



**Maryam laughs off criticism over power bill relief as Murad blames Centre for crisis**

As Punjab government continues to face criticism over the power subsidy worth Rs45 billion, Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz responded to the latest jibe from her Sindh counterpart Murad Ali Shah, saying that the relief was not a "folly".



**Ignite – NICAT Pakistan hosts Asia-Pacific's First Meta Llama Pitchathon**

The National Incubation Center for Aerospace Technologies (NICAT), in partnership with Meta, the Ministry of IT & Telecommunication, and Ignite National Technology Fund, hosted the first-ever Meta Llama Pitchathon in the Asia-Pacific region. This groundbreaking event highlighted the tremendous potential of artificial intelligence (AI) through the application of Meta's cutting-edge Llama 2 and Llama 3 models. (Details on Page 6)

Simultaneously published from Islamabad, Lahore and Multan

**Cabinet-Decisions**

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



Photo: PID

**Federal Cabinet green lights skills development initiative for enhanced training**

**Spokesman Report**

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Cabinet, on Tuesday, approved the establishment of the "Prime Minister's Skills Development Company" to generate and manage funds for technical and vocational training and to implement various training programs.

The Federal Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in Islamabad, approved the establishment of the company under the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission, as per

Section 42 of the Companies Act, 2017. This decision followed a recommendation from the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training.

In accordance with the prime minister's directive, the company was established to delineate the operational and regulatory responsibilities of the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission.

After this, the Prime Minister's Skill Development Company will look after the operational issues of technical and vocational training while the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission will

look after the regulatory issues.

The federal cabinet authorized the transfer of operations for the King Hamad University of Nursing and Associated Medical Sciences to the National University of Medical Sciences. A memorandum of understanding (MoU) will be signed between the Ministry of National Health Services and the Ministry of Defense to formalize this agreement.

The Federal Cabinet ratified the decisions from the Cabinet Committee on Government-Owned Institutions

meeting held on August 12, 2024. Additionally, the Cabinet has endorsed the decisions from the Economic Coordination Committee meeting on August 15, 2024.

The Cabinet was updated on the Supreme Court's recent ruling in the Mubarak Sani case. It was informed that, following the prime minister's directive, an additional petition related to the Mubarak Sani case was filed with the Supreme Court of Pakistan on August 17, 2024.

The Cabinet was also informed that the National Assembly held an in-depth

discussion on this case, and it has been referred to the Standing Committee on Law and Justice for further consideration.

The Federal Cabinet has approved the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the Ministry of Investment, Industry, and Trade of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Ministry of Commerce of Pakistan. This MoU, aimed at promoting cooperation in the field of electronic commerce (e-commerce), was endorsed based on the recommendation of the Ministry of Commerce.

**ISPR announces successful training launch of Shaheen-II ballistic missile**



**City Desk**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan today conducted successful training launch of surface to surface ballistic missile Shaheen-II. The training launch was aimed at training of troops, validating various technical parameters and performance evaluation of different sub-systems incorporated for improved accuracy and enhanced survivability.

Today's training launch was witnessed by senior officers from Strategic Plans Division, Army Strategic Forces Command, scientists and engineers of strategic organizations.

Director General Strategic Plans Division appreciated the technical prowess, dedication and commitment of scientists who contributed towards this landmark achievement.

The President, Prime Minister of Pakistan, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee and Services Chiefs congratulated the scientists and engineers on this achievement.

**Security forces kill three terrorists in Mastung**

**City Desk**

RAWALPINDI: On 18/19 August 2024, security forces conducted an intelligence based operation in Mastung District.

During conduct of the operation, after an intense fire exchange, three terrorists of BLA were sent to hell while three of them got injured.

These terrorists were involved in numerous terrorist

activities in the area and were also responsible for shahadat of Deputy Commissioner of Panjgur, Mr. Zakir Ali, on 12 August 2024.

Today's operation has avenged the heinous act and has brought the perpetrators to justice.

Security forces of Pakistan in step with the Nation, remain determined to thwart attempts at sabotaging peace, stability and progress of Balochistan.

**Ex-CJP Nisar says he met 'submissive' Faiz Hameed after retirement in Peshawar**

**City Desk**

ISLAMABAD: Ex-chief justice of Pakistan Saqib Nisar said on Tuesday that he met former Inter-Services Intelligence director general Lieutenant General (ret'd) Faiz Hameed after his retirement in 2002. He described the former spymaster as "submissive". "Faiz Hameed respected me a lot," he said when Aaj News contacted him after the information minister claimed that more big fishes would be netted following the arrest of former spymaster.

**Pakistan, Netherlands strengthen ties with focus on human trafficking, cricket cooperation**

**Spokesman Report**

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi welcomed the Ambassador of the Netherlands, Henny de Vries, on Tuesday at the Ministry of Interior to discuss issues of mutual interest.

The meeting focused on enhancing bilateral cooperation across various sectors, with a special emphasis on combating human trafficking and strengthening cricket ties between the two nations.

Naqvi emphasized Pakistan's commitment to deepening relations with the Netherlands, particularly in areas such as human trafficking prevention, where he highlighted the importance of collective international action.

Ambassador de Vries congratulated Minister Naqvi on his nomination for the presidency of the Asian Cricket Council and underscored the importance of sports diplomacy. He expressed hope that closer cricket ties would provide the Netherlands team with valuable learning opportunities from Pakistan's experience.



The meeting concluded on a positive note, with both sides agreeing to further enhance cooperation in various fields, reinforcing the strong and growing relationship between Pakistan and the Netherlands. Federal Interior Secretary Khurram Ali Agha and Additional Home Secretary Rifat Mukhtar Raja were also present at the meeting.

**Call on Dar by Secretary General of CICA**



**City Desk**

ISLAMABAD: Secretary General of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA), Ambassador Kairat Sarybay, who is currently on a visit to Pakistan, called on Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar today.

The Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to CICA's vision for a common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security in Asia. He emphasized

the need for conflict prevention; addressing the root causes of endemic disputes; and finding sustainable solutions for lasting peace and development in the CICA region. He also emphasized the significance of preventive diplomacy, multilateralism and regional collaboration in addressing emerging global challenges.

Secretary General Sarybay appreciated Pakistan's active and constructive role in CICA and briefed the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister on the ongoing activities and the future outlook of CICA.

**Bushra Bibi discharged in 12 cases related to May 9 events**

**City Desk**

ISLAMABAD: This undated file photo shows Bushra Imran, wife of former prime minister Imran Khan, during her interview with Hum News. Photo via Hum News. An anti-terrorism court discharged on Tuesday former PM

Imran Khan's wife Bushra Bibi in 12 cases related to the incidents of May 9. She was named as a suspect in several sensitive cases, including those involving the GHQ and ISI offices. Judge Malik Ejaz Asif presided over the hearing held at the Adiala Jail. The police had filed a request for her summons and physical remand.

**NAB files another reference against PTI founder, Bushra Bibi**

**City Desk**

ISLAMABAD: A new reference in the Toshakhana case against Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan and his wife, Bushra Bibi has been filed by National Accountability Bureau (NAB) on Tuesday.

The reference was submitted to an accountability court in Islamabad by Investigating Officer Mohsin Haroon and Case Officer Waqar Hassan.

# Chairman Senate to take steps to prevent disaster in Pakistan after heavy rains

**Kiran Asim**

MULTAN: Chairman Senate Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani has expressed grief and regret over the loss of life and property due to rains and flood lanes in various parts of the country, especially Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab.

In a statement on Monday, Chairman Senate. He said that in this hour of sorrow, the family members of the victims share their grief



equally, we pray to Allah Almighty to give the injured a speedy recovery.

Chairman Senate Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani also directed the relevant institutions to speed up the initiatives.

He said that natural disasters are a global problem, the negative effects can be reduced only with joint efforts, at this time Pakistan is facing challenges like climate change, people should take precautionary measures during rains.

## PPP demands PM to provide aid to people in wake of natural calamity



**Asim Tanveer**

MULTAN: Member National Assembly Syed Ali Qasim Gillani said The government should provide full assistance to the people affected by rains and floods, while the PPP workers should also participate fully in the relief activities due to the natural calamity. People Party Member National Assembly Syed Ali Qasim Gillani Talking to PPP Leader Saleem Ur Rehman Mayo during the meeting, he said that establishment of IT Park in Multan is our priority. People should be protected from difficulties by using it. On this occasion, Haji Fida Hussain Bhatti. Naveed Rahman Mayo. Amin Bhatti was present. Syed Ali Qasim Gillani said that the people are fed up with the inflation. We have spoken to the Prime Minister for immediate relief and we are aware of the people's problems. Although we are not part of the government, we are forcing the government to end the people's problems. are doing

## Electricity bills are cruel tariffs. taxes and imf's anti-business policies are rejected by the people

**Quratul Ain Asim**

MULTAN: Addressing the meeting of Central Association of Traders Multan Cantt, Central President Malik Zahid Awan, Secretary General Moazzam Waheed Khawaja, Senior Vice President Chaudhry Mehmood Ali, Chief Coordinator Ghazanfar Malik and Ijaz Karim Gaggi said that the electricity bills are cruel tariffs, taxes and IMF's anti-business policies are rejected by the people. The Cantonment business community is starting a protest movement. The Supreme Council meeting will decide on the August 28 strike on August 25. Legal collection has been started, similarly, illegal charges and surcharges have been started in the needle gas bills as well. The aim is to make the nation miserable for a long time. War protest circle will be wide and will come out on the streets. In the meeting, the main leaders Malik Amir Awan, Akhtar Hussain, Kalb Abid Khan, Ranashah Ahmad, Sheikh Muhammad Shafiq, Basit Tawqir Ansari, Khawaja Dilshad Ahmed, Sheikh Rizwan, Zafraqbal Khan, Bilal Ahmed, Malik Isfandiari Awan and Others were involved.

## Merchant says electricity bills will kill business in Multan



**Asim Tanveer**

MULTAN: Merchant Leader and Convener Merchant Coordinating Council Shahid Mahmood Ansari has said that the high electricity bills have destroyed the business and One Thousand Rupees fixed Meter charges Black Law. In such a situation, applying the black law of sales tax recovery on the basis of weight to the retailers and wholesalers will also push the shop keepers into the blind well of economic depression which the business community will never accept. He said that, regarding the strike of August 28, business organizations across the country, especially The union of the Central Organization of Tradersmen of Pakistan and All Pakistan Anjuman Tradesmen and other trade organizations and the central leadership of traders including Kashif Chaudhry, Ajmal Baloch, Khawaja Muhammad Shafiq, Khawaja Sulaiman Siddiqui, Sheikh Javed Akhtar Zafar Siddiqui and other business leaders is a good omen for the business community. Small businessmen fully support him, he expressed these views while leading a protest demonstration organized by Tradesmen Liaison Council against cruel electricity bills, meter rent fix charges and advance tax on retailers while Zaheer Qureshi, Shafiqat Bhatti Tahir Siddiqui, Nadeem Gul and others were participants.

## Muslim Conference to celebrate Nila Butt Day in a grand manner: women's wing

**Bureau Report**

MUZAFFARABAD: Muslim Conference Women's Wing Chairperson Samia Sajid Raja and President students wing Mohterma Meoona Kiyani said that the all women's particularly students and women wings will also participate fully in the preparations for Nila Butt Day. In a joint statement they said that the movement started from Nila Butt will die only after the Muslim Conference reaches its completion. Under the leadership of Party President Sardar Attique Ahmad Khan, the Muslim Conference, the women's wings will participate fully to celebrate Nila Butt Day in a grand manner. In spite of trying all tactics of oppression in occupied Kashmir, India has failed to suppress the spirit of freedom of Kashmiris and will continue to fail. The Indian government can not in any way hurt their spirit of freedom by inflicting atrocities on Kashmiris. August 24 of this year At the place of Nila Butt, not thousands of Kashmiris will come together and pledge that they will make the movement started from the place of Nila Butt a success in any case and Kashmiris will not avoid any sacrifice for a strong and stable Pakistan. Neela Butt will give proof that the Muslim Conference is working day and night for the success of the idea of accession to Pakistan.



## Pollution

KARACHI: Smoke rise from a burning pile of garbage at roadside garbage drum that is creating air pollution and harmful for the health of area residents showing negligence of concerned department, at Khamosh Colony, in the Provincial Capital.



Photo: Online

# May every Muslim be blessed with Hajj Umrah: President Professional Photographers Association Faisalabad



**Abdul Majid**

FAISALABAD: A congratulatory speech was held before the departure of the President of Professional Photographers Association Muhammad Ahmed for Umrah. In which the office-bearers and senior photographers of the

association participated. In this ceremony, Muhammad Ahmed was garlanded with garlands and garlands. While the congratulators included Chairman Association Tanvir Hussain Zaidi, Senior Photojournalist Abdul Majid, Senior Vice President Muham-

mad Asif, General Secretary Qaswar Munir sheikh, Vice Presidents Kashif Hameed, Shahram Raza., Media Secretary Rao Mubasher, Joint Secretary Muhammad Ramzan, Friends Color Lab Muhammad Shafiq, Executive Members Muhammad Saeed, Malik Sohail Sardar,

Abdul Ghaffar, Ghulam Nabi, Muhammad Shahid Afridi, Muhammad Waqar, Shakeel Naik, Taya Billa was included. In the end, prayers were also offered for Muhammad Ahmed, the country of Pakistan, the Pakistan Army, the Nations of Pakistan and the members of the association.

## Protest at Benazir Income Support Program offices in Takht Bhai against inhumane

**Tariq Khan yousafzai**

TAKHT BHAI: Protest against lack of facilities and inhumane treatment at Benazir Income Support Program offices in Takht Bhai.

The offices of the Benazir Income Support Program in Takht Bhai are lacking basic facilities, and applicants, especially women, are facing inhumane treatment. Despite waiting for days, they are not receiving their payments, and the staff is creating unnecessary hurdles.

The protesters demanded that the government take immediate action to address these issues, including. Providing basic facilities such as drinking water and toilet facilities.

Ensuring the presence of adequate staff to assist application Putting an end to the inhumane treatment of applicant Ensuring timely payment of installments. The government must take responsibility for the welfare of its citizens and provide necessary facilities to those in need.

# Yasin says women are most important part of our society



**Abdul Majeed Tahir**

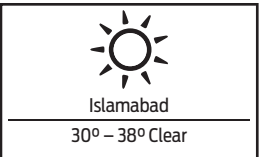
KOTLI: The President of Pakistan People's Party Azad Kashmir Chaudhry Muhammad Yasin has said that women are the most important part of our society. Islam first gave rights to women as mothers and feet in heaven, then the rights of sisters, daughters and wives are set. Hazrat Fatima Razi Allah Anhu used to stand up and welcome

the Holy Prophet (PBUH) when she came to him. Pakistan People's Party always talked about the rights of women. Nabila Ayub has been the deputy speaker minister in Kashmir at this time and is the flag holder. He expressed these views while addressing the Women Empowerment/Career Counseling event organized by Civil Defense and Rescue 1122 District Kotli and others also spoke. President

Pakistan People's Party Azad Kashmir Chaudhry Muhammad Yasin added that we made Shahla Waqar a first female government secretary and now there are two secretaries in every government are moving forward in every sector.

Pakistan and Kashmir are bound in eternal relations. Kashmiri martyrs are buried in the Pakistani flag which is an eternal example of love for Paki-

stan. The private secretary of Quaid-e-Azam was a Kashmiri. Quaid-e-Azam declared Kashmir as the aorta of Pakistan. Diaspora came forward in every difficult time and played a great role in the prosperity of Pakistan and Azad Kashmir. It has to be brought and it is included in the manifesto of our party. Whatever sector you work in, Pakistan People's Party is with you and will provide a working environment.



**SERVICES**  
**Namaz Timings**

Fajr	4:04 am
Zohr	12:11 pm
Asr	4:54 pm
Maghrib	6:48 pm
Isha	8:17 pm

**EMERGENCY**

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

**ENQUIRY**

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

**HOSPITALS**

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

**DEPARTMENTS**

CDA	9221334-43
CDA	9208301-04
Met Office	9250360-6
RDA	5555864
TMA	5770886
Cantonment Board	9270151-3

*easypaisa unveils enhanced Credit Score to elevate Financial Literacy*

**Commerce Desk**

ISLAMABAD: easypaisa has launched an enhanced credit score visibility feature designed to elevate financial awareness and empower users in managing their financial health. This cutting-edge feature provides unprecedented access to users' credit scores directly within the easypaisa app, addressing a critical gap in Pakistan, where understanding of credit scores is limited. A major challenge in our financial industry has been the lack of availability of credit score information for users. easypaisa's new feature enhances the credit score facility by empowering users to take control of their financial well-being while simultaneously educating them on how their transaction, credit, and deposit behaviors impact their credit score.

Muhammad Khurram Waraich, Head of Digital Lending & Data Science at TMB/easypaisa, commented, "At Easypaisa, we are dedicated to fostering innovation and providing inclusive financial solutions for millions of Pakistanis. In an economy where credit is scarce and financial literacy is limited, our enhanced credit score feature aims to elevate awareness and understanding of credit scores. This initiative empowers users to actively manage their digital banking journey, monitor their scores with data-driven insights, and take control of their financial health with clear and transparent visibility."

# ISSI hosts launch of Ms. Naz Parveen's book 'Xinjiang ke Khushal Uyghur'

**Spokesman Report**

ISLAMABAD: The China-Pakistan Study Centre (CPSC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) organized a book launch for "Xinjiang ke Khushal Uyghur," authored by renowned columnist and author Ms. Naz Parveen. The event was graced by Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed as the chief guest. Distinguished speakers included Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, Director General ISSI; Prof. Zamir Ahmed Awan, founding chairperson of the Global Silk Route Research Alliance; Professor Dr. Azhar Ahmed, Independent Analyst; and Ms. Nabila Jaffer, Research Analyst and Lead of the China Program at the Institute of Regional Studies Islamabad.

In his welcome remarks, Ambassador Sohail Mahmood expressed gratitude to the guests

for attending the book launch. He highlighted three key aspects: Firstly, the unique and cherished relationship between Pakistan and China — marked by strategic mutual trust and mutual support, nurtured by successive generations, and strengthened by transformational initiatives like CPEC. Secondly, Ms. Naz Parveen, the author and director of China Window, has made notable contributions through her writings and facilitated deeper understanding of China's culture and traditions.

Prof. Zamir Ahmed Awan, emphasized the significance of cultural diplomacy in understanding China and lauded the author for her accessible and engaging writing style.

Professor Dr. Azhar Ahmed commended the author for her achievement in publishing such a detailed and vivid travelogue. Ms. Nabila Jaffer expressed

her admiration for the book's imaginative and artistic narrative, which she found to be a refreshing departure from typical political discourses.

Ms. Naz Parveen, the author, shared her motivation for writing the book, which stemmed from her experiences at China Window in Peshawar and her desire to counter the negative narratives surrounding China's treatment of Uyghur Muslims.

Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, the chief guest, congratulated Ms. Naz Parveen for her exceptional work and commended the book for its communicative style and insightful content. He reflected on the evolution of China, highlighting its revolutionary reforms and criticized the Western media's attempts to demonize China. He stressed the importance of Pakistani voices in countering such propaganda



and called for greater efforts to promote understanding between the two nations.

Earlier, in his introductory remarks, Dr. Talat Shabbir, Director of the China Pakistan Study Centre, introduced the book.

In his vote of thanks, Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman of the ISSI Board of Governors, emphasized the profound connection between Pakistan and China, rooted in mutual trust and respect. He praised the book for its personal

and thought-provoking insights into Chinese culture, which serve as a powerful rebuttal to negative narratives.

The book launch was well attended by academics, students, members of the diplomatic community, and civil society.

## Bilateral MoU

ISLAMABAD: Group photo of DG ISSI Amb Sohail Mahmood and President NIMA Adm Ahmed Saeed HI(M) with researchers on the occasion of the MOU between NIMA and ISSI for education and policy research



PML-N candidate and former deputy mayor of Islamabad Syed Zeeshan Ali Naqvi submits his nomination papers for local government elections at the IMCG, G-11/1 on Tuesday.

## Karim Aziz Malik discusses boosting trade, investment with HC Maldives



ISLAMABAD: Mr. Karim Aziz Malik, Chairman of FPCCI Capital Office, Islamabad visited the High Commission of the Republic of Maldives. He met with H. E. Mr. Mohammed Thoha, High Commissioner. They discussed enhancing trade and investment between the two countries. The High commissioner expressed interest in importing a variety of Pakistan mangoes and carpets. Additionally, he highlighted the need for a direct flight to the Maldives to boost tourism from Pakistan

## AEO Study Abroad Expo Kicks Off Successfully at PC Hotel Lahore

LAHORE: AEO Pakistan has once again launched Pakistan's biggest study abroad expo, spanning across 10 major cities, including Lahore, Islamabad, Karachi, Multan, Sialkot, Faisalabad, Abbottabad, Peshawar, Bahawalpur, and Hyderabad. This expo offers a golden opportunity for prospective students nationwide to receive free expert advice and counselling on applying to top-ranked universities in Australia, the USA, Canada, and the UK. Representatives from over 15 prestigious universities and institutions are participating, providing invaluable guidance and insights for students planning their academic futures. Attendees also benefit from information on IELTS testing and preparatory classes available at the expo.

The expo series continues with upcoming events scheduled in Sialkot on August 21st at Hotel the Jeeven's, Islamabad on August 22nd at Serena Hotel, Faisalabad on August 22nd at Hotel One, Multan on August 24th at Hotel One Tariq Road, Karachi on August 24th at Serena Hotel, Abbottabad on August 24th at Hotel One, Peshawar on August 25th at Serena Hotel, Hyderabad on August 25th at Indus Hotel, and Bahawalpur on August 26th at Ajwa Garden Hotel & Restaurant. Entry to the exhibitions is free. Scholarships are also available for eligible students.

With over 5000 alumni and 300,000+ IELTS registrations, AEO Pakistan has established itself as a leading authority in Australian and global education and as the most trusted IELTS and OET test centre in the country. Serving as the official liaison office for over 40 top Australian universities and institutions, AEO Pakistan has been facilitating student enrolments for more than two decades. Since 2002, AEO's bi-annual Australian Education Expos have empowered thousands of Pakistani students to pursue higher education abroad.

# Packages Limited Becomes First Company in Pakistan to Deploy SAP Sustainability Solutions

**City Desk**

ISLAMABAD: Packages Limited, in collaboration with SAP Pakistan, has announced a groundbreaking achievement as the first company in Pakistan to sign a sustainability deal with SAP. This initiative aims to catalyze the adoption of SAP sustainability solutions among export-related industries across Pakistan. By leveraging verified and actionable data, these industries can significantly bolster their green credentials and strengthen their market positioning.

Faizan Mahmood, Group Chief Information Officer, Packages Limited, said, "By integrating SAP's Sustainability Control Tower, we are not only enhancing our capabilities for sustainable growth with environment-friendly operations but also setting a benchmark for other companies in Pakistan to follow the green route."

Ayesha Aziz, Group



Manager Sustainability, Packages Limited, said, "We are proud to be the first to take this leap and are confident it will drive significant positive change."

Saqib Ahmad, Country Managing Director, SAP Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq & Bahrain, said, "The planet needs our businesses to be cognizant of their impact on the environment. This sustainability deal with Packages Limited represents a monumental step forward not only for SAP Pakistan but for the entire industry in Pakistan. We hope to see it emulated across the business landscape in the country. Our commitment to business ethics and sustainability is aligned with the evolving need for a healthier planet with environment-friendly policies."

# Ziauddin University Hosts Public & Patient Engagement Summit

**City Desk**

KARACHI: Ziauddin University marked a pivotal moment in Pakistan's healthcare landscape by hosting a Patient & Public Involvement and Engagement Summit. This summit brought together public engagement experts, healthcare professionals, and patient advocates to highlight the critical importance of involving patients and the public in health research, setting a new standard for inclusivity and collaboration in the field.

The Summit was inaugurated by Dr. Zulfiqar Ali Umrani, co-director of the Clinical Trials Unit at Ziauddin University. The Public & Patient Involvement and Engagement (PPIE) initiative, led by the Critical Care Medicine Research Group, was introduced by Professor Dr. Nikhat Ahmed Siddiqui.

The discussion on the significant challenges and opportunities of integrating Public & Patient Involvement and Engagement (PPIE) into clinical trials across Pakistan was highlighted by Professor Dr. Saeed Hamid, Director of the Clinical Trials Unit at Aga Khan University. He emphasized how embracing this inclusive approach could revolutionize the coun-



try's health research by making it more patient-centered and impactful.

The critical need to integrate patients' voices into research was highlighted by Mr. Adnan Masood, a Banking and Technology Consultant and public representative in Ziauddin University's PPIE group.

He emphasized that the success of healthcare innovations relies heavily on understanding and addressing patients' needs and concerns—an aspect frequently overlooked in traditional research frameworks.

Adding a global perspective, Dr. Rakhshi Memon, Research Fellow at University College London, shared valuable insights from her work with Public & Patient Involvement and Engagement (PPIE) in Pakistan. She discussed best practices for effectively engaging the public in health research, offering practical strategies and examples from her experiences.

Following this, Dr. Ashleigh Cheyne, Public Engagement Expert at the Pandemic Science Institute, University of Oxford, presented her experiences from the UK. She focused on the development of the PLATINUM treatment plan for Mpox patients during the 2022 outbreak, highlighting how public involvement was instrumental in shaping the treatment plan and improving patient outcomes.

In addition to the presentations by Prof. Dr. Saeed Hamid, Mr. Adnan Masood, Dr. Rakhshi Memon and Dr. Ashleigh Cheyne, the summit featured an engaging panel discussion joined by Dr Zulfiqar Ali Umrani.

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# Pak Army is not Elite of the Country - III

**E**lites benefit from unparalleled access to resources, including top-tier educational opportunities, high-quality healthcare, and influential social networks. Their financial means allow them to attend prestigious institutions, receive specialized medical care, and leverage connections to further their interests. They can also invest in assets like real estate, stocks, and businesses to increase their wealth. In contrast, the middle class has access to a reasonable level of resources but lacks the exclusivity and extent of access enjoyed by the elite. Middle-class individuals typically have access to quality education and healthcare, yet they may encounter financial limitations that restrict their options. While their resources allow for a comfortable lifestyle, they may not afford luxuries or extensive investments. In contrast, the lower class often faces significant limitations in accessing education and healthcare. Financial instability can impede their ability to invest in long-term assets or secure stable employment. Lower-class individuals frequently depend on public services and assistance programs, which offer essential support but may not match the quality or scope of private resources. Elites, on the other hand, wield considerable social influence thanks to their wealth, power, and positions of authority. Elites typically wield significant influence across political, economic, and cultural domains, shaping public policies,

market trends, and cultural norms. Their opinions and actions can have substantial societal impacts, and they often have the power to steer media narratives and public discourse.

The middle class holds moderate social influence. While they may not have the same level of power as elites, they are crucial in the workforce and consumer market. Their collective spending power and voting patterns can affect economic trends and political outcomes. Middle-class individuals can impact their communities and contribute to societal change, although their influence is generally less pronounced compared to that of elites.

The lower class often experiences limited social influence. Economic constraints and social marginalization can restrict their participation in high-level decision-making and public discourse. Despite this, grassroots movements and community organizations can help amplify their voices and advocate for change, although their impact is usually smaller compared to that of the middle and upper classes.

Elites enjoy a lifestyle marked by luxury and exclusivity. They have the means to frequently travel, reside in upscale neighborhoods, and access premium services

and products. Their consumption patterns include high-value goods and experiences such as fine dining, private events, and bespoke services.

In contrast, the middle class generally leads a comfortable and stable lifestyle, with consumption focused on quality goods and services that offer practicality and value. They may enjoy vacations, dining out, and cultural activities, but their consumption is typically more moderate compared to that of elites.

The lower class often faces greater economic constraints, focusing their spending on basic necessities and essential services. Leisure activities and discretionary spending are limited, and they may struggle to access higher-quality goods and services.

In Pakistan, the elite class is similarly marked by a concentration of wealth and power, contributing to notable economic disparities. The gap between the elite and the broader population can deepen social and economic inequalities. The presence of political dynasties can restrict political mobility and entrench existing power structures, potentially impeding democratic processes and reform efforts. Issues such as corruption, nepotism, and lack of accountability among elites can undermine public trust and hinder effective governance. Additionally, the domi-

nance of cultural elites can marginalize diverse voices and perspectives, affecting the representation of various social and cultural groups in media and public discourse.

Recently, DG ISPR addressed the issue of elites in Pakistan, clarifying that some claims that the Pakistan Army constitutes the country's elite are incorrect. Understanding the significant contributions of the Pakistan Army is essential to appreciate how it serves and supports the people of Pakistan. A national army is vital for a country's defense and stability, and its role extends beyond merely safeguarding national sovereignty. In the modern era, an army plays a key part in national security, disaster response, and international diplomacy.

The primary mission of any national army is to protect the country's territory from external threats. This involves maintaining a well-equipped and trained force prepared to address potential invasions, conflicts, or military aggression from other nations. The army's defensive responsibilities include securing borders, conducting surveillance, and engaging in combat operations when necessary. National armies often play a crucial role in counterterrorism efforts. They work to prevent and address terrorist threats through intelligence operations, coordination with other security agencies, and targeted actions to dismantle terrorist networks and safeguard civilians.

*To be continued*

## Hate speech....



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

## Massive pro-Palestinian protests in Chicago

**T**housands of pro-Palestinian protesters marched in Chicago on the opening day of the Democratic National Convention (DNC) on Monday, in a show of anger against the Biden administration's support for Israel in the Gaza war, now in its 11 month.

The 4-day convention, in which more than 50,000 delegates from across the country are participating, is being broadcast live. It is set to officially endorse Vice President Kamala Devi Harris as the Democratic Party's nominee for the November presidential election in which she will face the Republican challenger, former president Donald Trump.

Monday's massive protest against the Biden administration actions in the Israel war in Gaza is a sharp reminder of the divisions that still dog the party despite a show of unity for its new candidate.

About 5,000 protesters gathered in Chicago's Union Park on Monday, carrying signs reading, "Stop the War," "We're trying to help you, Kamala" and "Abandon Harris '24."

After hours of peaceful demonstrations, dozens of protesters broke through part of the perimeter security fence, drawing riot police to the site, TV footage showed.

The DNC's security team confirmed that protesters breached a portion of the fencing on the outer perimeter near the convention arena but said law enforcement personnel acted quickly and there was no threat to attendees.

Four people detained and placed in handcuffs. Chicago police confirmed at a press conference that arrests were made but did not say how many.

Chanting intensified ahead of the fence breach, as protesters reached a neighbourhood park on Chicago's West Side and paused to amplify their calls for a ceasefire. Amid the noise, the crowd turned its frustration toward Vice President Kamala Harris, referring to the Democratic candidate as "Killer Kamala".

Chicago police formed a perimeter around the park on foot to contain protesters, with some police members on bikes.

Still, the umbrella group "March on the DNC" drew fewer supporters than expected to a park outside the convention arena, hours before President Joe Biden was to address the gathering.

Another large protest was scheduled for Thursday, when Ms. Harris is due to formally accept the nomination.

Pro-Palestinian groups have for months protested the Biden administration's military and financial support for Israel in its war in Gaza, which has killed more than 40,000 Palestinians in Gaza, according to Gaza health officials.

## Letter to the Editor

### Urgent Need of Stable Internet Service in Pakistan

Respected Editor,  
 The Internet is an essential part of many people's work. Many people in Pakistan are facing internet disruption across many cities. Users are experiencing slow connections and frequent outages. The situation is very challenging for people who work remotely and many people rely on stable internet connections to sustain their livelihoods.

Many social media apps- Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, Upwork and Fiverr went down in Pakistan. Internet outages had a severe impact on people's work. Even communicating with people has become difficult. A lot of damage has been done to the freelancers and their business. It is not just inconvenient but also hindering productivity and innovation.

Pakistan is already facing an economic crisis and because of internet disruption Pakistan has lost five hundred million dollars. Worldwide people are using 5G and we Pakistanis are still struggling with 3G and 4G internet services.

Authorities should take immediate steps to address this issue. The Ministry of IT and Telecom should focus on modernizing internet services. Government and internet service providers should invest in internet infrastructure and ensure high-quality internet services.

It is imperative to address this issue so that Pakistan does not lag in the Global Digital economy.

Sincerely,  
**Komal Shahzadi. Islamabad**  
 komalshahzadi@gmail.com

### Rising instability - Can it be even worse?

The Editor,  
 I am writing to you regarding our whole nation's concerns on increasing instability in the country. We all are well aware of the fact what issues our country is facing right now including political and economic instability, local and international loans, unemployment, poverty, restrictions, etc.

Now, government has decided to install firewall to monitor everybody's social media activities and can detain anybody on just using their right of free speech. It means there will be no privacy or security. It seems nothing other than a way for government to avoid criticism and questioning over their own disqualification in certain matters. Just to recall that the twitter, considered to be one of the most popular social media apps in the world and an effective platform to deliver your voice at international level, is already banned in Pakistan. I'm afraid such steps will make Pakistan not anymore different from an authoritarian regime like in North Korea where nobody can even point towards government or other powerful institutions and no matter whatever they do, nobody can question or criticize them. The question is, can it be even worse?

Recently, our people celebrated 77th year of independence, hoping as usual for its prosperity and betterment. Amid this, I came across a strange but honest compliment. A guy posted, "what an irony we have to use virtual private network (vpn) to even post a status of our Independence Day". In fact, it is the reality and the reason our youth doesn't want to stay here anymore and is using all possible ways to go to foreign countries for a promising future. Government must learn a lesson from what happened in Bangladesh. As our population largely consists of youth and these young people can retaliate at any time.

So, it is the need of the hour to reconsider things and to not deprive anybody of their natural and positive rights. It is the time to remember that Pakistan is a democratic country.

Yours sincerely,  
**Muhammad Sarhad Shahzad**  
 University of the Punjab, Lahore  
 armadhashmi3316@gmail.com

### Urgent Attention Needed: Mpox Outbreak and Its Potential Threat to Pakistan

Dear Editor,  
 I am writing to convey how deeply concerned I am about the recent global upsurge in Mpox

(monkeypox) cases and the possible threat they pose to Pakistan. In light of the global health crisis that is growing, it is critical that our country takes decisive steps to stop the virus from spreading within its borders. A zoonotic virus called mpox has been growing alarmingly in a number of nations. Previously limited to Central and West Africa, the virus has now been found around the world, including Europe and the Americas. Similar to smallpox, mumps symptoms are characterized by fever, rash, and enlarged lymph nodes, albeit they are often less severe.

Concerns have been expressed regarding the possibility of a pandemic, though, given its recent worldwide expansion. Pakistan might be seriously at risk if mpox were to spread throughout the nation due to its large population and inadequate healthcare system. The COVID-19 epidemic has taught us important lessons about the value of early discovery, quick action, and public awareness. Regrettably, in spite of these insights, we are still ill-equipped to deal with novel and developing illnesses.

The government and public health authorities must immediately step up their surveillance at airports and other entry points where passengers from impacted areas may arrive. Public awareness efforts should also be started in order to inform the public about the signs and modes of transmission of mpox, which will help to ensure that any possible cases are quickly reported and isolated. In order to provide access to the most recent data and resources, partnerships with international health organizations should be expanded.

Vaccination programs should also be taken into account, especially for high-risk populations. In order to contain such epidemics, the healthcare system must also be strengthened and have sufficient supply of antiviral drugs and personal protective equipment (PPE). In conclusion, even though the mpox virus may not yet be a major problem in Pakistan, the state of the world shows that we cannot afford to take things for granted. To stop the virus from spreading throughout our nation, quick action is needed. I implore the government and pertinent health authorities to give this matter top priority and to take the required actions to safeguard the wellbeing and security of our people.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

Your Sincerely,

**Ayesha Kiran**  
 City Phalia District Mandi  
 Email: ashig8963@gmail.com

### Detrimental Impact of Recent Internet Disruptions

Respected Editor,  
 I am writing to express my opinion regarding the Internet Disruptions and Their Detrimental Impact on Pakistan's Digital Infrastructure. The issue of recurring internet slowdowns and connectivity issues is related to the testing of a firewall to filter out obscene and unwanted content. However, this issue is being escalated because the internet slowdown is tainting the global reputation and clientele rate of online business setups and freelancers in Pakistan.

The Internet is the backbone of digital infrastructure and communication in this globalized digital era. The digital economy is a crucial factor in the GDP of Pakistan, contributing around \$3.5 billion annually, and relies on hassle-free internet access. Freelancers who rely on platforms like Fiverr and Upwork will have a decrease in their client ratio because of connectivity issues.

The notification of Fiverr regarding the unavailability of Pakistani freelancers on its platform for global users highlights the necessity of having a reliable internet connection. These internet and connectivity issues are very problematic as they pose a threat to the confidence of clients and drive the business away. If these issues persist, the IT sector and digital economy will face huge financial losses because it will impact IT exports and online startups. The orders and businesses will shift to countries that have stable and secure internet connections.

National security and cyber security concerns are undoubtedly important, but this approach caused a lot of damage to the digital economy and infrastructure of the country. The government should implement only targeted security measures to tackle the threats without putting the entire network at stake. Transparent online connectivity governance is a necessity to avoid any unnecessary

shutdown or connectivity issues in the future because ensuring stable internet connectivity is vital for Pakistan's digital infrastructure and innovation.

Yours sincerely,  
**Isha Shahzad**  
 Student of UMT, Lahore  
 ishahshahzad850@gmail.com

### A Call for Uniform Electricity Prices: Relief for all Pakistanis

Dear Editor,  
 I am writing to bring attention to the pressing issue of electricity prices in our country. As you may know, the current prices are unsustainable for many households and businesses. It is imperative that we demand a uniform electricity price throughout Pakistan.

Our country has the capacity to generate over 45,000 megawatts of electricity, exceeding our requirements. However, the transmission lines can only handle 22-25,000 megawatts. To address this issue, I propose that the government engage in talks with local and public independent power producers (IPPs) to find a solution.

Furthermore, I suggest privatizing electricity distribution companies and issuing licenses to additional companies in each region. This will encourage competition and drive down prices.

I also take issue with the recent announcement by Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supreme Nawaz Sharif, providing electricity price relief exclusively for Punjab. This move will only create despair in other regions. I demand that the government provide relief for all Pakistanis, regardless of their province.

I urge the Prime Minister to take immediate action and announce a nationwide reduction of RS.20 per unit in electricity prices. This is the only way to provide genuine relief to the people of Pakistan. Let us come together to demand a fair and uniform electricity price for all.

Sincerely,  
**Adan Irshad, Rawalpindi**  
 adanirshad361@gmail.com

# Decentralisation and Youth Development Essential for Future Growth - CASS Organises Catalyst Conversation

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: As Pakistan nears its centennial year of independence, engaging in thoughtful discussions to envision a prosperous future becomes imperative. This Catalyst Conversation, organised by the Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies (CASS), Islamabad, was designed to facilitate such discourse. The session was guided by insights and expertise of Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, Chairman Sanober Institute and former Foreign Secretary of Pakistan.

Air Marshal Zahid Mehmood (Retd), moderator for the session and Director at CASS, initiated the discussion by reflecting on the creation of Pakistan — a saga marked by struggle and sacrifice under the guidance of visionary leaders. He stressed that as Pakistan approaches its centenary, it is crucial for all Pakistanis to learn from the past 77 years and chart a forward-looking course aligned with the original vision of its founders and the aspirations of



its people. He also highlighted that the responsibility for Pakistan's development extends beyond policymakers and national leaders to every citizen.

On the main subject 'Pakistan of 2047: Distinguished Speaker, Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry (Retd), discussed the formidable challenges and potential strategies for envisioning a prosperous future for Pakistan. During his talk, he noted the difficulty in predicting the nation's future given the current political and economic climate and regional conflicts.

Ambassador Chaudhry stressed the

importance of having a clear vision and long-term socioeconomic development plans, similar to those implemented by nations like the United States, China, and Singapore. He outlined several critical challenges facing Pakistan today, including inadequate devolution of power; substantial portion of the population not contributing to the tax base; excessive reliance on donor aid to balance economic shortfalls; and lackluster export growth. Additional issues highlighted included weak economic growth; water and food insecurity; bureaucratic barriers for the private

sector; non-competitive knowledge economy, and insufficient development of human resources.

Despite these challenges, Pakistan's potential was underscored by its young population, rich natural resources, and strategic geographic location. Ambassador Chaudhry advocated for a citizen-centric approach, as originally championed by the country's founder — Quaid-i-Azam.

Ambassador Chaudhry outlined several key reforms needed to transform Pakistan's potential into reality, including stable political governance

through decentralisation; economic self-reliance; living within means; continuity of economic policies; and ease-of-doing business to facilitate the private sector. He also called for streamlining regulations; enhancing tax compliance; non-partisan accountability; and significant investments in human development, particularly in education and skill development for youth in emerging technologies such as AI. The speaker concluded by stating that with these reforms, Pakistan could look forward to a peaceful and prosperous future by 2047, marking

the centennial of its independence. Conversely, without such reforms, the future remains uncertain.

In his concluding remarks, Air Marshal Javaid Ahmed, President of CASS, Islamabad, pointed out dual nature of the challenges Pakistan faces, with both known and unknown elements. He stressed the immediate need for action and the pivotal role of think tanks in fostering foresight and developing a balanced perspective for the nation's future. He remarked on critical imbalance in the national narrative, which often oscillates between two extremes, underscoring the importance of grooming current and future leadership to better address these difficulties.

In the question and answer session, participants and speakers agreed that understanding Pakistan's challenges is essential for planning and executing future actions that will steer the country toward a prosperous and stable future, ensuring balanced development that includes contributions from all sectors of society.

## Zindigi, The King's Trust International, and PAGE Expand 'The Achieve' Initiative to Empower Girls Across Pakistan

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Zindigi—Powered by JS Bank, The King's Trust International, and the Pakistan Alliance for Girls Education (PAGE) have extended their efforts to empower young girls in Pakistan by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to launch an expanded phase of "The Achieve Programme." Achieve is a social and emotional learning Programme that aims to provide young girls in Pakistan with core life skills such as confidence, communication, problem solving and emotional resilience.

Building on the success of its initial pilot in 2023, the Pakistan chapter of "The Achieve Programme" has already

empowered over 100 underserved girls from three schools in Islamabad and Swat. This next phase aims to broaden its impact, reaching out to an additional 200 young girls.

Speaking at the event, Asma Anwar, Head of CE, People & Culture at Zindigi, stated, "We are delighted to strengthen our collaboration with The King's Trust International and PAGE Pakistan. This initiative aligns deeply with our mission to empower the youth of Pakistan, and we believe it will create a sustainable model that equips young girls with the education and skills they need to succeed."

Fajr Rabia Pasha, CEO & MD of PAGE, added, "We are excited to bring the Achieve Programme to even

more adolescent girls from marginalized backgrounds. With a concerning dropout rate of 10.5% for girls by grade 9, the need for such initiatives is critical. Our ongoing partnership with Zindigi and The King's Trust International is expanding the opportunities available to these girls, ensuring they stay on the path to success and grow into the leaders of tomorrow."

Wasim Malik, Head of Programmes—Asia and Middle East at The King's Trust International, commented:

"Launched with the support of Zindigi in early 2023, the Achieve pilot project has not only been successful in supporting young girls to (re)engage with the formal education, but it has

also improved and equipped them with life skills. Out of those participants who were surveyed, 97% felt more comfortable in working with others, which promotes the essential life skill of teamwork. All the respondents felt an increase in their self-confidence, and strongly agreed that participating in Achieve has increased their willingness to attend school more regularly. Teachers reported a positive change in their teaching style."

"On furthering their support, I express the deep appreciation of The King's Trust International to the leadership of Zindigi—powered by JS Bank and our delivery partner organization, Pakistan Alliance for Girls Education. It is highly commendable to see the

commitment which Zindigi and JS Bank are showing towards helping young girls to succeed in their education and careers. We see Zindigi, JS Bank and Pakistan Alliance for Girls Education as steadfast long-term partners to expand and develop the programme to empower more girls across Pakistan," added Wasim.

The extension of "The Achieve Programme" reflects Zindigi's ongoing commitment to fostering entrepreneurship among Pakistan's youth, with a particular focus on empowering young girls. By equipping them with essential skills and support, Zindigi is helping to cultivate the next generation of entrepreneurs, laying the foundation for their future financial

success.

About Zindigi: Zindigi, powered by JS Bank, is a pioneering digital banking initiative tailored specifically for Gen Z and millennials. As the first of its kind, Zindigi offers a fully customizable mobile app, empowering customers with complete control over their digital banking experience. It provides innovative savings and investment products designed to meet the unique financial needs of its customers. With the slogan "Simple Karo," Zindigi is committed to making finances simple and impactful, beyond borders. Zindigi belongs to the JS Group, one of the nation's most diversified and progressive financial services groups.

## A Traveler's Paradise: Surveying the Ethiopian Tourism

Jemal Beker Abdula

Ethiopia has a vast tourism potential due to its natural, cultural, religious, historical and archeological gifts. Ethiopia is often dubbed in the international community as the "Cradle of Humankind" due to its prominent position and important role in studying human evolution and human beginning on earth. Several pieces of evidence prove the country's valuable contribution to understanding early human history and pre-history under different phases. The country's rich archaeological heritage can be measured on various lines, like the discovery of Lucy in 1974 at the Hadar site. The Lucy title is given to the Australopithecus collection of several pieces of centuries-old fossilized bones discovered in the Awash Valley of Ethiopia. The Lucy skeleton has been marked internationally as one of the most completed early hominid discoveries to understand the origin of human evolution. Akin to Lucy, the Ardi (Ardipithecus ramidus), Homo Erectus, and Homo Habilis provide further validation to the considerable contribution of Ethiopia in the history of mankind. In addition to Hadar, Afra Depression and Melka Kunture and Balchit are known globally as important areas enriched with fossil deposits, and they offer a greater deal to people interested in visiting archeological and Paleanthropological sites. The country's unique position in the region has made it an epicentre of early human civilizations, providing a wide range of ancient sites and fascinating international visitors concerning archaeological studies. The country's archaeological tourism contains profound insights into human history, which offers immense opportunities to explore the depths of human origin and its evolution on Ethiopian land.

Furthermore, religion always remained an important aspect of Addis Ababa's cultural and historical heritage, where the local population has a centuries-old history of diverse religious practices. The varying indigenous religious practices

across the country have highlighted Addis Ababa internationally as one of the prominent lands of pilgrims and an interesting place where visitors can learn about the history of religions and their transcontinental spread. Ethiopia's deep-rooted association with ancient religions has made it a historical center of ancient Christian and Islamic values without upsetting the positions of other sacred ideologies in society. The famous town of Lalibela, has 11 rock-cut monolithic churches, which have been established in contrast to the early monolithic churches of the country. The presence of spiritual Christian sites introduced innovative architecture in the historical buildings, and these buildings attract thousands of pilgrims and visitors annually. Regarding Islamic history, Harar Jugol, the old walled city, is one of the ancient places of the Muslim world, and presently, it is internationally famous for its ancient mosques and rich Islamic knowledge. The city's unique architecture is globally known for its Harar Walls, which presents a brief overview of Islamic culture and ancient Muslim traditions. This walled city is well-known for its distinctive interior designs, including 82 mosques and 102 shrines, largely contributing to Ethiopia's national cultural heritage. Moreover, Sof Omar natural and cultural heritage is another fascinating religious and cultural sites of Ethiopia. As a sacred place of worship Sof Omar cave system is believed to be the Caves of Mystery where the ancestral cult of Sheikh Sof Omar Ahmad, his families and descendants is observed and practiced annually. Each and every cave structures are assigned and designated to diverse ritual practices. Annual festive events with comprehensive Islamic religious processions and traditional beliefs and practices are conducted in the cave shrines and mosques of this underground karstic limestone caverns.

Both cities of Ethiopia, Lalibela and Harar, and Sof Omar Cave are on the UNESCO World Heritage List due to their rich cultural and religious heritages and sacred associations with the Christian and Muslim commu-

nities.

UNESCO has added many Ethiopian sites to its World Heritage List, such as the ancient cities of Aksum and Tiya (famous for their massive obelisks (stelae) and tombs), and Awash Valley (due to the discovery of Lucy), the Lower Valley of the Omo (having a wealth of fossils), and Konso cultural landscape (due to anthropomorphic wooden statues). UNESCO has formally recognized two national parks in Ethiopia as potential places for its World Heritage List: the Simien Mountains National Park and the Bale Mountains National Park. The Simien Mountains Park is the largest national park in the



country, and its territory covers the two highest points of Ethiopia, Simien Mountain and Ras Dashan. The Bale Mountains National Park is famous for its diverse Afromontane habitats and striking landscapes, whereas other national parks contain varying exceptional features. In addition to having a wide range of wildlife and biodiversity, the Semi-arid landscapes of Awash National Park, the white grass of NechSar National Park, the Mursi and Nyangatom tribes of Omo National Park, Nile River Basin ecosystem of Gambella National Park, and the savannah landscapes of Mago National Park are the mainstream points of Ethiopian tourism. These parks reflect the country's diverse

ecosystems, critical for protecting Ethiopian natural culture, attractive landscapes, and rich biodiversity. Moreover, the semi-desert ecosystem of Yangudi Rassa National Park, the twin lakes of Abijatta-Shalla Lakes National Park, the South Sudanese-Nile ecosystem of Gambella National Park, and the dense forests and magnificent river flows of the Chebera Churchura National Park contain interesting tourist offerings. The various attractive points of these parks enabled Ethiopia to attract many visitors from diverse backgrounds. These national parks' unique cultural and ecological offerings have enabled the Ethiopian

other African nations colonized by several external powers. In this way, Roof of Africa enhances the scope of Ethiopian tourism in the world while containing adequate fascination for travelers interested in trekking, mountain climbing, and witnessing the unmatched natural stunning landscapes. In addition to the country's topology, the Ethiopian cultural diversity is internationally recognized as an essential feature of its tourism potential. This diversity is based on different ethnic groups' languages, traditions, norms, and cultural practices. The Omo Valley is famous in the region for its dissimilar cultural

practices consisting of different Indigenous tribes such as Mursi, Hamar, Kara, Nyamatong, Kuegu, Arbore, Ari, Daasanach, and Turkana. These diverse social patterns of Ethiopia formulate a unique music comprised of characteristic pentatonic scale and exceptional traditional dances of more than 80 domestic ethnic groups have their own peculiar musical pattern and melodies. The exciting part of Ethiopian music is associated with its unique instruments. These instruments create different tunes of Christian Zema and Muslim Sufi music, along with folk and popular melodies. In this way, music represents a vibrant component of the country's cultural identity, which the

nation to commendably support the broader context of African tourism in the world. It is pertinent to mention here the highest points of Northeastern Africa, the Ethiopian highlands, and sometimes they are called the Roof of Africa. This is due to the country's high elevation and distinctive mountainous terrain. The country has some of the internationally known highest peaks of the continent, and these peaks give the Ethiopian nation a towering position in the continent parallel to making it an inimitable home of deep valleys, rugged mountains, and extensive plateaus. The Roof of Africa sometimes recalls Addis Ababa's historical resilience and independence efforts, contrasting

Ethiopian nation has recognized as a primary source of pride. International tourist communities could consider it a gateway to understanding and enjoying Ethiopian culture, whereas travelers from diverse countries can enjoy the exciting music scenes in Addis Ababa. International travelers can enjoy a mixture of traditional music and contemporary pop under the interesting tunes of Ethio-Jazz in various live public music avenues. Besides social and cultural music events, religious festivals like Timkat and Meskel annually receive many visitors from different countries to experience Ethiopian spiritual music which are UNESCO intangible World Heritages. Moreover, the Harari People Shuwald Festival attracting a huge Muslim community that also registered as Intangible World Heritages. Thus, there is no harm in saying that the music has become essential to Ethiopian tourism while offering a matchless blend of classical and modern beats.

The discussion on Ethiopian tourism can only be completed by mentioning the role of local cuisine, which is an integral part of national cultural identity, in attracting international visitors. The growing tourist attraction for Ethiopian taste is due to its exclusive flavours, distinctive dining manners, traditional cooking styles, and rich culinary traditions. The gluten-free Injera, spiced clarified Niter Kibbeh, chilli-based Berbere, Mitmita, muqamad, chuko, qocho represent different local ingredients' tastes and potentially attract visitors from different countries. The communal dining styles support a sense of togetherness, and breaking Injera together contains cultural significance more than eating. Such cultural norms foster the values of hospitality, friendship, and community thinking, which enable international travellers to enjoy the memorable cuisine culture of Ethiopia. Coffee is a gravitational point of Ethiopian cuisine because the country is the birthplace of coffee, and it has been socially associated with various formal ceremonies and cultural events. The roasting, grinding, and brewing of coffee beans also encompass fascinating Ethiopian heritage, whereas

the tourist communities could visit the coffee forms of Harar, Jimma, Limu, Yirgacheffe and Sidamo, providing practical experiences of coffee cultivation and its further processing. Moreover, the country's coffee tours involve fascinating and immersive experiences, letting travellers gain exciting facts about the Ethiopian coffee industry and its global reputation.

Therefore, the country has several tourist offerings and compelling destinations for visitors. The abovementioned information provides a glimpse of Ethiopian potential in the international tourist industry parallel to securing a prominent position in regional tourist reviews. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, the country's present government is highly determined to boost Ethiopian tourist potential by upgrading the country's tourist infrastructure like Wanchi ecotourism, Chebra Churchura elephant logo, and Gorgora and promoting the indigenous tourism industry. The central vision of Abiy Ahmed's government concentrates on cultural preservation, sustainable practices, digital transformation, and diversification in the national tourism sector. The Addis Ababa-based formal political authorities aim to transform Ethiopia into a leading tourist destination with regional and global recognition the case in point is Addis Ababa Corridor development and beautification projects. The country has substantial dynamism in upholding the national vision of tourism, which contributes to regional economic growth, employment enhancement, and glorifying national pride at the regional and international levels. Therefore, the leading circles of global tourist communities could find Ethiopia to be a promising and leading tourist destination in the future. The validation of this argument could be attained from the multileveled efforts of the current government and its commitment to making Ethiopia a middle-income economy with the support of several structural reforms and development plans.

Author is Special Envoy, and Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ethiopia to Pakistan

**Bull & Bears**  
PSX 100-Share  
Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index	
Current	Prev. Close
77,745.52	77,830.34
Day's High	Day's Low
77,930.03	77,460.39
Index Value	Change
4,029,455,986	-84.82
Percentage	Time
-0.11%	20 Aug, 2024 5:00 pm

Europe: FTSE 100 Index	
Index Value	Change
8,273.32	-83.62
Percentage	Time
-1.00%	20 Aug, 4:35 pm GMT+1

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average	
Index Value	Change
40,798.25	-98.28
Percentage	Time
-0.24%	20 Aug, 1:04 pm GMT-4

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average	
Index Value	Change
38,062.92	+674.30
Percentage	Time
+1.80%	20 Aug, 3:15 pm GMT+9

**Open Market Forex Rates**

Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	185.65	189.25
Bahrain Dinar	734	739.50
Canadian Dollar	202.65	207.00
China Yuan	38.29	38.69
Danish Krone	40.03	40.43
Euro	306.40	308.60
Hong Kong Dollar	35.68	36.03
Indian Rupee	3.34	3.45
Japanese Yen	1.97	1.98
Kuwaiti Dinar	905.45	910.60
Malaysian Ringgit	58.99	59.59
New Zealand \$	169.34	171.34
Norwegians Krone	26.14	26.44
Omani Riyal	723.4	728.50
Qatari Riyal	76.44	77.14
Saudi Riyal	73.82	74.52
Singapore Dollar	202	204.00
Swedish Korona	26.27	26.57
Swiss Franc	319.5	324.50
Thai Bhat	7.57	7.72
U.A.E Dirham	75.90	76.32
UK Pound Sterling	360	362.3
US Dollar	279.70	280.4

# Ignite - NICAT Pakistan hosts Asia-Pacific's First Meta Llama Pitchathon

**Spokesman Report**

ISLAMABAD: The National Incubation Center for Aerospace Technologies (NICAT), in partnership with Meta, the Ministry of IT & Telecommunication, and Ignite National Technology Fund, hosted the first-ever Meta Llama Pitchathon in the Asia-Pacific region. This groundbreaking event highlighted the tremendous potential of artificial intelligence (AI) through the application of Meta's cutting-edge Llama 2 and Llama 3 models.

The Pitchathon was graced by the presence of Ms. Shaza Fatima Khawaja, Minister of State for IT & Telecommunication, as the Chief Guest. Her participation underscored the government's strong commitment to fostering technological advancement and innovation in Pakistan.

In her address, Ms. Shaza Fatima Khawaja stated, "This Pitchathon is a testament to Pakistan's growing capabilities in AI and technological innovation. The government is dedicated to creating an environment that nurtures talent and encourages the development of cutting-edge solutions that address both local and global challenges. Events like these are crucial in our journey to position Pakistan as a leader in the global digital economy."

The competition, which opened on July 19, 2024, attracted 112 submissions, out of which 7 teams were shortlisted by the e27 and Meta officials to pitch their ideas for the final round on August 13, 2024, to a distinguished panel of



judges, including Muhammad Rashid Mukhtar, Dr. Muhammad Usman, Zeeshan Qedwae, Ammar Jaffri, Barira Hanif, and Dr. Anan-ul-Hasan. The judges, with their diverse expertise, meticulously evaluated each project based on technical feasibility, potential impact, and the responsible use of AI.

The top three finalists that pitched today showcased groundbreaking innovations with the potential to drive significant social impact. Traversaa.ai, a team from San Francisco, USA,

proposed UrduLlama, a large language model (LLM) specifically designed for the Urdu language, aimed at combating educational inequality and illiteracy in Pakistan. Answer AI, with team members from both Pakistan and the USA, introduced OpportunityGateway, a platform that offers affordable and personalized tools for IELTS test preparation, making quality education accessible to a broader audience. Finally, Islamabad-based vResolv Pvt Ltd presented Qazi AI, a Legal AI Assistant

developed to streamline judicial processes and address the overwhelming backlog of cases in Pakistan's judicial system.

Simon Milner, Meta's Vice President of Public Policy for the Asia-Pacific region, presented certificates to the top three finalists. Whereas Traversaa.ai was declared winner that will compete in the regional finals in Singapore in October 2024, vying for a prize pool of up to \$100,000. This includes travel and accommodation, offering the winners a global platform to showcase their innovations, connect with international industry leaders, and gain invaluable exposure. The success of the Meta Llama Pitchathon is a testament to Pakistan's vibrant tech ecosystem and its potential to lead AI innovation.

Mohan Belani, CEO and Co-founder of e27, added: "The Meta Llama Pitchathon is an exciting platform for AI companies and developers to leverage the open-source power of Llama to solve some of the world's most pressing problems."

Imran Jattala, Project Director at NICAT, expressed his enthusiasm: "This Pitchathon is a transformative event for the region, providing a unique platform for innovators to push the boundaries of AI."

As Pakistan's leading Aerospace and DeepTech incubation center, NICAT is at the forefront of technological innovation. This event underscores NICAT's commitment to advancing AI technologies that have the potential to revolutionize industries and drive economic growth.

## Meting

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Privatization, Board of Investment and Communications, Abdul Aleem Khan while speaking at the meeting of the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Communications in on Tuesday.



Photo: PID

## CCP engages all stakeholders & regulators in PTCL-Telenor Merger

**Commerce Desk**

ISLAMABAD: The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) is currently conducting an in-depth Phase II Merger analysis in response to the proposed merger between Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL) and Telenor Pakistan (Private) Limited (Telenor).

CCP is providing key stakeholders an opportunity to present their concerns of potential impact of the merger on Pakistan's telecom market.

CCP is evaluating the potential benefits of the merger, including cost efficiencies and economies of scale that could enhance financial stability. The anal-

ysis will further consider whether the merger could lead to an expansion of network coverage, an increase in capacity, and an improvement in the quality of service for consumers.

The Commission, presently, is analysing Retail LDI Fixed-line Telecommunication Market, Retail Mobile Telecommunication Market, Wholesale Domestic Leased Lines, Wholesale IP Bandwidth and Individual Mobile/Fixed Interconnect Market to safeguard competition concerns.

CCP is closely examining these issues, particularly the market share dynamics of Pakistan's mobile network capacity and the risk of creating 'capacity asymmetry' in the relevant market.

## Pakistani solar company, SkyElectric breaks ground in Japanese market in pursuit of global expansion

**Commerce Desk**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's prestigious solar technology brand, SkyElectric has achieved a momentous breakthrough in the Japanese market by completing the first phase of the Japan Electrical Safety & Environment Technology Laboratories (JET) testing program, partially greenlighting the brand's entry into the Japanese market. This success underscores SkyElectric's unwavering commitment to product quality and service excellence, besides positioning the brand strongly in one of the most

competitive and stringent global markets.

Sharing his thoughts regarding the achievement, Co-founder & CEO, SkyElectric, Amin Sukhera said, "The successful completion of the first phase of JET is a monumental achievement, which underscores the exceptional quality and reliability of our products. It emphasizes the technical excellence of our systems and the company's unwavering commitment to meeting the highest international standards. Our success marks SkyElectric's first significant step into the Japanese market, one of the most advanced and competitive solar

markets in the world, which will open doors of opportunity for us globally."

Also commenting on the development, Zeeshan Ahmad, COO, SkyElectric said, "Entering the Japanese market is a strategic priority for SkyElectric as we continue to expand our global footprint. Japan's stringent regulatory environment and high consumer expectations make it a key market for showcasing the strength of our technology. We have gained a foothold in Japan and enhanced our global reputation as a leading provider of innovative and reliable solar energy solutions."

## Nabeel Hussain Takes Home The Coveted Style & Colour Trophy In Its Inaugural Year

**Commerce Desk**

KARACHI: L'Oréal Professionnel hosted the inaugural Style & Colour Trophy 2024 in Pakistan for the first time ever. Internationally present since 1954, Pakistan's first live hair competition brought together over 100 of the country's most skilled hairstylists to compete for the coveted title, while inventing the new colour and style trends for the year.

The Style & Colour Trophy 2024 competition witnessed fierce competition among talented stylists from across Pakistan. The finalists, including Faryal, Nabeel Hussain, Nabeela Mubeen, Shaista Riaz, and Uzma Bashir represented Faiza's Salon

in Islamabad, Sania and Sadaf Ali Asghar from Posh by Sarvat in Faisalabad, Sumaira (T&G North) and Humaira (T&G South), Hamid Latif, and Atif Zaib from Nabila's Salon, showcased their creativity and expertise through stunning hair creations.

As anticipation crackled through the air, the final walk witnessed the ultimate showdown of talent, with the 12 finalists displaying their look for a panel of esteemed judges, including renowned international hairstyling expert Indra Tanudarma and celebrated Pakistani model and actress Vaneza Ahmad, who crowned the winner, Nabeel Hussain from Faiza's Salon with the coveted title.

"We are thrilled to introduce the

Style & Colour Trophy to Pakistan," said Qawi Naseer, Country Managing Director of L'Oréal Pakistan. "This platform is not just a competition; it's a celebration of the incredible talent that lies within our industry. We believe that Pakistan possesses a wealth of untapped hairdressing talent, and we are committed to providing a platform for these artists to shine on the global stage."

Speaking on the occasion, Indra stated, "I am truly impressed by the level of talent and creativity I've witnessed here in Pakistan. The finalists showcased a deep understanding of hairdressing and a unique aesthetic that is truly inspiring." Vaneza further commented, "The Style & Colour



Trophy is a game-changer for the Pakistani beauty industry.

*Mobilink Bank revolutionizes financial independence for women with an industry*



**Commerce Desk**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's leading digital microfinance bank, Mobilink Bank, has launched an easy-to-use in-app inheritance calculator made accessible through its Dost app. The cutting-edge financial tool is designed to empower individuals, especially women, by providing clear insights into their inheritance share. The calculator's launch is a testament to the Bank's commitment to promoting financial inclusion and social justice through this initiative.

"We believe that every individual has the right to financial independence and security," emphasized Haaris Mahmood Chaudhary, Interim CEO of Mobilink Bank. "Through this inheritance calculator, we are committed to giving a voice to the women who lack the tools and knowledge to understand their inheritance share and are often denied it. Our platform provides clarity and helps individuals, particularly women, to calculate their rightful inheritance share within minutes. By addressing the challenges of cultural variations, data privacy, and informal practices, we want to ensure that our users know their due share and claim it rightfully."

With a steadfast commitment to building an inclusive environment, the Bank offers a comprehensive suite of products and services designed to meet the diverse needs of its growing customer base.

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

# Arshad Nadeem, record-holder Olympian, called on General Sahir Shamshad Mirza

Sports Desk

RAWALPINDI: Arshad Nadeem, record-holder Olympian, called on General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, at Joint Staff Headquarters, Rawalpindi.

Chairman JCSC lauded Arshad Nadeem's efforts for securing Pakistan's first-ever Gold Medal in a singles' event and setting up of a new Olympic record.

General Sahir Shamshad Mirza also appreciated the diligence and devotion of Arshad Nadeem in achieving a momentous milestone in Pakistan's sport history and wished him the very best for his future endeavours.



# ICCI President presents Rs. 1m cheque to Arshad Nadeem

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Arshad Nadeem, Pakistan's javelin superstar who created history for Pakistan by winning a gold medal with a 92.97-metre throw, expressed his gratitude to Allah Almighty and the nation for the respect and honor bestowed upon him on winning the Gold Medal at Paris Olympics. He was speaking at a ceremony held in his honor at the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) on Tuesday where he was also presented with a cheque of Rs. 10,00,000/- by ICCI President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari. A cheque among to Rs. five million will also be presented to national hero by the Business community of Islamabad.

Arshad Nadeem attributed his success to hard work and dedication, stating that there was a long journey behind his achievement. He vowed to maintain his performance in upcoming events.

Earlier, Arshad Nadeem received a warm welcome upon his arrival at the Chamber House.

Addressing the ceremony, ICCI President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari highlighted the significance of sports in promoting national unity and praised Arshad Nadeem as a national hero



who ended Pakistan's 32-year wait for an Olympic medal, lifting the nation's spirits during a challenging time.

Bakhtawari emphasized the need to promote sports to attract youth towards healthy activities, foster harmony, and promote peace and tranquility. He stressed that winning gold medals is essential in today's world, as it earns nations recognition and respect. He encouraged the creation of more athletes like Arshad Nadeem to bring pride to Pakistan.

On behalf of the ICCI he called for increased support for Pakistan's sporting talent, better facilities and nurturing to enable young athletes to excel on the global stage. It is the collective responsibility of sports organizations

to collaborate in securing funding and providing essential infrastructure, such as stadiums and training facilities, to aspiring sports stars.

He apprised the audience that ICCI has already taken the initiative to establish a sports academy in Islamabad with the help of Capital Development Authority which will be named after Arshad Nadeem and that the Chamber will extend its fullest support for the promotion of healthy activities not only in Islamabad but the entire Pakistan.

Secretary General United Business Group and former Zafar Bakhtawari said Arshad Nadeem by winning the gold medal has ignited a candle of hope in the nation in despair. He said that Pakistani nation is a great nation which

can generate wonders if it gets guidance. He said that it is at the credit of Arshad Nadeem that he created a unity in the nation at this challenging times which is need of the hour. He further said that sports always play an important role in bringing the nations closer to each other and promoting peace and harmony the world-over.

Senior Vice President ICCI Faad Waheed appreciated Arshad Nadeem for winning the gold medal because of his hard work and determination despite the meager resources by saying that we will have to promote games for ensuring healthier atmosphere for our youth.

Vice President Engr Azhar ul Islam Zafar in his vote of thanks said that entire nation is indebted to Arshad Nadeem for giving this gift which is being celebrated throughout the country.

Coach Salman Iqbal Butt expressed his gratitude to the ICCI and the business community all over the country for the recognition and honour being extended to Arshad Nadeem by saying that this patronage will in deed by a great service to the nation.

The ceremony was largely attended by the members of business community from the twin cities, civil society, students and mediapersons.

# Team Pakistan make inroads in Asian MMA Championship

A Sports

LAHORE: A total of 12 Pakistan fighters, eight men and four women, advanced into the semi-final stage of the ongoing Asian MMA Championship in respective categories.

In an eventful third day of the Asian MMA Championship, which featured 33 matches, saw Pakistan's Abdul Manan, Zeeshan Akbar, Muhammad Aroz Saleem Baig, Taimur Chishty, Abdul Sami, Asghar Khan, Shahab Ali and Zulqarnain Khan, advancing into the Men's semi-finals of



different weight categories. Representing Team Pakistan in the Flyweight category, Manan outclassed Team Kyrgyzstan's

Avazbek Tairov to advance further while Zeeshan triumphed over Islam Nazarmukhamedov in the Bantamweight duel.

In the Lightweight category, Shahab Ali downed Team Iran's Daryush Khanlari to book his semi-final with Team Lebanon's Fadi Jaber.

Pakistan fighters were equally impressive in the women's category as four of their fighters, Bushra Ahmed, Eman Khan, Bushra Akhtar and Bano Butt, made it to the semi-finals in their respective categories.

Bano will square off against Team India's Khushboo Nishad in the semi-final of the Women's Atomweight category. The Asian Championship of

MMA is being held in Pakistan for the first time, while Brave Combat Federation marked its return to Pakistan after a six-year gap. This Asian MMA Championship, scheduled from 18th to 22nd August 2024, is being broadcast live on Pakistan's first HD sports channel, A Sports, and simultaneously streamed on ARY ZAP.

A total of 12 countries are participating in the Asian Championship, featuring more than 180 fighters, 120 officials, and 120 technical staff will participate in the competitions.

# Women's T20 World Cup 2024 moved from Bangladesh

A Sports

ISLAMABAD: The Women's T20 World Cup 2024, originally scheduled to be hosted by Bangladesh, has been relocated to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the International Cricket Council (ICC) confirmed Tuesday.



The global event will follow the same schedule and will run from October 3 to 20 with the matches now staged in Dubai and Sharjah with the hosting rights continuing to remain with the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB).

The decision was made owing to the nationwide protests in Bangladesh.

ICC Chief Executive Geoff Allardice expressed regret over moving the tournament from Bangladesh to UAE, stating that he was sure that the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) would host a "memorable" event.

"It is a shame not to be hosting the Women's T20 World Cup in Bangladesh as we know the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) would have staged a memorable event," Allardice said in a statement.

"I would like to thank the team at the BCB for exploring all avenues to try and enable the event to be hosted in Bangladesh, but travel advisories from the governments of a number of the participating teams meant that wasn't feasible. However, they will retain hosting rights. We look forward to taking an ICC global event to Bangladesh in the near future.

Allardice further lauded the UAE Cricket for stepping up as the host of the Women's T20 World Cup 2024.

"I'd also like to thank the Emirates Cricket Board for stepping in to host on behalf of the BCB and Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe for their generous offers of support, and we look forward to seeing ICC global events in both of those countries in 2026."

# T20 World Cup 2024: Two pitches deemed "unsatisfactory" by ICC

A Sports

DUBAI: The International Cricket Council (ICC) issued the much-awaited pitch ratings for this year's Men's T20 World Cup, co-hosted by the United States of America (USA) and the West Indies.



As per the apex cricketing body, the pitch for the first two matches at the Nassau County International Cricket Stadium in New York and the surface for the first semi-final of the global event between Afghanistan and Sri Lanka at the Brian Lara Academy in Tarouba was "unsatisfactory".

The assessment of the pitches was issued two months after the conclusion of the Men's T20 World Cup 2024 which saw India coming from behind to down South Africa and clinch their second title.

In the first two matches in New York, Sri Lanka were bowled out on just 77 by South Africa on June 3 while in another fixture, two days later, Ireland were booked on 96 by eventual champions India.

In the second of the aforementioned fixtures, a handful of players from both sides suffered blows due to the uncertain bounce of the pitch.

India captain Rohit Sharma was forced to retire out as a precautionary measure after being hit on the forearm by pacer Josh Little. Wicketkeeper batter Rishabh Pant was also struck by one of Little's deliveries while Ireland batter Harry Tector coped with a blow on his finger, courtesy of a short ball by Jasprit Bumrah.

The pitches being used for the T20 World Cup 2024, drew criticism from cricket pundits with former Zimbabwe cricketer Andy Flower terming the New Zealand pitch "bordering on dangerous" while Former England cricketer Michael Vaughan coined it "shocking".

However, the pitch used for the semi-final between South Africa and Afghanistan came under tighter scrutiny which saw the Asian side bundling out on a meagre 56.

Some of the deliveries kept low while some bumped up from similar spots, clearly indicating the uneven bounce the surface possessed.

Afghanistan head coach Jonathan Trott, following his team's defeat in the semi-final, expressed his dissatisfaction and stated, "That's not a pitch you want to play a semi-final on."

For the unversed, the ICC rates pitches and outfields of all international matches on a scale that ranges from very good to unfit: very good, good, satisfactory, unsatisfactory and unfit.

The surface used for the second T20 World Cup 2024 semi-final between India and defending champions England received "satisfactory" rating while the Kensington Oval's pitch for the final between India and South Africa was rated "very good".

The ICC was largely impressed by the outfields of the T20 World Cup 2024 as only New York and Guyana were rated "satisfactory" while the rest were "very good".

# Trophy for Pakistan-Bangladesh Test series unveiled

A Sports

RAWALPINDI: The glittering trophy for the Test series between Pakistan and Bangladesh was unveiled at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium here on Tuesday.

The two-match series part of the ICC World Test Championship (WTC) will run from August 21 to September 4 with both matches to be played at the same venue.

The first Test match will commence at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium from 21 August, while the second Test match will be played from 30 August to 3 September.

Pakistan are currently ranked sixth in the ICC World Test Championship 2023-25. They have played two away series in the championship, winning 2-0 against Sri Lanka and losing 3-0 to Australia.

Pakistan are scheduled to play nine Test matches this season,

their busiest Test season since 1998-99.

Seven of these Test matches will be played at home, including two against Bangladesh, three against England in October and two against West Indies in January next year.

The two away Test matches are against South Africa, which will be played in December/January.

The first Test match against Bangladesh marks Pakistan red-ball head coach Jason Gillespie's first international assignment since his appointment in April this year.

It will also be Shan Masood's first Test match as captain on home soil, embarking on a new era in red-ball cricket for the team.

Previewing the Test series, Pakistan captain Shan Masood shared his excitement for the upcoming matches, with the hope to kick off the busy season at high.

"Fans always want the cricket team to do well and win matches for them. We are all excited about the series and the great season ahead," said Shan.

"We have a talented group of cricketers who are eager to perform well in the series. Our bowlers are capable of taking 20 wickets and helping the team win matches.

"The series against Bangladesh is very important for us as we prepare for a busy season ahead, and we are determined to perform well.

"We had some good training sessions leading up to the series, and the coaching staff has worked hard with the players.

"It is an honour and a privilege to lead the side at home. With captaincy comes great responsibility, and I will do my best to take this team forward."

Bangladesh captain Najmul Hossain Shanto expressed gratitude towards the Pakistan Cricket

Board (PCB) and acknowledged the importance of the series for both teams.

"We are grateful to the PCB for helping us get some practice here in Lahore. We had a couple of sessions there and I am hopeful the players will do well in the series," said Shanto.

"The series against Pakistan is very important and we know that Pakistan has great potential. The series is part of the ICC Championship and we know every game is very important.

"The series between Bangladesh 'A' and Pakistan Shaheens have helped our players to assess the conditions well."

Pakistan Playing XI for the first Bangladesh Test: Abdullah Shafique, Saim Ayub, Shan Masood (c), Babar Azam, Saud Shakeel, Mohammad Rizwan (wk), Salman Ali Agha, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Naseem Shah, Khurram Shehzad, Mohammad Ali.



Bangladesh squad: Najmul Hossain Shanto (c), Hasan Mahmud, Litton Kumer Das, Mehidy Hasan Miraz, Mominul Haque, Mushfiqur Rahim, Nahid Rana, Nayeem Hasan, Shadman Islam, Shakib Al Hasan, Shoriful Islam, Syed Khaled Ahmed, Taijul Islam and Zakir Hasan

## Call on

ISLAMABAD: Outgoing Ambassador of Palestine H.E. Ahmad Jawad A Rabei called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday.



Photo: PID

## PM reiterates Pakistan's support for Palestinian people's right to self-determination

## City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday reiterated Pakistan's unwavering support for the Palestinian people and their right to self-determination and strongly condemned Israel's barbaric actions against innocent Palestinians in Gaza.

The prime minister, in a meeting with outgoing Ambassador of Palestine Ahmed Jawad A. A. Rabei who called on him here, said Israel's barbarism since October 7, 2023, led to the heart-wrenching killing of over 40,000 innocent Palestinians, including women and children, and more than 90,000 injured.

He reaffirmed Pakistan's strong commitment and support for efforts to find a just and lasting resolution of the Palestine issue through a two-state solution with the creation of an independent state of Palestine with pre-1967 borders and Al Quds as its capital, in accordance with relevant UN resolutions.

Ambassador Jawad thanked the prime minister for his support for the Palestinian cause as well as for the hospitality extended to him during his five-year tenure. He lauded Pakistan's historic and consistent stance on Palestine and its contribution to the international efforts for peace and stability in the region.

The ambassador thanked the Government of Pakistan for providing much-needed humanitarian assistance and offering scholarships to Palestinian medical students to complete their studies in Pakistan. The prime minister wished the Palestinian ambassador success in his future endeavors.

## Jam Kamal Khan emphasizes reform and growth in Pakistan's gems and jewellery sector

## Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan reaffirmed the government's commitment to revitalizing Pakistan's gems and jewelry industry during a key meeting with the Sectoral Council for Gems and Jewellery.

The meeting, which gathered virtually, senior officials from the public and private sectors, focused on enhancing the sector's export potential and aligning with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's vision to make this billion-dollar industry a cornerstone of Pakistan's economy.

Minister Jam Kamal highlighted the Prime Minister's active engagement with



the sector, noting that PM Shehbaz Sharif has personally convened three to four meetings over the past few months

to address the industry's challenges and opportunities. The Minister underscored the government's dedication

to this sector, emphasizing that the policy-making process must be driven by input from private sector stakeholders to

ensure its success.

During the meeting, the Chairman of the Council, Salman Hanif, pinpointed regulatory barriers, particularly amendments to SRO 760, as critical hurdles impeding the industry's growth.

Hanif argued for the regularization of the sector to unlock its full potential. He stressed that without addressing these regulatory challenges, the industry would struggle to reach its export targets.

The Minister further assured that the council would be involved in upcoming high-level discussions and that dedicated ministry officers would work closely with the council to finalize the proposal.

## Senator Rubina Khalid Lauds Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

## City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Senator Rubina Khalid, Chairperson of the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), has commended the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for its pivotal role in the success of the Nashonuma Conditional Cash Transfer program. During a meeting today with Dr. Anita Zaidi from the Foundation at the BISP headquarters, Senator Rubina Khalid emphasized the ongoing partnership between BISP and the Foundation in advancing maternal and child health initiatives in Pakistan.

The meeting brought together key figures, including Syed Ali Mehmood, Country Lead; Mr. Sharjeel Murtaza, Chief Digital Officer, Karandaaz; Mr. Taimoor Ali, Head of DFS; Ms. Samia Ali, Gender Lead; Usman Kokab Khan, Associate Director of Digital Transformation, among others.



Dr. Anita Zaidi and Syed Ali Mehmood proposed innovative strategies to encourage hospital births by incentivizing women, and leveraging RAAST for secure digital payments

to beneficiaries. Senator Rubina Khalid appreciated the proposed idea and acknowledged the challenge of ensuring transparent payments to women beneficiaries without compro-

promising their dignity, stating, "BISP is committed to addressing this challenge and is actively consulting with the State Bank of Pakistan to adopt a transparent payment mechanism."

Published by: Almass Ayoub Sabir from Zero Point Printers Rawalpindi

## United efforts, youth's hard work inevitable to make Pakistan an economic power: Dar

## City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on Tuesday said that the nation's united efforts and youth's excellence in education and innovation were inevitable to develop Pakistan as an economic power.

"I believe that Pakistan was created in the name of Allah. This can never fail. It has to prosper. It has to develop and lead Muslim Ummah one day. You have the potential...If we put in our efforts, we can become an economic power. Once we become an economic power, we will lead Muslim Ummah," he said addressing the Youth Convention held here.



Advising the youth to avail education opportunities in classrooms as well as outside, opt for new technologies, and explore new avenues, he also asked the youth to beware of the enemies within which were poised to destroy the country.

## Initial work for privatization of discos geared up

## Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Privatization of Electricity Distribution Companies (DISCOs) is being processed and initial work in this regard has been geared up. Moreover, advertisements have also been launched in international media on August 17. This was disclosed in a high-level meeting co chaired by Federal Minister for Privatization, Board of Investment and Communications Abdul Aleem Khan and Federal Minister for Energy Sardar Awaiz Ahmad Khan Laghari.

Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan observed that the privatization of DISCOs will be completed in different phases in which transparency and technical aspects must be kept into consideration. Federal Minister for Energy Sardar Awaiz Laghari directed that the issues necessary for the privatization of DISCOs should be dealt with as soon as possible and access to the details and data of these institutions should be handed over to the inter-



ested parties. Federal Minister for Privatization Abdul Aleem Khan said that wherever possible, the process of privatization should be completed in the shortest possible time.

Briefing the meeting, Secretary Privatization and senior officials told that the complete schedule for the privatization of "DISCOs" has been prepared and its final approval will be taken from the Cabinet Committee and the Federal Government. Appointment of Financial Advisor, market sounding, restructuring level and other important issues of privatization of DISCOs also came under discussion in this meeting.

## IHC demands explanation from govt in internet slowdown case, hints at stay order

## City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad High Court Chief Justice Aamer Farooq has summoned relevant officials to explain the recent slowdown in internet speeds in the country.

During a hearing on a petition against the slow internet speeds and the installation of a firewall, the Chief Justice questioned the petitioner's lawyer, Imaan Mazari, about the cause of the internet slowdown.

"Before we issue any order, tell us what is actually happening?" Justice Farooq asked. "Which ministry is responsible for this? We need to know the reason behind the decline in internet speed. Should we ask the PTA or the Ministry of Information

Technology?"

Mazari informed the court that the PTA has remained silent on the matter.

The Chief Justice then inquired about the appropriate official to summon, asking if the Secretary or Joint Secretary should be called. Mazari requested that high-ranking officials from the relevant ministries be summoned.

Justice Farooq responded, "We will summon someone who knows about this matter and can brief the court."

The court issued notices to the parties involved and adjourned the hearing until Monday, seeking a response by then.

## Pakistan has highest power tariff in region, admits energy minister

ISLAMABAD: Energy Minister Awaiz Leghari on Tuesday admitted that the electricity tariffs in Pakistan were the highest in the region but added that the poor were being provided subsidy in power bills.

"No doubt, we're providing the most expensive electricity in the region, but poor consumers are getting at subsidised rates with others bearing the burden," the minister said while addressing the National Youth Convention in Islamabad.

Due to the high cost of electricity, the minister said, industries across the country were shutting down but the government was "now providing electricity to the industries at lower rates, bearing the additional costs".

Meanwhile, Leghari also asked the nation to endure "two-hour of load-shedding" which according to him,

could result in significant savings of up to Rs50 billion

"Another measure to save electricity is switching fans to energy efficient," he said, adding that the government has chalked out new power plan to eliminate loadshedding.

The power minister further said that earlier, the cost of electricity for the consumers was Rs10 per unit, but it has increased due to the depreciation of local currency against US dollar. "The current average electricity cost stands at Rs44 per unit," he added.

Leghari noted that the nation would receive a "good news" regarding independent power producers (IPPs) soon. "We secretly began work on IPPs, but the news leaked from the ministry," he said.