



**President for promoting barter trade, economic ties with Iran**

President Asif Ali Zardari has underlined the need for promoting barter trade and economic relations with Iran for the mutual benefit of the two brotherly countries. He said that both countries had great scope for expanding bilateral economic cooperation in diverse fields. (Details on Page 5)



**Aseefa Bhutto elected unopposed as MNA from Sindh's Shaheed Benazirabad**

Aseefa Bhutto Zardari was elected unopposed as a member of the National Assembly from NA-207 Shaheed Benazirabad, formerly Nawabshah, in Sindh on Friday. "Grateful and honoured to have been elected unopposed as MNA NA-207 Shaheed Benazirabad," she said in a post on X, erstwhile Twitter. "I pledge to serve all my constituents to the best of my abilities, with dedication and irrespective of political affiliation." (Details on Page 8)

Simultaneously published from Islamabad, Lahore and Multan

**Meeting**

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting on measures against the spectrum of illegal activities on Friday.



Photo: Online

**PM chairs meeting on measures against electricity theft, smuggling**

**Spokesman Report**

ISLAMABAD, MAR 29 (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Friday chaired a meeting on measures against spectrum of illegal activities here.

Members of the Federal Cabinet, Chief of the Army Staff (COAS), General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Provincial Chief Ministers and high-level government officials were present in the meeting.

The agenda of the meeting was "Measures against Spectrum of illegal activities & Criminal Mafias". The participants were briefed in detail on steps taken against the criminal mafias, smuggling, hoarding, money laundering, power theft and repatriation of illegal foreigners etc.

The participants acknowledged the importance of such actions and their positive impact on the economy and well being of the people of Pakistan.

The meeting showed firm

resolve to take action against smugglers, hoarders and market manipulators, who have impacted the economic trajectory and to provide immediate relief to common citizens.

The meeting gave approval of agreements among Federal and Provincial governments on Anti-Power Theft policy, restructuring of Power Distribution Companies on modern lines, installation of Smart meters for full eradication of Power Theft and ordered strict action against the corrupt officers.

Chief of the Army Staff assured unwavering resolve of Pakistan Army to support government's initiatives aimed at economic recovery of the country.

At the end, the prime minister directed all the stakeholders to vigorously pursue various initiatives against spectrum of illegal activities & criminal mafias to ensure their accomplishment within stipulated timeframe.

**US President Joe Biden writes to PM Shehbaz, assures US full support in confronting challenges**

**Spokesman Report**

ISLAMABAD: President of the United States Joe Biden, in his first communication with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif after assumption of his office, conveyed his heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to the newly elected government of Pakistan. In his letter to the prime minister, President Biden reiterated the US' unwavering commitment to standing alongside Pakistan in confronting the most pressing challenges facing the world and the region.



He also emphasized the shared vision of prioritizing public health protection, economic

development, and education, affirming the commitment to advancing these goals in tandem, a press release of Prime Minister Office said on Friday.

Highlighting the significance of the enduring partnership between the peoples of the United States and Pakistan, President Biden said the partnership was critical to ensuring the security of the world and the people.

Moreover, President Biden emphasized the continued collaboration between the two nations under the US-Pakistan Green Alliance Framework, aiming to bolster environmen-

tal improvements and sustainable development initiatives. He also assured to continue support for Pakistan's endeavors in sustainable agriculture, water management, and recovery efforts following the devastating 2022 floods. President Biden reaffirmed the joint commitment to upholding human rights and promoting inclusive development, signaling a strengthened partnership between the United States and Pakistan. "The close relations established between the people of the two countries will further strengthen," the president added.

**'Bisham attack culprits to be brought to justice', Naqvi assures Chinese team**



**City Desk**

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi met the Chinese team of investigators at Beijing's embassy and expressed the government's resolve to bring the culprits of the Bisham terrorist attack to justice at all costs.

Chinese investigators arrived in Pakistan on Friday to join a probe into the killing of five Chinese nationals in a suicide attack.

Interior minister briefed the Chinese investigation team about the progress made so far in the investigation into the incident.

Measures pertaining to protection of Chinese nationals and overall security were also discussed on the occasion.

The interior minister also met with Chinese Ambassador and updated him on the probe

into Bisham incident. The development comes after a terror attack in Shangla's Besham city claimed the lives of at least six people, including five Chinese engineers, working on the Dasu Dam, earlier this week.

Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch on Friday said this attack was orchestrated by the enemies of Pakistan-China friendship.

She said such attempts will not succeed and we will continue to work together to develop CPEC and promote cooperation. She said Pakistan will not allow any force to sabotage the relationship between the two countries.

The Spokesperson said Pakistan and China are close friends and Iron brothers. She said the two countries together will resolutely act against these elements and defeat them.

**In a first, foreign minister replaces FM in CCI**

**Commerce Desk**

ISLAMABAD: The foreign minister has replaced finance minister in the Council of Common Interests (CCI) for the first time in country's history as Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif approved reconstitution of the body, ARY News reported on Friday.

According to a notification from the CCI Secretariat - a copy of which is available with ARY News, President Asif Ali Zardari - on the advice of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif - signed off on the reconstitution of the vital body.

The newly constituted council includes the premier, Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif, Minister of States and Frontier Regions Amir Muqam, Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur and Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti.

PM Shehbaz Sharif will head the eight-member Council of Common Interests (CCI).

Notably, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb is excluded from the largest decision-making forum.

As per the Constitution, the

CCI is responsible for formulating and regulating policies in relation to matters included in the federal legislative list and exercising supervision and control over related institutions.

"The council shall be constituted within thirty days of the prime minister taking oath of the office," it states, adding that the CCI should at least meet once in 90 days.

As per Article 153 of the Constitution, the CCI members include the prime minister, four provincial chiefs and three federal ministers to be nominated by the premier.

This was the second time PM Shehbaz snubbed the finance minister and given a task to Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar. Muhammad Aurangzeb was also initially excluded from the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) last week before PM Shehbaz decided to hand over the committee's chairmanship to Aurangzeb.

The prime minister had reconstituted four cabinet committees. Out of these, Aurangzeb was appointed as the chairman of only one committee. Traditionally these committees have been headed by the finance minister.

**PTI demands CJP Isa, IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq resign after six judge's letter**

**News Desk**

ISLAMABAD: The PTI has demanded Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa and Islamabad High Court (IHC) CJ Aamer Farooq resign from their posts, following six IHC judges letter that raised the alleged matter of executive and intelligence agencies' interference in the judiciary.

"The most important thing is that this letter is written to the Supreme Judicial Council and the IHC chief justice has been indicted in the letter," PTI Secretary Information Rauf Hassan, along with the party's legal minds, told a press conference in Islamabad.

Leaders of the former ruling party were addressing the press conference a day after they rejected the formation of a retired judge-led inquiry commission on the judges' letter.

Six out of eight judges of IHC in a letter to the SJC on Tuesday demanded that a judicial convention be summoned over the alleged intelligence agencies' interference in the judiciary. After this, the CJP twice convened a full court meeting.

On Thursday, CJP Isa said that "interference by the executive" in the affairs and judicial workings of judges "will not be tolerated". He was quoted as saying in a statement from the Supreme Court issued after the full court meeting and his meeting with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

At the presser, Rauf described the IHC chief justice as "complicit and tout" and alleged that under his supervision former prime minister Imran Khan was punished. "The first indictment is of the IHC CJ," he said and added that the CJP was also mentioned about this.

According to the party's spokesperson, incumbent Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was also involved in it.

"We will take all those steps that law allows us," he Rauf said and demanded that other judges also share their experience of how they were allegedly pressurised. "We won't let this letter be pushed under the rag."

He used the word "judicial surrender", claiming that the judiciary was surrendering its independence before the execu-

utive. Niazullah Niazi, the party's chief election commissioner, said that it was about the Constitution and law. "We demand CJP Isa and the IHC chief justice resign immediately because of the way courts conducted cases against Imran Khan. Our war is against the rule of law," he said and cast doubts on the incumbent prime minister.

He added that the party's time for press conferences has ended. "We are hopefully going towards lawyers' movement. We will lead the whole nation. The Constitution allows us to protest. We will go to the SC," Niazi said and added that Imran Khan has allowed them to stage a country-wide protest.

PTI's Shoaib Shaheen wanted 15 judges of the Supreme Court to hear the matter not a retired judge. The matter should be conducted transparently, he added.

When asked, Shaheen said that they would protect their rights by living in the system. The party would conduct a rally on Sunday, in Rawalpindi on April 19, and in Karachi on April 21.

**Pakistan's most senior naturalist, biodiversity expert Prof Z. B. Mirza passes away**

**Spokesman Report**

ISLAMABAD: Senior biodiversity expert, naturalist and Chairman Scientific Committee of the Islamabad Wildlife Management Board, Prof. Dr. Z. B. Mirza, 88, passed away peacefully at his residence on Friday. The funeral prayers of the deceased would be held after prayers at 5 pm, H-11 Graveyard. Professor Zahid Baig Mirza, affectionately known as Prof. Z. B. Mirza, made significant contributions to the fields of ornithology, conservation, and biodiversity in Pakistan, earning both national and international recognition.

**Federal, provincial govts on same page to address Balochistan issues: CM**



**City Desk**

ISLAMABAD: Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti, Friday said that both the federal and Balochistan provincial governments are on the same page to address issues of the province. Addressing a press conference along with leaders of allied political parties

Continued on page 8

# PM AJK warns India to stop using anti-Kashmir rhetoric ahead of elections

**Bureau Report**

MUZAFFARABAD: Prime Minister Azad Kashmir Chaudhry Anwar ul Haq has said that as the elections in India were drawing nearer, Modi and his party would resort to same anti-Muslim and anti-Pakistan and anti-Kashmir rhetoric to whip up the nationalist sentiment in India. Addressing an iftar dinner hosted in honor of journalists, the A.J.K premier said that the BJP has a long history of using anti-Muslim and anti-pakistan rhetoric as a tool to achieve its political goal and push forward its agenda.

Referring to India's August 5, 2019 decision, the Prime Minister said that the move was out-rightly rejected by the people of Kashmir and Pakistan as well as civilized nations of the world. Voicing his serious concern over the worsening political and human rights situation in the Indian occupied territory of Jammu and Kashmir, he said, "Violations of human rights, forced disappearances, bloodshed and violence and killing of innocent people by the Indian occupation forces have become a daily routine in Occupied Kashmir". About Indian Defense Minister off the cuffs statements regarding Azad Kashmir,



he said that it was better for Indian politicians to stop daydreaming. He said that he witnessed the Kashmiris' passion and determination. He said that the coalition government's recent initiatives have been instrumental in restoring the trust of

the people in the system. The PM said that during his eleven months long rule not a single case of corruption or misuse of authority has surfaced. To strengthen the system and serve the people of the state, he said, was the sole mission of his life. The PM said that he would neither allow any one whatsoever to misuse the taxpayers' money nor would he allow anyone to disrupt the law and order in the state. On this occasion, Senior Minister Colonel (Retd) Waqar Ahmad Noor, Government Ministers Chaudhry Azhar Sadiq, Raja Muhammad Siddique Khan, Nisar Ansar Abdali, Raja Faisal Mumtaz Rathore, Sardar Muhammad Javed Ayub, Chaudhry Akbar Ibrahim, Javed Iqbal Badhanvi, Chaudhry Muhammad Akhlaq, Sardar Zia Qamar, Chaudhry Yasir Sultan, Mian Abdul Waheed, Ms. Nisara Abbasi, Ms. Taqdees Gilani, Information Secretary Ansar Yaqub and a large number of journalists were also present.

## Group photo

CHAKWAL: Group photo of Social Media Volunteers Team of Begum Noor Memorial Hospital Bhubhar Rural Chakwal with Baba Bashir, Chairman, Bin Qutab Foundation.



# Faisalabad City Police destroy kites, chemical cords after crackdown on kite flying

**Abdul Majid**

FAISALABAD: City Police Officer Captain (retd) Muhammad Ali Zia destroyed the kites worth crores of rupees and chemical cords which were taken to the police line in Faisalabad during 02 months in the presence of people of all schools of thought. On this occasion, CP Faisal Abad said that the purpose of putting kites on fire is that the citizens also shoulder their responsibility and support the police to prevent their children and surrounding people from playing kite flying, a precious life is lost in this bloody



game. It has already happened that the people who are under the influence of the cases are our children, if their criminal record is made, they will not be able to go to any other country for education. On this occasion, the city police officer said that during 02 months, Faisalabad police arrested 36 people who were running 03

pages of online sale of kite flying on social media, besides registering 2634 cases and arresting 2644 people. More than one and a half million kites, raw materials worth lakhs, 6300 chemical cord wheels, 11 factories, 08 machines, 850 small and big shopkeepers who used to sell kites were arrested. During the crackdown, 271

people were arrested and 161 guns, pistols, Kalashnikovs and dozens of magazines were seized and cases were registered. According to the directives of Chief Minister Punjab and IG Punjab, the crackdown will continue against kite flyers until further orders. The Punjab Kite Flying Ordinance is being amended by the Prosecutor General of Punjab, after which the jail time of the kite flyers arrested in the cases will not be given, but the punishment will be more. The accountability process is also going on in the police department. On this occasion Faisalabad

Chamber of Commerce Vice President Muhammad Aslam Bhali, Supreme Anjum Traders Chairman Amin Butt, Member Punjab Bar Farooq Dogar, Faisalabad Bar President Mian Anwar Haq, Secre Tree Press Club Mian Kashif, Ulema Sikandar Zaki, DPP Muzaffar Ali Ranjha, Teachers and students also participated and while appreciating the initiative of the police, they said that all the civil society including industrialists, businessmen, lawyers, journalist community and people of every school of thought have assured the police that they will do this.

# S. M. Food, Volka Food kick-start tree plantation campaign in Multan

**Spokesman Report**

MULTAN: Ch. Zulfiqar Ali Anjum kick started the tree plantation campaign by planting trees in the factory area. The tree planting campaign initiated by the administration in Multan under the directives and policy of the Punjab government is commendable. In detail, Chaudhry Zulfiqar Ali Anjum, renowned industrialist and Group Chairman of S. M. Food and Volka Food International, kickstarted the tree plantation campaign by planting trees in the factory area. He emphasized the extraordinary importance of the Punjab government's tree plantation campaign, "Plant for Pakistan." Trees are a blessing, and we should appreciate

them. Trees not only provide us with oxygen, fruits, wood, and shade but also help us cope with climate change. Trees purify the air and soil and help moderate the climate. The aim of this campaign is to make the surroundings of factories and nearby areas clean and beautiful and to raise environmental awareness among employees. Under this initiative, more than 5000 plants will be planted around Volka Food, Gibz, UTL and Universal factories. The group chairman of S. M. Food emphasized, "Tree planting is our national duty, and we should all contribute to fulfilling it." He further stated, "Trees purify the air and help keep the environment cool." The renowned industrialists appealed to the common

citizens and factory workers to participate in the campaign and assist in caring for the plants. The tree plantation campaign of the Multan administration will help make the city green and cheerful, turning it into a healthy and habitable place. This initiative is the best gift for the city's residents, and we hope it continues. We are all committed to our government's policy and should all contribute to planting and caring for trees. One tree can start a forest of millions, so let's all come together and make our city a green and happy place. Mohsin Multan Mr. Zulfiqar Ali, on the occasion of the tree planting campaign, urged everyone to plant trees around their homes, offices, or



schools and participate in local tree planting campaigns. He suggested rewarding organizations that care for trees. Encourage your friends and

family to plant trees. After planting the trees, Chaudhry Zulfiqar Ali Anjum prayed for the prosperity of a lush green Pakistan.

## GNS Solutions in Lahore hosts Iftar Dinner for defence personnel

**Tahir Amin Malik**

A Iftar Dinner was hosted by GNS Solutions Pvt Ltd, Lahore at DESom (Defence Services Officer Mess, Lahore. GNS Solutions is Telecommunications IT company which is service provider in Lahore. Gns Solutions is famous for their excellent internet services in the country their expertise and customer-centric approach make them a top choice for needs highly recommended. GNS services are reliable, fast and the customer support is responsive. At the Iftar Dinner there is So Many dignitaries were presence which included Khawaja Mr. Farrukh Arshad Chairman GNS Group, and Company Secretary Gns Group Major Khawaja Sohail Anwar who hosted the Iftar Denner, while other guest were Ijaz Chairman FMP Group, Mr. Atif, IT head Inmol Atonic Energy, Mr. Mujahid Gorsu Founder Gorsu Foundation., Mr. Adil, Ddirector Allied Telecom, Mr. Kashif Bashir, IEEE Vice Chairman, Lahore. Mr. Abdul Rasheed IT head Rudoff Group, Mr. Sumair, IT head Express Packages, Mr. Adnan, Directore Wapda, Mr. Rafi, DG Agriculture, and Mr. Nasir, Ceo Nastec, and many more other guest. After the Dinner the Ceo and Chairman Gns Khawaja Farrukh Arshad, and Major Khawaja Sohail Anwar Company Secretary Gns Group thanks all the guest to participate in Iftar Dinner.



## Fruit orchards on the brink of destruction due to lack of small dams in Wana.

**Adam Khan Wazir**

SOUTH WAZIRISTAN: Fruit tree plantation campaign is going on in Wana, of Lower South Waziristan District.

Local tribes plant thousands of fruit trees not only in orchards every year rather, thousands of trucks loaded with different fruits and vegetables are sent from here every year to be sold in different markets of the country.

Unfortunately, the farmers and cultivators here are very worried due to the continuous fall of the water level for the past several years, there is a need for the government to take emergency measures to store rainwater and construct small dams, check dams and weirs, then the water level will rise.

Farmer Haji Toor Khan said, that Lower South Waziristan district is a fertile agricultural area.

Apples, plum, potatoes, apricots and peaches here are known throughout the country due to their sweetness.

Haji said, however, due to the lack of small dams and check dams, not only the farmers but also the common people are expressing serious concern due to the falling water level.

On the other hand, South Waziristan Lower SDO Zia Udin said that the water issue in Wana is a serious problem and however, the Irrigation Department is trying hard to construct small dams and check dams in Wana, so that the water level here can be prevented from falling further.

Local tribals here say that the government should take measures on an emergency basis to build small dams and check dams to control the falling water level.



## Convict sentenced to 15 years in prison for drugs peddling

**Raza Naqvi**

ATTOCK: A Control of Narcotics Substance Court (CNS) sentenced fifteen-year imprisonment and imposed fine to an accused involved in a drug peddling case. The accused Nasir Mehmood- resident of Mohallah Haji Gulab Khan was arrested by Pindigheb Police in August 2023 in the case registered under section 9-C of control of narcotics substance act 1997 after recovery of hashish and opium from his custody. The additional session Judge Qammar Zaman Bhatti after hearing the arguments of defense and prosecution counsels announced the verdict as the convicted was found guilty of having drugs, subsequently awarded 15-year imprisonment and fine worth Rs 0.30 million. During the proceedings, the public prosecutor for the state argued that the accused was caught red-handed while selling the contraband and the evidence on record fully connected him with the commission of the offence. He maintained that the accused was charged for a heinous offence and he did not deserve any leniency.

## Ch Yasin says need of the hour to implement National Action Plan strictly

**Bureau Report**

ISLAMABAD: President of Pakistan People's Party Azad Kashmir and senior parliamentarian Chaudhry Muhammad Yasin has said that the need of the hour is that the National Action Plan needs to be implemented strictly and its Competition is only in national unity. He expressed these views while talking to various delegations yesterday.

He said that foreign investment is needed for economic stability in Pakistan, and forces hostile to Pakistan want to stop investment by disrupting the peace and order situation in the country, and the attack on Chinese engineers is also a link in the same chain. He said that there is a need to implement the National Action Plan to prevent such incidents. He said that Pakistan is currently going through a critical period with economic crisis and the wave of terrorism is worrying. He said that the nation is facing a difficult time.



**Sardar Attique congratulate**

## Barrister Raja Azar Iqbal, Kashmiri, appointed UK Judge

**Abdul Majeed Tahir**

LONDON/RAWALPINDI: Barrister Raja Azar Iqbal, an A.J.K national hailing from Mirpur has been appointed as Judge by the Lord Chancellor of the United Kingdom. He has assumed his office Thursday.

Barrister Raja Azar Iqbal belongs to village Boa Kalan Mirpur, A.J.K. He is the first Kashmiri from the region to have been appointed as Judge in the UK Judiciary by the Lord Chancellor. Being Judge he will exercise his functional jurisdiction over entire England.

Barrister Raja Azar Iqbal before his new appointment was Chairman diplomatic wing of All Jammu and Muslim Conference England.



Islamabad  
15° - 23° Clear

SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr	4:35 am
Zohr	12:13 pm
Asr	4:40 pm
Maghrib	6:26 pm
Isha	7:51 pm

EMERGENCY

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

Women Police Stations

Islamabad	9222596
Rawalpindi	9270601-20

ENQUIRY

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

HOSPITALS

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

DEPARTMENTS

CDA	9221334-43
CDA	9208301-04
Met Office	9250360-6
RDA	5555864
TMA	5770886
Cantonment Board	9270151-3
Islamabad Metropolitan Corporation	9209224
Potohar Town	9209224
Rawal Town	5773343

MAJU hosts a seminar on the IMF Program

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Mohammad Ali Jinnah University (MAJU) recently hosted a seminar on Pakistan's economic situation and the latest agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) at the campus.

Speaking at a seminar, Director at the Center for Excellence in Islamic Finance (CEIF)-IBA Ahmed Siddiqui underscored the crucial role of the IMF in stabilizing the country's current account and the option of utilizing the international lender's Islamic financing program.

He mentioned that Islamic institutions are taking the lead in the banking and financial sectors, having a strong potential to transform the economy from interest-based elements to Shariah-compliant mechanisms within five years.

He further added that the masses are choosing Shariah-compliant financial products and services in the country as their preferred choice, depicting the promising future of Islamic financial system in Pakistan.

Economist Muhammad Farrukh Ahmed discussed various issues and challenges facing the economy and its critical solutions through restructuring and reforms of macroeconomic indicators.

# CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif to launch 'Muhammad Nawaz Sharif Kissan Card'

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif is all out for the welfare and prosperity of farmers in the province. She approved the launch of Muhammad Nawaz Sharif Kissan Card to provide subsidised farm inputs to farmers in Punjab, while chairing a special meeting on agricultural reforms for the second consecutive day.

Madam Chief Minister said, "Muhammad Nawaz Sharif Kissan Card project in Punjab is the biggest in the history of Pakistan." She added, "Under the project, agricultural loans worth Rs 150 billion will be provided to 5 lakh small farmers on easy terms. Farmers will be given an agricultural loan of Rs 30,000 per acre

for the purchase of best quality seeds, fertilizers and pesticides."

Madam Chief Minister said, "Various types of other subsidies will also be provided to the farmers through Nawaz Sharif Kissan Card." She said, "Model Agriculture Centers (MAC) will be established across Punjab in collaboration with the private sector. These model agriculture centers will have modern agricultural machinery, training, pesticide seeds and demonstration plots." She added, "In the first phase, one model agriculture center will be set up in each district. Farmers will get rid of fake fertilizers and medicines."

Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif directed the Agriculture Department to compile complete data of production and demand of each crop. She approved to



set up state-of-the-art center of excellence for research and development on cotton, wheat and rice crops. She agreed to control administrative affairs of the

Center of Excellence through a Board and link these Research Centres with the Regional Universities. Madam Chief Minister also directed to build a research and development center at the cost of Rs 2 billion in Agriculture University Faisalabad with the cooperation of China. This Pak China R&D Center will have genome center, germplasm resource, speed breeding and research facility on climate change.

Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif also directed to present amendments to the Agriculture Pesticides Act and the Fertilizers Control Act to prevent the sale of spurious agricultural drugs and fertilizers. She also reviewed the restructuring of Punjab Seed Corporation and Punjab Agricultural Research Board. A proposal

to introduce a law to prevent the use of agricultural land for residential purposes was also considered in the meeting. She agreed to equip Agricultural Extension Wing with modern technology and recruit 500 agriculture graduates.

Earlier, Madam Chief Minister was briefed that 24,800 latest agricultural implements will be provided to the farmers at a cost of Rs 7 billion in two years.

Senior Provincial Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb, Information Minister Azma Zahid Bukhari, Agriculture Minister Mohammad Ashiq Hussain, Former Senators Pervaiz Rashid, Saud Majeed, Chief Secretary, Secretaries Agriculture, Finance, President Bank of Punjab and other senior officers concerned attended the meeting.

## Solidarity

ISLAMABAD: Chairman CDA Captain (Retd) Anwarul Haque is being handed over the award given by former Federal Minister J Salik, Convener of World Minorities Alliance, in recognition of his outstanding public services in the CDA office.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

## Trade group demands end to traffic in Peshawar's Qissa Khawani market



PNP

PESHAWAR: President of the Markezi Tanzeem e Tajran Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Malik Mehr Elahi, President of Peshawar Traders Chamber Gulam Bilal Javid, and other members stated that last night heavy machinery provided by the district administration was used for decorating and embellishing. The closure of traffic from both sides of the Qissa Khawani market for this purpose was strongly opposed. Traders from related markets and other associated areas were filled with waves of sorrow and frustration, feeling that the administration has become their enemy during these blessed days. If traffic is halted for work, it will not only affect the Qissa Khawani market but also the livelihoods of traders in related markets. The district administration must ensure the protection of traders in the Qissa Khawani market and other related areas so that this decoration and embellishment project can be completed peacefully and in stages. Mayor Peshawar Haji Zubair Ali had assured that traders' businesses would not suffer, and this work would be completed through mutual agreement. Construction work will take place after Eid ul-Fitr. However, the district administration has disregarded even Mayor Peshawar Haji Zubair Ali's assurance. We appeal to the higher authorities of our provincial government and district administration to complete this project while addressing the concerns of traders regarding decoration and embellishment. Otherwise, traders will be forced to protest to protect their rights, and the responsibility for all circumstances will lie with the district administration.

## Chaudhry Shafay attends launching ceremony of new solar product



PPA

LAHORE: Provincial Minister of Industry and Commerce Chaudhry Shafay Hussain visited Raya Golf and Country Club Defense. He attended launching ceremony of new solar product of the Chinese company Huawei as a special guest. The provincial minister along with the officials of the Chinese company. Launched a new solar product together.

Provincial Minister of Industry and Commerce Chaudhry Shafay Hussain said that Pakistan is facing the challenge of environmental pollution. There are strong friendly and economic relations between Pakistan and China. Both countries can move forward together in green energy. Chaudhry Shafay Hussain said, our future is related to the promotion of solar technology and discussions are ongoing with foreign companies regarding the production of solar panels in Punjab. The Chinese company Huawei also cooperates in the solar sector. Reduction in the heavy duty imposed on the import of motors of solar panels, talks are ongoing with the federal government for this. The provincial minister said that there are vast opportunities for investment in 18 special economic zones of Punjab. There is a 10-year income tax exemption on investment in these special economic zones while, the import of one time duty-free machinery is also allowed. The provincial Minister of Industry and Commerce said that Chinese companies should take advantage of the investment opportunities in these industrial zones. Punjab government is focusing on the promotion of solar technology in the province. Industry, government institutions, Homes and agricultural tubewells are being shifted to solar technology. The Chinese company Huawei should set up a solar panel manufacturing plant in Punjab, the government will provide all possible facilities. The provincial minister congratulated the Chinese company on the launch of a new solar product. The authorities of Chinese company and investors attended the ceremony.



## Students get first-hand experience of high-rise buildings in CBD Punjab

City Desk

LAHORE: Punjab Central Business District Development Authority (PCBDDA) also known as Central Business District Punjab (CBD Punjab), invited students of Beaconhouse National University's Razia Hasan School of Architecture and Design for a study tour of CBD Punjab. The tour aimed to enlighten students about the complexities and features of high-rise building design.

Director of Architecture and Planning CBD Punjab, Sameer Aftab Sial, briefed the students about high-rise design and building construction methodologies. He emphasized the importance of such initiatives stating that students are the architects of the future. He highlighted CBD Punjab's commitment to providing opportunities for professional development to students, with



this tour being a part of that endeavour.

While addressing the students Director Architecture and Planning CBD Punjab, Sameer Aftab Sial said, "The design of high-rise buildings encompasses various complexities and features. It is essential to familiarize students with

these aspects through their degree programs so that they can shine in the future with modern knowledge."

During the tour students also visited CBD Punjab's site and showed keen interest in the various ongoing projects of CBD Punjab. The tour served as a platform for students to

explore and express their enthusiasm for the diverse projects undertaken by CBD Punjab.

CBD Punjab continues its tradition of fostering students' professional growth, with this tour being a testament to its commitment to providing practical exposure alongside academic learning.

## PTC challenges misleading tax loss figures, seeks fair market competition

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tobacco Company (PTC) is concerned about the recent misinformation spread across the media regarding loss to the national exchequer due to non-payment of taxes by legitimate tobacco companies. They have expressed their concerns about the figures presented by an Islamabad-based think tank, showcasing a substantial revenue loss inflicted upon the national exchequer by legitimate tobacco companies, purportedly amounting to Rs 567 billion. It is important to note that this figure is incorrect, misleading and detached from ground realities. The only loss incurred to the Government by the tobacco industry is because of tax evasion of illicit manufacturers as the legitimate industry pays all applicable duties and taxes. The misrepresented number is for accumulated loss over a decade, which has unfortunately been overlooked in much of the discourse following the report's release. This oversight has led to misconcep-

tions and potentially skewed perceptions of the legitimate tobacco industry's economic impact.

The nuanced context of these findings is crucial for informed public dialogue, as the portrayal of the data, without explicitly clarifying its decade-long spread, might contribute to a narrative that seems to align with the interests of certain entities advocating for the illicit tobacco sector. Representatives from PTC questioned the legitimacy of such a report, which downplayed the impact of the illicit tobacco trade in the country. They shared that the introduction of a 3-tier system in 2017 was the need of the hour for the government due to the fall in revenue collection, and this regime not only allowed revenues to increase and illicit market share to decrease but also paved the way for a level playing field and sustainability for the industry. However, the illicit tobacco sector operates outside the stringent regulatory framework and yet, paradoxically, seems to evade the scrutiny and regulatory actions that are promptly

applied to their legitimate law-abiding counterparts.

There is a growing concern within the relevant segment that this portrayal and the ensuing public narrative might be steering the government towards policy decisions that inadvertently favour these non-compliant entities. The report also cited the Senate Special Committee on the causes of the Decline in Tax Collection of the Tobacco Sector, to highlight the issue of lower tax collection. Ironically, in the same minutes, the FBR claimed the illicit market share to be more than 36 percent, which caused tax revenues to fall.

The representatives urged the law enforcement agencies to initiate a nationwide crackdown against illicit cigarette trade, causing the Government of Pakistan losses of Rs 300 billion annually rather than what the impact the report has claimed spread out over a decade and raised questions regarding the intentions behind publishing such a report.

Contrary to the report's impression

and subsequent coverage, the legitimate tobacco industry has significantly contributed to the national exchequer, with substantial payments in the fiscal year, Rs 148 billion in 2021-22 and Rs 173 billion in 2022-23. This financial input underscores the legitimate industry's commitment to fulfilling its budgetary responsibilities and adhering to the agreed-upon tax structures, which were meticulously designed to ensure fair and substantial revenue generation for the country's development.

They said that it is paramount to acknowledge that the legitimate tobacco sector has consistently complied with every regulation imposed by the government, including implementing the Track and Trace System (TTS). This compliance starkly contrasts with the illicit sector, which continues to defy these laws with apparent impunity. This discrepancy in regulatory enforcement undermines the rule of law and places the legitimate industry at a competitive disadvantage, challenging the principles of fair trade and market competition.

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# ‘The Indomitable Spirit of China-Pakistan Cooperation’

The tragic incident that deeply shook the core of the Pakistani nation was the malicious, deceitful, and heartless attack on our Chinese brothers. These selfless individuals left behind their homeland, families, and loved ones to contribute to the construction of vital energy, transport, and communication infrastructure in remote areas of our country, far from the bustling urban centers. They dedicated their days, weeks, and years to this noble cause, with the sole aim of providing a conducive environment for all Pakistanis to enjoy reliable electricity, safe transportation on well-constructed roads, highways, and motorways, and access to efficient public transport systems such as Metro bus services, green buses, and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). The attack on them not only robbed us of invaluable lives but also struck at the heart of our collective aspirations for progress and development.

The enemy, driven by ulterior motives, callously disregarded the longstanding tradition of Pakistani hospitality, which dictates that even the fiercest adversary's guests should be protected and cared for. The ruthless and heartless terrorists, with their stone-eyed resolve, cowardly attacked innocent, unarmed Chinese civilians around 1 p.m. on March 26 near Bisham, resulting in the martyrdom of five Chinese nationals and one Pakistani working on the Dasu Hydro-

power Project in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. Their sole aim was to strike at the heart of our nation by targeting our Chinese friends, who selflessly offer their assistance to our country without seeking anything in return.

The profound bonds of friendship and brotherhood with our Chinese allies are treasured and esteemed deeply. Their unwavering support and genuine gestures of affection resonate profoundly within our hearts. The enemy, recognizing the significance of our relationship, maliciously targeted our Chinese friends, knowing that such an act would evoke intense pain, sorrow, and outrage across every corner of Pakistan. This collective anguish transcends geographical, social, and governmental boundaries, profoundly impacting every Pakistani who holds our Chinese brothers and sisters close to their hearts.

In times of adversity, our Chinese counterparts have consistently extended their helping hands to us, demonstrating unwavering support and solidarity without any expectation of reciprocity. They epitomize true family members, standing by us through thick and thin. The cowardly attack not only inflicted physical harm but also inflicted a deep wound on the collective spirit of our

nation, serving as a stark reminder of the invaluable bond we share with our Chinese brethren.

What the enemy failed to comprehend is that the bond between the Chinese and Pakistanis transcends mere material considerations—it is a connection of blood and soul. The people of both nations are intertwined as one body and one soul. When any part of this body is harmed, the entire entity feels the pain. However, rather than driving a wedge between us, cowardly attacks only serve to strengthen our resolve and deepen our unity.

In the face of such heinous and reprehensible acts, the consequences could have been dire if they had targeted nationals of any other country. There may have been swift actions such as the withdrawal of nationals from Pakistan, issuance of travel advisories, halting of ongoing projects, and advisories to cease business activities with Pakistan. Threatening statements may have been issued, placing blame on Pakistan and its security forces for failing to protect their citizens and workers within the country.

The statement issued by the articulate spokesperson of the Chinese Foreign Ministry stood in stark contrast to what might have been expected from any other nation under similar circumstances.

Strongly condemning the terrorist attack, the spokesperson reaffirmed the unwavering bond between China and Pakistan, describing them as “all-weather strategic cooperative partners” and “iron-clad brothers.” Furthermore, the spokesperson emphasized the critical role of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in Pakistan's socio economic development, asserting that no attempt to undermine this cooperation would succeed.

Expressing China's staunch opposition to terrorism in all its forms, the spokesperson reiterated firm support for Pakistan in its fight against terrorism. Promising even stronger commitment to safeguard the safety and security of Chinese personnel, projects, and institutions in Pakistan, the statement delivered a resounding message to the terrorists and their backers.

This robust and unequivocal response undoubtedly dealt a significant blow to the terrorists and their network of masterminds, handlers, financiers, abettors, and facilitators. It must have left them feeling frustrated and dejected, as their sinister aims and objectives were thwarted. The statement served as a powerful deterrent, rendering their strategy, planning, financial resources, and human assets futile in the face of unwavering solidarity between China and Pakistan.

*To be continued*



Analysis

Qamar Bashir

## Clean energy expo China concluded

Three-day Clean Energy Expo China 2024 (CEEC2024) concluded here in Beijing with an exhibition area of about 50,000 square meters, new displays, new technologies, new achievements and new thoughts demonstrated a brand-new power system ecological chain and new quality productive forces covering wind, solar, hydrogen, storage to more than 42,000 audiences. Not only a total of 628 exhibiting companies, CEEC2024 also invited more than 500 home and abroad experts, entrepreneurs, envoys to China, to discuss the current development trends of clean energy through dozens of meetings and parallel forums.

Hydrogen energy, known as the ultimate energy of the 21st century, has recently been included in the Chinese government work report 2024 for the first time as an indispensable field of new quality productive forces, attracting widespread attention. At the Hydrogen Energy & Fuel Cells Expo China 2024 held simultaneously, the China Hydrogen Alliance made a detailed analysis and expectations on the current situation and development prospects of the hydrogen industry, China Economic Net (CEN) reported. According to statistics from the China Hydrogen Alliance Research Institute, China's hydrogen production in 2022 has reached approximately 35.33 million tons, accounting for more than one-third of the world's total, firmly ranking as the largest hydrogen producer. By 2050, if net-zero emissions are to be achieved, global demand for hydrogen will be about 660 million tons, of which China will account for approximately 195 million tons, namely, nearly 30%. The UK and China have the same goals on climate issues. The UK hopes to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050, as well as China hopes to achieve carbon neutrality by 2060. To my way of thinking, hydrogen energy would play an increasingly important role in fulfilling such commitments. At present, the UK mainly focuses on the demand for hydrogen energy in transportation, some industries that are difficult to reduce emissions (such as cement, steel, and the like) and sustainable aviation fuel, â€ Lewis Neal, British Trade Envoy to China, noted in a speech at the Inaugural UK-China Energy Dialogue Hydrogen Side Forum co-organized by China Hydrogen Alliance and the British Embassy in China. “I am deeply impressed by the development speed of hydrogen energy made by the Chinese government and companies, including the increase in electrolytic hydrogen production capacity,” the Envoy indicated. “We look forward to British and Chinese companies continuing to deepen cooperation in this field”. Started in 2009, CEEC, as China's first multi-category professional expo focusing on the clean energy industry chain, covering a completely new power system such as power generation, storage, transmission, distribution, transformation, and consumption.



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

## The Role of Journalism in National Defense - III

By empowering audiences, cultivating media literacy, and upholding journalistic standards, societies can mitigate the impact of negative journalism and cultivate a more informed and resilient public sphere.

Promoting media literacy among audiences stands out as one of the most effective approaches to counter negative journalism. By arming individuals with critical thinking skills to evaluate information discerningly, media literacy enables them to distinguish between credible journalism and sensationalism. Initiatives like educational programs, workshops, and online resources can aid people in recognizing biases, identifying misinformation, and verifying sources, thereby reducing susceptibility to negative narratives and manipulation.

In Pakistan, a country grappling with diverse security challenges, the role of journalists extends beyond mere reporting to encompass a vital contribution to national defense. With a robust and independent press, Pakistani journalists serve as guardians of democracy, watchdogs of government, and conduits of information to the public. Within the realm of national defense, their role becomes even more critical, as they foster transparency, accountability, and public awareness regarding security and defense matters. Let's delve into how Pakistani journalists can effectively contribute to national defense in various capacities. Through meticulous investigation and scrutiny, journalists uncover instances of corruption, mismanagement, and human rights abuses. By bringing such malpractices to light, journalists uphold transparency and integrity within the defense establishment, bolstering public trust and confidence in security agencies. During crises, Pakistani journalists contribute to national defense by fostering unity, resilience, and solidarity among citizens. Through responsible reporting and ethical journalism, they disseminate accurate information, dispel rumors, and discourage panic or fear-mongering. By highlighting tales of bravery, sacrifice, and community resilience, journalists inspire patriotism and fortitude, rallying the

nation behind common objectives of security and stability. Furthermore, journalists in Pakistan can advocate for peace, dialogue, and diplomacy as crucial components of security policy. Through nuanced analysis and informed commentary, they provide insights on diplomatic endeavors, peace negotiations, and conflict resolution efforts. By promoting a culture of dialogue and understanding, journalists facilitate peaceful coexistence with neighboring countries and mitigate the risk of armed conflict escalation. Additionally, journalists play a crucial role in enhancing public comprehension of defense issues, policies, and strategies through comprehensive reporting and analysis. They simplify complex security concepts, demystify defense terminology, and provide context, background, and expert insights, enabling citizens to engage constructively in debates on defense spending, military capabilities, and national security priorities.

In every nation, the armed forces serve as guardians of sovereignty, security, and stability. As frontline defenders against external threats and protectors of national interests, a country's army plays a pivotal role in safeguarding the safety and well-being of its citizens. However, the efficacy and readiness of any military depend not only on the commitment and dedication of its personnel but also on the support and endorsement of the civilian population. Understanding the necessity of supporting one's country's army is crucial for fostering a robust national defense and ensuring the resilience of the nation in the face of challenges.

The primary mission of the Pak Army is to defend sovereignty and independence against external aggression or intrusion. By maintaining a strong and capable military, nations deter potential adversaries and safeguard their territorial integrity. Supporting one's country's army is not merely an act of patriotism but also a pragmatic necessity to assert sovereignty and protect interests in an increasingly complex and competitive world. The security and safety of citizens are paramount concerns for any government, with the army playing a central role in ensuring national security. From coun-

terterrorism operations to border patrols and disaster response, the military provides vital support in maintaining law and order and protecting the population from both foreign and domestic threats. Supporting one's country's army enables citizens to contribute to their own safety and the security of future generations. A professional and disciplined military is essential for upholding democratic values and freedoms within a society. In democratic nations, the military serves the government and the people, respecting civilian authority and adhering to the rule of law. By supporting one's country's army, citizens reinforce the principle of civilian control over the military, ensuring accountability to the elected government and the constitution. Beyond national defense, many countries deploy their armed forces in peacekeeping missions and humanitarian operations to promote regional and global stability and security. Supporting the Pak army in these endeavors demonstrates solidarity with those affected by conflict and crisis, affirming the nation's commitment to international peace and security. By contributing to peacekeeping efforts, citizens help prevent conflicts from escalating and foster a more stable and prosperous world. Supporting the Pak Army also entails investing in defense capabilities and modernizing military infrastructure to address evolving security challenges. Adequate funding, training, and equipment are essential for ensuring preparedness and effectiveness in fulfilling the military's mission. By advocating for adequate resources and policies that prioritize national defense, citizens contribute to the long-term strength and resilience of both the military and the nation as a whole.

Readers, in Pakistan, where certain elements actively propagate propaganda against our army, it is imperative for journalists and writers to counter these negative actions. National security stands as the utmost priority for the country, and the Pak Army stands at the forefront to ensure our national defense. It is crucial for journalists and writers to spotlight the services and sacrifices of the Pak Army for the nation, presenting an accurate portrayal to the people of Pakistan. Recognizing the remarkable contributions of the Pak Army and demonstrating solidarity with our armed forces are essential in the current circumstances.

## Mohabat Khan Mosque attracts visitors, archeology lovers - I

Fakhar-e-Alam

Peshawar has been remained a strategic city where invaders constructed worship places to freely perform religious obligations and use its peoples' strong bonds with religion in their favor to prolong their rule.

Being a gateway to the subcontinent and central Asian states (CARs), Peshawar was always a strategic city where kings, warriors and invaders constructed mosques, churches and gurdwaras at prime locations to worship in accordance with their faith besides molding public opinions after conquering it before extending their influence to the subcontinent.

The Muslims commanders and kings of different dynasties passed through the historic Khyber Pass from Central Asian Republics (CARs), Afghanistan stayed first at Peshawar where they constructed scores of mosques and worship places for Muslims and minorities to promote interfaith harmony and bring people of all faith closer.

“From recent GorKathri excavations, it was made clear that Islam had first spread in the border areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Afghanistan after Sabuktigin, a Turkic slave commander laid the foundation of the Ghaznavi dynasty at Ghazi in 977 AD in Central Afghanistan,” said Bakhtzada Muhammad, senior research officer of the archeology department KP while talking to APP.

Following an untimely death of Sabuktigin and a revolt against his son Ismail, Mehmud Ghaznavi had gained control over the Ghaznavi kingdom and extended his influence to Punjab after defeating Raja of Jaypala of the Kabul Shahis at the battle of Peshawar in 1001 AD,” he said.

Resultantly, Islam had gained roots in Bannu, Waziristan, Khyber and other border areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where construction of large and small mosques was started. “An inscription in Arabic engraved on a black marble

was found in 1984 on the slopes of the hill below the castle of Raja Gira, which authenticated the foundation of the historic Odigram Mosque in Swat (also known as Sultan Mahmood Ghaznavi mosque constructed in 1048 CE on the order of General Amir Nustagin of Ghaznavi, which attracted worshippers in droves in Ramazan.

The construction of small and big mosques including the historic Yakagund mosque in Mohmand district, Sheikh Habib mosque in 1650 at Bala Manari and Gunj gate mosque alais Khawja Maroof mosque some 600 years ago established at Peshawar by the Muslim rulers of various dynasties, resultantly Islam got flourished in these regions.

After conquering Peshawar, the Mughal rulers started construction work of the iconic Mohabat Khan mosque in 1660-70 by the then Peshawar's Governor Nawab Mohabat Khan. An amalgamation of Islamic and Mughal architecture, Mohabat Khan's small portion was constructed by Mughal emperor, Shah Jehan and a major portion by King Aurangzeb Alamgir with beautiful white marble. The mosque was finally completed in 1680 and later renovated in 1898 after the vandalism of the Sikh rulers,” he said.

The British took over Peshawar's control in 1949; the mosque was renovated and handed over to the people of Peshawar for worship. After the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, the refugee tribal elders congregated in the mosque to forge unity amongst Afghans against the Soviets invaders.

The fortune turned positive when the KP government declared Mohabat Khan mosque a historical site in 1982 and took its administrative control to the Auqaf Department. Built on a high mound at Andar Sher bazaar near historic Chowk-yadgar at Peshawar City, the worshippers enter its 30,155 square feet vast open courtyard with capacity to accommodate about 30,000 worshippers at a time besides a centrally located ablution pool and a single row of rooms lining the exterior walls with two tall minarets, which further magnified its look.

*To be continued*

# President for promoting barter trade, economic ties with Iran

Ambassador of Palestine also called on President

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari has underlined the need for promoting barter trade and economic relations with Iran for the mutual benefit of the two brotherly countries. He said that both countries had great scope for expanding bilateral economic cooperation in diverse fields. The President expressed these views while talking to Iran's Ambassador to Pakistan, Dr Reza Amiri Moghadam, who called on him, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, today.

Talking to the Ambassador, the President expressed his commitment to further strengthen bilateral relations between the two brotherly countries. He called for working together to overcome the common challenges faced by both sides.

The Iranian Ambassador congratulated the President on assuming the office. He said that both Iran and Pakistan enjoyed historical, religious and cultural ties, which were becoming stronger with time. He emphasised the need for increasing the bilateral trade



volume, banking cooperation, and air and business linkages between the two countries. The Ambassador further stated that Pakistan could benefit from the Chahbahar-Zahedan railroad for trade with Central Asia, Europe and Turkiye. He expressed the hope that Pak-Iran relations would receive fresh impetus under the leadership of President Asif Ali Zardari. He also conveyed warm regards from the Iranian President, Dr Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi, for the President of Pakistan.

Later, the Ambassador of Palestine to Pakistan, Mr Ahmed Jawad Rabei, also called on President Asif Ali Zardari and congratulated him on assuming the office. The Ambassador highlighted the atrocities and the reign of terror unleashed by the Israeli forces against innocent Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

Talking to the Palestinian Ambassador, the President said that it was very painful to see the tragic sufferings of Palestinians at the hands of Israel-

li forces. He stated that Pakistan had historic ties with Palestine, and would continue to stand by its Palestinian brothers and raise its voice at all fora. He lauded the bravery and resilience of the Palestinian people, who had been waging a long struggle against Israeli occupation.

The President urged the international community to make efforts for the free flow of humanitarian assistance to Gaza by lifting all the barriers and ensuring the protection of Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip. He said that Pakistan would send additional relief goods, including food and medicine, to the Palestinian people.

The Ambassador appreciated Pakistan's support in the field of education as over 50,000 Palestinians had graduated in various disciplines from educational institutions in Pakistan. He also conveyed the warm regards of the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and thanked the Government and the people of Pakistan for their consistent support and solidarity with the Palestinian people.

## Chinese premier pledges efforts to promote equipment upgrades, trade-ins of consumer goods



Xinhua

BEIJING: Chinese Premier Li Qiang on Thursday pledged to take concrete action to promote large-scale equipment upgrades and trade-ins of consumer goods, in an effort to facilitate economic transformation and improve people's livelihoods.

Speaking during a State Council video conference, Li, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, highlighted the strategic significance of the upgrade campaign and its benefits for the economy, businesses and individuals.

He called on all regions and government departments to attach great importance to the campaign and make solid efforts to carry it out.

Li said the campaign should be market-oriented and government-guided, and it should include four major areas: equipment renewals, trade-ins of consumer goods, the recycling of used goods, and the leveling-up of standards.

China will prioritize equipment upgrades in promising industries with powerful driving forces, accelerate the elimination of dated or inefficient equipment with high levels of energy consumption, high emissions or hidden safety risks, and focus on supporting the trade-ins of costly durable consumer goods that are urgently needed and can drive the economy, Li said.

Work will be done to accelerate the development of recycling systems and encourage the concentrated, large-scale development of enterprises engaged in the processing and utilization of renewable resources, Li said.

He also called for industrial standards to be lifted gradually so that these upgrades become normal practices.

The meeting was chaired by Vice Premier Ding Xuexiang, who is also a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee. He Lifeng and Zhang Guoqing, both vice premiers, and State Councilor Wu Zhenglong also attended the meeting.

## Azerbaijan to boost cooperation in IT and Telecom sector



PPA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan Mr. Khazar Farhadov called on Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication Ms. Shaza Fatima in her office on Friday.

Matters of mutual interest and related to IT and Telecommunication sector were discussed in the meeting.

The Azerbaijan Ambassador congratulated Minister of State for IT Shaza Fatima for assuming her office.

The two-side agreed to enhance cooperation in IT and telecom sector.

Shaza Fatima said that Pakistan and Azerbaijan have brotherly relations, adding that Pakistan greatly values its ties with Azerbaijan. She said Pakistan wanted tangible ties between the two countries in the field of IT and Telecom sector.

Minister of State for IT Shaza Fatima said that Pakistan aspired to start youth exchange program with Azerbaijan. She noted that the exchange of startups between the two countries will give fillip to relations.

Shaza Fatima also emphasised upon starting the joint IT training program for the youth of two countries. She went on to say that the Pakistan has conducive atmosphere for foreign direct investment especially in IT and Telecom sector. She said there was great potential in IT and telecom sector of Pakistan, adding that we will fully cooperate with Azerbaijan in the field of IT and Telecom.

Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador of Azerbaijan said that Pakistan's IT and Telecom sector was progressing, adding that Azerbaijan wanted to further boost ties with Pakistan in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) field.

## CEO European Asian Studies

BRUSSELS: Pakistan's ambassador to Belgium Amna Baloch Friday had an insightful interaction with CEO of European Institute for Asian Studies Axel Goethals. They exchanged views on dynamics of EU-Asia relations. They agreed to explore pathways for future engagement.



## Boao forum for Asia 2024 concludes on successful note



Xinhua

BEIJING: The Boao Forum for Asia (BFA) annual conference 2024 concluded Friday in Boao, a coastal town in China's island province of Hainan, with a series of consensus reached.

"All parties are more aware of the challenges facing the world today," said Li Baodong, BFA secretary general, at the closing press conference, adding that all countries are encountering common challenges, including the sluggish global economic recovery and the persistence of regional conflicts. "Only by working together can we better handle the challenges."

Asia is leading a new era of sustainable development, and China is the pillar of sustainable development of the world economy in the post-COVID-19 era, he noted.

China is advancing high-quality development and further opening up, and the country is expected to remain the largest contributor to global economic growth, he said.

The consensus also underscores that innovation is the inexhaustible driving force for development, and countries around the world should accelerate actions on climate change.

The BFA annual conference this year took place from March 26 to 29, with the theme "Asia and the World: Common Challenges, Shared Responsibilities."

The conference drew about 2,000 delegates from over 60 countries and regions and more than 1,100 journalists from nearly 40 countries and regions.

## Korean Ambassador met Commissioner Faisalabad

Abdul Majid

FAISALABAD: Faisalabad Commissioner Faisalabad welcomed the Korean Ambassador and informed him about the division's administrative structure, historical importance and textile sector. He also provided details about the agriculture sector. He said that a Business Facilitation Center has been set up to provide the required NOCs under one roof to the business community, which is showing encourag-



ing results and the business community. Satisfied with this facility. It was agreed between the commissioner and the Korean ambassador

to further promote bilateral relations and to take advantage of numerous development opportunities in agriculture, information technol-

ogy, industry and trade and other sectors and to utilize each other's experiences. The Commissioner thanked the Korean Ambassador for visiting Faisalabad. The Korean Ambassador thanked Commissioner Faisalabad for his excellent hospitality and awareness of the affairs of the division. I am happy to visit Faisalabad. The people here are hospitable. I will give priority to visiting Faisalabad in the future. The Korean Ambassador also presented commemorative gifts to Commissioner Faisalabad.

# Islamabad needs Urban Climate Resilient infrastructure to sustain livable status: Experts

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Experts at a seminar on Friday underlined that amid growing population and climate-induced disaster risks it has become imperative for the federal capital to maintain a climate resilient infrastructure to sustain as a livable metropolis.

The seminar titled, 'Building Urban Climate Resilience in Islamabad,' was jointly organized by Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) and Climate Action Network South Asia (CANSAs) here. CANSAs representatives participated in the seminar online.

Stressing the need to establish some model municipalities having climate resilient infrastructure, SDPI Deputy Executive Director, Dr Shafiqat Munir, said that Pakistan needs to have a strong local government system to develop climate smart urban centers whereas devolution at the small-scale needs to be achieved as every

disaster hits local tier or bottom level of states, i.e. cities or municipalities.

Referring to the SDPI Report on the same title, he said: "in Nepal, a mayor from a small municipality has developed climate smart infrastructure in his municipality, but in Pakistan, financial constraints for local level authorities are the main impediments to achieve the goal of urban resilience."

He, however, pointed out that there a lack of strong local government system in the country, which needs to be made stronger, and democratic with maximum powers rest with the elected local leadership.

He indicated that the SDPI is also engaging with provincial governments to convince them to invest in peri-urban areas and local governments for the sake of climate resilience.

Aleena Kareem said transparency in public projects, better reporting and impact evaluation

mechanisms and public-private partnerships could support urban resilience initiatives. She suggested the authorities concerned to come up with net zero targets for Islamabad to contain its carbon emissions to avoid climate disasters.

Nakul from CANSAs said Pakistan has highest population growth and urbanization rates needs a proper mechanism and effort in this regard, he added. Since the cities in South Asia are at the receiving end due to the economic nature of development, robust efforts are required other than COP forums to meet its urban resilience goals, Nakul added.

Associate Research Fellow, SDPI, Zainab Naem delivered a brief presentation on the Report which said: around 4.3 billion people, i.e. 55% of world population, live in urban centers whereas the South Asia has accelerated growth trend with one of the highest urbanization trends in



Pakistan.

She highlighted that the nexus between climate change and urban growth is prevalent in major economic sectors in the entire South Asia. "Climate Change can exacerbate existing health risks in urban areas due to factors like air pollution and

extreme heat. However, South Asia would require \$215 billion annually by 2030 for flood protection due to recurring flood risks," she added.

"Annual mean temperature per decade increased by 0.32° Celsius in Pakistan with a significant increasing trend of annual

mean temperature between 1961-2022 following rapid population increase due to rural-to-urban migration," she noted.

The Report suggests some action points leading to institutional building, coordination and governance, policy interventions, planning frameworks like green

procurement, supply chains, pollution laws and liabilities on polluters and financing to create sustainable revenue streams for green and resilient urbanization.

Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA) Ahsiq Nawaz said the federal capital was established to cater to the needs of the federation, but it had become a business hub that spilled over the burden of population and services beyond its capacity.

The natural water courses of the federal capital got polluted after trash and waste dumping that created silt in the nullahs leading to urban flooding risk, whereas it was generating 600 tonnes per day solid waste without a proper landfill site, which was serious matter of concern, he added.

"EPA wants segregation at source and integrated resource management that will help in decomposing major waste on source to better manage the solid waste," he said.

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

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index	
Current	Prev. Close
67,005.10	67,142.12
Day's High	Day's Low
67,307.63	66,822.42
Index Value	Change
6,194,884,662	-137.02
Percentage	Time
-0.2%	29 Mar, 2024 5:00 pm

Europe: FTSE 100 Index	
Index Value	Change
7,952.62	+20.64
Percentage	Time
+0.26%	28 Mar, 4:35 pm GMT

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average	
Index Value	Change
39,807.37	+47.29
Percentage	Time
+0.12%	28 Mar, 5:20 pm GMT-4

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average	
Index Value	Change
40,369.44	+201.37
Percentage	Time
-0.50%	29 Mar, 3:15 pm GMT+9

Open Market Forex Rates		
Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	182.7	184.5
Bahrain Dinar	747.61	755.61
Canadian Dollar	204.25	206.45
China Yuan	38.74	39.14
Danish Krone	40.3	40.7
Euro	301.45	304.45
Hong Kong Dollar	35.55	35.9
Indian Rupee	3.33	3.44
Japanese Yen	1.86	1.94
Kuwaiti Dinar	910.14	919.14
Malaysian Ringgit	59.25	59.85
New Zealand \$	170.56	172.56
Norwegians Krone	26.19	26.49
Omani Riyal	721.86	729.86
Qatari Riyal	76.57	77.27
Saudi Riyal	73.65	74.4
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	75.4	76.15
UK Pound Sterling	353.5	357
US Dollar	278	280.75

# IT exports likely to be three and a half billion dollars: Mian Zahid Hussain

**Tariq Khattak**

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain said on Friday that IT exports can increase by one billion dollars as compared to the last fiscal. He said that the volume of IT exports last year was 2.6 billion dollars, which is likely to increase by one billion dollars this year, but it is nothing compared to the neighboring country whose exports stand at 320 billion

dollars. Mian Zahid Hussain said that our annual IT exports could jump to 25 billion dollars with efforts in the right direction. Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that the IT sector has a one percent share of Pakistan's GDP and provides employment to more than three hundred thousand people. This important sector has seen some improvement from October 2023; a fifteen percent increase has been recorded in the first eight months of this year. The business leader said that in addition to



private companies and freelancers, the stability of the rupee and facilities from the central bank has also played an important role in the development of the IT sector. Mian Zahid Hussain said that Pakistan's IT industry is taking off, but a comprehensive road map is needed in this regard. Pakistani companies and freelancers are facing banking problems for which the central bank has taken commendable steps but there is still a lot to be done. He observed that it will be difficult to fully exploit this important sector's potential without providing an enabling environment.

## Perfume

ISLAMABAD: A vendor is selling scents of different kinds at Aabpara in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Raja Farid

## Unilever Pakistan and Karachi Press Club collaborate for capacity building on Climate Journalism



LAHORE: Unilever Pakistan and Karachi Press Club held an interactive session to address the development needs for climate journalism in Pakistan. The event was attended by prominent journalists, aimed to delve into the nuances of climate change reporting and its critical importance in shaping public awareness and policy discourse. The session commenced with an overview of Unilever's sustainability initiatives, which not only aim to transform the livelihoods of those associated with the organization but also aspire to create a broader impact on society. Discussions revolved around the imperative to distinguish between climate change and its impacts, as well as the degradation of the environment. Afia Salam, Media Development Specialist & Climate Change expert, emphasized the significance

of bridging the private and public sectors to find mutually beneficial solutions. She remarked, "Bringing private and public sectors to a middle ground is essential to provide reporters and journalists with access to accurate and authentic field information and resources, crucial for effective climate change journalism." Shoab Ahmed, Secretary, Karachi Press Club, highlighted the strategic necessity of facilitating such conversations and elevating them to the forefront for actionable solutions. Fatima Arshad, Head of Sustainability, Unilever Pakistan, underscored the ongoing nature of climate change and the necessity for sustained efforts. She said that climate change is not a one-off event and needs an end-to-end disaster management strategy in the future so we can ensure there is resilience and preparedness.

## FPCCI forms high-profile think tank to help boost Pakistan's economic revival

**PPA**

KARACHI: Atif Ikram Sheikh, President FPCCI, has constituted a high-profile think tank of the apex body—comprising the nation's top economic minds, governance specialists, industrialists, entrepreneurs, investors and exporters. The body will be called FPCCI's Think Tank on Pakistan's Economic Revival & Growth (FPCCI-PERG); and, will be chaired by Dr. Gohar Ejaz, former caretaker federal minister for finance, revenue and investments. Atif Ikram Sheikh maintained that the entire business, industry and trade community of Pakistan is united for the economic revival of Pakistan; and, being the apex body, FPCCI has assembled an ensemble group of Pakistan's brightest minds.

The members of FPCCI-PERG will include: the veteran industrialist, Bashir Jan Mohammad; the capital markets czar, Arif Habib; serial entrepreneur, Mohammad Ali Tabba; former Presidents of FPCCI, Mian Muhammad Idrees & Ghazanfar Bilour; top

exporter, Dr. Nouman Idrees Butt; CEO TDAP, Zubair Motiwala; Chairman APTMA, Asif Inam and former president Lahore Chamber, Shahzad Ali Malik. The likes of Shahid Abdullah, Fawad Mukhtar, Maqsood Ismail, Farooq Naseem and Shahzad Asghar Ali will also be the part of FPCCI-PERG. In-depth analysis and informed discourse will be the core values of the think tank. The objectives of the think tank are conducting research on economic challenges & opportunities; formulating evidence-based policy recommendations for sustainable economic growth and facilitating dialogue among the quadrilateral alliance of policymakers, industry, academia & civil society. Atif Ikram Sheikh apprised that all major sectors and industrial regions of the country will be represented by their best of the best—and, FPCCI is all-willing to kickstart a result-oriented consultative process with the government on federal budget 2024-25 and charter of economy in the light of the recommendations of its think tank.

## TCL Experience Lounge: Where entertainment meets innovation in Pakistan

**PPA**

LAHORE: TCL, Pakistan's no. 1 LED TV brand, announces the launch of its first-ever Experience Lounge in Pakistan. This launch demonstrates TCL's dedication to introducing cutting-edge technology and immersive entertainment experiences to Pakistani consumers. TCL's Experience Lounge marks a significant milestone in the company's journey in Pakistan. The TCL Experience Lounge offers an entertainment destination where visitors can take part in top-quality visual experiences. With state-of-the-art audiovisual technology and TCL screens, the Cinema Experience gives the guests a full cinematic experience, while the Gaming Zone, equipped with the latest

gaming technology and TCL LED screens, provides an immersive gameplay environment. Complementing these experiences is the emphasis on Quality Sound, ensuring that every auditory detail is faithfully reproduced, enhancing the overall entertainment journey for consumers. "Our commitment to innovation and customer satisfaction drives us to create groundbreaking initiatives like the TCL Experience Lounge," stated Sunny Yang, General Manager of TCL Middle East and Africa. "This immersive destination encapsulates TCL's vision to provide unparalleled entertainment experiences to consumers in Pakistan."



## ICCI to make all out efforts to turn Islamabad into a clean and green city-Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari

**PPA**

ISLAMABAD: President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari has said that capital city is our own city and we are determined to turn it into a clean and green city and that business community is the biggest stakeholder of the city and it will utilise all available resources to make it fascinating and beautiful in real terms. He said this while signing a Memorandum of Understanding between the ICCI and the CDA on Friday. The President said that ICCI will take the responsibility of newly built washrooms of different markets for their operation, management, maintenance and development as per the hygienic standards. He added that the nominal fee charged for the use will be spent for the upgradation and maintenance of these washrooms. ICCI will also ensure

the placement of janitorial staff wearing proper uniforms at each facility. The President ICCI further said that the Chamber will also built water filtration plants on a self-help basis and continue to play its role for the upgradation of the city. On this occasion, the business community as well as residents hailed the ICCI initiative in the interest of the citizens. The MoU was signed by Mr. Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari on behalf of the ICCI and by Mr. Mashooq Ali Shaikh, Director Sanitation on behalf of the CDA. On this occasion, among others, Noman Khalid, Member IT, Shafiqullah Dilwar, Director General, Ms. Abeera Marwat, Director Sports and Culture, Zafar Bakhtawari Secretary General UBG, Ejaz Abbasi, former President, Ch. Khalid, former SVP and Ch. Zia, a former executive member, was also present.



## Zong 4G contributes to the digital transformation in Pakistan through OEM partnerships



**PPA**

ISLAMABAD: Zong 4G, Pakistan's telecommunication leader, proudly reaches a new pinnacle in propelling the nation's digital evolution. With the exhilarating introduction of OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer) partnerships especially for its esteemed corporate clientele, Zong 4G unleashes a wave of innovation aimed at enhancing revenue streams and elevating the customer journey.

In order to create ease for its corporate users, Zong 4G is offering the following services Network and Cyber Security: CMPak helps its customers to leverage the intelligence of wide-range security network, it includes firewalls (Virtual and physical), WAF, Cloud based security Solutions, IDS, IPS, Email security solutions, Secure VPN, Connectivity Solutions, Real time Antivirus, data leak Checkers. Major Partners include: Fortinet, Sangfor, Sophos, TrendMicro, Kaspersky.

IT Infrastructure: A diverse selection of products is available, encompassing routers, switches, WiFi devices, data center racks, industrial-grade UPS, on-premises cloud services, and smart screens, among other offerings. Major Partners include: Huawei, ZTE, Rujie, Ruckus, Fiberhome, Raisecom, Attom.

Automation and Surveillance: CMPak showcases a premier array of Automation and Surveillance solutions, achieved through collaborations with top international industry players. CMPak extends AMS, Surveillance solutions, Dash Cam solutions, and IP Phones to its customers, encompassing surveillance cameras, facial recognition solutions, ANPR solutions, and video security solutions. Major Partners include: Dahua, HIKVision, Grandstream.

# Performances by Hamza Qureshi and Umer Ejaz Illuminate Inter College Ramazan T20 Cup

Sports Desk

KARACHI: The Inter College Ramazan T-20 Cup witnessed two enthralling matches with City School and Happy Palace Green College emerging victorious in their respective encounters.

The highlights of the days play Hamza Qureshi 103 first Century of the Tournament and deadly bowling by Umer Ejaz 4/13.

The Tournament is being organized by Regional Cricket Association Karachi and Sponsored by Pakistan Cricket Board.

Scores in Brief:

The City School beat Government Pakistan Shipowners College by 47 runs at IBA Karachi University Ground. The City School 200/4 in 20 overs. Hamza Qureshi 103 15x4 2x6, Umer Usman 61 8x4 2x6. Muzammil Ahmed 2/46.



Government Pakistan Shipowners College 153/7 in 20 overs. Abdul Rafay ul Haq 47 4x4 3x6, Noor Zaman 31. Saif Sarfraz 2/27. After the finish of the Match the Chief Guest Afzal Qureshi Give the Player of the Match Cash award Rs.5000/= to Hamza Qureshi. Arif Waheed, Tariq Hafeez and Coach Saeed bin Nasir also present on the occasion.

In the 2nd Match Happy Palace Green College beat Government Dehli College by 43 runs at Eid Gah Ground Nazimabad. Happy Palace Green College scored 164/8 in allotted 20 overs. Arham Ashraf 42 4x4 2x6. Azhan Fareed 3/18.

Government Dehli College 121 all out in 17.2 overs. Umer Ejaz (sla) 4/18. After the end of the Match Umer Ejaz received the Player of the Match Cash award Rs.5000/= from the Chief Guest Former First Class Cricketer Zafar Ahmed.

# Leaders Real Madrid face Athletic Club in final run towards La Liga title

Sports Desk

LAHORE: La Liga leaders Real Madrid will host Athletic Bilbao on Sunday as the Spanish top flight ramps up for an exciting end to the season.

Madrid have a firm grip on the title race after shaking free of Catalan minnows Girona before the international break, but Ernesto Valverde's high-flying Athletic will be tricky opposition at the Santiago Bernabeu.

The Basque side, in the Copa del Rey final, are fighting to secure a top-four finish and a return to Champions League football next season. Athletic are fourth, a point clear of Diego Simeone's Atletico in fifth, who face Villarreal on Monday.

Madrid have a comfortable eight-point lead on defending La Liga champions Barcelona with nine matches remaining and if they can beat Athletic, they



will be confident of holding on to claim a third title in five seasons.

The Catalans have found form in recent weeks after coach Xavi Hernandez said he would walk away at the end of the season, and face Las Palmas at home on Saturday.

Barcelona are unbeaten in 10 matches and thumped Atletico 3-0 at the Metropolitan stadium in their last outing, showing Madrid they would not relinquish their crown without a fight.

"All the players are giving

their best and are at their best level," warned Xavi before the international break.

"Now we're at our best moment of the season, it's a moment to dream."

He added: "An eight-point advantage is a lot (but) we have a direct clash against them and we will try to do it."

Real Madrid are close to recovering defender Eder Militao from injury although he is unlikely to face Athletic.

Top goalscorer Jude Bellingham is set to return to the side after a two-match

suspension, although he and Fede Valverde returned from international duty with minor fitness concerns.

Despite Madrid's frequent injury problems this season, Ancelotti was positive about the team's chances of silverware this season.

"I am quite optimistic and we are better than ever," said the Italian, before Madrid beat Osasuna in their previous match.

"We have to be excited for the games to come, we have to be happy, satisfied and hopeful."

Seven points clear of Atletico, Girona should be able to hold on to a top-four spot, although their form has dipped badly with four defeats in their last six matches.

"Not reaching the Champions League would be a big blow," admitted coach Michel Sanchez.

Girona host Real Betis, seventh, on Sunday before visiting Atletico Madrid.

# Manchester's Old Trafford Stadium hosts Iftar dinner

Sports Desk

LAHORE: Zahid Noor is associated with the Pakistan's largest media network ARY News from Manchester United Kingdom as a News Correspondent. He also plays a vital role in reporting Sports News for A Sports.

MANCHESTER: Lancashire Cricket Foundation on Thursday hosted an inter-faith Iftar dinner event here at the iconic Old Trafford Cricket Ground.

The representative of King Charles, the members of the British parliament and British army officials attended the event. Notable social and political personalities from all faiths and communities, including the Lord Mayor of Manchester, the Leader of Manchester City Council, councillors, and Greater Manchester Police officers, joined together at the iftar to show solidarity with Muslims.

"It is a great event to be involved in where multiple communities come together in Manchester," said Mike Russell, the Chief Inspector of the Greater Manchester Police.

"I just like to thank you for inviting me this evening to this wonderful event. This was my first iftar and I thoroughly enjoyed it," said Lindsey M Forbes, the deputy commander of Army Headquarters North West.

The event attendees expressed that such events promote interfaith harmony and communal peace among citizens.



# Former New Zealand allrounder Corey Anderson to represent USA in Canada T20Is

A Sports

LAHORE: Former New Zealand all-rounder Corey Anderson has been selected in the squad of the United States of America (USA) on Friday for the home T20 series against Canada.

The 33-year-old all-rounder, who last played for New Zealand in 2018 before moving to the USA in 2020, is set to make his debut for his adopted country.

Corey Anderson became eligible to represent the USA in international cricket last year. He played 13 Tests, 49 ODIs



and 31 T20Is for New Zealand since making his debut in 2013, scoring over 2000 runs

and taking 90 wickets across formats.

He was also part of New

Zealand's squad in the ICC World Cup 2015, where they reached the final for the first time, but lost to co-hosts Australia.

The five-match T20I series between the USA and Canada will be played in Houston, Texas from Houston, Texas.

Monank Patel will continue to lead the USA, while Aaron Jones will serve as vice-captain of the team.

"With the ICC T20 World Cup looming, this series holds immense significance for our team," Monank said in a USA Cricket statement.

"We have some new players

coming into the squad, and these games will help us get the right combinations and prepare well for the World Cup."

USA squad for the T20I series against Canada

Monank Patel (c), Aaron Jones (vice-capt), Andries Gous, Corey Anderson, Gajanan Singh, Harmet Singh, Jessy Singh, Milind Kumar, Nisarg Patel, Nitish Kumar, Noshutsh Kenjige, Saurabh Netravalkar, Shadley Van Schalkwyk, Steven Taylor, Usman Rafiq

Reserves: Juanoy Drysdale, Saitaja Mulkamalla, Shayan Jahangir

# Kylian Mbappe set to measure up to Marseille for final time with PSG

Sports Desk

LAHORE: Kylian Mbappe is set to sample the fiercest rivalry in French football for the final time before his expected departure at the end of the season as Paris Saint-Germain make the trip to Marseille on Sunday.

There is no love lost between the two biggest clubs in France, even if Marseille have struggled to compete with PSG for honours since the Qatari takeover of the capital side over a decade ago.

The Parisians come into this game with a huge 12-point lead at the top of the table from nearest challengers Brest with just eight matches remaining, meaning Mbappe is surely certain to win a sixth title in seven seasons with the club.

Marseille, in contrast, are seventh, three points outside the European places despite a

recent revival under new coach Jean-Louis Gasset, a former PSG assistant boss.

Kylian Mbappe has already told PSG that he intends to leave at the end of the current campaign when his contract expires, with Real Madrid his expected next destination.

That means he is unlikely to sample the heated atmosphere of the 67,000-capacity Velodrome again any time soon after this Sunday.

This will be his second visit there this week after he turned out for France at the same venue in their 3-2 friendly win over Chile on Tuesday.

The 25-year-old's status as national team captain did not prevent him from being whistled by sections of the crowd in the Mediterranean city, who were unable to forget his connection to PSG for the evening.

"Honestly I would under-

stand if I were jeered," he had said before the France game.

"I am a PSG player. If I am whistled, that's life. I wouldn't take it personally."

"It shouldn't happen," complained France coach Didier Deschamps, himself a former Marseille captain. He admitted hearing the jeers for Mbappe was "disappointing".

Mbappe recaptured his best form for PSG just before the international break after a run of games in which he lost his status as an undisputed starter.

A hat-trick in a 6-2 win at Montpellier two weeks ago took him to 38 goals in 37 appearances for PSG this season.

Luis Enrique's side appears to be finding their best form at the right time and are undefeated in 24 matches since early November.

This game begins a vital few weeks in which they will also

host Rennes in the French Cup semi-finals and face Barcelona in the Champions League quarter-finals.

Meanwhile, Marseille lost their last two games after claiming five straight wins following Gasset's appointment.

They have a Europa League last-eight tie against Benfica on the horizon but are in the midst of an injury crisis, with full-back Jonathan Clauss among those sidelined after coming off playing for France.

The France forward has yet to justify the 90 million euro (\$97m) transfer fee paid by PSG to sign him from Eintracht Frankfurt at the start of the season.

He has managed nine goals in 31 appearances for his new club but has not been a first-choice starter in recent months and has struggled to convince when named in coach Luis Enri-



que's XI.

That did not prevent him from being called up to the latest France squad, though,

# No timescale for Andy Murray's return after ankle injury



Sports Desk

LAHORE: Andy Murray has pulled out of events in Monte Carlo and Munich next month with no timeline set for the three-time Grand Slam champion's return to court after tearing ankle ligaments at the Miami Open.

Murray said earlier this year he did not plan to "play much past this summer" after slipping down the world rankings due to fitness problems and a struggle to recapture his best form.

A two-time Wimbledon champion, Murray was preparing for a farewell appearance at the All England Club and hopes to take part in one more Olympic Games in Paris in July.

However, with just over three months until Wimbledon, Murray faces a race against time to be fit.

The Scot said he had suffered a full rupture of his anterior talofibular ligament and a near full-thickness rupture of his calcaneofibular ligament in a third-round defeat in Miami to Tomas Machac on Sunday.

"Following consultation with his team and medical experts, Andy Murray has taken the decision to miss the Rolex Monte Carlo Masters and BMW Open Munich," said a statement from Murray's management team on Friday.

"At this stage, it is still not clear how long Andy will be out of action, and he is continuing to review options with his medical team.

"Obviously this is very disappointing news for Andy and he has reiterated his desire to get back on court as soon as possible."

The two-time Olympic champion also has little time to qualify for the Paris Games.

Direct entry into the Olympic men's singles will be given to the top 56 players in the ATP rankings on June 10 with Murray currently 62 in the world.

# Scheffler one off lead of Moore, Furr at PGA Houston Open



Sports Desk

LAHORE: World number one Scottie Scheffler started limbering up for the Masters with a bogey-free five-under-par 65 that put him one off the first-round lead shared by Taylor Moore and Wilson Furr at the Houston Open on Thursday.

Moore shook off an opening bogey with an eagle and five birdies in his six-under-par 64 at Memorial Park Golf Course.

He was joined atop the board by 276th-ranked Furr, who played his last five holes in four-under with an eagle at the fifth and birdies at the eighth and ninth to close his round.

Scheffler, trying to become the first player since Dustin Johnson in 2017 to win three consecutive PGA Tour starts, had set the pace for much of the day as he shook off "a little rust" from his week off last week.

Scheffler missed the green at his first three holes but got up and down for par at each before rolling in a 12-foot birdie putt at the 13th. He added birdies at the 17th, second, third and fifth holes, and while he hit just 11 of 18 greens in regulation he needed just 25 putts. "I had a solid round," Scheffler said. "Bogey-free is always nice, especially around a golf course like this. It's nice to be able to keep the card clean."

It Scheffler's 28th consecutive round under par to start the year, the most on record since 1983 according to the PGA Tour.

Perhaps more importantly Scheffler, who needed treatment on his neck on his way to victory at the Players Championship, said he was feeling good in his final tune-up for the Masters.

"Neck's feeling better, body feels good," Scheffler said. "The off week was good for me to get some rest, get some rehab. I took a couple more days off than I typically would last week, so it was some good recovery time."

Scheffler's win at TPC Sawgrass followed a five-stroke triumph at Bay Hill — his first victory in nearly a year.

He's rounding into form with the first major of the year approaching in two weeks at Augusta National, where Scheffler won in 2022. Scheffler was tied for third with fellow Americans Davis Riley and Joe Highsmith. Riley had six birdies and an eagle to overcome a bogey and a double-bogey while Highsmith had six birdies and a bogey.

and he scored one goal and set

up another as Les Bleus beat Chile in midweek in Marseille.

Like Kylian Mbappe, he will

be keen to silence the Velodrome crowd on Sunday as he prepares to make his 100th appearance in France's top flight.

## Goodness

ISLAMABAD: H.E Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Salem Al Zaabi Ambassador of UAE visits 'Pakistan Sweet Home' orphanage on Friday.



Photo: Spokesman

## UAE Ambassador visits Pakistan Sweet Home Orphanage to mark Zayed Humanitarian Day

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: H. E. Hamad Obaid Al Zaabi, the UAE Ambassador in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, in conjunction with Zayed Humanitarian Day, visits Pakistan Sweet Home Orphanage and holds a charitable event to support and provide food and medical care for the orphanage in the holy month of Ramadan, in partnership with charitable and human-

itarian organizations of UAE.

H. E. Hamad Obaid Al Zaabi, UAE Ambassador in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan: Zayed Humanitarian Day is a day of embodiment of the noble humanitarian principles established by the founding father, Sheikh Zayed, "may Allah have mercy on him," the values of giving, altruism, and doing good.. It is a day in which we remember Zayed's humanitarian legacy in Pakistan.

## HC Malaysia denotes essential educational materials to Islamabad Model College

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The High Commission of Malaysia in Pakistan under the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme (MTCP), donated essential educational materials to Islamabad Model College for Girls, located in Quaid-E-Azam University Colony, Islamabad. The donation included 60 chairs and 10 tables for preschool children, 30 stationery-filled goodie bags, and a fresh coat of paint for the classrooms, aims to enhance the learning environment for the students and support the institution's educational goals, said a news release.

Ambassador Mohammad Azhar Mazlan, the High Commissioner of Malaysia to Pakistan, has handed over the donated items at the school premises. The event witnessed the presence of former participants of Pakistan's MTCP program alongside dedicated staff members of the High Commission. Addressing the event, Ambassador Azhar Mazlan underscored Malaysia's steadfast commitment to fostering educational advancement in



Pakistan. He expressed his delight in supporting education and empowering young minds through this donation. He emphasised the importance of education in shaping the future of communities and countries, highlighting Malaysia's commitment to promoting education globally. The Headmistress of Islamabad Model College for Girls expressed her gratitude for the donation, noting that it will significantly improve the learning experience of the students. She praised the longstanding relations between Malaysia and Pakistan and thanked the High Commission for their continuous support. The donation ceremony served as a symbol of the strong ties between Malaysia and Pakistan, and the shared commitment to education and development.

# No political, bureaucratic interference be allowed in anti-smuggling move: PM

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Friday said the government will not allow any political or bureaucratic interference in its move to curb smuggling, corruption, power theft and tax evasion in the country. "No political and bureaucratic influence will be allowed to interfere in this major surgery which we have to undertake collectively for the good of Pakistan and its 250 million people," the prime minister said while chairing a meeting on anti-smuggling.

He said it was very important to understand the real challenges of the country and then immediately fix them to

revive and stabilize the economy. For this, he said all stakeholders including the provinces, institutions, and armed forces will have to collaborate with the federal government to tackle one of the most important challenge of revival of economy. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said illegal trade and smuggling were the biggest challenges that had badly dented the country's economy. He recalled that in 2022, the coalition government allowed export of 250,000 tons of sugar, but it had to withdraw its decision "because we were told that the surplus target was not up to that level". However, he said the same amount of sugar was later exported to Afghanistan.



Similarly, the prime minister pointed out that the country had to face loss of around Rs 400 to 500 billion annually in term of power theft, whereas leakages, transmission losses and line losses of electricity were other than that. As regards tax revenues, he said the government's target this year was Rs 9 trillion. But it

has the potential of collecting Rs 4 trillion extra revenues by streamlining the tax system and by curbing corruption and tax evasion. He said a tax amount of Rs 2.7 trillion was still under litigation either in tribunals or in appellate courts. The government, he said would try its best to recover this amount. Appreciating the efforts of Chief of Army Staff in curbing smuggling and power theft, the prime minister said during the nine months of interim government, an amount of Rs 58 billion was saved in power sector. Similarly, a significant improvement was witnessed in smuggling in the country due to the commitment, will to do, and cooperation of all province-

and the personal commitment and interest of the Chief of Army Staff, the prime minister added. Besides taking reforms in certain sectors, he said the government was also committed to promote industry and agriculture sector in the country. He informed that the government had chalked out a plan to fully digitize the system of Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to boost the tax revenues in the country. He said the well reputed and honest officers will be encouraged while the corrupt element will be discouraged. As regards law and order situation, the prime minister said the government was determined to foil the evil designs of the enemy.

## Uzbekistan's Ambassador and Pakistan's Commerce Minister Forge Path for Enhanced Economic Relations

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Uzbekistan's Ambassador to Pakistan, Aybek Arif Usmanov, met with Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan, aiming to elevate economic relations between the two nations.

Usmanov praised Minister Jam's experience in politics and expressed confidence in his ability to enhance bilateral trade.

Stressing the longstanding friendly ties between



Pakistan and Uzbekistan, Usmanov emphasized the

various sectors through B2B and G2G agreements.

Uzbekistan's foreign minister and deputy trade secretary have plan to visit Pakistan soon for B2B and G2G discussions aimed at boosting trade, he added.

Highlighting the potential in sectors like agriculture, pharmaceuticals, building materials, textiles, and leather, Usmanov underscored the importance of tapping into these opportunities.

Minister Khan echoed the sentiment, acknowledged

the untapped potential between the two countries and emphasizing the need for improved connectivity and new trade routes to enhance trade volume.

Both dignitaries pledged for close coordination to facilitate the business community from both sides.

This commitment aligns with their shared goal of fostering stronger economic ties and creating mutually beneficial opportunities for trade and investment.

## Aseefa Bhutto elected unopposed as MNA from Sindh's Shaheed Benazirabad

Bureau Report

NAWABSHAH: Aseefa Bhutto Zardari was elected unopposed as a member of the National Assembly from NA-207 Shaheed Benazirabad, formerly Nawabshah, in Sindh on Friday.

"Grateful and honoured to have been elected unopposed as MNA NA-207 Shaheed Benazirabad," she said in a post on X, erstwhile Twitter. "I pledge to serve all my constituents to the best of my abilities, with dedication and irrespective of political affiliation."

Aseefa, 31, is the youngest of Zardari's three children with former prime minister Benazir Bhutto. Others are

Bakhtawar and Bilawal.

Aseefa had filed her nomination papers to contest the by-election on March 17 and her candidature was subsequently approved by the returning officer after the scrutinisation process on Thursday.

The NA-207 seat was vacated by her father, Asif Ali Zardari, after he was elected as the president. The notification said that three candidates, including Abdul Rasool Brohi, Amanullah and Mairaj Ahmed, withdrew their names from the contest for the by-poll.



## Israeli PM Netanyahu refuses to accept int'l demands to end the war

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu continues to deliberately thwart all decisions, orders, demands and international consensus on the need to protect civilians and secure their basic humanitarian needs in accordance with the Security Council resolution and the orders of the International Court of Justice. He continues to place obstacles to prove the international community's inability and inability to enforce international law and the agreements regulating the conditions of civilians. In light of the war being implemented, it confronts the foundations and concepts of the international position calling for a ceasefire and ensuring the protection of civilians, especially in Rafah,

and the introduction of aid in a sustainable manner by dismantling those concepts and fabricating misleading narratives to thwart each of them individually so that they do not constitute a useful sentence, and the slogan "Victory" is used. Absolute) and the release of the hostages using military force as an option to object to valid international demands, ruling out any political language whether to achieve his alleged goals or to agree on post-war arrangements with the international community and the legitimate leadership of the Palestinian people, which means that Netanyahu is not keen on achieving any of those goals and demands. All international organizations aim to prolong the war and ensure that his ruling coalition remains in

power, and to complete the destruction of the entire Gaza Strip and empty it of its population in all internationally prohibited forms, including targeting civilians and displacing them by force.

The Ministry believes that the margin of courtesy of the international community and states towards Israel has exceeded everything that is reasonable, legal, humanitarian and moral, and has come to reflect the fact that the international community has lost its will and is reproducing its failure with regard to human rights, even at a minimum level such as the ability to bring relief aid to Palestinian civilians. Without that, Netanyahu would not have been able to continue the war of genocide against our people for 175 days.

## Federal, provincial govts on same page...

Continued from Page 1

in Islamabad, he said that the state is using the relevant tools to prevent threats and causes of insurgency in Balochistan.

He said that the leadership of Balochistan was united for resolving the issues of province. He said the Balochistan government was making efforts to promote the good governance as the beneficiary of such governance was common people of the province, who is main victim of bad governance. He mentioned that all parties were actively involved in providing relief to the common men of the province. He said that for the first time in history, Senators have been elected from the province unopposed. In response to a question, he stated that violence cannot guarantee the provision of rights to Balochistan as all the rights granted to Balochistan to date have been conferred by the country's parliament.

He expressed gratitude to the Pakistan People's Party, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, Awami National Party, and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz for giving him the opportunity to serve the people of Balochistan as Chief Minister. Paying tribute to the security forces for foiling terrorist attacks in Gwadar and Turbat, the Chief Minister said the vigilant jawans thwarted the terrorist attack in Gwadar by killing the suicide bombers within a period of only twenty minutes. In response to another question, he mentioned that over 2,000 teachers are drawing salaries without working, and doctors are also receiving salaries without providing services to the government or the people. He expressed resolve to check such malpractices. Regarding smuggling, he stated that while the government discourages it, a lenient approach has been taken due to the lack of job opportunities. However, the government does not condone smuggling.