



Khaqan Abbasi challenges 26th amendment in SHC

Former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi on Monday challenged the 26th amendment in the Sindh High Court (SHC). The former prime minister requested the court to declare the amendment as null and void. The Parliament passed the 26th Amendment between 20-21 October night under which the term for the Chief Justice of Pakistan has been fixed at three years.



Deadline announced for Hajj 2025 applications

The Ministry of Religious Affairs in Pakistan has issued a deadline for those wishing to perform the Hajj 2025. According to reports, the ministry announced that Hajj 2025 applications will be accepted until December 17, which falls on a Tuesday at banks across the country. All Hajj applications received by December 17 will be processed on a "first come, first served" basis.

Simultaneously published from Islamabad, Lahore and Multan

Blue Economy

President Asif Ali Zardari addressing the 3rd China-Indian Ocean Region forum on Blue Economy held in Kunming, China from December 14-16, through a video message.



Photo: PID

Visit of the Prime Minister to Egypt



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif will undertake an official visit to Egypt from 18 to 20 December 2024 to participate in the Eleventh Summit of the Developing Eight (D-8) countries being held in Cairo.

Preceding the Summit, Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar will attend the 21st Session of the D-8 Council of Ministers on 18 December 2024.

The theme of the 11th D-8 Summit is "Investing in Youth and Supporting SMEs: Shaping Tomorrow's Economy."

At the Summit, the Prime Minister will underline the importance of investing in

youth and SMEs for building a strong and inclusive economy; creating jobs; advancing innovation; and promoting local entrepreneurship. He will express Pakistan's strong commitment to the ideals of D-8; underscore the importance of fostering partnerships for mutual benefit and prosperity; and promoting cooperation in agriculture, food security and tourism. He will also underline Pakistan's incentives for youth empowerment and financial development.

The Prime Minister of Pakistan will also attend the Special Session of D-8 on the Humanitarian Crisis and Reconstruction Challenges in Gaza and Lebanon to deliberate on the situation resulting from Israeli aggression in the Middle East. He will underline Pakistan's principled position on the situation in Palestine and call for peace in the Middle East.

On the sidelines of the Summit, the Prime Minister is expected to hold bilateral meetings with participating leaders.

Mohsin Naqvi visits Saudi Anti-Narcotics HQ, discusses bilateral cooperation



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Interior and Narcotics Control, Mohsin Naqvi, visited the Saudi Anti-Narcotics Headquarters, where he was warmly received by Major General Muhammad Al-Qarni, Director General of Saudi Anti-Narcotics, on Monday.

During the visit, both

sides held detailed discussions on enhancing collaboration to combat drug trafficking. They agreed to take more effective measures under bilateral cooperation and discussed strategies to tackle the growing global challenge of narcotics.

Saudi Arabia offered to assist Pakistan with advanced drug detection equipment.

Pakistan committed to promoting marine cooperation: President Asif Zardari

Spokesman Report

KARACHI: President Asif Ali Zardari has reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to promoting regional marine cooperation and ensuring peace, progress and sustainability in the Indian Ocean region.

Addressing the 3rd China-Indian Ocean Region Forum on Blue Economy Cooperation held in Kunming, China, via a video message, the President stressed the need for collective action to harness the ocean's potential while addressing the pressing challenges of climate change, pollution and ecosystem degradation.

"Pakistan stands ready to partner with all stakeholders to promote marine cooperation and ensure that our region remains a bastion of peace, progress, and sustainability," the president said.

The forum, held from December 14 to 16 in Kunming, China, is organised by the China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA) and focuses on promoting collaboration among countries in the maritime sector.

The president said that the future world economic growth was going to be driven by the East due to its large population resources.

Highlighting the importance of the ocean as a shared lifeline and a source of immense economic opportunities, President Asif Ali Zardari pointed out Pakistan's efforts to enhance its blue economy. He said that these include the formulation of the National Maritime Policy, initiatives focusing on sustainable fisheries and marine conservation and the Living Indus Project, which aims to protect ecosystems and combat pollution.

He underscored the development of Gwadar Port under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is being transformed into a regional

connectivity hub to drive trade and maritime economic growth.

The president praised Pakistan's partnership with China, under the Belt and Road Initiative, emphasizing its role in knowledge exchange, technological advancement, and marine conservation.

The president commended China's Global Development Initiative and CIDCA's efforts to embed sustainability in the Forum's goals. He expressed appreciation for the inclusion of capacity building and island nations in the Forum's agenda, saying that it aligned with Pakistan's vision of transnational

collaboration and environmental stewardship.

Expressing optimism about the Forum's outcomes, the President said, "I am sure that this Forum will pave the way for greater economic cooperation among member countries." He also called for collective efforts to protect marine resources and promote the blue economy for the benefit of future generations.

The 3rd China-Indian Ocean Region Forum aims to bring together leaders, policymakers, and experts from across the region to explore opportunities for maritime collaboration and sustainable development.

Dialogue, imperative to end misconceptions, build positive image of country: Tarar

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar said on Monday that dialogue was the sole option for moving forward in order to project and promote a positive perception, and dispel specific misconceptions about the country.

There was no problem in the world that could not be solved without dialogue, he said while delivering a speech at the Institute of Regional Studies "Dialogue on diversity: Leveraging Pakistan's Cultural Diversity to Foster Peace Within and Across Borders." "Dialogue is the key to every problem. Dialogue has solution in everything," he added.

He said those who propagated violence and intolerance were not friends adding there was definitely a need to discern between friend and foe.



diverse people that coexist in Pakistan, I think we need to bring in an air of positivity. And as the government, we are totally committed towards this cause," he added.

Pakistani nation was most misunderstood nation and there were specific misconceptions about the country, he remarked.

He said Pakistan was totally a different country, in contrast with what the western media had been portraying. "We are a peaceful people, we are a peace-loving people," he added.

He said that efforts were being made to revive the soft and positive image of Pakistan in the world by dispelling the wrong perceptions.

Policeman guarding polio vaccination team killed in KP's Karak

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: Militants shot a police officer guarding polio vaccinators in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Karak on Monday, police said, the day after health workers launched a nationwide campaign against the resurgent disease.

Pakistan and neighbouring Afghanistan are the only countries where polio remains endemic and the vaccination teams frequently come under attack by militants targeting security forces.

"The attack resulted in the death of the police officer at the scene, while one polio worker was injured," a senior police official told AFP on the condition of anonymity.

The police officer was travelling with two vaccinators when they were attacked by motorcyclists. No group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack in KP, which has long been a hive of militant activity.

The polio campaign has been temporarily suspended in Shakar Khel, the village where the incident took place, but continues in other parts of the province bordering Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, KP Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur condemned the attacks on polio workers and sought reports from senior police officials. He has directed them to take action against the elements involved.

A press release from the CM's office stated that separate attacks in Karak and Bannu districts killed a policeman and injuries to two polio workers.

In response to the incidents, CM Gandapur has called for measures to enhance the security of anti-polio teams operating in the region.

"Those who attack the anti-polio teams are enemies of our children's secure future," the chief minister said, "front-line anti-polio workers are our heroes and benefactors." Pakistan has seen a surge in polio cases this year, recording 63 this year compared with six in 2023.

On Monday, the federal government launched a four-day campaign that will cover 143 districts across the country, with over 400,000 polio workers going door-to-door aiming to immunise more than 45 million children over the age of five.



President, PM strongly condemn terrorist attack on polio workers

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday strongly condemned the terrorist attack on the polio workers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's district Karak, resulting in the martyrdom of a policeman.

The prime minister directed the relevant authorities to provide immediate medical assistance to those injured in the incident.

In separate press statements, the president and the prime minister expressed deep sorrow and grief over the martyrdom of the policeman.

President Asif Zardari said that the terrorists, who did not want to see the people healthy and prosperous, were the enemies of the future of the country and the nation.

He urged the people to fully participate in the government's



anti-polio campaign and ensure administering polio drops to their children.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif emphasized that the sacrifices of the security forces in government's efforts to eradicate polio disease in the country will never go in vain.

Expressing concerns over the attack on the polio workers, the prime minister said such actions will not deter the government's commitments.

"The government will utilize all possible resources to ensure the safety of the polio workers till complete eradication of the disease in the country," he added.

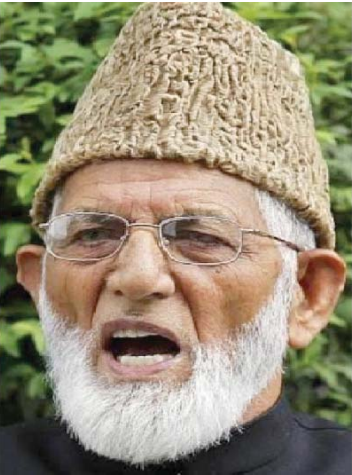
Sardar Attique strongly condemns illegal house arrest of Mirwaiz Umer Farooq

Bureau Report

RAWALPINDI: President of All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference and former Prime Minister Sardar Attique has strongly condemned the illegal house arrest of veteran Hurriyat leader Mirwaiz Umer Farooq and illegal raid on Syed Ali Geelani House and party office and unauthorised act of taking record by Indian army and said that the such brutal tactics can not suppress the Kashmiries.

He said Indian government led by Narendra Modi is brutally using military force to suppress the struggle of Kashmiris for their right to self-determination, but it will never succeed in its nefarious intentions.

India has waged a war against the defenseless people of occupied Jammu and Kashmir and Indian atrocities have intensified after August 5, 2019. India has been subjecting Kashmiris to brutal atrocities for the last 76 years for



demanding their right to self-determination.

However, Indian oppression has not been able to force the Kashmiri people to give up their legitimate demands. He appealed to international human rights organizations to raise their voices against Indian

atrocities in occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

He expressed these views while talking to Muslim Conference delegations at Mujahid Manzil in Rawalpindi. He said that Kashmiris want implementation of UN resolutions in which the people of Jammu and

Kashmir have been guaranteed the right to self-determination. He said that they stand shoulder to shoulder with their Kashmiri brothers in the struggle against Indian occupation. He said that all political parties are on the same page on the Kashmir issue.

Polio-free campaign

NAWABSHAH: Member National Assembly Asifa Bhutto Zardari administers a polio vaccine to a child, in the city. The Pakistani government launched an anti-polio vaccination campaign in an effort to eradicate the crippling disease.



Photo: Online

DFP condemns house detention of Mirwaiz Umar Farooq

Abdul Majeed Tahir

SRINAGAR: Voicing its serious concern over the continuous and illegal detention of the incarcerated party chairman Shabir Ahmed Shah and other Hurriyat leaders, the Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party has urged the world human rights organizations to play their much needed role to help secure early release of Kashmiri prisoners who have been languishing in different jails since past several years.

In a statement issued here today, the DFP spokesman advocate Arshad Iqbal said that hundreds of Kashmiri prisoners lodged in prisons outside Kashmir have been suffering due to highly unfavorable conditions and lack



of basic amenities including access to clean and drinkable water, hygienic

food and medicines.

The DFP spokesman also expressed his party's concern over the continued house detention of veteran Hurriyat leader Mirwaiz Dr. Umar Farooq and termed his detention as a violation of basic human rights.

The spokesman, while seeking early release of all illegally detained Kashmiri prisoners, said that the Indian government was using arbitrary arrests and prolonged detentions as a tool to suppress Kashmiris' legitimate political aspirations.

Stressing the need for early and amicable settlement of the lingering Kashmir dispute, the DFP leader said that the unresolved dispute has been the main cause and consequence of rights violations in the region.

Anti-Polio Campaign Launched in Toba Tek Singh

Zafar Chishti

TOBA TEK SINGH: Deputy Commissioner Mohammad Naeem Sindhu formally inaugurated the campaign for polio immunization for children up to five years of age.

CEO Health Dr. Kashif Mehmood Kambh, DM Punjab Health Facilities Management Company Muhammad Asif Rasheed and personalities from civil society were also present on this occasion. Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Naeem

Sindhu said that the 5 day anti-polio campaign will be held from December 16 to December 20 will continue. In the anti-polio campaign, 4 lakh 33 thousand 838 children will be administered polio drops. Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Naeem Sindhu further said that 1916 mobile, 106 fixed, 49 transit teams will administer drops to children up to 5 years of age. Polio drops are also being administered at all health centers across the district. It is a priority to make the homeland polio-free. All govern-



ment departments and scholars have to fulfill their responsibilities. Polio virus can be completely eradicated only through joint efforts. The aim of repeating the campaign repeatedly is to eradicate this virus once and for all. Parents must vaccinate their children up to five years of age, coop-

erate with polio teams visiting home. Microplan should be followed responsibly and previous experiences should be taken into consideration. Double monitoring of the campaign will be done in this regard, there is no room for negligence or carelessness.

Press Club Cabinet dissolved; Election Committee Formed

Correspondent

TAKHT BHAI: The cabinet of Takht Bhai Press Club (Registered) has been dissolved, and a three-member committee comprising press club members has been formed to oversee new elections. This committee, in consultation with the President of the Tehsil Bar Association and the Director of the Information Department, will prepare the election schedule and supervise the electoral process.

The final meeting of the Takht Bhai Press Club (Registered) was held under the chairmanship of Muslim Khan Sabir, with a large attendance from the cabinet and members. Addressing the meeting, President Muslim Khan Sabir announced the dissolution of the cabinet for new elections and the formation of an election committee comprising senior journalists Haji Murad Ali Murad, Ibrahim Syed Yousafzai, and Rafeullah Pamir. This committee, along with the President of the Tehsil Bar Association and the Director of Information, will finalize the schedule and ensure elections are conducted by December 25. President Muslim Khan Sabir stated that the cabinet is accountable to all members and that they have a clean record. He added that the work accomplished over the past 18 months under challenging circumstances is evident to everyone. He assured that they would continue their efforts for the improvement of the institution and the benefit of the area and its people in collaboration with senior and junior journalists alike.

Shah Abdul Latif University, Khairpur signs MoU with American Institute of Pakistan Studies (AIPS)

Qayoom Sarohi

KHAIRPUR: On Monday, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between Shah Abdul Latif University (SALU), Khairpur, and the American Institute of Pakistan Studies (AIPS) to enhance cooperation in promoting higher education, research, and academic exchanges.

The MoU was formally signed at the Syndicate Hall of SALU, in the presence of distinguished faculty members and officials. Meritorious Professor Dr. Yousuf Khushik, Vice Chancellor of SALU, and Dr. Matthew Cook, President of AIPS, were among the signatories, along with Dr. Aalia Sohail, Director of AIPS, and Dr. Siraj Ahmed Soomro, Chairman of the Department of Pakistan Studies at SALU.

Vice Chancellor Dr. Yousuf Khushik welcomed the guests and emphasized the longstanding and trustworthy relationship between Pakistan and the United States. He expressed optimism that the partnership would open new avenues for academic collaboration, research, and international projects.

"America is a trusted friend of Pakistan, and this agreement marks a new chapter in our academic relations," Dr. Khushik remarked. He further appreciated Dr. Cook's extensive knowledge of Sindh, mentioning that the author of six books on the region brought a wealth of expertise that would be invaluable to the collaboration.

All Facilities Being Provided to Patients in Hospital: MS. Dr. Ijaz

Zafar Chishti

TOBA TEK SINGH: According to the details, MSTHQ Hospital Kamalia, Doctor Ijaz Talking to the Correspondent of Daily The Spokesman in his office said that, All the facilities including medicines are being provided to the patients coming to the hospital and our doctors check the patients comfortably. Apart from this, the nursing staff of the hospital takes good care of the patients.

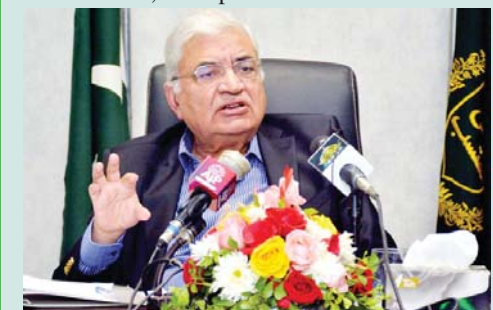


Wafaqi Mohtasib inaugurates online meeting on Business and Human Rights

ISLAMABAD: Wafaqi Mohtasib, Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi on Monday said that the primary purpose of economic growth is to promote equal opportunity for all citizens to live their lives in dignity and honor.

He was inaugurating an online meeting on Business and Human Rights organized by the Asian Ombudsman Association (AOA) in cooperation with the Commissioner of Human Rights in Azerbaijan. Addressing the meeting as President of the 47-member strong Asian Ombudsman Association, Mr. Qureshi underlined the growing influence of corporate activities on human lives and communities.

He said that the United Nations Guiding Principles (UNGPs) on Business and Human Rights provide a comprehensive global standard for addressing maladministration and abuses resulting from the business activities, said a press release issued here.



He further added that Pakistan remains committed to safeguarding the rights and interests of the stakeholders in business and industry. "The people are the biggest stakeholders and their legitimate interests must be protected", he maintained.

He also called upon the business and industrial circles not to lose sight of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), while carrying out business-related activities and also remain watchful about their impact on the environment.

It may be added that the theme of the meeting is in line with Article 4(2) of the AOA's Bye-Laws, which provide for activities aimed at sharing of information and promoting professionalism in the discharge of Ombudsman's functions.

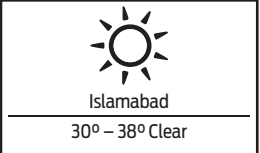
The meeting was attended by a large number of member institutions of the Asian Ombudsman Association (AOA), the OIC Ombudsman Association (OICOA) and the Forum of Pakistan Ombudsman (FPO) including from China, Thailand, Hong Kong, Morocco, and Azerbaijan.

Govt refunded huge amount to Hajj pilgrims; NA told

ISLAMABAD, DEC 16 (APP): Federal Parliamentary Secretary Shamsheer Ali Mazari on Monday informed the National Assembly that as many as Rs132,000 had been refunded to 7624 Hajj pilgrims who did not avail the facility of travelling by train.

Replying to a supplementary question of MNA Aalia Kamran during the Question Hour session of the lower House of the Parliament, he informed that Rs118,000 had been returned to those pilgrims who travelled by train while 97,000 rupees had been refunded to other pilgrims.

Shamsheer said that mobile SIMs including international and Whatsapp's call facility costing around Rs6000 had also been provided to each pilgrim.



SERVICES

Namaz Timings
 Fajr 5:37 am
 Zohr 12:03 pm
 Asr 3:23 pm
 Maghrib 5:01 pm
 Isha 6:31 pm

EMERGENCY

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

Women Police Stations

Islamabad 9222596
 Rawalpindi 9270601-20

ENQUIRY

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

HOSPITALS

CMH 561111
 MH 561116
 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

Signing of MOU between PEMRA & NITB for Development of PEMRA's Mobile App

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Today, during a ceremony, Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between PEMRA and NITB was signed at Authority's Headquarters in Islamabad. This MoU was signed by Mr. Muhammad Tahir, Director General (Operations - Broadcast Media & PR), PEMRA and Dr. Babar Majid Bhatti, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), NITB.

Mr. Muhammad Saleem, Chairman, PEMRA along with Mr. Sikander Rashid Choudhry, Executive Member were also present. Chairman, PEMRA Muhammad Saleem expressed his gratitude to Dr. Babar Majid Bhatti, CEO, NITB for his support for this initiative and bringing both the organizations to mutual cooperation.

On this occasion, Mr. Wakeel Khan, Director General (Licensing - Broadcast Media), Ms. Zeeba Tabassum, Director General (IT), Mr. Tamseel Hayder, Director and PSO to Chairman PEMRA, Mr. Saeed Ahmed Soomro, Regional Director (Islamabad), Mr. Tahir Farooq Tarar, Head (Legal) and Mr. Shahbaz Akhtar, Director (IT) was also present.

Christmas celebration organized by Pakistan Cultural Forum for the Christian community

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of Pakistan Cultural Forum, Secretary General UBG (FPCCI), and former President ICCI, Zafar Bakhtawari, hosted a grand Christmas celebration in Islamabad to promote traditional harmony and interfaith unity. The event was attended by over 70 pastors from various churches, prominent individuals from the Christian community, and other distinguished personalities.

President of Clean and Green Islamabad Movement, Member Central Core Committee UBG, and former President ICCI, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, Advisor to the Punjab Government on Health Zahid Bakhtawari, and Director of D. Watson Group Abid Bakhtawari co-hosted the event. Senior Vice President ICCI Nasir Chaudhry, ICCI Executive Members Waseem Chaudhry, Ruheel Anwar Butt, Malik Mohsin Khalid, Nisar Mirza, Faizan Shehzad, Ameer Hamza, Chaudhry Ashraf Farzand, Pastor Samson Sohail, Pastor Malik Kamran, Bishop Javed Siddiq, Bishop Farrukh Javed, and others also attended.

The event commenced with prayers for peace, love, and prosperity in the country. This was followed by the traditional Christmas cake-cutting ceremony, which was a highlight of the event and

fostered feelings of joy and unity among the attendees.

Zafar Bakhtawari, in his speech, said, "Minorities are an integral part of our nation. Together, we must work for the progress and prosperity of our country. Christmas conveys the message of love, brotherhood, and peace, and the Bakhtawari family has always strived to spread this message."

Addressing the gathering, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari extended his Christmas greetings to the Christian community, saying, "Christmas is a message of peace, joy, and hope. We must embody this message in our lives and promote social harmony by sharing each other's joys and sorrows. The Bakhtawari family has always upheld the tradition of expressing solidarity with minorities and celebrating their happiness."

During the event, several pastors and representatives of the Christian community expressed their gratitude to the Bakhtawari family, acknowledging that such events promote unity and love in society. Pastor Noble John remarked, "We are thankful to the Bakhtawari family for providing us a platform where we can come together and celebrate. This event symbolizes the coexistence of people from different faiths in Pakistan with love and tolerance."



The event concluded with the distribution of gifts among attendees and a grand dinner. The celebration further strengthened the spirit of interfaith harmony and brotherhood among the people of Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

Cutting wood

RAWALPINDI: A worker busy in cutting wood into pieces with axe for selling at his workplace at Ammar Pura area, in the city.



Photo: Online

Policy rate reduction will boost the economic activity. President FPCCI Atif Ikram Shaikh

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: President Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industries Atif Ikram Sheikh has said that the reduction of 200 basis points in the policy rate by the State Bank is welcome, there is scope for further reduction in the interest rate.

President Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industries Atif Ikram Sheikh has welcomed the announcement of a 2 percent reduction in interest rates by the Central Bank



and said that the next monetary policy announcement may reduce by 400 basis points. In the last six months the policy rate has been reduced by 9%.

Atif Ikram Sheikh said that the reduction in the policy rate will increase the economic development, the currency circulation including investment, exports will also increase, the reduction in the interest rate will also reduce the internal debt of the government. Cancellation of contracts with the IPP's is also an important step by the government.

Mushaal sounds alarm on RSS-led cultural war against Kashmiris

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Mushaal Hussein Mullick, wife of senior Hurriyat Leader Mohammad Yasin Malik, expressed her alarm that the Indian notorious government's ongoing attempts to crush Kashmiri culture were a blatant manifestation of India's culture war aimed at erasing the unique identity and heritage of the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK).

Addressing at an event organised by International Regional Studies (IRS) titled "Leveraging Pakistan's cultural diversity to foster peace within and without" here on Monday, Mushaal stated that the assault on Kashmir's cultural fabric was a stark reminder of the occupation's relentless efforts to crush the spirit of the Kashmiri people. Chairperson of Peace and Culture



Organisation urged the international community and UN bodies to take notice of the RSS-led cultural genocide of Kashmiris. She said that the RSS was hell-bent to impose a homogeneous Hindu

culture on the diverse and pluralistic society of Kashmir, which was evident in their efforts to suppress Kashmiri art, literature and music.

Mushaal said that the Indian government was pursuing genocidal policy ruthlessly killing Kashmiris and erasing their cultural identity; however, she vowed that the Narendra Modi-led Hindutva regime would not succeed in their nefarious designs.

She stressed the need that Pakistan had rich cultural diversity and pluralistic heritage, which could be used as powerful tools to build bridges, heal divisions, conflict resolution and project a peaceful and inclusive image of Pakistan on the global stage.

The Chairperson emphasized that they should elevate themselves, individually and collectively, so that they could shape Pakistan's destiny.

Nutrition Awareness Camp Organized by BZU Department of Human Nutrition



Special Correspondent

MULTAN: Yesterday the Department of Human Nutrition, Bahauddin Zakariya University (BZU) Multan, organized a Nutrition Awareness Camp. The event was graced by prominent figures, including Dr. Muhammad Tauseef Sultan (Chairman, Department of Human Nutrition), Dr. Muhammad Riaz (Chairman, Department of Food Safety), Dr. Anila Hamid (Chairman, Department of Animal and Food Products), Dr. Tariq Ismail (Associate Professor, Department of Food Science and Technology), Dr. Khurram Afzal (Associate Professor, Department of Human Nutrition), and Dr. Adnan Amjad (Assistant Professor, Department of Human Nutrition).

The food products presented at the stalls were prepared under the supervision of faculty members, including Ph. D. scholars Usman Khalid, Naeem Sarwar, Madam Iqra Akram, Madam Iqra Tabassum, Madam Amber Saleem, and Ms. Iqra Baig. The camp emphasized treating various illnesses through dietary modifications, addressing conditions like diabetes, liver and gastrointestinal disorders, intestinal problems, bone health issues, heart diseases, and women's specific health concerns.

Students actively answered participants' questions and provided practical dietary solutions. Their tireless efforts were commended for their potential role in preventing diseases and promoting health in society.

Dr. Muhammad Tauseef Sultan appreciated the dedication of students, emphasizing the importance of such initiatives in addressing public health challenges. Dr. Muhammad Riaz highlighted the need to promote these nutritious food solutions within the community to combat the root causes of various diseases.

Zindigi and Islamic Relief Pakistan Partner to Transform Humanitarian Aid Through Digital Innovation

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Zindigi, powered by JS Bank, has partnered with Islamic Relief Pakistan to transform delivery of humanitarian aid through advanced digital solutions across Pakistan. This initiative streamlines disbursements, ensuring transparency and efficiency for beneficiaries across four provinces, 40 cities, the federal capital, and Azad Kashmir, making aid faster, more reliable, and impactful for vulnerable communities.

Beyond digitizing disbursements, the collaboration is rooted in addressing systemic challenges, with an emphasis on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and engaging with the Global Climate Fund (GCF). Together, the two organizations plan to expand their reach into critical areas such as healthcare, women's empowerment, climate change, food security and livelihoods, access to clean water, and targeted programs for orphans and youth.

Central to the partnership is the integration of Zindigi's Human Resource Management System (HRMS), which will optimize HR operations and payroll management for Islamic Relief Pakistan. "This partnership exemplifies Zindigi's commitment to harnessing the power of digital technology to make a meaningful impact," said Atif Ishaque, Chief Business Officer at Zindagi. "By partnering with Islamic Relief Pakistan, we are not just enabling operational efficiencies; we are amplifying the scale and effectiveness of their humanitarian efforts across the country."

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Will Trump's promises ever be fulfilled?

During the election campaigns made many lofty promises such as implementing his immigration rhetoric, imposing 100% tariffs on BRICS member countries, ending the Russia-Ukraine war and the Israel-Palestine conflict, cutting bureaucracy by 70%, mass deportations of undocumented immigrants, imposing universal tariffs of 10% to 20% on imports and suggested imposing higher tariffs on specific countries like China. Additionally, he pledged to reduce military aid to Ukraine, reassess NATO contributions. On abortion, Trump supported state-level decision-making and hinted at pursuing legal actions against political opponents.

When asked how he intended to implement these promises, Trump's standard reply in most cases was through the issuance of executive orders. However, deep down, he likely understood that issuing executive orders on every issue, conflict, or situation is not that straightforward. While executive orders are and will remain an extremely powerful tool for the President, they come with significant limitations.

For instance, the President cannot issue an executive order that contravenes the U.S. Constitution or violates the principle of separation of powers among the legislative, judicial, and executive branches; curbing the freedom of speech, media or religion. In short, executive orders must be grounded in the Constitution or statutory authority, and they cannot create new laws or override congressional powers.

The authority for the U.S. President to issue executive orders is derived from the Constitution, primarily Article II. The Executive Power Clause (Article II, Section 1) vests executive authority in the President, while the Take Care Clause (Article II, Section 3) mandates the President to ensure federal laws are faithfully executed, allowing orders to manage their implementation. Additionally, the Commander-in-Chief Clause (Article II, Section 2) provides authority for orders related to military and national security.

These checks ensure that executive orders remain within constitutional and statutory limits.

Though a few of President-elect Trump's promises such as immigration enforcement, prioritizing deportations and using the military for civilian law enforcement is limited by the Posse Comitatus Act. Similarly, targeted tariffs under national security grounds, and foreign policy decisions like adjusting NATO contributions or reducing military aid to Ukraine, can also be implemented through executive orders. However, the President's power for investigations against political opponents could face legal and ethical challenges.

There are other promises which are beyond the scope of executive orders such as state-level abortion laws, broad tariff policies affecting all imports would require congressional approval and significant changes to immigration laws, such as altering legal criteria for status or deportation, require legislative action.

If President Trump adopts the legislative path, most of his promises might not see the daylight during his four years tenure due to their complexity and predefined lengthy path. The process would begin with introducing the bill in the congress, followed by committee reviews, debates, and possible amendments, which can take weeks to months. Once approved by the committee, the bill would move to floor debates and votes in the House and Senate. If both chambers pass different versions, a conference committee would reconcile them before

final votes and the President's signature. In a fast-tracked scenario with strong party support, the process could take 1-3 months, but contentious legislation, especially if subject to a Senate filibuster requiring 60 votes to overcome, could take 6-12 months or stall indefinitely.

Like abortion bill, Trump's other promises would as well require a lengthy path. Mass deportations and securing the U.S.-Mexico border, could take 1-3 years. Trade policies, including universal tariffs of 10%-20% or 100% tariffs on BRICS countries, could take 1-5 years, as broader measures would need congressional approval and face global resistance. Reducing bureaucracy by 70% would require significant legislative and administrative reforms, likely taking 4-8 years.

The Foreign policy goals such as ending the Russia-Ukraine war and resolving the Israel-Palestine conflict, could take years to decades or remain unresolved. Overall, implementation would span 4-8 years for most promises, with some outcomes taking longer or remaining uncertain.

The true measure of any promise lies in its fulfillment. Donald Trump, a master showman, made numerous lofty promises during his campaign, many of which he likely knew could never be fully realized within a four-year term. Yet, with the flair of a seasoned actor, he delivered these pledges with unshakable confidence, captivating his supporters and igniting their hopes. He painted a vision so grand that it seemed, to his followers, that upon taking the reins of the most powerful nation in recorded history, he would transform his words into action with the wave of a magic wand. Deep down, Trump must have known the complexities and limita-



Analysis

Qamar Bashir

Israel plans to double population in occupied Golan

Israel agreed on Sunday to double its population on the occupied Golan Heights while saying threats from Syria remained despite the moderate tone of rebel leaders who ousted President Bashar al-Assad a week ago.

"Strengthening the Golan is strengthening the State of Israel, and it is especially important at this time. We will continue to hold onto it, cause it to blossom, and settle in it," Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in a statement.

Israel captured most of the strategic plateau from Syria in the 1967 Six-Day War, annexing it in 1981.

In 2019 then-President Donald Trump declared U.S. support for Israeli sovereignty over the Golan, but the annexation has not been recognised by most countries. Syria demands Israel withdraw but Israel refuses, citing security concerns. Various peace efforts have failed.

Netanyahu said he spoke with Trump on Saturday about security developments in Syria.

"We have no interest in a conflict with Syria," Netanyahu said in a statement. Israeli actions in Syria were intended to "thwart the potential threats from Syria and to prevent the takeover of terrorist elements near our border," he added.

Defence Minister Israel Katz said in a statement that the latest developments in Syria increased the threat to Israel, "despite the moderate image that the rebel leaders claim to present".

Netanyahu's office said the government unanimously approved a more than 40-million-shekel (\$11 million) plan to encourage demographic growth in the Golan.

It said Netanyahu submitted the plan to the government "in light of the war and the new front facing Syria, and out of a desire to double the population of the Golan".

Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates condemned Israel's decision, with the UAE - which normalised relations with Israel in 2020 - describing it as a "deliberate effort to expand the occupation".

Some 31,000 Israelis have settled there, said analyst Avraham Levine of the Alma Research and Education Center specialising in Israel's security challenges on its northern border. The Golan is home to 24,000 Druze, an Arab minority who practice an offshoot of Islam, Levine said. Most identify as Syrian.

Since then Israel has moved into a demilitarised zone inside Syria that was created after the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, including the Syrian side of the strategic Mount Hermon that overlooks Damascus, where its forces took over an abandoned Syrian military post.

Israel, which has said that it does not intend to stay there and calls the incursion into Syrian territory a limited and temporary measure to ensure border security, has also carried out hundreds of strikes on Syria's strategic weapons stockpiles.



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

Economy: The sole determinant of post-modernism

Syed Muhammad Ali Naqvi

The question of whether the economy is the sole determinant of post-modernism invites an exploration of its philosophical underpinnings, particularly the evolution from modernism, alongside insights from empiricism and pragmatism. This analysis will also consider contemporary political dynamics and future prospects, illustrating these themes with concrete examples and relevant poetry. Modernism emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, marked by a belief in progress, reason, and the power of human innovation. Thinkers like René Descartes emphasized rationality, while figures like Immanuel Kant focused on autonomy and moral imperatives. Modernism celebrated grand narratives and objective truths, aligning closely with industrial capitalism. The rise of technology and industrialization fostered a sense of optimism about human potential and societal advancement.

In stark contrast, post-modernism arose in the mid-20th century as a reaction against the assumptions of modernism. It questions the validity of grand narratives and universal truths, positing that knowledge is socially constructed, fragmented, and contingent. Post-modernist philosophers, such as Jean-François Lyotard, argued that the grand narratives of modernism failed to capture the complexity and diversity of human experience. This skepticism towards overarching ideologies reflects a broader cultural shift towards relativism and plurality.

To understand the relationship between economy and post-modernism, it is crucial to integrate insights from empiricism and pragmatism. Empiricism, with roots in thinkers like John Locke and David Hume, emphasizes knowledge derived from sensory experience. In a post-modern context, this aligns with the idea that economic conditions are shaped by lived experiences rather

than abstract theories. For instance, economic policies that may appear beneficial in theory can have varied impacts on different communities based on their unique contexts.

UBI proposes providing all citizens with a regular, unconditional payment, ensuring a basic standard of living regardless of employment status. This approach seeks to alleviate the economic pressures exacerbated by technological advancements and economic instability. By decoupling income from traditional employment, UBI encourages individuals to pursue creative endeavors, education, or entrepreneurial ventures, thereby adapting to the changing economic landscape.

The interplay between economic forces and post-modernism can be further illustrated through specific case studies. In the United States, the gig economy has transformed labor relations, offering flexible work opportunities but also exposing workers to economic vulnerability. Companies like Uber and Lyft provide income for many, yet the lack of job security and benefits highlights the precarious nature of this economic model. As more individuals rely on gig work, the implications for social welfare systems and workers' rights become increasingly pressing.

In Germany, the social market economy provides a contrasting model that balances capitalist principles with social welfare. The country's commitment to social equity and strong labor protections demonstrates a pragmatic approach to addressing economic challenges. By investing in education, vocational training, and social safety nets, Germany has maintained relatively low levels of income inequality while fostering economic growth. This model exemplifies the potential for economic practices that prioritize inclusivity and social cohesion within a post-modern context.

In India, economic liberalization in the 1990s spurred significant growth but also highlighted disparities within society. The economic reforms led to an increase in wealth for some, while millions

remained trapped in poverty. The contrasting narratives of progress and stagnation reflect the complexities of post-modernism, where multiple realities coexist. Movements advocating for inclusive policies, such as those promoting access to education and healthcare, challenge the dominant economic paradigms and seek to address the needs of marginalized populations.

As we navigate the intricate relationship between economy and post-modernism, poetry can serve as a powerful vehicle for expressing the nuances of these themes. Consider the poignant lines from W. B. Yeats' "The Second Coming":

"Turning and turning in the widening gyre,
 The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
 Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
 Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world."
 These lines capture the sense of disintegration and chaos that often accompanies rapid economic and social change. They resonate with the fragmentation of post-modern narratives, reflecting the uncertainty and complexity of contemporary life.

In conclusion, while the economy plays a significant role in shaping post-modernism, it is not the only determinant. The interplay of social, political, and cultural factors, along with philosophical insights from empiricism and pragmatism, presents a more nuanced understanding of contemporary dynamics. The economic landscape shapes narratives, influences political movements, and defines the experiences of individuals and communities.

As we move forward, the ability to adapt our economic practices to foster inclusivity will be essential in shaping a just and equitable post-modern society. By embracing a holistic approach that considers the interplay between economy and society, we can create a future that acknowledges the complexities of human experience while striving for progress and equity.

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'The Syrian Crisis: Unraveling Sectarian Alliances and Geopolitical Intrigues'

In Syria, Tahrir al-Sham has assumed control, while Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has sought political asylum in Russia alongside his family. This situation raises a critical question that needs to be addressed: Is Tahrir al-Sham supported by the United States and other international powers? This claim is often made by supporters of the Assad regime, but it warrants closer scrutiny. If such claims are made, it is equally important to recognize that Bashar al-Assad himself received extensive support from various foreign countries, including the one where he now resides as a political refugee.

The reality of the Syrian conflict is that external involvement exists on both sides. Those who label Tahrir al-Sham's activities as entirely externally orchestrated must also consider the substantial foreign backing that has sustained the Assad regime over the years. This acknowledgment highlights a deeper truth: the war in Syria has evolved into a sectarian conflict, a grim reality that is impossible to ignore. The affiliations of fighters and their motives often point to underlying sectarian divides that fuel the violence.

The ongoing conflict also underscores the importance of addressing broader geopolitical issues. For example, the Palestinian issue should remain a matter solely for the Palestinians, free from exploitation by external powers. Russia, in its bid to restore global credibility, is leveraging this issue, achieving some success. Similarly, Iran seeks to position itself as the leader of the Islamic world, further complicating the Middle Eastern landscape.

The Middle East, including parts of South Asia, has perpetuated warlike situations through proxy wars, later positioning themselves as mediators or saviors. Saudi Arabia, for instance, continues to finance opposition to these proxies, particularly in Pakistan. These dynamics reflect the intricate web of alliances, rivalries, and state interests that fuel regional instability.

Regarding Palestine, the responsibility of Hamas—backed by Iran—cannot be overlooked. By provoking Israel through militant actions, Hamas has created conditions that have further endangered Palestinian lives. In response, Israel has launched attacks on Syrian regions, which many interpret as part of a larger geopolitical strategy involving rebellious groups and their subsequent victories.

Navigating the Complex Landscape In conclusion, the Syrian crisis and its regional ramifications are shrouded in layers of confusion and competing narratives. While it is difficult to ascertain a single, definitive truth, constructing informed perspectives and strategic policies remains crucial.

For Pakistan and other states, the focus should be on strategic navigation: fostering peace, addressing humanitarian concerns, and maintaining balanced relations without succumbing to sectarian or proxy conflicts. Only through such an approach can lasting stability and progress be achieved amidst the ongoing turmoil.

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Analysis



M Azam Tariq

IS National Broadband Network Forum 2024

Chairman Senate emphasizes broadband as a necessity for digital economic growth

IS Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: The National Broadband Network Forum 2024, organized by PTA in collaboration with Huawei, was held in Islamabad under the theme "Gigabit for All." Mr. Yousaf Raza Gillani Chairman Senate graced the event as the chief guest, emphasizing broadband as a necessity for digital economic growth. He commended PTA's role in enhancing broadband penetration, noting a milestone of 59% but stressing the need to address the remaining gaps. He also expressed appreciation for Huawei Pakistan's commitment for ICT sector enablement over the past many years, "Huawei, has been a major partner in the digital transformation of Pakistan, and we are looking forward to working closely together to further enable the industry in the fields of AI, Cloud and Big Data."

Minister of State for IT, Shiza Fatima, assured the government's continued support to the telecom sector in bridging the digital divide. Chairman PTA highlighted the importance of collaboration and innovation in achieving universal



connectivity. Secretary MoIT pledged sustained efforts toward building a digitally inclusive Pakistan.

Aamir Ibrahim, CEO Jazz said, "We applaud PTA's leadership in fostering collaboration and driving initiatives like the National Broadband Network Forum, which are instrumental in shaping Pakistan's digital future. With a broadband penetration milestone of 59%, it is clear that strategic partnerships—such as those with PTA

and technology leaders like Huawei—are vital in advancing internet accessibility, AI-driven innovation, and broadband infrastructure. At Jazz, we remain steadfast in our commitment to working alongside PTA and other stakeholders to ensure that digital transformation empowers growth, inclusion, and progress for all Pakistanis."

Huawei's CEO reaffirmed the commitment to providing cutting-



edge broadband solutions, furthering Pakistan's digital transformation. CEO Jazz and NERA PTA's 5G consultants also shared their dedication to enhancing broadband infra-

structure across the country. The event underscored the collective commitment to advancing Pakistan's broadband infrastructure and fostering a smart, connected

future. The NBN Forum 2024 is the second in a series of international forums hosted by PTA, focusing on increasing broadband penetration in Pakistan.

Parliamentarians Commit to Tackle Rapid Population Growth for National Prosperity

IS Our Correspondent

QUETTA: "Lady Health Workers (LHWs) are pivotal in delivering home-based family planning services, especially in hard-to-reach areas. By engaging families and religious leaders, they create awareness and empower women with choices, tipping the scales in service delivery," stated Senator Sherry Rehman at the 12th meeting of the Parliamentary Forum on Population (PFP). The event was organized by the Population Council, with support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

Citing the groundbreaking study Pakistan @2050, Senator Rehman emphasized the urgency of implementing the National Action Plan on population endorsed by the Council of Common Interests (CCI) decision. "This study presents two contrasting futures: a 'Business-as-Usual' (BaU) scenario that exacerbates existing challenges and a CCI-based roadmap that can improve per capita outcomes by 37%. Population growth impacts all vital sectors—education, health, and the economy—and addressing it must transcend political divides. Female



education is especially critical in enabling women to make informed health decisions, including determining family size," she remarked.

Senator Rehman also highlighted the devastating consequences of unchecked population growth on climate change and national resources calling a rapid increase in population size a ticking bomb. "Every 10 minutes, a woman in Pakistan dies from

preventable causes.

Dr. Zeba Sathar, Country Director of the Population Council, called for immediate accountability on the CCI decisions. She emphasized integrating population welfare indicators into the National Finance Commission (NFC) formula and reducing the weightage of population size in resource allocation.

Dr. Farooq Sattar, Member of the

National Assembly, described population growth as the "mother of all issues," urging stronger political will to address it. "Population growth impacts health, education, and economic sectors.

Dr. Luay Shabaneh, UNFPA Country Representative for Pakistan, underscored the critical role of parliamentarians in advancing reproductive health rights

MPA Uzma Kardar from the Punjab Assembly called for a joint resolution on sustainable population growth to strengthen legislation and amplify a unified voice. MPA Zmarak Khan from the Balochistan Assembly highlighted health and family planning service delivery challenges in the province, stressing the need for increased and equitable resource allocation.

Parliamentarians at the forum pledged to advocate for resolutions, adjournment motions, and other legislative actions in their assemblies to accelerate momentum on this critical national issue. They also called for integrating family planning and sustainable population themes into educational curricula and enhancing grassroots service delivery through empowered local governments.

Chairman PRCS Merged Areas Branch Briefs National Chairman on Humanitarian Efforts in Kurram and Parachinar

IS Spokesman Report



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) Merged Areas Branch, Imran Wazir, held a significant meeting with the National Chairman PRCS, Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari, at the National Headquarters on Monday.

He expressed gratitude for the community's appreciation of PRCS's swift and effective response. "The community acknowledged PRCS as the first organization to reach them in their time of need, providing comprehensive support," said Imran Wazir. He also acknowledged the vital role of the PRCS National Headquarters in supporting the Merged Areas Branch through provision of essential support to alleviate the suffering of vulnerable populations.

National Chairman PRCS, Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari, applauded the dedicated efforts and swift response of the PRCS Merged Areas Branch. He reaffirmed the National Headquarters' commitment to strengthening provincial branches, enhancing their capacity, and broadening their outreach to better serve communities in need. The meeting concluded with Imran Wazir extending a formal invitation to the National Chairman to visit the Merged Areas Branch, aiming to further strengthen collaboration and coordination between the National Headquarter and the Merged Areas Branch.

IICR hosts webinar on "Community and Social Work Initiatives"

IS City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Institute of Conflict Resolution (IICR) convened a distinguished and highly impactful webinar, raising dialogue on a critical issue titled "Community and Social Work Initiatives: Empowering Local Change-Makers," bringing together esteemed academics, policymakers, and grassroots activists from South Asia and the Middle East. The event, moderated by Prof. Dr. Amna Mehmood of the Islamic International University Islamabad, provided a collaborative platform to address persistent challenges in grassroots social work and to explore innovative approaches to community empowerment.

The panel included distinguished speakers such as Prof. Dr. Song Zhihui, Vice Dean at the School of International Studies at Sichuan University, China; Dr. George Cooke, Executive Director of the Regional Centre for Strategic Studies, Sri Lanka; Dr. Tahir Mumtaz Awan, Senior Research Fellow at Hunan University, China, and UNDP National Expert; and Ms. Anwar Ghais, a Lebanese Youth Activist and Researcher in International Law. Each panelist brought unique insights from their regions, focusing on strategies to overcome barriers such as limited resources, lack of visibility, and difficulties in scaling community initiatives.

Spotify Pakistan Brings Wrapped 2024 to Life in Karachi with Star-Studded Celebration

IS City Desk

KARACHI: Spotify brought the magic of music to life at its much-anticipated year-end celebration, Wrapped 2024 event in Karachi. The vibrant evening showcased the year's top artists, songs, and listeners, and was attended by a diverse audience of music lovers, influencers, and local artists.

Hosted by Zehra Merchant, the event began with DJ SIDD's performance, who kept the night alive with his dynamic beats. Annural Khalid, Spotify's top woman artist of 2024 Wrapped, followed with a soulful performance, and the night reached its peak with Hasan Raheem, whose signature energy had the crowd on their feet.

Speaking at the occasion, Talha Hashim, Spotify's Marketing Manager for UAE, Pakistan, Sri Lanka & Bang-



ladesh, said, "Wrapped is more than just music statistics and End of Year

playlists; it's a reflection of our journeys, our moods, and the moments

that defined our year. At Spotify Pakistan, we're thrilled to see how music continues to be discovered, connecting fans with artists and telling our unique stories."

The event was attended by some prominent artists and influencers including, Umair, the second most streamed local artist this year, Bilal Ali of Kashmir band, Maria Unera, Aashir Wajahat, Nayel Wajahat, Adnan Zafar (aka Ken), Osamah Nasir, Daniya Kanwal, Reham Rafiq and Bilal Hassan (MystaPaki), to name a few.

With Spotify Wrapped 2024 celebrating exceptional Pakistani talent and the listeners who support them, the night reaffirmed Spotify's commitment to fostering a thriving music culture in Pakistan. Eligible users can explore their personalized 2024 Wrapped experience exclusively on Spotify.

STZA, Telenor Velocity, and Invest2Innovate Host Roundtable to Address Funding Challenges in Pakistan's Startup Ecosystem

IS Commerce Desk

KARACHI: The Special Technology Zones Authority (STZA), a government organisation enabling the development of Special Technology Zones (STZs) across Pakistan, hosted a significant roundtable discussion in collaboration with Telenor Pakistan and Invest2Innovate (i2i).

The roundtable discussion, titled "From Idea to Impact - Closing the Funding Gap in Pakistan's Startup Ecosystem," brought together key stakeholders, including ESOs, investors, policymakers, and entrepreneurial leaders, to address critical challenges hindering startup growth. The session focused on

building investor confidence by addressing macroeconomic challenges, easing regulatory hurdles, and enabling focused tax holidays through Special Technology Zones (STZs), while emphasising actionable strategies for enhancing venture capital and angel investments.

Hamza Saeed Orakzai, Chief Market Development Officer at STZA, emphasised the importance of the discussion: "At STZA, we are committed to enabling entrepreneurs by providing the right infrastructure, regulatory support, and incentives through our Special Technology Zones.

Highlighting the significance of this initiative, Sarah Munir, CEO of Invest2Innovate (i2i),

stated, "Platforms like this roundtable are key to spotting and addressing the funding challenges in Pakistan. At i2i, we aim to connect and collaborate with different stakeholders to build a more sustainable and inclusive future for entrepreneurship."

Areej Khan, Chief People Officer, Telenor Pakistan, emphasised: "At Telenor Velocity, we understand that startups are the backbone of innovation and economic growth. By hosting this roundtable, we aim to address critical challenges such as the funding gap and bring together key stakeholders to create actionable strategies that empower Pakistani startups to succeed on a global scale."

Zeesan Rehman Khattak, Commissioner (Specialised Companies and IT), Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP), stated, "The roundtable hosted by STZA, Telenor Velocity, and i2i is a great step in addressing critical funding challenges and promoting collaboration between policymakers, investors, and entrepreneurs.

The Special Technology Zones Authority (STZA) is committed to enabling investment and promoting innovation by enabling the development of Special Technology Zones. By creating an environment that encourages high-tech investments, streamlines business operations, and supports



talent development, STZA is laying the foundation for a glob-

ally competitive and sustainable startup ecosystem, driving

Pakistan's long-term economic growth.

Bull & Bears
PSX 100-Share
Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index		
Current	Prev. Close	
116,169.41	114,301.80	
Day's High	Day's Low	
116,681.59	115,345.99	
Index Value	Change	
46,490,299,492	+ 1867.61	
Percentage	Time	
+1.63%	16 Dec, 2024 5:00 pm	
Europe: FTSE 100 Index		
Index Value	Change	
8,262.05	-38.28	
Percentage	Time	
-0.46%	16 Dec, 4:35 pm GMT	
USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average		
Index Value	Change	
43,775.40	-52.66	
Percentage	Time	
-0.12%	16 Dec, 12:06 pm GMT-5	
Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average		
Index Value	Change	
39,457.49	-12.95	
Percentage	Time	
-0.033%	16 Dec, 3:45 pm GMT+9	
Open Market Forex Rates		
Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	177.75	180.00
Bahrain Dinar	734.65	742.65
Canadian Dollar	196.10	198.50
China Yuan	37.99	38.39
Danish Krone	39.15	39.55
Euro	290.00	292.75
Hong Kong Dollar	35.45	35.8
Indian Rupee	3.18	3.27
Japanese Yen	1.86	1.92
Kuwaiti Dinar	896.85	906.35
Malaysian Ringgit	61.75	62.35
New Zealand \$	162.4	164.4
Norwegians Krone	24.93	25.23
Omani Riyal	718.85	727.35
Qatari Riyal	75.7	76.4
Saudi Riyal	73.65	74.20
Singapore Dollar	204.99	206.99
Swedish Korona	25.04	25.34
Swiss Franc	311.35	314.15
Thai Bhat	8	8.15
U.A.E Dirham	75.30	75.95
UK Pound Sterling	348.50	352
US Dollar	277.70	279.20

Tajikistan-Pakistan direct flights to commence soon

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), a leading global business institution, marked a significant milestone by organizing the Pakistan-Tajikistan Business Forum in Islamabad. This high-profile event was graced by Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan, Tajikistan's Minister for Energy and Water Resources Jum'a Daler Shofaqr, CEO of the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) Mohammad Zubair Motiwala, Tajikistan's Ambassador to Pakistan Sharifzoda Yusuf, Additional Secretary Ministry of Commerce, Nasir Hamid, Director general Muhammad Naseer ICCI President Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, senior officials from the Commerce Ministry, TDAP, and key business leaders from both nations.

In their addresses, Ministers Jam Kamal Khan and Jum'a Daler Shofaqr presented an in-depth analysis of investment opportunities in Pakistan and Tajikistan. They highlighted proactive measures taken by the respective governments to attract foreign investments, including lucrative incentives tailored for global enterprises. The ministers expressed optimism that business leaders would capitalize on these opportunities, fostering economic growth and mutual prosperity.

The forum's hallmark was the dynamic B2B meetings hosted at the ICCI, where two hundred business leaders from Pakistan and



Tajikistan exchanged insights on their investment landscapes and explored pathways for collaboration. These engagements paved the

way for promising agreements aimed at shared economic advancement.

ICCI President Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, in his vote of thanks, lauded the forum as a transformative platform for strengthening bilateral trade and people-to-people connections.

Kitab Mela

KARACHI: Visitors are buying books on a stall during 19th International Kitab Mela at Expo center, in the Provincial Capital.



Photo: Online

FPCCI & UNIDO - ITPO Bahrain Exchange Letters of Consent for Promotion of Entrepreneurship in Pakistan

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh, President FPCCI, has apprised that FPCCI and UNIDO - ITPO Bahrain have exchanged letters of consent for the promotion of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and women entrepreneurs in Pakistan through setting up of Enterprise Development and Investment Promotion Program (EDIP) centers at FPCCI Head Office, Federation House, Karachi.

Mr. Saquib Fayyaz Magoon, SVP FPCCI and H. E. Sheikh Ebrahim Bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, Chairman Board of Trustees, International Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation UNIDO - ITPO

Bahrain, signed the letters of consent at Federation House; and, attended by leading business personalities of various SME sectors of Pakistan; women entrepreneurs and representatives of large public & private sector universities.

Addressing the session, Sheikh Ebrahim Bin Khalifa Al Khalifa said that International Centre for Entrepreneurship and Innovation in collaboration with the UNIDO - ITPO Bahrain is keen on forging a strategic partnership with FPCCI in promoting domestic investment leading to the mobilization of foreign direct investment (FDI) through the Enterprise Development and Investment Promotion Program (EDIP).

Key Consultative Meeting Chaired by Patron-in-Chief of Sarhad Business Alliance

Commerce Desk

PESHAWAR: A significant consultative meeting of the Sarhad Business Alliance was held under the chairmanship of Patron-in-Chief and Former Governor Haji Ghulam Ali at the office of Co-Chairman Siraj Ud Din. The meeting addressed key issues related to industry, trade, challenges faced by the business community, environmental concerns, and matters pertaining to the industrial sector. Participants emphasized the need for collective efforts and sustainable economic growth to resolve these challenges.

It was decided to prepare a comprehensive working paper on environmental issues, property taxes, and other major concerns to engage with relevant departments and the provincial government effectively.

Prior to the consultative meeting, Haji Ghulam Ali, accompanied by SBA Co-Chairmen Muhammad Ishaq, Siraj Ud Din, Shahrukh Khan, and Ghulam



Bilal Javid, President of Peshawar Traders Chamber, visited Hayatabad Industrial Estate.

The delegation inquired about the health of Dr. Maqbool Khan, CEO of MEDICON Pharma and President of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Pharmaceutical

Manufacturers Association (KPPMA), who recently underwent successful surgery.

The delegation also offered condolences on the passing of Aminullah Khan, brother of prominent industrialist and CEO of Legacy Pharma, Bashir Khan.

OGDCL Revives Heavy Oil Well in Chakwal, Enhances Production at Rajian Oil Field

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL), Pakistan's leading exploration and production company, has successfully revived a heavy oil well in the Northern Region field, marking a significant milestone in the nation's energy sector.

The initiative was undertaken at the Rajian Oil Field located in Gujjar Khan Exploration License (E. L.), district Chakwal, and is part of OGDCL's strategic moves to enhance production capabilities. Earlier, the field's four heavy oil-producing wells were

contributing 1,500 barrels per day (BPD). With the successful completion of the revival process, the cumulative production from the Rajian Oil Field has now surged to 2,500 BPD.

OGDCL developed a robust optimization plan for the Rajian field, including 11 workover jobs and the deployment of advanced artificial lift systems.

Rajian-3A, the first target of this initiative, reaches a depth of 3,652 meters. The well had been temporarily suspended in 2020 due to formation challenges.

Zong 4G Reaffirms Commitment to Customer Excellence with Landmark Customer Experience Event



Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Zong, Pakistan's leading digital and telecommunication service provider, held a customer experience event company-wide this week. The event was a reflection of the dedication and commitment of employees, delivering high-quality experience to their customers.

In Pakistan's fast-evolving digital landscape, customers demand more than standard solutions—they seek personalized experiences that cater to their unique needs. This event reinforced Zong's mission to prioritize customer experience as a cornerstone of its culture. It brought together corporate customers, consumers, and Zong employees to engage with Zong's portfolio of services, cutting-edge technologies, and enterprise solutions. As part of an outreach program, university faculty and students were invited to visit the displays of Zong's Product Portfolio as well.

Mr. Huo Junli, CEO Zong, addressing the attendees, emphasized, "At Zong, we are not just providing telecommunication services; we are crafting experiences that make life easier, smarter, and more connected. Every decision we make, every product we design, and every service we offer is aimed at enhancing customer satisfaction, leading the way in shaping the future of customer experience in Pakistan."



Spokesman Report

MULTAN: The Chairman of SM Group of Industries, a member of the National Export Development Board and the Board of Investment, lauded the decision of the Monetary Policy Committee of the State Bank of Pakistan to reduce the interest rate by 2%, bringing it down to 13%. He stated that this consistent reduction in the interest rate is a clear indicator of Pakistan's growing economic stability. Furthermore, it will contribute to stabilizing the

Now Economic Stability and Agricultural Reform: A Vision for Pakistan

exchange rate of the dollar.

The Chairman emphasized the vital role of agriculture in Pakistan's economy, describing it as the backbone of the nation. However, he highlighted that merely having abundant water resources is insufficient to enhance agricultural productivity. To compete with developed nations, Pakistan must adopt modern agricultural technologies and use hybrid seeds to improve crop yields. He particularly stressed the need to increase the production of oilseeds and pulses, which are essential for economic growth and achieving self-sufficiency in food.

Addressing Food Security Challenges

Pakistan, being an agricultural country, relies heavily on its farming sector. Yet, the increasing population and weak agricultural infrastructure have turned food security into a critical issue. By modernizing the agricultural sector, Pakistan can not only overcome the food security crisis but also lay the foundation for a stable economy.

The Chairman urged the government to provide quality educational opportunities to the children of farmers, enabling them to acquire modern skills in agriculture. He

also called attention to the weak agricultural infrastructure in the country, which requires immediate focus. Better roads, efficient water distribution systems, and access to advanced farming machinery are crucial for agricultural development.

He further emphasized the importance of integrating contemporary and religious education with modern, technology-driven learning for the youth. He stressed the necessity of equipping young individuals with skills in cutting-edge fields such as Artificial Intelligence (AI). Leveraging technology can not only

revolutionize agriculture but also open pathways for progress in other sectors of the economy.

Renowned industrialist said the reduction in interest rates is a positive step towards economic stabilization. However, to sustain this progress and address the pressing issue of food security, Pakistan must invest in modernizing its agricultural sector and equipping its youth with advanced technological skills. A balanced approach to economic reforms, agricultural innovation, and modern education will pave the way for Pakistan's long-term growth and prosperity.

Shehar Bano, daughter of security guard of Lodhran, makes international cricket debut

Sports Desk

LODHRAN: Lodhran witnessed a historic moment as Shehar Bano, the talented daughter of a security guard, made her international cricket debut. Representing Pakistan in the Women's Under-19 T20 Asia Cup, she played her first match against Nepal in Malaysia. This marks a proud milestone for Lodhran and South Punjab.

Shehar Bano, a student at Amna Girls College and a player from Tareen Cricket Academy, is a left-arm fast bowler who has worked her way to the top through sheer determination. Her journey began humbly on the outskirts of Lodhran, in the small village of 48/M, where her father, Liaqat Abbas, works as a security guard for a private company.

"I used to play cricket just for fun," shared Shehar Bano in an emotional interview. "During summer vacation, I attended a summer camp, and that's where everything changed. Slowly, I started practicing at the Tareen Cricket Academy, participated in the Under-19 trials, and eventually got selected for the national team. My family is thrilled, and I owe this success to Ali Tareen and



my coach, Mohammad Nadeem, who supported me throughout this journey."

The Tareen Cricket Academy provided her with vital facilities, including equipment like bats, pads, and kits. "If it weren't for the academy, I wouldn't be here. We all practice together there," she added.

On her debut, head coach Mohsin Kamal presented her with the debut cap, and the team management and players congratulated her on starting her international career. Ali Tareen, the owner of the Tareen Cricket Academy and the Multan Sultans T20 franchise, also celebrated her achievement,

stating, "Shehar Bano is a star, and her debut is a proud moment for Lodhran. Today, we are reminded of why investing in local talent is so important. This is just the beginning—we will continue our efforts to promote women's cricket and natural young talent."

Ace Academy's Bilal upsets Heera, Abubakar stun Sami Zeb in Khawaja Iftikhar Memorial Tennis Championship

Tahir Amin Malik.

Bilal Asim of Ace Tennis Academy and Abubakar Talha of Wapda recorded upset victories in the main round of the Khawaja Iftikhar Ahmad Memorial National Ranking Tennis Championship 2024 that commenced on Monday at the Sports Board Punjab Tennis Courts, Nishtar Park Sports Complex, Lahore.

Bilal Asim of Ace Tennis Academy delivered a remarkable performance, defeating the seasoned Heera Ashiq in straight sets, 6-3, 6-3, during the men's singles first round. Abubakar Talha of Wapda also stunned spectators, securing a 7-5, 6-1 victory over Sami Zeb Khan in another exciting match. A standout moment came from an all-Ace Tennis Academy clash, where Ahmed Nael Qureshi triumphed over the spirited Hamza Roman with a commanding 6-2, 6-3 win.

In the other first round matches of the day, Abdullah Adnan beat Imran Bhatti

6-3, 6-3, Ahtesham Humayun beat M Salar 6-3, 7-6(5), Yousaf Khalil beat Ahmed Raza 6-1, 6-0, top seed M Shoaib beat Asad Zaman 6-7, 6-2, Barkat Ullah beat Rayan Ahmad 6-1, 6-0, Ahmed Ch beat Abdul Basit 6-1, 6-1, M Abid beat Muhammad Yahya 6-2, 6-1.

Haider Ali Khan beat Usman Rafiq 6-7(4), 6-4, 6-4, Shahreyar Anees beat Faizan Fayyaz 6-4, 6-2, Uzair Khan beat Waqas Malik 6-5, Shahzad Khan beat 6-1, 6-3, Aqeel Khan beat Hamza Ali Rizwan 6-3, 6-2, Muzammil Murtaza beat Amir Mazari 6-2, 7-6(4). Asad Zaman beat Husnain Ali Rizwan 6-2, 6-3 and Ahtesham Humayun beat Talha Khan 6-1, 6-1.

In the boys U-18 matches, Mahad Shahzad beat Mutteb ur Rehman 6-2, 6-2, Ahmed Nael Qureshi beat Allay Hussain 6-0, 6-0, Rayan Ahmad beat M Huzamia 6-2, 6-0, Shreyar Anees beat Nabeel Ali Qayum 4-6, 7-5, 6-3, Muhammad Yahya beat Zain Saeed 6-2, 6-0, Hamza beat Abdur Rehman



6-1, 6-2, Hamza Ali Rizwan beat Bilal Awais 6-0, 6-0, M Salar beat Abdullah Pirzada 7-5, 6-0, Rayyan Khan 6-0,

6-0. In the boys U-14 matches, Ohad-e-Mustafa got w/o, Muhammad Muaz beat Sohaib Javed 4-0, 4-0, Hamza Ali Awais got w/o.

Bilal Asim, a brilliant student of Ace Tennis Academy, recently expressed his gratitude for the academy after his upset victory against Heera Ashiq. He commended Ace Tennis Academy and its owner, Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi, President of Pakistan Tennis Federation. "Under the visionary leadership of Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi, young talent in Pakistan is flourishing into national stars. Soon, these players will proudly raise the Pakistani flag across the globe."

Similarly, Ahmed Nael Qureshi, another shining star of the Ace Tennis Academy, shared his appreciation. "Ace Tennis Academy is a beacon for aspiring athletes. The dedication of Aisam-ul-Haq Qureshi to nurturing Pakistan's tennis talent is unmatched. With his guidance, our players are destined for global recognition."

Lake City Panthers triumph over Engro Dolphins

Sports Desk

RAWALPINDI: Lake City Panthers secured a convincing six-wicket victory against Engro Dolphins in the Bahria Town Champions T20 Cup on Monday at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium. The win marked Panthers' third success in the tournament, while the Dolphins suffered their fifth consecutive defeat.

After winning the toss, the Panthers invited the Dolphins to bat first. Struggling from the outset, the Dolphins managed only 106 runs for the loss of 9 wickets in their allotted 20 overs. The top order crumbled under pressure, with Sahibzada Farhan departing for a duck in the very first over, handling over his wicket to Ali Raza. Imad Butt then delivered a double blow in the next over, dismissing Muhammad Huraira and Umar Amin for 0 and 4 runs, respectively.

Wasim Junior added to the Dolphins'



woes by removing Mirza Tahir Baig for 19 in his first over. The Dolphins could not recover after losing four wickets for just 31 runs. Skipper Faheem Ashraf (25), Muhammad Ikhlaiq (19), and

Qasim Akram (14) were the only notable contributors.

Wasim Junior started with the ball, taking 3 wickets for 28 runs, while Imad Butt and Arfat Minhas picked up two

wickets each.

Chasing a modest target of 107, the Panthers faced early trouble, losing three wickets for just 14 runs. Umar Siddiq (5), Mubasir Khan, and captain Shadab Khan fell cheaply, leaving the team reeling. However, Abdul Wahid Bangalzai played a match-winning knock, scoring an unbeaten 51 off 39 balls, including 6 fours and 2 sixes. He shared an 82-run partnership with Danish Aziz, who contributed a steady 38 runs off 33 balls with 3 fours and a six.

Arfat Minhas also chipped in with 11 not out, as the Panthers achieved the target in 15 overs with six wickets in hand. Ehsanullah and Sameen Gul bowled well for the Dolphins, taking two wickets each.

Abdul Wahid Bangalzai was named Player of the Match for his exceptional half-century under pressure.

In Tuesday's match, ABL Stallions will face Noorpur Lions.

Nepal beat Pakistan by six wickets in ACC U19 Women's Asia Cup

Sports Desk

KUALA LUMPUR: Nepal beat Pakistan by six wickets at the Bayuemas Oval in Kuala Lumpur to qualify for the Super-Four Stage of the ACC U19 Women's Asia Cup on Monday.

Chasing 105 to win, captain Puja Mahato's undefeated run-a-ball 47, which included three fours helped her side achieve the target with an over to spare.

For Pakistan, Fatima Khan and Qurat-ulain snapped a wicket each.

Earlier, after opting to bat first, Pakistan scored 104 for five in their 20 overs. Opener and wicketkeeper-batter Komal Khan top-scored with a 43-ball 38, which included two fours. Maham Anees coming to bat at number five was other notable contributor, scoring unbeaten 29 off 38 balls, hitting two boundaries.

For Nepal, Mahato bagged two wickets for 27.

Pakistan, after losing their opening match against India by nine wickets on Sunday, will now take part in fifth posi-



tion match scheduled on Wednesday 18. The match will begin at 2pm PKT.

Scores in brief:

Nepal U19 beat Pakistan U19 by six wickets

Pakistan 104-5, 20 overs (Komal

Khan 38, Maham Anees 29 not out; Puja Mahato 2-27)

Nepal 105-4, 19 overs (Puja Mahato 47 not out)

Player of the match - Puja Mahato (Nepal)

28th world Kyokushin kai karate tournament



Sports Desk

LAHORE: 28th world Kyokushin kai karate tournament in weight categories under supervision of WKKO (WORLD KYOKUSHIN KARATE ORGANIZATION) was held in Kagoshima Japan Previous days, about 13 countries participated in this tournament like Japan, Pakistan, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, China, South Korea, Russia, Finland, Philippine, Papua, New Guinea, Zimbabwe.

from Pakistan Representative Shihan Akhtar Ali Participated With his student Suleman Bilal 41 kg weight. Japan Got 1st position in different weights total 12 trophies got and 2nd position got Russia total 7 trophies, Uzbekistan 3rd position with 4 trophies. Zimbabwe Got 1 trophy in heavy weight and performed good fight.

Pakistan Mr. Suleman Bilal 10 years old child performance was also good this was his 1st chance in international tournament in Japan, after 4 fights in weight 41 to 45 kg he was loos his fight in 5th round because he just blues belt but good performance

Dahiya ryokan take Japan Representative application words for SULEMAN BILAL and provided Participation Certificate for his skills in karate.

Dahiya Ryoko Take and Sensei Kakusho Take Present KATANA (SWORD) Representative

Semifinal lineups for men, women football events at Quaid-e-Azam Games completed

Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: The semifinal lineups for the men's and women's football events at the ongoing Quaid-e-Azam Inter-Provincial Games at Pakistan Sports Complex Islamabad were completed on Monday.

In the men's category, teams from Sindh, Punjab, Gilgit-Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa advanced to the semifinals. Meanwhile, in the women's category, teams from Islamabad, Balochistan, Sindh, and Gilgit-Baltistan secured their spots in the last four stage.

The semifinal matches will take place on Tuesday. In the men's event, the first semifinal will see Sindh facing Punjab, while Gilgit-Baltistan will clash with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the second semifinal.

In the women's category, Islamabad will compete against Balochistan in the first semifinal, while Sindh and Gilgit-Baltistan will lock horns in the second semifinal.

Players from seven regions across the country are participating in these events, including teams from Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh, Balochistan, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan, and Islamabad.

QA Games: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh, Punjab register wins in hockey matches

Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh and Punjab exhibited dominant performances in hockey contests of the ongoing Quaid-e-Azam Inter-Provincial Game, overcoming their opponents at the Naseer Bunda Hockey Stadium on Monday.

In the women's hockey event, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa delivered a commanding performance, defeating Balochistan 7-0 in Match 5. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's attackers displayed exceptional skill and teamwork, leaving Balochistan struggling to defend against their relentless offense.

Match 6 saw Sindh taking on Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) in another women's hockey clash. Sindh emerged victorious with a 3-0 scoreline, thanks to a well-coordinated strategy and decisive finishing.

The men's hockey event witnessed a one-sided affair in Match 3, where Punjab overpowered Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) with an impressive 10-0 victory. Punjab's team demonstrated superior technique and fitness, dominating the game from start to finish.

QA Games: AJK, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan excel in men's volleyball

ISLAMABAD: The Quaid-e-Azam Inter-Provincial Games witnessed thrilling volleyball matches at the Liaquat Gymnasium of Pakistan Sports Complex Islamabad on Sunday.

In the men's volleyball event, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), and Balochistan emerged victorious. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa delivered a strong performance by defeating Islamabad 2-0. Azad Jammu and Kashmir also showcased their skills, overcoming Sindh 2-0. In another match, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa continued their winning streak, beating Gilgit-Baltistan 2-0. Balochistan clinched a hard-fought victory against Islamabad with a 2-1 scoreline.

In the women's volleyball event, Balochistan dominated AJK, winning 2-0, while Sindh secured a comfortable 2-0 victory against Gilgit-Baltistan. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa outclassed AJK with a 2-0 win, and Islamabad triumphed over Balochistan, also with a 2-0 scoreline.

The volleyball competitions feature players from seven units across the country, including Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, AJK, Gilgit-Baltistan and Islamabad.

Meeting on fertilizer pricing

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Monday chaired a meeting of the cabinet committee to ensure stability of fertilizer pricing.



Photo: PID

DPM chairs meeting to ensure stability of fertilizer pricing

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Monday chaired a meeting of cabinet committee to ensure stability of fertilizer pricing.

Minister for Industries Rana Tanveer Hussain and senior government officials participated in the meeting.

The participants were briefed on discussions between the government, gas suppliers and the fertilizer industry. The availability of gas for fertilizer industry was also examined and found to be satisfactory.

The Deputy Prime Minister directed maintaining an uninterrupted gas supply to the fertilizer industry throughout Rabi cropping season to ensure stable production and stocks.

13th Round of Pakistan-Norway Bilateral Political Consultations in Oslo

Spokesman Report

OSLO: Pakistan and Norway held the 13th Round of Bilateral Political Consultations (BPCs) in Oslo today.

Additional Foreign Secretary (Europe) Ambassador Shafqat Ali Khan led the Pakistan side while the Norwegian side was led by Director General, Department for Regional Affairs at Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Signe Brudeset.

The two sides comprehensively reviewed the entire spectrum of bilateral political and economic relations; and discussed opportunities for further cooperation in renewable energy, information technology, fisheries and maritime sector, climate, education, health, and parliamentary exchanges. They also appreciated the contributive role of multi-generational Pakistani diaspora in Norway in underpinning the ties between the two countries.

Expressing satisfaction at the trajectory of Pakistan-Norway relations, the two sides reaffirmed their commitment to increase the momentum in bilateral cooperation, and to collaborate closely at multilateral fora, including the United Nations. Important regional and global developments were also discussed.

The next round of Pakistan-Norway BPC will be held next year in Islamabad on mutually agreed dates.



SBP cuts policy rate by 200bps to 13pc

Khurram Jaffran

KARACHI: The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) on Monday slashed the policy rates by 200 basis points (bps) to 13pc.

SBP Governor Jameel Ahmad announced the policy decision after the MPC meeting.

"Headline inflation declined to 4.9 percent y/y in November 2024, in line with the MPC's expectations. This deceleration was mainly driven by the continued decline in food inflation and the phasing out of the impact

of the hike in gas tariffs in November 2023.

"However, the Committee noted that core inflation, at 9.7 percent, is proving to be sticky, whereas inflation expectations of consumers and businesses remain volatile. To this effect, the Committee reiterated its previous assessment that inflation may remain volatile in the near term before stabilizing in the target range.

"At the same time, the growth prospects have somewhat improved, as reflected by the recent uptick in high-frequency indicators of economic activity. Overall, the Committee assessed that its

approach of measured policy rate cuts is keeping inflationary and external account pressures in check while supporting economic growth on a sustainable basis," said the committee.

The committee noted the following key developments since its last meeting that may have implications for the macroeconomic outlook. First, the current account remained in surplus for the third consecutive month in October 2024, which, amidst weak financial inflows and substantial official debt repayments, helped increase the SBP's FX reserves to around \$12 billion.

Second, global commodity prices remained generally favourable, with positive spillovers on domestic inflation and the import bill. Third, credit to the private sector recorded a noticeable increase, broadly reflecting the impact of ease in financial conditions and banks' efforts to meet the advances-to-deposit ratio (ADR) thresholds. Lastly, the shortfall in tax revenues from the target has widened.

Based on these developments, the committee assessed that the impact of the cumulative reduction in the policy rate from June 2024 is beginning to unfold and will

continue to materialise over the next few quarters.

"In this context and taking into account today's decision, the Committee noted that the real policy rate remains appropriately positive to stabilize inflation within the target range of 5-7 percent," said the committee.

The committee had on Nov 4 reduced the key interest rate by 250 bps, taking it from 17.5pc to 15pc after a fourth successive cut since June.

The MPC noted that the strict regulations by the government played an important role in sustaining the downward trend in inflation.

Chairperson BISP met with ADB Director of Human and Social Development

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Senator Rubina Khalid, met with Ms. Sofia Shakil, Director of Human and Social Development at the Asian Development Bank (ADB), at BISP headquarters today. The meeting focused on the importance of public-private partnerships for skill development and the international standardization of training certifications for BISP's eligible households, aligning them with market demands.

Speaking on the occasion, Senator Rubina Khalid emphasized the need to connect deserving and skilled individuals with Pakistan's industrial sector to provide training in various fields and



create job opportunities. She highlighted that state-of-the-art training institutes and industries in cities like Faisalabad, Sialkot, and Karachi can serve as excellent platforms for

BISP beneficiaries.

She also noted that BISP has active collaborations with organizations such as NAVTTC (National Vocational and Technical Training Commission), the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis, IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development), and Alfa Mall of Bank Alfalah to enhance skill training opportunities.

Ms. Sofia Shakil appreciated BISP's conditional and unconditional financial assistance programs and highlighted the significance of mutual cooperation at the provincial level to uplift marginalized segments of society. She also stressed the importance of holding regular meetings between the teams of BISP and ADB to ensure effective collaboration.

Statement by the Spokesperson on the incident of capsized boats in the South of Greece

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: "We announce with deep sorrow that, as per the latest information shared by the Greek authorities, four Pakistani nationals have been identified among the dead

in Saturday's incidents of capsized boats in the south of Crete Island of Greece".

Our Mission in Athens is in contact with the Greek authorities to facilitate the survivors and repatriate the dead bodies.

Punjab Assembly passes bill to increase MPAs' salaries to Rs400,000

Tahir Malik

LAHORE: The salary of Punjab Assembly members has been increased from Rs76,000 to Rs400,000. After the bill's approval, the salaries of provincial ministers will rise from Rs100,000 to Rs960,000.

Following the approval, the Speaker's salary will increase from Rs125,000 to Rs950,000.

The deputy speaker's salary has been raised from Rs120,000 to Rs775,000, while the salary of parliamentary secretaries will increase from Rs83,000 to Rs451,000.

Additionally, after the bill's approval, the salary of special assistants will rise from Rs100,000 to Rs665,000, and the salary of advisers will also increase from Rs100,000 to Rs665,000.

No plan to ban VPNs, PTA chairman says



Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: Chairman PTA Hafiz Rahman has reiterated that no Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) have been blocked in Pakistan, and there are no plans to do so.

Speaking at the launch ceremony of the PTA's 2024 annual report, Rahman addressed concerns regarding potential VPN restrictions.

He stated, "We have said it before, and I repeat it now: we could block

VPNs, but we won't. To date, no VPNs have been blocked."

Rahman further emphasized the transparency of the PTA's operations, stating, "Those days are over when we could hide something and it would remain hidden. When questions arise about internet shutdowns in the name of national security, we often lack satisfactory answers."

He emphasized that questions regarding national security and internet access should be directed to policymakers.

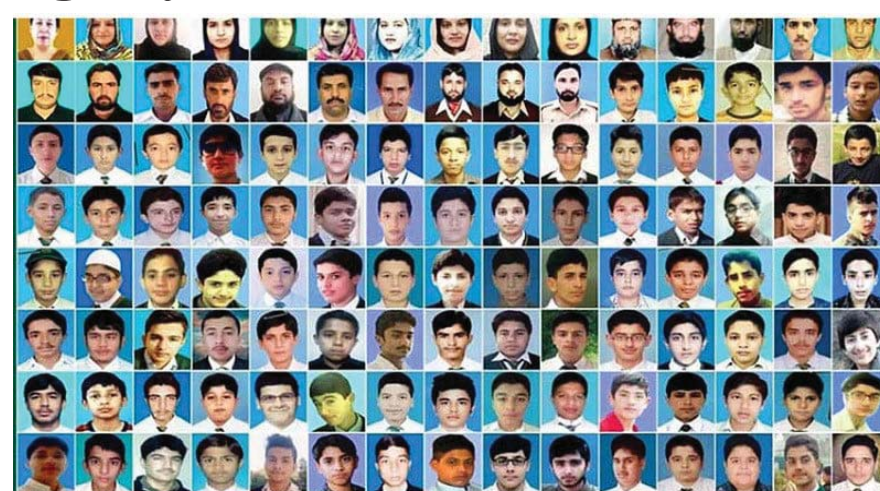
Pakistan marks 10 years since Army Public School tragedy

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Monday marks the tenth anniversary of the Army Public School (APS) tragedy, a day that remains etched in Pakistan's history as one of its darkest.

On December 16, 2014, six terrorists from the banned Tehrik-i-Taliban launched a cowardly attack on APS, resulting in the deaths of 132 students and 17 staff members.

The tragedy not only devastated families but also revitalized the nation's resolve to combat terrorism, leading to the establishment of the National Action Plan aimed at eradicating terrorism from



tribal regions. A decade later, the grief

persists, as families continue to come together to honor

the memories of the martyrs. Parents are gathering at the

homes of the slain, sharing their sorrow and supporting one another during this difficult time.

In remembrance, memorial gatherings are being held across educational institutions in Peshawar today, where special prayers will be offered for the elevation of the martyrs' ranks.

In light of the current security situation, the Punjab School Education Department has announced that all public and private schools in Punjab and Islamabad will remain closed on December 16.

This decision aims to ensure safety as strict security measures are enforced around educational institutions.