

Daily The Spokesman

A Leading National Daily



فرمان رسول
ہم سے احمد بن مسعود نے بیان کیا ہے کہ انہوں نے کہا کہ میں نے رسول اللہ صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم کو کبھی کوئی کلمہ نہیں سنا، نہ میں نے انہیں انہی کے پاس سنا، نہ انہیں اب میرے پاس سنا۔
کوفی مٹھی میں لے لے گا اور آسمان کو اپنے دائیں ہاتھ میں لپیٹ لے گا پھر فرمائے گا میں بادشاہ ہے ہوں، کہاں ہیں زمین کے بادشاہ۔
(بخاری، حدیث نمبر 7382)
Barkat Rice Mills (Pvt) Limited



By-elections: ECP directs security personnel to uphold neutrality, maintain peace

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) instructed security personnel, excluding armed forces, deployed in by-elections to maintain neutrality, assist officers, ensure peace and uphold impartiality, particularly during the counting process. (Details on Page 8)



Xi Focus: Xi presents flag to PLA's information support force

The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) has set up an information support force. Chinese President Xi Jinping presented a flag to the force at its establishment ceremony held on Friday in Beijing. Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC), stressed solid efforts to build a strong and modernized information support force. (Details on Page 5)

Simultaneously published from Islamabad, Lahore and Multan

Shawaal-ul-Mukarram 12, Sunday, April 21, 2024

www.dailyspokesman.net

@daily_spokesman

Daily Spokesman Vol: 18, Issue: 9

Price Rs. 25.00 Pages 8

Passing Out parade

Passing Out parade of cadets of 149th PMA Long Course, 14th Mujahid Course, 68th Integrated Course and 23rd Lady Cadet Course at Pakistan Military Academy (PMA) Kakul on Saturday.



Photo: ISPR

149th PMA Long Course Passing Out Parade: CJCS was Chief Guest

Spokesman Report

RAWALPINDI: Passing Out parade of cadets of 149th PMA Long Course, 14th Mujahid Course, 68th Integrated Course and 23rd Lady Cadet Course was held at Pakistan Military Academy (PMA) Kakul today. 49 Cadets from friendly countries were also among the passed out cadets.

General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, NI (M), Chairman Joint

Chiefs of Staff Committee was the Chief Guest while General Metin Gürk, Chief of the Turkish General Staff was Guest of Honour on the occasion.

CJCS reviewed and addressed the parade. CJCS and the Turkish Chief of General Staff gave away awards to the distinguished cadets.

The coveted Sword of Honour was awarded to Academy Senior Under Officer Muhammad Nauman Abdullah and Presi-

dent's Gold medal to Company Senior Under Officer Muhammad Abdullah Javed of 149th PMA Long Course. The Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee Overseas Gold Medal was awarded to Friendly Country Senior Under Officer Fahad Bin Aqil Al Towarqi Al Fallaj from Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The COAS Cane was awarded to Course Under Officer Ilyas Khan of 14th Mujahid Course. The Commandant's Canes were awarded to Course Junior Under Officer Danish Sattar of 68th Integrated Course and Course Under Officer Sher Bano of 23rd Lady Cadet Course.

The Chairman JCSC felicitated the passing out cadets and their proud parents on the successful completion of their training at PMA.

On the occasion, General Sahir Shamshad Mirza said, "Since its inception, PMA has remained the cradle of leadership and center of

excellence for cadets joining the premier institution of Army. Over the years, PMA has also trained scores of foreign cadets whose brilliant performance in their respective Armies stands testament to the professional ethos of PMA. Today's parade serves as an illustrious example of military discipline at its finest and reflects the sterling ethos of the Academy and Pakistan Army alike."

Earlier on arrival, CJCS was received by Commandant PMA.

excellence for cadets joining the premier institution of Army. Over the years, PMA has also trained scores of foreign cadets whose brilliant performance in their respective Armies stands testament to the professional ethos of PMA. Today's parade serves as an illustrious example of military discipline at its finest and reflects the sterling ethos of the Academy and Pakistan Army alike."

Earlier on arrival, CJCS was received by Commandant PMA.

By-elections: Govt to suspend mobile, internet services today

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Mobile and internet services would remain suspended in several districts of Balochistan and Punjab on Sunday (tomorrow) during the by-elections across the two provinces, the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority has said.

In a statement on Saturday, the PTA said that the decision was taken on the recommendation of the interior ministry.

Earlier in the day, the Punjab Home Department recommended the suspension of mobile and internet services in 13 districts and tehsils across the province during by-elections being held on Sunday in Punjab.

In a related development, the Election Commission of Pakistan has banned media

coverage of the transfer of election material to polling stations.

By-elections for five National Assembly and 16 Provincial Assembly seats are scheduled for Sunday.

In a letter addressed to the Pakistan Ministry of Interior, the department has requested the temporary suspension of services to ensure peaceful and transparent elections.

The letter has also been copied to the Chief Secretary, Inspector General of Police, and Chairman of the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA).

The by-elections are set to take place in various constituencies across Punjab, including Lahore, Faisalabad, Multan, Gujranwala, Rawalpindi, Sargodha, Bahawalpur, Sialkot, Gujrat, Sheikhupura, Jhang, Kasur, and Sahiwal.

Finance minister briefs financial institutions on govt's economic reform initiatives

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Muhammad Aurangzeb on Saturday briefed the chiefs of international financial institutions about the country's economic reform initiatives and development priorities by the government of Pakistan.

The finance minister met with World Bank's Regional Vice President for South Asia, Martin Raiser to discuss Pakistan's reform initiatives and development priorities in Washington DC.

During the meeting, the finance minister expressed satisfaction that the new Country Partnership Framework (CPF) between Pakistan and the World Bank would be finalized soon. He underlined the government's reform thrust in the areas of energy, taxation and state-owned enterprises (SOEs), highlighting the



pursuit of both short and long-term goals in these crucial sectors. Referring to his earlier meetings with the senior leadership of the World Bank, the finance minister stated that the Bank's focus on climate change, digitalization, and human capital development aligns well with the priorities of the government.

The finance minister highlighted the government's vision to realize Pakistan's true economic potential in terms of sustainable economic growth. He stressed the importance

of timely completion of development projects and the realization of intended impacts and outcomes, emphasizing the need for effective implementation and monitoring.

The finance minister also met with Brent Neiman, Deputy Secretary for International Finance at the U.S. Department of Treasury, on the sidelines of the IMF/World Bank Spring Meetings in Washington D. C. Finance Minister briefed

Continued on Page 8

Ex-PM Khan accuses CJP Isa of inaction on 'poor' rule of law

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Former prime minister Imran Khan accused Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa of inaction on issues of the poor rule of law and not upholding the supremacy of the Constitution that he mentioned in his letter to the latter on Saturday.

"Inaction on your part and that of the Supreme Court in the face of each of the aforementioned matters of grave importance would exacerbate the Constitutional crisis the country is already faced with and push it closer and closer to the abyss," he said in a four-page letter to the CJP.

The incarcerated PTI leader highlighted seven matters,

some of which he said formed the subject matter of already filed petitions in the apex court while others involve circumstances that call for prompt intervention at the judiciary's motion. But he claimed that such cases have so far been in vain.

The official account of the former premier shared pictures of the letter in a social media post

on X.

Last year, the incarcerated PTI chairman had also penned a letter to CJP Qazi Faez Esa, requesting the top judge to protect the party's fundamental rights. In a seven-page letter on November 30, 2023, he had urged the apex court to safeguard his party's "right to liberty, to associate, assemble and speak" as guaranteed under the Constitution.

In the recent letter, the former PM first mentioned a graft case against his rival Nawaz Sharif. Despite recording statements of 15 out of 25 witnesses, he said that the National Accountability Bureau prosecutors had proposed the accountability court to exonerate the PML-N supremo.

Pak-China ties rapidly growing due to CPEC: PM

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday said that the economic and cultural relationships between Pakistan and China were being rapidly growing due to China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

In a message on global observance of Chinese language as one of the largest dialects for communication, he said that a sufficient number of Pakistanis were learning the Chinese language which was further cementing ties between the people of the two countries.

The United Nations (UN) observed the UN Chinese Language Day every year on April 20 to highlight the contribution of Chinese literature, poetry and language in world culture.

The prime minister observed that steps were being taken at the official and public



sectors levels to promote the Chinese language and literature so that the people to people contacts between the two countries could be further strengthened, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

Today was the observance of the Chinese language as the global language, he said, adding that the dialect had been an exponent of centuries old Chinese culture.

Pakistan rejects 'political use' of export controls after US sanctions alleged missile suppliers



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has said that it rejected the alleged political use of export controls after the United States decided to impose sanctions against commercial entities on allegations of links with the country's ballistic missile programme.

"It is well known that the same jurisdictions, which claim strict adherence to non-proliferation controls, have waived off licensing requirements for advanced military technologies for some countries," Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said in response to media queries after the US administration's decision.

"Such discriminatory approaches and double standards are undermining the credibility of non proliferation regimes and also the objectives of regional and global peace and security by accentuating military asymmetries."

Earlier in the day, the US State Department four enti-

ties for their alleged involvement in supplying materials and equipment to Pakistan's ballistic missile program, including its long-range missile capabilities.

The sanctioned entities include: Minsk Wheel Tractor Plant (Belarus), Xi'an Longde Technology Development Company Limited (China), Tianjin Creative Source International Trade Co Ltd (China), and Granpect Company Limited (China).

The FO spokesperson said that such listings of commercial entities have taken place in the past as well on allegations of links to Pakistan's ballistic missile programme without sharing any evidence whatsoever.

"We have pointed out many times need to avoid arbitrary application of export controls and for discussions between concerned parties for an objective mechanism to avoid erroneous sanctions on technology needed purely for socio-economic development pursuits," she said.

The statement added that Pakistan was ready to discuss end-use and end-user verification mechanisms so that legitimate commercial users were not hurt by discriminatory application of export controls.

JUI-F announces PB-50 by-election boycott

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman has announced his decision to boycott the PB-50 by-election in Balochistan's Qilla Abdullah, alleging that signs were clear that polls would be rigged.

"We don't need such an election," he said while addressing a public gathering in Pishin on Saturday. "You want to have rigging, so we today announce our decision to boycott the election."

By-elections will be held for five vacant seats of the National Assembly; 12 of the Punjab Assembly, two each of the Khyber-Pakhtunkh-

wa and Balochistan legislatures as well as one of the Sindh Assembly. In addition, re-polling in all constituencies of PB-50 (Killa Abdullah) will also take place on the same day.

Fazl added that his party was always against vote-rigging and they also took out similar protests in 2018.

"This is not the time to fight with each other. Politicians have always been used. Politicians should not be sold for seats," the JUI-F chief said.

He went on to add that the protest campaign would be lead across the country. "We won't allow the fake government to run the affairs," he said.

AJK PM announces completion of one year of coalition govt

Abdul Majeed Tahir

ISLAMABAD/MUZAFFARABAD: Azad Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwar Haq has said that today, Alhamdulillah, one year of the coalition government has been completed.

The person is degraded, this responsibility is from the owner of the universe, he gives as long as he wants and takes away when he wants. Tribute to the current army chief of Pakistan Army for his emotional commitment to the Kashmir Liberation Movement. Thank you. I am grateful to the establishment for providing full support. I am completing a difficult journey full of thorns with the grace of Allah. No one can dare to challenge the writ of a powerful state. The creation must have the intention of serving God. Allah Almighty opens the way. Land PCI for refugees will be done before June 30. Indian touts and brokers in Azad Kashmir will be crushed with iron hands.

The Prime Minister expressed these views while addressing a solemn ceremony on the completion of one year of the coalition government on behalf of Government Minister Javed Butt, Government Ministers Abdul Majid Khan, Ms. Taqdees Geelani, Sardar

Amir Altaf, Sardar Javed Ayub, Mian Abdul Waheed, Sardar Zia Qamar, Chaudhry Muhammad Rasheed, Chaudhry Muhammad Arshad, Chaudhry Azhar Sadiq, Advisor to PM Rtd Col Maruf Ahmed, political and social figures were also present. The Prime Minister said that the public does not pay much attention to the speeches of political activists because their confidence is rising in the political system. He said that just like the patients.

The recovery is a proof of the better performance of the doctor. Similarly, the people know the performance of the government better. said that no powerful and mafia can stand in front of the power of the state, when you compromise once, then you continue to compromise. So far 60% of the budget has been spent and by the grace of Allah, transparency is being taken into account. In Azad Kashmir, road construction, social sector programs and major changes in electronics, health and education sectors have been brought down, the deficit of 8 billion has been brought down to one billion, in the health and education sectors.

Attendance was ensured, the ten district hospitals of Azad Kashmir are improving day by day, the remain-



ing forty percent of the budget will be spent on the convenience of the people. He said that the main objective of the state is to serve its people. They don't pay taxes because they don't have confidence if they know that with this money, the welfare of the people will be done, someone will get education, someone will get health facilities, someone will install an electric pole, a school building.

They are ready to pay taxes even today, the government is providing subsidy to the people in Azad Kashmir, more than 20 billion subsidy is being given in the form of food, subsidy is being provided in the form of cheap electricity in Azad Kashmir. 3 billion subsidy is being provided in five municipal corporations for clean water. He said that the people's trust in the state is being restored, and the state will be theirs.

An endowment fund of 10 billion rupees has been established. What is being done to provide financial assis-

tance to orphans, widows, transgenders, destitute elderly men and women and divorced women, ironically, Merit is being talked about by those who have paraded Merit's dead body. Today, we made such a system that the letter of my son or daughter who took the number in NTS will reach his home, we made the best public service commission. He said that the day I created the motion of no-confidence in 72 hours, until today, there have been thousands of imaginary no-confidence motions, but I work hard every day and will continue to do so, to the Indian Interior Minister.

Former President and Prime Minister Sardar Muhammad Yaqoob Khan gave his time to the Prime Minister. Government Minister Javed Butt thanked Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwar Haq in his address, he also thanked the government ministers. He said that Alhamdulillah, today our coalition government has completed one year, the way Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwar Haq has completed one year which is unprecedented in the past, fixed the bureaucracy, implemented biometrics in the offices, eradicated corruption. Diya and promoted good governance. He said that more work needs to be done for the refugees living in Pakistan.

Sardar Attique demands immediate compensation for losses due to natural disasters

Abdul Majeed Tahir

MUZAFFARABAD: President of All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference and former Prime Minister Sardar Attique Ahmad Khan has said that the government should make an accurate estimate of the loss of lives and property due to natural disasters and compensate the losses and ensure the provision of compensation to the effected families. At present, the roads are closed due to landslides by heavy rains, which the passengers are facing serious problems. The Roads Department should take immediate practical steps in this regard and provide machinery for the maintenance of the connecting roads for transport. Should be opened. The President Muslim Conference expressed condolences to the injured and prayed for the speedy recovery of the injured and said that in this hour of difficulty, the heirs are in grief. Equal participants. Demanded the Azad Kashmir government to improve the condition of the roads as well as improve the system of checking the fitness of the vehicles to prevent such fatal accidents. Facilitate immediate payment of death claims and financial assistance to the injured as well as better treatment.



BJP wants to divide Kashmiris: Farooq Abdullah

Bureau Report

SRINAGAR: President of Jammu and Kashmir National Conference and Member of Indian Parliament Dr. Farooq Abdullah has said that Kashmiri people will never accept the tools of BJP and RSS. Talking to the public delegations at the party headquarters in Srinagar on Saturday, Farooq Abdullah said that the BJP's ambitions are not right and its people are not only bent on making the people of Jammu and Kashmir needy, but also bully, pressure and Through the policy of division, religious harmony, tolerance and unique identity are being harmed here. He said that in order to fulfill their nefarious plans, these people have employed their agents in Jammu and Kashmir and are trying to execute their plans on the basis of force and money he added.



RPO Faisalabad conducts meeting at FIEDMC to review Chinese security

Abdul Majid

FAISALABAD: Regional Police Office Dr Muhammad Abid Khan along with Commissioner Faisalabad Silwat Saeed conducted meeting at FIEDMC to review the security of FIEDMC. City Police Officer, DCO Faisalabad, SSP Special Branch, Head of intelligence agencies and representative of FIEDMC attended the meeting.

RPO Faisalabad further directed to carry out a fresh security audit of FIEDMC to plug the loopholes identified by the law enforcement agencies (LEAs).

Moreover, the RPO directed the law enforcement agencies to carry out search operations in the environs of FIEDMC. Security deployment should be made according to Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) during the movement of Chinese nationals.

The Chinese national should be bound to travel in special vehicles, keeping the protocols of prescribed SOPs.

The RPO also recommended bullet proof vehicles should for the movements of Chinese and other foreign nationals and special security arrangements should be made for their residential areas.

Permanent barricades should be established to strengthen the hard targeting of facilities where foreigners works and resides.

The security audit of all facilities and industrial area needs to be conducted on top priority as per directions of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). Notwithstanding, the revamping of security measures, the laxity in duty will not be tolerated.

All preparations for the by-election on DI Khan NA 44 completed

Adam Khan Wazir

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: Police spokesperson has said that preparations have been completed to conduct the by-election in Dera Ismail Khan in 44-NA in a peaceful environment.

In this regard, in a statement issued by Commissioner Dera Division Zafar Ul Islam and Regional Police Officer Dera Nasir Mahmood Satti, steps have been taken to ensure the conduct of elections in a peaceful environment, while in touch with all the concerned bodies,

The spokesperson said police have completed security arrangements and along with the police, other security agencies will also perform duties for the by-elections, 358 polling stations have been set up in NA-44 Dera Ismail Khan, out of which 03 have been declared highly sensitive, 221 sensitive and 134 normal.

Officials said in statement 4000 police officers and officials will perform security duties at these polling stations.

Officials said ladies police along with lady searchers have been deployed for security at women polling stations, along with them, mobile patrol teams of QRF and RRF will also perform security duties.

A police spokesperson told that a complete ban has been imposed on the display of weapons.

Officials said special blockades have been established to maintain law and order situations, indiscriminate action will be taken against the elements who violate the law and harm the public order.

Carelessness

ISLAMABAD: Citizens crossing the road in a risky way, despite of having overhead bridge on Colonel Sher Khan Shaheed Road in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

Tillition of PDM-2 has created endless storm of inflation: Rubina Akhtar

Quratulain Asim

MULTAN: Tehreek-e-Insaf leader Dr. Rubina has submitted her nomination papers to the returning officer in constituency NA-148. Speaking to the media on this occasion, she said that the government of PDM-1 and the current PDM-2 imposed on the people. People have been grinded in the mill of inflation. Dr. Rubina Akhtar further said that PDM's No. 1 and 2 governments have injected electricity and gas. By increasing the prices of petrol and LPG, the back of the poor and middle class has been broken. By illegally banning the import of soybeans used in chicken feed, the government has skyrocketed the prices of chicken meat across Pakistan. Dr. Rubina Akhtar said that the price



of chicken meat was Rs 200 per kg during the Tehreek-e-Insaf government.

But after a systematic conspiracy against the government of Imran Khan by mistrusting and the favorite government of certain people

PDM has imposed an endless storm of inflation on the people across Pakistan and after PDM, the dead-year government of Kakar's illegitimate government has created a storm of inflation across the country and the poor and middle class.

has been put back in the mill of inflation. And the prices of daily necessities have increased enormously. On the other hand, the prices of chicken have increased by 600%. Dr. Rubina Akhtar is a doctor and is serving humanity in this spirit. She Wants to serve the people.

The government should stop dropping electricity and petrol bombs on the poor people every day, she added that earlier business is non-existent and the farmers are suffering now, even though the wheat production has improved, they have not been paid better, which is less to be condemned, she added that she will also give a new innovation to the election campaign in the constituency in which it will be easier for the people to choose better candidates.

Wazir tribes convened third Jirga to resume the suspended trade activities at Angoor Ada border

Adam Khan Wazir

SOUTH WAZIRISTAN: The third Grand Jirga of Ahmadzai Wazir tribes comprising 9 major tribes was convened at Wana Rustam Bazar on Saturday regarding the restoration of trade activities on Pak-Afghan Angoor Ada border in Wana, Lower South Waziristan District.

In which Local Government Tehsil Wana Chairman Maulana Muhammad Saleh Wazir, business community, Ullamas, tribal elders and people belonging to different schools of thought participated in large numbers. Addressing the

Jirga, JUI District President Maulana Mizajan, Scholar Jana Mir, Malik Tariq Khan, Malik Sidra Noor and Malik Aziz Ullah said that due to the suspension of commercial and trade activities on the Pak-Afghan border, Angoor Ada shopkeepers and common people are facing severe difficulties in Lower South Waziristan District.

While the business has been severely affected due to the suspension of trade at the border in various markets of Wana, South Waziristan.

Jirga participants said, here the prices of food items are increasing day by day which the people are unable to buy.

On the other hand, Scholar Jana Mir demanded from the present government, that during the days of Eid, one vehicle, 21 valuable mobile phones and 7 lakh cash rupees were stolen by unknown persons at Sherwanganai, area of Upper Waziristan District.

In the end, Ahmadzai Wazir elders had a discussion about applying passports at the border.

On this occasion, the Wazir tribes announced on Monday to call the final jirga in which the elders of all the nine major tribes will participate.

It may be remembered that Angoor Ada border trade activities have been suspended for



the last 6 months and the national exchequer is losing crores of rupees on a daily basis.

It is worth mentioning here that the Angoor Ada border is not officially closed and the main

reason for the suspension of commercial and trade activities here is the Angoor Ada sit-in.

IGFC assured to resolve the legitimate demands of traders.



Islamabad
15° - 23° Clear

SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr 4:02 am
Zohr 12:07 pm
Asr 4:49 pm
Maghrib 6:43 pm
Isha 8:12 pm

EMERGENCY

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

Women Police Stations

Islamabad 9222596
Rawalpindi 9270601-20

ENQUIRY

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

HOSPITALS

CMH 561111
MH 561116
MH 561116
Cantt Hospital 9270907-11
DHQ 5556311-4
RGH 9290301-7
Holy Family 9290322-7
PIMS 9261170-79

Polish-Pakistan Friendship Patriots Celebrated at Roots Millennium

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Poland in Pakistan His Excellency Maciej Pisarski & Madame and Guest of Honour Pakistan's Former Chief of Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal (R) Sohail Aman inaugurated the iconic purpose-built Roots Millennium Campus at Multi Gardens B-17, Islamabad spread on 4 acres of thematic wonderland, followed by the celebration of Pakistan-Poland Cultural and Friendship Festival says a press release.

Founder and CEO Dr. Faisal Mushtaq TI, Executive Director Engr. Anna Faisal, COO Abid Hussain, Director Operations & Development Brig. (R) Khurram Nazir Mirza, Director Community Mrs. Sabina Zakir, Director Education Erum Atif and Principal Roots Millennium B-17 Campus Mrs. Afshan Imran were present at this auspicious occasion.

The Chief Guest Ambassador

of Poland H. E. Maciej Pisarski and Guest of Honour Air Chief Marshal (R) Sohail Aman unveiled the Inaugural Plaque.

The Millennium Education Group, Pakistan is spreading widely nationwide with purpose built iconic campuses and award-winning academic choices, qualifications, and curriculum under the dynamic and trailblazing leadership of Founder and CEO Dr. Faisal Mushtaq TI. The Flagship Roots Millennium School B-17, Islamabad Campus is a state-of-the-art purpose-built campus having international standard facilities inside it for the learners and teachers for residents of B-17 Multi gardens society. It is equipped with the latest classroom technology & world class academic resources as per 21 century standards across scholastic and non-scholastic education.

Ambassador H. E. Maciej Pisarski and Guest of Honours were given a tour of the campus by Dr. Faisal Mushtaq and Admin-

istration, they showed them around the largest private tertiary purpose-built institution in Multi Gardens B-17, Islamabad, wherein they were shown various departments, classrooms and other facilities including the FIFA Certified Futsal grounds, Knowledge Park Library, ICT, Robotics, STM and digital labs, Activity Gym, language and reading rooms, Laboratories, Cafeteria, and world class forum Auditorium.

Polish Ambassador, H. E. Maciej Pisarski in his speech expressed his pleasure in witnessing the event and stressed that education is the best investment for the future of the country. Moreover, he spoke on the fact that Poland and Pakistan maintain extensive bilateral, friendly, and economic cooperation since decades and that there is a lot of potential and opportunities for the two countries to further cement their relations.

In his welcome speech Founder & CEO Dr. Faisal Mushtaq TI,



thanked the distinguished teachers, parents, students and guests for gracing the occasion while reflecting on The Millennium

Education mission and commitment to bring quality education and to developing the right set of skills, attitudes, knowledge,

and values within Millennials so that they can confidently meet the global challenges of the 21st century.

Food Minister cracks down on substandard food in Faisalabad

PPA

LAHORE: On the instructions of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, Food Minister Punjab Bilal Yasin cracked down on the manufacturers and sellers of substandard food in Faisalabad. Food safety teams headed by the provincial food minister raided well-known restaurants, food points and markets. Meanwhile, fines of Rs 3 lakh were imposed for violating the rules and a warning was issued to the slaughterhouse. Similarly, a case was registered and more than 1 man of substandard meat and fish was destroyed. Talking to media representatives present on the spot, Food Minister Punjab Bilal Yasin said that actions have been taken for violations of food safety laws. The food minister said that during the raid, the storage area was found with a very dirty and smelly environment. Similarly, medical and training certificates of the employees were also not available. Bilal Yasin said that the manufacturing and expiry dates were not mentioned on the prepared food while dead bees and mosquitoes were found in the freezer. During the inspection, it was observed that food was being prepared with expired ingredients with open drains and broken floors in the processing area. Penalties imposed and cases filed for serious violations of Pure Food Regulations. Bilal Yasin said that it is our mission to provide quality food to the citizens and no relaxation will be offered to the mafia. The Food Minister said that rooting out adulteration mafia is one of the top priorities of the Food Department and operations are underway across Punjab to achieve this goal.

Brotherhood

ISLAMABAD: CDA officials displaying the flags of Pakistan and Iran on Constitution Avenue, as Pakistan to host Iran's President on Monday for official bilateral talks in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Raja Farid

CBD Punjab and PSEB forge historic pact to establish Nawaz Sharif IT City, elevating Punjab's tech landscape

PNP

LAHORE: Punjab Central Business District Development Authority (PCBDDA), also recognized as Central Business District Punjab (CBD Punjab), and the Pakistan Software Export Board (PSEB) have solidified a momentous Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to foster the inception of Pakistan's premier IT hub, Nawaz Sharif IT City as per the directives of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif. The signing of this MoU marks a significant stride towards the establishment of Nawaz Sharif IT City, slated to be the country's foremost and largest IT precinct.

The MoU signing ceremony took place at the closing ceremony of ITCN Asia and was attended by prominent figures



from the IT and corporate world, including H. E. Dima Yahya, Secretary General, Digital Corporation Organization, Minister for State IT & Communication Shiza Fatima Khawaja, Director Business Development CBD Punjab, Ali Waqar Shah, Director Marketing CBD Punjab, Waseem Siddiq, Director Architecture & Planning CBD Punjab, Sameer Aftab Sial, Director

Project Management CBD Punjab Asif Iqbal, and others. The MoU was signed by Imran Amin, CEO CBD Punjab, and Humera Ayesha Moirani, CEO PSEB.

While addressing the ceremony Imran Amin, CEO CBD Punjab, said "The signing of this MoU signifies a pivotal moment in Punjab's trajectory toward becoming a nucleus of technological innovation and

economic prosperity. I extend my gratitude to Chief Minister Punjab, Maryam Nawaz Sharif, trusting the capabilities of the authority and entrusting CBD Punjab with the establishment of Nawaz Sharif IT City. Through strategic collaborations with PSEB, our goal is to unlock the complete potential of Punjab's IT ecosystem, fostering inclusive growth and prosperity for all stakeholders."

This partnership between CBD Punjab and PSEB underscores their shared commitment to fostering a conducive environment for the growth and flourishing of the IT industry in Punjab. Together, they are poised to propel Nawaz Sharif IT City to unprecedented heights, ushering in a new era of technological advancement and economic vitality in the region.

National Consultation Meeting on hemophilia day held



Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: To honor World Hemophilia Day, SPEAK Trust in collaboration with Health Services Academy marked a significant National Consultation Meeting at the Health Services Academy in Islamabad. Distinguished guest speakers from various esteemed organizations gathered to shed light on the challenges faced in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of hemophilia patients.

Among the notable speakers were Dr. Shehzad Ali Khan, the Vice Chancellor of Health Services Academy; Dr. Abbas Ali Zaidi, President of Hemophilia Foundation; Dr. Shahid, the Dean of Life Sciences; Dr. Lubna from Hemophilia Patients Welfare Society; Air Marshal Aftab Hussain, Director of Sundas Foundation; and Dr. Farwa, blood bank in-charge along with hematologists from private and public hospitals

The event revolved around insightful discussions and a panel session addressing the hurdles encountered in providing adequate care and support to hemophilic patients. Dr. Shehzad underscored the concerning prevalence of genetic diseases in Pakistan, partly attributing it to the high rate of cousin marriages. Dr. Shehzad further highlighted a broader regional context, mentioning that countries like Iran and Saudi Arabia in the EMRO region have greater awareness of prenatal and premarital screening compared to Pakistan. Despite being part of the EMRO region, Pakistan lags behind in this aspect and stands among the top countries in the region for hemophilia prevalence. Dr. Lubna further elaborated the issues related to medicine procurement and socio-economic challenges faced by the patients

Mr. Shahbaz Akbar Chaudhary highlighted another social stigma attached with Hemophilia prevention and delved into the stereotypes surrounding prenatal and premarital screenings, emphasizing the crucial need for awareness and advocacy for widespread testing, even at the school level. Air Marshal Aftab stressed the importance of involving religious scholars and leaders to raise awareness about genetic disorders, acknowledging their significant influence within the Pakistani population.

Registration of pilgrims under private Hajj scheme in progress: Ashrafi

LAHORE: Pakistan Ulema Council Chairman Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi has announced that the registration of pilgrims under the private Hajj scheme is in progress, with 24,000 pilgrims slated to participate in the Road to Makkah project this year.

He made these remarks during a press conference held at the Lahore Press Club, where he was joined by representatives from Hajj Organisers Association of Pakistan (HOAP), including Saeed Ahmed Malik, Chaudhry Ehsanullah, Malik Abdul Khaliq, Chaudhry Muhammad Adil, Khalid Mahmood Bhatti, Pir Shafaat Ahmed Boudla, and Zeeshan Qamar.

AKU Earns Prestigious Zairi Int'l Award for Research Impact

PPA

KARACHI: The Aga Khan University received the prestigious Zairi International Award for Excellence for Research Impact in Higher Education during the 6th MENA Higher Education Leadership Forum (MENA HELF) held in Dubai, UAE, on April 18, 2024. This forum is an exclusive gathering of higher education leaders from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, with a few notable educational and political leaders from the US, Australia, Ireland and the UK.

The Zairi International

Awards for Excellence in Higher Education, which have six categories, were launched in 2021. The Research Excellence Award was presented by Her Excellency Ohood bint Khalafan Al Roumi, Minister of State for Government Development and the Future in the UAE, on behalf of the Center for Learning Innovations and Customized Knowledge Solutions (CLICKS), which presents the Zairi awards on an annual basis. The research award, in particular, recognises higher education institutions for their outstanding contributions to groundbreaking research, that addresses real-world challenges

in a variety of disciplines including social, economic, political, and cultural spheres. The prize, which focuses on tangible impact within communities and disciplines, celebrates achievements that demonstrate meaningful benefits.

"This award is a testament to the untiring efforts by our faculty members, research teams, research administrators, and university leadership to ensure that research is foundational in everything we do as a university," said Dr Salim Virani, AKU's Vice Provost Research. "Our core values of Impact, Quality, Relevance and Access (IQRA) are

fully represented in the research performed at our university and this award validates those core values of the Aga Khan University."

The Zairi awards recognise higher education institutions that develop and implement creative responses to current and ongoing issues in the field. It considers many factors, including research priorities and strategies that address local, regional, or global issues; innovative approaches that foster sustainability and growth; institutional culture and how well it cultivates leadership and support; measurable impact and results



through publications, citations, patents, and external funding; as well as productive partnerships and collaborations for knowledge co-creation.

"This accolade reflects the dedication and collaborative efforts of our faculty, researchers, and staff who continuously strive for excellence in research.

We remain deeply committed to fostering a culture that can drive positive change and address the real needs of communities through impactful research and capacity building", said AKU President Dr Sulaiman Shahabuddin.

The Zairi Award of Excellence for Research Impact

follows the Zairi Award of Excellence for Disruptive Education, which was granted to AKU in 2022 based on the work of the University's Network of Quality, Teaching and Learning, QTL_net, which supports teaching excellence and promotes scholarship on teaching and learning across AKU.

Group Chairman/Chief Editor: **Almas Ayoub Sabir**
 Vice Chairman: **Asim Nazir Ahmad**
 Managing Editor: **Naveed Ahmad Khan**
 Head Editorial Advisory Board: **Amjad Mehmood**
 Bureau Chief Karachi: **Saleem Zaman Khan.**
 (mszk786@gmail.com)
 Bureau Chief Lahore: **Syed Afraz Ali Nazish**
 (afrazalishah@gmail.com)
 Islamabad Office: **Rose Plaza, I-8 Markaz.**
 Karachi office: **Flat No.C.3.A.One Comfort, Block No 11.**
Gulshan-e-Iqbal, Main Rashid Minhas Road.
 Lahore Office: **7-E,Samanberg, Johar Town.**
 Email: **spokesmanislambad@gmail.com**
 Whatsapp: **0346-5008408**

Transforming education sector: from job hunters to job creators

Asmat Shah Garwaki

In an era of rapid technological advancements and evolving economic landscapes, the traditional approach to education is undergoing a profound transformation owing to the mushroom growth of digitalization, artificial intelligence, and information technology started bringing about positive changes in people's lives.

This paradigmatic change in the education system strongly reflects a growing recognition of the need to equip young learners for a piece of meaningful knowledge and inculcate the positive energy necessary to navigate an increasingly competitive job market following the completion of their 16 years of education. "Gone were the days when a college or university degree alone guaranteed a secure career path. Today, employers prefer graduates, who possess a diverse skill set, adaptability, and willingness to perform in comparative industrial and digital markets with a will to innovate and deliver quickly," said Professor Dr. Zilakat Malik, former Chairman Economics Department at the University of Peshawar while talking to APP. He said that higher education was a rich cultural and scientific asset that prepares students in diversified fields besides promoting economic,

technological, and social change in society. Dr Zilakat said it is the public sector universities and higher educational institutes (HEIs) that exchange knowledge, research, and innovation besides equipping students with the necessary skills and expertise needed for overseas employment and expediting the engine of economic growth. The financial crisis in most universities of KP has been deepened after nonpayment of the promised annual provincial grants of Rs 3,000 million, impacting negatively on the universities' abilities to maintain infrastructure, support academic programs, and research studies, and ensure quality in education disciplines. As many as 20 out of 34 universities were likely to face budget deficits while 27 universities allocate more than 50pc of their budgets to establishment expenditures, needing realignment of priorities on a priority basis. Dr Zilakat said the report has exposed the poor health of the majority of universities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. "The job creators would emerge only by providing financial autonomy to public universities and make focus on modern research as per the markets demands". Ehtisham Qaisar, a BS Urdu literature graduate said that he applied for government and private jobs through various testing agencies and walk-in interviews but his applications were rejected due to lack of professional experience. He urged

the government to increase the scope and stipends of the national internship program and explore new job markets for the youth abroad. Educationist Dr Zainullah said that improving employment opportunities through education requires a multifaceted approach that addresses both the quality and relevance of education.

Citing a Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) 2021 Report, he said the number of out-of-school children (OSC) had swelled to about 22.8 million in the country including 4.7 million children aged between 5 to 16 years in KP which was a matter of great concerns. Alarmingly, about 2.9 million girls and one million OSC in merged tribal districts were still out of schools, a BISP report said, adding that 74.4 percent of girls and 38.5 percent of boys are out of schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa due to poverty and socio-economic imbalances. Besides 77 percent of OSCs reported in Palas Kolai, 70 percent in Upper Kohistan and 69 percent in Upper Kohistan, about 61 percent of such children in Torghar, 55pc in Shangla, 53 percent in Lakki Marwat, and 51 percent each in Tank and Batagram districts. He said KP needs to discourage unnecessary employment in colleges and universities besides reevaluating curriculum to make youth jobs creators rather than job seekers. Firstly, he said that investing in education infrastructure, such

as schools, libraries, and vocational training centers, is crucial to ensure access to quality education for all. He said the curriculum reforms including starting computer science from the primary level would help children to take advantage of job opportunities in the IT sector and CPEC projects. Shahab Khan, senior planning officer of the Education Department told the news agency that students' enrollment campaign started in the province and efforts would be made to enroll one million out-of-school children in schools. He said that a Rs3.7 billion project was planned for education stipends to students of class 1-12 and Rs500 million for school bags and stationary in merged areas. The KP Minister for Education Faisal Tarkai said that schools were being equipped with all essential facilities to make students job creators rather than job seekers. "By embracing interdisciplinary learning, experiential education, soft skills development, digital innovation, and a focus on career readiness and entrepreneurship, educational institutions are equipping students with the tools and mindset needed to thrive in an increasingly competitive and dynamic job market," he added. He said students would be trained in digital technology with the assistance of TEVTA to take full advantage of the vast scope of employment in the IT market in the country.

Dangerous cycle of retaliation

Following reports of Israeli strikes inside Iran near a nuclear power station Friday, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres issued a new appeal to all parties to "stop the dangerous cycle of retaliation in the Middle East". "The Secretary-General condemns any act of retaliation and appeals to the international community to work together to prevent any further development that could lead to devastating consequences for the entire region and beyond," he said in a statement issued by his Office.

Echoing those concerns, UN atomic energy agency chief Rafael Grossi urged "extreme restraint" from all sides, after more than six and a half months of war in Gaza that have fuelled fears of a wider regional conflict. "IAEA can confirm that there is no damage to Iran's nuclear sites" and Director-General Grossi "continues to call for extreme restraint from everybody and reiterates that nuclear facilities should never be a target in military conflicts", the International Atomic Energy Agency said in a tweet following unconfirmed media reports that possible drone strikes had targeted the Iranian province of Isfahan, which is home to nuclear facilities and military garrisons. In Geneva, too, the UN human rights office, OHCHR, urged all parties "to take steps to de-escalate the situation" rapidly. "(We) call on third States, in particular those with influence, to do all in their power to ensure there is no further deterioration in an already extremely precarious situation," said OHCHR spokesperson Jeremy Laurence. In Gaza, aid teams offered new insight into the dangers faced by Palestinian civilians – particularly pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers – as a result of the "wanton destruction" of vital medical equipment and widespread "dehydration, malnutrition and fear" among Palestinians. Speaking to journalists in Geneva, Dominic Allen, Representative for the UN sexual and reproductive health agency (UNFPA) for Palestine, said that there were indications that the number of complicated births is nearly twice what it was before war erupted. "There is absolutely an increase in the numbers," he said, adding that pre-war, around 15 per cent of births required some form of emergency obstetric care. Today, some doctors have reported "a doubling of what they previously had dealt with, and this is due to malnutrition, dehydration and fear, which impact the pregnant woman's ability to give birth safely and carry their baby to full term safely," the UNFPA official said. Allen described his latest mission to Gaza to assess the impact of Israeli attacks on healthcare at embattled hospitals in the north, central and southern governorates. It was clear that the last remaining hospitals in the enclave – including its second largest, Nasser Hospital – are "clinging to life themselves whilst they are a lifeline for the pregnant women of Gaza", Allen said via video link from Jerusalem. "What I saw, it breaks my heart... It's indescribable. What we see there is medical equipment, purposefully broken, ultrasounds – which you will know is a very important tool for helping ensure safe births – with cables that have been cut, screens of complex medical equipment like ultrasounds and other with the screens smashed. So, purposeful, wanton destruction in the maternity ward."



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

The growing trend of Milk Alternatives worldwide

In humans, the habit of drinking milk lasts longer compared to other mammals' offspring. Even after drinking their mother's milk, humans continue to drink milk regularly, making them the only mammals in the world to do so. In contrast, other animals stop drinking milk after a certain age and begin eating solid food. However, humans continue to drink milk later in life to meet their nutritional needs.

In recent years, concerns have risen about the rapid increase in population, food, and environmental issues, leading to a shortfall in meeting human needs through dairy production. In developing countries, the growing demand and prices of milk have made it unaffordable for the average urban citizen. Dairy farming is impacting the environment, causing concerns about greenhouse gas emissions, water usage, and animal welfare. Therefore, milk consumers are actively seeking alternative sources besides animals. It is estimated that dairy farming is responsible for approximately 65% of greenhouse gas emissions.

As a result, people are now seeking alternatives to cow and buffalo milk that are more environmentally friendly and nutritious. The world is quickly turning towards dairy alternatives due to various reasons including lactose intolerance, scarcity of nutrition, environmental concerns, ethical considerations, and more. Even those who can digest

lactose are reducing their milk intake due to these concerns. This is a major reason why people are looking for dairy-free alternatives.

In this scenario, there is a growing trend towards plant-based milk alternatives, which can serve as a cheaper option for the economically disadvantaged populations in developing countries. This shifting trend can play a role in providing nutritious alternatives like milk to people in places where cow milk supply is insufficient. Plant-based alternatives are typically made by soaking fruits, nuts, grains, or other important components in water, then straining them to extract a "white liquid or milk." A wide variety of milk alternatives are available, such as soy milk, which is a good source of protein and lactose-free. Almond milk is light and has a special taste, being lactose-free. Rice milk is gluten-free and fiber-rich with a mild sweet taste. The choice of the right milk alternative depends on individual needs and preferences. Taking into account factors like taste, nutritional profile, environmental impacts, etc., these alternatives can be used accordingly.

When the nutritional value of alternative sources of milk is compared to animal-based milk, many chemical compounds are shared to a considerable extent. Coconut milk is a source of calcium and vitamins C, E, B1, B3, B5, and B6. Coconut milk usually contains high levels of fat and calories, but the protein

content is low, making it a good cream alternative. Similarly, 'soy milk' is made from soybeans and contains almost the same amount of protein as dairy milk. According to research, soy protein can serve as an alternative to animal protein in preventing heart disease. Soy milk-derived protein can be used to make tofu, just like cheese is made from dairy milk. Instead of rich fruits or nuts, grains like oats are also being used. Oat milk, such as 'Oatly', is a recent alternative made from plant-based milk.

In recent years, Pakistan has experienced a notable growth in the adoption of plant-based alternatives. AKIN Foods stands out as the sole Pakistani company specializing in the production of soy milk and cold-pressed oil. Utilizing locally sourced soybeans, their products have gained traction in the market. Collaborating with esteemed Pakistani agricultural research institutions like PARC and PATCO, AKIN Foods is advancing the production of premium soy milk and tofu, thereby driving research in alternative milk options.

Despite this, it's essential to acknowledge that while plant-based milk alternatives show promise, they fall short of providing the complete nutritional profile found in natural dairy milk. For instance, while soy milk and tofu offer comparable protein content, they often lack in calcium and vitamin B12, essential nutrients abundant in cow's milk. Thus, while these alternatives cater to specific dietary preferences and lifestyle choices, complete reliance on them may not be feasible for all consumers.

Writer is associate with Department Food sciences and engineering BZU

K-Dramas as a tool of Korean Public Diplomacy

Hamna Obaid Khokher

South Korea, one of the most developed Asian Tiger is now a hub of an emerging global phenomenon expressing its cultural impact and public diplomacy through Korean dramas or series. TV dramas or series is one of the most popular genre of media and Korean media uses it in a very impactful way. This Korean Wave encompassing TV dramas, movies and music is widely known as hallyu in the world that has helped South Korea in nation-branding.

In Post-Cold War era, the triumph of liberal world order paved way for states to engage in different aspects of public diplomacy. From 1990 onwards, when the concept of soft power given by Joseph Nye started spreading across the borders, a state like South Korea sitting on a nuclear war fault line had to change its ways of dealing with foreign audiences. Calling this effort as 'Creation of a New Korea', President Kim Young Sam (1993-1998) did liberalization of media in order to project the image of Koreans as 'global citizens'. Economically, South Korea has proved itself to be a miracle where Samsung, Hyundai, SK Group, LG Group etc appeases the global consumers with their products. Over the years, the country developed new globalization strategies to open up to the world including promoting soft power through K-Dramas.

The unique K-drama, 'It's Okay to not be Okay' (2020) adds a completely different dimension in K-dramas as it sheds light on a mental disorder i.e

autism and makes viewers aware of this serious challenge and allows them to build sympathy for such persons.

"Hometown Cha Cha Cha" (2021) is another K-Drama that gives a glimpse of a regular neighborhood in a seaside village in Korea. The main idea is to reflect the simplicity of life in a small town as compared to complicated lifestyles in Seoul and other cities.

Today, the characteristics of the Korean Wave highlight its hybrid nature, blending traditional Korean culture with modern elements that appeal to a diverse audience.

People from different parts of the world today, try to emulate Korean cultural values in their daily life patterns due to their notable impact. Individuals from all over the globe try to adopt many aspects of Korean culture. For instance, they learn Korean language, they try different Korean food items available in their country, they visit South Korea for its worth-visiting places promoting tourism, students get enrolled for scholarships of Korean universities and many people try to imitate Korean behavior like bowing while greeting, sitting on floor while eating and posing for pictures. Thus, Korean culture portrayed in these dramas showcase a significant impact of K-Dramas on a global scale.

In Pakistan, there exists a great K-dramas fan base depicting the inclination of Pakistani people particularly young girls towards East-Asian media rather than Western media. PTV Home broadcasted a dubbed version of the South Korean drama "Nagen" in 2016 to strengthen cultural ties between the two nations.

The conservative cultures depicted in Korean dramas align closely with Pakistani societal norms, emphasizing respect for family, elders, and traditional values. The portrayal of romance in Korean dramas, characterized by innocence, gradual development, and minimal physical affection, contrasts with Western content, resonating well with Pakistani viewers who appreciate the modest and relatable approach to relationships. Particularly during Covid-19, Netflix and YouTube have gained prominence as a platform for viewing Korean dramas and so people who started watching K-Dramas to kill their boredom continued to follow these series regularly afterwards too.

To conclude, South Korea effectively uses its TV industry to engage with foreign public resulting in soft power projection of the country and its public diplomacy. While offering a break from everyday life, K-Dramas also depict fantasy and take viewers to an illusory world of romance and ultimately, raising standards of lifestyle, beauty and love. This brings a challenge for K-Dramas production hubs to balance fantasy with realistic portrayals and add more authenticity. Still in current years, Korean dramas are being viewed in Pakistan and other parts of the world to a great extent. If the increasing popularity of the Korean wave among Pakistanis stays and grows more in the future, then the impact of hegemony may be obvious.

Writer is Student of Bachelors in International Relations, FJWU. She can be reached at hamnakhokher31@gmail.com

Xi Focus: Xi presents flag to PLA's information support force

Xinhua

BELJING: The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) has set up an information support force.

Chinese President Xi Jinping presented a flag to the force at its establishment ceremony held on Friday in Beijing.

Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC), stressed solid efforts to build a strong and modernized information support force.

Xi said that the establishment of the information support force is a major decision that the CPC Central Committee and the CMC has made in light of the overall need of building a strong military.

Xi stressed that the information support force is a new, strategic branch of the military and a key pillar in coordinating the construction and application of the network information system. It will play a crucial role in advancing the



Chinese military's high-quality development and competitiveness in modern warfare.

He ordered the force to resolutely obey the Party's command, and make sure it stays absolutely loyal, pure and reliable.

Xi urged the force to integrate deeply into the Chinese military's joint operation system, carry out information support operations in a precise and



effective manner, and facilitate military operations in various directions and fields.

He also urged efforts to build a network information system that fulfills the requirements of modern warfare and features the Chinese military's own characteristics, as well as efforts to accelerate the development of integrat-

ed combat capabilities more effectively. Xi met with members of the leadership of the information support force and had a group photo with them.

According to a decision made by the CMC, the information support force is directly led by the CMC, and the official designation of the Strategic Support Force is canceled.

China's cross-border e-commerce trade up 9.6 pct in Q1

Xinhua

BELJING: China's cross-border e-commerce trade rose 9.6 percent year on year to 577.6 billion yuan (about 81.3 billion U. S. dollars) in the first quarter of this year, data from the Ministry of Commerce (MOC) showed.



During the period, the country's e-commerce imports and exports with Silk Road e-commerce partner countries such as Hungary, the United Arab Emirates, Cambodia and Brazil, saw rapid growth, the ministry said.

The pace of international cooperation in e-commerce has accelerated, the MOC said, noting that for the first time, it organized Chinese e-commerce platforms to conduct roadshows in foreign countries. Through such an initiative, Chinese e-commerce firms connected with more than 60 small and medium-sized enterprises in Italy, according to the ministry. In the first quarter, the national online retail sales reached 3.3 trillion yuan, an increase of 12.4 percent year on year, with service consumption continuing to lead the growth, the MOC said.

Palestinian ambassador calls on PPP Chairman



Spokesman Report

KARACHI: The Ambassador, State of Palestine, his Excellency Ahmed Jawad Amin Rabei, paid a visit to Bilawal House to meet Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and MNA Bibi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari here on Saturday. According to a press release from the Media Cell Bilawal House, discussions on Pakistan-Palestine relations took place during the meeting.

The PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, speaking at the event, reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering support for the Palestinian people, particularly on the issue of Gaza. He said that Israel's actions in Gaza have created such a history of atrocities that have ashamed the humanity. He said that the Pakistani nation stands united on the issue of Palestine, and "our hearts beat with the Palestinians." Ambassador of Palestine Ahmed Jawad Amin Rabei presented Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Bibi Aseefa Bhutto Zardari with commemorative photos of Shaheed Mohartama Benazir Bhutto and Yasser Arafat, as well as a photo of Al-Aqsa Mosque and a commemorative shield. Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah was also present at the occasion.

Palestine Ministry welcomes the decision of the Republic of Barbados to recognize the State of Palestine

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the State of Palestine welcomes the decision of the Republic of Barbados to recognize the State of Palestine on the borders of June 4, 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

This step reflects Barbados's keenness to support the Palestinian people and their inalienable and legitimate rights in their land and homeland, which is consistent with its positions in support of the right of all peoples to self-determination, without exception, in line with the principles of international law and the relevant resolutions of international legitimacy.

The Ministry considers that the decision of the friendly Republic of Barbados, in these times, comes as a contribution from countries that believe in the two-state solution as an option that represents the will and international legitimacy to save this solution, which is being systematically destroyed as a result of the accelerating Israeli policies and plans, especially through the continuation of the genocidal war in the Gaza Strip and the expansion of settlement. The invasion of cities, towns and villages in the West Bank, in addition to the policy of Judaization and displacement and the open imposition of the apartheid system, in a continuous attempt to impose new realities and prevent the possibility of embodying the Palestinian state on the ground.

The Ministry calls on all countries that have not yet recognized the State of Palestine to take this step as soon as possible, in confirmation of the international community's insistence on ending the suffering and injustice to which the Palestinian people have been exposed for more than seventy years, and restoring all their legitimate and inalienable rights, first and foremost their right to self-determination. In its independent, sovereign state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

It is worth noting that Barbados is a country in the Caribbean basin. It was a member of the British Commonwealth but left it and became a republic in 2021. It is one of the Caribbean countries whose recognition we were looking forward to.

Kite Festival

Prior to the opening ceremony of 41st Weifang International Kite Festival, Ambassador of Pakistan to China H.E. Khalil Hashmi had a group interaction with Mayor Liu Jianjun, highlighted the strong ties between Weifang and Pakistan, and proposed mutually beneficial cooperation.



Photo: PID

House passes bill for possible TikTok ban in US

The US House passed a bill on Saturday afternoon requiring TikTok's parent business to either sell the app or face domestic prohibition

A guideline imposed by the bill requires the China-based company ByteDance to sell TikTok within nine months, with the president having the option to extend this period to a year, or make the app face a ban across the country, according to NBC.

With the backing of Biden and the Senate, the proposal, which extends the period for a sale from a previous House bill, is now more likely than ever to be banned in the United States. This afternoon, the House is scheduled to vote on three proposals that would authorize the United States to provide further security assistance to the Indo-Pacific region as well as to Israel and Ukraine.

One day after a rare and exceptional bipartisan alliance set the stage for the votes, with more Democrats (165) than Republicans (151) voting in favour of the "rule" to move forward with the legislation.

Iran, Israel appear to pull back from brink as Gaza bombed again

News Desk

TEHRAN: Iran has dismissed as akin to child's play Israel's reported retaliation for an unprecedented Iranian strike, as both sides on Saturday appeared to step back from wider conflict stemming from the war in Gaza.

However, a deadly blast at an Iraqi military base emphasized the high tensions which persist in the region, as did more deadly Israeli strikes in Gaza and intensifying clashes in the West Bank.

Fears have soared this month that escalating tit-for-tat attacks between Israel and Iran could tip over into a broader war in the Middle East.

Israel had warned it would hit back after Iran launched more than 300 missiles and drones a week ago in its first-ever direct attack on its arch enemy's territory.

The Iran attack was itself in retaliation for an air strike — widely blamed on Israel — that levelled the Iranian consulate in Damascus and killed seven Revolutionary Guards on April 1.

The Israeli retaliation appeared to

come on Friday, when Iranian media reported blasts in the central province of Isfahan.

Fars news agency reported "three explosions" close to Qahjavarestan, near Isfahan airport and the 8th Shekari army air base.

"What happened last night was no attack," Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian told NBC News.

"It was the flight of two or three quadcopters, which are at the level of toys that our children use in Iran," he added.

"As long as there is no new adventure on behalf of the Israeli regime against Iran's interests, we will have no response."

Israeli officials have made no public comment on what — according to a senior US congressional source who spoke to AFP — were retaliatory Israeli strikes against Iran.

Sanam Vakil, director of the Middle East and North Africa program at Britain's Chatham House think tank, said the reported Israeli strike had been "calibrated to avoid damage and further Iranian aggression."

Iranian political expert Hamid Gholamzadeh said the incident in Isfahan, while "insignificant," needs to be seen in the context of the "fight for balance of power" between the two countries.

"The region is on fire and an all-out war can be ignited any moment," he said.

While tensions rose after the attack on Iran's consulate, violence involving Iran-backed groups had already been surging across the Middle East since the outbreak of the Gaza war.

Officials in Iraq said one person was killed and eight wounded in an explosion at a military base south of Baghdad housing a coalition of pro-Iranian armed groups.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility.

Since the Gaza war began, violence has also flared in the other occupied Palestinian territory, the West Bank.

The Israeli army said Saturday that its forces killed 10 militants and arrested eight other people during a 40-hour raid on a refugee camp in the northern West Bank.

The Palestinian health ministry said 11 people were wounded in the Israeli

raid, including a paramedic who was shot trying to get to the wounded.

Israel has faced growing global opposition over its military offensive in Gaza, which has reduced vast areas of the besieged Palestinian territory to rubble, while aid groups have warned the north is on the brink of famine.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who is under pressure over the rising civilian toll, needs "further escalation and another war to distract the world attention" away from suffering in Gaza, Iranian analyst Gholamzadeh said. There have been particular fears about Israel's intention to send troops into the southernmost city of Rafah, where most of the population is now sheltering having fled violence elsewhere.

Foreign ministers of the G7 group of developed economies, meeting in Italy on Friday, said they opposed a "full-scale military operation in Rafah" because it would have "catastrophic consequences" for civilians.

But even without a full operation, the city has been under regular bombardment.

Uzbekistan and the World Bank sign an agreement to finance the project for US\$50 million

News Desk

TASHKENT: Uzbekistan and the World Bank signed an agreement to finance a project to build a digital economy in Uzbekistan.

The agreement was signed by World Bank Vice President Antonella Bassani and Deputy Prime Minister—Minister of Economy and Finance of Uzbekistan Jamshid Kuchkarov on the sidelines of the spring meetings of the World Bank Group (WBG) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Washington.

Antonella Bassani and Jamshid Kuchkarov held productive negotiations.

During the meeting, the parties discussed issues of deep-

ening bilateral cooperation. In particular, the sides reviewed the Bank's support for the government's efforts to implement market reforms and its strategies to respond to the impacts of climate change.

The parties also welcomed the signing of an agreement on financing a project that will help Uzbekistan build a digital economy, including development, attracting investment, and creating new jobs in the IT services sector, and the signing of an agreement to finance a project to develop the digital economy reflect the desire for joint efforts in the field of reform and innovation.

This project promises to be significant for the development

of Uzbekistan and the creation of new opportunities for its citizens.

Let us recall that in November 2023, the Board of Executive Directors of the World Bank approved a soft loan in the amount of US\$50 million for the implementation of the Digital Inclusion in Uzbekistan project.

The project aims to support the government of Uzbekistan's efforts to develop the digital economy and increase access for youth from rural and remote areas to digital skills training and employment opportunities in information technology-enabled services (ITES).

Uzbekistan has shown significant growth in exports in ITES services sector from

US\$600,000 in 2017 to US\$140 million in 2022, accompanied by an increase in the number of companies and high-paying jobs in the information technology (IT) sector. Despite the positive trends, the contribution of the entire information and communication technology (ICT) sector to the country's GDP still remains modest and amounted to 1.9% in 2022.

The country's development strategy until 2030 ("Uzbekistan-2030") envisages that by the end of the current decade, Uzbekistan will transform into a Central Asian information technology hub (IT-HUB), reach the export volume of IT services up to US\$5 billion per year, and increase the number of IT

representative offices—there are up to 1000 companies in the country, and will also provide employment for 300 thousand young people in the IT sector. To achieve these goals, it is necessary to invest significant resources in training a workforce with appropriate digital skills, developing the necessary IT and office infrastructure, developing legislation and policies for the development of the IT sector, and providing incentives to attract foreign and local investment in the industry.

Investments in Uzbekistan's digital economy could also help reduce the number of young people, including women, who are currently uneducated, untrained and unemployed.



A new project supported by the World Bank will help Uzbekistan use the ITES services sector as a catalyst for economic growth, job creation and foreign investment. It will be implemented by IT-Park under the Ministry of Digital Technology with the aim of training thousands of youth under the age of 30 living in rural and remote areas of the country. As part of the project, ITES companies that

will hire these individuals will be provided with various incentives.

In 2029, by the time the project is completed, it is predicted that about 25 thousand people will be employed in the ITES services sector of Uzbekistan and about 15 thousand people will be able to get work in related industries. The project aims to contribute to achieving these goals by supporting various activities.

Foreign Investment in the stock exchange is promising for the economy: Atif Ikram Sheikh



PA

ISLAMABAD: President Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry Atif Ikram Sheikh while reacting to the foreign historic investment in the stock exchange said that the investment of foreign investors in the stock exchange is welcome. Stock exchange has seen such a huge investment after seven years. The reason for the bullish trend in the market is the expectation of bilateral agreements in the Prime Minister's visit to Saudi Arabia and positive news of expected Saudi investment in RekoDak due to the efforts of the SIFC Forum.

Atif Ikram Sheikh, President Federation of Pakistan added that Foreign investors buying shares in the Pakistan Stock Exchange is a positive sign of confidence in our current government. In one day, non-resident investors purchased shares worth \$234 million in the stock exchange, which is beneficial for the economy.

Atif Ikram said that in the nine months of the current financial year, foreign investors of \$ 90 million have come to the Pakistani capital market, the KSC Hundred Index in the stock market reached 70,909 points, which is historic and shows that the confidence of local investors, including foreign investors, is also increasing in the stock exchange.

POL rates hike: FRIA asks govt to withdraw anti-industry decision



PPA

LAHORE: The Ferozepur Road Industrial Association (FRIA) has asked the government to withdraw the anti-industry decisions of continuous raises in oil products prices, warning the authorities that inflation above six percent could hurt the economic growth and only a prudent approach could keep it in under the control.

FRIA senior vice chairman Shahbaz Aslam said that another hike in petrol prices would put an additional burden on the industries and general public at a time when they are already hard-pressed with huge power tariff jump amid unprecedented inflation.

Shahbaz Aslam, also the PIAF senior leader, said that recent massive increase in the petrol, diesel and other petroleum prices has shattered all segments of society including industrialists and traders. He said that government did not bother to pass on the benefit of decrease of oil prices in international market and earned billion rupees, which was a sheer injustice and now made a huge raise in the petroleum prices.

Standard Chartered and British Asian Trust celebrate successful partnership

PPA

KARACHI: Standard Chartered Bank and The British Asian Trust, in collaboration with partners Shirakat and Sindh Agricultural & Forestry Workers Coordinating Organisation (SAFWCO), celebrated the success of their Agripreneurs project. This was the second phase of the project and focused on high-performing participants from the previous phase. The project supported 700 participants with additional business growth, marketing, quality assurance and digital literacy training resulting in their revenues increasing by 25%. 300 new participants were also onboarded and provided with basic enterprise development training. The project worked with businesses catering to high demand products such as chillis, vegetable and fruit drying, fodder production in Sindh and Punjab.

Business community determined to play its role in revival of country's economy: Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari

PPA

ISLAMABAD: President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari has said that the business community is playing an important role in the development of country's economy and in creating employment opportunities for youth, therefore, resolution of its problems is one of his top most priorities.

Addressing a ceremony held in honour of the Umra pilgrims belonging to different markets of the capital at Chamber House he said that restoration of the confidence of businessmen, industrialists and investors is of paramount importance and for this purpose he is working tirelessly without any discrimination.

He said that he in his personal capacity as per the corporate responsibility is desirous of providing water filtration plants to each and every sector of Islamabad.

He urged all the stakeholders to start consultation with the Chambers of commerce across the country to get the input of the business community for revival of economy and for this purpose the business community will fully cooperate with the government in its efforts to revive the economy.



In his address, Chairman Founder Group Khalid Iqbal Malik drew the attention towards the deteriorating standard of education in the country and urged the business community to come forward and contribute for the betterment of the sector.

Vice President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Engr. Azhar ul Islam Zafar said that we have to promote brotherhood in our ranks for the progress of the country.

Secretary General United Business Group Zafar Bakhtawari called upon the government

to formulate its economic policies in consultation with the business community if it really wants to put the country on road to progress and prosperity.

General Secretary, IEAA Ch. Zahid Rafique said that entire credit of forging unity among the ranks of business community goes to Zafar Bakhtawari and Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari.

President I-8 markaz Raja Fayyaz Gul hailed the performance of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry under the leadership of its President Ahsan Bakhtawari.

President Melody Market, Azhar Iqbal Satti while recounting the achievements of Islamabad Chamber under the president ship of Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari pledged his fullest support to him.

President E-11 markaz Ifthikhar Abbasi mentioned the successes of the Chamber and made a demand for a state of the art display centre to attract foreign investors.

President E-11 markaz Ifthikhar Abbasi commended President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari for leading the Chamber from the front.

President D-13 markaz Mohammad Noman described President Ahsan Zafar as pride of the business community.

Chairman J-7 group Maqbool Hussain said that Mr. Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari has set a unique record of performance for the welfare of traders' community which will be difficult to beat by any one. In future.

Ch. Babar while terming Mr. Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari as the brand ambassador of business community promised his and his associates all out support to him.

The ceremony was also addressed by Khalid Chaudhry, Nasir Chaudhry, Irfan Chaudhry, Usman Khan, Malik Mohsin, Nisar Mirza, Imtiaz Abbasi and other.

NPO Pakistan hosts International Workshop on Gemstone Value Addition

PPA

ISLAMABAD: National Productivity Organization (NPO), Pakistan in collaboration with Asian Productivity Organization (APO), Japan is organizing an International Workshop on value addition of gemstone products for compliance with international standards from 22nd to 25th April 2024 at Islamabad hotel. The said workshop is expected to be attended by 18 overseas participants from Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Vietnam from APO member countries, 10 local participants and sessions will be delivered by the international resource speakers from Thailand.

The main objective of this program is to review international standards on gemstone



products, to provide comprehensive knowledge of cutting, polishing, designing and heating techniques, and to enhance understanding of best practices and technological advances in gemstone value chains including manufacturing, standardi-

zation and trading. Nature has bestowed Pakistan with largest treasures of Gemstones. Some of these make Pakistan prominent in the mineral world. World's most desired colored gemstones, such as Emerald,

Ruby, Sapphire, Topaz, Aquamarine, and Tourmaline are found in Pakistan.

The northern and north-western parts of Pakistan are shrouded by the three world-famous ranges called Hindukush, Himalaya, and Karakorum. These mountains have been found to be extremely rich in the mineral deposits. Deep green Emerald of Sawat valley and rare pink Topaz of Katlang are one of the most precious gemstones in the world market.

Gemstones present in Pakistan can be found in Khyber Pakhtunkwah province in Swat, Dir, Mansehra, Kohistan, Peshawar, etc. In Gilgit Baltistan and AJK in Chilas, Hunza, Shigar, Baltistan etc. in Baluchistan Province they are in abundance in Kharan, Chaman etc.

ITCN Asia attracts business & investment promises deals worth millions of dollars

PPA

LAHORE: The 24th edition of ITCN Asia served as a platform for local and foreign companies and investors to sign multiple business and investment deals for the future in IT, telecom, and allied sectors.

According to the organizers, more than 600 companies were participating in the mega IT trade show, which hosted various thought-provoking and networking sessions, including the AI Summit, World CISO Summit & Awards 2024, Global Digital Summit, Investors Summit, Policy Roundtable, Skills Roundtable, Enterprise Roundtable, Animation and Games Roundtable, Gameathon, ITCN Asia Global Security Symposium, Freelancers Summit, Made in Pakistan Roundtable



Conference, etc.

Vice President and Event Director Ecommerce Gateway Pakistan Muhammad Umair Nizam said the 24th ITCN Asia concluded on an optimistic note in Lahore, as it paved the way for accelerated growth in the technological ecosystem of the coun-

try, particularly in the IT sector, which was declared a key sector by the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC).

The biggest tech show will achieve various goals for the IT and telecom sectors soon, including investment inflows in Pakistan, growth in export receipts, strengthening of startup culture, the emergence of AI in the country, etc.

ITCN Asia offers a comprehensive platform for showcasing solutions in key sectors such as but not limited to government, cloud, data center, cybersecurity, ERP, education, banking & finance, health and pharma, e-commerce, artificial intelligence (AI), etc. The event focuses on networking, knowledge sharing, and lead generation, with conferences facilitating a learning environment for tech enthusiasts.

PAeC leads the way for Pakistan at ICDDA 2024 in Ankara

PPA

KARACHI: Pakistan Aerospace Council (PAeC)'s Convener, Mr. Imtiaz Rastgar, is currently in Ankara, Turkey, participating in the Industrial Cooperation Days in Defense and Aerospace (ICDDA) 2024. With the aim of fostering international collaborations and showcasing Pakistan's aerospace capabilities, Mr. Rastgar proudly represented the Pakistan Aerospace Council (PAeC) at this prestigious event.

During ICDDA 2024, PAeC distributed the latest print version of its directory "HIGH-TECH INDUSTRIAL CLUSTER OF PAKISTAN" to various companies in attendance, including aerospace clusters from Malaysia, Turkey, and Indonesia. This initiative aimed to strengthen partnerships and explore potential avenues for cooperation within the aerospace industry.

The event also welcomed esteemed guests from leading organizations such as Boeing, Leonardo Turkey,



and TURKSAT (Türksat Satellite Communications Cable TV and Operations), DELTA Aerospace, Ozen Savunma, and TCI Aircraft Interiors. These senior officials were invited to visit Pakistan, further solidifying ties and exploring opportunities for collaboration with Pakistani counterparts.

To extend the reach of the PAeC Directory and promote collaboration opportunities, the digital version is now available on the PAeC website. Prospective partners, customers, and companies interested in subcontracting possibilities from Pakistan can access the directory at the following link: <https://pakaero.com.pk/paec-directory-2024/>

Ever-rising energy cost biggest issue of export industry: Phma

PPA

LAHORE: The Pakistan Hosiery Manufacturers & Exporters Association (PHMA) has said that high cost of doing business has proved to be dangerous for the value-added export-oriented knitwear industry, as the ever-increasing gas and power tariffs are the real threat to the economy amidst frequent upward revisions in policy rate and continuous fluctuations in rupee against

dollar. These views were expressed in an interactive session held here at PHMA Zonal office to review the challenges faced by the PHMA members, with the PHMA North Zone Senior Vice Chairman Amanullah Khan in the chair. Participants of the meeting urged the Central Bank to allocate funds for renewable energy schemes, including solar energy financing exclusively to the export-oriented value-added textile sector.



use digital wallets for savings and business." Altaf Hussain Nizamani, Executive Director of SAFWCO said, "Our project shows how powerful it is to help people and give them skills. These women not only change their own lives but also inspire others. It's a great example of how working together can make a big difference."

Notable guests attending included key market stakeholders representing food companies, grocery chains and restaurants.

The event also provided an opportunity for industry leaders and the female Agripreneurs to form direct links, gaining valuable insights and feedback aimed at enhancing their product quality, marketability and growth plan.

First South Punjab Chess Fair opens in Multan

Sports Desk

MULTAN: First South Punjab Chess Fair has begun in Multan with participation from over 250 chess players from across Pakistan brainstorming their moves on 64-square battle field drawn on a board to claim prizes worth Rs 1.7 million.

The chess contest is being organized by Punjab Chess Association, Multan District Chess Association, Punjab Sports Board and Pakistan Chess Federation. Three rounds were played on the first day with Muhammad Shahzad on top of the table in masters category while Tahir Mustafa was leading in South category.

Tough contests were witnessed in Masters category with FIDE masters found themselves exposed to some marvelous game from opponents. Chess veteran Tanveer Geelani had to lose half point when coin and Rook combination by Akhtar Hussain forced his King to repeat pattern.

At the conclusion of third round, Muhammad Shahzad topped the list in Masters category with three points while Sabir Khan stood at second place, FIDE master Muhammad Waqar from Karachi secured third position, Muhammad from Quetta at fourth and Sibte-Ali from Multan ranked at fifth on the points table.

In South Punjab category, Tahir Mustafa is leading the points table with three points after winning three matches. Wajid Mahmood, Abdullah Wahla, Zahoor Ahmad, Omar Hafeez, Arsalan Akhtar and Muhammad Saqlain were



on the second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh position respectively with their aggregate score.

Remaining 28 players are also in the contest with two aggregate points each. Earlier, Raja Gonar from Punjab Chess Association, the tournament organizer, inaugurated the chess contest. He said that the contest was aimed at providing

a platform to chess players from all age groups and all skills level to demonstrate their talent.

Masters category besides south Punjab Shiners, women and U-14 and other categories were introduced and chess players participated in good number.

Second and final day's play would begin Sunday 8:30 am. Additional Chief Secretary

South Punjab Fuad Hashim Rabhani would attend the prize distribution ceremony as special guest while secretary energy Punjab Dr. Naem Rauf would be the guest of honour.

Officials from Pakistan Sports Board and Punjab Sports Board would besides chess players and association office beaters would also be there.

Mardan, Hazara in Girls; Peshawar, Swat in Boys take lead in PM Youth Table Tennis League

Sports Desk

PESHAWAR: In the ongoing Prime Minister Youth Talent Hunt Table Tennis League, girls' teams from Mardan and Hazara and boys' teams from Peshawar and Swat emerged as the top performers among the participating teams from five different regions across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Saturday.

The league is being played at Lala Rafique Sports Arena and the latest games were held on Saturday.

Several matches were played in the table tennis provincial league under the Prime Minister's Youth Talent Hunt Program. Mardan and Hazara competed in the girls' competition, while Peshawar and Swat teams took the lead in the boys' competition.

Director General Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) Amjad Ali Afridi was the chief guest on



this occasion. Director Distance Studies University of Peshawar Dr Noorzada, Provincial Table Tennis Association Vice President Kifayatullah, Director Sports Islamia College University Peshawar and Organizing Secretary Ali Hoti, Female Coaches Saira, Amina and HEC Officials Owais were present.

The Mardan team defeated Swat by 3-0 in the first match of the girls team event in the table tennis provincial league

in connection with the ongoing Prime Minister Youth Talent Hunt Program at Qayyum Sports Complex Peshawar. Hiba of Mardan defeated Seema of Swat by 11-6 and 11-7, Huria defeated Khadija by 11-6, 11-8 while Maya defeated Atiga by 2-0, the score was 11-7 and 11-9 in the last singles. In the second match Hazara defeated Bannu by 3-0 and qualified for the next round. Peshawar defeated Mardan by 3-1, in which Ubaid of Peshawar defeated Hamza of Mardan by 11, 6, 11, 9. In the second match, Jawad of Mardan defeated Owais of Peshawar by 11, 8, 9-11 and 11-9. In the third match, Haroon of Peshawar defeated Mudassar of Mardan by 11-7 and 11-8 and Obaid of Peshawar defeated Jawad of Mardan by 11-7 and 11-5.

In the second match of the team event, Swat defeated Hazara 3-0. Speaking at the ceremony, Director General Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory

Authority (PEMRA) Amjad Ali Afridi said that by organizing the Prime Minister's Talent Hunt program, new talent will emerge in our province, which will shine not only in the province but also in the country at the national and international levels.

He said that sports activity is very important for men as well as women. He demanded from the Higher Education Commission that along with table tennis, other sports should also be included in the Prime Minister's Youth Talent Hunt program so that the players get more opportunities to play.

In response, to the demand of the chief guest, Owais, an HEC representative informed that in the Prime Minister Youth Talent Hunt Program, a total of 12 Games have been included and apart from Wrestling and Weightlifting, the girls' players are taking part in 10 different Games.

Mohammad Rizwan goes past Babar, Kohli to set major record in T20Is

A Sports

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan wicket-keeper batter Mohammad Rizwan on Saturday, added another feather to his cap by breaking a long-standing T20I record, jointly held by Babar Azam and India's star batter Virat Kohli.

During the second T20I against New Zealand here, Mohammad Rizwan became the fastest batter to score 3000 runs in T20Is, surpassing his national team captain Babar and India's Kohli.

Kohli and Azam are the joint-fastest to score 3000 runs in T20I cricket, taking 81 innings each, followed by Australia's Aaron Finch who took 98



innings. The wicket-keeper batter amassed this record in 79 innings, with his match-winning 45-run knock against the Blackcaps in Saturday's match. Meanwhile, Babar Azam is

closing in on Virat Kohli's record for the most runs in T20I cricket. Azam has scored 3,698 runs in T20I cricket and is third among the highest run-scorers in the format. Kohli tops the list with 4,037, followed by his teammate

Rohit Sharma, who has amassed 3,974 runs.

Azam needs 340 runs in five games to become the highest-scorer as well as the second batter to surpass the 4000-run mark in T20I cricket.

It is pertinent to mention here that a combined bowling effort by Pakistan bowlers, followed by Mohammad Rizwan's composed innings crushed New Zealand by seven wickets in the second T20I of the five-match series here at Pindi Cricket Stadium. Chasing a meagre 91-run target, Pakistan successfully chased the total in 12.1 overs when Rizwan hit Cole McConchie for a boundary over square leg.

Pakistan squad
Babar Azam (c), Moham-

mad Rizwan (wk), Saim Ayub, Usman Khan, Ifkhar Ahmed, Azam Khan (wk), Imad Wasim, Shadab Khan, Shaheen Shah 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 McConchie, Jimmy Neesham, Will O'Rourke, Tim Robinson, Ben Sears, Tim Seifert (WK), Ish Sodhi, Tom Blundell, Zak Foulkes.

Basketball championship from 21st



Sports Desk

FAISALABAD: An Inter District Basketball Championship will commence at Crescent Sports Complex here on Sunday (April 21).

Divisional Commissioner Madam Silwat Saeed will inaugurate the championship at 10 a.m. In this connection all necessary arrangements have been completed to hold the sports event in a most befitting manner, a spokesman for the divisional sports department said here on Saturday.

Azam Khan ruled out of New Zealand T20Is

A Sports

LAHORE: Pakistan wicket-keeper batter Azam Khan has been ruled out of the ongoing five-match T20I series against New Zealand due to injury in his right calf muscle, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Saturday.



"Azam Khan has been advised to undergo a 10-day rest following radiology reports confirming a Grade One tear of his right calf muscle," the PCB said in a statement.

Consequently, the PCB said the right-handed batter will be unable to participate in the ongoing T20I series against New Zealand, which culminates in Lahore on April 27.

Azam will now depart from the Pakistan men's cricket team and report to the National Cricket Academy, where he will commence his rehabilitation process under the supervision of the PCB medical panel.

The discomfort in Azam's right calf was first noticed during batting practice in the pre-first T20I training session at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium.

For the unversed, the highly-anticipated first T20I between Pakistan and New Zealand was called off due to persistent rain here. Only a two-ball action was possible at the picturesque Pindi Cricket Stadium as the rain returned after Shaheen Shah Afridi's early wicket.

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

Karate Combat 45: Shahzaib Rindh clinches victory for Pakistan by defeating India's Rana Singh

Pakistan skipper Shahzaib Rindh defeated India's captain Rana Singh to grab victory for his side in the last-round drama after scores were tied in the explosive 3 vs 3 team fight between the arch-rivals at the Karate Combat 45 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE) on Saturday.

The high-tension battle was decided in the last round after Pakistan's Rizwan Ali and India's Himanshu Kaushik won the first and second match, respectively.

The event began with Pakistan's Rizwan Ali taking on India's Pawan Gupta in the first round. The Pakistani did not have any trouble in taking his opponent down as Gupta was soon lying on the floor after Rizwan knocked him out in the first round.

Pakistan were leading 1-0 before India's Himanshu Kaushik faced Faizan Khan in the second round. Had Pakistan won that, they would've won the match but that didn't happen as Kaushik managed to overcome Faizan, who came in place of Uloomi Karim after he wasn't allowed to fight as he missed his weight by five kilos.

As the match became 1-1, it came down to the decisive round where Pakistan's captain Shahzaib Rindh faced India's Rana Singh. Rindh's continuous attacks from the beginning of the match put his opponent in the corner and he ultimately ended up winning the fight with a technical knockout decision.

After the fight, Rindh came into the ring raising both Pakistani and Indian flags as his gesture of peace between the two countries.

"This fight was for peace. We are not enemies, we are together," Rindh said after the match.

In the process, he also extended his Karate Combat record to 5-0. He also created history in February earlier this year after he registered the fastest knockout at Karate Combat 44 in Mexico City. The 25-year-old stunned his opponent, Marco Cubas of Peru, with a knockout in 21 seconds during the first round.

Earlier, Rindh slapped Rana while on stage during a press conference on Friday. The video of the incident immediately went viral on social media.

"How was the slap bro?" Rindh said after the clash on stage.

Silva strikes late as Manchester City sink Chelsea to reach FA Cup final

Sports Desk

LAHORE: Bernardo Silva fired Manchester City back into the FA Cup final as the Portugal midfielder's late strike sealed the holders' 1-0 win against Chelsea at Wembley on Saturday.

Pep Guardiola's side were second best for long periods of the semi-final, but Chelsea wasted a string of chances before Silva delivered the knockout blow six minutes from full-time.

Shaken by their Champions League quarter-final loss against Real Madrid on penalties in midweek, City took a while to shake off the gloom from the end of their treble bid.

They were hampered by the absence of Norway striker

Erling Haaland after he suffered a knock against Real, with Julian Alvarez unable to make an impact as his replacement.

City were bailed out by Chelsea striker Nicolas Jackson's profligacy and Guardiola will hope the hard-fought success provides a timely lift as they chase a Premier League and FA Cup double.

Manchester City face United or Coventry, who meet on Sunday, in the final on May 25 and will retain the Premier League title if they win their last six games.

It will be City's 13th final in the competition and potentially a repeat of last year's 2-1 win over United in the Wembley Manchester derby.

Beaten by Liverpool in the League Cup final in February, Chelsea's wait to win their first domestic trophy since the 2018 FA Cup goes on for another season.

It was a bitter blow for Blues boss Mauricio Pochettino, who has endured a difficult first season in charge and remains without silverware in England.

The semi-final was billed as in-form Chelsea forward Cole Palmer's chance to punish his old club for selling him to the Blues in September.

Guardiola said Palmer was asking to leave City for two years before he eventually joined Chelsea, where he has scored 23 goals in all competitions this, including 11 in his last six games.

Palmer, who scored four times in Monday's 6-0 rout of Everton, was a constant threat for Chelsea, but ultimately it was his team's lack of killer instinct that proved decisive.

Palmer's pin-point pass sent Jackson racing into the City area early on, but his strike lacked the accuracy to beat Stefan Ortega in a miss that foreshadowed Chelsea's fate.

Jackson wasted a golden opportunity to give Chelsea the goal their dominance deserved.

Enzo Fernandez's pass split the City defence, but Jackson opted to go around Ortega rather than shoot and the chance was gone as Nathan Ake scurried back to clear.

Playing with more purpose

and quality than City, Pochettino's team threatened again as Palmer cleverly shimmed past Rodri for a low drive from 12 yards that was well saved by Ortega.

It was the first time lethargic Manchester City had failed to muster a first half shot on target since a game against Everton in February.

Jackson, in the midst of a terrible debut season, was put clean through on goal by Conor Gallagher immediately after the interval.

But the much-maligned striker's shot was palmed away by Ortega, who clawed away a close-range header from Jackson seconds later.

City finally tested Djordje



Petrovic through Phil Foden's snap-shot, but the Serbian was equal to his powerful strike.

Chelsea appealed in vain for a penalty when Jack Grealish's arm blocked Palmer's free-kick, while Moises Caicedo was fortunate to escape a second booking for a crunching tackle that forced Grealish to limp off.

Grealish's replacement Jeremy Doku drew an immediate save from Petrovic with a near-

post blast. Doku's presence lifted Manchester City and the Belgian played a part as they stole the victory in the 84th minute.

Advancing with intent towards the Chelsea end, Doku slipped a pass to Kevin de Bruyne, whose low cross was pushed out by Petrovic to Silva for a close-range finish that deflected home as Guardiola punched the air in relief.

Meeting

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi in a meeting with the Ambassador of Iran Dr Reza Amiri Moghaddam on Saturday.



Photo: PID

Iranian Ambassador discusses details of President's visit with Mohsin Naqvi

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Iranian Ambassador Dr Reza Amiri Moghaddam on Saturday met with Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi in his office to discuss arrangements for the Iranian president's upcoming official

visit to Pakistan.

The meeting discussed the details of the visit of the President of Iran along with the details of proposed agreements which would be discussed during the visit.

The Iranian Ambassador congratulated Mohsin Naqvi

on assuming the post of interior minister and appreciated his performance as caretaker chief minister of Punjab. "You completed public projects at an extraordinary speed during your tenure as Chief Minister," said the Iranian ambassador.

The minister termed the

Iranian President's visit very important, in the context of the regional situation and said that the visit would be a milestone in the development of bilateral relations.

"We have to work together to solve the menace of terrorism and other challenges"

said Mohsin Naqvi adding that Pakistan-Iran relations span over decades and Pakistan values brotherly relations with Iran.

He said that there is a need to promote cooperation for lasting peace and stability in the region.

By-elections: ECP directs security personnel to uphold neutrality, maintain peace

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) instructed security personnel, excluding armed forces, deployed in by-elections to maintain neutrality, assist officers, ensure peace and uphold impartiality, particularly during the counting process.

In a code of conduct issued for law enforcement agencies deployed on election duty, the arrest of suspects is only permitted upon instruction from polling staff.

Law enforcement personnel deployed for the bye-elections in Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Balochistan must adhere to the code, ensuring they perform their duties lawfully to assist the Election Commission of Pakistan in conducting fair and peaceful bye-elections in 2024.

According to the guidelines outlined by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), security personnel are required to carry out their duties within the boundaries of their assigned mandate and in

compliance with the law. This is to ensure the facilitation of free, fair, transparent, and peaceful bye-elections in 2024.

Each gazetted law enforcement officer will exercise powers delegated by the Election Commission of Pakistan under Section 193 of the Elections Act, 2017, and cooperate with District Returning Officers, Returning Officers, and Presiding Officers as per Section 83(a) of the same Act.

Assist the Presiding Officer in ensuring smooth and effective polling station operations, maintaining order, and removing any individuals who misbehave or disobey orders. Remain impartial and neutral throughout the electoral process, providing full cooperation to the Presiding Officer to ensure uninterrupted voting.

As per the code, exhibit courteous and impeccable conduct when interacting with voters and polling staff, while remaining resolute and fair in compliance with the law in all situations. Offer assistance and guidance to individuals outside the polling station in the event of

confusion or disturbances, ensuring a calm and secure environment conducive to voting. Conduct thorough frisking/checking of each voter to prevent the entry of any weapons, explosives, or prohibited items, including mobile phones, which may pose a threat to the integrity of the polling process.

Ensure voters are efficiently queued, with priority given to elderly, transgender individuals, pregnant women, women with infants, and voters with disabilities. Concentrate solely on maintaining a peaceful and transparent polling process outside the polling station, following the directions of the Presiding Officer. Note that only one polling agent per candidate is permitted at each polling booth, with only one agent allowed to observe the counting and tabulation of results, as per the code.

Polling agents and observers are legally entitled to obtain copies of Form-45 and Form-46 from the Presiding Officer during the counting process. Additionally, ensure the security of the Returning Officer's

office premises until the result consolidation is complete, and safely store polling materials in the Commission's strong room. Adhere to all election and relevant laws, aiming to build public trust by maintaining a secure environment and upholding law and order throughout the election process. Note that District Returning Officers/Returning Officers may visit polling stations at any time.

Accredited observers and media personnel are permitted to enter polling stations. Media personnel, along with cameras, can film the voting and counting processes, excluding the screened-off compartment to maintain ballot secrecy. Security personnel, including police, must not ask voters to produce their "Perchees" or prove their identity, as this is the responsibility of the polling officer. No eligible voter should be denied entry to the polling station, as voting is their inviolable right.

Ensure impartiality and avoid any actions that may suggest bias. Refrain from assuming the responsibility

of polling staff under any circumstances. Do not handle any election materials, including ballot papers, stamps, or electoral rolls. Only allow authorized polling staff to handle such materials. Avoid engaging in arguments or altercations with candidates, their agents, polling agents, observers, or media personnel. Refrain from interfering with the duties of the Presiding Officer, Assistant Presiding Officer, or Polling Officer. Report any irregularities observed outside the polling station to the Presiding Officer and follow their instructions.

Do not object to the presence of candidates, their agents, or observers during the counting process. Only make arrests at the polling station if explicitly instructed to do so by the Presiding Officer. Refrain from interfering with the counting process and ensure a peaceful environment outside the polling station until the completion of the counting process, unless malpractice is identified, in which case inform the officer in charge immediately for further action.

Helping Flood Victims: Relief operations continue in Balochistan flood-hit areas



News Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Army, Balochistan North and Civil Administration are continuing relief operations in different areas of Balochistan in the wake of floods.

People are being shifted to safer places. Cooked food is being distributed among the flood victims.

A free medical camp has been

established by the Balochistan in a village of Chaman area to help the flood victims. Doctors and paramedical staff are deployed in the medical camp.

Free medicines and food items are being provided to all the flood victims.

Flood relief kits including gas cylinders and tents for emergency camps have been delivered to the flood affected areas.

Dubai's flagship carriers resume normal operations after floods

Spokesman Report

DUBAI: Emirates canceled nearly 400 flights and delayed many more as a result of a record storm that hit the desert city of Dubai on Tuesday. Reuters

Dubai's flagship carrier Emirates and sister airline flydubai have restored normal operations after heavy rains caused severe flooding across the United Arab Emirates earlier this week, the airlines said on Saturday.

Emirates cancelled nearly 400 flights and delayed many more as a result of a record storm that hit the desert city of Dubai on

Tuesday, said a statement released by the airline's president, Tim Clark.

Due to the impact of the storm, the airline suspended check-in for passengers departing from Dubai and halted its transit operations through Dubai International Airport, a major global travel hub, leaving thousands of travellers stranded.

The airport has struggled to return to normal operations after the storm flooded taxiways, forcing flight diversions, delays and cancellations.

Flydubai also returned to its full flight schedule from the airport's Terminal 2 and Terminal 3 on Saturday

following the weather-related disruption, a spokesman for the airline said.

Clark said Emirates had provided 12,000 hotel rooms and 250,000 meal vouchers to customers who were affected. He added it would take days to clear the backlog of rebooked passengers.

The UAE has suffered the impact of the flooding for days, with roads between the city and Abu Dhabi still partially under water as of Saturday.

In Abu Dhabi, some supermarkets and restaurants faced product shortages, unable to receive deliveries from Dubai.

PM strongly condemns attack on Customs officials in DI Khan



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday strongly condemned an attack on Customs officials in Daraban area of District Dera Ismail Khan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The prime minister reiterated that such cowardly acts could not shake the resolve of the

government and the fight against terrorism and smuggling would continue till their complete elimination. The prime minister prayed for the departed souls of Shaheed officials and for the bereaved families to bear the losses with fortitude, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

He said that looking after the bereaved families of Shuhada was now a responsibility of the government and directed Chairman Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to prepare Shuhada package for the bereaved families.

Those Shuhada who had been sacrificing their lives for the motherland and laying down their lives in performance of duties, were alive before Allah Almighty, he added.

Finance minister conveys condolences over recent terrorist attack against Chinese



Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Muhammad Aurangzeb on Saturday met with the Chinese Finance Minister Lan Fo'an on the sidelines of the IMF/World Bank Spring Meetings in Washington D. C. The finance minister conveyed condolences on behalf of the leadership and the people of Pakistan over the recent terrorist attack against Chinese nationals in Pakistan. He reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering commitment to ensuring the safety and security of Chinese citizens and investments in the country, said a press release issued here by Ministry of Finance.

The minister lauded China's invaluable contribution to Pakistan's development through initiatives such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and support at international financial institutions.

Apprising the Chinese counterpart of the progress on CPEC, the finance minister stated that Phase-I focused on infrastructure development, while Phase-II would emphasize monetizing assets through the operationali-

zation of Special Economic Zones and relocation of Chinese Private-Owned Companies (POCs).

He expressed the government's resolve to accelerate Phase-II of CPEC. Finance Minister also expressed gratitude to the Chinese government for the SAFE deposits and their regular roll-overs, which have played a crucial role in addressing Pakistan's external financing gaps.

The federal minister informed the Chinese Minister that Pakistan was entering into a larger and extended program with International Monetary Fund (IMF) and looked forward to China's continued support.

He also briefed him on the government's priorities, including broadening the tax base, fixing the energy sector, and overhauling the state-owned enterprises (SOEs).

He stated that Pakistan aimed to tap into the Chinese Bond Market and launch Panda Bonds during the fiscal year 2025-26. Both sides agreed on the need to continue their cooperation within international institutions, reflecting deep-rooted economic ties between the two countries.

Fatiha Qul held

Kiran Asim

A large gathering of Fatiha Qul was held in Jamia Masjid Mehria Shamsabad, the shrine of Hazrat Musa Pak Shaheed, Makhdoom Syed Abul Hasan Gilani, for the repose of the soul of former foreign secretary Jalil Abbas Jilani and the late wife of veteran politician Makhdoom Salahuddin Jilani. Chairman Senate, former Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gillani, former Governor Malik Rafiq Rajwana offered a collective prayer. Elderly politician Makhdoom Javed Hashmi,

Former federal minister Makhdoom Syed Tanvir ul Hassan Gillani, Member of National Assembly Syed Ali Musa Gillani, Former adviser to Prime Minister Malik Abdul Ghaffar Dogar, Khawaja Muhammad Younis, Khawaja Muhammad Yusuf, Khawaja Muhammad Ilyas MNA Mehr Asghar Hayat Haraj, Khawaja Shoaib, Dr. Altaf Qureshi, Shahid Mehmoood Khan, Zaheeruddin Alizai, Nawab Tabish Durran, Naeem Khan, Zaigham Gillani. A large number of people including most of the assembly members participated.

Finance minister briefs ...

Continued from Page 1

Mr. Neiman on Pakistan's positive economic indicators in the wake of the Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) signed with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

During the meeting, the finance minister briefed the AIB President on Pakistan's positive economic indicators, including improving foreign exchange reserves, a stable currency, declining inflation rates, and a surging stock market.

He highlighted the renewed institutional and foreign inflows into the market, on the back of the successful 9-month Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The finance minister informed Mr. Jin Liqun that Pakistan was looking to enter into a larger and extended program with the IMF, building upon the progress achieved under the SBA. He identified broadening the tax base, fixing the energy sector, and undertaking state-owned enterprise (SOE) reforms as key priorities of the government.

He expressed gratitude to IFC

for its support in the outsourcing of the Islamabad airport, which will be followed by similar initiatives in Lahore and Karachi.

He noted with satisfaction the uptick in IFC activities in the country and requested the corporation's support in assisting the government in shifting its Public Sector Development Program (PSDP) to PPP mode. Other engagements of the finance minister included luncheon meeting with Country Management Unit (CMU) of the World Bank, participation in the High-level Closed-door Roundtable on Financial Markets Access: Challenges and Opportunities organized by the Middle East and Central Asia Department (MCD), IMF and meeting with Mr. Andrew Torre, Regional President, VISA.

The minister is leading Pakistan's delegation in the IMF / World Bank's 2024 Spring Meetings being held in Washington DC. Other delegates include Imdadullah Bosal, Finance Secretary, Dr. Kazim Niaz, Secretary Economic Affairs Division, Jameel Ahmed, Governor State Bank of Pakistan and Adil Akbar Khan, Senior Joint Secretary, Economic Affairs Division