



Melania Trump to release memoir ahead of 2024 presidential elections

The former first lady, Melania Trump, is expected to release her memoir based on the powerful and inspiring story of a woman who has carved "her own path" this fall. Melania's office revealed that the memoir is in two versions: a \$150 "Collector's Edition," spanning 256 pages, "in full colour throughout, with each copy signed by the author," and a "Memoir Edition," comprising 304 pages, including 48 pages of never-before-seen photographs.



Paris Olympics: Opening ceremony unfolds with smashing razzle-dazzle

The opening ceremony of the Olympics in Paris kicked off with frenzy and excitement amid heavy security on Friday, following threats of rain and potential sabotage attacks. A fictional scenario in which the arrival of the Olympic flame goes awry is depicted ahead of an extravagant show on the river Seine that will kick off the summer Games. French soccer superstar Zinedine Zidane was shown running across Paris... (Details on Page 7)

Simultaneously published from Islamabad, Lahore and Multan

Redzone sealed

ISLAMABAD: A view of heavy containers placed at entrance of red zone due to Jamaat-e-Islami sit in protest (Dharna) at D-Chowk, in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

Govt ready to negotiate with JI for country's development & prosperity: Tarar

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information, Broadcasting, Culture and National Heritage Attaullah Tarar on Friday announced the government's readiness to negotiate with the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) on their demand in a bid to end their sit-in causing inconvenience to the general public.

"We are ready to talk for peace, security and development of the country which is the main agenda of our government," the minister said while addressing a news conference along with Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan Amir Muqam and PML-N Senior Leader Tariq Fazal.

The minister said JI Chief Hafiz Naeem ur Rehman was a seasoned and far-sighted leader whose guidance would be instrumental for the

government to address the existing issues within the existing framework.

He said the government was ready to form a three-member committee which would comprise of him, Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan Amir Muqam and PML-N Senior Leader Tariq Fazal.

Tarar called upon the JI leadership to sit and guide the government in resolving the issues instead of doing the "politics of agitation".

The JI was given permission only to stage their sit-in at Liaquat Bagh, Rawalpindi, he said, urging them to use only the dedicated place for the purpose.

There was no need to obstructing a public servant in discharge of his/her duty and creating hurdles for the people, he



said, regretting one or the other group had made it a routine to swarm the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad that caused traffic issues for the people including patients and profes-

sionals. The minister urged the JI leadership to follow the Standard Operation Procedures agreed with the local administration. Protest at the D-Chowk

would not be allowed at any cost since there was a possibility of a mischief due to involvement of any miscreant, he maintained.

The minister urged the JI leadership to have a faith in the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif who had been working 20 hours a day to implement the agenda of home grown economic reforms that included privatization of loss making entities, digitization of the Federal Board of Revenue for documentation of non-documented economy, addition of new filers in the tax net and other initiatives.

He said it was top priority of the government to achieve home grown economic reforms that had started providing fiscal space to offer subsidy to the people in electricity bills.

KP won't allow military operations: CM Gandapur

Bureau Report

PESHAWA: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa would not allow military operations in the province as previous counter-terrorism actions made them homeless, provincial chief minister Ali Amin Gandapur said on Friday.

"The slaves of America have imposed wrong policies on the Pashtun, and the experiences of the rulers have caused us harm," he said in his address to the Bannu Aman Committee in the district. "We will make our own decisions, and we will seize our rights rather than just demanding them."

The district observed a complete shutter-down strike on Friday. Gandapur's address came a day after the provincial apex committee approved all demands of the peace committee.

The province would conduct "indiscriminate operations" against the offices of armed groups, according to the statement. The military institutions have clarified that there "is no ongoing operation" in the province and the police and Counter-Terrorism Department would take action against terrorist elements. In areas near the



border where the police cannot operate, the assistance of the military would be sought.

"All 16 demands of the Bannu jirga have been accepted. I have the signed document, but there are elements within and outside the government who distort everything," Gandapur said and added that the police and the local administration would raid the suspected locations and resolve the matter.

The KP chief minister added that the Pashtun have played an important role in liberating Pakistan and their role was crucial even in the 1965 war. "We have been loyal to the country with our heart, soul, and resources. Sacrifice is in our blood and we will render sacrifices for the country."

Several JI workers arrested amid D-Chowk sit-in call

Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: Several supporters of Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) have been arrested in different parts of the country as the police initiated a crackdown against the party amid a sit-in at D-Chowk.

In Islamabad, several JI workers who were reaching D-Chowk to stage a sit-in were held and shifted to an unknown place in prisoners vans. The administration and police also sealed all the routes leading to D-Chowk as the JI announced to stage a sit-in there against inflation and high electricity bills.

The JI announced a protest against the hike in power tariffs, inflated electricity bills and other burning issues. Islamabad police confirmed that 13 JI workers were arrested from Express Chowk.

The police also closed the Faizabad interchange connecting Rawalpindi to Islamabad by placing heavy barriers. Along with the placement of containers at the capital city's access points, significant roads and intersections now only permit one lane of

traffic. Residents are experiencing severe inconvenience with traffic jams and long queues of vehicles.

JI spokesperson Qaiser Sharif claimed that their 500 workers who were heading to Islamabad have been arrested, terming it the "worst example of police terrorism".

In a statement, Qaiser Sharif said that police raided the homes of office-bearers and workers, "desecrating" the ones' privacy by making videos of homes.

He said that police arrested even the guests from workers' homes at various locations, saying that around 500 workers have been arrested by police.

Hafiz Naeemur Rehman, the JI Ameer, in his video message, directed his workers to stage a sit-in wherever they are stopped by the administration. He said that caravans have left for the sit-in at D-Chowk with 'great enthusiasm'.

"We are peaceful people and want to remain peaceful. Wherever there is an obstacle, the workers should hold a sit-in. We will turn one sit-in into many sit-ins," the JI chief said.

Intelligence operation in North Waziristan sends Khawarji Terrorist to hell

City Desk

RAWALPINDI: On 26 July 24, Security Forces conducted an intelligence based operation in North Waziristan District on reported presence of terrorists.

During conduct of the operation, after intense fire exchange, Khawarji Terrorist Razzaq was sent to hell. He was a close associate of Khawarji Gul Bahadur and was actively involved in numerous terrorist activities in the area including target killing of Malik Sher Muhammad, grandson of Faqir of Ippi on 6 January 2023 as well as facilitation of suicide bombing attack



in North Waziristan on 16 March 2024 which resulted in shahadat of seven brave soldiers.

Sanitization operation is being conducted to eliminate any other terrorist found in the area as Security Forces of Pakistan remain determined to eliminate the menace of terrorism from the country.

Pakistan rejects Indian Prime Minister's belligerent remarks

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan rejects the Indian Prime Minister's belligerent remarks made in Drass, Ladakh on 26 July 2024.

Bravado and jingoism undermine regional peace, and are totally counter-productive for resolution of long-standing disputes between Pakistan and India, especially the core dispute of Jammu and Kashmir.

The Indian leaders' rhetorical statements cannot deflect international attention from India's heavy-handed approach to suppress the Kashmiri people's just struggle for realization of their fundamental rights and freedoms, particularly their inalienable right to self-determination.



Instead of maligning others for terrorism, India should reflect on its own campaign of orchestrating targeted assassinations, subversion and terrorism in foreign territories. Pakistan stands resolute in its intent and ability to safeguard its sovereignty against any aggression, as exemplified by its robust response to India's reckless incursion in February 2019.

While Pakistan is ready to counter India's aggressive actions, it remains committed to promoting peace and stability in the region.

Pakistan Navy fire fighters help in rescue operation at Kashif Center



Bureau Report

KARACHI: Pakistan Navy fire fighters assisted the civil administration in rescue operation to control fire at Kashif Center, Karachi. 05 x Fire Tenders, 01 x Snorkel and experienced fire fighters of Pakistan Navy effectively contributed in fire fighting and Rescue operation.

PN firefighters and rescue teams immediately reached the mishap building and remained continuously engaged in the firefighting and rescue operation until fire was controlled in 15 story building and all personnel were safely rescued. PN firefighters safely rescued 29x stranded Civilians from Kashif centre.

JI protest: Islamabad's red zone sealed, metro suspended

Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: In response to the upcoming Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) protests, authorities have sealed the

capital's red zone by placing containers.

The opposition parties' have announced protest targeting the hike in power tariffs, inflated electricity bills, and the release
Continued on Page 8

Jamaat-e-Islami staging a sit-in against national criminals: Hafiz Naeem

Asim Tanveer

GUJRANWALA: Amer-e Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan Hafiz Naeemur Rahman has said that if Islamabad is prevented from entering, all the responsibility of the situation will fall on the government. They will sit peacefully in D Chowk, convoys have started leaving from all over the country to participate in the sit-in, the historic sit-in on Friday, July 26 will represent 25 crore people.



Addressing the participants of the dharna preparation camp in Gujranwala and talking to the media, Amir Jamaat said that the protest will be successful, the people will be relieved, it is a constitutional and democratic right for the nation to raise its voice,

the administration should provide space for the protest. If stopped, the scope will spread throughout

the country. I invite every section of thought including youth, workers, industrialists, businessmen, farmers

to participate in the dharna, any political party who wants to join will be welcomed, I appeal to the workers of every political party to be a part of the protest. Secretary Information Kaiser Sharif, Amir Jamaat-e-Islami Punjab Central Javed Kasuri and Amir Gujranwala Mazhar Randhawa were also present on the occasion.

Hafiz Naeemur Rahman said that Jamaat-e-Islami is staging a sit-in against national criminals, we want electricity tariff to be reduced, slab system to be abolished, illegal taxes imposed on food items and salaried class to be abolished, few People are squeezing people's blood in the form of IPPs owners, IPPs contracts should be reviewed.

Fort-like mansion

RAWALPINDI: A fort-like mansion built during the British era, which is almost a century old, is still standing today due to its beauty and strength in the city.



Photo: Online

Mehsud Press Club Delegation Meets IGFC South KP, challenges solutions Discussed

Adam Khan Wazir

SOUTH WAZIRISTAN: The Mehsud Press Club delegation, headed by President Farooq Mehsud, met with Major General Haroon Hameed Chaudhry, IGFC South, KP in Wana to discuss the issues faced by journalists in the region.

The delegation highlighted difficulties encountered by journalists in South Waziristan Upper, Lower, Tank, and Dera Ismail Khan, and proposed potential solutions. Major General Haroon Hameed acknowledged the vital role journalists play in society, ensuring that the community remains informed. He assured that



FC South KP is committed to supporting journalists, allowing them to work without any fear or hindrance in the region. He also stressed the importance of combating misinformation and disinformation, praising the initiatives taken by the Mehsud Press Club in this regard.

The IGFC South urged journalists to promote the region's beauty, traditions, and tourism opportunities, highlighting the positive aspects of South Waziristan Lower and Upper through their reporting.

He emphasized that such efforts could contribute to

the region's development and prosperity.

In appreciation of Major General Haroon Hameed's support, particularly in the construction of the Mehsud Press Club building in Ladha, the delegation presented him with a souvenir and expressed their gratitude.

Meezan Bank and Haball sign Referral Arrangement Agreement

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Meezan Bank, Pakistan's leading Islamic bank, has recently announced that it has entered into a referral arrangement with Haball Pvt Ltd, a premier digital payments platform. Mr. Muhammad Abdullah Ahmed, Group Head-Transaction and International Banking Group at Meezan Bank, and Mr. Omer Bin Ahsan, CEO of Haball (Pvt) Limited, signed the agreement.



receiving dealer collections directly into their Meezan accounts, regardless of the initiating bank, buyers will benefit from seamless and hassle-free funds disbursement. This initiative will not only enhance Meezan Bank's existing cash management system but also expand the reach of its products, Meezan eBiz+ and Meezan

Payroll Partner, to a broader customer base.

Mr. Abdullah Ahmed, while speaking at the occasion said, "We are excited to partner with Haball and believe this partnership will benefit both of our customers. We look forward to working with Haball to help businesses in Pakistan streamline their payments process

and improve their cash flow."

Mr. Omer Bin Ahsan, said, "This collaboration with Meezan is a testament to our commitment to innovation in the digital payments space. We are confident that this partnership will bring immense value to our clients by offering them seamless and efficient financial services."

This agreement marks a significant step forward in the strategic partnership between Meezan and Haball, aimed at leveraging digital innovation to offer their customers seamless and efficient financial services. The collaboration is expected to drive growth, enhance service delivery, and expand the reach of both organizations in the digital payments landscape.

Expensive electricity has made life difficult for business and people



Abdul Majid

FAISALABAD: Sahibzada Hamza Tahir-ul-Hassan City President of Pakistan Ulama Council Faisalabad said this in his special statement and added that the future of children is being destroyed due to garbage and the carelessness of the government has put the burden of expensive electricity on the people and IPPs agreement Pakistan. The oppression of the people is great and the agreement of Pakistan and IPPs cannot go together. The patience of businessmen and ordinary citizens has paid off. Giving them money from the nation's tax earnings is definitely haram and is a crime under the law. Politicians should be aware and pay attention to the rights of the people. For their privileges and protocols, the government is causing trillions of losses to the treasury and by sucking the blood of the people, they are improving the future of their children. Improve the situation and give relief to the people by terminating the IPPs agreement. Sahibzada Hamza Tahirul Hasan further said that the entire nation stands with its Pakistan Army and security agencies and there should be no misunderstanding that the Pakistan Army and They will be able to create distance between the people. The whole nation salutes its martyrs and they are standing by the side of their Pakistan army and security institutions for the development and prosperity of Pakistan by thwarting every conspiracy of external forces.

Police arrested hundreds workers of Jamaat-e-Islami: Dr Safdar Hashmi

Asim Tanveer



MULTAN: Amer-e Jamaat-e-Islami Multan Said Police disruptions and arrests failed to stop Jamaat-e-Islami workers, including Jamaat-e-Islami secretary Professor Ali Asghar Salimi, arrested dozens of workers, hundreds of workers broke the barriers and entered Islamabad. Amir Jamaat-e-Islami South Punjab Rao Zafar, General Secretary South Punjab Soheb Amar Siddiqui, Islamic Center, Dr. Safdar Hashmi, Mian Asif Ikhwan's residence

were raided by the police. The police had to return unsuccessfully from the Jamaat-e-Islami office in Multan. Attempts to arrest Khawaja Asim, Hafiz Aslam and others failed, Ahmad Jamal Baloch left the custody of the youth police of the central leader and reached Islamabad.

Raids, arrests, obstacles failed to block the way, workers and leadership managed to reach Islamabad.

Our problem is oppressive taxes, high electricity prices, ending unfair contracts with IPPs. Hasan Akhwani Central Deputy Media Coordinator Jamaat-e-Islami for South Punjab.

In a statement from Multan Media Center, Hasan Akhwani said that at present, Jamaat-e-Islami is the only political party which is talking about the common man. Common man, businessmen, farmers, students are all worried about this problem. Public power cannot be restrained by containers. The government should make the IPPs clear to the public and announce the termination of contracts. Jamaat-e-Islami workers reached Islamabad and proved that Jamaat-e-Islami is the only peaceful political party in the country. Workers did not break a single pot anywhere in the entire country. Hassan Ikhwan said that protest is our basic right and it is the responsibility of the government to provide relief to the people.

President Zardari has grown in the country: Ijaz Chaudhry

Abdul Majid

FAISALABAD: (Pakistan People's Party) District President Muhammad Ijaz Chaudhry said that President Zardari has played a key role for political and economic stability in the country. A message has been given to promote understanding and tolerance to stop violence. Even the worst opponents do not live without paying tribute to President Zardari's conciliatory politics and far-sighted people-friendly decisions. The slogan of Zardari is the heaviest! Even today, giving presidential powers to the Parliament is the basis of the China-Pakistan CPEC plan. Democratic revolutionary measures like Rakhana and the 18th Amendment are worthy of praise. Mardahar served 11 years of solitary confinement during the first (N) League period, then he challenged Musharraf's dictatorship. Addressing the party members after the 69th birthday cake cutting ceremony of President of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari at his residence, Rana Mohsin Khan, Vice President of People's Party Europe, Divisional and District Coordinator Muhammad Tahir Sheikh said that President Zardari has grown in the country. Promoted understanding and tolerance to stop the attitude of intolerance. District Deputy Secretary General Rai Abid Ali Kharl, former member District Price Control Committee Farhan Chaudhry, Mian Luqman, Mian Usman Mani, Shahid Goga, Chaudhry Ibad and others said that People's Party is being made active at the Union Council level as well. People's Party has always prioritized the national interest and paid great tribute to President Zardari's public services. Finally, Muhammad Tahir Sheikh, Leader of the People Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Shaheed Bibi, Chaudhry Ghulam Mohiuddin Rahi, wife of former City General Secretary PPP Adeel Taj, recited Fatiha for the deceased of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and prayed for the long life of President Zardari along with the safety of the country and the nation.

DC Multan Waseem Hamid Sindhu's Visited to Children's Hospital Multan

Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: Deputy Commissioner Waseem Hamid Sindhu along with Dean Children's Complex Hospital Multan Professor Dr. Muhammad Kashif Chishti paid a detailed visit to Children's Hospital Multan.



Deputy Commissioner Waseem Hamid Sindhu made a detailed visit to the outdoor department, pathology, neonatal ward, medical wards, pharmacy and various departments. Professor Dr. Kashif Chishti also briefed the Deputy Commissioner on the ongoing construction work in the hospital. MS Dr. Kamran Asif was also present on this occasion.

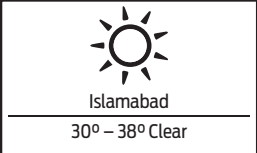
Open substandard and unrefined edible oil and ghee are very harmful to human body: Amjad Ali



Quratul Ain Asim

MULTAN: Benefits of Edible Oil Fortification, Vitamin A and D Deficiency in Pakistan" for representatives of Anjuman Tajran, bakery, wedding hall, hotel and restaurant owners and small shopkeepers in collaboration with Punjab Food Authority Leah managed by Nutrition International. Organized an awareness session on "use of open and unrefined oil and its negative effects on health". Trade organizations, representatives of edible oil mills, small shopkeepers and people from different walks of life participated in this awareness program. On this occasion, Zonal Managers of Food Fortification Program, Amjad Ali and Ijaz Shaikh informed the people about the fortification program and they said that more than half of women and children population in Pakistan are suffering from deficiency of micronutrients including iron, vitamin A. And vitamin D is at the top According to a conservative estimate, about 9.9 million (99 lakh) people in Pakistan suffer from osteoporosis, of which 7.2 million (72 lakh) are women.

He informed the participants about the activities being done in District Leh. Amjad Ali, Zonal Manager of Food Fortification Program informed the participants about consumption of open or unrefined oil and its adverse effects on health. He explained in detail that there are many cases of using open and unrefined oil. Talking to the participants, he said that Nutrition International is working to increase the efficiency of edible oil mills and food authority by using digital technology in terms of quality assurance and quality control. In order to improve the quality standards and ensure the prevention of open and unrefined oil, on this occasion, Master Trainer Najeb Khan informed the people about food safety and food development. He emphasized on selling quality food to the people and especially avoiding the use of open oil and ghee in order to control the diseases caused by eating substandard products among the public.



SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr 3:39 am
Zohr 12:14 pm
Asr 5:08 pm
Maghrib 7:13 pm
Isha 8:49 pm

EMERGENCY

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

Women Police Stations

Islamabad 9222596
Rawalpindi 9270601-20

ENQUIRY

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

HOSPITALS

CMH 561111
MH 561116
MH 561116
Cantt Hospital 9270907-11
DHQ 5556311-4
RGH 9290301-7

Building disaster resilience of socio-economic sectors PM's top priority: Romina Khurshid Alam

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Romina Khurshid Alam said that climate change-caused various disasters mainly floods and heatwaves are now a major cause of massive socio-economic damages in Pakistan. But, the present government is taking all-out policy measures to enhance the country's climate resilience against the recurring and intensifying disasters.

Chairing a high-level meeting on Strengthening Pakistan's Shield Against Climate Change Impacts here on Friday, Romina Khurshid Alam said that despite poor economic conditions, the country remains committed to overcoming environmental and climate risks through whatever financial resources are available.

"Climate change significantly impacts Pakistan, affecting various aspects of life and the environment and these nega-

tive fallouts have left no option for us but to focus on building climate adaptation and improving disaster preparedness to protect lives and livelihoods of our people and environment," the prime minister's climate aide.

She cautioned that without exploring available funding opportunities in collaboration with international organisations including the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank, Pakistan would not be able to overcome exacerbating climate change impacts such as increasing floods, heatwaves, water scarcity, droughts, crop failures, declining crop productivity, biodiversity loss, sea-level rise and sea intrusion and health diseases.

However, "we are coordinating with national and international organisations such as Global Shield to help Pakistan avail existing funding resources for building the country's socio-economic resilience through climate risk mitigation policy initiatives.



During the meeting Deputy Resident Representative for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Pakistan, Van Nguyen briefed the PM's climate aide about the Global Shield and how Pakistan can avail from its funding

and technical capacity-building facilities to build up the country's resilience against the various climate risks, particularly disasters.

During the meeting representatives from the ministry and UNDP-Pakistan

both sides discussed at length the matters related to the climate risk mitigation, climate finance for adaptation and mitigation measures, agriculture insurance, urban flood resilience.

Briefed the PM's aide Romina Khurshid Alam, the senior UNDP-Pakistan official Van Nguyen also discussed processes for benefiting from the Global Shield against Climate Risks initiative, saying the new global funding mechanism aimed to close protection gaps in climate-vulnerable countries like Pakistan, using pre-arranged finance for improving disaster risk management.

"Basically, the Global Shield against Climate Risks initiative is more and better pre-arranged and trigger-based financial resource, which is immediately-available fund in response to disasters, in the most efficient, effective and fastest way for the economy, businesses, and communities in the most climate-vulnerable countries," she said further while conversing with the PM's aide Ms Alam.

Experts call for establishment of One-stop windows for Special Economic Zones

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Experts urge the government for the establishment of the One-window stop for the Special Economic Zones under China -Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in order to boost up Business to Business (B2B) activities more effectively in the SEZs.

In an interview, Ambassador (R) Masood Khalid said that the SEZs around the world are run by national policies that have the objective of making the most economic benefit out of the creation of such special zones.

He added that the most national policies around the world have some important factors that need to be taken in consideration when replicating a similar policy structure in Pakistan.

The Executive Director General of Board of Investment (BOI), Dr Erfa Iqbal, while speaking to INP-WealthPK said that one of the key roles of One-Window stop is streamlining bureaucracy, reducing the bureaucratic red tape, and simplifying the process for businesses and investors looking to set up and operate in these designated zones.

She said, "these windows expedite the processing of licenses, permits, and clearances, offering a streamlined system for application submissions and approvals, quoting that in the Hainan Free Trade Port, an online platform and service centre have simplified the application process, saved time and ensured transparency."

Containers placement

ISLAMABAD: Workers placed heavy shipping containers with the help of heavy machinery at D-Chowk during Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) protest against inflation, in the Federal Capital.

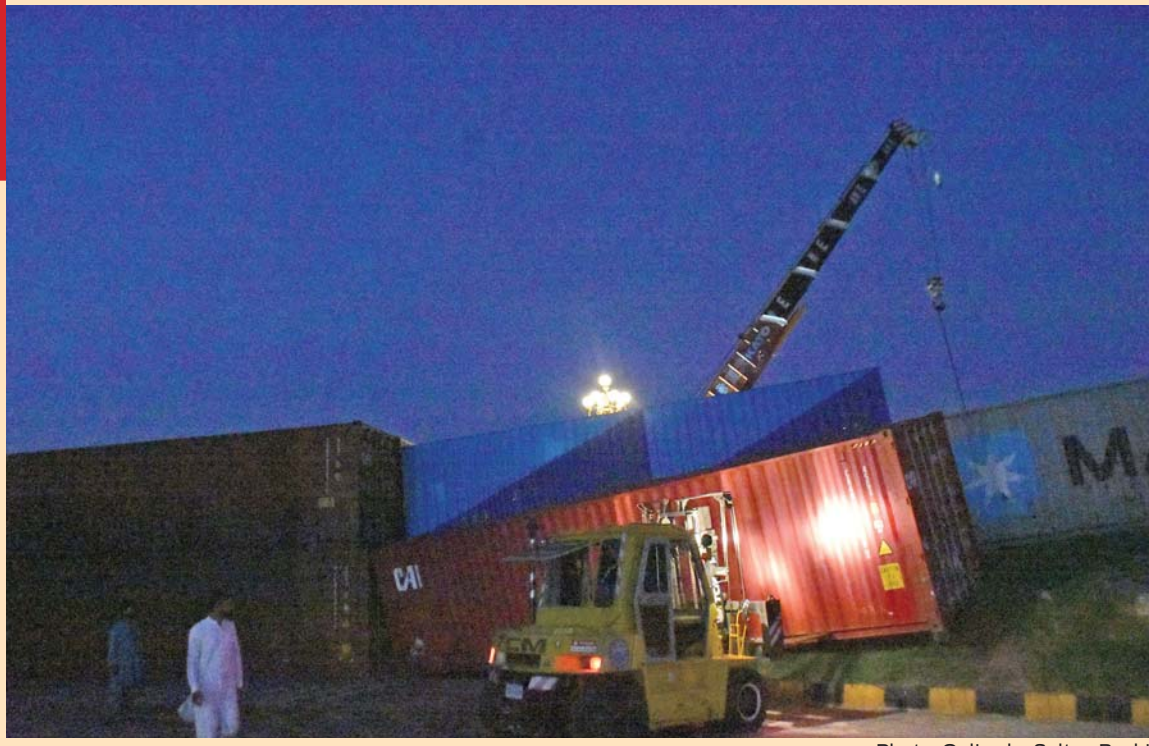


Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

Competent officers to deal with business community: A. Aleem Khan

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: A Business Facilitation Center being established under the banner of the Board of Investment, where business community will get one-window facilities and their problems of business related departments will be solved under one roof. Federal Minister for Board of Investment, Privatization and Communications Abdul Aleem Khan visited the under construction Business Facilitation Center in Islamabad where he issued instructions that the quality and speed of work on this business center with the collaboration of Board of Investment and CDA



be improved. Abdul Aleem Khan directed the change in the layout plan of the Business Facilitation Center and directed that 40 counters will work simultaneously to solve the problems of businessmen in this center while for this purpose competent officers

of the business center and assured all possible support from the Capital Development Authority and told that early completion will be made as per directions. Federal Secretary for Board of Investment Abdul Rahim Qureshi and senior officers highlighted the important aspects of the under-construction Business Facilitation Center, on which Federal Minister for Board of Investment Abdul Aleem Khan said that this center should be made more spacious for the convenience of the business community and make it much comfortable where the businessmen do not face difficulties including car parking.

Information Services Academy Islamabad delegation visited PID Complex, Muzaffarabad

Bureau Report

ISLAMABAD: Information Services Academy Islamabad delegation visited PID Complex, Azad Kashmir Director Public Relations Raja Shahid Hussain inspected various departments of the complex and briefed the delegation. Information and Food Secretary of Azad Kashmir Sardar Sohail Azam was also present on this occasion. The delegation of Information Services Academy was led by Executive Director General Arshad Munir while the delegation included Director ISA Mehreen Liaquat and Deputy Director Adnan Akram Bajwa and others. The delegation of Information Services Academy visited PID Digital Studio, Digital Archive, Advertising Department and Azad Jammu and Kashmir Press Founda-



tion and appreciated the professionalism of Public Relations Department. Director of Public Relations Raja Shahid Hussain briefed the delegation about the historical journey of the Public Relations Department, development projects and future plans and also answered the questions of the participants of the delegation. Nazim Social and Digital Media Muhammad

Bashir Mirza, Deputy Secretary Information Sardar Imran Saleem, Information Officers Raja Muhammad Sohail Khan, Qaratul Ain Shabbir, Raja Abdul Basit Khan, Khizr Hayat, Sardar Shamim Anjum and others were also present in the briefing. Azad Kashmir Director Public Relations Raja Shahid Hussain inspected various departments of the complex

and briefed the delegation. Information and Food Secretary of Azad Kashmir Sardar Sohail Azam was also present on this occasion. The delegation of Information Services Academy was led by Executive Director General Arshad Munir while the delegation included Director ISA Mehreen Liaquat and Deputy Director Adnan Akram Bajwa and others. The delega-

tion of Information Services Academy visited PID Digital Studio, Digital Archive, Advertising Department and Azad Jammu and Kashmir Press Foundation and appreciated the professionalism of Public Relations Department. Director of Public Relations Raja Shahid Hussain briefed the delegation about the historical journey of the Public Relations Department, development projects and future plans and also answered the questions of the participants of the delegation. Nazim Social and Digital Media Muhammad Bashir Mirza, Deputy Secretary Information Sardar Imran Saleem, Information Officers Raja Muhammad Sohail Khan, Qaratul Ain Shabbir, Raja Abdul Basit Khan, Khizr Hayat, Sardar Shamim Anjum and others were also present in the briefing.

Forging Global Partnerships: IIUI And Ningbotech University Ink MoU

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between the Department of Media & Communication Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, International Islamic University, Islamabad (IIUI) and the Department of Journalism and Communication, School of Media and Law, NingboTech University, Ningbo, China. The MOU aimed to establish a collaborative partnership to facilitate the exchange of students and faculty members in the field of Media and Communication.

The signing ceremony took place at the new campus of IIUI, witnessed by Acting President Prof. Dr. Muhammad Sarwar, Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, Prof. Dr. Zafar Iqbal signed on behalf of IIUI, while Vice Dean, School of Media and Law & Vice Director, Digital Culture Innovation Center, Professor Wang Junwei signed for NingboTech University.

Acting President IIUI Prof. Dr. Muhammad Sarwar stated that the university aims to enhance its bilateral educational cooperation worldwide. He noted that the university already had a significant presence of Chinese students and this venture boosted research in social sciences. He said that the collaboration will open new avenues for research and academic cooperation between the two universities.

Professor Wang Junwei said that China and Pakistan have exemplary ties, with opportunities to enhance educational cooperation. He emphasized that faculty exchange programs and joint research ventures shared experiences and result-based research. He opined that the MOU will facilitate the exchange of ideas, expertise, and resources, ultimately contributing to the advancement of media and communication studies.

PANAH conducts Think Tank Meeting on NCD Reduction in Pakistan



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) have emerged as the leading cause of death globally, accounting for approximately 60% of all deaths in Pakistan. These diseases significantly diminish productivity and human capital while escalating healthcare costs due to severe illness, disability, and death. Key contributors to NCDs include high sugar consumption, ultra-processed foods, tobacco use, and physical inactivity.

President PANAH, Maj Gen. (R) Masud Ur Rehman Kiani, expressed grave concern over the alarming rise in heart diseases and related conditions. He emphasized the importance of addressing modifiable risk factors for NCDs and underscored PANAH's expanding role in educating the public about proven, effective prevention strategies.

Mr. Munawar Hussain, Country Coordinator of the Global Health Incubator (GHI), presented comprehensive data on the severe health impacts of consuming ultra-processed foods and beverages. He drew attention to the undeniable link between these products and the surge in NCDs, stressing the urgency of implementing policies to curb their consumption. General Secretary PANAH Mr. Sanaullah Ghumman briefed the participants about the proceedings of the previous meetings of the think tank and shared the agenda of the present meeting.

During the meeting, participants agreed that one of the primary drivers of the increase in NCDs is the prevalence of unhealthy foods, particularly ultra-processed items high in salt, sugar, and fat.

Performance of Drug Court Multan Stood Second in Punjab



Quratul Ain Asim

MULTAN: under the chairmanship of Minister Primary and Secondary Health Care Punjab Mr. Khawaja Imran Nazir, a report was presented about the performance of all districts and drug courts in a meeting of the Secretary Quality Control Board and Department Prosecution Officers across Punjab. In terms of performance, drug inspectors and drug controllers of South Punjab were prominent throughout Punjab.

In this regard, Muhammad Shafiq Pharmacist/Department Prosecution Officer Drug Court Multan informed Chairman Drug Court and Judge Multan Mr Muhammad Saleem ullah today. Chairman Drug Court Multan Mr. Muhammad Saleem ullah paid tribute to the entire team of Drug Court Multan including all the members and expressed hope that Drug Court Multan will remain committed to deal with the cases completely according to the law as soon as possible. And soon it will stabilize its performance across Punjab.

Group Chairman/Chief Editor: **Almas Ayoub Sabir**
 Vice Chairman: **Asim Nazir Ahmad**
 Managing Editor: **Naveed Ahmad Khan**
 Head Editorial Advisory Board: **Amjad Mehmood**
 Bureau Chief Karachi: **Saleem Zaman Khan.**
 (mszk786@gmail.com)
 Bureau Chief Lahore: **Syed Afraz Ali Nazish**
 (afrazalishah@gmail.com)
 Islamabad Office: Rose Plaza, I-8 Markaz.
 Karachi office: Flat No.C.3.A.One Comfort, Block No 11.
 Gulshan-e-Iqbal, Main Rashid Minhas Road.
 Lahore Office: 7-E,Samanberg, Johar Town.
 Email: **spokesmanislamabad@gmail.com**
 Whatsapp: **0346-5008408**

Political Harmony: A bedrock for strengthening democracy

Muhammad Amin

Democracy, commonly heralded as the best form of government, thrives on expression of the people's will through their elected representatives. But, this journey sometimes becomes tumultuous amidst populism, extra constitutional measures and upheavals.

In many countries this system suffered a severe blow due to political engineering, venomous uprising and unconstitutional acts even by those always propagating democracy and the populist leaders as we recently witness in our country.

When the political players enter a deadlock due to their arrogance and haughtiness and close the doors for negotiation, strictly sticking to their stance, the concept of political harmony and understanding each other's view point fades away.

These uncalled for interruptions leave deep scars on political landscape besides fostering an environment where religious extremism, terrorism and societal and political intolerance creeps in, marring any country's economic and democratic progress very badly.

"The fractured governance structure, built on numerous fault lines, often becomes a catalyst for these extra constitutional steps," said Professor Dr A. H. Hilali, former Chairman Political Science Department, University of Peshawar.

"Corruption, mismanagement, nepotism and jobbery often weaken a democratic system and rule of law. Moreover, locking horns by different political forces pave way for extra constitutional steps by non-democratic forces."

Most recently, the political temperature in the country and stiffness of rival forces not to sit on table for resolving contentious issues has heightened self-centered politicking.

"Although we have a glaring example of creating Pakistan through a democratic struggle wherein Quaid-i-Azam repeatedly negotiated with other leaders, the formula for division of British India, yet some of our leaders are still too far from such wisdom and approach and difficult to be dealt with," Hilali said.

He feared that a permanent political divide with no channels of communication would further retard democratic system and if the trend of blame games, accusations and hooliganism continues it would lay inconceivable negative effect on democracy and state institutions.

As in democracy today's rivals are friends of tomorrow, therefore, revisiting their stance by political leaders always brings out some solution to stalemates and deadlocks. But, most of time we see these leaders negating one and other in the name of party policy or political affiliation.

"The PTI founder has taken a harsh stance for not talking to any political party or government for resolution of political issues and his party is mainly

restricted to social media statements," remarked Ikhair Wali Khan, the PMLN KP Spokesman. "Anybody thinking that the whole nation was standing behind him, is a misperception and nobody can impose his will on other on this basis."

He said a malicious onslaught to push back the contemporary political forces as being done by PTI through malicious propaganda, rather spoils opportunities for negotiations and harmony. "When the parties have vendetta against sister political forces and allegedly get involved in May 9 type vandalism, attacking PTV and parliament buildings and continuously involve in mud-slinging and hurling baseless allegations, they leave minimal space for other parties to negotiate with them."

On the other hands Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf level allegations of rigging the elections the same time forgetting the situation in 2018. If rival forces charge each other with same kind of allegations what can be the way out for reconciliation and harmony.

But, the saner elements of society like Dr Hilali see political harmony as the only panacea to nation's sufferings. "It is very important for our country as it was passing through difficult time on geopolitical fronts and there is need for broader national unity to steer country out of turmoil."

He strongly advocated to fostering a culture of dialogue and tolerance among political forces, ensuring that differing viewpoints coexist within the democratic framework and political parties for

mutual as well as benefits for our people. Therefore, it is high time for all political and other constitutional organs of the state to seek a broader harmony to promote good governance and strengthen democratic institutions to pave way for coming generation to prosper and live in peace.

Moreover, in a situation when the country is encountering terrorism and extremism and financial crunch, political harmony is not just a desirable ideal but a fundamental necessity for the welfare of people, rule of law and supremacy of parliament.

The understandings reached previously like Charter of Democracy by PML-N and PPP need to be reviewed making them more inclusive and acceptable to all forces. In put by other state organs can also be included in framing any new charter wherein all forces join hands for fighting out challenges, the country is facing presently.

Everybody must understand that people are the ultimate sufferer due to their willful thinking and policies. Therefore, they should forget personal vindictiveness and arrogance for the welfare of poor masses, being crushed by uncontrolled price hike, political uncertainty and in-fighting.

Moreover, any situation where our own political forces fail to stand united for supreme national interests it opens doors for external forces to interference and move forward their nefarious agenda of de-stabilizing our country.

UN rights experts slam US 'massive crackdown' on pro-Palestinian student protests

United Nations human rights experts have expressed deep concern over a "massive crackdown" on pro-Palestinian student protests at various universities in the United States, urging authorities to uphold the rights to free speech and peaceful assembly.

"The banning and attacks on student protests are a grave violation of the rights to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression guaranteed by international human rights law, and must stop immediately," the experts said in a joint statement on Thursday.

They added that their concerns were conveyed to the US Government in a previous communication.

Students across the US have organized anti-war encampments and peaceful protests to express solidarity with Palestinian civilians in Gaza suffering amidst the deadly Israeli military attacks since Oct 7.

The statement noted that many demonstrations were dispersed by law enforcement at the universities' requests, often resulting in violence that required medical attention for some protesters.

Reports indicate that students faced severe consequences, including arrests, potential deportation, expulsion, loss of housing, and excessive surveillance.

The UN Human Rights Council-appointed experts called on academic institutions to avoid punitive actions against students exercising their fundamental rights and to consider readmitting those expelled. The experts also addressed accusations from some US politicians and university officials that labelled the protests as antisemitic.

"It is inaccurate and unjustified to bluntly label all peaceful demonstrations of solidarity with the Palestinian people or calls for a ceasefire in Gaza or criticism of Israel's policies as antisemitic," they said.

"We strongly denounce antisemitism as a serious form of racial hatred and intolerance and urge authorities to properly investigate and take effective measures against it in line with international human rights law," they stressed.

The experts included, among others, the special rapporteurs on the right to education, for cultural rights, and on freedom of opinion and expression.

Meanwhile: The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Turk, Thursday called on Bangladesh to urgently disclose the details of last week's crackdown on protests amid accounts of "horrific violence", calling for "an impartial, independent and transparent investigation".

Over the past few weeks, students in Bangladesh have been protesting against the Government to demand an end to the quota system for government jobs amid rising unemployment. As demonstrations continued, there were eruptions of violence which led to deaths and the closure of public and private universities.

Latest reports indicate that over 170 people have died, and over a thousand have been injured. Two journalists reportedly were killed, and many others injured, while hundreds of people were arrested amidst the protests.



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

India Initiates a New Era of brutality in IIOJK - III

Article 370 was integrated into the Indian Constitution in 1949, recognizing the special status of Jammu and Kashmir within the Indian Union. This article granted the state significant autonomy, enabling it to have its own constitution, flag, and substantial legislative powers, except in defense, foreign affairs, finance, and communications, which required approval from the Indian government. Over the years, Article 370 underwent multiple amendments and interpretations, reflecting shifting political dynamics and internal governance challenges within IIOJK.

Despite its special status, the region experienced periods of political instability, armed conflict, and Independence movements. In August 2019, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Government of India revoked Article 370 through a presidential order, alongside Article 35A, which conferred special privileges and rights to permanent residents of J&K. This decision also involved reorganizing the state into two Union Territories: Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh.

The revocation of Article 370 sparked widespread controversy and protests both domestically and internationally. Critics argued that it eroded the region's autonomy and breached commitments made to the people of

J&K during the accession period.

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) became involved in the Kashmir issue in 1948, adopting Resolution 47, which called for a ceasefire and a referendum to allow the people of Jammu and Kashmir to determine their future status. This resolution laid the groundwork for subsequent resolutions that reaffirmed the principle of self-determination and the necessity for a plebiscite to ascertain the wishes of the Kashmiri people. Resolution 47 (1948) outlined a three-step process: ceasefire, withdrawal of foreign forces, and a plebiscite supervised by the United Nations to decide the future of Jammu and Kashmir.

Throughout the years, the UNSC passed multiple resolutions reiterating the right of the Kashmiri people to self-determination. These resolutions emphasized the importance of creating conditions conducive to a free and fair plebiscite. Despite the United Nations' clear stance and international consensus on the issue, implementing these resolutions has encountered significant challenges. India has consistently denied the right of self-determination to the people of IIOJK, instead opting to revoke the region's special status and seeking to integrate it into India, bypassing UN resolutions on Kashmir. The Kashmir conflict remains a focal point of international attention and concern due

to its potential for regional instability and humanitarian consequences. The United Nations and various international organizations have repeatedly urged for dialogue and a peaceful resolution of the Kashmir issue, emphasizing the importance of upholding human rights and addressing grievances through diplomatic channels. However, the issue remains unresolved, largely due to India's actions.

The Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) region has a turbulent history marked by conflict and political instability, exacerbated by the killings and arrests of prominent Kashmiri leaders. These incidents have not only exacerbated divisions within the region but have also elicited international concern and condemnation. One of the most significant and tragic events in recent memory was the killing of Burhan Wani in July 2016. Wani, a young and influential commander and advocate for Kashmiri freedom, was viewed as a symbol of resistance against Indian rule. His death during an encounter with security forces triggered widespread protests and a harsh crackdown, resulting in numerous civilian casualties and hundreds injured. Following Wani's death, the region experienced a wave of unrest, marked by curfews, severed communication lines, and subsequent targeted killings of other vocal advocates for Kashmiri rights and autonomy, such as Riyaz Naikoo and Zakir Musa, who were killed in separate encounters with security forces.

To be continued

South Punjab mangoes - another victim of climate change

M. Atif Ismail

Despite changing weathers and multiple other issues confronting farmers across South Punjab, the region still remains a "Mangoes Heaven and Taste Capital" owing to exotic flavor and aroma of different mango varieties.

Extremely popular world over, mango orchards are a hallmark of fertile lands of Multan, Muzaffargarh, Khanewal, Rahim Yar Khan and other cities of South Punjab creating a vibrant montage of lush greenery and golden fruit that captivates both eyes and palates.

These mango orchards spread over thousands of acres in South Punjab with Multan atop in its cultivation on 31,000 hectare land followed by Rahim Yar Khan, Muzaffargarh and Khanewal having mangoes cultivation areas of 26,000, 19,000 and 14,000 hectares respectively.

Among hundreds of varieties of mangoes, 25 to 30 are being cultivated on commercial scale including "King of the Fruit" Chaunsa besides Langra, Dausehri, Anwar Ratool, Saroli, Tota Pari, Fajri, Neelum, Alphanso, Almas, Sanwal, Surkha, Sunera and Desi varieties.

"It is king of all fruits. Its taste and aroma is matchless. Moreover, its unique combination with monsoon season makes it loveable and different from other fruits," remarked Abu Bakar Siddique, a resident of Multan. "We eat different fruits all over the year but eating mangoes is a passion. The pleasure we take eating mangoes have no match."

Former Director Mango Research Station, Abdul Ghaffar Garewal also mentioned to late flowering of two major mango varieties, "Sindhari and Chaunsa Samar Bahisht." "These varieties did not gain their optimal size due to low temperature at flowering stage. Then during May 22-29, it spiked to 47 and 51 degrees Celsius. This stress exacerbated the crop loss."

He opined that due to changing weather mango crop was delayed this year and exporters had to wait for shipments till May 30, almost a week late than the previous years. "Late flowering delayed the fruit ripening as climatic anomaly affected size and quality of mangoes and made it susceptible to pest attacks, thus reducing the yield. Therefore, exporters could also not get desired profit this season."

Garewal advised farmers and exporters to closely monitor climatic conditions and adjust their timelines accordingly to ensure that mangoes reach optimal ripeness before being shipped.

He said the farmers should cultivate varieties preferred by international markets as they could enhance profitability by focusing on these profitable varieties instead of growing a mix of eight to ten local varieties. "The transitioning from conventional farming practices to market-oriented cultivation would surely benefit them."

This reduced production is also challenging for exporters who have to visit various mango orchards for export-quality product as shrinking mango size makes it difficult for them to buy the required product.

As the mango crop is also being affected by changing weather pattern, there is dire for adaptation measures to mitigate climate change impact on mango and save existing varieties as well as research on new varieties so the country could continue with its export volume.

Director Mango Research Station Multan Hafiz Asif informed that department officials had conducted a comprehensive survey across the region and provided proper guidelines to growers. He informed that mango growers were well aware and took urgent measures to protect their orchards from climate impacts. Regarding heat stress, he stated that growers irrigated their orchards during heat spells, thereby mitigating the effects of climate change.

Hafiz Asif acknowledged the fact of low production but clarified that actual situation was different as he asserted that overall production had not decreased as mango cultivation was actually increasing in the region.

He claimed that concerns about extensive mango cutting were exaggerated as if a grower sells his 25 acres mangoes land with mango orchards, he plant mangoes on 100 acres as Asif expressed hope that our exporters would earn handsome foreign exchange from mangoes export.

Now whatever the situation; but in a country with agricultural economy each and every crop matters and when there is persistent threat of climate change, it is obligatory on our policy makers and researchers to continue efforts for introducing new varieties and adaptation measures to saving our farmers changing weather patterns.

Anniversary of diplomatic journey in Pakistan

British High Commissioner celebrates one year in Pakistan, Reflects on Country's Rich Heritage & Future Challenges

Amjad Mehmood

ISLAMABAD: Marking the one-year anniversary of her arrival in Pakistan, Her Excellency Ms. Jane Marriott CMG OBE, the British High Commissioner to Pakistan, has shared reflections on her experiences and observations since her appointment. In a message addressed to media, she highlighted the warmth of Pakistani hospitality, the nation's natural beauty, and its rich cultural and culinary heritage, expressing gratitude for the opportunity to explore and experience the country firsthand.

Over the past year, Ms. Marriott has had the privilege of hiking in some of the world's



most scenic landscapes, frequently venturing into the Margalla Hills and spending special weekends in Nathia Gali. She fondly recalled the vibrant atmosphere experienced at the Rawalpindi Stadium during the Pakistan Super League (PSL) and at the Oval stadium in London for the Pakistan-UK T20 match. She humorously noted her own attempts to join the Women's cricket team, acknowledging her limitations in the sport.

The High Commissioner emphasized the centrality of family in Pakistani society, recounting the visit of her 82-year-old mother and sister earlier this year, who were equally captivated by the country's charm. She echoed sentiments expressed by other diplomatic

colleagues, praising the welcoming spirit encountered throughout Pakistan by visiting family members.

A notable aspect of her tenure has been the exploration of Pakistani cuisine, with Ms. Marriott delighting in the variety of dishes ranging from Peshawar's Kaboob to Multan's Halva and Karachi's renowned Biryani. She described the pleasure of entering the office greeted by the aroma of fresh mangoes, underscoring the country's culinary excellence. However, Ms. Marriott acknowledged the challenges facing Pakistan, highlighting the importance of economic reforms for sustainable growth and the urgent need to address climate change adaptation. She refer-

enced the Prime Minister's declaration of an 'Education Emergency', aimed at revitalizing education for out-of-school children across the country.

Despite these challenges, Ms. Marriott expressed confidence in Pakistan's resilience, innovation, and strength, noting the United Kingdom's readiness to support the nation as a friend and partner in overcoming these obstacles. Her reflections serve as a testament to the enduring bond between the UK and Pakistan, underscored by mutual respect and a shared commitment to fostering peace, prosperity, and educational advancement. She concluded her message in following words, "Bohat shukriya for a magnificent first year".

Difficulties

ISLAMABAD: Motorcyclists are facing difficulties due to road blocks with heavy shipping containers at Faizabad Chowk during Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) protest against inflation, in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

Pakistan's Belgium envoy holds virtual Khuli Kutchery

Spokesman Report

BRUSSELS: Ambassador of Pakistan to Belgium, Luxembourg and the European Union Amna Baloch on Friday held a virtual Khuli Kutchery with the Pakistani community, living in Belgium and Luxembourg.

During the interaction with the diaspora, the ambassador listened to the problems being faced by them and addressed their concerns.

The ambassador commended the Pakistani community's contribution to the progress and development of the country.

She assured swift resolution of the issues of the diaspora and welcomed suggestions for enhancing interactions.

The diaspora appreciated regular and meaningful engagement by the embassy of Pakistan in Belgium.



Minister Rana Tanveer Hussain launched PCI-POWERCHINA SEZ Policy Report

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan-China Institute, in collaboration with China Chamber of Commerce in Pakistan and PowerChina, has launched a groundbreaking report titled 'Aligning Special Economic Zones Policies of Pakistan and China'. The report aims to provide a strategic framework for enhancing the economic and industrial collaboration between Pakistan and China through Special Economic Zones (SEZs). The launch event, held in Islamabad, brought together key stakeholders and experts who shared their insights on the importance of this initiative and its potential impact on Pakistan's economic landscape.

In his opening remarks, Mustafa Hyder Sayed, Executive Director of Pakistan-China Institute, emphasised the timeliness of the report. He noted that its release coincides with increasing collaboration between China and Pakistan, making it a pivotal moment for both nations. Sayed highlighted the critical need for Pakistan to adopt export-oriented policies to attract Chinese industries that are relocating to the global south due to rising production costs, business-friendly environments, and market access to regional markets.

Media and News Director, China Chamber of Commerce in Pakistan, Su Dong, underscored the successful completion of 47 projects in Pakistan, with several others under construction. He expressed PowerChina's read-



iness to continue working closely with Pakistan, extending best wishes for the report's success. Su Dong emphasised the significance of this collaborative effort in driving economic growth and fostering a stronger bilateral relationship.

Federal Minister for Industries and Production, Rana Tanveer Hussain, delivered a keynote speech, lauding China as a great friend of Pakistan. He emphasised the significance of SEZs in attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and fostering industrialization, noting that the relocation of Chinese industries presents a significant opportunity for Pakistan. Hussain stated that the government is committed to offering more incentives and concessions to attract Chinese businesses, ensuring full security for their oper-

ations, and adopting Shenzhen as a benchmark for SEZ development.

Mr. Zou Yaodong, Chief Administration Officer of China Overseas Ports Holdings Company Pakistan Ltd, extended warm congratulations on the launch of the report. He noted that in the past few years, SEZs have achieved significant development and become engines of economic growth.

Dr. Erfa Iqbal, Additional Secretary and Executive Director General-II (EDG-II) at the Board of Investment (BOI), shared her insights on the report, emphasising that the topic is very close to her heart. She highlighted that economic survival depends on robust SEZ policies and that China serves as a valuable example for Pakistan, a model followed by countries like Cambodia and Vietnam.

Council of Europe's Register, factual or ideological

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: In May 2023, the Council of Europe initiated the creation of the so-called International "Register of Damage" incurred by Ukraine during its conflict with Russia. It was made operational in April 2024. The establishment of this mechanism is yet another manifestation of the West's double standards.

The Council of Europe has never once bothered to create a "Register of Damage" caused by NATO during its reckless military campaigns against Yugoslavia, Iraq, Libya, Syria, involving both the United States and members of the Council of Europe itself.

These misadventures had nothing to do with protecting legitimate security interests of NATO countries. In the Council of Europe, the damage caused worldwide by the crimes of the West has never been accounted for. Apparently, Strasbourg believes that NATO shells bring freedom and democracy instead of death and destruction.

It is clear to any unbiased observer that by creating such "Register" the West is cynically trying to shift respon-

sibility for its own experiments onto those who are trying to overcome the consequences of its actions. Western countries try to blame Russia for the failures of their own reckless policies - NATO's eastward expansionism, fostering a neo-Nazi regime in Kiev, turning Ukraine into a military springboard, supplying it with arms and



sending mercenaries there.

In fact, they should start with the damage caused to the population and civilian infrastructure of Donbas since 2014 as a result of Kiev's punitive operation. And the water and energy blockade of Crimea. And the illegal financial and economic sanctions imposed by the West against Russia and these regions. And the "freezing" (essentially theft) of some \$300 billion

of Russian assets.

The Council of Europe does not even realize what a bottomless Pandora's box it is opening. Many Asian, African and Latin American countries should take a closer look at this experience and consider creating an international "Register of Damage" caused by centuries of Western colonial and ongoing neo-colonial exploitation.

It is difficult to say whether the idea of the Council of Europe is more hypocritical, stupid or inhuman. Do its authors realize that such projects only lead to further escalation of confrontation on the continent, with consequences that are hard to predict?

However, the Council of Europe has long been used by the West in its hybrid war with Russia, primarily as an instrument of "legal aggression". One should not forget that this organization has largely lost its original raison d'être, as stipulated in its Charter, and no longer serves European interests. It has essentially turned into an "ideological department" of the European Union, which, in turn, is fully controlled by the United States and NATO.

ISSI holds webinar on 'Elections in Iran: Regional and Int'l Insights'

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Afghanistan Middle East and Africa (CAMEA) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) hosted a webinar, titled "Elections in Iran: Regional and International Insights." The webinar was moderated by Ms. Amina Khan, Director CAMEA. Speakers included Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, Director General ISSI; Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman BoG, ISSI; Ambassador Riffat Masood, Pakistan's Former Ambassador to Iran; Dr. Nabi-Sonboli, Senior Research Fellow at Institute for Political and International Studies (IPIS), Iran; Dr. Flavius Caba Maria, President and Director of the Political Department, Middle East Political and

Economic Institute (MEPEI), Romania; and Dr. Murat Aslan, Senior Researcher SETA Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research, Türkiye.

DG ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood highlighted the importance of elections in Iran, particularly given the country's regional and international significance. He noted that the recent elections, held after the tragic demise of President Raisi and Foreign Minister Abdollahian, resulted in Dr. Masoud Pezeshkian winning in the run-off garnering over 16 million votes. This outcome was surprising to many, as Dr. Pezeshkian was a relatively lesser known candidate and his previous two presidential attempts had been unsuccessful.

Ambassador Sohail added that Dr. Pezeshkian's campaign focused on reform, national

unity, and international engagement, with priorities like lifting of sanctions and reviving the nuclear agreement with the West. Dr. Pezeshkian aims to balance relations with all countries, enhance regional partnerships, and explore economic and technological opportunities. The President-elect had critiqued the U. S. stance on the nuclear issue (JCPOA) and called for recognition of Iran's legitimate rights. The DG ISSI underlined that Dr. Pezeshkian's success will depend on support from national stakeholders, and the Supreme Leader, and would be assisted by a highly experienced diplomat Dr. Javad Zarif.

Ms. Amina Khan noted that while Dr. Pezeshkian has made promises to moderate Iran's conservative outlook, improve relations with the region and the

West alike, including calls for negotiations as well as the potential revival of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), many are of the view that he will carefully balance promises of change while remaining loyal to Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei.

Dr. Nabi-Sonboli noted that Dr. Pezeshkian's victory was unexpected and signifies a slight shift from the previous administration, where major changes are unlikely. The President-elect is expected to continue existing policies with moderate adjustments, focusing on national unity and forming a diverse government—which will signify a mix of change and continuity.

Dr. Flavius Caba Maria discussed the presidential process, noting that the core foreign policy principles are



unlikely to change, though renewed nuclear negotiations are possible. He highlighted President-elect Dr. Pezeshkian's likely focus on deeper ties with China, Russia, and BRICS.

Dr. Murat Aslan highlighted the long-standing stability of Turkish-Iranian relations since

the 1639 Treaty of Zuhab. He noted Turkish influence in Iran's ruling elite and emphasized the 1979 Revolution's initial broad inclusion before conservative control.

Ambassador Riffat Masood highlighted Iran's unique governance structure, with the

Rahbar holding the ultimate authority. She emphasized that preserving the theocratic system was at the core of this structure for ensuring stability and security.

During his concluding remarks, Ambassador Khalid Mahmood said that he expects limited changes, as the final authority remains unchanged, with existing regional policies continuing and some improvements possible. Ambassador Khalid Mahmood highlighted that while the Trump administration's JCPOA withdrawal benefited Iran, the Biden administration maintained a similar stance. He observed progress in Iran-Pakistan relations but acknowledged unresolved issues. Despite this, he expressed optimism about the future developments.

Country's growth hinges on business community's active role: Ahsan Iqbal

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal has said the business community is the real stakeholder of the country, therefore it has to come forward to play a leading role for its progress and prosperity. He added that businessmen and industrialists will be taken on board in each and every important decision making.

He said this while talking to a delegation of United Business Group comprising its Secretary General Zafar Bakhtawari, former President FPCCI and Chairman UBG Balochistan, Engineer Daroo Khan Achakzai, former Vice President FPCCI Haji Jamal Din, Chairman Pakistan-Iran Business Council Asfandyar Mandokhel, SVP, Chaman Chamber of Commerce and Industry Olus Yar Khan, founder and Executive member Chaman Chamber of Commerce and Industry Shafiq Kakar.

The Minister said that the incumbent government is focusing on the much needed connectivity by expanding the road and rail links



with the regional as well as the neighboring countries for the enhancement of business and trade activities, highlighting that the first phase of the work on Karachi-Multan railway project will soon be commenced. He said that work on N-25 connecting Balochistan-Karachi will be completed soon.

On his part Engineer Daroo Khan Achakzai underlined the need for devising a business plan on urgent basis to enhance country's exports to Central Asian States via Afghanistan adding that under the Integrated Transit Trade Management System (ITMS) Chaman should be declared

as Dry Port to facilitate the business community and for this purpose a comprehensive module should be worked out to accelerate the economic activities.

Zafar Bakhtawari, Secretary General United Business Group highlighted the significance of rail network

for the cost effective transportation as compared to the road infrastructure for the growth of exports.

He also stressed the need for provision of necessary facilities to the business fraternity for ease of doing businesses and demanded abolishment of trade barriers with neighboring countries in the larger interest of the country.

Asfandyar Mandokhel and Haji Jamal Din Achakzai said that establishment of a gateway at Zhob-Qambar boarder will go a long way in the promotion of exports and business activities for all the stakeholders. He also mentioned the benefits of establishing industrial zones for the economic betterment of the country as well as the business community.

Olus Yar Khan, highlighting the significance of border trade through connectivity with regional countries demanded maximum facilities for the purpose to achieve the objective.

Shafiq Kakar demanded the early completion of Chaman-Spin Boldaq railway track and establishment of warehouses to discover more and more business opportunities.

Meeting

LAHORE: Former Prime Minister Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar, Former Commerce Minister Gohar Ejaz, FPCCI President Atif Ikram Sheikh, Patron-in-Chief UGB SM Tanveer, Khalid Tawab, Sheikh Riazuiddin, and UBG Secretary General Zafar Bakhtawari attending an event organized at FPCCI Regional Office, Lahore. Former Prime Minister was appointed as the President of FPCCI Research Think Tank in the ceremony.



SECP Rolls out Digital Agenda for Insured Pakistan

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has published the findings of its survey on "Mapping the Existing Digital Infrastructure of Insurance," which provide critical insights into the current state of digitalization in Pakistan's insurance sector.

While drawing comparisons between Pakistan's insurance industry and that of other jurisdictions, the survey identifies areas of progress and those that are neglected. It indicates that the insurance industry is still in its infancy stage of digitalization, evidenced by only a few companies starting their digital journey and digitalization efforts being primarily focused on the distribution side. As such, majority of

companies have yet to take significant steps towards digitalization.

Based on this comprehensive analysis, SECP published a report titled "Insured Pakistan through Digitalization: Gaps, Potential & Roadmap", which outlines the roadmap to be followed in order to meet the objectives of the Insured Pakistan 5-year Strategic Plan.

SECP's Commissioner Insurance, Mr. Aamir Khan, in his message stated that the current state of digitalization requires immediate attention from all stakeholders. While the SECP is committed to modernizing Pakistan's insurance sector, other stakeholders must join forces and advance toward a comprehensive digital insurance ecosystem. The report is available at SECP's website

Shocking that state-run IPPs get profit in US dollars: Mian Zahid Hussain

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: The chairman of the FPCCI Advisory Board and National Business Group Pakistan, President of Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain said on Friday that the Government's silence on the issue of IPPs despite heavy criticism and losses of thousands of billions of rupees is incomprehensible.

He said this problem would not be solved by delaying it or issuing statements; steps must be taken so that low-income people could sigh relief.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that since the Government itself is charging a high rate of profit on its IPPs, how can it stop the IPPs established by the private sector from doing the same?

Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that the organizations that are losing billions of rupees annually and surviving on loans and bailout packages have also established their IPPs to suck the blood of the masses.



The Government should immediately conduct a forensic audit of all IPPs, make their contracts public and make all payments to them in local currency, he demanded.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that if the Government immediately privatizes its own IPPs, the losses of the energy sector will be reduced, and the cost of generating

electricity will come down.

He said that people and businesses can get affordable electricity by creating healthy competition in the electricity generation and transmission sector.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that in 2015, the average electricity consumption was 13 thousand megawatts while the total production capacity was 20 thousand, for which a capacity payment of 200 billion rupees was being made.

The average power demand in 2024 is 20,000 MW. Still, the generation capacity has increased to more than 43,000 MW, including 23,400 MW of new IPPs. Due to the increase in production capacity, the capacity payment has increased 10 times and has reached Rs. 2800 billion next year.

Mian Zahid Hussain further said that fair competition should be promoted in the electricity sector and that the private sector should be attracted to investing in the transmission network. Negotiating with IPPs will require thorough legal, technical and financial consultation among experts, as hasty action could lead to another disaster like Riko Diq.

President Kashif Anwar urges government to support Business Sector

Commerce Desk

LAHORE: The President of the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI), Kashif Anwar has said that the economic conditions are challenging and the government needs to support the business sector by reducing electricity prices and simplifying the tax system. This would enable the business community to play a significant role in the country's economic recovery and increase the exports. The government must take special measures for women entrepreneurs and LCCI is already doing a lot in this regard.

He expressed these views while addressing a delega-



tion from the Faisalabad Women Chamber, led by its President Rubina Amjad. Other members included FPCCI Vice President Quratul-Ain, former President and Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Trade and Export Development Sobia Aqeel, and former Senior Vice President Shahida Iqbal.

No increase in electricity consumption in nine years: Shahid Rashid Butt

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Former President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Dr Shahid Rashid Butt, said on Friday that no economy could ever develop by indiscriminately increasing taxes.

He said that raising taxes while avoiding the expansion of the tax is increasing poverty in the country.

In a statement issued today, Shahid Rashid Butt stated that a country where the masses are starving and the middle class is being wiped out could never become self-reliant.

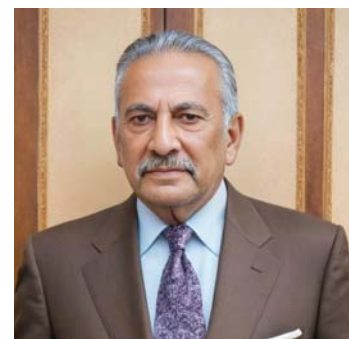
The business leader said the economy could never flourish by

increasing taxes and utility prices.

There have been many claims of the country's development in the last nine years, but the electricity consumption in Pakistan is the same as it was nine years ago, while the population has increased a lot.

He warned that if we do not make electricity more affordable for economic development, businesses will close, businesspersons will go bankrupt, and people will lose their jobs.

The government will have to pay attention to the closing industries. He asked, "How can industrial production increase when our industry is not functioning?"



Millions of workers have lost jobs due to the industry's closure; therefore, the government should move towards industry revival.

After three years of activation, the textile looms have once again closed. He underlined that if the wheel of industry moves, the wheel of the economy will move, too.

He asserted that although agriculture serves as the foundation of the nation's economy, it needs to receive more attention, leading the agricultural nation to import food items valued at billions of dollars.

Shahid Rashid Butt advocated for modernizing agriculture to boost crop and fruit production, making barren and uninhabited land fertile, and providing farmers with subsidies for fertilizer, oil, and electricity.

In three provinces, gas and oil

reserves can increase production and improve the country's fortune by cutting energy import bills.

Many countries in the world depend on tourism. We have beautiful valleys, mountains, rivers, deserts, plains, and beaches. However, we have yet to attract tourists' attention, primarily due to the law and order problem.

We have never paid much attention to religious tourism, even though our country is the birthplace of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Sikhism. If we open the doors to the people of these three religions, we will have given them access to their holy places to two and a half billion people, which can change the country's destiny.

Bull & Bears PSX 100-Share Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index	
Current	Prev. Close
78,029.50	78,469.33
Day's High	Day's Low
78,569.88	77,921.47
Index Value	Change
6,677,560,882	-439.83
Percentage	Time
-0.56%	26 Jul, 2024 5:00 pm

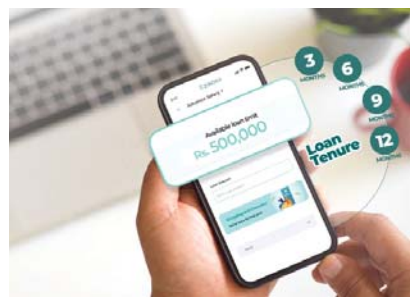
Europe: FTSE 100 Index	
Index Value	Change
8,285.71	+99.36
Percentage	Time
+1.21%	26 Jul, 4:35 pm GMT+1

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average	
Index Value	Change
40,749.11	+814.04
Percentage	Time
+2.04%	26 Jul, 1:28 pm GMT-4

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average	
Index Value	Change
37,667.41	-202.10
Percentage	Time
-0.53%	26 Jul, 3:15 pm GMT+9

Open Market Forex Rates		
Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	184.95	186.75
Bahrain Dinar	741.05	749.05
Canadian Dollar	203.85	205.85
China Yuan	38.4	38.8
Danish Krone	40.15	40.55
Euro	301.85	303.95
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	76.85	77.6
UK Pound Sterling	356.25	360.5
US Dollar	278.50	280.15

Zindigi Redefines Digital Financing with industry-first Realtime Advance Salary



Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Zindigi continues to redefine financial convenience with its latest Advance Salary+ feature. Through this loan offering Zindigi will offer 3, 6, 9 & 12-month loans which enhance financing options for salaried individuals at the most competitive rates. Building on its AI-driven technologies, Zindigi now offers a hassle-free solution designed to meet the immediate financial needs without any documentation.

This innovation not only enhances accessibility but also sets a new standard in user-centric financial solutions. Unlike traditional loan offerings, the Advance Salary+ Loan stands out by eliminating the need for documentation, simplifying the borrowing process significantly. Aimed to provide maximum convenience to users, Advance Salary+ offers flexible tenure options up to 12 months, allowing borrowers to tailor their repayment plans according to their financial situation. Loan amounts are personalized and based on multiples of the borrower's salary, ensuring each applicant receives the appropriate level of support.

"This product marks a significant stride in our mission to democratize financial access," said Talal Ur Rehman, Head of Digital Lending & Wealth Management at Zindigi. "It's about making financial support accessible to those who previously faced challenges in securing timely credit. Offered to Zindigi's enterprise customers, this solution opens door to other enterprises across Pakistan ranging from large to micro sized to add on to this service to their employee offering"

Naqvi hails Pak women cricketers for going down fighting against Sri Lanka

Sports Desk

LAHORE: Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman Mohsin Naqvi has lauded Pakistan women cricketers for putting up fight in a close loss against Sri Lankan women in the second semi-final of the Women's Asia Cup 2024 in Dambulla on Friday.

In a penultimate-ball nervy finish which saw Sri Lankan Women win by three wickets kept the spectators on the tenterhooks. Pakistan's Saadia Iqbal claimed career best 4-16. Sri Lankan captain Chamari Athapaththu lead her team home with a fine batting



display.

In a post on the X (formerly Twitter) here on Friday night, he wrote, "Absolutely proud of the Pakistan Women's cricket team! You fought with heart and determination till the very last ball. Winning and losing are both part of the game, but truly matters is the spirit and resilience you displayed. You have lives up to the nation's expectations and made us all proud. Keep your heads high; you have our unwavering support. Best of luck for the future."

In the first semi-final, Indian Women surpassed Bangladesh women in a one-sided competition.

Cricket- Shaheens impress with ball on opening day of second four-day match

Sports Desk

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Shaheens trail by 219 runs with eight wickets in hand as they finished the day with 39-2 in 16 overs, before bowling out Bangladesh 'A' for 258 runs, on the opening day of second four-day match on Friday at DXC Arena in Darwin, Australia.

Ripon Mondol removed Shaheens' opening batters, Sahibzada Farhan (4, 13b) and Haseebullah (18, 46b, 3x4s). Mohammad Ali (1 not out, 5b), sent in as night-watchman, will be on the crease with Omair Bin Yousuf (7 not out, 33b, 1x4) at the start of play on the second day.

Earlier, Kashif Ali drew first blood for Pakistan Shaheens, after skipper Sahibzada opted to bowl first, as he dismissed Shadman Islam in the eighth over. Parvez Hossain Emon (30, 75b, 4x4s) stitched a 60-run second wicket partnership with skipper Mahmudul Hasan Joy before Khurram Shahzad struck to remove him. Soon, Khurram and Faisal Akram



gave Bangladesh 'A' a double blow as the former pinned Amite Hasan leg-before wicket for seven in 28th over while the latter got rid of Shahadat Hossain, in the following over, for a solitary run. With Bangladesh 'A' losing momentum

at 104-4, skipper Mahmudul (69, 90b, 8x4s, 1x6), joined forces with Aich Mollah to put on a 54-run fifth-wicket partnership before falling prey to Kashif.

Another double strike left Bangladesh 'A' reeling at 188-7, when Aich Mollah (55,

80b, 7x4s) was caught behind soon to be followed by Hasan Murad, seven-ball duck, who was run out by Haseebullah.

Vital contributions from Mahidul Hasan Ankon (31, 43b, 6x4s), batting at seven, Rejaur Rehman Raja (28, 34b, 5x4s), batting at nine, and Ripon Mondol (17, 40b, 2x4s), batting at 10, helped their team cross the 250-run mark before falling for 258 in 67.3 overs.

Pacers Khurram and Kashif dismissed three and two batters, respectively while Faisal Akram and Kamran Ghulam bagged two wickets each.

Scores in brief: Pakistan Shaheens trail by 219 runs Bangladesh A 258 all out, 67.3 overs (Mahmudul Hasan Joy 69, Aich Mollah 55, Mahidul Islam Ankon 31, Parvez Hossain Emon 30; Khurram Shahzad 3-69, Kamran Ghulam 2-6, Kashif Ali 2-21, Faisal Akram 2-87)

Pakistan Shaheens 39-2, 16 overs (Haseebullah 18, Omair Bin Yousuf 7 not out; Ripon Mondol 2-22)

World Cup holders Spain win women's Olympic football opener

Sports Desk

Reigning Ballon d'Or Aitana Bonmati scored one goal and helped create another as World Cup holders Spain came from behind to beat Japan 2-1 in their first game of the Paris Olympics women's football tournament on Thursday.

Spain are making their Olympic women's football debut at the Paris Games but are leading contenders to win the gold medal after their World Cup triumph in Australia and New Zealand last year.

They fell behind against Japan in the western French city of Nantes to Aoba Fujino's early free-kick, but Bonmati soon equalised before Mariona Caldentey netted the winner in the 74th minute.

It is the perfect start for Spain in Group C of the Paris Olympics' women's football, in which rivals Nigeria and Brazil meet later.

With 12 teams split into three groups of four, there is margin for error as the two best third-placed teams will advance to the quarter-finals.

That will provide some comfort for Japan, who won the silver medal at London 2012.

Spain's starting XI featured



seven players who were in the line-up for last year's World Cup final win over England in Sydney, plus Alexia Putellas, the two-time former Ballon d'Or winner.

Japan's side included Hinata Miyazawa, the top scorer at the World Cup, but it was Fujino who opened the scoring in the 13th minute with a fine strike from a dead ball which proved too powerful for goalkeeper Cata Coll.

However, Spain bossed

possession and drew level midway through the first half when Bonmati was played in by Athenea del Castillo and rounded the goalkeeper to score.

They then grabbed what proved to be the winner when Caldentey came in from the left and played a quick exchange of passes with Bonmati before firing in.

Meanwhile, reigning Olympic champions Canada shrugged off a spying scandal to come from behind and start

their campaign with a 2-1 win over New Zealand in Saint-Etienne.

Mackenzie Barry gave New Zealand the lead before an embarrassingly sparse crowd at the Stade Geoffroy-Guichard, the same venue where the men's game between Argentina and Morocco was affected by crowd trouble on Wednesday.

However, Arsenal's Cloe Lacasse levelled in first-half stoppage time for Canada, who beat Sweden on penalties

in the final in Tokyo three years ago.

Evelyne Viens then latched onto a long ball forward to fire in the winner 11 minutes from the end.

Canada's build-up had been overshadowed after an assistant coach and an analyst were sent home from the Olympics on the eve of their opening game.

The analyst, 43-year-old Joey Lombardi, was also given a suspended eight-month prison sentence for flying a drone over a New Zealand training session this week in Saint-Etienne.

Lombardi pleaded guilty when he appeared in court in Saint-Etienne on Wednesday.

The assistant coach was Jasmine Mander, to whom Lombardi reported.

Head coach Bev Priestman apologised and decided to take no part in the game against New Zealand as a result because she felt it would not be appropriate.

Canada and New Zealand are in Group A along with hosts France and Colombia, who meet later in Lyon.

Record four-time gold medalists the United States meet Zambia later in Group B, which also sees Germany take on Australia.

Initial stage of National Women's Football Club C'ship concludes

Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: The initial stage of the National Women's Football Club Championship 2024 concluded, witnessing matches in Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore and Quetta.



The final day featured three exciting matches across three cities, marking the end of this phase and setting the stage for the final rounds.

In the first match of the day, the Diya Women's Football Club delivered a stunning performance against the Overseas Women Football Club, securing a resounding 10-0 victory.

The Balochistan Women's Football Club faced off against the Quetta Women's Football Club in a closely contested match but Balochistan managed to clinch a narrow 3-2 victory.

The day's final match took place in Islamabad, where the Highlanders Women's Football Club beat the Striker Women's Football Club with a 5-1 score.

Eight teams have qualified for the final stage of the National Women's Football Club Championship 2024 including TWK (Lahore), Legacy WFC (Islamabad), Highlanders WFC (Islamabad), Karachi United WFC (Karachi), Karachi City WFC (Karachi), Diya WFC (Karachi), Jafa WFC (Karachi) and Hazara Quetta WFC (Quetta).

The final round will be held from August 1 to 10 at the Jinnah Sports Complex in Islamabad. The schedule will be shared in due course.

60 young school going children being imparted top level training in karate Summer Camp



Tahir Amin Malik

LAHORE: The Sports Board Punjab's Summer Sports Camp of karate is underway at Nistar Park Sports Complex (NPSC) Gymnasium Hall as per directions of Director General Sports Punjab Pervez Iqbal here on Friday.

As many as 60 young school going children of 5 to 16 years of age are attaining top level training in the karate Summer Sports Camp being conducted under the supervision of qualified coaches Qurra tul Ain and M Amjad.

The expert coaches are imparting advance training to camp probables with special focus on physical stretching and other relevant activities. Apart from this, the coaches also taught the school going children about the importance of a balanced diet.

Director General Sports Punjab Pervez Iqbal in a statement on Friday said that the Summer Camps are useful activity and it will play a key role in improving the game skills of the school going boys and girls. "Sports Board Punjab has arranged qualified coaches for imparting latest training to young camp probable in Summer Sports Camps".

Director General Sports Punjab Pervez Iqbal further said that the 40-day Summer Sports Camp is definitely a revolutionary programme and it will play a significant part in locating fresh talented players from all parts of the province. "Our expert coaches are also imparting modern training to school going boys and girls in all divisions of the province".

Pak team triumphs in Int'l Taekwondo Championship

Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has made a remarkable mark at the 11th SeongNam Open International Taekwondo Championship held in Korea from July 20 to 21, 2024.



The Pakistani taekwondo team brought home one Gold and two Bronze medals, showcasing their exceptional skills on the international stage, said a press release.

Zena Sheraz achieved a standout performance by winning the Gold medal in the Female Individual Recognised Poomsae category. Her victory was complemented by Naila, who secured a Bronze medal in the same category, underscoring the strength of Pakistan's female taekwondo practitioners.

In the Male Freestyle Individual Poomsae category, Ameer Hamza earned a Bronze medal, adding to the nation's proud haul.

The Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) has extended its heartfelt congratulations to the athletes and expressed immense pride in their achievements. The PSB commended their dedication and skill, which contributed to these impressive results at the prestigious championship.

This success not only highlights the growing prowess of Pakistani taekwondo but also serves as an inspiration for future athletes in the country.

Paris Olympics opening ceremony underway on River Seine

Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: The opening ceremony for the Paris Olympics began Friday, an unprecedented and ambitious show with up to 7,000 athletes parading down the River Seine past the historic monuments of the French capital despite the risk of rain dampening spirits.

For the first time in Olympic history, the opening ceremony is taking place outside the main stadium, with some 300,000 people watching in person from specially built stands on the river banks, and another 200,000 from overlooking balconies and apartments.

As tradition dictates, the Greek delegation had the honour of leading out the flotilla, as the cradle of the modern Olympic movement.

In an ambitious, high-risk departure from past opening ceremonies, the athletes will sail down the river in

an armada of 85 boats.

The show will blend both French culture and history and great Olympic moments of the past while US pop star Lady Gaga wowed the crowd of VIPS and spectators with an early performance in the ceremony.

Despite the forecast of heavy rain, and a wave of attacks which paralysed France's high-speed rail network early Friday, organisers were confident of pulling off the audacious ceremony.

Chief Games organiser Tony Estanguet said before the show there would be some modifications if it was wet, but he insisted the weather would not dampen the mood.

"It's going to be a beautiful moment, it's going to be a great party," he added.

Basketball superstar LeBron James, who will be one of two Team USA flag-bearers along with tennis star Coco Gauff, was seen being equipped with a clear plastic poncho to protect him from the predicted deluge just before

the teams boarded the boats.

Long queues had formed at access points along the Seine hours before the start of the parade.

After passing scanners and checkpoints, the first arrivals discovered the numerous floating stages installed in the river channel and bridges that have been festooned with flags and the pink-and-purple colours of the Games.

"The atmosphere is really friendly," said 75-year-old Frenchman Jean-Yves Herve, who watched the show with his grand-daughter.

"There are lots of foreigners, we're enjoying it. It's good for France."

A huge security operation was in place for the Paris Olympics opening ceremony, with a security perimeter erected along both banks of the Seine.

The ceremony will be guarded by 45,000 police and paramilitary officers and another 10,000 soldiers and 22,000 private security guards will complete the security operation.



Police snipers were positioned on high points along the river, which is overlooked by hundreds of buildings.

French security forces are on their highest alert to prevent terror attacks spoiling the start of the first Olymp-

had a sophisticated understanding of the network.

Far-left French anarchists have a history of targeting the train network with arson attacks.

Suspicions might also fall on Russia, which French President Emmanuel Macron has said in the past was planning to target the Games.

Around 3,000 dancers are set to perform amid Paris Olympic opening ceremony from the banks of the river and monuments including Notre-Dame cathedral in a show that will promote diversity, gender equality and French history.

The landmarks and architecture of the City of Light are set to feature as a backdrop both to Friday night's show and much of the sport afterwards.

Paris's vision is for a more cost-effective and less polluting Olympics than previous editions, with competitions set to take place at historic locations around the capital.

Meeting

Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb Federal Minister for Finance & Revenue and Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Laghari Minister for Energy (Power Division) held a meeting with Mr. Chen Liang, Chairman of China International Capital Corporation.



Photo: PID

Policy makers in China laud the macro-economic stability in Pakistan

Spokesman Report

BEIJING: Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb Minister for Finance & Revenue and Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Laghari Minister for Power held meetings with Mr. Pan Gongsheng, Governor of People's Bank of China (PBOC) and Mr. Ren Jingong, Vice Administrator National Energy Administration (NEA). Ambassador Khalil Hashmi and officials of the Embassy accompanied the Ministers.

In meetings with high-ranking officials from the Chinese institutions the Ministers briefed about the

government's reform agenda and engagement with the IMF. The discussions focused on the significant strides made by Pakistan in improving its macroeconomic indicators by focused reforms in taxation, energy and privatization of the state-owned enterprises. The reforms have already started showing their results, particularly, reducing inflation from 38% to 13% marks a substantial achievement for the economy. Additionally, the stabilization of the exchange rate and the bolstering of foreign exchange reserves were highlighted as key factors contributing to the economic upturn. There

was consensus that such reforms are indispensable for achieving long-term stability and fostering sustainable economic growth. The Governor's recognition of Pakistan's policy measures reflects a broader international perspective on the importance of economic resilience and the positive impact of prudent fiscal management.

Lauding President Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) both the Ministers noted the achievements during the first phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a flagship project of BRI, for strengthening the infrastructure in

energy, transport sectors along with others. It was highlighted that during the next phase of CPEC, focus is on strengthening b2b cooperation, with private sector playing the central role in the development and economic growth.

In a meeting with Vice Administrator NEA, Minister for Power expressed government's conviction to introduce energy reforms aimed at enhancing efficiency of power sector by addressing systemic issues and cutting transmission losses. He appreciated NEA for signing the MoU on improving governance of the Power Sector and expressed resolve to fast-track imple-

mentation of the agreement.

The Ministers also met Executive Vice President of China Development Bank (CDB), President of National Association of Financial Market Institutional Investors (NAFMII), Chairperson of Silk Road Fund (SRF), Chairman of China International Capital Corporation (CICC).

On the instructions of the Prime Minister, the two Ministers paid an official visit to Beijing from 24-26 July 2024 as part of the Government's efforts to implement consensus reached at the leadership level during the former's recent visit to China.

Pakistan Navy commissions third offshore patrol vessel, PNS Hunain in Romania

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Navy has commissioned its Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV), PNS HUNAIN at Constanta Port, Romania. Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. Chief of the Defence Staff of Romania General Gheorghita Vlad and Chief of Romanian Navy Vice Admiral Mihai Panait also attended as guests of honour.

While addressing the ceremony, Chief of the Naval Staff emphasized on the significance of the project and highlighted the additional set of capabilities added to PN sphere of operations with the induction of PNS HUNAIN. He expressed his confidence that induction of these multipurpose and highly adaptive platforms, equipped with state-of-the-art weapons/sensors suite, will further enhance PN forward presence and perpetual operational readi-



ness vis-à-vis deployment on Regional Maritime Security Patrols (RMS) in the Indian Ocean Region. Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf

commended the exceptional professionalism and dedication of DAMEN Shipyard and expressed confidence in prospects of future cooperation in delivering cutting edge technologies to Pakistan Navy.

The newly commissioned, PNS HUNAIN is a multipurpose and highly agile platform of medium size tonnage. The ship is a state of the art electronic warfare, anti-ship & anti-air warfare capable platform with modern self-protection and terminal defence systems. The ship is also capable of embarking multirole helicopter and has the ability to operate independently as well as part of a Task Force for enhanced duration to undertake number of missions while safeguarding the Maritime interests of Pakistan. The commissioning ceremony was attended by the high level dignitaries from Pakistan, Romania and Netherlands, including Pakistani community in Romania.

Imran wants army to be neutral: Aleema Khan

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Aleema Khan, sister of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan, has claimed that her brother urged the military to remain neutral during a recent meeting. Speaking to the media at Adiala Jail, Aleema Khan said that she and other family members met with Imran Khan, but lawyers were not allowed access. She alleged that the Adiala Jail is under the control of the military.

According to Aleema Khan, Imran Khan told his family that the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) are morally bankrupt and that the current government is deliberately trying to create a rift between the PTI and the armed forces. Imran Khan said that the military is the backbone of Pakistan, Aleema Khan stated.

Australian High Commissioner calls on Minister of State for IT Shaza Fatima



Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: Australian High Commissioner to Pakistan Mr. Neil Hawkins called on Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication Ms. Shaza Fatima Khawaja in her office on Friday.

Matters of bilateral interest, IT and Telecommunication, digitalization, fiberization, and cybersecurity were discussed in the meeting.

Minister of State for IT Shaza Fatima said that the present government is focused upon digitalization

in the country, adding that digitalization of the economy is our topmost priority. Governance and society are also being digitalized under National Digitalization Plan.

She said that work is going on National Fiberization Policy, as robust fiberization is utmost necessary for 5G technology in the country. Shaza Fatima said Ministry of IT & Telecom is committed for ending digital gender divide.

She said that startups exchange program can be started between Pakistan and Australia.

British govt withdraws bid for Israeli war crimes amnesty: Palestinian foreign ministry

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the State of Palestine welcomes the decision of the new British government to withdraw the request submitted by the previous government to the International Criminal Court to intervene in granting additional immunity to Israeli war criminals in order to achieve justice.

The Ministry appreciates the positions of the British government, including the courageous positions it expressed towards adopting international law and human rights as the basis for its foreign relations, and that the Palestinian issue is an issue of human rights and international law, and this means that cooperation between the State of Palestine and Britain will be strengthened in the coming days.

Ambassador of Tajikistan calls on PM Shehbaz Sharif



Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Tajikistan to Pakistan Sharifzoda Yusuf Toir Friday paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif at the PM House. The prime minister welcomed the ambassador and wished him a successful tenure in Pakistan.

While fondly recalling his recent visit to Dushanbe earlier this month, the prime minister said he was touched by the warm welcome extended to him and hailed the friendly and productive discussions with President Emomali Rahmon during the visit.

Expressing satisfaction at the MoUs/agreements signed between the two sides during his visit, PM Shehbaz Sharif urged that timely implementation and follow up would help to strengthen bilateral ties even further.

He renewed his invitation to President Rahmon to undertake an official visit to Pakistan at his earliest conven-

ience, while adding that Pakistan was looking forward to Tajikistan's participation in the SCO Council of Heads of Government meeting in Islamabad in October this year.

The Tajik Ambassador briefed the prime minister on a number of proposals aimed at enhancing bilateral cooperation in various fields including education, agriculture and defence as well as connectivity through land and air routes.

While noting the proposals, the prime minister tasked relevant ministries to get in touch with the Tajik Ambassador for further discussions. Regional connectivity projects including CASA-1000, also came under discussion.

The Tajik Ambassador thanked the prime minister for receiving him, conveyed greetings of his President to him and expressed his country's desire to further enhance its relations with Pakistan.

NA Speaker, Italian Envoy discuss bilateral ties & parliamentary cooperation



Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Speaker of the National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq has said that Pakistan and Italy enjoy a long-standing cordial relations based on a shared commitment to global peace and sustainable development. It is high time to enhance political, cultural, economic, and people-to-people connections between the two countries for the mutual benefit of the people on both sides, he remarked, during a meeting with the Italian Ambassador to Pakistan, H. E. Mrs. Marilina Armellini, who called on him at the Parliament

on Friday.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed a wide range of regional and global developments. They underscored the significance of continuous collaboration to maintain a positive trajectory in bilateral relations and explore new areas of engagement.

The Ambassador expressed gratitude to the Speaker for his kind remarks and reiterated that Italy views Pakistan as an important regional stakeholder. She expressed a desire to further strengthen linkages in all areas of mutual interest, in addition to fostering parliamentary and cultural exchanges.

KPk's governor hails FBR for addressing tax issues of taxpayers

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mr. Faisal Karim Kundi visited FBR Headquarters and held a meeting with Chairman FBR Malik Amjed Zubair Tiwana.

During the meeting, Governor KP discussed, among others matters related to public interest various tax related matters and issues of taxpayers being faced by the people of the province. The Chairman FBR apprised about the steps being taken for timely resolution of taxpayer issues to foster a more taxpayer-friendly environment.



The Chairman FBR also apprised about the ongoing tax reforms being implemented by the FBR including digitisation and automation of its systems to enhance efficiency, transparency and accountability.

Ji protest: Islamabad's red zone...

Continued from Page 1

of PTI leader Imran Khan.

Ji has also announced a sit-in at Islamabad's D-Chowk, while the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) is organizing nationwide demonstrations against rising inflation.

To counter the protests, authorities have closed the routes leading to the federal capital while heavy contin-

gents of police have taken their positions at all the entry and exit points of the city.

The police have also closed the Faizabad interchange connecting Rawalpindi to Islamabad by placing heavy barriers.

Meanwhile, Islamabad police have placed containers on the link road from Lahore and Peshawar to the motorway, causing long queues.