



President Zardari to address joint Parliament today
President Asif Ali Zardari will address the joint sitting of the parliament, summoned today at 04:00 pm. Under Article 56 (3) of the Constitution, the President shall address a joint session of Parliament at the commencement of the parliamentary year after general elections. (Details on Page 8)



CM Maryam chairs a review meeting on rehabilitation of different projects
"Transparency should be ensured in the construction and rehabilitation of roads and hospitals," said Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, while chairing a review meeting on the rehabilitation of roads, Basic Health Units (BHUs) and Rural Health Centers (RHCs) across Punjab. She added, "I will go and review these projects myself." (Details on Page 3)

Simultaneously published from Islamabad, Lahore and Multan

Cabinet meeting



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

Cabinet directs NFS&R Ministry to take steps for meeting wheat procurement target

The prime minister directed to form a committee to further improve the procedure for establishing new universities and higher education institutions, which would be headed by the Minister for Federal Education and Technical Training, while the Minister for Petroleum, the Minister of State for Information Technology and the Attorney General for Pakistan would be its members.

The cabinet, on the recommendation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, allowed former ambassador Manzoor Ahmad Chaudhry to receive the Commandeur de l'Ordre National Award from the Government of Cote D'Ivoire in recognition of his services. On the recommendation of the Ministry of Law and Justice, it gave its approval for the conversion of Accountability Court-VIII Karachi to Special Court (Customs, Taxation and Anti-Smuggling-II), Accountability Court-III Hyderabad to Banking Court Mirpur Khas, Accountability Court-III Sukkur to Banking Court, Ghotki and Accountability Court-IV Sukkur to Banking Court Shaheed Benazirabad. On another recommendation of the Ministry of Law and Justice, the cabinet gave its consent for authorizing the Special Court II (Anti-Terrorism) to hear cases reported under the Official Secrets Act, 1923.

The Special Court II was given the authority in view of proceeding of the Special Court I judge on leave. The cabinet, on the recommendation of the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, approved the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the Ministry of Labour,

President for strengthening economic and cultural ties with Turkiye



Spokesman Report
ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari has called for further enhancing bilateral cooperation with Turkiye in the areas of trade, economy, education and culture. He said that Turkish companies should benefit from the investment-friendly policies of the country and invest through the Pakistan Stock Exchange.

The President expressed these views while talking to the Ambassador of Turkiye to Pakistan, Dr Mehmet Pacaci, who called on him, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, today.

Welcoming the Ambassador, the President said that the people of Pakistan and Turkiye had historic and long-standing ties, adding that the two nations had always supported and stood by each other in difficult times.

The President stated that Pakistan could benefit from the Turkish development experience, especially in the area of infrastructure development. In order to promote regional connectivity, he suggested undertaking a joint feasibility study to establish a railway connection between the two brotherly countries.

The President also underlined the need for increasing educational and cultural exchanges to further promote people-to-people contacts. He said that Pakistan looked forward to welcoming Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to the 7th High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council session in Pakistan.

The President also expressed his gratitude for President Erdogan's congratulatory messages on his election as President of Pakistan as well as at the beginning of Ramzan-ul-Mubarak. He also conveyed his warm greetings and sentiments for the future success of the President of Turkiye.

Spokesman Report
ISLAMABAD: The Federal Cabinet on Wednesday directed the Ministry of National Food Security and Research to work out an effective strategy in coordination with the provincial governments for achieving the wheat procurement target. Chairing the cabinet meeting, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif directed to take all possible steps to ensure that the farmers get full reward of their hard work.

Acknowledging the endeavours of Federal Cabinet and relevant authorities with regard to the successful visit of Saudi delegation, the prime minister said the delegation was impressed by the preparatory work and comprehensive briefings by the Pakistani ministers and officials. He also expressed special thanks to Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman for his keen interest in Pakistan, which led to a successful visit of the Saudi delegation.

"We must work hard with the same spirit and dedication to ensure the completion of projects under this Saudi investment in Pakistan," he added. He warned that any obstacles or impediments in that regard would not be spared.

He reiterated the commitment to working day and night for Pakistan's progress and prosperity, as pledged to the people. "If we continue to work hard, we will soon achieve the goal of country's development, prosperity and economic stability." The cabinet, on the recommendation of the Federal Ministry of Education and Technical Training, approved the bill regarding the establishment of the Institute of Modern Sciences in Wah Cantonment.

The prime minister directed to form a committee to further improve the procedure for establishing new universities and higher education institutions, which would be headed by the Minister for Federal Education and Technical Training, while the Minister for Petroleum, the Minister of State for Information Technology and the Attorney General for Pakistan would be its members.

The cabinet, on the recommendation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, allowed former ambassador Manzoor Ahmad Chaudhry to receive the Commandeur de l'Ordre National Award from the Government of Cote D'Ivoire in recognition of his services. On the recommendation of the Ministry of Law and Justice, it gave its approval for the conversion of Accountability Court-VIII Karachi to Special Court (Customs, Taxation and Anti-Smuggling-II), Accountability Court-III Hyderabad to Banking Court Mirpur Khas, Accountability Court-III Sukkur to Banking Court, Ghotki and Accountability Court-IV Sukkur to Banking Court Shaheed Benazirabad. On another recommendation of the Ministry of Law and Justice, the cabinet gave its consent for authorizing the Special Court II (Anti-Terrorism) to hear cases reported under the Official Secrets Act, 1923.

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Seven terrorists killed as Pakistan foils infiltration bid from Afghanistan

City Desk
ISLAMABAD: Pakistani security forces foiled an infiltration bid by a group of terrorists to enter the country from Afghanistan and, the military said in a statement on Wednesday. It said at least seven terrorists were killed.

"On 16th April 2024, movement of a group of seven terrorists, trying to infiltrate Pakistan-Afghanistan border, was detected by security forces in area of Spinaki. Ghulam Khan of North Waziristan District," said the ISPR.

The infiltrators were surrounded, effectively engaged and "after an intense fire exchange, all seven territories were sent to hell," said the statement issued by ISPR.

A large quantity of weapons, ammunition and explosives was also recovered from the killed terrorists.

The statement added that Pakistan has consistently been asking the Interim Afghan government to ensure effective border management on their side of the border.

The interim Afghan government is expected to fulfil its obligations and deny the use of Afghan soil by terrorists for perpetrating acts of terrorism against Pakistan, it said.

Security forces of Pakistan are determined and remain committed to securing its borders and eliminating the menace of terrorism from the country, the military said.

Akhunzada Chattan remains safe in bomb attack

City Desk
ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader and NA-8 candidate Syed Akhunzada Chattan on Wednesday remained safe in a bomb attack on his vehicle in Momand Tehsil of Bajaur District.

A private news channel quoting Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Bakht Munir reported that the incident took place when Akhunzada Chattan was traveling back to Khar after addressing an election meeting.

A new milestone in foreign policy: Atta Tarar

City Desk
ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attallah Tarar on Wednesday said that the response received by the prime minister at international level was a new milestone in the country's foreign policy. Addressing a press conference after the Federal Cabinet meeting, the minister said that it was a good omen that Pakistan - a strategically located nuclear state - was in news for good reasons especially on the economic front.

He said that the news about improvement in Pakistan's economy from international institutions and journals was encouraging. Bloomberg, the United Nations Development Programme and the Asian Development Bank had predicted growth and development of Pakistan's economy, he added. The minister said the stock exchange had witnessed a historic bullish trend which was the proof of restoration of investors' confidence. He assured that the impact of improvement in the economy would reach the masses soon. Atta Tarar said that

NAB gives clean chit to Nawaz Sharif in Toshakhana reference

City Desk
ISLAMABAD: The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) on Wednesday gave a clean chit to former prime minister Nawaz Sharif in the investigation regarding Toshakhana reference.

As per details, the accountability bureau submitted report regarding the Toshakhana reference to the Accountability Court (AC).

The NAB investigation report stated that Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz (PML-N) supremo Nawaz Sharif did not pay the amount via a fake account to buy the vehicle from Toshakhana.

The report informed the court that vehicle was surrendered to Toshakhana in 1997 and it was not owned by Toshakhana when Nawaz bought it in 2008.

National Assembly finalizes preparation for Joint sitting of Parliament

PPA
ISLAMABAD: National Assembly Secretariat has finalised preparation for Joint sitting of Parliament (Majlis-e-Shoora) to be held on 18th April 2024. Honourable Chief Justice of Pakistan, Governors and Chief Ministers of all provinces including Azad Jammu & Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan are special invitees. Furthermore, special invitation cards have also been issued to media representatives, correspondents and journalists to cover the proceedings of joint sitting of parliament.

Special security arrangements have also been finalised as entry to Parliament House is conditional with special invitation cards.

Balochistan CM announces enhancement of skill-based education to help secure employment for its youth

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti was met here on Tuesday by Secretary Welfare Fund Ministry of Overseas Pakistani Zulfikar Khan and while informing about the ongoing social security program in Balochistan, said that 19 thousand workers of the province are under social security program. are registered in which 90 percent of the registration is of laborers working in mines, the children of these workers are being provided educational support under the Government of Pakistan Workers Welfare Fund.

Emphasis was placed on the promotion of skill-based education in various fields along with traditional degree programs in institutions. Mir Sarfraz Bugti said that not every youth can be employed in the government sectors in the avail-



able resources of Balochistan, there is a demand for technical people in various fields all over the world, so it is important that we also provide decent employment opportunities to our youth by making them skilled.

Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti said that such programs of technical training and skills in inter-tech and matric-tech should be introduced in the institutions established under the Workers' Welfare Fund,

which are in demand in the global and national market, such institutions should be under public-private partnership. can also be established for which the provincial government will provide all possible support.

Animals feed

ISLAMABAD: Farmers collecting fodder for animals in Golra Sharif in the Federal Capital.

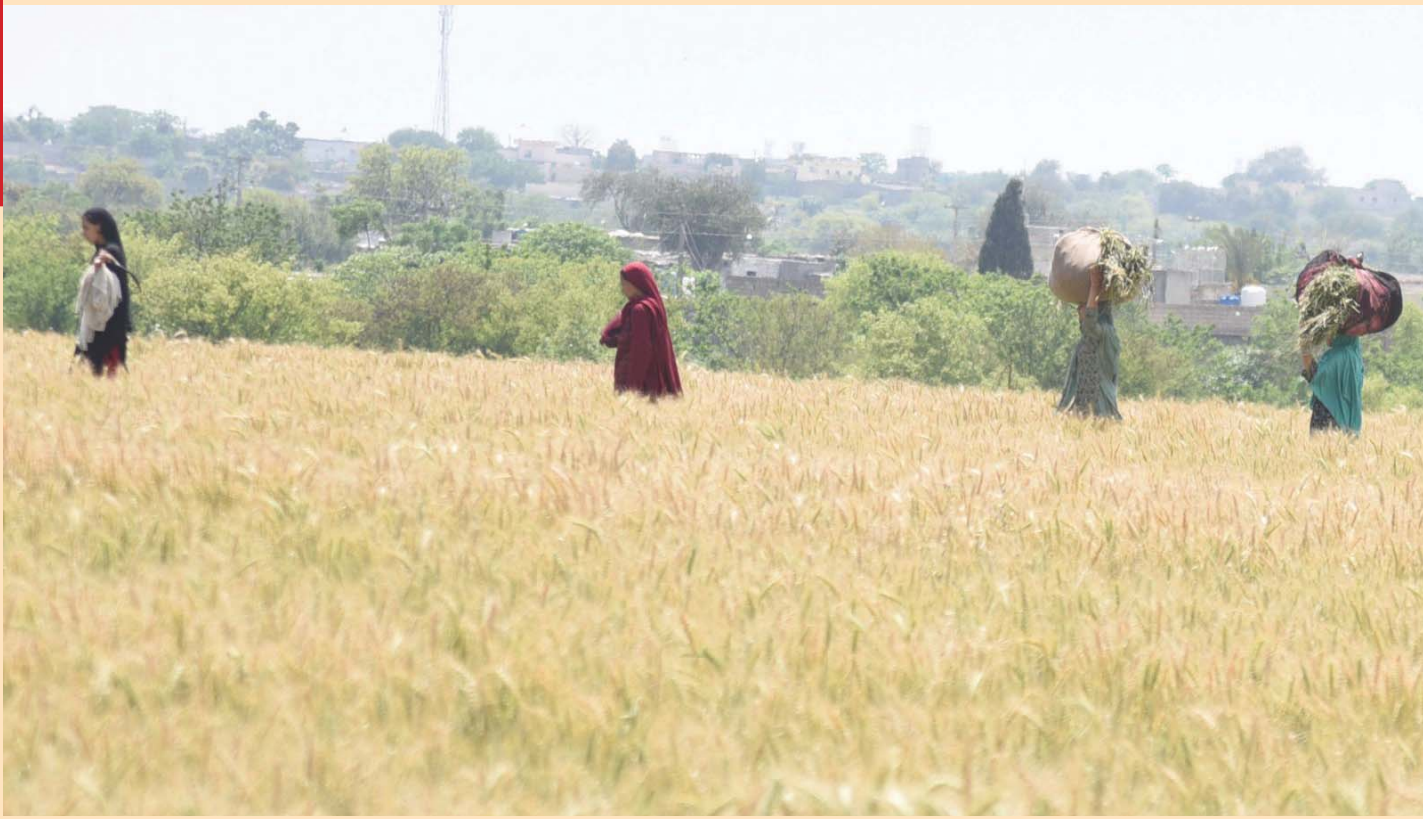


Photo: Online by Raja Farid

Opposition says PM must call assembly session to discuss Kashmir



Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: The leader of the opposition in the Azad Kashmir Legislative Assembly, senior PTI leader Khawaja Farooq Ahmed has said that the government should call the assembly session. The system can be run by a single man, there is no need for institutions, so don't let such an impression be created.

It is the responsibility of the government, the opposition media and the

bar association to organize a dialogue on the current situation. If it is part of the government, they say it is not our government. This is what the PPP people say.

All of them are making fun of the ministers and officials, but they are not ready to recognize Anwar-ul-Haq as the prime minister. If there is no change, then the prime minister He has the same thinking and ability that work can be done for the betterment of the people. Kashmir Express is the

powerful voice of Kashmiris around the world.

He expressed these thoughts on the occasion of the twenty-second anniversary of daily Kashmir Express Speaking at the event organized by Bureau Office Muzaaffarabad. Minister of Government Syed Bazal Ali Naqvi, Wahid Iqbal Butt, Shaukat Javed Mir, Mirza Bashir Director PID, Tanveer Ahmad Tanuli, Ishfaq Ahmad Mir, Ashfaq Shah, Nadeem Shah, Ejaz Ahmed, Mirza Shahzad, Faiza Geelani, Javed Chaudhry and

others also spoke and appreciated the daily Kashmir Express's highlighting of public issues including Kashmir Freedom Movement.

Assistant Director of Information Syed Asif Naqvi, Ms. Kausar, Fida Hussain were also present at the event., Malik Khawaja, Shan Hameed and others also participated. Leader of Opposition Khawaja Farooq Ahmed said that the government is reluctant to call the assembly session to avoid the process of accountability.

British Parliamentarians raised their voice in favor of Yasin Malik

Abdul Majeed Tahir

LONDON/MUZAFFARABAD: British Parliamentarians in a conference organized by Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) at British Parliament in United Kingdom (UK) yesterday raised their voice in favor of illegally incarcerated chairman JKLF, Muhammad Yasin Malik who defenselessly on 25 May, 2022 on the dictates of extremist BJP government of India led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has been unjustly convicted for life imprisonment in fake, fabricated and politically motivated cases filed against him by Indian notorious investigative agency NIA.



According to the statement Mr. Richard Burgen MP from Leeds East chaired and conducted the conference who was assisted by Mr. Amjad Nawaz Khan Organizer JKLF (UK Zone). Mr. Alex Sobel MP from Leeds North West. Mr. Andy McDonald

MP from Middlesbrough, Ms. Rachel Hopkins MP from Luton South, Mr. Khalid Mehmood MP from Birmingham, Mr. Mohammed Yasin MP from Bedford, Mr. John McDonnell MP from Hayes and Harlington, Mr. Stephen Timms MP from East Ham London, Mr. Imran

Hussain MP from Bradford East, Ms. Naz Shah MP from Bradford West, Mr. Margaret Greenwood MP from Wirral West, Mr. Sam Tarry MP from Ilford South, Mr. Tan Dhesi MP from Slough, Mr. Tahir Ali MP from Birmingham, Prof. Raja Zafar Khan Head of JKLF Diplomatic Bureau, Mr. Liaquat Lone President JKLF (UK Zone), Mr. Yousuf Choudhry Sr. Vice President JKLF (UK Zone), Sardar Naseem Iqbal Khan Advocate Head of Political Department JKLF (UK Zone), Mr. Tariq Sharif Member Supreme Council JKLF and Mr. Khawaja Hassan Mehmood President JKNAP (UK) delivered their speeches while as a

large number of JKLF office bearers, veterans and members were present in the conference.

The other participants of the conference were SM Ibrahim Member Supreme Council JKLF, Tanveer Malik Gen. Sec. JKLF (UK Zone), Raja Asad Kiyani Vice President JKLF (UK Zone), Sardar Gulfaraz Khan Spokesman JKLF (UK Zone) and senior party leaders; Malik Latief, Sanowar Hussain, Mehmood Hussain, Mushtaq Malik, Jameel Ashraf, Raja Raies, Rehmat Hussain, Arfa Kiyani, Nazakat Hussain, Haji Iqbal, Ms. Sana Malik, Lala Gulnawaz, Raja Zulqarnain, Khawaja Aneeq, Afzal Tahir and a guest participant Dr. Nawaz.

Sardar Attique says Kashmiri immigrants 'ambassadors of freedom' abroad



Abdul Majeed Tahir

RAWALPINDI/MUZAFFARABAD: President of All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference and former Prime Minister Sardar Attique Ahmad Khan has said that the Kashmiri immigrants living abroad are the ambassadors of the freedom struggle of Kashmir, who always protested the usurpation of India with full force at various international forums. And has exposed cruelty and brutality, especially after 5th August, 2019 immigrants have an effective role against Narendra Modi's brutal actions around the world. He expressed these views while discussing the meeting with Muslim Conference North America President Syed Aftab Shah, Syed Azhar Ali Shah, Syed Shah Hussain and Syed Mazhar Hussain Shah at Mujahid Manzil. He said that Kashmiri immigrants have presented their lively stand regarding the matter, they are worthy of praise.

SCO to pay zakat to beneficiaries of AfK through S Paisa under the modern system

Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: An agreement was reached between the Department of Tithes and Zakat and SCO to pay zakat to the poor, impoverished and insolvent beneficiaries of Azad Kashmir through S Paisa under the modern system. Sector Commander SCO Azad Kashmir Colonel Mohammad Rasheed Khan Chief Administrator Usher and Zakat Chaudhry Abdul Razzaq and others participated in a dignified function held at Sector Headquarters Muzaaffarabad Sector Commander SCO Azad Kashmir later said. Azad Kashmir is one of the most difficult and difficult regions. Neelam Haveli Valley and Lipa are such difficult regions where people have to face harsh weather conditions and difficulties. is providing support and billions of rupees of Benazir Income Support Program have been successfully reached or gone to the deserving people through S Paisa. He said that in the future this system will be successfully introduced throughout Azad Kashmir.

He said that there is more poverty in Azad Kashmir. Bring facilities to the destitute people at their doorsteps and improve the system of Zakat Department with modern methods Zakat Department in Azad Kashmir where poor people are paid through their personal accounts in Neelam District and Haveli District in several districts. There are no banks or their branches in the areas, while cash payments face a lot of complications and financial assistance cannot be provided at their doorsteps under a transparent system, which was the desire of the government.

UN delegation visits at South Punjab Secretariat



Quratul Ain Asim

MULTAN: A delegation from UN Women met with Additional Chief Secretary South Punjab, Mr. Fuad Hashim Rabbani, at the South Punjab Secretariat on Wednesday. The delegation included Manager Operations Anwar Qureshi, Programme Coordinator Sidra Humayun, and Program Associate Shahzeb Baig. The Secretary Services South Punjab Engineer Amjad Shoaib Khan Tareen, Additional Secretary Specialized Health Care Muzamil Bashir and Director Emergency Nishtar Hospital Dr. Zahid were also present in the meeting. The meeting focused on issues of women's empowerment, gender equality, and the measures being implemented by the Punjab government in these areas. Mr. Rabbani emphasized the critical role of women in societal development and cited the election of Punjab's first female Chief Minister as evidence of women's growing involvement in national development. He highlighted ongoing challenges such as poverty eradication among women in South Punjab and underscored initiatives to enhance literacy rates and promote technical education to foster financial independence for women. Mr. Fuad Hashim Rabbani instructed further activation of the Anti-Rape Crisis Cell (ARCC) established at Nishtar Hospital. The UN Women's delegation shared updates on various projects aimed at developing opportunities for women in the region and expressed plans to establish a UN Women office in South Punjab to bolster their efforts.

Mepco chief says sports play vital role in uplifting the society



Nadeem Kazmi

MULTAN: Chief Executive Officer Mepco Engineer Rana Muhammad Ayub Khan has said that sports play an important role in any society. Mepco is using all resources for the promotion of sports and facilities are being provided to the players. Young talent is being inducted into MEPCO teams to highlight the importance of sports in the society. It is a great honor for MEPCO players to receive the Sitara-E-Intiaz Award and Presidential Award. He expressed these views while meeting lawn tennis player Oceana Sohail (Sitara-E-Intiaz), Kabaddi player Shafiq Chishti (presidential award winner) and various team coaches at Mepco Sports Complex. He said that MEPCO is introducing a sports policy to provide more facilities to the players, which will be implemented soon after being approved by the board of directors.

President MEPCO Sports Association Chaudhry Khalid Mahmood and Vice President Waqas Masood Chughtai said that lawn tennis player Oceana Sohail has been associated with MEPCO for 15 years and she has won many gold, silver and brown medals. thanks to her excellent Performance and excellent game. Defeated top ranked players in All Pakistan WAPDA Inter Unit Lawn Tennis Tournaments as well.

Islamabad
15° - 23° Clear

SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr 4:07 am
Zohr 12:07 pm
Asr 4:48 pm
Maghrib 6:40 pm
Isha 8:09 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

ENQUIRY

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

HOSPITALS

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

DEPARTMENTS

CDA 9221334-43
CDA 9208301-04
Met Office 9250360-6
RDA 5555864
TMA 5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3

CM Maryam chairs a review meeting on rehabilitation of different projects

PPA

LAHORE: "Transparency should be ensured in the construction and rehabilitation of roads and hospitals," said Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, while chairing a review meeting on the rehabilitation of roads, Basic Health Units (BHUs) and Rural Health Centers (RHCs) across Punjab. She added, "I will go and review these projects myself."



Madam Chief Minister directed to complete Lahore Ring Road SL-3 project as soon as possible, besides taking immediate steps, in collaboration with the federal government, for the construction of SL-4 at the earliest. Recommendations for the construction of Deepalpur-Layah Mega Road besides other roads were also discussed in the meeting. Madam Chief Minister directed to plant trees on road sides, including 100,000 trees along Gujranwala-Lahore Express-

way. Earlier, Madam Chief Minister was briefed that under "Sarkein Bahaal... Punjab Khushhal (Roads Restored... Punjab Prosperous) Programme," the construction, repair and rehabilitation of 590 arterial and connector roads across Punjab have started. So far, 04 roads have been rehabilitated, while work is in progress on 05 others. It was told that the construction work on Muridke-Narowal, Painsara-Shorkot, Jhangra-Ahmedpur Sharqia, Chawinda-Sabz Pir and Zafar Wall roads is in full swing. It was told that Bahawalpur to Jhangra East will be the most beautiful expressway of Punjab. It was briefed that an invest-

ment conference will be held in May for the construction of Multan-Vihari Expressway.

Madam Chief Minister was also apprised that the construction and maintenance of health centers in Phulnagar, Manga, Shamke Bhattian and Ferozwa-la has been completed, while the work is in full swing on rest of them. She directed to complete the upgrading of health centers on war footing.

Senior Provincial Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb, Senator Pervaiz Rashid, Provincial Minister for Communication and Works Sohaib Ahmed Malik, Chairman Planning and Development Board and Secretary Construction and Works attended the meeting.

New children's emergency room at PIMS treats 200,000 children free of cost

PNP

ISLAMABAD: The new children's emergency room at Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) in Islamabad, managed by ChildLife Foundation, has successfully treated 200,000 children, since its establishment in August 2022. This milestone marks a significant achievement in combating child mortality rates in Pakistan, with the survival rate of critically ill children notably on the rise.

Pakistan faces a critical issue as 1,000 children succumb to various illnesses daily, making it imperative to address the high mortality rates among children in the country. Recognizing this challenge, ChildLife has implemented a solution-focused approach, emphasizing the importance of enhancing emergency care to effectively reduce child mortality rates by 50%.

ChildLife's impact extends far beyond PIMS, Islamabad, with a scalable and cost-effective model operating in 313 hospitals nationwide, including emergency rooms and Telemedicine Satellite Centers. Serving over 10,000 children every month in ER at PIMS, Islamabad from various regions, including Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Punjab, KP, Gilgit Baltistan, and AJK, ChildLife's commitment to pediatric healthcare remains steadfast. Through its concerted efforts, ChildLife Foundation continues to make significant strides towards improving pediatric emergency care and safeguarding the well-being of children across Pakistan.

SECP grants registration to first digital insurer

PPA

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has registered M/s Salaam Family Takaful Limited as the first ever digital family takaful operator. The registration regime for digital-only insurers and dedicated micro-insurers was introduced through an amendment to the Insurance Rules, 2017, notified vide S. R. O 1513(I)/2022, aiming to promote digitalization and improve customer convenience through instant provision of services.

The licensing of digital insurers in Pakistan will improve competition in the insurance market by lowering entrance barriers and providing more access to new insurance products and services. Digital insurers are expected to significantly lower policyholder costs and promote the adoption of customer-centered international best practices. Digital insurers will offer digitized claims management, enhanced policyholder connectivity through portal-based communication, and tailored services to meet policyholders' specific needs.

With the premium from digital channels constituting less than 1% of total industry premium, the registration is also expected to have a favourable impact on the overall industry premium from digital channels, ultimately catalyzing insurance penetration of the country towards the upward trajectory.

The notification for grant of registration to M/s Salaam Family Takaful Limited has been issued pursuant to provisions of sub-section (1) of section 10 of the Insurance Ordinance 2000.

AIOU to hold Lahore convocation on April 28

PNP

ISLAMABAD: The convocation of Allama Iqbal Open University (Punjab Chapter) will be held on April 28, 2024, in Lahore. Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training, Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui will be the chief guest. Many distinguished guests, including vice chancellors of various universities, rectors, renowned journalists and eminent social personalities from Punjab will attend the convocation. Vice Chancellor, AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood and Federal Minister, Dr. Khalid Maqbool will confer degrees and gold medals to students who graduated from semester Autumn 2004 to Spring 2022.

Vice Chancellor AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood, has said that 2024 marks the golden jubilee year of AIOU. To celebrate this milestone, the university has planned a grand celebration, which includes holding convocation ceremonies to honour its graduates. This convocation is exclusively for registered students from Punjab province.

Roots Millennium Education Group and Tech Valley signed an MoU

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Roots Millennium Education Group and Tech Valley, a pioneering tech company, official partner of Google in Education in Pakistan, are proud to announce their collaboration to launch the "Digital Safar" programme, a groundbreaking initiative says a press release. This joint effort aims to equip 10,000+ learners studying in Grade 5 to Grade 8 with the essential knowledge and skills required to navigate the digital realm safely and innovatively.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signing ceremony took place at TMUC H-11/4 in Islamabad and was attended by esteemed representatives from both organizations including Dr. Faisal Mush-taq Founder & CEO Roots Millennium Education Group and Umar Farooq CEO of Tech Valley. Digital Safar harnesses the power of Google's flagship programs, Google CS First and Be Internet Awesome, to deliver a comprehensive educational experience encompassing coding and online safety.

Expressing enthusiasm, Umar Farooq, CEO of Tech Valley, remarked, "We are excited to join forces with Roots Millennium Education to introduce the Digital Safar program across its campuses in Pakistan. Equipping the youth with essential digital skills and promoting responsible online conduct are imperative in today's digital landscape."

Petrol goes up by 5% in 2 weeks: Atif Ikram Sheikh



PPA

ISLAMABAD: Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh, President FPCCI, has maintained that the government should have kept the petroleum prices unchanged – given the slide in international oil prices by \$1 per barrel on the back of relative calm in West Asian region after Iran – Israel conflict did not go out of hand as expected; and, the demand destruction due to lowered economic & trade activities.

Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh maintained that the trend in rupee-dollar parity is visible for all to see that rupee value will remain largely stable in the coming weeks due to the completion of IMF-SBA and a forthcoming, long-term IMF-EFF program. Additionally, Saudi Arabia has also decided to enhance its foreign exchange deposit by \$2 billion to take it to \$5 billion in the SBP's foreign exchange reserves (FER) to help Pakistan deal with its economic woes, he added.

Mr. Saquib Fayyaz Magoon, SVP FPCCI, reiterated FPCCI's stance the core inflation has come down to 12.8 percent and headline inflation recorded at 20.7 percent in the month of March 2024; which is the lowest in 22 months; and, the trajectory is categorically showing a downward trend for the months to come.

National Day

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh cutting a cake on the occasion of 53rd Anniversary of the Independence and National Day of the People's Republic of Bangladesh



Photo: PID

Graduate Internship Training Review-KPK

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Engineering Council – PEC is going to conduct an event titled Graduate Internship Training Review-KPK at the C & W Secretariat, Peshawar on April 16, 2024 (Tuesday). Wherein, the Chief Guest was Engr. Ejaz Hussain Ansari, Vice Chairman, KPK

Engr. Mir Masood Rashid briefed the audience about the ten (10) initiatives of the PEC-Pakistan Development Committee (PPDC) i.e. STEM Education, Day Trip Learning, Annual Financing Scheme of Final Year Design Projects, Engineering Capstone Expo, PEC E-Library, Helping Industries by providing Internee Engineers, Graduate Internship Training, PEC E-Gateway, UNSDGS Adoption, Engineer Parliamentarians caucus.

Engr. Ejaz Hussain Ansari, Vice Chairman, KPK also briefed the audience about



the initiatives being taken by the council in the Governing Body Tenure (2021-24).

Kazakh Envoy for developing real road & rail connectivity to enhance cooperation

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Pakistan Yerzhan Kistafin has emphasized developing a real road and rail connectivity with regional approach to enhance cooperation between Pakistan and Kazakhstan in diverse fields including trade and energy sectors.

In an interview with Radio Pakistan, he said Pakistan and Kazakhstan enjoy very friendly and cordial relations and the two countries are cooperating with each other in different sectors to take this fraternal cooperation to new heights.

The Ambassador said leaders of both sides meet regularly for political dialogue to further deepen this cooperation. He said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is expected to visit Astana

to participate in Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit.

He said the political leadership of both the countries is engaged and working that relation between Pakistan and Kazakhstan should be activated.

Turning to economic cooperation between Pakistan and Kazakhstan, the Ambassador said unfortunately we are far below to tap the real potential of economic cooperation between the two countries.

He said trade volume between Pakistan and Kazakhstan was one hundred million dollar last year, which is quite little and it can be increased to the tune of one billion dollars.

Yerzhan Kistafin said we are also working with big logistic companies of Pakistan including NLC and improve connectivity and enhance

bilateral trade.

He said Kazakhstan largely produces wheat which can be imported by Pakistan. Our country is also rich in minerals and energy and Pakistan can also take benefit from these resources if there is real rail or road connectivity.

The Kazakh Ambassador said we are developing our cooperation in agriculture, education and in culture as well. He said the 12th Inter Governmental Joint Commission was held in Astana last year in which both sides agreed to establish joint working group on agriculture. He said we are also planning to hold another ministerial level session this year to boost friendly relations between the two countries.

Replying to a question, the Ambassador said Kazakhstan is currently chairing the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and we have prioritized

several areas for developing cooperation within the region. We should also develop connectivity among the SCO member countries.

He said Pakistan and Kazakhstan can also increase their mutual cooperation through this forum and bilaterally in diverse fields including terrorism, security and climate change.

He said there is dire need to augment interaction between our two forces, law enforcement and security services to deal with the issue of terrorism and security.

The Ambassador said it is our firm belief that we should develop a multi-lateral interaction to deal with the challenges of terrorism, energy and climate change.

The Kazakhstan Ambassador said his country is expecting visits of different Ministers of Pakistan to Astana



during this year.

He said we must also restore century old historical and cultural bonds between the people of Kazakhstan and Pakistan, particularly on province level. He said we can connect our cities on the basis of our old religious sites.

There is also a vast potential to enhance cooperation between Pakistan and Kazakhstan to preserve our ancient cultural heritage.

He said a Memorandum of Understanding was also signed in Inter

Governmental Joint Commission meeting held in Astana in last year to boost cooperation in art and culture.

The Ambassador said we also want to boost our relations in media industry including Television and Radio productions and newspapers to establish a direct exchange of information, which is extremely important particularly in the changing global environment.

He said we need to develop a direct channel for exchange of information.

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Innovative diplomacy with the US, KSA and Iran

The convergence of diplomatic engagements between Pakistan, USA, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and Iran amidst heightened regional tensions underscores a pivotal moment in Middle Eastern geopolitics. As the Saudi Foreign Minister embarks on a visit to Pakistan to overtly solidify initial Saudi investments of \$7 billion, Pakistan's President has extended an invitation to KSA's archrival Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, with Raisi accepting a visit on 22nd April. This timing is particularly noteworthy, occurring merely nine days after Iran's unprecedented direct attack on Israel—an action that has incensed the USA and its Western allies.

Pakistan's diplomatic overtures are paramount especially following the Iranian direct attack on Israel on 13th April, countered by a coalition of US, UK, and French military assets, with ground support from regional allies including Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait, and Jordan. Against this backdrop, Pakistan's invitation extended to President Raisi signifies Pakistan's delicate and risky diplomatic maneuvering as Pakistan's Finance Minister is currently in Washington DC to engage with the IMF to secure the release of the final tranche of \$1.1 billion under the Stand-By Agreement and to explore possibilities for a new three-year IMF program knowing very well that apparently, the visit of Iranian President to Pakistan would annoy the US which has almost veto power over IMF decision making process.

This evidence-based theory holds considerable weight, particularly given the

current context. Notably, Saudi Arabia's overtly intent to solidify substantial investments of \$7 billion (or potentially \$5 billion according to other sources) in Pakistan, but the Saudi delegation is led by the Foreign Minister, rather than by the Ministers of industries, trade and investment, or commerce. Conversely, Pakistan's response to this visit, spearheaded by the Foreign Minister despite the economic focus involving the Ministry of Finance, Board of Investment, and Ministry of Industries, highlights the diplomatic nature of the engagement.

Assuming this theory holds true, let's consider the potential benefits for the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan, as well as the broader impact on the Middle East under these circumstances.

By leveraging Pakistan's diplomatic influence, the U. S. could advance dialogue with Iran to potentially de-escalate tensions in the region, achieve guarantees from Iran in lieu of restraining from imposing further economic and financial sanction on Iran to preserve the safety of the world supply chain, prevent Iran from using its proxies to escalate tension in the Middle East and protect Israeli interests in the region.

Saudi Arabia may view Pakistan's diplomatic interlocation as an opportunity to mitigate regional tensions and foster stability in the Gulf, obtain guarantees of cessation of attacks by the Houthis in the red sea to ensure uninterrupted supply

of its petroleum products, the mainstay of its economy, and prevent spread Israel-Hamas-Iran stand off to other parts of the Middle East which could have disastrous consequence for the entire Middle East and the world peace.

For Pakistan, acting as a mediator between the US, KSA and Iran carry significant diplomatic and economic advantages. It could enhance Pakistan's regional influence and reinforce its position as a key player in Middle Eastern affairs. Moreover, attracting substantial investments from Saudi Arabia would bolster Pakistan's economy and contribute to its long-term development goals.

Reducing tensions between KSA and Iran and USA will pave the way for broader cooperation and confidence-building measures in the Middle East. It would enhance the diplomatic status of Pakistan which in the long run would help it to improve its financial and economic outlook.

If Pakistan effectively contributes to regional diplomacy and helps de-escalate tensions in the region and continue its policy of hand off from Israel-Hamas-Iran staff off, and succeeds in establishing viable and sustainable communication channel between Saudi Arabia and Iran, the United States, the U. S. could be more inclined to support the release of the outstanding \$1.1 billion tranche under Pakistan's existing Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) with the IMF

and could pave the way for the approval of a new three-year IMF program for Pakistan.

Above all, this will open the door for Saudi investment in Pakistan. The USA might turn a blind eye as Pakistan and Iran finally complete the long-awaited gas pipeline, allow affordable power and oil to flow from Iran, facilitate the next rollover of Saudi and UAE deposits, and allow the IMF to enter into a long-term agreement with Pakistan.

Should this theory prove to be accurate, Pakistan is pursuing innovative and unorthodox diplomatic strategies during a global period marked by a convoluted geopolitical terrain, notably in the Middle East, the Russia-Ukraine crisis, and the most recent Iranian reprisals in Israel.

Pakistan's success in this creative and inventive diplomacy will be beneficial in a variety of ways. Pakistan will be able to overcome its diplomatic isolation and regain relevance by managing the most delicate and sensitive diplomatic maneuvering in the globe. This would give Iran some comfort, as the result of this diplomatic endeavor might make it less likely that Israel-US will attack Iran in reprisal. It would ensure better possibilities for peace in the Middle East and smooth, risk-free exports of Saudi Arabia's oil products. If this diplomatic move is successful, there is a greater chance that Israel and Hamas would reach a peace agreement, which would provide the Palestinian people some relief.

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



Analysis

Qamar Bashir

Strengthening development cooperation with Pakistan top priority

Terming China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as the flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative, Chairman China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA), Luo Zhaohui has said that strengthening development cooperation with Pakistan was the top priority of China and it is also his firm personal commitment. Pakistan is the first country to participate in the joint construction of the Belt and Road and we will continue to strengthen development cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiatives, he made these remarks after receiving Hilal-e-Quaid-e-Azam at a befitting investiture ceremony held in Pakistan Embassy, Beijing.

Luo Zhaohui said that this honor not only belongs to him personally, but also to everyone in both countries who works hard for China-Pakistan friendship. He remarked that Hilal-e-Quaid-e-Azam carries the deep affection of the Pakistani government and people towards China and symbolizes the great friendship, mutual respect, unity and firm mutual trust between our two great countries.

In fact, this is the third time Luo Zhaohui has been decorated by the Government of Pakistan. In 2007 and 2010, he received top civil awards respectively. Before 2006, he was responsible for affairs related to Pakistan in the Asian Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China. From 2006 to 2010, Luo Zhaohui was honored to serve as the Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan and continue to serve China-Pakistan relations. Luo Zhaohui still remembers the kindness shown to him by the government and people of Pakistan during his stay in Islamabad where witnessed the tremendous contributions and sacrifices made by the Pakistani people in the fight against terrorism, including the fight against the ETIM. "I will never forget the selfless help the Pakistani government and people gave us during the 2008 Wenchuan earthquake. I will never forget the many projects we have collaborated on, including Chashma Nuclear Power Plant, Jhelum-Neelum Hydropower Station, Khalid Tank, JF-17 fighter jet, Type 22 frigate, and many more," he added. Before leaving Pakistan in May 2010, then-President Asif Ali Zardari personally presided over a ceremony to award him the Pakistan Medal of Honor. "I am delighted that President Zardari has now been re-elected as President of Pakistan".

Luo Zhaohui said he will also never forget the valuable help and warm hospitality extended to him by Shahbaz Sharif, the then Chief Minister of Punjab and now the Prime Minister. The Chairman of CIDCA said, throughout his career, he has always stayed in close contact with Pakistan and Pakistani friends, adding, Pakistan is my second home.

He said that strengthening development cooperation with Pakistan is the top priority. The latest infrastructure projects include the new international airport at Gwadar Port and the East Bay Expressway. We will continue to promote the implementation of global development initiatives. Pakistan is the first country to sign a document with China on the implementation of global development initiatives, he added. In July last year, the China hosted the first high-level meeting of the Global Action Forum for Shared Development. Prime Minister Shahbaz delivered a speech via video and sent ministerial representatives to attend the meeting.



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

Neglected Aspects of Bahawalnagar Incident - I

Few elements are as integral to the fabric of society as law enforcement. Police forces serve as the guardians of order, ensuring the safety and security of communities globally. Their significance transcends mere crime-fighting; they are the bedrock upon which the rule of law is built, essential for nurturing trust, preserving stability, and championing justice in society.

The Pakistani police force, akin to law enforcement agencies worldwide, plays a vital role in preserving peace, upholding the rule of law, and ensuring public safety. However, recent years have witnessed a surge in allegations of misconduct, abuse of power, and human rights violations within the ranks of the Pakistani police. Accusations spanning from extrajudicial killings to torture and corruption have prompted significant concerns regarding the accountability and integrity

Analysis



Abdul Basit Alvi

of the Pakistani police force. Among the most severe allegations is the practice of extrajudicial killings, where individuals are purportedly slain without proper legal procedures. Human rights organizations have extensively documented cases where suspects have been fatally shot, often termed as "encounters" by authorities. These occurrences raise profound questions regarding the deployment of excessive force and the absence of accountability for such actions. Additionally, reports of torture and mistreatment by police officers during interrogation or detention are distressingly prevalent in Pakistan. Victims, including minors and marginalized communities, have shared deeply disturbing accounts of physical and psychological torture while in police

custody. Such practices not only violate human rights but also diminish the credibility and legitimacy of law enforcement.

Corruption within the police force is another persistent issue that undermines public trust and confidence. Instances range from demanding bribes for basic services to collusion with criminal elements, eroding the effectiveness of law enforcement efforts and fostering a culture of impunity.

Allegations of political interference in police affairs are widespread in Pakistan. Politicians frequently exert influence over police operations, appointments, and investigations, compromising the independence and impartiality of law enforcement. This interference undermines the rule of law and perpetuates a system where justice is unevenly administered.

Strengthening accountability mechanisms within the police force is crucial to address allegations of misconduct and abuse. Independent oversight bodies, such as police complaint commissions or ombudsmen, can investigate complaints, hold officers accountable for their actions, and recommend disciplinary measures or legal action when necessary.

Investing in comprehensive training programs for police officers on human rights, ethical conduct, and conflict resolution can help foster a culture of respect for the rule of law and civilian rights. Continuous professional development opportunities can enhance officers' skills and knowledge, enabling them to carry out their duties effectively and ethically.

Building trust and collaboration between the police and the communities they serve is essential for effective law enforcement.

Community policing initiatives that engage residents in crime prevention efforts, facilitate dialogue, and address local concerns can help bridge the gap between law enforcement agencies and the public, fostering mutual respect and understanding.

Enacting and enforcing legislation that protects the rights of suspects, ensures due process, and prohibits torture and extrajudicial killings is essential to prevent abuses within the police force. Additionally, reforms aimed at depoliticizing police appointments and operations can help insulate law enforcement from undue political influence.

Regarding the recent incident in Bahawalnagar, it's important to examine all perspectives rather than focusing solely on one side. Reliable sources have provided intriguing information indicating notable facts. According to these sources, a checkpoint located outside the city by Chak Madrasa generates significant revenue. Every two to three years, approximately one to two of the District Police Officer (DPO) of Naka District is consumed by this checkpoint. Two years ago, a similar incident occurred when individuals associated with a Member of Provincial Assembly (MPA) were reportedly assaulted here. Similar incidents were reported in 2016. During the last decade of Ramadan, the police force adopts a stricter and more lawful approach, with much of the district's Eid gifts collected from this checkpoint. Rizwan Abbas serves as the SHO in this area. In addition to the local populace, animals and wild birds in the area also seek refuge from perceived cruelty and harsh treatment. On April 8th, the Eid collection campaign was in full force on the bridge. Every vehicle, motorcycle, and passerby was being halted, subjected to verbal abuse, and physically assaulted.

To be continued

Banana Fiber's Impact on Industry and Environment

Fazal Rehman

In the heart of rural Sindh, a silent revolution is underway, transforming traditional farming practices into lucrative and sustainable ventures. Muhammad Yasin Rao, and Muhammad Fawad Surya are among the many entrepreneurs from Sindh witnessing remarkable shifts in their agricultural enterprises, particularly in the banana farming sector.

Banana fiber, once considered a byproduct of banana cultivation, has emerged as a game-changer in multiple industries, offering a myriad of benefits. Its eco-friendly nature and versatile applications make it a sought-after material in various sectors, particularly textiles and manufacturing. Banana fiber extraction begins with the outer layers of the banana plant, primarily the pseudostem and leaves, which are abundant after harvest. These parts undergo a mechanical process to extract the fiber, which involves stripping the cellulose-rich material from the plant. Once extracted, the fibers are cleaned, dried, and spun into yarn or thread using traditional spinning methods or modern machinery. This thread can then be woven into various textiles or used in manufacturing diverse products. Meanwhile, the liquid residue obtained during the fiber extraction process, often referred to as "banana juice," is rich in nutrients. This liquid is a valuable organic fertilizer, containing potassium, phosphorus, and nitrogen, essential for plant growth. When applied to crops, it enhances soil fertility, promotes healthy root development, and boosts overall crop yields. Thus, the utilization of banana fiber not only contributes to sustainable manufacturing but also supports eco-friendly agricultural practices through the efficient utilization of natural resources.

Muhammad Yasin Rao, hailing from Matiari, epitomizes the spirit of innovation ingrained in rural entrepreneurs. Rao's journey began in 2012 when

his fascination with banana fiber led him to establish a small operation on his farm. Traditionally, banana farmers like Rao discarded the crop after harvest, but Rao saw potential in repurposing it. With support from a matching grant received by the Growth for Rural Advancement and Sustainable Progress (GRASP), Rao upgraded his infrastructure and machinery, significantly boosting his production capacity. Today, his enterprise not only sustains his family but also provides employment opportunities for others, while catering to the burgeoning demand for banana fiber in Karachi's textile industry.

Muhammad Fawad Surya, the Managing Director of Natural Fiber company, is working to produce products from Banana Fiber in state of the art facilities powered by solar energy. By leveraging grants to expand their product range, Surya's firm pioneers the development of biodegradable products, meeting the growing demand for eco-friendly alternatives. From ropes and cloth to biodegradable loofahs and bath sponges, banana fiber products offer a sustainable solution to consumer needs, reducing reliance on non-biodegradable materials and mitigating environmental pollution. They are also a good source of revenue, with a rapidly growing market presence.

The rise of banana fiber in industry not only stimulates economic growth but also fosters environmental conservation. As more entrepreneurs like Rao and Surya embrace banana fiber innovation, they contribute to a circular economy, where waste is transformed into valuable resources. Additionally, the adoption of banana fiber promotes sustainable agriculture practices, ensuring the long-term viability of farming communities and ecosystems.

In conclusion, the transformative power of banana fiber exemplifies the potential of agriculture in driving economic prosperity and environmental stewardship. GRASP is a project funded by the European Union and implemented by the International Trade Centre (ITC) in 22 districts of Sindh and Balochistan.

PM reaffirms significance of Pak-Turkmenistan longstanding, historic ties

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday reaffirmed the significance of longstanding, historic and cultural ties between Pakistan and Turkmenistan. He also underlined that there was a need to enhance bilateral cooperation, particularly in the domains of trade, energy and connectivity.

The prime minister expressed his views during a meeting with Ambassador of Turkmenistan Atadjan Movlamov who paid a courtesy call on him at the Prime Minister House, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. During the meeting, cooperation on regional initiatives was also highlighted. In this regard, the prime minister stressed that high level exchanges between the two countries needed to be enhanced. The importance of regular



Islamabad: Ambassador of Turkmenistan H. E. Atadjan Movlamov calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday.

meetings of the bilateral institutional mechanisms was also impressed upon

by the prime minister.

The ambassador conveyed the felicitations of the Turkmen leadership to the prime minister on his re-election. The prime minister thanked Turkmen President Serdar Berdimohamedov as well as National Leader of the Turkmen People Gurbanguly Berdimohamedov for their congratulatory messages.

He fondly recalled his meetings with them and said he looked forward to continuing these exchanges in the future.

The Turkmen ambassador briefed the prime minister on the various ongoing bilateral activities. The ambassador, who is also the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps in Islamabad, expressed his gratitude for the cooperation and support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other government departments in the discharge of his functions.

Inauguration

Today Ambassador Khorev inaugurated the Russian Language Centre at Punjab University in Lahore. After the ceremony the Ambassador met with Vice-Chancellor Prof. Dr. Khalid Mahmood and the faculty.



Uzbek Ambassador Oybek Arif Usmanov calls on FPCCI President Atif Ikram Sheikh

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of The Republic of Uzbekistan Oybek Arif Usmanov called on FPCCI President Atif Ikram Sheikh at capital office Islamabad and discussed various issues including bilateral trade, mutual cooperation, investment, Pakistan Uzbekistan Business Council and exchange of trade delegations. The Uzbek ambassador was accompanied by Bakurum Yusov Economic and Trade Consul Uzbekistan.

FPCCI President Atif Ikram Sheikh said on the occasion that Pakistan is a brotherly country of Uzbekistan, Pakistan's exports with Uzbekistan have increased gradually in the



last years, which has to be further increased, bilateral trade can be promoted in textile, pharmaceutical, rice, machinery, agriculture machinery, electrotechnical and other sectors. We have to explore different avenues to further promote this bilateral trade.

Atif Ikram added that we will participate in the single country exhibition to be held in Uzbekistan on

June 28. Pakistanis have the problem of business visa, tourist visa, flights to Uzbekistan which should be solved.

Uzbek Ambassador Oybek Arif Usmanov said that Uzbekistan is organizing an International Business Forum on May 3 and 4, in which the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry and the business commu-

nity are invited to participate, while the Minister of Uzbek Foreign Affairs will visit Pakistan on May 9-10. There will be G2B and B2B meetings.

Chairman FPCCI Capital Office Karim Aziz Malik, Convener Diplomatic Committee FPCCI Ahmed Waheed, Vice President FPCCI Ashfaq Ahmed, Chairman Coordination Malik Sohail Hussain, Acting President ICCI Fahad Waheed, Vice President Engineer Azharul Islam, Advisor President FPCCI Dr Afshan Malik, Executive Member FPCCI Farrukh Alvi, Chairman Pakistan Russia Business Council Mohsin Sheikh and others were also present in the meeting.

New York Times memo to journalists on Gaza: 'Avoid using the terms 'genocide' and 'ethnic cleansing'

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Intercept website published a report prepared by Jeremy Seahill and Ryan Grimm, in which they said that the New York Times issued instructions to journalists covering the Israeli war on the Gaza Strip to restrict the use of the terms "genocide" and "ethnic cleansing" and to "avoid" using the term "occupied territories" when using the terms "genocide" and "ethnic cleansing."

Description of the Palestinian territories, according to a copy of an internal memo obtained by the site. The memo also asks reporters not to use the word Palestine "except in very rare cases" and to stay away from the term "refugee camps" to describe areas of Gaza where displaced Palestinians expelled from other parts of Palestine have sought refuge during previous Israeli-Arab wars. The United Nations recognizes these areas as refugee camps and houses hundreds of thousands of registered refugees. The memo — written by Susan Wesling, standards editor of The Times (as Americans call the paper for short), and international editor Philip Pan, and their deputies — "provides guidance on some of the terminology and other issues we have grappled with since the beginning of the conflict in October."

While the document is presented as a general outline for maintaining objective journalistic principles in covering the Gaza war, several Times staffers told The Intercept that some of its contents show evidence of the newspaper's acquiescence to Israeli narratives. A source in the newspaper's newsroom, who asked to remain anonymous for fear of retaliation, said of the Gaza memo: "I think this kind of thing seems professional and logical if you have no knowledge of the historical context of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. But if you knew, it would be clear how much justification is given to Israel." The guidance was first distributed to Times journalists in November, and the guidance — which combined and expanded on previous standard guidance on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict — was updated regularly over the following months.

On Palestinian Prisoner's Day

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: The State of Palestine affirms its commitment to ensuring the release of thousands of prisoners and detainees in Israeli detention centers, including the large number of men, women and children who were kidnapped from the Gaza Strip during the past six months. The State of Palestine also renews its determination to hold Israel, the occupying power, accountable for the systematic torture policy it uses against Palestinian prisoners, including sexual violence and rape against men, women and children.

The Israeli occupation has pursued a policy of arrest, kidnapping, and torture over the decades, and these policies have affected more than a million Palestinians. The occupation also continues to practice its inhumane policy of detaining the bodies of Palestinians who were killed or tortured to death by Israeli occupation soldiers.

During the past six months, the ongoing brutal occupation policies have reached unprecedented levels, leading to the death of sixteen Palestinian prisoners under torture in illegal Israeli detention centers. In light of the ongoing extermination of our people in the Gaza Strip, countless Palestinians who were forcibly kidnapped lost their lives as a result of the torture, starvation, and deprivation of medical care they were subjected to in secret torture camps.

The State of Palestine renews its call on all partners to intensify their efforts to end this blatant attack on humanity, and to achieve freedom, peace and justice in the region. It affirms that the current situation represents an assault on humanity, the international system and its values.

Spotify reunites with Coke Studio to continue elevating local artists globally



THIS IS Coke Studio Pakistan



PPA

ISLAMABAD: Two of Pakistan's most influential music powerhouses, Spotify and Coke Studio Pakistan, have teamed up for the second consecutive season to celebrate local music, talent and culture. On 14 April, Coke Studio Pakistan kicked off Season 15 with another star-studded line-up producing some sensational tracks, and Spotify is ready to offer fans an immersive audio journey with new releases and special curated playlists on the Coke Studio in-app destination, a signature highlight of this partnership on Spotify.

"Spotify is thrilled to continue our partnership as the official music streaming partner of Coke Studio Pakistan for Season 15," said Khan FM, Spotify's Artist and Label Partnerships Manager for Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh. "Building on our past success, we've created a unique 'Coke Studio Pakistan' destination that offers our more than 600 million active music fans a diverse collection of popular songs from all seasons including the latest, taking the Sound of the Nation to the entire World. We're committed to bringing the rich tapestry of Pakistani music to our global audience, reaffirming Spotify's commitment to a diverse and inclusive music experience"

As the official audio streaming partner of Coke Studio Season 14, Spotify has set new benchmarks for the Pakistani music industry and achieved remarkable results in the process. In 2022, the fruitful partnership generated an impressive 430 million streams across all 13 tracks of Season 14. This feat easily eclipsed the combined 15 million streams for Seasons 12 and 13, demonstrating the powerful synergy of this collaboration.

Successful Cleanliness Drive at IMCB I/8-3 Led by NCHD



PPA

ISLAMABAD: In a remarkable initiative aimed at promoting hygiene and cleanliness, the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (MoFE&PT) launched campus-wide cleanliness campaign in Federal Directorate of Education (FDE) institutions. Under the guidance of Mr. Muin-ud-Din Wani, Secretary MoFE&PT, this campaign seeks to ensure pristine learning environments in all FDE institutions.

The National Commission for Human Development (NCHD) was entrusted with leading the cleanliness drive at Islamabad Model College for Boys (IMCB) I/8-3. On the morning of April 17, 2024, a team of dedicated officers from NCHD, including directors and heads of departments, arrived at the school premises to actively participate in the campaign.

The NCHD staff meticulously inspected various areas within the school, including the grounds, classrooms, and restrooms. Their goal was to assess the cleanliness situation and identify areas for improvement. Notably, the school was found to be well maintained, with proper trash cans strategically placed in different corners.

Mr. Mirza Nasir-ud-Din Mashhood Ahmed, the Worthy Director General of NCHD, personally visited different classrooms. He engaged with students, emphasizing the significance of cleanliness in their lives. Drawing inspiration from Islamic teachings, he underscored the importance of maintaining a clean and healthy environment for both physical and spiritual well-being.

The efforts of the school staff did not go unnoticed. The worthy Director General expressed his appreciation for their commitment to cleanliness. Their dedication to maintaining a tidy and organized campus reflects the spirit of collective responsibility.

As the campaign continues across FDE institutions, it is heartening to witness such proactive steps toward fostering a positive educational atmosphere. Let us all contribute to keeping our schools clean and inspiring future generations to do the same.

Our Aim Foundation Distributes Essential Ration Packs to 400 Deserving Families in Tharparkar

PPA

LAHORE: Our Aim Foundation, a humanitarian organization dedicated to alleviating hunger and poverty, has undertaken a significant initiative to support vulnerable communities in Tharparkar, Pakistan. In response to the dire conditions faced by many families in the region, Our Aim Foundation has conducted a comprehensive ration drive, providing essential food items during Ramadan to 400 deserving families that have impacted the lives of 2,000 people.

Tharparkar, known for its harsh climatic conditions and persistent challenges, has long struggled with food insecurity. The recent drought exacerbates the situation, leaving many families without access to an adequate and nutritious food supply.



Recognizing the urgent need for assistance, Our Aim Foundation has stepped in to offer support and relief to those most in need.

"We are deeply committed to extending compassion and support to communities in need," said Nisha Mandani, Founder & President at Our Aim Foundation. "Through initiatives like the Tharparkar Ration Drive in Pakistan, we aim to provide essential relief to families facing hunger and hardship, empowering them to overcome their challenges with dignity and resilience."

Our Aim Foundation acknowledges the generous support of donors and partners who make initiatives like the Tharparkar Ration Drive possible. With the collaborative support of partners, Our Aim Foundation is making a meaningful difference in the lives of vulnerable populations and ensuring that no one is left behind in the fight against hunger and poverty.

Bull & Bears
PSX 100-Share
Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index	
Current	Prev. Close
70,333.31	70,483.66
Day's High	Day's Low
70,725.49	70,037.28
Index Value	Change
10,760,056,691	-150.35
Percentage	Time
-0.21%	17 Apr, 2024 5:00 pm

Europe: FTSE 100 Index	
Index Value	Change
7,847.99	+27.63
Percentage	Time
+0.35%	17 Apr, 4:35 pm GMT+1

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average	
Index Value	Change
37,798.30	-0.67
Percentage	Time
-0.0018%	17 Apr, 2:27 pm GMT-4

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average	
Index Value	Change
37,961.80	-509.40
Percentage	Time
-1.32%	17 Apr, 3:15 pm GMT+

Open Market Forex Rates		
Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	181	182.8
Bahrain Dinar	739.63	747.63
Canadian Dollar	201	203
China Yuan	38.4	38.8
Danish Krone	39.61	40.01
Euro	293	296
Hong Kong Dollar	35.51	35.86
Indian Rupee	3.32	3.43
Japanese Yen	1.86	1.94
Kuwaiti Dinar	902.26	911.26
Malaysian Ringgit	58.24	58.84
New Zealand \$	164.75	166.75
Norwegians Krone	25.42	25.72
Omani Riyal	722.37	730.37
Qatari Riyal	76.37	77.07
Saudi Riyal	73.3	74.05
Singapore Dollar	204.5	206.5
Swedish Korona	25.56	25.86
Swiss Franc	304.67	307.17
Thai Bhat	7.56	7.71
U.A.E Dirham	75.25	75.95
UK Pound Sterling	342.25	345.65
US Dollar	277.3	280.15

Caught in a new economic vortex, billions will be affected, says Mian Zahid Hussain

Tariq Khattak

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain, said on Wednesday that Middle East tensions pose a risk to the recovery of the global economy.

A new economic whirlpool has seized the world and can have an impact on billions of people; therefore, the superpowers must resolve the problem without delay, he said.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that an increasing number of people are losing faith in the global political system, which should be noticed.

Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that the shipping sector was already affected by Yemeni militants, and business costs had increased.



Now the whole Middle East is in the grip of problems. If tensions are allowed to escalate, oil and gas prices will skyrocket, affecting all oil

and gas-importing countries, and their people will have to bear the brunt of further inflation.

The business leader said that there is anxiety in the whole world due to the Israeli aggression and its undue support by Western countries. People are protesting, and their confidence in the international system is badly affected, he added.

In these circumstances, the superpowers must take steps to normalise the situation and prevent Israel from committing further atrocities in Gaza; otherwise, militancy will flourish.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that the policymakers in Pakistan should also monitor the situation and plan to protect the people from the possible effects of this tension.

The majority of the people in Pakistan are already very worried about inflation and unemployment and are not able to bear any more burden.

He further said that the lives of the poor

people were already tough, and now the government has increased the prices of petroleum products, which has added to their problems.

The government is already collecting a levy of Rs. 60 per litre on petrol and diesel, and a tax of around Rs. 82 is also being collected. Due to the increase in oil prices, the purchasing power of the people is further reduced, while transportation has become more expensive.

To give relief to the people who are worried about inflation, the losses should be eliminated in the electricity and gas sectors by reforming them.

Failing government institutions should be privatized immediately to save around eight billion dollars annually, he demanded.

A good wheat crop has resulted in reduced prices of flour and bread and a reduction in the price has been notified, which is welcome, he said.

Launching ceremony

ISLAMABAD: PM's coordinator on climate change Romina Khursheed Alam addresses the launching ceremony on Pakistan climate finance activity project by USAID on Wednesday.



Photo: PID

SECP files criminal complaint against two individuals on charges of front-running

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Based on an investigation conducted under the Securities Act, 2015, the SECP has filed a criminal complaint against two individuals who were found involved in front-running equity trading by a large institutional investor during the period from October 1, 2021, to December 31, 2021. The criminal complaint number 15 of 2024, dated April 8, 2024, was filed at the Special Court (Offenses in Banks), Karachi.

The analysis of order-level data by SECP investigation team revealed that a day trader, with the active conniv-

ance of an investment officer of the institutional investor, purchased shares before the placement of buy orders by the institutional investor and subsequently sold those shares to the institutional investor. The practice continued for a few months. A substantial portion of the trades executed by the day trader during this period matched with trades executed by institutional investor as a counterparty. This resulted in losses to the institutional investor and gains to the day trader. There is strong evidence that the investment officer of the institutional investor was actively colluding with the day trader.

Mashreq Pakistan strengthens its operations with top leadership appointments

PPA

PAKISTAN: Mashreq Pakistan, a part of Mashreq which is the leading financial institution in the MENA region, has further solidified its commitment to Pakistan by announcing three key leadership appointments. Shamsulhaq Niaz has been appointed the Chief Digital Officer and Head of Payments, Khurram Mumtaz has been appointed as Head of NEO, and Rabia Atlas will serve as the Head of NEOPAY for the market.

These strategic appointments reflect Mashreq's dedication to strengthening its presence in the Pakistani market and its focus on delivering innovative digital banking solutions to its customers.

Commenting on these strategic appointments, Muhammad Hamayun Sajjad, CEO, Mashreq Pakistan, said: "As a trusted international digital leader, Mashreq brings with it a rich legacy of innovation and a profound commitment to catalyse Pakistan's future growth. We are here to empower Pakistan's people through banking innovation, superior customer experience and financial accessibility for all. Shamsulhaq, Khurram, and Rabia



bring a deep understanding of the national market and a wealth of experience that are well-aligned to contribute to this strategic vision. Their leadership will provide us with a clear roadmap for the continued evolution of digital banking in the country and help us consolidate our position as a leading international digital innovator bank."

Shamsulhaq Niaz, Chief Digital Officer and Head of Payments: In this pivotal role, Shamsulhaq will be responsible for establishing the Digital Payments and Channel verticals for the Bank, in addition to driving product development across all business streams.

Khurram Mumtaz, Head of NEO: Khurram has taken charge of driving the expansion of Mashreq NEO's offerings into the market, a critical component in the strategic development of the brand and implementation of Mashreq's digital agenda in the country.

Rabia Atlas, Head, NEOPAY: Rabia, in this strategic role, will be responsible for developing the framework for acquiring business in Pakistan and identifying areas of business profitability and growth. She will also work to redesign the Bank's merchant ecosystem by building value-added partnerships that enhance financial inclusion.

PTA undertakes consultation with APNA on CVAS License Template



PPA

ISLAMABAD: A delegation from All Pakistan Network Association (APNA) met with Chairman Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), Maj General (R) Hafeez Ur Rehman to contribute invaluable insights and their expert opinion on proposed license template.

During the meeting, APNA officials articulated their perspective and raised pertinent concerns regarding the CVAS license services segment in general. Moreover, specific discussion was also made on proposed changes in the license template. PTA

held interactive discussions with the delegation and requested them to formally submit their comments in writing to the Authority.

PTA believes in a collaborative environment to regulate the sector and hence promotes consultative approach for interventions towards the telecom industry. It is pertinent to mention that for this specific consultation on proposed CVAS license template, all relevant stakeholders were actively engaged in the process by providing opinions and feedback through face-to-face discussions and written submissions within the given timelines.

Women development imperative for sustainable economic prosperity: Lansana Wonneh

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Lansana Wonneh, Country Representative, UN Women has said that Women's economic empowerment is not just a women's issue but a human rights issue, their development is imperative and by supporting women entrepreneurs, we can create a more inclusive and sustainable economy.

He emphasized that dismantling structural barriers in their way is crucial for achieving gender parity and that tackling multi-forms of vulnerability and violence against women through improved policies, programmes and funding mechanisms is of paramount importance. He said this during his address as Chief Guest at National Women Trade Fair Certificate Distribution Ceremony and Eid Milan Party

held in collaboration with Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry and National Commission on Status of Women at Chamber House on Tuesday. He assured his institution's fullest support to all the stakeholders to achieve the objectives of women empowerment for promoting their advancement in all the sectors.

Chairperson National Commission on Status of Women Ms. Nilofar Bakhtiar said that empowering women economically is crucial for the development of our society. She said that there is no dearth of talent and creativity in the women of Pakistan, what they lack is opportunity to hone their talents to cultivate and that they should not be looked at as beneficiaries but as equal drivers of the economy.

Acting President ICCI Faad Waheed called for collaborative efforts to end

poverty in all its dimensions and pushing for peace and dignity for women and girls everywhere adding that women are not a burden on the economy rather they are the missing piece that will drive our economy to prosperity.

Engineer Azhar ul Islam Zafar Vice President ICCI drew attention to the pressing need for women to hold leadership roles in all the fields of life. He added that by collaborating with UNWOMEN, WCCI and ICCI women can get recognized for their abilities to achieve economic empowerment for the progress of the country.

On his part former President ICCI and Secretary General United Business Group Zafar Bakhtawari said that if we have to put our country on road to progress and earn applause in the comity of nations we have to take along



women in all the fields. He also made mention of numerous initiatives taken by ICCI and D-Watson Group for the prosperity of women. He appreciated Nelofar Bakhtiar, Chairperson NCSW, Dr. Shehla Javed, founder President

Lahore WCCI, Samina Fazil former President Islamabad WCCI for their proactive role in the empowerment of women and Ms. Uzaira Rafique, VC Fatima Jinnah Women University for her services in the field of education.

We are striving to achieve self-reliance in pulses: Chairman PARC

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Variety Evaluation Committee (VEC) meeting of Pulses held at the Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC) concluded with the unanimous recommendation of ten high-yielding pulses varieties poised to revolutionize agriculture in Pakistan. Pulses play a crucial role in global food security and nutrition of the country. Pakistan needs 1.56 million tons of pulses annually. We have become self-sufficient in mung production during 2021-22 which was 0.263 million tons against the total requirement of 0.180 million tons. Now the country is focusing on increasing the production of other pulse crops, such as chickpea, lentil and mash bean. The meeting was attended by representatives from the Federal Seed Certification and Registration Department (FSC&RD), Ministry of National Food Security & Research (MNFS&R), as well as scientists from pulses research institutes across the country.

Member Plant Sciences Division (PSD), PARC, Dr. Imtiaz Hussain presided over the VEC meeting. Dr. Muhammad Mansoor, National Coordinator Food Legumes, PARC, Islamabad presented 10 candidate varieties before the committee. After detailed deliberations, VEC recommended 10 pulses varieties that included 05 chickpea and 01 mung bean variety of NIAB, Faisalabad, 01 lentil and 01 mung bean variety of Pulses Research Program, NARC, Islamabad, 01 mung bean variety by Pulses Research Institute, AARI, Faisalabad and a mung bean variety of NIFA, Peshawar. This achievement is due to the consistent backup support by PSDP, Pulses Project "Promoting Research for Productivity Enhancement in Pulses" to its research components throughout the country.

The Chairman VEC, in his concluding remarks, stated that high yielding, disease and climate resilient varieties play an important role in improving pulses productivity. However, he was of the view that as the pulses gene pool has widened, therefore, all pulses scientists across the country are urged to focus on strengthening the pulses foundation seed production i.e. BNS, Pre-basic and basic seed. Moreover, there needs to be a strong nexus among researchers and extension workers.

Pakistan, West Indies ODI series commences on Thursday

Sports Desk

KARACHI: Pakistan women's team will aim to earn maximum points in the upcoming ICC Women's Championship 2022-25 fixture against the West Indies when the three-ODI series will commence here at the National Bank Stadium on Thursday. The second and third ODI will be played on 21 and 23 April, respectively.

Nida Dar will captain fifth-ranked Pakistan (16 points), while Hayley Matthews will skipper the ninth-ranked West Indies (eight points). The matches on Thursday and Sunday will start at 0930 local time, while Tuesday's game will start at 3.30pm. The series will be broadcast live on A Sports HD and Geo Super, and will also be live-streamed on ARY ZAP, Tamasha and Tapmad across the country. To facilitate fans, the entrance to the stadium is free and spectators can enjoy the game from the Javed Miandad Enclosure. Nida Dar, captain Pakistan women's team: "We have worked really hard for the upcoming series, knowing the significance it holds for our journey for direct qualification to



the ICC Women's World Cup. The training camp before the series was intense, and our coaches left no stone unturned in refining our skills and strengthening our fitness levels.

"West Indies may have a good track record against us in ODIs, but we have been playing some excellent cricket lately, and we are eager to continue that trend in the upcoming series. Our goal is to build on our recent successes and deliver strong performances against a tough opponent."

Hayley Matthews, captain West Indies women's team: "Pakistan are a dangerous opponent, especially on their home turf. They have a talented squad capable of turning the game around at any moment. We are up for the challenge, and we are determined to execute our game plan to come out on top. "The one-week training camp in Dubai provided us with the perfect platform to refine our skills ahead of the all-important ICC Women's Championship matches against Pakistan. As

we have arrived in Karachi and had a good couple of sessions, our focus now shifts to adapting to the local conditions to do well in the series." Australia's Claire Polosak will be the on-field umpire in all the three ODIs and five T20Is. For the ODIs, she will be joined by Abdul Moqet, Imran Jawed and Nasir Hussain for the on-field umpiring duties, while Saleema Imtiaz and Humairah Farah will be the reserve umpires for the ODI series. The three ODIs will be followed by five T20Is from 26 April to 3 May. Squads: Pakistan (ODIs only): Nida Dar (captain), Aliya Riaz, Bismah Maroof, Diana Baig, Fatima Sana, Muneeba Ali, Najiha Alvi (wk), Nashra Sundhu, Natalia Parvaiz, Sadaf Shamas, Sadia Iqbal, Sidra Amin, Sidra Nawaz (wk), Tuba Hassan, Umm-e-Hani and Waheeda Akhtar West Indies - Hayley Matthews (captain), Shemaine Campbell (vice-captain), Aaliyah Alleyne, Afy Fletcher, Chedean Nation, Cherry Ann Fraser, Chinelle Henry, Jannillea Glasgow, Karishma Ramharack, Kate Wilmott, Qiana Joseph, Rashada Williams, Shamillia Connell, Stafanie Taylor and Zaida James

T20I series against NZ holds great importance: Babar Azam

Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani Skipper Babar Azam believed the five-match T20I series against New Zealand holds great importance as part of preparations for the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 later this year. Speaking at the pre-series media conferences at the Pindi Stadium Rawalpindi on Wednesday Babar Azam said, "This five-match T20I series holds a lot of importance for us as we look forward to preparing for the all-important mega-event.

We had a great fitness camp in Kakul and are looking forward to express ourselves as unit. "New Zealand will challenge us at different points in the series, serving as a fine work out for the Pakistan side. The prospect of having a blend of youth and experience in the side excites me as a leader." Meanwhile New Zealand captain Michael Bracewell said, "I'm proud to be leading the team on this tour. We'll look to play entertaining cricket as a side and take the game forward. Most of the players in our squad have played a lot of T20 Cricket growing up and they are very well equipped with the knowledge of this format. Pakistan are formidable side at home and we'll look to put challenges in their back-



yard." Pakistan would kick-off their ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 preparations on Thursday at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium when they take on New Zealand in first of the five matches. The venue would also host matches on Saturday and Sunday, while Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium will be the stage for the remaining two matches next week on Thursday and Saturday. Both Babar Azam and Michael Bracewell also took part

in pre-series photo-shoot. This would be the third five-match series between the two sides inside a 12-month period. Last year, Pakistan and New Zealand drew the series at two-all in Pakistan, while New Zealand clinched the series 4-1 earlier this year in their backyard. Pakistan have named uncapped Abrar Ahmed, Mohammad Irfan Khan and Usman Khan in the 17-player squad, which also sees the return of Babar Azam

as the white-ball captain. Mohammad Amir and Imad Wasim were also back in national colours along with fast bowler Naseem Shah. Naseem last played for Pakistan in the ACC Asia Cup 2023 before suffering shoulder injury in the match against India in Colombo that sidelined him from the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023 and tours of Australia and New Zealand. Azhar Mahmood, for the first time in his career, would be the head coach of the Pakistan men's team. The former Test all-rounder has previously worked as the national side's bowling coach from 2016-2019. The toss was scheduled to take place at 7pm local time and the first will be bowled at 7:30pm local time. Squads: Pakistan - Babar Azam (captain), Abrar Ahmed, Azam Khan, Fakhar Zaman, Iftikhar Ahmed, Imad Wasim, Mohammad Abbas Afridi, Mohammad Rizwan, Mohammad Amir, Muhammad Irfan Khan, Naseem Shah, Saim Ayub, Shadab Khan, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Usama Mir, Usman Khan and Zaman Khan. New Zealand - Michael Bracewell (captain), Tom Blundell, Mark Chapman, Josh Clarkson, Jacob Duffy, Dean Foxcroft, Ben Lister, Cole McConechie, Jimmy Neesham, Will O'Rourke, Tim Robinson, Ben Sears, Tim Seifert, Ish Sodhi and Zak Foulkes.

Boys Handball under Prime Minister Youth Talent Hunt Program to start from May 1

Sports Desk

PESHAWAR: Provincial handball Men League competitions are being held in Peshawar University in connection with Prime Minister Youth Talent Hunt Program continued under the aegis of Higher Education Commission, Islamabad.

This was stated by Director General Sports University of Peshawar and former International Athlete Bahar Karam while talking to APP here on Wednesday. He said for the smooth conduct of the PM Youth Talent Hunt Boys



Handball League, all appropriate measures have been taken to hold the League inside the premises of University of Peshawar. The teams from five different

Regions including Dera Ismail Khan, Bannu, Mardan, Swat and Peshawar would be reaching Peshawar on April 27. The regional training camps will be held on April 28-29 while the League will begin on May 1, 2024.

The opening ceremony of the League would be organized on May 1, 2024 at 3:00 PM with Peshawar facing Mardan. On the same day at 5:00 PM, Bannu will face Swat. On May 2nd, Hazara will face Mardan and Peshawar will face Swat. On May 3rd, Bannu and Hazara will face Mardan and Swat.

On May 4, there will be a competition between Peshawar and Hazara, while the teams of Mardan and Bannu will compete, while on May 5, Hazara and Swat and Peshawar and Bannu will compete. Preparations are being completed and the best facilities will be provided to the players and officials. In these competitions, which are being completed, the best players will be selected only on merit, who will join the National League. Out of the National League, a team would be selected to visit other countries

Pakistan-New Zealand 5th T20I Series to start from Thursday

Sports Desk

PESHAWAR: A series of five T20 International matches will be played between Pakistan and New Zealand from April 18 with the first match played on Thursday at Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium at 7:30 PM.

A lucky series of 5th T20 International matches will be played between Pakistan and New Zealand from April 18. The first T20 International will be played on Thursday at 7:30 PM in Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium.

The second and third matches will also be played in the same Stadium on April 20 and 21. Fourth T20I match will be played on April 25 and the fifth T20I will be played on April 27 at the Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore.

Good matches are expected between the two countries. Pakistan will have the advantage of home ground and local spectators, but the New Zealand team is also a tough team and Pakistan will need to work hard to win the series. It is worth mentioning here that New Zealand in January this year defeated Pakistan on their home ground by 4-1.

Shaheen Shah Afridi led Pakistan in this series. The team has been announced. Two new players Usman Khan and Irfan Khan have been included in the Pakistan team for the first time. Pakistan cricket team consists of Babar Azam (captain), Saeem Ayub, Mohammad Rizwan, Usman Khan, Iftikhar Ahmed, Azam Khan, Irfan Khan, Niaz, Shadab Khan, Imad Wasim, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Naseem Shah, Zaman Khan, Muhammad Amir, Abbas Afridi, Osama Mir, Fakhr Zaman and Abrar Ahmed. Reserve players of the team include Haseebullah, Muhammad Ali, Sahibzada Farhan, Agha Salman and Wasim Jr.

The New Zealand team includes Michael Bracewell, Tom Blundell, Mark Chapman, Josh Clarkson, Jacob Duffy, Dean Foxcroft, Ben Lister, Cole McConechie, Zack Fowlkes, Jimmy Neesham, Will O'Rourke, Tim Robinson, Ben Sears, Tim Seifert, and Ish Sodhi.

So far 39 T20 International matches have been played between Pakistan and New Zealand in which New Zealand

has won 17 matches and lost 21 matches. In total, New Zealand have played 194 T20 International matches. Out of which NZ won 99 matches and lost 80. On the other hand, Pakistan has played 224 international T20 matches. In which Pakistan won 135 matches and lost 80 matches. Pakistan's highest score against New Zealand in a T20 International is 201 runs for the loss of 4 wickets which was scored by Pakistan on January 25, 2018 at Auckland. New Zealand's highest score against Pakistan was 226 runs for 8 wickets on January 12, 2024 at Auckland ground.

The lowest score of the innings was scored by Pakistan on 101 runs on January 22 in 2016 at Wellington. The New Zealand team was bowled out by 80 runs against Pakistan on December 30 in 2010 at Christ Church. In batting, Babar Azam and New Zealand's MS Chapman are the only batsmen who have scored centuries. Chapman played an innings of 104 runs and Babar Azam 101 runs and both were not out. The highest individual score after these two is Muhammad Hafeez when he scored 99 not out

at Hamilton on December 20, 2020. The second number on the table is Muhammad Rizwan when he scored two days later at Napier on December 22, 2020.

An innings of 89 runs was played at the venue. New Zealand's Guptill at number three played an unbeaten innings of 87 runs at the Hamilton venue on January 17 in 2016.

Babar Azam has the highest number of runs in T20 International matches and is on the first place in the batting table. He has scored 755 runs at an average of 44.41 in 21 matches against New Zealand. Babar Azam has scored one century and seven fifties.

Kane Williamson of New Zealand has scored 667 runs at an average of 39.23 in 21 matches against Pakistan. In which the best innings is 72 runs. Williamson has scored six half-centuries against Pakistan. The third number is Muhammad Rizwan of Pakistan who scored 622 runs at an average of 38.87 against New Zealand in 19 matches. In which the best innings is 98 runs not out. Muhammad Hafeez from Pakistan has scored



563 runs at an average of 37.53 in 18 matches in which the best innings is 99 runs not out. Muhammad Hafeez has scored three fifties.

New Zealand's Tim Southee has taken the most wickets on the bowling table. He bowled 38 Pakistan batsmen at an average of 17.05, in which the best bowling is five wickets for 18 runs. The second number on this table is Pakistan's Harris Rauf who dismissed 32 players in 16 matches. The best bowl-

ing was four wickets for 18 runs. The third place is for New Zealand lanky fast bowler Adam Melne who took 26 catches in seventeen matches, after him Pakistan Shaheen Afridi who got 25 wickets in 17 matches. The best bowling is three wickets for 20 runs. Shaheen's father-in-law Shahid Khan Afridi is at the fifth place, who has hunted 21 NZ batsmen at an average of 18.47. His best bowling is four wickets for 14 runs.



SARGODHA: Players participating in tug-of-war competition during Inter Girls Collegiate Tug-of-War Tournament organized by Education Board Sargodha.

National deaf cricket team rewarded with Rs 95 lakh for winning Deaf T20 World Cup



Tahir Amin Malik

LAHORE: Punjab Minister for Sports Faisal Ayub Khokhar distributed the cheques of Rs 95 lakh among the players and officials of the national deaf cricket team who won the Deaf T20 World Cup at a ceremony held at the National Hockey Stadium on Wednesday.

Secretary Sports Punjab Muzaffar Khan Sial, DG Sports Punjab Pervez Iqbal, Deputy Director Zahooh Ahmed and other officials were also present on this occasion.

Addressing the press conference, Faisal Ayub Khokhar said that the national deaf cricket team made the entire nation proud by defeating Sri Lanka in the final of Deaf T20 World Cup at Sharjah last month.

"Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz is the first CM of the province who extended much needed support to sports and sports community. CM's love for sports can be gauged from the fact that she has doubled the amount of Sports Endowment Fund after assuming her charge. She also doubled the cash prize for deaf cricket players."

He announced to organize grand Punjab League in which 15 games will be competed from UC level to provincial level. "Punjab League will be a suitable platform for all neglected players to demonstrate their sports talent. This league will also play a key role in tracing fresh potential players".

He informed that Women's Pink Games are also going to be held in a much better way in the coming weeks. "Punjab CM is taking special interest in Women's Pink Games which will provide a suitable platform to female athletes to showcase their hidden sports talent".

Faisal Ayub Khokhar said that more than 300 mega sports complexes will be developed across the province. "As many as 100 new sports complexes will be built in those areas where this sports facility does not exist while 200 sports complexes will be rehabilitated".

He said the project of new and rehabilitated sports complex has been included in ADP. "Top standard sports complexes will be constructed in Raiwind and Nankana Sahib. Besides this, the concept of outdoor gym is being introduced for the first time in Punjab".

Cristiano Ronaldo's ex-Man Utd teammate says he 'frustrated' other players

It's always a luxury when you are playing alongside Cristiano Ronaldo but his former Manchester United teammate Gary Neville does not feel that way about him.

The 39-year-old Ronaldo has become one of the world's most iconic soccer players, with his teammates relying on him to deliver during difficult situations.

However, it certainly took him some time to get to the stage he is at today.

United legend Neville discussed his frustrations when he was tasked with playing a Portuguese youngster at Old Trafford after he had played with a prime David Beckham.

He revealed this while he was in a discussion with Liverpool star Trent Alexander-Arnold on the latest episode of "The Overlap".

"Ronaldo came in, he was quite like that [shows his little finger]. Quite scrawny, not developed his body," Neville said recalling his early years.

"His decision-making was quite erratic. You know, if he should have crossed it, he dribbled. If he should have dribbled, he crossed it."

Called on

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Azerbaijan Mr. Khazar Farhadov called on Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq at Parliament House on Wednesday.



Photo: PID

President Zardari to address joint Parliament today

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari will address the joint sitting of the parliament, summoned today at 04:00 pm.

Under Article 56 (3) of the Constitution, the President shall address a joint session of Parliament at the commencement of the parliamentary year after general elections.

This will be President Asif Ali Zardari's record seventh address to the joint sitting of the National Assembly and

Senate. During his five-year stint in the Presidency from 2008 to 2013, he had already addressed the parliament six times.

It is pertinent to mention here that the previous joint sitting of Parliament was summoned on March 9 for the presidential elections with National Assembly Speaker Ayaz Sadiq in chair.

Asif Ali Zardari, the joint candidate of PPP and PML-N, was elected as the 14th president of Pakistan.



Zardari received majority votes of the electoral college, comprising the parliament and provincial assemblies, paving the way for him to assume the office of President of Pakistan, for the second time in the country's parliamentary history.

The PPP co-chairman received 411 votes while the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) backed candidate Mehmood Khan Achakzai — the home of PTI independents — only managed to get 181 votes.

In a joint sitting of the National Assembly and Senate, the coalition government's nominee received 255 votes while the SIC-backed candidate managed just 119 votes.

UN appeals for \$2.8 billion to help Palestinians enduring Israeli attacks

News Desk

UNITED NATIONS: The United Nations has appealed for \$2.8 billion to provide desperately needed aid to 3 million besieged Palestinians, stressing that tackling looming famine amid Israeli attacks against Gaza requires not only food but sanitation, water and health facilities. Andrea De Domenico, the head of the UN humanitarian office for Gaza and the West Bank, OCHA, told a news briefing that "massive operations" were required to restore those services and meet minimum standards — and "this can't be done during military operations".

He pointed to the destruction of hospitals, water and sanitation facilities, homes, roads and schools, adding that "there is not a single university that is standing in Gaza." The development came amid reports of ongoing Israeli bombardment of the Gaza Strip including Gaza City in the north, Rafah in southern Gaza and central Gaza, where more than dozen people were believed to have died in an apparent missile attack on a refugee camp on Tuesday. Video images reportedly from Al-Aqsa Hospital in Deir Al-Balah showed injured and dead victims including children after the strike on the Maghazi refugee camp in the centre of the enclave. Wednesday's appeal covers assistance to 3.1 million people between now and the end of the year. It envisages helping 2.3 million people in the Gaza Strip where food insecurity experts have warned that imminent famine looms in the north after more than six months of intense Israeli bombardment.

Iranian envoy lauds Pakistan's defence capabilities



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Reza Amiri Moghaddam called on Minister for Defence and Defence Production Khawaja Muhammad Asif on Wednesday and lauded the defence capabilities of Pakistan.

The Defence Minister said Pakistan and Iran enjoyed cordial and fraternal ties, nourished by centuries old religious and cultural affinities, a news release said.

Khawaja Asif reiterated Pakistan's stance on Palestine issue and highlighted early achievement of ceasefire in Gaza as well as resolution of Palestine issue.

Underlining the importance of Joint Border Commission, the Minister said that Pakistan had taken all necessary measures in the domain of border management and the joint efforts on the issue should continue in days ahead.

On the occasion, the Iranian Ambassador appreciated Pakistan's defence capabilities and said the two countries had potential for further collaboration in the field of defence and energy cooperation.

Finally, govt admits blocking X in Pakistan, explains its motives

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Interior has told the Islamabad High Court that social media platform X, was shut down in Pakistan after failing to adhere to directives made by the government. The government has also claimed that the site was blocked on the basis of intelligence reports.

In a 21-page reply submitted to the court, the ministry of interior said that the ban was 'necessitated' after X did not respond to multiple requests by the government.

"Twitter has not complied with the requests of Pakistani authorities rather demonstrated a lack of responsiveness to Pakistan's concerns regarding offensive material uploaded on their platform or trends that undermine the sovereignty and dignity of Pakistan," the ministry said.

The reply added that the Federal Investigation Agency has forwarded numerous requests to X to block accounts involved in defamatory campaign against the chief justice.

"This lack of cooperation from Twitter/X in addressing content that violates Pakistani laws and values further justifies the need for regulatory measures including the temporary ban," the reply added.

The statement also added that X was blocked on the ministry's directives by the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority on February 17 after reports from intelligence agencies.

The ministry said that the confidential intelligence reports can be shown to the court if needed. The ministry also said that the unchecked dissemination of fake news can pose a threat to society.

SECP directs listed companies to disclose gender gap data

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has issued a directive for listed companies to include a statement on gender pay gap in their annual reports. The directive aligns with the Government's instructions under the Prime Minister's Women Empowerment Package 2024, aimed at promoting gender diversity within the corporate sector.

To facilitate compliance, the SECP has provided a suggestive template for the gender pay gap statement, along with guidance on its calculation methodology.

Political parties advised to adhere to ECP rules, regulations in by-elections

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has urged all political parties and candidates participating in the upcoming by-elections to uphold Pakistan's Constitution, avoid actions that could harm national interests or institutions, comply with Election Commission regulations, and refrain from defaming the commission.

According to the code of conduct, high-ranking officials including the President, Prime Minister, Speaker/Deputy Speaker of assemblies, federal and provincial ministers, governors, mayors, and their deputies are prohibited from participating in election campaigns. However,

members of the Senate and local government could participate in the campaign while observing strictly the Election Commission's code of conduct.

Exceptions apply to speakers, deputy speakers, and local government office bearers contesting elections from their constituencies, provided they refrain from using official resources or announcing development schemes during their campaign.

Contestants must respect people's rights as per the constitution and law, refrain from actions undermining Pakistan's ideology, sovereignty, integrity, security, morality, public order, or judiciary and armed forces. Violations may result in

contempt under Section 10, of the Elections Act 2017.

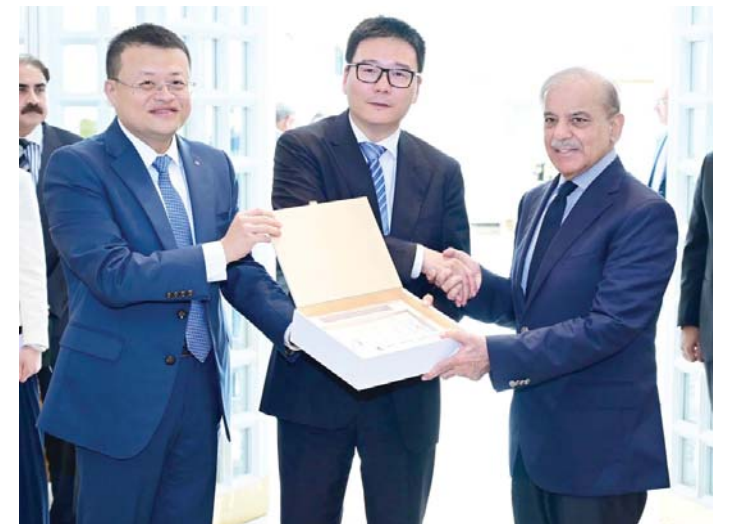
The code prohibits the offering of gifts or inducements to influence candidates, mandates cooperation with law enforcement for election security, and requires political parties to ensure equal opportunity for men and women in the selecting of candidate, with a minimum representation of five percent women candidates.

Additionally, they must adhere to Election Commission directives, maintain public order and morality, and refrain from maligning the Election Commission, with violations subject to contempt under the Elections Act 2017. Contestants must cooper-

ate with law enforcement for election security. Parties must provide equal opportunities for men and women in candidate selection, ensuring a minimum of five percent representation of women candidates as mandated by Section 206 of the Act.

Political parties, candidates, election agents, and their supporters are prohibited from barring any individual from becoming a candidate or exercising their right to vote based on gender identity. Parties must promote women's participation in the electoral process. Destruction of election materials is considered a corrupt practice, and parties should discourage such actions among their workers.

No compromise on security of Chinese workers in Pakistan: PM



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday assured that the government would make no compromise on the security of the Chinese workers in Pakistan. The prime minister, in a meeting with a delegation of Shanghai Electric Group led by Chairman Wu Lei, said that the government would ensure all possible facilitation of the Chinese investors to further expand the ongoing projects.

He urged the Chinese firms to switch the power plants from imported to the local coal and increase their investment in the coal mining sector. In the meeting, the prime minister was briefed about the projects being executed by the Shanghai Electric Group. Citing cordial and time-tested ties with China, Prime Minister

Shehbaz said that Pakistan desired to further promote its friendly ties and strengthen economic partnership with the country. The Shanghai Electric Group was currently working on Thar Coal mine development and a 1320MW coal power project. It was told that Shanghai Electric Group was one of the biggest firms engaged under the China Pakistan Economic Corridor in Pakistan. The Thar Coal projects executed by the Group were annually saving around \$400 million. The meeting was attended by Chairman of Thar Coal Block 1 Power Generation Company Meng Donghai, Economic Affairs Minister Ahad Khan Cheema, Energy Minister Sardar Awais Khan Leghari, Petroleum Minister Dr Musaddik Malik, Deputy Chairman of Planning Commission Muhammad Jahanzeb and relevant senior officers.

Govt prioritize to peruse economic reform agenda for sustainable economic development: Minister

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Muhammad Aurangzeb, on Wednesday said the government is committed to economic reform to sustainable economic development in the country. The minister spoke at the JP Morgan Seminar on Pakistan's Economic Policy Outlook.

He outlined three important reform areas of taxation, energy and privatization, said a press release issued here. The minister highlighted positive economic indicators including strong performance of the agriculture sector, diminishing inflationary pressures, stable exchange rate, declining trade deficit and strong remittances. He informed that the government was committed to



entering into a larger and extended programme with the IMF.

FM Ishaq Dar received a telephone call from Czech FM Jan Lipavsky

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Reflecting upon the close friendly ties between Pakistan and the Czech Republic, the two Foreign Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to strengthen bilateral cooperation across all areas of mutual interest.

Noting the 75 years of establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and the Czech Republic next year, Foreign Minister Dar underlined the importance of expanding collaboration in diverse fields, includ-



ing trade, investment, education, and people-to-people exchanges.

The two Foreign Ministers agreed to enhance engagement and dialogue on regional and global issues of mutual interest.

Sherry Rehman nominated as PPP's parliamentary leader in Senate

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) has nominated Senator Sherry Rehman as parliamentary leader in the Senate.

Senate Chairman Yousaf Raza Gillani congratulated Senator Rehman on being nominated for the position.

He expressed hope that the PPP leader will play a pivotal role in legislation in the upper house.

Senate Chairman Yousaf Raza Gillani said that the Senate was an important forum for policy-making and Senator Rehman would employ

her skills to highlight the issues faced by the masses.

It is pertinent to mention that Senator Sherry Rehman was the first female to become the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate.

She was declared the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate in 2018 as per a notification issued by the Senate Secretariat.

PPP leader and former prime minister Yousaf Raza Gillani was elected unopposed as the Chairman of the Senate on April 9 while PML-N's candidate for deputy chairman Senate Syedal Khan Nasir was also returned uncontested in the election.