

# Daily The Spokesman

A Leading National Daily



فرمان رسول ﷺ  
ہم سے معبود بن خالد قسبی نے بیان کیا ان سے حاضر بن وہب خزاعی رضی اللہ عنہ نے بیان کیا نبی کریم صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم نے فرمایا کیا میں تمہیں جنت دلوں کی خبر دوں۔ ہرگز نہیں۔ تو واضح کرنے والا اگر وہ (اللہ کا نام لے کر) قسم کھائے تو اللہ اس کی قسم پوری کرے۔ کیا میں تمہیں دوزخ دلوں کی خبر دوں ہر نحو، تو اگر چاہے اللہ اور منکر۔  
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## PM Shehbaz Sharif will pay an official visit to China

From June 3 to 5, at the invitation of Member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi, Türkiye's Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan will pay an official visit to China. Associated Press of Pakistan: A follow-up question on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's visit to China. Could you share some detail of his visit? (Details on Page 5)



## Petroleum products prices decreased

The federal government has reduced the price of petrol by Rs4.74 per litre in its third consecutive fortnightly review in light of a drop in the rate of global oil prices. The new price of petrol has come down to Rs268.36 per litre from Rs273.10 per litre. Meantime, the high speed diesel also has been slashed by Rs3.86 per litre to Rs270.22 per litre from its previous price of Rs274.08 per litre. "The prices of Petroleum products have seen a decreasing trend in the international market during the last fortnight, states a notification from the finance ministry."

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## Meeting on regional peace and stability

Rawalpindi: Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan, Jeyhun Bayramov, called on General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS), at the General Headquarters (GHQ).



Photo: ISPR

## Azerbaijan Foreign Minister calls on General Asim COAS

City Desk

RAWALPINDI: The Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan, Jeyhun Bayramov, called on General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS), at the General Headquarters (GHQ).

During their meeting, they engaged in in-depth discussions on matters of mutual interest, including regional peace and stability.

The COAS emphasized Pakistan's long-standing fraternal ties with Azerbai-

jan and reiterated the country's unwavering commitment to providing comprehensive assistance and cooperation in the spheres of defense and security.

Furthermore, the COAS praised the Azerbaijani Armed Forces for their exemplary professionalism and valor.

The visiting dignitary expressed his sincere appreciation for Pakistan's steadfast support to Azerbaijan and acknowledged the country's pivotal role in maintaining regional stability.

## Reserved seats: Full court to hear SIC plea on June 3

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: A 13-member full-court bench of the Supreme Court has been formed to hear the Sunni Ittehad Council's (SIC) reserved seats case on June 3, AR.

Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa would head the bench. Justice Musarrat Hilali will not be present to hear the case due to illness.

On May 6, Supreme Court (SC) suspended the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) and Peshawar High Court's (PHC) verdict on Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) reserved seats on Monday.

The three-member bench headed by Justice Mansoor Ali Shah, comprising Justice

Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Athar Minallah suspended the verdict pertaining to the allocation of reserved seats to other political parties.

Justice Mansoor Ali Shah said that the case has been fixed for hearing and "we are suspending the ECP and PHC verdicts."

Shah remarked that today's suspension verdict only applies to the allocation of additional seats. He emphasized that the people's mandate should be represented correctly in Parliament.

It is worth mentioning here that the Peshawar High Court (PHC) earlier dismissed petitions of the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) over reserved seats in assemblies.

## PM for plans on B2B meetings, attracting Chinese industry during his China visit

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday chaired a meeting to review the preparations for his upcoming visit to China, wherein he directed the formulation of comprehensive plans to hold result-oriented business-to-business meetings between the two countries. He instructed the relevant authorities to devise strategies for attracting Chinese industries to set up their units in Pakistan, assuring his government's all-out facilitation to the industrialists and investors. During the briefing to the



prime minister on the preparations for his China visit, it was told that a delegation of industrialists, investors, and businessmen would accompany him to

China's Shenzhen city. The delegation would hold meetings with the Chinese business community to promote business-to-business linkages between the two

countries. The prime minister directed Pakistan's Ambassador to China to extend all-out facilitation to the Pakistani business delega-

tion during its visit there. The meeting was attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, federal ministers including Jam Kamal Khan, Ahad Khan Cheema, Rana Tanveer Hussain, Attaullah Tarar, Dr Musaddik Malik, and Abdul Aleem Khan, Minister of State Shaza Fatima Khawaja, Special Assistant to PM Tariq Fatemi, PM's Coordinator Rana Ehsan Afzal, Deputy Chairman Planning Commission Jahanzeb Khan and senior government officers. Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal and Pakistan's Ambassador in Beijing joined the meeting via video link.

## IMF proposes spike in GST and taxes on salaried class in new budget: sources

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has shared a draft proposal with Pakistani authorities outlining key conditions for a new loan program. These proposals are expected to significantly impact the upcoming federal budget for the next fiscal year.

The Pakistani economic team has begun finalizing the budget in light of the IMF's conditions. The IMF has proposed a tax revenue

target of 1290 billion Pakistani rupees for the next fiscal year, while the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) is pushing for a target of 1250 billion rupees.

Sources reveal that ongoing online discussions and virtual meetings between the Pakistani economic team and the IMF are progressing. The IMF has proposed increasing the standard rate of the General Sales Tax (GST) from 18% to 19%. This change, if implemented,

Continued on Page 8

## Deputy PM Dar, US Ambassador discuss counterterrorism cooperation

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister (PM) and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on Friday met US Ambassador to Pakistan Donald Blome and discussed "mutual priorities", including counterterrorism cooperation.

According to a statement issued by US Embassy, Donald Blome met Deputy PM Ishaq Dar to discuss mutual priorities of the United States and Pakistan.

"Both leaders discussed counterterrorism cooperation, Pakistan's structural economic reforms and efforts to address security, regional and economic challenges," it said.

The US Ambassador reaffirmed the United States support for Pakistan's ongoing economic reforms



and underscored support for expanding business-to-business links and fostering a conducive environment for investors.

Ambassador Blome also highlighted potential areas for investment and trade opportunities, along with collaboration within the energy, technology, and infrastructure

sectors.

Earlier in May, Pakistan and the United States (US) underscored the importance of bilateral cooperation in addressing the most pressing challenges to regional and global security, including Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and ISIS-Khorasan.

Officials of both countries expressed the commitment during the Pakistan-US Counterterrorism Dialogue held in Washington D. C on May 10, stated a joint statement issued.

Additional Foreign Secretary for the UN and OIC, Ambassador Syed Haider Shah, and US Department of State Coordinator for Counterterrorism, Ambassador Elizabeth Richard, co-chaired the Dialogue.

## FIA Karachi office has to pay more than Rs 3 crore to K-Electric

Bureau Report

KARACHI: K-Electric on Friday issued a warning to cut off electricity to Karachi's Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) complex building, if the dues - amounting to Rs 40 million - remain unpaid.

According to the details, the power distribution company, K-Electric, has issued a final notice demanding the remaining payment to be deposited in

the account of the electricity bill by June 20.

The power distributor warned that the electricity connection would be disconnected if the payment is not made till the assigned date.

The complex reportedly has only one commercial meter installed for its four-storey structure. The current bill for May stands at Rs 32,550,120 while the total outstanding amount is

Rs 40 million.

However, the last payment towards the building's bill was made on June 21.

The significant departments of FIA complex including the Cyber-crime Wing, Counter-Terrorism Wing, and Anti-Money Laundering and VCFT Wing, with 50 rooms and more than four dozen air conditioners installed.

Last week, K-Electric issued a stern warning to cut off electricity

to the departments of the Sindh government over remaining dues amounting to billions of rupees.

Sources close to the development revealed that the Government of Sindh and the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board (KWSB) have not made any payments to K-Electric since January.

The non-payment of dues has led to a financial crisis for K-Electric, causing significant difficulties

in network maintenance.

In response to these unpaid dues, KE issued letters to key officials, including the Sindh Secretary of Finance and the Mayor of Karachi, urging immediate payment of the outstanding electricity bills.

In May, K-Electric sent five letters to remind immediate payment of the remaining dues.

The Water and Sewerage Board alone owes K-Electric 5 billion rupees.

## PAF, Navy supporting civic agencies along IWMB to extinguish inferno at Margalla Hills: Romina

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister's Coordinator on Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam on Friday said the helicopters of Pakistan Air Force (PAF) and Pakistan Navy team were supporting the civic agencies along with Islamabad Wildlife Management Board (IWMB) to extinguish glaring inferno at Margalla Hills National Park near sector E-9. She said that there was fire at two places on Margalla Hills whereas it was of high intensity spiking up in front of E-9 Hills, a news release said.

The Chairman NDMA was contacted by the PM's Coordinator whereas a Pakistan Air Force helicopter was dispatched

to the affected area to put out the fire, she said. She added that the team of Pakistan Navy was also participating in the effort to control the fire alongside the team of Islamabad Municipal Corporation involved in the effort to smother the fire. The Sixth Aviation Squadron was also requested to send a helicopter, she said, adding, "The Ministry of Climate Change is in touch with all relevant agencies. I am monitoring the situation myself," Romina Khurshid Alam said. A second helicopter was also dispatched by Pakistan Air Force to the affected area, she added.

"I am very grateful to NDMA and Pakistan Air Force and Pakistan Navy," the PM's Coordinator said.

# MNA Naveed Amir Jeeva met Acting President of Pakistan Syed Yousuf Raza Gillani

**Kiran Asim**

MULTAN: Leader of Pakistan Peoples Party and MNA Naveed Amir Jeeva met Acting President of Pakistan Syed Yousuf Raza Gillani at Saint Secretariat Islamabad and congratulated him on his behalf and on behalf of the Christian community on his election as Acting President of Pakistan.

And also presented him with a bouquet, speaking on this occasion Acting President of Pakistan Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani Yousuf Raza Gillani has always said that women and minorities are my constituency. He will do special work near the down-trodden classes, PPP is the voice of the



deprived classes and whenever it came to power, it took practical measures for the betterment of such classes, especially the country's minority community and gave them their rights.

Serving the deprived sections and becoming their voice is the political thinking of the PPP which is being put into practice. And participation of all classes in prosperity can be ensured. The country will benefit from it including the Christian community is with PPP and Syed Yousuf Raza Gillani.

Multan. Leader of People's Party MNA Naveed Amir Jeeva is presenting a bouquet while congratulating Syed Yusuf Raza Geelani on becoming Acting President of Pakistan.

*"I does not accept Israeli and Indian cruelty and brutality and terrorism of international terrorists"*



**Asim Tanveer**

MULTAN: Our relationship with the Palestinians is a relationship of faith and belief. Muslims all over the world including Kashmir and Palestine are our brothers. If the UN remains silent on Israel's attack on the UN camp and the martyrdom of refugee women and children, it will clearly mean that human rights institutions are actually human rights abusers. Address of the speakers at the protest demonstration of Jamaat-e-Islami Multan.

Jamaat-e-Islami to express its solidarity with the Palestinians in Multan, like the rest of the country, led the protest in Multan by Amer-e Jamaat-e-Islami Multan Dr. Safdar Hashmi, Deputy Emir-e Mian Asif Ikhwan, Khawaja Asim Riaz and Hafiz Aslam.

Jamaat-e-Islami does not accept cruelty and brutality and terrorism of international terrorists. The rulers of Pakistan should at least appreciate the words of the Prime Minister. He said that the two-state solution of Palestine is not acceptable under any circumstances. There is a state, the international organizations should recognize it. Amir Jamaat-e-Islami Multan Dr. Safdar Hashmi and others said in a speech at the demonstration that Israel is committing atrocities in Palestine. But Israel is committing atrocities more than before.

## Meezan Bank and Legends Arena Join Hands to Promote Health and Fitness

**Commerce Desk**

KARACHI: Meezan Bank, Pakistan's Premier Islamic bank, has recently announced a strategic partnership with Legends Arena, a state-of-the-art sports facility in Karachi. The signing ceremony recently held at Legends Arena marks the beginning of a collaboration aimed at promoting sports, health & fitness, and community engagement.

Under this partnership, Meezan Bank cardholders will enjoy discounted access to various premium facilities at Legends Arena including cricket pitches, futsal fields, padel courts, tennis courts, badminton courts, and more. This initiative highlights the Bank's dedication to supporting the sports and physical activity sector, ensuring it remains vibrant and accessible. It will further enable the Bank to deliver opportunities for its customer base to get active.

Syed Iftikhar Ul Haq—Group Head Consumer Finance at Meezan Bank, expressed his enthusiasm about the partnership and said: "We are committed to delivering exceptional value to our customers and encouraging them to lead a healthy and active lifestyle. This partnership with Legends Arena aligns with our goal of offering unparalleled benefits to our valued cardholders and promoting a healthy lifestyle through sports and recreational activities."

Saud Ahmed, Director at Legends Arena, also shared his thoughts: "We are excited to partner with Meezan Bank and offer their cardholders access to our premium sports facilities at exclusive rates."

## Goat Competition

FAISALABAD: People displayed their goats during 26th All Pakistan Beautiful Goat Competition, at Arid Agriculture University in the city.



Photo: Online

## Exclusive Interview

# Shahzada Muhammad Ghstasp Khan: Officers in KPK have made the government departments a fiefdom

**Interview By: Nasir Ali Tanoli**

MANSEHRA: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf MNA Shahzada Muhammad Ghstasp Khan, who defeated Mian Nawaz Sharif Former Prime Minister who was the Prime Minister of Pakistan for three times, from the Manshra NA-15 seat, says that the officers have made the government departments a fiefdom.

They said that the officers in KPK should correct their Qibla or else a situation like Kashmir may arise.

In my constituency, Captain R. Safdar has taken out billions of funds in the name of development works for which tenders have not even been tendered. He has raised the question for action in the National Assembly. I want to see that the federal budget is not a cat's dream.

Prince Muhammad Gastasp Khan said that everything is pushed from outside, new departments are created within the departments of their own accord, the size of the government has been increased so much that the government is the government everywhere, thousands of government vehicles, thousands of government vehicles. Offices, thousands of new officers, every facility, privilege, everything is for them, but the people have no benefit. Prince Muhammad Ghstasp Khan said that I don't understand that an officer comes from Peshawar, then dozens of government officials, dozens of security personnel, cars like this. It seems as if a king has come. Is all this necessary? Government officials, who are employees of the people, have been made the owners of the people, and this system is hating the people from within, and the lava brewing inside the people will not be tolerated by anyone. Time can explode. He said that justice cannot be expected only from the judiciary,



officers will have to be arrested and put in jail. He said, "I will ask those who run Pakistan to have mercy on the people of Pakistan and play their role in fixing these gaps in Pakistan."

There is chaos in hospitals, there is only what they want, no one asks the patient and the people sitting above are all giving good reports. They said, look at the education department. The one who is in charge of the district is a landlord and there is no one to ask him what he wants. Solve the problems and point out what is wrong, but now I think that everyone has become one, now the people's representatives and government officers and officials have become one, they all eat together, and no one cares about the people.

Prince Mohammad Gestasp Khan said that inflation is on the rise, unemployment is rising, and the white-clad class has fallen below the parot line. All departments have been hijacked. The local government system is the biggest source of theft. These are designed to provide municipal services. Funds are not distributed to the general public. There is nothing in it for the people who run it. They said that I visited Tanaloo a few days ago, billions of rupees have been taken out in the name of many projects, but the work there has not been completed. A resolution has been presented in the assembly that whether any big project has been started with these billions of rupees, whether there have been any development works, but so far there has been no response and I will not leave these corrupt mafias, said Prince Mohammad Ghstasp Khan. There has been corruption of billions in Manshra district, he said that the people have to think now, they have to get rid of this system, they have to bring a system that gives relief to the people, they said that there should not be a system of twenty percent. There should be a system of 100% people, they said that this system strengthens only one class, they said that I am not talking about the small and big officers who are sitting in government offices, this country belongs to them. The will is their will The department has its will The administrator has his will The college has his will The school has his will In the university he is a civil body He has a benefit The general public has no benefit A scholar The ship comes, their procedure is also not right, there is a mafia sitting in every institution.

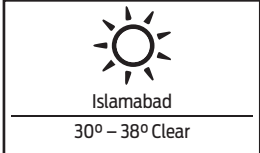


There is chaos in hospitals, there is only what they want, no one asks the patient and the people sitting above are all giving good reports. They said, look at the education department. The one who is in charge of the district is a landlord and there is no one to ask him what he wants. Solve the problems and point out what is wrong, but now I think that everyone has become one, now

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In response to a question, Prince Mohammad Gestasp Khan said that there are other countries in the world where there is development because the government provides opportunities for development, but in Pakistan it is quite the opposite because the government takes away development opportunities from the people. The opportunity is provided only to one class, it is only called the elite, it includes a few sectors which are 20 percent of this country who are eating, they are enjoying themselves and if anything is left from them, it is given to millions of people of Pakistan. He said that the water has now gone above the head, now everything is beyond the tolerance of the people and the result will be something else. They went out for and have returned with their rights, so if the problems are not resolved for the people of Pakistan, then the same problems with Kashmir will start in the cities of Pakistan, after which this process will not stop and this public sea will not stop. Everything will be washed away



**SERVICES**

**Namaz Timings**

Fajr	3:18 am
Zohr	12:05 pm
Asr	5:04 pm
Maghrib	7:13 pm
Isha	8:54 pm

**EMERGENCY**

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

**Women Police Stations**

Islamabad	9222596
Rawalpindi	9270601-20

**ENQUIRY**

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

**Rawalpindi Restaurants, Caterers, Bakers demands businessman-friendly scheme should be simplified**

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The officials of Rawalpindi Restaurants, Caterers, Sweets and Bakers Association of Pakistan said that the government should handle the Reservations of small and big businessmen on Asan Dost tax scheme. The businessman-friendly scheme should be simplified, Prime Minister of Pakistan Mian Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif should play his key role in ending the atmosphere of fear related to the tax policy between the institutions and the business community. If the concerns of small traders will be settled in easy way for tax registration, the registration process will be completed within days. Traders are responsible citizens of Pakistan, a large number of traders are already part of the tax network.

Yesterday, President of Restaurants, Caterers, Sweets and Bakers Association of Pakistan Chaudhry Mohammad Farooq, Chairman Mumtaz Ahmed, honorable members of the Core Committee, General Secretary Raja Adnan Mehmood, Vice Chairman Saleem Raza Butt, Senior Vice President Sheikh Mohammad Munir, Vice President Huzai-fa, Element, Vice President Chaudhry Khalid Mehmood, Vice President Sardar Mehmood Hussain, Information Secretary Tariq Khan, Sheikh Imran Elahi, Chaudhry Muhammad Hafeez, Chaudhry Sharafat Ali Awan, Sheikh Nayir Feroze, Naveed Abbasi in FBR Rawalpindi Office "ASAN Dost Scheme" Participated in the meeting held online with the coordinator of Naem Mir. On this occasion, regional coordinator Shahid Ghafoor Pracha along with heads of business organizations across the city also participated.

# DFP welcomes PM Sharif and COAS Gen. Asim Munir's remarks on Kashmir

Abdul Majeed Tahir

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party (DFP) has welcomed the prime minister of Pakistan Mian Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif's remarks on Kashmir.

In a statement issued here today the DFP spokesman advocate Arshad Iqbal thanked the PM Sharif for seeking world community attention towards the pain and plight of the Kashmiri and Palestinian people.

It may be recalled here that in his television address the Pak premier demand



that the international community should play its proactive role to ensure that the people of Palestine and Indian Occupied Kashmir are granted their rightful freedoms and basic human rights.

The DFP spokesman also expressed his profound gratitude to the country's military leadership that besides condemning bloodbath of people of Palestine at the hands of Zionist regime expressed complete solidarity with the Kashmiri people in their just struggle for the inalienable right to self-determination.

It may be recalled here that the military top brass during its high level meeting voiced its concern over the mistreatment of minorities, especially Muslims, in India and noted that the growing fascism was being perpetrated to achieve vested political ends.

## Called on

ISLAMABAD: German delegation led by head of development cooperation Sebastian Paust called on PM's Coordinator on Climate Change Romina Khurshid Alam at her office on Friday.



Photo: Spokesman

# 'Islamic Spirituality & Mysticism' launches, offering insightful exploration of Sufi tradition

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The unveiling of "Islamic Spirituality & Mysticism" marks a significant milestone in the literary landscape, as retired army general, Maj Gen (R) Muhammad Tahir, presents a profound introduction to Islamic Sufism. The book launch, hosted by the Nazriya Pakistan Council (NPC) at Aiwan-e-Quaid, Fatima Jinnah Park, gathered a distinguished audience, including esteemed writers, intellectuals, and media representatives.

Former Executive Director of LokVirsa, Uxi Mufti, lauded Gen Tahir's meticulous exploration of Islamic Sufism, tracing its origins, evolution, and its global impact on the dissemination of Islam. Speaking as the Chief Guest, Mufti emphasized the book's 680 pages as a testament to the author's profound sense of responsibility and dedication to the subject.

Gen Tahir's work emphasizes the Quran as the cornerstone of Sufi teachings, with the Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) serving as the guiding light. The book draws extensively from the wisdom of revered mystics such as Fariduddin Attar,



Maulana Rumi, and Imam Ghazali, advocating for the purity of self and a profound connection with the Divine.

"Islamic Spirituality & Mysticism" follows Gen Tahir's acclaimed work on Maulana Rumi, underscoring his prowess as a prolific writer in the realm of Sufi literature. The event saw engaging discussions led by notable figures such as Iftikhar Arif, Mian Muhammad Javed, and Dr. Raja Mazhar Hameed, Managing Director of the National Book Foundation (NBF), Mr Faisal Zahid Malik who is also Chairman & CEO of the Daily Pakistan Observer, former Defence Minister Lt Gen (R) Naem Lodhi,

Admiral (R) Aziz Mirza, Maj Gen (RR) Owais Mushtaq, Maj Gen (R) Muhammad Yasin, Maj Gen Muhaammad Siddique, former VC Dr Zia Najam, former Finance Secretary, Abdullah Yousaf, former Secretary ECP, Kanwar Dilshad Hussain, Nargis Nasir, Managing Director (MD) of the National Book Foundation (NBF) Dr Raja Mazhar Hameed, poet Mehboob Zafar, Col (R) Sharafat Ali and Director Media of the NPC, Hameed Qaiser.

Published by the NBF, "Islamic Spirituality & Mysticism" is priced at PKR 1740 but is available at a discounted rate of PKR 870 at the NBF Book Shop.

## Malala Yousafzai Announces Scholarship for Palestinian Students at Oxford Pakistan Programme Fundraiser



Spokesman Report

UNITED KINGDOM/ LAHORE: The youngest Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai, co-founder of Malala Fund, announced a new scholarship initiative in support of Palestinian students at the University of Oxford during her keynote address at the Oxford Pakistan Programme (OPP) Fundraiser Dinner.

Part of the Refugee Academic Futures Programme at Oxford, Malala Yousafzai highlighted how the Graduate Scholarship for Palestinian Students aims to break down the financial barriers that prevent Palestinian students from accessing Oxford's esteemed educational opportunities.

In her address, she highlighted the devastating impact of the recent conflict in Gaza on educational opportunities. "More than 80% of Gaza's schools and all universities have been damaged or destroyed," she stated.

She emphasized that this scholarship is one of many important signals that we can provide to demonstrate solidarity with Palestinian young people. "It will require a lasting ceasefire, and then years of investment in learning opportunities, to rebuild Gaza's education system. But in the interim, we must all do everything we can to lend our support to as many students as possible by sharing their stories, echoing their calls to action and funding them directly."

"This initiative is about centering and supporting young Palestinians whose voices will continue to resonate across the globe," Yousafzai emphasized. "Together, we're not just funding a scholarship; we are sending an important signal of solidarity with the Palestinian people."

The first recipient of this scholarship will begin their studies at Lady Margaret Hall at the University of Oxford, in October 2024. As part of the vibrant Oxford Pakistan Programme community, this scholar will embody resilience and change, drawing from a network of support and solidarity from their diverse peers, inspiring a brighter future for many more to come.

## Tutor briefing held at Allama Iqbal Open University



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University has appointed tutors across the country for the Spring Semester 2024 to provide excellent guidance to the thousands of students enrolled in the Matric and FA programs. The tutors are expected to perform their duties with dedication, integrity, and a commitment to national service to keep the students motivated to learn. These remarks were made by the Director of the Islamabad Regional Campus, Ahsan Shakoor, during a briefing session for tutors held the previous day.

He emphasized that tutors are university ambassadors who should encourage students unable to attend regular schools to enroll in Open University. Helping these students get on track will lead to societal improvement and ultimately contribute to the country's development. The Regional Director informed the tutors about the official WhatsApp group created by the university at the number 0304-0378832. This group will keep both students and tutors updated on the university's educational activities. Tutors can also use this WhatsApp number to quickly resolve their issues.

Ahsan Shakoor mentioned that the university's education system has become fully digitalized. Under the new system, the appointment of tutors is based purely on merit and is conducted through an automated system, with the regional offices playing a minimal role. He asserted that digitalization has made things much easier for students, and he claimed that if students strictly follow the issued guidelines, they will face no difficulties from admission to obtaining their degrees. Assistant Regional Director, Tauseef Ahmed, introduced the tutors to the awareness portal. In his briefing, he explained in detail how to use the portal, check assignments, punch results, and submit bills. At the end of the session, appointment letters and tutor bags were distributed to the 150 tutors of the Islamabad region.

# Over 1200 youth opt smoking per day in Pakistan; needs special attention of stakeholders

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) on Friday organized a special stakeholder discussion on World Tobacco Day being observed under the theme Protecting Children from Tobacco Industry Interference here to discuss strategies to prevent adolescent and youth from smoking.

Opening the discussion, Abdul Rahman, Director Operations, Punjab Food Authority (PFA) said without strict penalization and penalty to the violators no propitious outcomes were possible in stemming smoking among the youth.

"Media and communications are important tools to create impact on hazards of smoking and guiding the youth to shun misleading concepts on opting smoking through health risks. Moreover, the universities should abstain from offering leniency towards smoking in its premises," he said.

The major consumption of tobacco

was at educational institutions that could be managed through stringent punishments like business closures, he said.

Syed Ali Wasif Naqvi, Head of Policy, Advocacy and Outreach, SDPI in his presentation said as per the 2022 data, over 37 million adolescents aged 13-15 globally use tobacco. "In the WHO European Region, 11.5% of boys and 10.1% of girls in this age group are tobacco users. Notably, electronic cigarettes and nicotine pouches are increasingly popular among youth, with 12.5% of adolescents in the European Region using e-cigarettes in 2022 compared to 2% of adults," he said.

Dr Minhaj us Siraj, CEO Health Syndicate said the tobacco industry was engaging with children through labour in the tobacco fields, whereas those kids were not able to enter schools to acquire education for life. He also mentioned "green leaf disease".

He underlined that the exposure of adolescents to dangerous chemicals in tobacco processing was causing severe

health complications among them. He added that child protection from tobacco industry needs to be started from the fields.

Dr Siraj underlined that SRO 2024 implementation needs to be done in true letter and spirit, whereas his organization during the advocacy and awareness efforts had approached mosques to flag the issue in jumma sermons, and also in 2020 it was highlighted in Makkah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's Harmain Sharifain (The Two Holy Mosques).

Dr Amina Khan, Executive Director, The Initiative, said, "Generally 1 out of 3 people die of tobacco who do not quit tobacco use or smoking, whereas 1200 children between the age of 6-15 start smoking every day in Pakistan. Two out of five adult smokers start smoking at the age of 10 which rings alarm bells for all to start focusing on the toddlers."

Muhammad Aftab Ahmed, Project Manager Tobacco Control Cell at MoNHSR&C said the government is working on introducing the first smoke-



free model for youth in the federal capital to promote "no smoking" culture among the juvenile and youth.

Dr Waseem Janjua, Research Fellow, SDPI said the tobacco industry was increasing misleading tactics through advertisements promoting tobacco products that were trapping the innocent youth of the country.

Secretary General PANAHA, Sanaullah

Ghumman said the responses to challenges and crises mattered in the fight against tobacco risk and other issues.

He added that awareness and advocacy are an expensive and time-consuming laborious task that could be replaced with the option of increasing penalties for smoking and tobacco usage amongst children which could more encouraging outcomes.

"Over 100 countries have increased taxes on cigarettes making it inaccessible for children that can help protect the 1200 children at risk," he said.

In his vote of thanks, Khurram Hashmi said the session was a much-needed discussion on World No Tobacco Day that helped convene the experts for their insights that should be promoted further in the policy and community circles.

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# Last Ditch Battle

The dynamics of the political landscape in Pakistan are shifting rapidly. PTI has introduced new strategies and pieces, while the other party is making desperate moves to stay in the game, fearing the loss of its most effective and lethal piece, the judiciary that has previously demonstrated the ability to eliminate even the most powerful opponents. However, it still retains two powerful pieces: the parliament and the executive. Despite their inherent strength, these have been significantly weakened due to alleged credibility, legitimacy, and legality issues.

Earlier, the secured resourceful, all powerful and fortified king, the supra executive having three most powerful pieces; the parliament, the judiciary and the executive on its side, successfully cornered and imprisoned the PTI's king and was sure of its success until the judiciary decided to part ways and reclaimed its independence.

The incarcerated king, like a punching bag of steel, refused to bend, break, intimidate, or harass. He knew very well that he had been captured and delinked from its pawns and power pieces, but not yet defeated. He made clever defensive moves and allowed the other party to attack him relentlessly, using him like a punching bag. As a sportsman of the highest caliber, he perhaps knew that his rival would soon punch itself out, expending so much energy in its attacks that it would be exhausted, potentially leading to its own downfall or giving the opponent a chance to recover and counterattack.

The PTI, which had lost all hope in the lower or superior judiciary, suddenly found itself on another pedestal, rein-

igorating its hopes and inspiration for securing the release of its supreme leader and reactivating the PTI as a party, further strengthening its position on the political chessboard.

Shah Mahmood Qureshi's interim bail was extended in the May 9 vandalism case, Asad Umar received an extension on his interim bail in connection with the same incident, and Fawad Chaudhry was released. Hamad Azher, a young intelligent and fiery leader came out of hiding on the instruction of former Chairman PTI to lead the political side of the party, Shibli Faraz, a close associate and trusted friend of Chairman PTI was reactivated. After going through the worst form of persecution; physical, psychological, emotional, financial and economic, most of the leadership and their supporters have become resilient and are no more afraid of use of kinetic means to harass or intimidate them.

PTI's active engagement to craft a unified forum to confront the parliament and the executive on the results of the 2024 Election and to reclaim their lost mandate has added another significant dimension to the existing complexity of the political scenario.

With the government in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province, the PTI has access to the province's resources. The leadership, which has been persecuted, will find safe haven in KP province. They will have official resources to amplify their message and to execute political rallies, public meetings, and other agitational

maneuvers without the fear of arrest and persecution. Moreover, they can frustrate the federation's attempts to muzzle the PTI, at least in KP Province.

The defiant, ardent and courageous moves by the PTI is gaining a lot of traction in the traditional and social media both domestic and international. Social media has become a powerful tool for PTI to amplify its narrative and challenge the narrative of its rival. PTI leadership have learned the art and craft to connect with the public, bypassing traditional media filters and presenting their unfiltered narrative.

PTI has been using Social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram are also used from inside and outside the country despite its internet slow down and banning X to mobilize supporters, organize rallies, and create a sense of community among PTI followers, maintaining high levels of enthusiasm and participation. PTI leverages social media to counter the narratives presented by the army and other political opponents by quickly responding to allegations, sharing alternative viewpoints, and highlighting inconsistencies. Additionally, viral campaigns, including memes, videos, and hashtags, are used to spread the party's message and dominate online discussions.

The odds are even more complicated on the supra-executive side. In Balochistan and KP, insurgent and anti-federation elements harbor grudges against the army. Many political parties, skeptical of the 2024 election results, are

now openly criticizing the supra-executive. The inter-institutional sentiment, particularly after the Bahawalnagar incident, has created tension between the police and the army. Additionally, the repatriation of illegal Afghans and the enforcement of strict border control have led to unusual border tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Social media is filled with criticism of the army, which, despite the inherent strengths of the supra-executive, has posed significant challenges to it.

As the game approaches its final stages, where a winner may emerge or there might be a draw, every move becomes crucial. A draw could benefit both parties but would result in handing over the parliament and the executive to PTI as part of an agreed deal. Those who were in the parliament and executive on the basis of flawed and rigged Form 47, now assume the status of the opposition will play a new round of chess game. featuring PTI and a supra executive on one side, and PML(N), PPP, and MQM on the other. Although this scenario has a slim chance of materializing, in the realms of chess and politics, anything can happen.

Another scenario is more scary where one party wins, and the other refuses to accept defeat. This would lead the country into another prolonged chess game, potentially adding many layers of complexity on political, financial and economic challenges faced by the nation, and yet another round of miseries inflicted on the people of the country.

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

## Humanitarian facilities in Rafah are forced to close 'one after another'

With no let up in Israel's bombardment across Gaza on Thursday, UN humanitarian officials warned that the flow of vital lifesaving aid into the enclave has fallen by more than two-thirds since the Israeli military stepped up its campaign in Rafah and seized the key aid conduit. "Humanitarian facilities in Rafah are forced to close one after another... The flow of humanitarian aid supplies into Gaza, already insufficient to meet the soaring needs, has dropped by 67 per cent since 7 May," reported the UN aid coordination office, OCHA, amid reports that kitchens, clinics and hospitals are shutting down.

Until Israeli troops seized and closed the Rafah border crossing in the very south of the Strip, it had been the key entry point for food, water, fuel and medicine into Gaza as well as the route for sick and wounded people to leave for treatment. Echoing those concerns, the UN World Food Programme (WFP) warned that there was little the agency "can currently do in Rafah, with stocks very low and mobility severely restricted". According to WFP, the West Erez crossing in northern Gaza "is functional, but not reliable". Gate 96 further south and the Erez crossing are also "inaccessible" and access is so "constrained" to southern parts of Gaza that it risks causing the same catastrophic levels of hunger witnessed in the north. The development comes as the Israeli military said that it had secured "tactical control" of a narrow 13 kilometre (eight mile) stretch of land between Gaza and Egypt. In a statement on Wednesday, an Israeli military spokesperson reportedly claimed that rocket launchers had been used to attack Israel from the Philadelphi Corridor. After nearly eight months of war, the entire population of Gaza of 2.2 million people is almost exclusively dependent on humanitarian assistance, including food. Although desperately needed supplies have been delivered on the Palestinian side of the Kerem Abu Salem, or Kerem Shalom, crossing located close to Rafah, UN humanitarians have repeatedly stressed that it is not safe to fetch them amid ongoing hostilities, impassable roads, unexploded weapons, fuel shortages and delays at checkpoints. "Adults and children are beyond exhausted from constant displacement, hunger, and fear," WFP said in its latest situation update. "They are desperate for the war to end, as are humanitarian workers on the ground, who are largely displaced and dispersed along with the people they are meant to serve." Aid officials have frequently reiterated the responsibility of Israel as the occupying power to ensure that aid reaches those who need it, in line with international humanitarian law. The UN food agency meanwhile confirmed that lifesaving aid relief and fuel from Egypt had crossed into Gaza through the Kerem Shalom crossing. "This is an important step, but we need sustained access. We need all border crossings and crossing points within Gaza to be open," it said, adding that although some commercial goods had reached the enclave, "people cannot afford the high prices". "We need more aid to enter through the south because people need dietary diversity, access to healthcare and water." In its latest update, the UN food agency said that in the north, aid teams are distributing food parcels, wheat flour, hot meals and supporting bakeries. In central areas, WFP is prioritizing hot meals to reach more people with fewer resources. It noted that faster assistance is now possible thanks to a recently introduced self-registration tool that allows people to update their location. Just four bakeries now operate in Gaza City, and one recently opened in Jabalia, providing bread in the north. Out of the 17 bakeries WFP operates in Gaza, only 11 are functioning owing to the lack of fuel and other essentials. In Rafah the healthcare situation remains perilous, with only one hospital still functional, the World Health Organization said, referring to Al Emirati Maternity Hospital.



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

## AJK, Protest and Rangers - II

Entrusted with the dual duty of safeguarding both nature and people, rangers play a crucial role in upholding law and order throughout Pakistan's expansive wilderness. Amidst the challenges posed by poaching, illegal logging, land invasion, and environmental degradation, rangers stand as frontline defenders, steadfast in their commitment to enforcing the rule of law and conserving the nation's natural heritage for future generations.

At the heart of their mission, rangers are charged with enforcing laws and regulations designed to preserve biodiversity, protect natural resources, and combat wildlife exploitation. This encompasses patrolling protected areas such as national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, and forest reserves to deter and apprehend poachers, illegal loggers, and other perpetrators of environmental crimes. Through surveillance, intelligence gathering, and law enforcement operations, rangers disrupt illicit activities that threaten Pakistan's ecological balance and natural landscapes' integrity.

Moreover, rangers play a pivotal role in raising environmental awareness and educating local communities, nurturing a culture of conservation and sustainable resource management. Through outreach initiatives, community engagement programs, and capacity-building workshops, rangers empower communities to become custodians of their natural resources, forging partnerships based on mutual respect, trust, and shared responsibility for environmental protection. By bridging government agencies, civil society organizations, and grassroots communities, rangers promote collaboration and collective action toward environmental sustainability.

In addition to their conservation efforts, rangers are entrusted with maintaining law

and order in remote and often inaccessible regions of the country. Operating in challenging terrain and conditions, rangers serve as a visible symbol of authority, deterring criminal activities, and providing security to local communities. Whether combating illegal timber smuggling, preventing land encroachment, or responding to natural disasters, rangers exhibit bravery, dedication, and professionalism in the face of adversity, earning the respect and admiration of those they serve.

Furthermore, rangers play a crucial role in border security and national defense. Rangers collaborate closely with law enforcement agencies and military units to patrol sensitive border zones, monitor cross-border activities, and intercept the smuggling of illicit goods, weapons, and drugs. Through their vigilant presence along Pakistan's borders, rangers bolster the nation's security and sovereignty, fortifying defenses against external threats and upholding the integrity of territorial boundaries.

Despite their invaluable service, rangers frequently confront substantial challenges and risks in the execution of their duties. From armed encounters with poachers to encounters with perilous wildlife, rangers operate in environments fraught with tension, where the stakes often involve life and death. Furthermore, inadequate funding, insufficient training, and limited resources present hurdles to effective law enforcement and conservation endeavors, adding further pressure on ranger teams.

From countering terrorism to addressing civil unrest and preserving peace in urban centers, the Rangers have frequently been called upon to serve on the front lines of law enforcement, ensuring the safety and security of Pakistan's populace and safeguarding its borders. Karachi, the country's largest city and economic nucleus, has long grappled with issues of violent crime,

terrorism, and political instability. In response to escalating violence and criminal activities, the Rangers have been deployed to execute targeted counterterrorism operations in collaboration with local law enforcement agencies. Through intelligence-driven raids, search operations, and focused arrests, the Rangers have disrupted terrorist networks, dismantled criminal syndicates, and restored a semblance of peace and security to Karachi's streets.

During periods of civil unrest and political turmoil, the Rangers have been tasked with maintaining peace and order, ensuring public safety, and safeguarding critical infrastructure. Amid protests, riots, or large-scale demonstrations, the Rangers collaborate with local law enforcement agencies to ensure protester safety, prevent violence, and enforce curfews or limitations on public assemblies. By maintaining a visible presence and exercising restraint, the Rangers aid in de-escalating tensions and reinstating normalcy in affected areas.

As Pakistan's capital city, Islamabad serves as a focal point for political engagements, diplomatic missions, and governmental functions. To ensure the security of sensitive installations and diplomatic compounds, the Pakistan Rangers have been deployed to carry out security operations, perimeter patrols, and surveillance activities. Through upholding a secure environment, the Rangers contribute to the efficient functioning of governmental operations and diplomatic relations in the capital.

Turning to recent events in AJK, the formation of the Awami Action Committee several months ago aimed to address public grievances in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). Their key demands included subsidies on flour, electricity priced at production rates, and the cessation of privileges for the elite. To advocate for these demands, the Awami Action Committee announced a long march to Muzaffarabad. Acting responsibly, the AJK Government effectively managed the situation.

*To be continued*

## Loss of a Visionary Leader Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi's Unwavering Commitment to Peace - I

**Dr. Muhammad Shahzad Ashfaq**

The loss of a visionary leader is always a great tragedy, and the passing of Abraham Rasiye is no exception. As a passionate advocate peace and reconciliation in his community, Raisi's unwavering commitment to finding a peaceful solution to conflicts has left a lasting impact on all those who knew him. Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi was a man of principle and conviction, someone who truly believed in dialogue and understanding resolve even the entrenched disputes. Born and raised in a conflict-ridden region, he witnessed firsthand the devastating effects of violence and division on his community. Rasiye to dedicate his life to promoting peace and reconciliation.

Raisi approach of peacebuilding have characterized by his deep empathy and respect for all parties in a conflict. He understood that true reconciliation can only be achieved through dialogue and understanding, and he worked tirelessly to bring people together to find common ground. His unyielding commitment peace was evident in aspects of his work, from his advocacy for non-violent conflict resolution to his efforts to bridge the divide between different ethnic and religious groups.

Raisi's most remarkable qualities his ability to inspire to join him in quest for peace. His unwavering dedication and infectious enthusiasm touched the hearts of all those who knew him, and he was able to build bridges between people who had been divided for generations. Raisi's leadership and guidance were instrumental in bringing about positive change in

his community, and his legacy will continue to inspire future generations to work towards a more peaceful and harmonious world. The loss of Ebrahim Raisi is truly a great loss for all those who knew him. His visionary leadership, unwavering commitment to peace, and tireless efforts to build bridges conflicting parties have left an indelible mark on his community. Ebrahim Raisi was not afraid to take on difficult challenges or confront difficult situations. He was always willing to listen to different perspectives and find common ground. His ability to bring people together, even in the most divisive of situations, was a testament to his commitment to peace and unity. Ebrahim Raisi tireless efforts to build bridges between conflicting parties have had a lasting impact on his community. His ability to facilitate dialogue, mediate disputes, and find common ground helped to foster understanding and cooperation among different groups. He was always willing to put in the time and effort to help others overcome their differences and work towards a brighter future.

Raisi's journey as a mediator started many years ago when he witnessed the destructive effects of conflict on his community. Instead of standing by and watching, he took it upon himself to bring people together, to listen to their grievances, and to find common ground. Raisi understood that true healing and reconciliation could only come through dialogue and empathy, and he made it his mission facilitate that process. One of the key aspects of Raisi's work as a mediator is his to remain impartial and objective in the face of strong emotions and conflicting interests. He listens to all sides of the story without judgment, allowing each party to express their concerns and grievances openly and honestly.

*To be continued*

# PM Shehbaz Sharif will pay an official visit to China

Xinhua

BEIJING: From June 3 to 5, at the invitation of Member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi, Türkiye's Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan will pay an official visit to China.

Associated Press of Pakistan: A follow-up question on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's visit to China. Could you share some detail of his visit? And how does China view the current relations between Pakistan and China? And what is China's expectation for the visit?

Mao Ning: This is Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's first visit to China after the new Pakistani government came into office this year. During his visit, President Xi Jinping, Premier Li Qiang and Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress Zhao Leji will meet or have talks with him. The leaders of the



two countries will have an in-depth exchange of views on China-Pakistan relations and issues of mutual interest, and jointly draw up a blueprint for the growth of bilateral relations. In addition to Beijing, Prime Minister Sheh-

baz Sharif will visit Guangdong and Shaanxi.

China and Pakistan are all-weather strategic cooperative partners and ironclad friends. Our friendship has stood the test of time and remained rock-solid and—to use a Chinese expression—“steady as Mount Tai.” Under the guidance of the leaders of the two countries, China and Pakistan have in recent years had close high-level exchanges, steadily advanced practical cooperation, conducted fruitful and high-quality cooperation on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, and maintained sound communication and coordination in international and regional affairs. China stands ready to work with Pakistan through this visit to make greater progress in our all-weather strategic cooperative partnership and take new steps in the building of an even closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future in the new era.

## Ambassador of Pakistan to EU, Belgium, and Luxembourg Visits Brussels Parliament



Spokesman Report

BRUSSELS: Her Excellency Amna Baloch, the Ambassador of Pakistan to the European Union, Belgium, and Luxembourg, visited the Brussels Parliament today. On her arrival, she was warmly received by Carla Dejonghe, MP of the Brussels Parliament; Lamia Khan, Member of the Council of Koelberg; and Martine Raets, Chief of Cabinet of the Vice-President of the Brussels Parliament.

During her visit, Ambassador Baloch was given a tour of the parliamentary building and was provided with a comprehensive briefing on the rich historical background. She expressed her admiration for the architectural grandeur and historical significance of the building.

Ambassador Baloch thanked the Deputy Speaker Carla Dejonghe, Lamia Khan, and Martine Raets for their hospitality and candid exchange of ideas. She emphasized the importance of strengthening people-to-people ties and fostering mutual understanding between Pakistan and Belgium.

Officers from the Embassy of Pakistan also accompanied the Ambassador Baloch during her visit.

## Rebuilding Together: Flood-hit communities regain access to healthcare – Thanks to WHO-Japan Partnership



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: WHO Pakistan capped off a successful project with a ceremony thanking Japan for their vital support. Held at the WHO Islamabad Office, the event celebrated the “Rebuilding Together” initiative that revitalized healthcare infrastructure in flood-stricken areas. Japan's Ambassador to Pakistan, H. E. Ambassador Mr. Wada Mitsuhiro, and other dignitaries joined to celebrate the successful completion of the Project.

The devastating monsoon rains that struck Pakistan between mid-July and mid-August 2022 resulted in unprecedented flooding, impacting millions of lives across Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, and Sindh provinces. Over 600,000 people were displaced, 1.9 million houses damaged, and extensive agricultural losses incurred. The healthcare infrastructure was severely affected, with over 2,000 health facilities damaged. The financial assistance from the government and the people of Japan enabled WHO to timely respond to communicable disease outbreaks and enhance access to essential healthcare through revitalization of damaged healthcare facilities.

In a collaborative effort to strengthen healthcare delivery in Pakistan, WHO has renovated 462 healthcare facilities and provided them with essential equipment and supplies of which 240 have been rehabilitated through Japan's assistance. These facilities are now managed by the government health authorities, ensuring continued service provision. To empower local healthcare professionals for long-term sustainability, WHO has also invested in capacity building of service providers in various aspects of healthcare delivery including disease surveillance and outbreak response. Dr Luo Dapeng, WHO Representative and Head of Mission in Pakistan, in his welcome remarks, acknowledged the remarkable support by the government and people of Japan stating “We are extremely grateful for the invaluable support from the Government and people of Japan. Their generous contribution has been instrumental in restoring access to essential healthcare for vulnerable communities affected by the floods. This collaborative effort exemplifies the importance of international partnerships in building resilient healthcare systems.”

His Excellency Ambassador Mr. Wada Mitsuhiro appreciated WHO Pakistan's work and support to the government of Pakistan, noting that “The government of Japan is committed to “Leave No One's Health Behind” towards achieving the Universal Health Coverage. Global Health is central to Japan's Development Cooperation, and we consider it to be the fundamental pillar of sustainable development.”

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Soofia Yunus, Deputy Director General, Health, Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination highlighted the timely support provided by the Government of Japan, which enabled us (Government of Pakistan) to reach millions of people in Pakistan. She expressed her gratitude to the Japanese government, while also acknowledging the crucial support provided by the World Health Organization (WHO) during the devastating floods. She further emphasized that the Ministry of National Health Services is looking forward to continuing this collaboration in future.

WHO Pakistan remains committed to working alongside the Pakistani government and other stakeholders to further strengthen the country's health system.

## Group Photo

LONDON: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi in a group photo with Home Secretary of UK James Cleverly in London on Friday.



Photo: Spokesman

## India heatwave claims over 30 lives, including election officials

At least 33 people, including election officials on duty, died of suspected heatstroke in India's states of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Odisha on Friday, and the heatwave in the region is expected to continue until Saturday, authorities said.

India has been experiencing a blisteringly hot summer and a part of the capital Delhi recorded the country's highest ever temperature at 52.9 degrees Celsius (127.22°F) this week, though that may be revised with the weather department checking the sensors of the weather station that registered the reading.

While temperatures in northwest and central India are expected to fall in the coming days, the prevailing heatwave over east India is likely to continue for two days, said the India Meteorological Department (IMD), which declares a heatwave when the temperature is 4.5 C to 6.4 C higher than normal.

# Investment at the cost of letting people die?

A much needed tax requested by civil society which could save lives in Pakistan.

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The 2024-25 budget formulation is at its full swing. The beverage industry is using traditional seductive tactics on the name of foreign investment and exports to Pakistani policy makers to escape taxes. The civil society of Pakistan and health professionals collectively rejects such tactics of the beverage industry and termed it plan for killing people by building a huge burden on the health sector and hence, economy of the country. Pakistan is a country with more than 1100 people dying daily due to diabetes and its complications, over 300 limbs amputated every day and a heart attack occurs every single minute. In a joint statement issued, they requested FBR, IMF and Ministry of Finance to increase taxes on all type of sugary drinks to 50% of the retail price.

“The cost of management of diabetes has increased to more than \$2640 million in Pakistan in 2021. Sugary drinks are among the major risk factors of diabetes, heart diseases, cancer, liver and kidney diseases” said General Dr. Masood Ur Rehman Kiani, President, Pakistan National Heart Association. “We have requested policy makers in Pakistan, to increase federal excise duty on all type of sugary drinks to reduce the



diseases burden and saving precious lives” he added.

Pakistan has low taxes on the beverage sector as compared to many other countries regionally and globally. For example, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, UAE and other gulf states have imposed 50% excise duty on sugary drinks and 100% on energy drinks. Even India has a higher tax on beverage industry than Pakistan which makes 40 percent tax in total, which is one of highest of any product in India. The WHO data shows that more than 100 countries across the globe has already imposed high taxes on sugary drinks to discourage their consumption due to consequences on public health. The low taxes in Pakistan are encouraging the beverage industry to direct their investments to Pakistan creating serious threats to public health

and economy of the country.

“While Pakistan government is taking several measures to stabilize the economy, increasing tax on sugary drinks is an evidence based and sensible strategy to not only reduce the diseases burden, but also generate significant revenue in the best public interest” said by Munawar Hussain, Consultant Food Policy Program at Global Health Advocacy Incubator. While referring to the modelling study done by the World Bank, he said “If government increases 50% federal excise duty on all sugary drinks, it will bring health gain of 8500 DALYs, economic value of USD 8.9 million to public health and USD 810 million average annual tax revenue for the next ten years” he said.

Prof. Abdul Basit, Secretary General of the Diabetic Association of Pakistan

and Head, WHO Collaborating Centre, Karachi humbly appealed to Finance Minister and Prime Minister of Pakistan for giving priority to Public health over the corporate interest by increasing FED on sugary drinks including sodas, energy drinks, juices, iced teas, flavored milk, syrups and squashes. “Pakistan is globally at top in term of prevalence of diabetes with every third adults living with the diseases. This is a serious tragedy for our country as half of these are likely to develop kidney disease” he said. “Even the countries with established health system could not treat such a huge number of people. The prevention is the only option and best approach for any of the country” he added.

The civil society representatives said that policy makers need to stay alert from the several tactics used by the beverages industry to escape taxes “The beverage industry uses many tactics to misguide the policy makers to oppose taxes increase on sugary drinks. The research from Mexico, South Africa, Peru and other countries shows that taxing sugary drinks will reduce the consumption of unhealthy beverages but increase the consumption of healthier alternatives like bottled water and unsweetened milk”, said Sana Ullah Ghumman General Secretary PANAH.

# 80-member Pakistani delegation concludes 5-day business trip in Ethiopia on high note

Spokesman Report

ADDIS ABABA: More than 80 Pakistani businessmen, traders, investors and industrialists have concluded their 5-day business trip to Ethiopia on Friday on high note, writing a new chapter in the bilateral relations of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

During their five-day visit, the Pakistani business community had successful meetings with the leadership of Ethiopia, senior officials of the FDRE Government and Ethiopian Invest-

ment Commission, and business community.

The 2nd Business and Trade Delegation took place as a follow up to the first business and trade delegation that happened last year in March.

The 2nd Business and Trade Delegation to Ethiopia had a presence of the business community from diverse economic sectors of Pakistan including agriculture and agro processing, manufacturing, mining, ICT, tourism, construction, fertilizer, oral care, pulses and spices.

The 2nd Business and Trade delegation, designed by the FDR

Ethiopia's Embassy Islamabad, included government officials and prominent businessmen and industrialists including Trade and Development Authority of Pakistan Chairman H. E. Zubair Motiwala, Presidents of Sialkot and Faisalabad Chambers of Commerce and Industry H. E. Abdul Ghafoor Malik and H. E. Dr. Khurram Tariq, respectively, President of Sundar Industry and Trade Association H. E. Malik Azhar Ali, Former President of Gujranwala Chamber of Commerce Umar Ashraf, Forward Sports Director Khawaja Masood and Chief Executive Officer of

Air Sial Fazal Jilani.

The Pakistani business community opened their business trip with a visit to the historical Adwa Victory Memorial which was followed by cultural night arranged by the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia.

H. E. Ambassador Mesganu Arega, State Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia graced the occasion as a chief guest.

The second day of their visit was the most productive as they participated in a dedicated Ethio-Pakistan Business Forum which was launched by State Minister of



Foreign Affairs H. E. Ambassador Birtukan Ayano, H. E. Chala G/meskele, Minister of Trade and Regional Integration, H. E. Hanna Arayasselassie, Ethiopia Investment Commissioner and H. E. Akilu Tadesse CEO of Industry Parks Development Cooperation.

During the business forum, the Ethiopian Investment Commission and Ethiopian Investment Holdings senior officials briefed the delegation on extraordinary business, trade and investment opportunities in Ethiopia.

The forum was followed by the Business-to-Business and Business-to-Government meetings that enabled them to foster business connections for enhancing bilateral trade between the two countries.

The business community of Pakistan visited three industrial parks including Bole Lemi, Kilinto and Adama to witness on-ground business and investment opportunities in Ethiopia. Moreover, their visits to the Ministry of Mining, the Information Network Security

Administration, Ethiopian Investment Commission and International BIG 5 Construct Ethiopia Expo were also arranged.

The trade delegation also achieved major breakthrough with signing of Memoranda of Understanding between the Ethiopian Investment Commission and the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the Sundar Industry and Trade Association.

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

**Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index**

Current	Prev. Close
75,878.47	74,836.30
Day's High	Day's Low
75,953.74	74,989.26
Index Value	Change
12,292,712,030	+ 1000.35
Percentage	Time
+1.34%	31 May, 2024 5:00 pm

**Europe: FTSE 100 Index**

Index Value	Change
8,275.38	+ 44.33
Percentage	Time
+0.54%	31 May, 4:35 pm GMT

**USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average**

Index Value	Change
38,376.95	+ 265.47
Percentage	Time
+0.70%	31 May, 2:13 pm GMT-4

**Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average**

Index Value	Change
38,487.90	+ 433.77
Percentage	Time
+1.14%	31 May, 3:15 pm GMT+9

**Open Market Forex Rates**

Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	182.2	184
Bahrain Dinar	740.48	748.48
Canadian Dollar	204	206
China Yuan	38.49	38.89
Danish Krone	40.39	40.79
Euro	299	302
Hong Kong Dollar	35.61	35.96
Indian Rupee	3.34	3.45
Japanese Yen	1.91	1.99
Kuwaiti Dinar	908.01	917.01
Malaysian Ringgit	59.18	59.78
New Zealand \$	170.57	172.57
Norwegians Krone	26.34	26.64
Omani Riyal	723.28	731.28
Qatari Riyal	76.57	77.27
Saudi Riyal	73.5	74.2
Singapore Dollar	203	205
Swedish Korona	26.13	26.43
Swiss Franc	305.12	307.62
Thai Bhat	7.57	7.72
U.A.E Dirham	75.3	76
UK Pound Sterling	348.5	352
US Dollar	277.25	280

# Govt should consider nationalising IPPs and suspend repayments to banks

**Commerce Desk**

ISLAMABAD: Former President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt, said on Friday that Pakistan finds itself in a precarious situation with its mounting debt burden.

He added that due to the discouraging economic indicators, educated people are leaving the country, and capital is also flowing out. In contrast, friendly countries are hesitant to trust Pakistan.

Shahid Rasheed Butt said that limited choices remain for the survival of our country, and the elite members of society must contribute their fair share through taxation.

In a statement issued today, the business leader said the government should consider suspending paying back bank loans and interest repayments and consider the nationalisation of IPPs.

He said that presently, we need loans to run day-to-day affairs, and expenses and salaries are also paid with loans.

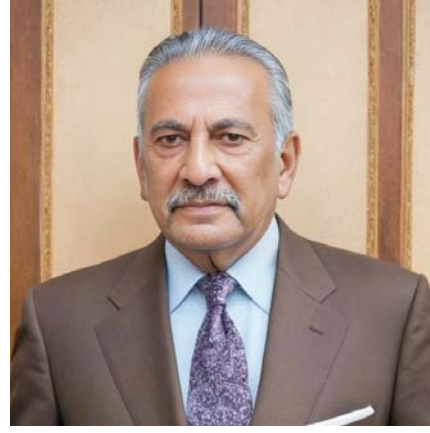
Highly educated people and capital are fleeing the country, and no friendly country is willing to trust Pakistan and invest here, he said.

If the elites are still not forced to fulfil their national responsibility, the country will be bankrupt any time soon.

Shahid Rasheed Butt said that Pakistan has few options left as the debt has reached 79 trillion rupees, of which more than 43 trillion is local and 33 trillion from foreign debt.

The interest rate is also fixed at 22%, which affects people and businesses. The government has to pay high interest on loans and has no intention of cutting expenditures.

He said that in these circumstances, it is not possible to nurture the failed government institutions, which are wasting trillions of rupees



annually at the country's cost.

He observed that supporting the elite, who have not been paying taxes since the country's

formation, is no longer possible.

Now, elites should also be taxed to save the country from bankruptcy. Banks in Pakistan are not interested in supporting the masses and promoting businesses.

Banks are only interested in making profits, which has made it the most profitable sector at the cost of the economy.

He said that economic conditions could improve if the government stops loan and interest payments to banks for one year as they have been earning billions for a long time.

In addition, the loss of power and gas sectors should be reduced by stopping free energy supply to the influential.

He said that IPP owners are ruining the country's economy for their own profit. Contracts with IPPs should not be renewed, and if they do not agree to reduce their rates, then the nationalisation of these units should be considered.

## Called on

ISLAMABAD: IMF Resident Representative to Pakistan Ms. Esther Perez Ruiz called on Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication Ms. Shaza Fatima Khawaja on Friday.



Photo: Spokesman

## K-Electric tops NEPRA's 2024 HSE Performance Evaluation Report

**Commerce Desk**

ISLAMABAD: K-Electric (KE) has been recognized as an outstanding performer in Health, Safety, and Environment (HSE) standards within the power sector according to the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority's (NEPRA) "2024 HSE Performance Evaluation Report."

The report, based on a comprehensive assessment of safety protocols and company initiatives, reflects K-Electric's significant improvements across all facets of its operations, from generation, transmission to distribution. According to the report, KE achieved impressive scores in HSE standards, scoring 96.5 in generation, 95 in transmission and 88 in distribution, above and beyond all other

distribution companies. This is a clear testament to the utility's unwavering commitment to 'safety first' and targeted investments in enabling safer workplaces.

Moonis Abdullah Alvi, CEO of K-Electric, expressed his gratitude in receiving this recognition: 'Safety, innovation, and sustainability are at the heart of KE's operations. As a customer-centric organization, we stand resolute in safeguarding the energy security that energizes our communities. Reliable and uninterrupted power supply remains the foundation of this commitment, and we will continue to deliver it with the highest safety standards. We remain adamant about continuous improvements and targeted investments to further improve operations.'

## FCEPL Leadership Visits Raast School for Educational and Nutritional Outreach

**Commerce Desk**

KARACHI: Managing Director FrieslandCampina Engro Pakistan (FCEPL), Kashan Hasan, along with senior leadership of the company, spent the day with the students of RAAST Welfare School in Qayyumabad, Karachi, as part of their ongoing collaboration to provide milk, quality education, and vocational training to underprivileged communities in Pakistan, and to mark the start of the company's World Milk Day celebrations.

While addressing the event, Kashan Hasan emphasized how such partnerships are imperative for developing a safe and secure environment for children. He stated: "Our partnership with Raast School underscores our commitment towards fostering healthy habits and educating the upcoming generation on the benefits of dairy. As a nation fighting a difficult battle against malnutrition and stunted growth, I am proud to represent a company



that is committed towards making nutrition accessible to the bright minds who will eventually shape the future of Pakistan."

During the event, FrieslandCampina Engro Pakistan's team held an educative session with the students on the impor-

tance of dairy products in their diet plans and spoke about the crucial role milk plays in every child's growth and education.

Speaking about the collaboration, Sadia Agha, General Secretary of RAAST Welfare Society stated: "In a country where 40% of children under

the age of five are stunted due to lack of consistent and proper diet, we are thrilled to be collaborating with FCEPL to ensure our students have continuous access to high nutrition dairy products which will particularly help them in their early age development and growth."

## Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry celebrates 'Youm-e-Takbeer'

**Commerce Desk**

ISLAMABAD: Member National Assembly, Anjum Aqeel Khan has said that Youm-e-Takbeer is a day of great significance for Pakistan, the successful nuclear tests conducted on this day not only demonstrated Pakistan's deterrence capabilities but also secured its sovereignty and defence against external threats. This bold move cemented Pakistan's position as a responsible nuclear power, committed to maintaining peace and stability in the region. The nation's spirit of unity and determination in the face of challenges is highlighted through this day, showcasing Pakistan's unwavering commitment to safeguarding its national interests and security.

Addressing a ceremony held in connection with the Youm-e-Takbeer here at Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry on Thursday evening he said that Youm-e-Takbeer is not just a day of celebration but a testament to Pakistan's resilience, determination, and commitment to peace and progress. It is also important to honour the sacrifices and contributions of all those who have played a role in shaping Pakistan's journey towards excellence and success, he added.

Member National Assembly Ms. Farrah Akbar while highlighting the significance of the day said that business community's support to the government is much needed to make it an economic power after the nuclear power. She said that reins of the state are

in the hands of sincere and able leadership, therefore, Inshallah, we will be able to come out of the situation for the better future.

Senior businessmen and Secretary General United Business Group Zafar Bakhtawari said that resisting the mounting external pressures, the then prime minister Nawaz Sharif went for the bold decision to test the Pakistani nukes.

He paid rich tributes to all the personalities who played a vital role in making the country a nuclear including late Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan, Mian Nawaz Sharif and other by asserting that we have to keep in our mind the fact that whenever our country starts journey towards progress some unpleasant incidents take



place and the journey stops and the same thing happened with the then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif who was compelled to go into exile for almost ten years.

ICCI Executive member Akhtar Abbasi, Group leader Blue Area Yousuf Rajput, former Senior Vice President Jamshaid Akhtar Shaikh in

their speeches also paid rich tributes to the national heroes for their struggles to attain the pride.

ICCI Executive member Rizwana Chheena presented the vote of thanks by asserting that environment for ease of doing business is need of the hour and the government must extend the

required facilities to the business community.

Those present on the occasion among other were Ms. Parveen Durrani, Ch. Mohammad Naeem, Shabbir Malik, Khalid Ch. Ch. Irfan, Mohsin Malik, Ch. Irfan, Ms. Nasira Ali (Naina), Munizeh Majid, Telmas Butt, Babar Ch.

### Nestlé Pakistan, UVAS ink research partnership on dairy nutrition, IVF in cows



**Spokesman Report**

LAHORE: Nestlé Pakistan has collaborated with University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences to extend support on research and development projects on food science, food safety, livestock, animal health and breeding programs. Research based projects will also focus on dairy innovation, nutrition profiling, qualitative and quantitative analysis of raw milk and products.

While signing the MoU, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Younus, Vice Chancellor, University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences, reiterated the need for strong academia-industry relations. "The last decade has observed a massive change in livestock sector with increased challenges to fulfill the demand for ever escalating population. There is need for commercialization of research and expertise from that can significantly contribute towards economic growth and business opportunities within country," he said, thanking Nestlé Pakistan's efforts towards academic research.

Jason Avanceña, Chief Executive Officer Nestlé Pakistan said, "Nestlé has made significant contributions to Pakistan's dairy value chain over the last three decades, and our partnership with UVAS is another milestone towards the betterment of livestock sector in Pakistan." He also emphasized on the use of In Vitro fertilization (IVF) technology for developing high genetics embryos that can improve the cows' productivity and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. "Quality research on nutrition profiling will be a step in fostering robust nutrition, health and wellness culture in Pakistan," he further added.

# Robin Uthappa believes Ireland can upset Pakistan in T20 World Cup

**A Sports**

LAHORE: Former Indian cricketer Robin Uthappa predicted that Ireland would upset Pakistan in the upcoming ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024.

The Pakistan Men's cricket team has been struggling to get on the winning track ahead of this year's mega event.

The Green Shirts played three bilateral T20I series in a bid to prepare for the T20 World Cup 2024 but could not produce the desired results.

The former champions played out a 2-2 draw against an inexperienced New Zealand side in a five-match home series before registering a 2-1 away series win over Ireland.

In their last assignment before the World Cup, Pakistan succumbed to a 2-0 defeat in the four-match away series against England.

But the biggest setback for Pakistan was the shock loss against Ireland in the first T20I.

Remember, Pakistan and Ireland are placed in Group A of the T20 World Cup



2024 and the two sides will lock horns in the mega event on June 16.

Meanwhile, former Indian batter Robin Uthappa made a massive claim that the Pakistan team will suffer an upset in the 20-team tournament, specifically due to their below-par fielding.

"It's just that Pakistan have been one of those teams where, in a tournament, especially in an ICC tournament, they have always been upset by somebody. There is one of those games.

"See, their fielding has been particularly iffy at all times. We have seen it in

the latest Asia Cup that even happened. I think, across time, in fact, Pakistan's fielding has been very shady in that sense.

"So, I think, one of those games will happen where they will not turn up. I feel a team like Ireland can certainly upset them."

Uthappa then went on to claim that Ireland would be the most likely side to upset Pakistan, highlighting their strong batting and bowling department.

"If you look at the batting order, I think it looks quite strong in itself," said Robin Uthappa.

"Their bowling attack is also pretty good. Josh Little leads the attack. He's been very impressive not just for Ireland but even when he has come to India to play in the IPL. Plays leagues around the world. He is a quick customer.

"Unassuming, Ge seems like he is not very quick. But he is actually very quick. Bowls a very heavy ball. Curtis Campher is someone who has also done really well for them. So, for me, Mark Adair is also someone who has done well."

## WTT Champions Chongqing 2024

Lin Gaoyuan of China hits a return to Anton Kallberg of Sweden during the men's singles round of 32 match at the WTT Champions Chongqing 2024 in southwest China's Chongqing, May 31, 2024.



Photo: Xinhua/Zhang Ziyu

## Shoaib Malik boosts Pakistan's 'morale' ahead of T20 World Cup

**Sports Desk**

LAHORE: Veteran all-rounder Shoaib Malik came out in support of the Pakistan Men's cricket team after their 2-0 series defeat against England just ahead of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024.

Taking to X, formerly Twitter, Malik termed the England series a tough one but highlighted how the national team dealt with similar situations in the past.

"Tough series! Remember: we've been in tough spots before & came out stronger," Shoaib wrote.

He then offered a piece of advice to Pakistan's white-ball captain Babar Azam and urged him to bat at No.3, coining the right-hand-



ed batter the "best option" to rotate the strike in the middle overs. "IMO [In my opinion] Babar should bat at no 03! We need someone in the middle overs to rotate strike, you are our best option, with your guidance our middle order will do a lot better," Malik added.

The former captain also

threw his weight behind all-rounder Shadab Khan and young wicketkeeper batter Azam Khan, who have been struggling to find the rhythm.

"Azam and Shadab, you two are vital for our team, don't lose confidence, play with heart, you are match winners. Going into the World Cup, keep your morale high,

we've got this," he concluded.

Notably, Shoaib Malik's statement came minutes after Pakistan succumbed to a 2-0 series defeat against England as they suffered a seven-wicket defeat against England in the fourth T20I at Kennington Oval, London.

The four-match series against England was Pakistan's final opportunity to gear up for the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 as the 2009 champions missed the warm-up matches for this year's mega event.

Former champions Pakistan will start their T20 World Cup 2024 campaign against the co-host United States of America (USA) on June 6 before taking on arch-rivals India in a blockbuster clash on June 9 in New York.

## Babar insists Pakistan 'on track' despite England series debacle

**Sports Desk**

LONDON: Pakistan's white-ball captain Babar Azam on Thursday, asserted that the national team is on track despite succumbing to a 2-0 series defeat against England.

Babar, while addressing the post-match press conference here after Pakistan's seven-wicket defeat against England in the fourth T20I, reflected on the national team's journey since the Asia Cup 2023 and reiterated that the team could not click.

"We are on track. But, as a team, we are not being able to click. When things change, you

need some time to get back on track. "[We have] a different support staff so we need some time to communicate with them.

"We are used to playing under different managements and we are performing as an individual but not as a team. I want us to perform as a team."

Babar Azam also termed the series defeat against England "disappointing" but remained confident that the team would perform well in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024.

"It is disappointing to lose the series," Babar said. "We needed to win the series



to go into the T20 World Cup with high spirits. The World Cup is a completely different game; we will deliver better

results in it," he added.

In the fourth T20I against England, Pakistan had a decent start to their innings as the

returning opening pair of Babar and Mohammad Rizwan added 59 runs for the first wicket before the captain perished on the final delivery of the batting powerplay.

Despite a good start, the touring side's middle-order failed to continue the momentum and crumbled against a disciplined England bowling attack.

"Undoubtedly, the batsmen were not responsible in the middle overs and lost wickets. Due to the successive fall of wickets, we couldn't achieve a big score," Babar admitted.

"The bowlers also didn't bowl well and conceded too many runs," Babar Azam added.

## Second phase of Summer Games Inter-Division hockey event from June 4-6

**Tahir Amin Malik**

LAHORE: After completing Inter-Division volleyball event of Summer Games 2024 quite successfully, Punjab Sports and Youth Affairs Department is going to organize second phase of Summer Games Inter-Division hockey event at the National Hockey Stadium from June 4 to 6, 2024.

It may be noted here that the competitions of Summer Games 2024 are being organized at different venues of Nishtar Park Sports Complex under the auspices of Punjab Sports and Youth Affairs Department.

The trials for the selection of players from all districts of Lahore for the Summer Games Inter-Division Hockey competition will be held on the direction of Director General Sports Punjab Pervez Iqbal at pitch-2 of National Hockey Stadium on June 1 (Saturday) at 3.00pm.

The trials will be conducted under the supervision of Divisional Sports Officer Lahore Rana Nadeem Anjum in which the players from all districts of Lahore Division including Kasur, Nankana Sahib, Sheikhupura and Lahore will participate.

A selection committee, which includes Olympians Tauqeer Dar, Khawaja Junaid, Mirza Waheed, and Sohail Ashraf, has been constituted for the monitoring of trials process. The second phase of Summer Games will be held from June 4 to June 6 in which hockey players from all divisions of Punjab will participate. The hockey trials of other divisions will also take place on June 1 (Saturday).

## West Indies thump Australia in T20 World Cup warm-up run-fest

**A Sports**



PORT OF SPAIN: Nicholas Pooran and Rovman Powell scored swashbuckling half-centuries and lifted West Indies to down Australia in a high-scoring ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 warm-up match here on Thursday.

Put into bat first, West Indies racked up a mammoth total of 257/4 with Pooran and Powell leading the attack.

The hosts got off to a briefly flying start to their innings as they lost Shai Hope in the third over with 38 runs on the board. Hope scored 14 off eight deliveries.

Wicketkeeper batter Pooran then joined Johnson Charles in the middle and launched a belligerent attack on the Australian bowlers.

Pooran smashed five fours and eight sixes on his way to an astonishing 75-run knock from 25 deliveries before being dismissed by Adam Zampa in the 10th over.

Charles was then involved in another partnership for the West Indies when he added 48 runs for the third wicket with skipper Rovman Powell before finally perishing in the 14th over.

The opening batter scored an anchoring 40 off 31 deliveries with the help of six fours.

Powell was quick to follow as he perished in the 16th over soon after bringing up his quickfire half-century.

He scored 52 off 25 balls with the help of eight boundaries including four sixes.

Sherfane Rutherford then took the reigns of West Indies' batting charge with a blistering cameo and scored an unbeaten 47 off 18 balls, bolstering the home team's total past the 250-run mark in the allotted overs.

Adam Zampa bagged two wickets for Australia but was expensive while Ashton Agar and Tim David made one scalp each.

In response, Australia finished at 222/7 despite a brisk half-century from Josh Inglis.

The right-handed batter top-scored for Australia with a 30-ball 55 with the help of five fours and four sixes while batting at No.4.

Besides him, Nathan Ellis (38), Ashton Agar (28), Tim David and Matthew Wade (25) made notable contributions for the former champions but their efforts were not enough to steer them over the line.

Gudakesh Motie and Alzarri Joseph led the bowling attack for the West Indies with two wickets each while Obed McCoy, Shamar Joseph and Akeal Hosein chipped in with a wicket apiece.

## Islamabad, Rangers move in Memorial Basketball semis

**Sports Desk**

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad and Punjab Rangers have qualified for the semifinals of All Pakistan Muhammad Majid and Abdul Nasir Memorial Basketball Tournament at Siddique Memon Sports Complex, Karachi.

On the fourth day of the pool round matches, Islamabad boys continued their journey of another consecutive victory in the tournament pool round matches by defeating Sindh Yellow by 52-14 points to qualify for the semifinal round, said a press release.

Ali Kazmi was the top player for Islamabad, who scored 19 points while Momin Javed scored 15 points. For Sindh Yellow Daniyal Khan scored 08 points for the losing team.

Top team Wapda also continued their outstanding performance to move ahead in top-four stage along with PAF, Rangers and Islamabad, as they thrashed Punjab Rangers in the last pool round match by 82-71 points. Kaleemullah and Muhammad Israr scored 22 and 17 points respectively. Sindh Whites outclassed Balochistan in the third match on day four by 87-46 points.

Pakistan Wapda would face Islamabad in the first semifinal on Saturday while Pakistan Air Force will play Punjab Rangers in the second semifinal of the tournament.

## Will Shaheen Afridi skip The Hundred 2024?

Amid reports of talks with the Global T20 Canada, Pakistan's left-arm pacer Shaheen Afridi is likely to withdraw from the upcoming edition of The Hundred, which is set to begin from July 23 in England, The Telegraph reported Friday.

Afridi, who represented Welsh Fire in the 2023 edition, was retained by the same franchise in the £100,000 category for this year's edition but the Pakistani pacer will not be participating in the league.

As per the report, the Global T20 Canada is also trying to sign Shaheen for their next edition. Both leagues are likely to collide but since Global T20's window is much shorter than The Hundred's, the left-arm pacer will get more family time should he opt to play in Canada.

## Migration

Many civilians have left Rafah, taking their belongings on their shoulders, in cars or on donkey-drawn carts.



Photo: Online

## Biden urges Hamas to accept latest hostage deal

News Desk

WASHINGTON DC: President Joe Biden said Friday that Hamas is "no longer capable" of carrying out another large-scale attack on Israel as he urged Israelis and Hamas to come to a deal to release remaining hostages for an extended ceasefire.

Biden addressed the nearly eight-month Israel-Hamas war as the Israeli military confirmed on Friday that its forces are now operating in central parts of Rafah in its expanding offensive in the southern Gaza city. "This is truly a decisive moment," Biden said as he spoke of a three-phase deal

that Israeli officials have offered Hamas.

"Israel has made their proposal. Hamas says it wants a ceasefire. This deal is an opportunity to prove whether they really mean it."

Israel launched its war in Gaza after Hamas' Oct. 7 attack in which militants stormed into southern Isra-

el, killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducted about 250.

Israel says around 100 hostages are still captive in Gaza, along with the bodies of around 30 more.

Ceasefire talks ground to a halt at the beginning of the month after a major push by the US and other mediators to

secure a deal, in hopes of averting a planned Israeli invasion of the southern city of Rafah.

The talks were stymied by a central sticking point: Hamas demands guarantees that the war will end and Israeli troops will withdraw from Gaza completely in return for a release of all the hostages, a demand Israel rejects.

## India must stop campaign to suppress political activists, intimidate Kashmiris: FO spokesman

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Friday reiterated its call for India to stop its ongoing campaign to suppress political activists and intimidate the Kashmiri public in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. "The headquarters of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference in Srinagar also remains sealed. India must stop its ongoing campaign to suppress political activists and intimidate the Kashmiri public. The people of Jammu and Kashmir should be able to freely exercise their right to self-determination as enshrined in the relevant UN Security Council resolutions," the Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said at her weekly press briefing here.

Highlighting the unabated Indian authorities' campaign to crush dissent in IIOJK and the confiscation of properties, she told the media that earlier this week, the properties including lands and a shop of two more Kashmiri youth were

sealed in Shopian District. The Indian authorities have so far seized hundreds of properties across the occupied territory to punish Kashmiri activists, she added. The spokesperson reiterated Pakistan's resolve to continue extending political, diplomatic, and moral support to Kashmiris for the just and peaceful settlement of the dispute as per the UN Security Council resolutions. She told the media that during his visit from May 29-30, Azerbaijan's Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov met Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Acting President Yousuf Raza Gilani, besides holding in-depth talks with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar. The two sides reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthen bilateral strategic relations and broaden the scope of cooperation in all areas of mutual interests and agreed to enhance parliamentary exchanges, strengthen cultural cooperation, and promote people-to-people exchanges. The spokesperson



mentioned a symposium held by the foreign ministry in connection with Vesak Day that brought together foreign delegates, including at the ministerial level, prominent Buddhist monks, and scholars on Buddhism and inter-faith understanding. Besides showcasing Pakistan's rich cultural heritage, the event explored the dimensions of Gandharan Heritage that emerged over 3,000 years ago in Northwest Pakistan, the importance of building bridges and understanding between different commu-

nities. Spokesperson Baloch highlighted the fourth round of Pakistan-Greece Bilateral Political Consultations held on May 29 in Athens, and the sixth round of Pakistan-Hungary Bilateral Political Consultations on May 27 in Budapest. During the meetings, the respective sides agreed to further advancing high-level dialogue and cooperation, and work together on maintaining a positive trajectory in bilateral ties. She told the media that on May 29, Pakistan and St. Lucia formally established diplomatic ties at a ceremony in New York. The joint communique was signed by Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Munir Akram, and his counterpart from St. Lucia. "Over the last three years, Pakistan has established diplomatic relations with Palau, Kiribati, the Dominican Republic, St. Kitts & Nevis, and the Commonwealth of Dominica. This decision reflects Pakistan's firm commitment to enhance its diplomatic outreach and expand cooper-

ation with countries around the globe," the spokesperson remarked. Spokesperson Baloch announced that at the invitation of Chinese President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif will undertake an official visit to China from June 4-8. In Beijing, he will meet President Xi and hold delegation-level talks with Premier Li, besides meeting with Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, and heads of key government departments. The prime minister will also visit the cities of Xi'an and Shenzhen. An important aspect of Prime Minister Shehbaz's visit will be meetings with corporate executives of leading Chinese companies dealing in oil and gas, energy, ICT, and emerging technologies. In Shenzhen, he will address the Pakistan-China Business Forum with leading businesspersons, entrepreneurs, and investors from both countries. He will also visit economic and agricultural zones in China.

## IMF Representative calls on Minister of State for IT Shaza Fatima

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Resident Representative of International Monetary Fund (IMF) to Pakistan Ms. Esther Perez Ruiz called on Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication Ms. Shaza Fatima Khawaja here on Friday.

Detailed views were exchanged on

digitalization process in Pakistan and IT and Telecommunication sector.

While talking to the IMF Representative, Shaza Fatima said that steps are on for digital transformation in the country. Connectivity, fiberization and availability of digital devices are the foundation of digitalization, she said.

The Minister of State for IT said that government was committed to transform Pakistan into digital economy under the National Digitalization Plan. Digitalization of health, education and agriculture sectors is pivotal for the uplift of the country.

About IT sector Shaza Fatima said IT sector of Pakistan has great poten-

tial as the sector is full of opportunities.

She noted that the IT exports of Pakistan were increasing. Under the vision of the Prime Minister private sector is being fully facilitated, she maintained. Shaza Fatima said Ministry of IT was taking alongside the IT and Telecom industry.

## BOI to simplify registration for new businesses: A. Aleem Khan

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Board of Investment, Privatization and Communications Abdul Aleem Khan while presiding over a special meeting on Ease of Doing Business has directed that the Board of Investment should simplify the registration process for new businesses. He added that it is vital to clarify the features of the Pakistan Business Portal which will soon be presented to the Prime Minister. Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan

further said that FBR and Security Exchange Commission should ensure online facilities at one window so that all relevant departments can facilitate business community including registration for starting their new setup. Abdul Aleem Khan said that it should be ensured that unnecessary rules and regulations hindering investment are removed so that the policy of accelerating investment can be implemented. Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan directed the Board of Investment to keep in view the important models

for Pakistan Business Portal including other countries and emphasized to create a policy framework according to the current requirements apart from the traditional methods. Federal Minister said that domestic and foreign investors should not be entangled in unnecessary formalities as the Ease of Doing Business model also aims at full cooperation by FBR, Securities of Exchange Commission and other departments to the investors. Abdul Aleem Khan indicated that new business and investment opportunities will

not only increase review and national ex chequer but also leave positive results on providing job facilities to the Youth. Federal Minister of Commerce Jam Kamal Khan also attended this meeting on Ease of Doing Business in which senior officers of the Board of Investment and other relevant departments gave a detail briefing to Federal Minister for Investment, Privatization and Communications Abdul Aleem Khan and apprised about their homework on Pakistan Business Portal, One Window and online facilities.

## Ringleader among two terrorists killed in Hassan Khel operation

City Desk

RAWALPINDI: The Pakistan Army on Friday killed two terrorists including a ring leader and injured as many during an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in Hassan Khel area of Peshawar District on the night of May 30 and 31. The Army troops, during the operation, effectively engaged the terrorists as result of which their ringleader Ayaz alias Muhammad and his accomplice Ahmedy alias Koochi were killed, and two others were injured, an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release said.

The killed terrorists remained actively involved in numerous terror-



ist activities against security forces and killing of innocent civilians, whereas weapons, ammunition and explosives were also recovered from them. Sanitization of the area was being carried out to eliminate any other terrorist if found in the area. "Locals of the area have appreciated the operation," the ISPR said, adding the security forces were determined to wipe out the menace of terrorism from the country.

## SC to hear Behria Town Murree case on June 4

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: A three-member bench of Supreme Court would hear the Behria Town Murree Project case on June 3.

Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa would preside the hearing while Justice Irfan Sadiq and Justice Nacem Akhtar Awan would be part of the bench.

The Registrar Office of the top



court has served notices to Behria Town and other respondents.

## CM directs concerned quarters to evolve mechanism for proper utilization of social security funds



Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sardar Ali Amin Khan Gandapur has directed the quarters concerned to devise a sustainable model to ensure utilization of social security funds in a proper manner. The CM has decided to arrange a collective marriage programme of 4000 deserving females hailing from the province and directed the concerned authorities to complete homework in this regard. Under the program, a grant of Rs 0.2 million per female would be provided from the dowry fund, he said. The CM issued the instructions during the meeting held here at Chief Minister's House on Friday. MNA Dr Amjad Ali Khan, Secretary Social Welfare Nazir Hussain Shah, Special Secretaries to Chief Minister Waqar Ali Khan, Masood Younis and other relevant officials also attended the meeting.

The CM has directed the concerned authorities to collect the actual data of deserving girls from all the districts and to provide quota in proportion to the population of each district, so that the decision regarding mass marriage program would be implemented in a transparent manner. "We need to have an efficient scrutiny mechanism in order to ensure that only deserving girls would be selected for that programme," he said. He directed that members of the committees to be formed at Village Council level and that should be selected purely on merit. He made it clear that political recommendations or personal likes and dislikes would not be tolerated in the disbursement of social security funds. Each and every penny of Zakat funds must be spent on the wellbeing of needy and poor people, by giving priority to orphans, widows and persons with disabilities, he instructed.

## IMF proposes spike in GST and...

Continued from Page 1

could generate an additional 180 billion rupees in revenue for the FBR over the next year.

The IMF has also proposed increasing the tax rate for high-income earners and raising the maximum rate from 30% to 40%. Additionally, the IMF suggests reducing the number of tax slabs for government employees from seven to four.

The IMF has proposed eliminating the fifth schedule from the Sales Tax Act, which relates to zero-rating, and bringing all items except exports under the standard GST rate. The IMF also suggests removing unnecessary tax exemptions in the sixth schedule and limiting tax concessions under the eighth schedule to only essential food items and health and education-related goods. The proposed tax rate for these items would be around 10%.

## 'PTI founder unaware of..'

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Imran Khan is in jail and cannot upload videos on X himself. He added that the PTI social media team, which operates from United States (US), handles the party's accounts.

The PTI spokesperson clarified that Imran Khan was unaware of the video related to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and the party's assembly members may have retweeted the video in their "personal capacity". He also stated that an inquiry will be conducted within

the party regarding the video issue. The statement came after Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Cyber-crime Cell wrote a letter to the authorities seeking access to incarcerated PTI founder Imran Khan to inquire about a 'controversial' post from his X handle.

The text of the letter stated that anti-state propaganda was disseminated through the official social media account of the PTI founder, targeting institutions, particularly the Pakistan Army.