



Ahsan vows to revive Pakistan's sports

Federal Minister for Planning and Inter Provincial Coordination (IPC), Ahsan Iqbal, inaugurated the National Conference on Revival of Sports, and emphasized the government's commitment in improving Pakistan's sports landscape. Declaring 2025 as the year of sports revival in Pakistan, the minister expressed his determination to take Pakistan's sports to new heights. (Details on Page 7)



'Unending sufferings of Kashmiri families with over 22,000 women widowed, 107,000 children orphaned'

Pakistan on Friday said that with over 22,000 women widowed and 107,000 children orphaned, the sufferings of the families in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) remained unending due to the unabated occupation and oppression of the Indian forces. (Details on Page 8)

Simultaneously published from Islamabad, Lahore and Multan

Meeting

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting on the matters related to facilitation of Industrial sector on Friday.



Photo: PID

Govt's business-friendly policies coming to fruition: PM

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday said that the business-friendly policies pursued by the incumbent government were coming to the fruition. The prime minister, talking to a delegation of international beverages companies

which called on him here, said that the government was extending its maximum support to the foreign investors and business community to make them create employment opportunities, boost exports and contribute to the national economic development. The delegation members appreciated the prime minister

for his government's pro-business policies. They told the prime minister that 25 plants of international beverages firms were operating in Pakistan and had employed around 130,000 workers. Apprising the prime minister of their largest recycling system, the delegation told the prime minister that the beverage

firms were contributing to the national exchequer through huge amount of taxes. Prime Minister Shehbaz urged the companies to play their productive role under their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). He also instructed the relevant authorities to hold consultations on the companies' proposals and resolve their issues

at the earliest. The delegation was led by Vice President of Coca Cola for Pakistan and Afghanistan Volkan Onguc and CEO of Pepsi Co Pakistan and Afghanistan Muhammad Khosa. Federal ministers Jam Kamal Khan, Rana Tanveer Hussain, Abdul Aleem Khan and relevant senior officers attended the meeting.

FBR forms joint working group for blocking non-filers sims

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has formed an 18-member Joint Working Group to address the issue of closing non-filers' accounts.

The Joint Working Group, established to close non-filers' accounts, includes representatives from FBR, Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), and mobile phone companies including Jazz, Ufone, and Telenor.

According to the FBR, the Working Group will examine the matter of blocking non-filers' accounts and ensure the implementation of the Income Tax General Order.

The group aims to remove obstacles in closing non-filers' accounts.

Meanwhile, the Islamabad High Court has sought a response from the government by May 22 on the government's petition against blocking the mobile phone SIMs of non-filers.

Justice Muneeb to be acting chief justice as Faiz Isa leaves country

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan, Justice Qazi Faez Isa, will be traveling abroad from May 18th to May 25th. In his absence, Justice Muneeb Akhtar will serve as the Acting Chief Justice.

Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa will be out of the country from May 18th to May 25th, and Senior Judge Justice Mansoor Ali Shah is already on an international trip.

During the Chief Justice's absence, Justice Muneeb Akhtar will take the oath as the Acting Chief Justice of Pakistan.

IMF demands Pakistan cut down expenses

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The International Monetary Fund has demanded Pakistan cut down expenses as the two sides hold talks for a new bailout package to have economic stability in the country, sources said.

The demand came as Pakistan's mounting debt burden and high-interest payments have put a significant strain on the country's economy.

Data reveals that interest payments on public debt have surpassed the federal government's net revenues, putting the sustainability of Pakistan's economy in jeopardy. In the first nine months of the current fiscal year, the country paid a staggering Rs5,518 billion in interest payments while the net revenues during the July-March period amounted to Rs5,313 billion.

Gandapur says KP will take over WAPDA offices if federal govt does not cooperate

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur asked the government to pay Rs50 billion of its due funds in the next two months. He also threatened to take over WAPDA offices in the provinces if the federal government did not budge.

Making a speech in the KP assembly on Friday, Gandapur said he was giving the federal government 15 days to sit down for talks with him.

In what was seemingly a hint at protests, Gandapur said that the KP government cannot simply keep making requests and would have to take matters in his own hands at some point.

He also referred to the recent protests in Azad Kashmir as having exposed the government. He said that the government would not be able to handle things if protests broke out in KP.

Threatening to take over WAPDA offices if the federal government does not budge, he said that electricity theft cannot take place without connivance of WAPDA officials.

Gandapur also said that the center had shared Rs300 billion less than what it owed the province. He said that the government is bound to pay KP Rs92 billion in surplus revenue as part of IMF conditions.

KP Govt makes botch attempt to maintain credibility by attributing false statement to PM: Tarar

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar on Friday said the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government was making a botch attempt to maintain its credibility by attributing a false statement to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

The minister, in a statement, said that the KPK Food Minister had attributed a false statement to the prime minister which was based on assumptions and contrary to the facts. He said the KP govt wanted to confront with the Federal Government by consistently churning out lies especially about electricity, wheat and other crops.



He regretted that the KP chief minister had been persistently threatening "to attack Islamabad and seize the Peshawar Electricity Supply Company".

He had even given a 15-day deadline to the Federal Government in that regard, the minister added.

Tarar said their "nefarious designs" would not succeed as the Federal Government was fully capable to protect state institutions and public property.

SC summons Vawda, Kamal in anti-judiciary tirade case

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court bench has summoned Senator Faisal Vawda and MQM-P MNA Mustafa Kamal as a three-member apex court bench heard a suo motu case taken on the independent lawmaker's anti-judiciary rhetoric.

On Thursday, the apex court took suo motu notice of Vawda's press conference where he questioned the Islamabad High Court (IHC) judges' claim that intelligence agencies had interfered in the judicial affairs.

The next day, MNA Kamal also highlighted the judiciary's alleged shortcomings and called for establishing ethical standards for the judges.

Kamal claimed the judiciary had set "ethical standards" for

politicians and the dual citizenship of judges was a "big question mark" and the judiciary should be made answerable on this issue.

At the hearing, CJP Isa asked the additional attorney general whether he had heard the press conference. The chief justice remarked judiciary was a public institution, not his personal, and added that he kept calm despite severe criticism against him.

The "character assassination" of the courts should not happen, CJP Isa said and added that the institution does not want to "clash" with anyone.

He remarked that the judiciary would not accept criticism against the institution as he mentioned the two press conferences addressed by Vawda and Kamal.

Japan important development partner of Pakistan: Tarar



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar said on Friday that Japan was an important development partner of Pakistan and Tokyo's support in difficult times has always been valuable for the people of Pakistan. During a meeting with Japanese Ambassador to Pakistan Wada Mitsuhiro here, he said Pakistan and Japan enjoyed a long-standing relationship of friendship and cooperation. In the meeting, bilateral diplomatic relations, cooperation in media sectors, fake news, economic initiatives of the government, and other important issues of mutual interest were discussed.

Attaullah Tarar said after

the current government assumed power, the economic development of Pakistan accelerated and international financial journals were also predicting further improvement in the economic progress of the country. In the meeting, issues regarding the prevention of fake news and the promotion of relations between the two countries in the fields of media were also discussed. "The whole world is facing a big challenge of fake news and there is a need to work together to overcome these challenges". The ambassador said Japan was seeking stronger ties with Pakistan. He opined that the government's measures to facilitate the business community will make Pakistan a more attractive destination for Japanese investors.

Mining a top priority under CPEC Phase-2: Ahsan Iqbal

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Professor Ahsan Iqbal said Friday that mining sector was the priority area of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Phase-2.

During a meeting with a MRDL Saindak, a Chinese mining company working in Chaghi Balochistan, he commended the company's decades long efforts to promote mining sector in the resource rich area of Balochistan.

In response to the company's request to seek inclusion of their latest project in CPEC, the



mining Ministry.

It was discussed during the meeting that if their energy needs are met by establishing a national power grid, the operational cost of all mining projects in the province will be reduced.

It is pertinent to mention here that the Saindak Copper-Gold Project in Balochistan is operated by MCCT Resources Development Company Pvt Ltd (MRDL).

MCCT has submitted a proposal of establishing a mineral industrial park in Pakistan which consists of copper/lead/zinc refining and deep processing, giving more value addition to the mineral products.

South Punjab needs province first: Yousuf Raza Gillani

Kiran Asim/Syed Nadeem Kazmi

MULTAN: Former Prime Minister & Chairman Senate Syed Yousuf Raza Gillani while talking to journalists at Circuit House said that Pakistan People's Party is a mature party. I was the first prime minister who talked about creating a province

The bill of the province was passed with a two-third majority. All the parties talked about Saraiki province, only the opposition did not support us, otherwise it would have become a province.

Talking about 58 2B, Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani said that many politicians were present on the occasion of Asma Jahangir's death anniversary. On this occasion, I recalled what Jahangir sahiba had told me, you should not have abolished 58 2 B. Now don't be happy to become the prime minister because this 58 2 B will be used by the judiciary.

And her words later proved to be



true that it was applied to me and after me to Nawaz Sharif. We have implemented 85% of the Charter of Democracy. I am definitely a victim but I have no regrets. Talking about the secretariat, he said that South

Punjab Secretariat is a part of our manifesto, we need not only a secretariat, but a province first, a secretariat will be formed later, we need a province and for this we have done a lot of work. We need a separate prov-

ince from Rajanpur to Attock

Talking about the ministries, Chairman Senate said that it will be decided by Chairman People's Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari because our workers are not feeling comfortable. It was their desire to support their party on the economic situation and we will not take a back step in this matter

In response to a question, Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani said that the current scenario is something else and he is the only political figure in South Punjab who has given his services to the three constitutional positions in a great way. In the current scenario, if all institutions play their roles, there will be no conflict.

In every case, negotiation is necessary and should be. The opposition is giving its good point of view and the government is also playing its role. Regarding the projects of South Punjab, he said that it is my priority to immediately complete the projects which were stalled and not completed during my time, in which many of our projects have already been completed.

All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference chief visits Muzaffarabad



Abdul Majeed Tahir

MUZAFFARABAD: President of All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference and former Prime Minister Sardar Attique Ahmad Khan visited Muzaffarabad. Central Chief Organizer Raja Saqib Majeed and members of Muslim Conference Central Majlis Amila Abdul Jabbar Abbasi, Sardar Munir Abbasi, Raja Naheed, Mazhar. Abbasi, Seemab Abbasi, Shiraz Abbasi, Faheem Abbasi, Mubasher Abbasi and other Muslim Conference workers welcomed him. Workers Muslim Conference on paying Umrah and attending the meeting of the Supreme Council of the Rabita Alam-e-Islami Conference taking a lively stand on the Kashmir issue. Earlier, Central Chief Organizer Saqib Majeed expressed his great love for Pakistan by hoisting the flag of Pakistan at the Kohala entry point. He congratulated the entire team for unfurling the flag of Pakistan in Kohala and said that the Pakistani flag is a symbol of our honor and dignity. There can be no compromise on its sanctity. Pakistan is the destination of the Kashmiris. The movement to join Pakistan is, in fact, the movement to complete Pakistan. He said that a strong Pakistan is the guarantor of the freedom of Kashmir. The Muslim Conference will continue to play its role for the freedom movement and the ideology of joining Pakistan. India itself is doing terrorism in Occupied Kashmir. Kashmiri youth are martyred on a daily basis. The people of Azad Kashmir belong to Pakistan. Arms are swords and defensive fences. The people here have played their role by fighting alongside the Pakistan Army in every tension and war. I attended the reception given by Abdul Jabbar Abbasi, member of the Central Council of the Muslim Conference at Dhangali and thanked Jabbar Abbasi and other workers.

DPC 25 police officials promoted in Dera division



Our Correspondent

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: A departmental promotion committee (DPC) meeting was held at Police Club Dera Ismail Khan on Thursday under the supervision of Regional Police Officer Dera Nasir Mahmood Satti in relation to the promotion of police officers of Dera Range.

In which District Police Officer Dera Nasir Mahmood, District Police Officer Tank Abdul Salam Khalid, District Police Officer South Waziristan Upper Malik Habib, District Police Officer South Waziristan Lower Farmanullah and DSP Legal Muhammad Inran Kundi participated as members.

According to the merit list, 74 were presented before the Promotion Committee from Dera, Tank, South Waziristan Upper and South Waziristan Lower.

According to the statement out of which 04 sub-inspectors who met merit were confirmed, 08 assistant sub-inspectors were promoted to sub-inspectors and 13 head constables were promoted to assistant sub-inspectors.

On the same occasion, RPO Dera Nasir Mahmood Satti congratulated the promoted police officers and informed them about the new responsibilities. He said that the department has a lot of expectations from you, so it is necessary for you, to always be loyal and honest to your department with the spirit of public service in your hearts,

Railway employees demand better pay, benefits for their children: PMU

Abdul Majid

FAISALABAD: On this occasion, Sheikh Muhammad Anwar congratulated the CEO on the revenue of the railway reaching 73 billion. The GM said that this revenue will reach 87 billion by the end of the financial year, God willing.

On this occasion, the central president said that the dues should be paid to the retired employees and widows as soon as possible. GPF payments should be made on a contingency basis in all divisions. The children of disabled employees of Railway TLA employees should be made permanent

The TA withheld from 2018 should be paid. Railway employees have played a key role in the rehabilitation of railways by working hard day and night. Rationalization of railway employees should be stopped immediately, if downsizing is to be done, then downsizing of the officers, not the employees. The contract officers and consultants appointed in Pakistan Railways should be relieved and the railway officers should be trusted. The Ministry of Finance should take responsibility for the salaries and pensions of the railways like other federal institutions. should be recruited, the privatization of Pakistan Railways should be stopped immediately, if the demands are not accepted, they will stage a sit-in outside the Parliament House, they will also knock on the door of the Supreme Court for their rights. For 76 years, the rulers occupying this country have always played with the railways. Repeated downsizing, right-sizing, out-sourcing and highly paid consultants have turned the department into a failed laboratory. The salary payment system in Pakistan Railways has been badly affected for the last two years. On the one hand Dues of retired employees and widows are not being paid for two years, while on the other hand, railways are providing free and discounted travel facilities to various organizations, which is tantamount to robbing the rights of railway employees. He has said that according to the Railway Charter, the railway is not a commercial but a welfare institution, the welfare institutions are not run on the basis of profit and loss but for the welfare of the people, whose performance is possible only on the financial support of the government, just like the motor. Institutions like road, metro, orange train, government educational institutions and hospitals provide facilities to the people with the financial support of the government, similarly, railways are also the biggest channel of providing cheap travel facilities to the people in Pakistan. He said that in spite of all the efforts of the Prime Union and due to the floods two years ago, the bailout package was not given to the railways.

Meeting

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Faisal Karim Kundi talking with PPP MNA Asma Arbab Alamgir, Vice President PPP Gulf and Middle East Syed Matloob Hussain Shah during a meeting at Governor House in the provincial capital.



Photo: PID

Federal govt should assist in the rehabilitation of damaged infrastructure affected by the deadly earthquake in 2005: PM AJK



Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: Prime Minister Azad Kashmir Chaudhry Anwar ul Haq has said that the government has sought help from the federal government vis a vis the completion of remaining work and restoration of damaged infrastructure that was hugely affected by the deadly earthquake that rocked the region in 2005. He said this while commenting on a resolution that was presented in the Legislative Assembly by Minister for Power Development Organization Chaudhry Muhammad Rashid, here today. The AJK premier

said that the government had formally written a letter to the federal government in this regard. Pertinently, the Speaker has constituted a committee under the chairmanship of senior minister Col. Retired Waqar Ahmad Noor. The committee of cabinet ministers including Faisal Mumtaz Rathore, Dewan Ali Khan Chaghtai, Chaudhry Muhammad Rasheed, Khawaja Farooq Ahmed, Sardar Hasan Ibrahim has been entrusted with the task of taking up the matter with the federal government. Speaking on the occasion the minister for education Diwan Ali Khan Chaghtai said that ERA was being abolished

and merged into NDMA. He informed the parliamentarians that the rest of the rehabilitation work would be carried out by the NDMA. Prof. Taqdees Gilani said that the work on damaged hospitals had been delayed and different schools were still functioning without roofs and other basic facilities. She also expressed her profound gratitude to the Prime Minister of Pakistan for the approval of the historic package for Azad Kashmir and his commitment regarding the pending liabilities. Ms. Intiaz Naseem sought early completion of 22 km road project in her home constituency Bagh, which she said was launched by Col. retired

Naseem. Law Minister Mian Abdul Waheed said that the mandate of IRA should be handed over to NDMA. Pir Mazhar Saeed said that the resolution presented by Chaudhry Mohammad Rasheed needs to be implemented without any further delay. Health Minister Nisar Ansar Abadli stressed on formation of another committee, which he said should be assigned the task of taking up the pending liabilities with the federal government. Opposition leader Khawaja Farooq Ahmed said that the federal government should provide the required funds to build the infrastructure affected by the earthquake.

Kashmir Assembly Speaker hosts reception for Ghulam Nabi Fai

Abdul Majeed Tahir

MUZAFFARABAD: Speaker AJK Legislative Assembly, Senior Parliamentarian Chaudhry Latif Akbar hosted a reception in honor of Dr. Ghulam Nabi Fai, Executive Director of Kashmir American Council, Chairman of Tehreek Tehreek-Kashmir. It was announced to send parliamentary delegations to foreign countries, including the United States and Great Britain, to highlight it at the global level. According to the Speaker Legislative Assembly Chaudhry Latif gave a reception at a local hotel in honor of

the well-known Kashmiri intellectual Dr. Ghulam Nabi Fai, who has always been on the move for the freedom movement of Kashmir at the international level, in which former President and Prime Minister Sardar Haji Muhammad Yaqoob Khan Hurriyat Conference leaders. Ghulam Mohammad Safi, Amir of Jamaat-e-Islami, Dr. Mushtaq Ahmed, Raja Faheem Kayani of Tehreek-e-Kashmir Britain, Hurriyat Leader, Journalist Altaf Butt, Dr. Waleed Azad Kashmir Cabinet Ministers, Raja Faisal Mumtaz Rathore, Chaudhry Azhar Sadiq, Ansar Abdali, Malik Zafar Iqbal,

Javed Iqbal Badhanvi, Syed Bazal Ali Naqvi, Ms. Nabila Ayub, Diwan Ali Khan Chaghtai, Chaudhry Qasim Majeed, Chaudhry Amir Yasin, Chaudhry Rashid, Sardar Javed Ayub, and the leader of Muslim League-N, Farhat Ali Mir, Assembly candidate for constituency seven Shaukat Javed, Pasban Hurriyat Chairman Uzair Ahmad Ghazali, International Forum for Justice Vice Chairman Mushtaq Salam, Usman Ali Hashim, Divisional President Jahangir Khan Mughal, Women's Division Vice President Shagufat Noreen Kazmi, Staff Officer Malik Mustafa Asghar, Public

Relations Officer Chaudhry Murad Ali and Senior representatives of electronic print media from the capital Muzaffarabad also addressed the ceremony in which a large number of participants participated.

The international community plays its decisive role in providing the birth right to self-determination and India is not persuaded to engage in purposeful negotiations until then, instead of increasing the tension between the two countries and reducing the challenges to world peace, provocations will continue to arise, Chaudhry said.

ISLAMABAD
30° - 38° Clear

SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr	3:29 am
Zohr	12:04 pm
Asr	4:59 pm
Maghrib	7:03 pm
Isha	8:41 pm

EMERGENCY

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

Women Police Stations

Islamabad	9222596
Rawalpindi	9270601-20

ENQUIRY

Edhi Ambulance	115
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World Telecom Day 2024

Huawei dedicated to building a Fully Connected, Intelligent World: Minister IT Shaza

Spokesman Report

State Minister for IT and Telecom Ms. Shaza Fatima visited Huawei Pakistan to commemorate World Telecom Day in Islamabad. Delegation from Ministry included Chief Coordinator Baber Sheikh, Sania Zaidi Coordinator and From Huawei Management Mr. Zhangzhen-CEO Carrier Network Business Group, Mr. Ray Yushaoning-Vice CEO Public Affair, Mr. Shahzad Rasheed-CEO Cloud, Mr. Saad Talha Saeed-Director Government Affairs and Mr. Ahmed Aziz-Director Public Relations were present.

World Telecom Day is dedicated to raising awareness about the role of telecommunications in the lives of people and in the development of societies worldwide.

At Huawei, our vision and mission is to bring digital to every person, home and organization for a fully connected, intelligent world. Technology is critical in

how we address social, economic, and environmental challenges and how we innovate and invest in the telecommunications sector to improve access to affordable and reliable services for all.

Minister in her address says as we know WTD 2024 celebrates the power of digital innovation in advancing sustainable development and prosperity for all. Telecommunications is the great equalizer, as we bridge the digital divide we see the powerful societal changes brought by the internet and new technologies.

Moreover, she appreciated that Huawei is dedicated to building a Fully Connected, Intelligent World We as Government of Pakistan will continue to support Huawei in building a robust ICT talent ecosystem and accelerating the digitalization progress.

She mentioned Pakistan has immense potential in the ICT space. World Telecom Day serves as a reminder of the importance of communication and connect-

ivity in our increasingly digital world. Technology and telecommunications play a crucial role in bridging the gap between individuals, communities, and nations, facilitating the exchange of information, ideas, and knowledge.

Mr. Zhangzhen mentioned that In the past year, Huawei has also launched the first Smart Village Project in Pakistan and powered the first National Hyper-Scale Financial Cloud, while focusing on sustainability and green solutions. The Government of Pakistan launched the Smart Village Pakistan project to overcome the extreme disparity between the urban and rural development indicators. The first in-country Financial Cloud is contributing to economic growth and employment generation while addressing data security concerns, reducing latency and improving efficiency, and optimizing costs.

Mr. Ray Yushaoning ensured their commitment to continue to contribute to Digital Pakistan



by providing the global best in AI and Cloud services, Digital Infrastructure, Smart City Solutions

and Cybersecurity to accelerate digital economic growth. We, at Huawei, thank you for your trust

in our services and look forward to serving Pakistan to the best of our abilities.

Reduction in energy prices is essential to drive the industry: Atif Ikram



PPA

ISLAMABAD: President of Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry Atif Ikram Sheikh welcomed the reduction in the prices of petroleum products and said that the reduction in energy prices is very necessary to increase exports and drive the industry. For which the prices of electricity and gas should also be reduced. As a result of government policies and the efforts of the Special Facilitation Council (SIFC), the economy is improving and the stock exchange is setting record highs.

Federation President Atif Ikram said that the effects of reduction in petroleum prices should be conveyed to the people, especially in transportation, the reduction in fares should be ensured. Investments from Saudi Arabia and other countries will have more positive effects on the country's economy. Our production cost is the highest in the region, which is a major obstacle in the way of industrialization. Without solving the problems of the business community, the country's economy cannot be put on the path of development.

Atif Ikram said that the industry is affected due to the high price of electricity in Pakistan, electricity is available in regional countries at 6 to 7 cents per unit, in Pakistan Electricity prices have reached 20 cents that is the reason why Pakistani industries cannot compete with regional countries. Interest rates are dangerously high it is very difficult for businesses to operate at such rates.

Exhibition

ISLAMABAD: Visitors take keen interest in a painting during paintings exhibition of different artists Gellry-6 in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

Pakistan-UAE enjoy deep rooted brotherly ties-Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates enjoy unwavering relations based on shared foundations of history, religion and culture which have been strengthening in the best interest of the people of both the countries with the passage of time.

This has been stated by Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry while talking to Deputy Head of the Mission UAE Embassy Mohammad Sultan AlKaitoob, who held a meeting with him at Islamabad Chamber of Commerce Industry.

On this occasion, both sides discussed possibilities of joint



economic cooperation, ways to consolidate bilateral relations and examined available investment opportunities in the industry, trade, tourism and education sectors.

Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari while mentioning the generous relief assistance to flood

case the rich tourism potential of the area, which hopefully will be attended by more than twenty Ambassadors of friendly countries and that it would be a matter of great pride for ICCI if the UAE Ambassador or his representative also join the same.

On his part, DHM, UAE Embassy stressed the importance of the meeting which provided a platform to discuss opportunities for cooperation and partnership between the two brotherly states by emphasizing that the business communities of Pakistan and the UAE have to explore new vistas of cooperation for the benefit of the people of both the sides by increasing trade volumes in the days to come.

AIOU and Rupani Foundation signs MoU



PNP

ISLAMABAD: A ceremony for the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) and Rupani Foundation for the establishment of an Early Childhood Development Excellence Center took place yesterday. The MoU was signed by Raja Umar Younis, Registrar of AIOU, and Jalal-ud-din, Chief Executive Officer of Rupani Foundation. The ceremony was presided over by Acting Vice-Chancellor and Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Professor Dr. Abdul Aziz Sahir.

In his address, Professor Dr. Abdul Aziz Sahir commended the long-standing partnership between Rupani Foundation and AIOU in the field of education. He stated that the MoU for the establishment of the Early Childhood Excellence Center is being signed today, and we will soon see the establishment of this center. He emphasized that the establishment of the center would be akin to a charitable act.

On this occasion, the Chief Executive Officer of Rupani Foundation highlighted in his speech that the establishment of the Early Childhood Excellence Center is a significant need of the region. He expressed hope that the establishment of this center would lead to effective initiatives in child upbringing programs, out-of-school children, and parental guidance.

Professor Dr. Fazal-ur-Rahman, Dean of the Faculty of Education, informed the participants about the BS, postgraduate, and certificate courses offered by the Department of Early Childhood Education. Dr. Muhammad Athar Hussain, Chairman of the Department of Early Childhood Education, outlined the aims and objectives of the Excellence Center. The principal officers of the university also present at the event.

National Conference on STEM Education hosted by Virtual University in collaboration with British Council

PPA

ISLAMABAD: The Virtual University of Pakistan, in collaboration with the British Council, successfully organized a two-day National Conference on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) Education at Islamabad. The conference was part of the British Council STEM Education Project and aimed to promote innovation and excellence in STEM education across Pakistan.

The conference featured presentations of 45 research papers covering a wide range of topics within STEM education, showcasing the latest advancements and research findings in the field. Prof. Dr. Muhammad Mukhtar, Vice-Chancellor of National Skills University was the chief guest of the first day and Mr. Zulfiqar Ali Qazilbash, Ed Tech Advisor to Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, was the special guest. Dr. Muhammad Mukhtar, VC, NSU applauded the efforts of Virtual University in disseminating education in all parts of Pakistan.

Mr. Zulfiqar Ali Qazilbash informed that the Government is working on Virtual School system for out of the school children.

Distinguished guests who attended the conference included Dr. Shahid Baig, ex-Chairperson of Pakistan Science Foundation, as Chief Guest; and Prof. Dr. Mehmood Ul Hasan, former Vice-Chancellor of AIOU, who delivered the keynote address. Rector Prof. Dr. Arshad Saleem shared his insights about the STEM conference and importance of STEM education in modern era. Dr. Arshad commended the Department of Education, Department of ORIC and Dr. Faisal Tehseen Shah for their efforts in organizing the event.

Two competitions were held during the conference, including Best Paper and Best Poster, which provided participants with opportunities to showcase their work and innovations in STEM education. Cash prizes were awarded to the winners of the Best Poster competition, with the first prize being Rs. 20,000, the second prize Rs. 15,000, and the third prize Rs. 10,000.

The conference concluded with the distribution of souvenirs to guests and participants, symbolizing the successful collaboration between Virtual University and the British Council in advancing STEM education initiatives in Pakistan.

Lawyers support the demand to raise minimum age of marriage of girls to 18 years

PNP

RAWALPINDI: In an awareness-raising session organized by PODA in the hall of the District Bar Association Rawalpindi, participants unanimously supported the legal amendment to raise the minimum age of marriage for girls in Punjab to 18 years. The session took place in the Sardar Ishaq Khan Hall of the district bar on Thursday.

PODA is implementing a three-year project titled "Reduce Early Marriages to Enhance Gender Equality" in 41 districts of the Punjab province, funded by the Royal Norwegian Embassy, Islamabad. The project focuses on advocating for legal amendments while lobbying with legislators and government departments such as health, education and population welfare departments, lady health workers,



nikah khawan, nikah registrars, and conducting awareness-raising activities.

Member Provincial Assembly, Nargis Faiz Malik, graced the occasion and assured her full support for the legal demand to raise the minimum age of marriage for girls to 18 years. She

pledged to share the session's outcome with the assembly.

PODA legal advisor, Khawaja Zahid Nasim Advocate, also emphasized the need to enhance and strengthen the roles of nikah khawan and nikah registrars to end child marriages.

Hifza Bukhari, former finance secretary of the Supreme Court Bar Association, said in her keynote address that the current environment is favorable for the government to lead the amendment to protect the rights of young girls by raising the minimum age of marriage to 18 years. This would enable them to pursue education and careers and participate equally in the development and progress of the country as Pakistani citizens. The participants of the session also recommended making CNIC mandatory for marriage and adopting standard practices for online marriage-related registration to reduce the incidence of child marriage in the country. PODA awarded shields of honor to Nargis Faiz Malik and the District Bar Association, Rawalpindi, which were received by a group of young lawyers.

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‘Russia Embraces China: US Watches Closely’

Chinese President Xi welcomed Russian President Vladimir Putin with great fanfare to deepen their “strategic partnership” based on national interests. He expressed his resolve to pursue a “no limits” partnership, unimpressed by US threats communicated by Joe Biden during their summit meeting in California. These threats were later reiterated by Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and US Secretary of State Tony Blinken. They warned China that there would be “significant consequences” if Chinese companies supported Russia’s war against Ukraine. They also demanded that China refrain from deepening its bilateral defense and defense production ties with Russia.

While setting aside the US warning, President Putin marks his first visit to a foreign country since he was sworn in for a six-year term, sending a clear message to the world about his priorities and the depth of his personal relationship with Xi. Putin declared the visit to be of an unprecedentedly high level for the strategic partnership between the two countries undeterred by attempts made by the US and EU to create a wedge between them. This visit was also a signal that they are ready to face the US position, which casts China as its biggest competitor and has labeled the Russia-China bilateral relations as the defining factor in an existential contest between democracies and autocracies.

In pre-visit media briefings, both countries expressed their desire to further boost their record \$240 billion (\$323.7 billion) trade from last year, marking a 26 percent increase from the previous year. This

trade spans various goods, ranging from cars and industrial machinery to smartphones, and includes billions of dollars’ worth of Russian energy exports. Interestingly, following the Ukraine war, relations between the two countries have strengthened, as have Beijing’s geopolitical ambitions.

The upsurge in trade received a significant boost when European suppliers ceased the supply of technologically advanced industrial goods critical to maintaining Russian industries at full capacity due to sanctions. China stepped in to successfully fill the gap with high-quality and cost-effective substitutes, which alleviated many of Russia’s woes. Simultaneously, this shift also compensated for Chinese losses in the US market. This newfound opportunity propelled Chinese exports to Russia to a new level, particularly in key critical technologies. These exports directly or indirectly helped Russia remain strong in industrial and defense sectors despite the depletion of its resources due to the protracted Russia-Ukraine war.

However, China’s defiance did not go unnoticed, and its invitation to the Russian President incurred consequences. US President Joe Biden unveiled steep tariff hikes on Chinese green technologies this week, impacting imports such as electric vehicles, chips, and solar cells. This move added stress to US-China ties and affected Chinese exports to the US, amounting to \$18 billion.

The recent tariff increase is in addition to the levies already imposed on Chinese

EVs, prompting automakers to avoid the US market. The new increase raises the tariff level from 25 percent to 100 percent, thereby impacting the sales and profitability of some Chinese companies. Under US pressure, the EU is expected to adopt a similarly strong posture in its own China tariff review, which is forthcoming. The European Union launched an inquiry into Chinese electric car subsidies last year, fearing a threat to Europe’s auto industry. This could result in a tariff hike from the current 10 percent.

While reacting to the US tariff hike, China warned the US that it would “take resolute measures” to defend its interests, beginning with announcing export controls on two rare metals essential for the manufacture of semiconductors.

This visit is also significant because, out of the many proposed solutions, plans, and suggestions put forward by various countries and geopolitical experts to end the Russian-Ukraine crisis, the most acceptable to Russia was the solution proposed by President Xi Jinping. He presented this proposal during his meeting with German Chancellor Scholz in Beijing on April 16, suggesting that all parties involved in the Ukraine crisis should abide by four principles: not seeking personal gain, not adding fuel to the fire, not further intensifying conflicts, and not undermining the stability of global industrial and supply chains.

While declaring President Xi’s proposal the most reasonable, Putin asserted that Russia has never refused negotiations for

a political settlement of the Ukrainian crisis and is open to dialogue on the issue. However, in the same breath, he criticized the West for attempting to “punish,” isolate, and weaken Russia, and for providing funds and weapons to Ukraine.

The remarkable political maturity demonstrated by Chinese leadership in achieving its political objectives without engaging in a cold war with the US or the West is noteworthy. The outstanding diplomatic maneuvering and positioning of China’s Foreign Minister have successfully navigated through traps, snarls, and obstacles set by the US and its allies. The success of its Belt and Road Initiative, which breached \$1.053 trillion in 2023, spanning 149 countries, showcases China’s diplomatic prowess.

Furthermore, China’s innovation capabilities have surpassed those of the US and Europe in many fields. Its economy stands as the largest trading partner of 120 countries, conducting business with nations regardless of their political affiliations. China’s growing role as an economic enabler extends to a wide range of countries, including those antagonistic to the US-led West, such as Russia, Belarus, Iran, North Korea, and Venezuela.

China has developed top-notch expertise across various sectors and spheres, positioning itself to potentially rival the US as a broker of peace in conflict-ridden regions. This could start with its role in resolving the Russia-Ukraine crisis and the Israel-Palestine conflict.

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



Analysis

Qamar Bashir

UN projects Pakistan’s economy to grow by 2 percent in 2024

Pakistan, which faces significant economic challenges, is expected to have “modest economic growth”, with its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) projected to expand by 2 per cent in 2024, according to a major United Nations report.

Noting that Pakistan had entered into a Stand-by Arrangement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) worth \$3 billion, the mid-year World Economic Situation and Prospects report said that the programme was expected to help stabilize the economy, increase the country’s foreign exchange reserves, and facilitate fiscal adjustment while also protecting crucial social spending.

At the same time, it said that in South Asia tight financial conditions and fiscal and external imbalances will continue to weigh on growth in the near term.

“In addition, geopolitical tensions – including the ongoing war in Ukraine and the conflict in Western Asia – will expose net-oil-importing countries in the region, including India, to the risk of sudden oil price spikes.”

Most countries in South Asia, according to the report, experienced currency depreciation pressures during the second half of 2023. Between July and October, the United States dollar climbed by around 6.5 per cent against a basket of global currencies, reaching its highest level in 11 months, mainly supported by the strong performance of the American economy and high interest rates.

“Thus,” it said, “between July and October, the Sri Lanka rupee depreciated by 3.2 per cent against the U. S. dollar, while the Indian rupee depreciated by 1.2 per cent. After raising policy rates in 2022, most central banks in South Asia paused monetary tightening or started lowering their key policy rates in 2023, with a few exceptions.

In this regard, the report noted that the State Bank of Pakistan has kept its policy rate unchanged at a record high of 22 per cent since June 2023.

In 2023, it said, the number of people facing acute food insecurity increased in Bangladesh and Pakistan and decreased in Sri Lanka. Afghanistan continued to be the country most affected by the food crisis in the region, with around 46 per cent of the population facing acute levels of food insecurity.

Ever-worsening climate shocks are also a challenge, threatening decades of development gains, especially for the world’s Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and small island developing States (SIDS), the report said.

“Droughts intensified considerably during July and August (2023), affecting most of India, Nepal, and Bangladesh, while Pakistan recorded above-average rainfall,” it said.

As far as the global economy is concerned, it is now forecast to grow by 2.7 per cent in 2024 (an increase of 0.3 percentage points from the forecast in January) and 2.8 per cent in 2025 (an increase of 0.1 percentage points).



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

DG ISPR Delivers Remarkable, Elaborate, and Clear Press Briefing - III

Globally, nations face the task of addressing anti-state elements—individuals or groups posing a threat to societal fabric and citizen well-being. This challenge is particularly pronounced in Pakistan, where the imperative to confront and penalize such elements remains urgent. The term “anti-state elements” encompasses a diverse array of actors, spanning from violent extremists and insurgents to foreign agents and subversive entities. Often, these individuals or groups espouse ideologies contrary to state values, seeking to sow discord, incite violence, or undermine governmental authority. Their actions not only jeopardize the lives and livelihoods of innocent civilians but also pose a direct menace to national security and stability. Indeed, the nation fervently demands the strict punishment of those involved in the events of May 9th. DG ISPR, stated that the Pakistan Army, along with its subsidiaries, contributed a total of 360 billion rupees in taxes. He highlighted the active role of the armed forces in supporting government initiatives aimed at bolstering the country’s economy. Major General Sharif emphasized that the army, in collaboration with other institutions, is actively participating in SIFC, resulting in successful crackdowns on smuggling, electricity theft, and drug trafficking, which have yielded positive outcomes for Pakistan.

In September, a comprehensive crackdown was conducted in Rawalpindi to address various issues, including smuggling, electricity theft, narcotics trade, and hoarding. The operation led to the recovery of significant quantities of goods, including 3,036.309 metric tons of fertilizer, 262.8 metric tons of wheat, 34,060.9 metric tons of sugar, and 232,420 cigarette stocks, amounting to a total of Rs91.231 billion. Furthermore, 69,537 individ-

uals have been apprehended in connection with these illicit activities. Additionally, law enforcement seized 1,028,904.9 kilograms of goods, resulting in the arrest of 1,352 individuals.

Addressing the issue of missing persons, the Director General of Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) stated that 80% of cases have been addressed by the Commission of Missing Persons. The phenomenon of missing persons is not unique to Pakistan; it is a global concern, even in developed countries. The matter is legally intricate, and the government is earnestly striving to resolve it.

Regarding the question of providing bases to other countries, the DG ISPR affirmed that Pakistan has not and will not grant bases to any foreign entity. The country is vigilant against illicit activities such as drug trafficking, arms smuggling, and terrorist infiltration under the guise of trade. Pakistan has never politicized trade with Afghanistan and hosts a significant Afghan population.

He also provided financial figures regarding the contributions of the Pakistan Army to the national treasury. In the last fiscal year, the Pakistan Army directly contributed 100 billion rupees, while its subsidiaries paid 260 billion rupees in taxes and duties. Additionally, the Army Foundation, DHS, NLC, and Army Welfare Trust deposited significant amounts in taxes—223 billion rupees, 23 billion rupees, 3 billion rupees, and 3 billion rupees, respectively. The recovery endeavors also encompass 27,514.8 metric tons of fertilizer, 2,428.03 metric tons of wheat, 10,180.2 metric tons of sugar, and 55,745.3 metric tons of other stocks.

“Pakistan was cognizant of India’s efforts to divert attention from its internal affairs.” Throughout the current year, India has violated ceasefire agreements on numerous occasions, including 120 speculative fire incidents, 115 aerial posture

surveillance system (APS) violations, and 59 technical air violations. These breaches of ceasefire have resulted in loss of life. “We stand prepared to safeguard our sovereignty at any cost.” In December 2023, the Indian armed forces targeted civilians in Poonch and Rajwadi, leading to the unlawful detention of Kashmiris and leaving three individuals in critical condition. Additionally, Kashmiris have been martyred in what he termed “illegal operations.” There have been allegations of electoral vote manipulation in India, with plans to hold elections for five parliament seats on five different days, raising concerns about the fairness and transparency of the electoral process. The Director General of Inter-Services Public Relations (DG ISPR) also expressed apprehensions regarding the Indian Supreme Court’s decision to revoke Article 370, which granted special status to occupied Kashmir under the Indian constitution. “Apart from Kashmir, the Indian government has been implicated in international killings, including the murder of Sikh nationals,” he stated, adding that Indian intelligence agencies were responsible for the deaths of two Pakistani nationals, supported by ample evidence. He also addressed the situation in Palestine, stating that Pakistan has emerged as a significant voice globally and will continue to support the Palestinian cause. “We must play our part in advancing Pakistan’s prosperity and progress. Pakistan has persistently waged and will continue the fight against terrorism,” the DG ISPR asserted, affirming that all available resources are being utilized for this purpose. “Our unity is our strength, and we remain united.”

Responding to allegations from the JUI-F, he stated that if anyone possesses evidence, they should present it to the relevant institutions, declining to comment further. Regarding the Bahawalnagar incident, he noted that security and police officials successfully resolved the situation amicably.

To be continued

Pakistan’s Path to Cultural Influence Inspired by South Korea’s Hallyu Wave II

Zoya Arshad

Pakistan has been facing a negative image in the international world due to the frequent political turmoil. This image has caused damage to the country’s reputation and has made it difficult for Pakistan to establish itself as a reliable and trustworthy nation in the eyes of the world. Moreover, the economic situation of Pakistan is not so good, and the country is struggling to achieve economic stability.

Pakistan needs to adopt a soft power approach like South Korea did in the 1990s to improve its image and attract investments. By investing in its culture, music, film, and sports, Pakistan can showcase its rich heritage, change negative perceptions, and promote economic growth. Building soft power is crucial for Pakistan to achieve economic betterment.

Pakistan is a diverse country with over 70 ethnicities, each with a unique way of life, language, customs, and dress. Its music is equally diverse, with each ethnicity having its musical style and instruments.

This diversity is a significant advantage for Pakistan’s music industry, enabling it to produce a broad range of music that appeals to a vast audience. Pakistani musicians are making their mark on the international stage, and with such a diverse range of styles to draw from, the industry has immense

potential. Pakistan’s music industry is diverse and rich, with the potential to promote the country’s culture globally. By following South Korea’s footsteps, which has used pop culture to increase its influence, Pakistan can embark on a similar journey. By using Coke Studio and Pakistani dramas, Pakistan can increase its soft power and showcase its culture globally.

In conclusion, South Korea’s journey with the Hallyu wave illustrates the tremendous impact of cultural exports in shaping a nation’s soft power. The global success of K- culture has not only elevated South Korea’s cultural influence but has also significantly contributed to its economic growth and international relations.

Pakistan, facing challenges in its global image and economic stability, can learn from this success story. By strategically investing in its entertainment and cultural industry, Pakistan has the potential to showcase its rich cultural diversity and artistic talent to the world.

Integrating music into tourism campaigns will further enhance the potential for economic growth. By embracing these strategies, Pakistan has the opportunity to harness the soft power of its music industry and establish a more positive and influential presence on the international scene.

Writer is pursuing a bachelor’s in Defence and diplomatic studies at Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi

Xi, Putin attend opening ceremony of China-Russia Years of Culture

Xinhua

BEIJING: Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin attended the opening ceremony of the China-Russia Years of Culture and a special concert celebrating the 75th anniversary of China-Russia diplomatic ties on Thursday in Beijing.

Noting that this year marks the 75th anniversary of the establishment of bilateral ties, Xi said that the history of China-Russia relations over the past three quarters of a century shows that consolidating and developing lasting bilateral good-neighborliness and friendship, comprehensive strategic coordination, and mutually beneficial cooperation serve the fundamental interests of the two countries and peoples, and conform to the expectations of the international community and the trend of the times, which has irreplaceable significance.

Xi said that holding theme years in each other's countries has become a fine tradition of people-to-people and cultural exchanges between China and Russia, as well as a feature and highlight in the history of bilateral relations, which has been widely welcomed by the

two peoples.

"Last year, President Putin and I agreed to make 2024 and 2025 the China-Russia Years of Culture. The two sides officially launched this cultural event today," Xi said, adding that the two countries will hold a series of cultural exchange programs to further release the potential of bilateral cultural cooperation and jointly open up a new future of China-Russia cultural exchanges.

It is believed that it will inject new impetus into the course of carrying forward the China-Russia friendship from generation to generation and enhancing mutual understanding and building a closer bond between the two peoples, Xi said.

Xi said that both Chinese and Russian folk music are like beautiful flowers in the gardens of world civilizations, and that the concert will surely become a wonderful chapter in the history of cultural exchanges and mutual learning between China and Russia.

"Let us take the China-Russia Years of Culture as an opportunity and the celebration of the 75th anniversary of diplomatic ties as a new starting point, carry forward our friendship, and work

together to enrich the China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for the new era and open up a bright future for bilateral friendship," he said.

For his part, Putin noted that this year marks the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, and said that the Russian people have sincere admiration for the great achievements the Chinese people have won under the leadership of the Communist Party of China.

He said that based on mutual respect, equality and mutual trust, the development of Russia-China relations has promoted the development of both countries, benefited the two peoples, and set a good example for international relations.

Holding the Russia-China Years of Culture on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries is of great symbolic significance, Putin said, noting that Russia is willing to deepen cultural and people-to-people exchanges with China to enhance mutual understanding and promote the upgrading of bilateral cooperation.



Iranian cultural counselor stresses family's role in societal resilience amid Palestinian struggle

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Iran Embassy's Cultural Counselor, Majeed Meshki underscored the pivotal role of a robust family structure in fostering resilience within societies drawing inspiration from the unwavering spirit of Palestinian nation.

Addressing a seminar on "Impact of War in Gaza on the families, women and children, of Palestine and the Responsibility of Women", he emphasized the enduring strength of nations rooted in familial bonds.

Meshki said how the Palestinian people, despite enduring decades of conflict and oppression, had demonstrated remarkable resilience in their struggle for self-determination.

He highlighted their steadfastness in the face of adversity, citing their 75-year-long quest for justice and freedom as a testament to their unwavering determination and resilience.

"The world should draw inspiration from the Gazans," Meshki asserted, urging global leaders to heed the lessons of perseverance and fortitude embodied by the Palestinian people.

He emphasized that the sacrifices made by Palestinians throughout their history served as a beacon of hope for the realization of an



independent Palestinian state, with Al-Quds (Jerusalem) as its rightful capital.

Throughout the seminar, participants engaged in discussions on the profound impact of war on Palestinian families, particularly women and children, shedding light on the human cost of conflict and the urgent need for international action to alleviate their suffering.

Afshan Kiani, Vice Chairperson Human Rights Council of Pakistan and Soch Aurat, lamented that

humanity was being insulted in Palestine by Israel through human rights violations. She also opined to create awareness about the human rights within our society.

Humaira Tayyaba, Founder and Team Lead Save Gaza Campaign, said the Palestinians ethnic cleansing was being conducted by Israel and the world was playing a role of silent spectator. She was of the opinion that we should stage a peaceful protest demonstration to express solidarity with the Palestinian people.

Aisha Syed, General Secretary Women Wing of Jamat-e-Islami, said the western world was supporting Israel while the Muslim countries were disintegrated over Palestine issue. She urged the Muslim leaders to be united to pressure Israel to stop its brutalities in Gaza.

At the end, an unveiling ceremony of the book - Islam Ka Aaeni Nizam (The Constitutional System of Islam) was held, authored by Dr Mansoreh Zarean and Munira Zarean and translated by Muhammad Ali Tawheed.

Bidaya Finance has selected Temenos and Systems Limited for its digital financing transformation in KSA



LAHORE: Bidaya Finance's commitment to digitally transform its operations is deeply rooted in its mission to provide innovative and reliable financial solutions to its clients. With a vision to enable a brighter future for individuals and businesses, Bidaya Finance has embarked on a journey to offer modern, scalable, and secure financing products and services.

"Today, we mark a significant milestone in our digital transformation journey and fulfilling our mission for providing innovative and reliable financing solutions, aiming to elevate the customer experience standards and establish ourselves as one of the leaders in the digital financing realm. Together, we are paving the way for a new era of innovation and unparalleled financial solutions."

Mahmud bin Salim Dahduli, CEO, Bidaya Finance "We are proud that Bidaya Finance has put its trust in Temenos and our partner Systems Limited to deliver this strategic front-to-back digital transformation. The implementation gives Bidaya access to the leading banking capabilities of Temenos and the latest cloud-native platform to elevate the customer experience and take its business forward with higher efficiency and agility. This latest collaboration further seals Temenos' market-leading position as the choice of banking platform for the financial institutions in KSA."

Portuguese, Language of 5 Continents—Portugal & Brazil Embassies Celebrate in Islamabad

Tazeen Akhtar / Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: Language is the first tool that breaks the barriers and bring the humans and communities closer to one another. A community survives with common language and becomes a nation while the nations shape good relations with the help of mutual understanding that is built and strengthened if they speak the same language. Portuguese Language Day on May 5 this year conveyed the message that your language is your asset, your identity and your pride among the comity of the nations.

Ambassador of Portugal H. E Mr. Frederico Silva, being himself a literary person and history lover arranged special events to celebrate the great Portuguese language day in Lahore, Pakistan capital of culture and literature and Islamabad in collaboration with Ambassador of Brazil H. E Mr. Olyntho Vieira.

On 11 May, the center of celebration was Lahore where two events attracted the literary people of the historical city of Pakistan. The first event was interactive talk co-organized with the Aga Khan Cultural Service on "History and Art, Heritage Preservation" and "UNESCO classified sites in Pakistan, Portugal and Brazil." Second event was co-organized with the Alhamra Arts Council and the Lahore Literary Festival. Main topics will include Portuguese Language around the world, Literatures of Lusophone Countries, Literary Festivals in Pakistan, Portugal and Brazil, literary work of Guimomar de Grammont.

On 16 May, the celebration returned to Islamabad where both Ambassadors hosted a reception on the occasion of the World Day of the Portuguese Language and the Lusophone Culture at the Residence of the Embassy of Brazil.



H. E Mr. Olyntho Vieira welcomed the guests who included envoys from different countries, government officials, academia, civil society representatives and media persons. H. E noted that language depicts your culture and traditions. He said that Portuguese language is linking different regions and continents into the bond of one community.

H. E Mr. Frederico Silva, in his keynote address about the language, appraised the guests about the coverage of Portuguese in the world and highlighted the role of language in bridging the gaps between the nations of 5 continents, 9 independent countries of the world have Portuguese as official language. They include Portugal, Brazil, Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Sao Tome e Principe, Equatorial Guinea, Timor-Leste in Asia, H. E Silva shared the information.

These 9 countries occupy an area of 10.8 million square km, about 7.25% of the land surface of the Earth. CPLP, The Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries is the international organization that emphasizes common linguistic and cultural poli-

cies, as well as cooperation in the areas of education, health, science, technology and defense. It enhances mutual friendship and cooperation among its members. It was established on July 17, 1996. It holds about 500 member organizations and nations.

Portuguese Language is a part of Ibero-Romance group derived from the Latin tree of languages. It is a dominantly consonant sounding language with Celtic phonology. Portuguese has approximately 250 million total speaker, 230 million native speakers and 30 million second language speakers.

Representing about 3.7% of the world's population and hold approximately 4% of the total wealth. Portuguese is the most spoken language in the Southern Hemisphere.

Listed globally as the fifth most spoke native language, third most spoken European language globally and the second most spoken Romance language in the world. Speaker of Portuguese are called "Lusophone" (Lusofonos).

The rising importance of the Portuguese language has been in the media and the subject of academic studies with a global impact. Portu-



guese is used as a native language in the 5 continents, parallel only to the English language. Portuguese is the world's fourth most spoken language. It also has one of the highest growth rates as a second language on the internet, social networks and learning as a foreign language.

Portuguese is the fifth most used language on the Internet. It enjoyed the fourth largest growth rate. Portuguese is the third most used language on Facebook and has registered the highest growth rate.

Renown playwright, Prof. Guimomar de Grammont is visiting Pakistan in connection with the celebration of Portuguese Language Day. She participated in the events in Lahore and she was present at the reception at Brazil Residence as well. She also addressed to the guests and expressed her gratitude for warm welcome and

hospitality of Pakistanis.

Prof. Guimomar de Grammont, from Ouro Preto, is a renowned author, poet, dramatist, historian, and professor. With a PhD in Brazilian Literature from USP, as an author she has been a recipient of the Casa de Las Americas Award and the Pen-Club National Award, amongst others.

As a playwright, she has staged seven plays in Brazil, including "Olympia" which toured all over Latin America and Europe. Former executive editor of National Fiction at Record. Prof. Guimomar has curated multiple global book festivals including Rio de Janeiro, Bahia, Lisbon, and Paris.

5th May is the World Day of Portuguese Speaking Communities and Cultures. In 2019, under the 40th session of the General Conference of UNESCO, it was proclaimed that

the 5th of May of each year would be commemorated "International Day of Portuguese Language".

Pakistan also has a special connection with Portugal in a sense that the great explorer of Portugal Vasco Da Gama is known by all Pakistanis very well. He traveled to the sub continent between 1497-99. It was his first voyage to united sub continent Indo Pak. He was the first European to travel to sub continent followed by English and French.

A large number of Pakistanis are working in Portugal. The Portuguese language is learnt, spoken by them. It makes a relation between the two countries that can be strengthened and converted into meaningful economic cooperation through further enhancing the understanding of the language. there are many common words in our both languages.

Bull & Bears
PSX 100-Share
Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index	
Current	Prev. Close
75,342.34	74,930.69
Day's High	Day's Low
75,401.11	74,947.71
Index Value	Change
10,794,119,011	+411.65

Percentage	Time
+0.55%	17 May, 2024 5:00 pm

Europe: FTSE 100 Index	
Index Value	Change
8,420.26	-18.39
Percentage	Time
-0.22%	17 May, 4:35 pm GMT

Percentage	Time
-0.22%	17 May, 4:35 pm GMT

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average	
Index Value	Change
39,938.29	+68.91
Percentage	Time
+0.17%	17 May, 1:58 pm GMT-4

Percentage	Time
+0.17%	17 May, 1:58 pm GMT-4

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average	
Index Value	Change
38,787.38	-132.88
Percentage	Time
-0.34%	17 May, 3:15 pm GMT+9

Percentage	Time
-0.34%	17 May, 3:15 pm GMT+9

Open Market Forex Rates

Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	181	183
Bahrain Dinar	747.77	755.77
Canadian Dollar	203	205
China Yuan	38.49	38.89
Danish Krone	40.25	40.65
Euro	297	299.5
Hong Kong Dollar	35.96	36.31
Indian Rupee	3.33	3.44
Japanese Yen	1.91	1.99
Kuwaiti Dinar	913.28	922.28
Malaysian Ringgit	58.69	59.29
New Zealand \$	169.45	171.45
Norwegians Krone	25.67	25.97
Omani Riyal	730.59	738.59
Qatari Riyal	76.41	77.11
Saudi Riyal	73.5	74.25
Singapore Dollar	203	205
Swedish Korona	25.67	25.97
Swiss Franc	309.01	311.51
Thai Bhat	7.57	7.72
U.A.E Dirham	75.25	76
UK Pound Sterling	348.5	352
US Dollar	277.5	280.2

Capital seeks refuge and thrives in secure environments: Mian Zahid Hussain

PPA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain said on Friday that the disclosure of Pakistanis' properties worth eleven billion dollars in Dubai is not surprising.

He added that investors don't care about democracy, dictatorship, or monarchy; they only care about the investment environment.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that money, whether black or white, turns in a direction where it remains safe and can grow.

Speaking to the business community, the veteran business leader stated that our authorities have attempted to obtain the details of Pakistanis' properties in Dubai, but they have failed.



However, now that the FATF has made UAE officials less inclined to conceal the investment's details,

Dubai Leaks teaches us that the best places to invest are those with strong law and order, easy business, and a preference for the rule of law.

In Dubai, new mega-scandals do not occur daily, like in Pakistan, and there is no practice of establishing false cases against people on political grounds.

The business leader asserted that Dubai strictly enforces the law, does not practice extortion, does not kidnap businessmen, and does not send them false tax notices.

These factors have made Dubai a paradise for tourists and investors, according to Mian Zahid Hussain. Due to tourism and investment, its resources and regional and global influence are continuously increasing, and a powerful nuclear country like Pakistan is often asking it for funds.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that the condi-

tions in India, Great Britain, and many other countries are much better than in Pakistan. Residents of these countries have also invested heavily in Dubai, indicating that they see Dubai's overall environment as superior to their own country.

Investors are confident that their capital will grow rapidly in Dubai and remain safe.

He further said that Pakistan is among the most profitable countries in the world, but despite this, its own people are investing outside the country because they do not trust their country and its system and do not consider it safe.

Pakistani authorities should improve the atmosphere of trust in their country, put the mafia in control, and make laws and a justice system according to international standards so that the rich can invest in their country instead of roaming around the world.

Protest

KARACHI: Residents of Lines area hold a protest at a road, against electricity load-shedding in the provincial Capital.



Photo: Online

Pakistan Information Commission Orders FBR to Disclose Information on Tax Evasion Cases

PPA

ISLAMABAD: In a landmark decision, the Pakistan Information Commission (PIC) has directed the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to disclose detailed information regarding tax evasion investigations involving prominent enterprises. The order comes in response to an appeal filed after the FBR failed to provide requested information under the Right of Access to Information Act, 2017.

The appellant, Azmat Khan, filed a request seeking details on an inquiry conducted by the FBR into the tax practices of three companies: M/s. AKK Enterprises (SMC-PVT) Limited, M/s. Perfect Craft (SMC-PVT) Limited, and M/s. Zayyan Trading Co., Karachi. The request specifically sought information regarding the inquiry's findings, any actions taken against the companies or individuals involved, and the rationale behind any inaction.

The appellant sought answers to several questions, including whether FIRs and criminal proceedings had been initiated against Mr. Junaid Marisori, outcomes of inquiries under the Anti-Money Laundering (AML) Act, 2010, reasons for the non-registration of M/s. Zayyan Trading Co. with the Sales Tax Department despite significant purchases, and the recovery of any tax amounts from the implicated entities.

The FBR, represented by Syed Shabih Haider, Deputy Director, sought exemption from disclosure, citing sections of the Right of Access to Information Act, 2017, and the Income Tax Ordinance, 2001, which protect certain confidential records. The FBR argued that disclosing the requested information could breach confidentiality

and was prosecutable under existing tax laws.

However, the Commission found that the requested information did not fall under exempt categories. The PIC emphasized that the information pertains to tax evasion, which is a public matter, not a personal privacy issue. The Commission highlighted that proactive disclosure of such information is mandated under the Right of Access to Information Act, 2017, to ensure transparency and accountability in government operations.

"The matter of tax evasion is not pertaining to personal privacy but it is an offense under the law which requires to be investigated and prosecuted in accordance with the law," stated the Commission's order. The PIC's decision underscored the government's commitment to transparency, good governance, and public participation in state affairs. It noted that the FBR is legally obligated to disclose the information proactively and that the provisions cited by the FBR to withhold the information were not applicable in this case.

As a result, the PIC has ordered the Chairman of the FBR and Secretary of the Revenue Division to provide the requested information to the appellant and the Commission within ten days. Additionally, the Commission has endorsed a copy of the order to the Secretary of the Prime Minister of Pakistan, in view of government's recent efforts to curb leakages and enhance revenue collection.

This decision is expected to set a precedent for similar cases, reinforcing the public's right to access information and the government's duty to maintain transparency in its operations.

German Consul General assured to prioritize visas to Businessmen: Atif Ikram Sheikh

PPA

KARACHI: Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh, President FPCCI, has said that the German Consul General in Karachi, H. E. Rüdiger Lotz, has apprised the business, industry and trade community from the apex platform of FPCCI that the business visas will be given priority in the visa issuance to Pakistani citizens as economic relations top the agenda. It is pertinent to note that top German diplomats visited FPCCI Head Office in Karachi to attend a high-profile, interactive session with the business community.

Mr. Saquib Fayyaz Magoon, SVP FPCCI, invited the business community and chambers of Germany to be their partner in growth and development of Pakistan; whereas, he outlined the principle objective of FPCCI's Vision 2030 as achieving \$100 billion in annual exports for the country. He put forward the top areas of B2B cooperation as startups, research & development,



women empowerment, vocational training and facilitation of business tourism.

Mr. Saquib Fayyaz Magoon expressed his pleasure that the German Consulate has appointed a prominent woman member of FPCCI, Ms. Sahibzadi Mahin Khan, as their focal person on trade and investment for Sindh and Balochistan region.

Mr. Sham Lal, a cotton and textiles expert,

maintained that Pakistan has the world's best textiles and related products; and, Germany should welcome the textile exporters of Pakistan through trade fairs and exhibitions.

H. E. Rüdiger Lotz, German Consul General in Karachi, stated that Pakistan is an important market for the German companies as it has a strong middle-class of 40 - 50 million with reasonable purchasing power; and, German companies have a long-established presence in the region; which dates back to over 100 years. He also expressed his optimism that Pakistani visa applicants have doubled in the recent years.

E. Mr. Andreas Wegner, Head of German Mission, stressed that collective efforts are required to increase the numbers vis-à-vis bilateral trade, investments, JVs, industrial collaborations and other areas of economic relations. He also shed light on the geo economic position of Pakistan at the crossroads of South Asia, Central Asia, Middle-east and Europe.

PSX stays bullish, gains 411.65 points

ISLAMABAD: The 100-Index of the PSX witnessed a bullish trend on Friday, gaining 411.65 points, a positive change of 0.55 per cent, closing at 75,342.35 points against 74,930.70 points the previous trading day. A total of 496,699,517 shares valuing Rs 17,631 billion were traded during the day as compared to 407,625,139 shares valuing Rs 16,987 billion on the last day.

Some 386 companies transacted their shares in the stock market; 212 of them recorded gains and 153 sustained losses, whereas the prices of 21 companies remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were Kohinoor Spinning with 44,618,981 shares at Rs4.85 per share, P.I.A.C (A) with 28,760,119 shares at Rs 24.31 per share and K-Electric Limited with 23,057,050 shares at Rs 4.57 per share. Nestle Pakistan limited witnessed a maximum increase of Rs149.82 per share price closing at Rs 7429.82, whereas the runner-up was Ismail Industries Limited with Rs 104.14 increase to close at Rs 1,548.92.

Sixth ISEM Pakistan Solar Exhibition & Conference inaugurated

PPA

LAHORE: Extremely heartening and vibrant participation from solar industry marked the commencement of the highly anticipated SIXTH ISEM Pakistan Solar Exhibition and Conference at the Expo Centre Lahore. The event, inaugurated on Friday, promises to be a significant gathering for professionals, stakeholders, and enthusiasts within the solar energy sector in Pakistan and across the globe.

The three-day exhibition, running until Sunday, has drawn the participation of various leading solar companies showcasing their innovative products and solutions.

With a focus on sustainable energy practices, the event aims to promote awareness, foster industry collaborations, and drive the adoption of solar energy technologies across Pakistan.

Speaking as the chief guest, Senator Lt-Gen (Retd) Abdul



Qayyum, Chairman Pak-China Business Forum, expressed optimism about the event, highlighting its potential to catalyze growth and development in the renewable energy sector.

APTMA Advisor Tahir Bashir Cheema emphasized the government's commitment to creating an enabling environment for sustainable energy initiatives, encouraging private sector investment, and promoting technol-

ical advancements in solar energy production and distribution.

The Pakistan Solar Exhibition and Conference serve as a platform for industry leaders, policymakers, investors, and researchers to exchange ideas, discuss emerging trends, and explore avenues for collaboration.

Attendees can expect insightful panel discussions, keynote presentations, and networking opportunities designed to spur



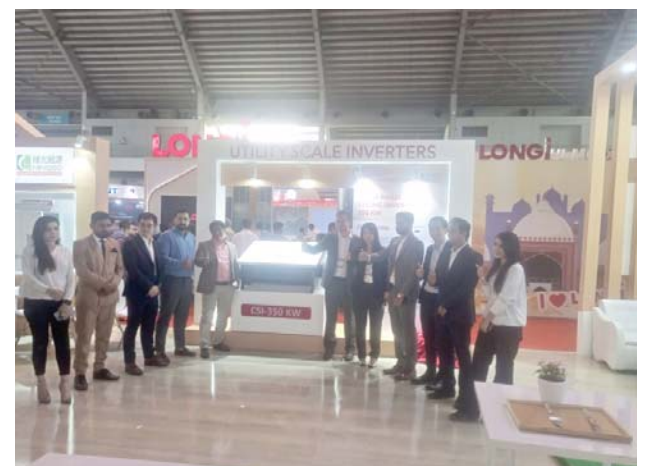
Caption: Aamir Saeed Maqbool, Manager Projects & Commercials with his team mates at stall during the 6th ISEM Pakistan Solar Exhibition, 2024

innovation and drive the sector forward.

Visitors to the exhibition can explore a wide range of solar products and solutions, including solar panels, inverters, energy storage systems, and solar-powered appliances. Exhibiting companies are showcasing their

latest advancements in solar technology, highlighting the efficiency, reliability, and cost-effectiveness of solar energy solutions for residential, commercial, and industrial applications.

The event's location at the Expo Centre Lahore provides a central hub for industry stake-



Grace Wan, Sales Manager, South East Asia with her team at the Canadian Solar Stall during the 6th ISEM, Pakistan Solar Exhibition, 2024.

holders to converge, engage in meaningful dialogue, and forge partnerships that can contribute to Pakistan's sustainable energy goals. With growing global interest in renewable energy source-

es, the Pakistan Solar Exhibition and Conference underscore the country's commitment to leveraging solar power as a key driver of economic and environmental sustainability.



Army chief meets national hockey team

On this occasion, the Pakistan Hockey Team had a meeting with the Army Chief, and President of the Pakistan Hockey Federation, Tariq Hussain, and other officials were also present. According to ISPR, the Army Chief praised the national hockey team for their remarkable performance and expressed good wishes for the future of the players.

The Army Chief stated that the hockey team has made the nation proud with their performance and assured them of every possible cooperation for their continued success. According to ISPR, President of the Pakistan Hockey Federation, Tariq Hussain, expressed gratitude to Army Chief General Asim Munir for the meeting and discussion with the team.

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Army Chief General Asim Munir met the

members of the national hockey team on Friday. According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the

Pakistan Hockey Team visited General Headquarters (GHQ) where Army Chief General Asim Munir welcomed the team.

Pakistan lifts Central Asian Volleyball C'ship title



Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan emerged victorious in the Central Asian Volleyball Championship, edging past Turkmenistan in the final showdown here at the Liaquat Gymnasium, Pakistan Sports Complex on Friday. Pakistan exhibited dominance, taking the first two sets 25-21 and 25-19. Turkmenistan made a strong comeback in the third set with a score of 20-25.

However, Pakistan secured the title by winning the fourth set 25-14, remaining unbeaten in six consecutive matches.

Overall, Pakistan won 18 sets and lost just three in the event. Meanwhile, in the third position match, Kyrgyzstan defeated Sri Lanka by 3-1. Minister for Planning and Inter Provincial Coordination, Ahsan Iqbal attended the closing ceremony as a chief guest and distributed medals among the players.

PFF delegation attends 74th FIFA Congress



Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) Normalisation Committee, led by Chairman Haroon Malik, accompanied by NC members Muhammad Shahid Niaz Khokhar and Saud Hashimi attended the 74th FIFA Congress held in Bangkok, Thailand. The 74th Congress, which saw attendance from the Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand Suriya Juangroongruangkit, FIFA Legends and other notable figures, was highlighted by several significant announcements and initiatives from FIFA President Gianni Infantino, said a press release.

FIFA President announced Brazil as the host nation for the tenth FIFA Women's World Cup in 2027. He emphasized the need to stand up and combat racism, urging the football community to unite to eradicate the issue from the sport. On the sidelines of the 74th Congress, the Pakistani delegation, led by Haroon Malik engaged in productive discussions with representatives from Korea, Belarus, Russia, Palestine and Germany. The meetings will play a crucial role in shaping the future of football in Pakistan and paving the way for new opportunities and development within the sport.

Shahzeb wins silver medal for Pakistan in Asian Taekwondo C'ship



Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: Hamdi Riyad of Saudi Arabia won the gold medal by defeating Shahzeb Khan of Pakistan in the final of the -54 kg category of the Kyorugi event of the Asian Taekwondo Championship at Da Nang, Vietnam. In the first round of the finals, Shahzeb won 1-0 against his Saudi opponent.

In the second round, a tough competition was seen between the two players. Hamdi Riyad won by scoring 9 points against 8, said a press release. In the third and decisive round, the referee showed partiality and gave many controversial decisions against Pakistan. Hamdi Riyad won the gold medal with a difference of 7 points against 3. Shahzeb Khan won the first silver medal for Pakistan in the history of the Asian Taekwondo Championship.

In other matches played today, in the - 87 kg category, Pakistan's Ikhtshamul Haque was defeated by India's Rishabh by 2-1. In the -58 kg category, Saudi Arabia's Jar Yousef won 2-1 against Pakistan's Abu Bakr Siddiq. In the women's -73 kg weight, Korea's Myeong Mi-Na defeated Pakistan's Maleeha with the score of 2-0.

England win toss, elect to bat against Pakistan in second T20I

Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: Zahid Noor is associated with the Pakistan's largest media network ARY News from Manchester United Kingdom as a News Correspondent. He also plays a vital role in reporting Sports News for A Sports.

NORTHAMPTON: England women have won the toss and elected to bat first against Pakistan in the second T20I of the three-match series here at The County Ground on Friday.

Ahsan vows to revive Pakistan's sports

Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning and Inter Provincial Coordination (IPC), Ahsan Iqbal, Friday inaugurated the National Conference on Revival of Sports here, and emphasized the government's commitment in improving Pakistan's sports landscape. Declaring 2025 as the year of sports revival in Pakistan, the minister expressed his determination to take Pakistan's sports to new heights. "All-out efforts are being made to improve Pakistan's sports," he said.

Addressing on the occasion the minister highlighted the importance of the conference in reviving and improving sports in the country. "Victory is not won on the field of play, but it has to be planted in the mind," he said. He pledged to provide comprehensive support to Pakistan's talented athletes, saying that the country has immense talent.

The aim of today's conference is to offer broad-based support to these athletes, he added. Ahsan announced several initiatives to promote sports, including the preparation of 2028 Olympics, promotion of institutional sports, and establishment of an endowment fund for players. He also mentioned the installation of astro-turfs to highlight sports from the grassroots level. The minister said Pakistanis were second to none in the world in terms of intelligence and hard work. However, he was of the view that despite having a population of 250 million, Pakistan failed to qualify for even five sports in the Olympics. Ending doping in sports in Pakistan, was a top priority, he stressed, adding that despite funds being allocated for National Games in 2016 and 2017, the event did not take place. Ahsan said that he was imprisoned in the previous government of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) for building Narowal Sports City. "Sports should be kept away from politics," he said. Ahsan also criticized the previous PTI government for dismantling departmental sports structures, which had harmed the development of



stan failed to qualify for even five sports in the Olympics. Ending doping in sports in Pakistan, was a top priority, he stressed, adding that despite funds being allocated for National Games in 2016 and 2017, the event did not take place. Ahsan said that he was imprisoned in the previous government of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) for building Narowal Sports City. "Sports should be kept away from politics," he said. Ahsan also criticized the previous PTI government for dismantling departmental sports structures, which had harmed the development of

sports. He said he will also write a letter to all departments to restore sports within a week. We plan to build seven astro turfs for hockey, four of which have already been completed. The minister also highlighted the achievements of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government, including ending of load shedding and terrorism, and bringing peace to the country. He also highlighted PML-N's government's achievements in resolving the energy crisis, combating terrorism. Ahsan also emphasized the need for sports revival in Pakistan, saying

that a nation's character is reflected in its sports. He highlighted the success of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project and drew a comparison with the development of sports infrastructure. Germany built 400 squash courts in one year, while Pakistan built only four in the same timeframe, he said. Looking ahead to 2047, when Pakistan and India will mark 100 years of their independence, he said, India has made significant strides in sports but expressed his determination to create a new chapter of development in Pakistan sports.

Batters power England to 144/6 against Pakistan in second T20I

A Sports

NORTHAMPTON: A combined batting effort, led by Nat Sciver-Brunts' blistering 31, propelled England to a formidable total against Pakistan in the second T20I of the three-match series here on Friday.

Opting to bat first, England racked up 144/6 in the allotted 20 overs, courtesy of Alice Capsey and Brunt, who remained joint top-scorers with 31 apiece.

The home side had a shaky start to their innings as Danni Wyatt (6) fell victim to Waheeda Akhtar on the first delivery of the third over with just 16 runs on the board.

Opening batter Maia Bouchier then knitted an anchoring partnership with Capsey to put England in a comfortable position.



The pair added 49 runs for the second wicket until a mix-up while running between

the wickets saw Bouchier walking back after scoring a solid 30 off 26 deliveries with the help

of five boundaries. Capsey followed Bouchier's footsteps and returned to the

dugout in the next over after scoring a cautious 33. Her 31-ball knock included five boundaries.

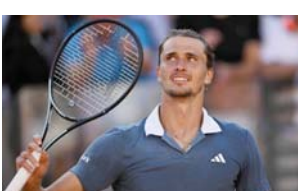
Brunt then put together a one-sided partnership for the fourth wicket with England skipper Heather Knight (4) before both perished in successive overs as Pakistan forced a comeback.

Nat Sciver-Brunts smashed six boundaries on her way to a 21-ball 31.

Later, Danielle Gibson lifted England's total with an unbeaten 18-run cameo which came off just nine deliveries while wicketkeeper batter Amy Jones played a supportive role with her 14-ball 15.

Skipper Nida Dar led the bowling attack for Pakistan women with 2/33 in her four overs while Fatima Sana, Diana Baig and Waheeda Akhtar made one scalp each.

Alexander Zverev equals Becker record to reach Rome Open final



Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: Germany's Alexander Zverev equalled compatriot Boris Becker's record by reaching an 11th Masters final on Friday when he ended the

Rome Open giant-killing run of Alejandro Tabilo. World number five Zverev, who lifted the Rome trophy in 2017, battled back to see off the Chilean 1-6, 7-6 (7/4), 6-2 in their semi-final. The 26-year-old Tabilo had shocked Novak Djokovic in the third round and the

32nd-ranked player showed little fear of Zverev until he began to play more passively in the second set tie-break.

Third seed Zverev then raced through the decider to make the

Rome final for the third time.

"I was just hanging on in the second set. I brought my energy up. I was really just hanging on and waiting and the patience was kind of good today," Zverev said on court. "He hit me off the court

in the first set and I did not play well at all, but he was a big reason why. He gave me no rhythm and I am happy I turned it around in the tie-break and ran away in the third set." In Sunday's final, he will take on either another Chilean in

Nicolas Jarry or Tommy Paul of the United States. By making Sunday's championship match, 27-year-old Alexander Zverev has tied Becker's record for the most Masters finals by a German since the series began in 1990.

Oath-taking ceremony

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari administered the oath of office to Mr. Ali Pervaiz as the Minister of State, during an oath-taking ceremony, held at Aiwan-e-Sadr on Friday.



Photo: PID

PM directs launching nationwide programme to overcome child stunting

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday directed the authorities concerned to launch a nationwide programme, in coordination with the provincial governments, to overcome the challenge of child stunting. The prime minister, chairing a meeting to discuss the issue of child stunting, also called for the formulation of a comprehensive plan for the protection of children against fatal diseases, for population

welfare and for coping with the health sector issues.

According to the World Health Organisation, child stunting refers to a child who is too short for his or her age and is the result of chronic or recurrent malnutrition. Stunting is a contributing risk factor to child mortality and is also a marker of inequalities in human development.

Prime Minister Shehbaz said that the Federal Government, in collaboration with the provincial governments, would take priority measures

for better child growth to achieve the country's bright future. Similarly, a nationwide awareness campaign was also equally essential to do away with the issue of stunting, he added. He thanked the international experts participating in the meeting which featured the presentation of statistics on the children's growth by the World Bank. The participants were told that a significant ratio of children in Pakistan suffered stunted growth caused by the lack of basic healthcare and nutri-

tion, contaminated drinking water, poor cleanliness, and lack of awareness of children's growth. Besides, the statistics about the prevalence of TB, hepatitis, diabetes and other fatal diseases in Pakistan were also highlighted and suggestions were put forward to overcome them.

The prime minister instructed the relevant authorities to immediately present a comprehensive plan on the matter. Federal ministers Ahsan Iqbal, Ahmad Khan Cheema, PM's Coordi-

nator Malik Mukhtar Ahmed, Deputy Chairman of Planning Commission Jahanzeb Khan, World Bank Country Director Najj Benhassine, UNICEF Representative in Pakistan Abdullah Fadil, Country Director of World Food Program Coco Ushiyama and other internationally renowned experts attended the meeting. The provincial chief secretaries Dr Zulfiqar Ali Bhutta, Dr Sajid Sufi, Dr Ijaz Nabi and other experts joined the meeting via video link.

Unending sufferings of Kashmiri families with over 22,000 women widowed, 107,000 children orphaned: Spokesperson

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Friday said that with over 22,000 women widowed and 107,000 children orphaned, the sufferings of the families in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) remained unended due to the unabated occupation and oppression of the Indian forces.

Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch, at her weekly press briefing, expressed solidarity with the Kashmiri families that remained divided and continued to suffer due to Indian oppression for the last several decades.

"The estimates of widowed

women and orphaned children exceed 22,000 and 107,000 respectively. Thousands of half-widows are awaiting the return of their husbands who have presumably been killed by Indian forces. The plight of the families of the victims of enforced disappearance is equally lamentable," the spokesperson remarked, referring to the annual International Day of Families observed on May 15.

Calling the ruthless Indian oppression the root-cause of the sufferings of Kashmiri families, the spokesperson urged India to allow Kashmiris to practice their right to self-determination as guaranteed by the United Nations Security Council's



resolutions.

Highlighting the diplomatic engagements that took place during the last week, the spokesperson started with the visit of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister

Senator Ishaq Dar to China to co-chair the Fifth Pakistan-China Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, where he also met with Chinese vice premier, and ministers for IDCPC and finance and others.

In the Dialogue, Pakistan and China agreed to strengthen mutual cooperation to safeguard common interests, promotion of peace and prosperity, enhance exchanges, and deepen ties in all areas of mutual benefit. Both sides also agreed to work for the upgraded version of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor by jointly building a growth corridor, a livelihood-enhancing corri-

dor, an innovation corridor, a green corridor and an open corridor, by aligning them with Pakistan's development framework and priorities.

The two sides agreed to accelerate progress on major connectivity projects, including upgradation of ML-1, the Gwadar Port, realignment of the Karakoram Highway Phase II, and to strengthen cooperation in agriculture, industrial parks, mining, information technology and other fields.

China reiterated its position on the Kashmir issue calling for its peaceful resolution in accordance with the UN Charter, relevant UN Security Council resolutions and bilateral agreements.

Eight groups express interest in PIA amid privatisation drive

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Eight companies have submitted their bids as the deadline for expressions of interest for the privatisation of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has expired.

According to the details, the last date for submitting bids was May 17, 4 pm. A statement issued here said that a total of eight companies submitted their bids for expressions of interest for the privatisation of the national airline.

The sources privy to the development said that the pre-qualification process for the bidders will begin soon. In the pre-qualification process, the shortlisted companies will be provided with further details about PIA.

The sources said that the pre-qualification process is expected to be completed by the last week of May. It is



noteworthy that the advertisements for the privatisation of PIA were published on April 2 and 3.

The sources privy to the development said that the Privatisation Commission received bids from Shineji Company of China, Fly Jinnah, Airblue Limited, Jiri International Pvt Ltd, Younis Brothers Holdings Consortium, Pak Ethanol Consortium, and Blue World City Consortium.

FBR holds meeting with trade unions

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) on Friday convened a meeting with representatives from various trade unions of the country aimed at addressing concerns raised by the trade and business community over implementation of the "Tajir Dost Scheme".

The meeting was attended by Chief coordinator of the Tajir Dost Scheme Naeem Mir and other senior officials to foster a collaborative approach towards the success of scheme, said a press release issued by the FBR.

During the meeting, representatives of the trade unions emphasized the need for clear guidelines on taxation for newly registered traders under the Tajir Dost Scheme. They were of the view that retailers' reluctance to register stemmed from ambiguity surrounding the taxation regime, potentially



hindering the scheme's effectiveness in enrolling traders.

Additionally, the representatives highlighted the absence of facilitation, tax exemptions or incentives to convince retailers to register under the scheme.

FBR officials and the Chief coordinator of the Tajir Dost Scheme agreed to consider the trade community's reservations and recommendations. They asked them to submit a unified proposal within a week regarding the registration and taxation of traders under the scheme.

Ali Pervaiz sworn in as Minister of State

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Member of the National Assembly Ali Pervaiz took the oath of the office of Minister of State here on Friday. President Asif Ali Zardari administered the oath to Ali Pervaiz in a ceremony held at the Aiwan-e-Sadr. The swearing-in cere-

mony was attended by Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, parliamentarians, and notables from different walks of life. Ali Pervaiz was elected as MNA from NA-119 constituency of Lahore on the ticket of the Pakistan Muslim League-N in the recently held by-election.

PM Shahbaz Sharif committed to building country's climate resilience: Romina Khurshid Alam



PPA

ISLAMABAD: Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Climate Change Romina Khurshid Alam has said that global warming is adversely affecting glaciers, ecosystems, lives and livelihoods of the people in mountain regions around the world.

However, addressing the challenges of rapidly melting glaciers, loss of ecosystem and protection of lives and livelihoods is not possible without the global community join hands to tackle the drivers of the global warming, particularly containing emissions of heat-trapping gases.

Chairing a meeting with Italian non-governmental organisation EvK2CNR here on Wednesday, the PM's Coordinator observed that soaring temperatures in the mountain regions including Pakistan are accompanied by changes in seasonal weather patterns, the melting of glaciers, the thawing of permafrost, and reductions in the extent and duration of snow cover.

As a result, water flows and its availability for industrial, household and agricultural uses has been shrinking and becoming increasingly unreliable, she added.

"Initiatives, which can help slow down global warming, are direly needed to overcome devastat-

ing impacts of climate change on glaciers, mountains, ecosystems, water flows, agriculture, public health and education," Romina Khurshid Alam stressed.

She said that adopting sustainable means of production and consumption is key to tackle climate change and its impacts on various socio-economic sectors, particularly water, agriculture, energy, health and education.

Romina Khurshid Alam told the meeting that the Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif is particularly serious and committed towards building Pakistan's environmental sustainability and climate resilience in all socio-economic sectors and has directed his team to leave no stone unturned to stem environmental degradation and increase the country's endurance against devastating fallouts of climate change.

Meanwhile, the President EvK2CNR, Agostino Da Polenza, apprised the PM's Coordinator about various initiatives being taken by his organization for socio-economic development, uplift of education, protection of mountain ecosystems and protected or environmentally-sensitive areas in Pakistan's mountain areas including Gilgit-Baltistan, which is home to the picturesque mountain peaks.

Pakistan embassy holds session with Belgium textile companies



Spokesman Report

BRUSSELS: Pakistan embassy in Brussels Friday held an interactive session with Belgium textiles companies. During the meeting they

discussed potential opportunities in Pakistan.

The textile companies were also invited for participation in TEXPO2024 scheduled to be held in Karachi, from October 22-24, 2024.

Tyrian White case against PTI founder set for hearing

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) has fixed for hearing a petition filed against former prime minister Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan for concealing his alleged daughter Tyrian White on May 21.

The case was apparently shelved since May 2023, when the IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq dissolved a three-member bench hearing the case after the opinions of two judges regarding the plea's maintainability were uploaded on

the court's website.

The bench comprising IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq, Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani, and Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir had reserved its verdict on March 30, while Justices Kayani and Tahir had opined against the petition's maintainability.

The IHC CJ formed a new bench comprising Justices Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri, Arbab Mohammad Tahir and Saman Rafat Imtiaz.

The bench will hear the case against PTI founder Imran Khan on May 21.