



**Govt to address issue of missing persons: Law Minister**

Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar has said the government is serious to address the issue of missing persons. Addressing a news conference along with Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar in Islamabad on Tuesday, he said a committee is being reconstituted on the directions of the PM on this matter, which will have parliamentary presence. (Report on Page 8)



**Ambassador of Kazakhstan for developing cultural ties with Pakistan**

Abai Qunanbaiuly, recognized as the national poet of Kazakhstan, writes about love, humanity, and learning, much like Muhammad Iqbal, Pakistan's national poet. Abai's works resonate far beyond Kazakhstan's borders, touching readers across diverse cultures and languages, inviting contemplation of existence and the embrace of diversity. At the book launch ceremony for "Book of Words" by Abai, translated into Pashto, Punjabi, Sindhi, and Balochi... (Details on Page 3)

Simultaneously published from Islamabad, Lahore and Multan

**Paying tribute**

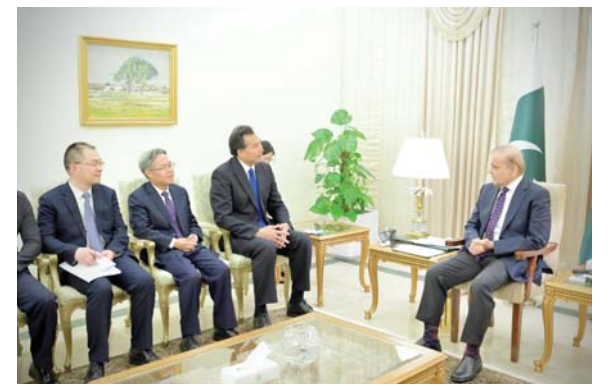
LAHORE: Iranian President Dr. Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi visits Iqbal's Mausoleum in Lahore and lays a wreath in honour of the renowned poet and philosopher at Mazar-e-Iqbal on Tuesday.



Photo: PID

**PM lauds CIDCA's role in Pakistan's economic uplift**

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif says China is Pakistan's most trusted friend



Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: A high-level delegation of the Chinese International Development Cooperation Agency, led by its Chairman Luo Zhaohui, called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in Islamabad on Tuesday.

Welcoming the delegation, the Prime Minister said China is Pakistan's most trusted friend and appreciated China's steadfast support to Pakistan.

of CPEC would result in more industrial, scientific, and green development.

He further said CPEC-II is also an opportunity for the private sectors of both countries to form joint ventures.

Chinese Ambassador in Pakistan Jiang Zaidong also attended the meeting.

The Prime Minister witnessed the signing ceremony of four Memorandums of Understanding focusing on Flood Rehabilitation, Information and Communication Technologies, Juncao Technology, China-Pakistan Development Cooperation Planning 2024-2028 alongside a Letter of Exchange on the establishment of a First Aid Centre in Balochistan, and Protocol on Cooperation in Human Resources Development under the Global Development Initiative.

These agreements signify the deepening cooperation between Pakistan and China across various sectors.

**Iranian President vows to enhance ties with Pakistan**

President Dr Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi says Pakistan and Iran maintain the same stance on Palestine issue

Staff Reporter

LAHORE: Iranian President Dr Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi says Pakistan and Iran are keen to develop centers of arts and learning besides promotion of arts and sciences.

Addressing students and faculty at Government College University in Lahore, he said it is need of the hour to pay special attention to arts, sciences and technology to shine among the comity of nations.

President Raisi said that

universities should be centers of learning and research and a comprehensive strategy in the education sector may pay dividends.

On Allama Iqbal, the Iranian President said the poetry of Allama Dr Muhammad Iqbal

enjoys special acceptance in Iran.

He said Pakistan and Iran maintain the same stance on Palestine issue.

Dr Raisi said Iran would further enhance its cooperation with Pakistan in the energy and

other sectors.

The Iranian President thanked Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif for the cordial hospitality during his visit.

**Afghan refugees' management require substantial resources: Amir Muqam**

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON) Engineer Amir Muqam on Tuesday urged the international community, through UNHCR leadership's, to increase funding and support to meet the growing needs of the Afghan refugees that required substantial resources. The SAFRON Minister held a virtual interaction with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Filippo Grandi over zoom to discuss issues of Afghan refugees, a news release said.

The federal minister said that government of Pakistan remains committed to the Solutions and Strategy for Afghan Refugees. The federal minister said that we are immensely grateful for UNHCR's ongoing support



and partnership in managing the Afghan Refugees' situation. "We look forward to continuing our collaboration to ensure the safety and dignity of refugees within our borders," he added.

He said that we emphasize our dedication to facilitating voluntary, safe and dignified repatriation. The Minister

said that we seem UNHCR's support in ensuring these processes are well supported and that returnees have viable prospects upon their return. He said that addressing the needs of Afghan refugees requires substantial resources. We urge the international community, through UNHCR leadership's,

to increase funding and support to meet the growing needs of this protracted crisis. "Our goal is not only the repatriation but also the successful integration of returnees into Afghan society. We are keen to discuss how UNHCR can assist in integrating returnees into national development plans of Afghanistan," he added.

He said that in light of the Afghanistan's political landscape it's crucial we discuss how these new challenges affect the refugees and our response strategies. "We look forward in participating in upcoming international forums and meetings to further to our joint efforts. Ensuring these meetings result in actionable commitments will be crucial. In this regard, I am looking forward to Your Excellency in your expected visit in July, 2024," he added.

**Security forces kill three terrorists in Pishin IBO**

Staff Reporter

RAWALPINDI: On night 22/23 April 24, security forces conducted an intelligence based operation in Pishin in District of Balochistan on reported presence of terrorists.

During the conduct of operation, after intense fire exchange, three terrorists were sent to hell, while one terrorist was apprehended in injured condition, who has been identified as an Afghan national.

A huge cache of arms, ammunition and explosives was also recovered during the operation.

Security forces of Pakistan, in step with the Nation, remain determined to thwart attempts of sabotaging peace, stability and progress of Balochistan.



provincial constituencies.

He alleged that "ballot boxes were already filled" before the polling process, and the results of Punjab seats were "pre-planned". He also alleged that the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) neither provided level playing field to the former ruling party nor took returning officers (ROs) from the judiciary.

Barrister Gohar said that the ECP failed to conduct fair and free elections, once again. He announced that his party will hold peaceful protests on Friday against the by-election "rigging".

He also demanded the Supreme Court (SC) to hear PTI's petitions regarding the Form 45 issue. He added that his party was neither resisting nor rejecting reconciliation but it was fighting for its rights.

Monday, PML-N senior leader Sanaulah extended a "reconciliation offer" to incarcerated PTI founder Khan and said that together they could steer the country out of crises.

His remarks came as the cash-strapped nation simultaneously facing multiple challenges, including economic and political crises and a sharp rise in terrorism. Agencies

**Finance Minister vows to implement govt's economic policies**

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb has emphasized the government's commitment to implement prudent economic policies to ensure sustainable development and prosperity for all stakeholders.

He was talking to Board of

Directors of Albaraka Bank Pakistan Ltd and all foreign shareholders to discuss the future economic and financial outlook of Pakistan, in Islamabad on Tuesday.

The Minister highlighted the progress made in various sectors and outlined the government's vision for fostering a conducive business environment and



attracting foreign investment.

The Board of Directors and foreign shareholders expressed their confidence in Pakistan's economic potential and reaffirmed their commitment to support initiatives aimed at promoting growth and financial stability.

They commended the government's efforts in implementing structural reforms and fostering a business-friendly environment conducive to investment.

Discussions during the meeting focused on Pakistan's future

economic prospects, including opportunities and challenges in key sectors such as banking, finance, and infrastructure development.

The participants exchanged views on strategies to enhance Pakistan's competitiveness, attract foreign investment, and promote sustainable economic growth.

# Education Minister appreciates role of UNICEF in Pakistan

UNICEF representative calls on Education Minister Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) representative in Pakistan Abdullah A. Fadil called on the Minister of Federal Education and Professional Training Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui on Tuesday. The meeting was attended by Secretary Education Mohyuddin Ahmed Wani in addition with senior officials of the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training.

Federal Minister Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui welcomed Abdullah A. Fadil and acknowledged the services of UNICEF in the education sector of Pakistan. He appreciated the role of UNICEF in helping Pakistan in its bid to create equal access to quality education for the people of Pakistan. Federal Minister said that there is a dire need to address the issue of Out of School Children and the broader gap of access and quality of education on an emergency basis.

Dr. Khalid said that the ministry of education is working on a holistic plan to create a National Education



Framework under which the federation and the provinces will be equal stakeholders. Minister said that this policy will be launched within a month and will bring all the stakeholders on the same page. He said that all the provinces along with donor partners will be taken on board to create a national consensus. Dr. Khalid said that the primary goal is to drastically reduce the Out of School Children in Pakistan and that can only be done with a national, concerted and focused effort.

Secretary Education Mohyuddin Ahmed Wani said that this seeming-

ly insurmountable crisis can only be addressed if we can make the solution of the education crisis a corner stone of the broader narrative of economic progress. Wani said that the federal government will pledge support for the underprivileged areas of the provinces such as slums to ensure broader inclusiveness under the National Education Policy.

Abdullah A. Fadil said that UNICEF has been present in Pakistan since 1948. He said that UNICEF supports efforts to increase access to quality education for all children in Paki-

stan, with a focus on marginalized and vulnerable populations. This includes initiatives to improve school enrollment, retention, and learning outcomes, as well as promoting inclusive and child-friendly learning environments.

Abdullah highlighted that UNICEF spent \$150 Mn from 2018-2013 on its education program in Pakistan and that this budget has been increased to approximately \$250 Mn for the next five years. Mr. Abdullah said that the forum of Foundational Learning Alliance, which includes all the major donors in Pakistan, would be keen to join the concerted effort under the banner of the National Education Policy.

Dr. Khalid Maqbool said that the feudalisation of education needs to end. He said that it is high time that every Pakistani can attain his/her right to education irrespective of his/her background. He said that access to quality education, teachers training, infrastructural and curriculum limitations are the greatest challenges that need to be prioritised.

## Niazi criticizes by-elections of Punjab

Abdul Majeed Tahri

MUZAFFARABAD: President Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Azad Kashmir, former Prime Minister Sardar Abdul Qayyum Niazi has said in his statement that the worst fraud in the by-elections of Punjab was a conspiracy to make the nominated candidates of Tehreek-e-Insaf lose the election by buying and selling government machinery workers. Which we strongly condemn.



He said our goal is to release Founder PTI Imran Khan from innocent prison. For this, we have continued to fight. The people of Pakistan know that Imran Khan is the only leader who can take Pakistan out of the economic quagmire. Our demand is that the judiciary of Pakistan should have a free and fair trial on the false and fabricated case related to Imran Khan. The judiciary should make independent decisions without any pressure. The group of hypocrites will go home within the year.

Niazi said that this corrupt government cannot last for long. Rising prices of diesel petrol and inflation have made life difficult for the people. The working class is craving for two-time bread. We are engrossed in our luxuries. We reject rigged elections in Pakistan. Like the previous elections, elections have been stolen this time too. Tehreek-e-Insaf Azad Kashmir rejected the stolen election and continued their struggle until the release of Imran Khan.

## DFP concerned over prisoners' plight, deteriorating HR situation in IIOJK

Bureau Report

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party (DFP) has expressed its grave concern over the continued detention of Kashmiri Hurriyat leaders, rights defenders, journalists and civil society activists who have been arrested before and after 5th August 2019.

In a statement issued here today the DFP spokesman advocate Arshad Iqbal said that the international community should come forward in a big way to help resolve the long-standing dispute that has been the main cause and consequence of bloodshed in the region.

The spokesman said that the international human rights organization must take stock of the situation and play their due role to bring an end to the barbaric brutalities being inflicted on Kashmiri people.

He said that the Indian troops operating under a shield of draconian laws have unleashed a reign of terror in the occupied Kashmir. Referring to the intensified repression ahead of parliamentary elections, he said, "Innocent people are being harassed and humiliated during cordon and search operations". The spokesman said that Indian secret agencies were compelling the Kashmiri people to support the BJP government and its local proxies in the parliamentary elections.

On the other hand, he said that the occupation authorities have been given a free hand to terrorise the families of Hurriyat leaders by attaching their houses and properties.

He said such mean tactics wouldn't deter Kashmiri resistance leaders from pursuing the collective cause for which they have given unprecedented sacrifices.

## Chaudhry Umar Daraz passes away

Our Correspondent

FAISALABAD: Faisalabad's well-known political and social figure Chaudhry Umar Daraz has passed away. The deceased participated extensively in politics and was also an advisor to former Prime Minister Ms. Benazir Bhutto. He was the best golfer while he also established the Khadija Mahmood Trust Hospital in Chaban where thousands of patients are being cured. His brother Dr. Khalid Mahmood was also the Chairman of Pakistan Science Foundation while his son Asad Mahmood was also elected MPA from PP 112. The funeral prayer of the deceased was performed tonight at Mid City Park Tariqabad, in which a large number of businessmen, apart from leading political and social personalities of the country, also participated. Meanwhile, Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Dr. Khurram Tariq, Senior Vice President Dr. Sajjad Arshad and Vice President Haji Muhammad Aslam Bhali expressed deep grief over the death of Chaudhry Umar Daraz and offered patience to the bereaved.

## All political parties staged protest against illegal police raid in Wana

Adam Khan Wazir

SOUTH WAZIRISTAN: District Lower South Waziristan the police force raided a notorious drug dealer in Wana.

On this occasion, the Mughal Khel tribe, along with all political parties, staged a protest in front of the police line on Tuesday against the illegal raid of police. DPO Farman Ullah ended the protest on the faith decade and the protesters dispersed.

According to the report, after Isha prayer last night, under the supervision of Wana police station SHO Allah Nawaz Wazir, a drug dealer named Riaz was raided and arrested in Mughal Khel village near Wana Bazar.

Politicians and residents of the area protested against this move of the police SHO, calling it illegal and a violation of the trampled boundary wall.

A large number of people including all political parties participated in the protest demonstration. On this occasion, the protesters raised slogans against the police force, local district administration and law enforcement agencies and strongly demanded legal action against the said SHO.

On the other hand, District Police Officer Farman Ullah Wardag met the delegation of the protest on the efforts of Mughal Khel village Chairman Rehan Wazir, and upon successful negotiations, the protest was ended by the participants, the protesters dispersed peacefully.

DPO Farman Ullah Wardag assured the representative delegation of the protesters that an immediate investigation will be initiated against the said SHO and the SHO will be punished for the mistake.

The DPO added that apart from this, more action will be taken against the vehicles with black glasses so that black glasses can be completely eliminated.

## Embroidery work

MUZAFFARABAD: Embroiders sewing Kashmiri shawls at Girls College Road Market in the city.

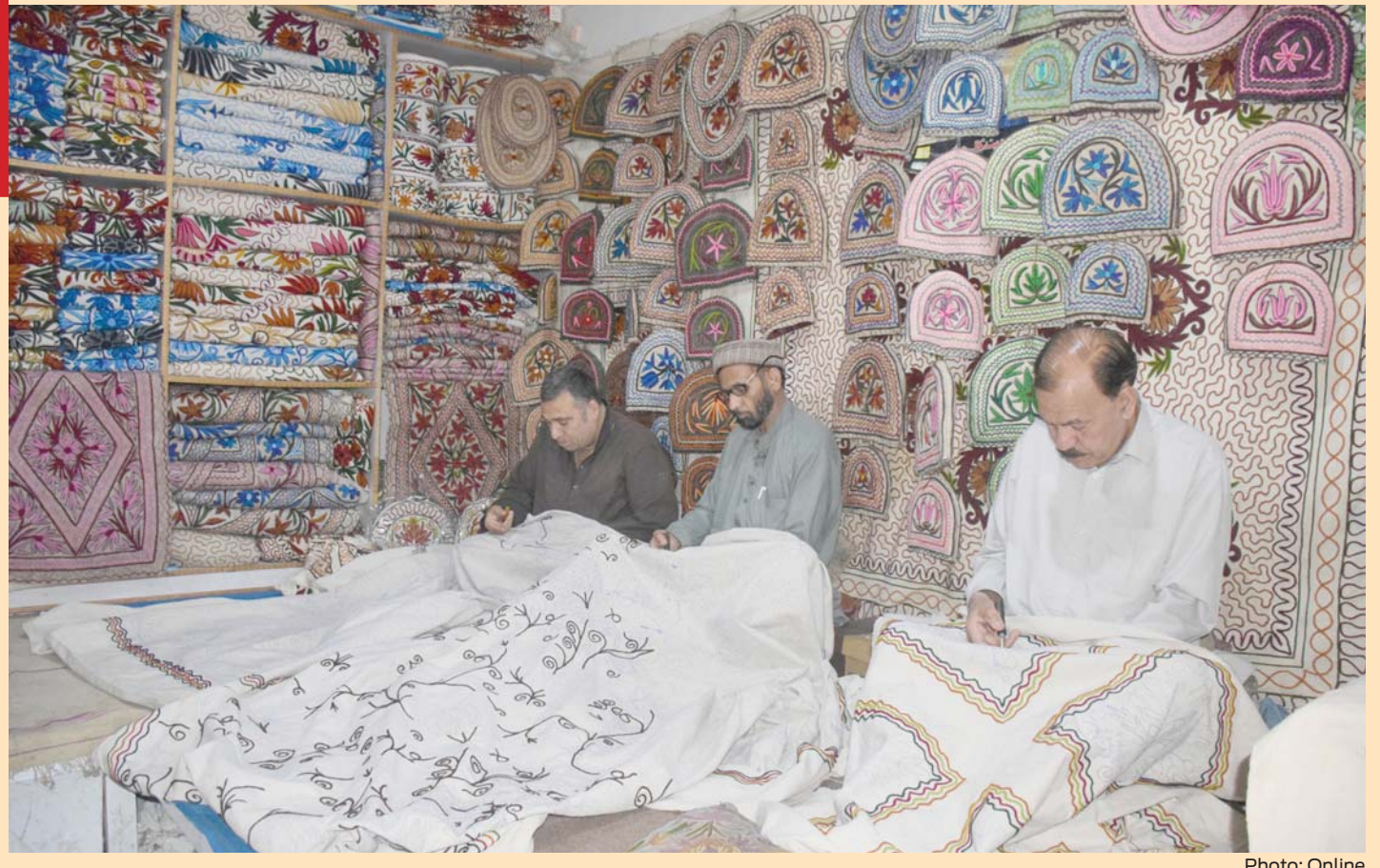


Photo: Online

## DDI measures digital development progress across Pakistan

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's first-ever Digital Development Index (DDI) measures digital development progress across Pakistan's provinces and districts, placing the country in the 'moderate' digital development category with a cumulative DDI of 0.205, in the Pakistan National Human Development Report (NHDR) 2023/2024. Doing Digital for Development: Access, Adopt, Accelerate' launched here on Tuesday.

The Report shows a strong correlation between districts that perform better on digital transformation and those that have higher human development outcomes. For the first time in Pakistan, the NHDR 2023/2024 evaluates access to digital technologies in combination with other factors like digi-

tal usage, digital skills attainment, and transformative potential in the form of the DDI, which underscores how some districts have the highest transformative potential due to their high digital development.

According to the global Human Development Report, Pakistan has a low Human Development Index rank of 164 out of 193 countries, coupled with a Gender Inequality Index position of 135 out of 166 countries. Digital divides further exacerbate poor development outcomes.

Federal Minister for Planning, Development & Special Initiatives, Ahsan Iqbal was the chief guest at the launch ceremony, which was also graced by visiting U. N. Assistant Secretary-General, UNDP Assistant Administrator and Regional Director Regional for Asia and the Pacific, Ms. Kanni Wignaraja.

A large gathering of diplomats, dignitaries, policymakers, civil society, students, and other segments of society attended the event, which also featured an interactive exhibition of Pakistan's digital evolution and journey since 1947.

Through exhaustive statistical analysis at national, provincial, and district levels, a nationally representative survey, and consultations conducted all over the country, the Pakistan NHDR 2023/2024 presents a dynamic digital transformation policy framework of 4 As - Access, Adopt, Anticipate, Accelerate - investments in which can become Pakistan's fastest route to human development.

"The Government of Pakistan is committed to harnessing the benefits of technological innovation to improve livelihood prospects, accelerate financial inclusion, improve

employment, and deliver efficient public services," stated Federal Minister Ahsan Iqbal in his keynote address at the launch ceremony.

Earlier in her remarks, UNDP Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, Ms. Kanni Wignaraja observed that just over 60 per cent of the population in Asia-Pacific is online, with women and marginalized groups significantly underrepresented. "Pakistan is the 6th largest contributor to the global middle-class growth between 2022 to 2030, contributing 25 million," she said. "Targeted digital transformation efforts for this growing middle class could greatly improve the country's productivity."

The Report highlights that 54.3 per cent of the country does not have access to the internet because of inadequate digital infrastructure and affordability challenges.

## Punjab Music Competition held in Faisalabad

Staff Reporter

FAISALABAD: The first Punjab Music Competition organized by Punjab Council of Arts Faisalabad Division was inaugurated in Salabad. Commissioner Faisalabad Salwat Saeed specially participated in the opening ceremony. Distinguished singer Ustad Ghulam Ali, Executive Director Punjab Council of Arts Dr. Syed Bilal Haider, President Chamber of Commerce and Industry Dr. Khurram Tariq, Director Abra Alam and others were present. That the land of Faisalabad is fertile in terms of art and the singers of Faisalabad have always brightened the name of Pakistan in the world of music. The commissioner encouraged the youth involved in the music competition and appreciated the efforts of Punjab Council of Arts Faisalabad Division.

The first Punjab music competition will be held in district Jhang today after district Faisalabad, on 24th April in Chinot district and on 25th April in Toba Tek Singh district. Ustad Ghulam Ali Wadigar also spoke at the opening ceremony.

## SSEFP book fair attracts thousands of book lovers

Raza Naqvi

ATTOCK: Poets, writers, intellectuals and storytellers assembled at the main campus of Sir Syed Educational Foundation Pakistan (SSEFP) in Hassanabdal to participate in second annual book fair in collaboration with publishers. A wide range of books and education-related accessories were made available at the fair at discounted rates. Books of almost every kind and on every subject were displayed at the

main Hall. The book fair has more than 50 stalls with around 0.1 million books on various subjects of Science, fiction, Islamic Literature, Medicine, Engineering and Technology. Almost 40 percent to 60 percent discount was offered on the books make it affordable for students. Muskan Butt- a second year student of local girls college and Ansa-poetess from Pindigheb town also performed book launching ceremony at the event.

Students visiting the fair have

lauded the effort of SSEFP and said books are a great source of inner enlightenment.

While addressing as chief guest in the closing ceremony, Deputy Commissioner Attock Rao Atif Raza has said that the love for books is a common trait among successful people worldwide, no matter the advancements in technology, the significance of a traditional paper-bound book cannot be undermined. He also emphasized the pivotal role of reading in human development. He was

of the view that involvement of youth in extra academic activities would definitely help the government in its endeavor of uprooting violence from the society. "Students need to improve their book reading habit and should make it a part of their life," he advised. He said books open new doors of success for its readers allowing them to explore new ideas. Mr Raza said there was a dire need to inculcate the book reading habit among the youth so that they could learn about the glori-

ous past. He encouraged both parents and teachers to cultivate a love for reading in children, to create enthusiastic readers. He expressed that books are valuable companions that foster empathy, ingenuity, and education in those who read them.

While lauding the role of Sir Syed education foundation in promotion of education and healthy activities in the district, he said that the foundation takes lead in organizing extra-curricular activities.

Director General Rahmatul

Alameen Authority Zafar Mahmood Malik, Managing director National Book Foundation Dr Mazhar Hameed, Sohail bin Aziz Director Rahmatul Alameen Authority, member Punjab assembly Sardar Muhammad Ali, District President PPP Attock Ashar Hayat, PPP Hassanabdal chapter President Sardar Zulfiqar Hayat Khan, Former Punjab Minister for culture Taimur Masood Malik, member KP assembly Shazia Jadoon, assistant commissioner Hassanab-

dal Dr Sana Ramchand, former tehsil Nazim Khanpur Raja Haroon Sikandar, distinguished researcher and traveler Muhammad Tawfiq, eminent educationist Attaur Rahman Chaudhry, Professor Tahir Durrani, President, Sir Syed Education Foundation, Deputy Director Public Relations Attock Shahzad Khokhar, Director Sir Syed Education Foundation Qazi Zahoorul Haq and President PPP Women Wing Attock Ms Eman also spoke on this occasion.

Islamabad  
15° - 23° Clear

**SERVICES**

**Namaz Timings**

Fajr	3:58 am
Zohr	12:06 pm
Asr	4:50 pm
Maghrib	6:45 pm
Isha	8:15 pm

**EMERGENCY**

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

**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
Cannt Hospital	9270907-11
DHQ	5556311-4
RGH	9290301-7
Holy Family	9290322-7
PIMS	9261170-79
Polyclinic	9218300-09
Shifa International	4603666

**DEPARTMENTS**

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

**COMPLAINTS**

Water Tanker Service	
E-7, F-10 & F-11	9204654
G-5, G-6, G-7, G-8	9203883
G-9, G-10, G-11, G-12, H-8	9266316
Wapda Islamabad	9217579-80
Sui Gas Complaint	119, 9272249

**Faisal Irfan's 'Hoshay' a glimpse into Pothohari culture**

Web Desk

ISLAMABAD: Celebrating the rich tapestry of Pothohari culture, journalist and poet Faisal Irfan unveils his third literary gem, "Hoshay." Published under the esteemed banner of Pothohar Rahtal Usar Publications Rawalpindi, this 240-page book offers a captivating exploration of the region's wedding rituals, from the vibrant hues of Mehndi and Mayon to the grandeur of Gharoli and Barat ceremonies.

Within its pages, "Hoshay" breathes life into the timeless melodies of Pothohari folk songs and sthanis, echoing across generations and resonating with the essence of tradition. Faisal Irfan's previous works, "Potohari Akhanh Tay Muhawaray" and "Parjihat Mahahari Anni," have already garnered acclaim, cementing his status as a revered chronicler of Pothohari heritage. As anticipation builds for his upcoming book, "Chahotay Laray," accolades pour in from academic, literary, and journalistic circles across Potohar. With each publication, Faisal Irfan illuminates the cultural landscape of Pothohar, weaving narratives that both honor the past and inspire the future.

**Ambassador of Kazakhstan for developing cultural ties with Pakistan**

*Abai's literary work launched in regional languages of Pakistan*

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Abai Qunanbaituly, recognized as the national poet of Kazakhstan, writes about love, humanity, and learning, much like Muhammad Iqbal, Pakistan's national poet. Abai's works resonate far beyond Kazakhstan's borders, touching readers across diverse cultures and languages, inviting contemplation of existence and the embrace of diversity. At the book launch ceremony for "Book of Words" by Abai, translated into Pashto, Punjabi, Sindhi, and Balochi, alongside a Kazakh-Urdu-English phrasebook, organized by the Institute of Peace and Diplomatic Studies in collaboration with the National Library of Pakistan and the Embassy of Kazakhstan to Pakistan, speakers emphasized the significance of cultural and language diplomacy.

In her welcoming remarks Dr. Farhat Asif, President Institute of Peace and Diplomatic Studies said that IPDS and The Diplomatic Insight has fostered to promote cultural and language diplomacy by promoting the literary works of great poets and philosophers from various countries of the world. She has underscored that the translation of Abai's "Book of Words" into the languages of the provinces of Pakistan is a significant contribu-

tion that breaks down language barriers between our countries.

In his keynote address Yerzhan Kistafin, Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Pakistan spoke about the influence and role of the Great Abai, his contribution to the development of literature and philosophy, while particularly highlighting the "Book of Words". Ambassador of Kazakhstan emphasized the importance of developing cultural ties between the peoples of Kazakhstan and Pakistan, given their shared cultural and historical heritage. Ambassador shared that the collaborative literary works pave the way for greater cooperation amongst the nations of Kazakhstan and Pakistan building the deepened ties. He has praised the outstanding work done by the translators from NUML University who have captured the essence of the Abai's literary work in different languages.

The President of the Cultural Institute of the Economic Cooperation Organization, Dr. Saad S. Khan, who took part in the online format from Tehran, noted the enduring values preached by Abai in his works, are not limited to contemporary Kazakhstan but also to the broader region and the global community. Dr. Saad Khan requested that the presented books be given to the #ECO Library Foundation. Director of Allama Iqbal Open University of Educa-



tional Technology, Irfan Ali Ansari noted that the presentation of books is a bridge in cultural interaction between the two countries. Former Director General of the Pakistan Literary Academy, Dr. Khalid Iqbal Yasir, who first translated "Book of Words" into Urdu back in 1997, elaborated about the life and work of the Great Abai, his contribution to the development of Kazakh literature to the participants.

Director General of the National Library of Pakistan, Mr. Asif Iqbal Khan, emphasized that literature is a tool for uniting peoples, which helps to transcend borders and strengthen mutual understanding between countries. At the end of the event, Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Pakistan, Ambassador Yerzhan Kistafin presented the gifts of books to Dean Diplomatic Corps to the Ambassador of Turkmenistan

to Pakistan Atajan Movlamov, Director General of the National Library of Pakistan and other distinguished speakers. Chief Executive Officer of Diplomatic Insight Muhammad Asif Noor and Azeem Iqbal presented a portrait of Abai to Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Pakistan. The event was attended by academic and members of the civil society as well as the diplomatic corps accredited in Islamabad.

**Vegetable and fruit**

ISLAMABAD: A vegetable and fruit seller arranging different items for attracting customers at Chak Shahzad in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Raja Farid

**CJCSC confers civil awards to scientists, engineers**

Staff Reporter

RAWALPINDI: On behalf of the President of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, General Sahir Shamsad Mirza, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, conferred civil awards to the eminent scientists and engineers from strategic organizations for their meritorious services at the Investiture Ceremony held at Chaklala Garrison, Rawalpindi.

A total of 35 awardees were conferred with the awards, 7x officers were awarded Sitara-i-Imtiaz, 15 x officers were awarded President's Award for Pride of Performance and 13 x officers were awarded Tamgha-i-Imtiaz. Chairman JCS lauded the services of the scientists and engineers; hailing them as the nation's unseen heroes. While addressing the awardees, the CJCSC



said, "You, all, have selflessly contributed towards strengthening the foundations of a resilient nation; and for that, we are forever indebted to you."

**Pakistan may lose around 50b if 10 sticks cigarette packs are allowed**



Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Expressing profound concern, health activists questioned recent efforts by the tobacco industry to introduce 10-stick packs. This move, according to the activists, not only jeopardizes the progress made in tobacco control but also directly impacts children and low-income individuals, who are most vulnerable to the harmful effects of tobacco consumption.

Malik Imran Ahmed, Country Head, Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, stated that the attempts for 10-stick packs by the tobacco industry are deeply troubling. It will not only undermine the progress made in tobacco control but also directly target children and low-income individuals who are most vulnerable to the harmful effects of tobacco consumption. Many countries in the world have banned single-stick and small-stick packet sales because they're easier to purchase for children, youth, and low-income groups, and hence the health burden is very high.

Imran added that the tobacco industry's claims of being one of the highest contributors to the economy are blatant lies. This contribution is forced in the forms of direct taxes. And even those taxes are not up to the benchmark recommended by WHO and World Bank. In fact, the tobacco industry is still making a profit from this situation by indulging in practices such as under-reporting, price adjustment, and pooling its products in the illicit market. If 10-packet cigarettes are allowed for export, there's a solid chance that the tobacco industry will sell them in the local market. And when they'll be questioned, they'll say they're counterfeit products. Therefore, to keep people safe, it's better not to allow these packets in the first place. The tobacco industry doesn't have any legal permits for these so-called export deals, and the burden caused on the national exchequer by these deadly products is much higher than these so-called export deals. So the government should stay vigilant.

Dr. Khalil Ahmad Dogar, Program Manager, SPARC, said that with approximately 31.9 million adults aged 15 years and above reported as current tobacco users, constituting nearly 19.7% of the adult population, the dire consequences of tobacco consumption extend far beyond individual health. Over 160,000 deaths are attributed to smoking-related illnesses annually, amounting to a staggering 1.6% of the nation's GDP each year.

Dr. Khalil urged the government to take proactive measures to protect public health and prevent the exploitation of children and low-income groups by the tobacco industry. We call upon the authorities to reject any proposals that endanger the health and well-being of our citizens.

**WPJP demands govt to immediately evict illegal, suspicious persons from capital**

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: (World Peace Jirga Program Country Head) Sadia Khan alias Khan Bibi has demanded the government to immediately evict illegal and suspicious persons from the federal capital Islamabad because these are the people in Islamabad involved in robberies and banditry incidents, illegal guesthouses should be closed, commercial activities in residential areas should be stopped, search operations should be conducted in all the plazas of Islamabad, skiing on all roads leading to the diplomatic enclave and a security system should be installed, all the offices of IOM should be moved out of the diplomatic enclave, he expressed these views along with the Chairman of World Peace Jirga Program Musittullah

Khan aka Khan Baba NPC President Azhar Jatoi and newly elected officials.

While giving a press conference on the occasion of the swearing-in ceremony at the Press Club Islamabad, Sadia Khan alias Khan Bibi further said that the World Peace Jirga Program has been busy for the development and prosperity of the country for the past twenty years, while now in Pakistan. Major health, education and employment projects are being launched, the organization has built a network at all provincial and divisional levels of Pakistan, very soon the swearing-in ceremony of members of all provinces will be held in Islamabad, while Donors conference will also be organized in the convention center and for this donor conferences will be held in America, Canada and United Arab Emirates and

offices will be built there, big projects will be started from this platform, agriculture, minerals, tourism, education and health. Like major projects, trade with not only internal but also foreign countries will be promoted, facilitation centers will be established in all borders of Pakistan, which will promote trade with neighboring countries, seminars will be organized at domestic and foreign levels.

Steps will be taken to solve the problems of Pakistanis living abroad, Khan Bibi added that members of all provinces of the country will be sworn in. In this regard, a seminar and oath-taking ceremony will be held in Lahore on May 13, while on May 15 Karachi on May, Quetta on May 17, Peshawar on May 21, Gilgit-Baltistan on May 24 and Islam at the beginning of June.



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 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.  
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 Lahore Office: 7-E,Samanberg, Johar Town.  
 Email: [spokesmanislamabad@gmail.com](mailto:spokesmanislamabad@gmail.com)  
 Whatsapp: 0346-5008408

# Wakhan Corridor: Vital for CPEC and BRI

An important development that went unnoticed by the Pakistan media radar was the construction of a 50-kilometer stretch of the Silk Road, extending from the Wakhan district of Afghanistan to the Chinese border. This road was inaugurated by Afghanistan's Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development in September last year (2023). With the construction of this road, Afghanistan has established a direct link with China, reducing the distance and lowering the cost for the import and export of commercial goods between the two countries. Meanwhile, the Afghan and Chinese governments are feverishly discussing the commencement of traffic through the Wakhan Corridor, a narrow strip of territory in northeastern Afghanistan stretching 350 kilometers to China and separating Tajikistan from Pakistan. It is located at the confluence of three mountain ranges — the Hindu Kush, Karakoram, and the Pamir, forming the Pamir knot.

If CPEC were extended through Afghanistan to Central Asia, the benefits for Pakistan could be significant. It could further enhance Pakistan's strategic position as a trade hub, increase connectivity with Central Asian markets, and boost economic growth. In dollar terms, the benefits could include increased revenue from transit fees, expanded trade opportunities, and improved economic ties with regional countries. This would strengthen Pakistan's geopolitical position and the development of infrastructure along this route would stimulate economic growth, create job opportunities, and foster cultural exchanges and people-

to-people connections, contributing to greater understanding and cooperation in the region.

Additionally, the corridor would provide Central Asian states with a shorter and more efficient route to access international markets via Gwadar Port, which is strategically important due to its location at the mouth of the Strait of Hormuz. It would enhance its strategic importance by providing an alternative route for trade that bypasses traditional chokepoints and improves connectivity between South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East, facilitating greater economic cooperation and integration in the region.

For Afghanistan, the direct access to China through the Wakhan border would enable Afghanistan to carry out its entire trade of over \$1.3 billion with China through this route. As a result, Pakistan could potentially experience a reduction in its geopolitical advantage and security leverage over Afghanistan. Alternatively, Afghanistan would reduce its dependence on Pakistan and vulnerability to disruptions in transit trade, thus weakening Pakistan's ability to use security concerns. Afghanistan would potentially seek closer ties with other regional powers, diminishing Pakistan's geopolitical leverage in the region.

For China, the opening of the Wakhan border would give a much-needed boost to extending Chinese reach to diverse markets as part of the Belt and Road Initiative. However, security and cross-border terrorism will continue to be Beijing's primary focus. Therefore, the opening of the road will largely depend on the ability of the Taliban to maintain control over Afghan territory, prevent the emergence of any real threat to China's domestic security by groups and militants inside Afghanistan, and Chinese willingness to set up a border control regime and construct necessary infrastructure such as roads, highways, and bridges to link Afghanistan with China through the Wakhan Corridor.

After the opening of this trade route, all traffic originating from Afghanistan for China, either via sea or through the Karakoram Highway, will be diverted toward the Wakhan border. This route will assume high significance as China is increasingly tapping many areas of Afghanistan for mining precious and rare minerals. China has signed impressive deals, including a \$10 billion deal for access to lithium deposits in Afghanistan and a \$3 billion deal to develop Afghanistan's largest copper deposit near Kabul. In Badakhshan, China is exploring minerals such as gold, lapis lazuli, and various gemstones. Additionally, China is exploring copper reserves in Balkh, a rare mineral in Helmand, and iron ores in Herat, as well as iron, copper, and precious stones in Kandahar.

The current route for transporting millions and millions tonnes of minerals every day extracted from Afghanistan and transported to China involves using the Karakoram Highway, which is far more

costly compared to transportation directly from Afghanistan to China through the Wakhan Border. The distance between Badakhshan Province and Xinjiang's capital, Urumqi, via the Wakhan Border is approximately 600-800 kilometers, whereas the distance from Badakhshan's capital, Faizabad, to Urumqi via KKH is approximately 1500 km. This means that all minerals being transported through the Karakoram Highway will be diverted to the Wakhan Border, depriving the KKH of a significant amount of traffic and depriving the government of Pakistan of transit fees, levies, customs duties, and Pakistani trucks of business, negatively impacting all businesses along the entire route.

The development of the Wakhan Corridor has transitioned from a mere discussion to a tangible possibility. This vital route is set to open soon, presenting Pakistan with numerous strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. It is imperative for the government of Pakistan to proactively position itself to assess the current scenario and future prospects. A comprehensive vision, mission, strategies, and plan should be developed to fully exploit the potential of the Wakhan Corridor and leverage the strategic significance of the region, which is at the center of imperial ambitions and geopolitical complexities. Failure to do so may result in Pakistan missing out on significant economic and strategic opportunities while facing potential challenges from shifting geopolitical dynamics in the region.

*The author is former Press Secretary to the President, former Press Minister to the Embassy of Pakistan to France and Former MD, SRBC.*



Analysis

Qamar Bashir

## Pak, Iran ties in diverse fields

Pakistan and Iran are culturally and historical linked. Both the countries have strong sentiments for each other. It is unfortunate that trade volume between the countries is not as much as it should have been. Iran can support Pakistan to a great extent in overcoming its energy crises. The leadership of both countries expressed willingness to take the trade volume up to 10 billion dollars in the next few years. We need to move forward and focus on strengthening our bilateral and trade relations with the neighboring countries. Both Pakistan and Iran have the same viewpoint over the prevailing Gaza situation. There is a dire need to convince other international players to play a role in a peaceful solution to the Gaza situation.

It was a historical visit of the Iranian President to Pakistan as it could be considered as a volunteer visit to promote goodwill between the two brotherly countries. Both the countries are enjoying strong relations except a brief period of misunderstandings. During the visit, the Iranian President also visited the mausoleum of national poet Allama Dr. Muhammad Iqbal who always talked about the unity of Muslims. Pakistan needs Iranian support and Iran needs Pakistan's support to overcome the regional and global challenges. The strong bond between the two countries is important keeping in view the global dynamics. The mutual cooperation between Pakistan and Iran will open the gates for the other Islamic countries to come forward and join the cooperation as well. Iran can also support Pakistan in funding the Pak-Iran gas pipeline project in order to overcome the energy crises.

It is an important visit of the Iranian President to Pakistan. Although, there were some border issues between the two Islamic states yet there is strong bond between the two countries. Both the countries need to explore the potential of trade in diverse fields. Both the countries have common principal stance on certain regional and global issues. Iran has always supported the narrative of Pakistan on the Kashmir dispute and similarly both have the same opinion on the current Gaza conflict. Unfortunately, Iran is under the international sanctions that is the main hurdle for trade between Pakistan and Iran. There is a need to get rid of the international pressure and resume our trade and gas pipeline project with Iran. It is a good development that Pakistan and Iran have signed many MoUs and agreements in different fields.



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

## Need of SIFC Investment for AJK - III

With inherent reliability and flexibility, hydropower proves well-equipped to meet the demands of contemporary energy systems. In contrast to solar and wind power, which are susceptible to fluctuations in weather patterns, hydropower offers a consistent and dependable source of electricity, ensuring grid stability and resilience. Additionally, hydropower plants can swiftly adjust their output to match fluctuations in demand, making them invaluable for balancing the variability of other renewable energy sources. This adaptability enhances the overall reliability of the electricity grid and ensures a steady power supply to consumers.

The development of hydropower projects can yield substantial economic benefits for communities and nations. Investments in hydropower infrastructure create employment opportunities, stimulate economic growth, and attract private sector investment. Furthermore, hydropower projects often serve multiple purposes, such as flood control, irrigation, water supply, and recreational activities. The revenue generated from hydropower generation can be reinvested in social welfare programs, infrastructure development, and environmental conservation efforts, contributing to overall socio-economic development.

By diversifying the energy mix and reducing dependence on imported fossil fuels, hydropower enhances energy security and independence for nations. Unlike oil and gas, which are susceptible to geopolitical uncertainties and price volatility, water resources are typically domestically controlled and less prone to external disruptions. This reduces the vulnerability of energy systems to supply

shocks and geopolitical tensions, ensuring a more stable and resilient energy infrastructure. Moreover, hydropower can play a vital role in rural electrification and expanding access to clean energy in remote areas, promoting social inclusion and poverty alleviation.

Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) possesses a valuable natural resource: flowing water. With its abundance of rivers, cascading waterfalls, and steep gradients, AJK presents an untapped opportunity to harness the power of hydropower for sustainable energy generation. As the world increasingly embraces renewable energy sources, exploring and optimizing the hydropower potential of AJK could not only fulfill the region's energy requirements but also make a substantial contribution to its economic growth and environmental sustainability.

AJK is abundantly endowed with water resources, boasting major rivers like the Jhelum, Neelum, and Poonch, all originating from the Himalayas. These rivers wind through picturesque valleys, traversing rugged terrain and forming natural channels ideally suited for hydropower development. With the region experiencing high levels of precipitation and snowmelt from mountain peaks, the flow of water remains consistent year-round, offering a dependable energy source. The diverse topography of AJK presents a plethora of opportunities for hydropower development, ranging from run-of-river projects to larger storage-based schemes. The swift currents and steep gradients of its rivers provide optimal conditions for efficient energy generation. Estimates indicate that AJK's hydropower potential exceeds several thousand megawatts (MW), positioning it as a significant contributor to the region's energy mix and diminishing its

reliance on imported fossil fuels. Hydropower emerges as a clean and renewable energy solution, offering a sustainable alternative to fossil fuels. Unlike coal or oil, which emit greenhouse gases and contribute to climate change, hydropower generates minimal carbon emissions during electricity production. Moreover, water is a naturally replenished resource, ensuring that hydropower remains a reliable and environmentally friendly energy option for future generations. The development of hydropower projects in AJK holds the potential to stimulate economic growth and create job opportunities. The construction and operation of hydropower infrastructure would generate employment in engineering, construction, and maintenance sectors, providing livelihoods for local communities. Additionally, revenue generated from hydropower generation could be reinvested in social welfare programs, education, and healthcare, fostering overall socio-economic development in the region.

Although large-scale agriculture may not be feasible due to limited available space in AJK, leveraging modern techniques and cultivating specific crops suited to this particular climate could yield dividends. Moreover, tourism and hydropower remain key areas for investment in the region.

In today's interconnected global landscape, the significance of foreign investment has never been more pronounced. Foreign investment, encompassing both capital and expertise, plays a pivotal role in propelling economic growth, fostering innovation, and driving development in countries worldwide. Whether in emerging markets or developed economies, the infusion of foreign capital brings numerous benefits that can propel nations towards prosperity and sustainability.

*To be continued*

## Policies can create growth momentum

Louise Loo

Foreign investments have had a long history of facilitating industrialization in China. In the early 1980s, China expanded its preferential policies to attract foreign investment, and the inflow of much-needed foreign equipment and capital at that time helped expand China's industrial capacity and sophistication.

That could be the case again, but to a much lesser extent, as senior Chinese officials embark on a reinvigorated mission to develop "new quality productive forces" through innovation this time round.

Historically, foreign capital was able to generate higher returns on industrial projects, and there was also significant productive technology transfer in the process. Over the past decade, however, the "pull" of foreign capital has diminished.

Besides, manufacturing supply chains are becoming more indigenous, as authorities seek to "onshore" key intermediate production processes. For example, in their current manufacturing push, Chinese authorities are encouraging companies to buy Chinese parts — as industry processes are to be driven, to the best possible extent, by "local resources" and "local demand needs".

Across the new industries of alternative energy vehicles, batteries and renewables, China has developed

its own indigenous brands that are increasingly capturing bigger market shares both domestically and abroad. These include BYD, CATL and Huawei.

Finally, in industries involving data security, such as high-tech areas of science, artificial intelligence and cloud computing, domestic substitution, rather than relying on foreign-funded enterprises, appear to be the way forward.

In that context, China's need for foreign investments for pushing forward new quality productive forces is much smaller than in previous industrial cycles. Consequently, we (at Oxford Economics) are less concerned by the decline in net foreign direct investment to a record low of \$33 billion in 2023.

Yet the authorities clearly understand the need for a market-driven, globally-competitive industrial base. In March, Premier Li Qiang pledged to allow greater market access to foreign companies, including decisions to relax some data transfer restrictions for cross-border payments and trade. The follow-through on these concrete measures will be critical in restoring the confidence of foreign investors.

To continue to attract foreign capital to propel China's manufacturing drive, there needs to be greater policy predictability in the country's regulatory environment, particularly for private enterprises.

On the one hand, the authorities have successfully played a big role in safeguarding issues of public and social welfare over the years, thus

ensuring broad social stability. On the other hand, they have been far less successful at leveling the playing field on market entry and resources for the private sector, with recent policies on tech, education and healthcare compounding investor unease.

Our recent analysis shows anecdotal company intent to diversify and reconfigure supply chains for multinational companies operating onshore, which ultimately could undermine China's pace of capital accumulation.

Further financial liberalization, continuing the trend of the past two decades in liberalizing financial services and opening up the market to foreign investors, would be hugely beneficial. The use of capital controls to manage the currency has at times deterred foreign investments, while cyclically, fierce headwinds for domestic sentiment — including lingering uncertainties surrounding policy stimulus, rising disinflationary pressures and the extent of macro spillovers from real estate — have dampened private sector confidence and compounded capital outflow pressures.

Where private confidence remains weak, the onus falls on public investment to decisively stabilize domestic economic fundamentals and successfully pivot toward higher-value adding and strategic growth drivers. Doing so may improve the medium-term outlook of the economy, thereby crowding in private foreign investments more sustainably. (Courtesy: CHINA DAILY)

*The author is lead economist at Oxford Economics.*

# UN rights chief 'horrified' by mass grave reports at Gaza hospitals

*Palestinian authorities report finding hundreds of bodies in mass graves at Nasser hospital in Khan Younis this week*

GENEVA: UN rights chief Volker Turk said on Tuesday he was "horrified" by the destruction of the Nasser and Al Shifa medical facilities in Gaza and reports of mass graves containing hundreds of bodies there, according to a spokesperson.

Palestinian authorities reported finding hundreds of bodies in mass graves at Nasser hospital in Khan Younis this week after it was abandoned by Israeli troops. Bodies were also reported at the Al Shifa site following an Israeli special forces operation.

The Israeli military said claims by Palestinian authorities that the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) had buried bodies were "baseless and unfounded". It said forces searching for Israeli hostages had examined bodies previously buried by Palestinians near Nasser hospital and had returned the bodies to where they were buried after they were examined.

"The examination was conducted in a careful manner and exclusively in places where intelligence indicated

the possible presence of hostages. The examination was carried out respectfully while maintaining the dignity of the deceased," it said in a statement.

Ravina Shamdasani, the spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, said the rights organisation was raising the alarm because multiple bodies had been discovered. Turk said he had been horrified by the reported mass grave discoveries and the hospitals' destruction, she said.

"Some of them had their hands tied, which of course indicates serious violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, and these need to be subjected to further investigations," Shamdasani said.

Read also: Israeli troops storm back into eastern Khan Younis

Turk, who was represented by Shamdasani at a UN press briefing, also decried Israeli strikes on Gaza in recent days, which he said had killed mostly women and children.

He also repeated a warning against a full-scale incursion on Rafah where

some 1.2 million civilians are crowded together, saying this could lead to "further atrocity crimes".

Violence has also surged in the occupied West Bank since Israel's war on Hamas began on Oct. 7, sparked by the latter's cross-border attacks on Israel which killed 1,200 people according to Israeli tallies.

Palestinian health authorities said 14 Palestinians had been killed on Saturday in the Nur Shams area in one of the heaviest tolls in the West Bank in months.

Shamdasani said the UN human rights office had received reports that some of the victims in Nur Shams had been killed in apparent extrajudicial executions. The Hamas media office has accused Israel of executions but has not shared visual or other evidence. Israel denies carrying out executions.

Israel's military has previously said a number of fighters were killed or arrested in the West Bank raid and at least four soldiers were wounded. Reuters



# Major arrests at NYU campus as Gaza protests spread

*Some of America's most prestigious universities have been rocked by protests in recent weeks*

NEW YORK: More than 130 people were arrested overnight during pro-Palestinian protests at the New York University campus, as student demonstrations gather pace in the United States over the Israel-Hamas war.

Some of America's most prestigious universities have been rocked by protests in recent weeks as students and other agitators take over quads and disrupt campus activities.

The demonstrations come amid sweeping debates over Israel's assault on Gaza, following Hamas's deadly invasion on October 7.

Such bastions of higher education — Harvard, Yale, Columbia and others — are grappling for a balance between students demanding free speech rights and others who argue that campuses are encouraging intimidation and hate speech.

On Tuesday, the New York Police Department told AFP that 133 people had been arrested at NYU and released after being issued with court summons, as protests also intensify at Yale, Columbia University and other campuses.

As the holiday of Passover began Monday night, police began detaining demonstrators at an encampment at NYU who had earlier refused orders



to disperse. A New York University spokesman said the decision to call police came after additional protesters, many of whom were not thought to be affiliated with NYU, suddenly breached the barriers erected around the encampment.

This "dramatically changed" the situation, the spokesman said in a statement on the school's website Monday, citing "disorderly, disruptive and antagonizing behavior" along with "intimidated chants and several antisemitic incidents."

disruptive enough — New York Police Department spokesmen have spoken of their officers facing violence when confronting protesters at NYU — to draw the attention of President Joe Biden and his administration.

"Anti-Semitic hate on college campuses is unacceptable," US Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona posted on X on Tuesday, expressing concern about the unrest.

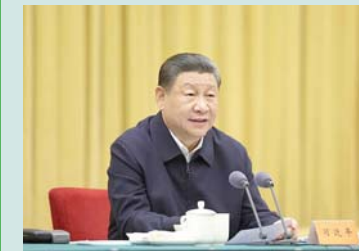
The protests began last week at Columbia University, also in New York, with a large group of demonstrators establishing a so-called "Gaza Solidarity Encampment" on school grounds.

But more than 100 protesters were arrested after university authorities called the police onto Columbia's campus Thursday, a move that seemingly escalated tensions and sparked a greater turnout over the weekend.

Social media images late Monday appeared to show pro-Palestinian Jewish students holding traditional seder meals inside the protest areas on campuses including at Columbia.

There were also demonstrations at MIT, the University of Michigan, UC Berkeley and Yale, where at least 47 people were arrested Monday after refusing requests to disperse. AFP

# Xi chairs symposium on boosting development of China's western region



CHONGQING: Chinese President Xi Jinping on Tuesday stressed further efforts to usher in a new stage in the development of China's western region featuring well-coordinated environmental conservation, greater openness and high-quality development.

Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made the remarks while chairing a symposium on boosting the development of China's western region in the new era. Xinhua

# France arrests eight in PKK financing probe

PARIS: French police arrested eight men on Tuesday as part of an investigation into the finances of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), banned as a terror organization by Turkey and its Western allies, anti-terrorism prosecutors told AFP.

The arrests took place in the Paris region and in southern France, the PNAT anti-terror unit said. The PKK has been designated a terrorist organization by Turkey, the United States and the European Union.

French prosecutors suspect the eight of preparing and financing terrorist acts, and of conspiring to extort, or attempt to extort, funds to finance a terrorist organisation between 2020 and 2024, the PNAT said. Investigators believe the eight to be connected to a campaign to collect funds from Kurdish business people and other Kurds in France, a source close to the case added.

Another source said the funds were destined for use in Belgium, where police on Monday raided Kurdish-run media as part of a probe undertaken at the request of a French anti-terror judge, the PNAT said.

# Dutch intelligence sees wars in Gaza, Ukraine as triggers for terrorist threats

ZOETERMEER, NETHERLANDS: The Dutch national intelligence agency said Tuesday that threats targeting the Netherlands are increasingly connected to worldwide turmoil, including the wars in Gaza and Ukraine.

Although the number of terror attacks across Europe has been down in recent years, the General Intelligence and Security Service in its annual report said the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza and the destruction of a Qur'an outside parliament last year are "trigger events" for extremists. "The terrorist threat is serious at this moment," the agency's director-general, Erik Akerboom, told The Associated Press.

Akerboom said he is particularly concerned about big events, noting that the agency is working closely with French authorities to prevent incidents during the Paris Olympics this summer.

In December, the Dutch counterterrorism agency increased the country's threat alert to its second-highest level because of concerns about the Daesh group's Khorasan affiliates, Akerboom said. IS-K, a Central Asian affiliate, was responsible for the attack at a suburban Moscow concert hall that killed at least 133 people in March. AP

# Hush money

# Eric Trump oblivious to this fact about Donald Trump

NEW YORK: Donald Trump arrived courthouse in Manhattan Tuesday to face a hush money trial and the 34 felonies of allegedly falsifying business records to pay \$130,000 to an adult film star Stormy Daniels in 2016. During the trial, reports indicate that the businessman's attorney had a heated exchange with judge Juan Merchan.

While speaking with Fox News Monday, Eric Trump said: "Every time I watch my father walk into that courtroom it breaks my heart because [the Democrats] will stop at nothing [...] to take the man down and no one



believes this nonsense, right?"

Executive Vice President of the Trump Organization also told the outlet how his father is being wronged and being trialled as the presidential elections in November are approaching.

He also claimed that his father is facing such trials because he was winning the "polls" as the Republican presumptive nominee.

"My father was focused on 'running the United States of America', not bookkeeping, not that anything was done wrong in the bookkeeping," he went on.

# 10 killed in mid-air helicopter crash in Malaysia

PERAK: As many as 10 people have died in a mid-air crash between two Malaysian Navy helicopters at the Lumut naval base, Perak on Tuesday.

The incident occurred at around 9:30am while navy helicopters were rehearsing for the Navy Day parade, Al Jazeera reported.

Malaysian Navy has confirmed the death of all the 10 crew members saying that the bodies have been shifted to the Lumut naval base military hospital for identification.

A video circulating on local media showed several helicopters flying in formation, when one of the choppers' rotor clipped another before both aircraft crashed into the ground.

Meanwhile, local police has also confirmed the authenticity of the footage. The navy said it would carry out an

investigation into the cause of the accident.

Defence Minister Mohamed Khaled Nordin said the aircraft — a maritime operations helicopter and a Fenice military chopper — were rehearsing for a parade celebrating the 90th anniversary of the Royal Malaysian Navy, due to be held on Saturday.

Speaking to reporters, the minister said that efforts were underway to verify the identities of the crew members killed, all of whom were below the age of 40.

According to the BBC, one of the helicopters carrying seven people crashed onto a running track, whereas the other with three people on board crashed into a swimming pool.

Reacting to the incident, Malaysia's Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, in a post on X, conveyed condolences to

the bereaved families saying that the country "mourns the heart-wrenching tragedy".

The incident comes as two crew members were rescued last month after a Malaysian coast guard helicopter crashed into the sea off Malaysia's Angsa Island last month.

The country has a history of helicopter crashes as two people were killed when two helicopters, in a similar incident, crashed into each other in 2020. Before that, six people died, including the then Deputy Minister of Plantation Industries and Commodities Noriah Kasnon in a helicopter crash in 2016.

The incident occurred a year after the then Malaysia's ambassador to the United States Jamaluddin Jarjis was killed along with four others after their helicopter crashed into a forest. Agencies



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

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index	
Current	Prev. Close
71,359.40	71,433.46
Day's High	Day's Low
71,846.63	71,338.42
Index Value	Change
14,889,881,593	-74.06
Percentage	Time
-0.1%	23 Apr, 2024 5:00 pm

Europe: FTSE 100 Index	
Index Value	Change
8,044.81	+20.94
Percentage	Time
+0.26%	23 Apr, 4:35 pm GMT+1

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average	
Index Value	Change
38,515.54	+275.56
Percentage	Time
+0.72%	23 Apr, 1:35 pm GMT-4

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average	
Index Value	Change
37,552.16	+113.55
Percentage	Time
+0.30%	23 Apr, 3:15 pm GMT+

**Open Market Forex Rates**

Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	181	182.8
Bahrain Dinar	740.8	748.8
Canadian Dollar	201	203
China Yuan	38.45	38.85
Danish Krone	39.75	40.15
Euro	293.2	296.2
Hong Kong Dollar	35.55	35.9
Indian Rupee	3.34	3.45
Japanese Yen	1.86	1.94
Kuwaiti Dinar	903.61	912.61
Malaysian Ringgit	58.19	58.79
New Zealand \$	164.22	166.22
Norwegians Krone	25.61	25.91
Omani Riyal	723.48	731.48
Qatari Riyal	76.52	77.22
Saudi Riyal	73.25	73.95
Singapore Dollar	204.5	206.5
Swedish Korona	25.31	25.61
Swiss Franc	305.43	307.93
Thai Bhat	7.51	7.66
U.A.E Dirham	75	75.8
UK Pound Sterling	339.5	343
US Dollar	277.5	280.25

# Economy on right path, govt committed to accelerate growth: Finance Minister

LIIBS 7th Edition, unites stakeholders for collaborating for growth

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: The 7th Edition of LEADERS IN ISLAMABAD BUSINESS SUMMIT (LIIBS) kicked off with a full house at a local hotel in Islamabad. More than 15 global speakers and 1000+ delegates were present at the event to unlock growth opportunities and collaborate for mutual benefit and advancement.

The 7th Edition of LIIBS is jointly hosted by Nutshell Group and Unity Foods Limited, in collaboration with OICCI (Overseas Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry), with Faysal Bank Limited as the Platinum partner, and InfraZamin Pakistan as the strategic partner. The theme of the event this year is 'Collaborating for Growth'.

Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, Federal Minister for Finance & Revenue, having recently returned from Washington after deliberations with the IMF, focused on the 'need to do' on an immediate basis. Commenting on the proactive role of government he said, "Agriculture and IT exports are the two sectors that can be the driver of growth for Pakistan's economy. It is up to us as a country to come up with investable, bankable projects. There has been a 33.6% increase



in agricultural loans between July and February of the current fiscal year. The government aims at alleviating inflation and providing relief to the weaker segments of society. Efforts are being made to control inflation and provide relief to the weaker segments of society. FBR tax collection increased by 30.2%, exceeding the target of PKR 6,707 billion. Ministry of Finance, FBR, and the Ministry of Law are taking steps to increase collaboration in revenue collection."

Welcoming the honorable public sector leadership, global leaders, and delegates to the 7th

Edition of LIIBS, Muhammad Azfar Ahsan, Pakistan's Former Minister for Investment, reinforced the shared vision of Unity Foods Limited and Nutshell Group, for a successful, self-sufficient, and sustainable Pakistan. Azfar emphasized the need for collaboration between the Private, Public, and Military sectors. "Pakistan is at a crossroads, but I am optimistic that the finance team under the dynamic leadership of Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb will collaborate and do the needful. To progress as a country, we need competent teams in four

main stakeholder domains: political government, bureaucracy, business leadership, and business community."

Prof. Ahsan Iqbal, Federal Minister for Planning, Development & Special Initiatives, graced the event and in a conversation titled, "The BIG Picture", he said, "We are committed to making Pakistan stand as an honorable country. Let us stop playing politics for the next few years and become an economic nation. The key to success is to compete and collaborate simultaneously. When it comes to market share, we should compete but when it comes to industry share, we should collaborate, with this strategy we can be on a growth trajectory within the next 2 years."

In his welcome address, Lt. Gen. Omar Mahmood Hayat (Rtd), Chairman of Unity Foods Limited, while expressing his eagerness to engage in more collaborative efforts for the benefit of Pakistan's national interests, stated, "Given the current environment, if there was ever a time for a collaborative approach, specifically for businesses in Pakistan, that time is now. It is imperative to encourage participation in public-private partnerships to address industry challenges, advocate for regulatory reforms, and promote sustainable development initiatives."

## Oil price deregulation will cause hyperinflation: PPDA

Instability will destroy businesses, and the country may go bankrupt

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Petroleum Dealers Association (PPDA) said on Tuesday that any attempt to deregulate the price of oil is a prescription for economic disaster.

Deregulating oil prices will plunge the nation into hyperinflation and instability, ruining millions of people and businesses and potentially leading to the country's bankruptcy.

Since the oil supply chain is extremely unstable, manipulating it could put Pakistan in a situation where a small loaf of bread would cost more than a bag of local currency.

Speaking at a hurried meeting, Hassan Shah, Executive Committee Member of PPDA, said that local currency will lose more value because of deregulating oil prices, and the country will become bankrupt.

There will be unrest across the country, and people will not be able to buy bread. Deregulation will make refineries and petroleum companies more arbitrary, leading to a never-ending crisis.

Hassan Shah said that in a country



where there is no price control mechanism, profiteering and violations of the law are common, and anti-cartelization laws are ineffective; deregulation is like playing with the future of the country.

He stated that the private sector should not have control over a vital industry like oil, adding that to move forward with deregulation, Pakistan must maintain an oil reserve that will last for at least 200 days. The nation cannot yet stockpile the oil needed for twenty days. A free market

experiment under these circumstances will fail miserably.

Despite the current regulation of the oil sector, refineries and oil marketing companies continue to stop supply without fear of legal consequences to profit illegally.

He feared that in the case of deregulation, where everyone receives an open exemption, the price of oil would increase repeatedly under various pretexts.

Pakistan's oil supply system is unpredictable and unstable, often leading to shortages. Sometimes, tankers carrying oil arrive late at the port; occasionally, there are no dollars for oil payments; and sometimes, oil prices rise in the global market.

Oil companies suspend supply if there is little possibility of a spike in the prices for which the masses have to pay for their greed. Deregulation should not allow them to raise prices under various pretexts for unjustified profits.

Twice a month, this environment of uncertainty emerges, instilling fear in the market. In the case of deregulation, it will be impossible to save the country from hyperinflation. People will face situations

## Iranian President's visit to expand economic cooperation: Mian Zahid

Says increasing economic cooperation will reduce deficits, tensions

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain said on Tuesday that the three-day visit of Iranian President Ibrahim Raisi will open new avenues of economic cooperation between the two countries.

He said that a large delegation of Iranian businessmen is also accompanying the distinguished guest, so their visit should be taken full advantage of, and economic cooperation should be increased, which will also help reduce the tension between the two countries.

Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that economic matters in Pakistan have always been neglected, which has caused the country to come close to bankruptcy.



Due to the efforts of the political and military leadership, the country avoided bankruptcy, but the economy could not be declared out of danger.

Even now, Pakistan is trying to get more loans from the IMF and is forced to sell national assets because essential institutions have been run on a political rather than economic basis; therefore, they have

become white elephants.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that the Iranian president is visiting when Pakistan's economic condition is weak, and the country could be fined twenty billion dollars for non-implementation of the gas pipeline agreement.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that elements in the border areas threaten both countries, which has caused tension to become routine in bilateral relations, and both countries continue to make accusations.

Pakistan and Iran should work together to clear the border areas of terrorists and build border markets and border trade. Pakistan can get cheap oil, gas, steel, and dozens of other commodities from Iran, while dozens of different commodities, including foodstuffs, can be exported to Iran.

If the two countries establish special and joint economic zones in the border area, it will not only employ the people but also reduce Pakistan's import bill.

## Islamic Banking, Finance emerging in CIS Countries

Spokesman Report

DUBAI: Islamic banking and finance is experiencing a surge in popularity within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) region, presenting a significant new market for financial services. This was highlighted by a recent visit to Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Azerbaijan by Mr. Muhammad Zubair, CEO of AlHuda Centre of Islamic Banking and Economics (CIBE), UAE a leading Islamic finance advisory and consultancy firm.

While the global assets of Islamic finance industry boast a value exceeding \$4.5 trillion, CIS countries are just beginning to tap into this potential. This surge is driven by a combination of factors. Firstly, large Muslim populations

in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan are seeking Sharia-compliant financial products. Secondly, governments in these nations are actively establishing legal frameworks to support Islamic finance development. Finally, the desire to diversify economies beyond traditional sectors is fueling interest in Islamic banking as an alternative. Though Islamic finance currently holds a small share of the CIS financial market, reports suggest substantial growth is imminent. Kazakhstan, for instance, aims to increase its Islamic banking assets to 3% by 2025, a significant jump from the current 0.2%. With its large Muslim population, supportive governments, and increasing awareness, the future of Islamic banking and finance in the CIS region appears



promising, with the potential to be a key driver of economic growth and financial inclusion.

Mr. Muhammad Zubair, CEO of AlHuda CIBE, said that "CIS region holds immense potential for Islamic banking and finance. We are witnessing a growing openness

among policymakers and regulators, creating a fertile ground for the industry to flourish". He emphasized the importance of collaboration, stating, "Banking, Insurance and Leasing are the backbone of any country's financial industry."

During his visit to Uzbekistan, Mr. Muhammad Zubair met with key industry leaders, including: Mr. Zafarjon Mustafae, Chairman of the Leasing Association of Uzbekistan and CEO of Uzbek Leasing International A. O. Discussions focused on exploring potential future joint initiatives to develop the Islamic leasing (Ijarah) sector. Ms. Dustmatova Nargis, Chief of Growth and Chairwoman of the Fintech Association of Uzbekistan. Mr. Oybek N. Khalilov, Chairman of the Board of the Association of Profes-

sionals of the Insurance Market of Uzbekistan, and Mr. Khamidov Bakhtiyor, General Director of the Banking Association of Uzbekistan. To promote Islamic and finance, he also delivered a lecture on Islamic Banking and Finance at TEAM UNIVERSITY LLC.

Kyrgyzstan presents a unique opportunity for Islamic micro-finance. With approximately 15 Islamic banking, financial, and Takaful institutions already established, the country is among the few in the CIS to have passed a dedicated Islamic banking law. Mr. Muhammad Zubair met with several key figures, including: Mr. Denis Khomyakov, CEO of Oxus, a micro-finance network offering Islamic microcredit services in Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan.

## Speakers discuss economic challenges of Pakistan

RCCI holds Think Tank session on Economy of Pakistan and Future Challenges



Staff Reporter

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry has organized a Think Tank session on "Economy of Pakistan and Future Challenges". President RCCI Saqib Rafiq along with Chairman RCCI Think Tank and Group Leader, Sohail Altaf and Vice Chairman Think Tank and Former President, Raja Amer Iqbal welcomed the Chief Guest Dr. Ashfaq Hasan Khan (SI), renowned Economist and Director General, NUST Institute of Policy Studies (NIPS).

Senior Vice President Muhammad Hamza Sarosh, Vice President Faisal Shahzad, Immediate Past President Ch. Nadeem A. Rauf, Former Presidents, Executive Committee members, representatives from tax bar associations, women members & distin-

guished members of RCCI also attended the session.

In his welcome remarks, President RCCI Saqib Rafiq shared the scope and aim of RCCI Think Tank and remarked that the idea behind this was not to identify the challenges and shortcomings in the economy but at the same time provide the viable solutions to address economic challenges.

Chairman Think Tank, Sohail Altaf said that Pakistan stands at a critical juncture in its economic journey. While we have made significant strides in recent years, we also face formidable challenges that require bold and decisive action. From structural weaknesses to external pressures, from socio-economic differences to environmental sustainability, the road ahead is fraught with both obstacles and opportunities.

## PPL enhances production

Adds 17 MMscfd gas & 530 bpd oil/condensate

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL) proudly announces a substantial augmentation in its production output, with the addition of 17 million standard cubic feet per day (MMscfd) of gas and 530 barrels per day (bpd) of oil/condensate to its portfolio. This achieve-

ment underscores PPL's unwavering commitment to bolstering the nation's energy security.

This additional indigenous hydrocarbon production, achieved through cost-effective measures, is poised to significantly narrow the energy demand and supply gap while saving valuable foreign exchange reserves for the nation.

## CCP conditionally approves technology transfer agreement between SSGCL and M/s Itron Inc. to boost local gas meter manufacturing

ISLAMABAD: The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has granted a time bound approval to the exemption application for the technology transfer and license agreement between the Sui Southern Gas Company Limited (SSGCL) and USA-based M/s Itron Inc. with certain conditions to be complied. The scope of agreement where exclusivity clauses have been allowed by the Commission is between SSGCL and M/s Itron to facilitate the manufacturing of gas meters in Pakistan.

CCP in its approval has directed SSGCL to achieve 100% localization of gas meters as a result of this agreement along with maximum import substitution through adequate local production of gas meters to meet local demand, including the demand of Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL), the other gas utility company in Pakistan. The Ministry of Energy has also issued directions to SSGCL in this regard.

CCP considers and grants exemptions pursuant to Section 9 of the Competition Act, 2010, inter alia ensuring that such exemptions have the economic benefits that outweigh the anti-competitive effects of business agreements for any exemption to be awarded.

CCP in its exemption has also directed that both parties to the agreement shall make concrete efforts to capitalize on the export potential of the gas meters and apprise annually to the CCP on the matter during the exemption period. The gas meters must be manufactured according to the specifications approved or allowed by the relevant regulator(s) and international standard.

The conditions set by CCP while awarding exemption are aimed at promoting localisation and facilitating consumer interests in the relevant market besides economic benefits of import substitution to meet the local demand of gas meters with exports potential also.

## PAK vs NZ

# Injury puts Rizwan's availability for T20I series in doubt

The series is now levelled at 1-1 with two remaining matches set to be played in Lahore on April 25 and 27

LAHORE: In a concerning development for the Pakistan cricket team, Mohammad Rizwan's availability for the remaining matches of the ongoing T20I series against New Zealand is in doubt due to the wicket-keeper batsman's hamstring injury.

Rizwan, a key top-order player for the national side, suffered the injury during the third T20I against the Black Caps in Rawalpindi on Sunday where he whizzed past Virat Kohli and Babar Azam's records by scoring the fastest 3,000 runs in T20 International cricket while featuring in his 79th T20I innings.

The team management might reach any decision over the right-handed batter's availability today after reviewing his



scans.

The development comes after Green Shirts' wicket-keeper

batsman Azam Khan was ruled out of the NZ series after experiencing discomfort in his right

calf during a practice session. According to the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), the crick-

eter was advised to undertake a 10-day rest following radiology reports confirming a Grade One tear of his right calf muscle.

It must be noted that New Zealand made a stunning comeback in the five-match T20I series courtesy of Mark Chapman who led the visitors to victory in the third T20I match played on Sunday.

The series is now levelled at 1-1 with two remaining matches set to be played in Lahore on April 25 and 27.

Before that, the national side thrashed visitors in the second T20I to secure seven-wicket on April 20 after the Black Caps were bowled out for just 90 runs in 18.1 overs.

The first match of the series was washed out due to rain. Agencies

## Slapped Indian fighter for abusing me, talking inappropriately about Pakistan: Shahzaib Rind

QUETTA: Pakistani mixed martial arts (MMA) fighter Shahzaib Rind Tuesday said the brawl with Indian fighter Rana Singh broke out after he abused him and talked inappropriately against Pakistan.

Shahzaib said the Indian fighter talked inappropriately against Pakistan on social media and then used inappropriate words in the press conference ahead of the fight.

"After the press conference, when the Indian fighter abused me and pushed me, then I slapped him to bring him to his senses," he said explaining why he slapped the opponent before the fight. Video of the slapping went viral on social media.

Shahzaib knocked Singh out instantly after the fight started on April 21 in the 'Karate Combat' in Dubai.

The Pakistani karate fighter



apprised that he worked really hard and trained in the United States for the encounter. He said though his opponent had an enviable record but he didn't take any pressure of it.

On his meeting Bollywood superstar Salman Khan, he said Khan had seen few other fights of his. He was over the moon and asked if he knocked everyone out in 20 seconds, he said.

Shahzaib relayed that he had been in martial arts since his childhood, as he started playing as early as at the age of 8.

"I am the first Pakistani to have been incorporated in the American League. I try to promote the culture of Pakistan and Balochistan in the world. I am trying to highlight the positive image of Pakistan," he said.

To another query, he said after winning the fight, he

raised the flag of Pakistan and India which was a message on the behaviour of the Indian fighter that we have the guts to reply aggressiveness with peace.

Shahzaib's video of carrying India's flag along Pakistan's and giving a message of peace and friendship after winning the fight is doing rounds on social media not only in Pakistan but in India as well.

Talking to media in Quetta, after arriving in Pakistan, Shahzaib on Tuesday said his next target was the world title.

He said he participated in all the fighting contests on his own. It was an honour for him to represent Pakistan and he was extremely happy for that, he said.

He added that he was happy to win the contest against India at Karate Combat 45 recently. Agencies

## Djokovic, Bonmati win Laureus Awards

MADRID: Serbian tennis legend Novak Djokovic was named as the Sportsman of the Year and Spanish footballer Aitana Bonmati won the women's counterpart on Monday night at the 25th Laureus World Sports Awards held in Madrid.

In a ceremony held at one of the Spanish capital's most emblematic buildings—the Palacio de Cibeles, Djokovic said, "We are individual athletes, but every success we owe to our family and our team. My team has been instrumental in my success in 2023, which was one of the best seasons of my life."

Novak Djokovic, who won the Australian, French and US Open titles to take his number of Grand Slams to 24, held off opposition from Leo Messi, Max Verstappen, Erling Haaland, Noah Lyles and Mondo Duplantis to win the prestigious 2024 Award.

The event was attended by some of the biggest names in sport from the past and present, such as Djokovic, athletes including Jessica Ennis-Hill,



Michael Johnson and Edwin Moses, former footballers including Cafu, Alessandro Del Piero, Marcel Desailly and Ruud Gullit, and gymnasts including Nadia Comaneci and Li Xiaopeng.

Bonmati, who helped Spain win the 2023 Women's World Cup and led

FC Barcelona to a domestic double, thanked her companions at Barcelona and the national team for their help in her winning the award.

The Spanish Women's Football Team was then given the Award for Laureus World Team of the Year after winning

the World Cup.

Real Madrid's Jude Bellingham won the World Breakthrough of the Year award, after his debut season with the Spanish club. The award was an extra reason to celebrate following his injury time winning goal against FC Barcelona on Sunday night.

American gymnast Simone Biles was given the Laureus World Comeback of the Year after winning four gold medals at the World Championship, including a record sixth all-around title after her two-year absence following the Tokyo Olympics.

Skateboarder Arisa Trew was the Laureus World Action Sports person of the Year, while Diede de Groot was the Laureus World Sports person of the Year with a Disability after recording her third straight calendar Grand Slam.

The Rafa Nadal Foundation was named as the winner of the Laureus Sport for Good Award for its work in helping vulnerable young people in Spain and India. Xinhua

## Selby unsure of future after early Crucible exit

Four-time snooker champion speaks out on mental health struggles caused by the sport



LONDON: Four-time world snooker champion Mark Selby is considering his future because the sport has adversely impacted his mental health, he said after his 10-6 first-round defeat by Joe O'Connor.

Selby, who won the world title in 2014, 2016, 2017 and 2021 and was runner-up last year, was disappointed with his performance against Crucible debutant O'Connor as he suffered his first opening round loss in the tournament since 2018.

"I will definitely still review it (my future) because I stopped myself from playing well when I had my chances and I can't keep doing that because it makes me ill and gets me down mentally," Selby told the BBC.

"I will sit down with (my wife) Vikki and see what the options are. It will be a big decision but if I carry on playing I need help, probably on the mental side of it, to enjoy the game a bit more. "I don't want to go through the motions and feel like playing is a chore," the 40-year-old Briton added.

"I will take a long time to think about it over the summer. Away from snooker I'm happy, then when I come to snooker it's the opposite." Reuters

## Uganda appoints Indian coach Sharma ahead of ICC T20 Men's WC2024

KAMPALA: The Uganda Cricket Association (UCA) announced Tuesday the appointment of new head coach Abhay Sharma.

Sharma, who is from India and signed a three-year contract, will be in charge of the national team at the International Cricket Council (ICC) T20 Men's World Cup to take place in West Indies and the United States from June 1-29th, 2024.

The 54-year-old will replace South African Laurence Mahatlane who left last year and will work with Jackson Ogwang who has been the interim coach and qualified the team for the World Cup.

"I am so happy to be here and very prepared to work together with the team so that we are able to register results. The World Cup is around the corner and there is a lot we have to do together in order to prepare well," added Sharma.

Sharma, who has held several coaching positions in India, was also in charge of India's U-19 team when they defeated England and Bangladesh in the Tri-Series.

The new coach also made it clear that there will be no pressure doing this job because he is used to handling cricket since it's his passion. "I am aware that expectations will be high because it's an emerging cricket nation. But if expectation comes in there will be pressure on the players," added Sharma.

John Walusimbi, the UCA Chief Executive Officer welcomed the new coach and made it clear they are ready to give him all the support he needs. "Many coaches numbering 54 applied for this job, but Sharma is the worthy candidate for the job because of his experience," added Walusimbi. Uganda Cricket Cranes are placed in Group C for the ICC T20 World Cup alongside Afghanistan, Papua New Guinea, West Indies, New Zealand. The Ugandan team will be stationed in the West Indies. Xinhua

## Thailand keen to host F1 race on streets of Bangkok

BANGKOK: Formula One fans could be treated to the sight of Max Verstappen and Lewis Hamilton roaring around the steamy streets of Bangkok, with Thailand keen to host a race.

Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin hosted F1 boss Stefano Domenicali on Monday to pitch the government's vision of bringing a grand prix to the sprawling, traffic-clogged Thai capital.

No timeframe or detailed plans have been announced, but Thai officials told local media they envisage the race being run on a street circuit, possibly around the city's historic centre.

"Thailand has the capacity to host Formula One in Bangkok," Srettha posted on X, formerly Twitter, after meeting Domenicali. "If successful, I'm confident that our country will bring impressive memories to others because we have the right potential, capacity and Thai people's hospitality."

Srettha's government is keen to push "soft power" initiatives to raise Thailand's profile and landing an F1 race would give tourism a lift as the kingdom's visitor-dependent economy bounces back from the pandemic.

Formula One is meanwhile keen to host more street races. "Basically, if F1 is going to be held in Thailand, we want it to be held on the roads... we are currently working on the matter," government spokesman Chai Watcharong told local media.

Alex Albon of Williams is the only Thai currently competing in F1 and only the second driver in history to hail from the kingdom. AFP

## Ten Hag says reaction to Man Utd FA Cup win a 'disgrace'

Dutchman hits out at claims that victory was 'embarrassing'

LONDON: Erik ten Hag says the media reaction to Manchester United's performance in the FA Cup semi-final against Coventry was "a disgrace", robustly defending his side's achievement in reaching a second straight final.

United surrendered a 3-0 lead at Wembley on Sunday and were saved from a humiliating exit in extra time only by a VAR intervention, which ruled out a goal for offside in the final moments.

They eventually scraped through against the Championship side on penalties to set up a re-match of last year's final against City.

Ten Hag admitted after the match his team had "got away

with it" but played down any notion of embarrassment.

But he has been widely criticised, adding to speculation he is on borrowed time at Old Trafford.

Former Premier League striker Chris Sutton said the performance would "cement his sacking".

But Ten Hag was in defiant mood on the eve of United's Premier League match against bottom side Sheffield United on Wednesday.

"You asked the question: 'Is it embarrassing?' No, the reaction from you was embarrassing," he told reporters on Tuesday.

"It is the comments. Top football is about results. We made it to a final and we deserved it not only

by this game but also the other games.

"We lost control for 20 minutes, we also had bad luck, 3-2, 3-3. We were very lucky in the end, it is clear. Penalties was very good and we made it to the final, it is a huge achievement. Twice, in two years, is magnificent. For me as a manager, four cup finals in four years.

"The comments are a disgrace."

United, winless in their past four Premier League games, are in danger of missing out on a European spot next season after a poor campaign.

They are already realistically out of the race to qualify for the lucrative Champions League but

still have the Europa League and the Europa Conference League to aim for.

"We have to win every game, we know that," said Ten Hag. "That's what United stands for and that is our approach, go from game to game but we have to qualify for Europe and we now have two opportunities — in the league and the FA Cup final."

Ten Hag said he would work closely with newly appointed technical director Jason Wilcox to determine the future direction of the club.

Wilcox, 53, has left second-tier Southampton to take up the job at Old Trafford with immediate effect.



"We have to form a partnership, which is very important," said Ten

Hag. "We are a little bit behind in the process so we have to catch up

and we will go and speed up the process." Agencies

## Call on

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of representatives of the leading universities of United Kingdom calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday.



Photo: Online

## Govt to address issue of missing persons: Law Minister

*Says the issue of missing persons, spanning over four decades and having several dimensions, cannot be resolved overnight*

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar has said the government is serious to address the issue of missing persons.

Addressing a news conference along with Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar in Islamabad on Tuesday, he said a committee is being reconstituted on the directions of the Prime Minister on this matter, which will have parliamentary presence.

The Law Minister, however, said that the issue of missing persons, spanning over four decades and having several dimensions, cannot be resolved overnight.

He emphasized the need



for its political solution with consensus, apart from the legal one.

Azam Nazeer Tarar pointed out that Pakistan has paid a heavy price in the war on terrorism and our security fore-

es and people have rendered unprecedented sacrifices in this war.

In his remarks on the occasion, the Information Minister expressed the government's intent to address this issue.

He said the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances has resolved 7900 cases out of over ten thousand cases of missing persons.

Turning to political landscape of the country, the Information Minister said the results of recently held by-elections have validated public confidence in the PML-N policies.

He said the results also showed that people are aligned with PML-N and its leadership to steer the country towards development and prosperity.

Attaullah Tarar said people have rejected the narratives of PTI, based on conspiracy, hatred, anarchy and politics of vandalism, through their votes.

He said the previous government of PTI had pushed the country towards international

isolation. However, the incumbent government of PML-N brought its back on track.

Attaullah Tarar said the reports of international financial institutions and rating agencies have also endorsed the policies of the present government aimed at bringing economic stability in the country.

He said our current account has been surplus, foreign direct investment has increased while IT exports have also witnessed upward trajectory due to prudent economic policies of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

The Minister expressed the hope that due to these prudent economic measures, we will be successful in achieving real glory of the country.

## NA Speaker, Saudi Envoy for enhancing bilateral ties

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Saudi Ambassador Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki called on Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq in Islamabad on Tuesday.

During the meeting, both the leaders showed satisfaction on Pak-Saudi relations and expressed determination to further expand the bilateral ties.

The Speaker National Assembly said Pakistan attaches great importance to its relations with Saudi Arabia. He said the people of Pakistan possess special

bond for Saudi Arabia and the Custodian of Two Holy Mosques Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud.

Sardar Ayaz Sadiq said both countries have common vies on key global and regional issues. He said parliamentary diplomacy is of the utmost importance to further strengthen bilateral relations. He said exchange of parliamentary delegations and coordination among the Parliamentary Friendship Groups will be helpful in bringing the two nations closer.

The Speaker also appreciated Saudi Arabia's cooperation



for the economic development of Pakistan.

Welcoming Saudi Arabia's commitment for investment, he said Pakistan offers tremendous opportunities in

this regard. He also thanked the Kingdom for extending facilities to Pakistani diaspora in Saudi Arabia.

He also extended invitation for Chairman Shura Council

of Saudi Arabia Dr Abdullah Bin Mohammed Bin Ibrahim Al-Sheikh to visit Pakistan.

The Saudi Ambassador thanked the Speaker for showing strong commitment with the Kingdom and extending good wishes for the Custodian of Two Holy Mosques as well as the desire to expand bilateral relations. He said Saudi Arabia too attaches immense importance to its brotherly relations with Pakistan.

Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki said the people of Saudi Arabia will continue playing their role for the sustainable development and prosperity of Pakistan.

## High-level delegation to advance investment in Maritime Sector

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: A delegation from Hutchison Group, a globally renowned Network in port and logistics operations, called on the Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh to discuss prospective expansion plans for investment in the Karachi Port Trust (KPT) and potentially other strategic ports across Pakistan. The meeting was attended by Federal Secretary Maritime Dr. Iram, Chairman Karachi Port Trust (KPT), Chairman Port Qasim Authority and other higher officials of the Ministry.

The delegation, comprised of senior executives from Hutchison Ports, including Regional Head of Hutchison Ports Mr. Andy Tsoi, country advisor HP, GM SAPT Unit Changsu Ki, GM KICT, Alvin Chow. The proceedings commenced with welcome remarks extended by the Federal Minister,

Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh focusing the importance accorded to the visit and the mutual commitment to fortifying Pakistan's maritime infrastructure. Minister urged the participants to translate prospective plans into tangible form, facilitating substantive deliberations towards actionable outcomes. Additionally, he emphasized the indispensable role of port development in driving overall economic progress. Mr. Andy Tsoi presented their strategic vision for enhancing port facilities and fortifying connectivity in the region. In the meeting, the Hutchison Ports unveiled a prospective investment blueprint, delineating a proposed infusion of \$1 billion into various planes of port development.

Notably, an initial tranche of \$200 million is to be designated for immediate deployment, with the remainder to be disbursed across phased implementations. They further added that at the

core of the investment strategy lies the augmentation of logistics infrastructure, encompassing the establishment of state-of-the-art warehouses, storage facilities, and depots. Furthermore, the plan entails the construction of modern road networks and the integration of technology to optimize operational efficiency and elevate transshipment handling capabilities to world-class standards.

The Hutchison Ports, which presently operates through two terminals at KPT via Karachi International Container Terminal (KICT) and South Asia Pakistan Terminals Limited (SAPT), reaffirmed their commitment to advancing port facilities in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Maritime Affairs. Federal Minister expressed that the Hutchison Ports must come up with a concrete plan for the said expansion and investment in the sector.

In response, the heads of KICT and SAPTL expressed their profound appreciation for the Federal Minister's proactive stance on port development and expansion of facilities. They committed to bring a comprehensive and inclusive plan for prospective expansion and investment so meaningful dialogue could ensue to translate it into reality.

The delegation reaffirmed its belief that a collaborative partnership with Hutchison Group will bring prosperity for Pakistan's maritime industry, enhancing economic growth and increasing international trade prospects.

The meeting concluded with remarks from Federal Minister reiterating government's firm commitment to collaborative efforts aimed at actualizing the shared vision of positioning Karachi Port Trust as an outstanding global maritime hub.

## President calls for enhancing Pakistan's aerial connections with other countries



Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari has emphasized the need to enhance Pakistan's aerial connections with other countries.

Talking to a delegation of Air Asia Aviation Group in Islamabad on Tuesday, he said potential of Pakistan's tourism sector can be fully exploited by increasing people-to-

people contacts.

The President said Pakistan has abundant tourism opportunities, especially religious sites.

He said investors should invest in the Pakistan Stock Exchange by taking advantage of the best investment opportunities it offers.

The delegation apprised the president about the Air Asia Aviation Group and its flight operations.

## FM Dar speaks to overseas Pakistanis via Zoom



ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on Tuesday addressed the overseas Pakistanis living in 35 countries at a Zoom Conference

organized by the Pakistan Muslim League- Nawaz International Affairs Chapter. "It was pleasure addressing this evening our diaspora/representatives in 35 countries at a Zoom Conference organized PML-N International Affairs Chapter," the minister wrote on his official X account.

He said, "All overseas Pakistanis are very dear to me and PML-N will do its best to implement its manifesto for their welfare and that will truly facilitate their investments and homecoming." APP

## Pakistan Aims to Reach \$3 Trillion Economy by 2047: Ahsan



Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is poised to achieve a \$3 trillion economy by 2047, bolstered by a targeted growth rate of 9%. Minister Ahsan Iqbal emphasized the current opportune moment for international investments in Pakistan, highlighting significant commitments from China and Saudi Arabia. Leveraging productivity enhancements, Pakistan aims to establish itself as an attractive destination for global industries, fostering its position in the international market.

Minister Ahsan Iqbal, speaking at the Leaders in Islamabad Business Summit 2024, stressed the imperative role of collaboration between the government and the private sector in driving economic growth. He advocated for the development of comprehensive ecosystems within business clusters to optimize value chains and promote sustainable value addition. Drawing parallels with successful models from countries like Japan, Korea, Singapore, and Malaysia, he emphasized the need for trading houses to facilitate the global market integration of local products. Underlining the interdependence of exports and global supply chains in driving economic advancement, Minister Ahsan Iqbal emphasized the need for Pakistan to transition from a predominantly domestic market focus to an export-oriented economy. He underscored the critical role of exports in revenue generation and integration into the global supply chain, citing the current low export figures as indicative of the need for strategic investment in this area.

Highlighting the imperative of enhancing business competi-

tiveness on a global scale, Minister Ahsan Iqbal urged businesses to prioritize export proficiency and sales mastery. He emphasized the pivotal role of competitiveness and productivity in driving wealth creation and emphasized the need for a progressive mindset to achieve the country's economic goals. Minister Ahsan Iqbal announced forthcoming measures aimed at reducing regulatory burdens on the private sector, signaling the government's commitment to fostering a conducive business environment. He reiterated the government's vision to streamline regulatory procedures to eliminate obstacles hindering entrepreneurial aspirations.

Minister Ahsan Iqbal called attention to the urgent need to enhance the investment landscape, citing the Saudi Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) as a promising platform for promoting Pakistan's attractiveness as a business-friendly destination. He emphasized the importance of establishing a robust global business identity for Pakistan, drawing parallels with the successful initiatives seen during the early stages of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Minister Ahsan Iqbal reaffirmed Pakistan's potential to achieve significant economic milestones, projecting a trajectory towards a \$2 trillion economy by 2047 with a growth rate of 7%, and ultimately, a \$3 trillion economy with a growth rate of 9%. The Minister engaged in a dynamic discussion with panelist Saqib Ahmed, Country Manager SAP for Pakistan, Bahrain, Iraq, and Afghanistan, during the Leaders in Islamabad Business Summit, held on April 22nd and 23rd at Serena Hotel, Islamabad.