



Trump plans to permit green cards to foreign graduates of US colleges

Republican candidate Donald Trump has said that he will automatically permit green cards to foreign graduates of US colleges if he is re-elected, which is an unanticipated turn from the former president considering his strict rhetoric on immigration. Trump promised to make it convenient to bring talent to the US, reported Al Jazeera.



IT exports surges to stunning \$ 332 million in May this year

The ICT services export remittances surged to US\$ 332 million in the month of May 2024, an astounding increase of 40.7% in comparison to US\$ 236 million in May 2023. ICT export remittances have surged to US\$ 2.925 billion during July 2023 to May 2024 of FY2023-24 in comparison to US\$ 2.371 billion reported for the same period last year, said a news release. (Details on Page 8)

Simultaneously published from Islamabad, Lahore and Multan

'Operation Azm-e-Istehkam' to eradicate terrorism

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting of Central Apex Committee of National Action Plan on Saturday.



Photo: PID

Pakistan launches 'Operation Azm-e-Istehkam' to eradicate terrorism

Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan government on Saturday approved a reinvigorated and re-energized national counter-terrorism campaign through launching of Operation 'Azm-e-Istehkam' with consensus of all stakeholders, symbolising the national resolve to eradicate extremism and terrorism from the country. The 'Operation Azm-e-Istehkam' was launched with the consensus of all stakeholders, including the provinces, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir, during a meeting of the Central Apex Committee on the National Action Plan (NAP), chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. "Azm-e-Istehkam will integrate and synergise multiple lines of effort to combat the menaces of extremism and terrorism in

a comprehensive and decisive manner," said a press release issued by the PM Office Media Wing. The meeting was attended by key ministers of the federal cabinet including the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Interior Minister Syed Mohsin Naqvi, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar and Information Minister Attaullah Tarar. Additionally, the chief ministers of all provinces and Gilgit-Baltistan, Services Chiefs and chief secretaries of the provinces along with other senior civilian, military and Law Enforcement Agencies officers were present. The forum conducted a comprehensive review of the ongoing counter-terrorism

campaign and assessed the internal security situation. "The forum reiterated that the fight against extremism and terrorism was Pakistan's war and was absolutely essential for the nation's survival and well-being. The forum resolved that no one would be allowed to challenge the writ of the state without any exception," it was added. The progress on the multi-domain tenets of the National Action Plan was scrutinised, with particular emphasis on identifying shortcomings in the implementation for addressing the same on top priority. The necessity for a comprehensive and reinvigorated counter-terrorism strategy, founded on complete national consensus and system-wide synergy, was underscored. In the politico-diplomatic domain, the forum resolved that

efforts would be intensified to curtail the operational space for terrorists through regional cooperation. The renewed and full-blown kinetic efforts of the armed forces would be augmented by full support from all the law enforcement agencies, empowered by effective legislation to address legal voids that hindered the effective prosecution of terrorism-related cases and award of exemplary punishments to them, the press release said. It said that the campaign would be duly complemented by socio-economic measures aimed at addressing genuine concerns of the people and creating an environment that discouraged extremist tendencies. The information space would be leveraged to promote a unified national narrative in support of the campaign. The forum also

reviewed measures to ensure foolproof security for Chinese nationals in Pakistan. Following the prime minister's approval, new standard operating procedures (SOPs) were issued to relevant departments, which would enhance mechanisms for providing comprehensive security to Chinese citizens in Pakistan. Pakistan has witnessed a surge in terrorist activities, especially in KP and Balochistan, since the outlawed militant group Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) ended its ceasefire with the government in November 2022. According to an annual security report issued by the Centre for Research and Security Studies, Pakistan witnessed 1,524 violence-related fatalities and 1,463 injuries from 789 terror attacks and counter-terror operations in 2023 — marking a record six-year high.

PM attends funeral of sepoy Haroon William



Spokesman Report

RAWALPINDI: The funeral service of Sepoy Haroon William, a 29-year-old resident of Islamabad, was held today at Saint Paul's Church, Rawalpindi. Sepoy William, a devoted Christian soldier, made the ultimate sacrifice in the defense of the motherland and embraced martyrdom in Kurram District yesterday while on duty in counter terrorism operations. The ceremony was attended by the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Defence Minister, Interior Minister, Minister of Information & Broadcasting, Chief of Army Staff, senior civil and military officers, soldiers, citizens, and relatives of the martyr. The Prime Minister praised the contributions and sacrifices of the Christian fraternity, lauding their role in the country's progress. He emphasized that the Armed Forces of Pakistan are a cohesive unit, comprising individuals from diverse backgrounds, striving for the collective defence of the state. Chief of Army Staff, General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M) honored the sacrifice of Sepoy Haroon William, Sepoy Anosh Rufun, and their comrades, stating that their unity and bravery exemplify the strength of the nation. He reaffirmed that the nation will always be indebted to their services and sacrifices for the honor of the motherland. Sepoy Haroon William was laid to rest with full military honors in Rawalpindi. Funeral prayers for Havildar Aqeel Ahmed (Okara), Lance Naik Muhammad Tafeer (Poonch), Sepoy Anosh Rufun (Attock), and Sepoy Muhammad Azam Khan (Haripur) were also held in their respective hometowns with full military honours. The Armed Forces of Pakistan remain resolute and committed to eradicating terrorism from the motherland at all costs.

In reply to SC, ECP says SIC ineligible for reserved seats as non-Muslims can't join it

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Sunni Ittehad Council—the new home of PTI elected lawmakers—was ineligible for reserved seats since non-Muslims cannot be religiopolitical party members, the country's top electoral authority said on Saturday. In response to the Supreme Court in the reserved seats case, the Election Commission of Pakistan said that the SIC cannot be given reserved seats. In mid-February, the PTI-backed independent candidates joined the SIC to secure reserved seats after the Supreme Court stripped the party of its iconic symbol before elections. There are 70 reserved seats in the National Assembly and 210 seats in the whole country which are only allotted to the political parties. The deadline for submitting the list of reserved seats was January 24, but the SIC did not submit the list for reserved seats, the ECP said. It went on to add that candidates were asked to provide a certificate of the PTI-Nazriati electoral symbol, but later they withdrew from the symbol. After this, they were declared independent candidates.

Ahsan for constituting committee to probe burgeoning lynching incidents countrywide

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Saturday proposed to constitute a committee to probe the burgeoning incidents of lynching in the name of desecration and blasphemy across the country. Speaking at the floor of the National Assembly (NA) on a 'point of order', he strongly condemned the Swat lynching incident stating that it had brought a bad name to the country in the comity of nations. Ahsan, expressing his personal experience, informed that a religious extremist made an assassination attempt on him but he was survived by the grace of Allah Almighty. Taking law into own hands, he said, it was against the spirit of Islam and as well as the Constitution and law of the land.

Interior Minister chairs meeting on security of Chinese citizens in Pakistan

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi on Saturday chaired an important meeting in the Ministry of Interior to review the measures taken to protect foreigners, especially Chinese citizens. The overall security situation in the country was also reviewed while the minister instructed to implement the SOPs of the security plan. He said that formulated plan should be regularly monitored at every level and the relevant departments should keep close contact to destroy the nefarious intentions of anti-national elements. There is no room for any negligence on the



PBC asks CJP to ensure seniority in LHC CJP appointment

Bureau Report

LAHORE: The Pakistan Bar Council (PBC) asked Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa to follow seniority while appointing the chief justice of the Lahore High Court. In a letter written to the CJP, the PBC's representatives asked the CJP to appoint the most senior judge as the chief justice of the LHC. The letter, signed by six PBC members read that the principle of seniority should be considered in the appointment of the Chief Justice. The PBC maintained that the government is 'mulling' to appoint a junior judge as the LHC chief justice. In the letter, the PBC members also argued that deviating from the principle of seniority without solid reasons would be a violation of the established judicial precedent. "The judiciary's dignity and transparency can only be maintained by following the principle of seniority. The public trust in the judicial system can only be maintained through transparency," the letter read. Earlier on March 8, Justice Malik Shahzad Ahmad Khan took oath as the Lahore High Court (LHC) chief justice in a ceremony held at the Governor's House here. Justice Malik Shahzad Ahmad Khan is set to retire in March 2025.

PTI demands SC to take notice of Muhammad Zubair's interview

Monitoring Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has demanded the Supreme Court (SC) to take notice of former governor of Sindh, Muhammad Zubair's interview, in which he alleged that former army chief General (ret'd) Qamar Javed Bajwa derailed Imran Khan-led government. Speaking at news channel 'Off the Record' programme 'Off the Record', Muhammad Zubair, who parted ways with the PML-N, maintained that Nawaz Sharif and Gen (ret'd) Qamar Bajwa had even met a couple of times in London. Addressing a press conference, PTI spokesperson Raouf Hasan noted Zubair, in his interview, said Bajwa conspired to overthrow the PTI government. Hasan said that Zubair's claims are a serious matter and require the Supreme Court's attention. "A gang of criminals was imposed on the country by overthrowing Imran Khan-led regime," he said, urging the SC to take suo motu notice of Zubair's interview. He also criticised Interior Minister Ahsan Iqbal's statement, saying it was irresponsible and aimed at spreading chaos. Ahsan Iqbal had demanded PTI founder Imran Khan should be kept in jail for country's stability. The PTI spokesperson also mentioned that friendly countries are advising Pakistan to maintain political stability, while some elements are trying to create unrest.

Transforming Digital Landscape: DG SCO Inaugurates High-Tech Freelancing Hub in Haveli, AJ&K

Abdul Majeed Tahir

HAVELI: Special Communications Organization (SCO) has developed a new Freelancing Hub in Haveli, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJ&K). The initiative introduces cutting-edge technologies to local youth for development of niche skills and promotion of business enabling environment in IT domain. Major General Umar Ahmad Shah HI(M), DG SCO, officiated the opening, emphasizing SCO's resolve to transform region's IT landscape.

The newly established IT setup at Haveli joins six other Freelancing Hubs in AJ&K, located in Kel, Kamhora Ghambir along the Line of Control (LoC), Hattian, Goharabad, Khairawal, and Koniyon. All these hubs aim at harnessing IT potential



of youth, and are connected with major sharing of expertise, skill development, / district level IT hubs for mutual and mentoring.

During inauguration, DG SCO Major General Umar Ahmad Shah remarked, "The launch of Freelancing Hub in Haveli demonstrates SCO's commitment to empower local youth. It provides state-of-the-art IT facilities in a very conducive environment, with an objective to unlock youth potential. The purpose is to promote a digitally inclusive society. I anticipate that these facilities will contribute towards fostering IT skills and boosting local economy."

The initiative to develop network of IT set ups across the region is a cornerstone of SCO's broader strategy to transform IT landscape of AJ&K. By nurturing local talent and providing them with desired IT tools, SCO is playing a pivotal role in the economic and social development of AJ&K.

Lodhran pilot project distributes toolkits to technical school graduates



Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: Toolkit distribution ceremony under the auspices of social organization Lodhran Pilot Project (LPP) according to details organized by social organization Lodhran pilot project, a toolkit distribution ceremony was held among the technical trained youth and coordination between institutions. Toolkits were distributed among 240 trained students from TEVTA and private educational institutions in a ceremony held at a local hotel in Bahawalpur. These students include 20 students of electricity, 40 students of beautician, 20 students of welding, 20 students of computer application, 50 students of graphic designing, 50 students of digital marketing, and 40 students of domestic tailoring. Chief Guest Additional Deputy Commissioner Bahawalpur Samira Rabbani while addressing the participants of the event said that the social services of Lodhran Pilot Project in Bahawalpur and Lodhran are commendable. Technical and technical education is the need of the hour and the youth should acquire skills in various fields and make their country famous. He said that the cooperation of the district government is always with the Lodhran pilot project.

Addressing the event, Project Coordinator LPP Mehreen Arif thanked all the government and non-government organizations and said that our organization is making a lot of efforts for the economic stability of the youth.

Officers of Toyota Bahawalpur, Social Welfare, Udyat Zar and other institutions also participated in the toolkit supply ceremony.

At the event, graduates, social organizations and employers also set up stalls related to their fields where they told the participants about their work and skills.

CTD arrests 22 suspects linked to banned groups in Punjab: spokesman

Kiran Asim

MULTAN: The Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) in the Punjab province has foiled a major terror plot by arresting 22 suspected persons linked with a banned out-fits during operations in different areas of Punjab.

According to the spokesman, the CTD Punjab conducted 152 intelligence based operations in different districts of the province to effectively deal with any untoward incident of terrorism, in which 152 suspected persons were interrogated and 22 suspected persons were arrested with weapons, explosives and other prohibited materials. Among the arrested alleged terrorists are Muhammad Abdullah, Hamidullah, Kamal Khan, Syed Mohsin Raza, Allah Datta Saqib, Muhammad Nadeem, Saad Manzoor, Muzam Hayat, Muhammad Akram Khan, Muhammad Ramadan, Feroze Khan, Muhammad Zohaib Hashmi, Muhammad Shoaib, Yasir Rehman Jagranwi, Asif Khan, Saeed Khan, Syed Rasool, Ameerullah, Muhammad Umar, Anwar Shah, Waris Khan, Muhammad Ahmad and Muhammad Siddiq are included, he said and added that they belong to the banned organizations Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, Sipah Sahaba Pakistan Daesh and Blochistan Lohration Army. He said that the arrest of these suspected persons was carried out during intelligence-based operations in Lahore, Attock, Sheikhpura, Muzaffargarh, Nankana Sahib, Bahawalpur, DG Khan, Chakwal, Gujranullah, Lodhran, Mianwali, Faisalabad, Multan, Bahawalnagar and Rawalpindi.

He said that the explosives 1645 grams, Hand grenades 03, IED bombs 01, Detonators 12, Safety fuse wire 32 feet, Pistol with 28 bullets 04, banned books 09, banned magazines 02, Pamphlets 212, Stickers 323, 02 flags, 03 receipt books, 03 mobile phones and 78500 rupees in cash have been recovered from the possession of the terrorists. The spokesman said that the arrested suspected persons had planned to sabotage across the province and wanted to target important installations.

Very soon the country will be on path of development': Chaudhry Naseer

Anwar Chauhan

Member National Assembly Constituency NA 65 Chaudhry Naseer Abbas Sidhu said that very soon the country will be on the path of development under the leadership of Muhammad Nawaz Sharif. Shahbaz Sharif is working tirelessly as the prime minister. There has been a reduction in inflation and stability in the value of the dollar, while the hundred-day performance of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif is encouraging.

He talked to Senior Journalist Inam Mirza Patron General Kharian Press Club and Chaudhry Anwar Chauhan Chairman Kharian Press Club during the meeting at Dera Sidh.



Back to Home

ISLAMABAD: After spending Eid Holidays citizens of twin cities reaching back to homes.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

Why it is, how to meet it

Just two days ago, a tragic incident occurred in Swat that brought shame to humanity. A tourist was accused of blasphemy, killed, and then his body was publicly burned. Such incidents have become common; only a few days earlier, a similar event took place in Sargodha's Mujahid Colony, where a Christian family was harassed under the same accusation. The elderly victim of this assault succumbed to his injuries after seven days. These incidents are becoming a norm, and no one seems to pay attention. They are forgotten, but they stain our society. No effort has been made to understand their causes or control them. Fundamentally, religious fanaticism has deep roots in our society. When a dictator seized power

under the guise of religion, the nation fell victim. State policies exploited religion to manipulate people's emotions while pursuing hidden agendas. During that era, relationships were established with neighboring countries based on religion, leading to the squandering of our human resources. Those affected by this were alienated from the state and subjected to religious extremism, viewing everything through a specific lens. This cycle continued as such activities were pursued as short-term policies, fueling religious fanaticism and pushing society into a well

of extremism. Consequently, society has become completely fanatical, and people now act recklessly.

This situation affects not just one area but the entire country, making everyone increasingly unsafe. Initially, minorities were fearful, but now even the Muslim community is suffering. People use blasphemy accusations for personal vendettas. Examining the causes reveals that religious fanaticism was once state-sponsored and still persists to some extent. In a society where such practices were endorsed by the state solely for ruling

benefits, the fear among the public has vanished, leading to unpredictable actions. Moreover, these killings were portrayed as spiritually beneficial, granting various metaphysical advantages, which people now only consider. Another solution to curb this serious threat is to control overpopulation. In the previous five decades, our population grew from 60 million to a staggering 220 million while the population of Bangladesh saw a hike from 65 million to 160 million in the same time frame. The citizens of the country, in one way or another are somehow respon-

Writer is student at University of Sargodha.



M Azam Tariq

Inevitable water crisis

Anwar Ullah

According to the states and figures, Pakistan is one of the 17th countries in the world which faces a severe water crisis. According to IRSA, we are undoubtedly in a downgraded position in terms of water sustainability, as we have a water backup for a month only, while our arch enemy can sustain herself for more than half a year. Being an agricultural country, more than 90% of our water is used for agricultural purposes.

Out of that water, 80% water is used for four major agricultural crops; rice, wheat, sugarcane and cotton but the contribution of these crops to the total GDP is below 5%. There exists a very poor pricing mechanism, both in agricultural rural and urban regions. The revenue collected for charging water to agricultural regions accounts to less than 20% of the total operating and manage-

ment cost. The worst that we have to face is the fast and continuous falling underground water level because of a flawed price mechanism. In fact, a recent study of NASA indicates that the Indus river basin is the second most stressed water basin on the planet. What makes the situation alarming is that 96% of our total freshwater is extracted from the Indus river basin, which has become so volatile. Also to bother us is that 80% of our total water that is either oceanic or surface water, comes from Indian water peripheries.

In contrast to our stagnant policies for water preservation, precautions are already in place for water conservation by the rest of the countries, which is recycling the water and reusing it. Israel and Singapore are one of the most water scarce countries, both recycling water by 90% and 40% respectively.

The storage of water into huge collection structures like dams is a reality escape as it only serves a short term solution to a potentially long term

solution demanding issue, not to forget the environmental hazards that come with the package. The modern globe, 177 countries in particular, has more affinity towards a long term solution which is the desalination of saline water resources, primarily the seas and oceans.

The Middle East takes the lead here, particularly Israel and KSA. In fact, the UN has predicted that most of the countries will go for desalination of saline water in the near future. However, on the bad side, the process is enormously expensive as it requires huge amounts of energy to perform the process and can only be done in the regions that face acute water shortage.

Needless to mention, it also destroys the marine life. It has also been observed that the salinity is subject to increase slowly and gradually which will make the process of desalination costlier. Innovatively, Riyadh has shifted towards solar energy, which is far affordable than the conventional energy means. We took the initiative in 2008 when we

built our first desalination plant in DHA Karachi, desalinating 14 million liters of saline water daily, for the members of the privileged housing society.

The plant also had the capacity of producing 94 megawatts of energy too. Shortly after, the plant saw a halt and soon became dead and powerless. Currently, a reverse osmosis (RO) plant in Manora of Karachi is half developed and is still under development. It is predicted that it will generate 5 million gallons of desalinated water daily. In 2018, another desalination plant was also inaugurated in Gwadar port and is not functional as of now, estimated to produce 2.5 million liters of water daily. In the previous five decades, our population grew from 60 million to a staggering 220 million while the population of Bangladesh saw a hike from 65 million to 160 million in the same time frame. The citizens of the country, in one way or another are somehow respon-

sible for the crisis as well. Being such a under debt country, the citizens should embrace the ground responsibilities. For instance, we waste a great amount of water while washing cars in commercial car washing services. To deal with it, the government should charge the use of water which is called water pricing or water metering, so everyone become responsible for their actions.

Then, our political leaders should own and prioritize this issue. They need to understand that efficient management of water resources is where the problem and solution lies, instead of exhausting extreme budget portions on building dams. Instead of blaming India and their political opponents to gain political grounds, they should focus on; improving the water management system, introduction of latest and modern technology in the agricultural sector and draw an efficient water pricing mechanism. Water pollution is another issue directly associated with water crisis. Faisalabad's fast fashion industry

pollutes a huge amount of household use water. Not only does it decrease the amount of clean water but also inflict water borne diseases on the regional population putting further pressure on the healthcare system of the country and eventually, the overall economy. In this regard, the government should strictly impose various forms of punishments on the factory owners neglecting the laws. Needless to mention, is reforming the National Water Policy, which was formulated for the first time back in 2018. This policy lacked urban water challenges, quantifiable targets to meet water conservation and quality. The government should divert focus from infrastructure improvement to water management. We, as a nation, have to understand this problem and to efficiently conserve and manage water, if we are to grow collectively.

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How many deaths will it take for the int'l community to wake up?

Amna Ayub

As the days go by, Palestinians are waiting for a sortie of brutal Israeli's army, but the international community ceases to function. This is due to instability and fragility of their policies and it leads to unsettled disputes. The United Nation which is a diplomatic and political international organization which intends to uphold and retain international peace and security, achieve international cooperation and to sustain harmony has failed to uphold Israel accountable for the massacre and displacement of thousands including the majority of women and children. The major world powers have failed humanity. The Palestine Israel conflict is a historic one dating back to late 19th and early 20th centuries, rather than a recent event from October 7th 2023. Historical accounts indicate that conflict is on sacred land that has significant religious importance for both groups. The Palestinians lived peacefully under the Ottoman Empire until after World War 1, the UN placed Palestine under British Administration and they legitimized Jewish immigration into Palestine through the Balfour Declaration. The situation escalated after World War 2 and the Holocaust which granted Israel International support for immigration into Palestine. The UN proposed a two state solution but the Arabs refused

to accept. After the British withdrew from Palestine, it started repeated conflicts among the parties in 1948, 1967, and 1973. Efforts to bring peace were made through resolutions such as Oslo Accord but failed and hence the conflict kept escalating as Israel yearned to capture more and more land. The conflict exacerbated once again after Hamas' attack on Southern Israel resulting in many casualties and hostage-takings. In response, Israel has been vigorously attacking civilians that include mostly children for the past 8 months. This genocide has continued for the past 8 months killing at least 36,439 Palestinians, mostly women and children, with over more than 82,000 injured and thousands still missing, according to enclave's Ministry of Health. The situation worsened after food shortage leading to starvation and increasing death-toll even higher due to malnutrition and it does not end here but Israel keeps on killing the civilians in the hospitals, homes and to add more to the calamities even attacked Rafah, the camp side Israel declared as 'safe zone' for the Palestinians to flee to. The American President has been supporting Israel since the beginning, condemning the Hamas' attack and in his recent statements he reaffirmed USA's support to Israel. The US calls it Israel's right to self defense. The UN has been actively monitoring the conflict and calling for peace on both sides. It has also been engaging with

stakeholders to call for a ceasefire. The UN Security Council has called for an urgent pause and to allow humanitarian aid in Gaza but the resolution was twice vetoed by the US. Despite all the efforts, the UN has miserably failed to call for accountability for the war crimes Israel has been committing. Also, no strong resolution has been passed to stop Israel from the Genocide. The prosecutor of the International Criminal Court seeks arrest warrants of Netanyahu, the PM of Israel and the Hamas leaders for war crimes. The charges include, causing starvation as a method of war, including denial of humanitarian aid. The Arabs and other Muslim countries have failed miserably in taking any stern stance for ceasefire or the resolution of this conflict. They have made efforts on diplomatic grounds but those efforts are negligible and have little or no impact on the situation. Iran has openly opposed Israeli aggression and condemned it while clearly siding with Palestinians. It also attacked Israel with drones in the month of April as an aggressive response. Recently, the US has proposed a ceasefire plan including three stages: first, a 6 days ceasefire when Israel will remove its forces from populated areas, then exchange of hostages followed by negotiations among Hamas and Israel for a permanent ceasefire. The final stage is the permanent ceasefire and also reconstruction of the enclave destroyed by the

Israeli forces. This plan is also being highly opposed by Netanyahu but the exact consequences are not clear. People across the globe have been boycotting the goods that support Israeli war crimes directly or indirectly. This has affected the revenue of producers with an estimated loss of about \$15 billion. This has also left political pressure on Israel and many companies have also divested from investing in Israeli companies. Israel has failed in conquering public opinion and people have been protesting against the genocide for months on end including students, workers, and people of all color and creed. Despite the repeated call for ceasefire and allowing humanitarian aid, Israel has not considered any law and is recurrently attacking the civilians and has not lifted the blockade to let the humanitarian aid in Gaza. It has been violating human rights, and International law over and over again but no one has yet taken any effective step to make Israel accountable for the mass destruction and killings of innocent people. The world has failed miserably in peace keeping, and humanity. The economic gains are more important to the states than the thousands of innocent kids that are beheaded, burned, airstripped, bombed and displaced. It's high time the world should wake up and contribute to the ceasefire and call for peace. *Writer is student at National Defense University, Islamabad*

Nine months after Gaza war, population entirely dispossessed of livelihood means

After nearly nine months of the Israeli war in Gaza, the besieged enclave's population has been almost entirely dispossessed of the means to ensure food security, shelter, health, and livelihood, a UN official told reporters Friday.

Gaza was "a world of devastation" and still in the grip of Israeli attacks, UN humanitarian officials just back from the enclave reported on Friday, as they described widespread destruction and stories of pregnant mothers forced to request preterm C-sections out of desperation and fear.

"Women were asking me, 'When can we go back to our homes?' Each displacement has brought more loss and fear," Maryse Guimond, UN Women's Special Representative for the Occupied Palestinian Territory, said by video-link to reporters in Geneva.

Ms Guimond, a veteran humanitarian worker, described seeing people "crammed" into makeshift shelters and lacking even the most basic essentials. At one school-turned-shelter run by the UN agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA), there were only 25 toilets for the 14,000 people seeking safety inside the compound and the 59,000 others camping outside, she noted.

Pointing to the "enormous" problems of access to Gaza's last functioning hospitals today, Dr Rik Peeperkorn from the UN World Health Organization (WHO) reported that the enclave's health workers, obstetricians and doctors now treat far higher levels of low birthweight babies than before the war.

"We see a lot of preterm babies and low birthweight babies and you see that often in times of conflicts, war...but we even had the stories where women were going when they had access to the hospital would ask for an early Caesarean to make sure that they deliver and deliver safely because they were completely unclear and they were scared about the access, if they would be able to access the hospital later, because of the volatile security situation and the constantly changing situation."

Beyond the risks of giving birth in Gaza today for mothers and their babies in a place where "there is hardly any antenatal care", the WHO medic highlighted the "amazing" amount of trauma cases, amputees and patients with chronic health conditions who urgently need to be evacuated out of the enclave for treatment.

Since war erupted on October 7, roughly 4,800 patients have been evacuated out of medical necessity from Gaza, most to Egypt and elsewhere in the region.

But "at least another 10,000 patients" now needed specialist treatment outside the enclave, Dr Peeperkorn said - "half of them related to the war and half of them related to what we call the chronic diseases: ...cancer, cardiovascular diseases and other non-communicable diseases, including severe mental health cases".



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

An Alarming Situation

A dangerous atmospheric deviation alludes to the drawn-out expansion in Earth's normal surface temperature because of human exercises, basically the discharge of ozone harming substances like carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), and nitrous oxide (N₂O). These gases trap heat in the environment, prompting the nursery impact. Since the Modern Unrest, the convergence of these gases has risen decisively, bringing about uncommon warming. The results of an Earth-wide temperature boost are sweeping and serious, influencing normal biological systems, weather conditions, and human social orders. Glacial masses and ice covers are dissolving, adding to rising ocean levels, which compromise beach front networks. Outrageous climate occasions, including storms, heatwaves, and weighty precipitation, are turning out to be more regular and extraordinary. Moreover, an Earth-wide temperature boost disturbs rural efficiency, imperils biodiversity, and worsens medical conditions. Relieving an Earth-wide temperature boost requires dire and composed worldwide endeavours to decrease ozone harming substance outflows, change to environmentally friendly power sources, upgrade energy productivity, and advance feasible land use releases. Addressing this worldwide test is fundamental to safeguarding the planet for people in the future and to guarantee the versatility of both normal and human frameworks.



Analysis

Muhammad Sohail Hassan

a lot of carbon dioxide (CO₂) and other ozone depleting substances, including methane (CH₄) from rural practices and domesticated animals, and nitrous oxide (N₂O) from modern exercises and composts. As these gases collect in the climate, they structure a sweeping that traps heat, prompting the warming of the planet. The ramifications of a dangerous atmospheric deviation are significant and complex. One of the most perceptible impacts is the dissolving of polar ice covers and glacial masses, which adds to rising ocean levels. This peculiarity represents a critical danger to seaside urban communities and little island countries, possibly uprooting a large number of individuals and causing monetary interruptions. Also, a worldwide temperature alteration is connected to the expanded recurrence and seriousness of outrageous climate occasions, like tropical storms, dry seasons, and heatwaves. These occasions can obliterate networks, annihilate framework, and lead to death toll. In addition, a worldwide temperature alteration influences biodiversity and biological systems. Numerous species are attempting to adjust to quickly changing temperatures and environments, bringing about shifts in dispersion, modified relocation examples, and even termination. Coral reefs, for instance, are encountering boundless dying because of hotter sea temperatures, which undermines marine biodiversity and the vocations of individuals who rely upon these environments. Farming frameworks are likewise under pressure as changing environment conditions influence crop yields and food security. Areas that were once fruitful may become parched, while others might encounter expanded precipitation and flooding, entangling cultivating rehearses and compounding craving and destitution in weak populaces.

Tending to a dangerous atmospheric deviation requires thorough systems that envelop moderation and transformation. Moderation endeavours centre around decreasing ozone harming substance emanations through the reception of sustainable power sources like sun based, wind, and hydropower, improving energy effectiveness, and executing carbon catch and capacity advances. Transformation includes making changes in environmental, social, and monetary frameworks to limit the harm brought about by an Earth-wide temperature boost. This incorporates building strong framework, growing early admonition frameworks for outrageous climate occasions, and safeguarding normal territories. Worldwide collaboration is urgent in handling an Earth-wide temperature boost. Arrangements, for example, the Paris Understanding mean to join nations in the work to restrict worldwide temperature climb to well under 2 degrees Celsius above pre-modern levels, with a goal to restrict it to 1.5 degrees Celsius. This requires a responsibility from all countries to decrease their carbon impressions and to help each other through innovation move and monetary guide. All in all, an unnatural weather change is a mind boggling and critical issue that influences each feature of life on the planet. Quick and supported activity is important to moderate its belongings and to adjust to the progressions that are as of now in progress. Through worldwide collaboration, development, and a common obligation to supportability, it is feasible to address the difficulties presented by an unnatural weather change and to shield the planet for people in the future. *The author is a Student of BS Political Science at the University of Sargodha. He is an article reader & writer, He has a grip on National and International Current affairs. Being a Student of Political Science, he is a keen observer of National and International affairs and has an analytical approach to it. He can be reached at sohailhassan535@gmail.com*

Cultural diplomacy

Fouzia Yasmin

Cultural diplomacy, a vital subset of international relations, involves different aspects like exchange of ideas, values, traditions, and other cultural aspects between nations and peoples of different countries to enhance mutual understanding and cooperation. Unlike traditional diplomacy, which often relied on political and economic negotiations only at governmental level, cultural diplomacy includes softer realms of interaction among societies, like people-to-people contact, which aims to build relations of trust and respect through cultural engagements. Mainly, cultural diplomacy seeks to promote national interests and foster peace by representing their country's culture at global level. The representation of cultural diplomacy includes music, art, literature, cuisine, sports, and educational programs. By presenting these cultural assets, nations can build up their global image and create a more favorable environment for political and economic relations and winning the hearts of foreign audiences. Cultural diplomacy is of great importance. Like when people from other countries watch and experience the cultures of our country, they often find common ground and shared human experiences, which can significantly reduce stereotypes and prejudices against our country. This connection through cultural diplomacy is crucial in countries where misunderstandings and misrepresentations can lead to internal and external conflicts. Through this way cultural diplomacy can play a significant role in conflict resolution and peace-building. In regions where political tensions are high, initiatives through cultural diplomacy can lead to negotiation and build up relationships. For instance, cultural exchange programs that bring together young people from conflicting nations can help to create awareness among people of the new generation that values, dialogue and cooperation reduces hostile relations. This could also

lead their government to making friendly policies as their citizens are wishing. Similarly, educational exchange programs are powerful tools of cultural diplomacy. Programs that enable students and scholars to study abroad create a network of global citizens who have a deep understanding and appreciation of the culture of the country where they studied. These individuals often become ambassadors for their host countries, promoting international collaboration and understanding in their professional and personal life styles. More importantly, cultural diplomacy contributes to the global economy. The cultural industries, including film, music, fashion, and art, are significant economic drivers. By promoting these industries abroad, countries can boost their financial conditions, create jobs, and attract others for tourism. Other things like festivals, exhibitions, and cultural performances not only represent the cultural richness and beauty but also attract international visitors, contributing to economic growth through tourism and making the tourism industry successful. As we are living in an age of digital world, so cultural diplomacy can be done very successfully on social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram etc and similarly through TV channels. This digital cultural diplomacy can engage younger audiences and foster global connectivity, making cultural exchanges more inclusive and widespread. The importance of cultural diplomacy is also evident in addressing global challenges such as climate change, health crises, and social justice. Cultural narratives and practices can inspire collective action and drive international cooperation on these issues. So, promoting the positive image of our country must be the first priority as the citizens of Pakistan. We are mostly indulged in promoting negative content just for the sake of getting attention and view, and leaving behind the precious and beautiful image of our country. *Writer is student in Department of IR at FJWU. She can be reached at fouziayasmin13@gmail.com*

Custodian of Kaaba, Sheikh Saleh Al Shaibi, passes away

Monitoring Desk

ISLAMABAD: Sheikh Saleh al Shaibi, the chief key holder and custodian of the holy Kaaba in Makkah, passed away on Saturday, after a prolonged illness, Gulf News reported.

Al Shaibi was the 109th successor in a line that dates back to Uthman bin Talha, a companion of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), who was originally entrusted with the key to the Kaaba.

He took over the role of caretaker in 2013 and was the 77th member of his family to serve in this capacity, a tradi-



tion that has spanned centuries.

The family's duties include managing the affairs of the Kaaba, cleaning, washing, ironing, and repairing its Kiswa (cover), as well as receiving visitors and handling all related tasks.

Al Shaibi was a scholar in his own right, holding a doctorate in Islamic studies and authoring several books on religion and history.

Saudi King Salman bin Abdul Aziz and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman have expressed their grief over the passing of Al Shaibi.

The burial will take place at the Al Mu'alla Cemetery in Makkah.

Long March-2C rocket

A Long March-2C rocket carrying an astronomical satellite, the Space-based Multi-band Variable Object Monitor (SVOM), blasts off from the Xichang Satellite Launch Center in southwest China's Sichuan Province on Saturday.



Photo: Chen Haojie/Xinhua

President Diplomat Business Club asks Pakistani tech businesses to join digital revolution

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: President Diplomat Business Club and former ambassador Javed Malik on Saturday urged Pakistani tech businesses to become a part of the digital revolution that was transforming the global business landscape.

He was addressing the Global Business Forum 2024, in Dubai, UAE which brought together delegates from over 30 countries under the auspices of Diplomat Business Club to explore business, trade and investment opportunities through global collaboration.

Diplomat Business Club facilitates business leaders to connect, collaborate, and explore new avenues to expand their businesses and also build new alliances to co-create new businesses ventures particularly in the digital business landscape.

Javed Malik stressed that digital transformation and innovation was changing the nature of doing business and



smart investors and business owners should be willing embrace this change, a press release said.

The president Diplomat Business Club further urged them to focusing their attention to new and innovative businesses ideas in the areas of fintech, blockchain, artificial intelligence, robotics, renewable energy, space technology, autonomous vehicles, clean energy, quantum computing and other technology-based businesses ventures that are clearly the future of business.

Javed Malik said that

the presence of diplomats, business leaders, investors, entrepreneurs and CEOs from more than 30 countries highlighted the Club's position as a premier global platform for business diplomacy in the region.

Speaking to media, he said that Diplomat Business Club would extend support to the Pakistani companies that wanted to reach international markets as well as qualified start-ups that sought funding.

He said that Diplomat Club's global engagement team has been in discus-

sions with Chambers of Commerce in Pakistan and some tech companies to facilitate them where possible.

Other speakers and participants of the global business forum included Trade Commissioner of Italy Valerio Soldani, Consul Generals, Trade Commissioners & Chairmen of business councils from Sweden, Turkey, United Kingdom, Pakistan, China, Russia, Spain, Mexico, Azerbaijan, South Africa as well as senior officials from the UAE Ministry of Economy.

Top diplomats, UN officials join in celebrating Pakistan's election to Security Council

Spokesman Report

NEW YORK: Nearly a hundred ambassadors from all regions of the world and United Nations officials Friday attended a reception hosted by Pakistan's Ambassador to the United Nations, Munir Akram, to celebrate Pakistan's victorious election to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

On June 6, Pakistan was elected, with a massive majority, as a non-permanent member of the 15-member Council, with Ambassador Akram pledging to make a contribution in meeting the grave challenges facing the world.

Pakistan, which was unopposed, garnered 182 votes in the 193-member General Assembly, and will begin its two-year term on January 1, 2025.

Ambassadors of the five permanent members of the Security Council— China, United States, Russia, France and Britain — were among those attended.

Also present were members of the Pakistani community in and around New York.

Palestine welcomes Cuba's announcement to intervene in the genocide case against Israel

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates welcomes Cuba's announcement to intervene in the case relating to the application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in the Gaza Strip, submitted by South Africa against Israel.

The Ministry affirms that this decision expresses Cuba's firm commitment to justice and the rule of international law, and affirms the deep solidarity and historical friendship between the two countries.

The Ministry calls on all states parties to the Convention to join and announce their active participation in the proceedings before the Court, as ending the ongoing genocide against the Palestinian people and combating Israel's impunity are responsibilities that we must shoulder together in the interest of humanity and the law.

Pakistan Association Luxembourg hosts Eid ul Azha celebration

Spokesman Report

LUXEMBOURG:

The Pakistan Association Luxembourg (PAL) hosted a vibrant Eid ul Adha celebration, uniting the Pakistani community in Luxembourg for a day filled with festivities, cultural immersion, and community spirit.



Ambassador of Pakistan to the European Union, Belgium, and Luxembourg Amna Baloch graced the event as the chief guest. The celebration attracted a large turnout from the Pakistani diaspora, who gathered to mark this significant cultural festival with enthusiasm and joy.

Families enjoyed a variety of activities, relishing traditional Pakistani cuisine and creating a lively and festive atmosphere. Special activities were organized for children, ensuring a memorable experience for all ages.

In her address, Amna Baloch emphasized the significance of Eid ul Adha, reflecting on its core values of sacrifice, unity, and togetherness. She praised the Pakistani community in Luxembourg for their contributions and highlighted the importance of such events in preserving cultural heritage and fostering unity among expatriates.

The ambassador's presence underscored the Embassy's commitment to supporting and connecting with the Pakistani diaspora, addressing their needs and concerns, and strengthening the bond between the community and their homeland.

The event served as a platform for cultural exchange, reinforcing a sense of unity and belonging among the Pakistani community in Luxembourg. It also provided an opportunity for the community to celebrate their heritage, share their traditions, and foster stronger connections within the diaspora.

ECO countries' including Pak's carpet design displayed at Tehran carpets exhibition



Spokesman Report

TEHRAN: ECO member states displayed their carpet arts including Pakistani carpet designs during Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO) regional exhibition of carpet arts held in Tehran.

Besides the carpet exhibition, a parallel workshop on the art of old carpet restoration was also inaugurated on the occasion, said a press release received here from Tehran on Saturday.

While inaugurating the carpet exhibition, President of Economic Cultural Institute (ECI) Tehran, Saad S Khan emphasised that carpet is the most ancient of regional art that is common across all the regional countries.

Meanwhile, professors and scholars speaking on the occasion talked about the common heritage of carpet designs in Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan and other regional countries that are members of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) based in Tehran.

Turkmenistan even holds Carpet Day each year as a national state holiday, Dr Saad said.

The scholars highlighted the cultural significance of carpets as a cultural symbol, carpets' role in hospitality in traditional homes and the importance of carpet weaving as a form of livelihood. Experts explained various techniques for restoring old, worn out or torn carpets, up to a century old, which can be restored to appear as good as new.

The ceremony was followed by a widely attended exhibition at the ECI Art Gallery in Tehran of hand-made unique carpets from the countries of the region including Pakistan. There was a live demonstration of carpet restoration being done by artisans. Thousands of visitors from across ECO countries are expected to visit this year's ongoing carpet exhibition.

Rhapsody in Isfahan

Mohammad Ghaderian

In historic city of Isfahan, where whispers travel across centuries and echoes of caravans resonate through the bustling bazaars, Didar Art Gallery hosted an exquisite symphony of connections in the end week of May. As we stood before these diverse expressions in a world where walls rise, we were reminded that humanity cuts across artificial lines.

'Symphony of Life' weaved approximately 57 threads from 20 countries, including Morocco, South Korea, Pakistan, Norway, Taiwan, India, Lithuania, Austria, Mexico, Singapore, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Iran, Turkey, UK, Germany, Italy, France, Netherlands and US, into a diverse and rich tapestry. The exhibition became a strong cultural conduit between nations aimed to highlight commonalities and acknowledge differences,

providing a unique opportunity for the interaction and coexistence of identities. 'Symphony of Life' behaved as a living archive; although works were presented as prints, attendees were eager to see the originals. Each work transcended mere physicality encompassing its creator's transformation, rebellion, and growth.

Identity is the sum of our aspirations, it is not solitary; one of the standout aspects of this exhibition was its scope which had a profound impact on the dialogue between civilizations. 'Symphony of Life' emphasized art as a language that has always played a key role in promoting democracy. The performances of traditional Iranian music, Eastern music, and a fusion of Iranian, Western, and Eastern instruments were another highlight, creating empathy and joy. This cultural initiative has been one of the significant events in recent years in Isfahan, garnering positive international atten-

tion. More truly, progress is collective and humans thrive in shared histories.

LART International Group founded by Abdolreza Rabeti in 2019, comprises Iranian and international artists chatting via messenger and emails to make such cultural exchanges a reality. Today, we stand on the precipice of change, which warrants new inquiries and an expanded capacity for critical thinking. At such junctures, there has been a natural inclination towards connecting with people outside the conventional systems for which platforms (tools) have been repurposed throughout history, and these adaptations continue to redefine our planet.

'Symphony of Life' presents Isfahan's legacy as the shared breath of people, where artists have debated philosophy in gardens and poets have penned verses under arches—all linked in humanity's quest for freedom to express and connect. It is hoped that in



the current tense and war-torn climate, dialogue among nations and people through art will serve as a balm for pain and suffering, generating space for peace and empathy.

Sohrab Sepehri writes for the exhibition:

زندگی درک همین اکنون است

life is understanding of now
زندگی درک همین الان است

a pleasant custom
زندگی چیزی نیست که باقی معادلت از یاد کنی تو هر دو

not something that can be forgotten
by you and me

زندگی راز بزرگی است که در باجاری است
a great mystery that flows in us

زندگی فاصله آمدن و رفتن نیست
interval of our coming and going

زندگی وزن نغمی است که در خاطر جاری ماند
the weight of life is a look that remains in memories

زندگی ترشحی بی دریغی است که آب تنی کردن در تو خمی آنگون است
getting more alive successively, is the life of bathing in the pond, now

زندگی سیم زبیدی است که در مندی کنی و قنات است
a beautiful, artistic scene, of me and you

هر کس نغمه خود خواند و از سمعش زدود
everyone sings his/her song and leaves the stage

This is an articulated opinion of Mohammad Ghaderian, a prominent figure in the visual arts, master painter and recognised art critic. He has collaborated with Iranian museums on book projects and research initiatives. With multiple solos and publications in academic journals under his belt, Ghaderian is currently leading the research group of Isfahan Painters Association.

Bull & Bears
PSX 100-Share
Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index	
Current	Prev. Close
78,810.49	78,801.53
Day's High	Day's Low
80,059.87	78,169.02
Index Value	Change
15,054,633,137	+8.96
Percentage	Time
+0.01%	21 Jun, 2024 5:00 pm

Europe: FTSE 100 Index	
Index Value	Change
8,237.72	-34.74
Percentage	Time
-0.42%	21 Jun, 4:35 pm GMT+1

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average	
Index Value	Change
39,145.08	+10.32
Percentage	Time
+0.026%	21 Jun, 1:11 pm GMT-4

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average	
Index Value	Change
38,596.47	-36.55
Percentage	Time
-0.095%	21 Jun, 3:15 pm GMT+9

Open Market Forex Rates		
Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	182.2	184
Bahrain Dinar	740.98	748.98
Canadian Dollar	202	204
China Yuan	38.4	38.8
Danish Krone	40.15	40.55
Euro	294.3	297.9
Hong Kong Dollar	35.68	36.03
Indian Rupee	3.34	3.45
Japanese Yen	1.9	1.98
Kuwaiti Dinar	908.7	917.7
Malaysian Ringgit	59.07	59.67
New Zealand \$	170.98	172.98
Norwegians Krone	26.38	26.68
Omani Riyal	723.75	731.75
Qatari Riyal	76.53	77.23
Saudi Riyal	72.85	73.6
Singapore Dollar	202	204
Swedish Korona	26.68	26.98
Swiss Franc	315.21	317.71
Thai Bhat	7.59	7.74
U.A.E Dirham	75	75.8
UK Pound Sterling	352	355.5
US Dollar	277.8	280.7

FBR's expanded authority in tax fraud cases will hamper investment: Mian Zahid Hussain

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain said on Saturday that some conditions of the IMF have yet to be fulfilled in the recent budget.

He said that in contrast, most of the budget proposals are as per the instructions of the IMF. He said that honouring commitments with the IMF will help Pakistan secure new loans to keep the country afloat.

Mian Zahid Hussain said allocating 1400 billion rupees for developmental projects in these difficult circumstances is a miracle.

Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that electricity could be made cheaper by Rs10 per unit for the industrial sector by a 200 billion rupees cut in development projects.

The affordable electricity will increase exports by five billion dollars, increase employment, and provide relief to people, but it seems difficult.

The business leader said that last year, 950 billion rupees were earmarked for development projects, of which only 379 billion rupees could be spent till May.

The budget is too focused on indirect taxes, which will increase poverty while reducing government expenditure, which should be addressed.

There has yet to be a concrete plan to eliminate the losses of 1200 billion rupees per year from the power sector. Besides, the privatization of 80 government institutions, which incur losses of 1200 billion rupees annually, must be done immediately.

In both terms, 2400 billion rupees can be saved annually, which makes it possible to save seven and a half billion dollars in government expenses.



Mian Zahid Hussain said that the industries of former Fata, Pata and other parts of the country are being given incentives of more than 200 billion rupees. At the same time, there are

several incentives, that violate the promises made to the IMF.

In these circumstances, if there is no increase in exports, remittances and tax base, new mini-budgets will have to be brought, increasing the pressure on the people.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that big infrastructure projects can bring improvement for the economy and the people, so these projects should be completed immediately so that the country's economic condition can improve.

He said that despite the huge increase in inflation, it is excessive to increase the tax on the income of the salaried class and that increasing the price of medicines, medical equipment, poultry feed, tractors, mobile phones, stationery, newsprint, cement, pasteurized milk and other items will increase inflation.

He warned that increased powers given to FBR are tax fraud cases and 0-year sentence risks being misused to discourage investment.

Group photo

Mr. Rana Abbas, CEO, AE Power Solar and foreign delegates posing for a group photo at InterSolar Europe World's Leading solar exhibition, Munich, Germany.



CAP urges continuation of 15% GST for POS integrated retailers in Finance Bill

Commerce Desk

LAHORE: Chairman of the Chainstore Association of Pakistan (CAP) Rana Tariq Mehboob has urged the government to maintain the 15% GST rate for Integrated Tier-1 Retailers by retaining S. No. 66 of the Eight Schedule of the Sales Tax Act 1990, which is proposed to be omitted in the Finance Bill 2024, as the FBR-POS integration has been instrumental in digitalizing taxation efforts.

In a press release issued today, CAP emphasized that a strategic combination of sequential measures, implemented in consultation with progressive retailers, will promote economic growth and sustainable tax compliance across the entire retail sector.



Rana Tariq Mehboob stated the CAP represents Tier-1 Retailers integrated with the FBR-POS system. The organized retail sector significantly contributes to Pakistan's formal economy, directly employing over 2,000,000 people and indirectly supporting many more through shopping malls, manufacturers, service providers, and the cottage industry amongst over 50 other sectors.

One Network and Mastercard partner for 10% cashback on M-TAG Top-Ups

Asad Hashmi.

RAWALPINDI: One Network, a leading services provider of electronic toll collection on Pakistan's Motorways, and Mastercard, a global leader in innovation in digital payments, announced a strategic partnership to offer a rewarding experience for motorway travelers.

Through this collaboration, users can enjoy a 10% cashback on their M-TAG recharge when they use their Mastercard (debit or credit cards) via One Network M-TAG App. This initiative aims to encourage the use of digital payments for motorway tolls, promoting a cashless and seamless travel experience for commuters across Pakistan.

The signing ceremony was held in Rawalpindi, where representatives from both companies emphasized their commitment to innovation and customer convenience.

"This partnership with Mastercard is a significant step forward for One Network," said Asif Siddique, CEO, One Network "By



offering a cashback incentive for M-TAG recharge via Mastercard, we are encouraging the adoption of digital payments on motorways, ultimately creating a smoother and more efficient experience for travelers."

"Mastercard is delighted to partner with One Network to drive the growth of digital payments in Pakistan," added Arslan Khan,

Country Manager (Pakistan), Mastercard. "This collaboration aligns perfectly with our commitment to fostering innovation and convenience within the payments ecosystem. We believe the 10% cashback offer will encourage travelers to embrace the ease and security of digital payments for their M-TAG recharge."

Salt manufacturers oppose proposal to abolish fixed tax regime for exporters

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: The Salt Manufacturers Association of Pakistan (SMAP) has expressed deep concern over the proposed shift from a 1% turnover-based Fixed Tax Regime (FTR) to the standard taxation rate of 29% of taxable profit in the Federal Budget 2024. The association warned that this change would be disastrous for exports and urged that the proposal to remove exports from the FTR must be immediately rejected to prevent further economic crises.

In a statement, Chairman SMAP, Qasim Yaqoob Paracha, said, "We stand united with Pakistan's export industries in vehemently opposing the proposed abolition of the fixed tax regime in the federal budget. These budget proposals threaten to escalate harassment and



corruption by tax authorities, driving away investors and creating an environment of uncertainty for businesses. "The business community categorically denounces these draconian measures. If these proposals are implemented, it will be very difficult to run the industries, and survival for industries will be impossible."

Qasim Yaqoob Paracha added, "We urge the government to reconsider these detrimental changes. Should these proposals persist, we will explore all available avenues in consultation with export.

Value-added textile exporters reject shift from 1% final to normal tax regime in Budget

Commerce Desk

LAHORE: The value-added textile exporters have rejected the proposed shift from one percent turnover-based Final Tax Regime (FTR) to the standard taxation at 29 percent of taxable profit, proving to be disastrous for the exports.

Pakistan Hosiery Manufacturers & Exporters Association (PHMA), in a hurriedly called meeting, held here today, observed that this proposal to remove exports from FTR must be dropped from the Finance Bill 2024 to prevent further deterioration of trade deficit and resulting pressure

on foreign exchange reserves.

"We are in state of shock on the adverse announcements in the Federal Budget 2024-2025 against exports which will sabotage the hard decades-long efforts of exporters to earn valuable foreign exchange for the country and to provide highest employment."

Besides PHMA North Zone senior vice chairman Amanullah Khan, M. I. Khurram of Comfort Knitwear and Sheikh Zafar Mahmood of Combined Fabrics, a large number of knitwear industry representatives attended the meeting to review the anomalies of the new budget 2024-



25. PHMA North Zone SVC Amanullah Khan observed that historically, the FTR has offered transparent mechanism for taxing export proceeds electronically irrespective of profit or loss on realization of their export proceeds. He said that this imprudent tax measure has been proposed not with an intention to enhance revenue but to open up the doors of corruption and harassment in the hands of FBR. He mentioned that presently the exporters are also contributing 0.25% as Export Development Surcharge.

M. I. Khurram of Comfort Knit-

wear, while addressing the meeting, stated that the proposal to eliminate zero-rating on local supplies under Export Facilitation Scheme (EFS) will have highly adverse effects on export. He said that removal of zero-rating on local supplies to registered exporters will compel the exporters to claim refunds of Sales Tax from FBR which is lengthy process contrary to the spirit of EFS.

M. I. Khurram said that already, billions of rupees Sales Tax Refunds are stuck-up with the government. Therefore, this adverse proposal must also be dropped from the Finance Bill 2024, he demanded.

Budget 2024-25: 18pc GST to reverse all gains towards digitalization of businesses

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Finance Bill 2024 proposed GST increase to 18 percent will further disadvantage tax-compliant retailers and will reverse all gains towards digitalization of the retail sector over the past five years. Although a maximum GST rate of 12 percent should be restored, maintaining the current rate at 15 percent will partially incentivize customers of Tier-1 retailers therefore allowing some semblance of competitiveness for the formal sector. These views were expressed by the Chairman of the Chainstore Association of Pakistan Rana Tariq, emphasizing that a strategic combination of sequential measures, implemented in consultation with progressive retailers, will promote economic growth and sustainable tax compliance across the entire retail sector. He stated the association represents Tier-1 Retailers integrated with the FBR-POS system. The organized retail sector significantly contributes to Pakistan's formal economy, directly employing over 2,000,000 people and indirectly supporting many more through shopping malls, manufacturers, service providers, and the cottage industry amongst over 50 other sectors. Despite ongoing attempts to rationalize the taxation of the retail sector, the proposed tax reforms have led to the closure of several integrated Tier-1 retailers and the premature reduction of the physical retail network of many others over the past two years, he furthered. He urged the government to maintain the 15% GST rate for Integrated Tier-1 Retailers by retaining S. No. 66 of the Eight Schedule of the Sales Tax Act 1990, which is proposed to be omitted in the Finance Bill 2024, as the FBR-POS integration has been instrumental in digitalizing taxation efforts, yielding positive results across the country since its inception. We firmly believe that thorough digitalization can address the elusive taxation reforms of the retail sector. The press release noted that when FBR-POS integration was introduced in 2019, the GST rate for locally produced textile and leather products was 9%.

Meeting

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar chairs the second meeting of the Committee on Medical Education at Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Saturday.



Photo: PID

Deputy PM chairs second meeting on medical education

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Saturday chaired the second meeting on 'Medical Education', emphasizing the government's dedication to enhancing healthcare through comprehensive improvements in medical training and education and come up with concrete recommendations.

The meeting was attended

by National Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Health, Minister for Law and Justice, MNA Dr Nafeesa Shah, Secretary of Health, President PM&DC, Chairman Higher Education Commission, President CPSP, Additional Foreign Secretary (ME & SIFC) and heads of prominent public and private medical institutions and eminent experts from the medical community.

In his opening address, the Deputy Prime Minister highlighted the essential role of robust medical education in tackling the nation's healthcare challenges. He stated, "Elevating our medical education standards is crucial for the health and well-being of our citizens. Our institutions must be empowered to provide top-tier education and training to our future medical professionals."

The main agenda aimed to review the progress made since the initial meeting and discuss the recommendations of the sub-committee. Chair, Sub-committee, Dr. Malik Mukhtar Ahmad Bharath, Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Health presented the recommendation of the sub-committee. The discussion focused on improving the quality of medical education in Pakistan, including

but not limited to, bringing education at par with international best practices, measures to streamline admission in foreign medical colleges, improving coordination between public and private sector and regulatory bodies to ensure uniform quality of education.

The next meeting will be held on 29th June after which the report will be submitted to the prime minister.

FBR to increase property valuation rates in major cities to 90% of market value

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has announced that assessed value of immovable properties located in major urban cities will be increased from 75% to 90% of the market rate through an official government notification that is expected to be issued in July 2024.

The FBR has planned to introduce a simplified tax scheme for retailers. The previous Tajir Dost Scheme, which was voluntary, was deemed a failure, so the FBR intends to try a new simplified approach for the retail sector.

During a discussion with reporters after a Senate panel meeting, Senator Faisal Vawda



stated that the federal budget for the upcoming year will be passed regardless of the circumstances or obstacles encountered. He emphasized that the budget will be approved at all costs.

FBR's Member Inland

Revenue (IR) Operation Mir Badshah Wazir highlighted revision of valuation rates of properties soon after approval of the budget 2024-25, which is to be increased.

The Senate panel recommended abolishing 10 percent

GST on newsprint.

The FBR stated that they have made efforts to expand the tax base, adding 1.5 million new tax filers in the previous fiscal year.

Senator Anusha Rahman argued that without drastic measures, the number of tax filers will not increase significantly. She proposed jailing non-filers as a solution.

The FBR informed that the total number of tax filers is around 4.5 million, but Senators Farooq Naek and others inquired about the number of "nil-filers"—those who file taxes but report no taxable income.

The FBR officials acknowledged that over 30% of filers could be "zero-filers", but they

declined to provide the exact number of nil-filers.

The FBR stated that their tax authorities uncovered Rs 756 billion worth of alleged tax fraud through fake/flying invoices, and arrested 70-80 individuals.

The steel sector was identified as a major source of these fake invoices and scrap steel-related schemes, causing estimated annual losses of Rs 60-70 billion to the national treasury.

"We have been hearing for the last 12 years that FBR is doing this and that to bring the undocumented sectors into the tax net but the fact of the matter is that it has done nothing," Senate Standing Committee on Finance Chairman Saleem Mandiwala said.

Sanaullah Khan Mastikhel's NA membership suspended over 'foul remarks'

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq suspended Sunni Ittehad Council's (SIC) member Sanaullah Khan Mastikhel for the entire budget session as he was found 'guilty' of using inappropriate language against the female lawmakers.

While suspending the SIC member, the speaker remarked that Sanaullah Mastikhel seriously violated the Assembly Rules.

"I have been a part of this House, and such language has never been used on the microphone," Sardar Ayaz Sadiq said.

The house adopted a motion introduced by the Speaker regarding the suspension of the member. The motion said, "Muhammad Sana Ullah Khan Masti Khel MNA expressed objectionable and indecent remarks during the budget speech".



The ruling said "Muhammad Sana Ullah Khan Masti Khel in his budget speech expressed highly objectionable and indecent remarks, thereby eroding and lowering the sanctity of the house in violation of rule of 30 of the Rules Procedure and Conduct of Business in the National Assembly, 2007.

Interior ministry's report on Swat mob lynching finds fault in police response

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: A local tourist who was lynched in Swat's Madyan on Thursday night and set his body on fire, an interior ministry report said on Saturday.

The police's decision to take the accused to the police station was the

"key mistake" that led to fatal consequences, according to the key points of the report.

A violent mob lynched the suspect on Thursday night and set his body on fire. The man was arrested and brought to the Madyan police station which was later stormed by the mob, according to police and local residents.

Educated nation can change the country: Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui

Bureau Report

KARACHI: Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui on Saturday said that only an educated nation could change the country and put it on the path to development and prosperity.

Talking to media persons after a meeting to discuss establishing campuses of educational institutions in Sindh at the Regional Office of Higher Education Commission (HEC), he said they have to change emergency into an emerging Pakistan and that is only possible through education.

Dr Siddiqui said that they were trying to take Pakistan's every area, village and slum to a prosperous stage.

He emphasised the digitisation in the country.



The minister mentioned that it is important to showcase this opportunity to the world and aging nations.

He added that crises have already emerged in Japan, Germany, and Russia, where the population is decreasing.

IT exports surges to stunning \$ 332 million in May this year

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The ICT services export remittances surged to US\$ 332 million in the month of May 2024, an astounding increase of 40.7% in comparison to US\$ 236 million in May 2023.

ICT export remittances have surged to US\$ 2.925 billion during July 2023 to May 2024 of FY2023-24 in comparison to US\$ 2.371 billion reported for the same period last year, said a news release.

Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja said that the present government is focused upon the development of IT sector.

She said the role of Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) and Pakistan Software Export Board (PSEB) in the increase of IT exports is laudable. Shaza Fatima said on the directives of the Prime Minister of Pakistan robust steps are underway for increasing IT exports.

She said that hefty increase has been made in IT sector budget in coming financial year, adding that this increase in IT exports will be



helpful in increase of IT exports. She said that Rs. 20 billion has been allocated for Digital Infrastructure Information projects in the current budget.

It may be noted that in comparison to previous month of April 2024, ICT services export remittances have increased by US\$ 22 million (7.1% growth) in May 2024.

Trade surplus of US\$ 2.571 billion, highest in all Services

(87.9% of total ICT export remittances) has been realized by the IT & ITeS Industry during July 2023 to May 2024 of FY2023-24, an increase of 22.31% as compared to trade surplus of US\$ 2.102 billion during the same period last year.

ICT sector exports of US\$ 2.925 billion are the highest among all Services (41.02% of total export of Services) with 'Other Business Services' trailing at US\$ 1.424 billion.

DIG Islamabad visits Police Khidmat Markaz, reviews security measures, public facilities



ISLAMABAD, JUN 22 (APP): DIG Islamabad Syed Ali Raza on Saturday visited Police Khidmat Markaz F-6 and reviewed security measures, scrutinized records and assessed the welfare and public facilities for police officers and the general public.

A police spokesman said that during the visit, the DIG Islamabad evaluated the services offered to citizens and emphasized the Markaz commitment to providing every possible facility to the public.

He highlighted the deployment of trained officers within Police Khidmat Markaz, dedicated not only to serving Pakistani citizens but also delivering exceptional services to foreign nationals.

He issued directives to senior officers to ensure immediate solutions and the provision of all feasible amenities for their benefit. SSP Traffic Muhammad Sarfarz Virk was also present on the occasion.

New tax on over 200 medical instruments set to drive up healthcare costs

Naveed Ahmad Khan

The federal government has imposed a sales tax on over 200 medical devices, including equipment for procedures like angiography and angioplasty, as well as diagnostic kits for various diseases.

This new tax, introduced as part of the 2024-25 fiscal budget, is expected to significantly impact the affordability of healthcare, especially for poorer patients.

Experts warn that this first-ever sales tax on the diagnosis and treatment of diseases will increase healthcare costs by 25% to 30%. The tax will also severely impact the budgets of public hospitals, leading to a notable reduction in routine operations, angiographies, and angioplasties.

The poor and middle classes who rely on private hospitals will be directly affected by the higher costs. The Chairman of the Healthcare Devices Association of Pakistan, Masood Ahmed, stated that the federal government has imposed sales tax on all imported medical devices and diagnostic kits.

The association has written to the Prime Minister and Finance Minister, requesting the removal of the sales tax, warning that it will make treatment unaffordable for the poor in



private hospitals.

Similarly, the former provincial health minister and President of the Private Hospitals and Clinics Association, Dr. Syed Junaid Ali Shah, stated that the 15% sales tax on diagnostic kits will severely burden patients, especially the poor.

In an emergency meeting, the association demanded that healthcare providers be granted industry status, arguing that healthcare is a necessity, not a luxury.

The article also mentions that the Sindh government has introduced a 15% tax on medical services, which is expected to add to the financial burden on patients who predominantly rely on private healthcare providers.

This move has sparked condemnation from doctors' organizations, educationists, and economists, who argue that such measures could hinder investment in human capital.