

# Daily The Spokesman

A Leading National Daily



فرمان رسول ﷺ  
 نبی کریم صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم نے اپنے پیغمبر سے روایت کیا کہ اللہ پاک فرماتا ہے کہ جب بندہ مجھ سے ایک بات کہے تو مجھ سے قریب ہو جائے تو میں ایک ہاتھ اس سے قریب ہوں گا اور جب بندہ مجھ سے ایک ہاتھ قریب ہوتا ہے تو میں اس سے دوا ہاتھ قریب ہوں گا اور جب وہ میرے پاس پہنچے گا تو میں اس سے قریب ہوں گا اور جب وہ میرے پاس پہنچے گا تو میں اس سے قریب ہوں گا۔  
 (صحیح بخاری، صفحہ نمبر 7536)  
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## JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman postpones Islamabad march

"Today, I spoke with Mufti Taqi Usmani and it has been decided that a meeting of all allied madressahs will be held to take everyone into confidence and adopt a unified stance. If a call needs to be made afterwards, be prepared; this meeting will take place on December 16 or 17," Fazl stated.



## Pakistan ranks 198th globally in internet speed rankings

According to the report, Pakistan ranks below Palestine, Bhutan, Ghana, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, and Libya in internet speed. The average mobile internet download speed in Pakistan is 19.59 Mbps, while broadband internet averages 15.52 Mbps. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) leads globally in both mobile and broadband internet speed, followed by Singapore in mobile internet and Qatar in broadband speed.

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## Called on

LAHORE: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday.



Photo: PID

## PM urges people to play role in ensuring a corruption-free future

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has expressed the government's commitment to root out corruption at every level, urging the people to play their role in the government's quest for a corruption-free future.

"On this International Anti-Corruption Day, let us stand together, united in our resolve to build a Pakistan where public resources are utilized efficiently for the welfare of our people," the prime minister said in a message.

"Let us work together for a future where the rule of law prevails and where accountability is the bedrock for all," he said.

He said the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) and other law enforcement agencies were working tirelessly to ensure that those who misuse power and rob the hard-earned public reve-

nues face the consequences of their actions. "We recognize the hard work of our institutions and stand with them in this important task to root out corruption from society", he added.

He highlighted that the 9th of December marked the International Anti-Corruption Day, a reminder of the global efforts to confront one of the greatest challenges facing our societies — corruption. "This year's theme "Uniting with Youth Against Corruption: Shaping Tomorrow's Integrity" rightly highlights the important role that our youth can play in the fight against corruption. Our younger generation deserves a future where they can thrive free from corruption," he added.

Today, he said Pakistan joined the international community to renew its commitment to transparency, integrity, and accountability for now and for future generations.

## Ministry of Law Organizes Qualifying Test for Appointment of Members in the Appellate Tribunal Inland Revenue (ATIR)

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: On the directions of the Prime Minister of Pakistan, the Ministry of Law and Justice on Sunday organised a Qualifying Skills Test for appointment of Members in the Appellate Tribunal Inland Revenue (ATIR) against 20 vacant posts.

To ensure that the test process was transparent, fair, competitive and held in a secure environment, the National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) was selected as a venue. As a result, the test was conducted today by the NUST at its Islamabad Examination Centre.

It is pointed out that In June 2024 the Ministry of Law and Justice invited the applications from interested candidates to fill these vacancies. Approximately 300 applicants applied, and after thorough scrutiny under a revised procedure, 262 applicants were short-listed to participate in the test.

The ATIR is a quasi-judicial forum that hears appeals against the orders passed by the Regional Commissioners/Commissioners of Inland Revenue Services (IRS). The Tribunal

Continued on Page 8

## Speculations grow about Assad's death in plane crash

Some sources suggest the IL-76 may have been shot down by rebels

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Reports are circulating that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's jet, an IL-76, crashed following his alleged escape from Damascus amidst a rebel takeover of the capital. While official confirmation is lacking, various news outlets and social media are abuzz with accounts of the incident.

According to flight tracking website Flightradar24, a Syrian Airlines plane departed Damascus International Airport at the same time as rebels seized control of the city. Initially heading towards the Syrian coast, the plane abruptly changed course, flying in a different direction for several minutes before disappearing from radar near Homs.

Data suggests the aircraft descended



rapidly before vanishing, raising concerns about the safety of those on board.

Speculation is rife regarding the plane's fate and the president's whereabouts. Some sources suggest the IL-76 may have been shot down by rebels, who possess significant anti-aircraft capabilities, especially given the

reported abandonment of equipment by the Syrian army.

Another theory proposes the transponder was deliberately switched off to avoid tracking.

Alternatively, it's speculated the plane may have been headed to a Russian airbase in Latakia, considered a safe haven for Assad, though this remains unconfirmed by authorities.

Turkish media outlets have also reported the alleged crash, adding to the uncertainty surrounding the incident.

While there's no definitive confirmation of the plane's destruction or the president's fate, the conflicting reports and lack of official statements have created significant international intrigue.

## Pakistani nationals are safe in Syria: FO

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Office on Sunday said all Pakistani nationals were safe in Syria and had been advised to exercise caution.

"We are closely monitoring the evolving situation in Syria," the Foreign Office Spokesperson said in a statement.

The statement added that the Embassy of Pakistan in Syria was open for support and advice.

As of now Damascus Airport is closed. Our embassy remains in contact with stranded Pakistani nationals including Zaireen. It will facilitate their return once the airport opens, it added.

Pakistan has always supported unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria, and there is no change in our principled position, the Spokesperson said

## PML-N head Nawaz directs PM Shehbaz to resolve Fazl's concerns on seminary bill

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif directed Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, who is his younger brother, to address Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman's concerns regarding the Societies Registration (Amendment) Bill—legislation intended to register madrasahs.

He said during a meeting between the two in Lahore on Sunday, sources said. They discussed the overall political situation in the country.

The Societies Registration (Amendment) Bill, 2024, is legislation stemming from an agreement between the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl and the government in

Continued on Page 8

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تدرت نے ذائقہ دیا احمد نے محفوظ کیا!

# CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif Reaches China on 8-Day Official Visit

**Bureau Report**

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif arrived in Beijing to undertake China visit as the first female Chief Minister of Punjab and Pakistan. She was accorded a warm reception at the Beijing airport upon her arrival and was presented with a bouquet. 6 senior officials of the Communist Party of China were present at the airport to warmly welcome her. Pakistan's Ambassador to China Khalil Hashmi and his wife also welcomed her at the airport.

A high-level delegation of the Communist Party of China called on CM Punjab. The head of the Chinese delegation, Lin Tao thanked CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif and her delegation upon their arrival and welcomed them from the bottom of his heart.

The Chief Minister said on the occasion, "Pak-China friendship is moving towards greater heights. We want to take Punjab to economic and financial heights with the cooperation of China. On behalf of the Punjab government



and the people of Punjab, I would like to extend my gratitude to the people of China."

Deputy Director General of the Communist Party of China Lin Tao, Consular South Asian Affairs Mrs. Li Zhenyao, Deputy Director of the Bureau of Southeast Chen Zhenbo, South Asian

Affairs Attaché, Seng Guoyu and Miss Chen Yubo and Miss Zhou Chenyu accorded her a warm reception. Other officers of the Pakistan's embassy were also present at the airport.

Senator Pervez Rashid, Senior Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb, Minister for Information and Culture

Azma Zahid Bokhari, Provincial Ministers Bilal Akbar, Ashiq Kirmani and others accompanied her.

The official engagements of CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif's 8-day visit will commence tomorrow. She will pay a visit to hospitals, schools and other institutions in China.

## Governor Punjab visits Major Muhammad Haseeb Shaheed's residence

**City Desk**

RAWALPINDI: Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan visited the residence of Major Muhammad Haseeb Shaheed here Sunday and offered his condolences with his family. The Governor prayed for the martyr's high rank. Later, while talking to the media, he said that Major Muhammad Haseeb was martyred while performing his duty.

Martyrs are our pride, their sacrifices will not go in vain. Martyrs have ensured the security of the country with their blood, he said.

The Governor Punjab said that sacrificing one's life for the security of the country was a matter of honour.

"The sacrifices of the martyrs have shaped the nation we stand in today. The patriotic spirit of their parents and relatives is both commendable and unparalleled." He concluded.

## Slow internet Speed, People are Facing Severe Difficulties: Chaudhry Muhammad Arif

**Quratul Ain Asim**

MULTAN: information Technology Expert Chaudhry Muhammad Arif Said The Internet slows down again in the country, users worried Internet has slowed down again in different parts of the country, resulting in problems for users.



Due to slow internet speed across the country, people are facing severe difficulties due to lack of online ticket booking for PIA and Railways. Due to dead slow speed of internet, people are unable to book tickets and seats in domestic and foreign airlines.

Due to slow internet, people are also facing severe difficulties in online tracking of train and courier services.

Not only videos and pictures are not being downloaded on social media apps, but browsing of other websites on the internet is also slow.

Wi-Fi service is also affected in many areas, due to which users are facing problems in uploading and downloading.

There are also difficulties in booking rides for online business, online classes and travel. Food delivery riders, and daily wage earners connected to online taxi services are seeing their livelihoods in danger.

In the era of digital economy, the e-commerce sector has been severely affected by the internet shutdown, businessmen ordering and sending shipments from other countries are also facing problems. According to IT experts, the Pakistani economy is losing billions of rupees daily due to the slowdown and shutdown of the internet. The profit of the Pakistani telecom sector alone is three billion rupees daily, but the sector is severely affected due to the slowdown of the internet.

## Deputy Commissioner lauds Akhuwat Foundation for IT training for Attock youth

**Raza Naqvi**

ATTOCK: By acquiring IT education, the youth of Attock can not only secure a bright future for themselves but also become financially supportive for their families and play an active role in the development of Pakistan. These views were expressed by Deputy Commissioner Attock, Rao Atif Raza, during a discussion with a delegation of trainees who have been awarded scholarships for a four-month course on digital marketing and search engine optimization at Akhuwat IT Training, Faisalabad. This interaction took place after the signing of an MoU between the Deputy Commissioner's Office and the Akhuwat Foundation. He advised the participants of the four-month training program to make the most of this unique opportunity, acquire valuable skills, build a successful career, and contribute actively to the development of Attock and the country upon their return. It is noteworthy that this initiative was made possible after the special invitation of Deputy Commissioner Attock, Rao Atif Raza, to the Chairman of Akhuwat Foundation, Dr. Muhammad Amjad Saqib, who visited Attock and extended this offer. This program is a significant step toward providing IT education and opportunities to the youth of Attock. This is the first batch, and more batches will be sent in the future.

## Christmas celebration rally

KARACHI: Christians wearing Santa Claus dresses as participate in a Christmas celebration rally at a road, in the Provincial Capital.



Photo: Online

# Abbottabad High Court Bench suspends the notification banning boating activities in Khanpur Dam

**Zakir Hussain Tanoli**

HARIPUR HAZARA: The Abbottabad High Court bench suspended the notification banning boating activities on Khanpur Dam. On October 26, Deputy Commissioner Haripur Shozab Abbas had imposed a ban on all types of boating activities on Khanpur Dam for one month under Section 144 on the recommendation of the DSP and Assistant Commissioner Khanpur and due to a dispute between boat/jetty owners, which was extended

again for one month on November 25. Against this, the leader of the Boat Association, Babar Zaman, approached the Peshawar High Court, Abbottabad and requested to suspend the notification issued by the Deputy Commissioner banning boating.

The previous day, a single bench of the High Court, while hearing the case, suspended the notification of the Deputy Commissioner Haripur on November 25 for another one month extension on boating activities and sought a response

within 14 days. Boat Association Khanpur Dam (Registered) President Raja Hanif Kayani told reporters that the district and tehsil administrations are busy destroying the tourism of Khanpur Dam. Due to politics, taxes have been imposed on those who earn their livelihood forcibly.

TMA Khanpur wants to collect taxes from WAPDA without any agreement, while WAPDA officials are of the opinion that no other department is authorized to collect taxes without any agreement.

Raja Hanif Kayani further said that we boat/jetty owners want to pay taxes ourselves, but our demand is that one department should legally collect the taxes.

He said that due to the cold war between the provincial and federal departments and local politics, tourism at Khanpur Dam is being destroyed and hundreds of people are afraid of becoming unemployed.

In this whole matter, instead of playing a positive role, the district and tehsil administrations are also pushing people towards



unemployment by imposing restrictions on one hand, while on the other hand, tourists who come to Khanpur Dam every day return disappointed after seeing the closure of boating and the situation. Raja Hanif Kayani

said that the provincial government claims to promote tourism, but it should also take notice of elements trying to end tourism at Khanpur Dam.

He also demanded that the Deputy Commissioner Haripur

solve the problems faced at Khanpur Dam instead of banning boating at Khanpur Dam so that tourism activities can be promoted at Khanpur Dam, which has a unique status across the country.

# Prof- Dr Masood-ul-Rauf Hiraj Elected As a President Of Pakistan Medical Association Multan

**Kiran Asim**

MULTAN: The unanimous candidate panel of UDF and SDA won the PMA Multan election. The entire panel of unanimous candidates of UDF and SDA won the election of PMA Multan with a huge majority. According to the election results, Professor Dr. Masood-ul-Rauf Hiraj was once again elected as the President of Pakistan Medical Association Multan by getting 1928 votes, while the candidate of the opposing South Punjab Medical Forum, President Liaquat Ali Jalal, got 450 votes. The South Punjab Medical Forum (Doctors Union) participated in the Pakistan Medical Association elections for the

first time against the unanimous candidates of UDF and SDA, but no candidate was successful. According to the details, the United Doctors Front and the South Doctors Alliance had announced their support and endorsement of joint candidates in the Pakistan Medical Association Multan election. After which the field of the Pakistan Medical Association Multan election was arranged at Nishar Hospital yesterday. A total of 2391 votes were cast during the election, out of which 108 were rejected while 2283 votes were valid. According to the election results, in the Pakistan Medical Association Multan election, PMA President Prof/Dr Masood-ul-Rauf Hiraj got 1928 votes, General

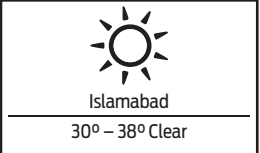
Secretary Dr Imran Haider Qaisrani 1792, Senior Vice President (1) Prof/Dr Nusrat Buzdar 1868, Senior Vice President (2) Dr Farhan Khan 1831, Senior Vice President (P&S) Dr Matlub Mughal 1867, Vice President Dr Ashfaq Siddiqui 1839, Vice President (Multan) Dr Faisal Zafar 1839, Vice President (Shujaabad) Dr Ahmed Khalil Khan 1878, Vice President (Jalalpur) Dr Shaukat Ghaloo 1871, Vice President (Dental) Dr Ijaz Hussain Sahu 1830, Lady Vice President Dr Uzma Shaheen 1839, Press and Information Secretary Dr Waqar Azeem Niazi 1840, Joint Secretary (1) Dr Waqas Afzal 1849, Joint Secretary (2) Dr. Khalid Javed Rind 1875, Joint Secretary (Dental) Dr. Mazhar Rasool 1877,



Cultural Secretary Dr. Momin Rasheed 1869, Lady Cultural Secretary Dr. Asma Bano 1862, Finance Secretary Dr. Adnan Bashir 1819, and Magazine Secretary Dr. Ali Rabbani 1874 votes, and the entire

panel was declared successful by a large majority. After the success, bhangeras were played to the beat of drums and a great celebration was held at night. The South Punjab Medical Forum, doctors,

paramedical staff, nurses and other hospital staff congratulated the elected candidates of UDF and SDA on their success in the Pakistan Medical Association Multan elections.



**SERVICES**

**Namaz Timings**

Fajr ..... 5:31 am  
 Zohr ..... 12:00 pm  
 Asr ..... 3:22 pm  
 Maghrib ..... 4:59 pm  
 Isha ..... 6:28 pm

**EMERGENCY**

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

**ENQUIRY**

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

**HOSPITALS**

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

**DEPARTMENTS**

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

**COMPLAINTS**

Water Tanker Service  
 E-7, F-10 & F-11 ..... 9204654  
 G-5, G-6, G-7, G-8 ..... 9203883  
 G-9, G-10, G-11, G-12, H-8 ..... 9266316  
 Wapda Islamabad ..... 9217579-80  
 Sui Gas Complaint ..... 119, 9272249  
 Wasa Water Tank  
 Rawalpindi ..... 0331-5022125

**Clarification**

**City Desk**

ISLAMABAD: The Bangladesh High Commission has issued a clarification in response to a report carried in Daily The Spokesman that Mr. Muhammad Ali Khalid, a Pakistani national bearing CNIC No. 61101-4752855-5 is not in the employment of the High Commission. The High Commission will not be responsible for any of his verbal or written communications, commitments, statements or activities.

# Mountain Melodies: Honoring Pakistan's Folk Music and Cultural Heritage

**Spokesman Report**

ISLAMABAD: Serena Hotels, as part of its Cultural Diplomacy Initiative, joined hands with Agha Khan Cultural Services Pakistan and the Agha Khan Foundation to celebrate and promote the rich cultural music and heritage of Pakistan through a delightful evening of folk music.

The event was a mesmerizing journey into Pakistan's vibrant traditions, featuring melodious tunes and captivating performances that showcased the essence of the nation's cultural identity. Renowned artists, including Dr. Masuma, Ustad Noor Bakhsh, Ustad Doshambay, and talented students from the Leif Larsen Music Centre, performed live, leaving the audience fascinated with their artistry and passion.

The Leif Larsen Music Centre, founded in April 2011 at the historic Altit Fort, serves as a beacon of the revival of folk music of the region. It provides invaluable facilities for traditional musicians and performers from Gilgit-Bal-

tistan and Chitral, enabling them to mentor youth in diverse traditions and genres of mountain music, ensuring the continuity of these cherished art forms.

The event was further graced by the Norwegian Ambassador H. E. Per Albert Ilsaas, who attended as the Chief Guest. In his address, the Ambassador highlighted the profound impact of cultural initiatives in bridging communities and promoting mutual understanding. He highly praised the collaboration between Serena Hotels, Agha Khan Cultural Services Pakistan, and the Agha Khan Foundation as a shining example of how cultural exchange can celebrate diversity, preserve heritage, and strengthen the bonds between different cultures. The Ambassador emphasized that events like these not only showcase the richness of Pakistan's traditions but also serve as a universal language that unites people across geographical and cultural boundaries.

Serena Hotels remains at the forefront of promoting Cultural Diplomacy through various initiatives that



celebrate and preserve Pakistan's rich heritage. These include the Satrang Art Gallery, dedicated to exhibiting contemporary art; crafts festivals that honor and

support the work of local artisans; and the musical platform Sarangi, which promotes traditional musical talent. Through these endeavors, Serena Hotels

reaffirms its commitment to preserving cultural traditions while encouraging interchange and artistic collaboration on both national and international levels.

## Mountain Melodies

ISLAMABAD: A man enjoying dancing during celebrations of folk music heritage ceremony title Mountain Melodies, organized by Agha Khan Foundation, at a local hotel in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

## Islamabad's Rock Climbing Community Celebrates International Mountain Day

**Mohammad Amin**

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad rock climbing community gathered at Margalla Hills near Saidpur village to celebrate International Mountain Day. Organized by renowned climber and E-Adventure owner Mr. Sajid Aslam, the event attracted local youth and expatriates, offering thrilling rock climbing experiences on various routes.

The celebration concluded with a cake-cutting ceremony led by Mr. Sajid Aslam and Abu Zafar Sadiq, President of the Alpine Club of Pakistan. With rock climbing growing in popularity among youth and diplomats, Margalla Hills continues to shine as a hub for adventure sports and outdoor tourism.

## Inauguration Ceremony of Gulshan Zahra Garden at BZU Zainab Hall held

**Zain Khan Malghani**

MULTAN: Inauguration Ceremony of Gulshan Zahra Garden at BZU Zainab Hall - A Significant Step Towards Sustainable Campus Life. According to details, the inauguration ceremony of Gulshan Zahra Garden was held yesterday at Zainab Hall, Bahauddin Zakariya University (BZU). The event was organized under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Syeda Azra Batool, Warden, and Dr. Ruksana Safdar Bajwa, Superintendent. This project commenced after both officials assumed their positions in August 2023 and was completed through the Warden's vision and teamwork.

The Chief Guest, Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Muhammad Zubair Iqbal, inaugurated the garden and planted a tree, emphasizing the importance of eco-friendly initiatives. In his address, he referred to Gulshan Zahra Garden as a symbol of positive change in the university, highlighting that it would not only enhance campus aesthetics but also provide students with a peaceful and environmentally conscious space.

The Vice Chancellor suggested aligning such projects with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 15 (Life on Land). He also met with international students residing in Zainab Hall, congratulating them on their academic achievements and encouraging them to strive further.

Prof. Dr. Syeda Azra Batool, the Warden, stated, "Gulshan Zahra Garden was a dream that I turned into reality with the support of my team. The project was based on environmental principles and focused on recycling materials."

Gulshan Zahra Garden has become a distinctive feature of Zainab Hall and will serve as a model for other hostels. The initiative conveys a strong message about the significance of environmental sustainability, responsibility, and teamwork.



# Scholars and leaders of six faiths explore religion's role in fostering global peace and harmony

**City Desk**

ISLAMABAD: In a rare and inspiring gathering, scholars and religious leaders representing six different faiths convened at an international seminar to discuss the transformative role of religion in fostering peace, harmony, and justice.

The seminar, titled "The Role of Religions in Fostering Peace, Harmony, and Justice" and organized by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), Islamabad, brought together voices from Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, and Judaism to explore how shared ethical values and consciously practiced faith can bridge divides, counter misconceptions, and create a foundation for global unity. This unique event highlighted the potential of dialogue among followers of different faiths to address contempo-



rary challenges and promote inclusive narratives rooted in mutual respect and understanding.

The session, chaired by Justice Dr

Qibla Ayaz, member, Shariat Appellate Bench, Supreme Court of Pakistan (SCP) was addressed by Rev Fr Prof Sarfraz Simon, diocesan director

of Catholic Church, Dr Neelima Shukla-Bhatt of Wellesley College, USA, Dr Kalyan Singh Kalyan of GC University, Lahore, Dr Samantha Ilangakoon of University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka, Dr Ophira Gamliel of University of Glasgow, and Dr Hafiz Waqas Khan of Riphah International University, Islamabad.

This was followed by a panel discussion chaired by Dr Khalid Masud, member judge, Shariat Appellate Bench, SCP, and Dr Zahid Parvez, rector, Markfield Institute of Higher Education, UK, featuring Dr Mary Hunter, post-doctoral researcher, St Leonard's associate of the University of St Andrews, Scotland, Dr Taimia Sabiha, assistant professor, International Islamic University, Islamabad, Dr Seema Farzad, social activist, and Manzoor Masih, member National Commission for Human Rights.

# Tobacco Industry shifting over manipulative tactics to influence public opinion: Experts

**City Desk**

ISLAMABAD: The experts at a stakeholder seminar on Sunday highlighted that the Tobacco Industry under the garb of corporate giants is perpetrating manipulative tactics to influence public opinion hindering progress on public health.

The Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) hosted a high-level stakeholder seminar on "Unveiling the Smoke Screen: Tobacco Industry Interference and Monitoring in Pakistan" that convened local and global experts to stock take Tobacco Industry

propaganda tactics to permeate misleading narrative regarding emerging tobacco products among the masses.

Syed Ali Wasif Naqvi, Senior Research Associate, SDPI in his opening remarks underlined that the Tobacco Industry (TI) has long been a powerful force that hinders progress in global public health.

A recent presentation by Dr. Waseem Iftikhar Janjua, Consultant, Health Centre, SDPI shed light on these insidious efforts, emphasizing the need for greater vigilance and transparency in monitoring tobacco

industry activities.

Dr. Janjua highlighted that Pakistan allows travelers to import tobacco and electronic products, which can be purchased at duty-free shops, raising concerns about the absence of proper regulations and protocols for dealing with the tobacco industry.

A new initiative, the Tobacco Harm Reduction Project, has been launched to investigate the industry's role in spreading tobacco-related harm in Pakistan, he added.

Dr. Sophie Braznell, Research Associate, University of Bath in

global tobacco control, stressed that governments worldwide are increasingly susceptible to the tobacco industry's influence, making it crucial to recognize all instances of interference. "Identifying these instances is the only tool we have to push back against their tactics," she said.

Dr. Tracy Johnston, STOP UK, pointed out that the tobacco industry's claims of fostering economic growth through new investments in the pharmaceutical sector are misleading. These claims, often touted by the industry as part of its "transformation," have been rejected by the



global public health community. Dr. Minhaj us Siraj, CEO, Syndicate Health revealed how the tobacco industry has tried to influence the implementation of the FCTC at the international level, including attempts

to manipulate draft sections regarding transit routes for tobacco trade. Pakistan, with its key role in global tobacco trade routes, successfully resisted these attempts, quashing the industry's influence over legislative

processes. At the local level, Ms. Sania Ali Khan, Technical Lead, STOP Project, Vital Strategies noted that the tobacco industry frequently engages in corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, which, though legal, mask its damaging effects.

Mr. Khurram Hashmi, Senior Technical Lead, Vital Strategies, Pakistan for stronger tobacco control policies, emphasized that although there have been significant efforts to curb tobacco proliferation, the interference of the tobacco industry remains a critical issue.

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# Syria: Trampled Like Grass

**W**hen Israel was carrying out its military operations against Palestine, I initially believed that the scale and magnitude of Israel's actions were disproportionate to Palestine alone and that Israel, along with its benefactor, had a larger strategic objective. This objective eventually came into focus: the weakening of Bashar al-Assad's Shia regime in Syria. Interestingly, the U.S. played a crucial role. It first identified the main factors that kept Assad in power: Russia and Iran.

On one front, Russia became entangled in a prolonged war in Ukraine, where, with the support of the U.S. and Europe, Ukraine was able to limit Russia's advances and push it back on multiple fronts. This prolonged war drained Russia of precious resources, and whatever resources it had were poured into its own conflict, leaving its allies, like Syria, high and dry.

At the same time, the U.S., with its ally Israel, sought to stretch Iran's resources in the Middle East by involving it in a series of regional conflicts. Iran was forced to commit significant resources to supporting Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis in Yemen, and securing its own interests, which left its support for Syria's Assad regime weakened.

This was a critical moment for the anti-Assad militias, supported by Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and other Sunni powers in the Middle East. These countries provided money and USA and its allies including Israel provided military aid, and superior guerrilla tactics and reconnaissance technologies, giving the militias an edge over the forces supporting Assad.

Donald J. Trump, the USA President Elect in his latest statement released on his personnel account on X, gleefully broke the news of Bashar al-Assad's imminent fall. He announced that opposition fighters

in Syria, in an unprecedented move, had taken control of numerous cities in a highly coordinated offensive and were now on the outskirts of Damascus, seemingly preparing for a major push to oust Assad. Trump pointed out that Russia, deeply involved in the ongoing war in Ukraine and having suffered significant losses, including over 600,000 soldiers, appeared incapable of halting this advance through Syria—a country Russia has long protected. He suggested that, just like Assad, Russia might be forced out, which he claimed would, in the end, be beneficial for them.

However, in his signature style, Trump reiterated his isolationist stance, saying, "THE UNITED STATES SHOULD HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH IT. THIS IS NOT OUR FIGHT. LET IT PLAY OUT. DO NOT GET INVOLVED!" Despite his rhetoric, it was clear that the U.S. had been deeply involved in the Syrian conflict for years, both directly and through support of various opposition groups, and it continued to be a significant player in the region.

The situation in Afghanistan echoes the recent developments in Syria. After the U.S.-led invasion in late 2001, NATO and its allies successfully removed the Taliban from power, replacing them with Hamid Karzai's government, followed by Ashraf Ghani in 2014. Despite massive investments of billions of dollars, the training of the Afghan National Army (ANA), and the continued presence of NATO forces, the Afghan government struggled with corruption, insurgency, and internal divisions. The Taliban gradually regained strength, and by 2021, after the U.S. signed the Doha Agreement to withdraw troops, the Afghan government quickly

collapsed.

In August 2021, as the Taliban swept through the country, President Ghani fled, and the Afghan government crumbled. The chaotic and rapid departure of both Ghani and U.S. forces marked a humiliating defeat, as the coalition's two-decade effort to stabilize Afghanistan ended in disaster. Despite the U.S. pouring resources into the country, the regime failed to survive without the backing of foreign forces, drawing comparisons to the weakening of Assad's regime in Syria amidst shifting global dynamics.

The Syrian war, which began in 2011, is a complex and devastating conflict involving a mix of internal and external actors pursuing divergent goals. Bashar al-Assad's government, supported by Russia, Iran, and Hezbollah, seeks to maintain power, while opposition forces range from moderate groups to extremists like Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, with backing from the U.S., Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar. Kurdish forces, crucial in the fight against ISIS, are allied with the U.S. but face Turkish opposition due to PKK ties. Regional players such as Iran and Russia aim to bolster Assad, while Turkey targets Kurdish ambitions, and Saudi Arabia and Qatar support Sunni rebels to counter Iran's influence. ISIS, though territorially diminished, remains a disruptive force. Global actors like the U.S. and Russia pursue strategic interests, further entrenching the conflict. This multi-dimensional proxy war has devastated Syria, complicating efforts for peace and prolonging human suffering.

Now when Rebel forces have entered Damascus, have freed prisoners and have surrounded Assad's resident, the future

of Syria remain uncertain for decades of come. With Assad's ouster and taking over Syria by U.S.-backed militia, Syria's next decade would likely see a fragile transition marked by internal divisions, ongoing insurgencies, and regional power struggles. A transitional government, heavily influenced by U.S. and Gulf interests, would face legitimacy challenges, while rebuilding efforts focus on restoring infrastructure and reviving the economy. Kurdish demands for autonomy could heighten tensions with Turkey, and Iran might escalate proxy warfare to undermine the new regime. Though aligned with Sunni Arab states, Syria could remain a battleground for geopolitical rivalries, with external interference stalling democratic reforms. Persistent extremist threats, corruption, and sectarian divides would jeopardize stability, leaving the country vulnerable to cycles of unrest and underdevelopment.

First Iraq, then Libya, later Afghanistan, and now Syria—nations that were once navigating their own challenges like any other—have been plunged into chaos through entanglement in complex geopolitical rivalries. Once peaceful, these countries now lie in ruins, their physical infrastructure decimated, their economies shattered, and their social fabric torn apart. Children have been orphaned, women widowed, and countless lives lost, leaving behind rubble where thriving communities once stood. The staggering human cost is a sobering reminder of the price of becoming a pawn in the games of powerful nations. For fragile and impoverished countries, the lesson is clear: steer clear of the battles of giants, or risk being trampled like grass underfoot.

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Analysis

Qamar Bashir

## UN urges new rulers in Syria

**A**s Syrian rebels declared an end to President Bashar al-Assad's rule after seizing control of Damascus, UN's Special Envoy for Syria, Geir Pedersen, said Sunday that the developments in the Arab country underscore the clear desire expressed by millions of Syrians that stable and inclusive transitional arrangements are put in place.

In a statement, he urged all Syrians to prioritize dialogue, unity, and respect for international humanitarian law and human rights as they seek to rebuild their society, adding he stands ready to support the Syrian people in their journey toward a stable and inclusive future.

Hassan Abdul-Ghani, senior commander of the opposition group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, claimed victory for the rebel forces that had stormed across Syria in a matter of days and entered Damascus overnight, forcing Assad to flee and ending his family's decades of rule after more than 13 years of civil war.

"Today marks a watershed moment in Syria's history — a nation that has endured nearly 14 years of relentless suffering and unspeakable loss... This dark chapter has left deep scars, but today we look forward with cautious hope to the opening of a new one — one of peace, reconciliation, dignity, and inclusion for all Syrians," Pedersen, the UN envoy, said.

The UN envoy, who has been attending a high-level meeting of Arab States in Doha this weekend, also issued an appeal for the new rulers in Damascus to ensure a stable transfer of power and to maintain the country's institutions.

This was the "clear desire" of millions of Syrians, Pedersen insisted, so that they can ultimately see their "legitimate aspirations" fulfilled "and restore a unified Syria, with its sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, in a way that can receive the support and engagement of the entire international community".

On the other hand, UN's top humanitarian official said that aid teams will continue to provide emergency relief wherever possible.

"We will respond wherever, whenever, however we can to support people in need, including reception centres — food, water, fuel, tents, blankets," said Tom Fletcher, Emergency Relief Coordinator and head of the UN aid coordination office, OCHA.

The hostilities have uprooted more than 370,000 people inside Syria, according to OCHA, "with many seeking refuge in the northeast and others trapped in front-line areas, unable to escape", the UN's senior aid official in Syria, Adam Abdelmoula, said on Saturday. "Civilian casualties, including women and children, continue to rise, underscoring the urgent need for coordinated humanitarian action."

After sweeping into Syria's second city, Aleppo, Hama, Homs and now Damascus have fallen in quick succession, despite suggestions that the Security Council-designated terrorist group lacked the means to sustain their stunning gains.



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

## Youth Must Exercise Caution

**U**nfortunately, a large number of Pakistani youth are unaware of the practices employed in other countries, which can lead to difficulties when applying for visas, living, or working abroad. Recent reports indicate that Pakistani citizens, especially the youth, are facing significant challenges in obtaining visas to the UAE. The reasons for these restrictions have become clearer. In a meeting between the Pakistani ambassador to the UAE and local officials, Emirati authorities raised concerns about the suspension of visas. UAE officials pointed out that Pakistani citizens have been involved in political protests, and some Pakistani Arabs have been critical of the UAE government on social media. They noted that the use of social media by Pakistani nationals in the UAE has not been viewed positively. Additionally, authorities reported that some Pakistani job seekers in the UAE were found to have falsified their academic credentials, while others had altered their identity cards and passports through fraudulent means.

UAE officials also cited concerns about the higher proportion of Pakistani citizens involved in criminal activities, such as theft, fraud, begging, prostitution, and drug-related offenses, compared to nationals of other countries. These findings were presented in a cabinet meeting, and were significant in the decision to impose visa restrictions on Pakistani nationals. In professional settings, youth have a unique opportunity to showcase their work ethic, skills, and ability to collaborate in diverse environments. Professionalism is one of the most effective ways to enhance both their personal image and their home country's reputation. How youth perform at work, manage deadlines, and engage with colleagues speaks volumes—not only about them, but about where they come

from. By demonstrating dedication, initiative, and responsibility, young people can highlight the professional strengths of their home nation. Whether delivering excellent results during an internship or contributing actively to a team, being reliable and hardworking leaves a lasting impression.

In many international environments, young people work alongside colleagues from various cultural backgrounds. The ability to communicate effectively and respectfully across these differences is an invaluable skill. By embracing cultural diversity and adapting to different communication styles, youth can build stronger professional relationships and contribute to a collaborative, inclusive work environment. This, in turn, fosters a positive image of their adaptability and cultural awareness, which reflects well on their home country.

Youth who bring fresh ideas or innovative solutions to the workplace can leave a lasting impact. Whether suggesting ways to improve processes or offering creative problem-solving approaches, youth can showcase the intellectual and entrepreneurial potential of their home country. Innovation is universally admired, and when young people contribute their unique perspectives, it highlights the diverse talents emerging from their homeland.

One of the most effective ways for youth to enhance both their personal and national reputation while abroad is by getting involved in local community projects or social initiatives. This not only helps youth integrate into their host country but also demonstrates their commitment to making a positive impact. Volunteering for local charity organizations, environmental movements, or cultural exchange programs offers a way to contribute to global causes while promoting the values shared in their home country. For example, a student from

Pakistan studying in Canada might volunteer at a local shelter or participate in an environmental cleanup event. These activities showcase the individual's concern for social and environmental issues, while promoting a positive image of their home country's values.

Many young people today are passionate about social causes, and social media allows them to raise awareness and advocate for issues such as environmental sustainability, gender equality, or human rights. By aligning with global movements, youth can show that their home country is engaged with these important causes, boosting both their own reputation and that of their nation as progressive and socially responsible.

In addition to their online presence, youth can also enhance their country's image through respectful and responsible behavior abroad. Simple actions—like following local laws, respecting cultural norms, and being courteous—can significantly influence how their home country is perceived. It's essential for youth to be mindful of the customs, regulations, and social etiquette in their host country to avoid misunderstandings and reflect positively on themselves and their homeland. For example, someone from a country where tipping is common might make an effort to learn the local tipping practices. Being environmentally conscious—reducing waste, conserving resources, and respecting nature—also creates a positive impression and shows a commitment to global well-being, reflecting the progressive values of their home country.

To maximize opportunities abroad and avoid potential challenges, youth should exercise maturity and responsibility, particularly when engaging on social media. It's crucial to avoid spreading misinformation or participating in harmful online behavior. By being thoughtful and aware of their actions, both online and offline, young people can ensure that their experiences abroad enhance their personal growth while promoting a positive image of their nation.



Analysis

Abdul Basit Alvi

## Exploitation of the Public Through the Stock Exchange

**I**n Pakistan, the general public, especially those who are uneducated and unaware of financial policies, are often led to believe that a rise in the stock exchange signifies economic improvement and a reduction in inflation. However, the reality is quite the opposite. The stock exchange primarily serves the interests of 33 powerful families and their approximately 300,000 associates. Considering Pakistan's total population of nearly 250 million, less than one percent of the populace is connected to the stock market.

### Overview of Pakistan's Stock Market

The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) has approximately 650 listed companies whose shares are traded in the market. The benchmark KSE-100 Index comprises the top 100 companies, with its fluctuations reflecting changes in their share prices. In simple terms, the KSE-100 crossing new thresholds, such as 100,000 points, results from a surge in these companies' share prices.

Some notable examples include: Sazgar Engineering Works Limited: Its share price rose from PKR 169 in November 2023 to PKR 1,100 in 2024—a staggering increase of approximately 550%. GlaxoSmithKline: The pharmaceutical company's share price jumped from PKR 82 to over PKR 350 during the same period, an increase of around 300%. Fauji Fertilizer Bin Qasim: Its shares increased from PKR 18 to PKR 80, reflecting a growth of over 250%. Honda Atlas: Shares surged from PKR 300 to PKR 860, while Fauji Fertilizer Company saw a 170% increase in its share price. Airlink Communications: Share prices grew by over 150% within a year, and National Bank of Pakistan recorded a 140% rise.

### Factors Driving Share Price Increases:

1. Sazgar Engineering: The company intro-

duced Pakistan's first hybrid SUV, which received strong market acceptance, boosting its share value significantly.

2. Fauji Fertilizer Bin Qasim: Its merger with Fauji Fertilizer Company and stable gas prices for its operations led to increased share value, unlike other fertilizer companies facing gas price hikes.

Despite these gains, these profits do not benefit the lower-income population nor contribute to reducing inflation. Instead, they largely favor the elite, further widening economic disparities.

### Role of External Factors

The revival of investor confidence due to Pakistan's IMF program has positively impacted the stock market. Additionally, as interest rates began to decline in June 2024, funds from property investments and fixed-income bank accounts started flowing into the stock market, contributing to its growth.

### Stock Market and Inflation

It is a misconception that increasing stock market profits lead to reduced inflation. Instead, stock market performance acts as a barometer for investment opportunities. Foreign investors assess listed companies' performance to decide on investments in specific sectors. However, when the elite class sees a rise in profits, their purchasing power increases, leading to higher demand for goods and subsequent price inflation.

The Pakistan Stock Exchange cannot be considered a reliable indicator of the economic condition of the masses, as it primarily benefits a small, powerful segment of society. The government must focus on addressing real economic challenges such as inflation and unemployment instead of misleading the public. People must also become aware of the stock market's limited impact on their economic well-being to avoid falling prey to official narratives. It is only "fleeing the flock".



Analysis

Zain-ul-Abideen Abid

# Iranian embassy stormed in Damascus

Reuters

DUBAI: Iran's embassy in the Syrian capital was stormed by rebels on Sunday following their capture of Damascus and the fall of Iran-allied Bashar al-Assad, Iranian state TV reported.

"It is said that the Iranian embassy was stormed alongside nearby stores by an armed group different from the group now controlling [most of] Syria," Iranian state TV said, referring to Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) which spearheaded the rebel advances across western Syria.

Footage from inside the embassy's premises was shared by Saudi Arabia's al-Arabiya channel, showing that assailants had rummaged through furniture and documents inside the building and damaged some windows.

Iran's foreign ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei said on Sunday that Iranian diplomats had vacated the embassy in the early morning, prior to any assault.



Iran's state TV said HTS had guaranteed there would be no disturbance to the Sayeda Zeinab and Sayeda Ruqqaya shrines in Damascus.

Iran's semi-official Tasnim news agency said on Sunday that all Iranian servants of the shrines returned to Iran prior to the capture of Damascus by rebels.

Sayeda Zeinab – the granddaughter of the Prophet Mohammad – is venerated by Shi'ites and her shrine is a site of mass pilgrimage for Shi'ites from across the world. It has also been a magnet for Shi'ite militiamen in Syria.

HTS was formerly an al-Qaeda affiliate known as the Nusra Front until its leader, Abu Mohammed

al-Golani, severed ties with the global jihadist movement in 2016.

Syria's Bashar al-Assad boarded a plane in Damascus for an unknown destination early on Sunday, two senior army officers said, as rebels seized the city and ousted him from power after 24 years as president.

Assad has not spoken in public since the sudden rebel advance a week ago, when insurgents seized northern Aleppo in a surprise attack before marching into a succession of cities as frontlines crumbled.

His whereabouts now – and those of his wife Asma and their two children – remain unknown.

A Syrian Air plane took off from Damascus airport around the time the capital was reported to have been taken by rebels, according to data from the FlightRadar website.

The aircraft initially flew towards Syria's coastal region, a stronghold of Assad's Alawite sect, but then made an abrupt U-turn and flew in the opposite direction for a few minutes before disappearing off the map.

## China closely follows situation in Syria: Chinese Foreign Ministry



APP

BEIJING: China is closely following the situation in Syria and hopes that stability will return as soon as possible, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson said on Sunday.

It is reported that Syria's anti-government forces have entered Syrian capital Damascus and declared the fall of the Syrian government.

In a statement, the spokesperson said the Chinese government has been actively helping Chinese nationals who wish to leave the country to do so in a safe and orderly way, and staying in contact with those Chinese still in Syria and offering them advice on how to stay safe.

"We urge relevant parties in Syria to ensure the safety and security of the Chinese institutions and personnel in Syria," the spokesperson said.

The Chinese Embassy is still up and running and carrying out its duty in Syria. We will continue to make every possible assistance to Chinese nationals in need, the spokesperson added.

# Saudi Arabia launches largest urban rail network in Middle East with Riyadh Metro

News Desk

RIYADH: The first three lines of the Riyadh Metro officially has commenced operations marking the inauguration of the largest urban railway network in the Middle East.

The mega-project is a cornerstone of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 initiative, in a bid to reduce traffic congestion and enhancing the quality of life for residents in the Kingdom's capital.

The launch includes the Blue Line, connecting Olaya Street to Al Batha; the Yellow Line, serving King Khalid International Airport Road; and the Purple Line, spanning Abdulrahman bin Aauf Street-Sheikh Hassan bin Hussain bin Ali Road. The metro is designed to transform urban mobility by offering a sustainable and efficient alternative to road travel.

The Red Line, running along King Abdullah Road, and the Green Line, covering King Abdulaziz Road, are set to begin operations on December 15. The final phase of the first network, the Orange Line along Madinah Road, will open on January 5, 2025.

The Riyadh Metro project was first announced in April 2012, with the Saudi Cabinet approving the implementation of an integrated public transport system. The contracts were awarded in 2013 to three global consortiums, with a total project value of \$22.5 billion (SR84.4 billion). Despite delays caused by logistical and global challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the project has reached fruition, symbolizing Saudi Arabia's commitment to urban development and modernization.

The network features six lines covering 176 kilometers and 85



stations, including four major hubs strategically located to optimize connectivity across the city. Among these, the Blue Line spans 38 kilometers, making it the backbone of the system, while the Orange Line is the longest, stretching over 41 kilometers.

As part of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, the Riyadh Metro incorporates innovative sustainable practices to support environmental preservation. Energy-efficient trains, regenerative braking systems, and solar-powered stations are integral to the design, with all electricity sourced from renewable energy.

According to Maher Sheira, Supervisor of Digital Infrastructure for the King Abdulaziz Public Transport Project, the metro will help reduce city traffic by up to 30 per cent. "Our system is capable of transporting up to 3.6 million passengers daily. If just

100,000 passengers switch from cars to the metro, we estimate a potential saving equivalent to three million trees annually," he said.

Sheira also highlighted the integration of metro and bus systems under the King Abdulaziz Public Transport Program, ensuring a seamless experience for commuters using a single ticket system across all modes of transport.

The Riyadh Metro project showcases cutting-edge engineering and design. The city's challenging geological conditions, including dense limestone and breccia, required specialized tunnel boring machines (TBMs) for excavation. According to Roger Cruickshank, Senior Director at AtkinsRealis, the use of real-time geotechnical monitoring tools, fiber optic sensors, and advanced predictive analytics ensures infrastructure safety and operational efficiency.

The system operates on Level 4 automation, with centralized control centers managing operations through advanced algorithms and real-time data. Stations, designed with a blend of contemporary materials and traditional motifs, reflect Riyadh's cultural heritage while enhancing passenger convenience.

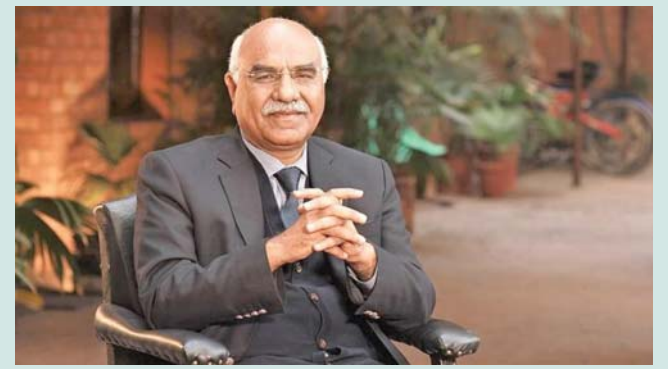
The metro's launch has been met with widespread enthusiasm from residents, commuters, and visitors. For students and daily commuters, the system offers time-efficient and affordable travel options. A medical student at King Saud University highlighted the cost-effectiveness, noting a monthly student pass priced at SR70 (\$18), enabling access to all metro and bus services.

The metro is also expected to drive urban development around stations and reduce reliance on private vehicles, supporting Saudi Arabia's broader goals of reducing carbon emissions and promoting sustainable urban growth.

The Riyadh Metro is not just a transportation network; it is a symbol of Saudi Arabia's ambitions for sustainable and integrated urban living. With the remaining lines set to open soon, the project is expected to position Riyadh as a global leader in urban mobility while fulfilling key aspects of Vision 2030.

Inaugurated by King Salman, the Riyadh Metro represents a transformative step in the Kingdom's journey toward modernization and environmental stewardship. As operations expand, the metro promises to redefine public transport in Riyadh and provide a model for other cities worldwide grappling with urbanization challenges.

## A Journey from \$1 Donation to \$1 Billion: A Glimpse into the Visionary Leadership of Dr. Amjad Saqib



Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: In a grand dinner hosted by renowned business figure Zulqarnain Ali Khan, a large number of women and men gathered to honor Dr. Amjad Saqib, the founder of the exemplary NGO, Akhuwat Foundation. The event highlighted Dr. Saqib's remarkable contributions to poverty alleviation and community welfare in Pakistan.

During the event, Dr. Saqib elaborated on the mission and vision behind the establishment of Akhuwat Foundation. He emphasized that as Allah has forbidden interest (usury), Akhuwat provides interest-free loans to uplift marginalized communities. Reflecting on the journey of Akhuwat, Dr. Saqib shared, "It hasn't been long since we started this noble initiative. Today, Akhuwat Foundation operates 800 branches across Pakistan, serving over 4 million families, approximately 3.5 million people. Our branches are active in 300 cities and districts, with a dedicated workforce of 400 individuals."

Dr. Saqib proudly announced that Akhuwat Foundation has established 305 schools and 3 colleges across the country, catering to children whose parents are unable to afford education. He emphasized that the loan repayment rate stands at an impressive 99.9%, which reflects the high level of honesty among Pakistan's population. "This success proves that the spirit of integrity is alive and well in our country," he added, amidst a round of applause.

Thanking Zulqarnain Ali Khan for hosting such a magnificent gathering, Dr. Saqib reflected on his personal journey. Recalling a time when he was employed and a woman in need approached him for a loan of 10,000 rupees, he shared how this moment transformed his outlook. "She came back and returned the loan, assuring me that she was not dishonest. She told me that she was now prosperous and that the money should be used to help another in need. This experience marked the beginning of Akhuwat, a movement based on the belief that if we support each other, society can flourish."

Dr. Saqib expressed that Pakistan desperately needs such solidarity. He firmly believes that when people support each other, everyone benefits, and in turn, Allah's blessings follow. "I have never seen a poor person who spends in the path of Allah. There is always divine help for them," he added.

The success of Akhuwat Foundation, which has grown from a humble \$1 donation to a staggering \$1 billion in contributions, is a testament to this belief. Dr. Saqib concluded by saying that it is this unwavering faith and commitment to community service that has driven Akhuwat's monumental success. Today, the foundation continues to break barriers, touching lives and fostering prosperity through its charitable programs.

## Millions warned to stay indoors as ferocious Storm Darragh batters UK

Storm Darragh wreaked havoc across the United Kingdom on Saturday, unleashing gusts of up to 93mph, prompting authorities to urge millions to stay indoors.

The deadly storm left tens of thousands in the dark as the country faced power outages as well as travel disruptions with train services suspended.

According to the Daily Express, these power cuts are "likely" across England until 6pm Sunday, as forecasters predict more weather disruption from the storm.

People walk against strong wind after Storm Darragh hit the country in Blackpool, Britain, December 7, 2024. — Reuters

People walk against strong wind after Storm Darragh hit the country in Blackpool, Britain, December 7, 2024. — Reuters

Additionally, the country's Met Office issued a yellow weather warning for wind affecting all 55 cities in England, with the entire nation of Wales also under the alert.

Meanwhile, Storm Darragh also created some harrowing landings for planes arriving at airports.

Energy Networks Association said 259,000 customers across England, Scotland and Wales were without power on Saturday evening. Photos from across England showed numerous trees toppled and fences blown over as strong gusts swept the country.

A man was killed in Preston when a tree fell across the A59 highway Saturday morning, smashing into his van, according to Lancashire Police.

Furthermore, the Met office on Sunday warned that households must take care to prepare for the storm.

It said: "Prepare to protect your property and people from injury. Check for loose items outside your home and plan how you could secure them. Items include; bins, garden furniture, trampolines, tents, sheds, and fences."

# Kashmiris to observe World Human Rights Day with renewed resolve on Tuesday

Bureau Report

MIRPUR: Like rest of the world, the people of Jammu and Kashmir on both sides of the line of control, will observe Universal Human Rights Day on Tuesday, December 10. Kashmiris will reiterate their long-standing unanimous demand for early end of the ongoing massive human rights abuses against innocent population in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) state as well as by similar aggressive forces in various other parts of the world.

In Azad Jammu Kashmir, major function to mark the Day will be hosted by AJK-based Kashmiris international NGO – Kashmir Institute of International Relations (KIIR).

The ceremony comprising a grand seminar, will be held to invite the attention of the international community including world human rights forums towards the fast deteriorating conditions of the humanity in bleeding vale of IIOJK where the Indian occupation forces were engaged in large scale human rights violations defying all international norms and commitments by denying Kashmiris their legitimate right to self determination, said Altaf Hussain Wani, Chairman of the KIIR, while talking to APP here Sunday.

The Human Rights Day on 10th of December every year recognizes the work of human rights defenders worldwide who act to end discrimination. Acting alone or in groups within their communities, every day human



rights defenders work to end discrimination by campaigning for equitable and effective laws, reporting and investigating human rights violations and supporting victims.

While some human rights defenders are internationally renowned, many remain anonymous and undertake their work often at great personal risk to themselves and their families. The Day commemorates the day in 1948 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

When the General Assembly adopted the Declaration, with 48 states in favor and eight abstentions, it was proclaimed as a "common standard

of achievement for all peoples and all nations", towards which individuals and societies should "strive by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance".

Although the Declaration with its broad range of political, civil, social, cultural and economic rights is not a binding document, it inspired more than 60 human rights instruments which together constitute an international standard of human rights.

It may be added that today, the general consent of all United Nations Member States on the basic Human Rights laid down in the Declaration makes it even stronger and emphasizes

the relevance of Human Rights in our daily lives. The High Commissioner for Human Rights, as the main United Nations rights official, and her Office play a major role in coordinating efforts for the yearly observation of Human Rights Day.

In Azad Jammu Kashmir, elaborated programs have been chalked out for organizing ceremonies to mark the Day will be including in Mirpur division under the auspices of various human rights organizations with the coordination of the members of the civil society.

The organizers said that the speakers would particularly emphasize the need of making collective efforts by the international community to ensure the complete protection of human rights all over the world particularly in those areas where the people were being denied their due rights. They will call for the measures by the international human rights outfits to move for ensuring the grant of basic human rights in the areas including in the strife-torn Indian held Jammu Kashmir state where the Indian occupying forces were involved in large scale human rights abuses against the local population since last 77 years to suppress their long standing demand for a free and fair plebiscite under the auspices of the UN resolutions on Kashmir allowing the Jammu Kashmir people to decide about their destiny granting the Kashmiris their internationally-acknowledged birth right to self determination.

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

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index	
Current	Prev. Close
109,053.95	108,238.96
Day's High	Day's Low
109,478.08	108,550.86
Index Value	Change
38,919,160,843	+ 814.99
Percentage	Time
+0.75%	6 Dec, 2024 5:00 pm

Europe: FTSE 100 Index	
Index Value	Change
8,308.61	-40.77
Percentage	Time
-0.49%	6 Dec, 4:35 pm GMT

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average	
Index Value	Change
44,647.44	-118.27
Percentage	Time
-0.26%	6 Dec, 12:37 pm GMT-5

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average	
Index Value	Change
39,091.17	-304.43
Percentage	Time
-0.77%	6 Dec, 3:45 pm GMT+9

Open Market Forex Rates		
Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	179.00	181.25
Bahrain Dinar	733.95	741.95
Canadian Dollar	198.10	200.50
China Yuan	37.99	38.39
Danish Krone	39.15	39.55
Euro	291.55	294.30
Hong Kong Dollar	35.45	35.8
Indian Rupee	3.18	3.27
Japanese Yen	1.86	1.92
Kuwaiti Dinar	895.50	905.00
Malaysian Ringgit	61.75	62.35
New Zealand \$	162.4	164.4
Norwegians Krone	24.93	25.23
Omani Riyal	718.35	726.85
Qatari Riyal	75.7	76.4
Saudi Riyal	73.65	74.20
Singapore Dollar	207.25	209.25
Swedish Korona	25.1	25.4
Swiss Franc	312.72	315.52
Thai Bhat	7.95	8.10
U.A.E Dirham	75.35	76.00
UK Pound Sterling	351.50	355
US Dollar	277.60	279.10

# ICCI To Launch Ramadan Shopping Festival to Boost Economic Activity

**Spokesman Report**

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) has announced the organization of a grand "Shopping Festival" during the third Ashra of Ramadan, set to take place from the 20th to the 30th of Ramadan. The event will be held across major shopping centers in Islamabad in collaboration with key stakeholders, including the Chainstore Association of Pakistan (CAP), Traders Welfare Associations (TWAs), Capital Development Authority (CDA), and IESCO. The festival aims to boost economic activity while benefiting both customers and the business community.

The announcement was made by Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, President of ICCI, during a combined meeting with office bearers of CAP, TWAs, and other business community leaders at ICCI. The attendees agreed to form a committee to implement the event and ensure its success, with the goal of generating economic activity and contributing to the country's financial well-being.

ICCI President Qureshi emphasized the chamber's dedication to accelerating economic activities by fostering a business-friendly environment for its members. He also acknowledged the challenges faced by the community, particularly bureaucratic red tape, and vowed



to address these issues to keep the economic engine running for the benefit of the country. He expressed confidence that the successful execution of the "Shopping Festival" would be a significant milestone for ICCI and that the chamber would continue to pursue other initiatives to revive economic activities.

Rana Tariq Mehboob, Patron in Chief/Co-Founder of CAP, informed the attendees about the core objectives of the association, emphasizing its role as a strong advocate for the organized retail sector at governmental, institutional, and international levels. He also highlighted the challenges the sector faces, particu-

larly with regard to irrational taxes.

The leadership of CAP, including Chairman Asfandiyar Farrukh, Senior Vice Chairman Ahsan Mehmood, and Secretary General Malik Asim Dogar, expressed full support for the "Shopping Festival" and underscored the importance of unity among the business community.

Senior Vice President of ICCI, Abdul Rehman Siddiqui, and Vice President Nasir Mehmood Chaudhry shared that the Chamber would handle the essential groundwork, including obtaining the necessary NOCs from relevant authorities. The festival will feature various stalls, including those offering food and beverages, handicrafts, lucky draws, gifts, kids' areas, and Mehndi and bangle activities.

Shahzad Shabbir Abbasi, Naem Akhtar Awan, Raja Javid Iqbal, Waheed Cheema, and Ahmed Khan, Presidents of Traders Welfare Associations from different shopping centers, expressed their gratitude to the Chamber for proposing the event and showed great enthusiasm for participating in the initiative.

Additionally, ICCI members present at the meeting included Executive Members Rohail Anwar Butt, Aamir Raheem Qureshi, Waseem Chaudhry, Zulqurnain Abbasi, Ishaq Sial, as well as ICCI members Khalid Chaudhry and Naem Siddiqui.

## Daily wagers

RAWALPINDI: A labourer wearing warm shawl sitting along his tools on a greenbelt waiting for customers during cold weather at Commercial Market in the city.



Photo: Online

## Russia-Ukraine war reshaping world trade and investment that will also affect: Iftikhar Malik

**Commerce Desk**

LAHORE: SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry former President Iftikhar Ali Malik Sunday cautioned that lingering Russia-Ukraine conflict is reshaping world trade and investment that will also affect Pakistan in the prevailing global scenario.

In a statement here today popular octogenarian trade leader of South Asia he said with no signs of an early end to the war, the risk is growing that conflict will tip a fragile global economy into recession. He said in late February 2022 last the crisis between Russia-Ukraine escalated, the global economy was beginning to recover from covid after recording worst economic performance since the great recession.



He said the current outlook for the global economy now seems bleak and South Asia will also be affected equally. He said rising inflation has outpaced the recovery in the real economy. He said disruption in supply chains and rising petroleum prices before Russia's invasion

caused challenges in managing global inflation and growth. He said Russia and Ukraine combined have a significant share of global supplies of oil, gas and other commodities so that the conflict resulted into increased commodity prices.

Iftikhar Malik said current

global crisis apart from rich countries will also impact the South Asia region as well and its economic activities will decline as inflation is being driven up further by soaring prices of food and fuel brought by Russia-Ukraine war. He said Pakistan should be ready to brave the consequences well on time to offset the impending hovering threat or at least manage to bear minimum possible aftershocks of the conflict.

He said leading world economists and marco economics experts predicted the signs of recession looming on the horizon are likely to deepened in 2025 with a significant decline in economic activities even in the United States and other countries followed by layoffs in multiple industries he concluded.

## PFC facing acute shortage of skilled woodworkers



**Commerce Desk**

LAHORE: The Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) is grappling with an acute shortage of skilled woodworkers and trained artisans, significantly impacting timely despatch of exports consignments to their foreign destinations.

Chairing here Sunday board of directors meeting, CEO PFC Mian Kashif Ashfaq said this scarcity of skilled labor has hindered the manufacturing process, causing delays in fulfilling export orders. He said the our furniture industry relies heavily on the expertise of craftsmen who specialize in traditional and modern woodworking techniques. However, the sector is facing challenges due to a lack of training programs,

diminishing interest among the younger generation, and insufficient incentives to attract and retain talent. As a result, the industry struggles to meet growing international demand while maintaining high-quality standards, he added.

These delays are not only damaging credibility as a reliable exporter but are also causing financial losses to exporters and contributing to reduced competitiveness in the global market. To address this issue, the PFC urges the government and private sector to collaborate on initiatives for establishing vocational training institutes, offering skill development programs, and providing financial incentives to artisans. A concerted effort is essential to revitalize the workforce, enhance productivity, and ensure timely delivery of export orders, safeguarding Pakistan's standing in the international furniture market, he concluded.

## Pakistani food exporters in Malaysia extend stay due to 'exceptional' response

**Commerce Desk**

LAHORE: Pakistani food exporters, delegation currently on a two-week tour to Malaysia, has extended their stay by another week for second consecutive time due to the exceptional response received from their Malaysian counterparts.

According to a message received here Sunday from Kuala Lumpur, the leader of the delegation Coordinator to Federal Tax Ombudsman Saif Ur Rehman said extension reflects the growing interest and demand for Pakistani food products including high quality international standards various varieties of Nimko in Malaysia. Several promising business deals are in

the pipeline, prompting the delegation to prolong their visit to finalize agreements and establish long-term partnerships. He said this development highlights the potential of Pakistan's food export sector in tapping into the Malaysian market, fostering bilateral trade, and contributing to economic growth. The delegation's extended stay demonstrates their commitment to ensuring these discussions translate into tangible outcomes. Delegation members comprising leading food industry representatives including Nimko has been actively engaging with local businesses to explore opportunities for strengthening trade ties, he concluded.

## Shahid Iqbal urges urgent action on food security

**Commerce Desk**

LAHORE: Convener Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry regional committee on Food Shahid Iqbal Sunday said growing food insecurity crisis, exacerbated by climate change, population explosion and lukewarm economic growth, will also affect Pakistan.

Talking here today to a delegation of industrialists led by Chaudhary Zahid Iqbal Arain former Vice President FPCCI from vehari he said timely addressing this hovering threat requires immediate, multifac-

eted action on both domestic and global fronts. He said we must prioritize sustainable agricultural practices. Investment in climate-resilient crops, modern irrigation systems, and farmer education can enhance productivity and reduce vulnerabilities to extreme weather. He said policy makers should promote crop diversification to decrease dependence on water-intensive staples like wheat and rice especially using various kinds of vulnerable hybrids seeds of different crops especially rice successfully evolved by the Guard Agriculture Research

and Services Ltd in 1999 showing excellent yields.

Shahid Imran said strengthening regional and global partnerships is essential. We can leverage alliances like the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) to develop collaborative food security frameworks, share resources, and establish early warning systems for climate-related disruptions.

Engaging with FAO and World Food Programme can bring technical expertise and financial support. He said addressing post-harvest losses is critical. improved storage,

transportation, and distribution infrastructure can minimize waste, ensuring more food reaches consumers. Additionally, social safety nets, like subsidized food programs, can help protect vulnerable populations.

Ensuring inclusive governance and public-private partnerships can create a cohesive strategy for addressing food insecurity. By acting decisively and engaging with the global community, Pakistan can mitigate its food security challenges and contribute to broader regional stability, he concluded.

## Khurram Zafar appointed CEO of Pakistan Mercantile Exchange (PMEX)



**Commerce Desk**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Mercantile Exchange Limited (PMEX) has appointed Mr. Khurram Zafar as the Chief Executive Officer, who has already taken charge.

Mr. Khurram Zafar joins PMEX with a robust background in business, technology, and capital market

leadership in Pakistan, Europe, and the United States.

Prior to his appointment at PMEX, Khurram led a Pakistan focused venture capital fund, founded the LUMS Center for Entrepreneurship, and served on the Board and Digital Financial Services advisory committee of Karandaaz Pakistan.

He has also served as the Chief Information Officer at the Lahore Stock Exchange and has consulted for Merrill Lynch, Visa, and Bank of America during his professional life in the US.

## BMP for raising tax-to-GDP ratio as shortfall widens to Rs400bn



**Commerce Desk**

LAHORE: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry's Businessmen Panel (BMP) on Sunday advocated the need for raising the country's tax base so that tax-to-GDP ratio improves as the tax shortfall may further widen to almost Rs400 billion at the end of 2024.

The BMP Chairman and FPCCI former president Mian Anjum Nisar urged the trade officers to explore opportunities to diversify exports of goods and services in their respective areas, asking them to meet the challenges faced by Pakistan in European markets.

He observed that against the target of Rs4.64 trillion, the FBR collected Rs4.29 trillion in five months, achieving a growth of 23%. It needs a 40% growth to reach the annual goal of nearly Rs13 trillion. He said that the IMF will assess December's tax collection before deciding on bringing a new tax-loaded budget. So, the condition of IMF to rope in agriculture income in the tax net appeared promising in enhancing the tax collection. Otherwise the whole burden will again be shifted to the industry.

The FPCCI former president said that country's major export markets did not see any significant growth in importing goods from Pakistan in the financial. He also suggested the ministry to devise strategies for promotion of Pakistani products, calling upon trade officers to take advantage of opportunities offered by China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

He recommended the broadening of tax base through appropriate legislation to ensure that all income earners pay taxes equitably, including agriculture income.

# TCF's 21st Annual Golf Tournament: Uniting for Education and Building Brighter Futures

## Sports Desk

KARACHI: The Citizens Foundation (TCF) conducted its 21st Annual Golf Tournament, on Sunday, December 8, 2024, at the prestigious Karachi Golf Club, Karsaz. This year's tournament was not just an exciting sporting event; it was a chance for participants to make a lasting impact on the lives of less-privileged children across Pakistan.

This year's tournament was centered around the critical need to bring children to school. With the number of out-of-school children in Pakistan reaching an alarming 26.2 million, TCF is committed to addressing the educational crisis and ensuring that every child has access to quality education. The funds raised from this tournament will support TCF to provide education for children in need.

For over two decades, TCF has been working tirelessly to provide quality education to the country's less-privileged children. With a vast network of 2,033 school units across Pakistan, serving 301,000 students enrolled, led by its dedicated team of 14,700 female faculty members, TCF is transforming lives by offering a bright future to chil-

dren in marginalised communities. This would not be possible without the generous support of individuals, businesses, and corporate partners.

"Education is a fundamental right, and for Pakistan to move forward, every child must have the opportunity to learn," said Mr. Mushtaq Chhpara, Co-Founder and Director of TCF. "Every year, our incredible community of golfers gathers not only to compete but also to create life-changing impact for children in need. Their generosity and support play a crucial role in bringing vulnerable children back into classrooms and reigniting their dreams."

A special highlight of the event was the presence of Tabarak Rehman, who joined as a guest speaker. Tabarak, an avid supporter of education, shared his inspiring journey of running 1,600 kms across Pakistan to support 7,000 children, with the aim of raising over \$1 million for education. His story served as a powerful reminder of the impact that dedication and perseverance can have on the lives of children in need.

In addition to the inspiring speeches, the competition highlighted the announcement of Dubai Islamic Bank as the winner.



## 41st Millat Tractors Governors Cup Golf Tournament

### Tahir Amin Malik.

The 41st Millat Tractors Governors Cup Golf Tournament was contested over 54 holes at the par-72 Lahore Gymkhana Golf Course. An event of prestige and stature, it attracted noteworthy golf playing amateur competitors from all over the country. As expected participating golfers were dexterously proficient and the fight for top honors turned out to be intense. In the end the illustrious and triumphant one turned out to be Farooq Alvi of Skyview Golf Club who compiled three rounds net scores of 69 in the first round, another admirable 69 in the second round and a not too glossy net 78 in the final round, although this final days modest effort did not impede his victory standing as the highly esteemed one of the Governors Cup Golf Championship. And in the process the successful outcome of his resolute and determined effort was dispiriting for quite a few enthusiastic adversaries who were yearning for a favorable result.

Champion of the occasion, Farooq Alvi of Skyview Golf Club accomplished his goal with a three rounds net aggregate score of 216, and this brought him elevation and upgradation as a golfer of merit. Without doubt Ghulam Qadir of



Nowshera contested appreciably well and put up a determined effort but a couple of missed putts landed him in the runners up slot and he felt upset about the fact that he lost to the ultimate winner by one stroke. He had a net score of 217 as against the winners score of 216. As for Farooq Alvi, he managed to grapple well with some tension causing moments.

His big plus point was that the putting prowess on the greens never got diluted. Added to that, most admirable were his fairway shots and on all the par fours and par fives.

Another competitor who failed by the barest of margins is Farid Maneka of Gymkhana. He achieved a net score of 217 and was tied with the runner

up Ghulam Qadir but as per rules, the better position goes to the player who was a step ahead on the final day. Others who put up appreciable and laudable efforts are Hamza Kardar, Asim Zafar, Ahmed Jibrani and Farooq Khan. Hamza finished at net 218, Asim Zafar at net 219, Ahmed Jibrani and Farooq Khan at 221. Saadullah Chaudry also finished at 221.

## Australia thrash India by 10 wickets to level Test series 1-1

ADELAIDE: A dominant Australia hammered India by 10 wickets in the day-night second Test to level the five-match series 1-1 on Sunday.

Needing just 19 to win after bowling out India for 175 in their second innings, Australia sealed victory in the first session on day three of the contest to maintain their perfect pink-ball record at Adelaide Oval.

Skipper Pat Cummins led by example, claiming 5-57 to help Australia bounce back from their comprehensive defeat in the series opener in Perth.

India, resuming on 128-5, saw their slim hopes of saving the Test evaporate when Mitchell Starc dismissed Rishabh Pant for 28 in the first over of the day.

Nitish Kumar Reddy's defiant 42 saved India the innings defeat but the miracle they needed to save the Test did not materialise, with Cummins using the bouncer to great effect as he ran through the visitors' lower order.

Australia needed only 20 balls to secure the win and move to a perfect 8-0 record in day-night Tests at the venue.

Usman Khawaja scored the winning run, watched by opening partner Nathan McSweeney, in what was the shortest Test between the sides.

"That was a great week. We were far away from the kind of team we want to be in Perth, but this is back to kind of how we want to play," said Cummins.

"I wasn't too upset with how I bowled



in Perth. The rhythm felt pretty good this week, and good to get a few wickets."

Travis Head was adjudged player of the match for his blistering 140 in the first innings, which tilted the match in Australia's favour.

India, despite welcoming back skipper Rohit Sharma and number three Shubman Gill, lasted a collective 81 overs in the entire match.

"A disappointing week for us," rued Rohit, who missed the opening Test to

care for his newborn son in Mumbai.

"We didn't play well enough to win the game. Australia played better than us.

"There were times when we could have grabbed the opportunity but failed, which cost us the game," he added.

During the match, Rohit managed three and six in his new middle-order position having vacated the opening slot for KL Rahul.

The third Test begins in Brisbane on December 14.

## Pakistan's Rayyan wins 16th Redtone Int'l Junior Squash C'ship

### Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Muhammad Rayyan Zaman has made the nation proud by winning the 16th Redtone International Junior Squash Championship 2024 in the Under-9 category. Pakistan's cuisine

According to information received here on Sunday, Rayyan, the grandson of former World Squash Champion Qamar Zaman and son of former champion Mansoor Zaman, defeated Malaysia's Sai Nideesh 3-0 in the final, with a score of 11/7, 11/5, and 11/7.

Rayyan's win is also a reflection of the hard work and dedication of his coaches, trainers, and family members who have supported him throughout his journey.

The 16th Redtone International Junior Squash Championship 2024 was a highly competitive tournament that brought together some of the best young squash players from around the world.

Rayyan's victory in the Under-9 category is a significant achievement, and it highlights his potential to become a top-ranked squash player in the future.

## Umar Siddiq stars in Lake City Panthers first win

### Sports Desk

RAWALPINDI: Opening batter Umar Siddiq smashed a brilliant unbeaten 78 and all-rounder Amad Butt grabbed three wickets as Lake City Panthers routed Engro Dolphins by eight wickets to open their account in the Bahria Town Champions T20 Cup in Rawalpindi on Sunday.

Siddiq's aggressive 53-ball knock was spiced with four towering sixes and eight boundaries. He gave Lake City Panthers a rollicking start with 33 coming in the first three overs and by the tenth over they had reached 86 for the loss of Sharjeel Khan 14.

Siddiq and stand-in skipper Haider Ali, deputising for unfit Shadab Khan, added a rapid 101 for the second wicket to bring their team within 23 runs of victory. Mubasir Khan, who scored 16 not out, hit the winning six as the 161-run target was achieved in 16 overs. Haider's 28-ball 46 contained five boundaries and two sixes.

Engro Dolphins' total of 160-8 showed most of the batters got starts but did not make it big, with promising youngster Mohammad Huraira the highest scorer with a 32-ball 37 that contained four boundaries and a six.

Mohammad Suleman struck two sixes and a boundary in his 27-ball 34 while Muhammad Ghazi Ghori (27, 16b, 3x4s, 1x6) and Shayan Sheikh (20, 12b, 4x4s) chipped in with useful contributions as 55 runs came in the last five overs. For Panthers, all-rounder Amad Butt was the pick of the bowlers with 3-19 while Mohammad Ibtisam finished with 2-30.

Scores in brief:

Match 3 - Lake City Panthers beat Engro Dolphins by eight wickets, Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium

Engro Dolphins 160-8 in 20 overs (Mohammad Huraira 37, Mohammad Suleman 34, Muhammad Ghazi Ghori 27, Shayan Sheikh 20; Amad Butt 3-19, Mohammad Ibtisam 2-30)

Lake City Panthers 161-2 in 16 overs (Umar Siddiq 78 not out, Haider Ali 46)

Player of the match - Umar Siddiq (Lake City Panthers)  
Tomorrow's fixture: Allied Bank Stallions vs Nurpur Lions, 12pm, Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium

## England beat New Zealand by 323 runs to secure series

### Sports Desk

England beat New Zealand by 323 runs after tea on the third day of the second test in Wellington on Sunday to secure an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series.

Captain Ben Stokes took 3-5 for England, while Tom Blundell was New Zealand's highest scorer with 115.

England faced some resistance from New Zealand in the shape of Tom Blundell's defiant century but dismissed the Black Caps for 259 to wrap up a thumping 323-run victory on the third day of the second test on Sunday.

The win in Wellington, seven days after an equally comfortable eight-wicket victory in Christchurch, ensured England a first series win in New Zealand since 2008 with the Hamilton test still to come.

Joe Root earlier secured his 36th test

hundred before England skipper Ben Stokes declared on 427-6 to present the Blacks Caps with a mammoth target of 583. Blundell bucked his recent form with a 102-ball 115 but the damage had already been done to the New Zealand top order by England's rampant seam attack.

When Blundell was dismissed by a fine catch from Ben Duckett off the bowling of spinner Shoaib Bashir in the first hour of the final session, the writing was on the wall.

Stokes (3-5) brought himself on for the first time to remove Matt Henry with his fourth delivery and ended Nathan Smith's innings on 42 in his second over.

He delivered the coup de grace for England's biggest ever victory by runs over New Zealand when Tim Southee swung big looking for a six but only managed to find Chris Woakes.

Stokes paid tribute to Harry Brook,

who was named Player of the Match for his century in the first innings, and Ollie Pope for the partnership that dragged England back into the match on the opening day. "Amazing to be stood here winning the series, in particular after being 43-4 on day one," said Stokes.

"I think Harry Brook and Ollie Pope were just amazing on day one, to go out there and play like that. That wicket, in cricket terms, is what we call a snake pit.

"To have the skill to be able to go out and play like that was just absolutely phenomenal. We've been unbelievable with the ball but I think the way that Harry Brook and Ollie Pope played on day one set this game up for us."

England had resumed on a blustery morning at Basin Reserve on 378-5 looking to quickly inflate their already imposing lead of 533 before sending the Blacks Caps in to bat.

The orthodox Root has not been the

most natural player of the "Bazball" style of aggressive batting England have played under coach Brendon McCullum.

The 33-year-old, however, showed a real flash of creativity to secure his 127-ball century with a glorious reverse-ramp for the 10th of the 11 fours in his knock. After Root edged behind for 106, Stokes raced off the field unbeaten on 49 keen to get his bowlers out and stuck in to the Black Caps.

Woakes did the early damage by bowling the hapless Devon Conway for a five-ball duck and having Kane Williamson caught behind off a thin edge for four.

The impressive Brydon Carse chipped in with a brilliant caught-and-bowled dismissal of Tom Latham for 24 before giving Pope more catching practice behind the stumps to remove Rachin Ravindra for six.

Blundell's run-a-ball innings was a



rare highlight at Basin Reserve for New Zealand, who had been outplayed by England with both bat and ball for all but the first session of the match.

"We're obviously hurting," said New Zealand skipper Latham.

"It's disappointing to lose in that

fashion, I think after the first innings, putting them under pressure. Harry played a fantastic innings there.

"Credit where credit's due. I thought that was a fantastic innings. You look down that scorecard, there's one guy that took it away from us."

## Protest

KARACHI: Activists of Central Jamaat-e Ahl-e Sunnat hold a banner during protest in favor of Palestine outside press club, in the Provincial Capital.



Photo: Online

## Naval Chief Admiral Naveed Ashraf message on occasion of 53rd Hangor Day

## Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: On this day, 53 years ago, PN Submarine HANGOR created history by sinking INS KHUKRI and crippling INS KIRPAN, first successful engagement of warship by a Submarine, post WW-II, and the only such engagement by a conventional submarine. We cannot forget this day and neither can the enemy.

This incident was not only part of a tactical battle, executed perfectly, but also

a strategic demonstration of Pakistan Navy's resolve to repulse enemy aggression and defend our maritime frontiers, notwithstanding numerical asymmetry.

The day reminds us of the courage, tenacity and grit of the HANGOR crew. What HANGOR achieved for Pakistan Navy is a testimony to Allah SWT's blessing and a true measure of the professionalism, dedication and selfless devotion of our veteran submariners and the inspirational role they played



in establishing historic legacies of our Submarine Service.

Through professional excellence and dedication, we can fight against all odds, and continue to enrich our proud heritage.

Pakistan Navy has always laid special emphasis on its Submarine Force and the ongoing submarine project in collaboration with China, bears testimony to this fact. Addition of 8 x HANGOR class submarines will boost combat capabilities of Pakistan Navy and bolster its offensive punch.

At this moment, while

reminiscing our triumph, let us not forget Shuhada of PNS/M GHAZI who laid their lives in the defence of the motherland in 1971. I firmly believe that Submarine Squadron will continue to draw inspiration from their sacrifices, as well as the exemplary feat of legendary PNS/M HANGOR.

I wish Submarine Service all the success in its future endeavours.

May Allah SWT be our Protector and Benefactor (Amen).

## Religious affairs ministry receives 72,000 Hajj applications

## City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony has received over 72,000 Hajj applications so far.

According to the spokesperson, Muhammad Umar Butt, applications for the Government Hajj Scheme will continue to be accepted at designated banks on Monday and Tuesday, marking the final two days for submissions.

He further said applicants can join their relatives' Hajj groups under the scheme for convenience.



To enroll in the Regular Hajj Scheme, Umar said applicants are required to deposit an initial payment of Rs 200,000 and the

second installment, totaling Rs 400,000 (including additional facilities), must be paid within ten days of the balloting.

The final installment is due by February 10.

He also highlighted that overseas Pakistanis can sponsor Hajj applications for themselves or their loved ones, enabling them to participate in the sacred pilgrimage through this scheme. He said this initiative will facilitate applicants while ensuring a smooth and transparent Hajj process.

In addition, Umar said the ministry has announced the 40th Annual National Hifz and Qirat Competition, inviting nominations from all four provinces, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad

Jammu and Kashmir.

He said district and provincial-level competitions have been directed to take place, with provinces instructed to finalize and submit their nominations by January 15. Winners from the provincial rounds will qualify to participate in the national-level Hifz and Qirat competition, he added.

The spokesperson further emphasized that winners at the national level will have the opportunity to represent Pakistan in international competitions, showcasing their talent on a global stage.

## Internet services still affected in various cities

## Naveed Ahmad Khan

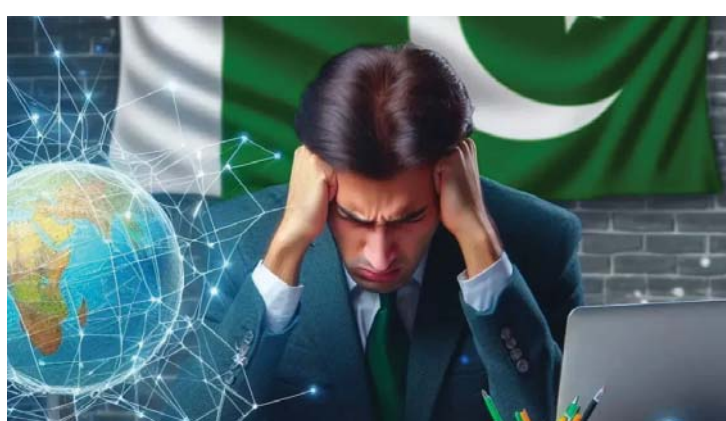
ISLAMABAD: Internet speeds in cities other than Lahore experienced significant slowdowns on Sunday, according to local reports as experts' express concerns over a national firewall being installed in the country.

The government is implementing an internet firewall to monitor and regulate content and social media platforms, however, it denies the use of the firewall for censorship.

The IT sector faced difficulties due to issues with international clients, leading to disruptions in social media applications such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp.

Like last month, several users struggled to upload and download images, voice notes, and videos. Virtual Private Networks users in multiple cities encountered difficulties accessing such services.

The slowdown in internet services is attributed to the second phase of firewall testing, reports said and added that it caused applications to lag, resulting in problems with uploading



and downloading messages, as well as delays in message delivery.

Pakistan suffers a \$2.2 million loss per hour when the internet is shut down for an hour, Pakistan Freelancers Association President Tufail Khan has said while quoting Netblocks data.

Netblocks is an institution which takes data from the World Bank, International Telecommunication Union and Eurostat. The tool tracks network stability and monitors internet outages in real-time.

"The internet outage affects delivery riders, IT-enabled people, cab riders," Khan said while appearing through a video link on Spotlight with Munizae Jahangir which was aired on Aaj News on Tuesday.

Pakistan has a record of curbing online access in response to political turmoil, banning social media sites, or simply temporarily shutting down the internet altogether.

Chairman of the Pakistan Software Houses Association (P@SHA),

Sajjad Mustafa Syed, has stated that the current internet speed issues are expected to be resolved within a three-month timeframe, amidst concerns that the implementation of a firewall may cause connectivity problems.

He remarked, "If a message is being sent via WhatsApp but images are not transmitting, it may indicate that monitoring is taking place."

Fariha Aziz, co-founder of Bolo Bhi, a digital-rights and civil-liberties group, told Reuters earlier this week that there had been no acknowledgement of an official firewall and accused authorities of not coming clean on the issue.

"It seems sustained opacity is the official government policy," Aziz said.

Rights group Amnesty International has also called on Pakistan to be transparent about internet disruptions.

According to the international data, Pakistan's internet infrastructure has fallen significantly short of global leaders. Its average download speed places it around 100th globally (20.61 Mbps), and 141st in broadband download speeds (15.6 Mbps).

## DPM Dar, Turkish FM discuss unfolding situation in Syria

## Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Sunday held telephone conversation with the Foreign Minister of Türkiye, Hakan Fidan on the unfolding situation in Syria.

During the conversation, the deputy PM shared the details of the efforts by the Government of Pakistan for the safety and security of its nationals in Syria.

They also discussed possible coop-



eration between the two countries for the safety of the Pakistan nationals, a press release issued by the Foreign Office said.

## Founder of PTI has no future: Attaullah Tarar

## Bureau Report

LAHORE: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar has said the founder of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has no future, and ensuring protection of minorities' rights remains the government's foremost priority.

Speaking at a Christmas cake-cutting ceremony at the Bihar Colony church ground here on Sunday, he criticised the PTI's failed plans to storm Islamabad. He also declared that the country's economy was now on the right track and that any attempts at a civil disobedience movement would fail miserably.

He stressed that the PTI and its leader's politics of chaos and violence had been rejected by people, adding that the party had no interest in addressing public issues and had only promoted a culture of unrest and destruction.

"The PTI's attempt to stage a sit-in

in Islamabad failed badly, and now they are threatening a civil disobedience movement, which, like their past propaganda, will flop," he added.

Tarar also extended heartfelt Christmas wishes to the Christian community, pledging to stand with them in their joys and sorrows. "A magnificent Christmas tree will be installed in this area, and I will personally come to light it," he said, lauding the sacrifices and contributions of minorities in Pakistan's creation and progress.

He highlighted the roles of notable figures such as Haroon William, who sacrificed his life for the nation while serving in the Pakistan Army, and Cecil Chaudhry, who represented Pakistan internationally. "The Christian community has produced some of the world's best fighter pilots, and like all communities, they have contributed significantly to Pakistan's development," he added.

## Islamabad to hire thousands of new policemen in light of PTI protests



## City Desk

ISLAMABAD: In response to escalating concerns about law and order, particularly in light of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)'s repeated threats of protests and sit-ins in Islamabad, the Pakistani federal government has authorized a significant expansion of the Islamabad Police force. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has approved the creation of 1,934 new positions.

According to a story in The News, This decision followed a summary submitted to the Prime Minister by the Interior Ministry, highlighting the need for increased police presence to maintain security in Islamabad.

The Management Services Wing of the Establishment Division endorsed the proposal.

The newly approved positions are distributed as follows: 24 inspectors (Grade-16), 50 sub-inspectors, 100 assistant sub-inspectors (ASIs), 180 head constables, and 1,580 constables.

## 12 PTI workers killed, 200 reported missing in protests: Omar Ayub



## Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: Opposition Leader Omar Ayub Khan has claimed that 12 PTI workers were shot dead and over 200 remained missing during a peaceful protests in Islamabad on Nov 24.

Speaking in Peshawar alongside Asad Qaiser, Shibli Faraz, and Sheikh Waqas Akram, Ayub said unarmed protesters were fired upon, resulting in casualties and disappearance. He alleged that over 5,000 workers have been arrested, while injured members are being intimidated.

Ayub accused the government of imposing a "virtual martial law" and compared PM Shehbaz Sharif's mindset and leadership style to Hitler.

A prayer ceremony for the deceased will be held on Dec 13, with overseas Pakistanis joining on Dec 15.

Shibli Fraz blamed the current unrest on the alleged rigging of the February 8 elections.

## Ministry of Law Organizes Qualifying Test for Appointment of..

## Continued from Page 1

plays a critical role in ensuring effective tax recovery and resolution of disputes, directly influencing national revenue generation. Moreover, it is a pivotal step towards filling

the key vacancies in ATIR through a merit-based and competitive process to expedite the resolution of tax related cases pending for years as the collection of taxes is essential for sustained economic development of the country.

## PML-N head Nawaz directs PM Shehbaz to resolve Fazl's concerns...

## Continued from Page 1

support of the 26th Constitutional Amendment. It extends the provisions of the Societies Registration Act of 1860 and introduces regulations for the registration of 'Deeni Madaris' through the relevant deputy commis-

sioner's office. Under the new bill, seminaries with multiple campuses would require only a single registration. Each institution is mandated to provide an annual report detailing its educational activities to the registrar.