

Daily The Spokesman

A Leading National Daily



فرمان رسول ﷺ
کہا کہ تم سے اب اسامہ نے بیان کیا کہ ان سے وہام بن کر ہوئے، ان سے ان کے والد نے اور ان سے عاقر نے کہا انہوں نے عبد اللہ بن زبیر سے کہا تھا کہ مجھے انتقال کے بعد میری سوتلوں کے ساتھ دفن کرنا ہی کریم علی اللہ علیہ وسلم کے ساتھ جڑو میں دفن مت کرنا کیونکہ میں اپنے نہیں کرتی کہ میری آپ کی اور بیویوں سے زیادہ پیکی بیان کی جائے۔
(بخاری، صفحہ نمبر 7327)
Barkat Rice Mills (Pvt) Limited



Kazakhstan and Pakistan seek to boost trade relations

In a bid to bolster trade ties between Kazakhstan and Pakistan, Ambassador Yerzhan Kistafin of Kazakhstan met with Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan on Thursday. The meeting focused on strategies to increase the trade volume between the two nations. (Details on Page 6)



Hafiz Naeemur Rehman elected new Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer

Hafiz Naeemur Rehman was elected as the new Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer on Thursday, succeeding Sirajul Haq for the coveted party slot. To elect the new Ameer, the JI election commission president announced three names including Hafiz Naeemur Rehman, Sirajul Haq, and Liaquat Baloch. The new leader's tenure will be five years, from April 2024 to April 2029. The election of a new leader after every five years... (Report on Page 8)

Simultaneously published from Islamabad, Lahore and Multan

Ramazan-ul-Mubarak 25, Friday, April 4, 2024

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Daily Spokesman Vol: 17, Issue: 356 Price Rs. 25.00 Pages 8

Cabinet meeting

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting of the Federal Cabinet on Thursday.



Photo: PID

New IMF programme crucial for economic stability: PM

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday said that the government was planning to enter a new programme with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) which he said, was very important to consolidate the country's economy.

"With the new IMF programme, the international institutions will have more trust on us and we will be able to move forward on the agenda of development and prosperity with more confidence," he said while speaking with the participants of the cabinet meeting held here under his chairmanship.

He said the finance minister was going to Washington this month with a delegation to participate in the IMF spring meetings where he will also discuss details of the new programme with the IMF.

He said although the terms of the new deal would not be so easy, but the government will shift the burden of the tough conditions from the less privileged to the wealthier.

The prime minister hoped that after the IMF board meeting, the last tranche of existing standby agreement worth \$1.1 billion will be disbursed to Pakistan this month.

With regard to PIA's divestment, he said the privatization process of Pakistan Airlines was on track and the schedule set for the process would be fully implemented.

He said that for the outsourcing of the airports, a Turkish company was arriving Islamabad on April 6 which would negotiate the outsourcing process with the Pakistani authorities.

About digitization of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), the prime minister informed that

the consultants for the digitization process would be appointed by end of the current month.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said, he recently chaired a meeting of Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) in which details of various sectors including finance, investment, exports, Information Technology, agriculture, power and petroleum were discussed.

"After a detailed meeting, it was decided that I will personally review the sector wise performance to solve out the problems faced by the sectors and to streamline the country's economy," he added.

The prime minister pointed out that the government had fulfilled its due responsibility with respect to the inquiry of the matter of letter by the Islamabad High Court judges by forming an inquiry commission led by former Chief Justice

Tassaduq Hussain Jilani. Afterward, he said Tassaduq Hussain Jilani refused from the commission, subsequently the Supreme Court took a sou motu notice of the letter.

The meeting was told that the cabinet, on the recommendation of Foreign Affairs Division, allowed former Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi to receive the "King Abdul Aziz Medal Badge of Honor of Excellent Class" on behalf of the Government of Saudi Arabia and "Darjah Kehormatan Angkatan Tentera" on behalf of the Government of Malaysia.

On the recommendation of Human Rights Division, the cabinet approved the appointment of the members of National Commission for Status of Women. Likewise, on the recommendation of Ministry of Human Rights, it approved

the abolition of the National Commission for Child Welfare and Development, the National Child Protection Center and the Implementation of National Line of Action for Children, which are offices working under the Ministry of Human Rights. All the employees of these departments who are civil servants would be included in the surplus pool of Pakistan, the meeting was told.

The meeting was also told that under the National Commission on Rights of Child Act 2017, the National Commission on the Rights of Child had been established therefore all other departments had become unnecessary as all the work related to these institutions is done by this commission. Keeping in view the austerity policy of the government, it has been decided to close these institutions, the meeting was told.

SCO SG condemns air attack on Iranian consulate in Syria



Spokesman Report

BELJING: Secretary General of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Zhang MingA condemned the air attack on the Consulate of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Damascus and expressed its condolences to the Iranian government. We believe that the relevant Vienna Conventions clearly stipulate the invi-

olability of diplomatic and consular institutions, and the aggression against diplomatic and consular agencies of SCO member states is completely unacceptable, he said in a statement issued here on Thursday.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization firmly opposes any provocation that threatens regional peace and security, he added.

Pakistan condemns terror attacks in Iran

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Thursday unequivocally condemned the heinous and dastardly terrorist attacks at police and security installations in the cities of Rask and Chabahaar in Iran. In a statement, the Foreign Office said, "We extend our heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims and pray for the recovery of the injured. Pakistan stands in full solidarity with the people and Government of Iran in fighting terrorism."



"Pakistan condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and is deeply concerned about the growing acts of terrorism in our region. It is a regional and global threat that requires resolute response," it concluded.

PPP chief Bilawal calls for judicial reforms after Zulfikar Bhutto's case



Bureau Report

NAUDERO: Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has said that it was imperative for the party to "actively" advocate for judicial reforms across all platforms, following the significant progress in the case of former prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

The people's faith in the judiciary has been shaken, he said while addressing an iftar dinner held to honour polling agents, polling in-charges, and dignitaries of PS-10 and NA-194 at Bhutto House, Naudero on Thursday.

According to a press release, he instructed the Sindh chief minister to organise "Khuli Kachries" at the district level to identify people's issues and conduct consultations on development projects.

Bilawal emphasised the significance of the Supreme Court's ruling in the Zulfikar Ali Bhutto case, saying that it held importance for both the party and the nation. While referring to the case, he noted

the acknowledgement of a "historic crime" and stressed the need for judicial reforms to address the "significant blemish" on the country's judiciary.

He added that the Charter of Democracy (CoD), endorsed by former prime minister Benazir Bhutto, encompassed the agenda of judicial reforms. "We have achieved 90 per cent implementation of the CoD, with judicial reforms being the remaining focus."

The PPP chairman urged the PPP workers to advocate for judicial reforms, aiming to ensure swift and affordable justice for the people.

Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that his party had chosen to extend support to the federal government in anticipation of resolving the people's issues, supporting the federal government with the hope that people's problems would be resolved. "We hope that if the government is given time, Pakistan will be taken out of the economic crisis," he remarked.

Tarar urges political parties not to politicize national economy

City Desk



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaulah Tarar on Thursday urged opposition and other political parties not to politicize national economy stabilized due to consistent efforts of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Addressing a news conference, the minister recalled the initiatives taken by PM Shehbaz Sharif led government during its previous tenure of 16 months.

He was flanked by Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Climate Change Romina Khurshid Alam. The minister gave credit to PM Shehbaz Sharif for successful negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that resulted into a standby agreement with the fund in the recent past. He said such initiatives had ultimately stabilized rupee against dollar and brought an improvement in the exchange rate subsequently. The minister recalled the hardships faced by the exporters in the recent past due to the fast fluctuation in the exchange rate especially stemmed from the wrong economic policies of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf led government. "There should be no politics on the economy and everyone should play their due role for economic stability," Tarar said while highlighting the positive indicators recorded with the arrival of PM Shehbaz Sharif's government in the country. He said Bloomberg had forecast a significant reduction in inflation in the country next year and simultaneously predicted an economic growth for Pakistan in the coming days. The country moving in right direction as the economy had started to boom which was reflected from the positive economic indicators, the minister noted.

ADB country director calls on Awaiz Leghari



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Country Director Asian Development Bank (ADB) Yong Ye called on Minister for Power Sardar Awaiz Ahmad Khan Leghari here Thursday and assured complete assistance to Pakistan in power sector reforms.

The Minister shared plans to streamline the Power Division by forming a focused team for effective policy interventions, said a press release.

He said that the incumbent government was committed to bringing complete reforms in the power sector of the country on priority basis.

Country Director Yong Ye pledged assistance in this endeavor with the help of experts from ABD in the hiring of the dedicated team.

Acknowledging the need for global expertise in reforming the sector, the Minister requested Country Director Yong Ye to identify reputable international firms capable of providing specialized knowledge and support for the said purpose.

Yong Ye also recommended hiring a transaction advisor to propose long-term policy initiatives for the sustainable future of Distribution Companies (DISCOS).

Shahid Khaqan Abbasi lauds China's help to Pakistan through BRI, CPEC

Spokesman Report

BELJING: Former Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi stressed the importance of building a closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future, as he condemned a terror attack that killed some Chinese workers in his country last week. Describing the March 26 attack that claimed the lives of five Chinese workers in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province as a very sad incident, Abbasi denounced the attack and said his country is committed to protecting Chinese nationals working in the country.

In an interview with China Daily in Boao, Hainan province, Abbasi lauded China's help to Pakistan through the Belt and Road Initiative and the flagship China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, or CPEC, project, saying he finds China's engagement and the way the Chinese system works fascinating. BRI projects are "basically left to the host country to decide what to do," said Abbasi, who recently took on a new role as a member of the board of directors of the Boao Forum for Asia. He said the Chinese side's framework for the CPEC had only two requirements: projects should be economically viable, and they should be environmentally sustainable. According to him, CPEC projects have been developed at an amazing speed in the past decade. Now, the focus is shifting to high-quality BRI. "As part of the community of shared future, I think it is a very, very beneficial relationship in that sense because if you really look back at the Silk Road, it was basically a trading route and it was about inclusion and integration.

PPP AJK celebrate 45th anniversary of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto today

Abdul Majeed Tahir

MUZAFFARABAD: The 45th anniversary of the founding chairman of Pakistan People's Party, Quaid-e-Awam Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, is celebrated in the entire Azad Kashmir with great devotion and respect. Solemn ceremonies were held at all the district tehsil city places of Azad Kashmir, in which the Supreme Court of Pakistan paid homage to the national and international achievements of martyr Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, daughter of the East, Ms. Benazir Bhutto.

While appreciating the decision of Bhutto reference case in wonderful words, there was a unanimous demand from the federal government to declare him as a national hero. Speaker Assembly Chaudhry Latif Akbar was Chief guest the Minister of Social Welfare Syed Bazal Ali Naqvi Shaukat Javed Mir, Sardar Mubarak Haider, Mubashir Munir Awan, Jahangir Khan

Mughal, Syed Shujaat Hussain Kazmi, Ms. Shagufata Noreen Kazmi, Councilor Musarat Sheikh, Naveed Zafar Gilani, Zulfiqar Wani, Syed Majaz Hussain Shah, Raja Fahad Jameel, Uzman Awan, Ilyas Awan, Chaudhry Farooq, Raja Farooq, Raja Ishtiaq, Waqar Nazir, Parvez Chaudhry Sardar Nawaz Chaudhry Sarwar Asad Naqvi Mohsin Swati Azhar Haroon Farhan Abbasi Raja Amjad Khan and his party and his Addressing the anniversary gathering attended by a large number of officials and workers of the subsidiary organizations, Speaker Legislative Assembly Chaudhry Latif Akbar said that the leader of the people, Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, laid the foundation for the country's unified constitution and nuclear program for invincible defense. President of Pakistan Asif Ali Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has blessed the nation with the legacy of honor and prestige.

Ms. Faryal Talpur, chairperson of



political affairs, played a key role in bringing justice to the People's Party and the Bhutto family by fighting a legal battle in the Supreme Court of Pakistan. But we pay tribute to him and thank the Supreme Court of Pakistan.

The democratic government of Pakistan will be successful in building trust by making decisions according to the national aspirations. Syed Bazal Ali

Naqvi Shawkat Javed Mir Mubarak Haider Mubasher Munir Awan Jahangir Mughal Shujaat Kazmi was speaking at the ceremony. Appreciating Bhutto's services, Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari vowed to continue the struggle for the establishment of an exploitation-free society, the independence of occupied Jammu and Kashmir, the stability of democracy, the supremacy of the constitution and the rule of law, and the people's prosperity.

Prayers were also made for the high status of all the deceased including the wife of the Speaker Legislative Assembly Chaudhry Latif Akbar and the security of Pakistan for the freedom of Occupied Kashmir. Full confidence was expressed in the leadership of Political Affairs Chairperson Ms. Faryal Talpur Senior Leader Chaudhry Riaz Party President Chaudhry Muhammad Yasin Speaker Chaudhry Latif Akbar and people-friendly decisions of the party were appreciated.

Wsaib Trade Union protests on petroleum product hike



Kiran Asim

MULTAN: Wasaib Trade Union, the representative trade organization of Wasaib, has rejected the Government's recent increase in the prices of petroleum products and demanded that the Government withdraw the recent increase. Al Khalid Associates near Sub Secretariat nou bahaar, which was presided over by President Makhdoom Syed Matloob Hussain Bukhari. In the meeting, Dr. Abdul Ghaffar Gopang, Vice President of Wasaib Tajir Ittehad, was presented with flowers and congratulated on his return from Umrah. Rana Mahmood ul Hasan was also congratulated for becoming a senator on the ticket of Pakistan People's Party with a huge majority and it was decided that Rana Mahmood ul Hasan will be warmly welcomed on his arrival in Multan. Appreciation was offered and prayed that Allah Ta'ala would make Syed Yousuf Raza Gillani as the Chairman Senate. In the meeting, the chairperson of Wasaib Trade Union was Mrs. Abida Bukhari, Senior Vice Chairman Ghulam Mustafa Lahori, Deputy Information Secretary Malik Mushtaq Ran, Social Media Coordinator Ehsan ul Haq Hashmi, Deputy Finance Secretary Malik Kashif Vaince, Media Coordinator Zawar Saedi, Members Provincial Council Makhdoom Rafique Kareem, Khizar Hayat and Rana Asif Ashraf. Khalid Ghaffar Gopang and others participated in the meeting. Dr. Abdul Ghaffar Gopang said in his speech that during Umrah, he offered special prayers for the success of the Muslims of Palestine and Kashmir, the stability of Pakistan, peace and order. The speakers said that we want full accountability of black mafia traders, but we demand that the current government should get rid of the IMF's domination to give relief to the people. Strict action should be taken against the big fishes. It was decided in the meeting that to express solidarity with the oppressed Muslims of Palestine, the officials of Wasaib Trade Union will celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr simplicity.

District admin and police provided assistance to MEPCO for cracking down against electricity thieves: Maryam Khan



Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: Commissioner Maryam Khan along with RPO Multan region Captain (R) Sohail Chaudhry chaired a review meeting to address electricity theft issue. The Divisional Enforcement Committee decided on further stringent measures against electricity thieves. Commissioner Maryam Khan emphasized on apprehending electricity thieves, filing cases against them, and disconnecting their electricity connections. MEPCO has been provided with the assistance of district administration and police in cracking down on electricity thieves. MEPCO will form a special task force to conduct a large-scale crackdown. District enforcement committees are formed to ensure clear outcomes. Ms Khan. RPO Multan Captain (R) Sohail Chaudhry stated that focal persons are appointed in all DPOs and CPO offices for investigation. Police are fully cooperating in curbing electricity theft. So far, 6628 FIRs have been registered, and 5420 arrests have been made. MEPCO authorities informed that 4 officials have been suspended due to negligence, and recoveries of Rs. 542.4 million have been made. Cases of electricity theft in domestic connections are also being addressed. MEPCO authorities are working on the process of controlling and recovery of electricity theft. The meeting was attended by Deputy Commissioners, CPOs, DPOs, and officers from relevant departments.

DFP urges privileged to help less privileged segment of society in Ramadan

Abdul Majeed Tahir

SRINAGAR: Jammu Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party (DFP) has appealed to the Kashmir masses to maintain austerity and the high spirit of the real Islamic values while observing the fasting in Ramadan.

In a statement, the DFP spokesman advocate Arshad Iqbal said, "Ramadan al Mubarak is a holy month that provides us a unique opportunity to share our blessings with those who are less fortunate and less-privileged".

He said that it is the month of feeling the pain of destitute and needy brethren of our society especially the ones who are facing the tough times under Indian subjugation.

Highlighting the plight of the downtrodden segments of the society, he said, "On one hand we have economically less privileged segment of society while on the other a large number of people, who have lost their livelihood and homes due to the occupation authorities' oppressive policies, are in dire need of financial support".

Preparation of Eid

ISLAMABAD: Women choosing jewellery at a stall displayed at Centaurus in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

MEPCO staff provide electricity with better voltage to consumers: Ch Khalid

Syed Nadeem Kazmi

MULTAN: Chief Engineer Planning and Engineering (P&E) Mepco Chaudhry Khalid Mehmood has said that the projects of high tension and low tension schemes should be completed immediately to provide electricity with better voltage to consumers across the region and further reduce the rate of line losses. He said that the system should be strengthened by area planning, bifurcation, load shifting, rehabilitation and upgradation of feeders.

He expressed these views while addressing the review meeting of Mapco Project Construction Directorate. He said that all construction divisions should immediately complete the approved renovation schemes in the concerned circles.



Deposit service connections, government connections, autonomous feeders, expansion projects of roads and highways and consumer connections with large B3 should be installed in minimum time.

It is possible to reduce the rate of line losses by area planning of high tension feeders projects so that the load of over-

loaded feeders in all circles is transferred to other new feeders and losses are reduced by balancing.

Project Director Construction MAPCO Farhan Shabbir Malik while briefing the Chief Engineer P&E said that the work on the projects of upgrading the power distribution system across the region is going on rapidly

and the high tension and low tension schemes in South Punjab are being completed on a priority basis.

Overload feeders at new grid stations Balancing is being done by shifting the load. During the current financial year 2023-24, 1 thousand 871 projects have been completed at a cost of 4 billion 49 crore rupees, among them 83 of connectivity of high tension feeders, area planning and bifurcation, 246 of lutenization schemes, 43 of ABC cable installation, providing electricity to villages.

A thousand 354, independent feeders, housing schemes, commercial 145 projects of removing electrical installations for the opening of buildings and roads were completed. Executive engineers of all construction divisions were also present in the meeting.

Digital Rights Foundation releases Cyber Harassment Helpline report for 2023

PPA

ISLAMABAD: The Digital Rights Foundation (DRF) has released its seventh annual Cyber Harassment Helpline Report for 2023. The Helpline has completed seven years of operations since its launch in December 2016 and has received a total number of 16,849 complaints from across Pakistan.

In 2023 alone a total of 2473 new complaints were received on the helpline with an average number of 206 new complaints received each month and February 2023 having the most complaints in the year.

The helpline report is a compila-

tion of the data from complaints received by the Helpline through its toll-free number (0800-393993), email and DRF's social media platforms from Monday to Sunday, 9 am to 5 pm. The report also contains case studies and feedback from Helpline callers and recommendations for policymakers and law enforcement agencies (LEAs).

The Cyber Harassment Helpline is the region's first dedicated helpline addressing tech-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) with gender-sensitive, confidential and free services. It provides legal advice, digital assistance, and basic psychological assistance and offers a proper

referral mechanism. The helpline operates 7 days a week to cater to a growing number of requests over the weekend. Nighat Dad, Executive Director of DRF, noted, "There's been a significant rise of complaints relating to technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) against women and marginalized groups in the year 2023. These instances of violence are also leading to a rise in potential offline violence for these groups. Another alarming thing that we noted through the helpline near the elections was the use of generative AI content being used to exacerbate violence against women in the public sphere, particularly

women journalists. These growing numbers are alarming and grow to show how online spaces are perpetuating identity-based attacks on women and marginalized groups. There is a need for urgent redressal and protection for survivors facing TFGBV with holistic support from state institutions within the country."

In 2023 Women were the highest reported victims of online harassment constituting 58.5% of complainants. The Helpline also noted that like the previous year this year the transgender community was subjected to an orchestrated online hate campaign and these complaints made up to approximately 1.6%..

Despite last year's findings of similar attacks, responses and actions taken by social media platforms have been the same. Hyra Basit, the helpline manager stated, "This year, we have seen how the manifestation of TFGBV has evolved over years, with rising complaints of incredible privacy violations of women via unregulated apps, and the use of modern editing and generative AI to produce non-consensual intimate images (NCII)".

Additionally, the report also includes a set of recommendations for policymakers and LEAs regarding online harassment cases in the country. For policymakers, it recommends

collaboration with gender-specific civil society organizations for conducting gender sensitization workshops in schools and education institutions, integrating digital literacy and safety into school curriculums, addressing the digital gender divide by removing barriers to internet and device access for women, enacting human rights-compliant legislation on digital privacy and protection, and supporting civil society organizations working on digital rights and gender equality.

Recommendations for law enforcement include increasing resource allocation, establishing mechanisms for handling cases

in foreign jurisdictions, enhancing the functionality of online complaint portals, developing protocols for coordination with police, collecting gender-disaggregated data on cyber harassment cases, establishing dedicated desks for cyber harassment within cybercrime wings, improving coordination between branches, providing psychological services for victims, implementing a case management and tracking system, enhancing technical expertise, and providing training for judges on cybercrime law, internet governance, and online harassment to improve their ability to adjudicate related cases effectively.



Islamabad
15° - 23° Clear

SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr 4:26 am
Zohr 12:11 pm
Asr 4:42 pm
Maghrib 6:31 pm
Isha 7:56 pm

EMERGENCY

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

Women Police Stations

Islamabad 9222596
Rawalpindi 9270601-20

ENQUIRY

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

HOSPITALS

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

DEPARTMENTS

CDA 921334-43
CDA 9208301-04
Met Office 9250360-6
RDA 5555864
TMA 5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3
Islamabad Metropolitan
Corporation 9209224
Potohar Town 9209224

Shahida Latif's New Naatia book published



PPA

ISLAMABAD: Famous and prominent poet, writer, and journalist. Awarded with pride of performance, Shahida Latif, has published her new Naatia Book "Shan N Mustafa" during Holy month of Ramadan by Mavra Publisher Lahore.

It is worth noting that already 10 poetry Books and 8 Literary Books of Shahida Latif have been given great appreciation by all circle of literature and journalism.

She was awarded huge numbers of awards, Certificates and medals the highest award is Pride of Performance in recognition of her devoted performance and achievements in literature and journalism.

The title of the book has been prepared by famous artists Aslam Kamal and the book contains valuable comments by Prof. Dr. Riaz Majeed, Dr. Haroon ur Rasheed Tabassum and Dr. Musharaf Hussain Anjum

Pakistan, Azerbaijan aim to boost economic ties, seeking finalization of PTA

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan, and Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan, Khazar Farhadov, met here on Thursday to discuss bolstering economic cooperation between the two nations.

Highlighting the historical, political, and economic ties shared by Pakistan and Azerbaijan, Minister Jam Kamal emphasized the need to extend bilateral trade to its true potential by addressing trade-related issues.

Minister Jam Kamal noted the increase in exports to Azerbaijan from US\$ 9.70 million in 2021-22 to US\$ 12.08 million in 2022-23, alongside a significant rise in imports primarily due to fertilizers.

Both countries are actively negotiating a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA), with finalized drafts.

Ambassador Khazar Farhadov stressed the importance of high-level visits to enhance bilateral relations and elevate trilateral cooperation with Turkiye.



He emphasized the resumption of LNG supplies from Azerbaijan to Pakistan and the potential for mutual investments, particularly in energy and IT sectors.

Notably, Azerbaijan exempted Pakistani rice from import customs duty until December 2027, signaling a gesture of goodwill.

Minister Jam Kamal reiterated Pakistan's commitment to strengthening commercial and economic ties, emphasizing the importance of people-to-people contact and the signing of the PTA to bolster trade volume and create new business opportunities.

Safety

ISLAMABAD: A motorcyclist choosing helmet at a stall along side of Expressway in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Raja Farid

Ambassador announces to take another trade delegation to Ethiopia in May

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: H. E. Jemal Bekker Abdula, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, on Thursday announced to mobilize another trade delegation of Pakistani businessmen to Ethiopia by May-end this year for further strengthening business, trade and commercial connections between the two countries.

Addressing the business community at Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI), the Ambassador recalled the experiences related to the first-ever trade delegation mobilized by the Ethiopian Embassy in Islamabad last year in March.



"We received overwhelming response to the first trade delegation which I called Hijra Trip to Ethiopia that enabled the business community of Pakistan to explore business, trade and investment opportunities in Ethiopia," the ambassador noted.

He said more than 75 businessmen participated in the

first trade delegation to Ethiopia and got an opportunity not only to directly communicate with the high-level government officials but also businessmen from the major sectors.

"I would like to urge every businessman in Pakistan to become part of our Hijra Trip II and contribute to the efforts of the Ethiopian Embassy in establishing strong trade relations and partnership between the two countries," the ambassador stressed.

On the occasion, the Ambassador also highlighted extraordinary trade and investment opportunities offered by home-grown economy of Ethiopia in diverse economic sectors including agriculture and agro-processing, manufacturing, mining, ICT and tourism.

Chinese volunteers serve food to underprivileged Pakistanis during Ramadan



Xinhua

ISLAMABAD: Raising his hands in prayer according to Muslim traditions while breaking his fast at dusk in the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, Muhammad Rashid made a wish for the health and happiness of Chinese volunteers serving food to Pakistanis at a makeshift dining place on the outskirts of the Pakistani capital.

Rashid, who sells ice cream here to financially support his family of five living in the country's eastern Multan district, relishes a hearty dinner each night alongside about 200 others at the venue established by the Chinese volunteers to feed the underprivileged people and make the fasting month easier for them.

"Ramadan presents its challenges, not just with the daytime fasting, but also with the added pressure of providing for my wife and kids," Rashid told Xinhua.

In these trying times, the dinner arrangements made by the Chinese volunteers provide invaluable assistance, as now his food expenses have been cut to half as he only needs to buy breakfast.

About a dozen volunteers associated with the China-Pakistan Youth Exchange Community (CPYEC) and other Chinese charity organizations are spreading love, hope, and kindness this Ramadan in Pakistan by distributing food items and arranging iftar dinners for locals.

With the food provided by the Chinese, Rashid and fellow community members can now redirect their food expenses towards supporting their families during Ramadan.

Talking to Xinhua, Muhammad Salman, a Pakistani volunteer with the community, said they have been arranging dinners for about 200 people daily since the first day of Ramadan this year.

"Our volunteers procure the food, meticulously prepare and cook it, then arrange it on the outskirts of Islamabad, targeting areas populated by laborers and underprivileged individuals," Salman told Xinhua.

The food provided by the Chinese volunteers includes fruits, vegetables, juice, dates, and traditional Pakistani dish.

The donations for the food come from people in China and the Chinese community in Pakistan, a 24-year-old Chinese volunteer, Wang Jing, told Xinhua.

"Our support for the Pakistani people will make them understand the care and love that we Chinese have for them. Understanding the friendship between the two peoples can further consolidate and deepen China-Pakistan friendship," he added.

According to CPYEC, the volunteers began organizing Ramadan iftar meal donation activities in Pakistan in 2017 and have provided iftar dinners for more than 60,000 Pakistani people.

"This year, we also distributed food packages containing rice, flour, oil, and other daily necessities to local poor people, planning to benefit more than 9,000 people," said the Chinese volunteer.

China-Pakistan Collaboration in TVET Sector



Bureau Report

LAHORE: In a significant development for technical and vocational education, the Punjab Board of Technical Education (PBTE) and UNI International convened a meeting today. The focus of the discussion was fostering collaboration between China and Pakistan in the TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) sector.

During the meeting, CEO of UNI International, Mr. Max Ma, and Director Engr. Yasser Shakoor engaged in productive exchanges. Notably, Mr. Muhammad Adnan, Secretary of PBTE Government of Punjab, expressed his appreciation for the relentless efforts of Mr. Max Ma and the UNI team. Their commitment to empowering Pakistani youth through education and employment was lauded by Mr. Adnan.

Furthermore, Mr. Adnan assured full cooperation with UNI International in its endeavor to create a brighter Pakistan through skill education and meaningful employment opportunities.

This collaboration holds immense promise for the future of technical education in the region, bridging gaps and equipping the youth with essential skills for a prosperous tomorrow.

Participants urge the government to make health for all a constitutional right

PPA

CHAKWAL: Celebrating World Health Day Seminar organized by PODA with the collaboration of University of Chakwal, the participants unanimously passed a resolution demanding the government to make health for all a constitutional right.

Presenting the resolution to around 200 participants including students, faculty members and senior district administration officers of various university departments, lawyers, social activists and community leaders and media persons, Chief Executive Officer, PODA, Sameena Nazir urged the government that for granting right to health, there is a dire need to introduce a constitutional amendment.

PODA in collaboration with the University of Chakwal jointly celebrated World Health Day

here in the university auditorium titled "Promoting and Protecting Women and Girls' Health, Challenges and a Way Forward" organized under the project "Reduce Early Marriages to Enhance Gender Equality" funded the Royal Norwegian Embassy, Islamabad.

Highlighting the importance of healthy diet for attaining proper nutrition, Dr. Muhammad Bilal Khan, Vice Chancellor, University of Chakwal said we need to promote local products. For example Chakwal is known for peanuts and we can make peanut butter. He appreciated PODA's efforts to arrange the seminar and paid tribute to CEO-PODA for her efforts to empower women and girls with awareness on such vital issues concerning to their health and well-being which could change their lives positively for their development

and progress.

Appreciating PODA and the management of University of Chakwal, Assistant Commissioner, Ms. Sameena Bashir said "healthy women guarantee healthy society". CEO Education Department of Chakwal, Abdul Waheed said unlikely other countries we don't pay much attention to the subject of health in curriculum. He said we need to ensure holistic education to our future generations including elements of physical, mental and emotional health for their development in text books. "We need to address subjects related to health at school level as new it has become reality after COVID," he added.

Highlighted frightening impacts of early marriage on the health of girl children, Syeda Kiran Hasnain, Medical Officer revealed that to treat cervical cancer due to more than 70

million girls aged 15 and above are at risk, we don't have Human Papilloma Virus Vaccine which can save lives of hundreds of girls in Pakistan.

Dr Faiza Akhter, UOC said that malnourished female can manage their lifestyle adaption in diet through portion control by adding five major group of food such as carbohydrates (roti, rice, pasta, noodles), protein fat (meat, lentils) fat (healthy fat, olive oil, coco oil), folic acid and zinc supplement.

Sahibzada Farrukh Zulfi, Admin & Accounts, Community Development Department informed the audience that the government is working to ensure tabs to nikaha registrars to stop early-age marriages to protect girls from this social menace. Ms. Naveeda Akhtar, School Health Nutrition Supervisor (NHNS District Health Department of

Chakwal) stressed on the need to develop healthy habits for stronger bodies. Other prominent speakers were Dr. Ghazala Fazal, Deputy Technical Officer Population Welfare Department, Waseem Abbas, Deputy Director Social Welfare Office, Syeda Samia Batool, Sub-inspector (police) and Naheeda Abbasi from PODA.

Nabeela Aslam, PODA shared an overview of PODA's project, "Reducing Early Marriages to Enhance Gender Equality", supported by the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Pakistan. "Early marriages are violation of a girl child's basic rights to lead violence and abuse free life.

CEO, PODA, Sameena Nazir and VC, University of Chakwal awarded the dignitaries with shields of honor in recognition of their efforts to empower women and girls.



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Upscaled Iran-Israel Conflict: Ramification for Pakistan..

The recent wave of high-intensity attacks on Iranian interests in the Middle East, coupled with strikes on symbols of power and authority within Iran itself, has left the entire Iranian nation and its leadership in a state of shock and mourning. Just as Iran was beginning to grapple with the devastating loss of lives following the missile strike on its embassy in Damascus, which claimed the lives of seven high-ranking officials, including the esteemed Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Zahedi and his deputy General Mohammad Hadi Hajriahimi, another brutal blow struck. This time, it was a merciless terror attack on the Rask Police Headquarters in Iran's South-eastern region, resulting in the deaths of 11 Iranian officials and leaving several others wounded.

cally, Israel should contain the spread of war in the Middle East, where it is fully engaged in war against Hamas and its affiliates in Gaza and the West Banks, Hothies in Yemen, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and Daesh in Syria, and therefore it should have avoided bringing Iran into the war theater.

However, it appears that Israel has larger plans and is a part of a larger conspiracy to draw Iran into the conflict by employing provocative tactics to force it into the war zone whether it wants to or does not. This could later give Israel a real and legitimate excuse to launch a full-scale attack on Iran.

Israel, confident of its military might, bolstered by the US's unquestionable diplomatic, political, financial and military support has perhaps fully determined to deal with Iran's looming threats once for all.

Like, it has killed around 40,000 Palestinians in Gaza and continuing unabated with total impunity, it seem hell bound to neutralize Iran's nuclear threat once and for all, eliminate its missiles, rockets and drone capabilities, and bringing it down to a point where it can no longer seriously jeopardize Israeli safety and security besides, lessen Iran's ability to disrupt the global food and oil supply chain and eradicate its influence and reach in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and Yemen.

Iran on the other hand enraged by the unprovoked attack on its Embassy in Syria, and later terrorist attack in Rask, while it was still in mourning mode after the twin bomb attack in January

4, in Karman province this year, which had killed over 100 people and wounded many more including many high ranking Iranian official, vowed a harsh revenge after every such deplorable attacks.

Soon after the attack in Karman on Jan 4, Iranian reaction was swift. On January 16, using a combination of ballistic missiles and drones, Iran struck targets in Syria, Iraq, and Pakistan allegedly associated with Israeli intelligence and anti-regime terrorist groups. Unlike the other two countries, Pakistan did not wait, and after 24 hours launched a proportional, highly precise and finally calibrated intelligence based strikes, against hideouts of armed groups in the Sistan-Baluchestan province of Iran and restored geopolitical and security balance.

But Israel was waiting patiently to respond to the Iranian barrage of ballistic missiles and drones attacks on Israeli assets in Syria and Iraq, until it responded today with lethal attacks on the Iranian Embassy in Damascus and masterminding the terrorist attack in Rask, prompting, Iranian leadership to pledge once again a harsh and befitting response, but this raising the stakes by adding a severe warning, that the time has now come to teach Israel a bitter lesson.

Previously, the sworn foes of Iran and Israel had shown prudence and avoided attacking each other directly, instead focused on attacking each other's proxies in the third countries. However, the level of tension has now increased to the point where in the near future, the world may experience elevated geopolitical tension

due to impending direct actions by Iran against Israel or retaliation by Israel against Iran.

This could lead to a dangerous expansion of the Middle East War theater to other parts of the world, causing supply chain disruptions, a spike in the price of petroleum, an increase in the price of commodities, and a general lack of certainty and predictability that would particularly harm the countries with the weakest economies like Pakistan.

Pakistan, which has committed numerous military and civilian resources to secure its borders with Afghanistan (2670 km) and India (3320 km) and is dealing with a serious threat of cross-border terrorism, will be particularly impacted if the Middle East War Front expands along its border with Iran (959 km).

This implies that the US, an Israeli ally, will once again try to seek military bases in Pakistan, and threaten to put the country in the stone age or economically and financially choke it if it refuses. Pakistan will once more be inundated with secret service operatives, private contractors, non-state players, Jehadi groups, foreign criminals, and suppliers and dealers of weaponry.

Given the likelihood of increased hostilities between Iran and Israel and the potential impact on the nation's security, sovereignty, and safety, the Pakistani government should take these growing threats very seriously. If these assumptions come to pass, it should use all available diplomatic, political, and international communication resources to protect the country's vital interests.

Writer is Press Secretary to the President (Rtd), Former Press Minister at Embassy of Pakistan to France, Former MD, SRBC



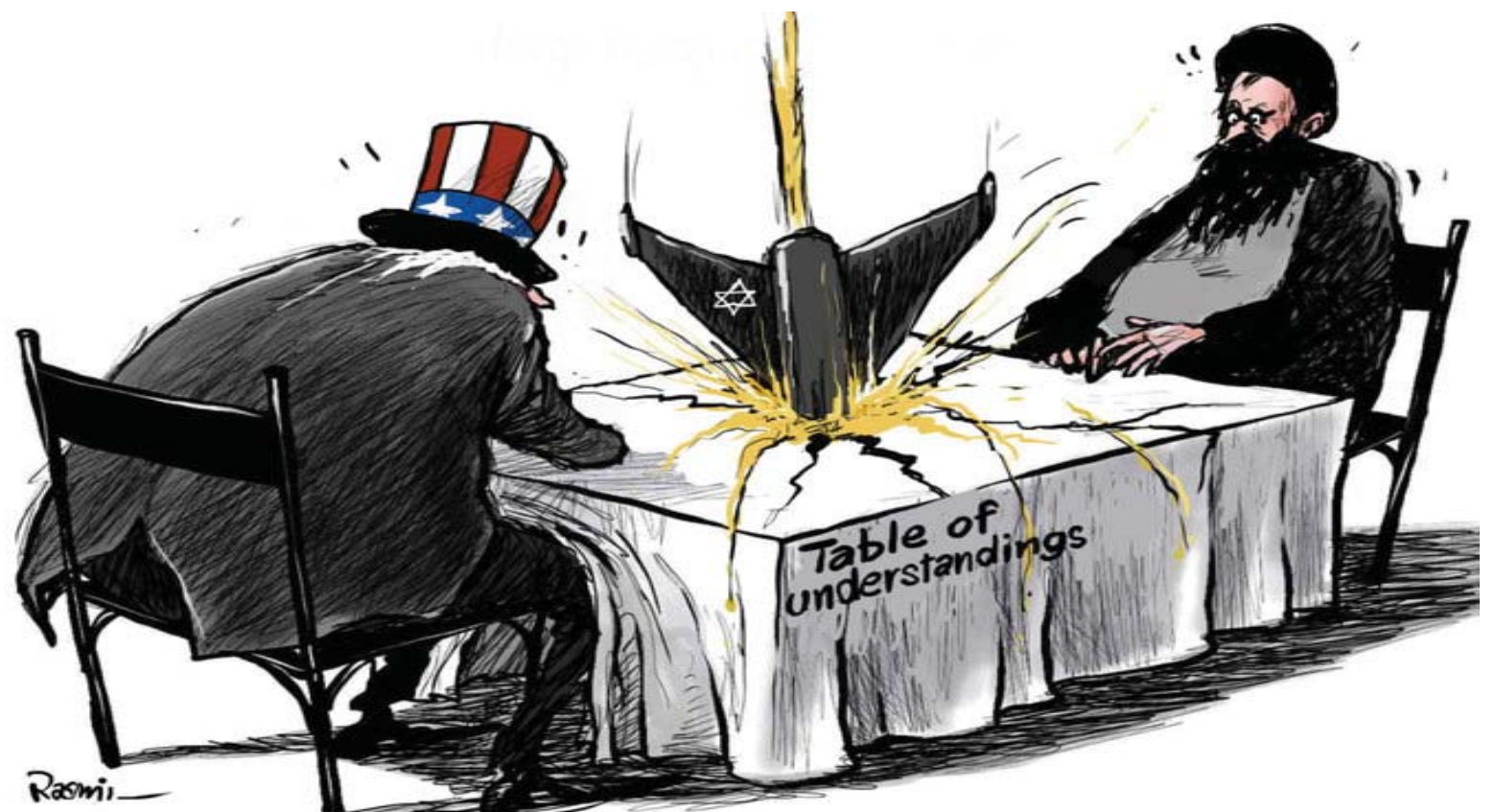
Israeli killed Aid workers

The UN World Food Programme (WFP) reports that daytime operations are continuing, including ongoing efforts to get food aid convoys into northern Gaza. World Central Kitchen and other charities have suspended aid operations which has had a "double impact" in the Gaza Strip, Mr. Dujarric said in response to a reporter's question.

"It has a real impact on people who depend on these organisations to receive aid," he said. "But it also has a psychological and chilling effect on humanitarian workers, both Palestinians and international, who continue to do their utmost to deliver aid to those who need it at great personal risk." The World Central Kitchen staff, consisting of local and international personnel, were killed in multiple Israeli airstrikes on their convoy while departing their warehouse in Deir al Balah in central Gaza. The head of the World Health Organization (WHO) said he was horrified by the killing of the seven humanitarian workers, noting that their cars were clearly marked and should never have been attacked. He also called for "more entry points, including in northern Gaza, cleared roads, and predictable and expedited passage through checkpoints."

Meanwhile, the UN humanitarian affairs office, OCHA, is working with the Palestine Red Crescent Society to assist in the repatriation of the remains of the international staff from World Central Kitchen. "According to the Israeli military, an initial investigation found that the strike was a 'grave mistake' due to a mis-identification," OCHA said in its latest update, issued on Wednesday. Israeli authorities said that a new humanitarian command centre will be established to improve the coordination of aid distribution, while a full independent investigation will be completed over the coming days. The findings will be shared with World Central Kitchen and other relevant international organizations.

WHO again requested authorization to travel to the destroyed Al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City in the wake of the end of the two-week Israeli military siege. Tedros said teams have been trying to seek permission to access what is left of the hospital, to speak with staff, and to see what can be saved "but at the moment, the situation looks disastrous." Al-Shifa was the largest hospital and main referral centre in the Gaza Strip, containing 750 beds, 26 operating rooms, 32 intensive care rooms, a dialysis department and a central laboratory. Tedros reiterated his call to respect and protect hospitals which "must not be used as battlefields." Since the conflict began nearly six months ago, WHO has verified more than 900 attacks on healthcare in Gaza, the West Bank, Israel and Lebanon, resulting in 736 deaths and 1,014 injuries. Currently, only 10 of Gaza's 36 hospitals are still able to function even partially.



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

Judges' Letter and Disturbing Efforts to Controversialize Prominent Intelligence Agency - II

Furthermore, there is the pressing issue of corruption within our judicial system. Transparency International Pakistan recently unveiled its Corruption Perceptions Survey for 2023, revealing that the judiciary ranks among the three most corrupt institutions in Pakistan. The report scrutinizes the prevalence of bribery within the judiciary, citing an average cost of 25,846 rupees for such practices in public service delivery. Remarkably, the survey indicates that the highest average bribe occurs in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, amounting to Rs 162,000. Punjab records the highest average bribe paid by citizens, reaching Rs 21,186, predominantly directed towards the police. In Balochistan, health facilities witness the highest average bribe, totaling Rs 160,000.

The pervasiveness of corruption, particularly within our lower judicial and police systems, which are essential pillars of any civilized society, poses a significant impediment to the overall well-being of the community. Regrettably, the civilian judicial system in Pakistan has struggled to deliver timely and transparent justice to its citizens. A persistent issue is the prolonged resolution of legal cases, some spanning generations and remaining unresolved. The burden on our courts is immense, with both superior and lower judiciaries grappling with an overwhelming backlog of 2.144 million cases. In 2021 alone, 4.102 million cases were concluded, while 4.06 million new cases were filed, resulting in an overall pending caseload of 2.16 million at the outset of the following year. Statistics obtained

from the Supreme Court, Federal Shariat Court, and five high courts reveal that in 2020, 229,822 cases were disposed of, with 241,250 new cases instituted. The pending cases before superior courts at year's end totaled 389,549, slightly surpassing the previous year's count of 378,216. Similarly, the district judiciary faced 1,783,826 pending cases at the beginning of the preceding year. Over the course of the year, they adjudicated 3,872,686 cases, while 3,822,881 new cases were filed, resulting in a total pending caseload of 1,754,947 by the close of 2021. These historical examples underscore the systemic challenges within our judicial systems.

More recently, the world has witnessed how six judges of the Islamabad High Court have leveled serious allegations against Pakistan's largest intelligence agency. In their communication to the Chief Justice of Pakistan, the six judges referenced the case of retired Justice Shaukat Siddiqui, urging an inquiry into the allegations he raised in 2018. They also pressed for the Supreme Judicial Council to examine whether the involvement of agencies in judicial matters persists, as it allegedly did in 2018. The six judges of the Islamabad High Court have leveled serious accusations against Pakistan's largest intelligence agency. Their letter detailed various incidents where judges purportedly faced pressure from secret agencies, harassment, and even torture inflicted upon their relatives, according to one judge. They reported the installation of video recording devices in the bedroom and drawing room of a government house. It's alarming if these allegations hold true, raising questions

as to why these concerns weren't voiced earlier. There's a lingering doubt whether the emergence of these issues amidst Pakistan's current situation aims to favor a specific group.

This letter has ignited significant controversy. A particular political faction and groups deemed anti-state are portraying these judges as heroes, demanding the annulment of sentences against the founder of a political party following the judges' letter. The anti-state faction has initiated a campaign opposing our premier intelligence agency, seeking to sway public opinion against our institutions.

It's crucial to recognize that within the intricate framework of a nation's security apparatus, intelligence agencies function as vigilant guardians, continually gathering, analyzing, and disseminating crucial information vital to the state's safety and stability. Far from the glamorous depictions often seen in spy fiction, these agencies operate discreetly, striving to anticipate and counter threats before they materialize. Their significance cannot be overstated, as they play a pivotal role in safeguarding against a multitude of internal and external dangers, prioritizing the protection of national sovereignty and integrity.

Intelligence agencies are responsible for monitoring the activities posing risks to the nation, whether from hostile foreign powers, terrorist organizations, or domestic threats. Through covert surveillance, cyber monitoring, and human intelligence operations, they gather intelligence on potential adversaries, identifying capabilities, intentions, and vulnerabilities. Additionally, they provide early warnings of impending crises or conflicts by analyzing patterns and trends, enabling preemptive action to mitigate risks and prevent escalation.

To be continued



Unveiling Dynamics: Safeguarding Chinese Interests in Pakistan - I

The recent focus on safeguarding the safety and security of Chinese nationals and investments within Pakistan underscores the enduring partnership between the two nations. As the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) continues to serve as a cornerstone of their cooperation, it is imperative to prioritize the protection of Chinese interests in Pakistani territory.

Recent events have highlighted the evolving security challenges facing Chinese nationals and projects in Pakistan. In response, Pakistani authorities have recognized the urgent need for proactive measures to mitigate risks and enhance the environment for Chinese engagement. This includes fostering trust and collaboration between the two nations to sustain bilateral cooperation and advance mutual prosperity and stability.

The commitment of Pakistani authorities to upholding the safety of Chinese investments reaffirms the depth of the partnership and its dedication to mutual prosperity and stability. By emphasizing the importance of close collaboration with Chinese counterparts, Pakistan is demonstrating its proactive stance towards ensuring the security of Chinese nationals and projects within its borders.

The strategic alliance between Pakistan and China remains strong, with both nations committed to creating a safe and secure environment for Chinese engagement in Pakistan. As the partnership continues to evolve, it is crucial for both countries to work together to

address security challenges and uphold the principles of mutual prosperity and stability. In doing so, the enduring partnership between Pakistan and China will only grow stronger, laying the foundation for continued cooperation and economic development in the region.

Worth mentioning that Pakistan and China share a longstanding relationship marked by cooperation in various domains, including trade, infrastructure development, and strategic alliances. Recent developments, however, have unveiled both opportunities and challenges in this bilateral partnership. This article delves into three significant developments shaping Pakistan-China relations, ranging from the reopening of the Khunjerab border to security challenges faced by Chinese nationals and projects in Pakistan.

The Khunjerab border, situated at a staggering altitude of approximately 15,000 feet above sea level, serves as the sole land crossing connecting Pakistan with China. After four months of closure due to snowfall, the border reopened for traffic, facilitating bilateral trade and tourism. This development not only signifies the resumption of economic activities but also underscores the resilience of Pakistan-China relations despite seasonal challenges. As per the protocol agreement of 1985, the border remains closed from December 1 to March 31 annually. However, the recent reopening indicates the commitment of both nations to bolster connectivity and foster economic exchanges.

To be continued



Pakistan desires to enhance energy, barter trade cooperation with Russia: President

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Thursday said that Pakistan desired to enhance bilateral cooperation with Russia, particularly in the fields of energy and barter trade.

The president, in a meeting with Russian Ambassador in Islamabad Albert P. Khorev, who called on him here, emphasized that Russian banks should be persuaded to launch their operations in Pakistan to promote bilateral trade.

He also called for strengthening cultural linkages between Pakistan and Russia, particularly in the fields of TV and film industries. President Zardari conveyed his message of felicitation to Russian President Vladimir Putin on his re-election and expressed good wishes for him.

He expressed the hope that under



President Putin's leadership, Russia would achieve swift development besides promoting regional peace. He also expressed condolence over the death of 130 people in a terrorist attack that took place on March 22 in Moscow.

Ambassador Albert Khorev told the president that Russia desired to play its part in the economic development and prosperity of Pakistan and that both countries were cooperating on mutual issues like anti-terrorism and drug trafficking.

The ambassador said that Russia desired to double the existing volume of bilateral trade with Pakistan. He thanked President Zardari for expressing condolence over the deaths in the March 22 terrorist attack in the Russian capital. The envoy also felicitated President Zardari on assuming the office.

CM meets World Bank country director



Bureau Report

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif had a meeting with World Bank Country Director Najy Benhassine to discuss World Bank-funded development projects in Punjab.

Emphasising the need for early completion of the ongoing public welfare projects in the province, the Chief Minister said, "I will personally monitor the ongoing World Bank-funded projects."

Mr Najy Benhassine congratulated Maryam Nawaz on being elected first female Chief Minister of Punjab. CM Maryam thanked him for the good words, and agreed to continue cooperation with the World Bank to achieve sustainable development in Punjab.

The Chief Minister briefed the WB Country Director about the projects like province-wide solid waste management, Knowledge Park, and nutrition for the malnourished children in Punjab.

She added, "The project of providing packaged milk to students in government primary schools is being started soon." She said, "The World Bank and other institutions will be welcomed to join this project."

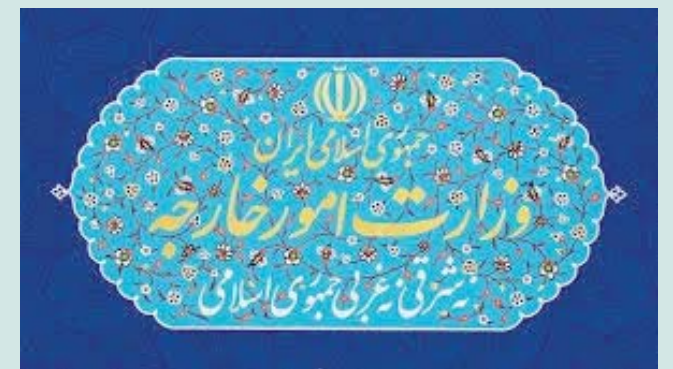
The CM highlighted the need for mutual cooperation for smog elimination and air quality improvement. The progress of WB-funded Punjab Green Development Program, and Punjab Cities Program was also reviewed in the meeting. Both leaders also agreed to cooperate in the field of information technology.

World Bank Country Director Najy Benhassine appreciated the vision of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, and expressed best wishes for her success.

Senior Provincial Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb, Senator Pervaiz Rashid, Chief Secretary and other senior officers concerned attended the meeting.

Intl. Quds Day

Iran urges global endeavors to confront 'cancerous' Zionist regime



IRNA

Tehran, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran on the occasion of International Quds Day 2024 has called on all Muslim governments and nations and the freedom- and truth-seekers of the world to stand in unity and solidarity to confront the "cancerous" Zionist regime.

As International Quds Day (the 5th of April 2024) draws near, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran in a statement released on Thursday emphasized the continuation of the principled and constant policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in supporting the liberation struggles and legitimate resistance of the Palestinian nation.

The Ministry stressed the necessity of effective, comprehensive, and deterrent counteraction against the crimes of the occupying and child-killing Zionist regime and calls on all Muslim governments and nations and the freedom- and truth-seekers of the world to stand in unity and solidarity so as to confront this "cancerous tumor" and disruptor of regional and international stability and security and to provide real and practical aid and support to the oppressed Palestinian people.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran also reminded the international and human rights organizations and institutions of their legal duties in supporting the rights of the Palestinian people under occupation, in ending the occupation, stopping the brutal crimes of the Zionists in the Holy al-Quds and other occupied regions in Palestine, and in putting an end to the aggressive and escalating actions of the Zionists in the region.

"While vehemently condemning the Zionist regime's blatant violation of international law and regulations, human rights, and international humanitarian law, the Government and the noble people of the Islamic Republic of Iran once again remind the international community and world governments, especially of Muslim countries, of their responsibility to provide all-out support for the oppressed Palestinian people, particularly the besieged inhabitants and war-stricken people of the Gaza Strip, and call for effective, decisive, and immediate action by governments and international legal and human rights institutions to stop these crimes and to lodge a criminal case for prosecuting and trying the commanders, perpetrators, and supporters of such human tragedies," the statement read.

It added, "In this regard, the Islamic Republic of Iran, in addition to participating in the process of oral proceedings of the International Court of Justice in legal pursuit of the continued occupation of the Palestinian territories and the violation of the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people, supports the efforts of other world governments towards claiming the rights of the Palestinian people."

Meeting

ISLAMABAD: H.E. Ms. Jane Marriott, British High Commissioner called on Minister for Defence, Khawaja Muhammad Asif on Thursday.



Photo: PID

Embassy in Netherlands organizes exhibition

Spokesman Report

HAGUE: The Pakistan embassy in the Netherlands has organized the first solo exhibition of Pakistan's leading visual artist Imran Qureshi at the prestigious Pulchri Studio. The show titled "Scattered Yet Together" will continue till 14 April 2024. The exhibition was officially opened by Ambassador Suljuk Mustansar Tarar, Ms. Marieta Reijkerro Chairperson of Pulchri Studio, in her opening remarks said that she was glad to see work of a leading Pakistani artist displayed and it was a result of two yearlong discussions with Ambassador Tarar. An "Artist Talk" with Mr. Imran Qureshi was also organized alongside the opening ceremony. Ambassador Suljuk Mustansar Tarar gave an overview of how the exhibition had been curated and current status of contemporary art in Pakistan. He mentioned different genres of works and how contemporary miniature painting from Pakistan has become a global art movement. Ambassador Tarar also highlighted the cultural links between Pakistan and the Netherlands and that Pakistani visual artists like others in the world have been inspired by the Dutch masters during their education or careers. Imran Qureshi during the talk shared how he joined the Miniature Department at National College of Arts, Lahore which was at that time one of the only places offering a graduate degree in Miniature painting. He recalled his different large-scale projects including



the rooftop commission at New York's Metropolitan Museum and how he used skills of traditional miniature in evolving a large-scale contemporary work of art. The talk and exhibition opening was attended by a large number of people. It included high ranking officials from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including Mr. Wouter Jurgens - Director for department of Asia and Oceania, Ambassador Dewi van der weerd - Ambassador for International cultural

cooperation, Ambassador Bea ten Tusscher - the Dutch Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion and Belief, Ambassador Joanna Roper - British Ambassador to The Hague, Ambassador Thomas Drew - former British High Commissioner to Pakistan, representative from Rijksmuseum, artists, and representatives from different galleries and museums in The Hague. Pulchri Studio is a Dutch art society established in 1847 and is housed in

its current building since 1901. It is a gallery space frequently used for multiple exhibition and visited by the locals and tourists alike. Pakistan and the Netherlands enjoy good bilateral relations. Both countries marked 75 years of their diplomatic relations in 2023. "Scattered Yet Together" is a Public and Cultural Diplomacy initiative by Pakistan Embassy the Netherlands to introduce Pakistani art, culture and heritage to the people of the Netherlands.

Iranian Ambassador calls for full support for Palestinians on Quds Day

Spokesman report

ISLAMABAD: Iranian Ambassador Dr Reza Amiri Moghaddam on Thursday said that following the killing of over 33000 Muslims in Gaza by the Zionist Israeli regime, the world's awareness of the evil nature of this regime has increased, and as a result, the leaders of the criminal Zionist regime have become more dishonorable than ever in the court of conscience of humanity.

Addressing the participants of a reception held to mark World Quds Day hosted by the Iranian Embassy at a local hotel, the envoy thanked each of the participants for attending the World Quds Day commem-

oration ceremony. "We all know very well that since 75 years ago, an anti-Islamic and anti-human project called "Zionism" has been launched by global arrogance with the aim of de-Islamizing the Holy Land of Palestine," he said.

He said the founder of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, Imam Khomeini (RA) was among the first to correctly figure out that the cure for this cancerous tumor is not possible except with the unity of the Islamic world, and therefore in 1979 and in the first month of Ramadan after the victory of the revolution, requested from all Muslims around the world to declare their international soli-

darity in support of the Palestinian people on the last Friday of Ramadan.

"The fact that today we celebrate Quds Day with millions of other Muslims around the world is the result of this historical message. The crimes of the child-killing Zionist regime in the last six months have proven the far-sightedness of this divine leader more than ever," he added.

He said that the fact is that throughout the entire devilish life of Israel, the United States government, by mobilizing all its economic, political, military and media capacities and by distorting history, has offered its unconditional support to Zionist criminals and is undoubtedly

an accomplice. It is then, if not to say that it is the commander and manager of these crimes, he added.

"As a result of this full support, the Zionists have recorded a new set of atrocities in history in the past six months. The brutal killing of women and children and journalists, attacks on treatment groups and hospitals and preventing the dispatching the relief aid are examples of this brutality," he added.

"Despite this, the Zionists have failed against the laudable will of the dear people of Gaza and therefore have put revenge on the supporters of the resistance in their agenda. Carrying out cross-border assassinations,



sabotage operations and attacks on diplomatic premises are all

"Undoubtedly, the efforts of the honorable people of Pakistan, the government and the diplomatic representatives of this country in the international forums have been effective in creating this awareness, and I consider it necessary to express my gratitude to the nation and government of Pakistan for their unwavering support for the Palestinian cause," he added.

"In the end, I would like to thank you once again for your presence in this event and we pray for the liberation of all Muslims from the oppressors and occupiers, and we pray for the freedom of the Holy Quds from God Almighty," he concluded.

caused by the frustration and anger of this accursed entity".

Bull & Bears
PSX 100-Share
Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index	
Current	Prev. Close
68,416.78	67,756.03
Day's High	Day's Low
68,439.37	67,912.35
Index Value	Change
12,721,252,360	+660.75
Percentage	Time
+0.98%	4 Apr, 2024 5:00 pm

Europe: FTSE 100 Index	
Index Value	Change
7,975.89	+38.45
Percentage	Time
+0.48%	4 Apr, 4:35 pm GMT+1

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average	
Index Value	Change
39,324.75	+197.61
Percentage	Time
+0.51%	4 Apr, 11:59 am GMT-4

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average	
Index Value	Change
39,773.14	+321.29
Percentage	Time
+0.81%	4 Apr, 3:15 pm GMT+9

Open Market Forex Rates		
Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	182.7	184.5
Bahrain Dinar	738.89	746.89
Canadian Dollar	204	206.2
China Yuan	38.5	38.9
Danish Krone	40.06	40.46
Euro	302	305
Hong Kong Dollar	35.57	35.92
Indian Rupee	3.33	3.44
Japanese Yen	1.86	1.94
Kuwaiti Dinar	903	912
Malaysian Ringgit	58.92	59.52
New Zealand \$	167.02	169.02
Norwegians Krone	25.38	25.68
Omani Riyal	721.71	729.71
Qatari Riyal	76.48	77.18
Saudi Riyal	73.3	74.05
Singapore Dollar	206	208
Swedish Korona	25.72	26.02
Swiss Franc	308.43	310.93
Thai Bhat	7.61	7.76
U.A.E Dirham	75.4	76.15
UK Pound Sterling	352	356
US Dollar	277.5	281

Kazakhstan and Pakistan seek to boost trade relations

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: In a bid to bolster trade ties between Kazakhstan and Pakistan, Ambassador Yezhan Kistafin of Kazakhstan met with Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan on Thursday.

The meeting focused on strategies to increase the trade volume between the two nations.

During the discussions, both dignitaries deliberated on the establishment of rout maps

and improving connectivity to facilitate smoother trade operations.

Minister Jam Kamal recognized the significant potential for cooperation between Kazakhstan and Pakistan, noting the positive developments observed in bilateral relations over the past two years.

Highlighting the contributions of companies like TCS and LNC in fostering economic ties, it was emphasized that collaborative efforts have played a crucial role in advancing trade activities.



Ambassador Kistafin expressed optimism about the forthcoming bilateral agreement, which is expected to further unlock the trade potential between the two countries.

He also conveyed greetings from Federal Minister for Commerce's counterpart, emphasizing the vast opportunities in various sectors including agriculture, particularly in crops like

Kino and Mango, as well as in IT, culture, fashion industry, mining, logistics, construction, and energy sectors.

Furthermore, the discussions also touched upon visa issues and the challenge of illegal human trafficking, underscoring the importance of addressing these issues to ensure the integrity of bilateral relations.

Agreement

ISLAMABAD: Mr. Saeed Ashraf Siddiqi, Joint Secretary, Economic Affairs Division and Mr. Naoaki MIYATA, Chief Representative, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Pakistan are signing the Grant Agreement on Thursday.



Photo: PID

ICCI President hails PM's initiatives for doubling country's exports



PPA

ISLAMABAD: President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari has highly appreciated Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's directions to double the country's exports.

The Prime Minister has directed the Ministry of Commerce to prepare a plan in consultations with all the stakeholders and entrepreneurs and submit an action plan to double the country's exports in next five years.

In a statement issued here in Islamabad on Thursday Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry expressed optimism that Prime Minister's initiative will go a long way in boosting country's exports and therein foreign exchange earnings and pulling it out of the existing economic crisis.

Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari added that hopefully all the

stakeholders will be taken on board for the promotion of exports of Information Technology, house hold products, textiles etc.

It is noteworthy, that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif while chairing a meeting at Ministry of Commerce has directed to extend all possible facilities to exporters in the e-commerce sector who make their products in Pakistan and export them all over the world. The Prime Minister also directed the Ministry for immediate resolution of problems of 'made in Pakistan brand' exporters. The ICCI President also welcomed Prime Minister's invitation to French companies to come forward and invest in Pakistan.

It is pertinent to mention here that the Prime Minister during a meeting with French Ambassador to Islamabad Nicolas Galey stressed the need for working together to enhance cooperation between the two countries in areas of trade and investment

Tapal Tea embarks on a digital odyssey, migrating from SAP S/4HANA on-premise to RISE with SAP!

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Tapal Tea, a pioneering name in the tea industry, enters a strategic collaboration and moves towards digital transformation by transitioning from SAP S/4HANA On-Premise to RISE with SAP. This significant step marks Tapal Tea's commitment to leveraging cutting-edge technology to enhance operational efficiency and drive innovation within the organization.

With a legacy of excellence in delivering quality tea products, Tapal Tea recognizes the pivotal role of technology in streamlining its operations and maintaining a competitive edge in the market. Tapal Tea has been an SAP customer since 2013, when it replaced Oracle with SAP ERP Central Component (ECC), and since then have invested in different SAP Line of Business (LoB) solutions such as SAP Ariba Sourcing and SAP SuccessFactors Performance & Goal Management (PMGM) and Recruitment.

Saqib Ahmad, Managing Director, SAP Pakistan, Iraq & Afghanistan, said, "The move from SAP S/4HANA On-Premise



to RISE with SAP represents an evolution in how businesses approach their digital transformation. RISE with SAP offers an integrated suite of solutions that not only streamlines operations but also propels businesses forward by leveraging the power of the cloud.

Tapal Tea, the leading tea brand in Pakistan, has been an integral part of house-

holds since its establishment in 1947. Tapal's commitment to quality and innovation has made its teas an indispensable part of millions of lives. The partnership between Tapal Tea and SAP exemplifies a shared commitment to excellence and innovation. This collaboration is not just a technological upgrade for Tapal but a strategic step towards future-ready operations.

COMSATS signs letter of Agreement with NIDM-Pakistan

PPA

ISLAMABAD: In a collaborative endeavor aimed at enhancing climate resilience and fostering sustainable solutions for disaster management using innovative technology, the Commission on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development in the South (COMSATS) and the National Institute of Disaster Management, Pakistan (NIDM), formalized the signing of a Letter of Agreement (LOA) on April 4, 2024, in Islamabad.

The Letter of Agreement (LOA) delineates an initiative focused on cooperation, coordination, and resource mobilization across all facets of disaster management, with a specific emphasis on mitigating the vulnerability of communities affected by climate change and natural disasters.

By leveraging the collective expertise and resources of both organizations, the partnership seeks to integrate climate considerations into their respective activities and operations, offering tools, assessment methodologies, and information resources to support decision-makers. This includes joint research, knowledge sharing, technology transfer, capacity building initiatives,

and advocacy efforts across various sectors such as ecosystem management, health, agriculture, and water resources to enhance climate resilience.

Ambassador Dr. Mohammad Nafees Zakaria, Executive Director of COMSATS, and M. Tanveer Paracha, Chief Coordinator of NIDM, signed the agreement on behalf of their respective organizations. The collaboration will focus on the exchange of knowledge and data to strengthen climate resilience, alongside advocacy and policy development to raise awareness and shape effective frameworks for climate adaptation and

disaster management. This partnership underscores a shared commitment to building a more resilient future for communities in Pakistan and beyond.

COMSATS is known for its capacity building activities, collaborative research and development projects, and technological solutions aimed at addressing various challenges and delivering public services. It explores ventures in AI applications, precision agriculture, food security, telehealth, drone technology, electric vehicles, among others. Additionally, COMSATS holds observer status with UNFCCC and



has an exclusive Directorate, COMSATS Centre for Climate and Sustainability, with membership of 25 Climate and Environmental Institutions.

Meanwhile, NIDM-Pakistan operates as a research-based think tank under the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA).

Govt committed to growth, productivity of agri sector: Minister



PPA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Industries and Production Rana Tanveer Hussain has taken over the additional charge of the Ministry of National Food Security and Research.

Speaking on his maiden visit to the ministry on Thursday, Federal Minister Rana Tanveer Hussain said Pakistan is an agricultural country and agricultures is the backbone of the economy. He said the government is committed to the growth and productivity of the agricultural sector.

The minister said all resources will be utilized for the development of agriculture sector in the country. "The development and prosperity of Pakistan depends on the development of agriculture," he said, adding that he will ensure practical measures for the development of agriculture sector in Pakistan.

The minister said an integrated strategy will be devised for the improvement of agriculture sector. "I am aware of the challenges and opportunities that our agriculture sector faces, and I am committed to working towards its sustainable growth and development," he said.

The minister said Pakistan has a rich agricultural heritage, with a diverse range of crops and products that have the potential to not only feed our nation but also contribute significantly to our economy. "The agriculture sector is the backbone of our economy, providing livelihoods to millions of people and playing a key role in ensuring food security for our population," he maintained.

The minister said Pakistan also faces numerous challenges that threaten the growth and sustainability of the agriculture sector.

Punjab University to train coaches in Institute of Sports Sciences Punjab after signing MoU

Tahir Amin Malik

LAHORE: Director General Sports Punjab Pervez Iqbal presided over an important meeting of Institute of Sports Sciences Punjab (ISSP) at his office here on Thursday.

Director Admin M Kaleem, Deputy Director Zahoor Ahmed, Deputy Director Ataur Rehman, ISSP Principal Chand Parveen, Instructor Shaista Qaiser, Admin Officer Malik Nasir were also present on this occasion. Chairman Sports Sciences and Physical Education Department Punjab University Dr Zafar Iqbal Butt was especially invited to the meeting.

ISSP Principal Chand Parveen and Admin Officer Malik Nasir gave a detailed briefing to DG Sports Punjab Pervez Iqbal about the training courses and other key features of Institute of Sports Sciences Punjab.

Addressing the meeting, Director General Sports Punjab Pervez Iqbal said that Punjab Sports Department will



collaborate with Punjab University's Sports Sciences Department for conducting training courses in future. "In this regard, an MoU will also be signed between Sports Board Punjab (SBP) and Punjab University soon".

Director General Sports Punjab Pervez Iqbal further said that the coaches are

being trained at Institute of Sports Sciences Punjab according to modern requirements. "At the completion of training courses, the certificates will be issued to the best qualified coaches," he informed.

Director General Sports Punjab Pervez Iqbal said that the syllabus of the ISSP courses and the qualification of all govern-

ment and private coaches will be re-evaluated thoroughly. "Punjab University is being included in the advisory committee formed for ISSP and the curriculum of ISSP courses will be certified by the Board of Studies of Sports Sciences and Physical Education Department Punjab University".

Global football talent showcase to land in Islamabad

Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Football Academy (TFA), a Dubai-based football academy renowned for its global outreach in identifying and nurturing football talent, sets its sights on Islamabad, for its latest talent showcase. Unlike the previous year's paid showcases across Karachi, Islamabad, and Lahore, TFA has revamped its approach, offering a golden opportunity for local talent to shine without any barriers. In a significant move to give back to the community, TFA, in partnership with well-known Pakistani academies, has announced a free talent showcase, slated for April 18, said a press.

In an exciting collaboration, Bookmepk joins hands with TFA as the official ticketing partner, rolling out 99 free tickets for this exclusive event. This initiative marks a pivotal moment in TFA's mission to democratize access to professional football opportunities, reflecting a commitment to fostering sports development and talent recognition in communities that are rich in potential yet often overlooked.

Ali El Jishi, The Sporting Director of TFA, commented on the initiative, "Last



year, we made a promise to come back, and we are here to fulfill that promise. Our commitment to nurturing talent is stronger than ever. This free showcase in Islamabad is just the beginning. We envision a future where our strategic partnerships extend beyond the field, developing coaches and delivering camps that could eventually evolve into a TFA franchise here. It's about laying down a sustainable foundation for football in Pakistan."

As a professional football club that travels the globe to accelerate players'

careers in professional football, TFA's Talent Showcase Tours have made waves in cities such as Reykjavik, Johannesburg, Kuala Lumpur, Cape Town, Addis Ababa, and Trinidad and Tobago. Now, as they prepare to make their mark in Bahrain, after Pakistan with an aim to uncover the next generation of football stars.

The showcase in Islamabad follows a rigorous yet promising format where in 99 players will be trialed across three different sessions, with each session host-

ing 33 hopefuls. From this talented pool, the top 25-30 players will be chosen for a final match, showcasing their skills in a competitive setting that mirrors the pressures and triumphs of professional play. The most exceptional one to three players from this final will earn a 30-day trial in Dubai with TFA's Future Team and First Team. Success in this trial means more than just recognition—it opens the door to signing a professional football contract with the club.

"Our goal is to reach into the heart of communities and bring out those shining stars that haven't had a platform before. Islamabad, with its rich cultural heritage and love for football, is the perfect stage," says a spokesperson from TFA.

As April 18 approaches, excitement builds not just among the aspiring footballers of Islamabad but also within the broader Pakistani sports community.

Through initiatives like these, TFA continues to strengthen its reputation as a forward-thinking club committed to football's global development. The Islamabad showcase is poised to be a landmark event, promising to uncover and polish the raw gems of Pakistan's football talent, setting them on a path towards international sportsmanship and success.

ICC unveils nominees for Player of the Month awards for March

A Sports

DUBAI: The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Thursday, unveiled the nominees for the Player of the Month Awards for the ICC Men's and Women's Player of the Month awards for their brilliant performances in March 2024.

The ICC Player of the Month award acknowledges the magnificent individual performers on the international stage, and the names shortlisted for March span a range of formats.

The nominees for the Men's Player of the Month include a key architect in Ireland's first-ever men's Test victory, a prolific frontline bowler from New Zealand, and a record-breaking Sri Lankan Test run-scorer.

Mark Adair was nominated for the ICC Men's Player of the Month award for the first time after spearheading Ireland's Test win over Afghanistan. He also made notable contributions in the



shorter formats.

New Zealand's pacer Matt Henry had a successful month with the ball as he took regular wickets in his side's

World Test Championship series against Australia.

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The lineup further features Sri Lanka's rising batter Kamindu Mendis, who earned the nomination for his memorable batting feats as Sri Lanka overcame Bangladesh in the longest format.

The women's shortlist honours both shorter formats, with notable all-rounders from Australia and New Zealand and an explosive new batter from England among the nominees.

England's Maia Bouchier received her maiden nomination for leading the run-scoring charts in her team's triumphant T20I series away in New Zealand.

Ashleigh Gardner, who has won the ICC Women's Player of the Month award four times in the past, is back in the mix after helping Australia defeat Bangladesh in their ODI series.

Despite ending up on the losing side in the England series, New Zealand's Amelia Kerr was their top run-scorer and wicket-taker in the March matches and thus was named amongst the nominees.

Women's Premier League Cricket Season will be played at DHA: Kashif Minhas

Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: The galaxy of national and international girls cricketers of Pakistan is ready to land in Multan from 5th April. Organized by Royal Orchard and in association with DHA Sports Complex, Women's Premier League Season 1 floodlit matches will be played at DHA Sports Complex. According to the event organizers Ali Umar and Kashif Minhas, 6 teams will participate in the women's league of 20 overs and these teams have been divided into two equal holes. According to the schedule, two matches will be played every night in the four-day Women's Premier League, the first match will start at 8 pm and the second will start at 12 pm. Champion. In addition to the runner-up teams, attractive awards will also be given to the best individual performers of the league. Royal Orchard will be the host team in the event. Apart from DHA Multan, Tarin Cricket Academy Multan, Star Cricket Academy Sargodha, Lahore International Cricket Academy Lahore and Grounds Up Cricket Academy Gulgasht Multan will participate.



Sindh Olympic Association Hosts Iftar dinner



Sports Desk

LAHORE: Iftar dinner was organized by Sindh Olympic Association Vice President Imtiaz Ahmed Sheikh and Sindh Olympic Association Secretary General Ahmed Ali Rajput at (KMC) Sports Complex, Kashmir Road. Wasim Hashmi, Gulfranz Ahmed Khan, Naseem Qureshi, Asghar Baloch, Mohammad Taqi, Khalid Rahmani, Haji Ghulam Mohammad, Irshad Makhdoom of Sindh Sports Board, Shahid Masood, Tariq Zafar, Asif Azim, Veena Masood, Sana Ali, Uzmi were present in this event. Sheikh, Miss Nargis, Nausad Ahmed Khan, Abdul Hameed, Kamran Qureshi, Kaleem Awan, Nadeem Khan, Mohsin Raza, Dr. Zulfiqar, Abid Naeem, Rehman Akram, Muhammad Wasif, Sindh Arm Wrestling Association Secretary and Media Coordinator Kashif Ahmad Farooqi and others. People related to sports and secretaries of the association, sadros, others participated in large numbers and lastly the Sindh Olympic office staff members Majid Hussain and Sheikh Najamul Ghani were given shields and Sindh Olympic Association Vice President Imtiaz Ahmed Sheikh, thanked all the people and prayed for the death of Syed Saeed Jameel, Treasurer of Sindh Olympic Association and Secretary General of Sindh Body Building Association.

Always tried to keep Shaheen away from captaincy, claims Shahid Afridi

A Sports

KARACHI: Former Pakistan captain and star all-rounder Shahid Afridi once again opened up on Shaheen Shah Afridi's removal as T20I captain, stating that he always tried to keep the pacer away from the role. "I



want Shaheen to focus on his own cricket," stated Afridi, adding that the pacer did not need his advice against accepting captaincy of Lahore Qalandars.

"I always tried to keep Shaheen away from captaincy," Afridi added. The former captain then backed his statement with a claim that many former captains, including himself had a dismal end to their reigns.

Earlier this week, Shahid Afridi revealed that he was surprised by the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) decision to change a captain ahead of the T20 World Cup. He also backed wicketkeeper batter Mohammad Rizwan to be the best choice for the role.

"I am surprised by the decision by very experienced cricketers in the selection committee. I still believe that if change was necessary than Rizwan was the best choice!" said Afridi in a post on X, formerly known as Twitter.

However, he said, that he extended full support to Babar Azam after his reappointment as the white-ball captain.

"Since now the decision has been made I offer my full support and best wishes to team Pakistan and Babar Azam," Shahid Afridi added.

Notably, Babar Azam's first assignment during his second tenure as Pakistan captain will be a five-match home T20I series against New Zealand, commencing on April 18 in Rawalpindi.

The star batter had previously led Pakistan in white-ball cricket from 2019 to 2023 before stepping down following the team's dismal performance in the ICC World Cup 2023.

Australia's Claire Polosak to officiate women series matches in Karachi

Sports Desk

PESHAWAR: Australia's Claire Polosak will officiate as an on-field umpire in all the eight white-ball matches between Pakistan and West Indies women's cricket teams scheduled in Karachi from April 18 to May 3, 2024.

West Indies women's cricket team will arrive in Karachi on April 14 to play three ODIs – part of ICC Women's Championship 2022-25 and five T20Is. All eight matches will be played at the National Bank Stadium.

In the ODI series, former Test batter and member of the PCB and ICC Elite Panel of Match Referees Ali Naqvi will lead the playing control team, while

Muhammad Javed, also part of the PCB and ICC Elite Panel of Match Referees will lead the playing control team in T20I series.

Alongside Polosak, Abdul Moqeet, Imran Jawed, and Nasir Hussain – all part of the PCB Elite Panel of Umpires will serve as on-field umpires during the ODI series. Saleema Imtiaz and Humairah Farah, both part of the PCB Women's Panel of Umpires will be the reserve umpires for the ODI series.

For the five T20Is, scheduled from April 26 to May 3, Polosak will be joined by Faisal Afridi (ICC and PCB Elite Panel of Umpires), Farooq Ali Khan (ICC and PCB Elite Panel of Umpires), Farooq Ali Khan (third umpire) and Afa Amin (reserve umpire); Muhammad Javed (match referee)

Afa Amin, Humairah, and Saleema will be reserve umpires in the T20I series.

Umpire and match referee appointments (Matches from April 18 to May 3)

18 April – First ODI. Claire Polosak and Nasir Hussain (on-field umpires), Abdul Moqeet (third umpire), Saleema Imtiaz (reserve umpire); Ali Naqvi (match referee)

21 April – Second ODI. Claire Polosak and Abdul Moqeet (on-field umpires), Nasir Hussain (third umpire), Humairah Farah (reserve umpire); Ali Naqvi (match referee)

23 April – Third ODI. Claire Polosak and Imran Jawed (on-field umpires), Abdul

Moqeet (third umpire), Saleema Imtiaz (reserve umpire); Ali Naqvi (match referee)

26 April – First T20I. Claire Polosak and Tariq Rasheed (on-field umpires), Nasir Hussain (third umpire), Humairah Farah (reserve umpire); Muhammad Javed (match referee)

28 April – Second T20I. Claire Polosak and Tariq Rasheed (on-field umpires), Imran Jawed (third umpire) and Saleema Imtiaz (reserve umpire); Muhammad Javed (match referee)

30 April – Third T20I. Claire Polosak and Faisal Afridi (on-field umpires), Tariq Rasheed (third umpire) and Afa Amin (reserve umpire); Muhammad Javed (match referee)



2 May – Fourth T20I. Claire Polosak and Farooq Ali Khan (on-field umpires), Imran Jawed (third umpire) and Humairah

Farah (reserve umpire); Muhammad Javed (match referee)

3 May – Fifth T20I. Claire Polosak and Faisal Afridi

(on-field umpires), Farooq Ali Khan (third umpire) and Afa Amin (reserve umpire); Muhammad Javed (match referee)

Called on

ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador of the People's Republic of China in Pakistan, Mr Jiang Zaidong, called on President Asif Ali Zardari, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, on Thursday.



Photo: PID

PM calls for immediate end to genocidal war against innocent Palestinians

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday strongly condemning the ongoing Israeli brutalities in Gaza that had continued relentlessly since October 7, 2023, called for an immediate end to the genocidal war against the brave and innocent Palestinian people. He was talking to Ambassador of Palestine to Pakistan Ahmed Jawad A. A. Rabei who called on him here.

He said Pakistan had a historic and close relationship with the brotherly State of Palestine and it had consistently

supported the Palestine cause, at the UN, OIC as well as other international platforms. He expressed deep condolences over the tragic death of over 32,000 Palestinians, including 17,000 children, as well as more than 70,000 injured by the brutal actions of Israeli security forces. The prime minister recalled the interim ruling of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in the case filed by South Africa and stated that Pakistan had also made a verbal statement in support of Palestine at the ICJ. While welcoming the adoption of UNSC Resolution 2728, the prime minister

expressed disappointment that Israel had chosen to ignore the resolution and continued to brazenly violate it. He assured the Palestinian Ambassador that Pakistan would continue to raise its voice at every international forum in solidarity with the Palestinian people. Pakistan has so far, sent seven tranches of relief goods for the people of Gaza. Another tranche is planned soon after Eid. The Palestinian Ambassador thanked the Prime Minister and the people of Pakistan for supporting the Palestinian people, which was a source of strength for them at this difficult



time. The prime minister thanked President of Palestine Dr. Mahmoud Abbas for his warm congratulatory message to him following his re-election.

The prime minister was assisted by Foreign Minister Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar, SAPM Tariq Fatemi and the Foreign Secretary.

PTI hints at joining JUI-F's sit-in against govt

Monitoring Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Barrister Gohar Ali Khan hinted at joining a sit-in announced by the Moulana Fazalur Rehman-led Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) against the government.

Speaking at ARY News programme "Khabar Meher Bukhari Kay Sath", Barrister Gohar said that the Grand Opposition Alliance would be launching anti-government movement after Eid-ul-Fitr.

"Moulana Fazlur Rehman would also be approached to join the Grand Opposition Alliance. We and the PTI are in touch and hope we will be meeting as well, Barrister Gohar added.

He said that the opposition parties'



protest would be aimed at strengthening the parliament as well as against mandate 'theft'. "We want no mandate to be stolen in future also," Barrister Gohar said.

The PTI chairman said that the decision regarding the leadership of Grand Opposition Alliance has not yet been taken. He said that the alliance's chief will be appointed in consultation with all parties. "It is our legal right to hold

peaceful protest," he said.

Barrister Gohar said that all cases against the PTI founder are based on 'political victimization, adding that Imran Khan would be released by the end of April 2024.

Earlier on Tuesday, the Grand Opposition Alliance formed by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and other major opposition parties announced an anti-government movement after Eid-ul-Fitr.

According to sources, the newly formed opposition alliance—also comprising, Sunni Ittehad Council, Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP), Majlis-e-Wadhat-e-Muslimeen (MWM) and Balochistan National Party (BNP) — would be holding the first joint public gathering

in Quetta on April 14.

Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) also hinted at joining the opposition alliance as its Liaquat Baloch said that his party will make a final announcement after the approval of Majlis Shura

The Grand Opposition Alliance would also be holding public gatherings in other parts of the country to protest against 'massive' rigging in the elections. The schedule for public gatherings in other cities would be announced later in consultation with all parties.

Sources privy to the development said that the Moulana Fazal-ur-Rehman-led Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) would also be approached to join the opposition in the movement against the government.

Indian govt ordered killings in Pakistan, claim intelligence officials

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Indian government assassinated individuals in Pakistan as part of a wider strategy to eliminate terrorists allegedly living on foreign soil, intelligence operatives from the two nuclear-armed neighbours told the Guardian.

The British newspaper report while quoting interviews with intelligence officials in both countries and documents shared by Pakistani investigators stated how India's foreign intelligence agency allegedly began to carry out assassinations abroad in view of national security after 2019.

Such claims relate to almost 20 killings since 2020, carried out by unidentified gunmen in Pakistan.

Earlier this year, Pakistan sought action against India for assassinations of nationals on Pakistani soil and claimed that the modus operandi was 'quite similar' to that used in Canada and the United States. Islamabad accused Delhi's intelligence agency Research & Analysis Wing (RAW), directly controlled by the office of India's prime minister, Narendra Modi, of killing Shahid Latif and Muhammad Riaz in 2023.

The recent report weighed in alle-

gations that Modi-led government has implemented a policy of targeting those it considers hostile to India. Last year, Canada and the US accused India of involvement in the murders of dissident figures including a Sikh activist in Canada and of a botched assassination attempt on another Sikh in the US last year.

Pakistani investigators claimed that such deaths were orchestrated by Indian intelligence sleeper-cells mostly operating out of the United Arab Emirates. They are accused of paying millions of rupees to local criminals or poor Pakistanis to carry out the assassinations. Indian agents also allegedly recruited militants to carry out the shootings, making them believe they were killing "infidels".

According to two Indian intelligence officers, the spy agency's focus on dissidents abroad was triggered by the Pulwama attack in 2019, when a suicide bomber targeted a military convoy in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir, killing 40 paramilitary personnel.

"After Pulwama, the approach changed to target the elements outside the country before they are able to launch an attack or create any distur-



bance," one Indian intelligence operative said. "We could not stop the attacks because ultimately their safe havens were in Pakistan, so we had to get to the source."

To conduct such operations "needed approval from the highest level of government," he added.

The officer said India had drawn inspiration from intelligence agencies such as Israel's Mossad and Russia's KGB, which have been linked to extrajudicial killings on foreign soil.

Senior officials from two separate Pakistani intelligence agencies said they suspected India's involvement in up to 20 killings since 2020. They pointed to evidence relating to previously undisclosed inquiries into seven of the cases — including witness testimonies, arrest records, financial statements, WhatsApp messages and passports — which investigators say show-

case in detail the operations conducted by Indian spies to assassinate targets on Pakistani soil.

Former state minister for foreign affairs Hina Rabbani Khar had also accused RAW of terrorist activities in India. At her press conference, she used the term "chronic terrorism syndrome" for India.

In 2020, Pakistan handed over a dossier on India's terror campaign to United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres and urged him to prevail on New Delhi to desist from its "illegal and aggressive" activities.

Intelligence sources claimed India was involved in suspected deaths of about 15 people, most of whom were shot at close range by unknown gunmen.

It added that millions of rupees were allegedly paid to Afghan nationals to carry out the shooting in Karachi in March 2022. They fled over the border but their handlers were later arrested by Pakistani security agencies.

According to the evidence gathered by Pakistan, the killings were regularly coordinated out of the UAE, where RAW established sleeper cells that would separately arrange different parts of the operation and recruit the killers.

Chinese Ambassador calls on President Asif Ali Zardari

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Pakistan, Jiang Zaidong, Thursday called on President Asif Ali Zardari, at Aiwan-e-Sadr. The meeting discussed matters of mutual interest, besides underscoring the need to

increase counter-terrorism cooperation and intelligence sharing to overcome the menace of terrorism. The president assured the ambassador that Pakistan would take all necessary measures to ensure the security of our Chinese brothers, who are working on different projects in Pakistan.

Iran proposes to release Pakistani prisoners

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: An Iranian delegation on Thursday called on Minister for Law and Justice senator Azam Nazeer Tarar to discuss issues of mutual interests.

The delegation was led by Dr. Askar Galailan, Deputy Justice Minister for Human Rights and International Affairs. Matters of mutual interest were discussed in the meeting.

Iranian delegation said that there are currently 160 Pakistani prisoners in Iran's jails and 60 Iranian prisoners are in custody in Pakistan. Considering the plight of their loved ones, the relatives of the imprisoned Paki-

stanis, the delegation proposed to release them.

They suggested that in the first phase, the prisoners would be released on humanitarian grounds and sent back to Pakistan. And Iranian prisoners will be sent back to Iran.

Law Minister welcomed this proposal with open heart and assured all possible cooperation from his side. Steps must be taken with the support of Ministry of Interior for those who are not involved in any legal crime.

In addition, in the meeting, it was also agreed to provide travel and business facilities to improve tourism and trade relations. In the end, it was reiterated to play a positive role from both sides.

Hafiz Naeemur Rehman elected new JI Ameer

Bureau Report

KARACHI: Hafiz Naeemur Rehman was elected as the new Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer on Thursday, succeeding Sirajul Haq for the coveted party slot.

To elect the new Ameer, the JI election commission president announced three names including Hafiz Naeemur Rehman, Sirajul Haq, and Liaquat Baloch.

The new leader's tenure will be five years, from April 2024 to April 2029. The election of a new leader after every five years is part of the religious-political party's by-laws.

As many as 46,000 members, including 6,000 women, from across the country cast their votes through secret balloting for the new leader. Election Commission President Rashid Minhas announced the results.

The outgoing Ameer Siraj would



complete his second term on April 8. Rehman would be the party's sixth leader serving in the top position.

According to JI spokesperson Qaisar Sharif, Ameer Maulana Syed Abul Ala Maududi was the founder of the party. Mian Tufail Muhammad, Qazi Hussain Ahmed, Syed Munawar Hussain, and Sirajul Haq have served in the same capacity.

Pakistan rules out talks with banned TTP



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Office ruled out talks with the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan, a day after a senior leader from the outlawed group's ideological twin — Afghan Taliban — advised the two sides to sit together and negotiate for peace.

At a weekly press briefing on Thursday, FO spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch ruled out talks with the

TTP.

She was responding to a query. Muhammad Nabi Omari, deputy interior minister of the interim Taliban government in Afghanistan, shared his views at an Iftar gathering in the southeastern Khost town on Wednesday.

Baloch said Pakistan expected Afghan authorities to take urgent action against terrorist outfits and their leadership for the crimes they were committing and the terrorist incidents they were responsible for in Pakistan, according to Radio Pakistan.

She further said that Pakistan remained committed to fighting against all terrorist outfits which had targeted Pakistan and the symbols of Pakistan-China friendship.

IHC adjourns cipher case against PTI founder till April 16

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday adjourned hearing till after the Eidul Fitr on appeals against the sentence of PTI founder and Shah Mehmood Qureshi in cipher case.

A division bench comprising Chief Justice Aamer Farooq and Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb heard the appeals.

During the hearing, the chief justice said that eight copies of the cipher were prepared after it was decoded and sent to different people.

The chief justice remarked that it was admitted fact that the copy of the cipher arrived to Azam Khan. He remarked that if the charges were proved even then more than one year sentenced couldn't be given in this case.

Defence lawyer Salman Safdar said that he would assist the bench regarding these sections, adding that his client was awarded sentences under

the both sections.

He said that usually cipher are returned in a period of one year but prosecution made the criminal case against PTI founder only after seven months. At this, Justice Miangul Hassan asked the lawyer to give any reference of the document regarding returning period of cipher.

The court said that Azam Khan was the sole witness of handing over of the cipher to PTI founder.

During hearing, Salman Safdar Advocate prayed the court to adjourn the case till after the Eid. The court accepted the request and adjourned hearing till April 16.

It is pertinent to mention here that the special court awarded 10-year jail term, each, to former prime minister and former foreign minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi in cipher/

The former prime minister and the former foreign minister were facing trial under Official Secrets Act in Adiala Jail from last year for 'distorting' the facts of the diplomatic cipher.