday decided to voluntarily forego their salaries and perks as part of the government's efforts to promote austerity.

The decision was made in a cabinet meeting chaired by the prime minister which took up different agenda items including the briefing on Staff Level Agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the constitution of PIA Holding Company and others, a PM Office press release said.

Federal Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb briefed the cabinet members on the Staff Level Agreement with the IMF. It was told that



the agreement would help improve the national economy and boost the investors' confidence.

As an important headway towards the PIA's privatisation, the federal cabinet approved the formation of the PIA Holding Company.

Reiterating its resolve to eliminate terrorism from the country, the cabinet members paid tribute and offered Fateha for the martyrs of a terrorist attack that took place in Mir Ali area of North Waziristan on March 16.

Turkish envoy calls on India to end its unconstitutional rule in Occupied Kashmir

Bureau Report

JEDDAH/MUZAFFARABAD: All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference President and former Prime Minister Sardar Attique has said that the Muslim Conference is not just the name of an organization but a movement that lives in hearts for centuries and its history is centuries old. Occupied Kashmir By usurping the state since 1947 and denying the people the right to speak for their rights reflects the ugly face of India. On November 21, 2018, the Occupied Kashmir Assembly was dissolved and till today there is no representative of the Occupied Jammu and Kashmir Assembly.

On this occasion, Turkish Ambassador and Additional Secretary General OIC Musa Kulaklikaya, well-known Arab businessman Hassan Al Samdani, Hussain Ahmed Al Samdani, Muhammad Bin Yahya, Muhammad Al Samdani, Nasir Al Samdani, Raja Iftikhar Ahmad Khan, Sardar Ashfaq



Khan, Sardar Latif Abbasi, Raja Tahir-Muzaffarabad/Jeddah (All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference President and former Prime Minister Sardar Attique has said that the Muslim Conference is not just the name of an organization but a movement that lives in hearts for centuries and its history is centuries old. Occupied Kashmir By usurping the state since 1947 and denying the people the right to speak for their rights reflects the ugly face of India. Turkish Ambassador and Addi-

tional Secretary General OIC Musa Kulaklikaya, well-known Arab businessman Hassan Al Samdani, Hussain Ahmed Al Samdani, Muhammad Bin Yahya, Muhammad Al Samdani, Nasir Al Samdani, Raja Iftikhar Ahmad Khan, Sardar Ashfaq Khan, Sardar Latif Abbasi, Raja Tahir Iqbal, Kamran Baig, Almas Abbasi, Engineer Rizwan Shafi, Sardar Zulfiqar Khan, Israr Abbasi and a large number of other workers participated. The Sadr Muslim Conference further said that

the Indian government has given the Hurriyat leaders the struggle based on the right to self-determination. India has been subjected to massive political revenge for withdrawing. Despite the worst repression, India has failed to break the spirit of the detained leaders and workers and they are standing firm on their right-based position. President Muslim Conference Sardar Atiq Ahmad Khan urged the United Nations to take notice of the Indian atrocities in the occupied territory and to play its role in giving Kashmiris their right to self-determination according to the resolutions passed by them.

Iqbal, Kamran Baig, Almas Abbasi, Engineer Rizwan Shafi, Sardar Zulfiqar Khan, Israr Abbasi and a large number of other workers participated. The Sadr Muslim Conference further said that the Indian government has given the Hurriyat leaders the struggle based on the right to self-determination. India has been subjected to massive political revenge for withdrawing.

Lipa Khele Ga second edition to be held



Bureau Report

LIPA/MUZAFFARABAD: The second edition of "Lipa Khele Ga" is being held in Lipa Valley from March 15. It will continue till April 8.

Which will include cricket championship, volleyball and football competitions. Teams from six regions of the Lipa Valley will participate in this event. During the tournament, the fans are getting to see exciting matches.

This second edition will not only promote healthy activities among the youth but also strengthen regional unity and harmony.

The dignitaries of Lipa Valley are calling this initiative a great opportunity for the youth to avail their skills and develop a spirit of healthy competition.

The people of the area have highly appreciated this initiative of the Pakistan Army which will not only highlight the talents of the youth, but the people in the entire Lipa Valley are enjoying the celebration.

World Oral Diseases Day celebrated in Nishtar Institute of Dentistry Multan



Kiran Asim /Quratul Ain Asim

MULTAN: World Oral Disease Day 2024 is being celebrated around the world. In this regard, an awareness walk was taken out at Nishtar Institute of Dentistry Multan. Administration and BDS Doctors Hold a Banners and penna flakes were carried on the occasion by MS Dr. Tariq Hameed Medical Superintendent Of Nishtar Institute of Dentistry said that along with the treatment of mental and physical diseases, the treatment of mouth, teeth and gum diseases and for this, caution and awareness are also very important. AMS Dr. Adnan said that the children at night Do regular brushing and avoid confectionery atom jelly chocolate sweet food items nowa days the trend of chewing food is gone and fast food and bakery item foods is more included due to crooked teeth in older special children. Absence of permanent teeth, during milk teeth But not falling and other diseases are born. Our Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) advised children and adults to adopt the habit of miswak. The digestive system of the stomach will be correct and sealing of the teeth should be done every After six months, get checked by an expert dentist and don't go to Attai doctors for cheap treatment. Teeth also increase the beauty of the face. To protect the teeth, while riding bikes, it is mandatory to use a helmet. A lot of cases of fractures are coming to the hospital A large number of Doctors AMS Dr. Naseem Siddiqui, (AMS) Professor, Dr. Imran Bucha, Superintendent of Nursing, Tahira Nazar, Dr. Khurram, Dr. Hasan, Dr. Saleem and other faculty members, BDS students participated in the walk.

District admin provides two lakh 92 thousands ration bags to needy people

Muhammad Atta Sanghi / Waleed Baloch



RAHIM YAR KHAN: On the vision of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, the distribution of ration bags to needy families under the "Neghaban Ramadan Package" continues, 2 lakh 92 thousand 652 deserving families were provided with ration in the district of Rahim Yar Khan. While the district administration Under the direction of Deputy Commissioner Khurram Pervez, the crackdown against the peddlers would be intensified 18 lakh 59 thousand were fined, 6 cases were registered and 129 people were arrested.

Deputy Commissioner Khurram Pervaiz said that under the vision of Chief Minister Punjab, ration bags have been delivered to the doorsteps of 292,652 registered households in the district under the Ramadan care package, while also providing relief to the people in the general market and preventing hoarding. Strict monitoring is going on from 1st of Ramadan So far, the price control magistrates in the district have conducted 22,727 inspections and 517 shopkeepers have been fined 18,59,000, 6 cases have been registered while 129 people have been arrested for other violations including high selling, hoarding, reduction of measurements, non-display of price lists.

Faisalabad district police arrest drug dealers during crackdown: RPO

Abdul Majid

FAISALABAD: 1728.572 kilos of hashish, 1239.7 kilos of heroin, 2,706 kilos of ice, 80317 liters of alcohol were brought to the district Sarbar Ahan during the campaign against drug dealers in the Faisalabad region under the supervision of RP Faisalabad Dr. Muhammad Abid Khan. Continued



In the light of the orders of IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar, a crackdown is on against drug dealers. During the campaign, registering 4306 cases, 4325 mills were arrested and 1728.572 kilos of hashish, 1239.7 kilos of heroin, 2,706 kilos of ice, 80317 liters of liquor were recovered from their possession.

RPO Faisalabad Dr. Muhammad Abid Khan said that the accused involved in drug trafficking are the future killers of new generations. They are a nuisance to the society and cause other serious crimes. For the better future of the establishment and future generations, it is necessary that strict and effective legal actions are taken against such elements.

Fishing

ISLAMABAD: Fisherman prepares the net for fishing in Rawal Dam in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Raja Farid

AJK ministers say problems of forest, health and secretariat employees resolved

Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: The most senior Minister of the Azad state of Jammu and Kashmir, Colonel Retired Waqar Ahmed Noor and the Minister's Raja Faisal Mumtaz Rathore, Abdul Majid Khan, Nisar Ansara Badali, Sardar Javed Ayub, Ahmed Raza Qadri and Chaudhry Akbar Ibrahim have said that the current government under the leadership of Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwar Haq is united and organized And is focused on development. Distrust can be someone's personal wish..

The most senior minister Colo-



nel Retired Waqar Ahmed Noor said that the system of government with good governance under the leadership of Chaudhry Anwar Haq has been running for 11 months.

Finance Minister Abdul Majid Khan said that a storm is being created through statements regarding the

no-confidence motion, mature political workers should not target institutions, those who are in responsible positions should give thoughtful statements. He said that political threats will not stop the process of accountability. Abdul Majid Khan said that he pays tribute to the Army

Chief. While strongly condemning the Mir Ali incident, we pay our respects to the officers and soldiers of Pakistan forces who were martyred in the incident.

Local Government Minister Raja Faisal Mumtaz Rathore said that he denies the news regarding distrust, there is no such thing under consideration, this time only worship will be done in Ramadan.

Health Minister Nisar Ansara Badali said that talks were going on with the employees of MNCH as per the instructions of Prime Minister Azad Kashmir Chaudhry Anwar Haq.

U.S. Govt and Pakistan launch HumAhang – Advancing Peacebuilding Diversity and Inclusion

Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: The United States government, in partnership with the Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives, launched a five-year project titled HumAhang [In Harmony]. HumAhang aims to foster peacebuilding and enhance dialogue between citizens and government institutions in South Punjab and North Sindh. This project will be implemented by Centre for Peace & Development Initiatives (CPDI), Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency (PILDAT), and Blumont Pakistan, and seeks to strengthen the effectiveness of citizen-led initiatives.

USAID Mission Director Kate Somvongsiri noted the long history of collaboration between the United States and Pakistan. "The United States government is committed to



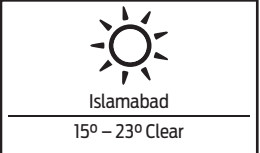
supporting initiatives that promote peace-building and inclusive communities, where the voices of individuals including women, members of minor-

ty communities, and persons with disabilities are fully heard in decision-making processes."

The event also celebrated Women's

History Month and highlighted the vital role women play in all spheres of life. "It is essential that women's voices are heard and included in decision-making processes that affect their lives. By promoting gender equality and by empowering women, Pakistan can create a more prosperous and equitable society for all its citizens," noted the USAID Mission Director. U. S. Consul General in Lahore Kristin Hawkins was also present at the launch.

Present at the event were representatives from various government departments, civil society organizations, media, and youth. Mukhtar Ahmad Ali and Mohammad Azim Arshad presented the project's objectives and Ahmed Bilal Mehboob offered words of appreciation for USAID's continued support to promote peace-building and social cohesion.



SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr 4:48 am
Zohr 12:15 pm
Asr 4:36 pm
Maghrib 6:20 pm
Isha 7:43 pm

EMERGENCY

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

Women Police Stations

Islamabad 9222596
Rawalpindi 9270601-20

ENQUIRY

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

HOSPITALS

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

DEPARTMENTS

CDA 9221334-43
CDA 9208301-04
Met Office 9250360-6
RDA 5555864

Foundation Stone Laying Ceremony for Establishment of Halal Authentication Laboratory in Uganda Held



PPA

ISLAMABAD: COMSTECH organized a groundbreaking ceremony for the establishment of Halal Authentication Laboratory at Islamic University in Uganda. The ceremony for the reverse linkage project between Uganda and Pakistan on "Establishing of the Halal Authentication Laboratory", was held at the Islamic University in Uganda (IUIU).

H. E. Prof. Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General, COMSTECH was the Chief Guest in the ceremony. The ceremony was attended by Prof. Ismail Simbwa Gyaganda, Rector, IUIU, H. E. Dr. Issahq Umar Iddrisu, The Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) Manager, Regional Hub Kampala, Uganda, H. E. Dr. Shk Ramadhan Mubajje, Mufti of Uganda, Mr. Sameh Hussein, Lead Technical Cooperation Specialist (IsDB), Prof. Dr. Syed Ghulam Musharraf, and Dr. Shakil Ahmed Technical Leads, ICCBS, University of Karachi, Pakistan.

The ceremony agenda included discussions regarding the project, its implementation strategy and timeline, training of human resources, along with composition of the project steering committee.

Education minister announces steps to address urgent needs of school children in Pakistan

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui chaired a meeting today, wherein he was briefed by officials of the Ministry of Federal Education regarding various programs and projects aimed at advancing education in Pakistan. The meeting, held at the Ministry focused on crucial initiatives to address the pressing issues within the education sector.

During the meeting, Minister Siddiqui expressed deep concern over the alarming number of out-of-school children in Pakistan. In response to this

challenge, he announced his intention to advise the Prime Minister and the Federal Cabinet to declare a national education emergency. This declaration aims to bring back these out-of-school children into the education system, ensuring that no child is left behind.

Furthermore, Minister Siddiqui directed the Ministry to swiftly formulate a strategy, with the urgency of a wartime effort, to train one million technology and IT-skilled workers. This initiative will be funded by the National Vocational & Technical Training Commission (NAVTC), with the goal of equipping the workforce with the necessary skills to thrive in a rapidly



evolving technological landscape.

To further these objectives, Dr. Khalid announced that a National Conference will be organized in collaboration with SIFC. This conference will aim to address the issue of out-of-school children and combat learning poverty by leveraging the transformative power of technology.

In conclusion, Minister Siddiqui reiterated the government's dedication to revolutionizing the education sector in Pakistan. By implementing comprehensive strategies and fostering collaboration with key stakeholders, the Ministry aims to create a brighter future for the nation's youth.

Pakistan Zindabad

ISLAMABAD: Highways of Islamabad decorated with Panaflexes of "Pakistan Zindabad" ahead of Pakistan Day.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

Karandaaz unveils GreenFin Innovations

PNP

ISLAMABAD: Karandaaz Pakistan, a development finance platform at the forefront of promoting financial inclusion and driving digital transformation across the country, announced the launch of GreenFin Innovations (GFI), a groundbreaking initiative dedicated to scaling innovative and sustainable solutions aimed at promoting a green economy and addressing the critical challenges of climate change in Pakistan.

GreenFin Innovations offers a unique blend of support, including concessional financing of up to PKR 50 million and tailored business development support, all while fostering connections within the climate change network. The initiative is committed to driving transformative change and local capacity building, to address urgent environmental and climate change challenges through innovative solutions.

Businesses registered and operating in Pakistan with a valid National Tax Number (NTN) are eligible for GreenFin Innovations support.

The proposed solutions must actively address the climate change issues in adaptation, mitigation, or cross-cutting thematic areas.

Karandaaz Chairperson Salim Raza, while elaborating on the initiative, said, "GreenFin Innovations is aimed at catalysing sustainable solutions to combat climate change in Pakistan. It provides blended finance in the form of concessional loans, with funding sizes varying based on the nature and scale of each project. GFI will empower businesses to play a pivotal role in promoting a green economy and mitigating the impacts of climate change."

Shumaila Rifaqat, Head of Innovation and MEL at Karandaaz said, "Pakistan is facing the dire effects of climate change. It is imperative that local capacity to address environmental and climate change challenges is developed and, in that endeavour, private sector has a huge role to play. To this end, GFI will provide the essential support and risk capital to catalyse innovation in addressing the climate challenge."

Google brings you special experiences for a more meaningful Ramadan

PPA

KARACHI: More than one billion Muslims worldwide commence the holy month of Ramadan, a period of fasting that lasts from dawn to dusk, during this month. Pakistanis also observe Ramadan in a variety of ways.

With Google, Pakistanis can enjoy diverse and distinctive Ramadan experiences to focus on and celebrate this holy month, maintain friendships, and spend quality time with their families regardless of their location.

There has always been a tradition of introducing new looks, whether it be to house decorations, recipes, or fashion. You can use your phone's camera to search for a delectable dessert that you tried at a friend's house, as well as the next favorite dress to purchase and wear on Eid-ul-Fitr.

Launch the Google application on your mobile device and select the camera icon. Simply capture an image or screenshot, and Google Lens will return with results that are

identical or comparable, allowing you to shop from them or find inspiration elsewhere.

The food is the tastiest tradition of Ramadan. Following a day of fasting, families convene in the evening to partake in break-the-fast meals. If you are a foodie with the intention of enhancing your cooking abilities through experimentation during Ramadan, then feel free to delve into a variety of international dishes. Simply enter the dish's name, followed by the word "recipe" into Google Search to retrieve a list of recipes that will provide you with ideas and guidance on how to prepare each dish to perfection.

Utilize Google Play to enlighten oneself with religious online lectures and delectable recipes while spending quality time during the holy month. Aside from fasting, you have the opportunity to learn, Utilize Google Play to enlighten oneself with religious online lectures and delectable recipes while spending quality time during the holy month.

Provision of quality telecom, Internet services topmost priority: Shaza Fatima



PPA

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja has said that the provision of quality and affordable telecom and internet services is the topmost priority of the incumbent government.

She was talking to Chairman Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) Major General (Retd) Hafezur Rehman who called on her here on Wednesday.

Matters related to 5G spectrum auction, connectivity and telecom industry were discussed in the meeting.

Minister of State for IT & Telecom said that the focus of Ministry of IT & Telecom is the promotion of digitalization and resolving the issues in this regard.

She said that Ministry of IT will fully support telecom industry and resolve all issues confronting it.

Shaza Fatima said that youth will be provided job opportunities by making them part of digital system.

Meanwhile, TikTok delegation led by Fahad Khan Niazi, Head of Public Policy, called on Minister of State for IT & Telecom Shaza Fatima Khawaja.

While talking to delegation, Shaza Fatima Khawaja said the purpose of social media platforms is to create awareness and educate masses. She urged TikTok to play important role for promoting positive image of Pakistan

AIOU starts mailing of books



PNP

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has begun dispatching books to 60,000 students who are enrolled in the matriculation program for Semester Spring 2024. Director Admissions stated that the process of dispatching books to matric program students will be completed by the end of this week. Additionally, the process of delivering books to 80,000 students enrolled in FA will commence next week. To ensure that all academic tasks are completed within the specified timeframe and to avoid any complaints from students, Vice Chancellor, AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood, has strictly instructed all departments to follow the academic calendar.

SECP organizes financial literacy lecture at Margalla College, F-7/4



PPA

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) conducted a financial literacy lecture at Post-Graduate Margalla College (IMCG) F-7/4, Islamabad, on the subject of "Savings and Investment: Pathway to a Better Future." A large contingent of students and faculty members attended the lecture.

The session focused on providing students and faculty with essential knowledge about managing finances, saving effectively, and making informed investment decisions for long-term financial security. The SECP has recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training to improve financial literacy in federal degree colleges.

Speaking at the event, the Principal, Ms Ayesha Kiani expressed her gratitude to the Ministry and SECP for their efforts in spreading financial literacy to colleges and expressed keen interest in continuing such activities on a regular basis. "This seminar plays a vital role in empowering young minds to make informed financial decisions," she stated.

The Ministry and SECP's collaborative effort to promote financial literacy among students is consistent with their overall objective to create a financially informed and responsible society in Pakistan.

Youm-e-Bab-ul-Islam

A day for us to renew our commitment and dedication for Pakistan

10th of Ramadan Bab-ul-Islam Day holds a special place in our nation's history. On this day, led by the young army chief Muhammad bin Qasim, the Muslim fighters ended the centuries-old cruel and inhumane traditions and practices long endured in the Indian subcontinent. They liberated the local populace and introduced them to the divine truth of Islam based on fair justice and belief in one God. Muhammad bin Qasim exemplified through his actions that Islam removes barriers between people, abolishes social classes, and regards all individuals as part of one unified community.

The 10th of Ramadan holds great

significance for the people of Pakistan because the arrival of Islam brought by Muhammad bin Qasim to this region, led to the establishment of our homeland centuries later.

This event heralded the beginning of Pakistan's creation and was not just an individual achievement but the start of a promising new era for the Muslim Ummah.

Due to Muhammad Bin Qasim's fair governance, the people of Sindh willingly embraced Islam. Subsequently, these reverts became torchbearers of Islam

and played a significant role in fostering academic advancement and prosperity throughout the entire subcontinent, leaving a notable mark in history.

Hakim Mohammed Said, Shaheed-e-Pakistan, was a prominent advocate of the Bab-ul-Islam movement. He used to organize special events at Hamdard Public School and other educational institutions on this day to emphasize its importance. He aimed to inspire and instill patriotism among the youth. Alhamdulillah, his legacy continues even



Analysis

Sadia Rashid

today. As a tangible show of support for this cause, Shaheed Hakim Mohammed Said founded the city of knowledge and wisdom, Madinat-ul-Hikmah at the location, believed by archaeologists to be the site where the Islamic army led by Muhammad bin Qasim established their camps.

Bab-ul-Islam is a day to reaffirm our commitment to truth, the eradication of oppression, and the spread of Islam, and reiterate our readiness to make any sacrifice for these principles. By understanding and fulfilling our religious and social duties, we should aim to fortify the ideological foundation of our nation and actively contribute to its growth and prosperity.

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Bloody Nose to India, Iran and Afghanistan - I

Pakistan's geopolitical trajectory has been deeply intertwined with the interests of superpowers since its inception. Positioned as a frontline state during the Cold War, Pakistan found itself at the epicenter of the ideological battle between communism and capitalism. Opting for the latter, Pakistan forged significant alliances with the United States and its allies through agreements such as SEATO and CENTO, positioning itself in direct opposition to the Soviet Union. This geopolitical alignment exposed Pakistan to intense regional tensions, exacerbated by the infiltration of communist ideology within its society. The resulting confrontation between the state and socialist elements contributed to significant internal strife, further compounded by periods of dictatorship and political discord. This turbulent backdrop ultimately led to three devastating wars, draining Pakistan's precious resources that could have otherwise been allocated to the nation's growth and development. Additionally, the culmination of these conflicts resulted in the secession of East Pakistan, giving rise to the independent state of Bangladesh. In the late seventies and eighties, Pakistan grappled with a tumultuous period marked by social, cultural, religious, and political upheaval. This era was characterized by a double jeopardy scenario: on one hand, the USSR's expansionist ambitions led to the subjugation of Afghani-

stan, bringing Soviet forces dangerously close to Pakistan's borders. Simultaneously, Pakistan endured the imposition of another dictatorship, which sought to instill jihadist fervor within the populace, fostering a climate conducive to waging jihad against the USSR in Afghanistan and later against India in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. The influx of Afghan refugees, coupled with the presence of die-hard elements from foreign intelligence agencies and armed forces, transformed Pakistan into a battleground of ideologies, low-intensity operations, psychological warfare, and overt and covert operations across the nation. Among the Baloch population, grappling with abject poverty, the allure of communist ideology served as a catalyst for the emergence of the Baloch insurgency, particularly along the borders with Iran's Balochistan and Sistan provinces. This insurgency led to cross-border movements of Baloch insurgents, sparking tensions with Iran. The sour relations with India at one hand, and Iran on the other hand finally culminated in surgical strikes by India inside Pakistan on 26th Feb, 2019 allegedly targeting terrorist hideouts, with no consequence and Iranian missile and drone attacks inside Paki-

stan's Balochistan province on 16 January 2024, claiming that it had targeted the Iranian Baloch militant group Jaish ul-Adl. In response to India's miscalculated and non-professional strikes, which resulted in minimal damage, Pakistan's armed forces demonstrated exceptional precision, control, and professionalism in their strategic operations. Employing surgical precision, they locked the high-value industrial and military assets deep inside India, disengaged and unloaded their load away from them ensuring minimal collateral damage while maximizing effectiveness. This strategic execution not only took India by surprise but also garnered international recognition for Pakistan's adept military capabilities. In contrast to India's anticipated surgical strikes, Iran's missile and drone attacks inside Pakistani territory resulted in civilian casualties, eliciting shock from both civilian and military leadership in Pakistan and drawing international attention. Responding swiftly, Pakistan's armed forces executed precise and targeted counterattacks, effectively neutralizing high-value terrorists sheltered within Iran while safeguarding civilians from harm. Much like India's experience, Iran also

gleaned a valuable lesson: the repercussions of provoking Pakistan's armed forces. These incidents highlight the imperative of dialogue, diplomacy, and restraint in de-escalating cross-border tensions. They reaffirm Pakistan's dedication to protecting its citizens and territorial integrity while promoting regional stability through peaceful resolution of disputes. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, Pakistan found itself thrust into the global spotlight once again, this time in the fight against a new adversary: Al-Qaeda. This stateless terrorist organization, adept at recruiting volunteers and jihadists from various regions, including the Swat Valley, Pashtun belt, and other parts of the country, posed a significant threat. Initially supported and armed to combat the Soviet Union, Al-Qaeda shifted its focus to the United States, leveraging its newfound power, influence, and vast military and financial resources. Following the devastating coordinated attacks orchestrated by Al-Qaeda on iconic symbols of American power, including the destruction of the Twin Towers and an attack on the Pentagon, the United States was driven to a state of fury. In response, the U.S. issued a stark ultimatum, threatening to bomb Pakistan into the Stone Age unless it collaborated in the fight against Al-Qaeda and the Taliban government in Afghanistan, which provided sanctuary to extremists. *To be continued*



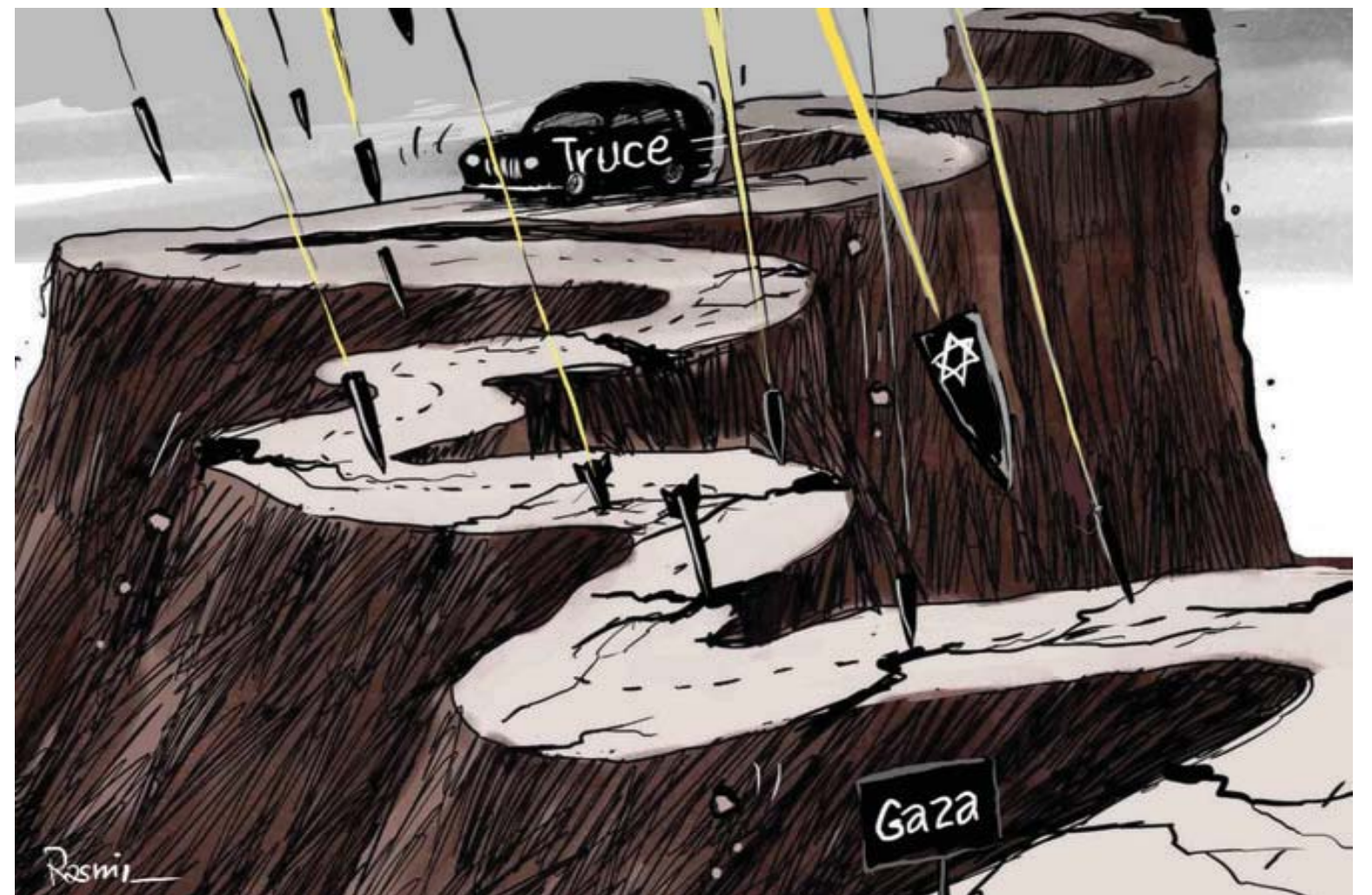
Analysis

Qamar Bashir

Children of Gaza spread joy for Ramazan, despite the deadly war

Clusters of tents are cobbled together with any available fabric, plastic and wood, as Ramazan decorations, lamps and lanterns illuminate a crowded camp of displaced people in central Gaza, spreading a ray of hope amid the rubble of war, according to a UN report. While ceasefire talks failed to end the five-month-long conflict that has killed nearly 32,000 Palestinians – most of them women and children – the goal of some youngsters living in the makeshift camp was simple. The children of Deir Al-Balah decided to lift their spirits in the face of ongoing war and celebrate the holy month of Ramazan, despite all the difficulties resulting from relentless Israeli attacks on Gaza. "Every year we welcome Ramazan in our homes, but this year is different," Shahad, a displaced child, told UN News's correspondent in Gaza, Ziad Talib. "Ramazan has come upon us while we are in the middle of war." One of the children in the camp, Shahad, said she was having fun carrying lanterns for Ramazan. "We agreed to change the atmosphere of war and decorate the camp," she explained, with a smile on her face and enthusiasm filling her voice.

Amira, displaced from northern Gaza "from built houses to tents on the dirt", cherished the happiness as the youngsters sang in a small square between the tents. "The children's joy is our joy," she said. Despite the grief, loss and distance from family and loved ones, Amira said they decided on their own to celebrate the holy month. The displaced people and residents in Deir Al-Balah alike are suffering from challenging and difficult conditions, with hostilities displacing more than 1.7 million people amid an ever-worsening hunger crisis, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). As lifesaving deliveries into the besieged enclave are alarmingly insufficient to meet rapidly escalating needs of almost the entire population who depend on food aid, famine warnings came on Monday, with a new report revealing that half the population in Gaza – 1.1 million people – have completely exhausted their food supplies and are suffering from catastrophic hunger and starvation. "Ramazan is upon us, and we are in the worst situation," warned Ahmed Abd Rabbo Musleh, who was displaced from Beit Hanoun in the north. People are trying hard to find something to support their families, especially during Ramazan, with a simple meal costing about 40 shekels (about \$11), he said, adding that "we cannot live at these prices." Despite the circumstances, Ahmed said he was able to provide food and drink for his family, but "there are those who cannot afford even bread." Others agreed, including Ahmed Thabet, who said no one can afford the "exorbitantly high prices" to buy what little food is available. "Ramazan this year is different from any Ramazan we have experienced throughout our entire lives," he said.



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

Significance of Pakistan Day Parade and Myths - I

Throughout history, the pursuit of independence emerges as a pivotal chapter in the story of every nation. Whether attained through prolonged struggle, diplomatic negotiations, or peaceful resistance, achieving independence signifies a profound moment of liberation and self-rule. This universal significance echoes across time, molding the fate of societies and inspiring future generations to uphold the principles of freedom, self-determination, and national identity. Independence epitomizes a people's inherent right to self-governance, free from external control or influence. It embodies the collective aspirations and determination of a nation, forged through the sacrifices of countless individuals who dared to challenge oppression. From the American Revolution to the Indian Independence Movement, history showcases humanity's unwavering pursuit of liberty and dignity. At its essence, independence fosters pride and cohesion among citizens, uniting them under a shared vision of progress and prosperity. It empowers individuals to actively engage in their nation's social and political life, fostering democracy and human rights. Furthermore, independence serves as a catalyst for economic advancement and innovation, allowing nations to chart their own path towards prosperity. Beyond its intrinsic value, independence holds significant geopolitical importance, fostering cooperation and diplomacy among nations. Sovereign states engage in relations based on mutual respect, forging alliances to address common challenges and promote global stability. Additionally, independence enables nations to celebrate their cultural diversity on the world stage, enriching humanity with unique

traditions and perspectives. In today's interconnected world, the relevance of independence is more pronounced than ever, as nations tackle complex issues such as climate change, pandemics, and socio-economic disparities. As custodians of their sovereignty, countries must navigate international relations while safeguarding the rights and interests of their citizens. By upholding the principles of sovereignty and collaboration, nations can aspire towards a fairer and more inclusive global framework, where every individual enjoys dignity and liberty. Pakistan Day, annually observed on March 23rd, stands as a pivotal moment in the nation's history, commemorating the Lahore Resolution of 1940 and the eventual establishment of an independent homeland for South Asia's Muslims. This significant event holds deep meaning, not just as a testament to the unwavering struggle for self-rule but also as a guiding light of hope, unity, and advancement for Pakistan's people. The Lahore Resolution, also referred to as the Pakistan Resolution, represented a crucial juncture in the fight for independence, articulating the demand for a separate Muslim state ensuring the rights and aspirations of Muslims. Led by visionary figures, the resolution rallied the Muslim community of undivided India, inspiring them to pursue a future liberated from religious, cultural, and political subjugation. On March 23, 1940, the Muslim League convened in Lahore to adopt this historic resolution, initiating the journey towards Pakistan's creation. This semi-

nal declaration not only laid the groundwork for a new nation but also ignited the flames of independence, fueling the spirit of resilience and unity among millions yearning for freedom and honor. Pakistan Day serves as a solemn tribute to the sacrifices made by countless individuals who dared to challenge the existing order and envisioned a brighter tomorrow for future generations. From the turmoil of Partition to the challenging quests for democracy and progress, Pakistan has confronted numerous hurdles on its path towards advancement and well-being. Furthermore, Pakistan Day celebrates the diverse tapestry of culture, identity, and heritage that characterizes the nation. From the majestic peaks of the north to the fertile plains of the Punjab and the vibrant streets of Karachi, Pakistan stands as a collage of languages, traditions, and practices, united by a shared bond of patriotism and fortitude. In modern times, Pakistan Day provides a platform for introspection, rejuvenation, and renewed commitment to the ideals of democracy, equality, and social equity. It's a moment to reiterate our dedication to the principles of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who envisioned Pakistan as a modern, progressive, and inclusive nation where all citizens have equal rights and opportunities. Additionally, Pakistan Day provides an occasion to showcase the nation's accomplishments and aspirations globally. From advancements in science and technology to progress in education and healthcare, Pakistan continues to make noteworthy contributions to the international community, reinforcing

its status as a responsible member of the global community. In the intricate landscape of geopolitics and national security, the significance of a robust military emerges as a cornerstone on which a nation's sovereignty and stability rely. From safeguarding territorial integrity to maintaining peace and security, a strong military force plays a crucial role in protecting a country's interests and the well-being of its people. Understanding the importance of a formidable military is essential as we navigate the complexities of an ever-evolving world, ensuring the prosperity and safety of the nation. Fundamentally, a strong military serves as a deterrent against external threats and aggression, discouraging potential adversaries from encroaching upon a nation's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Through vigilant monitoring and strategic readiness, the military acts as a shield against intrusions and provocations, securing borders and ensuring the security of citizens within the homeland. In an era marked by geopolitical tensions and regional conflicts, a potent military force preserves peace and stability in a volatile world. Additionally, a robust military plays a vital role in disaster response and humanitarian aid, showcasing its adaptability beyond conventional warfare. Whether addressing natural disasters, humanitarian crises, or global pandemics, the military possesses the logistical capacity and manpower to offer timely assistance and relief efforts, alleviating the impact of disasters and safeguarding the lives and livelihoods of affected populations. During times of crisis, the military stands as a symbol of hope and resilience, embodying the spirit of service and sacrifice for the greater good. *To be continued*



Analysis

Abdul Basit Alvi

Ramazan: The month of patience, compassion for all - II

Fakhar e Alam He said Ramazan helps Muslims to overcome their anxiety, depression and hypertension, besides getting rid of worldly desires. Dr Khalid said impatience, anger and rash behaviors can adversely affect an individual's social life and physical well-being while compassion and tolerance increase the self-esteem of people and leads to better outcomes in one's life. Abdul Ghafoor, former Director Sheikh Zayad Islamic Centre Peshawar and Member of the Central Reut-e-Hilal Committee said that Ramazan was the month when people could earn maximum virtues by contributing generously to the poor and deserving persons. "Ramazan promotes interfaith harmony and national cohesion besides cementing bonds of brotherhood, fraternity and friendship among Muslims and minorities by bringing them closer through Iftar parties," he added. Shahid Khan alias Lala, who was holding Iftar Dastarkhwan at historic Qissa Khawani bazaar especially for fasting Muslims and poor and deserving minorities community said that he was holding this noble practice for the last 11-year that gives him inner peace and satisfaction. "The Iftar Dastarkhwan where minori-

ties were also served would continue till Chand Raat," he said. Jatinder Singh, Chairman KP chapter of the National Peace Council for Interfaith Harmony told APP that all prophets and founders of all religions had promoted peace, forgiveness, patience, love and tolerance through their universal teachings, actions and deeds. "Without winning hearts and minds, we can't come closer to each other and develop a society whose inhabitants enjoy equal rights and respect for each other's beliefs," he said. He said big Iftar parties were planned by the Sikh community members for their Muslim brothers in the last 10-day of the holy month besides distribution of edible packages among fasting people at their doorsteps. "Arranging iftar parties and Ramazan camps for Muslims are not a new practice for them. Our forefathers did the same thing to express warmth, love and friendship to our Muslims brothers of Peshawar during Ramazan," he added. He said the establishment of a common study centre at Peshawar for followers of all religions where they could interact and understand each other's beliefs and organize iftar parties to bring people of all faith closer. The experts said that people should give charity to those in need besides reputable charity organizations with clean accounts and service records.

Xi calls for solid efforts to further energize China's central region

Xinhua

CHANGSHA: Chinese President Xi Jinping on Wednesday called for solid efforts to further energize the central region at a higher starting point.

Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made the remarks while chairing a symposium on further energizing the central region in the new era.

In his speech, Xi highlighted the central region's pivotal role as the country's important grain production base, energy and raw material base, modern equipment manufacturing and high-tech industry base, and comprehensive transportation hub.

Xi called for synergy in promoting high-quality development and writing new chapters of energizing the central region in the process of advancing Chinese modernization.

Li Qiang, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Chinese premier, Cai Qi, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and director of the General Office of the CPC Central Committee, and Ding Xuexiang, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Chinese vice premier, attended the symposium.

Since the previous symposium on energizing the central region was held five years ago, the region's development has reached a higher level, Xi said.

Xi also noted that further energizing the central region still faces many difficulties and challenges that require practical research to solve them.

More efforts should be made to push forward industrial innovation led by scientific and

technological innovation, and actively cultivate new quality productive forces, he said.

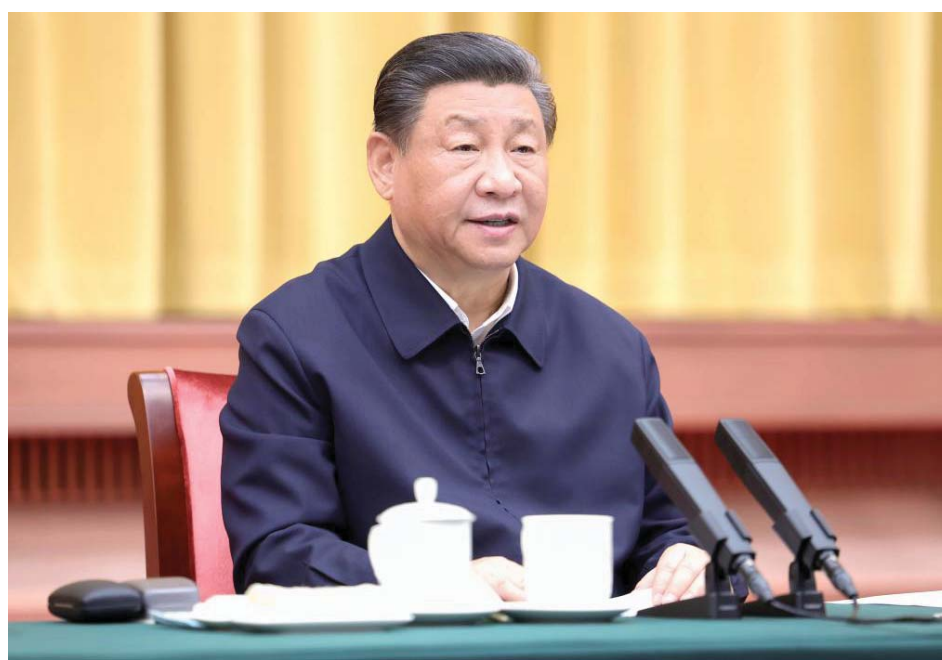
Xi called for forward-looking plans for future industries and a faster pace in modernizing the industrial system underpinned by advanced manufacturing.

The campaign to energize the central region should be better linked with the nation's other major development strategies to help the region better integrate into and support the country's new development pattern, he said.

Xi urged the region to promote deep reforms and high-level opening up in a coordinated manner in its efforts to grow into a more competitive inland pacesetter for opening up.

He also called for efforts to coordinate ecological environment protection and green and low-carbon development, and accelerate the building of a beautiful central region.

Xi highlighted the need to



Chinese President Xi Jinping, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, chairs a symposium on further energizing the central region in the new era in Changsha, central China's Hunan Province, March 20, 2024. (Xinhua/Ju Peng)

pursue integrated development of urban and rural areas and take solid steps to advance rural revitalization across the board.

Efforts should be made to make high-quality development and high-level security reinforce each other, and enhance the capabilities of ensuring food and energy security, Xi said.

Xi urged the related central authorities to conduct research and propose policies to further energize the central region in the new era.

At the symposium, Li Qiang called for efforts to faithfully study and implement the guiding principles of Xi's important speech, and turn the region's geographical and resource advantages into development advantages.

Ding Xuexiang stressed sticking to the requirements of high-quality development to secure new achievements in further energizing the central region.

Ambassador Blome and Commerce Minister Khan pledge to boost Pakistan-US trade ties

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The US Ambassador Donald Blome called on Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan, on Wednesday to discuss and explore avenues for enhancing bilateral trade and investment between the two countries.

During the meeting, both acknowledged the importance of leveraging people-to-people contacts and instilling confidence within the business communities of both countries to bolster trade volume.

Minister Khan emphasized the need for a comprehensive package of initiatives in various sectors including digital trade, mining, energy, climate, services, and the environment.

Highlighting the government's commitment to prioritize the economy, Minister Khan underscored the significance of building confidence among traders and investors.

He reiterated the Ministry of Commerce's dedication to facilitating businesses in all sectors, aiming to encourage increased investment in Pakistan.



Acknowledging the positive role played by the Pakistani-American community in the United States, Ambassador Blome commended their contributions to various fields, particularly in politics and business.

International Donors Applaud Humanitarian Response to 2022 Floods

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Humanitarian organizations, United Nations agencies, international donors, and representatives from National and Provincial Disaster Management Authorities gathered here on Tuesday to discuss lessons and reflections from rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts following the devastating floods of 2022-2023 and the way forward to improve an inclusive humanitarian response to the vulnerable communities in Pakistan.

Organized by an Italian NGO, CESVI, the event was attended by the Ambassador of Denmark in Pakistan, Mr. Jakob Linulf, representative of European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), Mr. Filippo Ortolani, Member DRR National Disaster Management Authority, Mr. Idrees Mehsud and Director Operations PDMA Sindh, Mr. Imdad Hussain Siddiqui along with representatives of various international and national NGOs.



The event served as the close out of a multimillion-dollar relief and recovery project undertaken by CESVI in Sindh and Punjab titled "Humanitarian Assistance for Vulnerable Flood Affected Communities in Pakistan", funded by ECHO, under which over 40,000 households comprising over 250,000 individuals from flood-affected districts received various forms of aid including cash grants, shelter rehabilitation, WASH kits, livelihood support and capacity building training. The project from 2022-2024 had an outlay of around 8 million Euros.

The event also included a panel discussion participated Florence Rolle (FAO Pakistan), Idrees Mehsud (NDMA), Imdad Siddiqui (PDMA Sindh), Charles Geha (OCHA Pakistan), Abdul Rehman (USAID Pakistan), Sarah Lumsdo (British High Commission), and Nusrat Nasab (Agha Khan Habitat) in which panelists discussed ways and mean to further improve the aid delivery mechanism in Pakistan and create greater harmony between the various stakeholders. Disaster Risk Management was also a major component of the discussions.

In his address, the Ambassador of Denmark, Mr. Jakob Linulf expressed gratitude to partners for their support, emphasizing that without their help, it wouldn't have been possible to assist the flood-affected people. He highlighted that providing clean drinking water was the biggest challenge during the 2022 floods and acknowledged the successful efforts in providing clean water to those in need. He also expressed eagerness to collaborate with the Pakistan Government in the future.

Mr. Filippo Ortolani, representing the donor of the project, commended the response of the international community during the 2022 floods, describing it as excellent.

Earlier in their opening addresses Farhan Ahmed Khan, Country Director CESVI Pakistan; and Ali Rauf Program Coordinator CESVI Pakistan welcomed the guests and gave an overview of the project and its achievements. Representative of a local NGO Partner, Lodhran Pilot Project also briefed the audience on their role in the rehabilitation activities.

Netanyahu admits that one of the goals of his aggression is to displace Gazans

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates condemns in the strongest terms the statements of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in which he continues to repeat his broken record of justifying the war of extermination against our people and pushing for their forced displacement from the Gaza Strip and his boasting about providing all the components and causes of this displacement, including the escalation of the current brutal bombing as if the war had begun.

Once again, the occupation army continues to completely destroy the Gaza Strip and turn it into a barren land in which life is impossible, in a way that is accompanied by the expansion of circles of mass killing among civilians throughout the Strip in general and in Rafah in particular, as well as placing more obstacles in the way of international efforts made to bring in aid and humanitarian needs. On a sustainable basis, which deepens the famine in the Gaza Strip and increases the number of child martyrs as a result, in addition to food insecurity for more than half of the Strip's population, and placing more than 2 million Palestinians in a cycle of continuous displacement in search of any safe place that is not available throughout Gaza strip.

The Ministry believes that, 166 days after the genocidal war, the international community continues to reproduce its failure to protect civilians and secure their basic humanitarian needs, and is represented by a miserable stereotype in diagnosing the catastrophic humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and frequently describing its dimensions and dangerous repercussions, and continues to repeat its demands and appeals to the Israeli government and bets on its ethics. But in vain, without finding any listening ears to the human conscience, and without translating his positions, words, and decisions into actions and measures that oblige the Israeli government, by the force of international law, to protect civilians and bring aid in a sustainable manner.

Driving Change: Alif Holdings' Visionary Approach Reshapes Pakistan's Construction Industry

PPA

LAHORE: Alif Holdings, a trailblazer in Pakistan's real estate development landscape, celebrates its excellence in providing superior and luxurious lifestyles to its esteemed customers. With a steadfast commitment to design excellence, construction quality, and unparalleled customer service, Alif Holdings has emerged as a trusted name synonymous with innovation and reliability.

For more than past 6 years, Alif Holdings has been empowering its customers to secure their futures by investing wisely in real estate. With an experienced staff boasting years of collective expertise in project management, construction, and architectural services, Alif Holdings stands as a beacon of trust and reliability in the industry. The company's dedication to excellence extends beyond construction to include rental and maintenance services, ensuring that clients' properties are not only a source of pride but also a valuable investment.

"We take pride in our ability to provide our customers with not just properties, but opportunities for a secure and prosperous future," said Mr. Ahmed Saljouk, Director of Finance & Development at Alif Holdings. "With our experienced staff and commitment to excellence, we aim to redefine the standards of luxurious living and smart investment in Pakistan."

One of Alif Holdings' recent milestones includes the overhaul of its operations with the hiring of specialists from the hospitality industry, bringing years of cumulative experience to the table. This strategic move underscores Alif Holdings' unwavering commitment to ensuring that its tenants receive the best possible experience, from the moment they step into one of our properties.

A Journey To The Sahara – PC Bhurban's Irresistible Iftar-Dinner Extravaganza

Indulging in the enchanting atmosphere of Pearl-Continental Hotel, Bhurban's Iftar-Dinner Buffet is a must-have experience for food enthusiasts looking for an adventurous meal; it is a celebration of culture, cuisine, and community against a breathtaking backdrop of the Murree Hills. Nestled just over an hour's drive from Islamabad, the journey through the Bara Kahu bypass unveils the serene charm of Murree Hills, setting the stage for an unforgettable evening.

As guests arrive at Nadia restaurant, they are greeted by a larger-than-life Ramazan calendar and a magnificent life-sized camel, a fitting symbol for this year's Sahara-themed Iftar extravaganza. Illuminated by starry lights, the decor curates the perfect setting for memorable photographs.

Inside, the ambience is nothing short of magical. Adorned in calming hues of white and gold, the interior is complemented well by sequined table runners, flick-

ering lanterns, and softly glowing candles. The air is filled with anticipation as guests prepare to embark on a culinary journey through Ramazan favourites and global delights.

The Iftar Buffet spread is a feast for the senses, featuring an array of mouthwatering treats, from traditional stuffed dates, samosas, pakoras, and spring rolls to exotic delights like juicy prawn dynamite, delectable wings, and delectable sandwiches. The chaat station and shabat cart offer refreshing options

to cleanse the palate, while a live Qawwali performance makes the meal more enjoyable.

Pearl-Continental Hotel, Bhurban's Iftar-Dinner Buffet boasts worldwide cuisines including Pakistani, Arabian, Continental, Chinese, and Italian specialties. The pièce de résistance, however, is undoubtedly the specialty Middle Eastern dessert bar, where indulgence knows no bounds.

The staff is elegantly draped in maroon-colored Turkish garb, catering to the guests' every



need with impeccable grace and hospitality. As guests savour their meals, they are reminded of the blessings and bounties of Ramazan, enveloped in the warmth of camaraderie and gratitude.

An Iftar-Dinner Buffet at PC Bhurban is more than just a culinary experience; it's a celebration of life's abundance, shared in the company of loved ones amidst unparalleled beauty and hospitality. For those seeking to elevate their Ramazan festivities, a visit to Pearl-Continental Hotel,

Bull & Bears
PSX 100-Share
Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index	
Current	Prev. Close
65,731.79	65,502.59
Day's High	Day's Low
65,968.02	65,614.94
Index Value	Change
8,240,681,796	+229.20
Percentage	Time
+0.35%	20 Mar, 2024 5:00 pm

Europe: FTSE 100 Index	
Index Value	Change
7,737.38	-0.92
Percentage	Time
-0.012%	20 Mar, 4:35 pm GMT

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average	
Index Value	Change
39,435.72	+324.96
Percentage	Time
+0.83%	20 Mar, 3:15 pm GMT-4

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average	
Index Value	Change
40,003.60	+263.16
Percentage	Time
+0.66%	19 Mar, 3:15 pm GMT+9

Open Market Forex Rates		
Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	182.7	184.5
Bahrain Dinar	741.19	749.19
Canadian Dollar	204	206.2
China Yuan	38.74	39.14
Danish Krone	40.58	40.98
Euro	301.45	304.45
Hong Kong Dollar	35.63	35.98
Indian Rupee	3.36	3.47
Japanese Yen	1.86	1.94
Kuwaiti Dinar	906.92	915.92
Malaysian Ringgit	59.25	59.85
New Zealand \$	168.56	170.56
Norwegians Krone	26.19	26.49
Omani Riyal	724.36	732.36
Qatari Riyal	76.57	77.27
Saudi Riyal	73.85	74.55
Singapore Dollar	206	208
Swedish Korona	26.89	27.19
Swiss Franc	313.78	316.28
Thai Bhat	7.76	7.91
U.A.E Dirham	75.6	76.35
UK Pound Sterling	352.9	356.4
US Dollar	278.7	281.45

How do exports grow if running industry becomes impossible: Mian Zahid Hussain

Tariq Khattak

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain said on Wednesday that increasing electricity, gas, and oil prices would be cruel.

Further price hikes will also increase the risks for the government as the opposition can use this situation to create chaos in the country.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that continued price spikes can lead to a political crisis, which will be dangerous for the economy, stabilizing steadily.

Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that instead of increasing

the burden on the people, the direct tax system should be improved, and tax should also be collected from non-tax-paying sectors.

The business leader said that in a country where setting up and running an industry is the most challenging task and playing with plots is the easiest and most profitable, the increase in production and exports is self-deception.

He added that development is only possible if capital is diverted to industry and agriculture and industry is not prioritized over all other sectors.

Agriculture needs to be prioritized after industry while bringing the big landowners into the tax net can generate at least five billion rupees.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that black money



in Pakistan is kept in the form of plots, land,

buildings, gold, dollars, and banknotes of large denominations.

Gold coming into the country through legal channels is negligible. In contrast, several tons of gold are brought into the country annually through smuggling, which causes a massive loss of revenue that can be regulated.

Mian Zahid Hussain further said that some people believe that if the government abolishes the Rs5000 banknote, corruption and the black economy will be dealt a huge blow.

It will reduce bribery to a great extent, and people will be forced to transact through banks.

In 2016, such experiments were conducted in the neighboring country of India, which greatly affected their economy for a few months, but later, it became a global economic powerhouse.

Appreciation

ISLAMABAD: Khurshid Ahmed Khan Marwat Chief Commissioner Regional Tax Office Islamabad receiving the shield from Khurshid Barlas Founder Chairman Pakistan Association of Exhibition Industry during the meeting at his office and Fahad Barlas Convener Exhibition was present at the occasion.



Govt will be unable to announce a developmental budget

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Former President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt, said on Wednesday that the decision of the State Bank of Pakistan to maintain the interest rate at 22 percent was the right decision.

He said it was impossible to cut interest rates before the IMF review's outcome, which disappointed the business community as they were demanding and anticipating a cut in the rates.

He added that the economic situation is improving, and inflation is likely to drop to 20 percent next month, so the Monetary Policy Committee of the State Bank may consider reducing interest rates in its next meeting.

Shahid Rasheed Butt said in a statement issued here today that people should stop dreaming of a developmental budget which is impossible in the current tough conditions.



He said that a lower interest rate at this stage would have increased inflation while the rupee value would have decreased. This would have increased imports, further depleting the foreign exchange reserves. Presently, the forex reserves are around thirteen billion dollars, barely covering two months' imports.

Shahid Rasheed Butt said that people

living abroad send a large number of dollars to their families before Ramadan, but despite this, the value of the dollar did not decrease as much as was expected.

He said that the government has assured IMF that the privatization of sick units will be expedited, which is a good move. Attempts have been made to privatize the state-run enterprises for several decades, but significant progress has yet to be made.

The business leader said that in 2016, the loss of loss-making enterprises was half a percent of the country's GDP which has swelled ten times.

These institutions are known for corruption, incompetence, and wastage of national resources, and they must be sold as soon as possible.

He said the IMF has asked the government to raise excise duty on luxury goods. FBR should apply the same rate of excise on all locally manufactured cigarettes, regardless of whether the manufacturer is local or foreign, and e-cigarettes should be taxed similarly to tobacco.

Dr. Khalid Maqbool urges provinces to harmonize food business rules

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Science and Technology, Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui has called upon the provincial governments to harmonize rules related to food businesses.

In separate letters addressed to each chief ministers of Punjab, KPK, Sindh and Balochistan, Dr. Siddiqui highlighted the need for uniformity to ensure food safety and quality nationwide.

The minister said the existing disparities in regulations and enforcement mechanisms among provinces and federal agencies

have resulted in inconsistencies, inefficiencies and potential gaps in ensuring the safety and quality of food products available to consumers nationwide and for import and export purposes.

He emphasized the role of the Pakistan Standards and Quality Control Authority (PSQCA) as the national standards body and advocated for streamlining standards to prevent duplication of efforts between PSQCA and provincial authorities.

He said PSQCA is the sole national standards body to establish standards for all food and non-food products, services and processes.

Careem introduces in-app donations for customers in the spirit of Ramadan

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Careem, the leading ride-hailing platform in Pakistan, has introduced a series of impactful initiatives this Ramadan, using technology as an enabler in the way donations are traditionally made. With the aim of giving back to the community, Careem has introduced a Ramadan donation car type 'GO Indus' in partnership with Indus Hospital.

With every ride of the 'GO Indus' car type, an additional PKR 50 will be added to the customer's total ride fare. All funds collected will be donated to Indus Hospital to provide healthcare support to the less fortunate members of our society. The Ramadan donation car type comes as a part of Careem's on-going commitment



towards contributing and bringing a positive impact to local communities.

Additionally, Careem colleagues in Pakistan have donated more than 0.7 million PKR from their cumulative salaries, which will be donated to Saylani Welfare International Trust. The amount will be utilized to purchase around 650 bags of flour which will then be distributed to those in need across Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad. This initiative is a testament of Careem's commitment to fostering a culture of generosity and solidarity within its workforce and the wider community.

Government to introduce online land record service for overseas Pakistanis: Ch. Salik Hussain



PPA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Chaudhry Salik Hussain has said that the Government is all set to launch an online land record service for overseas Pakistanis to mitigate their difficulties with regard to transfer of properties and attract foreign inflows.

He said this while talking to a delegation of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry headed by its President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari. Former President ICCI, UBG and Secretary General FPCCI Zafar Bakhtawari, former President ICCI and Chairman Founder Group Khalid Iqbal Malik and former executive member ICCI Saeed Khan, were included in the delegation. Initially, the delegation extended heartfelt congratulations to Chaudhry Salik Hussain on his appointment as Federal Minister. The Minister added that his Ministry has started work on the project with NADRA and other relevant institutions and that DHA will be onboard initially.

He elaborated that the services may be offered through the offices of community welfare attaches in foreign missions of Pakistan in countries with substantially large Pakistani diaspora. He went on to say that Business Community will be given representation in different Boards in the Ministry.

President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that overseas Pakistanis are valuable asset of Pakistan and Ambassadors of the country, therefore their difficulties should be resolved on priority basis.

Coalition for Tobacco Control Pakistan (CTC-Pak) Advocates for Increased Tobacco Taxation

PPA

ISLAMABAD: The Coalition for Tobacco Control Pakistan (CTC-Pak), comprising over 100 organizations nationwide dedicated to tobacco control, welcomes the appointment of the new finance minister and encourages him to consider tobacco taxation as a strategic avenue for economic enhancement in its improved tax regime for real estate and retail sectors.

In line with public health objectives, CTC-Pak underscores the importance of raising taxes on cigarettes to curb tobacco consumption, thereby fostering improved health outcomes for the populace. Moreover, CTC-Pak endorsed Dr. Nadeem Jan, former Federal Minister for National Health Services, call for a 50% increase in tobacco taxes to curb smoking, particularly among the youth, citing grave health hazards.

CTC-Pak supports health advocates prioritizing higher taxes on tobacco products for multiple reasons. Firstly, raising tobacco taxes effectively reduces consumption, especially among vulnerable groups like youth

and low-income individuals, promoting better public health outcomes. Secondly, higher tobacco taxes alleviate significant economic burdens stemming from healthcare costs, lost productivity, and premature deaths, thus benefiting both public health and overall economic well-being. Thirdly, implementing such taxes signals policy-makers to address tobacco use as a critical public health and economic concern, fostering the adoption of comprehensive tobacco control measures.



The coalition appeals to the newly appointed Finance Minister, Muhammad Aurangzeb, urging him to acknowledge the significant challenge posed by tobacco consumption in Pakistan. With an estimat-

ed 31.9 million adults engaging in tobacco use, constituting 19.7% of the adult population, the impact on public health and the economy is profound.

It further stresses the strain placed on healthcare resources to manage smoking-induced non-communicable diseases, emphasizing the urgent necessity for measures like increased tobacco taxation to alleviate economic burdens and safeguard public health. Zeeshan Danish, Project Coordinator at CTC-Pak, underscores the affordability of tobacco as a key driver behind youth initiation into smoking, further emphasizing the economic toll associated with smoking-related illnesses and fatalities.

Communication Officer CTC-Pak, Ashfaq Ahmad asserts that as we navigate the challenges posed by tobacco use, collaboration between the government, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders is paramount. Together, we must work towards creating a tobacco-free environment that prioritizes public health and safeguards future generations from the perils of tobacco addiction.

Massive tree plantation at Potohar Triangle to increase scenery of the city: Saqib Rafiq

PPA

ISLAMABAD: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) is going to launch a large-scale plantation and clean-up campaign to build a green belt around Potohar Triangle, Soan Bridge and along the banks of Nallah Lai. The plantation and cleanliness drive aimed to build green belt around this area to increase the scenery of the city. President Chamber and Chairman RWMC Saqib Rafiq, giving details, said that under the vision of Chief Minister Punjab, Maryam Nawaz, Green Punjab Initiative 2024-27, all the relevant agencies, especially the Forest Department, PHA, started a large-scale plantation campaign in Rawal-

pindi. The project will not only beautify the city but will add to environment of the vicinity.

In this regard an event has been planned on 21st March 2024 at 12:00 noon (Potohar Triangle Soan Bridge) to launch the activity, he added.

Youth especially school students and civil society, local dignitaries, business community and chamber members are being involved in this campaign, he added. He said that if every citizen plants only four trees and patronized it, one billion trees can be planted in the next two years. This initiative of CM Punjab of three years lead by youth which will transform Punjab inspiration resonating to whole of Pakistan, he added.

Pakistan Cricket Board announces schedule for West Indies Women Cricket Team tour to Pakistan

West Indies Women's Team to arrive in Karachi on 14 April to feature in eight white-ball matches

Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: Pakistan are all set to host their final set of ICC Women's Championship 2022-25 matches at home as West Indies are scheduled to arrive in Karachi on 14 April to feature in eight white-ball matches. Three ODIs – part of ICC Women's Championship 2022-25 – will be played at the National Bank Stadium (NBS) in Karachi on 18, 21 and 23 April. The ODI series will be followed by five T20Is, to be played at the same venue. The T20Is are scheduled for 26, 28, 30 April, 2 and 3 May.

The ODIs are set to begin at 3:30pm PKT, while the first ball in the T20Is will be bowled at 7:30pm PKT. Pakistan women's team are currently ranked third in the ICC Women's Championship 2022-25, securing 16 points from 18 matches, whereas the West Indies women's team are posi-

tioned at number nine with eight points from 12 outings.

In the ICC Women's T20I rankings, Pakistan are placed at eighth position, while West Indies occupy the sixth spot.

The forthcoming West Indies women's team tour to Pakistan will be their second tour since 2021. West Indies last visited Karachi in November 2021 and featured in three ODIs. The upcoming ICC Women's Championship 2022-25 series will also be the fourth series hosted at home by Pakistan Cricket Board. Sri Lanka (June 2022), Ireland (November 2022) and South Africa (September 2023) women's cricket teams have visited Pakistan during this period.

Pakistan's last series in the ICC Women's Championship 2022-25 will be the tour to England taking place in May this year.

Head of Women's Cricket Tania Mal-

ick: "We extend a warm welcome to the West Indies women's team to Pakistan for the upcoming series. Hosting the fourth women's championship series at home within the 2022-25 cycle is a testament to PCB's commitment to promoting women's cricket and providing our players with opportunities to shine on the international stage.

"The forthcoming series against West Indies is not just about cricket; it's about developing relationships and strengthening bonds between cricketing nations.

"With the ICC Women's Championship 2022-25 coming to its conclusion for the Pakistan women's team, the stakes are higher than ever for the women's team to qualify directly for the ICC Women's ODI World Cup. The current position of the Pakistan women's team reflects our determination and dedication, and we aim to collect maximum points from the three



championship matches at home. "Later this year, the ICC Women's T20 World Cup is also taking place. In light of this event and the team's recent

good performances in the shortest format, we have scheduled five T20Is against West Indies. The T20I series will help the selectors finalise the squad

for the mega event."

Series schedule:

14 Apr – West Indies women's team arrival in Karachi

18 Apr – First ODI at National Bank Stadium (NBS), Karachi (3:30pm local time) (ICC Women's Championship)

21 Apr – Second ODI at NBS Karachi (3:30pm local time) (ICC Women's Championship)

23 Apr – Third ODI at NBS Karachi (3:30pm local time) (ICC Women's Championship)

26 Apr – First T20I at NBS (7:30pm local time)

28 Apr – Second T20I at NBS (7:30pm local time)

30 Apr – Third T20I at NBS (7:30pm local time)

2 May – Fourth T20I at NBS Karachi (7:30pm local time)

3 May – Fifth T20I at NBS Karachi (7:30pm local time)

Punjab to hold first ever sports quiz on March 23: minister

Tahir Amin Malik...

LAHORE: Punjab's first Sports Quiz competition is all set to begin under the auspices of Sports Board Punjab (SBP) and Deputy Commissioner Strategic Reforms Unit (SRU) on March 23.

In this regard, Punjab Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs Faisal Ayub Khokhar had a detailed meeting with Deputy Commissioner Lahore Rafia Haider at DC office. Deputy Commissioner Lahore on this occasion gave an in-depth briefing to Punjab Sports Minister about the first ever sports quiz contest.

Punjab Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs Faisal Ayub Khokhar and Deputy Commissioner Lahore Rafia Haider also discussed the promotion of sports during their meeting.

Punjab Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs



Faisal Ayub Khokhar said that holding quiz competition is great news for the sports enthusiasts of the province. "The young male and female sports enthusiasts must take part in this informative and healthy activity to enhance their sports knowledge," he added.

Punjab Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs Faisal Ayub Khokhar said that Deputy Commissioner Lahore is taking effective

measures for the administrative improvement of the Lahore district. "We will work together with Deputy Commissioner Lahore for the improvement of sports structure. The sports competitions will also be organized at the district level soon," he added.

While giving briefing, Deputy Commissioner Lahore Rafia Haider said that the registration of quiz will start from March 23. "The first digital round of

quiz will be conducted from March 23 to 31 while the second round will be held after Eidul Fitr," she added.

Deputy Commissioner Lahore Rafia Haider further said that the quiz competition will be based on the sports history of Pakistan and people of 14 to 35 years age can participate in this contest. "The purpose of the quiz is to make the young generation aware of the sports history of Pakistan," she informed.

Babar, Rizwan, Shaheen among late additions to The Hundred draft



A Sports

Pakistan's T20I captain Shaheen Afridi, as well as star batters Babar Azam, and Mohammad Rizwan, have made late entries to The Hundred 2024 Draft, scheduled to take place on March 20 (today).

These three players have set a reserve price of £100,000 and will be available for selection by the eight teams participating in The Hundred.

Former Pakistan captain Bismah Maroof has also been added as a last-minute inclusion along with Indian captain Harmanpreet Kaur.

Meanwhile, young batter Saim Ayub, who ended the recently concluded Pakistan Super League (PSL) 9 with 345 runs in 11 games, has withdrawn his name from The Hundred 2024 Draft.

Earlier this month, a total of 65 Pakistan players, including five women cricketers signed up for The Hundred 2024 Draft. Leg-spinner Usama Mir was retained by Manchester Originals while Welsh Fire retained right-arm speedster Haris Rauf.

Pakistan's first-choice pacers Hasan Ali and Naseem Shah registered for The Hundred draft at a reserved price of £100,000. Whereas, Shadab Khan and Iftikhar Ahmed set their reserve prices at £75,000.

Mohammad Amir, Aamir Jamal, and Abdullah Shafique have set their base price at £60,000.

Fakhar Zaman, Mohammad Haris, and Imad Wasim signed up for the draft with a reserve price of £50,000 while Mir Hamza, Mohammad Hasnain, and Azam Khan entered with a £40,000 reserve price.

Furthermore, 46 Pakistan players signed up for The Hundred draft without a reserved price including Haider Ali, Umar Amin, Faheem Ashraf, Shah Nawaz Dahani, Zaman Khan, Shan Masood, Mohammad Nawaz, Roman Raees, Saud Shakeel, Haneen Shah, Mohammad Wasim Jr.

In the women's category, Pakistan captain Nida Dar, alongside Iram Javed and Fatima registered with a reserved price of £17,500 while all-rounder Aliya Riaz and Javeria Rauf entered the draft without a specified reserve price.

Mushfiqur Rahim ruled out of Sri Lanka Tests with thumb injury



A Sports

Bangladesh wicket-keeper Mushfiqur Rahim has been ruled out of the two-match Test series against Sri Lanka, owing to a thumb injury.

Bangladesh physio Bayjedul Islam Khan confirmed that the 36-year-old batter will require at least three weeks to recover from the injury, ruling him out of the Test series, which will commence on 22 March.

"After the match, Mushfiqur [Rahim] underwent an X-ray examination in Dhaka, which revealed an avulsion fracture on the MIP joint of his right thumb," Bayjedul said.

"He is currently undergoing conservative management for his injury and is expected to be sidelined for around three to four weeks, consequently ruling him out of participation in the Test series against Sri Lanka."

Rahim suffered the injury during the third ODI against Sri Lanka as he was struck by a delivery from Taskin Ahmed in the second over.

He continued to keep wickets after getting treatment from the team physio, taking four crucial catches. He later played an unbeaten 37-run knock to help Bangladesh chase 236 runs to clinch the ODI series 2-1.

He was the second-highest run-getter for Bangladesh in the ODI series with 135 runs from three innings.

He is also the most-capped Test player in Bangladesh history with 88 Test matches and has scored the most runs for the country – 5676 runs at an average of 38.09.

The Bangladesh selectors have not announced the replacement for the veteran wicketkeeper yet.

Bangladesh lost the T20I series against Sri Lanka 2-1 but made a resounding comeback to win the ODI series with the same margin.

Pakistan not an easy team: Jordan football coach



Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: Jordan football coach Hussein Amutah's on Wednesday said Pakistan would not be an easy team to compete, in the forthcoming FIFA World Cup 2026 Qualifier Round 2 matches. Speaking at the pre-match press conference, he said the Jordanian team performed well in the Asia Cup. "The confidence of the team has increased from the Asia Cup and we would play the best football.

Football is the most popular sport in Jordan but it was not an easy game. "Every game for Jordan is important. We have prepared well for FIFA qualifier matches against Pakistan," the Amutah said, who was contented to tour Pakistan. Meanwhile, Pakistan coach Stephen Constantine said our team also performed well in the Asia Cup. "We are trying with all our might to qualify for the group stage of the World Cup. We are trying to build a new team and players would not learn if they won't play," he said. Constantine said Pakistan was planning to play against different countries. "Our players lack experience and my focus right now is the Asian qualifiers and the SAFF Cup. I want to see the best football team of Pakistan and it is necessary to hold a football league in the country for better results," he said. The Pakistan-Jordan, home game was scheduled to be held here at the Jinnah Stadium of Pakistan Sports Complex on March 21 while the squad would then head to Jordan for an away game on March 26. Pakistan Squad includes- Goalkeepers: Yousuf Butt (D), Saqib Hanif, Abdul Basit and Hassan Ali; Defenders: Easah Suliman (D), Abdullah Iqbal (D), Mamoona Musa, Haseeb Khan, Mohammad Saddam, Mohammad Sohail, Omer Rao, Mohammad Fazal (D) and Mohammad Adeel; Midfielders: Rahis Nabi (D), Harun Hamid (D), Alamgir Ghazi, Rajab Ali, Ali Uzair, Shayek Dost and Abdul Samad (D); Forwards: Fareed Ullah, Waleed Khan, Imran Kayani (D) and Adeel Younis.

Stadium upgradation plan presented to PCB Chairman

Sports Desk

LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Mohsin Naqvi was presented with the plan to upgrade three major stadiums on Wednesday.

The development came after Naqvi previously announced that the major stadiums of the country would undergo upgradation before the ICC Champions Trophy 2025.

"Chairman PCB Mohsin Naqvi called on the NESPAK (National Engineering Services of Pakistan) officials in a follow-up meeting on the upgradation of the three major venues in Pakistan," the PCB said in a press release.

"COO PCB, Salman Naseer, Director Infrastructure



PCB Nasir Hameed and GM NESPAK were also in attendance during this meeting.

"The initial designs for the immediate upgradation of Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore, National Bank Stadium, Karachi and Pindi Stadium, Rawalpindi were presented to the Chairman PCB in the form of a presentation.

"The chairman instructed

the officials about his plans regarding the enhancement of the view for the fans from every seat in the stadium while he also emphasised the importance of renovation of the hospitality boxes at all three venues.

"With the upgradation plan to be finalised soon, the Chairman instructed the NESPAK officials to

start the work on stadiums immediately keeping in mind a tight window of time before hosting the ICC Champions Trophy 2025."

Mohsin Naqvi, while addressing the media at the National Bank Stadium on Monday night, following the conclusion of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) 9, acknowledged the need to upgrade three major stadiums, followed by the upgradation of other venues.

"Our three main venues – Lahore, Karachi and Rawalpindi – will be upgraded before the Champions Trophy. We will upgrade other venues later as well, once these three are done. Our stadiums will be state-of-the-art once they have been renovated," said Chairman PCB.

Afghanistan call for 'politics-free cricket' after Australia scrap T20Is

Sports Desk

LAHORE: Afghanistan cricket bosses on Wednesday expressed disappointment that Australia had scrapped a men's T20I series because of deteriorating women's rights in the Taliban-ruled country and called for "politics-free cricket".

Cricket Australia said it had received advice "that conditions for women and girls in Afghanistan are getting worse" and postponed the three-match series scheduled in August, likely to have been hosted by the UAE.

"The Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) expresses disappointment over Cricket Australia's decision to postpone yet another bilateral series against Afghanistan and reiterates its stance on neutral and poli-



tics-free cricket across the globe," said a statement.

The decision, announced Tuesday, was the third time since 2021, when the Taliban returned to power, that Austral-

ia have refused to play Afghanistan outside of international tournaments.

Cricket has surged in popularity inside Afghanistan in recent years, fuelled by triumphs

over bigger nations on the international stage.

But under the Taliban government's brand of Islamic rule, women are effectively barred from the game, as part of

a raft of restrictions on women in Afghanistan that the United Nations has labelled "gender apartheid".

The ACB urged the Australian government "not to impose its policies on cricket boards" and "focus on supporting the development of cricket".

"ACB advocates for keeping cricket distinct from political influence, considering the game's significance in Afghanistan and its connection to the happiness and joy of the Afghan nation," the board said.

Before the return of the Taliban, Afghanistan's cricket board was slowly making progress in growing the game among women – even contracting a small number of semi-professional players in 2020. Most of those eventually fled to Australia.

Economic Revival Meeting

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting on economic revival and reforms on Wednesday.



Photo: PID

PM announces zero tolerance against power thieves, tax evaders

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday expressing resolve to streamline the country's economy by bringing strict reforms in all public departments, said the government will adopt zero tolerance policy against power thieves, tax evaders and corrupt elements.

He said the new government with fresh mandate will work diligently to enhance foreign direct investment, expand tax net, minimize tax evasion, reduce public debt, eliminate power theft and implement stern austerity measures in the government departments.

Addressing the first formal

meeting of the federal cabinet held here chaired by him, the prime minister said, he had issued orders to completely digitize the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) as soon as possible to avoid tax evasions.

In this regard, he said that a consultant was being hired for the purpose which would be appointed by next month.

PM Shehbaz regretted that trillions of rupees were being evaded by the mafias. Such mafias, he said run businesses worth billions of rupees but they pay zero tax due to undocumented transactions. With digitization of the FBR, such mafias would be exposed and apprehended, he said.

He said Rs 2.4 trillion worth

of tax cases were currently pending either in the tribunals or in the courts which needed to be concluded as early as possible.

"I request the Chief Justice Supreme Court of Pakistan to help early conclusion of all such sub-judice cases."

Further, he said he had also directed to draw a list of honest and efficient officers to encourage them and acknowledge their services. On the other hand, the prime minister vowed to take strict action against the officers involved in corrupt activities. He pointed out that in the previous government, the coalition government had saved the country when it was on the

verge of default by putting its politics at stake.

He said during his recent meetings with the diplomats of the friendly countries, he conveyed them that the government was eager to enhance bilateral relations with those countries in terms of trade and investment.

He said under the umbrella of Special Investment Facilitation Center (SIFC), the government will provide one window option to the investors to enable them complete their due process without any hassle. The prime minister said all the provinces should support the federal government to achieve its goals of bringing a halt to power theft and tax evasion.

Earlier, PM Shehbaz Sharif paid tribute to the armed forces personnel who sacrificed their lives for the sake of the country's security. He said the terrorism in Pakistan had been completely eradicated from the country due to exemplary sacrifices of the armed forces personnel and the civilians. However, he regretted that few years ago, this menace of terrorism surfaced again in certain areas of the country.

"Almost 70,000 to 80,000 Pakistanis, including those from law enforcing agencies, police, professionals, and others sacrificed their lives for the sake of the country's security," he remarked.

President Zardari for expanding scope of Pak-Japan cooperation



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Wednesday called for expanding the scope of bilateral cooperation between Pakistan and Japan across a wide spectrum of areas, especially trade, investment, economy, culture and people-to-people contacts. The president, talking to the Ambassador of Japan Mitsuhiro Wada, who called on him, said that Pakistan was a huge market and Japanese businesses should benefit from the economic opportunities by investing in diverse sectors.

He said that both countries had been enjoying long-standing relations, which needed to be further cemented for the mutual benefit of the two sides. He highlighted that Japan had been a key development partner of Pakistan that had been supporting Pakistan's socio-economic development in different sectors

under the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). He further said that Pakistan had a huge population and could send the trained workforce and professionals to help Japan fulfill its requirement for human resources. The president said that Japanese automobile companies, based in Pakistan, should enhance production to export their products from Pakistan. The Japanese banks should also be encouraged to restart their operations in Pakistan, he said and reaffirmed Pakistan's resolve to overcome its current socio-economic challenges. The Japanese ambassador said that Pakistan had a strategic location and a huge population, and Japanese companies were interested in these potential areas. He called for further strengthening the existing bilateral cooperation for the mutual benefit of the two countries and informed that the export of Pakistani mangoes to Japan was growing.

UAE envoy calls on Pakistan minister to discuss bilateral ties, economic cooperation

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to Pakistan, H. E. Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Salim Alzaabi, called on Minister for Finance & Revenue, Mr. Muhammad Aurangzeb, at the Finance Division today, to discuss matters regarding bilateral relations and economic cooperation between Pakistan and the UAE.

Ambassador of UAE, H. E. Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Salim Alzaabi, extended felicitations to Mr. Muhammad Aurangzeb upon his appointment as Minister for Finance and Revenue and expressed confidence towards further strengthening of economic ties between the two countries.

Minister for Finance & Revenue, Mr. Muhammad Aurangzeb, expressed sincere appreciation for the long-standing brotherly relations between Pakistan and the

UAE, which are deeply rooted in shared history, culture, and faith. He emphasized the cherished nature of these traditional and longstand-



ing relations.

The Minister discussed the establishment of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) in Pakistan, aimed at attracting investments from friendly countries in various sectors and highlighted the progress made with the government's privatization program, specifically mentioning the privatization of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA).

FM underlines significance of economic-diplomacy to attract investments

Spokesman Report

BRUSSELS: Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on Wednesday stressed that in addition to conventional diplomacy, Pakistan needed to prioritize economic-diplomacy in the current circumstances. In this regard, he said all missions of Pakistan abroad should focus on attracting investments, the foreign minister said while interacting with officers of Pakistan High Commission in London, a press release said.

FM underlines significance of economic-diplomacy to attract investments The foreign minister said that Pakistan was blessed with significant natural as well as high quality human resources. The country had all the potential



to become a great economy provided a coherent approach was adopted to bring fiscal discipline and curtail external

deficit, he added. "The only requirement of the day is to manage these resources in an effective manner," he stressed.

The foreign minister said that all stakeholders, including line ministries, needed to work hand-in-hand with a team

spirit to strengthen Pakistan both internally and externally. FM underlines significance of economic-diplomacy to attract investments Dar said that Pakistan was undergoing challenging times, however, the incumbent government was committed to provide relief to the common man, adding moreover, on international fronts, Pakistan was engaging with partners for mutual cooperation. On the occasion, the foreign minister advised the officers to work hard and diligently to bring long-term investments in the country and enhancement of trade. The foreign minister will be representing Pakistan in the First Nuclear Energy Summit, scheduled to be held in Brussels on March 21.

PM for early conclusion of Pak-UK enhanced strategic partnership agreement

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday expressing the desire to elevate the Pakistan-UK relationship to the next level, emphasized the importance of early conclusion of the Enhanced Strategic Partnership (ESP) agreement. The prime minister, in a meeting with British High Commissioner Jane Marriott, who called on him, highlighted the government's priorities, in particular the importance of navigating through the economic challenges facing the country. In this regard, he underscored the need to enhance bilateral cooperation in trade and investment, climate, and people-to-people contacts as well as developing convergences on regional and multilateral issues of mutual interest. Prime Minister Shehbaz thanked British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Foreign Secretary Lord David Cameron for their messages of felicitation on his re-election and said that he looked forward to working closely with the UK leadership to further strengthen bilateral relations. PM for early conclusion of Pak-UK Enhanced Strategic Partnership agreement He said Pakistan and the UK had longstanding, historic relations and shared immense political goodwill while cooperating closely over a wide range of areas.

Pakistan, Turkiye vow to strengthen economic, trade relations

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Turkiye here on Wednesday expressed mutual desire to strengthen cooperation in the financial sectors between Pakistan and Turkiye, fostering deeper economic ties and enhancing bilateral relations for the prosperity of both nations. According to press statement issued by finance ministry, Turkish Ambassador to Pakistan, Dr. Mehmet Pacaci, called on Minister for Finance & Revenue, Mr. Muhammad Aurangzeb to discuss matters of mutual interest and further strengthening the bilateral relations between the two countries.

Pacaci extended felicitations to Muhammad Aurangzeb upon his appointment as Minister for Finance and Revenue and



expressed confidence towards further strengthening of economic ties between the two countries. The minister expressed sincere acknowledgment of the brotherly relations between Pakistan and Turkiye, which are deeply rooted in shared common faith, history, and cultural affinities. Highlight-

ing the excellent political and social relations between the two countries, the minister emphasized the necessity of translating these relations into robust economic and commercial collaboration to their full potential. He welcomed the signing of the Trade in Goods Agreement/Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) on 12 August 2022, as a positive step towards achieving the bilateral trade target of US\$ 5 billion in the medium term. The minister also apprised the Turkish Ambassador of the recently established Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) in Pakistan, aimed at attracting investments from friendly countries in various sectors, such as defense, agriculture, mines and minerals, energy, and the IT industry.

Govt, institutions' role crucial to thwart enemies' inimical designs: Reham

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Reham Khan on Wednesday said the government and national institutions' role was crucial to thwart the inimical designs of country's enemies who want to create political instability and anarchy in the country.

She was addressing the seminar conducted by the Centre for Development and Stability (CDS), a think tank, on the theme 'Disinformation: The Undermining Force Within—Revealing its Structural Threats to Society and National Security.'

The aim of this theme was to analyze the threats of disinformation to national security with the goal of providing viable solutions, said a press release. The seminar was held at the Ripah University Campus, Evacuee Trust Complex, here, under the slogan 'A Journey Towards Promoting Development and Securing Stability'. A large no of Youth delegates, renowned Media Personalities & intellectuals attended the Seminar.

Reham Khan said a few political

interests and miscreants have become the tools of hostile forces. Some political party and its leader has become a threat to national security, she added.

She reiterated the objective of the enemy forces is to create political instability and anarchy in the country, but they would not achieve success in their nefarious designs and



the government and country's institutions were ready to foil such reprehensible motives at all cost.

She said that fake accounts were trying to create a narrative in favour of a particular political party and anti-Pakistan while sitting abroad. Young people should reject propaganda and play their role in the development of the country, she maintained.