



Balochistan's railway routes massive overhaul initiatives underway: Azam Tarar

Federal Minister for Law and Justice, Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar on Monday told the Senate that the country's economic uplift was linked to development of Balochistan and therefore, a massive overhaul initiative were under different phases of feasibility to be kicked off through joint ventures and direct foreign investment endeavours.



'Agriculture Sector contributing 2.9% to GDP, 37.4% to total livelihoods in country'

Federal Minister for Law and Justice, Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar on Monday told the Upper House of the Parliament that despite adverse of climate change agriculture sector was contributing 2.9% to national GDP and as per livelihood index had 37.4% share in the total livelihoods generated across the country. He was responding to the motion and queries made by Senator Dr Zarqa Suharwardy Taimur... (Details on Page 8)

Simultaneously published from Islamabad, Lahore and Multan

Funeral

RAI KALAN, District Kasur: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday participates in the burial of Shaheed Captain Muhammad Faraz Ilyas who was martyred in Lakki Marwat.



Photo: PID

President directs payment of compensation to 1500 affectees of Diamer-Bhasha Dam

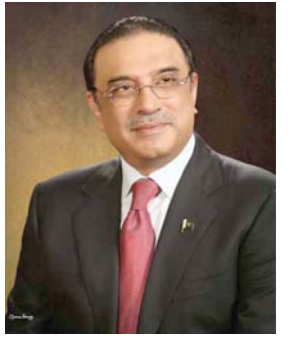
City Desk

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Monday directed the authorities concerned to ensure the payment of compensation worth Rs 4.7 million each to 1500 affectees of the Diamer-Bhasha Dam.

The president said this in separate meetings with Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Engineer Amir Muqam and Energy Minister Dr Musaddik Malik, according to a President House press release.

Highlighting the necessity of establishment of a medical college and hospital in GB, he instructed the relevant departments to take measures on priority for the purpose.

Besides, he also directed for extending the scope of Benazir



Income Support Programme (BISP) for the people of GB to provide them healthcare facilities.

A few days ago, the GB governor and the Members of GB Council had apprised the president of the issues faced by the GB people. The president had also assured them for the measures to help resolve the problems.

Shehbaz Sharif felicitates Modi on swearing in as Indian prime minister

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday felicitated Narendra Modi as he took oath of the office of the Prime Minister of India. "Felicitations to Narendra Modi on taking oath as the Prime Minister of India," the prime minister wrote on his X timeline.

Modi was sworn in as Indian PM on Sunday for a third term after the BJP-led Nation-



al Democratic Alliance won the general election with 293 seats - a much lower margin than predicted, contrary to the 234 seats won by now resurged opposition.

PM attends Namaz-e-Janaza of Shaheed Captain Faraz Ilyas

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Monday attended Namaz-e-Janaza of Shaheed Captain Faraz Ilyas in Kasur who was martyred in an improvised explosive device (IED) attack in District Lakki Marwat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The funeral prayer was attended by Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaulah Tarar,

IG Police Punjab and a number of senior military officers, civil authorities and residents.

The prime minister also met with the parents of shaheed captain and expressed condolences.

He announced to transform the native village of martyred officer as model village and renamed it as "Faraz Ilyas Shaheed".

He told the parents that the sacrifice of their son would not

go in vain and prayed for the bereaved family to bear the loss with fortitude.

Under the Quranic teachings, a shaheed had an elevated place in Jannah, he said, adding that a large number of Jawans of armed forces had laid down their lives for the motherland.

The prime minister said that the nation was proud of its brave sons and the coward terrorists could not succeed in shaking their

strong resolve.

Separately, on X account, the prime minister said that he was deeply saddened by the martyrdom of Pak Army personnel including a captain in a targeted attack in District Lakki Marwat.

"The sacrifices of our brave soldiers and citizens is a debt on us that we must repay by relentlessly eliminating terrorism from our nation. Heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families," he

further posted.

The late captain was laid to rest with complete military honours. The prime minister offered Fateha at his grave and placed a flower wreath.

He also prayed for the high ranks of the departed soul.

Shaheed Captain Faraz Ilyas, 26-year-old, belonged to village Rai Kalan, Kasur who laid down his life valiantly while performing his duties in Lakki Marwat.

NA passes four bills including PBC (Amendment) Bill, 2024

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly here on Monday passed four bills including "the Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation (Amendment) Bill, 2024."

Moving the bill, Federal Minister for Law Azam Nazeer Tarar said the PBC Amendment bill is aimed at giving more autonomy to the board of Radio Pakistan to improve its governance and performance.

The other bills passed by the house including, "The Pakistan National Shipping Corporation (Amendment) Bill, 2024", "The Pakistan Postal Services Management Board (Amendment) Bill, 2024" and "The National Highway Authority (Amendment) Bill, 2024."

PTI founder accepts SC's advice to hold talks with political parties

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: PTI founder Imran Khan has accepted the Supreme Court's (SC) advice and is ready to 'conditionally' engage in talks with all political parties, including PML-N and PPP.

In this regard, the incarcerated ex-premier will write a letter to the Supreme Court seeking its guidance on the matter.

The party leadership has been instructed to prepare a draft of the letter, which will highlight the current political and economic situation in the country and the challenges it faces.

The letter will also demand fair trials for PTI leaders and workers who are incarcerated or facing cases regarding May 9 violence and others. The party's legal committee will meet today to finalise the draft of the letter.

Insiders told that PTI is willing

to engage in serious and meaningful dialogue with 'authorised representatives' of political parties. The Supreme Court of Pakistan had advised PTI founder Imran Khan to initiate dialogue with politicians, as Imran Khan spoke in the court regarding accountability laws.

The PTI founder addressed the court via a video link from the Adiala Central Jail during the hearing of the government's intra-court appeal against the Supreme Court decision in the case pertaining to the amendments to the National Accountability Ordinance (NAO).

Imran Khan addressed the court for approximately 35 minutes in front of the larger bench, headed by Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa. Justices Aminuddin Khan, Jamal Khan Mandokhel, Athar Minallah, and Syed Hasan Azhar Rizvi also sat on the bench.

During his address, the former premier alleged that the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) was not under his control in PTI tenure.

He emphasised that when there is a disagreement between the government and the opposition regarding the appointment of the NAB chairman, a designated 'third umpire' steps in to make the appointment.

Justice Mandokhel said that Imran's statement was scaring him. He told the PTI founder that if the situation was so precarious, then "sit down with your fellow politicians and resolve the issues".

"Lead your group. You're looking up to us and we're looking up to you," Justice Mandokhel told the PTI founder. The judge further stated that if, God forbid, something were to happen to the country, the responsibility would lie with the politicians, not the judges.

Pakistan all set to present budget on June 12

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The federal government cleared the air on the presentation of the budget as the fiscal year 2024-25 will be tabled in Parliament on June 12 (Wednesday), a state-run news agency reported.

Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb will present the budget which has been formulated while 'considering' the existing challenges being faced by the economy at domestic and international fronts.

"The budget will be aimed at mitigating the people's sufferings, transforming the agriculture sector, promoting information technology (IT), and boosting exports," the

Continued on Page 8

Omar alleges judge was taken hostage by agencies before his court appearance

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly Omar Ayub has alleged that he was prevented from

appearing in Sargodha's anti-terrorism court, claiming that the judge had been held hostage by intelligence agencies.

In his speech at the National Assembly, he said that when

he arrived at the court, a police officer blocked his path and did not allow him to enter the premises. "I informed the officer that I had a court appearance, but I was delayed for a long time. By

the time we reached the court, the gates were closed."

Ayub added that they were standing in front of the court, but their bail was revoked for non-compliance. "Our party

members' homes have been raided. I must say that this is happening to us today, and it will happen to the rest of the members tomorrow."

Continued on Page 8

Awais Leghari invites Chinese company to setup solar manufacturing plant in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Power Division Sardar Awais Ahmed Khan Leghari on Saturday invited the Chinese company LONGi Green Energy Technology Co. Ltd. to set up solar PV manufacturing plant in Pakistan.

In a meeting with President of LONGi Green Energy Company, Zhenguo Li, the minister invited him to set up the solar manufacturing plant

in Pakistan, said a statement issued by the Power Division here.

The minister briefed the Chinese company's President about the solar potential in Pakistan adding that the share of renewable energy in the country's energy mix was rapidly being increased.

Mr Zhenguo Li assured his full support to promote solar energy in Pakistan.

PM Anwar Haq says will spend people's money on welfare of the common masses

Bureau Report

DHIRKOT: Prime Minister Azad Kashmir Chaudhry Anwar Haq has said that the main purpose of good governance was to spend the people's tax money on the welfare of the common masses.

While addressing a reception hosted in his honour by Raja Mubasher Ejaz, the AJK premier said that the incumbent government achieved an important milestone by converting a loss of 16 billion rupees into a credit of 32 billion rupees.

He said that 19 billion rupees were



spent on roads. "Not a single penny of

corruption or irregularities has been reported in the entire process", the PM said. Stressing the need to end the politics of cast, class, tribalism and regionalism, the PM said that it was imperative to get ourselves free from this menace to serve people of the state in a selfless manner.

He said that removing the backwardness of the state was the responsibility of the government. He expressed the optimism that the wheel of development in the state would start to move faster soon. The PM said that tolerance and wisdom was key to solve problems. "Strength-

ening state institutions was in the larger interests of the state and its people", the PM further said. He said that 11 crores of taxes were being collected annually from the whole Azad Kashmir.

"If we refuse to fulfill our national responsibilities, it will lead us nowhere but chaos and anarchy", the PM said, adding that protest was not the panacea to every problem. He said this kind of approach would get transmitted to our coming generations. Citing the regional dynamics, the PM said that Azad Kashmir cannot afford any civil war.

Keyrings

ISLAMABAD: A vendor is displaying key rings attraction for customers at his roadside workplace in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

Jamaat-e-Islami held a rally for the rights of railway employees in the upcoming budget

Abdul Majid

FAISALABAD: Central Chief Organizer Khalid Mahmood Chaudhry, Zonal President Zaheeruddin Babar, Secretary Kazim Farooq Gul in Faisalabad in the series of nationwide rallies to get the rights of railway employees and pensioners in the upcoming budget under the auspices of Railway Premium Union.

Hundreds of railway employees under the leadership of Nuruddin, Bau Tahir, Muhammad Kashif, Sajid Imran, Chaudhry Saifur Rehman, Babar Nawaz, Chaudhry Tanveer Ahmed, Adnan Khattak, Rai Shahbaz and Malik Manzoor participated in the labor rights rally at the railway station. Jamaat-e-Islami District Faisalabad Prof. Mehboob-ul-Zaman Butt specially participated by expressing solidarity with the railway workers and announced Jamaat-e-Islami's full support for the demands of the railway



employees. Speaking on this occasion, Khalid Mahmood Chaudhry said that the railway officers and employees have brought the railway out of losses and turned it into a profitable company for the first time in the country's history, but the government has turned a blind eye to the demands of these employees.

The government has a budget of trillions of rupees to reward the people it

likes in the name of IPPs and Benazirankum Support Program, but the government does not have the budget to meet the needs of the common Pakistani. Every railway worker and officer puts their duties and responsibilities above all regional, linguistic, political prejudices and distinctions and only for the improvement of Pakistan Railways and keeping its train operation better and normal and this is their

first priority. Prime Union will continue to provide all possible support to the administration to keep the railway services normal. They have said that according to the railway charter, the railway is not a commercial but a welfare institution, welfare institutions are not based on profit and loss but for the welfare of the people are run whose performance is possible only on the financial support of the government, just as institutions like the motorway, metro, orange train, government educational institutions and hospitals provide facilities to the people with the financial support of the government, in the same way, the railways are all of Pakistan. It is an organization that provides affordable travel facilities to the public. Previous governments have used this institution as a welfare institution for their political interests, but the railways were deprived of the financial support they needed from the government.

Aman Jirga announces jihad against usurers after Eid-ul-Azha

Tariq Khan Yousafzai

TAKHT BHAI: The Aman Jirga of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, expressing deep anger and regret over the failure of the law enforcement agencies in the recent incidents of increase in underplay interest, ice selling and killings, announced Jihad against usurers and ice immediately after Eid-ul-Azha. The vendors will not be spared in any case because the moneylenders and the abominable ice peddlers have corrupted the fabric of the society and the movement and war against them will soon be launched from North Hashangar Charsadda. Bills passed by the KP Assembly. Despite this, some ministers and members of assembly are supporting usurers, usurers do not deserve any pardon, the people should take full part in this jihad with Aman Jirga in the ongoing campaign against usurers. Bacha while addressing a press conference at Takhtbhai Press Club. From which Rahimzada Bacha, Chairman of Aman Jirga



Zilla Mardan. General Secretary Malik Mujibur Rehman, General Secretary of Takhtbhai Tehsil Shams Al Qayyum. Senior Vice Chairman Abdul Razzaq Mast Khel. Fida Muhammad Khan, Asrar Bacha, Haji Basar Khan, Qaisar Khan, Bahauddin, Salahuddin, Nazim Kishore Khan, Akbar Khan, Aftab Karim, Hazrat Ali, Chairman Tehreek Tafuzat Takhtbhai Al Haj Sardaraz, Tauseef Ahmad Maidani and Altaf Tareen also expressed their views. Sayf

Kamal Shah Bacha said that recently the laborers belonging to Baizo Khar-ki area condemn the brutal murder of Mudassar son of Sher Muhammad, the suppression of criminal elements is the most important need of the hour, if the police authorities do not take action. So, with the help of the people of the area, they will launch an armed campaign against them. Regarding usury, he said that usury is a curse, because of the curse of usury, the entire society has

become hollow. are and are in debt to businessmen. Usury is a declaration of war with Allah and His Messenger. Muslims should systematically raise awareness against usury. He is active in the field against the evils, with the grace of Allah and the support of the members of the Aman Jirga, so far countless usurers have been brought to justice and many people who have come under the influence of usurers have been freed from the curse of usury. Khyber province. Drug trafficking is so common in Pakhtunkhwa and especially in Mardan, Malakand and Charsadda North Hashtnagar that now even educated youth are rapidly falling under the grip of this scourge. Jihad has been declared against the sellers, mafia, carlifters and under no circumstances will they allow anyone to disturb the peace and order situation in Pakhtunkhwa because the development of any society depends on the establishment of peace and elimination of social and social evils.

Swimming, bathing banned near water channels in Attock

Raza Naqvi

ATTOCK: The district administration Attock on Monday imposed section 144 in the Attock district to ban swimming, bathing around water spots including rivers, canals, water channels, streams and small dams to avert casualties. This decision was taken as after current heatwave, people thronged at water spots for swimming and bathing while water level has already increased considerably. According to a handout issued by the district information office, the order has come into force instantly and will remain in force for 90 days. Strict action would be taken against people found violating the ban. The order said in exercise of powers under Section 144 CrPC 1898, swimming activities were being prohibited in rivers, nullahs, streams and tributaries. The order shall come into force with immediate effect and remain in force for a period of two months

Man, woman killed over honour in Attock

Raza Naqvi

ATTOCK: A man and woman was killed over honor in Khoar area in the limits of Pindigheb Police station in Attock in early of Monday. Police sources said. Police sources said that Mubashir found his wife and his cousin Ibrar in objectionable position in his room. Out of rage, he took out knife and stabbed both to death. After committing double murder, he fled from the scene leaving both in pool of blood. On getting information, Pindigheb Police reached at the crime scene and shifted the bodies to tehsil headquarters hospital for autopsy. Police registered double murder case against the nominated accused on the complaint of the mother of the woman and launched hunt to arrest him.

Expensive articles

Ali Raza Lakho

Nowadays, in Pakistan, the rate of inflation is high in everything. Masses cannot afford because they earn less than their expenditures. There are no better opportunities for livelihood. This occurs due to the government. Every government vows to the nation that they will alleviate expensive goods but they do not do that. Due to increasing in poverty day by day. People are dying from hunger, family stress, and unemployment. Moreover, the government is liable for this oppressed nation. They never complete any pledge for the nation. Poor people are clamouring day by day. Everyone cannot foster their clan properly, for instance, good healthy foods, good education, good attire and so on. So to say, nobody can understand the woes of the nation, masses a victims in Pakistan. In short, the government must take good action for the nation they are not able to run this government. (Shahdadpur, Sindh)

Future Leaders Training Program Held at IIUI



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Future Leaders Program commenced at International Islamic University, Islamabad (IIUI) which was designed, as per the directives of the President IIUI, for the Faculty members (Associate & Assistant Professors) aimed at cultivating and empowering emerging leaders for IIUI.

Under the guidance and spearheading of the Vice President (Research & Enterprise), Office of the Professional Trainings planned and executed this initiative to foster sustainable change and transformation by enhancing leadership and management skills of the faculty.

Prominent figures spoke on key topics including leadership in governance and operations, maintaining standards and quality in teaching, research, and knowledge, and driving enhancements to build national and international reputations. The IIUI Future Leaders program comprises three distinct phases, each offering a comprehensive exploration of various facets of leadership and development.

IIUI President Dr. Hathal Homoud Alotaibi addressing the Future Leadership Programme participants, emphasized the pivotal role of leaders in transforming organizations and nations. He noted that technological advancements, particularly in AI, have reshaped progress, urging visionary leaders to embrace change. Dr. Hathal highlighted that effective leaders excel in time management, smart solutions, and adaptability. He underscored the importance of emotional intelligence in decision-making and future planning.

During the inaugural session on leadership in governance and operations, General Retd. Zubair Mahmood Hayat, Former Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (JCSC), emphasized the necessity of grooming senior leadership to ensure a bright future. He highlighted the pivotal role of education in Islam, stating that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was the greatest teacher and that education is key to the Islamic renaissance.

Prof. Tahir Mahmood Chaudhry (Institutional Excellence Advisor and CEO), Ms. Noor Amna Malik (MD NAHE) and Prof. Dr. Jamil Un Nabi (Vice Chancellor University of Wah) were the resource persons for the daylong phase-1 activities of the program. Prof. Shuja (Vice President Research & Enterprise) and Prof. Abdul Rahem (Vice President Administration & Finance) also were the panellists along with the resource persons in the open interactive session/panel discussions held after the training sessions.

Chairperson BISP visits Payment Campsites in Sindh to check facilities

ISLAMABAD: Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Rubina Khalid made significant visits to the Benazir Income Support Programme payment campsites in Bachal Shah, Sukkur, and Babarloe, Khairpur on Monday.



The purpose of these visits was to personally monitor the payment disbursement process and to inspect the arrangements and facilities provided for women beneficiaries receiving their Kafaalat and Taleemi Wazaif stipends, said a news release.

During her visit, Rubina Khalid interacted with the women beneficiaries, listened to their concerns, and personally guided the needy and elderly women in receiving their cash amounts. Recognizing the need for efficiency, she directed the officials to increase the number of Point of Sale (POS) agents at the campsites to reduce the waiting time for the beneficiaries.

Following her inspections, Chairperson Rubina Khalid addressed the media, emphasizing the commitment to transparency in the disbursement process as directed by President Asif Ali Zardari.

"We have established these payment campsites to ensure transparency in the mechanism of payment disbursement," she stated. "We are heading towards a better payment mechanism and soon we will be able to open bank accounts for these beneficiaries for direct payments, minimizing human involvement."

Islamabad
30° - 38° Clear

SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr	3:14 am
Zohr	12:07 pm
Asr	5:07 pm
Maghrib	7:18 pm
Isha	9:01 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 Enquiry	117
Railway Exchange	9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi	5555489
CAA	9281092

HOSPITALS

CMH	561111
MH	561116
MH	561116
Cantt Hospital	9270907-11
DHQ	5556311-4
RGH	9290301-7
Holy Family	9290322-7
PIMS	9261170-79
Polyclinic	9218300-09
Shifa International	4603666

DEPARTMENTS

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

COMPLAINTS

Water Tanker Service	
E-7, F-10 & F-11	9204654
G-5, G-6, G-7, G-8	9203883
G-9, G-10, G-11, G-12, H-8	9266316
Wapda Islamabad	9217579-80
Sui Gas Complaint	119, 9272249
Wasa Water Tank	
Rawalpindi	0331-5022125

CCP Approves Artistic Milliners' Acquisition of Tenaga Generasi Limited

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has approved the acquisition of 100% shareholding of M/s Tenaga Generasi Limited (TGL), an independent power producer with a 49.5 MW wind power plant, by M/s Artistic Milliners (Private) Limited (AMPL), one of the world's top denim manufacturers.

Tenaga Generasi Limited, a Malaysian company, was incorporated in Pakistan in 2004 to set up a 50 MW wind power plant. The company was allocated 1,200 acres of land in District Gharo, Sindh, for the project. NEPRA issued a Generation License to TGL with an initial validity of 20 years.

In January 2008, the company decided to exit Pakistan, and TGL was acquired by Dawood Lawrencopur Limited (DLL), which held a 75% stake in TGL, with the remaining shareholding held by the International Finance Corporation (IFC), a member of the World Bank Group.

The Phase-I competition assessment by the CCP identified 'Renewable Energy - Wind Power Generation' as the relevant market. The assessment revealed that TGL's share in the market is less than 3%, while AMPL's two subsidiaries collectively hold a market share of 5.38%. Post-transaction, AMPL's market share is expected to rise to approximately 8%.

Given that the transaction does not lead to the dominance of the acquirer in the relevant market, the CCP has approved the acquisition.

This approval allows Artistic Milliners to increase its presence in the renewable energy sector. The acquisition underscores the potential for collaborative advancements in renewable energy, contributing significantly to redefining the national energy landscape.

Nationwide operation after finalising the lists of offenders

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Department of Explosives and the Pakistan Petroleum Dealers Association (PPDA) have decided to work together to eradicate the menace of mushrooming illegal dabba stations and nozzles across the country.

These dabba stations sell smuggled fuel without any safety precautions and fear of the law, posing a grave threat to the lives and property of the masses.

These nozzles are now openly operating on every street and neighbourhood in all the small and large towns and even in major cities across Pakistan, a 25-member Reforms Committee of the PPDA informed Abdul Ali Khan, the DG of Explosives Department.

During the meeting, the PPDA

leaders apprised the DG of the hazards the masses face due to illegal fuel shops with huge tanks buried under shops in residential and commercial areas.

Dozens of such nozzle shops and dabba stations catch fire frequently and have killed many in recent years, said Hassan Shah, an executive member of the PPDA.

He added that the growing number of nozzles installed in shops and roadside cabins has endangered their legal business, which pays billions in taxes and provides employment to hundreds of thousands of people.

Hassan Shah revealed that the daily smuggling of nearly 14 million litres of fuel into Pakistan costs the country billions of rupees.

On occasion, DG Explosives Abdul Ali Khan expressed concern over the mounting threat



Abdul Ali Khan, The DG Explosives



Hassan Shah, PPDA Leader

and conveyed his strong resolve to eradicate the dabba stations from every nook and cranny of the country.

He said that all the district presidents of PPDA would identify and furnish a list of all such illegal fuel sale points, including the names

and cell numbers of operators and the estimated quantity of fuel held at these points.

Abdul Ali Khan stated that the designated focal person would receive these lists; we will verify them, and then target the offenders district by district.

He stated that Deputy Commissioners, Additional Deputy Commissioners, Assistant Commissioners, District Police Officers, DSPs, and SHOs will have the legal authority and responsibility to take action. The officials who were too lax in carrying out the directives will face legal consequences.

He directed the PPDA to supervise these departments' performance and send weekly feedback through Hassan Shah, the PPDA's focal person, with a monthly meeting to review the progress.

DG Explosives Abdul Ali Khan announced the start of a vigorous nationwide campaign to stop the practice of selling smuggled fuel after finalizing the lists of wrongdoers.

Later, Nadeem Aziz Khan, Chairman Gujranwala Division, Amjad Shinwari, Chairman Kohat

Division, and others met with Chairman OGRA and DG Petroleum, who assured all-out cooperation in eliminating the menace.

Petroleum dealers stated that DG Explosives cooperation in this regard is unprecedented, and we feel indebted to him.

Khawaj Atif Ahmed, Secretary Information PPDA; Humayun Khan, President Khanewal; Zaheer Ahmed Paracha, President Layah; Nauman Ali Butt, Coordinator North; Waseem Butt and Haji Abdul Karim Khan from Karachi; Agha Sarwar, Chairman Baluchistan; Sultan Muhammad Sheerani, President Zoab Division; Akhter Nawaz, Chairman KPK; Sawab Gul, General Secretary KPK; Mian Ali Jan, President Malakand and Mr. Jan Alam Mehsud, President Dera Ghazi Khan were also present in the meeting.

Martyrdom

RAI KALAN, District Kasur: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif participates in the burial of Shaheed Captain Muhammad Faraz Ilyas who was martyred in Lakki Marwat Monday.



Photo: PID

Health Status report of Afghan Refugees highlights critical areas requiring immediate attention

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Chief Commissionerate for Afghan Refugees in Pakistan (CCAR), in partnership with International Rescue Committee (IRC), unveiled the "Health Status Report for Afghan Refugees" that provides a comprehensive overview of the current health landscape confronting Afghan refugees residing in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Muhammad Abbas Khan (Chief Commissioner for Afghan Refugees) noted that amidst the challenges of displacement, the issue of healthcare for Afghan refugees in Pakistan emerges as a critical concern, demanding urgent attention and action. He observed that the report highlights the strain on Pakistan's healthcare system, exacerbated by the influx of Afghan refugees, and the imperative need of aligning interventions with global frameworks such as the UN



Global Compact on Refugees. He further stated that this study has laid foundations to conduct a national study of health status of refugees residing in Pakistan.

Dr Fayaz Ahmad, eminent public health expert and lead author of the report presented the scope, key findings, and salient recommendations of

the report.

This session was followed by questions and feedback from the representatives of ECHO, UNHCR, UN-IOM, PRM, GIZ, and other organizations that have mandate of programming with Afghan refugees in Pakistan.

Shabnam Baloch, Country Director IRC-Pakistan, in

her closing remarks emphasized the need to reimagine our approach to healthcare in the face of climate-related challenges. She noted that the findings of the report underscore the urgent need for contextualized interventions to address the multifaceted health needs of Afghan refugees.

SAI Chief Terms 1.5% Interest Rate Cut as Insufficient

Bureau Report

KARACHI: The Site Association of Industry (SAI) President, Muhammad Kamran Arbi, expressed disappointment at the State Bank of Pakistan's (SBP) cutting interest by just 1.5%. He called the move "insufficient to address the challenges faced by the industrial sector."

In a statement, Mr. Arbi highlighted that SITE Association of Industry had submitted budget proposals to the State Bank, advocating for a policy rate reduction to 13-14 percent. This, he argued, would alleviate capital shortages stemming from the escalating costs of operating industries.

SAI president further emphasized that the central bank should establish a road-



ap for reducing interest rates, outlining measures aimed at alleviating the capi-

tal shortage faced by industries. If such a roadmap exists, he urged the industrialist community to be informed, as this would facilitate the implementation of mutually beneficial economic and business-friendly measures through collaborative consultation.

Kamran Arbi said that we are hopeful that measures like the recent reduction in interest rates will continue in the next monetary policy and the State Bank will seriously consider our proposal and bring the interest rate down to 13-14%. Because the rate of inflation is gradually decreasing in the country, which needs to be taken into account, so that the people and the business and industrial community can get relief.

Classical music evening titled "Raag Rung Khayal Gayaki" held at PAC



City Desk

RAWALPINDI: A classical music event titled "Raag Rang Khayal Gayaki" was organized at the Punjab Arts Council in Rawalpindi. The special guest of the program was the Director of the Arts Council, Sajjad Hussain along with Mr. Adnan Khaliq Bhatti and Muhammad Suleman. Nadeem Riaz Khan, Ghulam Abbas, and Muhammad Ishaq Qureshi performed ragas and received great applause from the audience in the musical gathering. Director of the Arts Council, Sajjad Hussain, stated that the beautiful colors of classical music, including Thumri, Dadra, Kafi, and Khayal Gayaki, can never be fully appreciated without mentioning the Sham Chaurasi, Patiala, Talwandi, Gwalior, and Kasur gharanas. He highlighted that many singers, including Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, Ustad Barkat Ali Khan, Ustad Salamat Ali Khan, Ustad Fateh Ali Khan, Ustad Amanat Ali Khan, Ustad Ashiq Ali Khan, Ustad Hamid Ali Khan, and Asad Amanat Ali Khan, nurtured classical music. Ustad Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan is considered the brightest star in the history of Qawwali. Ghulam Farid Sabri and Azziz Mian, along with many other Qawwals, also elevated this genre of music to great heights. Assistant Director Muhammad Suleman remarked that it is highly necessary to introduce the younger generation to their traditions and culture, so they have the opportunity to learn about their history, geographical boundaries, and ancestors. Classical and traditional music gatherings preserve our culture and heritage. A musical event is not only a source of entertainment but also an opportunity for people to enjoy various musical styles and appreciate music. A large number of people from neighboring cities participated in the event.

Jazz Introduces Saudi Data Roaming Bundles for Hajj Pilgrims

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Jazz, Pakistan's leading digital operator, has introduced Saudi data roaming bundles designed to meet the connectivity needs of Pakistani pilgrims during their spiritual journey in Saudi Arabia for Hajj. These Saudi Data Roaming Bundles provide pilgrims with access to 2GB and 6GB of data, valid for up to 30 and 45 days respectively, at affordable rates. This offering ensures that pilgrims can maintain communication with their loved ones back home throughout their sacred pilgrimage.

To activate these bundles, pilgrims can simply dial *ROAM* or *7626* to start using the service. This easy activation process underscores Jazz's commitment to supporting Pakistani pilgrims by making their journey as seamless and fulfilling as possible.

The introduction of these data bundles highlights Jazz's dedication to facilitating the digital needs of its customers, even when they are abroad. By offering comprehensive communication solutions, Jazz aims to enhance the spiritual experience of Pakistani pilgrims by keeping them connected with family and friends.

Bank Alfalah Launches Pakistan's First Digital Agriculture Financing

City Desk

KARACHI: Bank Alfalah, one of the leading commercial and digital banks, proudly announces the launch of Pakistan's First Digital Agriculture Financing product, an initiative aimed at empowering small-scale farmers and entrepreneurs in the country's Agriculture sector. This innovative product allows customers to avail dairy and equipment financing through a seamless digital process, marking a significant milestone in Pakistan's financial landscape.

Digital Agriculture Finance is part of the Bank's commitment to revive economic growth and foster financial inclusion in Pakistan. The launch of this product comes as part of the Revive and Rise initiative, which aims to provide potential farming citizens with access to subsidised financing, at a rate of 2%, enabling them to establish sustainable income streams and contribute to the nation's economic development.

Speaking on the occasion, Muhammad Yahya Khan, Chief Digital Officer, Bank Alfalah said, "The introduction of Pakistan's First Digital Agriculture Financing product signifies our dedication to empowering the Agriculture sector and promoting financial inclusion in Pakistan. We are committed to ensuring that small-scale farmers always have access to financial services. Through swift, cost-effective, and user-friendly financing solutions, our goal is to empower small-scale farmers and the broader Agriculture industry to boost productivity, enhance livelihoods, and contribute to the growth of Pakistan's economy."

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‘What is Wrong with Imran’s Video on X?’

For the last few days, there has been a lot of fervor, talks, fears, and intimidations, with law enforcement agencies resorting to grilling Rauf Hassan, Omer Ayub Khan, and later incarcerated Imran Khan, on account of a video uploaded on his personal account. The documentary is knitted against the background of the Hamoodur Rehman Commission Report on the debacle of East Pakistan and the dashed aspirations of millions of people as they watched Pakistan shatter before their very eyes, followed by the laying down of arms by the Pakistan army and the imprisonment of around a hundred thousand Pakistani brave soldiers by India. The nation went through a period of great despair, sorrow, and agony but gradually recovered from its wounds.

Examining the scenario where a leader of Pakistan’s most popular party, PTI, terms the military dictator who ordered the surrender in 1971 and General A. K. Niazi, who signed the surrender document, as traitors, and drawing a parallel between the events of 1971—triggered by the denial of power to the Awami League, which had won the election—and the 2024 election scenario where PTI claims to have won elections but was denied power, raises several points of analysis requiring a deep dive into historical context and contemporary political dynamics.

I read the Hamoodur Rehman Commission’s report in Dawn, which was made public after carefully curtailing the most sensitive parts around the late 80s. The report was very incisive and critical and had a lot of emotions woven into it. One part of the report which pained me immensely was the mention that nowhere in Muslim history had so many Muslim soldiers been made prisoners. In another part, which again hurt me a lot, the

report said it would have been much more honorable for the Pakistan army to embrace shahadat rather than surrendering to the enemy, and that too in such a large number.

The report vividly painted the scenario of December 16, 1971, when Lieutenant General A. A. K. Niazi of Pakistan signed the Instrument of Surrender, leading to the creation of Bangladesh. The surrender was viewed by many in Pakistan as a significant national humiliation. General Niazi and others were accused of incompetence and cowardice. The Hamoodur Rahman Commission, set up to investigate the defeat, recommended action against those responsible, but they were not formally charged with either betrayal or treachery.

However, the question of whether a surrender through a proper channel by an army or the signing of a surrender document by a General constitutes an act of treachery or treason or mere incompetence of both political and military leadership is complex and situational, demanding a look at historical examples and perspectives to reach some kind of conclusion.

On May 7, 1945, General Alfred Jodl signed the unconditional surrender of all German forces to the Allies, which deeply disappointed Germans who felt betrayed, though it was seen as a necessary step to end the conflict. General Jodl was later executed at Nuremberg, but not for the act of surrender. Similarly, on April 9, 1865, General Robert E. Lee surrendered the Army of Northern Virginia to Union General Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Court House, ending the American Civil War. Lee’s surrender was viewed as honorable and aimed at avoiding further

bloodshed, and he was respected for his decision. In contrast, on February 15, 1942, British Lieutenant General Arthur Percival’s surrender of Singapore to Japanese forces was one of the largest British-led surrenders and was seen by some as necessary to avoid massacre, though others criticized it as a failure of leadership. Percival faced criticism but was not tried for treachery.

These examples let us reach a simplistic understanding that a surrender to save lives is viewed as pragmatic and surrender without exhausting all options may be termed as incompetence.

The surrender without exhausting all options can be seen as betrayal with the caveat that those in the field who face the enemy directly are less culpable than those who ordered the surrender. Similarly, the treatment of officers who surrender can vary significantly: some are prosecuted, others reintegrated into society, and some celebrated for their pragmatism.

As per multiple military and strategic commentators, the decision to surrender in 1971 was influenced by military and political circumstances, including overwhelming opposition forces and an untenable situation for Pakistani troops, and secondly to the political events that led to the rebellion in East Pakistan were masterminded by Mujeeb ur Rehman and his Awami League, which had won the 1970 general elections but were denied power, leading to widespread unrest and eventually the war of independence. Therefore, unlike the troops on the border, the failure to transfer power to the elected representatives of East Pakistan is often cited as a significant factor leading to the 1971 conflict and the eventual secession of Bangladesh.

In 1971, the distinction between treachery or treason and mere incompetence lies in the intent and actions of military and political leaders. Treachery or treason would involve deliberate collaboration with the enemy, acts of sabotage, or betrayal of oaths for personal gain. Conversely, incompetence would encompass poor strategic decisions, underestimating the enemy, logistical failures, and inadequate political leadership.

The Hamoodur Rahman Commission Report criticized the military and political leadership for incompetence and mismanagement but did not label their actions as treasonous, recognizing the complexity of the wartime situation. General A. A. K. Niazi, for example, faced accusations of incompetence rather than treason for his leadership failures. The political decision to deny power to the Awami League after the 1970 elections was seen as a miscalculation rather than treachery. Thus, while treachery involves intentional harm, incompetence is marked by poor decision-making and leadership under pressure.

While PTI’s demand for respecting electoral outcomes to ensure democratic stability carries significant weight, each situation must be evaluated on its unique circumstances and merits.

Comparing the 2024 election scenario to the events of 1971 may serve a political narrative but does not fully account for the distinct contexts of military conflict and electoral politics. Therefore, while it may be politically expedient for the PTI to draw such comparisons, it is essential to approach these claims with a nuanced understanding of historical and contemporary realities.

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



Analysis

Qamar Bashir

SBP cuts down policy rate to 20.5% amid easing inflationary pressures

The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) on Monday slashed the policy rate by 150 basis points to 20.5 percent owing to subsiding inflationary pressure and ease in inflation expectations amid tight policy stance that was also supported by fiscal consolidation and administrative measures by government. “The reduced policy rate of 20.5 % will be effective from June 11, 2024,” the SBP said in its monetary policy statement issued after the meeting of Monetary Policy Committee (MPC).

The MPC found decline in inflation since February broadly in line with expectations and May out turn better than earlier anticipation and assessed that underlying inflationary pressures were subsiding as reflected by continued moderation in core inflation and ease in inflation expectations of both consumers and businesses in the latest surveys. The committee viewed some upside risks to the near-term inflation outlook associated with the upcoming budgetary measures and uncertainty regarding future energy price adjustments noting that “the cumulative impact of the earlier monetary tightening is expected to keep inflationary pressures in check.” While reviewing key development, the MPC noted that the real GDP growth remained moderate at 2.4% in FY24 as per provisional data, reduced current account deficit helped improve the foreign exchange reserves to around \$9 billion despite large debt repayments while the government has also approached the IMF for an Extended Fund Facility Programme, which was likely to unlock financial inflows that would help in further building up of FX buffers. The committee noted that international oil prices have declined, whereas non-oil commodity prices have continued to inch up. The committee terming it an appropriate time for reducing the policy rate on basis of recent developments, noted that the real interest rate was still significantly positive which was important to continue guiding inflation to the medium-term target of 5 to 7 %. It also emphasized that the future monetary policy decisions would remain data-driven and responsive to evolving developments related to the inflation outlook. The committee observed that latest estimates indicate real GDP growth at 2.1 percent in Q3-FY24, agriculture was already showing strong growth and industry also witnessed positive growth in Q3 while initial growth estimates for both Q1 and Q2 for FY24 were revised upward. Taking into account the developments in the first nine months, FY24 growth was provisionally estimated by PBS at 2.4 percent against a contraction of 0.2 percent in FY23 while almost two-thirds of this recovery was explained by improvement in the agriculture sector, the MPC observed and assessed that the developments were in line with its earlier expectations. The MPC anticipated that economic growth would remain moderate in FY25 due to the impact of expected moderation in agriculture output and ongoing stabilization policies.

In the External Sector, current account posted a surplus for the third consecutive month in April on the back of robust growth in remittances and exports offsetting the uptick in imports. During July-April FY24, the CAD narrowed to \$202 million and exports grew by 10.6% while imports decreased by 5.3%, the MPC noted adding that Workers’ remittances also remained robust in recent months, reaching an all-time high of \$3.2 billion in May 2024. “The resultant lower current account deficit, along with improved FDI and the disbursement of SBA tranche in April, has facilitated ongoing large debt repayments and supported the SBP’s FX reserves, the committee assessed and stressed that timely mobilization of financial inflows is essential to meet the external financing requirements and further strengthen FX buffers for the country to effectively respond to any external shocks and support sustainable economic growth.



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

AJK is not a Foreign Territory - II

These examples underscore the importance of journalistic integrity and highlight the potential legal ramifications for journalists who engage in negative journalism and disseminate false propaganda. While freedom of the press is a fundamental right, it must be tempered with the obligation to report truthfully and ethically. In an era rife

with misinformation and disinformation, upholding these principles is more crucial than ever to preserve public trust in the media. Regrettably, in Pakistan, there’s a lack of stringent regulations and monitoring mechanisms to hold journalists legally accountable for disseminating negative information. As a nation, we also need to reject negativity, incorrect information, and false propaganda. Recently, Hamid Mir’s column came under scrutiny, demonstrating how he utilized his journalistic platform to propagate false propaganda and misinformation regarding AJK. He misinterpreted a statement made in a Pakistani court, casting doubt on AJK’s autonomy. According to Hamid Mir, in the course of the hearing for poet Ahmed Farhad’s case in the Islamabad High Court, the Additional Attorney General suggested that AJK should be considered a “foreign territory.” This misinterpretation was aimed at dismissing the case and has since stirred widespread controversy and discourse among legal experts, journalists, and on social media platforms.



Analysis

Abdul Basit Alvi

Attorney General Munawar Iqbal Duggal countered this argument by highlighting that AJK possesses its own constitution and judicial system, where rulings by Pakistani courts are regarded as foreign judgments. This wrong interpretation of the statement has elicited a range of reactions, with some questioning the government’s stance on AJK’s status. It’s noteworthy that AJK’s constitutional framework is rooted in a 1974 Act. Although the Pakistani constitution does not explicitly mention AJK or Gilgit-Baltistan, it does offer a mechanism for their potential inclusion within Pakistan, alongside other territories. The crux of the ongoing debate revolves around interpreting these legal frameworks and understanding the political and administrative relationship between Pakistan and AJK. It is imperative to compare the special status of AJK and IIOJK to dispel such misconceptions. Azad Jammu and Kashmir holds a distinctive position within Pakistan’s constitutional framework, characterized by its unique governance structure and historical context. Situated in the northern region of Pakistan, AJK holds a distinctive significance in the country’s political landscape, boasting its own legislative assembly, president, and prime minister. To comprehend the unique status of AJK, one must delve into its historical backdrop, legal framework, and relationship with the rest of Pakistan. The status of AJK originates from the partition

of British India in 1947 and the subsequent conflict over the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. Following partition, the princely states were given the option to accede to either India or Pakistan. However, Maharaja Hari Singh, the ruler of Jammu and Kashmir, opted for India against the wishes of Kashmiris. In 1947, the populace of western Jammu and Kashmir, predominantly Muslims, rebelled against the Maharaja’s rule. The movement, initiated by Kashmiris and later joined by FATA Tribals, led to the establishment of the Azad Kashmir government.

The legal status of AJK is enshrined in the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Interim Constitution Act of 1974. According to this act, AJK enjoys a significant degree of autonomy, with its own legislative assembly, president, and prime minister. However, certain areas such as defense, foreign affairs, and currency fall under the jurisdiction of the Government of Pakistan. The relationship between AJK and Pakistan is further regulated by the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Council, which acts as a liaison between the two entities. Chaired by the Prime Minister of Pakistan, the council comprises members from both the federal government and AJK. AJK’s governance structure closely resembles that of Pakistan, with a president serving as the ceremonial head of state and a prime minister heading the executive branch. The legislative assembly, consisting of elected representatives from various constituencies, is responsible for enacting laws and overseeing the region’s administration.

To be continued

Strengthening the Indo-Russian Bond: Exploring Horizons of Collaboration

Syeda Khadija Rizwan

There are powerful alliances built on mutual trust, common ideals, and strategic objectives within the larger field of international relations. One such long-lasting alliance that has persisted for decades despite shifts in world politics is that between Russia and India. Now is a good time for India and Russia to deepen their connection in a variety of ways, to achieve shared prosperity and global leadership as the globe encounters new opportunities and challenges. A strong foundation of defense cooperation forms the basis of the Indo-Russian collaboration. “Reciprocal Logistics Support (ARLS) Agreement.” The “India-Russia Defense Industry Cooperation Conference” was opened by Russia and India. The conference will cover topics such as knowledge transfer, investment in India’s military industry, and defense industrial cooperation between Russia and India.

The Agreement on Reciprocal Logistics Support (ARLS) India and Russia are expected to conclude a mutual logistics agreement. India and Russia are expected to review the setting up of joint ventures for manufacturing spares for Russian defense platforms in India. Purchase of the S-400 air-defense missile systems. India has already received three squadrons of the S-400 missile systems out of the five it had ordered in 2018.

Furthermore, collaboration in science and technology can bring significant benefits. By sharing knowledge and

resources, they can make advancements in areas like biotechnology, nanotechnology, and artificial intelligence, addressing common challenges and driving innovation.

Collaboration between India and Russia has been a key factor in the success of the vaccine production facility of Bharat Immunologicals and Biologicals Corporation Ltd at Bulandshahr in Uttar Pradesh. Collaboration in Materials science has led to the establishment of the International Advanced Centre for Powder Metallurgy and New Materials (ARCI) set up at Hyderabad. High-Performance Computing was one of the major thrust areas for collaboration. A significant project under its purview pertains to the collaboration between the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) and the Institute for Computer-Aided Design (ICAD) of the Russian Academy of Science in the area of High-Performance Computing (HPC).

Remotely Operated Unmanned Submersible (ROSUB) was also jointly developed by the National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT), Chennai, and the Experimental Design Bureau of Oceanological Engineering (EDBOE), Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS), Moscow. In the emerging technologies domains, both sides in 2020 and 2021, with the help of the Russian Academy of Science (RAS), Russia India Network of Universities (RIN) and DST/CSIR/IIT/IISER institutes have conducted a series of scientific webinars in Data Analytics, AI, Nano-technology, New Materials, Advanced Manufacturing, Quantum Technologies, Interdisciplinary Cyber Physical Systems, Marine

Bio-diversity & Blue economy, Waste to Wealth technologies and Disaster Management Technologies etc.

Apart from these areas, cultural exchange plays a vital role in their relationship. Both countries appreciate each other’s cultural heritage, fostering a sense of solidarity. Events like the Festival of India in Russia and Russian Film Days in India promote mutual understanding and strengthen their bond.

Russian-Indian cultural interaction covers a wide range of areas. Music, dance, and theater groups are being exchanged, film festivals, art and photo exhibitions, and various thematic seminars and conferences are organized. Cross-cultural festivals are held annually.

Representatives of the Russian film industry regularly take part in festivals in India, including the most prestigious of them—the Indian International Festival in Goa, the Indian filmmakers—in Russian film festivals, including the Moscow International Film Festival. The Indian Festival in Moscow and the Days of Indian Culture in the Astrakhan Region are held annually.

In conclusion, the Indo-Russian partnership is significant as they face a changing world. By deepening their engagement and embracing innovation, they can inspire others with their shared vision and make a positive impact on global affairs. It’s time to reaffirm their commitment to this enduring friendship and work together for a brighter future.

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Two-Day Pakistan Travel & Tourism Symposium kicks off at PNCA

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The Two Day Pakistan Travel and Tourism Symposium jointly organized by Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) and World Bank Pakistan kicked off on Monday at Pakistan National Council of Arts Islamabad. The symposium themed "Building the National Economy through Tourism" where more than 20 foreign delegates and more than 400 national and international tourism professionals, industry experts, and decision-makers participated and shared their ideas for development of a future road map for the sustainable growth of tourism industry of Pakistan. On this occasion, a tourism Expo was also been organized to showcase Pakistan's rich tourism potential and create G2G, B2B and G2B linkages among the industry stakeholders. This Symposium is designed to explore and enhance critical facets of the tourism sector, with a focus on green investments, improving connectivity, responsible tourism, and the conservation of natural and cultural heritage. The event aims to foster a transformative dialogue among stakeholders to address pivotal challenges, forge synergies, and capitalize on opportunities in the evolving tourism landscape.

The opening ceremony of the symposium was attended by the as Chief Guest, Chairman Prime Minister's Youth Programme Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan, Minister for Culture, Tourism, Antiquities & Archives Sindh Syed Zulfiqar Ali Shah and Additional Secretary Cabinet Division Hammad Shamimi.

While addressing the participants, Chairman Prime Minister's Youth Program, Rana Mashhood Ahmad



Khan said that Pakistan, a land of rich history, diverse culture, and breathtaking natural beauty, offers countless opportunities for travelers, explorers, and adventure-seekers alike. "From the majestic Karakoram Mountains to the ancient Indus Valley Civilization, our country is a treasure trove of experiences waiting to be discovered"

Rana said. He also congratulated Mr. Aftab Rana, MD PTDC and his team for working hard to organize this important event with the support of World Bank, Green Tourism and other Partner organizations. While speaking on the occasion Additional Secretary Cabinet Division, Hammad Shamimi

said that we are committed to making Pakistan a top tourist destination. "Our efforts include improving infrastructure, facilitating connectivity, and fostering a business-friendly environment that encourages investment in the tourism sector". Moreover, he said, we are dedicated to promoting responsible and sustainable tourism practices

that preserve our natural and cultural heritage for future generations.

Furthermore he said that discussions and collaborations that will take place during this symposium are vital and by promoting responsible tourism practices and fostering innovative solutions, we can ensure that our tourism sector thrives in harmony with

our natural and cultural heritage. He extended his heartfelt gratitude to the team of PTDC, World Bank Group, and all the partner organizations who are contributing to this important event and thanked all the international and national delegates for sparing time to join us on this important occasion.

The Deputy Secretary General ECO, Ambassador Jandos Asanov in his address extended his heartfelt gratitude to the Government of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, especially the Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) for inviting their delegation to this important gathering. He said that The Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) aims to enhance its Member States' economies through sustainable development.

He further stated that in light of the dynamic nature of the tourism sector, it is essential to provide travelers with convenient travel arrangements. He said long-term investments in tourism infrastructure are crucial to offer suitable travel conditions and diversify accommodation opportunities.

Najy Ben Hassine, Country Director of World Bank Pakistan also addressed the event. It is pertinent to mention here that the symposium also witnessed four different panel discussions on various topics. The first panel discussion was on "Green Investments in Tourism and Hospitality Sector" while the second panel discussion was on "Improving Connectivity, Aviation, Transportation and Visa Facilitation. Similarly, the third panel discussion was on "Responsible Tourism and Conservation of natural and cultural heritage". Furthermore, the fourth panel discussion session was on "Tourism products diversification- religious and cultural heritage tourism".

PIDE, PRIME commission to review Pakistan's complex tax system—report highlights several flaws

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) and the Policy Research Institute of Market Economy (PRIME) have collaborated to form a Tax Reforms Commission, comprising several eminent thinkers. Currently, tax is a crucial issue in the media, and our lenders prioritize revenue collection over growth and employment. The commission highlights several flaws in the existing tax system. It is neither citizen-friendly, transparent, stable, nor predictable. Faced with increasing budgetary difficulties, reliance on ad-hoc measures has grown, leading to arbitrary withholding income taxes, turnover taxes, taxes on deemed incomes, and arbitrary revisions of tax rates. Approximately 68% of revenue is collected through excessive use of withholding and minimum tax regimes. The fragmented system, with numerous exemptions and rates, creates complexity and confusion for taxpayers. Problems include a broken refund system, high compliance costs, and a predat-

tory Tax Authority. The budget period is marked by extreme uncertainty and speculation due to this approach to taxation. This arbitrary approach has resulted in numerous court cases and reversals of initiatives. More taxes are not the solution to deep structural fiscal policy issues where expenditure control is not possible.

According to the press release issued by PIDE, these statements were made during a press conference at the National Press Club in Islamabad, where Dr. Nadeem ul Haque, Vice Chancellor of PIDE, Dr. Ali Salman, Founder of PRIME, and Dr. Mahmood Khalid, Senior Research Economist at PIDE, addressed the audience.

The Commission has worked tirelessly to ensure that reforms will not result in revenue loss and will lead to revenue growth. The proposed policy relies on simplification, harmonization, and improved FBR administration through digitization. Conservative estimates suggest direct revenue gains of at least Rs 4 trillion in the first three years, with significant benefits to the econo-

my in terms of higher investment, growth, and job creation.

Key problems and recommendations highlighted by the Commission include: reliance on tariffs is outdated. Pakistan has become increasingly isolated due to a closed economy. Strong policy commitment to openness is necessary to benefit from global trade. Decreasing tariffs has shown positive impacts on revenues and substantial reductions in smuggling and mis-invoicing. Zero-rated import of plant and machinery, industrial raw materials, and intermediate goods should be implemented. Withdrawal of regulatory duty (RD), additional custom duties (ACD), and withholding income tax on imports is also recommended. The decades-old GST/VAT agenda needs to be firmly implemented. Problems with sales tax registration, harmonization, digitization, and the refund system should be resolved this year. Key reforms include harmonization of GST/VAT and no new exemptions on GST except in areas such as education and health. A fully functional GST/VAT system must be a performance goal for

FBR with consequences. With a good GST in place, we should consider lowering the rate. Existing literature indicates that countries like India, Georgia, and Mexico, which shifted from high GST (17 to 19%) to VAT with a low rate (7 to 10%), have experienced an immediate positive impact on the tax-to-GDP ratio by 3 to 4%. PIDE research shows that in the short run, on average, a 1% increase in GST increases revenues by 2%, while in the long run, FBR revenues tend to decrease by 4% rates. Over the long run, the goal should be a gradual reduction of VAT to 10%.

The commission has done extensive economic analysis to estimate revenue implications of these reforms. Reforms in customs tariff revenue, including withdrawal of concessions and exemptions, and reduction in under-invoicing and misdeclaration, could bring Rs 314 billion with 36.5% growth over three years. General Sales Tax reforms could yield Rs 2,566 billion in additional revenues with 33% growth in the tax base over three years. Improved compliance in FED could yield



Rs 48 billion in additional revenue over three years, assuming a 5% growth rate. Capital gains tax reforms might result in a 20% revenue reduction in the first year but would gradually return to existing levels within three years. Direct tax reforms are expected to result in Rs 1,545 billion over three years, assuming a 27.7% growth rate in the base. Overall revenue gains from tax rationalizations are projected to

be approximately Rs 4 trillion, showing a 26% increase in the base over three years.

The PIDE-PRIME Tax Reforms Commission comprises eminent economists and tax experts, including Dr. Nadeem ul Haque, Vice Chancellor of Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE); Dr. Ali Salman, Executive Director of Policy Research Institute of Market Economy (PRIME);

Mr. Shahid H. Kardar, Former Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan; Syed Shabbir Zaidi, Former Chairman of the Federal Board of Revenue; Dr. Ikram ul Haq, Advocate Supreme Court; Dr. Manzoor Ahmad, Senior Fellow at PIDE; Dr. Nasir Iqbal, Head of Macro Lab, PIDE; Dr. Mahmood Khalid, Senior Research Economist, PIDE; and Dr. Khalil Ahmad, Distinguished Research Fellow, PRIME.

The Strategic Use of Gastronomy in Public Diplomacy: A Case Study of Thailand's Global Thai Program

Kashmala Khan

Countries are always looking for new ways of connecting with each other and advancing their global interests in today's world of interdependence. This has led to the rise of a concept known as gastrodiploacy which involves using food and cuisine as tools for creating bridges between nations and nurturing international friendships. Thailand is one country that has made significant strides in this area; it is well known for its good food and friendly people.

In 2002, an initiative called "Global Thai" was launched by Thailand with the aim of popularizing its restaurants around the globe while sharing the culinary heritage of the nation with others. The success story behind this program is evident from the fact that there are now over eight thousand Thai eateries operating in different parts of the world. This achievement can be attributed to three main things: being real, adjusting and exchanging cultures.

Thai cuisine has become an international darling with no change in its

various tastes and ingredients wherever it sets foot. On the other hand, Thai restaurants in foreign countries have adapted themselves to local palates and supplies thus making them more inclusive. Also, cooking classes plus food festivals among other activities have brought about cultural interaction between Thailand and other countries.

Through gastronomic diplomacy, Thailand's soft power has been strengthened and economic prosperity realized. Jobs have been created through exporting food products and promoting culinary tourism which has in turn led to more revenues from tourism. Thailand's dedication towards maintaining the authenticity of its national dishes globally is remarkable; it even employs technology such as taste testing robots for quality assurance purposes. The Thai government developed a taste-testing robot known as e-Delicious. This robot evaluates dishes' flavor, smell, and presentation to ensure they meet the high standards of traditional Thai cuisine. Any dish scoring below 80 is deemed below the government's standards. This blend of diplomatic and technological efforts underscores Thailand's commit-

ment to preserving the integrity of its national cuisine globally.

Thailand's cultural diplomacy revolves around gastrodiploacy, cuisine diplomacy, and tourism diplomacy. From 2000 to 2010, Thailand integrated cultural elements into traditional diplomatic efforts, blending the quest for tourist revenue with the aim of winning hearts and minds. This strategy involved actively exporting cultural elements, such as cuisine and scenic locations, to bolster its international image.

Tourism is crucial to Thailand's economy, prompting coordinated promotional efforts from various government ministries. Thailand is considered a pioneer in gastrodiploacy, successfully using its culinary heritage to enhance national brand awareness, encourage economic investment, and engage culturally with international audiences. As Paul Rockover describes, Thailand has effectively "won the hearts and minds through the stomach," leveraging its cuisine to create favorable impressions globally. This approach often includes serving traditional food at diplomatic events and using food as a means of gift-giving to strengthen ties.

Thailand's initiatives, like the "Global Thai" program launched in 2002, aimed to significantly increase the number of Thai restaurants abroad and promote Thai cuisine alongside tourism through the "Amazing Thailand" campaign. This effort doubled the number of Thai restaurants worldwide from 5,500 in 2002 to 10,000 in 2013. It also boosted tourism interest, with over 14 million tourists visiting Thailand in 2019, generating more than USD 20,000 million in tourism-related revenue. In 2023, the number of tourist arrivals amounted to around 28.15 million. These successes underscore the effectiveness of Thailand's cultural diplomacy in enhancing its global image and economic prosperity.

In conclusion, gastrodiploacy offers a unique approach to public diplomacy, allowing nations to engage with foreign publics, foster cultural exchange, and enhance their soft power. Thailand's success story serves as a model for other nations to follow, demonstrating the potential of food to bring people together and drive economic growth.

Writer is student of 8th semester of 4 year Bachelor's program in Fatima Jinnah Women University

Regional harmony essential for South Asia's development: Speakers

Bureau Report

KARACHI: Speakers highlighted the importance of regional harmony among states of South Asia for enhanced trade ties and social-economic development of the regional nations at the national conference on "Future Prospects of Regional Connectivity Through Dialogue in South Asia: Global and Strategic Perspectives" held recently at the University of Karachi, organized by Area Study Center for Europe.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Khalid Iraqi, Vice Chancellor of the University of Karachi, said the economic development of the South Asian region could be sustainably achieved until the disputes among the regional states are resolved in the most significant interest of their nations and their healthy beings.

On the occasion, Nusrat Mirza, Chairman, Rabta Forum International, said strong diplomatic ties among the South Asian states will lead to regional development on various fronts, including trade, economy, and tourism.

Najam Uddin Sheikh, former foreign secretary, said that Pakistan's state should resolve the core issue of Kash-

mir's conflict with India to pave the way for meaningful regional connectivity with regional states. Besides, he added, Pakistan should review its policy with Afghanistan to build up strong ties with the neighboring state based on mutual interest.

Qazi M A Khalil, the former diplomat, said Pakistan should review its foreign policies with the changing dynamics of geopolitics and geoeconomics along with its strength through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and its crucial role in the Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD).

Prof Dr Shaista Tabbasum SAARC played a pivotal role in regional connectivity, which should also address the emerging issue of global warming and climate change in the region. She said regional connectivity could also resolve the energy crisis in the area; however, the lack of trust between Pakistan and India is the foremost hurdle towards positive developments.

Uzma Shujat, Director at Area Study Center for Europe, and Syed Samiullah, Research Scholar at Rabta Forum International—were also speakers at the conference.

Bull & Bears
PSX 100-Share
Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index		
Current	Prev. Close	
73,252.56	73,754.01	
Day's High	Day's Low	
73,915.45	72,981.34	
Index Value	Change	
5,676,080,227	-501.45	
Percentage	Time	
-0.68%	10 Jun, 2024 5:00 pm	
Europe: FTSE 100 Index		
Index Value	Change	
8,228.48	-16.89	
Percentage	Time	
-0.20%	10 Jun, 4:50 pm GMT+1	
USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average		
Index Value	Change	
38,764.54	-34.45	
Percentage	Time	
-0.089%	10 Jun, 12:51 pm GMT-4	
Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average		
Index Value	Change	
39,038.16	+354.23	
Percentage	Time	
+0.92%	10 Jun, 3:15 pm GMT+9	
Open Market Forex Rates		
Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	183	185
Bahrain Dinar	739.79	747.79
Canadian Dollar	204	206
China Yuan	38.38	38.78
Danish Krone	40.28	40.68
Euro	296.25	299
Hong Kong Dollar	35.61	35.96
Indian Rupee	3.33	3.44
Japanese Yen	1.91	1.99
Kuwaiti Dinar	905.78	914.78
Malaysian Ringgit	59.3	59.9
New Zealand \$	170.02	172.02
Norwegians Krone	25.97	26.27
Omani Riyal	722.31	730.31
Qatari Riyal	76.42	77.12
Saudi Riyal	73.5	74.1
Singapore Dollar	203.5	205.5
Swedish Korona	26.4	26.7
Swiss Franc	310.21	312.71
Thai Bhat	7.56	7.71
U.A.E Dirham	75.25	76
UK Pound Sterling	352	355
US Dollar	277.75	280.5

Flawed tax system is promoting underground economy, says Mian Zahid Hussain

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Mian Zahid Hussain, the Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, the President of the Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, the All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and a former provincial minister, stated on Monday that Pakistan will not receive the required amount of loans from the IMF due to poor revenue collection and lack of reformed.

He said that Pakistan must fulfil all the stringent conditions of the IMF to get the required amount, which is politically difficult.

Mian Zahid Hussain stated that expanding the tax base to appease the lender would not be acceptable to tax evaders and could lead to issues for the government, ultimately impacting its popularity.

The veteran business leader warned that if

the provinces don't collect their required taxes, the center will have to increase the burden on current taxpayers to increase revenue.

The business leader stated that the non-cooperation of the provinces has resulted in the failure to collect taxes on agricultural income, GST on services, and municipal tax as required.

Consequently, the central government has decided to increase the burden on the salaried class, pensioners, and other taxpayers.

In addition, efforts are underway to tax rental income, bonds, stocks, property, wholesalers, and retailers, but he stated that it would be preferable to broaden the tax base rather than burden existing taxpayers more.

According to Mian Zahid Hussain, expanding the tax base should target the sectors that are not paying taxes.

He said that in developed countries, taxes are imposed on the rich, the middle class is



promoted, and the poor class is helped, whereas it is otherwise in Pakistan. He said that it is easy to target the salaried

class, but it is difficult to find and collect taxes from non-tax payers, so the tax authorities take shortcuts that have negative effects on society.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that due to loopholes in the tax system, the documented economy is continuously shrinking while the underground economy is flourishing.

He noted that now many employees have started demanding their salary in cash instead of checks to avoid taxes. Increased taxes on the documented economy will lead to a decrease in production and output, thereby increasing the profitability of undocumented businesses.

The size of the black economy will continue to increase due to the wrong priorities, he said.

There is a need to collect an annual tax of Rs 14000 billion, but due to the non-receipt of the required tax, Pakistan has to resort to debt to provide facilities to its people, which has become an unbearable burden for the economy.

Protest

HYDERABAD: Workers of HDA Mazdoor Union (CBA) hold a protest against non-payment of their 6 months salaries and 9 months pension, outside the Mayor Office Hyderabad.



Photo: Online

ABIBMETRO Partners with iLink and Kuickpay

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: HABIBMETRO, iLink and Kuickpay have entered into a tripartite agreement for bulk onboarding of online billers. This strategic collaboration promises to transform the onboarding process by making it fully automated with integrated systems. The purpose of the agreement is to facilitate bulk onboarding of billers through HABIBMETRO using Kuickpay and iBILL integrated platforms. It will enable HABIBMETRO to simultaneously onboard multiple business customers onto the iLink platform through a swift and efficient process.

During the ceremony, Mr. Khurram Shahzad Khan, President & CEO of HABIBMETRO, said, "We are confident that this partnership will significantly enhance the onboarding experience of our business clients. HABIBMETRO's collaboration with iLink and Kuickpay will streamline the customer onboarding process by eliminating the need for additional KYC and scrutiny."

The signing ceremony was attended by Mr. Khurram Shahzad Khan, President & CEO of HABIBMETRO, Mr. Aman Ullah Shaikh, Group Head Corporate Banking, HABIBMETRO, Mr. Jawad Shami, Head Transaction Banking, HABIBMETRO, Mr. Najeed Agrawalla, CEO of iLINK, Mr. Saqib Ali Kazmi, CEO of KuickPay and Mr. Arbab Ali Khan, Managing Director, KuickPay, along with their respective teams at the iLINK Headquarters.

Pak-Qatar Family Takaful Limited (PQFTL) announces appointment of new CEO



Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pak-Qatar Family Takaful Limited (PQFTL), a leading provider of Shariah-compliant Family Takaful solutions, is pleased to announce the appointment of Mr. Waqas Ahmad as its new Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

Mr. Waqas Ahmad boasts an impressive three-decade career in the Takaful and insurance industry, marked by significant achievements in various areas. He has demonstrated expertise in Life Insurance/Takaful underwriting and servicing, product development and innovation, re-Takaful arrangements and strategic partnerships, digital transformation and technology integration, and establishing and leading new Takaful ventures.

In terms of leadership experience, Mr. Waqas Ahmad has held various roles, including Chief Operating Officer (COO) at PQFTL, where he honed a deep understanding of the company's operations and values.

FPCCI Demands Larger Cut in the Policy Rate-Atif Ikram Sheikh

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh, President FPCCI, has said that the policy rate cut announced today is too little, too late - as, the business, industry and trade community was expecting higher and more substantive cut in the key policy rate of the State Bank of Pakistan vis-à-vis decline in core inflation. It is pertinent to note that core inflation has come down to 11.8 percent in May 2024; which is the lowest in the 30-month period, he added.

FPCCI President made it clear that interest rate should come down to 15 percent to enable Pakistani exporters compete in the regional and international export markets through reducing the cost of capital substantially. This step should be accompanied with the fulfillment of government's promise to rationalize electricity tariff for the industry, he added.

Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh maintained



consumer prices are categorically showing a declining trend as they fell by 3.2 percent in May 2024 compared to a decrease of 0.4 percent in April 2024 as

per Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). It is now overdue to provide respite to the business community in their access to finance from commercial banks through effectively and appropriately cutting the key policy rate, he added.

Mr. Saquib Fayyaz Magoon, SVP FPCCI, said that SBP should focus on core inflation rather than general inflation on an immediate basis as these exclude the most volatile components of the basket.

Mr. Magoon explained that despite the progressive and major hikes in the policy rates from 9.75 percent to 22 percent over a period 6 quarters in 2022 and 2023, general inflation remained stubbornly-high and didn't respond to the policy rate.

Mr. Saquib Fayyaz Magoon stressed that despite the successful completion of IMF Stand-by Agreement (IMF-SBA) and 22 percent policy rate, Pakistan remains overwhelmed with issues dwindling exports and economic instability.

ICCI-NUTECH agree to join hands to promote industry-academia cooperation

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: National University of Technology (NUTECH) and Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry have decided to initiate collaborative efforts for the industrial based skilled training programmes, need based scholarship programmes, creation of business incubation centre, promotion of hospitality sector and faculty-industrial research programmes. This understanding has been reached during a visit of ICCI delegation to the NUTECH under the leadership of its President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari wherein it was also decided that ICCI will participate in the upcoming NUTECH Job Fair to advance the core objective of industrial development.

On the occasion, Rector NUTECH Lt. Gen® Moazzam Ejaz while highlighting the achievements of the University said that the University has been ranked among the 100 best Institutions of the world, which is the result of the tireless efforts of its faculty and the expertise of the students in the relevant fields.

He apprised the participants about NUTECH's slogan 'a university of Industry' by saying that we are fully determined to achieve this goal with our head, heart and hand by working together. He further said that

convergence of academia-industry signifies a step forward to give boost to Pakistan's innovative landscape to herald a promising future with boundless possibilities.

President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that NUTECH is the first University engaged in industrial based research which is indeed a great service to the country.

He also apprised the Rector about ICCI's endeavors to establish an industrial estate in the outskirts of the capital to boost local industry through hydel power generation and sought Army Chief, General Asim Munir's help to get a nod for the smooth sail.

Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, added that skill development in the Air Hostesses and Nursing sectors can also prove useful for foreign exchange earnings.

Secretary General United Business Group Zafar Bakhtawari said that a MoU between ICCI and the NUTECH for collaborative endeavors for the development of corporate sector which is actually the locomotive force in running the country would go a long way and for the purpose ICCI is ready to allocate a reasonable space to the University for the research work.

Senior Vice President Faad Waheed under-



lined the significance of Artificial Intelligence based research for ease of doing business by curtailing the cost of doing business.

Coordinator ICCI sub Committee on HEC Adnan Mukhtar appreciated the Rector's offer

that ICCI can use the hitch labs of the University for the development of the industry.

Executive member Rizwan Chheena and ICCI member Sajid Iqbal also shared their insights for the academia-industrial linkage.

KE live app now offers easy access to income tax certificates

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: As the fiscal year closes and citizens prepare to file their taxes, K-Electric has introduced a quick and new service for customers to download their tax certificates through the KE Live App in just four simple clicks. These include sales tax for our industrial or commercial customers, advance income tax for residential accounts, and withholding tax certificate for net metering customers.

The initiative is an extension of KE's efforts to digitize its services to bring in more efficiency and customer-centricity in its processes and leverages technology and innovation to bridge the gap between the customer and the company.

Customers who are active taxpayers and whose KE account name and address match the details on their CNIC can apply for exemption from the Advance Income Tax through a simple process on the KE website. This option is also available for those customers living in rented premises, provided their current or permanent residential address on the CNIC matches the details on the KE Bill.

LONGi Achieves Milestone with 165KW Solar Rooftop Project in Pakistan

Commerce Desk

PESHAWAR: LONGi has reached a significant milestone in Pakistan's solar energy market by successfully completing a 165KW commercial rooftop solar project in Peshawar. This project, installed on the rooftop of the Shama CNG station, was finalized recently and utilizes 284 pieces of 580-watt LONGi Hi-MO X6 photovoltaic modules, offering a total installed capacity of 165KW. With this successful implementation, Peshawar is now benefiting from a cleaner, more sustainable energy solution.

The project generates approximately 700 to 750 units of electricity per day during the summer months.

Faisalabad outplays Sahiwal team by 4-0 to win Summer Games 2024 hockey title

Tahir Amin Malik

Faisalabad division hockey team outplayed Sahiwal team by a big margin of 4-0 to win Summer Games 2024 hockey title at National Hockey Stadium here on Thursday evening.

Punjab Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs Malik Faisal Ayub Khokhar graced the occasion as chief guest. He also distributed cash prizes, medals and trophies among the players and officials of both the teams. The Faisalabad division team was awarded the winners' trophy and a cheque of Rs 6 lakh while the Sahiwal team was given runners-up trophy and a cheque of Rs 3 lakh.

Secretary Sports and Youth Affairs Punjab Muzaffar Khan Sial, Director General Sports Punjab Pervez Iqbal, Director Admin M Kaleem, Director Youth Affairs Rana Nadeem Anjum, Director Sports Yasmeen Akhtar were also present on this occasion.

Besides them, Divisional Sports Officers Tariq Nazir (Faisalabad), Rauf Bajwa (Sahiwal), Olympian Tariq Imran, Deputy Director Ata ur Rehman, Deputy Director Zahoor Ahmed, Chief Sports Consultant Hafeez Bhatti, Administrator National Hockey Stadium Abdul Qayyum also attended the prize distribution ceremony.



Secretary Sports and Youth Affairs Punjab Muzaffar Khan Sial also presented a souvenir to Punjab Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs Malik Faisal Ayub Khokhar on this occasion.

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.

Addressing the prize distribution ceremony, Punjab Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs Malik Faisal Ayub Khokhar

announced that a hockey astro-turf will be laid in Sahiwal in near future. "Sahiwal hockey team has played the final despite having fewer facilities and resources".

He said that the final of the Summer Games Hockey event was played at the largest hockey stadium in the world. "International matches will also be played at this great venue in near future".

Punjab Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs Malik Faisal Ayub Khokhar said that Punjab Sports Department will organize Punjab Games in the next few months in which 16 games will be contested. "The prizes of worth Rs 10

crore will be distributed among participating players of the Punjab Games".

Punjab Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs Malik Faisal Ayub Khokhar said that Punjab Sports Department will continue to conduct events like Summer Games in future to provide sufficient playing opportunities to talented athletes of the province. "Our Scrutiny Committee has selected the talented players of this event as well and the selected players will be awarded Rs 70,000 monthly stipend".

Punjab Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs Malik Faisal Ayub Khokhar said that every child will be seen playing in the fields under the vision of Chief Minister Punjab. "Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz is very active in the promotion of sports".

He said 50 new grounds will be built in the upcoming ADP under Khalita Punjab campaign. "By the end of the financial year, the best sports complexes will be built in all tehsils of Punjab".

Faisalabad Division hockey team dominated the match proceedings right from the beginning. They did not give any room to Sahiwal boys to settle down and won the title encounter convincingly by 4-0. M Hussain struck two goals while Rana Danish and M Shakeel scored one each for victorious Faisalabad Division.

Rania, Hadia, Manahil & Sadia enter into semi-final in U17 Girls Squash

Sports Desk

PESHAWAR: Top seeded Rania Qazi, second seeded Sadia Zahoor, third seeded Hadia Farman, and fourth seeded Manahil Aqeel entered into the semi-finals of the ongoing Khyber Pakistan U17 Age Group Junior Squash Championship being played here at Qamar Zaman Squash Complex on Monday.

Former World Champion Qamar Zaman, Director Blue Tone Squash Academy, former World No. 13 Mansoor Zaman and former World No. 10 coach Amjad Khan also witnessed the matches.

Besides the girls U17 category, the Championship is also carrying U9, U11, U13 wherein players of the various categories also reached the semi-finals through their respective matches.

In the Girls category U17, Rania Qazi defeated Mashal Khan in straight sets, the score was 11-3, 11-3 and 11-6 as Rania



Qazi fully dominated the proceedings and did not allow her rival to play with free hands.

In the other quarter-finals matches Hadia Farman recorded victory against Alishba Niaz in a thrilling four sets match and reached the semi-final. Hadia Farman won the first set by 11-9 but failed to click in the second won by Alishba Niaz at 5-11. After 1-1, Hadia Farman managed her position according to the situation and marched into victory in the remaining two sets by 11-9 and 13-11. Alishba gave tough resistance

to Hadia Farman wherein both stretched to 13-11 by leveling the set at 5-5, 6-6, 7-7, 8-8, 9-9, 10-10 and 11-11.

In the third quarter-final Manahil Aqeel overpowered Maleeha Shah in straight sets, the score was 11-4, 11-9 and 11-5. Manahil and Maleeha Shah played well and gave each other a tough fight before Manahil Aqeel marched into victory.

The second seeded Sadia Zahoor beat Hiba Imtiaz by 3-0, the score was 11-6, 11-6 and 11-5. Sadia Zahoor has full control over her drops and accurate nick shots while Hiba was unable to respond well and thus Sadia Zahoor won the match by 3-0 and moved to the semi-finals.

In the U11 category Abdur Rehman, Aryan to clash in KP Junior Squash final. In the boys U11 quarter-finals Abdur Rehman Riaz defeated Haroon Afridi by 11-7 11-8 and 11-2 in a one-sided affair.

In the second quarter-final, Aryan Ahmad defeated Ahmad Shah Jahan by 11-8, 5-11, 11-5, and 11-2. Ahmad Shah Jahan fully dominated the match and despite losing the second set, overall managed his position to march into victory.

Anas Rafy eliminated Zubair Riaz by 3-0, the score was 11-2, 11-6 and 11-4, Fahad Arif defeated Muhammad Hussain Bakhish in a thrilling four sets battle, the score was 6-11, 11-8, 14-12 and 11-7.

In the U13 category quarter-finals Danish Sikandar beat Ayyan Mehboob 11-3, 11-5, 11-9, Sudais Nazir defeated Muhammad Yahya by 11-4, 11-6 and 11-4, Ahmad Safwan Gul beat Ahmad Ali Naz in another thrilling match, the score was 11-9, 11-8, 4-11, and 13-11 while in the last quarter-final Malik Muhammad recorded victory against Arman Ali by 11-3, 11-5, 7-11 and 11-8.

Balochistan, Punjab victorious in Blind Cricket T-20 League matches

Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: Balochistan and Punjab won their matches on the day-4 of PBCC Blind Cricket T-20 Super League 2024 at APS School Cricket Ground, Abbottabad on Monday.

In an exhilarating T20 match, the Balochistan Blind cricket team triumphed over KP in a nail biting finish, chasing down a formidable target of 213 runs with just one ball to spare.

The match commenced with KPK Blind setting a challenging target, scoring 212 runs for the loss of 7 wickets in their allotted 20 overs. The standout performances came from Badar Munir (B2) and Muhammad Rashid (B3). Badar dazzled with a rapid 58 off 30 balls, including nine boundaries and one six. Rashid anchored the innings with a well-crafted 95 not out off 60 balls, hitting 14 fours. Bashir Khan (B1) and Mohsin Khan (B3) from the Balochistan side put up impressive bowling performances, taking two wickets each.

In response, Balochistan managed to chase the target in a sensational way, scoring 216 for the loss of 9 wickets in 19.5



overs. Niamatullah (B3) led the charge with a solid 61 off 46 balls, supported by timely contributions from Imran Sarwar (B3), who remained not out on 33 off 18 balls, and Naseeb Ullah (B2), who scored a quickfire 21 off 12 balls. The chase saw dramatic turns with crucial wickets falling at regular intervals. Talha Iqbal (B3) from KPK delivered with the ball, taking two crucial wickets, including that of the key player Niamatullah.

In another match Punjab beat Sindh by 37 runs. Punjab Blind cricket team deliv-

ered an impressive batting performance, scoring a commanding 252 runs for the loss of 5 wickets in their allotted 20 overs against Sindh.

The Punjab Blind team exhibited an outstanding batting effort, with key contributions from Moeen Aslam (B2), Akmal Hayat Nasir (B3), and Mati Ullah (B3). Moeen Aslam was in exceptional form, scoring a blistering 51 off just 22 balls, hitting ten boundaries with a remarkable strike rate of 231.82. Akmal Hayat Nasir followed suit with a robust

68 off 44 balls, including ten fours and one six. Mati Ullah added crucial runs with a rapid 32 off 16 balls, while Israr Ul Hassan (B2) provided a solid finish, remaining not out with 24 runs off 13 balls. Sana Ullah (B3) also contributed significantly towards the end, scoring an unbeaten 21 off just 8 balls, boasting a strike rate of 262.50. Idrees Saleem (B1) took 2 wickets, while Muhammad Salman and Safdar claimed a wicket a piece.

In reply, Sindh managed to score 215 runs in 20 overs for the loss of 6 wickets. Sindh chase was led by a valiant effort from Muhammad Safdar (B3), who scored a brilliant 58 off 36 balls, including nine boundaries and one six. Ayoub Khan (B2) provided solid support with 46 runs off 34 balls. Despite their efforts, the Punjab Blind bowlers managed to keep crucial breakthroughs at key moments. Nisar Ali (B2) played a remarkable innings, remaining unbeaten with 49 runs off just 26 balls, hitting six fours and one six. However, Sindh middle order struggled to build on the momentum, facing tight bowling from Punjab Blind. Matiullah, Kazimullah and Sajid Nawaz took 2 wickets each.

Pakistan team bags gold in CAVA U-18 Volleyball C'ship



Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan U-18 Men's team has achieved a remarkable victory by winning a gold medal in the CAVA U-18 Volleyball Championship.

The team secured the Gold Medal by winning with a score-line of 3-1 sets, with set points of 20-25, 25-18, 25-23, and 27-25 against Iran.

Key performances by Muhmaad Yahya, Talal Ahmed, and Khizar Hayat played a crucial role in securing this win for Pakistan. Their outstanding skills and determination were evident throughout the match, significantly contributing to the team's success.

The leadership and preparation efforts were led by Team Manager Khalid Waqar, Treasurer of the Pakistan Volleyball Federation. The coaching staff, including Head Coach Saeed Ahmed Khan, Assistant Coach Muhammad Akram, and Analyst Muhammad Suleman, have been instrumental in guiding the team to this prestigious victory.

In recognition of their exceptional performances, several team members received individual awards including Best Setter: Talal Ahmed; Best Opposite; Hitter: Muhammad Yahya; Best Middle Blocker: Jabran; Most Valuable Player (MVP): Muhammad Yahya. With this victory, the Pakistan U-18 Men's Volleyball Team has qualified for the 15th Asian Men's U-20 Volleyball Championship, which will take place in Bahrain from July 28 to August 4.

This accomplishment reflects the dedication, hard work, and talent of the team and its coaching staff, setting a new benchmark for Pakistan Volleyball on the international stage.

Wade reprimanded for breaching ICC code of conduct



Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: Australia player Matthew Wade has been handed an official reprimand for breaching Level 1 of the ICC Code of Conduct during a Group B match of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 against England at the Kensington Oval in Barbados on Saturday. Wade was found to have breached Article 2.8 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel, which relates to "showing dissent at an Umpire's decision during an International Match."

In addition to this, one demerit point has been added to Wade's disciplinary record, for whom it was the first offence in a 24-month period, said a press release.

The incident occurred in the 18th over of Australia's innings. Wade played a delivery from leg-spinner Adil Rashid back to the bowler but expected it to be called a 'dead ball' by the umpire. When it wasn't, Wade then argued with the umpires over the decision.

Wade admitted the offence and accepted the sanction proposed by Andy Pycroft of the Emirates ICC Elite Panel of Match Referees, so there was no need for a formal hearing.

On-field umpires Nitin Menon and Joel Wilson, third umpire Asif Yaqoob and fourth umpire Jayaraman Madangopal levelled the charge.

Level 1 breaches carry a minimum penalty of an official reprimand, a maximum penalty of 50 per cent of a player's match fee, and one or two demerit points.

Pakistan team's departure to Tajikistan delayed due to technical issue

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan football team's departure to Tajikistan for the FIFA World Cup 2026 qualifiers has been delayed due to a technical issue with the chartered flight. The team was scheduled to depart from Lahore to Dushanbe on a private airline's chartered flight but was grounded due to a technical problem.

The Pakistan football squad had already arrived at the airport lounge, ready to board the flight, when they were informed of the delay.

The Pakistan national football team would play their final match of the FIFA World Cup 2026 qualifiers round 2 against Tajikistan on June 11. The match is scheduled to kick off at 8pm Pakistan time.

The team has been training hard under the guidance of their coach, and the players are determined to give their best performance in the match.

Klaasen, Maharaj help South Africa edge past Bangladesh in a thriller

NEW YORK: Heinrich Klaasen's 46-run knock, followed by Keshav Maharaj's last-over heroics helped South Africa register a narrow four-run victory over Bangladesh in a thrilling ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 clash here on Monday.

With this victory, South Africa booked their place in the Super Eight stage of the T20 World Cup 2024, having six points from three games.

Chasing a modest target of 114, Bangladesh managed only 109 courtesy of Maharaj's double-wicket last over.

Bangladesh lost the opening batter Tanzid Hasan in the second over with

nine runs on the board. Najmul Hossain Shanto then added 20 runs from 25 balls with Litton Das (9) for the second wicket before Maharaj struck to remove the latter.

Meanwhile, Anrich Nortje dismissed Shakib Al Hasan (3) and Shanto in consecutive overs to reduce Bangladesh to 50-4 in 9.5 overs. Shanto scored a scratchy 23-ball 14.

Towhid Hridoy and Mahmudullah then attempted to bring Bangladesh back into the match with a 44-run partnership from 45 balls.

With 20 required off 18 balls, Bangladesh looked like favourites to win the

game, however, South African bowlers pulled things to clinch a thrilling victory.

Kagiso Rabada dismissed Hridoy on the first ball of the 18th over and gave away only two runs in the over, leaving Bangladesh to chase 18 off 12.

Hridoy top-scored for Bangladesh with a 37-run knock from 34 balls, laced with two boundaries and two sixes.

Ottneil Baartman gave seven runs in the penultimate over and left 11 runs to defend in the last over.

Maharaj brilliantly defended the target, giving away only six runs and taking two wickets to steer his side to the Super Eight stage of the tournament.

The left-arm spinner topped the bowling chart for South Africa with figures of 3-27, while Rabada and Nortje claimed two wickets.

South Africa opted to bat first, however, the decision backfired as Bangladesh reduced the batting side to 23-4 in the fifth over, with pacer Tanzim Hasan Sakib taking three early wickets.

Klaasen and David Miller (29) then joined hands to help South Africa recover with a 79-run stand for the fifth wicket.

Klaasen played a gritty knock of 46 runs from 44 balls with the help of three sixes and two boundaries before Taskin



Ahmed castled him in the 18th over. Except for Klaasen, Miller, and Quinton de Kock (18), no other batter managed to reach double figures as

South Africa set Bangladesh to chase 114. Sakib led the bowling charts for Bangladesh with figures of 3-18, while Ahmed took two wickets.

Group Photo

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in a group photo with the Chief Ministers of all four provinces prior to the meeting of National Economic Council on Monday.



Photo: PID

NEC approves 13th 5-year National Development Plan, economic growth target for 2024-25

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The National Economic Council on Monday approved in principle the 13th five-year National Development Plan alongside approving the annual economic growth targets for the financial year 2024-25 and macroeconomic framework for annual plan. The meeting of the NEC, presided over by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif here, was briefed on the 13th five-year annual development plan. It was informed in the meeting that the key objectives of the plan include development of every part of the country especially the less developed areas, increase in exports, promotion of the small and medium industry, social protection and poverty alleviation, increase in the capacity building of the work force, and a framework to protect from the impacts of climate change.

The NEC directed the planning ministry to ensure the positive role of the provinces in the national economy and to present a comprehensive framework to increase the country's exports. The ministry

was also directed to include the provinces in the consultation process to achieve the overall economic growth target of the country.

NEC approves 13th 5-year National Development Plan, economic growth target for 2024-25

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in a group photo with the Chief Ministers of all four provinces prior to the meeting of National Economic Council in Islamabad on 10 June 2024.

The prime minister emphasized that the government would ensure the best utilization of the existing resource for revival of the economy and prosperity of the people. He further said that in all important decisions regarding the economy, the Federation would ensure consultation with the provinces and other stakeholders so that as a result of the collective vision for the development of the country, such decisions were made that were positive and involved the consent of all. "The National Economic Council is the biggest forum for important decisions regarding the coun-

try's economy, which will be used for important decisions for the recovery of the economy," he added. The prime minister also directed the National Economic Council to set up a committee which in consultation with the provinces and other stakeholders, should formulate the proposals to not only make the Council active but also to harmonize it with the modern requirements. The meeting was informed about the performance and the annual development projects for the year 2023-24 and proposals for the upcoming fiscal year 2024-25. It was told in the meeting that the growth rate target for the upcoming fiscal year had been increased significantly. The prime minister on the occasion said that as the agriculture sector was the backbone of the country's economy, therefore consultation with the provinces for its development was very important. He directed to ensure inclusion of the provinces' proposals regarding agriculture and other sectors in the plan. The Council was also informed about the national goals for the recovery of the economy

and the measures to achieve them. The meeting was told that measures such as production of export products, innovation of agriculture sector, artificial intelligence and information technology sector in line with international standards, sustainable and renewable energy, effective use of water resources, development of youth and women, effective and speedy implementation of the second phase of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) would ensure development of the country's economy in next five years. The review of the development budget 2023-24 and proposed development budget 2024-25 was also presented in the meeting. It was told that in the upcoming development budget, priority would be given to the projects under CPEC, those of foreign investment and the ones close to completion. Besides the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) would also be included in the development projects while the less developed areas of the country would be given priority in the development plan. A report on the performance of

Central Development Working Part (CDWP) and Executive Committee of National Economic Council (ECNEC) for the period April 2023 to May 2024 was also presented in the meeting. Earlier, the participants of the meeting prayed to Allah Almighty to grant eternal peace to Captain Muhammad Faraz Ilyas Shaheed and other soldiers who were martyred in the terrorist attack in Lucky Marwat on Sunday. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar, federal ministers Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Muhammad Aurangzeb, Ahsan Iqbal and Ahad Khan Cheema, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, Sindh CM Syed Murad Ali Shah, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa CM Ali Amin Gandapur, Balochistan CM Sarfaraz Khan Bugti, Punjab Minister Maryum Aurangzeb, Sindh Minister Jan Khan Shoro, Advisor to the KP CM Muzamil Aslam, Balochistan Minister Zahoor Ahmed Buledi, State Bank of Pakistan Governor Jameel Ahmed and relevant high officers participated in the meeting.

PM's Coordinator designates Jamal Khan Laghari as Pakistan's Wildlife Ambassador

City Desk:

ISLAMABAD: PM's Coordinator on Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Romina Khurshid Alam on Monday designated former Senator Jamal Khan

Laghari as Pakistan's Wildlife Ambassador in recognition of his wildlife services.

The PM's coordinator appreciated his wildlife services in Gilgit-Baltistan and Northern areas and said he would be an effective voice for

projection of wildlife of Pakistan, a news release said.

Jamal Khan Laghari while meeting the PM's coordinator apprised that he discovered Astoor Markhor's rare sub-species in Northern areas of Pakistan which surfaced

earlier in 1905. He further added that when he posted his photo on his social media handle, he was contacted by international wildlife's experts who commended the discovery.

Former Senator Jamal Khan

Laghari said that he significantly worked on "Snow Leopard" which was very useful for research purposes.

Romina Khurshid Alam while appreciating his work, designated him as the ambassador of Pakistan Wildlife.

Agriculture Sector contributing 2.9% to GDP, 37.4% to total livelihoods in country: Tarar

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Law and Justice, Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar on Monday told the Upper House of the Parliament that despite adverse of climate change agriculture sector was contributing 2.9% to national GDP and as per livelihood index had 37.4% share in the total livelihoods generated across the country. He was responding to the motion and queries made by Senator Dr Zarqa Suharwardy Taimur of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) to discuss the effects of climate change on agriculture sector of the country in the light of the Country's Economic Survey for the Financial Year 2022-23, released by the Ministry of Finance.

Senator Tarar thanked the movers for drawing attention towards the important issue and corrected the mover on deriding the Indus Water Treaty that it was this treaty that made India hesitant at international forums to engage in negotiations cross border



water management talks. The water Indus Treaty was done with India and negotiated through third party, the World Bank, whereas due to low riparian region was facing impacts of reduced water flows from India, he added. Azam Tarar said, "Climate change is a serious challenge and done by anthropogenic activities post industrial revolution. However, Pakistan due to lying in the Himalyan foothills is

most affected by climate change." The 2022 unexpected floods left 4.4 million acre crops damaged, one million livestock perished and millions of people affected by heatwaves, he said, adding, "In order to redress the damages, Kisan package 2022, seeds and agricultural medicines on subsidized rates, climate resilient seeds, establishment of seed developing authority, water storage and drip irrigation mechanisms have

been introduced." He informed that the National Adaptation Plan prepared that required the country \$152 billion to implement the proposed plans by 2030. "Living Indus Initiative project has been started, and Recharge Pakistan project prepared to conserve rain and flood water is being initiated at a cost of \$57 million whereas its first part is completed," Tarar said. Climate Impact Agriculture research and planning project of \$35 million was underway, whereas all these initiatives were started from the limited resources of the government, he added. Senator Dr Zarqa Suharwardy Taimur while moving the motion said Pakistan has world's second highest glaciers that were above 3000 and melting faster. "According to Economic Survey 2022-23, 34% of the arable land has been converted into non-agricultural land for development activities like housing societies. The green areas of Lahore and thriving mango orchards of Multan have been razed to build up housing project," she said.

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JVS & Investment from China top priority: A. Aleem Khan



Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Despite big achievements of the Prime Minister's recent visit to China, implementation on joint ventures from Chinese companies in the shortest possible time and bringing the planned investments to Pakistan is a major goal to be achieved. This was disclosed by Federal Minister for Investment, Privatization and Communications Abdul Aleem Khan while presiding over follow up of China's visit along with Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan here in Islamabad. Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan pointed out that permanent business desks are being established in different cities of China so that the fruits of this visit to China by Prime Minister and the MoUs held there can be brought to the final stages. Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan said that we have to go beyond traditional methods and be "pro-active" to find "out-of-box" solutions for trade with

China so that Pakistan can also adopt modern methods more investment in the country. Federal Minister appreciated joint working of Ministry of Commerce and the Board of Investment to take Chinese companies on board, for which we have to make progress as soon as possible.

Federal Secretary Board of Investments Rahim Hayat Qureshi, while giving a briefing in the review meeting said that the Ministry made comprehensive and coordinated arrangements for the recent visit of the Prime Minister to China, 31 MoUs were signed in this visit and about 1000 prominent companies from China took part in deliberations with Pakistani companies.

Federal Secretary Commerce Saleh Farooqui, Consulate General from Shanghai Rana Shehzad, Consul General Hong Kong Riaz Ahmed, Chairman Trade Development Authority of Pakistan Zubair Motiwala and Investment Officer of the Embassy of Pakistan in Beijing Ghulam Qadir also attended the meeting on video conference and shared their input. They gave a briefing regarding the visit to China and expressed their commitment that respective departments would continue all possible cooperation regarding follow-up activities of visit of China.

Ministry Education Federal Foundational Learning Policy 2024 Launched



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training (MoFEPT) launched the first ever Federal Foundational Learning Policy. The event was led by the Federal Secretary Mr. Mohyuddin Wani, and attended by key development partners, university vice-chancellors, parliamentarians and partner organisations working on education in Pakistan. The event was hosted by acclaimed author and social activist, Ms. Feryal Ali Gauhar.

At the launch on Monday, Mr. Salman Naveed Khan, CEO, Pak Alliance for Maths and Science, gave an overview of the eight pillars of the Federal Foundational Learning Policy 2024. Mr Sam Wilson, Project Director, Pakistan Foundational Learning Hub, said "it is easy to make a policy, but the real task is to implement it". Ms. Rifat Jabeen, Director Academics, Federal Directorate of Education, talked about the success of the Reading

Hour programme implemented in Islamabad Capital Territory, and commended the ongoing efforts of the MoFEPT to improve reading and create a reading culture in schools. Ms. Inga Afanasieva, Senior Economist at the World Bank, highlighted the low learning levels amongst children in ICT, and the low content knowledge of teachers who sometimes scored lower than their students on assessments. Ms. Saima Anwer, Senior Education Advisor at FCDO, stressed on the need to improve the quality of learning in schools in order to increase retention and tackle the out of school children crisis.

Finally, the Secretary MoFEPT, Mr. Mohyuddin Wani concluded the event by thanking partners and colleagues working on improving foundational learning in Pakistan. He highlighted the need to support teachers because of their key role in the learning process. He also nominated Ms. Feryal Ali Gauhar as the reading envoy to create a reading culture in the federal areas.

Omar alleges judge was taken...

Continued from Page 1

The Sunni Ittehad Council's lawmakers protested against the incident in the House and staged a walkout.

Former Speaker Asad Qaiser questioned under which law the opposition leader was barred from the court, asking whether there was any law or Constitution in the country.

Prior to the NA session, the SIC parliamentarians in the Punjab Assembly also staged a walkout. Opposition member Rana Aftab stated that they would boycott the session if no action was taken if the government did not stop "terrorism" against them.

They demand that the inspector general of police be summoned and held accountable.

Pakistan all set to present budget...

Continued from Page 1

government sources said.

The government also claimed that in addition to fiscal management, revenue mobilisation, measures for economic stabilization and growth, reduction in non-development expenditures, job creation and people-friendly policies for the socioeconomic prosperity of the country would feature in the budget.

The preparations for the announcement of the federal budget for fiscal year 2024-25 continued

in full swing in accordance with the prescribed timelines.

The budget is being prepared in close coordination among all the departments and ministries involved in the budget-related events, including the presentation of the budget in the Parliament and launching of the Economic Survey.

It is pertinent to mention here that the budget is being presented when Pakistan is deliberating with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a package of up to \$8 billion.