

Iran president Raisi to visit Pakistan on April 22

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi is scheduled to visit Pakistan on April 22 for a three-day trip, Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar confirmed Wednesday. Taking to media, Dar said that Iranian president visit to Pakistan has nothing to do with the escalating tensions between Tehran and Israel. "Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi's visit to Pakistan was planned before the tensions between Tehran and Tel-Aviv," the foreign minister explained.



Bangladesh set to achieve vision 2041 as smart & developed country, says Envoy

To celebrate 53rd anniversary of the independence and National Day of Bangladesh, High Commissioner H. E. Mr. Md. Ruhul Alam Siddique & Mrs. Shamsad Ara Khanam hosted a reception here at a hotel in Islamabad. The event was attended in large number by diplomats, officers from the armed forces of the diplomatic corps, Bangladeshis residing in the Pakistan and important personalities from different walks of society. (Details on Page 5)

Simultaneously published from Islamabad, Lahore and Multan

Bilateral military cooperation

Rawalpindi: General Metin Gürk, Chief of the Turkish General Staff called on General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, at Joint Staff Headquarters, Rawalpindi.

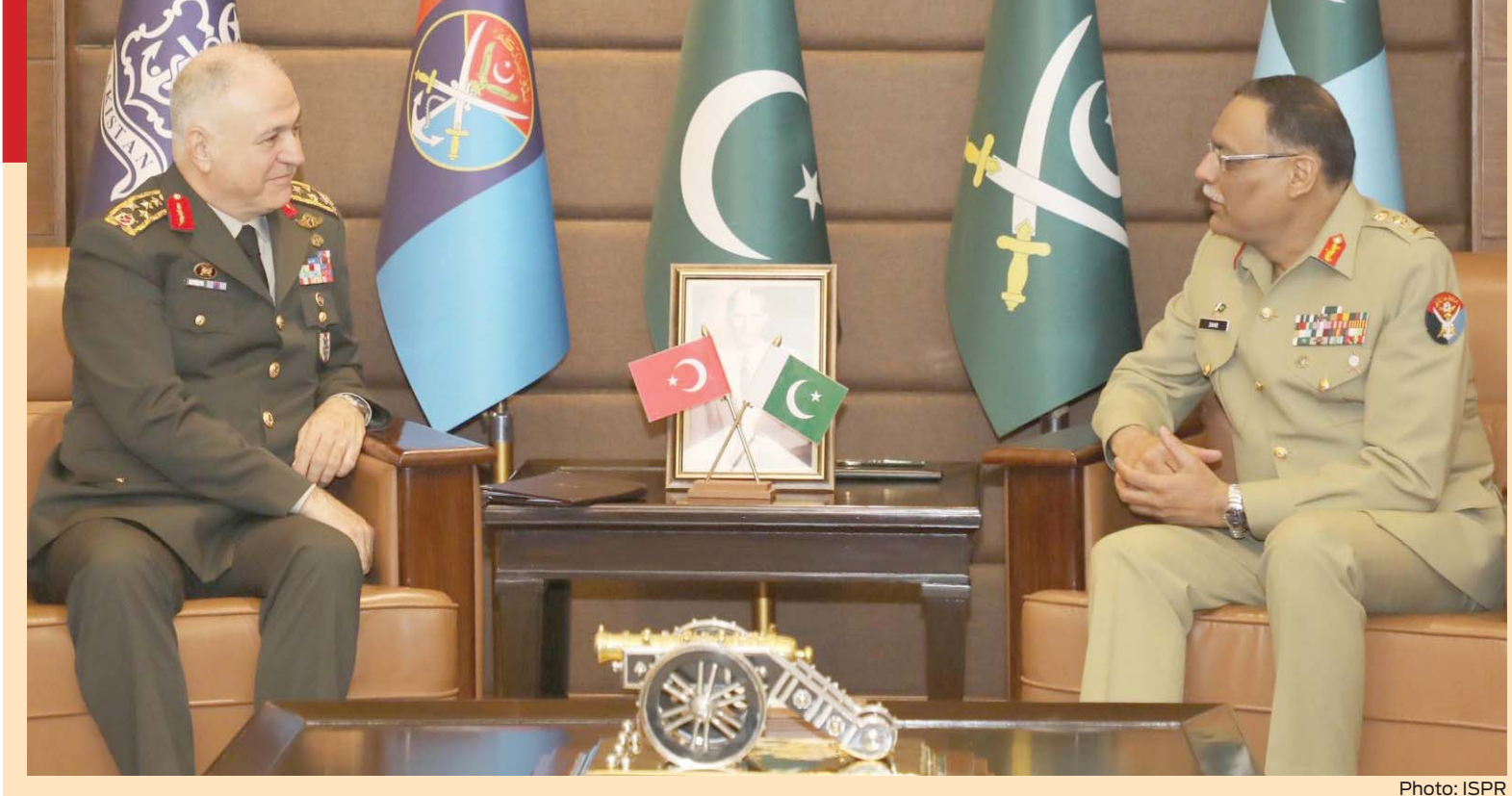


Photo: ISPR

Turkish chief of staff calls on General Mirza at Joint Staff Headquarters

Spokesman Report RAWALPINDI: General Metin Gürk, Chief of the Turkish General Staff called on General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, at Joint Staff Headquarters, Rawalpindi. During the meeting, matters related to enhancing the level and scope of bilateral military engagements and cooperation were discussed. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to forge deeper strategic ties. The dignitary lauded the professionalism of the Pakistan Armed Forces and acknowledged their sacrifices in the fight against terrorism. Earlier, upon arrival at Joint Staff Headquarters, a smartly turned-out tri-services contingent presented 'Guard of Honour' to the visiting dignitary.

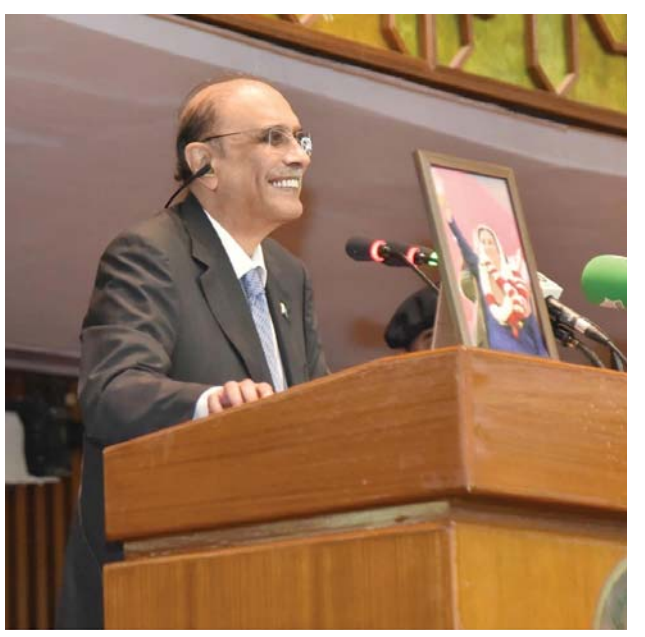
Turkish Army chief meets with General Asim COAS, discusses defense cooperation and regional stability



Spokesman Report RAWALPINDI: Today, His Excellency General Metin Gürk, Chief of the Turkish General Staff, met with General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS), at GHQ today. The discussion encompassed various topics of mutual interest, spanning defense, training, and initiatives aimed at bolstering regional peace and stability. Both sides acknowledged the robust relationship between their nations and committed to expanding defense collaboration further. COAS underscored the imperative of advancing existing military cooperation between their armed forces. The visiting dignitary commended Pakistan's efforts in fostering regional peace and stability, as well as the Pakistan Army's role in combating terrorism. Earlier, upon arrival at GHQ, the Chief of the General Staff of the Turkish Army paid respects at Yadrac-e-Shuhada by laying a floral wreath. A well-presented contingent of the Pakistan Army rendered a guard of honor to the esteemed visitor.

President Zardari calls for meaningful dialogue to overcome challenges

Naveed Ahmad Khan ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari addressed the joint sitting of the parliament amid Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) ruckus. Addressing the joint session of parliament, President Zardari emphasized the need for fostering an atmosphere of mutual respect and political reconciliation by embracing the vision of great leaders including Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to and Shaheed Benazir Bhutto. He expressed the confidence this will also help to effectively tackle all the challenges which are not impossible to overcome. The President emphasized meaningful dialogues, parliamentary consensus and time-bound implementation of rigorous reforms to take the country forward.



Sharing his vision for future, President Asif Ali Zardari urged the political leadership to prioritize the specific needs of marginalized community and under develop areas, underscoring the

need to move forward on the path of inclusive growth. The President said Pakistan needs to revitalize its economy. He said our primary objective should be to attract foreign direct investment. He urged the government intensified its efforts in implementation comprehensive ease of doing business reforms and simplifying regulations to provide an enabling environment to both domestic and foreign investors. He commended the establishment of Special Investment Facilitation Council to attract investment in key sectors of the economy, describing it as a step in the right direction. Under Article 56 (3) of the Constitution, the President shall address a joint session of Parliament at the commencement of the parliamentary year. The National Assembly Secretariat finalised preparation for the joint sitting of parliament (Majlis-e-Shoora). The Chief Justice of Pakistan, governors and chief ministers of all the provinces, including Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan are also invited. Besides, the Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, along with the three services chiefs, has also been invited. Speakers, deputy speakers all provincial assemblies, Legislative Assembly of Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan are also invited. This is 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.

Tarar condemns PTI for jeopardizing national interests, irresponsible statements

City Desk ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Attaullah Tarar, criticized Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Thursday, stating that individuals involved in last year's May 9 attacks are now jeopardizing national interests. Speaking to the media, Tarar emphasized that those who undermined the country's interests were adversaries of Pakistan. He expressed dismay at prioritizing political agendas and ego over national interests, highlighting the regrettable pattern of PTI leadership disowning statements against the country's interests. Tarar noted that PTI leaders were embroiled in corruption cases, lamenting that enemies of Pakistan struggle to accept investments in the country. He prayed for divine guidance for such individuals to speak in the country's favour. The minister condemned the actions stooping to anti-national levels, stressing that while criticism of the government and its policies is acceptable, criticizing Pakistan is intolerable. He acknowledged the support of friendly countries in investing and cooperating with Pakistan, expressing optimism for progress with Allah's grace. Attaullah Tarar also affirmed Pakistan's commitment to strengthen relations with friendly countries.

Pakistan is currently seeking an extended loan from the IMF

Commerce Desk ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's new government is confident that there will be no significant devaluation of its currency as it engages in negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to secure substantial lending and support its economic reform agenda, according to a new report by Bloomberg. According to Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, there is no justification for the Pakistani rupee to depreciate beyond the typical range of 6% to 8% witnessed in a normal year. The last currency devaluation occurred in January 2023. While previous IMF loans to Pakistan have often been accompanied by substantial devaluations, which are customary conditions in the IMF's programs worldwide, the finance minister believes that such drastic measures will not be necessary this time. In an interview during the IMF and World Bank spring meetings in Washington, he highlighted Pakistan's healthy foreign-exchange reserves, stable currency, increasing remittances, and steady exports as factors contributing to this outlook. However, he acknowledged that fluctuations in oil prices could pose a potential risk, although projections indicate that Pakistan should be able to manage it. Aurangzeb, aged 59, stated that the new government in Islamabad aims to strengthen sectors such as agriculture and information technology, providing them with support to drive the nation's growth rate above 4% in the coming years. In its negotiations with the IMF, Pakistan intends to pursue a traditional IMF loan through the extended fund facility. Additionally, it seeks funding from

PML-N persistently advocates for engaging dialogue: Asif

City Desk ISLAMABAD: Defense Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif said on Thursday that all political parties have to play their role to get Pakistan out of the existing crisis. Talking to a private news channel, he said that the opposition ought to fulfill its constitutional role rather than inciting turmoil through nationwide disruptions. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has been repeatedly invited to participate in dialogue to uplift the country, but they have not responded favorably, he added. Current government is committed to bring the country out of economic quagmire, he added.

EU Ambassador calls on PM Shehbaz



City Desk ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the European Union Riina Kionka Thursday paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and discussed matters related to mutual concern. The prime minister thanked the EU leaders for their congratulatory messages on his re-election and said he looked forward to working closely with the EU. He said Pakistan enjoyed friendly and cordial ties with the EU and expressed satisfaction at the existing institutional mechanisms that were meeting regularly to exchange views on further strengthening cooperation. The prime minister appreciated, in particular, EU's continued support to Pakistan through the GSP Plus scheme, which has now been renewed till 2027. He also expressed Pakistan's interest in engaging constructively with the EU's Global Gateway Strategy through the European Investment Bank. The prime minister sought EU's support in providing consultancy and expertise to help Pakistan carry out important reforms in various sectors. The EU Ambassador briefed the prime minister on various cooperation initiatives, including the ongoing dialogue on migration and mobility issues between the two sides, as well as facilitating European businesses operating in Pakistan. Progress on resumption of flights from Pakistan to EU countries was also discussed.

CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif meets Russian Ambassador Albert Khorev

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif met with the Ambassador of Russia Albert Khorev in which matters pertaining to agriculture, technology, trade and mutual interests were discussed. Over all situation in the region also came under discussion.

The Russian Ambassador Albert Khorev congratulated CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif on being elected as the first woman Chief Minister. The Chief Minister said, "We want to enhance bilateral trade in order to further strengthen Pakistan- Russia relations. We want to benefit from the agricultural expertise of Russia. We are keen to acquire seeds from Russia so as to yield maximum production." The Russian Ambassador said we want to elevate our relations with Pakistan to new heights. Albert Khorev maintained Pakistan is an old friend as well as an important country of the region.



Meeting

ISLAMABAD: PM's Coordinator on Climate Change & Environmental Coordination Romina Khurshid Alam in a meeting with the Danish Ambassador H.E. Jakob Linulf at her office on Thursday.



Photo: PID

Global double standards are becoming a threat to the peace of the world: Allama Sajid Naqvi

Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: Quaid-e-Millat Jafaria Pakistan Allama Syed Sajid Ali Naqvi has said that global double standards are becoming a threat to the peace of the world. With the reflection of Pin, the international world is constantly in turmoil, chaos and it is tantamount to pushing towards a big war, the declaration of new sanctions of colonialism despite the right of defense against Iran and the slapping of the occupying Zionist mafia despite the massacre in Gaza are clear examples of this.

These views were expressed by Quaid Millat Jafaria Pakistan Allama Syed Sajid Ali Naqvi in his reaction to the announcement of new restrictions on the brotherly neighboring coun-



try by the colonialists on the phone to the spokesman of the Shia Ulama Council South Punjab, Basharat

Abbas Qureshi. Allama Syed Sajid Ali Naqvi has said that since October 7, 2023, which type of cruelty or such tactics has not been tried by the occupying Zionism and colonialism on the whole of Palestine including Gaza, Rafah, which is a violation of international laws and the charter of the United Nations on the neighboring countries.

Global colonialism is not only silent on what has not been done. The spectator is involved in this oppression as a participant and supporter, while on the other hand, if a Muslim state responds to this oppressive, oppressive, occupier by keeping in mind all international laws and the United Nations Charter as its right to defend itself. If global colonialism

is frowned upon and restrictions are announced, then Unfortunately, the United Nations, which should have taken concrete, clear and bold steps for the peace of the United Nations, is unable to implement the resolution of its own Security Council, and because of this double standard, the peace of the international world is not possible.

Not only is it at stake, but the world is rapidly becoming increasingly insecure, Chaos and a big war are being pushed towards. He said that this situation is very worrying for the civilized nations and countries, the Islamic world and especially for Pakistan because the main responsibilities and basis of Pakistan are the Palestine and Kashmir issue.

SWL all line dept's gave a briefing ongoing uplift projects to DC, MPA

Adam Khan Wazir

SOUTH WAZIRISTAN: Member Provincial Assembly PK 114 Ajab Gul Wazir and Deputy Commissioner South Waziristan Lower Nasir Khan held a meeting with line departments officers at Wana DC compound.

While giving a detailed briefing to MPA and DC on ongoing development and uplift projects and schemes in South Waziristan Lower.

Additional Deputy Commissioner South Waziristan Lower (F&P) Finance and Planning Kashmir Khan and Assistant Commissioner Wana Faisal Ismail besides officers of all line departments were present in the meeting.

Line department officers shed light



on the ongoing development projects in detail.

In the briefing, besides C&W, Health Department, Agriculture and Forestry Department, Local Government Department, Health Department, Social Welfare Department

and Education Department presented the performance of their respective departments to the MPA and DC through presentation.

On this occasion, MPA Ajab Gul Wazir addressed the participating officers in the meeting and made it

clear, that the experiments done in the past will not be repeated in any case.

They said that in future we will move forward together while using all our energies to bring revolutionary changes in the Health Department, Education Department and Agriculture Department in Lower South Waziristan.

MPA made it clear that after today we will make a joint effort and all the officers should take this pledge, that every individual of Lower South Waziristan will get their right and in Waziristan, health facilities will be brought to every person at their doorstep.

He said the protection of each and every tree and plant of the valuable forests in Waziristan will be ensured.

Five Officials of Directorate of I&I – Customs (Peshawar) Embrace Martyrdom

PPA

DI KHAN: On the 18th of April, 2024, at around 03:30 PM, five officials of the Directorate of Intelligence & Investigation Customs (Peshawar) embraced martyrdom while performing an Intelligence based Operation (IBO) at Daraban Road, near village Sagguu, district Dera Ismail Khan (DI Khan).

During the operation, the officials were ambushed by unknown assailants in a dastardly attack and fired upon with automatic weapons. As the Will of Allah would have it, all five officials embraced martyrdom in the line of duty. Despite all odds they remained committed to their mission, serving the nation with honor and distinction. Their courage in the face of adversity serves as a shining example of gallantry.

Names of the officials are:

- 1) Intelligence Officer Aslam Khan Shaheed
- 2) Havaladar Inayat Ullah Khan Shaheed
- 3) Havaladar Mr. Akbar Zaman Shaheed
- 4) Sepoy Iftikhar Alam Shaheed
- 5) Sepoy Mr. Shahab Ali Shaheed

Directorate General of Intelligence & Investigation brings to record the valiant and selfless service rendered by the Shaheed officials to their motherland and the department. Their contribution in service of the country will be remembered by the rank and file of Pakistan Customs Service.

Chairman Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), Member Customs (Operations), Director General, Intelligence & Investigation (Customs) and all officers and officials of the Pakistan Customs Service convey their deepest condolences to the families of the Shaheed officials and unwavering support to the bereaved in these testing times.

Pakistan Customs Service unflinchingly resolves to continue to serve Pakistan and contribute to the welfare of the nation.

CEO CBD Punjab steers Walton Railway Crossing Flyover Project toward triumph

PPA

LAHORE: Punjab Central Business District Development Authority (PCBDDA), also known as Central Business District Punjab (CBD Punjab), is set to accomplish a significant milestone in its infrastructure development project. According to CEO Imran Amin, CBD Punjab is on track to complete placement of 23 girders within an ambitious time-frame of three working days at the Walton Railway Crossing.

With 120 girders already in place, CBD Punjab is poised to intensify its efforts to swiftly conclude the remaining structural components of the flyover. Following productive discussions with Pakistan Railways, it has been mutually agreed upon that CBD Punjab will undertake construction activities during the window of midnight to 6 am for three consecutive days. This strategic decision allows CBD Punjab to focus on the most complex section of the flyover, the Walton railway crossing, ensuring expedited progress while minimizing disruptions to daily commuter traffic and train schedule.

Emphasizing the urgency of the project, CEO Imran Amin affirmed CBD Punjab's commitment to working tirelessly, even during nighttime hours, to meet project deadlines and deliver on its promises. The dedication of the entire CBD Punjab team underscores their determination to enhance the region's infrastructure and address pressing transportation challenges.

In addition to the progress on the flyover, CBD Punjab has achieved another milestone by completing the asphalt work on CBD Route 47 up to the MSC wall slope, which will seamlessly connect the flyover to CBD Punjab Route 47. This crucial development will provide a direct and efficient route from Walton Road to the Main Boulevard Gulberg, significantly alleviating traffic congestion and improving the overall flow of vehicular movement in the area.

PHA employees should play important role in the beauty and development of Multan

Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: Director General Park and Horticulture Authority (DGPHA) Multan Asif Rauf Khan said that many measures are being taken for the welfare of the employees. No delay in the dues of the Retired employees and officers will be accepted. The dues should be paid as soon as possible to the valuable employees of the institution Assets will continue to provide rights to all employees.



He expressed these views while addressing the function of giving pension check to Retired officer Shahid Kamran. Director Admin and Finance Muhammad Akhtar Mandhira was also present on the occasion. DG PHA Multan Asif Rauf Khan further said that Employees should play their role in the Beauty and development of the Multan and PHA organization and all PHA employees should selflessly serve the institution and actively participate in initiatives to increase the beauty of Multan city. Director General Park and Horticulture Authority Asif Rauf Khan said that joint measures are needed for the stability of the institution. DGPHA Multan expressed good wishes for the retiring officer Shahid Kamran.

Peace Development Party chairman says politicians merely fulfilling political needs

Syed Nadeem Kazmi

MULTAN: Chairman of Peace Development Party Muhammad Faiq Shah said that how long will the political needs continue to be fulfilled, will the people be thought of above the interests?

Parliament has been rendered ineffective and a political necessity, the government and the opposition are not playing their democratic, constitutional and public role.

Chairman of Peace Development Party Muhammad Faiq Shah said that the politicians are merely fulfilling political needs by making the parliament ineffective, both the government and the opposition are ignorant and ignorant of their public, democratic and constitutional role, be it the address of the president or the prime minister and The opposition leader should have a national road map and action plan here Addresses are made for political expediency, to show their luster and accusations and waste the nation's time and their tax money, lifeless speeches of the President, Prime Minister, visits are a burden to the people, a burden to the country and to democracy. Left as a burden, these positions cost billions but no road map The idea of public need is destroyed, what is the benefit of such a democracy to the people, democracy is of the people and for the people, here Dama Dum Mast Qalandar and everything inside the stomach formula is going on, the President is a symbol of federation. They should give a roadmap for the four provinces, government and opposition, development and global challenges But all this happens in democratic countries, where political monopoly and fascism are nurtured, Peace and Development Party wants to change such political system with reforms and legislation.



Islamabad
15° - 23° Clear

SERVICES
Namaz Timings
Fajr 4:05 am
Zohr 12:07 pm
Asr 4:48 pm
Maghrib 6:41 pm
Isha 8:10 pm

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

Women Police Stations
Islamabad 9222596
Rawalpindi 9270601-20

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

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

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

Industrialists oppose hike in POL prices

PPA



KARACHI: Muhammad Kamran Arbi, President of SITE Association of Industry, has in a press statement, declared the recent increase in POL prices tragic for the industry & economy as a whole and has appealed the Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif to take necessary measures to curtail increase in POL products every fortnight otherwise, it will become more difficult to run factories due to constantly rising cost of production.

Kamran Arbi added that since past three months, the POL prices are being revised upward frequently which is adding to the already high cost of living. It will put extra financial burden on masses who are already hard pressed due to inflation. It will also directly impact cost of doing business and increase in cost of production. He said that increase in the utilities prices again & again is already impeding industrial activities to a great extent, and coupled with current increase in POL prices which is bound to stop the wheels of industry. This will ultimately result in decline in exports and mass unemployment.

SAI president stressed the need to formulate policies in consultation with stakeholders and avoid taking any step having negative impact on the industries, trade and national economy as a whole.

FPCCI wavier off 50% membership fee of women chambers

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) wavier off 50% membership fee of women chambers. President FPCCI Atif Ikram Sheikh said that the country and society cannot progress without the full role of women, this step is very important for women empowerment by reducing the membership fee for women by 50 percent. We have fulfilled our promise, for which the full credit goes to the leadership of UBG, who had promised their community during the election campaign today we kept that promise.

Federation President Atif Ikram further said that Pakistani women are extremely talented and we are striving to empower them in the economic field. If Pakistan is to progress, we have to make our women educated, skilled and empowered to business women.



Masses problems

ISLAMABAD: A view of massive traffic jam due to VVIP movement at Islamabad Expressway, in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

Zong Business revolutionizes digital landscape for CGCMS through recent partnership

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Zong Business, Pakistan's leading telecom operator has joined hands with China Gezhouba Construction Management Services (CGCMS) to ensure seamless connectivity robust networks, and innovative digital solutions to help the organization achieve its ambitious goals without hindrance.

Founded in 1970, China Gezhouba Group Corporation (CGGC) is a key subsidiary of China Energy Engineering Group Co., Ltd., a prominent state-owned enterprise. CGGC specializes in various sectors including water conservancy, power generation, infrastructure



construction, and real estate development, encompassing design, construction, investment, and operation services. CGCMS' expertise combined with Zong 4G's proficiency in network architecture, security, and scalability will enable CGCMS to regulate its organizational processes more effectively.

The distinguished guests included: From CGCMS: Mr. Wang Xiaoming (CEO), Mr. Yu Jingsheng (Project Manager), and Ms. Xiang Tiantian (Manager of Commercial Law). From Zong CMPak:

Mr. Huo Jun Li (CEO), Mr. Wang Yong (CHRO), Mr. Farooq Raza (GCSS HOD), Mr. Atif Ali (RD) and Ms. Na GuiXiu (Relationship Manager GCSS). CEO of Zong CMPak Mr. Huo Jun Li expressed enthusiasm about the collaboration and stated, "We are thrilled to partner with CGCMS. Our mission is to empower businesses through seamless connectivity. Together, we will redefine the impossible in the digital age." Simultaneously, the CEO of CGCMS commented, "Zong CMPak's reputation precedes them. Their network solutions align perfectly with our vision. We look forward to a fruitful collaboration."

Fly Jinnah expands int'l network with new route connecting Islamabad and Muscat

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan:- Fly Jinnah, Pakistan's low-cost carrier, has announced the launch of its new non-stop flights between Islamabad and Muscat in Oman, starting from 10 May 2024. The new route will initially start with a frequency of two weekly flights connecting both cities.

Flight Schedule between Islamabad International Airport and Muscat International Airport, effective 10 May, 2024.

Commenting on the airline's third international route, Fly Jinnah's spokesperson said: "Following the successful launch of our international flights connecting Islamabad and Lahore to Sharjah, Fly Jinnah is proud to mark another milestone with the introduction of our third international route from Islamabad to Muscat, the capital city of Oman. This expansion aligns with our commitment to providing our customers with new options for affordable and value driven air travel domestically and internationally."

Fly Jinnah remains steadfast in offering convenient and affordable service to its passengers. With its modern fleet of five Airbus A320 aircraft, the airline serves five major cities in Pakistan: Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, Peshawar, and Quetta. This new route adds to Fly Jinnah's growing list of international destinations, complementing the existing flight route to Sharjah, UAE.

7up launches innovative campaign to bring neighbours together

PNP

ISLAMABAD: 7UP has introduced a remarkably innovative outdoor campaign with the aim of inspiring neighbors to eat together. Billboards that dispense Dastarkhwans have been installed in various locations with a wonderful message on them: let's eat together with our neighbors. Anybody can simply roll a new Dastarkhwan off the billboard and take it home.



The insight behind this novel campaign was simple: In Ramadan, a time of spiritual reflection and communal harmony, traditionally brings people together from all walks of life to break their fast and share meals. However, after Ramadan in recent times, societal changes, including urbanization and socio-economic disparities, have led to a decline in the practice of communal gathering. Recognizing the importance of reviving this cherished tradition, 7UP launched the Togetherness Matters campaign.

The initiative aims to reintroduce the concept of communal gathering by providing tearable mats that served both as advertisements and practical tools for sharing meals. These tearable mats, adorned with an amalgamation of modern and traditional designs, strike a balance between contemporary aesthetics and cultural heritage. Additionally, the messaging printed on the mats effectively convey the campaign's theme of togetherness.

Initially utilized as Out-of-Home (OOH) advertisements, the tearable mats serve a dual purpose, catching the attention of passersby while also encouraging community engagement. As the campaign progressed, the mats transitioned into practical tools for hosting communal gatherings, further reinforcing the message of togetherness.

The campaign extended its reach beyond residential areas to include marginalized communities. By providing mats, 7UP aims to promote inclusivity and underscored the message that togetherness knows no boundaries.

Actress Naimal Khawar Launches Personal YouTube Channel

PPA

KARACHI: Naimal Khawar, renowned for her captivating performances on screen, is excited to announce the launch of her personal YouTube channel, 'Naimal Khawar Abbasi.'



The esteemed actress, also known for her prowess in the world of fine artistry, aims to foster a deeper connection with her loyal fanbase by offering an intimate glimpse into her daily life, including her routines, experiences, and personal reflections.

With the advent of her YouTube channel, Naimal Khawar is set to break barriers, inviting fans into her world like never before. From sharing behind-the-scenes glimpses of her latest projects to showcasing her artwork and studio endeavors, Naimal Khawar promises an authentic and engaging experience for viewers.

'I've always cherished the unwavering support of my fans,' says Naimal Khawar. 'Through my YouTube channel, I'm thrilled to bridge the gap between us, offering a more personal connection and sharing aspects of my life beyond the screen.'

As an artist renowned for her versatility and dedication, Naimal Khawar's YouTube channel promises to be a hub of inspiration and creativity, inviting fans to embark on a journey alongside her.

Law enforcement officers from Balochistan empowered against forced labor and human trafficking

PPA

ISLAMABAD: On 16-17 April, the International Labour Organization (ILO) completed a training programme for 40 officers from the Department of Labour, Federal Investigation Agency, Police, and Mines departments of Balochistan province, equipping them with essential knowledge and skills to tackle forced labour, bonded labour and human trafficking.

The activity took place under the project "From Protocol to Practice: A Bridge to Global Action on Forced Labour" (BRIDGE), which the ILO is implementing in collaboration with the United States Department of Labour. The project aims to bolster efforts to eradicate forced labour.

The BRIDGE project adopts various strategies, including promoting the ratification of the 2014 Protocol to the ILO Forced Labour Convention, improving national policies and legislation on forced labour, conducting research, strengthening the capacities of employers' and workers' organizations to address forced labour, and providing support to victims of forced labour. The project is currently active in Uzbekistan, Peru, Nepal, Mongolia and Pakistan.

Speaking on the occasion, Sardar Mushtaq Ahmad Jaffar, Director General of Labour in Balochistan, commended the ILO for its enduring partnership and support. He urged officers to seize the opportunity to enhance their capacities and play a pivotal role in eliminating bonded labour, and human trafficking from Balochistan.

Decarbonization of Pakistan's cement requires strong stakeholder consensus

PPA

ISLAMABAD: The experts at the study launch of Pakistan's cement sector decarbonization opined that reducing carbon footprint from the cement industry is possible through strong collaboration of the key stakeholders, joint working, resource pooling, and the technology collaboration.

The Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) and Policy Research Institute for Equitable Development (PRIED) on Thursday jointly organized the launch of two research-driven studies on Decarbonization of Pakistan's Cement sector.

Dr Vaqar Ahmed, Joint Executive Director, SDPI in his opening remarks said the industrial carbon footprint places industries at the forefront of carbon offset measures. The cement

sector is among the leading carbon emitters whereas cement industry like the rest of the world being carbon intensive is facing formidable challenges. He added that Pakistan's nationally determined contributions (NDCs) target achievement is crucial to comply with its global pledges. However, the cement production is a multifaceted process that demands robust and complex interventions to decarbonize its production mechanisms.

The Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) is an opportunity for the industrial sectors like cement, steel and others to decarbonize whereas the SDPI is proud to take the lead in launching "Pakistan's Industrial Decarbonization Initiative", he said. Dr. Vaqar invite all stakeholders to collaborate with SDPI on building a better discourse and implementing

the key actions. Prof Dr Muhammad Fahim Khokhar, Professor at the National University of Science and Technology (NUST) in his presentation shed light on industrial decarbonization combating climate change's impact.

He said the global carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions released from the cement sector (37.4Gt) are rising at 1.1 percent annual growth rate that are mainly coming from 65% of the total coal consumed by the industrial sector of the country.

Dr Khokhar underlined that the world is shifting over renewables and it to reduce reliance on fossil fuel-based energy. However there has been a global paradigm shift in CO2 emissions as initially EU and US were the leading polluters which has now been shifted to Asia with mainly China and

India being the biggest polluters, he added.

Quratulain from Policy Research Institute for Equitable Development (PRIED) presented the international perspective and success stories of decarbonization across the cement sector in the world.

Head of Energy Unit SDPI Engineer Ubaid ur Rehman Zia and Researcher Saleha Qureshi presented SDPI Scoping Study on Pakistan's Cement Sector: A Road Towards Decarbonization.

Mr. Ubaid presented the LEAP modeling undertaken in the study under different scenarios and highlighted that the fuel switching and substitution had a great potential whereas the net zero in Pakistan has to be done in a unique fashion with high reliance on carbon capturing.

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The way forward for Pakistan

“Rather than going cap-in-hand asking for new finance, the new government and its backers in the establishment and business would need to design first their own plans worth investing in, by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and others. The only approach that can succeed is the one that redirects resources towards a more outward-oriented and less distorted economy, and an economy that serves the many, not the few.” (Stefan Dercon, Professor of Economic Policy at the Blavatnik School of Government, Department of Economics, Oxford University)

What Pakistan truly requires is not a larger handout, but a clear vision focused on harnessing domestic resources to address the current crisis and shape a future where the financial framework not only advances but also empowers both industries and individuals towards self-sufficiency and progress.

This comprehensive strategy must encompass tax restructuring, the recently negotiated IMF agreement (now in its 24th iteration), boosting exports, the privatisation of state-owned assets, providing support to existing investors (both local and foreign), and implementing strategic reforms to bolster these areas.

In the nation's 76-year history, Aurangzeb steps into the position of Pakistan's 45th Finance Minister. Top of Form

His track record of successfully navigating financial hurdles on the global stage, pioneering excellence in his prior roles, and consistently embracing innovation rather than adhering to conventional approaches inspires confidence in his ability to be up to the task. Pakistan requires a leader with both strategic foresight and innovative thinking, qualities that he has adeptly demonstrated.

Overall, Pakistan's reserves are USD 13.37 billion, of which SBP's (State Bank of Pakistan's) reserves are USD 8.04 billion, while the commercial banks'

reserves are USD 5.3 billion. All developing economies are confronted with the new fiscal landscape, but what Pakistan faces is a question of survival.

The nation's foreign currency reserves are at best, modest, while the loan repayment obligation by end June this year is USD 24 billion. The external debt is of USD 130 billion, almost one-third of the USD 340 billion economy. With inflation surging above 20% and a currency depreciation surpassing 50% over the last two years, the finance minister has his hands full and his top priority is to secure a multi-year loan from the IMF.

Establishing a comprehensive long-term policy framework is integral to the success of any development plan, and finance is one field that affects and determines the health of all projects that contribute to the health of the economy. Aurangzeb has been hammering on the needed structural reforms, fiscal discipline, and leveraging technology to foster sustainable growth and development.

His focus on ready projects is almost tangible, as not an opportunity goes by without him deliberating on the lack of readiness for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). As an experienced banker, he understands the need for local investors with reference to an enabling environment, and the ideal infrastructure that would attract foreign ones.

During a recent gathering on the Pakistan Stock Exchange in Karachi, Aurangzeb delineated several specific initiatives, including measures aimed at augmenting tax revenue by addressing leaks, instituting a track-and-trace system, and modernizing operations for enhanced transparency and efficiency.

He emphasized the critical necessity of addressing all sources of leakage within the tax collection entity—the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR)—which encom-

passes exemptions benefiting the privileged for political reasons, internal malfeasance, and legislative loopholes exploited by recipients of patronage.

Rectifying these issues holds the potential to significantly bolster revenue, thereby reducing reliance on regressive indirect taxes that disproportionately impact the less affluent. He has been vocal on the urgency of resolving pending tax cases worth PKR 1.7 trillion within three months and has also elaborated on plans for digitizing the tax system and FBR operations.

IMF's Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva's recent comment can help us see the clear link between what Aurangzeb is planning and how well-aligned it is with the international perspective. She said that "there are very important issues to be resolved in Pakistan; the tax base, how the richer part of society contributes to the economy, the way public spending is being directed, and, of course, creating a more transparent environment."

The debate on including agricultural fields in the tax ambit has been long and, so far, ineffective. Aurangzeb's vision for 'Zara' banking and understanding its potential has helped HBL (Habib Bank Limited) launch an entire scheme related to exploring and developing this sector. Pakistan is an agrarian country; therefore, a consolidated plan is required to make agriculture profitable, while ensuring its contribution to the economy and the tax net.

Technology is the new paradigm for finance. Digitalization has already enabled the banking industry to expand their outreach to unprecedented levels and they hope to be able to convert Pakistan's undocumented economy into a documented one. The renewed focus on digitalization and transparency in tax oper-

ations marks a significant stride towards modernizing Pakistan's public sector into an efficient and transparent system. This shift towards technology will streamline tax collection, reduce corruption risks, and boost revenue.

Economic stability is what Pakistan primarily needs, at both the macroeconomic and microeconomic levels, unless we wish to continue with the status quo and live with the uncertainty of external sector crises. It requires prudent management of external debt, productive borrowing, with the caveat that returns on investment exceed borrowing costs, and the effective utilization of development assistance can help us reach our economic goals faster.

Given that Pakistan's debt has surged to 91% of its GDP, it is imperative to advocate flexibility within the IMF programmes to effectively address unforeseen economic shocks and potential slippages. Measures such as modernizing the IMF prescriptions and advocating financing mechanisms will be needed to address debt sustainability challenges.

To ensure Pakistan's success, however, it is imperative to have the Finance Minister chair the Cabinet Committee on Privatisation (CCoP) for expedited fiscal support and remain a strong part of the Council of Common Interests (CCI) to see to the action plans and determine the best way forward in the national interest.

The Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue will need to be empowered with the authority to steer a steady course and receive facilitation and backing from all stakeholders. It is crucial for everyone involved in national governance to adopt the perspective that best represents Pakistan's interests and unite in establishing an optimal collaborative framework involving both the public and private sectors and the military leadership.

The writer is a former Chairman Board of Investment. He can be reached at @MAzfarAhsan



Analysis

Muhammad Azfar Ahsan

US university cancels Muslim student's graduation

A prominent advocacy body has condemned the University of Southern California (USC) for cancelling a scheduled graduation speech of the 2024 valedictorian, Asna Tabassum, following objections by anti-Muslim and anti-Palestinian extremists. In a call Wednesday with USC Provost Andrew Guzman, Ms. Tabassum, who describes herself as a "first-generation South Asian-American Muslim," was told that the school could not maintain an appropriate level of security if she spoke due to the volume of security threats and harassment from pro-Israel critics. She was told this decision "was not a judgment on you and your accomplishments and ambitions."

The university official claimed the volume of vitriol was "unprecedented." In an official statement issued, USC said: "After careful consideration, we have decided that our student valedictorian will not deliver a speech at commencement. While this is disappointing, tradition must give way to safety... The issue here is how best to maintain campus security and safety, period." The May 10 commencement ceremony, honouring this year's class of 19,000-plus graduates, is expected to draw 65,000 people to the downtown Los Angeles campus of USC, long regarded as one of California's most prestigious private universities. The cancellation was criticized by individuals and organizations who say it was done to censor Ms. Tabassum, "not protect her. 'USC cannot hide its cowardly decision behind a disingenuous concern for 'security','" said Hussam Ayloush, executive director of the Washington-based Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR). On her part, Ms. Tabassum released a personal statement protesting USC's decision to bar her from addressing the ceremony. She said, "I am honoured to have been selected as USC Class of 2024 Valedictorian. Although this should have been a time of celebration for my family, friends, professors, and classmates, anti-Muslim and anti-Palestinian voices have subjected me to a campaign of racist hatred because of my uncompromising belief in human rights for all. 'This campaign to prevent me from addressing my peers at commencement has evidently accomplished its goal: today, USC administrators informed me that the university will no longer allow me to speak at commencement due to supposed security concerns. I am both shocked by this decision and profoundly disappointed that the University is succumbing to a campaign of hate meant to silence my voice. 'I am not surprised by those who attempt to propagate hatred. I am surprised that my own university—my home for four years—has abandoned me.'" In a statement, Ayloush, CAIR's Executive Director in Los Angeles, said: "USC cannot hide its cowardly decision behind a disingenuous concern for 'security.' Asna is an incredibly accomplished student whose academic and extracurricular accomplishments made her the ideal and historic recipient of this year's valedictorian's honor. The university can, should and must ensure a safe environment for graduation rather than taking the unprecedented step of cancelling a valedictorian's speech.



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

Neglected aspects of Bahawalnagar Incident - II

There was a heated altercation with a motorcyclist over a perceived inadequate contribution, resulting in physical violence against him. Witnessing the severity of the situation, the motorcyclist fled the scene. Escaping unscathed from this checkpoint was no laughing matter. Consequently, that same evening, without any legal warrant or formal complaint filed, the man's residence was raided. Although the individual in question was not present, his two brothers, both serving in the army—one from Waziristan and the other from Rawalpindi—had returned home to celebrate Eid. They questioned the police officers regarding the absence of a warrant or legal grounds for the intrusion. The situation escalated, leading to the police forcibly entering the premises, even resorting to tearing the clothing of women present. The two brothers were detained and taken to separate police stations, where they endured a night of relentless torture. By morning, both brothers were in critical condition, suffering from severe bleeding and broken bones. Considering the delicate nature of the situation, the police transported both individuals, unconscious, to DHQ Bahawalnagar, claiming they had been found unconscious on the road after an accident. Later that evening, one of the brothers regained consciousness and recounted the entire ordeal to the attending doctor. Following protocol, hospital officials promptly notified the relevant military authorities about the presence and medical condition of their personnel. Upon public revelation of the incident, it was discovered that no entry had been logged at the police station and there was no official record. In response, Bahawalnagar police authorities suspended the

SHO and several other personnel, filing a mild First Information Report (FIR) to downplay the matter, and relocated them to another police station pending further inquiry.

The concerned military agency requested a transparent investigation by Bahawalnagar police and swift action. Simultaneously, the Garrison Commander of Bahawalnagar was instructed to ensure the injured personnel received optimal medical care and legal recourse.

Immediately after Eid prayers on the morning of the festival, the Garrison Commander attended to the hospitalized employees at DHQ, then contacted the District Police Officer (DPO) of Bahawalnagar by phone to inquire about the progress of legal proceedings. The DPO assured the Commander that all personnel were in custody and that a thorough investigation was underway.

Subsequently, the Garrison Commander proceeded to Police Station A Division Bahawalnagar to review the registered FIR and current legal proceedings and inform the Army High Command. Upon arrival, however, he discovered that the individual occupying the SHO's office was not the actual in-charge of the A Division, but rather Rizwan Abbas. Meanwhile, the genuine SHO and the other accused officers were found in the office, casually enjoying Eid treats and tea. When the Commander questioned the genuine in-charge about the ongoing inquiry, he was met with insults and threats from the police station staff. Despite this, the Commander maintained composure, refraining from retaliation, and promptly informed higher authorities of the incident, including the availability of CCTV footage at the police station.

Despite police authorities' denial of the inci-

dent, the Commander informed superiors of the entire situation and was instructed to dispatch a technical team to obtain a copy of the CCTV footage from A Division Police Station for potential future departmental proceedings. Accordingly, a two-member technical team was dispatched to the police station with a copy of the directive. Both members of the technical team faced verbal abuse and mistreatment, and all CCTV footage was systematically erased. When the team failed to return, the Bahawalnagar Garrison contacted the police station, only to be informed that the CCTV system was malfunctioning and no footage existed. Furthermore, the police accused the team members of misconduct, resulting in the filing of a fabricated FIR against them. They were subsequently detained in the lockup, prompting the Garrison to mobilize a team of 20 Army personnel to secure their release and initiate necessary legal proceedings.

It's disheartening to observe on social media, fueled by a few anti-state elements eager to tarnish the reputation of the Pakistan Army, the distortion of facts and disregard for truth. The reality of the situation was obscured, while the pervasive issues within our police force, including corruption, were ignored. Transparency International Pakistan recently released its Corruption Perceptions Survey 2023, which highlighted the police as one of the three most corrupt institutions in Pakistan, a fact well-known to the public. According to the findings, the police were identified as the most corrupt institution, followed by the procurement and contracting sector, and then the judiciary. The education and health sectors occupied the fourth and fifth positions, respectively. Local governments, land administration, customs, excise, and income tax were subsequently listed as the sixth, seventh, and eighth most corrupt institutions.

To be continued

Propelling Pakistan's Agri Entrepreneurs

Fazal Rehman

In the realm of global trade, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) often encounter formidable hurdles on their journey to establish a foothold in international markets. Recent progress in Pakistan clearly demonstrates how connecting markets can greatly boost SMEs, leading to lasting success and prosperity.

The 4th Pakistan-Africa Trade Development Conference (PATDC) & Pakistan Single Country Exhibition (PSCEx), held in Cairo, emerged as a pivotal juncture for Pakistani SMEs, particularly those hailing from Sindh and Balochistan. Supported by the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) and the International Trade Centre's (ITC) Growth for Rural Advancement and Sustainable Progress (GRASP) program funded by the European Union, this landmark event served as a catalyst for dynamic exchanges among policymakers, industry stalwarts, and visionary entrepreneurs, thereby nurturing deeper economic ties within the Middle East and North African (MENA) region.

Pakistan's export potential shines bright amid global economic changes. With diverse industries like textiles, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, and IT, the country offers a wealth of products for global markets. Recent efforts like the Pakistan-Africa Trade Development Conference and the Food and Agriculture Exhibition highlight Pakistan's dedication to expanding exports.

Market connections are crucial for Pakistan's agriculture and horticulture sectors, providing entrepreneurs with opportunities for wider economic growth and stronger livelihoods. These connections offer more than just transactions; they open doors to profitable markets, reduced losses after harvest, and increased profitability. Given that agriculture contributes about 24% to Pakistan's GDP and employs nearly half of

its workforce, strong market links are essential. Recent figures highlight this importance: the Food and Agriculture Exhibition in Karachi generated deals surpassing US\$ 3.5 million (For GRASP supported SMEs), demonstrating the significant economic impact of effective market connections. These links not only enhance export possibilities but also facilitate the exchange of technology, knowledge, and value addition. Strengthening market ties for Pakistan's agriculture and horticulture entrepreneurs holds the promise of boosting both local and international trade, driving economic growth, and fostering sustainable development.

The GRASP project, funded by the European Union and executed by ITC, stands as a testament to the transformative clout of international partnerships in propelling trade growth and empowerment. By furnishing targeted support to SMEs and facilitating market linkages, GRASP exemplifies the potency of collaborative endeavors in unlocking the full potential of SMEs and nurturing sustainable trade growth. By championing the cause of market linkages, Pakistan paves the way for its agri entrepreneurs to thrive, thereby charting a course towards a vibrant and resilient economy.

The GRASP project, funded by the European Union and managed by ITC, showcases the power of international partnerships in boosting trade and empowerment. By offering targeted assistance to SMEs and aiding in market connections, GRASP illustrates the effectiveness of collaborative efforts in unleashing SMEs' full potential and fostering sustainable trade growth. Through its focus on improving market linkages and enhancing value chains across 8 products in 22 districts of Sindh and Balochistan, GRASP is empowering SMEs to thrive. Pakistan's commitment to championing market connections sets the stage for agricultural entrepreneurs to flourish, paving the way for a vibrant and resilient economy.

Bangladesh set to achieve vision 2041 as smart & developed country, says Envoy

Pakistan & Bangladesh share rich history of brotherly ties: Qaiser Sheikh

Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: To celebrate 53rd anniversary of the independence and National Day of Bangladesh, High Commissioner H. E. Mr. Md. Ruhul Alam Siddique & Mrs. Shamshad Ara Khanam hosted a reception here at a hotel in Islamabad. The event was attended in large number by diplomats, officers from the armed forces of the diplomatic corps, Bangladeshis residing in the Pakistan and important personalities from different walks of society.

Bangladesh independence and National Day celebrated with prominent participation as chief guest by Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Mr. Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh and Chief Justice, Federal Shariat Court Mr. Justice Iqbal Hameedur Rahman, as guest of honor. Former interim Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jalil Abbas Jilani, Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, Chairman of the Senate Defence Committee, Senator Sehar Kamran and Ambassador of Turkmenistan to Pakistan and Dean of Diplomatic Corps H. E. Mr. Atadjan Movlamov were also present on the occasion.

The guest of honor and other persons, including envoys of the SAARC region were also invited to share the stage.

The Chief Guest, Mr. Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh extended felicitations to Bangladesh on behalf of the Government of Pakistan, reaffirming the commitment to further strengthen the bilateral relationship between the two nations in the future.

"We have always valued the bond of brotherhood that unites our people, and we are determined to take it to new heights," he added.

At the eve of Bangladesh independence and National Day, the Minister commented it was gratifying that there had been significant improvement in the mutual relations between the two countries in recent years. "We should continue working to further improve our relations in the future," he said.

He stressed there were immense possibilities of cooperation between Pakistan and Bangladesh in various fields including trade, culture, and people-to-people contact.

He said, "We must use all avenues to strengthen the ties and enhance cooperation for the



mutual benefit of people." The High Commissioner of Bangladesh, H. E. Md. Ruhul Alam Siddique shared his country's progress – the fastest growing economy; bilateral relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh and the interaction that takes place between the two countries at different levels.

He said In the early hours of 26 March 1971, the greatest Bangalee of all time, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman declared Independence of a new nation called Bangladesh. On this auspicious occasion, I recall him with great reverence and profound respect. I also take this opportunity to pay tribute to all Bangalee men and women who embraced martyrdom and endured endless miseries during the War of Liberation in 1971.

The Ambassador said that "Since 1971, Bangladesh has gone a long way. During the last fifty-years, just to mention a few, per capita income increased 30 times from merely 94 US Dollars in 1972 to 2824 US Dollars and life expectancy increased to 72 years from 47 years after independence. One of the most significant achievements of Bangladesh in these years is that Bangladesh is all set to graduate from a LDC to a developing country in 2026".

He said the able daughter of the Father of the Nation, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina assumed office for five years in 1996. She



again became the Prime Minister in 2009. This January, she was reelected Prime Minister for the fifth time and for the fourth consecutive terms.

Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Bangladesh has achieved remarkable progress in socio-economic development and it has been transformed into one of the most vibrant emerging economies of the world. During the last 15 years, Bangladesh has registered around average seven percent GDP growth. It has made laudable achievements in women empowerment, access to education, maternal and child health,

application of information technology and tackling the risks of climate change. Bangladesh is now a knowledge-based middle income country. It has achieved all the MDGs and is on the right track in meeting the targets of SDGs.

Presently, Bangladesh is marching forward to achieve the next goal: "Vision 2041", i.e. "Smart Bangladesh"; a high income country with smart citizens, smart economy, smart government and smart society by 2041.

Ruhul Alam said that the cardinal principle of Bangladesh Foreign Policy "Friendship

with all and malice towards none" was enunciated by the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Guided by this principle, Bangladesh continues to play its role in global peace, security and stability. Bangladesh is an important country in the peacekeeping and peace building initiatives of the United Nations. As part of this role, Bangladesh has been one of the top peace-keeper contributing countries in the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations for the last three decades.

He informed that Bangladesh has also set an example of humanity by allowing to enter into and



hosting over 1.2 million forcibly displaced distressed Myanmar nationals, the Rohingyas, inside its territory. I take this opportunity to call upon the people and the government of Pakistan as well as the world community to come forward for the resolution of this humanitarian crisis through convincing the Myanmar authorities to create conducive conditions in Rakhaine State for the voluntary return of these people to their homes.

Mr. Siddique said Bangladesh and Pakistan enjoy a unique relationship based on shared history and commonality of faith and culture. The relationship is rooted in the common desire for realizing the goals of regional peace, stability and socio-economic progress of the peoples of the two countries. I hope that the rela-

tionship between our two countries will continue to grow stronger in all areas of cooperation in the years to come.

With this hope, let me conclude by wishing the peoples of Bangladesh and Pakistan continued peace, progress and prosperity.

He concluded the speech by wishing the peoples of Bangladesh and Pakistan continued peace, friendship, progress and prosperity.

Before dinner, a cake cutting ceremony was also organized. Dinner with some Bangladeshi specialties was served for participants. As someone remarked, it is people to people contacts which make good relations between countries even better and such events make a real difference.

Photo by Raja Farid

PAIDAR

Mushahid launches Pakistan's first think tank on Africa



Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's first think tank on Africa, Pakistan-Africa Institute for Development & Research (PAIDAR) was launched at a well attended event at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) today. The think tank is the brain child of Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed who is also the founding President of PAIDAR and who introduced the aims and objectives of this new initiative. The think tank was launched at a Seminar hosted by the Institute of Strategic Studies with the theme: "Reviving the Bandung spirit of Afro-Asian solidarity: Pakistan-Africa relations". The guests included a number of ambassadors, especially from African countries as well as scholars, students, dignitaries and think tanks.

Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed noted the coincidence of the launch of PAIDAR coincides with the 69th anniversary of the Bandung conference of Asian and African nations held on April 18, 1955 in Indonesia in which Pakistan also participated together with China as well as countries from Africa. He termed Africa as the pivotal player in the resurgence of the Global South with 54 members of the African Union.

Referring to Pakistan-Africa relations, Senator Mushahid Hussain said that Pakistan's ties with Africa predate the creation of Pakistan as the Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the Founder of Pakistan visited Egypt in 1946 to forge friendly ties with this key African country. He said in the 1950s, it was Pakistan which gave full support to liberation movements of

African countries like Tunisia, Morocco, Libya and Eritrea, even providing diplomatic passports to prominent freedom fighters from these countries. In the 1970s, Pakistan supported the liberation struggles of South Africa and Zimbabwe with financial and military support. Pakistan also provided scholarships for students and technical and administrative assistance to the newly independent countries of Africa including Tanzania, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya and Uganda and today there is also a large Pakistani Diaspora in different countries of Africa. Senator Mushahid Hussain said that "the Bandung Spirit is part of my DNA as my late father Colonel Amjad Hussain Sayed was Pakistan's first Military Attaché to Indonesia and he played a pivotal role in promoting Pakistan-Indonesia friendship, for

which he received the highest military award from Indonesia".

Outlining the aims and objectives of the new Think Tank on Africa, Senator Mushahid Hussain said that one of the major purposes of PAIDAR would be to restore Pakistan's foreign policy priority orientation and involvement in Africa given our common interests and revive Pakistan-Africa bond through people-to-people exchanges and business-to-business connectivity in such areas as education, environment and climate change, trade and investment, energy, promoting the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, maritime affairs, sports, tourism and culture as Pakistan and Africa have a shared colonial past and are part of the Global South embarked on the democratic path of development.

Ambassadors from African countries: Mohammed Karmoune, Dean of the African Corps and Ambassador of Morocco, Jemal Beker Abdulla, Ambassador of Ethiopia and Mary Nyambura Kamau, High Commissioner of Kenya welcomed the initiative and termed it as a much needed positive platform to promote Pakistan-Africa relations in different domains. Pakistan's High Commissioner to South Africa, Aftab Hassain and Ambassador in Ethiopia, Atif Sharif Mian as well as Prominent business leader Zafar Bakhtawari and Additional Secretary (Africa), from Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sheryar Akbar Khan also spoke on the occasion. Director General, ISSI, Ambassador Suhail Mahmood welcomed the initiative and appreciated Senator Mushahid Hussain's vision and farsightedness

in this new outreach to Africa which would be a plus for promoting Pakistan's interests in a very important and happening part of the world. He referred to the "unbounded enthusiasm and invaluable contribution" of Senator Mushahid Hussain to promote Pakistan's interests.

The formal launch of PAIDAR was done by Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed along with Chairman of ISSI, Ambassador Khalid Mehmood and Director General, ISSI, Ambassador Suhail Mehmood. Senator Mushahid Hussain also announced that among upcoming activities of PAIDAR would be a publication of a regular newsletter as well as celebrations of important anniversaries pertaining to Africa including the upcoming Africa Day on May 25, 2024.

Bull & Bears PSX 100-Share Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index	
Current	Prev. Close
70,290.11	70,333.31
Day's High	Day's Low
70,645.29	69,783.31
Index Value	Change
11,463,504,265	-43.20
Percentage	Time
-0.06%	18 Apr, 2024 5:00 pm

Europe: FTSE 100 Index	
Index Value	Change
7,877.05	+29.06
Percentage	Time
+0.37%	18 Apr, 4:35 pm GMT+1

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average	
Index Value	Change
37,818.46	+65.15
Percentage	Time
+0.17%	18 Apr, 12:48 pm GMT-4

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average	
Index Value	Change
38,079.70	+117.90
Percentage	Time
+0.31%	18 Apr, 3:15 pm GMT+

Open Market Forex Rates		
Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	181	182.8
Bahrain Dinar	740.09	748.09
Canadian Dollar	201	203
China Yuan	38.44	38.84
Danish Krone	39.69	40.09
Euro	293	296
Hong Kong Dollar	35.53	35.88
Indian Rupee	3.33	3.44
Japanese Yen	1.86	1.94
Kuwaiti Dinar	902.64	911.64
Malaysian Ringgit	58.08	58.68
New Zealand \$	164.22	166.22
Norwegians Krone	25.31	25.61
Omani Riyal	722.87	730.87
Qatari Riyal	76.45	77.15
Saudi Riyal	73.3	74.05
Singapore Dollar	204.5	206.5
Swedish Korona	25.31	25.61
Swiss Franc	305.08	307.58
Thai Bhat	7.56	7.71
U.A.E Dirham	75.2	75.9
UK Pound Sterling	342.25	345.65
US Dollar	277.5	280.25

Influential unjustly getting trillions should be highlighted

Tariq Khattak

ISLAMABAD: Shahid Rasheed Butt, the former president of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), stated on Wednesday that it is necessary to reveal the names of the influential individuals and groups receiving annual benefits of 17.5 billion dollars.

If the privileges that elites are getting are legal and moral, why have they been kept a secret for so long, he asked?

Shahid Rasheed Butt said in a statement issued here today that in the financial year 2022, the elites were exempted from Rs 2.24 trillion in federal taxes, which was 36.4 percent of the total tax collected by FBR and 3.4 percent of the GDP.

This amount was higher than the federal government's total expenditures, and without these exemptions and privileges, the country

would not have required the IMF loans.

According to research by a former Finance Minister, the privileged classes receive annual benefits of Rs 14000 billion, he said, adding that when accounted for inflation, this amount comes to 7.5 trillion rupees.

Snatching the resources of people with low incomes and giving them to influential people and groups does not develop the economy but weakens it and stoke poverty.

Many experts believe that drama is being made in the name of reforms aimed at further squeezing low-income people to benefit the rich.

If the undue and unethical support of the elite is stopped, Pakistan will not need to beg from the IMF and friendly nations, he said.

Tackling the elite capture will reduce inflation, cut unemployment, and decrease illiteracy. The rupee's value, growth rate, and quality of public health will all improve, and the



country will not face a long-term crisis.

Mr. Butt noted that there is a concerning disparity between the rich and the poor in Pakistan, and people in positions of authority are deliberately widening it.

Regarding human development rankings, Pakistan's low average income and poor health and literacy rates are notable. While a tiny percentage of Pakistan's elite enjoy remarkable wealth, most citizens lack the bare essentials.

Despite the populist rhetoric of our opportunistic politicians, Pakistan's glaring socio-economic inequities are the result of various structural problems that have not been intentionally addressed.

Influential people need to re-evaluate our country's goals. It's high time our government shifted their attention to ensuring growth through progressive policies that boost production from the bottom up.

Otherwise, the situation would exacerbate already-existing disparities and affect the entire nation, not just low-income people.

However, he said it is doubtful that the government will stop rewarding and bribing the elite.

A gift of summer

ISLAMABAD: Labourers are unloading watermelons from a loading truck alongside a road, in Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Raja Farid

PTCL Group posted Double Digit Revenue Growth of 14%

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL), the leading telecom and ICT services provider in the country, has announced its financial results for the quarter ending March 31, 2024. The announcement was made during a Board of Directors meeting in Islamabad.

In Q1 2024, PTCL Group upheld its momentum and strengthened its position as a major telecom service provider in Pakistan. Revenue growth was largely due to strong performance in the consumer segment, boosted by significant growth in Fixed Broadband, Mobile Data and Business Solutions.

PTCL Group's revenue has increased by 14% YoY to Rs 49 billion, mainly driven by strong performance in the consumer segment led by fixed broadband, mobile data, and wholesale & Business Solutions. The Group has posted a net loss of Rs 4.8 billion which is 16% lower YOY.

PTCL's aggressive deployment of FTTH and the strong performance of corporate segment are the cornerstones for the topline growth. Continuing from the past quarters, PTCL's strategic focus remained on enhancing customer experience by providing the fastest and most reliable internet services under its flagship 'Flash

Fiber' Fiber-To-The-Home (FTTH) brand, which boosts PTCL as one of the leading FTTH operator in the industry with majority share of the market's net adds. PTCL's fixed broadband business has shown 22% YoY growth while voice grew by 4% YoY.

The Business solutions segment continued its momentum sustaining market leadership in IP Bandwidth, Cloud, Data Center, and other ICT services segments. PTCL's Business solutions revenue has grown by 9% on a quarterly basis despite the addition of LDI operators and US\$ to PKR parity improvement.

Being the national telecom carrier and connectivity backbone in Pakistan, PTCL Group strives to provide innovative solutions to accelerate growth for a 'Digital Pakistan' through robust telecommunication infrastructure and a diverse portfolio of services with enhanced customer experience.

Ufone 4G posted a YoY growth of 27% in topline in Q1 2024 supported by solid network expansion and strategic initiatives in Q1'24. This growth has been possible due to better customer experience and digital engagement through multiple data-centric products and strategic partnerships with leading digital platforms. Ufone 4G continues its network modernization activities to provide unmatched customer experience

across Pakistan.

Ubank, microfinance and branchless banking subsidiary of PTCL stands resolute in its commitment towards financial and social inclusion, utilizing its extensive outreach to provide exceptional services to a diverse clientele across the length and breadth of the country through its rural retail banking, corporate finance & investment banking, Islamic banking, urban retail banking, corporate banking, and digital banking canvases. Keeping up with the mandate of financial inclusion, Ubank launched international remittances via e& from GCC, Mastercard and other related digital initiatives aimed at increasing the digital footprint of the group.

Recognizing the significance of CSR, PTCL Group has always been at the forefront to serve the communities.

During Q1, 2024, PTCL Group stepped up as Gwadar battled floods, by delivering clean drinking water and also provided free calls in Gwadar to help connect flood-affected families, facilitate rescue & relief operations.

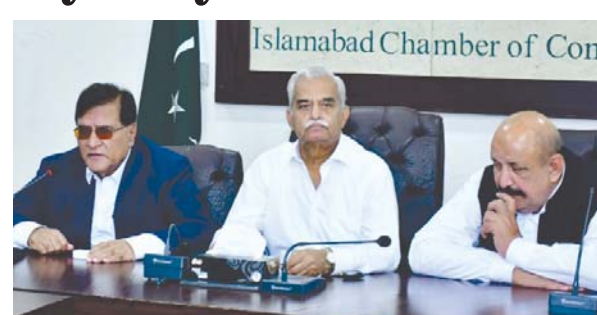
The main highlight for this quarter was PTCL Group's collaboration with PPAF to bridge digital gap by equipping 100 women entrepreneurs with smartphones under "Ba-Ikhtiar" program in Haripur, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

ICCI resolute to turn Islamabad an eco-friendly city

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Founder Group, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Khalid Iqbal Malik has said that Islamabad is the pride of Pakistan and ICCI is resolute to make it an eco-friendly city with the cooperation of all the stakeholders. He said this while addressing a ceremony held here at the Chamber House in honour of Raja Javaid Iqbal, President Traders Welfare Association G-9 markaz, who has recently turned back after performing the Umrah.

Khalid Iqbal Malik said that Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry under the able leadership of its President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari



is working day and night for the betterment of the business community and the civil society. He paid richest tributes to Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari for his outclass performance as the ICCI President.

Addressing the ceremony, former President ICCI and Secretary General United Business Group Zafar Bakhtawari

said ICCI is steadfast in offering the finest services to the business community and turning Islamabad a model city for its residents and the rest of the world.

Raja Javaid Iqbal said that ICCI President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari has played a key role in resolving the problems of the business community in all the nooks and corners of the capital

city that is why he has emerged as the darling of the business community.

In their speeches office bearers of Traders Welfare Associations made mention of the achievements of ICCI during last one and a half year by terming its President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari as a brand ambassador of the capital city. They said that the ICCI President is serving the community without any discrimination of liking and disliking.

Those who spoke on the occasion include Nasir Chaudhry, Ikhtlaq Abbasi, Ch. Naeem, Ch. Abdul Ghaffar, Ch. Nazeer, Syed Ather Haider Shah, Haji Zafar, Khalid Ch. Abbas Hashmi, Mohsin Khalid, Malik Iftikhar, Khursheed Qureshi, Babar Chaudhry and Naeem Awan.

foodpanda and CIRCLE join forces to empower women entrepreneurs



PPA

ISLAMABAD: foodpanda, Pakistan's leading delivery platform, is excited to announce its strategic partnership with CIRCLE, a tech organisation dedicated to promoting women's economic empowerment through digital literacy, technology, and entrepreneurship.

Ahsan Malik, Head of Sales, at foodpanda, expressed his enthusiasm about the partnership, stating, "We are thrilled to partner with CIRCLE to empower women entrepreneurs from all walks of life, across Pakistan. This collaboration has been achieved with the goal of advancing our commitment to supporting diversity, inclusion, and innovation in the food industry."

Sadaf Abid, CEO of CIRCLE, shared her thoughts on the partnership, saying, "We are delighted to collaborate with foodpanda to empower women chefs and entrepreneurs. By combin-

ing foodpanda's platform with CIRCLE's expertise in digital literacy and entrepreneurship, we aim to create a positive impact and open doors for women to thrive and succeed in the culinary industry."

Additionally, foodpanda will conduct dedicated speaking sessions for each specialised batch of trained HomeChefs graduating from CIRCLE's training programs. These sessions will highlight the value proposition of joining foodpanda's platform, emphasising the benefits for HomeChefs, ease of business, one-stop solution offerings, and the 30-day incubation support.

CIRCLE has been at the forefront of training thousands of women across Pakistan, aligning its efforts with UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 1, 5, 8, and 17. The organisation focuses on fostering multi-stakeholder partnerships to empower women from developing nations like Pakistan through technology and digital literacy.

Telenor Microfinance Bank announces PKR 1.2 billion pre-tax profit for financial Year 2023

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Telenor Microfinance Bank (TMB), operator of Pakistan's leading digital financial services platform easypaisa, announced its financial results for the year ended December 31, 2023, marking a remarkable turnaround with a profit before tax of PKR 1.2 billion. This impressive performance and the securing of the In-Principle Approval for a Digital Retail Bank license from the State Bank of Pakistan in September 2023 are a testament to the Bank's digital transformation journey.

The Bank reported revenue growth of 70% year-over-year of PKR 28 billion, driven by 90% growth in net markup income from higher deposits and favorable rates, as well as 65% growth in non-markup income to PKR 14b. Customer deposits grew 9.3% to PKR 50.9 billion, while the advanced book increased 60% to PKR 18.6b. The Bank also maintained a robust capital adequacy ratio of 21.91%, well above regulatory requirements.

TMB's flagship digital financial services platform easypaisa, continued strong growth, serving over 13.2 million monthly active users

in 2023, a 17% year-over-year increase. The easypaisa app saw 9.6 million monthly active app users, up 32% from 2022, maintaining its position as Pakistan's top financial app. In 2023, easypaisa processed over 2.1 billion transactions worth PKR 7 trillion, representing a substantial 56% growth in transactions and 77% growth in volume compared to 2022.

Commenting on the significant milestone, Kashif Ahmed, Acting President & CEO, TMB shared his

easypaisa

thoughts; "Our remarkable financial turnaround in 2023, following the adoption of our digital-first strategy, is a testament to the unwavering dedication of our team and the trust placed in us by the State Bank of Pakistan, our Board, and our valued customers. This defining year has paved the way for an exciting future as we transition into a digital retail bank and witness the impressive growth of our easypaisa platform. We are poised to redefine digital banking in Pakistan, empowering all Pakistanis with innovative digital financial solutions."

Chief Minister Punjab Baseball League Opening Ceremony a Grand Success

Tahir Amin Malik

LAHORE: The Pakistan Federation Baseball proudly announced the inauguration of the Chief Minister Punjab Baseball League, marking a significant milestone in the promotion of baseball within the region. The opening ceremony, held at FC College Baseball Ground, witnessed esteemed dignitaries and sports enthusiasts coming together to celebrate the spirit of the game.

Honourable Minister of Education, Rana Sikander Hayat, graced the occasion as the chief guest, sharing his passion for sports, particularly baseball. Minister Hayat, a former representative of Pakistan in international baseball events, reminisced about his own experiences and pledged to foster the growth of the sport by establishing 10 baseball grounds in each division of Punjab.

Syed Fakhar Ali Shah, General Secretary of Pakistan Federation Baseball, and Executive Director Moazzam Khan Klair warmly welcomed Minister Hayat, expressing gratitude for his unwavering support towards baseball and sports development in the region. Fakhar Shah highlighted the significance of the league, emphasizing its role in nurturing talent



and fostering a culture of sportsmanship. The Chief Minister Punjab Baseball League promises four days of thrilling competition, featuring teams including Lahore Lions, Multan Mustangs, and Faisalabad Falcons, with both male and female divisions vying for victory. The league aims to showcase the prowess of local talent and provide a platform for aspiring players to shine on the national stage.

The presence of Rector of the Forman Christian College Dr. Jonathan S. Addleton, Chief Security Officer Lt. Col. (R) Rana Khaqan, umpires, and organizers, including Amjad Nawaz Khan and Ahsan Omer, further underscored the collaborative efforts to ensure the success of the event.

As the league kicks off, the Pakistan Federation Baseball invites all sports enthusiasts to join in the excitement and support the growth of baseball in Punjab.

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Matthews leads West Indies women to convincing victory over Pakistan in series opener

Sports Desk

KARACHI: Captain Hayley Matthews led West Indies women to a resounding 113-run victory over Pakistan in the opening One Day International (ODI) of the series held at the National Bank Stadium in Karachi.

Hayley Matthews showcased her brilliance with a remarkable century, scoring 140 runs off 150 balls, adorned with 15 fours and a six.

This marked her fifth career century in 81 matches, achieved in 125 balls, featuring nine fours and a six. She partnered with Shemaine Campbelle, contributing 102 runs for the second wicket after an early setback with just a single run on the board due to the loss of opener Rashada Williams.

Campbelle played a supportive role with a steady 45 off 71 balls, while Chinelle Henry added a valuable 23 runs at a run-a-ball pace. The West Indies set a formidable target of 270 runs for Pakistan.

In response, Pakistan faltered early, struggling at 65 for four, and further slipping to 100 for six. Despite efforts from Muneeba Ali and Nida Dar, who



offered some resistance, Pakistan couldn't sustain against the disciplined West Indies bowling attack.

Tuba Hassan's brief cameo of 25 runs off 23 balls was not enough as Pakistan was bowled out for 156.

Afy Fisher and Zaida James, alongside Matthews, stood out with two wickets each.

The second match of the series is scheduled for April 21 at the same venue.

Azam experiences discomfort during Wednesday's training session

Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: Azam Khan experienced discomfort in his right knee and right calf muscle while batting in the nets during Wednesday's training session at Pindi Stadium Rawalpindi.



He has promptly received medical attention and treatment. Azam is currently under the care of the medical team, and a decision regarding his participation in the upcoming matches against New Zealand will be made pending the results of radiology reports.

Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) would provide further updates in due course.

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 stage for the remaining two matches next week on Thursday and Saturday.

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.

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 Zahoor 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 extend-



ed 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".

PAK vs NZ: Persistent rain washes out first T20I

RAWALPINDI: The first T20I of the five-match series between Pakistan and New Zealand have been called off as adamant rainfall continued to downpour at the Pindi Cricket Stadium here on Thursday.

Only a two-ball action was possible at the picturesque Pindi Cricket Stadium as the rain returned after Shaheen Shah Afridi cleaned up Tim Robinson with a perfectly crafted in-swing.

As soon as it started raining again, the on-field umpires shook hands with the players and decided to call off the match.

The toss of the anticipated fixture between Pakistan and New Zealand was also delayed for about half an hour. New Zealand's captain Michael Bracewell then won the coin toss and elected to bat first.

Soon after, players from both



teams gathered for the national anthems but the rain returned, causing the action to be delayed further.

The second spell of rain was heavier and it seemed likely that the match would be abandoned without a ball bowled.

A tireless effort from the ground staff went in vain as the rain returned again to sweep the possibility of a five-over match

between Pakistan and New Zealand.

Pakistan squad

Babar Azam (c), Mohammad Rizwan (wk), Saim Ayub, Usman Khan, Iftikhar Ahmed, Azam Khan (wk), Imad Wasim, Shadab Khan, Shaheen Afridi, Naseem Shah, Mohammad Amir, Abbas Afridi, Abrar Ahmed, Fakhar Zaman, Irfan Khan Niazi, Usama Mir, Zaman Khan

Reserves: Haseebullah, Mohammad Ali, Agha Salman, Sahibzada Farhan, Mohammad Wasim Jr.

New Zealand squad

Michael Bracewell (c), Mark Chapman, Josh Clarkson, Jacob Duffy, Dean Foxcroft, Ben Lister, Cole McConeh, Jimmy Neesham, Will O'Rourke, Tim Robinson, Ben Sears, Tim Seifert (WK), Ish Sodhi, Tom Blundell, Zak Foulkes.

Two Pak coaches complete UCI Level 1 course

Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD:

Two Pakistani cycling coaches have completed the UCI Level 1 cycling coaching course at the renowned World Cycling Center (WCC) in Korea. According to the President of the Pakistan Cycling Federation (PCF), Syed Azhar Ali Shah, this remarkable achievement would help them (Nisar from Pakistan Wapda and Fahad from Punjab) with significant advancement in their coaching journeys.



A substantial number of coaches from Pakistan have attained their coaching qualifications from WCC in Korea since 2015, with an impressive tally of 13 coaches having excelled in both the Level 1 and Level 2 cycling courses. Among the recent cohort of accomplished candidates, Nisar from Pakistan Wapda and Fahad from Punjab have earned their completion certificates from the Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI), further elevating Pakistan's presence in the global cycling community. This milestone serves as a testament to the unwavering dedication and relentless commitment of Pakistani coaches towards honing their expertise and expanding their knowledge in the realm of cycling coaching.

Sports minister inaugurates gymnasium hall, multi-purpose stadium



Sports Desk

LAHORE: Punjab Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs Malik Faisal Ayub Khokhar visited Shahkot city, district Nankana Sahib where he inaugurated state-of-the-art Sports Gymnasium Hall and multi-purpose Sports Stadium on Thursday.

DG Sports Punjab Pervez Iqbal, Divisional Sports Officer Rana Nadeem Anjum, Project Director PMU Qaiser Raza, District Sports Officer Nankana Sahib, ADC Nankana Sahib and other officials were also present on this occasion.

Talking to media on this occasion, Faisal Ayub Khokhar said that it is first time that state of the art sports stadiums are being constructed in villages and towns of the province. "The era of sports development has begun and now the development of sports will scale new heights in accordance with the vision of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz".

He further 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 valuable sports facility does not exist while 200 sports complexes will be rehabilitated".

Khokhar said that our players will earn laurels for the country in international competitions. "Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz is taking special interest in the development of sports sector and Punjab Sports Department is establishing top level sports facilities for the growth of sports culture among the younger generation," he added.

DG Sports Punjab Pervez Iqbal while talking at the inauguration ceremony of Shahkot Gymnasium said that these sports facilities are no less than a blessing for the youth. "Our youngsters are quite talented and they must avail these modern sports fully to polish their sports skills".

He said that Sports Board Punjab is utilizing all resources for the development of sports as per vision of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz. "The provision of sports facilities to talented male and female athletes is our mission so that the promising athletes can offer handsome performance in international sports events".

'That will be awesome,' Rohit Sharma on Pakistan-India Test

A Sports

LAHORE: India captain Rohit Sharma commented on the potency of the Test series with Pakistan, saying that he would 'love' to play against the arch-rivals on a regular basis.



In a chat with Club Prairie Fire podcast, co-hosted by former England captain Michael Vaughan and former Australian prolific opener Adam Gilchrist, the Indian captain regarded the Pakistan bowling attack as formidable.

He said that it would be a good contest if the two teams faced each other at a neutral venue.

"Do you think Test between Pakistan and India could benefit the longest format of the game hugely and it would be fantastic for Test cricket?" asked Michael Vaughan.

Rohit Sharma did not hesitate to answer and said, "I totally believe that, they (Pakistan) are a good team. They have got superb bowling line-up. I think I will be a good contest especially if you play in overseas conditions, it will be awesome."

He said that Pakistan and India last played Test cricket against each other way back in 2007.

"I would love to," Rohit Sharma replied when asked by Michael Vaughan if he would like to play the Test series against Pakistan regularly.

"At the end of the day, we want to be in contest and I think it will be a great contest between the two sides. We anyway play them in ICC trophies, so it doesn't really matter. It's just pure cricket that I'm looking at.

"I'm not interested in anything else. It's pure cricket game between bat and ball. It'll be a great contest, so why not."

It is pertinent to mention that Pakistan and India have not played a Test since 2007/08 and a bilateral series in any format since 2012/13 due to the long-standing political tensions between the two neighbouring countries.

The fierce rivals, however, only came face to face in multi-national events like Asia Cup and ICC World Cups.

Signing ceremony

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif witnesses the signing of a letter of intent between the Prime Minister's Youth Programme and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund.



Photo: PID

PM witnesses signing of letter of intent between PMYP, UNICEF

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday witnessed signing of a letter of intent regarding the United Nations Generation Unlimited (GenU) programme between Prime Minister's Youth Programme and the

UN International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF). GenU was launched by the Secretary General of the United Nations in 2018 aimed at empowering the youth through education, technical training and entrepreneurship and working towards early education and training. GenU is planning to start

its full operations in Pakistan with an initial investment of 20 million Euros in youth related projects. Signing the document would help provide equal opportunities to education and training to the youth. GenU and the PM Youth Programme will work together on operational strategic framework in this

regard. PM witnesses signing of letter of intent between PMYP, UNICEF Earlier the UNICEF delegation headed by representative of UNICEF in Pakistan Abdullah A Fazel called on the prime minister. Chairman PM Youth Programme Rana Mashhood was also present in the meeting.

The delegation apprised the prime minister about the collaboration between PM Youth Programme and UNICEF regarding increasing the capacity of the youth in Pakistan. The prime minister appreciated the steps being taken by UNICEF for the welfare of children all over the world including Pakistan.

British High Commissioner calls on Speaker National Assembly

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq has said that Pakistan attaches great importance to its longstanding relations with the United Kingdom (UK) which are based on mutual respect and shared perceptions on broad range of regional and international issues. It is high time to further solidify this cordial bond through increased people-to-people interactions, enhanced parliamentary engagements, and bolstered economic ties for the mutual benefit of the two friendly countries. He expressed these views while talking to the British High Commissioner to Pakistan, Ms. Jane Marriott, who called on him, at Parliament, today. Highlighting the significance



of parliamentary cooperation, Speaker Sadiq underscored that parliamentary diplomacy has historically played a pivotal role in strengthening bilateral relations. He emphasized the continuous exchange

and collaboration between the two parliaments through parliamentary friendship groups and high-level exchanges as avenues to foster mutual learning and benefit from each other's experiences. In

this regard, invitation would be extended to the Speaker of House of Commons for visit to Pakistan along with the parliamentarians. Recognizing the significant contribution of the Pakistani diaspora, the Speaker

praised their involvement in the advancement and growth of both nations. He described overseas Pakistanis as a priceless asset to the country and vowed to take measures in partnership with relevant stakeholders to facilitate overseas Pakistanis. Moreover, he urged that UK may consider offering more educational opportunities in the form of scholarships for Pakistani students.

Ms Jane Marriott thanked the Speaker of the National Assembly of Pakistan for his kind words and agreed to take up all matters of concerns with the relevant authorities. She also expressed hope that both sides would continue to work together to further deepen the Pakistan-UK relations.

Rwanda's rebirth — a nation of unity emerges from shadow of genocide

Xinhua

KIGALI: During a ceremony at the Kigali Genocide Memorial on April 7, Rwandan President Paul Kagame and First Lady Jeannette Kagame lit a memorial torch, a flame of remembrance set to burn for 100 days as a solemn tribute to the tragedy that occurred three decades ago.

On April 7, 1994, Rwanda plunged into darkness as nearly 1 million Rwandans, predominantly Tutsis, fell victim to brutality in three months. Hutu militias unleashed a wave of terror, perpetrating beatings, torture, rape, and murder against Tutsi civilians, including numerous women and children.

The genocide, tearing apart communities of Hutus and Tutsis who shared the same language and religion, found its roots in the colonial policies of Western powers. The seeds of division were sown through the colonial scheme of "divide and rule."

We Can't Tell Ourselves Apart

Nestled in the heart of Africa, Rwanda is known as the "land of a thousand hills." Its breathtaking scenery boasts rolling hills adorned with serene lakes and meandering rivers nourishing lush greenery.

The Hutu and Tutsi communities



have long coexisted as predominant ethnic groups. The Hutu, primarily agrarian, constitute the majority of the population, while the Tutsi, the sizeable minority, traditionally engage in livestock herding. For generations, the two communities have intermingled, living in mixed settlements and often intermarrying.

"Before the arrival of the colonizers, Rwandans were living in total harmony, where Hutu, Tutsi and Twa each played their role in the society," said Jean-Baptiste Gasominari, a Rwandan political analyst.

Rwanda's fate took a drastic turn with the arrival of European colonizers, first the Germans and later the Belgians, in the late 19th century. Employing the ruse of racial classification, the colonizers shattered the longstanding harmony between the two ethnic groups.

According to the flawed contrivance, Europeans deemed themselves superior to Africans, designating Tutsis, with physical features closer to Europeans, as the "superior race" and enlisting them as proxies for governance.

Western anthropologists, in their quest for categorization and control, scrutinized the skulls, facial features, and body types of the indigenous population. Minute differences, such as the length and width of the nose, were perceived as ethnic markers. Consequently, since 1933, Belgian colonial authorities enforced the divisive labeling of Rwandans as either "Hutu" or "Tutsi" on their identity cards.

"You can't tell us apart, even we can't tell us apart," Laurent Nkongoli, then vice president of the National Assembly, who is Tutsi, told American writer Philip Gourevitch, saying he was treated as "one of them" in a Hutu settlement.

"Hutus and Tutsis were once social classes, but the colonizers transformed these identities into political tools," said Ladislav Ngenyahimana, the secretary general of the Rwanda Association of Local Government Authorities.

Division Created By Colonizers

Mahmood Mamdani, a Ugandan academic, delves into the ploy employed by colonial powers known as indirect

rule, a tactic that sought not to eradicate but to redefine existing differences between conquerors and the conquered.

Initially, colonizers attempted direct control over their colonies but encountered formidable resistance rooted in entrenched social traditions.

Henry Maine, a British jurist, devised the infamous "divide and rule" scheme to salvage British authority in India. The Machiavellian approach exploited existing divisions among local populations based on race, language, culture, and religion. By co-opting select groups and nurturing indigenous elites to administer colonial rule on their behalf, colonizers intended to deflect resentment away from themselves.

This practice has since been adopted across the globe, from the British-controlled Malay Peninsula and Dutch-ruled Indonesia, and gradually extended to Egypt, Sudan and other African nations.

Yet, "divide and rule" evolved beyond mere polarization of native populations; it morphed into a deliberate effort to redefine Africa. Western powers crafted narratives, fabricating traditional cultures and distorting historical truths to justify their domination.

Turkish General Metin Gürak called on Air Chief Marshal Zaheer



Spokesman Report

RAWALPINDI: General Metin Gürak, Chief of General Staff, Turkish Armed Forces, called on Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff during his visit to Air Headquarters, Islamabad today. Both the dignitaries discussed various areas of shared interest, aimed at bolstering professional cooperation in the realm of modern warfare

technologies and training.

General Metin Gürak acknowledged the progress made by Pakistan Air Force in developing a robust indigenous aviation industry. The visiting dignitary expressed his desire to consolidate the existing mutual industrial collaboration with NASTP.

The dignitary also visited various installations and technological infrastructure established at Air Headquarters.

AJK PM, federal minister discuss Kashmir situation



Bureau Report

MIRPUR: Azad Jammu Kashmir Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwar Haq and Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs, Gilgit-Baltistan Engineer Amir Muqam held a detailed meeting at Jammu Kashmir House in the federal metropolis on Thursday.

They discussed mutual concerns, including the political and human rights situation in Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK), and ongoing development projects in Azad Jammu Kashmir.

The federal minister reiterated Pakistan's unwavering political,

moral, and diplomatic support for Kashmiris' legitimate struggle for the right to self-determination.

He condemned the atrocities inflicted by Indian forces in IOJK and assured full support for timely completion of development projects in Azad Kashmir.

PM Haq congratulated Engineer Amir Muqam on his appointment as federal minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan.

He highlighted Kashmiris' unconditional love for Pakistan and updated the minister on the progress of ongoing development projects in Azad Jammu Kashmir.

China wants Pakistan to increase counter-terrorism efforts after Bisham attack

Monitoring Desk

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of China to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong addressed a query during an interview with Shaukat Piracha on his show Rubaroo on April 18, 2024. Screenshot via Aaj News

Pakistan should increase counter-terrorism efforts after a suicide blast in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Bisham, Shangla district, on March 26. Dasu has been attacked in the past. A blast on a bus had killed 13 people, including nine Chinese nationals, in 2021.

taken for the protection and security of Chinese nationals, projects, and institutions in Pakistan," he said in an interview with Shaukat Piracha on his show Rubaroo aired on Aaj News on Thursday.

Besides five Chinese citizens, one Pakistani national — the driver — was also killed after a suicide bomber rammed into the bus transporting staff of the Dasu dam project in Bisham, Shangla district, on March 26.

Every possible step should be

Sui Gas Task Force Multan crackdown against gas thieves

Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: According to the details, three consumers were using domestic gas for commercial purposes, among them one was using Crystal Pickle, the other was Ur Rahman Milk and Faludha Ice Cream and the third was being used in a nursing hostel.

Meters of three consumers were taken off due to tampering. A customer's meter was disconnected for compressor usage. A customer's meter was disconnected due to illegal shifting. Two consumers were giving gas to more than two houses through extension, their meters were also disconnected. In addition to them, five consumers were supplying gas through extension in more than one house, whose extension was disconnected.

Update on Dubai airport flight operation resumption

Spokesman Report

DUBAI: Dubai International Airport (DXB) has reopened Terminal 3 for Emirates and FlyDubai flights. However, passengers are expected a high volume of guests at the terminal, the airport authorities said in an update on Thursday morning.

Airport authorities advised passengers to confirm their flight departures from their respective airlines before leaving for the airport to avoid unnecessary delays.

They are working for passengers to ensure that they reach their intended destinations.

Reports said at least 1,244 flights were cancelled and 41 were diverted at Dubai International (DXB) due to heavy rainfall on Tuesday.