



Repression by the Modi regime intensified in IIOJK: Mushaal

Mushaal Hussean Mullick, wife of unlawfully incarcerated senior Kashmiri Hurriyat leader Mohammad Yasin Malik has said that repression by the Modi led Indian fascist regime intensified in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). (Details on Page 3)



Ahsan Iqbal calls for enhancing digital, innovative literacy

Federal Minister for Planning and Development, Prof. Ahsan Iqbal laid the foundation stone of 'Center of Excellence Early Childhood Development' at Allama Iqbal Open University yesterday. Addressing the event, he emphasized that education is crucial for a country's development. Developed countries prioritize early childhood development and education through significant investments. (Details on Page 8)

Simultaneously published from Islamabad, Lahore and Multan

Meeting

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting regarding Prime Minister's Youth Programme on Thursday.



Photo: PID

PM orders strategy for youth to get equitable job access

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday directed the relevant authorities to prepare a comprehensive strategy with respect to provision of employment opportunities to the youth of the country on equal basis. Calling the youth as the assets of Pakistan, the prime minister said the country's development was linked with their welfare and progress. Chairing a meeting regarding Prime Minister's Youth Programme at the PM House, he said, with their immense talent,

the youth could change the fate of the country if they were provided with the required resources. The prime minister was of the view that provision of employment opportunities to the youth was the government's top priority. He said all the training programmes at National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NVTTC) should be focused on creating job opportunities for the students. He directed to conduct a detailed survey of job market and then accordingly start the skill training programmes. During the meeting, it was

informed that under PM Laptop Scheme, some 600,000 laptops had so far been delivered to the students. Under this scheme, the government would provide additional 100,000 laptops during current year. The meeting was informed that 64% students who got training under the Youth Skills Development Programme managed to get respectable jobs during previous three years. It was told that the government funded 100 startups under its PM National Innovation Award who were being placed in designated incubation centers

across the country. Similarly, the prime minister was informed that 10 international standard sports academies and a biomechanical laboratory would start functioning this year under PM Youth Sports League. Likewise, under the Prime Minister Green Youth Program, 268 universities across the country would be targeted for training youth on climate change prevention and eco-innovation. "Preparation of National Youth Employment Policy 2024 is in final stages," the meeting was told. The focus of the policy would be to create decent employment opportuni-

ties for the youth and increase the proportion of women in the workforce. Similarly, it was told that PM Digital Hub was also being prepared which would be a one-window operation dashboard. The meeting was attended by Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Khan Cheema, Information Minister Attaullah Tarar, Minister of State for Information Technology & Telecom Shaza Fatima Khawaja, Chairman PM Youth Programme Rana Mashhood, Coordinator to PM Rana Ihsan Afzal and other relevant high officials.

Intelligence operation in Hoshab District of Balochistan targets two more terrorists

City Desk

RAWALPINDI: On 24 July 24, Security Forces, conducted an Intelligence Based Operation in Hoshab District of Balochistan. During conduct of the operation, intense fire exchange took place between own troops and the terrorists. Resultantly, terrorist Ali Jan was sent to hell, while two terrorists got injured. Weapons, ammunition and explosives were also recovered from killed terrorist, who remained actively involved in multiple terrorist activities in the area including kidnapping and target killing of innocent



civilians. Sanitization operation is being conducted to eliminate any other terrorist found in the area. Security Forces of Pakistan, in step with the Nation, remain determined to thwart attempts of sabotaging peace and stability of Balochistan.

PM commends armed forces for Hoshab anti-terror operation

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday commended the armed forces for their successful operation against terrorists in District Hoshab, Balochistan. The prime minister stated that the soldiers of the Paki-

stan Army successfully carried out the operation and sent the terrorists to hell, according to a statement issued by Prime Minister's Office. The prime minister remarked that the officers and soldiers of the Pakistan Army were tirelessly working day and night to eliminate the scourge of terrorism from the country.

IMF board likely to approve \$7b bailout for Pakistan in August

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) Executive Board likely to approve a \$7 billion bailout package for Pakistan in August, citing sources. According to sources, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Executive Board meeting is expected to take place in August. Pakistan and the IMF had reached a staff-level agreement on July 12. The IMF Board is expected to give final approval to the agreement within 4-6 weeks. Finance Ministry sources said that before the board meeting, Pakistan will ensure external financing. The current loan program does not include funding for climate change. However, funding for climate change and natural disaster risks is expected in November, sources said. The IMF will consider Pakistan's proposed request for climate financing. After the first review meeting, there

may be discussions on climate change programs. Sources said that Pakistan will have to identify long-term priority projects related to climate change. The IMF's Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF) program provides cheap and long-term financing. To achieve this goal, Pakistan will have to work with other global institutions, sources from the Ministry of Finance said. Bangladesh has already received a \$1.5 billion IMF program for climate change. It is pertinent to mention here that on July 13 Pakistan and the International Monetary Fund reached a three-year, \$7 billion aid package deal. The new programme, which needs to be validated by the Fund's Executive Board, should enable Pakistan to "cement macroeconomic stability and create conditions for stronger, more inclusive and resilient growth," according to a statement.

Meeting of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister with Secretary General ECO



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Secretary General ECO, Ambassador Khusrav Noziri, called on Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 25 July 2024. The outgoing Secretary General apprised the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister about ECO's initiatives and activities as well as his reforms agenda to revitalize ECO during his tenure. The Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign

Minister appreciated the Secretary General's services for the organization. He reaffirmed Pakistan's full support in enhancing intra-regional trade among ECO member countries and ECO reforms agenda. Noting that former Foreign Secretary of Pakistan Dr. Asad Majeed Khan will take up the mantle of ECO Secretary General in August, the Deputy Prime Minister expressed the hope that Dr. Khan would continue the good work done by Ambassador Khusrav Noziri in his three-year tenure.

ECP notifies 39 MNAs as PTI lawmakers

Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Thursday notified 39 MNAs as PTI lawmakers in line with the Supreme Court's verdict in the reserved seats case. The decision was taken in a session held under the chair of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja today. The ECP had finally decided last week to implement the apex court's decision. ECP's last meeting had noted that 39 MNAs who were declared as PTI lawmakers had mentioned their affiliation with the party in their nomination papers. The ECP spokesperson clarified that the ECP has not misinterpreted the SC's verdict and has not declared the intra-party elections as valid. Instead, the commission has held that the PTI's intra-party elections were not in accordance with the

law, and therefore, the candidates who submitted their nomination papers without a party ticket and declaration could not be considered PTI candidates. The reserved seats issue came to limelight after over 80 Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) backed independent candidates emerged victorious in the February 8 elections. The SIC then approached the ECP on February 21 seeking allocation of reserved seats. However, the PTI suffered a setback after the electoral body, citing the party's failure to submit its list of candidates, denied allocating the reserved seats to the SIC via its 4-1 majority verdict on March 4. The election commission distributed the reserved seats for women and minorities among other political parties. The PTI-backed SIC had approached the court after the ECP refused to allocate the reserved seats due to the party's failure to submit its

list of candidates before the deadline. The Peshawar High Court (PHC) upheld the ECP's decision, leading the SIC to appeal to the Supreme Court. In the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly - according to a notification, the ECP allocated one reserved seat each to Jamiat Ulama-i-Islam Pakistan, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Pakistan People's Party (PPP). In Sindh Assembly - allocated reserved seat for women to Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) and PPP. PPP's Samita Afzal and MQM-P's Fouzia Hameed elected on reserved seats. Subsequently, the PHC ruling allowed the ruling coalition, comprising the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), and other allies, to gain a two-thirds majority in the National Assembly. This decision increased the PML-N's seats to 123 and the PPP's to 73, while the SIC held 82 seats.

PDM wants confrontation between PTI and army: PTI founder via Omar Ayub

City Desk

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Secretary General and Opposition Leader in the National Assembly Omar Ayub said that the party's founder, Imran

Khan, stated that the PDM government wants confrontation between PTI and the army. Speaking to the media after meeting with Imran Khan at Adiala Jail, Omar Ayub said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and

others have 'evil' intentions. "The first message from Imran Khan is for Army Chief General Syed Asim Munir that Shehbaz Sharif and the PDM are trying to pit the army and PTI against each other. We (PTI) and Asim

Munir will not let their intentions succeed," he added. Omar Ayub also accused the authorities of deliberately deleting the video footage of the Zaman Park incident, demanding that it be made public.

The PTI secretary general said that Imran Khan will approach the court to obtain the footage. He said that the Islamabad administration has been asked to allow the PTI to hold a public gathering on August 5.

Jam Kamal Khan hails landmark partnership to combat hepatitis in Pakistan

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan has termed the newly announced partnership between Lab Diagnostic Systems (LDS) and Hangzhou AICHEK Medical Technology Co. Ltd. as a progressive initiative that sets Pakistan on the road to self-sufficiency.

He emphasized that such collaborative efforts will not only strengthen the deep-rooted ties between China and Pakistan but also significantly improve the healthcare system through self-reliance.

This partnership with AICHEK Medical Technology is set to bring groundbreaking innovations in In-Vitro Diagnostics (IVD) and biomedical reagents to Pakistan. AICHEK, renowned for its comprehensive IVD product solutions, will work closely with LDS to enhance the local healthcare infrastructure and ensure the availability of cutting-edge medical technologies.



Mr. Zafar Mehmood, Group CEO of LDS, with over 22 years of experience in the healthcare sector, expressed his excitement about the partnership. "This collaboration represents a monumental step towards our goal of improving healthcare access and outcomes in Paki-

stan. By joining forces with AICHEK, we are bringing the latest advancements in medical technology to our country, ultimately improving the lives of millions," said Mr. Zafar Mehmood. Mr. Yinlai Li, CEO of AICHEK Medical and BIOEAST Group, also

shared his vision for the partnership. "Our collaboration with LDS is a testament to our commitment to expanding our reach and impact in the global healthcare market. Together, we aim to address the pressing healthcare challenges in Pakistan and set new standards for innovation and excellence."

A pivotal moment in the event was the contract signing ceremony, where Mr. Zafar Mehmood and Mr. Yinlai Li formally signed the partnership agreement.

This momentous occasion was followed by a commemorative group photograph featuring the chief guest, guests of honor, and other dignitaries.

This partnership is not only a milestone in the healthcare sector but also a significant enhancement of the bilateral relationship between Pakistan and China.

It symbolizes a shared commitment to addressing global health challenges and underscores the strength of the partnership between the two nations.

RPO Faisalabad issued instructions to control the crime rate and provide security to the public

Abdul Majid

FAISALABAD: Regional Police Officer Faisalabad Dr. Mohammad Abid Khan held a meeting with the district heads at the RPO office, while CPO Faisalabad, while DPO Jhang, Toba Tek Singh and Chinyut participated in the meeting through video link.



RPO Faisalabad Dr. Mohammad Abid Khan emphasized on preventing crimes and improving service delivery by making all officers implement the operational policy according to KPIs in light of the orders of IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar.

In serious cases of murder, attempted murder, robbery, robbery, murder and resistance, the accused should be arrested as soon as possible and the cases should be investigated. The patrol system should be improved by identifying crime pockets. Attention should be given to the recovery rate. Teams should be formed to arrest the criminal advertisers so that counter-crimes can be reduced. The registration of cases should be implemented on time. Delays in the registration of cases will be intolerable. Orders have been issued to speed up the ground operations against drug dealers. Active criminal gangs should be arrested as soon as possible. Action should be taken against those who are firing aircraft. Search operations should be carried out against criminals in their respective areas. District Heads visit the stations and carry out formal and informal inspections.

Veto calls on SIPs should be kept in mind in every case. Work should be done regarding the welfare project so that services can be ensured for the citizens along with protection. Action should be taken.

Lala Moin Sheikh has expressed great concern over increasing electricity bills

Abdul Majid

FAISALABAD: President of National Peace Committee Young Traders and well-known young businessman leader Lala Moin Ahmed Sheikh has expressed great concern over increasing electricity bills. The electricity bills have left the people in need, fear the ruler God, due to the high tax and unit rate in such a bill, the white-clad class has been ruined, but the laborer and the poor man have died alive, this is huge. There is cruelty which cannot be tolerated. Common people to meet the bread of the house, children's expenses or just pay the electricity bill, the people are paying the bills by selling the jewelry of the women of their house. The government left no stone unturned to destroy the public, WAPDA employees were given free units and benefits and the poor were left hungry for two-time bread, Lala Moin Ahmed Sheikh said that if the government did not reduce the rate of units, The people will be forced to come to the streets, the government should give relief to the people and Rs 10 per unit to the domestic consumer and the wasteful taxes should be eliminated in the bill.



1200 bottles of imported wine recovered, two wine sellers held



Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: Deputy Inspector General Police (CPO) SSP Operation Multan Rana Arsalan Zahid and SSP Investigation Muhammed Ashraf Addressing to the Press Conference in Multan. He Said Station Delhi Gate has arrested 02 liquor sellers while seizing a large consignment of imported liquor. During the operation, 1200 bottles of imported liquor were recovered. The liquor was being supplied to notorious liquor dealer Khalid Sen.

Under the direction of CPO Multan Sadiq Ali Dogar, Multan Police operations are ongoing against criminals. In this regard, the Delhi Gate Police, acting on a tip-off, stopped a Shahzardale near Maswan Chowk. During checking, 1200 bottles of imported liquor were recovered from Mini Loder Truck. 02 liquor sellers were arrested on the spot. The arrested accused have been identified as Sher Ali son of Ghulam Abbas Sakna Noori Sehwaq Talamba and Iftikhar Ali son of Qasim Ali Sakna Chak No. 12 F Basti Malook.

The accused confessed that they work for the notorious drug dealer Khalid Sen and were supplying this liquor to him. The police seized the recovered liquor and the bottle and arrested both the accused and Khalid Sen in case no. 639/24 Bajram PO3/4/4/79 Police Station Delhi Gate registered and initiated further legal proceedings. Raids are being conducted to arrest Khalid Sen. Under the supervision of SP City Division Hasan Raza and headed by DSP Delhi Gate Mehr Waseem, SHO Police Station Delhi Gate Muhammad Khan along with Sub Inspector Muhammad Junaid Shahab and other officers. Liquor recovered while taking action.

Hazro admin assured addressing civic issues

Raza Naqvi

ATTOCK: The local administration of Hazro on Thursday assured notables and representatives of social society to address civic problems especially improvement of drainage system, improvement road structure, availability of specialists doctors at tehsil headquarters hospital and measures to coup with urban flooding during monsoon season. This assurance was made by officials of local administration led by assistant commissioner Hazro Rana Kamran Ashraf to a 15-member delegation notables and representatives of social society led by Chach Muhafiz Committee (CMC) Chief Khalid Khan, Senior Vice Chairman Nisar Ali Khan and senior member Imran Khan Hazarvi. The delegation apprised the officials of local administration about the civic and public problems faced by the population of tehsil Hazro and its adjoining area.

Mr Rana has said that to coup with the drainage problem, the community support is need of the hour and with public support, the local administration alone not able to address the situation.

He said that necessary funds would also be extracted to launch mega drainage system in the city to address the issue for permanent bases. Responding to another demand related to tehsil headquarters hospital, he said that the district administration as well as member district monitoring committee and former provincial Minister Jahangir Khanzada is also in interaction with the provincial and district health authorities to transfer specialist doctors at the hospital so that better health facilities would be provided to the masses at their door step. Mr Rana has assured the delegation that cleanliness and desilting of drainage and sewerage lines of the urban areas of the tehsil would be completed before end of this month.

Dangerous

ISLAMABAD: A view of damage electricity pole alongside a road near cold storage at sector I-11/4 in the Federal Capital, which may cause any incident any time needs attention of concerned authorities.



Photo: Online

AJK Information Minister participated in Hajj Conference

Abdul Majeed Tahir

ISLAMABAD: Information Minister of the Azad State of Jammu and Kashmir Pir Muhammad Mazhar Saeed Shah participated in the Hajj Conference held at Islamabad Hotel. The chief guest of the conference was the delegate of the Saudi Arabian Embassy, Al-Astaz Saleh Al-Mutairi, while the conference was presided over by Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haidari, National Assembly Member, Mustafa Kamal, Pir Saadat Ali Shah, Sajjada Nashin of Choura Sharif, and other political and religious

personalities and scholars participated in the conference. The host of the conference was Maulana Fazlur Rehman Khalil of Tehreek Defa e Harmain Sharifeen.

In his address, the Information Minister of Azad Kashmir said that we pay tribute to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz, Crown Prince Muhammad bin Sulaiman and the Saudi government for the successful completion of the Hajj mission in the year 1445 Hijri. Baitullah Sharif, Ruzta-ul-Nabi (peace and blessings of Allah be upon



him) and the center of the religion of Islam has been the holy land of Saudi Arabia since the beginning and we

have always respected this land, we have a spiritual relationship with Saudi Arabia. He said

By organizing this seminar, a practical effort has been made to promote unity, harmony and harmony among scholars and intellectuals and to promote the pure values of Islam. Saudi Arabia has supported Pakistan in every difficult time, the Pakistani nation is and will remain by the side of Saudi Arabia. He said that he is grateful to the Saudi government for providing the best facilities for the pilgrims he added.

President of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari Birthday Celebration in Multan

Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: The Birthday celebration of President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari was organized by PPP Multan district general secretary Rao Sajid Ali under the chairmanship of PPP South Punjab Senior Vice President Khawaja Rizwan Alam at a local hotel.

Senator Rana Mehmood ul Hassan and Syed Mujtaba Gillani EX MPA and Younger Brother Of Syed Yousuf Raza Gillani attended the ceremony. MPA Rana Iqbal Siraj, City President Malik Naseem Labar, General Secretary City



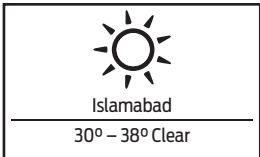
AD Khan Baloch, Senior Vice President City Sajid Khan Baloch, Secretary Information City Khawaja Imran President P.Y.O A large number of party leaders including Malik Nadeem Akhtar, Rana Naem,

Rana Shahid, Haji Saeed, Saqib Kazmi, Sheikh Imran Khalid Tipu participated on this occasion and the birthday cake of Asif Ali Zardari was also cut. I said that President Asif Ali Zardari has estab-

lished himself as the imam of today's politicians with his wise politics. Great Leader President Asif Ali Zardari salutes his bravery and courage on his birthday and congratulates him and his great son Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and beloved daughters MNA Asifa Bhutto Zardari and Bakhtawar Bhutto Zardari and the Jialis.

The role of President of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari in Pakistani democracy is the same as that of Nelson Mandela in African democracy. Today, we pray that the great leader Asif Ali Zardari, who wiped out the hideous

concepts of provincialism, racism and religious hatred in Pakistan with the flower of reconciliation and the smile of negotiations, may Allah bless him and keep him safe and every The speakers added that President Asif Ali Zardari has always given priority to the strengthening of democratic institutions in Pakistan by denying his zaat, and the points he gave to improve the economic situation should be implemented immediately, because only by following these points, the economic situation of Pakistan can be improved and inflation and unemployment can be controlled.



SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr 3:38 am
Zohr 12:14 pm
Asr 5:09 pm
Maghrib 7:13 pm
Isha 8:50 pm

EMERGENCY

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

Women Police Stations

Islamabad 9222596
Rawalpindi 9270601-20

ENQUIRY

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

HOSPITALS

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

DEPARTMENTS

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

COMPLAINTS

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

Sheikh Rashid, brother of Central Association of Traders, dies in London

City Desk



ISLAMABAD: The younger brother of Central Association of Traders Liaquat Bagh Rawalpindi and Hoteliers Association President Sheikh Abdul Waheed, passed away. Sheikh Shalhzad Rashid was 52 years old. He died in London. Whose funeral prayers were offered in the family park of Swan Garden Rawalpindi. A large number of business, social and public circles participated in the funeral prayer. A special prayer ceremony was held at Umar Farooq Mosque Swan Garden after Asr prayer for the forgiveness of the deceased. A large number of members of Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce, Anjuman Tajran Rawalpindi, members of Hotels Association, social workers and religious circles specially participated on this occasion. Where a collective prayer was offered for the forgiveness of the deceased and the patience of the family members.

Repression by the Modi regime intensified in IIOJK: Mushaal

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Mushaal Hussein Mullick, wife of unlawfully incarcerated senior Kashmiri Hurriyat leader Mohammad Yasin Malik has said that repression by the Modi led Indian fascist regime intensified in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK).

She was addressing a roundtable discussion "Human Rights crisis in IIOJK: what lies ahead during Modi 3rd term" organized by Ambassador Jauhar President Institute of Regional Studies here in Islamabad.

Former SAPM for Human Rights and Women Empowerment said that human rights violations have risen dramatically in IIOJK since late 1989 as occupied forces killed 96,320 innocent Kashmiris besides 11264 women also gang-raped.

She said that the Indian army, Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and the Border Security Force directly involved in rape, mass killings, torture, enforced disappearance, and suppression of freedom of speech.

Mushaal disclosed that more than 900,000 Indian troops have kept 8 million Kashmiris under an inhuman military siege.

Chairperson Peace and Council Organization said that the Indian security forces



have picked up most of the innocent Kashmiris young men in operations designed to identify suspected militants.

She further said that torture in IIOJK is of exceptional brutality and explains the appalling number of people who have died in custody of the security forces.

Torture includes beatings and electric shocks, hanging people upside down for many hours, crushing their legs with heavy rollers, and burning parts of their body, she also explained.

Hundreds of Kashmiris have died in custody after arrests in "crackdown operations" to identify suspected militants, Mushaal added.

Former SAPM said that Modi and BJP

leaders live in fool's paradise and she fears that situation will become worse in the third term of Modi in IIOJK.

Mushaal has urged India to immediately lift the inhuman military siege and rescind illegal actions taken since 5 August 2019.

She also called for global action against India's human rights abuses in IIOJK.

Chairman Kashmir Institute of International Relations Altaf Wani, Executive Member of APHC Shamim Shwal, former Convener APHC Syed Faiz Naqshbandi, Human Right Advocate Barrister Needa Salam, Associate Professor at NUML Dr Waseem and Scholar Kashmir Affairs Dr Waqas Ali Kausar also participated in this round discussion

Security arrangement

ISLAMABAD: A view of heavy containers placed on a green belt alongside a road near red zone due to Jamaat-e-Islami sit in protest (Dharna) at D-Chowk, in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online

PAC role is exemplary in promoting Art and Culture. Shazia Rizwan

City Desk

RAWALPINDI: Member of the Punjab Assembly, Shazia Rizwan, has stated that the Punjab Arts Council Rawalpindi plays a crucial role in promoting art and culture in the Pothohar region. She expressed this during her visit to an exhibition showcasing artworks created by female students at the Arts Council.

The special guest further emphasized that the promotion of regional culture ensures unity and solidarity. Art and culture are significant components of any country, contributing not only to its development and prosperity but also representing its valuable heritage. Culture is a distinctive aspect that differentiates one country from another. Various activities are ongoing in Punjab province for the promotion of art and culture. It is a fact



that no nation can progress by neglecting its culture. In this regard, Chief Minister of Punjab, Maryam Nawaz Sharif, has established a beautiful tradition of revitalizing the province's culture. Director of the Arts Council, Sajjad Hussain, briefed Member of the Punjab Assembly, Shazia Rizwan, on the events taking place at the Arts Council.

Prospect Pakistan partners with Tiger Eye MMA to boost Mixed Martial Arts in Pakistan



City Desk

BANGKOK, THAILAND/LAHORE: In an industry first and a major move for Mixed Martial Arts in Pakistan, Pakistan's leading sports platform Prospect Pakistan announced a pioneering partnership with Bashir Ahmad, popularly known as the "Godfather of MMA", Founder at Tiger Eye MMA in Bangkok, Thailand and previously an integral part of the One Fighting Championship (ONE FC) franchise.

To mark this partnership, an MOU between Rizwan Raees Khan, Founder and CEO Prospect Pakistan and Bashir Ahmad, Founder and Head Coach of Tiger Eye MMA was signed at the Embassy of Pakistan in Bangkok, in the presence of Mr. Yasir Hussain, Deputy Head of Mission alongside diplomats posted at the Embassy and a delegation of Tiger Eye MMA coaches and their leadership team.

"We are excited to begin working with Prospect Pakistan who are leading a change in Pakistan with regards to sports and connecting Pakistani athletes to opportunities globally. The partnership will see us share programme ideas, MMA development strategies and insights in to how our environment caters to the needs of individuals through a variety of disciplines including Personalized Training, access to MMA platforms in Thailand and Asia, S&C, Medical, Player Care, Education and Performance Psychology. It has been special to welcome Prospect to Thailand, and even more so to our Academy home at Tiger Eye. As much as we hope it will bring new experiences for Pakistan's growing MMA community, it has certainly opened horizons for us to be able to give back and help the people of Pakistan" said Bashir Ahmad, Co-Founder and Head Coach at Tiger Eye MMA.

Expressing enthusiasm about the partnership Mr. Yasir Hussain, Deputy Head of Mission at Embassy of Pakistan added, "How Prospect Pakistan is pioneering change in the Pakistan Sporting Eco System is something we fully support. This Tie-Up with Tiger Eye MMA represents a transformative step for Pakistani Sports.

The partnership between Prospect and Tiger Eye aims to foster the exchange of best practices, open new player pathways, and provide advanced training for coaches from Pakistan. This initiative is set to elevate the level of MMA in Pakistan by integrating international standards and expertise into local practices, one step at a time.

Founder and CEO of Prospect, Rizwan Raees Khan further added, "Pakistan has incredible MMA athletes lacking both global and local opportunities. Our partnership with Tiger Eye MMA aims to change this, growing the sport of MMA in Pakistan and opening avenues for fighters to explore in Thailand and Asia at large. As a company, we are committed to creating opportunities for Pakistan's athletes and building our sporting eco system, as we have recently demonstrated through our partnership facilitation between Swindon Town FC and Karachi United, in the sport of Football."

TikTok celebrates release of Jimin of BTS' second solo album, MUSE, with exclusive in-app experience

ISLAMABAD: TikTok, the go-to platform for music discovery, launched an immersive in-app experience celebrating the release of Jimin of BTS' highly anticipated sophomore album, MUSE.



The #Jimin_Who hub offers fans worldwide a unique opportunity to engage with exclusive content, participate in challenges, and unlock limited-time rewards. By searching for related terms like 'Jimin' and 'BTS', will be presented with challenges to unlock a limited-time exclusive profile frame. Additionally, the hub features top-performing content from Jimin, including his solo work and collaborations, Fan Spotlight showcasing standout ARMY members and their creations, and an immersive experience celebrating Jimin's sophomore album, MUSE.

Since debuting over a decade ago, BTS (@bts_official_bighit) has established themselves as 21st century pop icons, breaking countless records and becoming the fourth biggest artist account on TikTok. With over 65.5M followers and 1.4B likes, hashtags related to the group continue to generate huge engagement, with #bts appearing in 94.1M creator videos and #bts_official_bighit in 33.4M. Jimin's solo content has inspired millions of creator videos and views, cementing his status as a global superstar.

Hashtags related to #jimin have been featured in more than 29.9M creator videos. After releasing his debut solo album FACE last year, Jimin's #1 song, 'Like Crazy', inspired more than 300K creator videos, and the dance video posted on the group's TikTok was viewed over 36.2M times and received more than 8.6M likes. Jimin recently shared an exclusive behind the scenes video of the pre-release single "Smeraldo Garden Marching Band (feat. Loco)" from MUSE, which has been viewed by 11M fans and garnered 2.5M likes.

Businesses in Pakistan see PM Sharif as 'worse' manager of economy: Gallup

Bureau Report

KARACHI: Calling the government of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif as "worse" manager of the economy, the country's business owners have become more pessimistic about their future because of continued political turmoil and the new tax-heavy budget, according to a latest survey.

The values were negative for all three strands as Gallup Pakistan surveyed the owners of 454 small, medium and large businesses from more than 30 districts in the second quarter of 2024 to compile its Gallup Business Confidence Index report.

In the Index the score for current business situation, future business situation and direction of the country declined by four to 10%, the survey reports.

A significant number of busi-

nesses thought the government's new financial plan for FY25 was not business-friendly while about two in five businesses see inflation as their biggest problem.

Like first quarter, price hike was the most cited problem that almost two out of five businessmen, 37%, would like the government to address.

The inflation, which soared to 12.6% last month in June, remains backbreaking and continues to erode the purchasing power of consumers.

More than half, 54%, of Pakistan's businesses think that the current Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz government is worse than the previous government in managing the economy, according to the survey.

"Owing to continued political uncertainty and the recently announced heavy-on-taxation

federal and provincial budgets have had a significant impact on business optimism in the country," said Bilal Ijaz Gilani, an executive director at Gallup Pakistan and chief architect of Gallup Pakistan Business Confidence Index.

The business community, which is already burdened with various regulatory measures and taxes through direct and indirect means, expressed serious reservations on the new budget while being surveyed, he said.

The number of businesses which want the government to solve their taxation issues has risen considerably from the first quarter because of the increased taxes the government imposed in the federal budget last month.

Six out of 10 businesses surveyed said they were faced with crippling load-shedding. This quarter 16%

more businesses said the power outages had increased due to heavy load on power infrastructure in the country in summer. Overall, 39% businesses surveyed said no to load-shedding while 61% said yes.

Asked how well their businesses were doing, the owners and managers said the national and global challenges had made economic security a distant dream in Pakistan. Resultantly, the net current business situation score saw a fall of 16% in the second quarter of 2024.

The businesses appeared more pessimistic about the future as 57% expressed negative expectations while only 43% expect things to get better. The net future business confidence score has worsened by 36% since the last quarter and is now at -14%.

The pessimistic expectations for future business conditions were prev-

alent specially among those selling hardware and tools, electrical items and manufacturing products. The businesses selling home decor and accessories, gift items like toys and sports related, and cosmetics were among the most optimistic.

The net direction of the country score also moved southward to -64%, worsening by four percentage points from the previous quarter as overall trend for the past few quarters has been consistently negative.

"Only 18% of respondents claimed that the country is heading in the right direction," the report said.

A majority, 54%, of businessmen said the current economic managers from the PML-N government were worse than their counterparts in the previous government in terms of economic management. Twenty-three percent respondents from

manufacturing sector thought the current and previous governments were the same.

A sweeping majority of businessmen, 85%, do not consider the government's new financial plan as a "good budget", the survey said. Eleven percent of the manufacturers and 15% service providers said the budget was business friendly.

Because of high inflation and poor business conditions nine percent more employers, especially manufacturers, had to decrease their workforce in the second quarter. Six out of 10 businesses or 60% said their sales were worse this year. More manufacturers (66%) reported worse sales as compared to service providers (58%).

"Governments in Pakistan need to listen and address the voice of business communities across Pakistan," said Gilani.

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A Bridge that Endangered South Asia

While we in Pakistan are hurling blames and threats at each other, India has quietly tightened its grip on Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) and improved its standing along the 3500 Km disputed border by silently building a bridge on the rugged Himalayas gorge. This bridge has successfully linked the Kashmir valley to the vast Indian plains by train to achieve three strategic objectives: to further tighten its grip on IIOJK, to contain Pakistan, and to meet the perceived rising strategic threat from China.

The bridge named "Chenab Rail Bridge" is the highest of its kind in the world and has been hailed as a feat of engineering that will play a pivotal role in both peace and wartime, facilitating the movement of army personnel in larger numbers than was previously possible. The 1,315-meter-long steel and concrete \$24 million bridge connects two mountains with an arch 359 meters above the Chenab River, completing the vital link of the 272-kilometer railway that begins in the garrison city of Udhampur, headquarters of the army's northern command, and runs through the region's capital Srinagar. It terminates a kilometer higher in altitude in Baramulla, a gateway trade town near the Line of Control with Pakistan. The railway cost an estimated \$3.9 billion and has been an immense undertaking, with construction beginning nearly three decades ago.

Earlier, the Indian military had to stockpile supplies, military equipment, and ammunition transported by road in Ladakh for six months every year before the roads closed for winter. With the construction of the bridge, the military will have a year-long sustainable supply line. This project will also give birth to several other road tunnel projects to connect Kashmir and Ladakh, not far from India's

frontiers with China and Pakistan. The completion of this vital bridge has given India a multitude of advantages across military, strategic, economic, political, and security dimensions. Militarily, it enhances troop mobility and logistical efficiency, enabling rapid deployment and sustained supply lines in Jammu and Kashmir. Strategically, it strengthens India's position against China and Pakistan, acting as a deterrent and reinforcing territorial control. Economically, the bridge promotes regional development by attracting investment, boosting trade, and enhancing tourism. Politically, it symbolizes national integration, facilitates policy implementation, and contributes to political stability by improving living standards. Security-wise, it bolsters disputed border monitoring and counter-insurgency operations, ensuring civilian safety and reinforcing India's overall security posture in the region.

The Chenab Rail Bridge represents a significant strategic development with far-reaching implications for China-India relations, India-Pakistan dynamics, the Kashmiri struggle for freedom, and the broader South Asian region. This infrastructure project enhances India's logistical and military capabilities in the region, particularly along the contested borders with China. By improving troop and equipment mobility, India strengthens its defensive and offensive positions, signaling its readiness to counter any potential threats from China. This development not only increases India's military readiness but also supports its broader strategy of counterbalancing China's influence in South Asia. It would also give much-needed impetus to the strategic interests of both the USA and the West, who

are supporting India and propping it as a counterbalance power against China.

For India-Pakistan relations, the Chenab Rail Bridge exacerbates existing tensions, particularly over the disputed region of Jammu and Kashmir. The improved infrastructure allows India to bolster its military presence in the area, which, in Pakistan's view, should be a direct threat to its security and territorial claims. This increased militarization could lead to further conflicts and heightened diplomatic tensions between the two nuclear-armed neighbors. Moreover, the international community may pay closer attention to the ongoing conflict in Kashmir, potentially influencing geopolitical dynamics and the involvement of global powers.

The Kashmiri population faces both opportunities and threats from the Chenab Rail Bridge. While improved infrastructure might bring economic benefits, there are significant concerns about demographic changes and the erosion of Kashmiri autonomy. Easier access to the region could lead to an influx of outsiders, potentially marginalizing the local population and undermining their unique cultural and linguistic identity. This development could intensify the resistance among Kashmiris, fueling their long-standing demand for self-determination and merger with Pakistan. Additionally, the increased militarization facilitated by the bridge might lead to more human rights violations, drawing international condemnation and support for the Kashmiri cause.

In the broader context of South Asia, the Chenab Rail Bridge influences regional stability, economic development, and strategic alliances. By enhancing India's stra-

tegic posture, the project could destabilize the region by increasing military capabilities and heightening tensions with both Pakistan and China. However, improved infrastructure in Jammu and Kashmir could also foster economic growth through increased trade and connectivity within India and potentially with neighboring countries. This project could serve as a model for similar initiatives in the region, promoting economic development and regional connectivity if managed diplomatically.

To neutralize India's advantages after completing the Chenab Rail Bridge, Pakistan should adopt a multifaceted strategy. Militarily, Pakistan should enhance its defensive preparedness. Economically, Pakistan must build resilience, develop infrastructure in Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Additionally, fostering political unity within Pakistan and ensuring good governance and human rights in Pakistan-administered Kashmir will further strengthen Pakistan's position.

Pakistan should also intensify its international diplomacy to highlight that the construction of the Chenab Rail Bridge in IIOJK is a direct violation of the UNSC resolutions. By building such strategic infrastructure, India is unilaterally altering the status quo of the region, thereby undermining the spirit and intent of the UNSC resolutions, which call for maintaining the disputed nature of the territory until a fair and impartial plebiscite is conducted under UN auspices. This not only challenges the legal and international status of Jammu and Kashmir but also raises significant concerns about India's commitment to resolving the issue peacefully and in accordance with international law.

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



Analysis

Qamar Bashir

UNICEF chief calls for urgent security reset in Gaza amid 'new horrors'

The head of the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) has appealed for an immediate improvement in the security situation in Gaza, where dangerous operating conditions and attacks against humanitarian workers continue to hamper aid delivery to communities in need.

"Simply put – we do not have the necessary conditions in the Gaza Strip for a robust humanitarian response," UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell said in a statement issued on Wednesday in the wake of an attack on one of the agency's vehicles and the latest Israeli evacuation order in Khan Younis.

Ms. Russell began by highlighting the dire conditions in Gaza, where "with each passing week, families face new horrors."

She said devastating attacks on schools and sites housing displaced people continue, reportedly killing hundreds more Palestinians and further straining the already overburdened hospitals in the enclave.

"We see children who withstood previous injuries only to be hurt again. Doctors and nurses with no resources, struggling to save lives. Thousands of boys and girls sick, hungry, injured, or separated from their families," she said.

"The violence and deprivation are leaving permanent scars on their vulnerable bodies and minds. And now, with a breakdown in sanitation and sewage treatment, the polio virus joins the list of threats, especially for the thousands of unvaccinated children."

Meanwhile, "as families are repeatedly forced to move to escape the immediate violence, the humanitarian situation is beyond catastrophic," she said.

Although UNICEF and other humanitarian agencies are doing everything they can to respond, "the dire situation and attacks against humanitarian personnel continue to obstruct our efforts."

On Tuesday, a clearly-marked UNICEF vehicle was hit by bullets while waiting at a designated holding point near the Wadi Gaza checkpoint. It was one of two vehicles that were going to collect five young children and reunite them with their father after their mother was killed.

"Fortunately, no one was injured, and the team managed to reunite the family," she said. "Yet in this incident, like others before it, the humanitarian consequences could have been horrific."

Stating that the conditions in Gaza do not support a robust humanitarian response, she said that "the flow of aid must be unimpeded and access must be regular and safe."

For nearly nine months, aid has trickled in, civilians have been deprived of supplies, and the commercial sector has been decimated, she said.

The result has been growing competition for the little that is available, smuggling of goods into Gaza, and the increasingly organized looting of aid supplies which "not only impedes our efforts to reach vulnerable families but puts our teams and the civilians we are supporting at risk."

The situation is exacerbated by the operating conditions on the ground, she continued, noting that at least 278 aid workers have already been killed to date – a record number – while others are put in harm's way or prevented from doing their jobs.



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

India Initiates a New Era of brutality in IIOJK - II

Reports indicate an increase in communal violence and assaults against religious minorities, particularly Muslims and Christians, during Modi's administration. Vigilante groups and mobs often act with impunity, driven by religious polarization and provocative rhetoric. Incidents such as the lynching of individuals suspected of consuming or trading beef underscore the vulnerability of religious minorities and the inadequacies in law enforcement protection.

India has increasingly employed surveillance technology to monitor dissent and quell protests. The government's frequent use of internet shutdowns, especially in conflict zones and during protests, has been criticized as a disproportionate restriction on freedom of expression and access to information. Critics argue that these measures undermine democratic principles and hinder transparency and accountability.

Under Modi's leadership, the international community, including human rights organizations and foreign governments, has expressed concerns about the situation in India. Various United Nations bodies, the European Union, and the United States have urged India to uphold human rights standards, ensure accountability for violations, and safeguard freedoms of

expression and peaceful assembly.

For decades, the region of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) has been a focal point of contention between India and Pakistan, with its residents caught in the crossfire of geopolitical tensions. Within this complex landscape lies a tragic narrative of human rights abuses and systemic repression, particularly in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) under Indian governance. India's control over the region dates back to 1947, when military forces were deployed following the signing of the Instrument of Accession by the then Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir. Efforts of Pakistan and later people of J&K themselves resulted into liberation of a part of Kashmir which is known as AJK.

The situation in IIOJK remains deeply troubling, marked by a significant Indian military presence and stringent security measures. In August 2019, the Indian government revoked Article 370 of the Constitution, which had granted special autonomy to the region, and restructured the state into two Union Territories. This decision was accompanied by a severe crackdown, including a blackout on communications, mass arrests of political figures and activists, and restrictions on movement. Reports from international human rights organizations such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and

the United Nations consistently highlight serious human rights violations in IIOJK, including extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions, torture, and sexual violence perpetrated by Indian security forces. Civilians, including women and children, have been caught in the crossfire or deliberately targeted during military operations. The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) and the Public Safety Act (PSA) grant Indian security forces sweeping powers with limited accountability, contributing to a climate of impunity. Under these laws, security personnel can arrest individuals without a warrant and detain them for extended periods without trial, leading to widespread fear and mistrust among the local population. The conflict has taken a heavy toll on the civilian population of IIOJK, with reports of psychological trauma, displacement, and economic hardship. The region's development has been hampered by curfews, internet shutdowns, and restrictions on freedom of movement, hindering access to education, healthcare, and livelihood opportunities. The international community, including the United Nations and various human rights organizations, has consistently urged India to uphold its international obligations, thoroughly investigate allegations of human rights abuses, and ensure justice and reparations for victims. However, progress has been slow, with India often dismissing external criticism as interference in its internal affairs.

To be continued



Analysis

Abdul Basit Alvi

'The Reconciliation Talks in Beijing, A Chinese Gift for US'

Alishba Aslam

Since the 7th of October 2024, Israel has been enjoying full support from the US and most of the western countries, which fully endorse Israel's right to defend itself against Hamas. In the name of "self-defense", Israel has killed more than 38000 civilians mostly children and women with the backing of these western nations. The Arabs have largely distanced themselves from the Israel-Palestine Conflict, viewing the Palestinians as terrorists, a stance that ultimately supports the western narrative of Israel's self defense.

Under these circumstances, the world has been witnessing the brutal killings of human beings, including newly-born children, pregnant women, and individuals of special needs. Over the last 10 months, humanity has observed the worst humanitarian crisis and genocide being broadcasted live, all supported by western countries who always claimed to be the greatest proponents of human rights.

The United Nations, the International Court of Justice, the Criminal Court of Justice have all been watching this bloodshed and decrying the humanitarian crisis. Yet, none can stop Israel's brutality against the Palestinian people. These events highlighted the miserable state of humanity under the current unipolar world order, where countries suffer in the absence of leadership that advocates for equal rights for all countries. This became more evident when the US vetoed the UN resolution in favor of Palestine and a ceasefire, which was passed with a large majority in the UN assembly.

The major points from the agreement reported so far are:

- 1- PLO is recognized as the legitimate representative of all Palestinian people.
- 2- Hamas, Fatah and other Palestinian groups to form interim national reconciliation governments.
- 3- The government will focus on the post-war governance and reconstruction of Gaza and the strongest call is of a truly independent Palestinian state in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions.
- 4- The national unity government will manage the affairs of Palestinians in Gaza and the West bank, oversee the reconstruction and prepare conditions for elections.

Furthermore, the Chinese FM Wang Yi put forward a three step initiative to end the Israel-Gaza conflict,

- 1- Achievement of comprehensive and lasting ceasefire in Gaza strip, ensuring access to aid.
- 2- Implementation of Post war governance and reconstruction of Gaza under the principles of "Palestinians governing Palestine".
- 3- Make Palestine a full UN member state and begin implementation of the two state solution.

One important aspect of these reconciliation talks is that the formation of a unity government, or even the sole PLO governance in Palestine, removes the basic hurdle in ceasefire negotiations.

The timing of these talks is also very significant, as the Biden Administration and US Congress continue to support Israel, inviting Netanyahu to address the US Congress. China's invitation to Palestinian factions for reconciliation talks sends a message to the Palestinian community that they are not left behind and there are some countries that are making efforts for their future. It also signals that China will not allow Netanyahu and Biden to occupy Gaza, and that Gaza's governance will remain in Palestinian hands.

This agreement is a first step towards settling the matters, moving the conflict towards long term peace and ending the months old bloodshed.

The whole world, especially the Palestinians, are looking towards China as it takes a significant role in advocating Palestinian unity and rights. Mustafa Barghouti, the president of Palestinian National Initiative, stated that the Palestinian factions held the reconciliation talks in China because China is honest and actually wants to help us without interfering with our internal affairs. China plays a very important role not only in supporting the Palestinian Unity but also Palestinian rights. There is a glimmer of hope that peace and stability may finally be within reach for the long-suffering people of Palestine. The coming months will reveal whether the initiative can bring an end to the relentless violence and pave a way for a just and lasting resolution. However the involvement of an emerging super power in this deadly conflict raises hopes among people.

Writer is Research Officer in Pakistan Institute of China Studies, University of Sargodha

Such ties can promote close cultural, economic and social relations: Malik Sohail Hussain

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI) is pleased to announce a promising development in strengthening international relations and economic collaboration. The proposal by Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh President FPCCI to link Islamabad and Washington D. C as Sister Cities was put forward by Mr. Malik Sohail Hussain Chairman Coordination FPCCI, during a significant meeting with Ms. Nina Albert Deputy Mayor of Economic and Planning Development of the District of Columbia.

This proposal was warmly received by Deputy Mayor Albert, who expressed her willingness to consult with



the US Department of State to explore this exciting opportunity further. Mr. Malik Sohail Hussain highlighted FPCCI's pivotal role in facilitating this potential partnership by bridging the governmental connections between

Islamabad and Washington D. C. He emphasized the significant benefits such a relationship could bring, fostering closer cultural, economic and social ties.

Deputy Mayor Albert underscored the importance

of promoting Tourism and Hospitality as vital sectors for mutual growth. Responding to this, Mr. Malik extended an invitation to American investors to explore the abundant opportunities in Pakistan's tourism industry. He

highlighted key areas with immense potential, including Adventure Tourism In the majestic Himalayas and Karakoram Ranges, offering unparalleled experiences for adventure enthusiasts, Health Tourism Attracting visitors with Pakistan's pleasant climate and high quality medical services, Religious Tourism Showcasing Pakistan's rich religious heritage and historical sites and Heritage Tourism Promoting Pakistan's diverse cultural and historical landmarks.

The meeting concluded on an optimistic note, with Deputy Mayor Albert affirming the possibility of establishing a Sister City linkage between Washington D. C. and Islamabad in the near future.

Local leadership needs to be strengthened for improved disaster response: Speakers



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The speakers at a result validation workshop on humanitarian partnership landscape in Pakistan on Thursday underscored the need to harness the potential of international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) to strengthen local leadership at the community level for improved disaster response.

The Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) in collaboration with Oxfam Pakistan organised a one-day result validation workshop on the report titled "How has the Humanitarian Partnership Landscape Change in the Light of the Grand Bargain and Charter for Change (C4C) in Pakistan."

Dr Shafiqat Munir said the country's recurrent phenomenon of extreme weather events have exposed the vulnerabilities of the prevailing systems to catch up with the pace of natural calamities for a matching response.

He said the minute analysis of the 2010 and 2022 devastation floods have increased the demand for enabling local leaderships with a clear role to lead disaster resilience efforts at the community level.

The Report, he said provides a detailed analysis and comparison of humanitarian aid by INGOs in the previous and most recent disasters that indicated a steady decline in the global partners response.

However, he underlined that in the absence of international relief the local communities have stepped up for humanitarian aid and response that indicated the potential need to promote local actors who have come forward and the research had focussed on this aspect.

"The 2010 floods have impacted 22 million population of the country and some 158 INGOs had responded to the crisis whereas the 2022 floods affected 32 million masses but only 70 global humanitarian organisations responded the call.

During the panel discussion, Member National Assembly (MNA), Farah Naz Akbar commended the study author for meticulously observing the crisis and presenting workable recommendations to come up with alternatives to the impending risks.

The legislator emphasized upon the need to critically review the decline in international humanitarian aid for the course correction of the country, MNA Farah Naz said.

Head of Localisation and Partnerships, Pak Mission Society, Qamar Iqbal said the report needs to highlight specific recommendations pertaining to crosscutting themes and sectors for targeted interventions to enable promising outcomes. Moreover, a national reference of Grand Bargain needs to be introduced in the country for better understanding and adoption of the modern global concept.

Global Expert on Corporate Governance and Sustainability, Prof Dr M Naveed proposed to link the study with sustainable development goals for a broader scope of the research to garner government support in this regard.

Country Director, Human Appeal, Daud Saqlain said the geopolitical tensions post Ukraine-Russia War and international dynamics have changed the global humanitarian aid perspective that demands the governments and local partners to act smartly for favourable outcomes while negotiating with INGOs and international donors.

The session ended at a healthy question hour session with members of civil society, government and private sector, and media representatives.

CBD Punjab Champions sustainable development at UNEP workshop in Dubai

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Punjab Central Business District Development Authority (PCBDDA) also known as Central Business District Punjab (CBD Punjab), a leader in transformative urban development projects, participated in the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) technical study and workshop on District Cooling Systems held in Dubai. This prestigious event was hosted by Empower, a renowned leader in district cooling services, in collaboration with Tabreed, a key player based in Abu Dhabi. The workshop gathered global experts and industry leaders to explore innovative solutions and best practices in district cooling systems, which are essential for sustainable urban development.

CBD Punjab was represented by Director Project Management, Asif Iqbal, and Deputy Director Deputy Director Renewable Energy & Smart City Solutions, Yasir Khattak. Their presence underscored CBD Punjab's commitment to integrating advanced cooling technologies and sustainable infrastructure within its ongoing and future projects. As advocates for sustainable development, Asif Iqbal and Yasir Khattak actively engaged in in-depth discussions and collaborative sessions



with industry leaders, including the CEO of Empower and other distinguished participants from various countries. These interactions highlighted CBD Punjab's dedication to adopting global best practices and contributing to environmentally friendly urban environments.

During the event, Director Project Management, CBD Punjab, Asif Iqbal, expressed his thoughts on the importance of district cooling systems. He stated, "We are honored to be part of this significant initiative by UNEP. District cooling systems are essential for creating energy-efficient and environ-

mentally friendly urban environments. Our participation reflects CBD Punjab's dedication to adopting global best practices and contributing to sustainable development.

Deputy Director Renewable Energy & Smart City Solutions CBD Punjab, Yasir Khattak also shared his insights on the workshop. He noted, "The workshop provided invaluable insights into cutting-edge district cooling technologies. Collaborating with international experts enhances our ability to implement smart and sustainable solutions in Punjab, benefitting both the environment and our communities.

By leveraging expertise from global leaders, CBD Punjab aims to implement innovative solutions that align with international standards and practices, ensuring that its projects are not only sustainable but also resilient and adaptable to future challenges. CBD Punjab's involvement in this workshop exemplifies its proactive approach towards sustainable urban development. By participating in global forums and engaging with international experts, CBD Punjab is poised to lead the way in implementing advanced cooling technologies and sustainable infrastructure in its projects.

Uzbekistan plans to increase exports of electrical products to Europe, countries of South Asia and the Middle East

Yuri Kutbidinov,

There are about a thousand manufacturing enterprises operating in the electrical engineering sector of Uzbekistan, most of them small, producing over two thousand types of products. Almost all enterprises in the industry are privately owned. The total number of people employed in the industry exceeds 35,000.

The 76 largest enterprises in the industry, which produce over 90% of all electrical engineering products, are members of the Association of Electrical Engineering Manufacturers (UzEltechSanoat). Of these, 18 enterprises manufacture electrical wires and cables, 27 enterprises manufacture household appliances, and 32 enterprises manufacture power transformers and other electrical products.

The Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan for 2022-2026 aimed to increase industrial production by 1.4 times by 2026, including doubling the production of high value-added products in the electrical engineering industry and tripling exports.

The Uzbekistan-2030 Strategy, adopted in September 2023, will ensure the achievement of all the goals outlined in the Development Strategy of New Uzbekistan. It also sets the task of increasing copper processing in the electrical engineering industry to 300,000 tons per year and raising the localization level of manufactured products to an average of 65%.

Therefore, Uzbekistan pays special attention to the development of technologically advanced industries, including electrical engineering, and provides state support

Over the past seven years, the President of Uzbekistan has adopted several legislative acts providing customs and tax benefits to enterprises in the electrical engineering industry, as well as subsidies to cover transportation and other expenses.

Specifically, until January 1, 2027, enterprises in the electrical engineering industry have received a 50% reduction in profit and property taxes. Additionally, benefits for exemption from customs duties on imported raw materials, components, and equipment for their own production needs have been extended.

Furthermore, several programs have been approved for the implementation of investment projects in the electrical engineering industry, focusing on technical and technological upgrades of existing facilities and the creation of new production lines.

Due to these measures, over the past 7 years, the volume of attracted investments in the industry has amounted to \$935 million, of which about \$400 million are foreign direct investments.

Additionally, more than 260 new investment projects worth over \$800 million have been launched, including 50 cable production projects worth \$120 million, 115 household appliance projects worth \$380 million, 40 power equipment projects worth \$60 million, and 58 other electrical engineering projects worth \$250 million.

As a result, over 13,000 new jobs have been created, bringing the total number of jobs in the industry to 35,000.

As a result of implementing investment projects for modernizing and creating new production facilities, the production of



new types of electrical engineering products has been mastered, particularly household appliances (washing machines, electric stoves, vacuum cleaners, hoods, water heaters, new models of refrigerators and washing machines under the Samsung brand, SMART HD TVs, built-in hobs and gas stoves, etc.); industrial air conditioners; new types of electrical cables (high and low voltage, used in solar energy systems, household appliances, as well as self-supporting insulated cables); dry transformers; electronics (monoblocks, SIM cards, electronic boards for household appliances); smart meters for electricity, gas, and water consumption; parts for solar panels and

renewable energy stations; elevators and escalators; water pumps, etc.

Overall, from 2017 to 2023, the production volume of the electrical engineering industry increased 7.1 times to \$1.98 billion, including a 5.5-fold increase in wires, cables, and copper products to \$792 million; an 8.2-fold increase in household appliances to \$633 million; and a 9.3-fold increase in power and technical equipment to \$567 million.

The contribution of the electrical engineering industry to the development of the economy is also growing, and although the share of the industry's value added in the economy is still less than 1%, it has grown 1.5 times in recent

years.

The growth in the production of electrical engineering products has contributed to an increase in export volumes, which have grown 5.5 times to \$1047 million over the specified period, including a 4-fold increase in wires, cables, and copper products to \$576 million; a more than 10-fold increase in household appliances to \$214 million; and a 12-fold increase in power equipment and other products to \$257 million.

It should be noted that the significant growth (more than 10 times) in the export of household appliances occurred due to the creation of new production facilities in Uzbekistan by Artel Electronics. In particular, the export

volume of refrigerators increased 15 times to \$58 million, televisions 6 times to \$52 million, electric stoves 4.5 times to \$40 million, washing machines 5 times to \$20 million, air conditioners 4 times to \$15 million, etc.

Moreover, not only the geography of export countries has expanded, but also the range of electrical engineering products supplied to foreign markets. Currently, about 200 types of various electrical engineering products are exported to almost 70 countries. The number of exporting enterprises in the electrical engineering industry has grown to 100.

In January 2024, a Presidential Decree "On Additional Meas-

ures for Further Increasing the Production and Export Potential of the Electrical Engineering Industry" was adopted, outlining target indicators for the industry's development in the coming years.

Specifically, in 2024, the plan is to increase the volume of production by almost 30% to \$2.6 billion, exports by 43% to \$1.5 billion, and the volume of copper processing into finished products to 140,000 tons. In 2025, the goal is to increase production to \$3.2 billion, exports to \$2.0 billion, and copper processing to 160,000 tons.

To achieve these targets, the Program for Creating New Production Capacities and Diversifying Production in the Electrical Engineering Industry in 2024-2026 and Beyond has been approved. The program aims to implement a total of 294 investment projects worth over \$4 billion in the coming years.

In conclusion, it should be noted that the necessary conditions have been created in Uzbekistan for enterprises in the electrical engineering industry to increase production volumes and expand the supply of their products to both domestic and foreign markets.

Therefore, goals have been set to increase exports not only to traditional but also to new markets. In particular, there are plans to increase the export of electrical engineering products to European markets, considering the GSP+ preferential trade regime granted to Uzbekistan, as well as to South Asian and Middle Eastern countries.

WRITER IS chief Research Officer of the Center for Economic Research and Reforms under the Administration of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Bull & Bears
PSX 100-Share
Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index		
Current	Prev. Close	
78,469.33	79,397.00	
Day's High	Day's Low	
79,776.95	78,330.58	
Index Value	Change	
8,792,077,802	-927.67	
Percentage	Time	
-1.17%	25 Jul, 2024 5:00 pm	
Europe: FTSE 100 Index		
Index Value	Change	
8,186.35	+32.66	
Percentage	Time	
+0.40%	25 Jul, 4:35 pm GMT+1	
USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average		
Index Value	Change	
40,316.47	+462.60	
Percentage	Time	
+1.16%	25 Jul, 12:51 pm GMT-4	
Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average		
Index Value	Change	
37,869.51	-1,285.34	
Percentage	Time	
-3.28%	25 Jul, 3:15 pm GMT+9	
Open Market Forex Rates		
Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	184.85	186.65
Bahrain Dinar	741.05	749.05
Canadian Dollar	203.75	205.75
China Yuan	38.4	38.8
Danish Krone	40.15	40.55
Euro	301.75	303.85
Hong Kong Dollar	35.65	36
Indian Rupee	3.33	3.43
Japanese Yen	1.91	1.99
Kuwaiti Dinar	908	917
Malaysian Ringgit	58.85	59.65
New Zealand \$	169.15	171.15
Norwegians Krone	26.04	26.34
Omani Riyal	722.87	730.89
Qatari Riyal	76.39	77.09
Saudi Riyal	73.90	74.63
Singapore Dollar	202.5	204.5
Swedish Korona	26.6	26.9
Swiss Franc	309.05	311.55
Thai Bhat	7.55	7.7
U.A.E Dirham	76.75	77.5
UK Pound Sterling	356.15	360.4
US Dollar	278.85	280.5

PPDA supports move to end government's role in fixing oil prices

Spokesman Report

KARACHI: On Thursday, the Pakistan Petroleum Dealers Association (PPDA) said it supports the Prime Minister's decision to end the government's role in determining oil prices.

It said the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) should set petroleum product prices, not the notorious oil marketing companies (OMCs).

OGRA is well suited to protect all stakeholders' professional interests; therefore, it must be empowered, said Hassan Shah, spokesperson for the PPDA.

Giving the authority to determine the oil price to OMCs is like "throwing consumers to the wolves," he said.

He observed that if the political government stops setting the oil prices, it will not face public criticism for inflating the cost of oil following an increase in its price on the international market.

The government also incurs losses due to fluctuations in oil prices; the only solution is to end its intervention in the oil pricing mechanism completely, he said.

Hassan Shah said that the devaluation of



the local currency, the appreciation of the dollar, or fluctuations in the price of oil on the global market will not affect the political government's reputation once its role in deter-

mining oil prices ends. He said that OGRA can professionally determine oil prices, and petroleum dealers have no objection to it. However, they have reservations about giving this authority to oil marketing companies, which will prove disastrous.

Complete deregulation of oil prices could lead powerful multinationals to eradicate national institutions such as PSO and PARCO from the market and seize control of essential national resources like fuel, potentially jeopardising energy security closely linked to national security.

He stated that the OGRA should be empowered to set the prices for ex-refineries, ex-companies, and ex-filling stations because this organisation will maintain equilibrium and prevent sector exploitation.

Hassan Shah said that making a hasty decision without consulting the representatives of more than 14,000 petrol pump owners, all oil refineries, oil marketing companies, especially PSOs, and oil tankers can lead to a major disaster.

He demanded that the government conduct a thorough study and evaluate the benefits and implications before deciding.

Development

ISLAMABAD: Work in progress on an underpass on Jinnah Avenue for Mehran Gate of Fatima Jinnah Park, Capital Administration also building 12 shops inside the underpass for public.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

8th Kunming Fair in China Pakistan Declared Theme Country Atif Ikram Sheikh, President FPCCI

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh, President FPCCI, has expressed his gratitude that Pakistan has been honored as the Theme Country - where Governor of Yunnan Province, China, was the Chief Guest and either ministers or presidents of national chambers from huge economies like China, India, Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam were present. Additionally, Nepal, Bhutan, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Myanmar were also in attendance.

Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh stressed that the importance and strategic nature of Pakistan - China economic relations manifested in the fact that their bilateral trade has crossed \$20 billion psychological mark.

8th South Asia Expo (CSAE) - a six-day event of global



significance - is underway in Kunming, Yunnan Province, China. The expo welcomed over 2,000 local, regional and international exhibitors from 82 countries from all regions of the world. It is pertinent to note that Mr. Saquib Fayyaz Magoon, SVP FPCCI, lead the Pakistani delegation to attend the high-profile 8th China - South Asia Expo in Kunming, China. The delegation includes the likes of Mr. Shabbir Mansha, former VP FPCCI & Chairman of FPCCI's Pak - China Business Council (FPCCI-PCBC); Mr. Kareem Aziz Malik, Chairman Capital Office FPCCI & former VP FPCCI; Mr. Adeel Siddiqui, former VP FPCCI & President of Hyderabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (HCCI) and Sahibzadi Mahin Khan, President of Korangi Women Chamber of Commerce & Industry (KWCCI) & Convener of FPCCI's central standing committee on foreign affairs, trade and investment. Mr. Saquib Fayyaz Magoon highlighted that last year

CSAE draw more than 4 million visitors and generated over \$100 billion in foreign trade turnover; which led to the signing and implementation of over 3,000 projects. Data from China's Ministry of Commerce show that, in 2023, trade between China and South Asian countries reached \$200 billion.

Mr. Shabbir Mansha stated that CSAE is an enormous opportunity for Pakistani business community to attract the huge Chinese economy of \$22 trillion for exports, investments, JVs, transfer of technology and industrial collaborations.

Mr. Adeel Siddiqui emphasized that there is a big demand of Pakistani textiles and handicrafts in China; nevertheless, our cottage industry needs to synchronize with Chinese traditions, standards and tastes in order to produce exportable products.

Nestlé Pakistan reports half year results

Commerce Desk

LAHORE: Nestlé Pakistan's revenue for the six-month period ended June 30, 2024, rose to PKR 107.7 billion reflecting a growth of 6.2% compared to the same period last year. The results were announced following a Board of Directors' meeting at the Company's Head Office.

This was driven by broad-based growth across our portfolio, complemented by

a favorable product mix and demand generating activities. However, headwinds in commodity and energy prices, along with increased investment in our brands, have resulted in a decline in operating profit.

The Company maintains a cautious outlook for the rest of the year in view of the taxes announced as part of the Federal budget 2024-25, along with the ongoing external challenges.

SECP briefs Pakistan's diplomatic missions in EU on ease of registering companies

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) as part of its objective to facilitate foreign investments in Pakistan, conducted an online session for Pakistan's diplomatic missions and consular offices in European Union.

The session, collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) was attended by representatives from 27 of Pakistan's missions/consulates in Europe, including Brussels, Hauge, Dublin, Athens, Paris, Rome, Madrid, Lisbon, Stockholm,

Copenhagen, Prague, Berlin, Vienna, Warsaw, Sofia, Sarajevo, Tunis, Bern, Budapest, London, Minsk, Baku, Oslo, Ankara, Bucharest, Mosco, Kyiv and Belgrade.

Officials from SECP provided an overview of the most recent changes made with the intention to streamline the online incorporation procedures in Pakistan. Moreover, councilors were informed that since all processes are now fully digitalized and completed online, potential investors can register their companies and easily manage post-incorporation filings from overseas.

CCP penalty decision upheld in battery makers deceptive marketing case

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Competition Appellate Tribunal (CAT) has unanimously upheld the level of penalty imposed by the Competition of Pakistan (CCP) on 'Dry & Acid-Lead' Battery manufacturers for concealing crucial product information from consumers.

In a recent judgment, CAT found the CCP's penalties - PKR 1 Million each along with per day penalty of PKR 100,000 - fair and proportionate, and has directed Millat Industrial Products Ltd and Century Engineering (Pvt) Ltd to deposit the amount of penalty within the stipulated time period.

Mobilink Bank upgrades treasury operations with AutoSoft Dynamics for enhanced efficiency

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's leading digital microfinance bank, Mobilink Bank, has brought on board AutoSoft Dynamics, a renowned global provider of core banking and financial application solutions, as a strategic partner to automate their treasury operations. Under this partnership, AutoSoft will facilitate Mobilink Bank's seamless integration with the State Bank of Pakistan's (SBP) PRISM solution through its Real-Time Gross Settlement (RTGS)

system. This integration ensures secure and instantaneous fund transfers, aligning with the Bank's commitment to providing premium financial services.

Mobilink Bank is part of the VEON group, a global digital operator that provides converged connectivity and digital services to nearly 160 million customers in six dynamic markets that are home to 7% of the world's population.

Adil Ali Abbasi, Chief Financial Officer Mobilink Bank and Bilal Mahmood, M. D. Contour Software



& CEO AutoSoft Dynamics formalized the partnership in Islamabad. The signing ceremony was attended by representatives from both organizations. Sharing his thoughts at the signing

ceremony, Faisal Mahmood, Chief Information Officer, Mobilink Bank, said, "We at Mobilink Bank are continuously working on improving our customer's experience. Partnering with industry leaders like AutoSoft Dynamics allows us to utilize cutting-edge technology and create a more agile and efficient banking system."

Bilal Mahmood, M. D. Contour Software & CEO AutoSoft Dynamics commented on the occasion, stating, "We are delighted to welcome Mobilink Bank as our new client. With the support of our experienced

team, top-tier solutions, and the best practices of our parent company Constellation Software Inc., we look forward to delivering a robust implementation for the Bank to meet both their current and future needs."

Shahzad Rafique, COO of AutoSoft, stated, "This is the 18th strategic partnership for our Treasury Automation System (ADAMS) in Pakistan, with 20% of the country's Money Market transactions being processed by our ADAMS Treasury System. We look forward to helping Mobilink Bank deliver its goals!"

Cybercriminals find Telegram safe haven for illegal activities

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD:



Amid rising concerns about Telegram's security, the Kaspersky Digital Footprint Intelligence team analyzed shadow Telegram channels. Their findings reveal a troubling trend: cybercriminals are increasingly using Telegram as a platform for the underground market activities.

Cybercriminals actively operate channels and groups on Telegram dedicated to discussing fraud schemes, distributing leaked databases, and trading various criminal services, such as cashing out, forging documents, DDoS attacks as a service and more. According to Kaspersky's Digital Footprint Intelligence data, the volume of such posts surged by 53% in May-June 2024 compared to the same period last year.

"The growing interest in Telegram from the cybercriminal community is driven by several key factors. Firstly, this messenger is very popular in general - its audience has reached 900 million monthly users, according to Pavel Durov. Secondly, it is marketed as the most secure and independent messenger that does not collect any user data, giving threat actors a sense of security and impunity. Moreover, finding or creating a community on Telegram is relatively easy, which, combined with other factors, allows various channels, including cybercriminal ones, to gather an audience quickly," explains Alexey Bannikov, analyst at Kaspersky Digital Footprint Intelligence.

"There is another trend: Telegram has emerged as a platform where various hackers make statements and express their views. Due to its extensive user base and rapid content distribution through Telegram channels, hackers find the platform a convenient tool to incite DDoS attacks and other disruptive methods against targeted infrastructures. Additionally, they can release stolen data from attacked organizations into the public domain using shadow channels", notes Alexey Bannikov.

Rana Sanaullah attends Commonwealth Sports Ministers moot in Paris

Sports Desk

PARIS: Federal Minister for Inter-Provincial Coordination Rana Sanaullah Khan on Thursday represented Pakistan at the 11th Commonwealth Sports Ministers Meeting in Paris, held on the sidelines of the Paris 2024 Olympics.

The ministerial meeting is being held under the overarching theme 'Building Inclusive and Resilient Societies Through Sport'.

The moot also aims to explore practical inter-sectoral approaches to maximise the impact and benefits of sport on current and emerging development issues and challenges.

On Wednesday too, Minister Rana Sanaullah also participated in a discussion focused on 'Leveraging Quality Physical Education & Sport for Sustainable Social Legacies,' where he highlighted Pakistan's commitment to empowering youth through initiatives such as the Prime Minister's Youth Programme and the Youth Talent Hunt Programme, aimed at not only identifying future athletes but also instilling long-lasting social values.

Apart from participating in the opening ceremony of the Paris 2024 Olympics and visiting UNESCO headquarters, Rana Sanaullah Khan actively engaged in discussions at the



forum on utilizing high-quality physical education and sports to achieve sustainable social outcomes.

Pakistan to face Sri Lanka in ACC Women's Asia Cup semi



Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: The stage is set for a thrilling encounter as Pakistan Women and Sri Lanka Women face off in the second semifinal of the ACC Women's T20 Asia Cup 2024 on Friday (July 26).

Pakistan, after a loss to India, bounced back strongly with convincing victories over Nepal and the United Arab Emirates earning their spot in the final four.

The opening pair of Gull Feroza and Muneeba Ali has formed a formidable partnership, while the bowling attack, spearheaded by Sadia Iqbal, Nashra Sundhu, Tuba Hassan, and Syeda Aroob Shah, has been effective.

Pakistan captain Nida Dar expressed confidence in her team's ability to perform well in the semi-final. "After the initial setback, we gained the right track and are showing signs of improvement," she said. "We will

be entering the match fully determined to do our best."

Sri Lanka, as the hosts, enjoyed a dominant group stage, remaining undefeated. Their batting, led by Chamari Athapaththu, has been particularly impressive. Spinner Kavisha Dilhari has been a force to reckon with, claiming crucial wickets in recent matches.

Pakistan will look to adopt an aggressive approach to overcome the hosts and secure a place in the final.

Weightlifter Nooh Dastgrit Butt blames authorities over Paris Olympics absence

Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan weightlifter Nooh Dastgrit Butt lamented the lack of support from the sports institutions of the country for his absence from the Paris Olympics, scheduled to run from July 26 to August 11.

Butt appeared at ARY News' show Sports Room and expressed his disappointment over not being able to represent Pakistan in the biggest sporting event.

"The athlete from New Zealand, whom I beat in the Commonwealth Games, is participating in the Olympics but I am not. All because of the [authorities], neither I participated in any qualifying event nor was sent for international training," said Butt.

"They should have sent me for international training right after the Commonwealth Games and also for qualifying events so that I would participate in the Olympics and win a medal for Pakistan," he added.

When probed about the difficulties in his professional career, Butt termed the sports institutions as the biggest hurdle before going on to appeal to the government for an ample platform.

"The biggest difficulty for me currently is the sports institutions of Pakistan, who did not send me for Olympics qualifiers. But now, all I



can do is appeal to the government to provide me an international platform so that I can prepare for upcoming events like Commonwealth Games, Asian Games and Olympics," Butt said.

In May this year, weightlifter Nooh Dastgrit Butt shared that he has been sidelined from this year's Asian Games and Paris Olympics 2024 for allegedly being part of a parallel weightlifting interim committee.

However, the Commonwealth Games gold medalist has refuted the accusations made against him and categorically denied his affiliation with any interim weightlifting committee.

Taking to his Instagram account, Nooh Dastgrit Butt shared an official letter, that he received from the Pakistan Weightlifting Federation (PWF), which expressed reservations over his inclusion in the weightlifting event of the ongoing National Games.

13-km Marathon, 3-km Family Fun Race and hockey match to be held in Lahore on Independence Day



Tahir Amin Malik

LAHORE: Director General Sports Punjab Pervez Iqbal chaired an important meeting to review the preparations of multiple sports events scheduled to be held on Independence Day at the National Hockey Stadium on Wednesday.

Director Admin M Kaleem, Director Sports Yasmeen Akhtar, Deputy Director Zahoor Ahmed, Deputy Director Ataur Rahman, Deputy Director Chand Perveen, Assistant Director Waseem Ahmed, Ghaffar Gujjar and other officials participated in the meeting. The meeting also reviewed the arrangements of Khailta Punjab Games.

Addressing the meeting, Director General Sports Punjab Pervez Iqbal informed that a 13-kilometer Marathon, a 3-km Family Fun Race and a hockey match will be held in the provincial capital on the occasion of Independence Day. "Thousands of male and female athletes from across the province will take part in these exciting events," he added.

Director General Sports Punjab Pervez Iqbal further said that Sports Board Punjab will organise sports competitions all over Punjab province on this great occasion. "Apart from Lahore, table tennis, badminton and volleyball competitions will be held in all districts of the province."

Director General Sports Punjab Pervez Iqbal said that the Independence Day sports events will provide a great opportunity to talented athletes of different games to demonstrate their potential at a bigger platform. "Sports Board Punjab will make excellent arrangements to celebrate this great occasion in a befitting manner".

Ben Stokes backs Mark Wood to breach 100mph barrier in Test cricket



England's Test captain Ben Stokes backed right-arm speedster Mark Wood to break the 100mph barrier in Test cricket.

Stokes, while speaking ahead of England's third and final home Test

against West Indies, asserted that Wood has always something "left in the tank" but was not sure if the pacer is concerned about it.

"I don't know if he's actually too bothered about it," said Stokes. "He seems to be getting closer and closer to that (100mph mark), but I'm happy with what he's doing now to be honest."

"Being able to sustain that pace is quite phenomenal. "His average speed every time he plays a Test match is always above 90mph -- it's all fine and well trying to bowl one spell above 90 but every spell he bowls for England he's clocking over 90mph," added Stokes as he reflected on the sheer physical effort of his county colleague.

Australia's Mitchell Starc currently holds the record of the fastest delivery ever recorded in Tests at 99.6mph against New Zealand in 2015.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's legend Shoaib Akhtar holds the all-format record when he bowled a 100.2mph thunderbolt against England in an ODI game.

Mark Wood's Test career has been blighted by injuries but his captain Stokes is delighted with how the pacer is bowling right now.

"You have to hold your hands up and celebrate what we have there," Stokes said. "He (Wood) has got the heart of a lion. He runs in spell after spell, ball after ball."

"When he bowls the whole game changes. When his name is read out the whole crowd is up, then when the speeds are on the big screen everyone gets going."

"Woody is always looking up at the screen as well to see what he's clocking. He knows he's in the team to not only bowl skilfully, but also fast."

Last week, Wood achieved a unique feat with his searing pace as he bowled the fastest over ever recorded for England at home in Test cricket.

Mark Wood recorded the feat in the second Test of the three-match series between England and West Indies, currently underway at Trent Bridge.

Pakistan Cricket: Solutions

The below average performance of Pakistan cricket team in the 2024 T20 world cup has been extremely disappointing for Pakistan cricket fans. Every cricket fan in Pakistan is trying to understand the causes and get a grasp on what happened. Almost all of Pakistan's former greats from Wasim Akram to Waqar Younis and Inzamam have come out in the media and offered opinions about how to address this mess that Pakistan cricket has become. In this brief article I focus on two immediate short term fixes that PCB must put in place to get this team back on track. The long-term fixes of investing in and improving domestic cricket and school/college cricket and putting a stop to politically driven PCB chairman appointments are also extremely critical but will hopefully be a topic for another discussion.

Captaincy: Pakistan's first key problem is Babar Azam's captaincy. Over the past 4 years he has been captain of Pakistan but in most clutch matches and situations he seems to make the same mistakes repeatedly. From selection before the match to smartness in key moments during a match, Babar is found wanting. Shadab's consistent selection in the T11 when he is totally out of form is a great example of a situation where Babar has not found a solution to the problem that has been in

front of him for the last two years now. Persisting with an out of form Hassan Ali in 2022 cost Pakistan a world cup final spot, again Babar did not make the critical call to sit Hassan Ali out of the semifinal or the game before. Similarly, when it comes to winning key moments in a game, Babar consistently lets other teams off the hook. Most times when a new batsman comes in, Babar keeps the field open, does not keep any attacking fields and lets the other team's batsmen settle in and take the game away from Pakistan. Often Babar is thinking about completing 20 or 50 overs versus thinking of getting the opposition out. Asia Cup game against India on a spicy wicket with India 66 for 4 comes to mind where one or two wickets using pacers would have finished India off, but Babar went to his spinners who did not get any help from the wicket and so India ended up getting 266 runs. Looking at this World Cup, the errors in the game against USA were really schoolboy errors that the whole cricket fraternity has been mocking for the last few days. The execution from Harris Rauf in the last over against USA was bad but still the plan from captain was also horrendous. If the plan was to bowl a yorker then no one would understand why mid off was in the circle; simple cricketing sense would say that with the plan to bowl Yorkers, mid-off, mid-on, third man and deep fine leg are fielders that must be back. The

reason captaincy is being brought up here as the first problem is because even if a captain has 10 special players like Wasim Akram and Virat Kohli, his captaincy mindset and field placements are defensive and he is not smart about his batting and bowling line ups, his team can never win a big tournament. Captains who win big cricket tournaments are smart tacticians who show leadership in key junctures and that's what enables them to win big trophies. MS Dhoni, Eoin Morgan, Steve Waugh, and Imran Khan all are names who were smart leaders on the field and who stood up for the players they wanted in the team. Yuvraj Singh was a part time bowler, but MS Dhoni used him smartly in 2011 world cup and he took 15 wickets at an economy of 5. The point here is that a good captain can take performance out of even ordinary players, but the captain must define roles and stand up for the players he wants in the team.

The immediate solution to Pakistan's white ball captaincy problem is Mohammad Rizwan. Rizwan has consistently shown with Multan Sultans that he can gel a team, get performance out of average players and lead teams to remarkable success. One trophy and

two runners up awards in 3 seasons and a 66.67 win percentage, way ahead of any other PSL captain, is a testament to his leadership abilities. Besides Multan Sultans, Rizwan has won the national T20 cup as a captain and shown leadership capabilities in clutch situations in domestic cricket and for Pakistan. His average is over 50 against India in T20s and two of his 50s have led to Pakistan winning against India recently. His ability to handle pressure of big matches is visible in his numbers and demeanor on the field. Changing a captain frequently is never a good thing but with Babar it is obvious that he has not learned on the job, and he continues to make the same mistakes. Giving Rizwan the captaincy will serve PCB well because he has been a successful captain in PSL and domestic cricket. He can bring this team together and my prediction is that under his captaincy Pakistan can win a T20 world cup trophy.

Selection: Absurd Selection is the second big problem Pakistan faces and PCB must sort this out immediately. The fundamental criterion for selection must be Pakistan domestic cricket and not PSL. By domestic I mean players must perform in 4-day Quaid e Azam trophy for a certain

period before they can be selected for Pakistan's T20 side. There can be some exceptions but generally a player having gone through a few years of first class 4-day cricket will always be more ready for the pressure that international cricket brings. All of India's T20 players have played Ranji Trophy for a considerable period and similarly most top English and Australian T20 players have come through by playing first class 4-day cricket. But in Pakistan we bring players into the team that have one good PSL season, these players are usually not ready for international cricket and so they end up being exposed. This not only hurts Pakistan's performance but also devalues domestic 4-day cricket which is the real academy for producing cricketers. Looking at the current T20 team, players like Azam Khan, Usman Khan and even to an extent Saim Ayub, they have not gone through at least 2-4 years of full 4-day first class cricket. So, their underperformance should not surprise anyone. Pakistan should look to form the core of its middle order batting with players like Saud Shaker, Shan Masood, Abdullah Shafique, Agha Salman and Mohammad Harris. With Babar, Rizwan and Fakhar in top 3 or 4, the rest of the batting spots from 4-6 need to be occupied by proper batters from the names above. One can make an argument that none of these players is a big hitter except maybe Harris, but Pakistan needs to understand that on

flat pitches these players who have solid techniques can score faster runs and on tricky surfaces and pressure situations these batters have a better chance of survival as compared to someone like an Usman or Azam. On the bowling front no one has understood why Abrar was not given a go. Abrar and Usama Mir are the bowlers Pakistan should be looking to field in their T11 as spinners. Aamer Jamal is an all-rounder that Pakistan must look to put in their T15. The PCB selection committee must be held accountable for this disastrous T20 world cup. No one can understand why they did not send one proper middle order batsman in the squad. Changing of PCB leadership and the selection committee every few months has had a terrible impact on the team performance. Analyzing the politics that leads to consistent PCB chairmanship changes and the awful impact it has on the team is a subject for another day but in immediate future a change in captaincy as well as sensible selections and selection policies must be put in place to resurrect the future of this team.

The writer has followed Pakistan cricket closely for over 30 years, has won multiple top division league championships in USA as a player and captain, played college cricket in Pakistan, and is a university badminton coach at Swarthmore College in Philadelphia USA.



Analysis

Nabeel A. Adeel

Fateha

ISLAMABAD: Senator Sherry Rehman, Chairperson, Senate Standing Committee on Climate Change & Environmental Coordination, Nadeem Afzal Chan, PPP Leader & former Federal Minister, Ali Muhammad Khan, Former Federal Minister, Senator Aon Abbas Buppi, Ex MD, Pakistan Baitul Mal, Senator Rubina Khalid, Chairperson, BISP, Syed Zahir Ali Shah, former Health Minister, KPK and Firdous Ashiq Awan, Leader of Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party & former Federal Minister offering fateha for departed soul of father of PIC, Mobashir Hasan on Thursday.



Photo: PID

Finance, Energy minister brief Chinese minister on ongoing reforms in energy sector

Spokesman Report

BEIJING: Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, Minister for Finance & Revenue and Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Laghari, Minister for Energy met with Mr Lan Fo'an Minister of Finance China in Beijing. Ambassador Khalil Hashmi and other senior officials of the Embassy were also present.

Minister for Finance underscored the special significance of China-Pakistan financial and banking cooperation in the all weather and iron-clad strategic cooperative partnership between the two countries and thanked the Chinese side for its invaluable economic and financial support to Pakistan in time tested way. He informed the Chinese side about the Government's economic reform agenda, including the efforts to strengthen tax revenue generation, energy and SOE reforms and achieve sustainable growth. He described the recently concluded agreement between the IMF and Pakistan as an important enabler to execute the reform agenda.



The Minister for Energy outlined the ongoing reforms in the energy sector. He emphasized the government's resolve to successfully overcome the operational and organizational challenges. The Minister of Finance of China appreciated the Government of Pakistan's resolve for a strong economic recovery while assuring China's continued support to Pakistan's economic development, including through high-

quality development agenda and assured the continued support for Pakistan in the strategic partnership. He explained the Chinese experience of structural reforms over the last 30 years and suggested that this could be a good example for Pakistan to emulate. Mr Lan emphasized that both countries have a longstanding partnership. Later, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb Federal Minister for Finance & Revenue and

Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Laghari Minister for Energy (Power Division) also held a useful meeting with the President of China Export and Credit Insurance Corp (SINOSURE) at its Headquarters and discussed the latest reform agenda of the government of Pakistan. During the meeting, both ministers lauded SINOSURE's role in the development of Pakistan, particularly during the first phase of CPEC.

They showed confidence that SINOSURE will continue its full support for completing ongoing and new projects under the second phase of CPEC especially now led by the private sector.

President of China Export and Credit Insurance Corp (SINOSURE) welcomed the delegation and reiterated Sinosure's commitment towards the execution of socio-economic uplift projects under CPEC including B2B projects.

PM reaffirms Pakistan's support to ECO in boosting intra-regional trade

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday reaffirmed his commitment that Pakistan would continue to lend its full support to Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) in enhancing intra-regional trade among ECO countries as well as on the ECO reforms agenda.

He was talking to Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Amb. Khusrav Noziri who called on him at the PM House.

He highlighted the significance of "ECO Vision 2025", signed during the 2017 ECO Summit in Islamabad under then Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, as an important document for the ECO.

The outgoing Secretary General apprised the Prime Minister about

ECO's initiatives and activities as well as his reform agenda to revitalize ECO during his tenure.

The prime minister appreciated the Secretary General's efforts and contributions to promote ECO as a regional platform for cooperation and extended best wishes for his future endeavors.

He noted with pleasure that Amb. Noziri was a graduate of Pakistan's Foreign Service Academy. The prime minister also conveyed his warm wishes for President Emomali Rahmon, President of Tajikistan.

The prime minister also stated that Pakistan was proud that the incoming Secretary General of ECO would be Dr. Asad Majeed Khan, former Foreign Secretary of Pakistan.

The Secretary General conveyed his gratitude for Pakistan's consistent support to him during his tenure as Secretary General ECO.

Pakistan PM to attend Iranian president's oath ceremony next week

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's foreign office announced on Thursday Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will visit Iran on July 30 to attend the inauguration ceremony of President-elect Dr. Masoud Pezeshkian.

This will be Sharif's second visit to Iran in three months, as he previously visited the neighboring state to offer condolences on the death of President Ebrahim Raisi in a helicopter crash in May.

Earlier this month, voters in Iran gave a decisive win to reformist candidate Pezeshkian in the runoff election against the ultraconservative Saeed Jalili to replace Raisi.

Pezeshkian is now required to take an oath in Iranian parliament before assuming the office of the head of the state next week.

"At the invitation of the Speaker of the Islamic Consultative Assembly of Iran, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, the Prime Minister of Pakistan, [Shehbaz_] Sharif, will visit Tehran on 30 July to attend the inauguration ceremony of the President-elect of Iran, Dr. Masoud Pezeshkian," the foreign office spokesperson, Mumtaz Zahra Baloch, informed during her weekly media briefing.

She said the visit demonstrated the dedication of both countries to

enhancing high-level interactions and bilateral collaboration.

"The visit attests to the commitment by the two countries to strengthen leadership level engagements and bilateral cooperation," Baloch said. Pakistan and Iran have had a history of rocky relations despite several commercial pacts. Their highest profile agreement is a stalled gas supply deal signed in 2010 to build a pipeline from Iran's Fars gas field to Pakistan's southern provinces of Balochistan and Sindh.

Pakistan and Iran also find themselves at odds due to the instability along their shared porous border, with their leaders routinely trading blame after militant attacks in their respective territories.

Earlier this year in January, Pakistan and Iran exchanged airstrikes, with each government claiming to have targeted militant hideouts in the other country.

Both states have since made peace overtures and restored bilateral ties through multiple high-level visits.

Ahsan Iqbal calls for enhancing digital, innovative literacy

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning and Development, Prof. Ahsan Iqbal laid the foundation stone of 'Center of Excellence Early Childhood Development' at Allama Iqbal Open University yesterday. Addressing the event, he emphasized that education is crucial for a country's development. Developed countries prioritize early childhood development and education through significant investments. He hoped that this center would play a pivotal role in early childhood development in Pakistan. The Minister stated that there was a need for such a center.

Vice Chancellor, AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mehmood said



that early childhood development, education and training are the guarantee of a bright future. He said that the first six years of a child's life are very important for early childhood development. The child's future is shaped during the

early years. A strong foundation ensures a brighter future. Chairman Rupani Foundation, Nasruddin Ripani stated that if children in Pakistan receive the best education and training, they will bring fame to Pakistan in the future. Currently,

22 million children in Pakistan are out of school, which worries us. The UNICEF Pakistan representative, Joshua Karkaire, congratulated the Vice Chancellor, AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mehmood, and the Chairman, Rupani Foundation, Nasruddin Rupani, calling the center a deliberate initiative. He said that both organizations will get full support from UNICEF in this endeavor.

Earlier, the Chairman, Early Childhood Education Department, AIOU, Dr. Muhammad Athar Hussain explained the aims and objectives of the Center in detail. This event was organized by the Directorate of Works, AIOU, Department of Early Childhood Education, AIOU, Rupani Foundation, and other partner organizations. Before the inauguration of the center, Deputy Director of Works, Junaid Liaquat gave a presentation to the Federal Minister on the cost, facilities and completion of the completion of the center.

NBP reaffirms its commitment to expand Loan facility for Youth in a meeting with Governor Kundi

Spokesman Report

KARACHI: Mr. Rehmat Ali Hasnie, President & CEO National Bank of Pakistan (NBP) expressed his commitment to enhancing loan accessibility for unemployed youth, during a productive meeting with Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Governor, Faisal Karim Kundi, at the Bank's Head Office.

Governor Kundi was welcomed by Mr. Rehmat Ali Hasnie, and Mr. Farooq Hasan, Executive Vice President - Divisional Head Govt. of Pakistan & Specialized Agencies.

The meeting fostered a



productive discussion on NBP's role in supporting economic development and enhancing customer service. Governor Kundi commended NBP's role as a national pillar and emphasized the need for initiatives that support aspiring entrepreneurs and streamline services for vulnerable groups.

Pakistan, Saudi Arabia to enhance ties in IT & Telecom sector

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja met with Ambassador of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Pakistan Nawaf bin Saeed Ahmad Al-Malkiy on Thursday.

Matters of mutual interest and enhancing ties in IT and Telecom sector between the two countries were discussed in the meeting.

Minister of State for IT Shaza Fatima said Pakistan aspired to boost its relations with Saudi Arabia in the field of IT and Telecommunication. She said that Saudi Arabia is attractive market for Pakistani tech companies, urging Saudi Arabia to facilitate Pakistani IT companies registered with Pakistan Software Export Board (PSEB), in getting visa and travelling for Saudi Arabia.

Shaza Fatima said that Pakistan also wanted jointly work with Saudi Arabia in the field of cybersecurity.



Ambassador of Saudi Arabia Nawaf bin Saeed Ahmad Al-Malkiy said that Saudi Arabia will fully cooperate with Pakistan in the field of IT and Telecommunication. He also ensured to support and facilitating Pakistani tech companies in getting visa and travelling.

Director General International Coordination, MoITT Syed Jawwad Ali Sherazi was also present in the meeting./Ends

Australian HC Neil Hawkens Called on A. Aleem Khan

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Communications, Privatization and Board of Investment Abdul Aleem Khan chaired a high-level meeting of the National Highway Authority in which he directed to setup priorities for the construction of highways and identification of new projects.

Federal Minister of Communications Abdul Aleem Khan further said that the officers of the National Highway Authority should take advantage of their abilities and expertise to develop a model of working on projects in other countries as well so that the annual income of NHA can be increased. Regarding the construction of highways and roads in the northern region, Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan said that the construction of the Gilgit-Khunjrab Motorway could prove to be a "Game Changer" by providing access to China and Central Asian States, similarly land connectivity through road and rail up to Gwadar is of very important.

Australia's High Commissioner H. E. Neil Hawkins called on Federal Minister for Privatization, Board of Investment and Communications Abdul Aleem Khan to discuss the



ongoing privatization process, investment issues and bilateral relations. Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan said that the privatization of loss-making institutions is key factor because the country's economy was suffering because of it. Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan further said that various institutions including PIA, House Building Finance Corporation and First Women Bank are being privatized can be managed by the private sector and made profitable. Abdul Aleem Khan told Australia's High Commissioner that there is ample scope for foreign investment in Pakistan for which encouraging discussions are being held with different countries. Neil Hawkins discussed various matters of mutual interest and both sides investment with the Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan and assured him of full cooperation from the Australian Government.