



Completion of ML-1 Railway project govt's priority: Ahsan

Minister for Planning Professor Ahsan Iqbal has underscored the substantial success witnessed by Pakistan between 2013 and 2018, marked by an influx of approximately twenty-five billion dollars of Chinese investment within the framework of CPEC. The Minister chaired the preparatory meeting for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor in Islamabad today... (Details on Page 8)



Govt extends stay of registered Afghan refugees

The government has extended the validity of the Afghan refugees' Proof of Registration Cards (PoRs) that expired on April 1, 2024, to June 30, 2024, to facilitate those who have yet not left Pakistan voluntarily as it presses ahead with its push to boot out illegal foreigners, a statement said on Friday. A decision to this effect was taken in the federal cabinet meeting held at the PM House under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

Simultaneously published from Islamabad, Lahore and Multan

Meeting on climate change

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs the third meeting of Pakistan Climate Change Council on Friday.



Photo: PID

Govt pursuing agenda of economic reforms: PM

The Prime Minister says IT Exports have been recorded all times high

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has said the government is rigorously pursuing the agenda of economic reforms to steer the country out of prevailing challenges.

Presiding over the Federal Cabinet meeting held in Islamabad on Friday, he said the reports of international financial institutions and journals showing positive and upward trajectory about Pakistan's economy is a testimony of the prudent policies of the incumbent government.

The Prime Minister said our IT Exports have been recorded all

times high, foreign remittances and overall exports of the country have also witnessed surge and credit of all this goes to the sitting government.

He said foreign investment from our friendly countries including Saudi Arabia is also increasing which would have positive impact on our economy.

Shehbaz Sharif said the government is also implementing a comprehensive policy and taking steps to reduce electricity theft and lowering its prices. He, however, said we have not only to take difficult decision, but to safeguard them in the interest of country.

The Prime Minister said the Track and Trace System introduced in 2019 was a complete fraud and cruel joke. He categorically stated that stern action would be taken against those who inflicted loss on the national economy.

The Federal Cabinet has approved establishment of an additional special court in Makran Division to deal with narcotics cases in Balochistan province.

The approval was accorded at a meeting of federal cabinet held in Islamabad today, with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in the chair.

The court will have jurisdiction over Panjgur, Kech, Gwadar, Hub and Lasbela districts. The cabinet directed for making the prosecution process more effective.

The Cabinet also approved the extension of Proof of Registration (POR) cards of Afghan refugees till 30th June this year, enabling the card holders to avail schools, bank accounts and other facilities in Pakistan.

These POR card holders will be repatriated in the third phase of ongoing repatriation program of illegal nationals residing in Pakistan.

The Cabinet was briefed about

progress on privatization of PIA. The cabinet directed the authorities concerned to ensure transparency in this regard.

The meeting was also briefed by the Secretary Aviation about measures taken to improve facilities at airports across the country especially Lahore and Karachi.

The Cabinet was informed that service counters at the airports have been increased and further improvements are being made in facilities.

The meeting was told that consultation with all stakeholders is in the final stage regarding use of drone technology in the agriculture sector.

Ashrafi re-elected member of MWL's Supreme Council

ISLAMABAD: Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, Pakistan Ulema Council Chairman and International Tazim-e-Haramain Sharifain Council Secretary General, has been re-elected as a member of the Supreme Council of Muslim World League.

With a longstanding commitment to the upliftment of Islamic values and the welfare of Muslim communities worldwide, Ashrafi has consistently been at the forefront of advocating for unity and cooperation within the Muslim world. Ashrafi's re-election to the prestigious Supreme Council reaffirms his influential role in shaping the discourse surrounding contemporary Islamic issues. Throughout his tenure, Ashrafi has demonstrated remarkable leadership in promoting interfaith harmony, countering extremism, and fostering dialogue among diverse Muslim sects. Ashrafi's unwavering efforts have earned him respect and



recognition both nationally and internationally.

As a member of the Supreme Council of Muslim World League, Ashrafi is poised to continue his advocacy for the rights and well-being of Muslims, while also contributing to the League's initiatives aimed at addressing the multifaceted challenges confronting the Muslim Ummah.

In response to his re-election, Ashrafi expressed gratitude for the trust expressed by the members of the Supreme Council in him. He reiterated his commitment to advancing the interests of Muslims, emphasizing the importance of unity and solidarity in the face of global challenges. APP

Kamal emphasizes vital role of IPR in achieving SDGs

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan has emphasized the vital role of Intellectual Property Rights in driving innovation, creativity and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in the country.

Addressing Seminar organized by Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry in collaboration with Intellectual Property Organization to commemorate World Intellectual Property Day 2024, the Minister said that Pakistan was blessed with huge natural resources and need to

channelize these resources and streamline the direction.

The minister reaffirmed the government's resolve to prioritize the development of a robust national Intellectual Property framework that fosters innovation and creativity for ensuring equitable access to the benefits of IP, especially for marginalized communities.

He said this day holds special significance as we reflect on the crucial role of Intellectual Property in fostering innovation, creativity and ultimately advancing the Sustainable Development Goals.

Green Pakistan Initiative forum terms 'Agriculture' as lifeline of country

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Green Pakistan Initiative forum has termed 'Agriculture' as the lifeline of the country.

According to the ISPR, Green Pakistan Initiative Conference was held today in which Federal Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal, Minister for National Food Security Rana Tanveer Hussain and Army Chief General Syed Asim Munir graced the occasion.

Civil and military officials, involved in the national undertaking also attended the conference.



The forum was briefed about the multi-faceted GPI initiatives and significant benchmarks achieved in a short span of time. The initiatives presented before the forum included, inter alia,

establishment of model farms, water management schemes, technology innovations and investment partnerships aimed at ensuring food security and enhancing agricultural produc-

tivity in Pakistan.

The Federal Ministers, while concluding the session lauded this transformative initiative and underscored that agriculture is the lifeline of Pakistan. They

hoped that GPI would introduce contemporary best practices in Pakistan's agriculture sector.

While addressing the conference, Army Chief remarked that Pakistan is a blessed land with an industrious and resilient nation which needs to come together for national development.

General Asim Munir assured that the Army will continue to provide all possible support for the economic development of the country and underscored that the Army's efforts would contribute towards comprehensive national security and collective good of the nation.

Masood calls for Pak-US coop for regional peace



Spokesman Report

WASHINGTON: Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States Masood Khan has said that the significance of improving Pakistan's defense capabilities lies in its challenging geographical location and rough neighborhood.

He made these remarks while addressing a gathering of scholars, intellectuals and opinion-makers during Ambassador Circle Series organized by World Affairs Council of Charlotte in US state of North Carolina.

The Ambassador expressed hope for the continuation of defense ties between Pakistan and the United States and encouraged both countries to invest in both security and non-security areas.

He said the rapid growth of Pakistan's tech industry in recent years is a promising development in the context of strengthened Pakistan-US relations. He said Pakistan has become an integral part of the overall technological ecosystem and has made significant strides in the tech industry.

US, China must be 'partners, not rivals': President Xi

Chinese President meets U.S. secretary of state

BELJING: Chinese President Xi Jinping met with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Friday.

Noting that this year marks the 45th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and the United States, Xi said over

the past 45 years, the relationship has gone through wind and rain, and the two sides can draw a few important lessons.

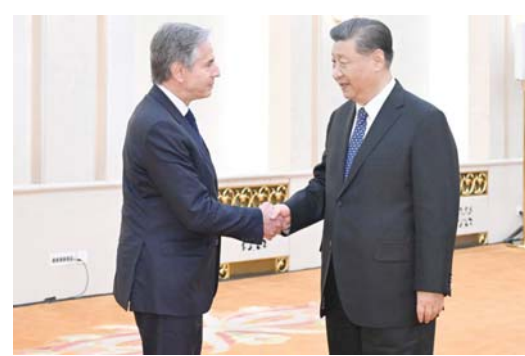
China and the United States should be partners rather than rivals; help each other succeed rather than hurt each other; seek common ground and

reserve differences rather than engage in vicious competition; and honor words with actions rather than say one thing but do another.

Xi said he proposed mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation as the three overarching principles for

the relationship, which are both lessons learned from the past and a guide for the future.

Xi emphasized that in his phone call with President Joe Biden three weeks ago, he shared his thoughts on how to stabilize and develop China-U.S. relations in 2024, and under-



Chinese President Xi Jinping meets with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, capital of China, April 26, 2024. Photo: Xinhua

lined that the two sides should value peace, prioritize stability, and uphold credibility. Xinhua

Baleegh emphasizes importance of education, leadership skills

Engr. Muhammad Baleegh-ur-Rehman addresses at the 4th Convocation ceremony of Government College Women University Faisalabad

Our Correspondent

FAISALABAD: Chancellor GCWUF Engr. Muhammad Baleegh-ur-Rehman emphasized the importance of education and leadership skills at the 4th Convocation ceremony of Government College Women University Faisalabad.

Addressing the audience, he congratulated the graduates on their achievements and advised them to maintain integrity and gratitude. Commending the university for providing quality education in a safe environment, he praised the 3560 graduates who received degrees spanning various sessions. 132 outstanding students received gold, silver, and bronze medals from the governor.

In a warm gesture, Vice Chancellor of Women University, Prof. Dr.



Zill-i-Huma Nazli, extended a hearty welcome to the Chancellor, showcasing the university's commitment to

transparency and progress. Dr. Nazli presented a comprehensive report detailing the university's pivotal

research and developmental endeavors, alongside academic and administrative accomplishments. Moreover, she sincerely congratulated the Controller of Examinations Rizwana Tanvir on successfully organizing the convocation. She congratulated the graduates, expressing her heartfelt wishes for their future endeavors in both personal and professional realms.

The convocation ceremony attracted a diverse array of distinguished guests, including vice-chancellors from esteemed universities, esteemed members of statutory bodies, as well as former Vice Chancellors and registrars of the university. The presence of dedicated alumni and representatives from various sectors of society further underscored the occasion's significance, affirming the university's deep-rooted connections within the community.

Ambassador of Kazakhstan terms visit to Faisalabad a success



FAISALABAD: Yezhan Kistafin, the Ambassador of Kazakhstan, met Commissioner Silwat Saeed at the Commissioner's office. Commissioner Faisalabad welcomed the Ambassador of Kazakhstan and informed about the administrative affairs of the division. He gave a detailed briefing on the measures. He discussed the ongoing measures on the improvement of the transport sector and urban transport. Apart from giving a briefing on the sectors of agriculture, live stock, he said that Faisalabad is an industrial hub and there are numerous opportunities for development. Faisalabad has no second in industry. On this occasion, it was agreed to work together in commercial, economic and agricultural sectors. Presented a commemorative shield to the Ambassador of Kazakhstan and invited him to visit again.

The Ambassador of Kazakhstan declared the visit to Faisalabad a success and thanked Commissioner Faisalabad for his hospitality. The support of Kazakhstan will also be received for the promotion of industries.

He said that the visit to various industrial units during his visit to Faisalabad was also a successful experience. Effective measures will also be taken for investment. Welcomed the invitation for a detailed visit.

Commissioner Multan inaugurates anti-polio drive



MULTAN: Commissioner Multan Division Ms Marium Khan inaugurated Five Days Anti Polio Campaign in Multan District.

Kiran Asim

MULTAN: On the instructions of the Punjab government, the five-day anti-polio campaign in Multan district was inaugurated by Commissioner Multan Division Maryam Khan by administering drops to the child while DC Multan Captain (retd) Rizwan Qadir was also present.

Commissioner Maryam Khan said that five In the fasting campaign, more than 10 lakh children were administered polio drops in Multan district will go for which 4380 teams have been formed to administer polio drops in Multan district.

Polio drops are absolutely safe, citizens should not fall prey to false propaganda, DC Multan Captain (retd) Rizwan Qadir said that the anti-polio campaign will continue from April 29 to May 3, every hospital, dispensary, bus wagon stand in the district. Teams will be present at the railway station. Polio-free Pakistan is the dream of all of us. Until the eradication of polio virus we all have to vaccinate children against polio. Director Health Dr. Waseem Ramzi, CO Health Dr. Faisal and other doctors and officers were present.

Mepco Admin establishes District Emergency Operation Center

Syed Nadeem Kazmi

MULTAN: Superintending Engineer Operation MEPCO Multan Circle Amjad Nawaz Bhatti has appointed Additional XEN (Circle Training Center / Safety Cell) Taj Mahmood Qamar as the focal person in the District Emergency Operation Center established in Rescue 1122 Office Kalma Chowk Multan while immediate restoration in case of interruption in power supply of three officials for the actions of Duties have been assigned who will serve in the District Emergency Operation Center in three shifts. SDC Muhammad Yasin will be on duty from 8 am to 4 pm, LDC Qari Muhammad Yasin from 4 pm to 11 pm and Lineman Second Jafar Ali Anjum from 11 pm to 8 am.

Rashid lauds services of WAPDA workers



Multan: Group photo of WAPDA Hydro Union Zonal Chairman Rashid Yameen with Secretary Malik Tanveer and others in Mepco Manzoora Sub-Division Multan.

Syed Nadeem Kazmi

MULTAN: Zonal Chairman of All Pakistan WAPDA Hydro Workers Union Chaudhry Rashid Yameen and Secretary Malik Tanveer have said every worker of WAPDA in extreme heat and cold season. They Are Serving For Pakistan and the people in storms and floods every worker of WAPDA is our asset. WAPDA is progressing only because of the unity of WAPDA will be prosperous if the workers Prosperity will also come to the house, he expressed these thoughts while addressing the function of congratulating Meter Inspector First Rana Muhammad Akbar on his promotion in Mepco Manzoora sub-division, where Malik Babar, Ishrat Alvi, and Zeb Gera, Chaudhry Inran and other dignitaries were also present on the occasion.

Dangerous

FAISALABAD: A woman holds charpoys on a motorcycle on her way at a road in the city, which may cause any incident any time.



Photo: Online

Pakistan Youth Parliament concludes Esaar-e-Ramzan



Staff Reporter

FAISALABAD: Pakistan Youth Parliament proudly announces the successful conclusion of its esteemed corporate social responsibility program, Esaar-e-Ramzan 8.0, with a grand closing ceremony held at the prestigious Pakistan Air Force Club in Lahore.

Esaar-e-Ramzan is a flagship initiative wherein members of Pakistan Youth Parliament, alongside dedicated volunteers, engage in meaningful visits to various orphanages, old homes, thalassemia centers, and similar institu-

tions, spreading love, joy, and support to those in need. This program embodies the spirit of compassion and solidarity, reflecting the core values of empathy and service ingrained in the youth of Pakistan. With the participation of approximately 1000 volunteers from across the country each year, Esaar-e-Ramzan serves as a transformative journey for aspiring leaders, offering hands-on experiences and opportunities to cultivate essential soft skills. Nearly a hundred volunteers undergo significant personal growth, emerging as complete leaders equipped with valu-

able lessons and enriched perspectives.

The closing ceremony, held at the Pakistan Air Force Club Lahore, was graced by the esteemed presence of Air Commodore Khalid Chishti Sitara I Imtiaz, who attended as the Chief Guest. Air Commodore Khalid Chishti expressed his admiration for the dedication and altruism displayed by the youth of Pakistan Youth Parliament. He remarked, "Witnessing the selfless efforts of the youth in service of their fellow citizens fills me with immense pride and hope for the future of our nation. Esaar-e-Ramzan exemplifies

the noblest ideals of compassion and community, and I commend the organizers and participants for their invaluable contributions.

President Muhammad Abubakar warmly welcomed the distinguished guest and expressed heartfelt appreciation for the unwavering support extended towards the noble cause. In recognition of outstanding contributions and exemplary dedication, awards were bestowed upon high achievers, honoring their remarkable commitment to serving humanity and making a positive difference in society.

Preston University to launch four more Faculties

Staff Reporter

KARACHI: The academic council of Preston University (PU) Karachi formally decided to launch four faculties and eight departments to provide higher education to students in different disciplines.

After the reform of November 2023, the new management convened the first academic council meeting under the chair of the Chancellor of the University, Naveed Yusuf. The Pro-Chancellor, Mohammad Miraj Sahib, Chief Executive Director Syed Riaz Ahmed Sahib, industrial experts along with the internal and external faculty members participated in the academic council.

The participants approved the introduction of four faculties at its campus, including (1) Faculty of Biological



Sciences (2) Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities (3) Faculty of Management Sciences and (4) Faculty of Engi-

neering and Technology based on eight departments.

Four-year BS and two-year ADP

programs and MS/M. Phil programs were also approved. Slogan, Mission and Vision statements were approved after some modifications. The minutes of the academic council were forwarded to BoG. At the end of the meeting, Chief Executive Director Syed Riaz Ahmed appreciated the tireless efforts of the team by saying, 'I believe that your team will make Preston University an ideal educational institution.'

Pro-Chancellor of Preston University, Muhammad Miraj Sahib, thanked the members of the academic council. He said that it is a matter of pride that we have the profession of prophets. He further said today's time and gathering reflects the Quaid-e-Azam's vision for the development of Pakistan. In the end, he prayed for Allah Almighty's assistance and guidance to deal with the matters honestly.



Islamabad
15° - 23° Clear

SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr 3:54 am
Zohr 12:06 pm
Asr 4:51 pm
Maghrib 6:47 pm
Isha 8:18 pm

EMERGENCY

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

ENQUIRY

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

HOSPITALS

CMH 561111
MH 561116
MH 561116
Cantt Hospital 9270907-11
DHO 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

Govt to bridge gap b/w academia, industry: Education Minister

Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui says people with technical education and technical experience are in demand all over the World

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Ms. Qurat ul Ain Vice President Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI), met Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui Federal Minister of Federal Education and Professional Training. She apprised the FM about gap between academia and industry, research and cooperation, technical education, and other issues.

Federal Minister for Education reiterated the government's dedication to revolutionizing the education sector in Pakistan. By implementing comprehensive strategies and fostering collaboration with key stakeholders, the Ministry aims to create a brighter future for the nation's youth. He further said that bridge the gap between academia and industry is our big mission. In this case will be provide cutting-edge IT skills to the youth, so

that ensuring their relevance in the ever-evolving job market.

Minister Siddiqui further said that the industry and universities should work together to solve the country's problems through research and cooperation. He said that people with technical education and technical experience are in demand all over the world. He said that the government is paying special attention to vocational education.

He further said that women were very important pillar of our society and skillful women needed to move forward for progress, in every field including politics, religion and education women should play their role. He said that the government were spending a lot of money for the promotion of higher education and now it was the responsibility of the universities to pay special attention to research in line with the requirements of the modern

era and bring the public sector universities to national and international rankings.

FM Siddiqui said that the business community was the backbone of the country's economy and the government was taking pragmatic steps to resolve all their problems. He emphasized on the business community pay special attention to increase exports so as to increase the country's foreign exchange.

Ms. Qurat ul Ain Vice President FPCCI said that fortunately we had abundance of natural and human resources but unfortunately we were not utilizing the potential of our manpower. She said that the secret of various developed nations was skilled labor. She said that the government should devise good policies to facilitate industrialists. He said that we should reduce the gap between our import and export.



Ms. Quratul Ain, Vice President Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) has urged upon the government to set up a policy to promote technical education in the country so that the target to provide employment to people could be achieved. She said that there was a need to launch a National

Technical Education Programme to produce skilled labour to meet the requirement of our industries as well as to cater for the growing need of the Arab and Gulf countries. Pakistan's rapid population growth and the corresponding expansion of the workforce are a burden on the national economy. Millions of young people enter the job market annually,

but they are unable to find work and do not contribute to national growth due to lack of relevant skills.

In addition to the school requirement, there is a great requirement for establishment of a large number of vocational training centers.

Vice President FPCCI Ms. Qurat ul Ain further said that she also urged the government to evolve policies requiring compulsory linkages between institutions and industry for all existing and upcoming industries in relevant areas in order to foster employability skills. She said that with the provision of better technical training facilities the country would be able to export skilled labour and thereby earn foreign exchange. In short, the service sector required better planning to give much desired boost to our human capital, She added.

Shopping

ISLAMABAD: Women are buying summer clothes from roadside vendors at Karachi Company in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Raja Farid

TikTok partners with Coke Studio as Official Entertainment Partner for Season 15

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: TikTok, the leading destination for short videos, has announced its first partnership with Coke Studio as the Official Entertainment Partner for Season 15. This collaboration marks a significant milestone as both brands continue to revolutionize the entertainment landscape and bring diverse, engaging content to audiences worldwide.

Coke Studio Pakistan has been at the forefront of music innovation, bringing together emerging and breakthrough artists to create unforgettable musical experiences. With billions of views across the globe, Coke Studio has established itself as a cultural phenomenon, transcending borders and genres.

Through this partnership, TikTok becomes the official Entertainment Partner for Coke Studio Season 15, harnessing the power of both brands to redefine the way audiences engage with music, lifestyle, and entertainment content. TikTok will provide exclusive behind-the-scenes footage, artist interviews, and unique content experiences, amplifying the magic of Coke Studio to a global audience.

Speaking about the partnership, Saif Mujahid, Head of Content Operations & Marketing-Pakistan, stated, "We are thrilled to partner with Coke Studio, a pioneering platform that shares our commitment to creativity and cultural exchange. Together, we aim to set new trends in entertainment, leveraging the power of music and storytelling to inspire and connect communities worldwide."

ISSI holds in-house Session on Elections in India

ISLAMABAD: The India Study Centre (ISC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) organized an in-house session on the on-going 18th Lok Sabha elections in India. The event was attended by diplomats, academics, practitioners, and researchers of various Islamabad-based think-tanks.

The participants exchanged views on the length and breadth of the 7-phase electoral process; relevant developments including issuance of major parties' election manifestos; the tone and tenor of the election campaign by various parties; the role of the Indian Election Commission; the political dispositions and likely inclinations of the various regions of India from the North to the South; and



the approaches of the Indian media and civil society.

It was noted that a divisive and polarizing rhetoric was gripping the general environment, while several government Ministers had pointedly invoked Pakistan in their campaign shenanigans to garner electoral dividends. Analysts felt this did not portend well either for India's internal social harmony or for

its external engagement in the neighbourhood.

The experts also underscored the importance of extreme vigilance by Pakistan as desperation on the part of the ruling dispensation in India could lead to any ill-considered misadventure (false flag). In terms of Pakistan-India relations, it was deemed prudent to await the final outcome of the elections and

its aftermath and then to make a realistic assessment including the steps India would be prepared to take to create a conducive environment for a result-oriented dialogue process on all outstanding disputes.

The 7-phases of the voting in the Indian elections will be completed by 1 June and the results announced on 4 June 2024.

Foundation University advocates for health rights on WHD



Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Foundation University Islamabad (FUI) hosted a landmark event at Jinnah Auditorium, FUSH, to observe World Health Day 2024. The event, under the banner "My Health, My Right," brought together prominent figures such as Rector FUI Maj Gen Muhammad Kaleem Asif HI(M), (Retd) and Director Dr. Shumaila Humayun, alongside Prof Dr. Naila Azam, to spearhead discussions on pressing health issues.

The day was marked by insightful dialogues on gender-based violence, nutrition rights, and environmental conservation, featuring contributions from UNFPA's Dr. Rasheed Ahmad, FAO's Florence Rolle, and Brig Khalid Afridi of the Army Heritage Foundation. The esteemed presence of WHO Country Rep Dr. Luo Dapeng as Chief Guest accentuated the day's importance.

Preceding the main event, FUI had organized a series of community health education drives, departmental initiatives, and a free medical camp from April 15 to April 23, reaffirming its dedication to enhancing community health and wellbeing. In the end, Director (FUSH) Maj General Imran Fazal, HI(M), (Retd) presented souvenir to the Rector FUI.

SECP-IFSB workshop on Islamic Capital Markets concludes

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: The three-day capacity building workshop jointly organized by SECP and IFSB on Islamic Capital Markets concludes in Islamabad. The workshop, especially designed to enhance the capacity of officials of regulatory and supervisory authorities, was well attended by officials from the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan, the State Bank of Pakistan, the Ministry of Finance, the Competition Commission of Pakistan, PSX, PMEX, CDC, and NCCPL.

Speaking at the event, Mr. Akif Saeed, Chairman SECP, reiterated its deep commitment to support the continued development and expansion of the Islamic finance industry in Pakistan. Referring to the historic judgment of the Federal Shariat Court and government's commitment to transform the entire financial system in accordance with Shariah principles, he pointed out that SECP has already accelerated its efforts and achieved considerable progress by enabling Islamic finance in all regulated sectors.

The SECP has revamped the Shariah governance framework and also issued Guidelines for Offering Islamic Financial Services that are enabling industry to achieve many firsts during the year. These include Shariah certification of the first ever Shariah-compliant REIT schemes, dedicated asset management companies, Islamic income, money market, and equity funds, Islamic pension schemes, Islamic ETFs, an NBFC with buy-now pay-later platform, a stock brokerage house, and a microfinance company. The regular issuance and listing of GoP Ijarah Sukuk through the stock market is another major breakthrough in the domestic Sukuk market achieved during the year.

Chairman PRCS engages in humanitarian collaboration with Morocco envoy

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: The Chairman Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS), Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari, held a courtesy meeting with His Excellency Ambassador of Kingdom of Morocco in Pakistan, Mohammed Karmoune, at the Embassy of Morocco here on Friday. This meeting marked a crucial moment in the humanitarian relationship between Pakistan and Morocco.

The meeting provided a platform for both parties to deliberate on matters of mutual interest, particularly focusing on humanitarian aid and disaster management. Chairman Laghari emphasized on the substantial part-

nership between the two nations in addressing humanitarian challenges.

During the discussions, Chairman Laghari provided insights into the ongoing programs and projects of the Pakistan Red Crescent Society, emphasizing the organization's commitment to serving vulnerable communities nationwide. He underscored the importance of international cooperation and solidarity in effectively addressing humanitarian crises, expressing gratitude for Morocco's past participation in PRCS-organized events such as the International Donors Conference.

Chairman Laghari specifically emphasized PRCS's anticipation

of support from the Government of Morocco, especially in the recovery phase following the devastating Monsoon 2022 floods. He also expressed a strong desire to enhance cooperation, particularly with the Moroccan government and the Moroccan Red Cross, and other humanitarian organizations aligned with the Red Crescent mandate, aiming to alleviate the suffering of vulnerable communities in Pakistan. Chairman Laghari extended an invitation to His Excellency Ambassador Mohammed Karmoune to visit the PRCS National Headquarters, which was graciously accepted.

Ambassador Mohammed



Karmoune expressed gratitude to Chairman Laghari for the comprehensive information and insights provided regarding disaster management during

the floods, noting the impressive execution. He commended the Pakistan Red Crescent Society for its relentless efforts, led by Chairman Sardar

Shahid Ahmed Laghari, in providing assistance to those in need, especially during times of crisis. The Moroccan Ambassador pledged to facilitate Chairman Laghari's visit to Morocco, arranging meetings with counterparts from the Moroccan Red Cross and heads of humanitarian organizations. The aim is to investigate opportunities for collaboration and address any gaps in interventions, such as shelter, livelihood, health, and cash assistance, being carried out by PRCS during the recovery phase. He recognized the indispensable role of humanitarian organizations like PRCS in mitigating human suffering and promoting resilience within communities.

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Can Asia be relied on to ensure global food security?

Ehtesham Shahid

Asia has about 60 percent of the world's population but only about a third of its arable land. Food security expert Paul Teng of Nanyang Technological University consistently uses such measured words to explain his findings. Teng has been underlining the food security challenges facing Asia and the rest of the world for decades, highlighting the challenges associated with climate change and the use of technology.

In 2013, Teng warned against South Asia's declining agriculture production and reduced gross domestic product share, also underlining that Asia produces more agricultural commodities than it imports. "The agri-food picture in Asia has changed much in response to changes in its number of middle-class people and their rising economic power at the household level," his 2021 co-authored study claimed. In 2022, he highlighted the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war's "massive consequences" for global food security.

While it helps to follow a reliable expert on a matter that resonates globally, the bigger question is the broader implications of Asia's food security dynamics. The continent is home to many of the countries most affected by climate change. It also has some of the world's most economically active countries, with increasing urbanization and a growing middle class. This

suggests that food security in Asia affects global food security through many links.

Asia's role in global food security comes with complexities and challenges that influence its reliability as a stabilizing force in the world's food supply. The continent is a major producer of numerous agricultural products and countries like China and India are among the largest agricultural producers globally, making their contributions vital to regional and global food markets. However, Asia's population pressure creates immense demand for food internally, potentially limiting the amount available for export and impacting global food security. Moreover, water scarcity and land degradation are significant challenges in parts of Asia, impacting agricultural productivity. And some Asian regions face political instability and economic challenges that can disrupt food production and distribution. Trade policies and regional conflicts can also affect food availability and prices.

Asia's ability to ensure food security depends on addressing internal challenges, enhancing sustainable practices and maintaining stable economic and political conditions. International cooperation, investment in technology and infrastructure and policies aimed at sustainable resource management will be essential in leveraging Asia's full potential to contribute to global food security.

Critical concerns on the supply side include diminishing agricultural productivity, excessive use of natural resources and growing water scarcity. As Asia undergoes further urbanization and prosperity,

these factors will likely drive food prices up unless supply can adequately meet the rising demand. Moreover, climate change is poised to be the most significant threat to food security as it affects agricultural productivity and could severely impact food availability.

An Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development paper on food security claimed that 40 percent of developing Asia is projected to face severe water shortages by 2030, which, along with urban encroachment and soil erosion, will significantly stress the region's agricultural land base. "Increasing productivity is complicated and limited by climate change. Its impact on Asia's food security is not a distant threat," the report stated, adding that climate change has a measurable impact on agriculture in a wide range of economies, crops and farming systems.

Research suggests that shifting temperature patterns rather than rainfall changes will pose the greatest risk to crop productivity in Asia. As a result, countries and regions dependent on Asia for food security would need to take several strategic measures. These measures start with adopting advanced agricultural technologies to help increase domestic food production, such as precision farming, hydroponics and vertical farming, which are particularly suited to the region's arid areas. Efficient water use is crucial, too.

Techniques such as drip irrigation, desalination and wastewater recycling can help conserve precious water resources and increase agricultural output. Another way forward is to diversify the sources

of food imports. Trade links with multiple regions can help stabilize food prices and supply, making them less vulnerable to geopolitical tensions or local agricultural disruptions in Asia. Equally critical is the need to invest in agricultural research and development that can lead to innovations tailored to the region's specific needs, such as crops more resistant to heat and drought.

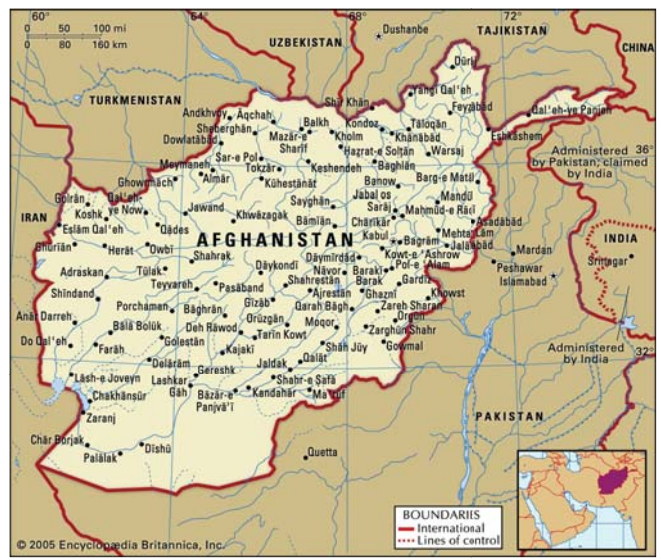
Improving food storage, processing and distribution infrastructures can minimize waste and enhance food systems' efficiency. Supportive policies and regulatory frameworks can encourage investment in agriculture, foster innovation and facilitate sustainable practices. Countries and regions seeking greater food security should encourage collaborations between the government and private sector, leading to investments in agricultural projects and infrastructure development that boost local food production.

Food security is often at the core of national policy agendas and international cooperation efforts, reflecting its critical role in ensuring a stable, healthy and productive global population. Many Middle East and North African countries depend heavily on food imports due to limited agricultural capacity caused by arid climates and water scarcity. The reliance on Asian food supplies makes these regions sensitive to fluctuations in the continent's food production and export policies, highlighting the importance of sustainable and stable agricultural practices within Asia for global food security.

(Courtesy: Arab News)

Afghan govt must ensure its soil is not used for terrorism activities

Unfortunately, the land of our neighboring Muslim country is being used for terrorist activities in Pakistan. When the interim government in Afghanistan was formed the stakeholders agreed that Afghan soil will not be used against any other country but the interim government in Afghanistan failed to fulfill its commitment. Pakistan has provided shelters to over four million Afghan refugees for the last many decades. On the other hand, the Afghan government is backing the militant organization in its country to carry out terrorist activities in Pakistan. Pakistan shares long borders with Afghanistan and Iran. During the recent visit of the Iranian president to Pakistan, both Pakistan and Iran agreed to peacefully resolve the border issues. Whenever a militant is apprehended or killed by our security forces, it is proved that the attacks were being operated from Afghan soil. The Afghan



government is either turning a blind eye or providing them sanctuary. It is a matter of grave concern that Afghan militants are using modern weapons that were in the use of NATO forces earlier.

Terrorism is one of the biggest challenges that Pakistan has been facing. A spike in terror attacks has been observed in the last few months. The stakeholders need to adopt a comprehensive strategy to wipe out the menace of terrorism from its roots. In Balochistan, the dynamics of the terrorism is different as that of in KPK. The government and security forces need to adopt different strategies by leaving no loophole for the terrorists. Unfortunately, there is a nexus of RAW, NDS and TTP and the militants are using Afghan soil for their nefarious designs against Pakistan. In my opinion, Pakistan miscalculated the takeover of Afghan Taliban in Afghanistan. Pakistan must also have signed an agreement with the Afghan government for not allowing use of its soil against Pakistan by the militants. Now the Taliban government is using TTP as a tool to pressurize Pakistan.



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

Reality of Mahrang Baloch's Missing Persons - III

In Pakistan, when the government and law enforcement agencies take decisive actions against terrorist elements, purported human rights advocates promptly intervene. Interestingly, these advocates often remain silent when other countries implement even stricter measures against such elements within their territories. Our judicial system is widely recognized for its flaws and delays, often resulting in cases dragging on for years and leading to the wrongful conviction of innocent individuals while the actual perpetrators evade justice. In such circumstances, whenever our agencies detain someone for investigation and evidence gathering, accusations of coercive and illegal arrests frequently arise. I firmly believe that our agencies do not apprehend innocent individuals without cause, and there is always substance behind these arrests. If someone is innocent and has not acted against the state or the armed forces, there should be no grounds for their apprehension. Behind every missing person, there is always a story, and our religion emphasizes the love for our country, the nation that has granted us identity and freedom. Therefore, it is the duty of every individual to recognize the significance of our freedom, an independent nation, and a patriotic armed forces.

While it may be tempting to immediately blame agencies for allegedly capturing innocents, it is crucial to remember that many of these arrests have led to the identification of numerous terrorists, anti-state elements, and foreign agents. Terrorists rarely confess to their crimes voluntarily, and thorough investigations are essential for extracting information from them. National security is a non-negotiable priority, and no coun-

try compromises on this aspect. I have encountered numerous columnists and journalists who consistently criticize agencies, often focusing on only one aspect of the situation. In presenting a comprehensive and truthful perspective, I aim to address those who question why some individuals disappear. I do not claim that all missing persons are guilty, as it is not my role or that of journalists to make such judgments. Only a thorough investigation can determine the innocence or guilt of individuals.

Several factors contribute to the phenomenon of missing persons. Importantly, not all individuals reported missing are within the jurisdiction of law enforcement agencies; some have connections to terrorist organizations and are involved in activities against the state. Individuals associated with terrorism may go into hiding to avoid arrest. Additionally, some people go missing due to personal vendettas, seeking shelter in remote areas to evade potential retaliation from adversaries. Others may be involved in cross-border smuggling and various criminal activities, leading them to evade detection by remaining in hiding. The categorization of these individuals as missing persons can be deliberate or inadvertent, influenced by deliberate actions or a lack of awareness. Pakistan's law enforcement agencies have consistently committed themselves to safeguarding fundamental human rights as mandated by the constitution. In pursuit of this goal, Pakistan's security forces have made numerous sacrifices to secure the well-being of individuals and society. However, despite their unwavering dedication, these agencies often face unjust accusations regarding missing persons disappearances, unsupported by evidence. Furthermore, a deliberate social media campaign spreads this misinformation, fostering misconceptions

among the public.

The issue of missing persons is pervasive worldwide, and Pakistan is no exception, with various factors contributing to its exacerbation. While human rights organizations tend to scrutinize security forces, they often overlook the underlying factors or ground realities. Voluntary disappearances, sometimes mistaken for enforced disappearances, are prevalent, with instances of individuals choosing to vanish without notifying their families. Furthermore, investigations reveal cases where individuals deliberately disappear to evade arrest by law enforcement agencies. Additionally, identifying abandoned deceased individuals poses a significant challenge. Based on meticulous statistics from Edhi and Chippa, over 35,000 abandoned bodies have been interred throughout the country solely by these two NGOs since 2005.

It's crucial to distinguish between cases of missing persons and enforced disappearances, as often, missing individuals are later discovered to have been casualties of security force actions during counterterrorism operations in the country. For instance, in a past incident, terrorist Karim Jan, listed as missing, was killed during an attack on the Gwadar Port Authority complex. His sister formally requested his body following the incident. Similarly, the sister of terrorist Abdul Wadud Satakzai had been searching for her brother since August 12, 2021, before learning of his death in the Mach attack.

When compared to other nations, it becomes evident that the issue of missing persons is a significant global concern, extending to developed countries such as the US, UK, and Europe, as indicated by credible sources from various nations. A comparative analysis of missing persons reports underscores the gravity of this issue. In the US, the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) reported 521,705 cases in its 2021 publication on the FBI website.

To be continued

Islamic thought can help the region attain a green future-I

Rodrigo Tavares

US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen's recent visit to China underscored the urgency of addressing climate change. While she expressed concerns about the adequacy of China's efforts in combating this existential threat, Chinese officials asserted their commitment to their own vision of sustainability encapsulated in the concept of "Ecological Civilization."

This vision seeks to harmonize economic prosperity with ecological preservation over a century-long period. While the Joe Biden administration's Western approach draws inspiration from seminal works including "Small is Beautiful" by E. F. Schumacher and "Silent Spring" by Rachel Carson, China's perspective is deeply entrenched in indigenous philosophies such as Taoism and Confucianism. These two views on sustainability are not irreconcilable, but they are distinct.

Over the past half-century, less established environmental perspectives have often been met with wariness rather than recognized as valuable indigenous wisdom deserving documentation, amplification, and integration into a comprehensive global framework rooted in bulletproof science, and which should be embraced by communities worldwide, all of whom should feel directly impacted by climate change issues and recognize their role as part of the solution.

Take, for instance, Islamic thinking, which carries a long tradition of sustainability and environmental stewardship. While we in Europe and North America were shaping many new environmental concepts, a set of Saudi Arabian scholars pioneered the "Islamic Principles for the Conservation of the Natural Envi-

ronment" in 1983.

This 25-page Islamic study, which proved influential in shaping policies across various Muslim states, asserted that the "protection, conservation and development of the environment and natural resources is a mandatory religious duty to which every Muslim should be committed." It was published with support from the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources and the Saudi Arabia government.

Using language that we were not used to in the West, the document boldly called upon Muslim "rulers, administrative and municipal agencies and organizations" to protect the environment as a "common social duty." Anticipating the concept of "sustainable development" later outlined in the seminal UN-sponsored 1987 Brundtland report, the "Islamic Principles" advocated for "a balanced and planned international system for the protection and conservation" of humans and their environment and "for the maintenance and perpetuation of a suitable, prosperous life for the present and future generations."

It was also one of the forerunners of the modern concept of "leakage" typically used in carbon markets and of "do no significant harm" used in sustainable finance. It stated that "developmental actions and projects undertaken in one country should not lead to or result in any kind of damage, harm or degradation in the natural environment of another country."

If Saudi Arabia is currently undertaking plans to plant 10 billion trees, it is worth noting that as far back as 1983, those Saudi scholars advocated for the "revival, restoration, or recovery of lands" based on Qur'anic principles. And as encapsulated in a saying of Prophet Muhammad: "On Doomsday, if anyone has a palm shoot in hand, he should plant it."

To be continued

China, US reach five-point consensus at Beijing meeting

The two sides affirmed the positive progress made in dialogue and cooperation between China and US

BELJING: Wang Yi, a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and Chinese foreign minister, held talks with U. S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Friday in Beijing, with the two sides reaching a five-point consensus based on a comprehensive exchange of views.

First, both sides agreed to continue to work hard to stabilize and develop China-U. S. relations in accordance with the guidance of the two heads of state. The two sides affirmed the positive progress made in dialogue and cooperation between China and the United States in various fields since the meeting in San Francisco, and agreed to speed up the implementation of the important consensus reached by the two heads of state in San Francisco.

Second, both sides agreed to maintain high-level exchanges and contacts at all levels. They will continue to allow the restored and newly



established consultation mechanisms to play their role in the fields of diplomacy, economy, finance and commerce, continue to carry out exchanges between the two militaries, and further promote China-U. S. cooperation on drug control, climate

change and artificial intelligence. Third, the two sides announced that they would hold the first meeting of the China-U. S. intergovernmental dialogue on artificial intelligence, continue to advance consultations on the principles guiding China-U. S. relations, hold a new round of China-U. S. consultations on Asia-Pacific affairs and China-U. S. maritime affairs, and continue consular consultations. The anti-drug working group of the two countries will hold a senior officials meeting. The United States welcomes China's special envoy for climate change Liu Zhenmin to visit the United States.

Fourth, the two sides will take measures to expand cultural and people-to-people exchanges between the two countries, welcome students from each other's countries and work together for the success of the 14th China-U. S. Tourism Leadership Summit to be held in Xi'an, northwest China's Shaanxi Province, in May.

Fifth, the two sides will maintain consultations on international and regional hotspot issues and strengthen communication between the special envoys of the two sides. Xinhua

US SC justices lean towards some level of immunity in Trump case

Some justices indicate concern about presidents lacking immunity

WASHINGTON: The Supreme Court's conservative justices signalled support on Thursday for US presidents having some level of protection from criminal charges for certain acts taken in office as it tackled Donald Trump's claim of immunity from prosecution for trying to undo his 2020 election loss.

During about 2-1/2 hours of arguments in the case, most of the justices seemed unlikely to embrace Trump's most far-reaching argument that presidents have "absolute immunity" for official acts — an assertion that appeared to wilt under hypothetical questions involving selling nuclear secrets, taking a bribe or ordering a coup or political assassination.

But the conservative justices, who hold a 6-3 majority on the nation's top judicial body, indi-



cated concern about presidents lacking any degree of immunity, especially for less egregious acts. The contours of such a ruling, though, were not clear after arguments probing the extent of presidential powers.

Trump, seeking this year to regain the White House, appealed after lower courts

rejected his request to be shielded from four election-related criminal charges on the grounds that he was serving as president when he took the actions that led to the indictment obtained by Special Counsel Jack Smith.

The Supreme Court's eventual ruling may narrow the special counsel's allegations

against Trump, but it appeared that at least parts of the indictment would survive. The decision could further delay Trump's trial, however, if the Supreme Court instructs lower courts to determine how to apply its newly formulated view of immunity. Smith attended the arguments.

Conservative Justice Samuel Alito said incumbent presidents who lose re-election would be in a "peculiarly precarious position" if they are vulnerable to vindictive prosecution by the next presidential administration.

"Will that not lead us into a cycle that destabilises the functioning of our country as a democracy?" Alito asked Michael Dreeben, the lawyer representing Smith.

"We can look around the world and find countries where

we have seen this process where the loser gets thrown in jail," Alito added.

Conservative Chief Justice John Roberts signalled concern about abusive prosecutions of presidents, absent immunity.

"You know how easy it is in many cases for a prosecutor to get a grand jury to bring an indictment. And reliance on the good faith of the prosecutor may not be enough in some cases," Roberts told Dreeben, while indicating he was not suggesting Trump's indictment in this case was improper.

Trump, the Republican candidate challenging Democratic President Joe Biden in the November 5 election in a rematch from four years ago, is the first former US president to be criminally prosecuted. Reuters

Rahul Gandhi in the fray

As India begins voting in 2nd phase of giant election



NEW DELHI: Almost one billion people are eligible to vote in the seven-phase general elections that began on April 19 and concludes on June 1, with votes set to be counted on June 4.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is seeking a record-equalling third straight term on the back of his economic record, welfare measures, national pride, Hindu nationalism and personal popularity. Surveys suggest he will easily win a comfortable majority.

His challengers have formed an alliance of more than two dozen parties and are promising greater affirmative action, more handouts and an end to what they call Modi's autocratic rule.

Friday's polling will be held for 88 of the total 543 seats in the lower house of parliament with 160 million people eligible to vote. It will be spread across 13 states and federal territories in the world's most populous country.

More than half of those 88 seats are in the southern states of Kerala and Karnataka and the northwestern state of Rajasthan.

The campaign has changed tack since the first phase and become heated as Modi and the main opposition Congress party have faced off on communal issues with Modi accusing Congress of favouring minority Muslims, aiming to dilute affirmative action and planning to impose inheritance tax.

"Congress, which used to make noise in the name of the Constitution, has now been badly exposed for its hidden agenda," Modi posted on X late on Thursday.

Congress has denied the charges and said Modi is distracting voters from real issues such as unemployment, price rise and rural distress and fears losing. Reuters

Another US official resigns over Gaza policy amid growing protests

WASHINGTON: United States State Department's spokesperson for the Middle East and North Africa, Hala Rharrit, has resigned in protest of America's policy on Gaza — at least the third high-profile resignation from the department, as pro-Palestinian demonstrations at university campuses across the country grow.



Rharrit was also the Dubai Regional Media Hub's deputy director and joined the State Department almost two decades ago as a political and human rights officer, the department's website showed.

"I resigned April 2024 after 18 years of distinguished service in opposition to the United States' Gaza policy. Diplomacy, not arms. Be a force for peace and unity," Hala Rharrit wrote in a LinkedIn post, according to Al Arabiya.

A State Department spokesperson, when asked about the resignation in Thursday's press briefing, said the department has channels for its workforce to share views when it disagrees with government policies. Under close questioning, Spokesperson Vendant Patel refused to go beyond saying, "This is a personal matter."

Nearly a month earlier, Annelise Sheline of the State Department's human rights bureau announced her resignation, and State Department official Josh Paul resigned in October. A senior official in the US Education Department, Tariq Habash, who is Palestinian-American, had stepped down in January. APP

Elon Musk beats Mark Zuckerberg as richest man, again

Because of Meta's most recent decline in market value, Elon Musk, the CEO of Tesla, has once again surpassed Mark Zuckerberg, the owner of Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp and Threads.



Even though Facebook's parent company posted better-than-expected first-quarter profitability, it nevertheless saw a \$132.2 billion decline in market capitalisation on Thursday, according to Quartz.

Investors who were alarmed by the tech giant's AI initiatives and muted second-quarter projections contributed to the loss. On Friday during regular trade, Meta's worth decreased to \$1.11 trillion.

As of Thursday, Musk's net worth was \$184 billion, based on Bloomberg's Billionaire Index. According to the same index, Zuckerberg's net worth has dropped significantly from the \$175 billion that was estimated for him last week to \$157 billion.

This occurred just a few days after Tesla released its disappointing earnings results, showing that its revenue growth rate had decreased by 9% year over year — the largest decrease since 2012. Musk assured investors that Tesla would soon start selling EVs at a lower price, so investors remained unfazed.

Even after the tech company revealed that its revenue was 30% greater than the previous year, Meta did not see the same level of investor trust.

Yemen's Houthis claim attacks on ship in Gulf of Aden, Israeli city

SANAA: Yemen's Houthi group on Thursday claimed responsibility for the attack on the MSC Darwin ship in the Gulf of Aden and the launch of missiles toward the Israeli city of Eilat.

"We attacked the Israeli ship, MSC Darwin, in the Gulf of Aden with a number of naval missiles and drones, hitting it accurately," Houthi military spokesman Yahya Sarea said in a televised statement aired by the Houthi-run al-Masirah TV.

The group consistently describes MSC-operated ships as "Israeli" for uncertain reasons.

"We also launched a number of ballistic and winged missiles towards targets in the southern Israeli city of Eilat," he said.

The spokesman stressed that the group will continue preventing all Israeli ships or those heading to Israel from transiting the Red Sea, the Arabian Sea, and the Indian Ocean.

"We emphasize that we will continue carrying out more attacks against



targets in the Israeli city (Eilat)," Sarea added.

Hours earlier, the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations reported on its website that it received a report of an attack 15 nautical miles south-

west of Yemen's southern port city of Aden.

"The master (of the attacked ship) reports a loud bang heard and a splash and smoke seen coming from the sea. The master reports the vessel and all

crew are safe," the British agency said, adding that "military authorities" were sent to the scene to provide support.

The Houthis have been targeting Israeli-linked ships or ships heading to Israeli ports in the Red Sea since November last year in solidarity with Palestinians engaged in conflict with Israel.

Several ships have since been reportedly damaged, including the sinking of the British-operated cargo ship Rubymar in the Red Sea.

The Houthi attacks have forced several shipping companies to re-route around Africa, resulting in extended transit times and elevated costs.

A coalition of U. S. and British naval forces in the Red Sea has been launching airstrikes on Houthi military targets since January, which were responded to by the Houthis with more intensified attacks that targeted the coalition's warships. Xinhua

Pro-Palestinian protesters rally at University of California, LA

LOS ANGELES: Hundreds of protesters gathered and built a protest encampment in support of Palestinians on Thursday at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), one of the top public universities in the United States.

Organizers of the "UCLA Palestine Solidarity Encampment" said in a statement that "We will not be silent while Gaza is being annihilated."

The group, made of UCLA students, community members, faculty, and staff, issued a list of demands that include the boycotts of Israeli universities.

"With the passing of a new funding package, the Biden

administration has approved and signed off on 26.4 billion U. S. dollars in aid for the 'Israelis,' greenlighting the invasion of Rafah, where they have trapped 1.5 million fleeing Palestinians," the statement noted.

Protesters displayed signs on campus with slogans such as "Let Gaza live." "This is not war, this is genocide," "Stop the massacres," and "UCLA says free Palestine."

"Our top priority is always the safety and well-being of our entire Bruin community," said Mary Osako, vice chancellor for UCLA Strategic Communications, in a statement, adding that "We're actively monitor-

ing this situation to support a peaceful campus environment that respects our community's right to free expression while minimizing disruption to our teaching and learning mission."

The UCLA rally came one day after another pro-Palestinian protest over the Israel-Hamas war at the University of Southern California's (USC) Los Angeles campus. After hours of clashing with police at the university, over 90 protesters were arrested Wednesday night by the Los Angeles Police Department.

USC announced on Thursday the renowned private research university has canceled its main

stage graduation ceremony for students that had been planned for May 10.

More than 150 students of the University of California, Santa Barbara, also organized a pro-Palestine demonstration in the university's student resource building on Thursday, according to local television channels.

Despite certain U. S. politicians branding the demonstrators as "anti-Semitic" and the subsequent arrest of hundreds of students, pro-Palestinian demonstrations are spreading on campuses across the United States as the Israel-Hamas conflict in Gaza continues. Xinhua



People participate in a pro-Palestinian protest at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), California, the United States, on April 25, 2024. Hundreds of protesters gathered and built a protest encampment in support of Palestinians on Thursday at UCLA, one of the top public universities in the United States.

Bull & Bears
PSX 100-Share
Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index	
Current	Prev. Close
72,742.74	71,764.18
Day's High	Day's Low
72,862.41	71,764.18
Index Value	Change
14,307,377,262	+771.34
Percentage	Time
+1.07%	26 Apr, 2024 5:00 pm

Europe: FTSE 100 Index	
Index Value	Change
8,139.83	+60.97
Percentage	Time
+0.75%	26 Apr, 4:35 pm GMT+1

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average	
Index Value	Change
38,331.51	+245.71
Percentage	Time
+0.65%	26 Apr, 1:06 pm GMT-4

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average	
Index Value	Change
37,934.76	+306.28
Percentage	Time
+0.81%	26 Apr, 3:15 pm GMT+

Open Market Forex Rates		
Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	178.5	180
Bahrain Dinar	740.5	748.5
Canadian Dollar	200.8	203
China Yuan	38.47	38.87
Danish Krone	40.02	40.42
Euro	294	297
Hong Kong Dollar	35.57	35.92
Indian Rupee	3.34	3.45
Japanese Yen	1.86	1.94
Kuwaiti Dinar	904.6	913.6
Malaysian Ringgit	58.28	58.88
New Zealand \$	165.38	167.38
Norwegians Krone	25.35	25.65
Omani Riyal	723.13	731.13
Qatari Riyal	76.49	77.19
Saudi Riyal	73.3	73.95
Singapore Dollar	204.5	206.5
Swedish Korona	25.53	25.83
Swiss Franc	304.82	307.32
Thai Bhat	7.52	7.67
U.A.E Dirham	75	75.75
UK Pound Sterling	343.75	347.9
US Dollar	277.25	279.8

Ethio-Pakistan Business Forum discuss economic coop

Ambassador Jemal Beker highlighted business, trade and investment opportunities in the diverse economic sectors of the FDR Ethiopia

Our Correspondent

LAHORE: The Embassy of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) in collaboration with the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) organized an "Ethio-Pakistan Business Forum" at the LCCI Headquarters to encourage the business community to participate in the trade delegation to Ethiopia coordinated by the Ethiopian Embassy Islamabad from May 26th to May 31st, 2024.

A large number of business community took part in the "Ethio-Pakistan Business Forum" from diverse economic sectors including manufacturing, textile, fertilizer, pharmaceutical, surgical, agriculture, chemicals, construction, tourism and ICT.

Upon arrival, H. E. Jemal Beker Abdula, Special Envoy and Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the FDRE to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, was accorded warm welcome by the LCCI President H. E. Mr. Kashif Anwar and his team.

Addressing the business forum, Ambassador Jemal Beker highlighted business, trade



and investment opportunities in the diverse economic sectors of the FDR Ethiopia which underwent home-grown economic reforms led by Dr. Abiy Ahmed, Prime Minister of Ethiopia.

He urged the business community of Lahore to join the trade delegation of the Ethiopian

Embassy Islamabad and explore business, trade and investment opportunities in the land of origins and opportunities.

The Ambassador lauded the Government of Pakistan for launching the Look Africa and Engage Africa policy to enhance its relations

especially trade with Africa which is a market of more than 1.4 billion people.

Ethiopia is a gateway to Africa, he said while highlighting the Enter and Operate in Africa through Ethiopia Initiative of the Ethiopian Embassy Islamabad to help the business community of Pakistan to connect with their counterparts in Africa.

"To this end, we have facilitated exchange of business delegations between the two countries within one year of establishment of the Ethiopian Embassy Islamabad," he remarked.

The Ambassador said last year in March, the Ethiopian Embassy Islamabad mobilized more than 75 Pakistani businessmen to visit Ethiopia to help them foster connections with their counterparts in Ethiopia.

Resultantly, more than 50 businessmen and industrialists from Ethiopia visited Pakistan in May 2023 to boost the bilateral trade between the two countries.

Ambassador Jemal Beker said the Ethiopian Airlines had started its operations in Karachi last year which enabled the business community of Pakistan to enter and operate in Africa.

Selling goats

KARACHI: Street vendor selling goats at a road in the Provincial Capital.



Photo: Online

Kaspersky Next: New flagship product line for business

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Kaspersky introduces its new flagship product line 'Kaspersky Next' combining robust endpoint protection with the transparency and speed of EDR (Endpoint Detection and Response) alongside the visibility and powerful tools of XDR (Extended Detection and Response). Customers can now choose one of three product tiers tailored to their business requirements, the complexity of their IT infrastructure, and their available resources.

According to a report from a survey, 52% of companies state security operations are more difficult today than they were several years ago. 41% of respondents believe that the evolving and rapidly changing threat landscape is the key reason behind difficulty in security operation while 20% sighted lack of cybersecurity skills or staff to keep up with security analytics and operations as key issue.

Amid the constantly evolving cyberthreat landscape, it is vital for companies to have a comprehensive cybersecurity solution they can trust and rely on for effective protection. As a leading innovative and technological company, Kaspersky is continuously developing its solutions to address all the cybersecurity requirements of businesses, helping them build up reliable cybersecurity frameworks.

Kaspersky Next is a new line of cybersecurity products that includes robust endpoint protection powered by AI capabilities, and goes beyond the classic EPP (Endpoint Protection Platform), bringing together EDR and XDR for corporate customers of any size and industry. As the most advanced and effective cybersecurity solutions, EDR and XDR help companies to withstand the more prevalent, evasive, and sophisticated attacks, providing businesses with total visibility, control, rapid response and proactive threat hunting.

PSO leads the market with resilience and growth

Posts a profit of 13.4 billion in 9MFY24

Our Correspondent

KARACHI: Pakistan State Oil (PSO), the leading energy company, maintained its industry dominance and demonstrated steady performance in 9MFY24. The company announced a net profit of PKR 13.4 billion, translating into earnings per share of PKR 28.5 and gross sales of PKR 2.8 trillion for the period.

The company's Board of Management (BoM) reviewed the group's performance for the nine months ended March 31, 2024 in the meeting held on April 26, 2024. The group posted a net profit of PKR 16.6 billion for the period, translating into earnings per share of PKR 35.5.

Amidst significant challenges in the petroleum sector, PSO strengthened its market presence, achieving a noteworthy 1.3% increase in white oil market share, reaching 52.4% by the end of the period in review. This growth was predominantly driven by a 2.1% expansion in gasoline market share, soaring to 46.4% in 9MFY24. Moreover, PSO maintained

a robust position in the diesel market, commanding a market share of 54.5%.

The company also retained its leading position in the black oil market, selling 247 KMT during the period, despite a 74.6% decline in sales YoY due to reduced furnace oil-based power generation. Demonstrating remarkable resilience and prowess, PSO continued to lead the Jet fuel industry, securing an unprecedented market share of 99.4%.

Underscoring PSO's commitment to bolstering its infrastructure for enhanced operations, 7 new storage tanks with a combined capacity of 91 KMT were constructed at Faisalabad, Faqirabad, and Mehmoodkot. The company also carried out successful rehabilitation efforts on storage tanks totaling 26.6 KMT in capacity at Sihala, Pipri Marshalling Yard (PMY), Buffer Oil Terminal (BOT), Habibabad and Sahiwal, complemented by ongoing efforts to enhance capacity by an additional 21.4 KMT across Zulfiqarabad, Sihala, and Mehmoodkot terminals.

On the retail front, PSO expanded its presence by incorporating 37 new retail outlets, taking the total nationwide footprint to 3,555, further solidifying the company's focus to providing accessible and reliable energy solutions to its customers.

Marking a significant milestone, CERISMA (Private) Limited, PSO's Fintech arm, was granted with the in-principle approval for Electronic Money Institution (EMI) by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). This achievement is poised to revolutionize financial inclusion and empowerment, harnessing a digital framework to elevate nationwide financial accessibility to new heights.

As part of the company's state-of-the-art Fuel Management System solution, the national flag bearers-PSO and Pakistan Railways (PR) inaugurated the recently upgraded Railways Filling and Storage Facilities at Karachi and Lahore, representing a significant step in bringing in operational efficiencies while further strengthening over 4 decades of relationship between the two entities.

SECP Introduces SECP-XS

A swift complaint resolution platform

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has introduced a new digital platform, SECP-XS (<https://xs.secp.gov.pk>), to promptly resolve user queries and concerns.

Following the successful introduction of the eZfile, the new fully automated corporate registry, SECP recognizes the need for a seamless mechanism to address user concerns and queries. SECP-XS is offering a user-friendly platform for reporting, managing, and resolving issues related to regulatory compliance and statutory

processes.

SECP-XS is a centralized platform that seeks to simplify complaint management by providing regular updates, notifications, faster follow-up actions, and progress tracking capabilities, thereby improving user satisfaction, internal efficiency, and service standards.

The SECP strongly recommends using SECP-XS for swift resolution of corporate registry, eZfile-related issues. The introduction of a one-stop complaint management solution reflects SECP's commitment to transparency, accountability, and excellence in the corporate sector.

Zindigi, MyTM & Cashin to digitize pilgrimage experience

Pioneering a new era in Hajj convenience

Our Correspondent

KARACHI: In a groundbreaking move, Zindigi, powered by JS Bank & MyTM in collaboration with Cashin (KSA), has launched an innovative payment system specifically for Pakistani pilgrims, in line with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030. This initiative, unveiled at the LEAP conference this year, introduces a cashless Hajj and Umrah experience, significantly enhancing convenience by reducing fees and taxes. This landmark initiative not only ensures convenience but also sets a precedent for future advancements in pilgrimage services. It represents a key advancement towards the Vision 2030 goal of achieving 70% non-cash transac-

tions by 2030.

For Pakistani pilgrims, the traditional financial challenges of Hajj, including handling numerous transactions for visa fees, accommodation, and transportation, will now be streamlined. They will utilize the Zindigi Debit cards, ensuring all transactions are effortless and seamless, preparing for a pilot test during the Hajj 2024.

Basir Shamsie, President & CEO of JS Bank, reflected on the innovative partnership, saying, "This collaboration represents a significant stride towards facilitating the sacred rituals. It not only advances Pakistan's commitment to financial inclusion but also aligns with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030. By introducing a cash-

less solution tailored for Hajj and Umrah, we are setting new standards in convenience and security, fostering an ecosystem where technology and tradition converge. This initiative is a bridge that underscores our shared vision for a future where economic and technological progress serves everyone."

Noman Azhar, Chief Officer Zindigi stated, "Zindigi exist to make a meaningful impact in the lives of customers beyond borders. This initiative perfectly embodies our vision to offer simple yet impactful financial services. With around 4 million people from Pakistan embarking on the sacred journey of Hajj and Umrah to Saudi Arabia each year, this represents significance of Zindigi's contri-



contribution in facilitating masses. We are excited to be part of such impactful initiatives that resonate with the core purpose of existence.'

National Foods to reduce dependency on imported raw materials



Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: National Foods Limited (NFL) has embarked on a remarkable journey of import substitution through the project 'Seed To Table'. By means of formal partnerships with progressive farm-managing companies, National Foods Limited aims to empower local farmers and fortify Pakistan's agri value chain.

NFL, fueled by the vision of reshaping Pakistan's agricultural landscape, launched the 'Seed to Table' project in August 2023 with a vision to reduce the country's dependency on imported raw materials, particularly the annual import of tomato paste amounting to USD 10 million. Through the dedicated efforts of all stakeholders in the project including farmers, tomato seeds were cultivated in September 2023 over 500 acres in different parts of Sindh. The harvests started in February this year, yielding around 8,000 tons of premium-quality tomatoes so far.

"The revolutionary 'Seed To Table' project has already saved USD 2mn with a realized localization potential of around USD 10mn. It presents us with the opportunity to export in a USD 10bn+ market," said Abrar Hasan, Global CEO of National Foods Limited (NFL).

The project aims to empower local farmers ensuring their continued growth and prosperity through formal partnerships with progressive farm-managing companies including Syngenta, Ibtida Ventures, Vital Green, Indus Acres, Kevlaar, Al-Rahim Agri Processing, Farmdar, Farnevo, and Salaam Takaful. "Even in its early stage, the 'Seed to Table' project has exceeded our expectations and we are incredibly proud of the results," said Abrar Hasan, adding that NFL aims to double the acreage next year and will continue to expand further.

Babar, Rizwan good players not whole team: Hafeez

Babar is a strong batter who knows how to bat in different conditions

RAWALPINDI: Former Pakistan all-rounder and team director Mohammad Hafeez opined that Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan are great players, however, they do not represent the whole team and cannot take whole responsibility of the team upon their shoulders.

Hafeez while talking to a private TV channel, has shed his views regarding the recent selection process, reliance on the Babar-Rizwan duo, issue of NOCs to players for playing leagues, and his analysis of Green Shirts' strength ahead of the T20 World Cup.

He said, "Mohammad Amir, Imad Wasim, and Usman Khan are talented players but there is a systematic process to be followed for selection. These players should have played domestic cricket and upon performance must have been picked for the Pakistan cricket team. Such parachute selection does not send a good message to the domestic players."

Hafeez was criticised for not being a high-level qualified coach during his tenure as a director of the Pakistan men's cricket team.

Responding to the criticism regarding his coaching skills, he said "The process of removing me as director of cricket



team was unfortunate. I am a qualified level-one coach. Coaching courses are an education but not complete eligibility to become a coach. We cannot ignore the experience of international cricket."

Recently former chairman PCB Najam Sethi claimed local coaches make decisions on personal relations. "I'm really disappointed with the statement of the former PCB chairman because such a statement has disappointed many former players. Pakistan has got legends of cricket which is admired by the rest of

the world." He added, "This is a slavish mindset of PCB that only a foreign coach should be appointed. I have never seen any local coach promoting nepotism or personal recommendations."

The T20 opening duo of Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan was broken in the tenure of Hafeez as team director.

"Babar and Rizwan are great players but do not represent the whole Pakistan team. Babar and Rizwan cannot take the whole responsibility of the team upon

their shoulders. I felt Saim Ayub as an opener was a solution for us. Why current team management has retained Saim as an opener if I was wrong?"

Elaborating his opinions regarding the batting order, "Babar has been batting at number three for last seven to eight years. There will be nothing new for Babar to bat at number three in T20. Rizwan and Saim as openers followed by Babar and Fakhar at three will make a strong top order for Pakistan."

Hafeez further said "Babar is a strong batter who knows how to bat in different conditions. Saim must play as an opener in T20 World Cup 2024 despite early failures."

Hafeez sheds light on the importance of the strike rate, "Cricket has changed now. You can compromise on consistency but performance must be impactful. Other cricket teams don't rely on single players. You can see their different players giving performance in different matches."

Hafeez disagreed the comparison made between Babar and Virat Kohli. "There is simply no comparison between these players. Kohli has given great services and performances for India whereas Babar is doing well." Agencies

National Women's ODI Tournament: Success of Quetta, Karachi and Lahore

An excellent all-round performance by Ameema Sohail

Staff Reporter

FAISALABAD: In the National Women's One Day Tournament, Quetta, Karachi and Lahore won the matches played on Friday.

Quetta defeated Multan by one wicket at Iqbal Stadium.

Multan team was bowled out for 110 runs. Sadaf Shams scored 35 runs. Saima Malik, Ayesha Amjad and Kinza Wahab took two wickets each.

Quetta completed the required score for the loss of 9 wickets. Arija Haseeb scored 33 runs without getting out. Tasmia Rabab, Nurul Ayman and Asma Sharif took two wickets each.

Karachi won against Peshawar by a huge margin of 150 runs at the Jawad Club Ground.

Batting first, Karachi scored 194 runs for 9 wickets in the allotted 50 overs. Captain Umima Sohail remained the top scorer with 47 runs. Momina State took two wickets.

In response, the Peshawar team was bowled out by scoring only 44 runs. The highest number of runs was 17 extras.



Aleena Shah scored 11 runs. Ameema Sohail also showed good performance in bowling and got 4 wickets by giving only 2 runs.

He was adjudged player of the match

for this excellent all-round performance. Lahore beat Rawalpindi by 9 wickets at Bohranwali ground.

The Rawalpindi team was bowled out for 154 runs. Tania Saeed was the top

scorer with 36 runs. Zuneesh Sattar took 3 wickets while Ayesha Bilal and Quratul Ain took two wickets each.

Lahore achieved the target at the loss of just one wicket. Iram Javed scored 84 runs and Samia Afsar scored 62 runs and both were not out. Both added 149 runs in the second wicket partnership.

Short Score:

Multan 110 runs (40 overs) Sadaf Shams 35. Kanza Wahab 17 / 2 wickets. Quetta 114 runs 9 players out (30.5 overs). Ariya Haseeb 33 not out. Rahmat Noorin 17 / 2 wickets.

Result. Quetta won by one wicket.

Karachi 194 runs 9 players out. (50 Overs) Umima Sohail 47. Momina State 38/2 wickets.

Peshawar 44 runs (25 overs). Extra runs 17. Ameema Sohail 2 / 4 wickets.

Result. Karachi won by 150 runs. Rawalpindi 154 runs. (48.5 overs) Tania Saeed 36. Quratul Ain 24 / 2 wickets.

Lahore 155 runs one wicket (25 overs) Iram Javed 84 not out. Samia Afsar 62 not out.

Result. Lahore won by 9 wickets.

Azhar Mahmood should be sacked as head coach: Sallu

'The all-rounder's last tenure with Pak team in 2016 was also a failure and he has no talent for coaching'

KARACHI: The Pakistan Cricket Board has made a blunder in appointing a mediocre player like Azhar Mahmood as the head coach of the national team and his inability to motivate the team is evident from the recent defeats at the hands of a depleted New Zealand team which is playing without its top players.

This was stated by former Chief Selector and Test cricketer Salahuddin Ahmed Sallu said on Friday.

"I want to know what are Azhar's credentials to merit such a key post, and that too ahead of the all-important T20 World Cup?" asked Sallu.

"Azhar's last tenure with the Pakistan team in 2016 was also a failure and he should be removed sooner than later and be replaced by competent people like Rashid Latif as head coach."

Sallu said it was not just an embarrassment to lose to a very inexperienced

New Zealand side "on our home grounds but is also a morale-shattering experience for our players who have tough assignment ahead."

"This New Zealand side is playing without stalwarts such as Kane Williamson, Tim Southee, Trent Boult, Matt Henry, Devon Conway, Tom Latham, Daryl Mitchell, Glenn Phillips, Rachin Ravindra, Mitchell Santner and a few others and still they have beaten us,"

lamented Sallu.

"The PCB should immediately take steps to redress the problems afflicting the team and must replace Azhar Mahmood as head coach because he is just not the right man for this vital job and does not have the talent for coaching."

Sallu pointed out that the Pakistan Super League franchise Islamabad United also sacked Azhar Mahmood last year and replaced him with Mike Hesson. Agencies

Patrick finally reveals what happened on night of Super bowl victory

DUBAI: Patrick Mahomes, the star quarterback of the two-time Super Bowl winner team, the Kansas City Chiefs, has finally addressed the Lombardy Trophy controversy, Marca reported.

In a recent interview with Complex, Mahomes set the record straight, explaining what exactly happened on the night of the Super Bowl celebrations.

He said: "I'm not that dumb just to hand the trophy in the middle of a crowd. That was a replica trophy."

Mahomes had been accused of being so drunk during the celebratory parade that he gave away the iconic Vince Lombardi Trophy to a random stranger in the crowd.

Furthermore, during the interview, he also promised his fans another title win next season.

Committees formed for organization of First CM Punjab Pink Games

Tahir Amin Malik

LAHORE: Sports Board Punjab (SBP), on the directions of Director General Sports Punjab Pervez Iqbal, has constituted nine administrative committees for the smooth organization of forthcoming First Chief Minister Punjab Pink Games scheduled to be played from May 2 to 5 at different venues of provincial capital.

Director General Sports Punjab Pervez Iqbal will be convener of Event Organising Committee while Sports Competition Conducting Committee will work under the supervision of Director Sports Yasmeen Akhtar.

Director Admin M Kaleem will be convener of four committees which include, Accommodation Committee, Tabulation and Evaluation Committee, Electronic Print and Social Media Committee, and Artwork and Detailed Branding Committee.

Deputy Director Atta ur Rehman will be convener of Documents Scrutiny Committee. Similarly, Security Committee and General Grievance Committees have also been constituted for organizing the mega Pink Games in a befitting manner.

Director General Sports Punjab Pervez Iqbal, in a statement on Friday said the preparations of First Chief Minister Punjab Pink Games are in full swing and Sports Board Punjab will provide top standard facilities to all the participating teams during the mega event. "The female athletes from all nine divisions and different universities of the province will showcase their sports skills during the 4-day sports extravaganza."

Zone-VI Blues moved into Final of the Khansortium Karachi Region Senior Inter District Cricket Tournery

KARACHI: On the occasion of the first Semi Final of Khan-



sortium Karachi Region Senior Inter District Cricket Tournament A Group Photograph of Zone-VI Blues and IV Whites with the Chief Guest Khalid Nafees Chairman Tournament Committee RCAF, Touseef Siddiqui, Azam Khan, Muhammad Ahmed Naqvi, Mansoor and Muhammad Bilal also present on the occasion.

Staff Reporter

KARACHI: Zone-VI Blues moved into Final after beating Zone-IV Whites by 59 runs in the First Semi Final of Khansortium Karachi Region Senior Inter District Cricket Tournament at KCCA Stadium. Before the start of the Match the two teams was introduced to the Chief Guest Khalid Nafees, Chairman Tournament Committee RCAF, Touseef Siddiqui, Azam Khan, Muhammad Ahmed Naqvi Mansoor and Muhammad Bilal also present.

Scores in Brief:

Zone-VI Blues beat Zone-IV Whites by 59 runs. Zone-VI Blues 243/7 in allotted 45 overs. Muhammad Taha 63 4x4 1x6, Hurair Shahid 50 4x4, Asad ul Haq 44, Osama Bouch 34. Muhammad Afzal 2/31, Muhammad Asif 2/39.

Zone-IV Whites 184 all out in 39.2 overs. Muhammad Afzal 55 5x4 3x6, Abdullah Raffay 38, Abdullah Fazal 34. Saifullah (rob) 4/32, Muhammad Taha 2/36, Nadir Shah 2/44.

NTDC Super 8 Inter-Dept Tape Ball Cricket Tournament ends

Staff Reporter

LAHORE: The National Transmission & Despatch Company Limited (NTDC) Super 8 Inter-Departmental Tape Ball Cricket Tournament concluded, today, at WAPDA Sports Complex, Lahore. The tournament was started on 23rd of April 2024. 20 teams from different NTDC formations participated in the tournament. It was organized by Chief Engineer TSG (North) NTDC, NKLP Lahore.

In a thrilling final, the team of GM (HR) Office defeated the team of GM (TSG) by 7 wickets. Batting first, GM (TSG) team scored 59 runs for loss of 6 wickets in allotted five overs. In response, GM (HR) team successfully achieved the target in 3.2 overs, losing just 01 wicket.

Engr. Munawar Hussain, General Manager (Human Resource) NTDC graced the occasion as chief guest and presented winner's trophy to the winning team and medals to the runner ups. Expressing his views, General Manager (HR) NTDC appreciated the efforts of the players and office of Chief Engineer TSG (North) NTDC for organizing the tournament.

General Manager TSG Engr. Ashar Ali, Chief Engineer TSG (North) Engr. Shahid Nazir, Secretary WAPDA Sports Board Malik Umair Aslam, female officers, other senior NTDC officers and a large number of NTDC employees were present to watch the final match.

General Manager TSG Engr. Ashar Ali, Chief Engineer TSG (North) Engr. Shahid Nazir, Secretary WAPDA Sports Board Malik Umair Aslam, female officers, other senior NTDC officers and a large number of NTDC employees were present to watch the final match.

Red Bull design guru Newey to quit



PARIS: Adrian Newey, widely regarded as the greatest Formula 1 designer and a chief architect of Red Bull's title dominance, is set to leave the world champions in the aftermath of the Christian Horner controversy, media reports claimed Thursday.

Newey, 65, has been with Red Bull since 2005 and has played a key role in all of the team's 13 world titles — seven drivers and six constructors — since 2010.

However, he is believed to have become unsettled at the team ever since team principal Horner was accused of sexual harassment and inappropriate behaviour by a female employee.

Horner was cleared of wrongdoing by an internal investigation carried out by Red Bull's parent company before the employee was then suspended. She is appealing that decision.

After Germany's Auto Motor und Sport first reported Newey's position on Thursday, the BBC claimed they had "independently verified (the information) with high-level sources close to Red Bull and Newey". AFP

Swiatek, Gauff through in Madrid Open as Osaka falls

World number one beat Wang Xiyu 6-1, 6-4 to reach the third round

MADRID: World number one Iga Swiatek beat Wang Xiyu 6-1, 6-4 to reach the third round of the Madrid Open on Thursday as she bids to win the competition for the first time.

Earlier Coco Gauff sailed through to the third round with a 6-0, 6-0 thumping of Arantxa Rus, while Liudmila Samsonova ousted Naomi Osaka in three sets.

Runner-up last year, Swiatek bounced back from her semi-final defeat by Elena Rybakina in Stuttgart with a largely comfortable straight sets victory.

The Pole, a four-time Grand



Slam winner and an expert on clay, wobbled in the second set as Wang won three games in a row but recovered to triumph in one hour 16 minutes.

"I love this place — I got to know the city a little better last year," Swiatek said. "So this time I feel more comfortable around."

Madrid is the only major European clay tournament that three-time French Open champion Swiatek has yet to win.

Swiatek coasted through the first set, breaking twice for a 4-0 lead. She wrapped up it up with another break, leaving

Wang no chance of reaching her red-hot backhand return.

The Doha and Indian Wells winner took a 4-1 lead in the second set but Wang fought her way back in for 4-4, before the top seed steeled herself to hold.

Wang then handed the second set on a plate to Swiatek with two double faults, and the Pole will face 27th seed Sorana Cirstea in the third round.

Earlier Gauff, 20, earned the first 'double bagel' victory of her career in a WTA Tour main draw event in only 51 minutes against her 33-year-old Dutch opponent Rus. AFP

Group photo

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Defence and Defence Production, Khawaja Muhammad Asif in a group photo with Defence Ministers of member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in Kazakhstan on Friday.



Photo: PID

Completion of ML-1 Railway project govt's priority: Ahsan

Planning Minister accentuated the imperative of preparing for the second phase of CPEC

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning Professor Ahsan Iqbal has underscored the substantial success witnessed by Pakistan between 2013 and 2018, marked by an influx of approximately twenty-five billion dollars of Chinese investment within the framework of CPEC.

The Minister chaired the preparatory meeting for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor in Islamabad today preceding the 13th Joint Cooperation Committee meeting and an imminent high-level delegation visit to China.

This investment traversed critical sectors such as energy, infrastructure, Gwadar, and telecommunications, significantly augmenting Pakistan's developmental landscape across various sectors. Despite encountering setbacks during the previous political administration, concerted efforts have been undertaken to restore China's confidence, yielding significant progress under the present government's stewardship over the past 16 months.

In his assessment of ongoing projects, the Planning Minister accentuated the imperative of preparing for



the second phase of CPEC. Making reference to the recent visit of China's Deputy Prime Minister commemorating the 10th anniversary of CPEC, Ahsan Iqbal outlined the incorporation of five corridors for future collaboration, with a focal emphasis on economic corridors geared towards job creation, innovation, green energy, and inclusive regional development.

The meeting deliberated on pragmatic strategies within each corridor, aligning them with national development objectives and priorities. Preparatory measures for an anticipated high-profile visit to Pakistan encompassed potential discussions at the Joint Cooperation Committee to finalize outcomes prior to the Prime Minister's forth-

coming visit to China. The primary objective remains to optimize mutual benefits for both nations by harmonizing projects with a broader developmental vision.

Projects under scrutiny included ML-1, the Thakot-Raikot Section of KKH, Gwadar Airport, Orange Line, and the KCR Project, among other novel initiatives. Recommendations for new projects and initiatives were encouraged for submission to the Joint Working Group or JCC for consideration.

The Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal underscored the importance of cultivating a proficient team to ensure readiness for negotiations in China. Each project within the portfolio will be evaluated based on

its contribution to the overarching vision and its potential for yielding mutually advantageous outcomes.

The meeting convened key stakeholders, including the Special Assistant to the Prime Minister for Foreign Affairs, representatives from the Pakistan Embassy in China, Secretaries, and Senior Officials from various line ministries.

As communicated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the recent Joint Working Group meeting held on January 21, 2024, reaffirmed the commitment to international cooperation and coordination. Co-chaired by the Chinese Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs and the former Foreign Secretary of Pakistan, both countries concurred on third-party cooperation earlier this year. Minister Ahsan Iqbal was apprised by the Foreign Office that modalities for third-party cooperation would be finalized during the Prime Minister's upcoming visit to China.

While reviewing the progress of key CPEC projects, Minister Ahsan Iqbal discussed the imperative of upgrading the Karakoram Highway to mitigate the risk of submergence following the construction of the Bhasa

dam.

The Secretary Railways briefed the Minister on the upgrading of the 1727-kilometer-long ML-1 Railway line from Karachi to Peshawar. This multi-billion-dollar railway line constitutes a historic milestone in Pakistan's infrastructure development. Joint financing arrangements will be pursued with Chinese authorities during the Prime Minister's visit to China.

Minister Ahsan Iqbal reiterated that the timely completion of the ML-1 Railway Line remains the government's paramount priority. Highlighting the unique advantages of this mega railway line, he emphasized its role in supporting industries by reducing the cost of doing business, besides curtailing the oil import bill and transportation costs. Furthermore, it is poised to diversify supply chains for businesses operating along the route.

The preparatory meeting concluded with the Minister's directive to all pertinent ministries and their departments to formulate thoroughly researched, output-based progress reports and proposals in anticipation of the Prime Minister's visit to China.

Pakistan to deepen collaboration with SCO: Defence Minister

Khawaja Asif expresses deep concern over the escalating situation in Gaza

Spokesman Report

ASTANA: Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif has reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to further deepen and expand collaboration with Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.

He was addressing annual meeting of Defence Ministers of member states of the Organisation in Astana, Kazakhstan on Friday.

On the occasion, the Defence Minister expressed deep concern over the escalating situation in Gaza.

He said Pakistan has consistently advocated for a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the Palestin-

ian question as per the international law and relevant United Nations resolutions.

On the sidelines of the meeting, the Defence Minister held meetings with his counterparts from friendly countries of the SCO to discuss bilateral defence cooperation.

The meeting reviewed the regional security issues, defence cooperation initiatives.

Various areas of mutual interest including counter terrorism, Afghanistan situation and review of national security priorities, extremist threats, border management and maritime security were also deliberated upon.

Govt to collaborate with private sector: Finance Minister

Muhammad Aurangzeb chairs meeting of steering committee on FBR's digitalization



Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb has reaffirmed the government's commitment to collaborate with the private sector and all relevant stakeholders in propelling Pakistan towards a modernized taxation framework.

The Minister chaired the meeting of the Steering Committee on the Digitalization of the Federal Board of Revenue in Islamabad today.

He underscored that digitalization of FBR is not only crucial for improving tax collection and administration, but also for promoting sustained economic growth.

During the meeting, the committee approved the top proposal from McKinsey and Company, a global-renowned consulting firm, for the digitalization project. Director DFS Karandaaz Sharjeel Murtaza briefed the committee on the procurement process, which involved comprehensive technical evaluation by an approved committee comprising senior officials from FBR and technical experts from Karandaaz Pakistan.

McKinsey and Company emerged as the top bidder after thorough evaluation of technical and financial aspects. The negotiated full and final proposal from McKinsey

and Company was presented to the committee, leading to the approval for contracting and onboarding McKinsey and Company and commencing the project.

The Finance Minister commended the Procurement Committee for ensuring the selection of high-quality consulting services for this important national project, and stressed upon the need for a result-oriented approach, leveraging existing knowledge on digitalization, and prioritizing early successes.

The committee reviewed the progress made so far in the digitalization of FBR's operations and explored the avenues to further enhance efficiency and transparency of tax administration across the country.

The meeting concluded with the agreement on the next steps for commencement of the process of digitalization of FBR's operations through collaboration between FBR and the private sector for a digitally empowered tax ecosystem in the country.

The meeting was attended by key stakeholders including Chairman FBR, CEO Karandaaz Waqas ul Hasan, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Country Lead Syed Ali Mahmood, and representatives from FBR.

Work started to establish forensic laboratory, prison in ICT: Naqvi

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has said that work has been started for the establishment of forensic laboratory and a prison in the federal capital.

Talking to the media persons in Islamabad on Friday during his visit to Public Facilitation Center, he expressed the commitment to bring down crime rate in the capital territory. He said police stations of the capital will be transformed into three to four months. He said a criteria will be put in place for the registration of FIRs. He said the Safe City project will be further upgraded.

The Interior Minister said a proposal is being sent to the federal government for recruitment of two thousand police personnel in Islamabad. He said this strength is also required to further enhance the security of Chinese nationals.

UNODC, Pakistan agree to combat smuggling of migrants

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) are hosting a regional conference in collaboration with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the European Union (EU) to discuss the challenges of smuggling migrants on 26-27 April at the Marriott Hotel Islamabad.

Migrant smuggling is a crime with high profits and a low risk of punishment for the criminals involved. Smugglers sell illegal and dangerous services to desperate people and are often part of a well-organized, multinational network. International cooperation is vital to combat this crime.

"This regional cooperation workshop constitutes a veritable part of our desire to benefit from the perspectives, expertise, as well as cooperation of our regional and international partners. The international community needs a 'comprehensive approach' that helps safe, orderly and regular migration on the one hand, while addressing the negative impacts of irregular migration on the other" said Mr. Syrus Sajjad Qazi, the Foreign Secretary.

"Recent incidents, including the tragic event where 350 Pakistanis were on board a packed trawler that capsized off southern Greece on 14 June 2023, are a stark reminder of the urgent need for increased collaboration among nations to effectively address this complex crime," said Jeremy Milsom, UNODC Representative in Pakistan.

The conference, held as part of the PROTECT: Improving Migration



Management and Migrant Protection in Selected Silk Route Countries project, funded by the European Union, and implemented in the framework of the Global Action against Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants (GLO.ACT), will explore mechanisms to improve information-sharing between countries and emphasize victim-centered approaches to combat migrant smuggling.

The Deputy Head of the EU Delegation to Pakistan, Mr. Philipp Gross, highlighted: "The importance of regional cooperation cannot be overstated in addressing the multifaceted challenges posed by human trafficking and smuggling of migrants. Routes originating in Pakistan, traversing through Iran and Türkiye, and ultimately reaching the European Union, serve as critical pathways for irregular migration. Formal and informal cooperation mech-

anisms along these routes are essential to disrupt criminal networks, dismantle smuggling rings and protect vulnerable migrants.

The European Union launched the Global Alliance to Counter Migrant Smuggling in November 2023, to strengthen international cooperation to prevent and respond to migrant smuggling, and to provide alternatives to irregular migration. Today's regional conference is a primary example of key countries strengthening cooperation along a whole-of-route approach to counter this crime. In parallel, consistently addressing the root causes of irregular migration, such as poverty and conflict, remains imperative to deter people from embarking on perilous journeys. The EU remains committed to support Pakistan and regional partners towards these shared objectives."