

Murad Ali Shah’s address on the need for discipline in police service

Abdul Ghafoor Sarohi

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah, addressing former IGPs, emphasized the importance of discipline, justice, impartiality, public service, and community policing within the police system. He stated that the police must align with the vision of Quaid-e-Azam, working with discipline and impartiality to serve the nation effectively.

He made these remarks while speaking at the Annual Conference of the Association of Former IGPs at the CPO, titled “Police Reforms: Turning Challenges into Opportunities.” The event was attended by Home Minister Ziaul Hassan Lanjhar, IGP Ghulam Nabi Memon, 40 retired IGPs, serving



officers, and civil society members. The Chief Minister further explained that Quaid-e-Azam’s belief was that the police serve the public, not rule over them, and therefore, the police must function with impartiality, justice, and discipline to strengthen the administration. He acknowledged

that reforms in the police system are necessary, as if everything was perfect, there would be no need for reforms. However, he stressed the need for more discipline, capacity building, and the adoption of community policing approaches.

Home Minister Ziaul Hassan Lanjhar commented that the Police Order 2022 was an improvement over General Pervez Musharraf’s Police Order. He stated that as a minister, he had given IGPs the freedom to make all decisions. IGP Ghulam Nabi Memon responded to various questions during the first session of the conference, while the President of the AIGP, Afzal Shigri, urged the government to bring necessary reforms in the police.

Group photo

MUZAFFARABAD: A group photo of Chief Secretary Azad Kashmir Dawood Muhammad Breach, Brigade Commander Brigadier Farhan Iqbal, Sector Commander ISPR Brigadier Fayyaz, Colonel Saad, Assembly candidate for Leepa Valley Constituency 7 Shaukat Javed Mir and Owais Arif Awan, Abdul Razzaq Khan and district administration officers at a ceremony held at Yadgar Shuhada in the capital Muzaffarabad on the occasion of the death anniversary of Raees-ul-Ahrar, Chaudhry Ghulam Abbas.



AJK Information Minister continues Kashmir campaign in Turkey

Bureau Report

ISTANBUL / TURKEY: Azad Kashmir Information Minister Maulana Pir Muhammad Mazhar Saeed Shah continues Kashmir campaign in Turkey. Meeting with President of the Palestinian Ulema Dr. Sheikh Nawaf Takroori and Director of Bridge of Civilization Dr. Ahmed Khalid in Istanbul. It was agreed to bring the Kashmir issue and the Palestine issue together before the world. The latest situation in occupied Jammu and Kashmir and Gaza was discussed in the meeting. The information minister also presented the flags of Kashmir, Pakistan and Palestine to both leaders.

President of Palestine Dr. Sheikh Nawaf Takroori and Director of Bridge of Civilization Dr. Ahmed Khalid expressed their full solidarity with the Kashmiris. Information Minister Maulana Pir Muhammad Mazhar Saeed Shah invited the President of the Palestine Ulema Association, Dr. Sheikh Nawaf Takroori, and the Director of Bridge of Civilization, Dr. Ahmed Khalid, to visit Azad Jammu



and Kashmir, which they accepted and said that they would soon visit Azad Kashmir with an international delegation. Speaking on the occasion, the

President of the Palestine Ulema Association, Dr. Sheikh Nawaf Takroori, and the Director of Bridge of Civilization, Dr. Ahmed Khalid, said that

whenever the people of Palestine are mentioned, the long list of martyrs and ghazis of Kashmir comes before the eyes.

AJK Legislative Assembly Opposition Leader submitted a requisition to Speaker

Abdul Majeed Tahir

MUZAFFARABAD: Azad Kashmir’s opposition leader Khawaja Farooq Ahmed has submitted a requisition to the Chamber Speaker to convene an assembly session with the signatures of the presidents of four political parties—Muslim League-N, Shah Ghulam Qadir, PPP, Chaudhry Muhammad Yasin, Tehreek-e-Insaf, Abdul Qayyum Niazi, JKPP, Sardar Hassan Ibrahim—in which he has explicitly demanded a discussion on the recent crisis, while on the other hand, the federal government has replaced the Chief Secretary and appointed Flight Lieutenant (retd) Khushal Khan, and no progress has been made



by the Anwar Sarkar group. According to the details, the

political situation in Azad Kashmir is moving towards the change of the third Prime Minister in the current tenure. The important role of the PPP in the journey of change has come to the fore. After the successful strike of the People’s Joint Action Committee across Azad Kashmir, a big gap has emerged between the assembly and the people at the public level.

Regarding the crisis and other public issues, the Leader of the Opposition Khawaja Farooq Ahmed has submitted a requisition to the Speaker Chamber with the signatures of the presidents of the other four political parties, Shah Ghulam Qadir of the PML-N, Chaudhry Muhammad Yasin of the PPP, and Sardar Hassan Ibrahim of the JKPP, and Abdul Qayyum Niazi of the PTI, to convene a session of the Legislative Assembly.

At the federal level, the Chief Secretary of Azad Kashmir has also been changed and the newly appointed Flight Lieutenant (retd) Khushal Khan has been appointed AJK Chief Secretary.

It may be recalled that earlier, whenever changes were made at the government level within the AJK, the Chief Secretary and the AG were changed in the first phase. The majority group of the coalition government, Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwarul Haq, has also started consultations among themselves.

Christmas is an immense gift of God: Father Abid Tanveer

Abdul Majid

FAISALABAD: Father Abid Tanveer (Vicar General) while congratulating the Christian community on Christmas has said that Christmas is an immense gift of God, sending us a Savior, Emmanuel, God living with us within us. Christmas is a time of hope, peace, joy and love. Love is born, Christmas is the Feast of light which dispel the darkness. The grace of God has appeared to us in the form of Child Jesus born in Bethlehem. It is also professed in Nicene Creed “God from God, light from light, true God from God, for us men, and for our Salvation, he came down from heaven”. Christmas is a great gift to us, God becoming men dwelling among us. Christmas is a time to exult in this gift of grace. Rejoice, you who have abandoned all hope, God is offering us an outstretched hand. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light, on those who live in a land of deep shadow a light has shown. Let us adore him in silence while he is still a mere infant, seems to comfort us by saying, “Do not be afraid, I am God there is no other”. Let us feel that God has come to meet us, he has shown us his face, full of grace and mercy. May his coming to us not be in vain, let us seek Jesus, let us be drawn to his light which dispels sadness and fear from every human heart. Let us open our hearts to welcome Jesus, who is the Savior, the prince of peace. On this Christmas let us promise to be the herald of peace on earth. We need to allow the savior to be born in our lives. Let us humbly admit the truth with the German mystic Angelus Silesius “Christ could be born a thousand times in Bethlehem but all in vain until He is born in me”. May God bless you abundantly during this Christmas season as well during New Year!



Certificate of appreciation for Government Graduate College Attock

Raza Naqvi

ATTOCK: Certificate of Appreciation for Government Graduate College Attock for achieving the enrollment target at the intermediate level. December 18, 2024 In a prestigious ceremony held at Government Vigar-un-Nisa College, Rawalpindi, the Principal of Government Graduate College Attock, Professor Khalid Javed Siddiqui, was awarded a Certificate of Appreciation by the Director Colleges, Rawalpindi Division, Dr. Kaneez Fatima. This recognition was given for successfully achieving the Higher Education Department’s enrollment target for Intermediate First Year Admissions 2024. The event was graced by the presence of the Provincial Minister for Higher Education, Rana Sikander Hayat, Secretary Higher Education Department, Dr. Farrukh Naveed, Additional Secretary, Azam Kamal, and DPI Colleges, Dr. Ansar On this occasion, the Principal of Government Graduate College Attock congratulated his staff for their dedication and hard work in increasing the college’s enrollment this year. He highlighted the efforts made by the staff, including visits to high schools and villages across the region to encourage students to enroll in the college. The Government of Punjab and the Higher Education Department have highly appreciated this outstanding performance by Government Graduate College Attock.

DC and DPO Presided over Important Meeting Held at District Peace Committee and Interfaith Harmony



Zafar Chishti

TOBA TEK SINGH: Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Naeem Sindhu and District Police Officer Ibadat Nisar presided over an important meeting of the District Peace Committee and Interfaith Harmony. In the meeting, a comprehensive strategy was considered to ensure peace and order and promote interfaith harmony on the occasion of December 25 (Quaid-e-Azam Day and Christmas) and New Year. In the meeting, Additional Deputy Commissioner General Zeeshan Labbha Masih, Scholars, Christian leaders, representatives of civic organizations, and relevant government departments Officers attended. Addressing the meeting, Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Naeem Sindhu said that maintaining law and order and providing complete security to followers of all religions is the top priority of the district administration. He said that all schools of thought should work together to promote brotherhood and tolerance among people. District Police Officer Ibadat Nisar said that on December 25 and New Year, churches, places of worship and public places will be strictly enforced. Safety measures will be taken.

BZU ORIC Officially Approved by HEC

Zain Khan

MULTAN: Bahauddin Zakariya University (BZU), Multan, has achieved a remarkable milestone as its Office of Research, Innovation, and Commercialization (ORIC) has been officially recognized by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan. This accomplishment marks a significant step forward in the university’s journey to enhance research, innovation, and academic excellence.

The registration of ORIC stands as a testament to the visionary leadership and dedication of the university’s Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Dr. Zubair Iqbal Ghouri. His exceptional guidance and ability to tackle challenges have positioned BZU as a prominent institution in research and innovation on a national level.

This achievement also reflects the relentless efforts and commitment of Prof. Dr. Muhammad Najam-ul-Haq, Director of ORIC. Since 2019, his continuous endeavors have fostered a thriving research environment within the university, enabling the academic and research community to excel.

The registration of ORIC marks the beginning of a new era of progress for BZU, focusing on impactful research, academic collaboration, and innovation. This success not only reinforces the university’s commitment to serving the people of South Punjab but also contributes significantly to Pakistan’s intellectual and economic development.



Islamabad

30° – 38° Clear

SERVICES

Namaz Timings

| | |
|---------|----------|
| Fajr | 5:38 am |
| Zohr | 12:05 pm |
| Asr | 3:25 pm |
| Maghrib | 5:03 pm |
| Isha | 6:32 pm |

EMERGENCY

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

ENQUIRY

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

HOSPITALS

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

DEPARTMENTS

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

COMPLAINTS

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

NSU conducts 2nd Certificate Distribution Ceremony for short courses

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: 2nd Certificate Distribution Ceremony was held at National Skills University (NSU) Islamabad in NSU Auditorium after successful completion of the six short courses which included Automotive Technician, Digital Marketing, Digital Marketing and Freelancing, Domestic and Industrial Electrician, Phlebotomy and Professional Programming course. Prof. Dr. Muhammad Shehryar Manzoor, a distinguished academic leader at NSU, was the Chief Guest of the ceremony.

During the welcome address, Mr. Qaiser Naseem, Controller of Examination NSU, apprised the audience that a total of 105 students have successfully completed the short courses and are now fully equipped to tackle the challenges of the modern industry. So far, NSU has proudly produced 1,538 alumni through its short courses, both by its Islamabad and Sarmad Tanveer Campus Muridke, solidifying its position as a leading institution in skills development and vocational training.

The Chief Guest, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Shehryar Manzoor, congratulated the students on their successful achievements and commended the University administration and faculty for the consistent and diligent efforts to bridge the skills gap in Pakistan.

Open House and Career Fair Organized at COMSATS, Wah Campus

City Desk

WAH CANTT: COMSATS University Islamabad (CUI), Wah Campus organized an Open House and Job Fair on Thursday, December 19, 2024 for the graduating students of Fall Semester 2024. A total of 148 students from Management Sciences, and Computer Sciences Departments showcased 71 Final Year Projects (FYPs) which portrayed their professional skills and expertise for industries. Representatives from more than 60 companies evaluated projects, conducted interviews, and shortlisted students for job placements/ internships.

Dr. Mushtaq Ahmad Bhatti, In-Charge, Career Development Center (CDC), highlighted the CDC's role and the event details. The Campus Director, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Abid, T. I., warmly welcomed industry representatives, the chief guest, evaluators, and students to the Open House and Career Fair at CUI Wah Campus. In his address, Prof. Dr. Abid emphasized the availability of exceptional talent at the campus and encouraged companies to leverage students' skills for the advancement of both industry and the nation.

Prof. Dr. Jamil Ahmad, Vice Chairman, National Computing Education Accred-



itation Council (NCEAC) and Member for Information Technology at the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan, graced the event as Chief Guest for opening session, shared HEC vision for establishing Data Centers and High-Performance Computing (HPC) facilities in

Pakistan.

Prof. Dr. Sajid Qamar, Rector, CUI, expressed gratitude to the chief guest for his insightful contributions and highlighted the role of events like the Open House and FYP expos in bridging the gap between academia and industry.

At the closing ceremony Prof. Dr. Jameel un Nabi, Vice Chancellor of the University of Wah was the Chief Guest. Prof. Seyed Komail Tayebi, President of the Economic Cooperation Organization Science Foundation (ECOSF), Dr Mehdi Taheri, President of Iran Khanah Farhang Rawalpindi,

Mr Majid Meshki, Cultural Counsellor of the Embassy of Iran also joined as Guest of Honors.

The event concluded with certificates presented to the winning FYP teams, along with a vote of thanks delivered by the Campus Director.

51st Anniversary of Asian Study Group

ISLAMABAD: Austrian Ambassador to Pakistan Andrea Wicke speaks posing for a group photograph along with violinist Ustaad Raees Ahmed, tabla maestro Amoos Ali and others during a reception held to celebrate 51st anniversary of the Asian Study Group, in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

FACE partners with Punjab government to drive modern agriculture transformation

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: FACE (Food Security & Agriculture Centre of Excellence) a not for profit organization has joined hands with the Punjab Government to advance the agriculture sector. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Punjab Agriculture Department and FACE on Thursday, 19th December.

FACE will support the Punjab Agriculture Department with technological innovation, international expertise, and infrastructure development to improve crop yields and promote sustainable farming practices tailored to the region's changing climate.

Punjab Agriculture Minister Syed Ashiq Hussain expressed



optimism that this collaboration will address key challenges, including food security, low crop yields, and climate change

impacts.

Chief Operating Officer FACE, Mr. Hasan Akram highlighted the organization's

commitment to empowering farmers through modern techniques and international expertise.

Pathways to Development Conference at LUMS Explores Governance and Inclusion



City Desk

LAHORE: What role do governance and inclusion play in building resilient and equitable societies? This question brought together leading voices from Pakistan and the diaspora at LUMS during the third annual Pathways to Development Conference, held from December 16-18. The event convened academics, policymakers, and practitioners to explore pressing issues, from climate justice and poverty alleviation to digital innovation and gender equality.

Jointly organised by the Chaudhry Nazar Muhammad Department of Economics and Mahbub Ul Haq Research Centre (MHRC) at LUMS, Centre for Economic Research in Pakistan (CERP), Institute of Development & Economic Alternatives (IDEAS), Institute of Development Studies at University of Sussex (IDS), Consortium for Development Policy Research (CDPR), and International Growth Centre (IGC), the conference featured 20 engaging sessions showcasing cutting-edge research and thought leadership.

Mr. Maroof A. Syed, President and CEO of CERP, opened the conference by emphasising, "Progress demands reimagining governance as a dynamic, participatory process." The event also featured a powerful statement by Justice Mansoor Ali Shah, Supreme Court of Pakistan, who declared, "Climate finance is the new climate justice," urging courts to recognise it as a fundamental human right and calling on the global north to address its "climate debt."

Keynote speaker Dr. Lant Pritchett, London School of Economics, cautioned against using the low-bar poverty line as a starting point and emphasised the importance of state capability. Dr. Mazhar Waseem, University of Manchester, delivered the second keynote, discussing Pakistan's "filing obsession puzzle," where more tax filers have not led to higher revenues.

Distinguished speakers, including Dr. Ali Cheema, LUMS; Dr. Murtaza Syed, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank; Ms. Fauzia Viqar, Federal Ombudsperson for Protection Against Harassment of Women, Mr. Ikram ul Haq, Punjab Land Records Authority, and Dr. Hadia Majid, LUMS, offered insights into tackling these challenges through research and policy.

Discussions also turned to electoral dynamics, gender development, and social change. The conference not only showcased groundbreaking research but also sparked meaningful dialogue and offered actionable pathways toward a sustainable, inclusive Pakistan.

Attock Tehsil Jand three person killed

Raza Naqvi

ATTOCK: Unidentified assailants open fire in Gulyal, Tehsil Jand; 3 individuals killed According to details, three individuals were injured in a shooting incident by unidentified persons in the Gulyal area of Tehsil Jand. Upon receiving the information, two ambulances of Rescue 1122, Tehsil Jand, arrived at the scene and provided CPR to the victims while transporting them to Tehsil Headquarters Hospital Jand. Unfortunately, the doctors declared all three individuals dead upon arrival. The deceased have been identified as: h50-year-old Mamarth, son of Muhammad Ameen30-year-old Muhammad Amir, son of Malik Ameer26-year-old Muhammad Kamran, son of Karam Khan.

A National Hero: AKU's Dr Zulfiqar Bhutta Honoured Globally

Bureau Report

KARACHI: In a proud moment for Pakistan and the global healthcare community, Dr Zulfiqar Ahmed Bhutta, a global leader in maternal and child health, has been appointed as an Officer of the Order of Canada, one of the country's most prestigious civilian honours. This recognition celebrates Dr Bhutta's exceptional contributions to global health, particularly in underserved communities across South Asia, Africa, and beyond.

Dr Bhutta's groundbreaking research has transformed public health policies worldwide and improved countless lives. His work on community health systems, including Pakistan's Lady Health Worker programme, is regarded as a

global model for empowering frontline health workers.

Speaking about the honour, Dr Bhutta said, "I am greatly honoured by this recognition and deeply grateful to a generation of students and colleagues who have worked with me over the years on challenges of women and children in Pakistan and other low-income countries."

Dr Bhutta serves as the Founding Director of the Institute for Global Health and Development at Aga Khan University (AKU) and also founded and its Centre of Excellence in Women and Child Health between 2012 and 2024. He is also Co-Director of the SickKids Centre for Global Child Health in Toronto. With over 1,400 academic publications and recognition as a Highly

Cited Researcher, Dr Bhutta's influence extends across research, policy, and practice.

Dr Sulaiman Shahabuddin, President of AKU, praised Dr Bhutta's dedication, stating:

"Dr Bhutta's achievements inspire us to pursue innovation and make a tangible impact in global health. His work embodies AKU's commitment to advancing evidence-based research that tackles the world's most pressing health and development challenges."

In honouring Dr Zulfiqar Bhutta, we acknowledge not just an individual's accomplishments but the promise of what dedication, expertise, and compassion can achieve. For Pakistan, he stands as a true national hero whose work inspires hope for healthier generations to come.



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Syria’s ‘flame of hope’ must not be extinguished

A flame of hope burns bright today in Syria – but if it’s not carefully managed by both Syrians themselves and the international community, it risks being extinguished, UN Secretary-General António Guterres warned Thursday.

Speaking to reporters in New York, he said there is “a real risk that progress could unravel,” without an “inclusive, credible and peaceful” political transition that is Syrian led, on behalf of all its citizens. “The people of Syria stand at a moment of history – and a moment of opportunity. That opportunity cannot be missed,” Mr. Guterres said, following five decades of brutal, dictatorial rule.

The UN stands with the Syrian people, recognizing that this is their long-sought change to realize the peaceful movement for change that began with the impassioned protests of 2011.

“But nothing is guaranteed,” he added, calling for all communities to be fully integrated into a new Syria.

“The rights of women and girls must be fully respected. And the process must be guided by the underlying principles of Security Council resolution 2254. We are focused on facilitating just such a process.”

Meanwhile, the country is still mired in humanitarian crisis with the UN and partners mobilizing to assess the needs and respond to “rapidly shifting” conditions, he said.

“Adequate funding for humanitarian and recovery response is critical. And that funding is not yet available. And I make a strong appeal to the international community to show the generosity the Syrian people deserve in this moment – and to massively support the humanitarian response.”

The UN chief also pledge support to those who continue to live with the agony of uncertainty over missing loved ones, announcing the appointment of Karla Quintana of Mexico, to head up the General Assembly-mandated Independent Institution on Missing Persons in Syria. He called for all the international mechanisms advancing the protection of human rights and accountability for the crimes of the Assad regime, to be provided the tools needed “to carry out their vital work.”

The task of documenting Syria’s disappeared – who are believed to number more than 130,000 – is carried out principally by three bodies at the UN:

- The Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic – established by the UN General Assembly in June 2023;
- The Independent Institution on Missing Persons in the Syrian Arab Republic – established by the UN General Assembly in June 2023;
- The International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism for Syria (often known as “the Mechanism”) which was established by the UN General Assembly in December 2016;
- The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic – which reports to the Human Rights Council in Geneva.

The UN chief noted that conflict is far from over, and civilian protection must be the highest priority. Fighting continues in the north with terror group ISIL/Dae’sh still a “major threat”.

“At the same time, extensive Israeli airstrikes continue. They are violations of Syria’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. They must stop,” he continued.

Pakistan’s Vision for A Greener Future Rise of Eco-Conscious Plantations

Dr. Muhammad Shahzad Ashfaq

Pakistan a land of mountains and natural beauty of glaciers facing pressing environmental challenges ranging from deforestation to air pollution. The motherland has begun to envision a greener future through the promotion of eco-conscious plantations. Plantations are vital role in maintaining ecological balance mitigating the effects of climate change and fostering sustainable development. Pakistan’s vision for a greener future specially focusing on the of eco-conscious plantations as a key strategy to combat environmental degradation. The nation recognized the urgency of addressing environmental issues and has taken significant steps to promote eco-conscious plantations.

One of the primary motive behind this vision is the need to take up deforestation which has been a major concern in the country. Deforestation not only leads to loss of biodiversity but also contributes to soil erosion, reduce water quality and increase in greenhouse gas emission. The vision of Pakistan aims the rise of eco-conscious plantations to reverse the trend of deforestation and restore degraded ecosystems. Furthermore, eco-conscious plantations play a crucial role in mitigating the impact of climate change. Trees absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere helping to reduce greenhouse gas concentrations and combat global warming.

The expansion of forest cover through sustainable plantations, Pakistan can contribute to international efforts to curb climate change or meet its commitments

under the Paris Agreement. Forest act as natural carbon sinks, storing carbon and offsetting emission from various sources. Pakistan has recognized the economic potential of eco-conscious plantations. Sustainable forestry practices not only contribute to environmental conservation but also offers economic benefits to local communities.

Pakistan is facing environmental challenges including air pollution, deforestation and climate change impacts. The country need to increase its forest cover through sustainable plantations. The Paris Agreement and the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals, an international treaty aimed at limiting global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius and emphasizes the importance of afforestation and reforestation in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Through proper implementation of sustainable forestry practices Pakistan can contribute to these global efforts and align itself with the goals of Paris Agreement. Sustainable plantation offers a range of environmental, social and economic benefits.

In Pakistan the expansion of forest sequester carbon dioxide from the environment and increase fresh air to mitigate climate change. Moreover, forests are home to a diverse range of plant and animal species many of which are threatened by deforestation and habitat destruction. Although creating new forest habitats through plantations Pakistan protect endangered species, preserves ecological balance and strengthen the resilience ecosystems against climate change impact.

The country is taking significant steps to address these challenges and protect its natural heritage. Pakistan has made considerable efforts in protecting endangered species. The country is home to a

diverse range of wildlife including the iconic snow leopard, the Indus river dolphin and the Markhor, the national animal of Pakistan. The species face threats from habitat destruction, illegal wildlife trade and climate change.

Pakistan has established protected areas and wildlife sanctuaries where endangered species are given refuge and monitored for conservation purposes. Different areas are designed under various conservation law and regulations to ensure the sustainable management of their habitats and the protection of these species residing within them.

One such example is the Deosai National Park, located in the northern area of Pakistan which serves as a sanctuary for the endangered Himalayan brown bear. The park’s unique ecosystem provides a safe habitat for these bears, allowing them to breed and multiply without the threat of human interference. In terms of preserving ecological balance, the motherland recognizes the importance of maintaining a harmonious relationship between human activities and the environment. However, while it emphasizes the need for coexistence between humanity and nature, it lacks specificity regarding how this harmony can be achieved. A mere acknowledgment of the relationship does not address the complexities involved in balancing economic development with ecological preservation. The country has implemented various policies and regulations to promote sustainable land for reduce pollution.

This anthropocentric framing risks prioritizing nationalistic sentiments over global ecological responsibilities. A more effective discourse would involve interdisciplinary approaches that integrate scientific research with community engagement

to foster genuine environmental stewardship. Ultimately, while the assertion is commendable in its intent, it necessitates a more nuanced exploration of practical strategies and frameworks to facilitate sustainable practices. Only through comprehensive planning and inclusive dialogue can we hope to achieve true ecological balance.

Pakistan’s focus on eco-conscious plantations serves as a model for addressing environmental challenges while fostering socio-economic growth. Pakistan’s commitment to eco-conscious plantations exemplifies a progressive approach to tackling environmental challenges while simultaneously fostering socio-economic growth. The nation has recognized the detrimental effects of deforestation and climate change, leading to initiatives such as the Billion Tree Tsunami, which not only aims to restore ecosystems but also creates employment opportunities. Prioritizing reforestation, Pakistan demonstrates that environmental sustainability can be integrated with economic development.

Moreover, these plantations serve as a catalyst for community engagement and empowerment. Local populations are involved in planting and maintaining trees, instilling a sense of ownership and responsibility toward their environment. This participatory model not only enhances biodiversity but also promotes social cohesion as communities unite for a common cause. Additionally, eco-tourism generated from these green spaces can stimulate local economies further. A greener future is not just a vision; it is an imperative that demands immediate action from all sectors of society.

Writer is Post-Doctorate (Peace Education), International Islamic University, Islamabad



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

Angela Merkel’s Memoir

Dr Qaisar Rashid

Angela Merkel, Germany’s first female chancellor (2005–2021) and leader of the centre-right political party, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) (2000–2018), has penned a collection of her memories, “Freedom: Memoirs 1954–2021”. Merkel’s personal assistant, Beate Baumann, is the co-author.

Originally written in German and later translated into English, the book was published last month. In it, Merkel equates the word “freedom” with Western democracy: the advent of Western democracy in Germany heralded freedom for the Germans. This is the central theme of the book, which is particularly intriguing because her rise to the office of Chancellor in 2005 is attributed to her right-wing rhetoric, which helped her oust the centre-left party of then-Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD). During her election campaign, Merkel raised right-wing slogans such as “Conserve German competitiveness” (Deutsche Wettbewerbsfähigkeit) by limiting the influx of non-Germans into Germany. In doing so, she criticised Schröder’s policy of opening Germany to the outside world.

After assuming power, Merkel adopted a more moderate stance. This about-turn frustrated her right-wing supporters. In October 2010, while addressing the youth wing of her party in Brandenburg State at Potsdam, she unequivocally declared that the idea of multiculturalism in Germany had failed (Multi-kulti ist gescheitert), leaving no room for any culture other than German culture to flourish in Germany. Instead of promoting the benefits of Western democracy facilitating multiculturalism, she tailored her message to suit her audience. Nevertheless, her statements did not satisfy the youth wing. Consequently, in April 2013, thousands of them renounced their allegiance to Merkel’s party and

founded the Alternative for Germany (AfD), a far-right political party, to revive the vision of right-wing conservatism that had helped Merkel secure her electoral victory and ascend to the chancellorship.

In her memoir, Merkel expresses disdain for East Germany while extolling West Germany. She claims, for instance, that she was born in Hamburg, West Germany, and that her parents relocated (without her consent) to Brandenburg, East Germany, where she pursued her education and earned a PhD in Physics from the University of Leipzig. Readers may be surprised to learn that her father, a pastor, held leftist political leanings yet chose to move to East Germany, where the right-wing held sway. These claims seem aimed at portraying her as a reluctant resident of East Germany. Ironically, despite benefiting from East Germany’s educational opportunities, Merkel expresses no gratitude towards it. Nowhere in her memoir does she highlight any positives of East Germany, suggesting that her narrative is crafted to appease prospective left-leaning readers. Her antipathy towards East Germany is a recurring theme throughout her extensive recollections. This sentiment ignores historical nuances, such as the Potsdam Conference of August 1945, where the Allies and Soviets agreed to divide Germany. East Germany did not independently decide to join the Soviet bloc in 1949; rather, it was a consequence of the Cold War.

Merkel was 35 when the Berlin Wall fell in November 1989. The fall of the wall enabled her to move to West Germany and begin her political career, fulfilling her long-standing admiration for the West. However, two interesting contradictions emerge. First, after German reunification (1989–1990), despite her father’s leftist inclinations and her stated yearning for freedom in West Germany, Merkel joined the centre-right CDU, which was allied with the Christian Social Union (CSU), another centre-right conservative party. Second, despite her affinity for West Germany, she chose to represent Constituency 15 in Mecklenburg–Western Pomerania, a state in northeast

East Germany. Merkel remained the representative for this constituency until 2021. By her own narrative, one might expect her to have joined a centre-left party, such as the SPD, and represented a constituency in West Germany. However, she did not do that.

In the chapter discussing American politics (Donald Trump), Merkel expresses hope for Kamala Harris’s success, representing the Democratic Party, as the book went to press before the United States presidential election. To promote the English-language edition of her memoir in the US, Merkel met former US President Barack Obama at the Anthem Theatre in Washington, DC, on 2 December.

As German Chancellor, Merkel served the interests of the CDU-CSU alliance for four terms (2005–2021) by opposing multiculturalism in Germany. She condemned Schröder for introducing foreigners (Ausländer) — including workers, PhD students, and researchers, most of whom were non-white — whom she accused of undermining German competitiveness. Pursuing a protectionist policy, Merkel harmed the careers of countless foreigners in her quest for political power. Yet, in her memoir, she offers warm support to the US Democratic Party, which champions the cause of multiculturalism and welcomes foreign workers, PhD students, and researchers, irrespective of race, to enhance the competitiveness of American society and systems. Interestingly, both Harris and Obama, non-white advocates of multiculturalism, oppose protectionism. While Merkel resisted non-white foreigners in Germany, particularly English-speaking ones, she sought the support of English-speaking non-white Americans to promote her book abroad. By doing so, she acknowledges that publishing her memoir solely in German would have limited its reach, necessitating its translation into English to connect with a broader audience.

In summary, the memoir reveals that Merkel’s political expediency was confined to Germany alone.

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IS North Korean Corner

Kim Jong Il’s Exploits for Cause of Anti-imperialist Independence

Spokesman Report

As he performed outstanding exploits for the cause of anti-imperialist independence with his extraordinary wisdom and practice, Chairman Kim Jong Il (1942–2011) is still highly praised by the world’s progressive mankind as a peerlessly great man in the era of independence.

Outstanding Thinker and Theoretician

Kim Jong Il, by conducting energetic ideological and theoretical activities, gave perfect answers to the numerous theoretical and practical problems raised by the times and history, thereby greatly encouraging the world’s progressive people in their struggle for independence.

He developed in depth the immortal Juche idea created by President Kim Il Sung (1912–1994), providing the most scientific ideological and theoretical weapon in the era of independence.

In particular, when the imperialists and reactionaries made a big fuss about the “end” of socialism availing themselves of the massive political upheavals created in some socialist countries from the late 1980s to the early 1990s, he left an indelible trace in the human history of ideology with his scientific insight, strong ability to analyse and judge and energetic authorship.

He made public many works including “The Historical Lesson in Building Socialism and the General Line of Our Party”, “Abuses of Socialism Are Intolerable” and “Socialism Is a Science”, providing the banner of struggle for the victorious advance of the cause of socialism.

Still many political parties and people in the world study his profound ideas and theories in depth and regard them as the banner of their struggle for anti-imperialist cause.

Defender of Peace and Security

Towards the close of the 20th century the US-led imperialist allied forces intensified political and military offensive and pressure against socialist Korea more than ever before. Kim Jong Il considered that the independence and dignity of the country and the global peace and security could be defended only by dint of self-defensive arms, tremendous military capabilities, in the present era when justice was being ruthlessly trampled upon by the high-handedness and arbitrariness of the imperialists.

His extraordinary military wisdom and unexcelled courage turned the DPRK into a political and military power, foiled the offensive of the imperialist allied forces to crush the country and safeguarded peace in the Korean peninsula where a touch-and-go situation was created.

Peace and security in the Korean peninsula can be said to constitute an indisputably important factor in ensuring peace and security in the Asia-Pacific region and the rest of the world. It is because, but for Kim Jong Il, a war would have been inevitable in the Korean peninsula and mankind would have suffered another catastrophic world war.

By building up powerful self-defensive military capabilities, he smashed the moves of the imperialist allied forces against his country and ensured peace and security in the Korean peninsula and the rest of the world. This is the greatest exploit he performed for the cause of global independence.

Polish envoy says bilateral trade with Pakistan steadily increasing

Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Poland to Pakistan Maciej Pisarski has said both Poland and Pakistan have developed friendly and productive cooperation over the 62 years. A broader framework of this relationship is to uphold the international order based on the UN Charter and other relevant international treaties.

'Respect for sovereignty, legal equality of all states, territorial integrity and rejection of military means as a way of solving international problems are among the most fundamental values of that order'.

The ambassador expressed these views in an extensive media briefing. The ambassador touched upon various issues ranging from bilateral issues to regional and international challengers confronting the world today.

Ambassador Pisarski further said, Poland congratulates Pakistan on the election to the UN Security Council for 2025-2026 and looks forward to working with Pakistan on preventing and solving conflicts and crisis which undermine our security.

'We believe that activity of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in this international body will contribute to building lasting peace and security in the world. We fully appreciate a longstanding participation of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan in the UN peacekeeping missions'.

Talking about the trade relations the Ambassador said, he was happy to report that our bilateral trade with Pakistan has been steadily increasing, with a significant jump from €456.74 million in 2018 to €861 million in 2023. This growth in trade is a reflection of the strengthening economic ties between our two countries.

He highlighted the successful economic mission led by the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Islamabad under the GreenEvo initiative. The mission brought together representatives from nine Polish businesses



providing innovative green technology solutions, and featured business events in Karachi and Lahore. We believe that such initiatives will help to further boost our bilateral trade and economic cooperation.

'Polish Oil and Gas Company/Orlen Group through its Pakistan Branch has been in operation in Pakistan since 1997. Since 2005 the company has been operating in the Kirthar concession. As a result of the work done, the company has made three tight gas discoveries (Rehman, Rizq, and Rayyan fields), making it a pioneer in the exploration and production of unconventional gas deposits in Pakistan. The company has made over USD 450 million in investments thus far, he added.

Talking about Poland's Economic Growth and Resilience the ambassador said, the level of our trade is not satisfactory. It does not yet reflect and strength of the Polish economy and the potential of the Pakistani markets.

To ensure a conducive, stable, transparent and fair economic environment for foreign companies and investors who have operated or consider to establish a relationship with Pakistani partners is of paramount importance.

'Firstly, I would like to highlight Poland's remarkable economic growth

since 1989. Our GDP has increased by an impressive 826.96%, making us the most successful economy in Europe. This achievement is a testament to the hard work and dedication of the Polish people, as well as the effective economic policies implemented by our government. We have also become the fastest-growing large economy in the world among upper-middle-income and high-income countries, surpassing even the Asian tigers such as South Korea and Singapore'.

Our GDP per capita PPP has almost tripled, from \$10,300 in 1990 to over \$28,000 in 2018. This significant increase in GDP per capita has resulted in a substantial improvement in the standard of living for Polish citizens. According to the OECD Economic Outlook, Poland's GDP is expected to rise by 3.4% in 2025, solidifying our position as a robust and resilient economy.

On Ukraine he said, the goals of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace for Ukraine and durable security for Europe are inseparable.

Ukraine must prevail. This is why after more than 1,000 days of Russia's illegal war against Ukraine, we remain steadfast in our solidarity. We will continue to support Ukraine in its right



of self-defence against Russian aggression.

'We condemn Russia's decision to escalate its war of aggression through brutal and deliberate attacks against Ukraine's cities and critical civilian infrastructure, by the deployment of DPRK troops and by using intermediate range ballistic missiles to attack Ukraine'.

Using North Korean troops joins up Europe's and Asia's security paradigms in a dangerous and destabilizing fashion. (Asia is being dragged into a war in Europe). The Russian aggression against Ukraine is not "an European war" – as some of analysts have claimed – any longer.

Regrettably, we are witnessing a surge in disinformation campaigns orchestrated by Russia, aimed at destabilizing Poland, Ukraine, and the EU. These disinformation campaigns are a key component of Russia's hybrid warfare strategy, which seeks to undermine the

sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine'.

He said, regarding the migration crisis on the Polish-Belarusian border, we have witnessed a significant increase in attempts to illegally cross the border. According to data from the Polish Border Guard, there were over 15,000 attempts to illegally cross the border in 2022, and this number has continued to rise in 2023 and 2024. We are working closely with our EU partners to address this challenge and ensure the security of our borders.

The ambassador also talked about the Middle East situation saying international protection of civilian population and humanitarian law must be respected.

'We are also committed to supporting international efforts to address the Middle East crisis, particularly in Palestine. In 2024, Poland contributed \$5 million to humanitarian efforts for

Palestinians, and we have provided assistance worth over \$12.2 million to Palestine in 2023-24'.

Briefing the media people about the Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2025 he said he would like to highlight Poland's upcoming presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2025. Polish presidency will focus on building a secure and resilient Europe, with seven key security dimensions, including defense and security, protection of people and borders, and resistance to foreign interference and disinformation.

During the presidency, we will prioritize measures to strengthen the EU's defense and security capabilities, including the development of a European Defense Fund and the enhancement of EU-NATO cooperation. We will also focus on protecting the EU's external borders and addressing the root causes of migration.

ISSI hosts Seminar on 'Prospects and Challenges of Regional Cooperation in South Asia: Role of SAARC'

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The India Study Centre at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) organized a seminar titled "Prospects and Challenges of Regional Cooperation in South Asia: Role of SAARC". The event brought together diplomats, academics, practitioners, and researchers to deliberate on the challenges and opportunities for regional cooperation in South Asia under the framework of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Ambassador Imran Ahmed Siddiqui, Additional Secretary, MOFA, featured as the keynote speaker, while the panel of distinguished speakers included Ambassador Yuba Nath Lamsal, Former Ambassador of Nepal; Ambassador Babar Amin, Former Ambassador of Pakistan; Dr. Zahid Shahab Ahmad, Associate Professor, National Defence

College, UAE; and Dr. Saeed Ahmad Rid, Assistant Professor, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad.

In his introductory remarks, Dr. Khurram Abbas, Director of the India Study Centre, ISSI, highlighted the importance of fostering a collective regional approach to address the pressing issues faced by South Asia. He pointed towards recent political developments across South Asia that were indicating an enabling environment for the revival of regional cooperation through SAARC.

In his welcome address, DG ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood underscored the critical need for revitalizing SAARC to address shared challenges and unlock South Asia's potential. Reflecting on the 40th anniversary of the SAARC Charter, he emphasized the importance of evaluating the organization's

achievements and finding new pathways to enhance regional integration. He highlighted SAARC's accomplishments, such as the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) and the SAARC Development Fund (SDF), while acknowledging structural and political challenges that have hindered progress.

Quoting recent guidance to the SAARC Secretary General given by Bangladesh's Chief Adviser Prof. Muhammad Yunus, Ambassador Sohail Mahmood emphasized the importance of functional collaboration in areas like climate change, sustainable development, and youth engagement to create a stronger, more impactful SAARC for the future.

The keynote address was delivered by Ambassador Imran Ahmed Siddiqui, Additional Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Pakistan. In his insightful talk, he



highlighted the historical significance of SAARC amid myriad of issues looming on the region including climate change, food and health security, devastating economic indicators, neglected human security, among others. While stressing SAARC's contributions to fostering cooperation among member states and the pressing need to reinvigorate SAARC in light of contemporary challenges, he reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering commitment

to uphold its Charter, principles, and priorities.

Dr. Saeed Ahmad Rid discussed the historical pattern of socio-cultural and political linkages in South Asia, which were disrupted by the unnatural demarcations made by colonial powers, rendering its populace to the levels of underdevelopment. He outlined a number of steps in public and private arenas to enhance people-to-people connections among South Asian

states.

Dr. Zahid Shahab Ahmed emphasized that the geographical, social, and political context made South Asia a unique region, and, therefore, it was not justified to draw a comparison between SAARC and other regional fora like European Union (EU). He highlighted several structural as well as practical challenges restricting the efficient working of SAARC including competition between its members to find international markets outside South Asia, inter-state disputes, rising inclination among several members toward sub-regionalism, funding issues, besides others.

Ambassador Babar Amin suggested that Indian approach to regional integration was motivated by its political and ideological inclinations. While expressing disappointment over India's decisions like denial of visa to Paki-

stani students studying in South Asian University, New Delhi, he stressed that civil society should play an active role in pressurizing policymakers in New Delhi to revisit their approach.

Ambassador Yuba Nath Lamsal from Nepal stressed that South Asian states and societies had more common characteristics than divisive issues. He emphasized that cooperation, and not competition, in South Asia could guarantee a better future to the forthcoming generations.

Following a lively Q/A session, Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman Board of Governors (BOG), ISSI, delivered the concluding remarks. He underscored the significance of regional cooperation as a pathway to sustainable development and peace in South Asia and expressed hope for a reinvigorated SAARC to advance these goals.

Al-Shifa Trust launch operations in Gilgit

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: Responding to the increasing demand for quality eye care services, the Al-Shifa Trust started providing free services to the people of remote areas before the completion of the cutting-edge hospital in Gilgit.

The move, which results from a joint venture between the Al-Shifa Trust and the Rupani Foundation, will benefit millions of underserved people, many of whom cannot afford quality services.

Doctors have already begun helping many patients in this still-under-construction portion of the hospital, a significant advancement.

In this regard, a ceremony was held in which the Minister of Health Gilgit-Baltistan, Raja Azam Khan, participated as the chief guest. He lauded the trust's efforts in bringing advanced eye care services to faraway areas.

The minister said that previously, residents of Gilgit-Baltistan had to travel to other provinces for eye treatments, incurring significant financial and emotional costs. We are grateful for the considerable reduction in these challenges.

The groundbreaking of the state-of-the-art hospital took place just five months ago, in July 2024. Al-Shifa Trust has prioritized the commencement of its operations, recognizing the urgent need for quality eye care in the area despite its



scheduled completion in 2026.

The newly inaugurated facility has already started offering Outpatient Department services and eye surgeries, with fully trained and highly skilled doctors and support teams now on the ground.

All services will be free to the community, reinforcing the trust's commitment to eradicating preventable blindness and improving access to specialized eye care in underserved regions like Gilgit-Baltistan.

Abdul Rehman Mithani, advisor to Rupani Development Initiatives, illuminated the Rupani Foundation's evolution, goals, and ongoing projects at the ceremony. He stated that the foundation focuses on improving people's lives through quality education, community development, and superior healthcare facilities.

Mithani emphasized that the Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital is a remarkable gift for the people of Gilgit-Baltistan, offering free treatments, medicines, and surgeries.

Ministers, senior government officials, and other dignitaries also attended the inaugural event and commended Al-Shifa Trust for its visionary approach and timely action in addressing healthcare gaps.

After completion, the facility will be the region's first. It will offer advanced medical care and ensure that the people of Gilgit-Baltistan receive world-class eye treatment close to home.

Participants said that enhancing healthcare access in remote areas is a noble cause. This initiative aims to revolutionize healthcare delivery by offering cutting-edge medical services to underprivileged communities.

Hamdard University held a one-day free medical camp at Uth Palan Gabol Goth

City Desk

KARACHI: The Faculty of Eastern Medicine at Hamdard University recently held a one-day free medical camp at Uth Palan Gabol Goth supervised by Hakim Amjad Ismail, providing healthcare services to the underprivileged local community. Hamdard Foundation Pakistan contributed to the event by including its free mobile dispensary, ensuring the distribution of free medicines to patients. Additionally, Hamdard Laboratories distributed 'Rooh Afza GO' to the residents of the village.

The Hamdard team, comprising researchers, physicians, and students, led by Dean of the Faculty of Eastern Medicine, Dr. Professor Syed Faisal Haider Zaidi, Assistant Professors

Hakim Rais Khan and Hakim Amjad Chishti, Lecturer Tabiba Huma Saeed, and Nutritionist Lecturer Hajra Ilyas, distributed a significant number of ration bags among the deserving residents of the village. These bags contained essential items sufficient to support a family of four to five for a month and were distributed with respect and dignity.

In preparation for winter, the team also provided warm jackets, mufflers, and closed shoes in large quantities for both children and adults to help them combat the cold. Additionally, hundreds of ready-to-serve food packets were distributed among the villagers.

A free dry cupping therapy service was offered throughout the day, from morning to evening, as part of the medical camp. Moreover, the team included a nutritionist from Hamdard University's Department of Nutrition, who conducted sessions to educate women about the importance of a balanced diet and proper nutrition. Since women play a central role in preparing meals for their families, raising their awareness about nutrition contributes positively to the overall



health of the family.



Bull & Bears

PSX 100-Share

Index Fluctuation

| Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Current | Prev. Close |
| 106,274.97 | 111,070.29 |
| Day's High | Day's Low |
| 111,745.02 | 105,937.37 |
| Index Value | Change |
| 43,632,187,068 | -4795.32 |
| Percentage | Time |
| -4.32% | 19 Dec, 2024 5:00 pm |

| Europe: FTSE 100 Index | |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| Index Value | Change |
| 8,105.32 | -93.79 |
| Percentage | Time |
| -1.14% | 19 Dec, 4:35 pm GMT |

| USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Index Value | Change |
| 42,452.45 | +125.58 |
| Percentage | Time |
| +0.30% | 19 Dec, 12:35 pm GMT-5 |

| Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Index Value | Change |
| 38,813.58 | -268.13 |
| Percentage | Time |
| -0.69% | 19 Dec, 3:45 pm GMT+9 |

| Open Market Forex Rates | | |
|-------------------------|--------|---------|
| Currency | Buying | Selling |
| Australian Dollar | 173.75 | 176.00 |
| Bahrain Dinar | 734.95 | 742.95 |
| Canadian Dollar | 194.42 | 196.82 |
| China Yuan | 37.99 | 38.39 |
| Danish Krone | 39.15 | 39.55 |
| Euro | 286.45 | 289.20 |
| Hong Kong Dollar | 35.42 | 35.77 |
| Indian Rupee | 3.19 | 3.28 |
| Japanese Yen | 1.85 | 1.91 |
| Kuwaiti Dinar | 897.50 | 907.00 |
| Malaysian Ringgit | 61.59 | 62.19 |
| NewZealand \$ | 156.93 | 158.93 |
| Norwegians Krone | 24.41 | 24.71 |
| Omani Riyal | 719.30 | 727.80 |
| Qatari Riyal | 75.7 | 76.4 |
| Saudi Riyal | 73.70 | 74.25 |
| Singapore Dollar | 204.99 | 206.99 |
| Swedish Korona | 25.03 | 25.33 |
| Swiss Franc | 311.29 | 314.09 |
| Thai Bhat | 8 | 8.15 |
| U.A.E Dirham | 75.40 | 76.05 |
| UK Pound Sterling | 347.30 | 350.8 |
| US Dollar | 277.90 | 279.40 |

Envisioned by Xi

Jinping, BRI Green

and Low-Carbon

Expert Network

kicks off



BEIJING: The BRI Green and Low-Carbon Expert Network (GLEN), a prestigious international body dedicated to advancing sustainable and low-carbon development under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), was formally launched in Beijing. The network, supported by the Ministry of Ecology and Environment of the People's Republic of China (MEE), brings together global experts to facilitate collaboration, consultation, and capacity building in green development.

The opening session was graced by high-level dignitaries, including Zhao Yingmin, Vice Minister of the Ministry of Ecology and Environment of China, Salvador Moncada, Ambassador of Honduras to China, Khalil Hashmi, Ambassador of Pakistan to China, and Erik Solheim, Vice President of the BRIGC Governing Board and Co-Chair of the Board of Europe-Asia Center. The session highlighted the critical role of international cooperation in fostering a sustainable, low-carbon future under the Belt and Road framework.

In a significant recognition of his contributions and expertise, Mustafa Hyder Sayed, Executive Director of the Pakistan-China Institute, has been appointed as an inaugural member of the BRI GLEN for a 3-year term. Mustafa Sayed's appointment underscores his leading role in fostering sustainable development initiatives, particularly within the Belt and Road framework, and his advocacy for green economic transition across partner nations.

Chief Collector Customs conducts

Awareness Session at FPCCI

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh, President FPCCI, has apprised that the apex body has organized an awareness session with senior officials of collectorate of customs exports and Port Qasim on authorized economic operators (AEO) program and other pressing issues vis-à-vis exports.

It is pertinent to note that the top customs officials that conducted the awareness session at the Federation House, Karachi, consisted of Mr. Irfan Ur Rehman, Chief Collector of Customs Exports, briefed the audience and was accompanied by top officials.

Mr. Saquib Fayyaz Magoon, SVP FPCCI, informed that in order to extend awareness among trade bodies and stakeholders regarding authorized economic operator (AEO) program, Chief Collector of Customs briefed the session participants regarding various aspects of AEO – issued vide SRO.1114 (I)/2020 dated 26-10-2020.

Mr. Irfan Ur Rehman, Chief Collector of Customs Exports, stated that, in the light of Section 212A of Customs Act 1969, certain



rules have been formulated to make AEO program internationally-aligned and make it a success in export facilitation in Pakistan.

Customs officials explained that salient features of the AEO program include: safe framework of the standards; changing role

of customs worldwide article 7.7 regarding trade facilitation measures for authorized operators based on principles of trade facilitation; the program has benefits for trade and government alike; criteria for eligibility of trade certification has been formulated; benefits for trade bodies or stakeholders have been incorporated and important security requirements of the program are maintained.

Mr. Asif Sakhi, VP FPCCI, maintained that the global trade has shifted from GATT to WCO and AEO Program – and it is basically based on strengthening supply chain security of trade.

Mr. Asif Inam, VP FPCCI, emphasized that AEO program needs awareness in trade bodies and stakeholders; and, welcomed customs department's keenness to brief the business, industry and trade community regarding the benefits of the program.

Participants of the awareness session proposed that monetary limits for the inclusion in AEO program should be reviewed and status of transit trade in the program should be introduced.

Souvenir

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs presenting a souvenir to Turkish Ambassador to Pakistan, H.E. Dr. Irfan Neziroglu, symbolizing the strong bond and collaboration between Pakistan and Turkey.



Photo: PID

SAARC Chamber

President Jashim

calls on Iftikhar Ali

Malik at his residence

Commerce Desk

LAHORE: Md Jashim Uddin, President SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry accompanied by a high level delegation from South Asia today paid a courtesy call on Iftikhar Ali Malik, former President SAARC Chamber here at his residence.

The visit aimed to acknowledge Malik's invaluable services and contributions to the business community across South Asia. The delegation included Vice Presidents Chandi Raj Dhakal from Nepal, Shafquat Haider from Bangladesh, Anjum Nisar from Pakistan and other trade leaders from south Asia. The meeting underscored the pivotal role played by Iftikhar Ali

Malik in fostering regional economic cooperation and championing the cause of South Asian businesses on global platforms.

During visit Jashim lauded his strategic vision and leadership, which have significantly strengthened the SAARC Chamber's efforts to promote economic integration, trade, and investment within the region.

Other members of delegation included Ms. Hina Mansab Khan, Chairperson SCWEC, Ms. Sathi Yasmeen, Ms. Tania Wahab, EC Members, SCWEC, Umesh Lal Shrestha, EC Member, SCCI, Zulfiqar Butt, Secretary General, Badar Munir, Director, Ms. Robina and Ms. Tahir, EC Member SCWEC (Pakistan).

OGDCL announces

production

commencement from

Kunnar West Well-03

in Hyderabad

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL), Pakistan's leading exploration and production company, on Thursday announced the commencement of production from its Kunnar West Well-3, located in the Hyderabad district of Sindh.

The well, brought into production at a wellhead flowing pressure (WHFP) of 1200 PSI with a 32/64" choke size, is currently producing 3.5 million standard cubic feet per day (MMSCFD) of gas, 30 barrels per day (BPD) of condensate, and 3.8 metric tons per day (MTD) of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG). The gas output has been seamlessly integrated into the Sui Southern Gas Company



Limited (SSGCL) network, contributing to the country's energy supply.

Kunnar West Field is part of the Kunnar Mining Lease, located in the Hyderabad district of Sindh province, and is operated by OGDCL with a 100% working interest. This achievement underscores OGDCL's commitment to operational excellence and sustainable energy development through its vital contribution. By leveraging innovative technologies, OGDCL continues solidifying its position as a leader in the hydrocarbon sector.

Tetra Pak launches its first-ever

Sustainability Report for Pakistan

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Tetra Pak, a global leader in food processing and packaging solutions, has launched its inaugural Sustainability Report for Pakistan, serving as a local supplement to its FY23 global Sustainability Report. The report underscored the company's commitment to environmental, social, and economic sustainability in the country. The launch event, held in Islamabad, brought together key government officials, diplomats, and policymakers. Mr. Hammad Shameemi, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Climate Change & Environmental Coordination, graced the occasion as the Chief Guest.

Speaking at the event, Awais Bin Nasim, Managing Director of Tetra Pak Pakistan, said, "This report reflects our unwavering commitment to sustainability, despite the challenges



unique to Pakistan. It showcases how our local initiatives, collaborative efforts, and innovative solutions are creating meaningful change for communities and the environment. We are proud to take this step towards greater transparency and accountability."

"This report highlights the critical role of the private sector in addressing Pakistan's environmental challenges," said Hammad Shameemi, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Climate Change & Environmental Coordination. He further said, "As the country

stands at the forefront of the global climate crisis, we expect organizations like Tetra Pak to lead the way with innovative solutions such as advancing recycling systems, optimizing resource efficiency, and engaging communities through environmental education. Their efforts set a benchmark for sustainability and demonstrate how the private sector can support the government in building a more resilient and sustainable Pakistan."

Tetra Pak's inaugural Sustainability Report for Pakistan symbolizes its enduring commitment to creating a positive impact in the communities where it operates. Through partnerships with local stakeholders, governments, and organizations, the company continues to strive for a sustainable future while contributing meaningfully to Pakistan's sustainable development.

Telenor Pakistan Signs Pakistan's

First-Ever Tripartite MoU

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: In a groundbreaking step towards digitalization, Telenor Pakistan has signed Pakistan's first-ever tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to implement smart metering at its Base Transceiver Station (BTS) sites across Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJ&K). The initiative aims to empower societies by leveraging smart metering technology to enhance energy efficiency and ensure consumption accuracy.

The tripartite agreement brings together Telenor Pakistan, Government of AJ&K and SBEEC to pilot

a smart metering solution enabling both consumers and the power distribution company to monitor electricity consumption in real time. The solution will help ensure precise billing, minimize energy wastage by monitoring usage patterns and support data-driven decision-making to optimize resource utilization. The initiative also aligns with Telenor Pakistan's larger vision of promoting digital solutions for socio-economic development. The tripartite MoU was signed at Telenor Pakistan's Campus 345 in Islamabad and was attended by Awais Vohra, Chief Technical Officer, Telenor Pakistan; Irshad

Ahmed Qureshi, Secretary, Electricity Department, Government of AJ&K; Zaffar Sami, Executive Director SBEEC, along with senior officials of the respective organizations.

Speaking on the occasion, Awais Vohra, Chief Technical Officer, Telenor Pakistan, said, "This pilot project, the first-ever collaboration with any DISCO, marks a significant step in the digital transformation of the energy sector. We thank the AJK government for its pragmatic and forward-looking approach in adopting new technologies."

Irshad Ahmed Qureshi, Secretary, Electricity Department, Government



of Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJ&K) stated, "We are delighted to partner with Telenor Pakistan and SBEEC on this pioneering initiative. Smart metering represents a transforma-

tive approach to energy efficiency and this collaboration is a testament to our shared vision of leveraging technology for the socio-economic upliftment of the region."

Pakistan dominates cricket field, forces India to concede

PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi says India will face consequences if it attempts to withdraw from agreement

Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has compelled the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) to bow down to the demands after the International Cricket Council announced that the archrivals would play their Champions Trophy games on neutral ground, sources said.

The arch-rivals only meet in ICC multi-national events like ODI and T20 World Cups, with the last bilateral series held when Pakistan toured India in 2012-13.

India last toured Pakistan to feature in the 2008 Asia Cup and have not played a bilateral series across the border for 18 years.

Both the BCCI and the ICC have accepted all of Pakistan's conditions following this pressure.

India's refusal to play in Pakistan has backfired as the PCB "successfully negotiated" a condition that the archrival would not play in Pakistan for three years. Instead, both teams would compete at neutral venues for the next three years.



The decision would also apply to the ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025; if India reaches the final, they would play at a neutral venue. Pakistan has secured the hosting rights for the Women's World Cup 2028.

Earlier, PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi spoke informally with reporters, stating that India would not back out of a written agreement this time. "The situation is different from the past and if India

attempts to withdraw, they will face consequences."

Naqvi stated that the venues in Dubai and Sri Lanka for matches against India have not yet been finalised.

It is noteworthy that after a long hiatus, Pakistan would be hosting a major ICC event, the Champions Trophy 2025, following the ICC Cricket World Cup 1996 and the Asia Cup 2008. All matches of the Champions Trophy would take place from

February 19 to March 19 next year in three major cities of Pakistan: Karachi, Lahore, and Rawalpindi.

But the BCCI has suggested moving their matches to neutral venues due to the Indian government's refusal to allow a tour of Pakistan.

Since the Asia Cup in 2008, India has not played any matches in Pakistan and there have been no bilateral series between the two countries since Pakistan's tour of India in 2012-2013.

Last year, Pakistan was awarded the hosting rights for the Asia Cup, but India outright refused to travel to Pakistan. Under a hybrid model, all of India's matches were scheduled to take place in Sri Lanka, where they easily defeated Sri Lanka in the final held in Colombo to claim the title.

The PCB's governing board has ratified the chairman's decisions regarding future matches and events.

In the last few years, Pakistan has hosted the world's top teams after improving security, emerging from cricketing isolation that began after a militant attack on the Sri Lankan team bus in 2009 in Lahore.

Punjab crowned champions as curtains fall on Quaid-e-Azam Inter-Provincial Games

Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Quaid-e-Azam Inter-Provincial Games 2024 came to an end on Thursday with Punjab securing top spot in the weeklong sporting extravaganza at Pakistan Sports Complex Islamabad.

With an unmatched tally of 173 medals, including 78 gold, 53 silver and 42 bronze, Punjab outshone its competitors to reaffirm its dominance in the national sports arena.

Punjab's athletes delivered stellar performances across various disciplines, leaving their rivals trailing far behind.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) finished second with a remarkable haul of 98 medals, including 29 gold, 31 silver and 38 bronze. Sindh claimed third place with 79 medals, including 16 golds, 28 silver and 35 bronze.

Balochistan followed in fourth with 62 medals, securing 14 gold, 16 silver and 32 bronze. Both provinces displayed commendable skills and determination, signaling bright futures for their athletes.

Islamabad, the host city demonstrated strong performances in various



categories, ending the Games with 56 medals, including 6 gold, 11 silver and 39 bronze.. Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) also contributed to the spirit of competi-

tion with promising displays of talent. Gilgit-Baltistan earned 2 gold, 2 silver and 18 bronze, totalling 22 medals. AJK clinched 26 medals, including 1 gold, 5 silver and 20 bronze.

The Quaid-e-Azam Games with 516 medals awarded across numerous events, stood as a testament to Pakistan's rich athletic talent and the spirit of unity among its provinces.

Nurpur Lions beat Lake City Panthers in crucial match

Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: Nurpur Lions paceman Shahid Aziz successfully defended 16 runs to give his team an eight-run win over Lake City Panthers in the Bahria Town Champions T20 Cup crucial match at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium on Thursday.

Lake City Panthers, set 161 to win, finished on 152-6 in their allotted overs with Danish Aziz scoring an unbeaten 38 off 27 balls with five boundaries. Opener Umar Siddiq scored a 28-ball 38, hitting one six and four boundaries.

Sajid Khan struck two sixes in his eight-ball 17 while Amad Butt scored an unbeaten 13-ball 16 but those were not enough. For Lions, spinner Sharoon Siraj bagged three wickets for 19.

The victory gives Nurpur Lions eight points from seven matches and a better net run-rate lifts them to second. UMT Markhors are top of the table with 10



points while ABL Stallions are third with eight points.

The defeat leaves Lake City Panthers on fourth with six points while Engro Dolphins are pointless with six defeats

in as many matches.

Sent into bat, Nurpur Lions had a solid start with Imam-ul-Haq and Hasan Nawaz putting 85 in 7.2 overs. Imam cracked eight boundaries and a six in his

36-ball 57 while Hasan's 22-ball 41 were spiced with three sixes and four boundaries. But once Nawaz fell to spinner Sajid Khan the innings fell apart.

Nurpur Lions slumped from 110-1 to 160 all out with four balls of the stipulated 20 overs remaining unused. Shahzaib Khan 16 and Khushdil Shah with 13 were the other batters with double figures. Leg-spinner Usama Mir returned with figures of 4-23 in his four overs while pacer Mohammad Wasim Jnr took 2-22.

Scores in brief: Nurpur Lions beat Lake City Panthers by eight runs

Nurpur Lions 160 all out in 19.2 overs (Imam-ul-Haq 57, Hasan Nawaz 41, Shahzaib Khan 16; Usama Mir 4-23, Mohammad Wasim Jnr 2-22)

Lake City Panthers 152-6 in 20 overs (Danish Aziz 38 not out, Umar Siddiq 38; Sharoon Siraj 3-19)

Player of the match - Sharoon Siraj

New Turn in Pak-India Cricket: Announcement of Matches Under Hybrid Model from 2025 to 2027

The International Cricket Council (ICC) has made an important decision, announcing that from 2025 to 2027, the Champions Trophy and other major cricket events in Pakistan will be held under the "Hybrid Model." This announcement particularly prioritizes holding Pakistan-India matches at neutral venues, marking the beginning of a new and unique movement in international cricket.

The Hybrid Model and Its Purpose

Under the Hybrid Model, matches between Pakistan and India will be played at neutral venues. The objective is to keep the political and social tensions between the two countries sepa-

rate from the sport. Under this model, while events held in Pakistan will see India's matches played at neutral venues, similarly, events in India will see Pakistan's matches held at neutral venues. This decision is a significant step in promoting cricket and peace between the two countries.

The Plan for 2025 to 2027

According to the agreement announced by the ICC, the 2025 Champions Trophy in Pakistan, the 2025 Women's ODI World Cup in India, and the 2026 Men's T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka will be played

under the Hybrid Model. During this period, all matches between Pakistan and India will be played at neutral venues, ensuring transparency and fairness in cricket in both countries.

Impact of ICC's Decision

ICC's new decision is significant in keeping cricket between Pakistan and India free from political influences. Cricket has always been a major subject of interest between the two countries, and this move could lead to a new beginning for international cricket. It will also provide cricket fans with a fresh opportunity to

Analysis

Abdul Ghafoor Sarohi

Zone-I W and Zone-III W Secure victories in Woodward Trophy U-19 Inter Zonal Cricket Tournament



Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: Two more matches were decided in the Woodward Trophy Under-19 Inter Zonal Cricket Tournament at various Grounds of the City.

The Tournament is being organized by Regional Cricket Association Karachi with the collaboration of Medicam Group of Companies.

Scores in Brief:

Zone-I Whites beat Zone-V Blues by 9 Wickets at Young Fighter Ground.

Zone-V Blues 109 allout in 36.2 overs. Roman Touseef 21, Wasif Khan 17, Sufyan Khan (sla) 3/9, Saim Ansari 2/12, Abdul Moiz 2/37.

Zone-I Whites 110/1 in 17.3 overs. Yousuf Khan 51 7x4, Ayan Tariq 38 both not out.

Later Syfyar Tariq of Zone-I Whites received the Medicam Man of the Match Award from Arif Waheed Secretary Zone-I.

In the 2nd Match Zone-III Whites beat Zone-I Blues by 5 Wickets. Zone-I Blues 140 allout in 39.5 overs. Muhammad Yaqoob 33 4x4, Muhammad Khan 25, Sajjad Ali 19, Rafay Ahmed 17. Muhammad Waseem (rlb) 4/36, Taimoor Rehman 2/22, Asadullah 2/26.

Zone-III Whites 141/5 in 28.2 overs. Muhammad Hamza 44 7x4, Muhammad Bilal 40 4x4, Daniyal Ali 19, Hamza Yaqoob 18. Muhammad Shaneer (rlb) 3/24, Sudais Gaba 2/34.

After the end of the Match Muhammad Raees President Zone-III given away the Medicam Man of the Match Award to Muhammad Waseem of Zone-III White

Quaid-e-Azam Games: Punjab dominates in badminton as KPK excels in kabaddi



Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: Punjab's athletes on Thursday reigned supreme in the badminton arena at the Rodham Hall of Pakistan Sports Complex Islamabad, claiming multiple gold medals. Kanzul Eman emerged as the women's singles champion, defeating Hamna Irshad 2-0 in an all-Punjab final.

Kanzul displayed remarkable agility and precision, securing gold while Hamna settled for silver.

In the women's doubles, Kanzul Eman partnered with Hamna Irshad to overpower Sindh's Mariyam Hamza and Mariyam Hanif, claiming a flawless 2-0 victory. The win saw Punjab adding another gold to its tally, leaving Sindh with silver.

The men's doubles final saw Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's (KPK) Afnan and Haseeb clinching gold by defeating Punjab's Sohaib and Ukmer 2-0 in a fierce showdown.

Sindh dominated the mixed doubles final, with Ibad Khan and Mariyam Hanif triumphing over Hasnain and Mariyam Hamza in an all-Sindh clash, winning 2-0 to secure gold. In the men's singles event, Muhammad Zaid of KPK defeated Muhammad Afnan, also from KPK 2-0, adding yet another gold to KPK's haul.

Meanwhile, the final of kabaddi was held at Amir Khan Boxing Hall wherein KPK produced spectacular performance, outwitting Punjab in an intense contest. KPK dominated with a score of 40-28, securing the gold medal and leaving Punjab with silver.

Real Madrid dominate Pachuca to lift Intercontinental Cup trophy

DOHA: Real Madrid secured a commanding 3-0 victory against Mexico's Pachuca to lift the Intercontinental Cup in Doha on Wednesday. Mbappe opened the scoring in the 37th minute before Rodrigo doubled Madrid's lead early in the second half. Vinicius sealed a comfortable win for the Spanish and European champions with a late penalty.

France striker Mbappe returned to the Madrid line-up in Doha after missing Saturday's 3-3 draw with Rayo Vallecano due to a hamstring injury suffered in the Champions League win at Atalanta last week. Mbappe swept in from close range to break the deadlock after brilliant play from Vinicius Junior, who won the FIFA Best men's player of the year award a day earlier after missing out on the Ballon d'Or.

Former West Brom and Newcastle forward Salomon Rondon led the attack for CONCACAF Champions Cup winners Pachuca, but they never truly looked capable of an upset and Rodrigo's fine curling strike from the edge of the area put Madrid in total control.

It was allowed to stand after the referee consulted the pitchside monitor even though Jude Bellingham was in an offside position and appeared to be interfering with the goalkeeper's line of vision.

Vinicius added a third from the penalty spot six minutes from time following another VAR review after Lucas Vazquez was chopped down in the Pachuca box.

"We knew that after a long trip and playing just one game it's hard. We struggled at the beginning, but we adapted well," Madrid midfielder Fede Valverde told Spanish television channel Telecinco.

It is Madrid's second title of the season following their UEFA Super Cup triumph over Atalanta in August.

Carlo Ancelotti won his 15th trophy as Madrid coach, moving him past Miguel Munoz for the most in club history.

"I'm very pleased, very happy. It's a success. That's more than anyone else," said Ancelotti.

This was the first edition of the FIFA-backed Intercontinental Cup, which broadly maintains the previous format of the Club World Cup and features the six continental champions.

The latter is being expanded to include 32 teams in 2025 and will now be played every four years. A past version of the Intercontinental Cup ran from 1960 to 2004 involving the champions of Europe and South America.

Called on

ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador of China to Pakistan, Mr. Jiang Zaidong, called on President Asif Ali Zardari, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, on Thursday.



Photo: PID

Naval Chief Visits Oman and Meets Top Civil and Military Leadership



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf, called on the top military and naval leadership of Oman during an official visit. He held separate meetings with the Minister of Royal Office, General Sultan Mohammad AlNu'amani, the Commander of Royal Navy of Oman, Rear Admiral Saif Nasser Al Rahbi, and the Commander of National Defence College, Rear Admiral Ali Abdullah Al Shidi.

During the meetings, discussions centered on strengthening defence cooperation and reinforcing the historic ties between Oman and Pakistan. The Naval Chief emphasized that Pakistan Navy is a strong proponent of collaborative maritime security in coordination with regional

countries and has always been at the forefront of such initiatives. Oman's civil and military leadership appreciated Pakistan Navy's efforts in promoting collaborative maritime security in the region and acknowledged the importance of strong bilateral naval cooperation.

The Naval Chief also visited key facilities, including the RNO Said bin Sultan Naval Base, Oman Naval Ship, Maritime Security Centre, National Defence College, Military Technical College, and Sultan Qaboos Naval Academy, where he received detailed briefings.

Pakistan and Oman share a historically close relationship, and the visit of Naval Chief is expected to further enhance and broaden defence ties between the two countries, particularly in naval cooperation.

Youth, SMEs, key drivers of economic development: PM

Spokesman Report

CAIRO: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday, underscoring vital role of youth and small and medium enterprises (SMEs), said that robust economies could be built by investing in both key drivers of in the economic development.

He said for Pakistan, investing in youth, and supporting SMEs, was crucial for the country's socio-economic

development, and progress. "With over 60% of our population under the age of 30, we possess, fountain of potential, for innovation and growth," he said while addressing the D-8 Summit in Cairo.

The prime minister highlighted that unlocking this potential required provision of the right skills, opportunities and financial resources.

Similarly, he said through the flagship Youth Programme,

his government was committed to providing quality education, creating jobs, and offering productive opportunities.

Since 2013, he said this programme under the leadership of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif had distributed over 6,00,000 laptops to high achievers, awarded hundreds and thousands of scholarships, and trained a huge cohort of individuals in demand-driven skills such as artificial intelligence, data analytics, and cyber

security.

"Pakistan is home to one of the largest freelance communities in the world. We are focusing on IT trainings at a mass scale to equip our youth with the necessary tools to connect with the digital world and capitalize on those opportunities with the aim to enable jobs-seekers become job-creators," he remarked.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also highlighted the importance of ceasefire in

Gaza, adding that it was crucial to ensure peace, prosperity and progress, not only in the region but globally.

"I would, in all humanity, urge my brother presidents, prime ministers, other dignitaries sitting in this room that while we discussed today's agenda, it was equally important to discuss the situation in Gaza the the peace and ceasefire in Lebanon and potential threat of Israel's carnage," he added.

Finance minister reaffirmed Govt's commitment to supporting SMEs

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Muhammad Aurangzeb on Thursday commended Sialkot's remarkable industrial achievements and reaffirmed the Government's steadfast commitment to supporting small and Medium Entrepreneurs (SMEs).

The minister acknowledged the necessity of making difficult decisions to stabilize the economy, recognizing their impact on businesses and individuals, said a press release issued here.

Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Muhammad Aurangzeb, Federal Minister for Defense, Khawaja Muhammad Asif and Federal Minister of Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan visited Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) for an interactive session with the business community of the city.

The finance minister emphasized the critical importance of enhancing Pakistan's tax-to-GDP ratio from the



current 10.3% to an optimal 13-14% in alignment with acceptable benchmarks.

He also highlighted the Federal Government's commitment to make structural reforms to ensure that Pakistan can be put on the path of sustainable economic growth avoiding any balance of payment crisis.

He said that in pursuit of the same, the Government had to take tough decisions to bring the country out of the woods.

Aurangzeb was of the view that the benefits of a robust and stable economy would be reaped by all sectors of Economy including the commoners.

He elaborated on ongoing reforms within the FBR, including the integration of FBR and NADRA data to minimize discrepancies in business audits by the tax authority.

He assured the business community that FBR would turn into a business-friendly organization but also said that

no sector would be allowed to enjoy any exemptions in terms of tax practice.

Aurangzeb gave a patient hearing to the representations made by the President Chamber on the issue of Final Tax Regime and shared that all the proposals would be considered at length, and decisions would be taken in the best interest of the SMEs and the Exports.

He directed the Sialkot Chamber to start preparation of Budget Proposals for next Financial Year sharing his commitment to deliberate on all pitches made in the best interest of the Export Sector of Pakistan.

He said that the Finance Ministry, instead of meeting business representatives in Islamabad, would be visiting all trade bodies across Pakistan to gather sector specific budget proposals.

The delegation of Government stalwarts was warmly received by Ikram Ul Haq, President of SCCI, accompanied by prominent members of Sialkot Chamber.

DPM Ishaq Dar, Azerbaijan DPM discuss progress on bilateral cooperation



News Desk

CAIRO: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Thursday met with the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan

Jeyhun Bayramov on the sidelines of 11th Summit of Developing Eight Countries, being held in Cairo.

During the meeting, they discussed bilateral cooperation between Pakistan and Azerbaijan and projects for regional connectivity.

FIA Faisalabad Action Against Human Traffickers.

The FIA Circle Faisalabad has made a significant move in tackling human trafficking and smuggling. A case against three human traffickers, linked to the tragic boat incident in Greece, has been registered.

In addition, two FIA officers, Inspector Zubair Ashraf and Sub-Inspector Shahid Imran, have been arrested for negligence during their duties at Faisalabad Airport. These officers were serving as shift in-charges and failed to properly screen passengers.

Eighteen victims of the tragic Greece boat accident had departed from Faisalabad Airport. While 17 of them were rescued, one, named Sufyan, tragically lost his life in the incident. The victims had paid large sums of money to an agent, Abdul Rauf, for arranging their illegal travel to Greece. Along with Rauf, human traffickers Abbas Zulfqar and Qamar Zaman have been nominated in the case.

The FIA has launched a full-scale investigation, with efforts underway to apprehend the remaining suspects. Raids are being conducted, and all available resources are being used to ensure the swift arrest of the traffickers.

Atleast 28,000 Pakistanis asks for asylum in EU countries, says report

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Between October 2022 and October 2023, Pakistanis submitted approximately 28,000 applications for international protection in European Union Plus countries, according to a report released by the EU's Agency for Asylum (EUAA) on Wednesday.

The report indicated a downward trend in monthly applications, with a peak of around 3,400 applications in October 2022, dropping to 1,900 in October 2023. Italy emerged as the primary destination for Pakistani asylum seekers, followed by France, Greece, and Germany.

The "Country Focus on Pakistan Report" revealed that EU Plus countries issued nearly 20,000 initial decisions on Pakistani applications, with only 12 percent resulting in granted refugee status or subsidiary protection. As of the end of October, approximately 34,000 decisions remain pending.

The report also highlighted the political and security landscape in Pakistan, detailing the roles of various actors, the judiciary, and the treatment of specific population groups, including Afghan refugees.

Pakistan has been identified as one of the countries with the highest vulnerabilities to modern slavery in the region, with an estimated 2.4 million people affected by forced labor or forced marriage. The country is situated along a major trafficking route, including the trade of human organs.

Interior Minister meets JI Ameer

City Desk

LAHORE: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi visited the Jamaat-e-Islami headquarters in Mansoorah Lahore, where he held a meeting with Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami Hafiz Naeem-ur-Rehman.

During the meeting, current law and order situation in the country and matters of mutual interest were discussed in detail. Both leaders also discussed the situation in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, particularly in the tribal district of Kurram.

The interior minister stated that maintaining law and order situation throughout the country is the top priority of the government. Mohsin Naqvi also apprised Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami regarding the agreements with Independent Power Producers (IPPs).

Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami presented proposals regarding KE (K-Electric). He further stated that the Government of Pakistan should play its role regarding the Palestinian issue.

The interior minister emphasized that the govern-



ment is taking the matter very seriously, noting that the Prime Minister has raised the Pales-

tinian issue on every forum. Secretary General Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer-ul-Azeem and

Deputy Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami Dr. Osama Razi were also present during the meeting.