



Pakistan strives to have cordial ties with all countries: Dar

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar says communication and dialogue are essential for reducing the current and future risks and for fostering a collaborative approach to caters to the needs of all nations. Addressing a ceremony in Islamabad on Tuesday, he said Pakistan firmly supports an approach that prefers cooperation over confrontation... (Details on Page 8)



Bilawal urges opposition to offer solutions to problems, not protests

Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari has called on the opposition parties to work with the government 'in the public interest by offering suggestions rather than staging protests. Speaking at the National Assembly (NA) session chaired by Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, Bhutto said, "The public wants solutions to their problems. Without consensus on democracy, public hopes cannot be fulfilled." (Details on Page 8)

Simultaneously published from Islamabad, Lahore and Multan

Meeting

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs Federal Cabinet meeting on Tuesday.



Photo: PID

Azm-e-Istehkam to energize IBOs: PM tells cabinet

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif rules out any large-scale military operation

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday ruling out any large-scale military operation said that Azm-e-Istehkam was a multi-domain, multi-agency and whole of system national vision aimed at decisively rooting out the nebulous and shadowy presence of remnants of terrorists, and violent extremism.

The prime minister, chairing a meeting of the federal cabinet, took the members into confidence about the prevailing misunderstanding and speculations about the Azm-e-Istehkam, saying that instead of any large-scale operation, the already ongoing intelligence based kinetic operations would be energized.

In his remarks, he told the members that no additional duty would be imposed on the solar panels to ensure the acces-

sibility of low-cost solar energy to every citizen.

He said the government was planning to put the national economy on a positive trajectory and expressed satisfaction over the country heading towards economic stability.

The prime minister reiterated the resolve to boost the country's exports by promoting Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and withdrawing privileges from the elite class and those exploiting the national resources. The economic protection of the common man and providing them equal opportunities were among the government's priorities, he added.

Discussing the annual budget 2024-25, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif instructed the members to ensure their presence in the ongoing budget

debate in the parliament.

During the briefing, the cabinet members were informed that the privatisation of the PIA was moving ahead swiftly as companies showing interest in the pre-bidding process were visiting different PIA sites. The bidding of the PIA will be held in the first week of August, it was told.

The prime minister instructed to accelerate the PIA privatisation while ensuring transparency in the process.

On the commerce ministry's recommendation and request from the World Food Programme of Afghanistan, the federal cabinet approved transit of a truck from Karachi to Kabul carrying the spare parts of the trucks, just for once on humanitarian grounds.

The body gave the go-ahead

to signing of an MoU between the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Pakistan and that of Saudi Arabia. It also extended till March 2025 the timeframe of an implementation committee on the immovable property of late Ameer of Bahawalpur, light of the Supreme Court of Pakistan's ruling and recommendation of the States and Frontier Regions Division.

The federal cabinet also approved the appointment of the Executive Director of the Frequency Allocation Board.

During the briefing on the Economic Coordination Committee's decision, the cabinet meeting was told that the country had sufficient stock of sugar available and the Sugar Advisory Board and relevant departments had approved exporting the leftover stock of

sugar after taking into account the expected consumption before the next crushing season and assessing the surplus stock.

The prime minister said the government would not tolerate any increase in the sugar price and instructed the formation of a committee to monitor the sugar price and stop its export in case of any possibility of a price hike.

The meeting approved the annual report of the National Economic Council for fiscal year 2022-23 prepared by the planning ministry for tabling before the parliament.

The federal cabinet endorsed the Economic Coordination Committee's decisions of June 13, 2024; Cabinet Committee on Legislative Cases of June 11, 2024 and Cabinet Committee on State Owned Enterprises's decision of June 20, 2024. APP

Operation Azm-e-Istehkam continuation of NAP: Asif

Our Correspondent

LAHORE: Defence Minister Khawaja Asif says Operation Azm-e-Istehkam is a continuation of the National Action Plan.

Talking to newsmen in Lahore, the Defence Minister informed that the National Action Plan was formulated with the consensus of all political parties. He said that the opposition parties will be given a full opportunity to discuss Operation Azm-e-Istehkam.

Defence Minister said that this is a matter of national security and the media should play its role in this regard.



He said that Operation Azm-e-Istehkam will be implemented in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Khawaja Asif said that the purpose of Operation Azm-e-Istehkam is to restore government implementation in certain areas.

He stressed that consensus among all institutions and political forces is essential for the success of the operations.

No additional duty on solar panels

ISLAMABAD: After speculated changes in net metering and new taxes on solar products raised many eyebrows, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has clarified that the federal government will not impose additional duties on solar panels to ensure the accessibility of low-cost energy to every citizen.

The clarification came after the federal government signalled to replace solar net metering with "gross metering" while some reports suggested that new taxes would be introduced on solar products which would extensively reduce the financial benefits of in-house power generation.

PM Shehbaz said the "government is planning to put the national economy on a positive trajectory" and expressed satisfaction over the country heading towards economic

stability. He made these remarks while chairing the federal cabinet meeting in Islamabad on Tuesday in which the members took a set of key decisions.

The premier reiterated the resolve to boost the country's exports by promoting Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and withdrawing privileges from the elite class and those exploiting the national resources.

The economic protection of the common man and providing them equal opportunities were among the government's priorities, he added.

Discussing the annual budget 2024-25, the premier instructed the members to ensure their presence in the ongoing budget debate in the parliament. APP

PPP to vote for budget 2024-25 to avoid 'instability'

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) will vote for the budget to prevent instability in the country, senior parliamentarian Syed Naveed Qamar announced on Tuesday.

The decision was made during a parliamentary party meeting chaired by PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, with Aseefa Bhutto Zardari also in attendance.

PPP Secretary Information Shazia Marri stated that members had expressed concerns about their constituencies in previous meetings.

The party leadership engaged the government to address these issues, with senior PPP parliamentarian Syed Naveed Qamar briefing members on the progress.

Qamar explained that an agreement between the PPP and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) was made during the formation of the government.

New FY budget aimed at reducing fiscal deficit: Finance Minister

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb has said the budget for the next fiscal year is aimed at reducing fiscal deficit by focusing on measures that enhance the government's revenues and reduce unnecessary expenditures.

Winding up discussion on the budget 2024-25 in the National Assembly on Tuesday, he said on the directions of the Prime Minister, the process of simplicity and austerity will be continued in the next fiscal year.

He said a committee headed by him has been constituted which will present recommendations in this regard including closing down the ministries or their merger and devolution to the provinces.

The Finance Minister announced that the pension expenditures will be brought down through pension reforms in future.

Muhammad Aurangzeb pointed out that the home-grown reforms program is the basis of the next year's fiscal budget in order to steer the country out of a difficult economic situation.

He said the reforms include enhancing tax to GDP ratio to thirteen percent, SOE reforms, public private partnership and energy sector reforms.

The Minister said the govern-



ment is seriously committed to this plan and started its implementation. He assured that all the stakeholders will be taken on board about the implementation of this plan.

He said the digitization process of FBR is being accelerated. He said legislation is being introduced in the parliament to bring changes in the boards of the power sector. The privatization of the PIA has been taken forward.

Highlighting other points of the home-grown reforms plan, the Finance Minister said these include targeted social protection, broad based fair taxation system and initiatives for the health and education sectors including skills development.

Muhammad Aurangzeb was

appreciative of the recommendations submitted by the Senate for inclusion in the next year's budget.

He said the government has decided to include these recommendations in the budget keeping in view the public interest.

He said these include providing an opportunity to the non-filers for personal hearing before implementing the measures of SIM blockage and ban on foreign travel.

He announced that the stationery items will remain exempted from tax. He said the current reduced rates for Hybrid-Electric Vehicles will remain intact.

He said under Export Facilitation Scheme 2021 policy, zero rating for the local suppliers is not being abolished.

Peace, stability key for economic progress: Ahsan

ISLAMABAD: Planning and Development Minister Ahsan Iqbal emphasised that key prerequisites for advancing include policy continuity, political stability, and peace in the country.

Speaking to a private news channel on Tuesday, he warned that without these fundamentals, the country's progress would be hindered.

Regarding the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), he noted that significant progress was made between 2013 and 2018 but subsequent changes in government slowed developments in Gwadar and the Special Economic Zones.

He highlighted efforts by the current administration to accelerate these projects, aiming for full speed ahead. He also highlighted the upcoming second phase of CPEC, which will focus on five key corridors: Growth, Livelihood, Innovation, Green, and Open corridors. These corridors are designed to enhance regional cooperation and ensure comprehensive development, he explained. Agencies

Opposition brushed aside resolution condemning mob lynching on under garb of protest: Tarar

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Law and Justice Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar on Tuesday accused the opposition benches of brushing aside the resolution condemning mob lynching incidents on the garb of their protest.

Speaking in the Senate, the minister apprised the chair that he was scolded and pushed by the opposition members during their protest in the House.

"The opposition members are not ready to listen to but I took the signatures of their members namely Senators Anwar ul Haq Kakar and Kamil Ali Agha openly on the resolution."

Earlier, Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarian (PPPP) Parliamentary Leader Sherry Rehman derided the Leader of the Opposition for accusing the treasury benches of bypassing the opposition on the resolution condemning mob lynching incidents in Swat and Sargodha.

"The Leader of the Opposition is protesting and making false statements regarding the resolution. I requested the Law Minister to get the signature of the opposition on the resolution but he told me that the opposition members were not signing it. It cannot be

that the government brings a resolution and does not take the opposition on board," she added.

Leader of the Opposition Shibli Faraz apprised the chair that the resolution passed a day earlier was unilaterally approved without consulting the opposition.

Parliamentary Leader of Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) Manzoor Ahmed Kakar urged the House to pay heed towards the issues of professors and lecturers serving in different varsities of the country demanding increase in their remunerations in the budget.

"There are a total of 200 universities in Pakistan and Rs 65 billion has been allocated for them. However, the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan is demanding Rs 130 billion for distribution of funds to these varsities, whereas the provincial demand is of Rs 500 billion," he added.

He mentioned that there was exodus of lecturers and professors from the country that should not be ignored as it was detrimental for the future. He also urged the House to propose the government to announce scholarships for brilliant students unable to afford higher education expenses. APP

Balochistan govt values UN cooperation: CM Bugti

Stresses need to further enhance mutual cooperation in all other sectors

QUETTA: The Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti while talking to the United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Pakistan, Mohamed Yahya, said that the provincial government values the UN cooperation and there is a need to further enhance mutual cooperation in all other sectors including education, health, agriculture and technical skills.

The UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Pakistan, Mohamed Yahya, along with his team, called on Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti here.

Sarfraz Bugti said that the climate change is the biggest challenge, despite the lack of action in the emission of green gases.

The Chief Minister said that training programs for teachers are being started to provide quality education. He said that the provision of technical education to the youth is one of



the key priorities of the provincial government.

He said that the government has started a special program to provide technical education to the youth under the public private partnership PPP

mode.

The Chief Minister said the government has increased the education budget by 300 percent along with a substantial increase in the health budget for the fiscal year 2024-25.

The Chief Minister said that merit and transparency would be ensured to establish good governance in the province.

He asked the United Nations to provide support to the provincial government in teachers' training, water conservation and skill development program.

Sarfraz Bugti said that the area of Balochistan is very large and the development program of the United Nations is important in this regard.

The Chief Minister reiterated his commitment that better governance and planning would be ensured for smooth running of the affairs.

United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator Mohamed Yahya while appreciating the vision of the Chief Minister said that the strong guidance of the provincial government is necessary for mutual cooperation. APP

Rescue 1122 conducts fire safety training

NOWSHERA: Rescue 1122 Nowshera Virkan organized a hands-on fire safety and emergency evacuation training session for the staff of THQ Hospital on Tuesday.

The training was led by Rescue and Safety Officer Ghulam Yaseer Butt and his team. While, during the training, hospital staff was educated on various aspects of fire safety, including immediate response to fire incidents, preventive measures to avoid fire hazards, and emergency evacuation procedures for buildings. The practical session also included the use of fire extinguishers.

Assistant Commissioner Nowshera Virkan, Naveed Haider, was present on the occasion, and praised the efforts of Rescue 1122.

The training session was attended by Medical Superintendent Dr. Rahman Suleman, Surgeon Dr. Irfan Riaz, Quality Assurance Officer Ms. Sahar, and staff from all hospital departments.

At the conclusion Dr. Rahman Suleman expressed his gratitude to the Rescue 1122 team, noting that the training was highly beneficial for the hospital staff. APP

Nine of a family gunned down in Peshawar's Badaber

PESHAWAR: A terrifying incident sent shockwaves across the nation as at least nine members of a family were brutally killed by armed men in a house in Peshawar's Badaber village on Tuesday.

In the gruesome incident, the armed men opened indiscriminate firing after entering a house of their opponents in the vicinity of Badaber police station, leaving 9 people dead, including four women and four children while others got injured.

Police officials said in their initial statement that the incident was a result of monetary and property disputes between the two families.

However, Senior Superintendent Police (SSP) Operations Kashif Zulfikar contradicted the statement and said that there was seemingly no monetary dispute between both parties.

He added that a probe was launched to ascertain the motives behind the armed attack. "Two teams have been constituted to arrest the culprits," the police officer said. The bodies have been shifted to hospital for post-mortem by rescue teams.

Those killed were identified as Naureen w/o Ashfaq, Sidra d/o Amanat Ali, Hamida Begum w/o Malak Aman, Alibaba d/o Muhammad Asfaq, Akash s/o Muhammad Ashfaq, Tufail Afnan s/o Muhammad Ishaq and Inkhat s/o Muhammad Ishaq.

The injured included Saba w/o Ishaq and Iqra d/o Ishaq, according to state-run APP.

One of the injured women was shifted to Lady Reading Hospital, Peshawar, for medical assistance.

Police collected empty shells of cartridges and other evidence from the crime scene and registered a case on the report of the heirs.

SSP Investigation Sahibzada Sajjad said that four teams headed by Superintendent Police (SP) Saddar Circle were dispatched to arrest the criminals. He added that motives behind the incident would be revealed after a thorough investigation. APP

Decision to vacate highly contaminated building in Karachi before Monsoon rains

Staff Reporter

KARACHI: The city administration has intensified its efforts to evacuate highly dangerous buildings, with the Building Control Authority taking immediate action to demolish such structures. In a review meeting chaired by Commissioner Karachi Syed Hassan Naqvi, it was decided to take swift action to evacuate dangerous buildings before the monsoon rains.

The meeting was attended among others by all the deputy commissioners and the senior officers of Sindh building control authority. The officers of the building control authority briefed the commissioner about the progress of the efforts the authority is making.

It was told that the Building Control Authority has completed a survey of dilapidated conditioned buildings and served notices to their residents advising them to vacate the buildings. Utility agencies have also been requested to disconnect services to these buildings. The meeting decided that all deputy commissioners would hold meetings with building control authority concerned officials in their respective districts to identify and prioritize actions against dangerous buildings, ensuring the safety of residents' lives.

Muqam for non-political approach to combating terrorism

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan, Engineer Amir Muqam, on Tuesday called for consistent and non-political approach to combating terrorism in the country.

Speaking in the National Assembly, he expressed the gratitude to Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Minister of Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, and Advisor to the Prime Minister on Political and Public Affairs Rana Sanaullah for extending the tax exemption in the former FATA and PATA regions.

He said that the tax exemptions, originally granted in 2018, had been extended until 2023.

Despite external pressures from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and industrialists, the Prime Minister, considering the current situation, extended the tax exemption period to June 2024. "This is not a personal issue; we are grateful to the Prime Minister and Finance Minister for making this wise decision under these circumstances," he added.

Inauguration

ATTOCK: Honourable Chief Election Commissioner, Sikandar Sultan Raja inaugurated office of District Election Commission Attock on Tuesday.



Photo: PID

Gates Foundation, Pakistan to work for climate resilience building

ISLAMABAD: Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation have agreed to work jointly for building Pakistan's climate resilience.

This agreement was reached during a high-powered Climate Adaptation Roundtable hosted by the Prime Minister's Coordinator for Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam for the Foundation's chairman Bill Gates here, a news release said.

The roundtable was held at the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) Headquarters and co-hosted by Chairperson of NDMA, Lieutenant General Inam Haider Malik.

Romina Khurshid Alam apprised Bill Gates of the various sectoral impacts of climate change, saying Pakistan's socio-economic development gains at highly exposed to the adverse impacts of climate change.



She also informed him particularly of the floods, heat waves, forest fires and droughts, which have become frequent and intense in terms of their impacts on various socio-economic sectors, mainly agriculture, water, energy, health and education.

She informed Mr. Gates, "Despite the lowest contribution in climate change causing carbon emissions, Pakistan is facing the worst effects of global warming and making all-out efforts to deal with the impacts so as to protect lives and livelihoods of the country's

vulnerable communities."

"Pakistan is also committed to support global climate action at all levels to protect the global community from the deleterious impacts of global warming," she highlighted during her conversation with Mr. Gates. APP

AJK govt presents Rs 264 bln budget with development outlay of Rs 44 bln

MUZAFFARABAD: The Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK) Government on Tuesday presented the budget for the fiscal year 2024-25 of over Rs 264 billion with a development outlay of Rs 44 billion.

As the total income from revenue sources has been estimated Rs 201.17 billion, the deficit is expected to be met with the grants provided by the Federal Government.

Following the footsteps of Federal Government, the AJK Government announced 25 & 20 percent raise in the salaries of its employees and 15 percent in pension in the next fiscal year.

Presenting the budget in the AJK Legislative Assembly, Minister for Finance Abdul Majid Khan highlighted the estimates of income and expenditures, and also elaborated salient features of the budget and successes of his government to cut size the non-developmental expenditures by austerity measures and strict financial discipline.

The minister said the Inland Revenue would collect Rs 75 billion during the coming fiscal year in the head of income tax while the govern-

ment would receive Rs 105 billion from the Federal Variable Grants (share from the divisible pool), besides Rs 1 billion as water use charges from the Federal Government and other revenue and non-revenue collections of the government departments.

He said in the recurring expenditures, the biggest amount of Rs 43.14 billion had been allocated in the head of pension which was almost equal to the total development budget while Rs 43.68 billion earmarked for non-development expenditures of the education department, and Rs 7 billion for the services and general administration department, besides allocation of Rs. 9.84 billion for police.

He said Rs 41.62 billion had been allocated in the new head "state trading", without elaborating the type of trade carried out by the state.

The minister said Rs 14.95 billion had been earmarked for the health department and Rs10.81 billion for the energy and water resources department for their non-development expenditures.

In the Annual Development

Programme, the minister said, priority had been given to the communication and works department with an allocation of Rs. 14.9 billion followed by education department Rs. 4.8 billion and health department Rs. 3 billion, local government schemes Rs. 3.7 billion, and physical planning and housing schemes Rs. 2.46 billion.

The minister said the volume of the current fiscal year budget was Rs190.935 billion while an increase of Rs. 73.98 billion was made possible in the coming fiscal year budget with the efforts of the present government and cooperation of the Federal Government.

He said availability of the huge financial resources was the key success of his government as within a short time period of one year after assuming the office it accelerated the pace of the development in the region with the provision of Rs. 44 billion for ADP compared to Rs. 23 billion of the current fiscal year ADP.

He said that productive sector was also in the priorities of the government for which 6 percent of the total development budget was allocated in the

current fiscal year budget, which had been increased up to 14 percent in the next year budget.

He said the social sector was also given the priority in the coming fiscal year budget with an allocation of 14 percent of the total development budget compared to 6 percent of current fiscal year budget while the share of basic infrastructure had been decreased to 55 percent from the 78 percent.

The minister claimed that the biggest success of the present government was introducing better governance with a commitment to enforce strict financial and administrative discipline in every sector.

While counting the measures taken by his government to improve the governance, he said that it had given priority to improve the performance of education, health and land revenue departments by introducing reforms and enforcing strict administrative discipline including transparency in transfers and postings, appointments and introducing biometric attendance system to ensure 100 percent attendance of employees.

He said by strict financial discipline, the government was succeeded to decrease recurring expenditures from Rs. 190.47 billion to Rs. 165.1 billion in the current fiscal year budget estimates while the target of income was increased by Rs. 177.25 billion compared to Rs. 166.45 billion of initial estimates thus saving of Rs. 12.15 billion was available to minimize the deficit of Rs. 23.597 billion.

He said the government had invested Rs. 9 billion by establishing a social protection trust from its resources and the income of that trust would be spent to provide livelihood to the needy and unemployed people which would be a great milestone to achieve the success of their welfare.

He said the youth were the backbone in the progress of a nation and for the purpose of enhancing their caliber and skill, a "Skilled Youth" programme was being introduced in the coming fiscal year budget, besides improving the performance of Public Service Commission. A handsome amount had been allocated for the purpose in the coming fiscal year budget.

He said under the policy of right sizing, a total of 136 posts, including 40 from the Prime Minister Office and 96 from the Kashmir Council Secretariat had been abolished while 61 employees from the Prime Minister Secretariat and 136 employees from the Kashmir Council Secretariat had been transferred to surplus pool of the services department who will be posted on vacant posts in the other departments.

He said the government was prioritizing E-governance and digitalization of the system to ensure transparency and improve the performance and fast steps had been taken towards the goal to better facilitate the people.

He also announced that the government was restoring the free treatment facility for the needy people through "Health Card" from its own resources in the coming fiscal year budget.

He expressed gratitude to President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on behalf of his government for the provision of special grant of Rs 23 billion in the head of cheap electricity and subsidized flour for the people of AJK.



Islamabad
30° - 38° Clear

SERVICES

Namaz Timings
Fajr 3:15 am
Zohr 12:10 pm
Asr 5:11 pm
Maghrib 7:22 pm
Isha 9:06 pm

EMERGENCY

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

Women Police Stations

Islamabad 9222596
Rawalpindi 9270601-20

ENQUIRY

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

HOSPITALS

CMH 561111
MH 561116
MH 561116
Cantt Hospital 9270907-11
DHQ 5556311-4
RGH 9290301-7
Holy Family 9290322-7
PIMS 926170-79
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

Rana Mashhood meets with HEC Chairman



ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Prime Minister Youth Programme (PMYP) Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan has said that empowering youth with required resources and development opportunities is the need of the hour as today's youth, are leaders of tomorrow.

He said this during a meeting with the Chairman of the Higher Education Commission (HEC) Dr Mukhtar Ahmed here on Tuesday. The meeting discussed various ways to promote positive engagement and development opportunities for the country's youth.

During the meeting, Chairman Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan and Dr Mukhtar Ahmed both emphasized the importance of collective efforts for skills, education and overall empowerment of the youth population across the country.

They discussed various initiatives and programs namely the Prime Minister's National Innovation Award, Prime Minister's Youth Laptop Scheme, National Volunteer Corps and several other schemes that could be implemented to effectively engage and empower the youth.

They said that the joint efforts of the Prime Minister Youth Program and HEC will enable to utilize resources and expertise to effectively maximize the impact on youth development.

The Chairman PMYP and HEC expressed optimism about the future of youth development in Pakistan and reiterated their commitment to work together towards the common goal.

Mehsud for enforcing 100 percent ALCR to save commuters' lives

The measure was essential to ensure the safety and longevity of the road infrastructure

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Federal Secretary for Communications, Ali Sher Mehsood on Tuesday emphasized the need to enforce the 100 percent Axle Load Control Regime (ALCR) rigorously to save valuable roads and the lives of commuters.

Addressing the high-level official meeting here, he directed that no concessions will be made to any transporters regarding overloading. "Overloaded vehicles are strictly prohibited from entering Motorways and Highways," he added.

Ali Sher said the measure was essential to ensure the safety and longevity of the road infrastructure.

On this occasion, Inspector General National Highways and Motorways Police (NHMP), Salman Chaudhry said that special squads have been formed led by Additional Inspectors General to ensure the effective implementation of the Axle Load Control Regime. Zonal and Sector commanders were actively engaged in surprise inspections and monitoring to ensure compliance with the ALCR, he maintained.

He said overweight vehicles were being redirected to weigh stations on national highways, where they are either unloaded or sent back with heavy fines, adding the strict legal actions were being taken against those violating the load regulations.

Salman Chaudhry reiterated commitment in eradicating overloading completely, highlighting the importance of preserving the road infrastructure and safety of human lives.

The senior officers from the National Highways & Motorway Police also present in the meeting.

ISSI's marks 51st anniversary

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) celebrated the 51st anniversary of its founding here on Tuesday.

The Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, graced the occasion as chief guest where he dilated in detail on Pakistan's foreign policy in a transforming world, a news release said.

Delivering his welcome remarks, DG ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood underscored the growing impact of think-tanks and research organizations globally, stressing their pivotal role in generating research-based inputs, fostering informed dialogue, and impacting policy. Over the past five decades, he said, the ISSI has evolved into a formidable research organization and a reputable public sector think-tank. This journey, he emphasized, has been supported by the political and administrative leadership of the Foreign Ministry and guided by the ISSI Board of Governors.

Reflecting on the past year, Ambassador Sohail Mahmood highlighted ISSI's proactive initiatives aimed



at bridging the gap between academic and policy communities; providing a platform for inclusive, multi-stakeholder dialogue; strengthening collaboration with national stakeholders; increasing collaboration with international partners; enhancing research standards; and leveraging media and social media platforms for wider dissemination of insights. He emphasized ISSI's thematic priorities, which encompassed analyzing global and regional developments; supporting concept of 'comprehensive' security; strengthening efforts to accentuate 'pivot to geo-economics'; and reinforcing Pakistan's strategic engagements with major powers as well as key regions including Central Asia, ASEAN

and Africa. Additionally, ISSI's engagements on issues such as the Jammu & Kashmir dispute, Afghanistan's regional implications, Middle East dynamics, climate change impacts, and cultural diplomacy were noted as critical contributions to the policy discourse.

On the occasion, the ISSI's 5 Centres presented the chief guest with their new Books/Special Reports, covering themes that are in tandem with the needs of Pakistan. The CAMEA presented its book titled 'The Return of the Taliban: International and Regional Perspectives'; ISC presented its book titled 'Critical Issues Facing South Asia: Politics, Security, & Non-Traditional Challenges'; and CSP presented its book on 'Paki-

stan's Pathway to Development: Integrated Economy, Environment & Society'. The CPSC presented its report 'Shanghai Cooperation Organization: A Focus on Growth, Evolution, and Collaboration'; and ACDC presented its report titled 'India's Maritime Buildup: Implications for the Indian Ocean.'

The Chairman and DG ISSI presented a special shield to the chief guest, which was followed by the cutting of a cake celebrating ISSI's 51st anniversary.

The event was attended by a large number of former diplomats, senior officials, members of the Islamabad-based Diplomatic Corps, academics, scholars and researchers, and representatives of civil society, think-tanks, and the media.

Women's contributions in diplomacy highlighted

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Peace and Diplomatic Studies, in collaboration with the Riphah Institute of Public Policy, organized a seminar to celebrate the 'International Day for Women in Diplomacy' here at Riphah International University on Tuesday.

The event brought together speakers and diplomats to discuss women's achievements, challenges, and aspirations in diplomacy, a news release said.

Speaking at the seminar, Dr Farhat Asif, President of the Institute of Peace and Diplomatic Studies said celebrating this important day today serves as a powerful reminder of the significant contributions women have made and continue to make in the field of diplomacy. It provides an excellent opportunity to reflect on the achievements, challenges, and aspirations of women diplomats worldwide.

Ambassador Tehmina Janjua, the first woman Foreign Secretary of Pakistan, emphasized the critical role of women in strategic perspectives.

She praised the United Nations for its commitment to commemorating this significant day. She highlighted three essential aspects of women in diplomacy: the importance of women's participation in decision-making, the unique perspectives women bring to diplomacy, and the need for careful consideration of gender in diplomatic practices.

"It is imperative to address the levels at which women participate in decision-making within diplomacy and dismantle the barriers that hinder their progress," said



Ambassador Janjua. Leslie Scanlon, High Commissioner of Canada to Pakistan, remarked on the progress made in celebrating women in diplomacy while acknowledging the work that still needs to be done.

"Celebrating women in diplomacy acknowledges the progress that has been made while also highlighting the work that still needs to be done. It encourages thoughtful consideration of the obstacles faced by women in this realm, igniting initiatives aimed at overcoming barriers and promoting gender equality," said Ms. Scanlon.

Mumtaz Zahra Baloch, Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, provided a powerful perspective on the evolving role of women in Pakistan's diplomatic landscape. She highlighted the Ministry's efforts to promote gender equality and create opportunities for women diplomats.

"The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is committed to fostering an inclusive environment where women can thrive and contribute to our diplomatic missions. We recognize the unique strengths

that women bring to diplomacy and are dedicated to supporting their professional growth," Baloch remarked.

She also addressed the importance of visibility and representation, encouraging young women to pursue careers in diplomacy.

Ms. Dilshad Senol, Representative of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in Islamabad, provided a regional and global perspective on women's contributions to diplomacy by highlighting the important conventions that have been signed to ensure global inclusiveness. She underscored the importance of exchange and collaboration in strengthening the role of women diplomats.

Ambassador Naela Chohan, former Special Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, highlighted the historical contributions of women diplomats and the evolution of their roles over time. She called for continuous advocacy and action to ensure women are equally represented and heard in diplomatic forums.

Ambassador Chohan spoke on the significance of mentorship and support networks for women in diplomacy.

She emphasized the need for experienced women diplomats to mentor and guide the next generation, ensuring sustained progress and empowerment.

Senator Sitara Ayaz, Secretary General of the International Parliamentarians Congress (IIPC), shared her experiences and insights on the legislative efforts needed to support women in diplomacy. She emphasized the importance of creating supportive policies and frameworks facilitating women's active participation and leadership in diplomatic roles.

Senator Dr. Zarqa Suhawardy Taimur emphasized women's critical impact at decision-making tables in shaping policies.

She noted that women bring unique insights and perspectives that can lead to more comprehensive and effective solutions. However, she also highlighted the tremendous challenges women in politics face, including gender biases and systemic barriers.

She stressed the importance of mentorship and support networks, urging experienced women diplomats to guide and empower the next generation.

Imran Malik presents his book on Pakistan earthquake 2005 to Chairman HEC

ISLAMABAD: Renowned calamity writer Imran Malik on Monday presented his book 'Pakistan Earthquake 2005' to Chairman Higher Education Commission Prof Mukhtar Ahmed in Islamabad.

The book is about the horrors of 7.6 magnitude earthquake that had struck the country leaving over 70,000 dead. APP



Rubina Khalid advocates for economic empowerment



Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Senator Rubina Khalid Tuesday emphasized the critical importance of economic empowerment as the foundation for all forms of empowerment.

She highlighted BISP's initiative to provide technical skills to its beneficiaries, aiming to lift them out of poverty.

Senator Rubina Khalid was speaking during a meeting with Amjad Zafar, Team Lead at the World Bank, and Gul Najam Jamy, held today at BISP headquarters.

The Chairperson BISP pointed out the global demand for human resource development, stressing the need to implement a Poverty Graduation Programme focused on women empowerment.

She noted BISP's strong working relationship with the World Bank and underscored the necessity of further strengthening this collaboration.

In addition, Senator Rubina Khalid highlighted the importance of adopting a new payment mechanism with the support of the World Bank to ensure transparency.

She also emphasized the need to improve financial literacy among women beneficiaries. She reaffirmed the political leadership's directive that every BISP beneficiary must receive their full stipend amount without any deductions, in a dignified manner.

The World Bank team assured their complete technical support in these initiatives and confirmed their availability for a follow-up meeting within the week to present their proposed payment model system for BISP beneficiaries.

Earlier in the day, Vice Chairperson of Punjab Social Protection (PSP), Jahan Ara Watto, also met Senator Rubina Khalid. Ms. Jahan Ara Watto expressed her appreciation for the BISP database, which PSP has been utilizing for its education and health related projects. She highlighted the value of the BISP database in effectively reaching the targeted beneficiaries.

Rubina Khalid emphasized the importance of collaboration between BISP and Punjab Social Protection to ensure the welfare of the poor and to avoid duplication of efforts between federal and provincial government initiatives. APP

SC's three new judges take oath



Our Correspondent

ISLAMABAD: The three new judges of Supreme Court of Pakistan on Tuesday took oath of their offices in a ceremony at apex court Islamabad.

Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa administered the oath to Justice Malik Shahzad Ahmad Khan, Justice Aqeel Ahmed Abbasi, and Justice Shahid Bilal Hassan as top court's judges in a ceremony.

The oath taking ceremony was attended by judges of SC, attorney general of Pakistan and senior lawyers.

The law ministry has issued the notification on Monday, which stated that under Article 177 of the Constitution, the president pleased to appoint Sindh High Court (SHC) Chief Justice Aqeel Ahmed Abbasi, Lahore High Court (LHC) Chief Justice Malik Shahzad Ahmad Khan and LHC's Justice Shahid Bilal Hassan as judges of the Supreme Court.

Empowered young girls can play key role in country's development: Senator Ayesha

ISLAMABAD: The young girls can play a key role in development of the country if they are empowered, given proper guidance and confidence, said Chairperson National Commission on Rights of the Child Senator Ayesha Raza Farooq.

She was addressing as the chief guest to the opening ceremony of the Youth Forum organized by Pakistan Girl Guides Association National Headquarters from 25th to 28th June 2024. More than 50 Young Leaders from all regions of the country are participating. The theme of the Youth Forum is "Empowering Youth for Leadership and Governance," said a press release.

Speaking on the occasion, Senator Ayesha Raza Farooq appreciated the Pakistan Girl Guides Association for its efforts to empower young girls and said it is a unique program offered to Girls which helps them develop into confident and responsible citizens.

She also highlighted the role youth can play for the betterment of the country. She said that in a world that is constantly evolving, the skills and principles instilled through Girl Guiding are more important than ever. Guides' ability to adapt, lead with empathy, and embrace diversity and inclusion are qualities that will serve girls not only today but throughout their lives.

She hoped that during the coming days of the Youth Forum, the participants would discover their potential and polish their leadership skills.

She informed the participants about the work of the National Commission on the Rights of the Child and looked forward to young leaders to become he supporters of Child Rights in their communities.

Earlier, Mrs. Maria Maud Sabri, National Commissioner of the Pakistan Girl Guides Association welcomed them and other guests. She informed them about Guiding in Pakistan.

She briefed the guests that in Guiding we start working on our mission of leadership development as soon as a girl joins in. Each working group of 6-8 girls elects their leader. She said this is the first step in learning democracy and leadership. Leaders change regularly so that everyone gets a chance to lead, she said, adding that activities are selected by the girls themselves. APP

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World does not need another global front line in Lebanon

Nadim Shehadi

If the expected Israeli attack on Lebanon ends up with an occupation of part of south Lebanon and the creation of a buffer zone maintained by mutual deterrence, it will empower Hezbollah and create a front line for global confrontation in this increasingly bipolar world.

The Ukraine war created such a front line and clarified the divisions. The war between Russia and Ukraine involves Europe and the US and their allies on Kyiv's side and Iran, China and their allies in support of Moscow. Some countries have tried to keep a distance and remain neutral.

In Lebanon, the global front line will also not be solely between Lebanon and Israel. It will boost Hezbollah's power and bring it support from Russia, China, Iran and their local and global allies. It will be a direct confrontation between the two sides involved in Ukraine, but one in which they have an advantage and in which very few will be able to be neutral.

An occupation of Lebanese territory would also be a gift to Hezbollah. The Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon in 2000 was a blow to its legitimacy. It turned it from a force resisting occupation into a resistance force in search of an occupation. The excuse of minor border irregularities, including the Shebaa Farms, was unconvincing and not enough to legitimate its arms, which it had started using against its internal opponents and critics.

In early July 2006, there was an additional element to Hezbollah's legitimacy

problem. Syria had also withdrawn from Lebanon and there was pressure on Hezbollah to give up its arms and join in with rebuilding the country after the euphoria of the Cedar Revolution. Lebanon had been brought back in from the cold with what seemed like intensive international protection through several UN Security Council resolutions. Minor border and prisoner issues could be resolved through the help of the UN and there was intensive European mediation to do that.

This all changed when Israel launched a major attack on July 12, 2006, triggered by a Hezbollah guerilla operation across the border, kidnapping two soldiers and killing eight. Hezbollah regained its title as a resistance force against an aggressive neighbor with designs on its territory and it also became the protector, gaining popular support all over the Arab region. It declared victory by the mere fact that it survived and it continued, through assassinations and the maintenance of a constant state of war and paralysis, to control the country. Less than 20 years later, it reigns supreme over a hollowed-out and paralyzed state.

One of Hamas' achievements in the Gaza war is that it has imposed itself as the main interlocutor with the West. When was the last time anyone visited Ramallah? Instead, officials and diplomats go to Cairo and Doha to negotiate indirectly with Hamas. Hezbollah has achieved this in Lebanon too. It has become the main interlocutor to avoid war. A clear indication of the war's wider scope and potential came when Hassan Nasrallah last week threatened Cyprus, which is part of the EU and hence an ally

of NATO and the West.

But Hezbollah's control is not complete. There is opposition to its actions and a wide belief in the country that it is dragging it into an unnecessary and destructive war that it cannot handle. Hezbollah still silences opposition through assassinations, like that of cultural entrepreneur and activist Lokman Slim, or through pure bullying and accusations of treason, which journalists are subjected to daily.

An Israeli occupation in south Lebanon would be a gift to Hezbollah and its allies in the region. It would regain its legitimacy and its critics would be silenced, without any arguments against its hold over the country. It would be another divine victory not over Israel but over the rest of Lebanon, which will then be completely under its control.

In this situation, the new border — maintained by mutual deterrence — will be turned into a front line between two global alliances. Hezbollah will be the vanguard of resistance against American hegemony and will receive aid and support from China, Russia, Iran, Venezuela and all the countries keen to see the defeat of Israel and the US on the global scene.

America's allies in the region and those aspiring for peace and normalization with Israel will also lose any arguments. This is not a front they can be neutral on and they will have to contend with a growing internal opposition to normalization after Gaza and Lebanon. Any prospects for peace and stability in the region will be on hold for a long time.

Lebanon has always been the weather vane of regional stability. Historically,

regional tensions appeared in Lebanon first because this is the only place where they can have expression. The battle of ideas that will shape the future of the region and indeed much of the global order has already started in Lebanon, and from there it can spread. If Israel creates such favorable circumstances, the beneficiaries will primarily be its enemies and also those of the EU and of the West.

Ukraine can look like a minor regional conflict with limited scope by comparison. The front line in south Lebanon will involve a confrontation between all the forces already active in Ukraine, in addition to the confrontation between the West and the Muslim world.

The new front line will also dwarf the repercussions of the Gaza war. In the Gaza war, there is a semblance of two sides, and Israel can claim some justification following the Oct. 7 massacre by Hamas. On balance, it is obvious that Israel has lost more than it has gained in the court of global public opinion. The brutality that Israel has demonstrated in Gaza will translate as sympathy to Hezbollah and will further divide Western societies.

It is impossible to exaggerate the consequences of opening another front line for global confrontation in south Lebanon. An Israeli invasion must therefore be prevented at any cost. (Courtesy: Arab News)

Nadim Shehadi is an economist and political adviser. He has held positions in academia and think tanks in Europe and the US. He ran a program on the regional dimension of the Middle East Peace Process at Chatham House. X: @Confusezeus

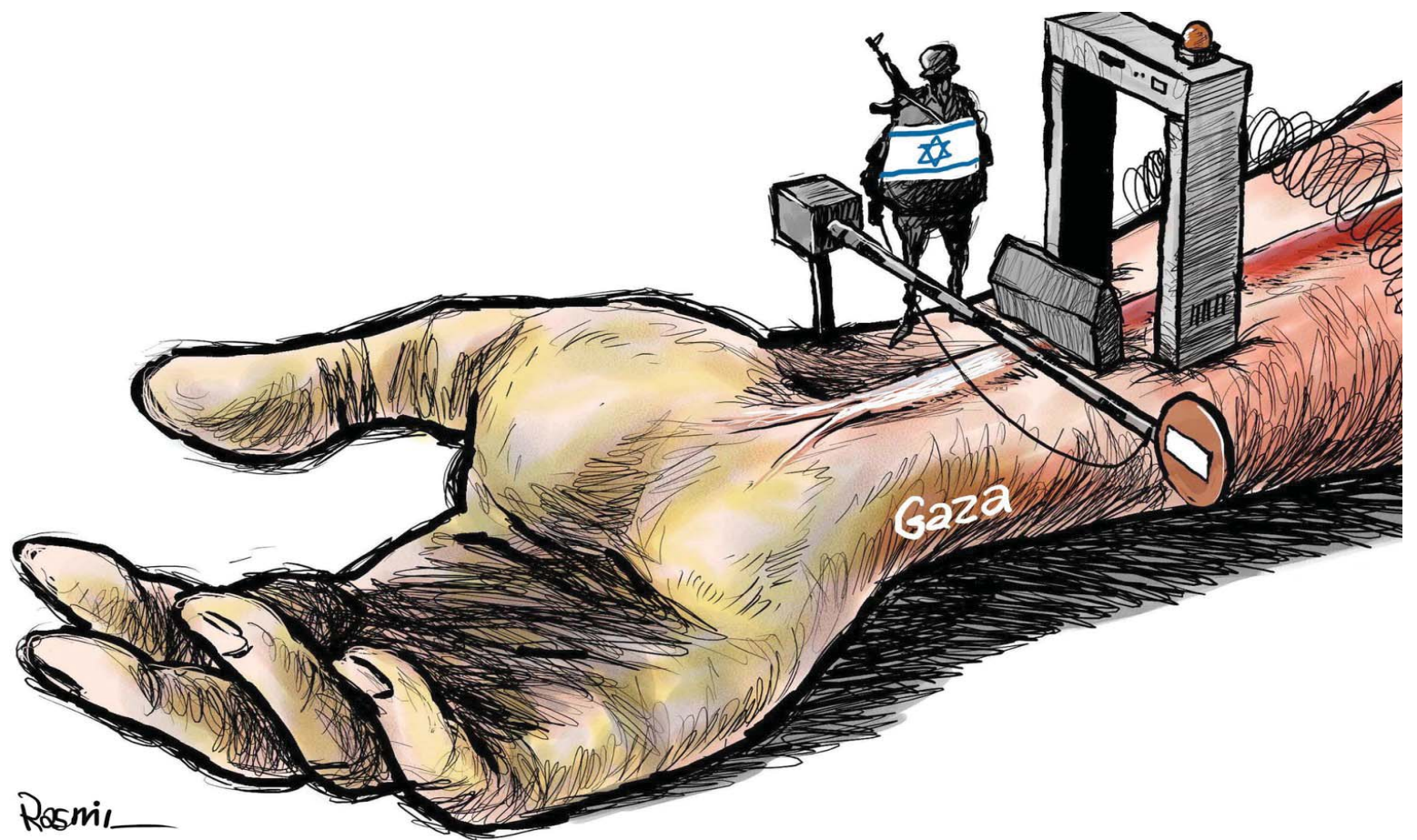
Azm-e-Istehkam meant to reinvigorate ongoing implementation of revised NAP



Azm-e-Istehkam is aimed at reinvigorating and re-engaging the ongoing implementation of Revised National Action Plan, which was initiated after the national consensus across the political spectrum, a statement issued by the Prime Minister Office said. The government recently announced a new vision for long-term stability called Azm-e-Istehkam. However, some people are misunderstanding it and comparing it to previous kinetic operations like Zarb-e-Azab and Rah-e-Najaat. The previous kinetic operations were conducted to physically dislodge terrorists from their known locations which had become No-Go areas and compromised the writ of the state. These operations required mass displacement of the local population and systematic clearance of affected areas.

This will include political, diplomatic, legal and information prongs apart from already continuing operations by all Law Enforcement Agencies. There are no such No-Go areas in the country since the ability of terrorist entities to or carry out large scale organized operations inside Pakistan was decisively degraded by earlier kinetic operations. Therefore, no large scale military operation is being contemplated where displacement of population will be required.

"Azm-e-Istehkam is a multi domain, multi agency, whole of the system national vision for enduring stability in Pakistan," the statement said adding "Azm-e-Istehkam is meant to energize already in place intelligence based kinetic operations so to decisively root out the nebulous and shadowy presence of remnants of terrorists, their facilitation due to crime terror nexus, and rooting out violent extremism in the country to ensure an overall secure environment in the country for its economic development and prosperity.



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

Will Hungary's EU presidency moderate its views?

Dr. Abdel Aziz Aluwaisheg

Hungary will next week assume the rotating EU presidency, to the chagrin of many European leaders, who consider the country to be an outlier, to say the least, in terms of domestic governance, immigration and foreign policy, including the war in Ukraine and relations with Russia.

In addition to these intra-EU differences, Budapest has at times been the sole dissenter to the bloc's attempts to forge a united front on the Gaza war and help reach a peaceful resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Hungary has also been one of the main places where Islamophobia has been weaponized in domestic politics.

Since the Gaza war started on Oct. 7, Hungary has been consistently pro-Israel and anti-Palestinian within the EU. For example, in February, all EU countries jointly called for a ceasefire in Gaza and urged Israel not to launch its planned assault on Rafah. But Budapest refused to endorse the call, despite pressure from other capitals. It also single-handedly derailed EU plans to collectively slap sanctions on violent Israeli settlers, first introduced in December following repeated attacks on Palestinians in the West Bank.

In a rare airing of foreign policy differences, 26 of the 27 EU member states isolated Hungary and issued a statement calling for "an immediate humanitarian pause that could lead to a sustainable ceasefire" in besieged Gaza.

Given the absence of a sizable Muslim population in Hungary — there are about 5,000 in a population of 10 million — Muslim-bashing has been almost cost-free. They have served as a scapegoat for the far-right parties, which fancy themselves as defenders of Europe in the face of both the "corrupt, liberal West" and the imagined

"invading Eastern hordes."

According to research conducted at the Budapest-based Political Capital Institute, in collaboration with the Brookings Institution, Hungary underwent a dramatic transition after gaining independence in 1989, following four decades of Soviet control. This research is part of the multi-year Brookings project "The One Percent Problem: Muslims in the West and the Rise of the New Populists."

In 1999, Hungary became a full-fledged NATO member and it joined the EU in 2004. Until 2010, Hungary was cited by Western observers as a prime example of a successful political and economic transformation. However, since then, it has departed somewhat from the EU-preferred political model to what has been described as a "competitive authoritarian" or "hybrid" model.

The EU and US have lamented that democratic institutions exist in theory in Hungary, but the rule of law and civil liberties have been "severely limited" in practice. Reflecting the drastic changes in Western perspectives, in 2010, the country scored 1 in Freedom House's Freedom of the World rankings, its highest score, as a "fully free democracy," but that fell to 2.5 in 2018 and the country was also downgraded to "partly free" status in terms of press freedom. In 2021, press watchdog Reporters Without Borders put Orban on its list of "predators," the first time a Western European leader had been placed in the lineup of heads of state or government who "crack down massively" on press freedom.

According to the Political Capital Institute, there has been a rising trend of intolerance in Hungary since 1989 and xenophobia has been higher there than in most of the former Soviet republics. In 1999, 15 percent of Hungarians expressed xenophobic attitudes, but that figure increased to 39 percent by 2014 and reached a peak of 67 percent in October 2018. These

views are particularly strong when it comes to Muslims. According to the Pew Research Center, 72 percent of Hungarians had unfavorable views of Muslims in 2016 compared to the EU median of 43 percent, even though (or rather because) Hungary has practically no Muslim population.

Hungarians were also more likely to consider refugees a burden or a major threat than the average European. In a 2017 survey, 64 percent of respondents from Hungary agreed with the statement that "all further migration from mainly Muslim countries should be stopped." The refugee crisis was also weaponized in Hungarian politics. In 2014, 18 percent of Hungarians said immigration was one of the most pressing issues for the EU and only 3 percent thought it was one of the main challenges for Hungary, but in 2018, 56 percent of Hungarians said that immigration was one of the two most pressing issues facing the EU.

While fear of uncontrolled illegal migration is understandable, turning it into irrational xenophobia directed mostly at Muslims is not. And translating that into taking extreme views on the Gaza war is destructive.

Budapest's defiance of EU consensus has been a thorn in Brussels' side and has isolated Hungary within the bloc, although recent gains by far-right parties in the European Parliament's elections may make it less isolated. However, being a spokesman for the bloc for the next six months may propel Hungary to become more conciliatory and closer to the center of the EU consensus. Hopefully, its presidency will drive Hungary to reassess its extreme positions on the Gaza war and the wider Middle East conflict and work to improve its relations with Muslims, both within the country and at large. (Courtesy: Arab News)

Dr. Abdel Aziz Aluwaisheg is the Gulf Cooperation Council assistant secretary-general for political affairs and negotiation.

China offers high-tech road to success - I

Chris Pereira

No country changes as rapidly as China. Every decade marks a new era in business, governance, innovation, and socio-economic development. This constant evolution is not merely a characteristic but the essence of China's dynamism, presenting a unique and compelling proposition for multinational companies to grow with the Chinese economy.

Each era creates immense opportunities for multinational companies to succeed in China. As China evolves, business strategies must adapt to stay ahead of the trends. Success here demands agility, foresight, and a deep understanding of the ever-shifting market dynamics.

In the 1980s, forward-thinking companies invested in early manufacturing, laying the foundation for China to become the "factory of the world". Those pioneers saw beyond the immediate challenges, envisioning the huge potential in China's vast, untapped resources and workforce. The 1990s saw a dramatic surge in foreign direct investment, expanding into diverse sectors such as infrastructure, communications and agriculture. That period was marked by a symbiotic relationship where China provided the growth environment, and multinational companies brought in expertise and capital.

Over the last 20 years, China's supply chain has evolved into a diversified powerhouse, offering everything from shoes and shirts to smartphones and satellites, and the massive domestic consumer base has created a vast market for international products. The sophistication and scale of China's manufacturing capabilities have reshaped global commerce.

The impact of China's transformation on global trade has been profound. And China's

focus on new quality productive forces is bound to make the present era into a new phase of quality production and technological advancement.

While China's consumer market remains enormous, international brands now face fierce competition from sophisticated local brands which align closely with Chinese consumers' tastes and demands. To succeed in such a market, international brands need to offer products that suit Chinese consumers' tastes. Understanding the nuanced preferences of Chinese consumers is crucial, and those who do so by integrating local insights with global best practices will thrive in the vast Chinese market.

The investment and manufacturing landscape too is evolving in this new era of higher competition, rapidly advancing technology and globally-focused Chinese companies. Previously, knowledge, investment and technologies flowed into China, now they are flowing outward. This shift marks a significant change in China's role on the global stage, from a receiver of foreign expertise to an innovation and export powerhouse.

Chinese companies are occupying the global stage like never before. Nearly every global industry now has competitive Chinese companies, and some sectors such as clean energy technology, electric vehicles and smart home appliances are dominated by Chinese brands. The global presence of Chinese companies offers new avenues for international collaboration and competition.

These companies have developed technologies at home and expanded worldwide, creating new investment opportunities. The narrative is no longer about foreign companies coming to China to sell and manufacture goods; it is about partnering with Chinese companies to innovate and grow on a global scale.

To be continued

Russian army chief, ex-defence minister face ICC arrest warrants

UN's judicial body makes latest move after issuing arrest warrant against Russian President Vladimir Putin

THE HAGUE: The International Criminal Court (ICC) said Tuesday that arrest warrants for Russia's top army chief and ex-defence minister had been issued by it over strikes on Ukrainian infrastructure that accounted for alleged war crimes.

The ICC warrants are the latest in a series of actions by the court over the Ukraine war, including an arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The warrants, issued on Monday but made public on Tuesday, concerned the Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov, and former defence minister Sergei Shoigu.

The two men are accused of the war crimes of directing attacks at civilian objects and causing excessive incidental harm to civilians, as well as the crime against humanity of "inhumane acts" in Ukraine, the ICC said in a statement. ICC judges said there were "reason-

able grounds to believe that the two suspects bear responsibility for missile strikes carried out by the Russian armed forces against the Ukrainian electric infrastructure from at least 10 October 2022 until at least 9 March 2023."

The court said these strikes were "directed against civilian objects" and even when targets could be considered military, civilian damage "would have been clearly excessive to the anticipated military advantage."

Ukraine hailed the "important" decision, with the the presidency's chief of staff Andriy Yermak saying: "Everyone will be held accountable for evil."

The ICC, based in The Hague, does not have its own police force for enforcing the arrest warrants. It relies on the justice systems of its 124 members to carry them out.

In theory, anyone under a warrant is prevented from travelling to an ICC member state for fear of arrest.



Putin himself has travelled abroad, notably to Kyrgyzstan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, which are not ICC member states.

However, he did skip a meeting of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) in South Africa, which

would have been expected to carry out the warrant.

Moscow lashed out at the warrant against Putin, calling it "void" and issuing its own warrant against the ICC's president in response.

Putin replaced Shoigu as defence

minister last month in a major shake-up to Russia's military leadership more than two years into its Ukraine offensive.

The 68-year-old was appointed Russian defence minister in 2012 and has had a decades-long political career of unmatched longevity in post-Soviet Russia.

He was named the new secretary of the Security Council, replacing his long-standing ally Nikolai Patrushev.

The Kremlin also said there were "no changes" envisaged to replace Gerasimov as Chief of the General Staff.

Along with Shoigu, Gerasimov had been targeted by a hardcore group of influential pro-offensive military bloggers for Moscow's perceived military failures.

Observers believe he was closely involved in devising the plan to send troops to Ukraine in conditions of absolute secrecy.

After taking over in 2012, Gerasimov

has been the longest-serving chief of the general staff of the post-Soviet era.

The ICC, created in 2002 to investigate war crimes around the world, in September opened a field office in Kyiv as part of efforts to hold Russian forces accountable for potential war crimes.

That move came after an international office to probe Russia for the war crime of aggression opened in The Hague in March 2023 in what Kyiv called a "historic" first step toward a tribunal for Moscow's leadership.

Along with Putin, the ICC has also issued a warrant against Maria Lvova-Belova, Russia's presidential commissioner for children's rights, on similar charges of unlawful child deportations during the Ukraine war.

In March this year, the ICC issued warrants for two senior Russian officers, Sergei Ivanovich Kobylash and Viktor Nikolayevich Sokolov, over strikes on infrastructure in Ukraine. Agencies

10 shot dead as section of Kenyan parliament set on fire

Protests against tax legislation turned into violent clashes as police fired at crowds outside parliament building

NAIROBI: At least ten people were shot dead in Kenya's capital on Tuesday, a paramedic said, as protests against tax legislation turned into violent clashes with police and a section of the parliament was set up in flames.

AFP journalists saw three people lying motionless on the ground near the compound, where police fired live rounds and left "many wounded", according to Amnesty International Kenya.

Police fired at crowds massing outside the parliament building, where lawmakers had been debating a contentious bill featuring tax hike proposals.

Shortly before, Irungu Houghton, the executive director of Amnesty International Kenya, told AFP that "human rights observers are now reporting



the increasing use of live bullets by the National Police Service in the capital of Nairobi".

"Safe passage for medical officers to treat the many wounded is now urgent," he said.

The mainly Gen-Z-led rallies began last week and

had been mostly peaceful, with President William Ruto saying over the weekend he was ready to talk to the protesters.

But tensions sharply escalated on Tuesday afternoon, as crowds began to throw stones at police and push back against barricades,

making their way towards the parliament complex, which was sealed off by police in full riot gear.

Anger over a cost-of-living crisis spiralled into nationwide rallies last week, with demonstrators calling for the finance bill to be scrapped. AFP

1,079 pilgrims out of 1,301 who died during Hajj lacked official permits

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Interior said Tuesday that 83% — 1,079 out of 1,301 — of the total deaths during the Hajj pilgrimage 2024 were of those who did not have an official permit.

Speaking in an interview with Al-Arabiya, Security spokesperson Colonel Talal bin Abdul Mohsen bin Shalhoub highlighted the proactive efforts to intensify media and awareness campaigns against performing Hajj without permits and to enforce stricter penalties for violators.

He pointed out that some individuals have been abusing visit visas and other non-Hajj-specific visas in the Kingdom.

Furthermore, Colonel



Shalhoub noted that some tourism companies in several brotherly countries have deceived visit visa holders by issuing visas not intended for Hajj and encouraging them to violate regulations by staying in Makkah two months before the Hajj season.

The spokesperson emphasised that a Hajj permit is not merely a transit card but a

crucial tool that facilitates access to pilgrims and identifies their locations to provide necessary care and services promptly. The absence of a permit poses challenges in some violators to offer services and healthcare.

Colonel Shalhoub mentioned the continuous updates through the Public Security's official social media accounts about appre-

hending those who promote fake Hajj campaigns and referring them to the public prosecution.

He also appreciated the strict measures taken by some brotherly countries against these deceptive companies and the corrective actions they have implemented to prevent future violations.

The deceased pilgrims belonged to more than 10 countries, ranging from the United States to Indonesia, and some governments are still updating their figures.

The cause of death in most cases was heat-related as temperatures in Makkah this year climbed as high as 51.8°C, according to Saudi Arabia's national meteorological centre. APP

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange to be freed after plea deal with US



LONDON: Julian Assange, the founder of WikiLeaks, has agreed to plead guilty on Wednesday to a single charge of violating United States espionage law, marking an end to his 14-year legal battle in Britain.

The charge relates to his involvement in obtaining and disclosing classified US national defence documents, Reuters reported, citing filings in the US District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands.

The plea deal, which could allow his return home to Australia, follows years of legal struggles, including a lengthy stay in a high-security British jail and seeking refuge in Ecuadorian embassy in London.

Previously, the 52-year-old Australian editor, also faced allegations of sex crimes in Sweden and battled extradition to the US, where he faced 18 criminal charges.

Assange is due to be sentenced Wednesday to 62 months of time already served, at a hearing in Saipan in the Northern Mariana Islands, at 9am local time.

The US territory in the Pacific was chosen due to Assange's opposition to travelling to the mainland US and for its proximity to Australia, prosecutors said.

Assange left Belmarsh maximum security jail in the early hours of Monday, before being bailed by the London High Court and later boarding a flight, his wife, Stella, said.

"I feel elated," Stella, who flew to Australia from London on Sunday with the couple's two children, told Reuters. "I also feel worried... Until it's fully signed off, I worry, but it looks like we've got there."

A video posted on X by Wikileaks showed Assange dressed in a blue shirt and jeans signing a document before boarding a private jet.

He had recently won permission to appeal against the approval of his US extradition and the case was due to be heard at London's High Court next month, a factor that his wife said helped galvanise talks over a deal. Agencies

Xi celebrates historic success of Chang'e-6 mission

President Xi congratulated Chang'e-6 mission for bringing back the first samples from the moon's far side



BEIJING: Chinese President Xi Jinping on Tuesday extended congratulations on the complete success of the Chang'e-6 mission that brought back the world's first samples collected from the moon's far side.

On behalf of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, the State Council and the Central Military Commission (CMC), Xi, also general secretary of the CPC Central Committee and chairman of the CMC, extended warm congratulations and sincere greetings to the Chang'e-6 mission headquarters and all those who participated in the mission in a congratulatory message.

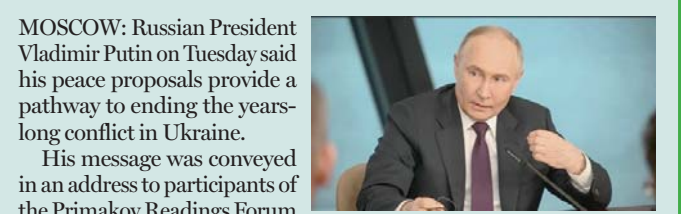
The return capsule of the Chang'e-6 probe, carrying the moon samples, landed precisely in the designated area in Siziwang Banner, north China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, at 2:07 p.m. (Beijing Time) on Tuesday.

Xi pointed out that for the first time in human history, Chang'e-6 has collected samples from the moon's far side and returned to Earth, marking another landmark achievement in China's endeavor to become a space and sci-tech power.

Over the past 20 years, all those involved in the lunar exploration project have scaled the heights of science and technology and made remarkable accomplishments that have captured worldwide attention, Xi said.

"The outstanding contributions you have made will always be remembered by the country and the people," he said. Xinhua

Putin claims his recent proposals can end the Ukraine conflict



MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday said his peace proposals provide a pathway to ending the years-long conflict in Ukraine.

His message was conveyed in an address to participants of the Primakov Readings Forum by his aide for international affairs, Yuri Ushakov.

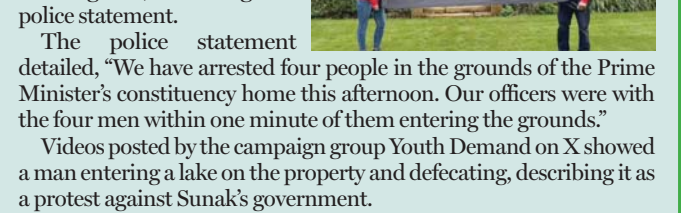
"I hope that, unlike many Western politicians who did not even want to delve into the essence of the initiative we put forward, the forum participants will approach its consideration thoughtfully and rationally. They will be able to see that it truly offers the possibility of stopping the conflict and moving towards a political and diplomatic settlement," read the statement published on the Kremlin website.

Putin on June 14 had called on Ukraine to withdraw its troops from Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions, agree with Russia's territorial gains made in the "special military operation" launched in February 2022, and confirm its neutral status. He also demanded the cancellation of all anti-Russian sanctions by the West.

The Russian leader expressed confidence that the forum participants would give due attention to Russian ideas on the formation of a system of equal, indivisible security and mutually beneficial cooperation across the Eurasian continent.

Moscow is hosting the 10th International Scientific and Expert Forum Primakov Readings, an annual international meeting of experts in the fields of international relations and the global economy, on Tuesday and Wednesday. Anadolu Agency

UK police arrest 4 protesters for entering PM Rishi Sunak's residence



LONDON: Four men were taken into custody on Tuesday for suspected aggravated trespass at Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's home in northern England, according to a police statement.

The police statement detailed, "We have arrested four people in the grounds of the Prime Minister's constituency home this afternoon. Our officers were with the four men within one minute of them entering the grounds."

Videos posted by the campaign group Youth Demand on X showed a man entering a lake on the property and defecating, describing it as a protest against Sunak's government.

The group is advocating for a halt to new oil and gas licences and is also calling for a two-way arms embargo on Israel.

India providing arms to Israel for Kargil help, says ex-envoy

NEW DELHI: India could be providing arms to Israel amid its ongoing onslaught against Hamas in a bid to "return the favour" for Tel Aviv's support to New Delhi during the 1999 Kargil War, ex-Israeli ambassador to India Daniel Carmon has said.

Carmon, during an interview with Israel's Ynetnews as per India Today, said the occupying nation was among the few who supported India with weapons during its war with neighbouring Pakistan.

The envoy, who served as the to New Delhi from 2014-2018, said: "The Indians always remind us that Israel was there for them during the Kargil war [...] The Indians don't forget this and might now be returning the favour."

The Indian media outlet reported

that during the 1999 war, New Delhi received military supplies and equipment — including guided munitions and drones — from Tel Aviv.

The former ambassador's remarks come amid reports that India has provided drones and artillery shells to Israel to support the occupying forces in their war with Gaza as its supplies run low due to the months-long battle.

Back in February, reports had emerged that Israel was provided with Hermes 900 drones which were manufactured in India's Hyderabad. The Hyderabad facility, established by Israel to manufacture supplies for the Indian military, reportedly sent around 20 drones for use by the Israeli Defence Forces.

However, New Delhi has neither

confirmed the report nor issued a statement on the former ambassador's comments.

In May, Spain blocked the cargo ship 'Marianne Danica' from entering the Cartagena port, according to Ynetnews. The ship, loaded with 27 tonnes of military equipment and on its way to Israel from Chennai, was turned away due to Spain's policy against allowing arms shipments headed for Israel.

In the ongoing war, Israel has killed almost 37,600 people, according to Palestinian health authorities, and has left the tiny, densely populated Gaza Strip in ruins.

Since early May, fighting has focused on Rafah, on Gaza's southern edge abutting the border with Egypt, where around half of the enclave's 2.3

million people have been sheltering after fleeing other areas.

Gaza's health ministry said on Tuesday that hospitals and medical centres in the enclave were experiencing a severe shortage of medicines and medical supplies due to the continued Israeli offensive, Israel's control and closure of all crossings and its targeting of the health sector in Gaza.

In particularly short supply are medications needed for emergency, anaesthesia, intensive care and operations, the ministry said in a statement.

The Israeli offensive came after Hamas-led fighters stormed into southern Israel on October 7, killing around 1,200 people and seizing more than 250 hostages, according to Israeli tallies.

Bull & Bears
PSX 100-Share
Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index		
Current	Prev. Close	
77,940.58	78,232.09	
Day's High	Day's Low	
78,541.21	77,908.98	
Index Value	Change	
7,659,018,531	-291.51	
Percentage	Time	
-0.37%	25 Jun, 2024 5:00 pm	
Europe: FTSE 100 Index		
Index Value	Change	
8,247.79	-33.76	
Percentage	Time	
-0.41%	25 Jun, 4:35 pm GMT+1	
USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average		
Index Value	Change	
39,145.82	-265.39	
Percentage	Time	
-0.67%	25 Jun, 2:47 pm GMT-4	
Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average		
Index Value	Change	
39,173.15	+368.50	
Percentage	Time	
+0.95%	25 Jun, 3:15 pm GMT+9	
Open Market Forex Rates		
Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	182.2	184
Bahrain Dinar	741.02	749.02
Canadian Dollar	203	205
China Yuan	38.38	38.78
Danish Krone	40.08	40.48
Euro	293.5	297.2
Hong Kong Dollar	35.67	36.02
Indian Rupee	3.33	3.44
Japanese Yen	1.9	1.98
Kuwaiti Dinar	908.44	917.44
Malaysian Ringgit	59.13	59.73
New Zealand \$	170.67	172.67
Norwegians Krone	26.38	26.68
Omani Riyal	723.26	731.26
Qatari Riyal	76.5	77.2
Saudi Riyal	73.05	73.85
Singapore Dollar	202	204
Swedish Korona	26.62	26.92
Swiss Franc	311.73	314.23
Thai Bhat	7.58	7.73
U.A.E Dirham	75.1	75.85
UK Pound Sterling	349.35	352.8
US Dollar	277.75	280.6

Young business people, entrepreneurs builders of country's economy: PM

A delegation of young entrepreneurs calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday said that the young businessmen were the builders of country's future and economy.

He said that the government would provide all possible facilities to the business community for promotion of economic activities, adding for provision of conducive environment for business activities and formation of business friendly policies were among the top priorities of the incumbent government.

The prime minister expressed these views during a meeting with a delegation of young entrepreneurs that called on him.

The meeting was attended by Minister for Commerce Jama Kamal, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaulah Tarar, Minister for Energy Sardar Awais Ahmed Khan Leghari, Minister for Privatization Abdul Aleem Khan, Chairman PM's Youth Programme Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan, relevant secretaries of the ministries and senior officials, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

The prime minister underlined that promotion of Pakistan's exports at the international level was critical for giving a spur to economic



activities in the country in which the young entrepreneurs could play a significant role.

He said that the economic and trade deficit of the country could be plugged with the cooperation of government and the business community, adding that a large number of youth could

be transformed into talented manpower that would further bolster country's economy.

The prime minister said the government was committed to end gender based discrimination in provision of economic opportunities. He also noted that the usage of latest tech-

nology for increasing agriculture yield could further boost country's exports.

The prime minister informed the delegation that they were also reducing the size of the government's structure and resolved to make government owned entities more efficient.

During the meeting, the prime minister directed for the constitution of a youth entrepreneurs advisory committee comprising the youth business people on the pattern of Economic Coordination Committee.

The prime minister said promotion of bilateral business cooperation between Pakistan and China was their top priority, adding with the second phase of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the industrial development would be accelerated.

The members of the delegation apprised the prime minister of the success of Pakistani business people at the local and global levels and the issues faced by them.

They also praised the prime minister on the historic achievement of Pakistan Stock Exchange.

The prime minister appreciated the efforts of business community and the young entrepreneurs. APP

Speakers emphasize for exploring food value chain of palm oil in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: The speakers at an international Seminar on Palm Oil on Tuesday emphasized on exploring potential of palm oil derivatives beyond culinary applications.

The Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia in Islamabad in collaboration with COMSTECH jointly organized the international seminar on "Sustainability of Palm Oil Industry and its Derivative Products" at COMSTECH Auditorium, Islamabad.

Speakers emphasize for exploring food value chain of palm oil in Pakistan

The international seminar aims to raise more awareness of the sustainability of the palm oil from Indonesia to the Pakistani public and maintain the awareness that the palm oil and its derivative products are not harmful to the health even beneficial for the well-being.

By this seminar, more potential is expected to explore the untapped potential of palm oil derivatives beyond culinary application.

In his remarks, COMSTECH Adviser Prof Dr Syed Khurshid Hasnain mentioned that COMSTECH have strong commitment to support the natural products coming from the OIC member countries and expect more applied research on more



application of the natural products for the industrial purposes that could benefits to the OIC member countries.

He believed that science and technology should be applicable and give economic benefits to the people. On his turn, the Indonesian Chargé D'Affaires (CDA), Mr Rahmat Hindiarta Kusuma underlined the importance of palm oil for Indonesia as it contributes to 4.5 percent to the Country's GDP, which absorbs more than 17 million direct and indirect workers. Given its significance, the Government of Indonesia successfully improved the approaches on palm oil production to be more eco-and-

labor-friendly.

"Please keep up with the Indonesian palm oil in our bilateral trade relations, and let us make it as milestone to improve more trade volumes between the two countries," CDA said, inviting the Pakistani business community to participate Trade Expo Indonesia 2024 this October.

The seminar discloses the minerals contained in the palm oil are very beneficial for the industry, compared with another vegetable oils and could be used for raw material of cosmetics, daily appliances, pharmaceuticals, paints, plastics and even Bio-Fuel.

Masood invites American entrepreneurs to invest in Pakistan

Spokesman Report

WASHINGTON DC: Pakistan's Ambassador to the US Masood Khan has invited American entrepreneurs and corporate leaders to make investments in Pakistan in the areas of IT, energy, agriculture and mineral extraction.

During his interaction with the US corporate leaders, entrepreneurs and business executives in Washington DC, he said Pakistan's market has remained lucrative and attractive for American businesses over the decades. He highlighted that the US International Trade Administration identifies several advantages for American investors in Pakistan, including the absence of shareholding restrictions, simple work permit regulations, no technology transfer requirements, and a large and sophisticated entrepre-

neurial community.

Masood Khan said Pakistan has established a Special Investment Facilitation Council to facilitate foreign inflows into diverse areas.

He said Pakistan is the fourth largest freelance provider in the world with over 20,000 ICT registered companies.

The Ambassador also drew attention to Pakistan's human potential and its massive transformation towards digitization and e-commerce, connecting its tech-savvy youth with new technologies. He invited US entrepreneurs to explore the country's vast mineral resources, including copper, gold, lead, zinc, iron ore, coal, lithium, rare earth, cobalt, aluminum, chromite, and nickel.

He briefed the participants on various incentives offered by the government across all sectors.

CDC announces further tariff reductions to facilitate Capital Market Investors

ISLAMABAD: The Central Depository Company of Pakistan Limited (CDC) has completely eliminated annual maintenance fee for the sub-account holders, as well as announced a full waiver of the CDS connection fee and minimum fees for Securities Brokers.

However, in order to make the transaction fee equitable, the Intra account movement transaction fee has been introduced, said a news release.

The revised tariffs reflect CDC's commitment to enhancing market accessibility and cost reduction for all capital market stakeholders. CDC has announced the additional reduction and rationalization in tariffs, effective July 1, 2024.

In alignment with the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan's (SECP) vision for investor facilitation and reducing the cost of doing business, CDC has, since its inception, reduced its transaction and custody fees by nearly 95%.

Commenting on the above reductions, Chairman CDC Farrukh H. Sabzwari and CEO CDC Badiuddin Akber said, "CDC has consistently passed on these benefits to investors through significant tariff reductions under the visionary guidance of CDC Board.

The current tariff rationalization is in line with CDC's Management Strategy of reducing cost of doing business and facilitating the Investors and other market players, including Securities Brokers."

They further mentioned that they are thankful to SECP in this regard, especially SECP Chairman Akif Saeed and Commissioner (SMD) Abdul Rehman Warraich, for their continued support and encouragement towards CDC for coming up with reforms to enhance ease of doing business and tariff reductions and rationalizations.

Since its inception in 1997, CDC has consistently prioritized the delivery of efficient, cost-effective services to its diverse clientele, including market participants

and general investors. During the last five years, CDC has been at the frontline of spearheading the digitization drive and has launched numerous groundbreaking initiatives in a very cost effective manner, most of them at even NO COST to investors.

These included implementation of Professional Clearing Member regime with the formation of a separate company named eClear Services, and introduction of many digital solutions and services such as CDS Access, Dividend Repository, eIPO, eLOR, eVoting, e-Meeting, Zakat Repository, Emlaak Financials for mutual fund investments, and the Centralized Gateway Portal, among many other initiatives aimed at streamlining payments and business processes.

CDC has been functioning as an indispensable pillar of the capital market infrastructure by driving innovation and efficiency in the financial sector with innovative and efficient financial solutions. APP

Saudi financial sector to grow bond offerings

Investment minister reveals at London forum

RIYADH: Bond offerings in Saudi Arabia are set to expand with increased activity, highlighting significant growth opportunities in the Kingdom's financial sector, according to the investment minister.

On the sidelines of the UK-Saudi Sustainable Infrastructure Summit in London on June 24, Khalid Al-Falih noted that despite the substantial and rapid growth in business opportunities in the Kingdom, certain aspects of the financial sector have not progressed fully, reported the Independent Arabia.

"Considering the size of the growth acceleration and its scope in business opportunities in Saudi Arabia, some aspects related to the financial sector have not fully evolved yet, especially

in terms of penetration levels and trading of issued bonds. Bond offerings in Saudi Arabia should witness growth through increased activity. There are significant growth opportunities available in Saudi Arabia," Al-Falih stated.

The minister emphasized that sustainable energy sources are a pivotal sector set for significant growth in the Kingdom, positioning the nation as a worldwide leader in competitive solutions, contributing to global economic growth.

Saudi Ambassador to the UK Prince Khalid bin Bandar said the relationship between Riyadh and London has "grown stronger over time and will continue to strengthen," reported the Independent Arabia.

Chinese New Energy Enterprises maintain optimism amid EU tariff increase on EVs

BEIJING: The environmental protection and energy transition are prominently discussed topics at the ongoing 25th World Economic Forum in Dalian, China.

During the sub-forum "Not Losing Momentum on the Energy Transition," experts and business representatives from the United States and China exchanged views on these issues and reached a consensus: despite geopolitical challenges, energy transition faces numerous hurdles, and global cooperation is essential to eliminate non-technical barriers.

Amid the backdrop of Europe's plan to impose tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles, Chinese entrepreneurs, as global leaders in the new energy

industry, have shown an optimistic attitude, CEN reported on Tuesday.

Robin Zeng, Chairman of CATL, expressed that while all parties globally have their considerations in developing the new energy industry and remain uncompromising, business actions will inevitably evolve into geopolitical matters. Using a vivid analogy, he explained his perspective: "Just like the 4-3-3 formation commonly used in football, different regions of the world should leverage their comparative advantages and enhance cooperation."

"When I discuss with our partners, I often say, let's not be too greedy; let's work together and share the results of our work. We can make some propor-

tional adjustments, and that's okay. The key is that we share our technology," he emphasized. "We are developing this industry not just for ourselves, but for the global renewable energy industry." He also believes that the friction between the new energy industries in the West and China is temporary.

Wen Shugang, Chairman of China Huaneng Group, shared a similar viewpoint: "Through technological leadership, we can enable people in regions and countries without resources to enjoy clean 'light and heat.' He believes that a new supply-demand relationship has formed between the enormous demand for low-carbon solutions and China's low-cost feasible technological solutions.

Currently, approximately 80% of global energy consumption still relies on fossil fuels. When forecasting industrial development, Wen Shugang emphasized that China remains unwavering in its commitment to green and low-carbon development. "Despite the changing international landscape and varying reactions to the Paris Agreement, with some countries even withdrawing, the Chinese government is unwavering in its path toward green development."

"He added that once a goal is set, it will not change, and robust market competition has significantly spurred the development of the private sector. Wen later emphasized that companies need to achieve deep decarbonization.



"The future should be highly electrified. Judging from the power generation side, only about 20% of global electricity is used by end-users; in the future, fossil fuel consumption should decrease, and terminal electrification usage should increase."

Robin Zeng on the other hand, succinctly encapsulated the core and key points of energy transition: "We are a zero-carbon factory, starting from now, can you drive an electric car? Can you turn your factory into a zero-carbon factory right now?" APP

T20 World Cup 2024

Afghanistan beat Bangladesh to reach semi-final

Australia eliminated from tournament as Rashid Khan-led side secure eight-run victory in nail-biting match

Spokesman Report

Afghanistan on Tuesday created history by reaching their first-ever semi final of a World Cup after securing an eight-run victory over Bangladesh in the ongoing T20 World Cup 2024.

Chasing Afghanistan's 116-run target, which was later reduced to 114 in 19 overs due to rain, Bangladesh were bowled out at 105 runs in the 18th over in the match being played at the Arnos Vale Stadium in West Indies.

Afghan bowlers came through for their side which has now joined India as the semi-finalists from Group 1 and sending Australia home.

Skipper Rashid Khan took 4-23 and Naveen-ul-Haq 4-26 in a defiant bowling effort ensuring that their side proceeds to the next stage of the tournament.

Afghanistan will now face South Africa at the Brian Lara Cricket Academy in Trinidad on June 27 (Thursday) in the first



Afghanistan's captain Rashid Khan (R) celebrates the dismissal of Bangladesh's Rishad Hossain during the ICC men's Twenty20 World Cup 2024 Super Eight cricket match between Afghanistan and Bangladesh at Arnos Vale Stadium in Arnos Vale, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines on Tuesday. AFP

semi-final. Whereas India will go up against England on the same day at the Guyana

National Stadium in the second semi-final.

Earlier in the day, Afghanistan were restricted to 115 runs after winning the toss and electing to bat first.

For Bangladesh, Rishad Hossain was the pick of the bowlers with figures of 3-26 in four overs. He took crucial wickets of Rahmanullah Gurbaz, Ibrahim Zadran and Gulbadin Naib. Gurbaz was the top scorer for Afghanistan with 43 runs in 55 balls with the help of three fours and a six.

Playing XIs

Bangladesh: Litton Das (wk), Tanzid Hasan, Najmul Hossain Shanto (c), Towhid Hridoy, Shakib Al Hasan, Mahmudullah, Soumya Sarkar, Rishad Hossain, Taskin Ahmed, Tanzim Hasan Sakib, Mustafizur Rahman

Afghanistan: Rahmanullah Gurbaz (wk), Ibrahim Zadran, Gulbadin Naib, Azmatullah Omarzai, Mohammad Nabi, Karim Janat, Rashid Khan (c), Nangeyalia Kharote, Noor Ahmad, Naveen-ul-Haq, Fazalhaq Farooqi

Malaysia to host 3-day Pakistan Tape Ball Cricket contest

The tournament will feature regional teams from various parts of Pakistan

KUALA LUMPUR: For the first time in Malaysia's history, the city of Kuala Lumpur will host a three-day Pakistani tape ball cricket tournament titled "Meri Cricket Meri Jeet," starting on June 28.

This highly anticipated event is organized in collaboration with Bank Al Habib and IPG, a press release said on Monday.

The tournament will feature regional teams from various parts of Pakistan, including Swat Cheeta, Swabi Champion, Sialkot Badshah, Rawalpindi Express, Buner Bahadur, Karachi Heroes, Lahore Sherdil, and Peshawar Leopards.

Entry to the "Meri Cricket Meri Jeet" festival will be free

for cricket fans, with special programmes arranged for families and children.

Pakistani cricket legends Sarfraz Ahmed, Rashid Latif, and Imran Nazir will attend the event to encourage and support the players.

The event will also feature a lucky draw with various prizes, including a grand prize of a return air ticket to Pakistan.

Fans that catch the ball outside the boundary will have the opportunity to take pictures with the legendary Pakistani cricketers.

A joint meeting involving representatives from mainstream Pakistani media houses in Malaysia, the Malaysia Pakistan Business Council, and other dignitaries was held at a

renowned Pakistani restaurant in Kuala Lumpur.

The meeting, chaired by Dato' Sri Nazir Mira Salam, Chairman of the Malaysia Pakistan Business Council, reviewed arrangements to promote a positive image of Pakistan through the cricket festival and to strengthen the bonds between the people of Malaysia and Pakistan.

The meeting also discussed plans to welcome Pakistani cricket superstars Sarfraz Ahmed, Imran Nazir, and Rashid Latif.

Dato' Sri Nazir Mira Salam and other officials thanked the organizers for elevating Pakistan's profile abroad and invited the Pakistani community in Malaysia to attend the event in large numbers.

To entertain the community, renowned Pakistani singers Jabran Raheel and Sofia Kaif will perform at the festival.

The meeting was attended by officials of the Pakistan Business Council Malaysia, including Humayun Habib, Muhammad Saleem, Muhammad Shuja, Irfan Latif Seifi, Waqar Ahmed Khan, Dato' Muhammad Jamil, MS Athar Qureshi, Haji Wajid Ali Khan, and several prominent social personalities and journalists.

Thousands of Pakistanis residing in Malaysia are expected to attend the event with their families and friends to witness the much-anticipated tournament featuring national heroes of Pakistan. Agencies

Olympics 2024: US swimming stars testify on anti-doping measures

Phelps and Schmitt will testify on anti-doping before House Energy and Commerce Committee's Subcommittee on Oversight

WASHINGTON: US swimming greats Michael Phelps and Allison Schmitt will testify on Tuesday to a US House of Representatives subcommittee probing a doping case involving Chinese swimmers ahead of this summer's Paris Olympics.

Olympic gold medalists Phelps and Schmitt, as well as Travis Tygart, the chief executive for the US Anti-Doping Agency, will testify to lawmakers on the Republican-controlled House Energy and Commerce Committee's Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations about anti-doping measures.

Phelps, with 28 medals to his name, is the most-decorated Olympian of all time. Schmitt won 10 medals over four games. Neither will compete in Paris.

Tuesday's hearing, due to begin at 7 p.m. ET (2300 GMT), will take place two months after the World Anti-Doping Agency confirmed reports that nearly two dozen Chinese swimmers tested positive for trimetazidine, a banned drug found in heart medication, before the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

CHINADA, China's anti-doping agency, has said the swimmers had been inadvertently exposed because of contamination and that they should not be held liable for the positive results. China named its 31-member swim team this month.

WADA said in April it would send a compliance team to assess China's anti-doping program, but leading swimmers, including seven-time gold medalist Katie Ledecky, who is competing in Paris, have continued to express concern.

Last month, a separate House committee called for the Justice Department and the International Olympic Committee to launch probes before the Olympics into the doping case involving the Chinese swimmers.

Four members of the House Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party, including top Republican John Moolenaar and top Democrat Raja Krishnamoorthi, wrote to the institutions that China "inexplicably" had contributed nearly \$2 million more than required to WADA programs. Reuters

David Warner quietly concludes illustrious int'l cricket career

SAINT LUCIA: Australian opener David Warner bid farewell to his 15-year international cricket career after Afghanistan bagged a victory over Bangladesh in the ongoing T20 World Cup 2024 on Tuesday, eliminating the Kangaroos from the tournament.

The decision comes as Afghanistan's latest victory marked Australia's exit from the tournament in the Super 8 stage, confirming a subdued farewell for Warner.

With appearances in 110 T20I innings, the 37-year-old opening batsman scored 3,277 runs, including a century and 28 half-centuries, at a formidable strike-rate of 142.47.

He had already announced that the T20 World Cup 2024 would be his last tournament and had played his final ODI in November's World Cup final win over India while his last Test was against Pakistan in January.

Before Afghanistan's match against Bangladesh, pacer Josh Hazlewood had stated that the timing of Warner's



send-off from his teammates would rely on the result of the same match.

"Nothing's been said yet," Hazlewood said. "It might be said after this [press conference] before the [evening] game, but I think we'll wait until after the game and then we'll [acknowledge] the career that's been. It's been unbelievable. We'll definitely miss him around the group, out in the field and off-field—an amazing all-format career."

On Warner's farewell, Hazlewood said: "We've had a little taste of it. It's sort of been a slow burn with Test cricket and ODI cricket, and now T20.

Life without him, we've sort of gotten used to it a little bit in New Zealand. It's always different when you lose a player that's been there for so long. But we'll move on and push forward."

Speaking before Australia's World Cup exit, Warner's opening partner Travis Head said it would be a "disappointing" manner for Warner's career to culminate.

"We'll be disappointed if it ended like that, where we have to watch another game. A lot has been said about what he's contributed to Australian cricket at the top of the order in all formats," Head said.

"He goes down as our best multi-format player. He'll be missed at the top of the order, but let's hope [tonight] is not the end of it. We'll wait and see but we'll give him a send-off tonight if that is the case later on. It might be a bit of a late one if the fixture finishes the way it has. But a lot has been said about how good Davey has been at the top of the order." Agencies

Brazil frustrated by Costa Rica at Copa

James Rodriguez inspired Colombia to a 2-1 win over Paraguay

LOS ANGELES: A lacklustre Brazil launched their Copa America campaign with a dour 0-0 draw against Costa Rica on Monday as James Rodriguez inspired Colombia to a 2-1 win over Paraguay.

Brazil, chasing a 10th Copa America crown, dominated possession and territory in the Group D game at the SoFi Stadium in Los Angeles but struggled to break down a resolute Costa Rica.

The Brazilians thought they had taken the lead in the 30th minute after Marquinhos tapped in at the back post after a flick on by Rodrygo following a free-kick by Raphinha.

But after an agonising VAR delay, the goal was chalked off for a fractional offside decision as Costa Rica escaped.

That was as good as it got for Brazil, who laboured to break down Costa Rica's defence for the remainder of the game, registering just three shots on target despite enjoying 73.5 percent possession.

Costa Rica were content to sit back, defending in numbers and rarely venturing forward with any purpose.

The Costa Ricans failed to have a single shot on goal for the entire game.

Brazil coach Dorival Junior paid tribute to Costa Rica's defensive organisation.

"They were very well organised from start to finish," he said. "They were dedicated in everything they did."

Colombia finished the day top of Group D after collecting all three points in their deserved win

over Paraguay at Houston's NRG Stadium.

Rodriguez, whose club career has languished in the decade since he rose to prominence with a dazzling performance at the 2014 World Cup, created both of Colombia's goals.

The 32-year-old midfielder, who has played just a handful of minutes for Brazilian club Sao Paulo in the two months leading into the Copa America, set up the opening goal for Colombia in the 32nd minute.

After finding space on the left, Rodriguez flighted a pinpoint cross to the far post to pick out Daniel Munoz, who beat Paraguay goalkeeper Rodrigo Morinigo with a firm downward header to make it 1-0.

Ten minutes later Colombia

doubled their lead and again it was a goal engineered by the trusty left boot of Rodriguez.

This time the goal arrived from the opposite flank, with Rodriguez swinging in a wicked free-kick that was glanced in by Crystal Palace midfielder Jefferson Lerma.

That made it 2-0 at half-time to leave Colombia firmly on course to extend their unbeaten streak to 24 games.

Colombia continued to carve out the better chances in the second half, but Paraguay set up a nervy finish after Brighton's Julio Enciso pulled one back in the 69th minute.

Ramon Sosa crossed from the left and Enciso punished slack marking in the Colombia area to hook an angled first-time volley into the bottom corner past



Camilo Vargas.

Colombia however controlled play after the Paraguay goal and looked the more threatening team.

The Colombians thought they had earned a penalty in the 84th

Wasim Akram: Indian team should visit Pakistan for Champions Trophy 2025

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Former Pakistan cricket captain Wasim Akram has expressed hope that the Indian team will visit Pakistan for the 2025 ICC Champions Trophy.

"I believe the Indian team will tour Pakistan next year for the Champions Trophy and witness the excellent arrangements," Akram said during an interview with an international media outlet.

He praised PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi's efforts to upgrade stadiums for the mega event, calling it a positive step.

Akram emphasised that Pakistan needs this tournament to boost its cricketing profile. "I hope all countries will participate because cricket and politics are entirely different. The whole nation is ready to host eight major teams," he added.

The 2025 Champions Trophy is scheduled to take place between February and mid-March, featuring 15 matches. The Indian team is expected to play all its matches in Lahore.

This tournament marks the return of the Champions Trophy after an eight-year hiatus. Pakistan won the last edition in 2017 under Sarfraz Ahmed's leadership, defeating India in the final.

The ICC has confirmed the participation of eight teams: Pakistan (host), India, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Afghanistan, England, and Bangladesh.

Pakistan and India have not played a bilateral series since 2013. The Indian team last toured Pakistan for the 2008 Asia Cup.

Asian Jr Individual Squash Championship begins

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Squash Federation (PSF) is set to host the 31st Asian Junior Individual Squash Championship from June 25 to 29, here at the Mushaf Squash Complex.

In a press conference here at a local hotel on Monday, Pakistan Squash Federation (PSF) General Secretary Air Commodore (R) Amir Nawaz along with Former World Champion Qamar Zaman and Group Captain Irfan Asghar announced that the Asian Junior Boys and Girls Individual Squash Championship 2024 will be held in collaboration with the Asian Squash Federation.

The championship will feature 12 countries, including Hong Kong, India, Iran, Japan, Korea, Macau, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar, Singapore, and Sri Lanka, with a total of 107 men players, 84 women players, 36 officials, and 44 parents participating.

Players will compete in the U-19, U-17, U-15, and U-13 events of the Asian Junior Individual Squash Championship. The PSF considers it an honor to host this historic event, aiming to provide a conducive environment for both domestic and international players.

Pakistan has entered 24 men and 19 women players in various age groups, who have undergone rigorous training to excel in the championship.

Senior officials of the Asian Squash Federation will participate in the event, which promises to be a thrilling spectacle for squash enthusiasts.

The Technical Delegate appointed by Asian Squash Federation (ASF) is Al-Arady Ally, while WSF International Referee Tahir Khanzada will lead a panel of 23 referees to conduct matches at both venues.

The Pakistan Squash Federation has made elaborate arrangements for the championship, ensuring a memorable experience for all participants.

The first Asian Junior Individual was held at Singapore in 1983 in which Umar Hayat of Pakistan won gold and his country mate Ahmed Gul won a silver medal.

A total of 30 Asian Junior Individual Squash Championships were conducted till 2023 in which Pakistani players showed excellent performance and won a gold and silver medals.

Apart from Jansher Khan, Abdul Rashid, Amjad Khan, Mansoor Zaman, Farhan Mehboob, Amir Atlas, Danish Atlas, Ali Bukhari, Tayyab Aslam, Israr Ahmed and Noor Zamam has also won Asian Junior Championship titles. Agencies

Semi-final schedule for T20 World Cup 2024 confirmed

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The T20 World Cup 2024 is nearing its end from the 20 teams at the beginning to coming down to the last four who will be playing in the semi-final on June 27 in the West Indies.

After England and South Africa, India became the third team to qualify for the T20 World Cup semi-final on Monday. The Men in Blue beat Australia by 24 runs in their recent match.

On the other side, Afghanistan beat Bangladesh by 8 runs (DLS method) in the final Super 8 match of the tournament on Tuesday to qualify for the final four.

For the first time in history, the Rashid Khan-led unit have qualified for the semi-finals of a World Cup.

Bangladesh were bowled out for 105 in 17.5 overs while chasing a target of 116 runs, which was later reduced to 114 in 19 overs due to rain.

As Afghanistan registered an historic win, opener Litton Das remained unbeaten on 54 runs in 49 balls, but ran out of partners at the other end.

T20 World Cup 2024 semi-final schedule

Semi-final 1 — June 27, 5:30AM (PST):

South Africa vs Afghanistan @ Brian Lara Cricket Academy, Trinidad and Tobago.

Semi-final 2 — June 27, 7:30PM (PST):

India vs England @ Providence Stadium, Georgetown, Guyana.

Camilo Vargas.

Colombia however controlled play after the Paraguay goal and looked the more threatening team.

The Colombians thought they had earned a penalty in the 84th

minute when another teasing Rodriguez cross into the box ended with defender Yerry Mina appearing to be hauled down by Gustavo Velazquez.

Argentinian referee Dario Herrera pointed to the spot but

subsequently overturned the decision after a VAR review.

Colombia play Costa Rica in their second group game on Friday, before wrapping up their first-round campaign against Brazil on July 2. AFP

Signing of LoU

ISLAMABAD: In a major breakthrough, NRTC Pakistan, Allied Australian, and Tech Valley Pakistan signed a letter of understanding (LoU) at the Ministry of Federal Education, paving the way for a groundbreaking joint venture to establish a state-of-the-art Chromebook assembly line in Pakistan on Tuesday.



Photo: Online

Pakistan strives to have cordial ties with all countries: Dar

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister says peaceful, stable Afghanistan to benefit both countries

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar says communication and dialogue are essential for reducing the current and future risks and for fostering a collaborative approach to cater to the needs of all nations.

Addressing a ceremony in Islamabad on Tuesday, he said Pakistan firmly supports an approach that prefers cooperation over confrontation and an approach that is built on reaffirmation of faith in and commitment to the UN Charter and international law.

The Foreign Minister said Pakistan remains a strong proponent of the inextricable link between peace and development.

He said within this frame-



work, Pakistan has consistently strived to have peaceful, cooperative and good-neighbourly relations with all countries in our immediate and extended neighborhoods.

Shedding light on all-weather strategic relations with China, the Deputy Prime Minister said China is the most trusted and reliable friend of Pakistan. He said our all-weather strategic coopera-

tive partnership with China is the cornerstone of Pakistan's foreign policy.

Ishaq Dar said the recent visit of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to China and his deep consultations with the Chinese leadership have resulted in reaffirming the strategic importance the two countries attach to this relationship and to the pivotal role of CPEC.

Turning to Afghanistan,

Ishaq Dar said a peaceful, stable, united, and prosperous Afghanistan is in Pakistan's vital interest.

He said apart from emphasizing inclusive governance and respect for the rights of all Afghans, Pakistan stresses the imperative need to ensure that Afghanistan's soil is not used for terrorism against any state.

The Foreign Minister said Pakistan earnestly hopes the Afghan Interim authorities would see that it is in their own enlightened self-interest to heed this call and take the practical steps needed to address our serious concerns.

About Indian Illegal Occupied Jammu and Kashmir, he said India's illegal and unilateral actions of 5 August 2019 had adversely affected the environment of bilateral relations.

The Foreign Minister said the onus remains on India to take necessary steps to create an enabling environment for purposeful engagement and result-oriented dialogue on all issues.

About relations with the United States, he said a stable, cooperative and durable relationship with the United States is of immense importance.

He said Pakistan is equally conscious of the imperative of having good relations with all major powers. The Foreign Minister said we are also working to forge closer cooperation with Russia, European Union, Japan, and ASEAN.

He said this would help Pakistan navigate the complexities of today's geo-politics and advance its goals of economic security and development.

Gilani for enhancing inter-parliamentary coop between Pakistan, Australia



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani on Tuesday stressed for increased exchange of parliamentary delegation to enhance the inter-parliamentary cooperation between Pakistan and Australia.

During meeting with High Commissioner of Australia to Pakistan, Neil Harkin who called him here, Gilani said that Pakistan accorded high value to its relations with Australia and wanted to further strengthen the ties between the two countries.

He also highlighted Pakistan's significant sacrifices in the war against terror and its humanitarian efforts, including the support extended to hundred thousands of Afghan refugees.

Yousaf Raza also emphasized Pakistan's proactive role in combating climate change, underscoring the country's ongoing initiatives and achievements in this critical area.

The High Commissioner

commended Pakistan for its unwavering commitment and efforts in the fight against terrorism.

He particularly praised Pakistan's humanitarian assistance to Afghan refugees and acknowledged the country's constructive contributions to global climate initiatives.

Furthermore, the envoy conveyed that they had accommodated 3,500 Afghan Refugees from Pakistan in Australia as gesture of solidarity and support.

He also apprised that they plan to accommodate another 6,000 Afghan Refugees in one phase and that 8,000 in the other phase which will greatly lessen the load on the economy, health and education system.

Both sides expressed satisfaction with the existing bilateral relations and reiterated their commitment to further strengthening cooperation in various fields, especially agriculture and education for the mutual benefit of both nations. APP

Sherry for convening Committee of Whole on Senate's powers to approve budget

ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary Leader of Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPPP) Sherry Rehman on Tuesday demanded the Senate chairman to convene the Committee of the Whole to deliberate over the powers of Upper House of the Parliament to approve the Federal Budget 2024-25.

Speaking in the Senate, the PPPP leader said though the Senate was the Upper House of the Parliament but its role in the approval of budget was limited.

Senator Rehman underscored that with equal representation of all the provinces, the Senate was the symbol of Federation.

She said it was cited that the senators were not directly elected representatives. For that, she added, "the system of electing Senate members should be changed so that they can be directly elected."

The PPPP leader said the senators painstakingly prepared recommendations on the budget, but the

National Assembly had the power to approve or reject them.

She pointed out that the Senate's Standing Committee on Finance, had representation from both treasury and opposition bench, which worked round the clock to prepare the recommendations for the Money Bill.

"It is appreciable that Leader of the House in the Senate Ishaq Dar spoke about the powers of the Senate on the floor of the National Assembly," she added.

Sherry Rehman said in many countries where the parliamentary system consisted of bicameral legislature both the houses had the role in approving the budget. "The Money Bill should not be approved without voting of the Upper House as there is no concept of the Federation sans Senate."

She said the Senate was the only institution which carried out a thorough fiscal and financial audit of the country, but it had no powers. APP

Bilawal urges opposition to offer solutions to problems, not protests

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari has called on the opposition parties to work with the government 'in the public interest by offering suggestions rather than staging protests.

Speaking at the National Assembly (NA) session chaired by Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, Bhutto said, "The public wants solutions to their problems. Without consensus on democracy, public hopes cannot be fulfilled."

He stressed the need for unity between the government and opposition for the public's benefit, noting that while the

PPP supported PM Shehbaz Sharif, they were not consulted on the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) or the budget.

"If the prime minister had sought everyone's opinion, it would have been a political and economic victory for Pakistan," he maintained.

He urged the opposition to sit with the government and provide constructive suggestions instead of protesting.

"We pray that he [prime minister] succeeds in bringing Pakistan out of difficulties," the former foreign minister said while highlighting the economic challenges of the

country.

"Five years ago, 35,000 rupees could support a household; now inflation is easing slightly, and we hope the public feels this relief."

Bhutto also mentioned a 27% increase in the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) funds and stressed the need to protect BISP constitutionally to prevent conspiracies.

He criticised the inefficiency in expanding the tax net and targeting mafias, urging direct taxes on wealthy individuals and companies. Bhutto proposed allowing provinces to collect sales tax to improve revenue.

The PPP chairman urged that fertiliser subsidies should go directly to farmers and expressed readiness to support the government against large lobbies benefiting from subsidies.

"Our investment in farmers led to self-sufficiency in food production," he said, calling farmers the backbone of the economy.

Bhutto recommended providing free solar panels to the poor and subsidised panels to the middle class to tackle load-shedding issues, criticising the Water & Power Development Authority's (WAPDA) performance and stressing the

need for domestic energy solutions.

He thanked Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb for praising Sindh's public-private partnership projects and advocated for the abolition of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), which he claimed hinders economic progress.

Bhutto concluded by urging the government to consult all stakeholders on difficult decisions, including opposition parties.

"We will support you if you withdraw imprudent taxes like those on milk and heart stents," he assured. Agencies

Mohsin directs for indiscriminate action against smuggling

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has directed the authorities concerned to continue indiscriminate action to prevent smuggling in the country.

In a statement, he said a zero tolerance policy against smuggling should be implemented as smuggling is destroying the country's industry and economy.

The Interior Minister also lauded the performance of Pakistan Coast Guards against smuggling.

Earlier, Pakistan Coast Guards foiled bids of smugglings at Othal Check Post and Dashti Nullah in Gwadar.

During the actions, the Coast Guards seized prohibited items including Guin, Betel Nut and Iranian Diesel. Thirteen illegal immigrants were also arrested.

Reserved seats can't be allocated contrary to principle of proportional rep: SC judge

"Whether SIC wins or loses this case, what will other parties benefit from it?" Justice Ayesha questions

ISLAMABAD: Supreme Court of Pakistan's Justice Ayesha A Malik on Tuesday said that the reserved seats cannot be allocated contrary to the principle of proportional representation.

Justice Malik made these comments during the hearing on the petition filed by the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC), the ally of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), against the denial of reserved seats for women and minorities.

A 13-member full court,

headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa, heard the matter.

The bench comprises Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, Justice Muneeb Akhtar, Justice Yahya Afridi, Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Justice Malik, Justice Athar Minallah, Justice Syed Hassan Azhar Rizvi, Justice Shahid Waheed, Justice Irfan Saadat Khan and Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan.

"Whether SIC wins or loses this case, what will other parties benefit from it?" questioned Justice Ayesha during the hearing today, noting that the reserved seats can only be allotted on the principle of proportional representation and not contrary to that.

Meanwhile, Justice Minallah said women and minorities must get representation in parliament.

He said that the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Pakistan

Peoples Party (PPP) were affected earlier but the SC did not come forward to help.

"The same is happening as it did in 2018. One party is the victim," said Justice Minallah, adding that the court did not learn from its history.

The judge added that there would surely come a time in the future when the Supreme Court will regret its decision again.

The hearing of the case has been adjourned till 11.30am on Thursday. Agencies