



Benazir's death anniversary: Pakistan Railways announces special train

Pakistan Railways on Thursday announced to run special train from Lahore to Garhi Khuda Baksh on the occasion of 17th death anniversary of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto to facilitate people who wanted to attend it in Garhi Khuda Bux Bhutto, Larkana.



Greek coastguard recovers bodies of eight migrants after collision off Rhodes

Greece has recovered the bodies of eight migrants who fell into the sea after their speedboat collided with a coastguard boat that was pursuing it off the island of Rhodes early on Friday, the Greek coastguard said. So far 18 people, many of them injured, have been rescued and a search operation in the area is ongoing, the coastguard said in a statement.

Simultaneously published from Islamabad, Lahore and Multan

Call on

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif view of debris of the demolished Chambers of Lawyers at F-8 Football ground after the Supreme Court ultimatum, which was till 01-05-2021, as the Workers of Anti encroachments.



Photo: Online

PM directs Law Ministry to amicably resolve Madaris registration issue

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Friday directed the Ministry of Law and Justice to amicably resolve the issue of madaris registration as per the constitution and law.

The matter was discussed as Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman called on the prime minister on Friday and the meeting marked a positive development regarding the suggestions put forth by Maulana Fazlur Rehman on madaris registration.

PM Shehbaz Sharif directed the law ministry to resolve the issues soon.

Members of the National Assembly Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haideri, Raja Pervez Ashraf, Senator Kamran Murtaza and senior leader of Pakistan Peoples Party Qamar Zaman Kaira also attended the meeting.

Speaker of National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Federal Ministers Azam Nazir Tarar, Attaullah Tarar, Rana Sanaulah, and Attorney General Mansoor Usman were also present.

Mohsin Naqvi visits Peshawar, emphasizes unity for peace in KPK

Bureau Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Friday visited the Chief Minister's Office in Peshawar, where he was warmly received by Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur.

The two leaders discussed critical issues, including the law and order situation in the province and strategies to ensure sustainable peace in the conflict-affected Kurram district.

During the meeting, Mohsin Naqvi assured full support to enhance the capacity of law enforcement agencies in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. "Establishing peace in Kurram is our top priority," he stated, emphasizing the need for collective efforts and consultation with all stakeholders to achieve lasting stability in the region.

Both leaders paid tribute to

the sacrifices of law enforcement personnel in the fight against terrorism. "Martyrs are our pride; we salute their eternal sacrifices," said Mohsin Naqvi. Chief Minister Gandapur echoed these sentiments, stating, "The sacrifices of our martyrs are unforgettable. Together, we will confront the menace of terrorism."

The meeting concluded with a strong commitment to unity and collaboration between federal and provincial authorities to address the security challenges and ensure peace across the region.



Pakistan's missile program is 'emerging threat', top US official says

Reuters

WASHINGTON: A senior White House official on Thursday said nuclear-armed Pakistan is developing long-range ballistic missile capabilities that eventually could allow it to strike targets well beyond South Asia, making it an "emerging threat" to the United States.

Deputy National Security Adviser Jon Finer's surprise revelation underscored how far the once-close ties between Washington and Islamabad have deteriorated since the 2021 U. S. troop withdrawal from Afghanistan.

It also raised questions about whether Pakistan has shifted the

objectives of nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs long intended to counter those of India, with which it has fought three major wars since 1947.

Speaking to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Finer said Pakistan has pursued "increasingly sophisticated missile technology, from long-range ballistic missile systems to equipment, that would enable the testing of significantly larger rocket motors."

If those trends continue, Finer said, "Pakistan will have the capability to strike targets well beyond South Asia, including in the United States."

The number of nuclear-



ar-armed states with missiles that can reach the U. S. home-

land "is very small and they tend to be adversarial," he continued, naming Russia, North Korea and China.

"So, candidly, it's hard for us to see Pakistan's actions as anything other than an emerging threat to the United States," Finer said.

His speech came a day after Washington announced a new round of sanctions related to Pakistan's ballistic missile development program, including for the first time against the state-run defense agency that oversees the program.

The Pakistani embassy did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Islamabad casts its nuclear

weapons and ballistic missile programs as deterrents against Indian aggression and intended to maintain regional stability.

Two senior administration officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that the U. S. concerns with Pakistan's missile program have been longstanding and stemmed from the sizes of the rocket engines being developed.

The threat posed to the United States is up to a decade away, said one official.

Finer's comments, the officials said, were intended to press Pakistani officials to address why they are developing more powerful rocket engines, something they have refused to do.

Over 200 B2B agreements, MoU worth \$70mln signed with Chinese firms, PM told

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Friday was apprised that over 200 business-to-business (B2B) agreements along with a memorandum of understanding worth \$70 million have been signed with several Chinese companies.

The prime minister (PM) chaired a review meeting regarding the progress of ongoing projects and various initiatives under the Board of Investment (BOI), a PM office news release said.

PM Shehbaz Sharif said an effective and comprehensive roadmap should be formulated for the completion of B2B agreements and the implementation of signed memorandums of understanding with international investors.

"Work on regulatory reforms should be accelerated to provide a conducive environment for business in the country. Such targets should be set for investment that can be achieved as soon as possible," the PM said.

Effective marketing of investment opportunities in Pakistan is essential to attract foreign investors, the prime minister said.

The prime minister directed to complete the construction of business facilitation centers in the country as soon as possible. He underscored that the construction of



business facilitation centers, organization of road shows and other such initiatives were critical to attract foreign investment to the country.

He was also briefed that some 35 Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in the country have been surveyed through Geographical Information System (GIS), whereas extensive data was available on the SEZs to accelerate the progress of ongoing projects.

During the meeting, the BOI officials informed that an 18-point plan was formu-

lated to make special economic zones more effective. Moreover, suggestions regarding the Ease of Doing Business Act 2024 were also presented during the meeting.

Under the Ease of Doing Business Act 2024, the Board of Investment would be able to create a regulatory framework for business in the country in accordance with the modern requirements, he added.

Federal Minister for Privatization Abdul Aleem Khan and senior officers of relevant institutions were present in the meeting.

PMAP may join PTI's civil disobedience movement if situation arises, says Achakzai

Monitoring Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party might join the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's civil disobedience if the situation arises, party chief Mahmood Khan Achakzai has said.

"If this government, which has come by force, continues to disregard everything... and if the National Assembly speaker does not allow parliamentarians to speak on Kurram then we may join the civil disobedience movement," he said while appearing on Rubaroo which was aired on Aaj News on Friday.

Earlier this month, jailed former PM Imran Khan had threatened a civil disobedience campaign starting December 14 unless his requests regarding the release of political prisoners and the establishment of a judicial commission to investigate the events of May 9, 2023, and November 26 were fulfilled.

State institutions are pursuing political opponents, remarks SC judge

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court rejected on Friday the pre-arrest bail application of murder suspect Ishaq, ordering his arrest and transfer to jail authorities.

A three-member bench led by Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail heard the case. Justices Athar Minallah and Malik Shahzad were the other two members of the bench.

In a case that has "lingered" in the judiciary since 2017, the judges offered sharp observations on the political climate of the country. Justice Minallah lamented the state's "preoccupation with political rivalries," commenting that "all institutions appear more focused on targeting opponents."

Justice Mandokhail noted that three former prime ministers had been assassinated, but no justice was delivered in their cases. He referenced the killing of a senior judge in Balochistan, saying, "Even in that case, no answers were provided. The problem lies not in the absence of mechanisms but in the lack of will to act."

He criticised the inefficiency of police investigations, particularly in Sindh and Punjab, and attributed it to the overarching issue of "political engineering" by state institutions. "As long as this continues, the conditions will remain unchanged," he said.

Justice Minallah stressed the importance of adhering to the Constitution, arguing that the country's state of "instability" could have been avoided if constitutional principles were followed.

The judges lamented the loss of public trust in state institutions. Justice Mandokhail observed that people now look to the judiciary, especially the Supreme Court, to address all governance failures.

Justice Minallah further criticized the societal norms that constrain the truth, saying, "This institution [Supreme Court] speaks only as much truth as our society allows. It took 40 years to acknowledge the assassination of an elected prime minister. What greater crime could there be than this? Accountability and punishment were overdue in such a case."

SC judge Justice Shehzad expressed concerns about the state of governance and justice in the country.

"If this is the state of affairs for a prime minister, what hope is there for the ordinary citizen? One day, the prime minister is in the Prime Minister's House; the next, they are in jail. No one knows how long someone will hold office."

After hearing arguments, the Supreme Court issued a clear directive to the police, ordering Ishaq's arrest and his transfer to prison authorities.

Persistent Sectarian Agitation

Hindrance in religious projects and rising tensions in Agham Kot

Abdul Ghafoor Sarohi

HYDERABAD: A group of 4-5 well-known troublemakers, who have been actively opposing the construction project of the shrine of Bibi Maham in Agham Kot by the Sindh Department of Auqaf for several years, forcibly halted the construction work of the department's office in an open lot meant for a vehicle stand in Agham Kot yesterday. Today, they staged a protest in Gulab Laghari city, raising slogans to incite religious tensions.

It should be noted that this is the same group that has been persistently working for the past 6-7 years to provoke a significant religious conflict in the area. These individuals have harassed pilgrims visiting Bibi's shrine from across the country, humiliated them, and created obstacles for their visits. In the past, they tore pages of the Holy Quran and scattered them in the cemetery, threw the wooden pulpit of the mosque outside, invited members of a banned religious organization to enforce strikes in Gulab Laghari, staged sit-ins, and organized rallies from



Gulab Laghari to the shrine in Agham Kot with provocative slogans. They even threatened and forced pilgrims to leave without visiting the shrine.

These points were discussed during an emergency meeting held under the chairmanship of Muhammad Waris Abbasi of the Azadara Rabita Committee Hyderabad in Qasimabad. The meeting revealed that some time

ago, when the Sindh Department of Auqaf initiated construction work at the shrine, these individuals created over seven fake graves overnight on the route designated for transporting construction materials, halting the work. When the government approved a new project for Bibi Maham's shrine and resumed work, the group once again placed 24 fake graves on an alter-

nate route overnight, which has stalled the project to this day.

The meeting urged the Sindh government and all security agencies to take immediate legal action against this known group of troublemakers who persistently create religious tensions and interfere in official work. Immediate steps are needed to prevent such actions and maintain peace.

Hussain Thebo Awarded Honorary Doctorate by Cetacea University, USA

Abdul Ghafoor Sarohi

HUDERABAD: A grand ceremony was held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, to honor senior journalist and strategic affairs analyst Hussain Thebo for his exceptional contributions to journalism and humanity. Cetacea University, USA, awarded him an honorary doctorate in recognition of his services. The event was graced by the university's administration and Muhammad Hussain, Pakistan's Consul General in Dubai, as the chief guest.



Chief Guest Muhammad Hussain emphasized the need for journalists like Hussain Thebo, whose work significantly benefits the nation.

Speaking at the ceremony, Dr. Hussain Thebo expressed his gratitude "I am deeply thankful to Cetacea University for this honorary degree. This journey from Hussain Thebo to Dr. Hussain Thebo is a great honor. I am sincerely grateful to my family, friends, and mentors who have supported me throughout."

DC visits revenue branches



Zafar Chishti

TOBA TEK SINGH: Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Naem Sindhu paid a surprise visit to the revenue branches. A detailed review of the arrangements and quality of services in the offices was carried out. Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Naem Sindhu said that the taut mafia has no place in the revenue offices. Strict legal action will be taken against the presence of the taut mafia. Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Naem Sindhu issued instructions to revenue officers to ensure transparency. Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Naem Sindhu urged to solve public problems immediately. Cleanliness and staff attendance were also checked in the offices. Strict action will be taken against defaulting staff. Easy and prompt provision of services to the public should be ensured.

Solves people problems is my top priority: DPO Ibadat Nisar

Zafar Chishti

TOBA TEK SINGH: District Police Officer (DPO) Toba Tek Singh Ibadat Nisar, in the light of the orders of Inspector General of

Punjab Police Dr. Usman Anwar and on the special instructions of Regional Police Officer (RPO) Region Faisalabad Dr. Muhammad Abid Khan, Establish a strong connection with the citizens. DPO Ibadat Nisar set up an open court after Friday prayers in Jamia Masjid Talab Walli Mochi Road Gujra area Police Station City Gujra to listen to the problems of the people and resolve them. A large number of local people attended the open court. DPO Ibadat Nisar heard the problems of silent and issued instructions on the spot for their immediate resolution. On this occasion, DPO Ibadat Nisar said that the purpose of the open court is to establish direct contact with the public. An open court will improve the communication between the police and the public.

After listening to the problems of the people in the open courtroom, effective steps are taken to solve them and providing justice to the people at their doorstep is the first priority.

Masood Khan to preside over conference on Kashmir

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador Masood Khan, former President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and former Ambassador to the United States, will preside over a conference on the "Issue of Kashmir and Its Permanent Solution in Real Aspects," said the Network for Human Rights and Justice (NHRJ).

The NHRJ said in a press release that the conference is scheduled to take place on 4th February 2025 in Islamabad and will bring together intellectuals, policymakers, and stakeholders to discuss the enduring issue of Kashmir and explore viable solutions for a lasting peace in the region.

A delegation from NHRJ, comprising Rasheed Ahmad Chughtai, Zulqarnain Sulari, Ch Riaz Ahmad, and Raja Azmat, met with Ambassador Masood Khan to formally present the invitation.

This conference is expected to provide a robust platform to address the complex dimensions of the Kashmir issue and propose actionable recommendations for its resolution in accordance with regional stability and the aspirations of the Kashmiri people.

The NHRJ expresses its deepest appreciation to Ambassador Masood Khan for his unwavering commitment to the cause of Kashmir and his willingness to contribute to this critical dialogue.

Native Scene

ISLAMABAD: Youngsters from the Christian community prepare a nativity scene at the Christians colony of Sector G-7 ahead of Christmas, which is a grand holy event of Christians around the World.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

Wazir tribesmen threaten to expand protest to Islamabad if demands not met

Umer Wazir

SOUTH WAZIRISTAN: A large protest rally was organized by Wazir tribesmen and PTM workers in Rustam Bazar, Wana, Lower South Waziristan district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, demanding the immediate release of former MNA Ali Wazir. Thousands of people, including tribal elders, political leaders, Ullamas, and PTM workers, participated in the



rally, carrying placards and banners calling for an end to Ali Wazir's "illegal imprisonment".

The protesters described Ali Wazir as a great leader of the Pashtun nation, who has represented the oppressed nations of the country and raised his voice for their rights. They highlighted the sacrifices made by Ali Wazir's family, including the martyrdom of many family members, and accused the government of seeking to silence him through illegal and unconstitutional law.

Speakers at the rally and protest,

including former provincial assembly candidate Alamgir Wazir, Jamiat-e-Ulema Islam Fazl District President Moulana Abd Ullah, PTM leaders Hanif Pashteen and Samad Lala, emphasized that Wazir has not committed any crime and that all FIRs filed against him are political and vindictive.

They condemned the government's tactics as state coercion and misuse of administrative powers.

10th Ayaz Festival Begins

Provincial Minister announces special grant for Ayaz Festival

Qayoom Sarohi

HYDERABAD: Sindh's Minister of Culture, Syed Zulfiqar Ali Shah, inaugurated the 10th Annual Ayaz Festival at the khana badosh Writers' Café. The festival will continue for three days, featuring various literary sessions and musical performances.

Prior to the opening ceremony, Shah's soormies, including Ghulam Sakina, Khushi Mallah, Pakeeza, and Suhana Mallah, sang Shah's poetry and received immense applause. The festival organizers, Irfana Mallah and Amar Sindhui, warmly welcomed the guests and expressed their gratitude.

In his presidential address at the opening ceremony, Minister Syed

Zulfiqar Ali Shah stated that the Ayaz Festival is a healthy activity in the field of literature. While two provinces in the country are currently experiencing tension, Sindh is hosting festivals that provide entertainment alongside meaningful discussions, sending a positive message to the world that Sindh is the land of Sufis.

He further added that, in the past, fairs were held at shrines, and people prepared for them as they would for Eid. Efforts are being made to revive these traditions to ensure that rural communities can also participate in cultural and literary activities. The minister assured that the Department of Culture supports the Ayaz Festival's organizers and aims to allocate a special grant for

the festival in the upcoming budget. He encouraged intellectuals from across the country to attend.

Renowned guest and scholar from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Nazir Mahmood, highlighted in his speech that extremism is prevalent across Pakistan, including Punjab and Sindh. He emphasized the need to free society from extremism and foster a tolerant environment where everyone can live freely. Unfortunately, tolerance has been eroded, and extremism has been imposed on Sindh and the country as a whole. He stressed the importance of understanding extremism, including its social, political, cultural, and gender dimensions, and criticized campaigns against the Ayaz Festival as cultural

extremism.

Nazir Mahmood also pointed out that Imran Khan's party is following the path of MQM's terrorism and called for the removal of extremist narratives from textbooks. He highlighted that global imperialist forces have played a role in spreading extremism in Pakistan and stressed the need for peace, justice, and equality to create a tolerant society. He also advocated for provincial autonomy under the 18th Amendment.

Renowned writer Noor-ul-Huda Shah expressed that holding the Ayaz Festival despite severe opposition is no small achievement. She highlighted the threats to Sindhi society, including the looting of the Indus River and the push towards extremism. She urged the youth



to focus on saving land and water for future generations instead of wasting time on negative campaigns.

During the event, Mehr-un-Nisa, a first-grade student, recited Ayaz's poetry, adding vibrancy to the atmosphere. The festival also features stalls showcasing books, cultural arts, and food.

The night concluded with a musical session where artists like Barkat Fakir and Manjhi Fakir received great acclaim. The festival witnessed a large turnout, including women and children. On the second day, various literary sessions and another musical evening are scheduled.



Islamabad
30° - 38° Clear

SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr5:39 am
Zohr12:05 pm
Asr3:25 pm
Maghrib5:03 pm
Isha6:32 pm

EMERGENCY

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

Women Police Stations

Islamabad 9222596
Rawalpindi 9270601-20

ENQUIRY

Edhi Ambulance115
PIA Flight Info 114
PIA Cargo 9280979
Railway Inquiry117
Railway Exchange9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi5555489
CAA 9281092

HOSPITALS

CMH561111
MH561116
MH561116
Cantt Hospital9270907-11
DHO5556311-4
RGH9290301-7
Holy Family9290322-7
PIMS9261170-79
Polyclinic9218300-09
Shifa International4603666

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

CDA chairman seeks ADB support for transformation in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA), Muhammad Ali Randhawa, on Friday initiated discussions with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to collaborate on key projects aimed at enhancing Islamabad's infrastructure and sustainability.

The high-level meeting, attended by CDA members, NESPAK consultants, and senior officials, explored potential partnerships to address the city's pressing challenges.

The meeting focused on critical issues, including Islamabad's water crisis, sustainable transport, and urban mobility initiatives.

Chairman Randhawa underscored the need for ADB's support to tackle water supply-demand gaps, inequitable distribution, and wastage through theft and leakage.

He highlighted the importance of the newly established Islamabad Water Agency in securing international funding and devising short-, medium-, and long-term solutions to the water shortage.

On sustainable transport, the CDA discussed plans for an intercity bus terminal and the introduction of bicycle tracks as part of the city's eco-friendly initiatives.

Preservation of Islamic heritage is the need of the hour: speakers

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: MUSLIM Institute in collaboration with Embassy of Azerbaijan in Islamabad successfully organized a seminar titled "Shusha-Cultural Capital of the Islamic World for 2024: A Testament to the Muslim World's Rich Heritage."

The event took at the National Library of Pakistan, Islamabad. Prominent speakers at the seminar included Former Presiden of Azad Jammu & Kashmir Ambassador Masood Khan; Sahibzada Sultan Ahmed Ali, Chairman of the MUSLIM Institute; Khazar Farhadov, Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan; Alisher Tokhtaev, Ambassador of Uzbekistan to Pakistan; Ambassador Major General Raza Muhammad (Retd), President of IPRI; Former Additional Secretary for Foreign Affairs Ambassador R Ishtiaq H. Andrabi; and Prof. Engr. Zamir Ahmed Awan. Speakers observed that Shusha was declared Cultural Capital of Islamic World by the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ICESCO).

This prestigious title underscores Shusha's deep-rooted cultural significance, artistic contributions, and its reflection of the rich heritage of the



Muslim world. Shusha stands as a living testament to the deep historical, cultural, and spiritual ties that link people across borders and time. This city has been a beacon of cultural excellence, attracting architects, intellectuals, poets, musicians, and scholars. Its rich history encompasses

centuries of artistic, architectural, and cultural development.

The speakers emphasized the importance of preserving Islamic heritage and promoting cultural exchange among Muslim countries. They also highlighted Shusha's potential to inspire future generations

and promote peace, stability, and cooperation in the region. This achievement carries profound significance, particularly in light of the threats faced by Islamic cultural heritage around the world. From the systematic challenges to Islamic heritage in India under repressive

Hindutva policies, to the destruction of sacred sites in Palestine due to inhumane occupation and apartheid, and the toll of conflicts and civil wars across the Middle East, the preservation of Islamic identity and heritage is a shared challenge for the global Muslim community.

Called on

ISLAMABAD: Australian High Commissioner Neil Hawkins called on Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Inter-Faith Harmony Chaudhary Salik Hussain on Friday.



Photo: PID

Ahsan Bakhtawari inaugurates Fatima-tuz-Zahra Dispensary in G-11 Markaz

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Member Central Core Committee UBG (FPCC), Chairman Clean and Green Islamabad Movement, and former President ICCI, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, inaugurated the Fatima-tuz-Zahra free Dispensary in G-11 Markaz yesterday. This dispensary has been established through the collaboration of the Anjuman-e-Tajir and the Khidmat Committee of G-11 Markaz.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by UBG Secretary General Zafar Bakhtawari, President G-11 Markaz Naeem Akhtar Awan, Secretary General Farrukh Khan,



Chairman Asim Abbasi, Chairman Khidmat Committee G-11 Markaz Inam-ur-Rehman Kambh, In-charge Khidmat Committee G-11 Muhammad

Owais, Shafiq-ur-Rehman Warraich, members of the business community, and local residents.

While addressing the cere-

mony, Ahsan Bakhtawari stated that providing basic health-care facilities to the public is a top priority. He commended the joint efforts of the Anjuman-e-Tajir and the Khidmat Committee, emphasizing that this dispensary will serve as a vital facility for local residents and provide quality treatment to those in need.

In his speech, Zafar Bakhtawari highlighted that the efforts of individuals and organizations driven by the spirit of public service can bring positive change to society. He described the Fatima-tuz-Zahra Dispensary as an excellent example of collective efforts for community welfare.

Riphah Int'l University hosts dinner to honor and welcome Palestinian Students



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Riphah International University organized a distinguished dinner to honor Palestinian students, recognizing their resilience and sacrifices. The event, held at Gulberg Greens Islamabad, was graced by the presence of the Ambassador of Palestine to Pakistan, H. E. Dr. Zuhair Mohammad Hamdallah Zaid, and Dr. Hafeez ur Rehman, President of Al-Khidmat Foundation.

H. E. Dr. Zuhair Mohammad Hamdallah Zaid expressed gratitude for Pakistan's unwavering support for Palestine and highlighted the strong bond between the two nations. Dr. Hafeez ur Rehman emphasized the transformative power of education in fostering resilience and hope among students. The evening concluded with a souvenir distribution ceremony to honor the distinguished guests and acknowledge their contributions, leaving the attendees inspired by the messages of solidarity and hope.

AIOU's Matric to Ph. D admissions to begin from January 1 across the country

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has announced the schedule for admissions for the Spring Semester 2025. Previously, the university conducted admissions in two phases until Autumn Semester 2024. However, the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Dr. Nasir Mahmood has introduced reforms to further improve the admission and examination systems. According to the new policy, admissions for all programs from Matriculation to PhD will now be conducted in a single phase starting on January 1.

Programs open for admission in Spring 2025 include Matriculation, FA, ICom, Associate Degrees in Arts, Commerce, and Education, BE, BS face-to-face and ODL programs, Postgraduate programs, MS, MPhil, PhD, Diploma programs, and Certificate courses. Admission forms and prospectuses for all programs will be available on the university's website www.aiou.edu.pk starting January 1.

To assist students, Vice-Chancellor Professor Dr. Nasir Mahmood has directed the administrators of the university's 54 regional offices nationwide to establish Student Facilitation Centers at their respective campuses before the commencement of admissions. These centers will ensure that all aspiring students visiting the campuses receive the necessary support, including free access to computers and the internet for online applications.

ISSI in collaboration with Lightstone Publishers hosting '9th Adab Festival Pakistan'

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), in collaboration with Lightstone Publishers, is all set to host the 9th edition of the "Adab Festival Pakistan" in Islamabad on Sunday, December 22, 2024. This premier literary and cultural event will be held at the Institute's premises from 11:00 AM to 8:00 PM. Joint hosting of the Festival illustrates the ISSI's growing outreach and its endeavors to promote intellectual discourse in close engagement with civil society.

Key highlights of the Festival include a thought-provoking book talk on Jinnah's Vision for Pakistan - A Call for Action by Yasser Latif Hamdani and Ilhan Niaz, followed by the launch of Zahid Hussain's A Dialogue with History: Interviews with World Leaders with Dr. Maleeha Lodhi and Arifa Noor as panelists. Engaging panel discussions will explore topics such as reimagining education, celebrating women's empowerment through the lens of Fouzia Saeed's Tapestry: Strands of Women's Struggles Woven into the History of Pakistan, and Pakistan's evolving role in the global scenario, featuring distinguished speakers like Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, Ms. Nasim Zehra, and Ambassador Masood Khan.

The Festival will also feature a cultural interlude with Sufi Kalaam and Dhamal by Arieab Azhar, encapsulating the richness of Pakistan's spiritual traditions, and conclude with the launch of Dr. Sania Nishtar's latest book, Delivering Welfare at Scale: Ehsaas 2047, offering insights into the future of welfare and development in Pakistan.

Zindigi brings digital innovation to E-Commerce

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Zindigi, in collaboration with PostEx, is solving real-world challenge faced by logistic companies by digitizing cash-on-delivery payments in Pakistan. Powered by RAAST, the Dynamic QR feature empowers riders to swiftly generate the QR from their PostEx application and can collect payments securely and seamlessly using multiple banking applications, revolutionizing the logistics sector.

Atif Ishaque, Chief business officer Zindigi added: "This partnership with PostEx reflects our vision of leveraging technology to enhance everyday financial interactions. By empowering customers with convenient, secure, and cashless payment options, we



are not only simplifying transactions but also contributing to the broader goal of financial inclusion and digital transformation in Pakistan."

Jawad Mirza, CEO of Logistics at PostEx, remarked: "Incorporating QR payments into the last-mile delivery process is a game-changer for the logistics industry. Partnering with Zindigi ensures this technology becomes accessible to all our customers. Using QR payments simplifies cash collection for riders, accelerates settlement for merchants, and provides customers with a seamless payment option at their doorstep. By digitizing cash-on-delivery, we are driving the logistics sector toward a more tech-enabled ecosystem."

This collaboration reaffirms Zindigi and PostEx's shared commitment to creating a tech-driven and financially inclusive ecosystem that benefits businesses and consumers alike.

Group Chairman/Chief Editor: **Almass Ayoub Sabir**
 Vice Chairman: **Asim Nazir Ahmad**
 Editor: **Naveed Ahmad Khan**
 Head Editorial Advisory Board: **Amjad Mehmood**
 Bureau Chief Karachi: **Khurram Jaffrani**
 (jaffrani@adpluse.pk)
 Bureau Chief Lahore: **Syed Afraz Ali Nazish**
 (afrazalishah@gmail.com)
 Head Office: **AIMS Building, Street No. 4, H-8/1, Islamabad.**
 spokesmanislamabad@gmail.com
 Phone: +92 51 2227123,
 WhatsApp +92 346 5008408
 Karachi office: **A111, Block C, Gulsha-e-Jamal, PRECHS,**
 Karachi Phone: 021-33399390
 Email: **spokesmankarachi@gmail.com**
 Lahore Office: **7-E, Samanberg, Johar Town.**
 spokesmanlahore@gmail.com

UN official decries Israeli 'weaponization' of humanitarian aid to Gaza

A senior UN official has denounced Israeli authorities for obstructing humanitarian work in the Gaza Strip, stressing that the aid system has been "weaponized."

Speaking to correspondents via video link on Thursday, Georgios Petropoulos, the head of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) sub-office in Gaza, said, "Israeli authorities and military seem unwilling to open multiple access points at once," which he said it hampers the delivery of vital supplies.

Petropoulos pointed to multiple issues that have slowed down aid deliveries, including strict Israeli restrictions on items, looting of aid in Israeli-controlled areas, and limited access via Israeli checkpoints.

"Most of the areas in which these lootings happen are under the control of the Israeli forces," he told reporters.

Giving a harrowing update on the dire situation in the enclave, Petropoulos described it as "the most dangerous place on earth right now."

The official underscored the grim reality facing over two million people trapped in Gaza, where basic necessities like food, shelter, and safety have become scarce.

"Dying hungry and in pain" is an increasingly likely outcome for children, mothers, aid workers, and teachers alike, he said.

"We're there to support [the people] who for more than 14 months have struggled to stay alive", Petropoulos said. "But we're not allowed to do our jobs," he emphasized.

OCHA has been striving to deliver food, healthcare, and safe drinking water to Gaza's besieged population, but fuel shortages and blocked access routes have exacerbated the crisis.

Moreover, these efforts have been opposed by what Petropoulos referred to as "blanket prohibitions" from Israeli authorities.

"When we raise these things with Israeli authorities, they reject virtually every single practical solution that we table," Petropoulos said, adding that "the aid system has been weaponized."

He further revealed that aid delivery often becomes a race against time, with insufficient supplies to meet the growing needs of the population.

"As an aid worker in Gaza, you're forced to make horrible decisions," he described. "Should I let people die of starvation or of the cold? Do we bring in more food to ease hunger or more plastic sheets for some shelter from the rain at night?" he illustrated.

North Gaza, under near-total siege for 75 days, has become a site of intensified military operations.

Petropoulos described chilling reports of mass casualties, the destruction of entire communities, and forced displacements under bombardment.

"The Israeli corridor bisecting the strip, has been fortified to such a degree that it's not really a corridor anymore," he said, noting that 150 requests for humanitarian access have been denied since October.

Power of Community Development

Amna Ali

Power of Community Development in Shaping a Stronger Future Together

Community development is the foundation for creating strong and sustainable societies. It emphasizes collective action, shared responsibility, and a commitment to enhancing everyone's quality of life. Community development fosters growth and progress by tackling local challenges, encouraging collaboration, and empowering individuals through education and resources. These efforts not only strengthen communities but also nurture a sense of unity and purpose, driving lasting, positive change for future generations.

As students, we gained valuable lessons beyond the classroom by promoting community growth. Our recent initiative to support Jaam-e-Masjid Faizan-e-Dastager offered meaningful insights into the power of collective effort, the importance of perseverance, and the transformative impact of education.

Overcoming Challenges through Determination

Our project aimed to enhance Quranic education for underprivileged children by providing essential resources such as Quran Pak, Noorani Qaida, and desks. Securing sponsorship proved to be our greatest challenge, pushing us into unfamiliar territory. We reached out to multiple organizations with proposals, often encountering hurdles like delayed responses or outright rejections. Each

setback compelled us to refine our approach and strengthen our determination. Developing a persuasive case for the project required careful planning, effective communication, and an unshakable belief in our mission. Through this process, we learned invaluable lessons about persistence, teamwork, and adaptability.

After persistent efforts, a private organization stepped forward with generous support. Their alignment with our mission and commitment to corporate social responsibility culminated in a Rs. 50,000 sponsorship, facilitated by Mr. Wajahat Ali, Senior HR Manager. This contribution directly enhanced the educational and spiritual growth of students at the madrasa by providing essential resources.

Simultaneously, our efforts to assist underprivileged families gained momentum as we connected with angel investors, including business professionals and entrepreneurs. By sharing personal stories of families struggling with financial challenges, we showcased the profound impact of their contributions. These investors were impressed by the project's transparency and community-centered approach, which ensured that their support created meaningful and lasting change. Beyond financial assistance, the investors became partners in community development, fostering relationships that emphasized trust, compassion, and empowerment.

Making a Lasting Impact through Collective Effort

Both projects have yielded far-reaching impacts. The madrasa students now have access to quality resources, creating an environment conducive to Quranic education. Similarly, the

angel investor initiative has provided financial stability to struggling families, enabling them to meet immediate needs while working toward long-term empowerment.

These initiatives reflect the transformative power of community-driven support. The joy and gratitude of beneficiaries reaffirmed our belief that targeted interventions, combined with compassion, can spark a chain reaction of positive change.

A Heartfelt Tribute
None of this would have been possible without the support of our sponsor, the angel investors, and our mentors, who trusted our vision have set an example of impactful community support.

Our supervisors' guidance was invaluable, ensuring that every aspect of the projects—from proposal drafting to fund utilization—was handled with precision and accountability. Their mentorship inspired us to persevere and take ownership of our roles as changemakers.

A Transformative Experience
As students, this experience was transformative. It taught us not only the principles of community development but also essential skills in leadership, accountability, and collaboration. We realized that small, collective efforts can drive significant, positive change.

This project has strengthened our commitment to giving back to society. The lessons we've learned will continue to inspire us to empower others and contribute to building a brighter future for all.

Writer is student of Department of Business Administration at Fjinnah University for Women

Can China Counter U. S. Arms Sales to Taiwan?

The first batch of 32 Abrams Tanks, the heaviest and most lethal "steel mountain" and battle-proven, was handed over to Taiwan this week. The deal is for 108 tanks to be delivered by 2024. Interestingly, while the economies of both the USA and China are highly intertwined and inseparable, the USA seems to leave no stone unturned in poking China, bringing it to a point where it might abandon its measured patience and respond in kind. For example, to counter the American strategy of bolstering military hardware and services in Taiwan, China could begin supplying military hardware to Puerto Rico, which holds a similar strategic and geopolitical position relative to the USA as Taiwan does to China.

Like Taiwan to China, Puerto Rico is a U.S. territory with considerable autonomy but remains under U. S. sovereignty, lacking full independence, similar to how China claims Taiwan as part of its territory. In contrast, Taiwan operates as a de facto independent nation with its own government and military. Both Puerto Rico and Taiwan reflect elements of disputed sovereignty and territorial claims, neither perfectly mirrors Taiwan's unique geopolitical situation.

Interestingly, although China is investing trillions of dollars in development projects across continents but emphasizes a policy of non-interference, presenting itself as a partner that respects sovereignty and refrains from meddling in domestic politics. It does not form military alliances, meddle in internal politics,

or involve itself in the internal conflicts of its allied countries. This non-interventionist approach also includes staying clear of internal matters in these states.

In contrast, the USA is perceived as more openly involved in the internal affairs of its allies, often justified under the banner of promoting democracy, human rights, and free markets. This includes imposing conditions on aid, providing direct political support, or pressuring allies to align with its foreign policy objectives and viewed as intrusive and undermining sovereignty.

Thus, China is often seen as a pragmatic economic partner with strategic conditions, while the USA is regarded as a political and military ally that expects ideological and policy alignment.

In a hypothetical situation, if China reverse its policy of restraint and strategic tolerance and with a view to counterbalance US's policy to arm Taiwan, if China starts openly supporting Puerto Rican perhaps, the US will not tolerate this Chinese intervention and would perceived as a direct challenge to its influence in its "backyard," leading to a strong response.

Domestically, Puerto Rican independence movements could gain momentum, causing political unrest and division. Militarily, the U. S. would reinforce its presence in the Caribbean, escalating tensions with China and risking a confrontation.

For the region and China, this scenario

would create profound consequences. The Caribbean could become a proxy battleground, destabilizing smaller nations and forcing them to choose sides, with economic and political fallout across Latin America. China's involvement risks overreach, provoking a strong U. S. response and alienating regional allies wary of external interference.

Globally, the confrontation could lead to a new Cold War dynamic, with heightened militarization in both the Caribbean and Indo-Pacific regions. While China might expose U. S. vulnerabilities, it would also face significant diplomatic and economic pushback, diverting resources from its primary focus on Taiwan and the Asia-Pacific.

Given the potential for escalating tensions and global instability, both China and the United States should seriously reevaluate their policy toward Taiwan and adopt a more balanced approach that prioritizes dialogue over provocation.

While supporting Taiwan's democratic aspirations is important, overt actions that appear to challenge China's sovereignty risk triggering a dangerous cycle of countermeasures, such as potential Chinese interference in Puerto Rico or elsewhere, that could destabilize multiple regions.

Instead of a confrontational stance, the U. S. should focus on fostering regional stability through multilateral diplomacy, reducing militarization, and encouraging

peaceful coexistence between Taiwan and China.

A restrained and pragmatic approach would not only prevent unnecessary conflicts but also safeguard U. S. interests, maintain global economic stability, and uphold a rules-based international order without forcing China into retaliatory measures that could spiral into a cold or even hot war.

While this scenario is highly unlikely and a distant possibility, it is important to acknowledge that China, known for its strategic restraint, ideological depth, and long-term vision, is unlikely to deviate from its path of patience and pragmatism. Much like Hong Kong, Taiwan may eventually find itself within China's fold—whether through a gradual process of integration or other mechanisms. While U. S. support for Taiwan may slow this trajectory, it is conceivable that, in the long run, such integration could become a fait accompli.

However, both the United States and China should prioritize redefining their policies and working together constructively to address this complex issue. By jointly facilitating a natural and peaceful resolution to the Taiwan conflict, they can set a precedent for diplomacy and collaboration, proving that geopolitical disputes can be resolved without resorting to hostility or conflict.

Writer is Press Secretary to the President (Rtd), Former Press Minister at Embassy of Pakistan to France and Former MD, SRBC. He is currently living in Detroit, Michigan



Analysis

Qamar Bashir



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

Family Court Trauma

Asifa A Rasool

For the past few weeks, I've been thinking about the emotional trauma I used to face while working in family courts. It's not easy, especially for someone with a soft and sensitive heart. Seeing the emotional struggles of families and children every day was overwhelming. The stress, the pressure, and the heartbreak that come with this kind of work are something I can't forget.

When I first started, it affected me deeply. My mental and physical health started to suffer, and there were times I found myself in the hospital almost every other week. Coming from a background where I had never witnessed such heartbreaking cases, I wasn't prepared for what I saw: children caught in the middle of their parents' fights. These kids are innocent, yet they end up being the most affected. Their emotional well-being and mental stability get damaged at such a young age, and unfortunately, these effects stay with them for life. Worse, the trauma often carries forward to the next generation.

What breaks my heart the most is how common this problem has become. Every month, more than 150 khula (divorce) cases are registered in just one court, and there are around 190 courts in the District and Sessions Court of Karachi alone. These numbers show how families are breaking apart, and the children are the ones suffering the most.

The root of this trauma often lies in wrong decisions; like rushing into marriage with the wrong person. Many marriages fall apart because people don't realize the importance of understanding each other before committing to such a big step. When the marriage ends, it's either through khula (if the woman has family

support) or divorce. If the woman doesn't have support, she is forced to bear everything alone, because she knows she's fighting her own battles. On the other hand, some men just walk away without realizing the long-term damage they're causing. After divorce, the struggle doesn't end. Women often carry the label of "divorcee" for the rest of their lives. Even if they remarry, there's always the risk of being taunted or judged for their past. If there are kids from the first marriage, their lives become even more difficult. These children grow up feeling lost and broken, constantly dealing with the emotional weight of their parents' decisions.

But this issue isn't one-sided. Sometimes, the fault lies with the woman, and the father ends up suffering too. What I've realized is that, in these situations, parents often forget how important it is to compromise or make sacrifices for their children. Instead of thinking about what's best for their kids, they focus only on themselves.

Now, I'm not saying that anyone, man or woman, should tolerate an abusive or unhappy marriage just for their children. But I do believe that even if a marriage ends, parents can still work together to create a positive and supportive environment for their kids. Children don't need to see their parents fighting or hating each other. What they really need is love, understanding, and stability.

At the end of the day, I just want to say this to all parents; Support your kids when they face big decisions like marriage, stand by them if things don't work out the way they planned and respect their choices, and don't judge them. Your kids need you the most during these tough times. Be their support system. Help them move forward in life so they don't feel alone. After all, life is already hard enough, don't let your love and support be something they have to live without.

President of Uzbekistan: Success of the entrepreneur - success of the people

Spokesman Report

TASHKENT: On December 20 President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev held a meeting with country's active entrepreneurs. Year-end results on entrepreneurship support and plans for 2025 were discussed at the meeting in a video format.

At the beginning of the meeting the Head of State delivered a speech outlining main objectives and achievements:

– Development of entrepreneurship – our strategic goal. Entrepreneurs are our strongest support and greatest strength. Therefore, their support should become the daily business of all leaders – from the center to the lowest level. Especially at the local level, hokims should interact more often with entrepreneurs, visit enterprises, and live in their concerns. We should cherish and appreciate business representatives, talented and with great potential. They are very valuable people for us, – emphasized Shavkat Mirziyoyev.

In this connection, the activity of the Public Council for Support of Entrepreneurship established under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan has been mentioned. The Council has become a bridge between the state and business, putting forward concrete proposals. This year, 5 laws, 101 decrees and resolutions have been adopted on the most pressing issues of business support.

In recent years, the economy has seen an increase in liquidity. This has provided the ground for sustainable financing of investment projects. Funds in the accounts of enterprises in banks have increased by 20 trillion soums, reaching 107 trillion soums. Deposits of the population increased by 25 trillion soums and amounted to 105 trillion soums.

According to the year-end results, the total volume of issued loans reached 275 trillion soums. In 2025, this figure will exceed 300 trillion soums. Particular attention will be paid to lending to small businesses: its share will increase from 28 to 40 percent, reaching 120 trillion soums.

To meet the needs of entrepreneurs, banks plan to attract \$6 billion from external sources without state guarantees in 2025. Owing to the expansion of factoring opportunities, these services have been provided this year in the amount of \$100 million.



For the development of infrastructure – roads, water supply, electricity and gas supply, railroads – 35 trillion soums were allocated in 2024, and next year it is planned to allocate 43 trillion soums.

To supply enterprises with stable power supply, electricity production has reached 82 billion kilowatt-hours. Due to the capacities introduced in 2024, the production will increase to 90 billion kilowatt-hours in 2025. In 2025, 25 projects worth \$6.4 billion will add 4.8 gigawatts of additional capacity.

Currently, there are 24 independent power producers in the country. In 2025, an online wholesale electricity market will start operating for the first time. As an experiment, the power grids of Samarkand, Jizzakh and Sirdarya regions will be transferred to the management of the private sector.

In the tourism sector, entrepreneurs have invested 6.5 trillion soums in construction of hotels for 24 thousand beds. In 2025, this number will grow by another 30 thousand. Another 25 complexes will be added to the 17 trade and tourist facilities commissioned this year.

A separate company has been set up to promote trade, which has allocated \$350 million in export financing. For every dollar invested, entrepreneurs received \$6 in export revenue. In 2024, another \$300 million will be allocated for this purpose.

In 2024, entrepreneurs acquired 3 thousand state-owned properties and 4 thousand hectares of land with a total value of 11.5 trillion soums. In 2025, another 4.5 thousand buildings and 6 thousand hectares of land will be offered for business.

Private sector involvement in the

repair and maintenance of roads, which have long been in the monopoly of the state, is expanding. In 2024, 260 kilometers of roads were handed over to entrepreneurs, and in 2025 this figure will increase to 3 thousand kilometers. With support from the Asian Development Bank, 841 kilometers of roads in 86 districts will be built by local contractors.

In the railway industry, digitalization and improved operational efficiency reduced freight transportation time by 40 percent. By increasing the time for free unloading of cargo at stations from 2 hours to 3 days, entrepreneurs saved 57 billion soums over the year.

In the aviation sector, the number of private companies reached 14. Additional 6 cargo and 16 passenger airplanes were put into operation. Airports in Bukhara and Namangan have been transferred to private management, tenders for airports in Andijan and Urgench are underway.

The President emphasized the importance of maintaining a stable tax policy to maintain an attractive business environment. The main tax rates will remain unchanged. From January 1, 2025, state property and land will be sold VAT-free, excise tax on mobile communications will be abolished, and double land tax on agricultural land outside the city limits will be discontinued. Publishing enterprises will be exempted from income tax for 5 years.

Preferences for IT park residents, exempting them from all kinds of taxes, will be extended until 2040. Preferences for private schools, kindergartens and foreign specialists will be valid until 2030.

The process of Uzbekistan's access-



to the World Trade Organization (WTO) is reaching its final stage. In this regard, privileges contrary to the WTO rules are canceled. At the same time, all conditions will be created for market participants to work in a fair competitive environment.

Transportation and logistics infrastructure also remain in focus. The work of the “Khanabad”, “Mingtepa”, “Karasu” and “Uchkurgan” border points has been resumed. In 2025, additional corridors will be built at “Gishtkuprik”, “Navoi”, “Davut-ota”, “Shavat” and “Gulbakhor” border crossings, which will increase their capacity five-fold.

Despite the challenging geopolitical environment, the country's economy grew 6.3 percent in 2024 reaching \$111 billion. Industry, agriculture and services attracted \$38 billion in investment, while exports exceeded \$26 billion.

The President noted the key role of entrepreneurs who create jobs and reduce poverty in achieving these results, expressing gratitude to them.

Next year, it is planned to increase GDP to \$120 billion, exports to \$30 billion, and investment to more than \$42 billion.

At the meeting, opinions were exchanged on the necessary steps to achieve these goals. The entrepreneurs suggested simplifying business procedures, deepening processing of raw materials, increasing production of high value-added products and boosting exports. Having listened to the views expressed, the Head of State defined

corresponding measures.

Primarily, the importance of increasing the incomes of private sector workers was emphasized. In this regard, textile and leather enterprises that pay their employees a salary of at least 2.5 million soums and have at least 15 percent of employees from low-income families will receive tax benefits. For such companies, the rate of profit tax and income tax for their employees will be only 1 percent.

The Head of State noted that similar social criteria for granting benefits can be applied in other sectors of the economy.

The President underlined the need for entrepreneurs not to limit themselves to bank loans, but to adapt to international standards and independently attract funds from abroad. For this purpose, a center will be created, which will support entrepreneurs' access to international financial markets with the participation of international consulting companies.

There are 142 so-called “champion” companies with more than 5,000 employees and annual revenues exceeding 1 trillion soums. They become multi-profile corporations, contributing to the development of related industries.

To support such promising entrepreneurs and stimulate others, it is proposed to provide them with land and buildings directly, as well as transfer state-owned enterprises into long-term management.

It is known that 7 out of 10 richest companies in the world work in the field of information technology and fintech

services. Additional benefits will be provided for the establishment of such companies in Uzbekistan. In particular, duty-free import of laboratory equipment and technological installations for research and development (R&D) centers will be allowed.

Uzbekistan has about a thousand deposits with reserves of more than 100 types of minerals. To utilize them for production of high value-added products, 400 new deposits will be put up for auction in January.

Land released from cotton and grain crops will be auctioned in large lots of up to 50 hectares and sold to professional investors to create industrial plantations. On plots of up to 20 hectares it will be possible to create blast freezing, sorting and packaging facilities.

It is planned to develop an updated Customs Code, which will meet the requirements of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and modern conditions.

At the end of the meeting, the Head of State once again reaffirmed his commitment to supporting initiatives and projects of entrepreneurs.

– The entrepreneurial movement in Uzbekistan is turning into a great force, and this process is irreversible. No matter what high goals and objectives we set for ourselves at the state level, we and our people count on you above all. The richer our entrepreneurs are, the richer our people and the greater the power of our state will be. The success of an entrepreneur is the success of our entire nation – underscored the President.

Year-End Luncheon Unites Honorary Consuls

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Mr. Ahammad Rashed, Honorary Consul General of the Republic of Tunisia and Former Dean of the Honorary Consuls' Corps, Peshawar KP Chapter, hosted a gracious year-end luncheon for honorary consuls and dignitaries from across Pakistan. The event took place at a prominent hotel in Islamabad, creating a vibrant platform for camaraderie and meaningful dialogue.

In his welcoming remarks, Mr. Ahammad Rashed expressed gratitude to the attendees for taking the time to join the gathering despite their busy schedules. He highlighted that the primary purpose of the event was to reconnect with friends and colleagues as the year comes to a close.

The event saw participation from renowned businessmen, honorary consuls, and notable figures from various sectors, including: Ms. Dorsaf Maaroufi, Deputy Head of Mission,



Tunisia Embassy Islamabad, Mr. Isphanyar Bhandara, Federal Parliamentary Secretary, SAFRON Ministry, Mr. Hassan Masood Kanwar, Vice Chairman, Board of Investment & Trade, KP, Mr. Hamid Asghar Khan, Additional Secretary (Africa), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan, Mr. Navabzada Malik Ahmad, Former State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Ghalib Iqbal, Former Chief of Protocol, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Former President, FPCCI, Mr. Masud

Khan, Honorary Consul of Lithuania, Islamabad, Mr. Omer Butt, Honorary Consul of Gaza, Islamabad, Mr. Assad Saifullah Khan, Honorary Consul of the Czech Republic, Peshawar, Mr. Kashif Mehar, Honorary Consul of Kyrgyzstan, Major General Muhammad Abid Nazir (Retd.), Former Secretary of Defense, Barrister Habil Ahmad Khan, CEO, Welt Connect, Mr. Hatim Yakub, Tabani Group, Mr. Rashid Rauf Bandy, General Manager, Best Western, Mr.

Saad Mahmood, Honorary Consul General of Iceland, Islamabad, Mr. S. M. Imran, Executive Director, Din Group of Industries, Mr. Khurram Saleem, Guest of Honour, Chairman, UNZE Group of Companies, and EO Global Board Member, Lahore, Mr. Muhammad Hameed, Honorary Consul General of the Republic of Tunisia, Lahore and Mr. Abidullah Khan, Deputy Chief of Protocol, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Peshawar Camp Office.

Moroccan Ambassador Hosts Dinner in Honor of Pakistan-Morocco Parliamentary Friendship Group

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The Moroccan Ambassador to Pakistan hosted a dinner in honor of the Pakistan-Morocco Parliamentary Friendship Group (PFG), attended by a large number of renowned Members of the National Assembly Syed Khurshed Ahmed Shah, Syed Naveed Qamar, Raja Parvez Ashraf, Mr. Aijaz Hussain Jakhriani, Rana Muhammad Qasim Noon, Mr. Tariq Fazal Chudhary, Sardar Nabil Ahmed Gabol, Mr. Khurshed Ahmed Junejo, Mr. Zulfikar Sattar Bachani, Mr. Asad Alam Niazi, Mr. Bilal Azhar Kayani, Mr. Muhammad Azhar Khan Leghari, Mr. Fateh Khan, Ms. Shaista Pervaiz, Ms. Akhtar Bibi, Ms. Zahra Wadood Fatemi, Ms. Nuzhat Sadiq, Ms. Sehar Kamran, Ms. Sabheen



Ghouri along with Special Invitees Hon CG of Morocco Ishtiaq Baig, Additional Secretary Africa MOFA Mr. Hamid Asghar, Mr. Ghalib Iqbal and Mian Akram Farid. The event, held at the residence of the Moroccan Ambassador, celebrated the enduring friendship between the two nations and underscored the importance of deepening bilateral ties through parliamentary cooperation.

During the event, Mirza

Ikhtiar Baig, Convener of Pakistan-Morocco PFG, expressed his gratitude to the Ambassador for hosting the event and highlighted the rich historical, cultural, and deeply rooted relations between Pakistan and Morocco. He emphasized the shared values that have long bonded the two countries and the potential for further strengthening these ties through continued cooperation at all levels.

In his remarks, the

Moroccan Ambassador extended his sincere thanks to the parliamentarians for attending the event.

He reiterated Morocco's commitment to enhancing parliamentary relations between the two countries and called for increased collaboration in tackling global challenges. The Ambassador also stressed the importance of encouraging visits between parliamentarians and expanding people-to-people contacts, recognizing these interactions as vital for fostering deeper mutual understanding and stronger diplomatic relations.

Both sides pledged to continue their efforts in strengthening bilateral relations and enhancing cooperation between the two countries for the benefit of both nations and their people.

National Training Course on “Climate Smart Agricultural Practices” successfully concluded

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC), with the support of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), successfully conducted a one-week National Training Course on “Climate Smart Agricultural (CSA) Practices for Bridging Yield Gap of Major Crops Using Nuclear Science and Technology.” The course took place at the Nuclear Institute for Food and Agriculture (NIFA), Peshawar, from December 9 to 13, 2024. The training course aimed to equip participants with theoretical and practical knowledge

of modern agricultural practices that integrate nuclear science and technology to enhance crop productivity and address challenges posed by climate change.

Director General (Agric. & Biotech) Dr. Zahid Mukhtar was the Chief Guest at the inaugural session of the training on December 09, 2024. Speaking on the occasion, he highlighted the contributions of PAEC's four agricultural centres i.e. NIAB, NIBGE, NIA, and NIFA for their groundbreaking work in developing high yield and climate resilient crop varieties. He commended the PAEC's scientists for their relentless efforts in boosting Pakistan's

agricultural potential, fostering economic growth, and bringing agricultural revolution.

Earlier the Principal Scientist and Course Coordinator, Dr. Amir Raza emphasized the significance of CSA practices for sustainable agricultural systems and productivity enhancement. Director NIFA, Dr. Gul Sanat Shah extended a warm welcome to the chief guest, technical experts, dignitaries, course participants and explained salient achievements of NIFA in the field of food and agriculture.

In his keynote address, Dr. Mohammad Zaman, Technical Expert/ course designer from

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Austria Vienna, outlined the course contents, technical program and expected outcomes. He said that objectives of the training course are to apprise the participants with the theoretical and practical aspects of nuclear and other contemporary techniques used to combat the challenges posed by climate change and to enhance yield of major crops in the field of food and agricultural research. He stressed the importance of combining nuclear and isotopic techniques with conventional methods to enhance crop yields and soil productivity.

Member Science PAEC Dr. Masood Iqbal was the chief guest at the concluding session of the training. He warmly congratulated the participants and expressed hope that the course would strengthen collaboration among participants, PAEC scientists, and IAEA Experts for the shared goal of improving crop productivity and sustainably. He shared insights into the history of PAEC in general and particularly the four Agri. & Biotech centres. In his concluding address, he said that PAEC has always been remained in front line to address the challenges faced by the country in diverse fields. This

training course was organized by PAEC in collaboration with International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) while realizing the burning issues emerged with the climate change in the world as well as in our country. He paid homage to the highly motivated and patriotic personality Dr. Mohammad Zaman and NIFA for successful organization of this great event.

The course encompassed 20 lectures delivered by distinguished experts from IAEA, Austria Vienna, Bangladesh and some virtual sessions. The topics covered during the course were climate change, climate-smart

agriculture and the application of advanced techniques such as spectroscopy, atomic absorption and near-infrared spectroscopy (NIRS).

The event brought together twenty-five (25) participants from different R & D organizations and universities across the country. Participants expressed their enthusiasm and optimism, emphasizing the importance of such initiatives in enhancing Pakistan's agricultural resilience and productivity. The course underscored PAEC's dedication to leveraging cutting edge science and technology for national development.

Bull & Bears
PSX 100-Share
Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index	
Current	Prev. Close
109,513.14	106,274.97
Day's High	Day's Low
109,846.64	105,601.03
Index Value	Change
29,601,942,204	+3238.17
Percentage	Time
+3.05%	20 Dec, 2024 5:00 pm
Europe: FTSE 100 Index	
Index Value	Change
8,084.61	-20.71
Percentage	Time
-0.26%	20 Dec, 4:35 pm GMT
USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average	
Index Value	Change
43,022.99	+680.75
Percentage	Time
+1.61%	20 Dec, 11:38 am GMT-5
Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average	
Index Value	Change
38,701.90	-111.68
Percentage	Time
-0.29%	20 Dec, 3:45 pm GMT+9

Open Market Forex Rates		
Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	174.75	177.00
Bahrain Dinar	735.15	743.15
Canadian Dollar	195.60	198.00
China Yuan	37.99	38.39
Danish Krone	39.15	39.55
Euro	287.25	290.00
Hong Kong Dollar	35.42	35.77
Indian Rupee	3.19	3.28
Japanese Yen	1.85	1.91
Kuwaiti Dinar	896.01	905.51
Malaysian Ringgit	61.59	62.19
New Zealand \$	156.93	158.93
Norwegians Krone	24.41	24.71
Omani Riyal	719.50	728.00
Qatari Riyal	75.7	76.4
Saudi Riyal	73.75	74.30
Singapore Dollar	204.99	206.99
Swedish Korona	25.03	25.33
Swiss Franc	310.12	312.92
Thai Bhat	8	8.15
U.A.E Dirham	75.40	76.05
UK Pound Sterling	349.05	352.55
US Dollar	277.95	279.45

Pakistan's capital market delegation visits China and signs MoUs

By **Khurram Jaffrani**

KARACHI: A high-level delegation from Pakistan's capital markets, led by Mr. Akif Saeed, Chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP), alongside Dr. Shamsad Akhtar, Chairperson of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX), Mr. Farrukh H. Sabzwari, CEO of PSX, Mr. Muneer Kamal, Chairman of the National Clearing Company of Pakistan Limited (NCCPL), and other senior SECP executives, recently visited China.

During the one-week visit, the delegation engaged with key Chinese financial institutions, including the China Securities Regulatory Commission (CSRC), the China Securities Depository and Clearing Corporation (CSDC), the Securities Association of China (SAC), the Asset Management Association of China (AMAC), the China Financial Futures Exchange (CFFEX), the Shanghai Stock Exchange (SSE), the Shenzhen Stock Exchange (SZSE), the Shanghai Futures Exchange (SHFE), and CITIC Securities Co. Ltd.

The primary goal of the visit was to deepen collaboration between the Pakistani and



Chinese capital markets, explore opportunities for cross-border investment products, and enhance market access and investor participation for both Pakistani and Chinese entities.

PSX is pleased to announce that, during the visit, Mr. Farrukh H. Sabzwari, CEO of PSX, signed Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with the Shanghai Stock Exchange (SSE), Shenzhen Stock Exchange (SZSE) and China Financial Futures Exchange (CFFEX). These MoUs mark a significant milestone in strengthening ties and enhancing cooperation between PSX and these leading Chinese exchanges.

Speaking on the occasion, Chairman SECP, Mr. Akif Saeed said, "I extend my sincere congratulations to the PSX and its Chinese counterparts, the SSE, SZSE, CFFEX on signing of these important MOUs."

Dr. Shamsad Akhtar stated, "I congratulate PSX, SSE, SZSE, and CFFEX on the signing of these MoUs, which reflect the strengthened cooperative relations between the exchanges. Mr. Farrukh H. Sabzwari further added, "I extend my congratulations to the leadership and teams of PSX and the three Chinese exchanges for signing these momentous MoUs, which will help promote bilateral partnerships and drive the development of Pakistan's capital market."

National Meeting

ISLAMABAD: Coordinator to Prime Minister on Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam addressing to a national meeting on sustainable Development Goals on Friday.



Photo: PID

CCP imposes penalty of Rs. 170M for deceptive marketing

By **Commerce Desk**

ISLAMABAD: The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has imposed penalties of Rs 75 million each on two manufacturers of frozen desserts for misleading consumers by falsely advertising their products as "ice cream."

CCP initiated these proceedings on a complaint filed by M/s Pakistan Fruit Juice Company (Private) Limited, the manufacturers of "Hico" ice cream, alleging about two undertakings engaged in deceptive marketing by portraying their "frozen desserts" as ice cream through televised advertisements and social media campaigns.

The Commission directed a formal enquiry into the matter and later issued show cause notices to M/s Unilever Pakistan and M/s Friesland Campina Engro, manufacturers and distributors of frozen desserts under the brand names of "Walls" and "Omoro," respectively. The CCP bench, comprising

the Members Mr. Salman Amin and Mr. Saeed Ahmed Nawaz conducted these hearings. The bench while imposing the penalty in its order, inter-alia referred to the Pakistan Standards and Quality Control Authority (PSQCA) PN 969-2010 and the Punjab Pure Food Regulations 2018, which define "frozen dessert" and "ice cream" as two distinct products. Notably as per the standards, "ice cream" is made from milk, cream, or other dairy products, while "frozen desserts" are prepared from a pasteurized mix consisting of a combination of milk, milk products, and edible vegetable oils.

Additionally, a penalty of PKR 20 million was also imposed on M/s Unilever Pakistan for conducting and disseminating false comparisons of their products as healthier to the dairy ice cream in its advertisements, which constitutes a violation of Section 10(2)(c) of the Competition Act. The order is available at CCP's website.

Businesses plan to increase IT Security budgets up to 9% in the next two years: Kaspersky's Report

By **Commerce Desk**

ISLAMABAD: According to latest "IT Security Economics" report by Kaspersky, companies are planning to increase their investments in information security against the background of growing financial losses from cyber incidents.

Kaspersky IT Security Economics is an annual report that unpicks the changes in budgets, breaches and business challenges affecting IT Security decision makers. It is based on interviews with IT and IT security professionals working in organizations of various sizes and industries. The survey was conducted across 27 countries in Europe, the Middle East, Turkey, the Africa region, Latin and North America and the Asia-Pacific region including Pakistan.



According to the research, companies plan to increase their IT security budgets by up to 9%. The median cybersecurity budgets for large enterprises were \$5.7M with \$41.8M allocated for IT generally, while SMBs invested

\$0.2M in IT security from a median IT budget of \$1.6M.

Large enterprises experienced an average of 12 incidents this year, spending \$6.2M to recover from them — 1.1 times higher than the budget allocated for IT secu-

ritly overall. While these enterprises are often better equipped to detect incidents quickly, the time required to fully respond and mitigate these threats can span for hours, underscoring the challenge of managing widespread, complex IT environments.

As for SMBs, these organizations experienced an average of 16 incidents this year, while spending \$0.3M for remediation, which is 1.5 times higher than their overall IT Security budget. SMBs are the most disproportionately affected group in terms of budgetary impact.

In Pakistan organizations of all sizes reported to have experienced on average 11 incidents within a year. To read the full report "IT Security Economics", visit the website.

National Finance Olympiad 2024: ICAP Celebrates a Decade of Financial Excellence

By **Commerce Desk**

KARACHI: The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Pakistan (ICAP) is proud to mark a milestone with the grand celebration of the 10th National Finance Olympiad (NFO). This landmark event celebrates a decade of financial brilliance, innovation, and leadership, serving as a beacon of excellence for Pakistan's financial community.

Since its inception, the National Finance Olympiad has been a flagship initiative of ICAP's Professional Accountants in Business (PAIB) Committee. Over ten years, it has grown into a premier platform for finance professionals to showcase their expertise. A total of 52 teams representing various sectors and organisations participated in the

rigorous competition, which spanned two challenging rounds. The top 6 teams, Unilever, Lipton Teas & Infusions, Engro Fertilizers, KPMG, KnS School of Business Studies and K-Electric, showcased exceptional financial expertise and secured their places in the Grand Finale, vying for the coveted title of "National Finance Champion 2024".

The President ICAP, Mr. Farrukh Rehman FCA, recognized finance professionals' critical role in the nation's socioeconomic development and praised the participants' exceptional performance. He congratulated all the participating teams and the top contenders, emphasizing how platforms like the NFO 2024, organized by ICAP, serve as catalysts for nurturing the next generation of finance leaders. He highlighted

ICAP's commitment to fostering excellence, resilience, and innovation in the field, ensuring that finance professionals continue to contribute meaningfully to Pakistan's progress on the global stage.

A panel discussion featuring industry leaders, further enriched the evening, offering their insights into the grand decade-long journey of the National Finance Olympiad. The panelists comprised of Mr. Shakaib Arif FCA, Chief Executive Officer, Naymat Collateral Management Company Limited, Mr. Ali Tariq, CEO Unilever Pakistan) and Mr. Khalilullah Shaikh FCA, Board Member, IFAC. The session was moderated by Mr. Samiullah Siddiqui FCA, Chairman PAIB Committee and Council Member, ICAP.



Almost half of taxpayers don't see their taxes being spent for the public good



By **Commerce Desk**

LAHORE: Across the globe taxpayers support the idea of a fiscal contract – citizens agreeing to pay tax in exchange for services – but a global poll suggests that only a third see the deal working in practice.

Globally the survey found that 52% of respondents agree that taxes are a contribution to the community rather than a cost (25% disagree, rest neutral), but only 33% agree that tax revenues in their country are spent for the public good (46% disagree, rest neutral). In addition, 32% agree that public services and infrastructure are a fair return for the taxes they pay (50% disagree, rest neutral).

But the survey found that Latin American countries are consistently less positive than the regional averages for the sample countries in Africa and Asia. The findings are consistent with previous G20 survey results, where Mexico, Argentina and Brazil typically return lower trust and confidence scores than average.

Helen Brand OBE, chief executive of ACCA said: "Trust in tax systems is crucial for sustainable development and prosperity, and the findings of this survey highlight the challenges that many governments across the world face in building it."

Commenting on the finding that tax accountants are the most trusted source of information on tax, and politicians the least, Lee White, CEO of IFAC, said "Consumer and investor protection is the foundation for economic prosperity, which aligns with building trust in the tax ecosystem."

Champions Trophy: Javed Miandad opens up on ICC's 'hybrid model' decision

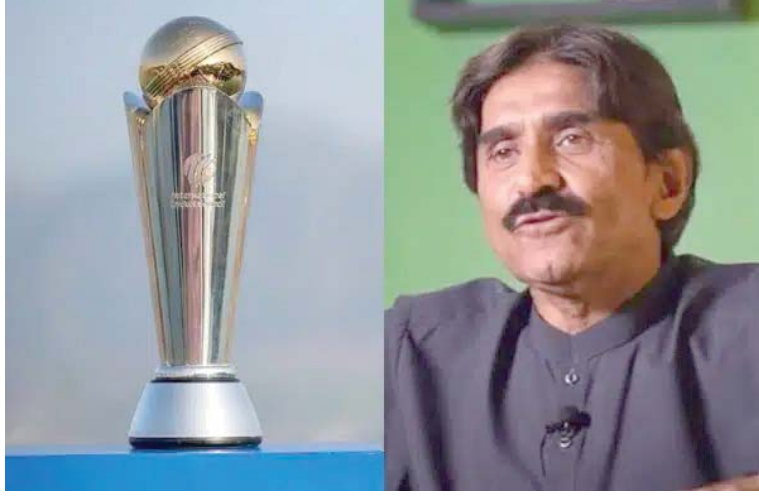
A Sports

ISLAMABAD: Legendary Pakistan batter Javed Miandad has recently opened up on the International Cricket Council's (ICC) decision regarding the Champions Trophy 2025.

The ICC confirmed on December 19 that a hybrid model will be applied for the Champions Trophy 2025, which will be hosted by Pakistan, with India playing their matches at a neutral venue.

"ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025 to be played across Pakistan and a neutral venue," the apex cricket body announced.

"India and Pakistan matches hosted by either country at ICC Events during the 2024-2027 rights cycle will be played at a neutral venue, the ICC Board confirmed on Thursday, 19 December."



Javed Miandad has called this decision a victory for the Pakistan Cricket

Board (PCB), asserting that they took a sensible approach.

"I think the PCB took the sensible approach and instead of doing something rash and facing isolation in the ICC and among other cricket nations, it opted for a solution where I think the PCB has gained more than the BCCI," Miandad stated while talking to the Indian media.

"Still Pakistan is hosting a big event after a very long time and we have sent a clear message that if you don't come and play in our country, we will also not play in India."

It's worth noting that the ICC also confirmed that Pakistan will host the ICC Women's T20 World Cup in 2028, the first event of the next event cycle. Similar to the current cycle, India will not travel to Pakistan for the 2028 event.

Conquerors, Stars advance to final of National Women's One-Day Tournament

Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: Conquerors and Stars beat Strikers and Invincibles, respectively to qualify for the final of the National Women's One-Day Tournament.

At the Diamond Cricket Ground, batting first Strikers were bowled out for 150 in 41.3 overs. Aleena Masood top-scored with an unbeaten 64 off 131 balls, hitting four boundaries and one six, while also carrying the bat. Conquerors' Hafsa Khalid was pick of the bowlers with four wickets for 23 runs in 6.3 overs. Nashra Sundhu bagged two wickets for 14 runs in nine overs.

In turn, Conquerors achieved the target in 30.4 overs losing four wickets in the process. Fatima Sana (56 not out, 43b, 7x4s, 2x6s) and Najiha Alvi (40 not out, 49b, 2x4s) knitted an unbeaten 94-run partnership for the fifth wicket.

At the Shoaib Akhtar Cricket Stadium, after being put into bat, Stars scored 223 for seven in 45 overs. No. 8 batter Tuba Hassan scored an unbeaten 61 off 31 balls, smashing seven fours and three sixes, while Kaynat Hafeez (50, 90b, 6x4s) and Sidra Nawaz (50, 74b, 4x4s) scored half-centuries.

Conquerors, Stars advance to final of National Women's One-Day Tournament



Invincibles' Tania Saeed bagged three wickets for 38 in her nine overs.

In reply, Invincibles were bowled out for 141 in 40.2 overs with opening batter Ayesha Zafar top-scoring with a 54-ball 46, hitting seven fours. She also shared

an opening stand of 71 runs with Aisha Naecem (19, 47, 2x4s).

For Stars, right-arm off-spinner Neelam Mushtaq bagged five wickets for 22, while Tuba with her leg-spin bowling took three wickets for 38 in 8.2 overs.

At the end of match, Stars qualified for the final after having a superior net run-rate to Invincibles as both sides finished with 10 points each.

The final will be played on Sunday at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium, with the first ball of the 45-over match to be bowled at 9.30am. The match will also be live-streamed on PCB YouTube channel.

Scores in brief:

Match 19 - Conquerors beat Strikers by six wickets at Diamond Cricket Ground, Islamabad

Strikers 150 all out, 41.3 overs (Aleena Masood 64 not out, Nida Dar 29; Hafsa Khalid 4-23, Nashra Sundhu 2-14)

Conquerors 155-4, 30.4 overs (Fatima Sana 56 not out, Najiha Alvi 40 not out, Dua Majid 33)

Player of the match - Hafsa Khalid (Conquerors)

Match 20 - Stars beat Invincibles by 82 runs at Shoaib Akhtar Cricket Stadium, Rawalpindi

Stars 223-7, 45 overs (Tuba Hassan 61 not out, Sidra Nawaz 50, Kaynat Hafeez 50; Tania Saeed 3-38)

Invincibles 141 all out, 40.2 overs (Ayesha Zafar 46; Neelam Mushtaq 5-22, Tuba Hasan 3-38)

Player of the match (joint) - Neelam Mushtaq and Tuba Hassan (Stars)

PSB assured that it will not obstruct the upcoming POA elections: DG

Tahir Amin Malik.

LAHORE: The Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) has assured that it will not obstruct the upcoming Pakistan Olympic Association (POA) elections. However, it emphasised that the POA must address concerns regarding its electoral college and other objections.

Director General of Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) Muhammad Yasir Pirzada said this during his address as a guest of honor at the Sports Journalists Association of Lahore (SJAL) event held at the National Hockey Stadium, Lahore. Yasir Pirzada elaborated on measures taken to promote sports in Pakistan, shedding light on the recently concluded Quaid-e-Azam Games and its objectives.

Speaking about the POA elections, he raised concerns over the voter list while clarifying that the PSB has no intention of disrupting the electoral process. He reiterated respect for the Lausanne Agreement, which binds both the Pakistan government and the POA to comply fully with International Olympic Committee (IOC) regulations.

Pirzada emphasised that while the



PSB does not interfere in the affairs of sports federations, it seeks transparency in their electoral processes. To this end, a code of conduct has been established, which federations are expected to adhere to.

Addressing financial accountability, the DG PSB said: "When the government provides funding, it has the right to demand accountability." He revealed that some federations have submitted their audit reports, which have been uploaded

to the PSB website. However, the federations that fail to provide detailed accounts of their grants, despite repeated notices, will have their names published online to ensure public awareness.

Regarding international tours, Pirzada announced that federations must now share merit-based team selection details with the Pakistan Sports Board. Additionally, obtaining a No Objection Certificate (NOC) for international events will require adherence to the established procedures.

Dispelling the notion that Pakistani athletes lack facilities, he asserted: "The PSB has initiated a program to groom talented athletes and prepare them for international competitions." The board is committed to playing its role in the development of sports in Pakistan and enhancing the performance of athletes on global platforms.

The event concluded with the Senior SJAL officials Aqeel Ahmad, Muhammad Yousaf Anjum, Muhammad Yaqoob, Afzal Ifthikhar and others presenting a commemorative shield to DG PSB Yasir Pirzada on behalf of entire SJAL family.

Nathan McSweeney dropped from Australia squad for fourth India Test

Sports Desk

LAHORE: Cricket Australia (CA) has included uncapped teenager Sam Konstas in the squad for the fourth Test against India, replacing opening batter Nathan McSweeney on Friday.

Fast bowler Jhye Richardson was also included in the 15-man lineup to give the team more options with Josh Hazlewood sidelined by a right calf injury.

The two sides are locked at 1-1 in the five-Test series with India needing one more win to retain the Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

McSweeney had played in all three

Tests so far after winning the race to replace the retired David Warner at the top of the order alongside Usman Khawaja.

But the 25-year-old, who is not a specialist opener, struggled to assert himself, particularly against Indian spearhead Jasprit Bumrah. His highest score was 39 and he was dismissed for nine and four in the third Test at Brisbane.

In contrast, 19-year-old Sam Konstas has been in sizzling domestic form with calls mounting to bring him into the international fold.

Earlier this season, he became the youngest player since Ricky Ponting to

score two centuries in the same Sheffield Shield match. He also slammed a century playing for the Prime Minister's XI against India.

His inclusion does not necessarily mean he will play, with reserve batsman Josh Inglis also a potential opening partner for Khawaja.

"Sam gets a call up to the Test squad for the first time. His style of batting offers a point of difference and we look forward to watching his game develop further," said chief selector George Bailey.

"We remain confident Nathan [McSweeney] has the ability and temperament to succeed at Test level

in the future. It was a difficult decision to leave him out.

"It has clearly been a challenge at the top of the order for batters throughout the series and we want to provide the option of a different lineup for the next two matches."

Despite Richardson returning to the squad after a wretched run with injuries, Scott Boland is widely expected to replace Hazlewood in the starting XI alongside fellow quicks Pat Cummins and Mitchell Starc.

"In the absence of Josh Hazlewood, Jhye provides further options in the fast bowling space," said Bailey. "It has been pleasing to see his successful



return throughout the early part of the domestic summer."

Australia squad for the fourth Test against India: Pat Cummins (capt), Travis Head, Steve Smith, Sean Abbott,

Scott Boland, Alex Carey, Josh Inglis, Usman Khawaja, Sam Konstas, Marnus Labuschagne, Nathan Lyon, Mitchell Marsh, Jhye Richardson, Mitchell Starc, Beau Webster

Woodward Trophy U-17 Inter Zonal Cricket Tournament



Sports Desk

KARACHI: Due to brilliant Batting by Ali Sher 89 with the help of 5 boundaries and a Six and 65 by Jawwad Zamir 65 helped Zone-VII Whites 2nd Victory from Group "D" against Zone-V Green by 196 runs at Young Fighter Ground.

Scores in Brief:

Zone-VII Whites 282/7 in 40 overs. Ali Sher 89 5x4 1x6, Jawwad Zamir 65 3x4, Ibrahim Khan 41, Hassan Khan 33. Syed Azlan Shah 2/39.

Zone-V Green 86 all out in 35.1 overs. Usyed 22. Abdul Ghani (sla) 3/24, Zaid Abdullah 2/10, Muhammad Zaidi 2/13.

Later Ali Sher received Medicam Man of the Match Award from Ex First Class Cricketer Faraz Patel.

PCB reveals venue of PSL 10 Player Draft

A Sports

LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Friday announced that the port city Gwadar in Balochistan will host the Player Draft for the upcoming Pakistan Super League (PSL) season 10.

The ceremony that kicks off the league's festivities will take place on Saturday, 11 January 2025. The start timing of the PSL 10 Player Draft will be shared in due course. The decision to choose Gwadar was made with the aim of taking the popular sport among the people in that part of the province and inspiring the next generations to take up cricket as a professional sport.

"Gwadar, with its stunning coastline and strategic importance, represents the heart of Pakistan's economic future," PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi said.

"By hosting the HBL PSL Player Draft here, we aim to highlight its cultural and economic significance while celebrating the unity cricket brings to our nation."

"I look forward to welcoming all the franchises and the relevant stakeholders to the beautiful city of Gwadar on 11 January as we take an exciting step towards marking the start of the 10th edition of Pakistan's biggest sporting extravaganza."

Meanwhile, Salman Naseer, Chief Executive Officer of PSL, expressed pride in taking the PSL 10 Player Draft to the city of Gwadar.

"It gives me great pride in announcing Gwadar as the host city for the HBL PSL Player Draft," said Naseer.

"This initiative reflects our commitment to expanding HBL PSL's reach to every corner of Pakistan and showcasing the beauty of Pakistan to the world."

"HBL PSL is more than a cricket league to passionate fans of Pakistan, it's a celebration of Pakistan's passion, diversity, and talent. "The Player Draft taking place in Gwadar is a step towards inspiring young cricketers from Balochistan and other cities of the country to dream big."

The relegation process and retention of players will be announced at the end of December.

Heinrich Klaasen fined for 'kicking stumps' during second Pakistan ODI

South Africa's prolific batter Heinrich Klaasen has been fined 15% of his match fee for "kicking the stumps" to show his disappointment after being dismissed by pacer Naseem Shah during the second ODI against Pakistan.

According to a statement issued by the International Cricket Council (ICC), the right-handed batter committed a Level 1 breach of the ICC Code of Conduct.

One demerit point has also been added to his disciplinary record for violating Article 2.2 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel, which relates to "abuse of cricket equipment or clothing, ground equipment or fixtures and fittings during an International Match".

Klaasen was a standout performer with the bat for the hosts, scoring a valiant 97 off 74 balls as South Africa faced a challenging chase of 330.

He batted right till the end and was the last wicket to fall in the 43rd over but with little support at the other end, the Proteas fell 81 runs short.

Press Conference

ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq along with speakers' of Provincial Assemblies and Legislative Assemblies addressing Press Conference after closing ceremony of 18th Speakers Conference at Parliament House.



Photo: PID

Joint Declaration Issued

18th Speakers' Conference concludes under the chairmanship of Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq

Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: The 18th Speakers' Conference, chaired by Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, concluded with a unanimous joint declaration issued unanimously by Speakers of Federal, Provincial and State assemblies of country. The declaration, consisting of 23 key resolutions, reaffirmed the commitment to promoting parliamentary values, ensuring transparency in legislation, addressing public issues effectively, upholding constitutional supremacy, combating climate change through robust parliamentary institutions, and protecting the rights of women and children.

The conference participants included Chairman Senate Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani, Deputy Speaker National Assembly Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shah, Federal Minister for Law and Justice Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar, Speaker of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Assembly Chaudhry Latif Akbar, Speaker of the Balochistan Assembly Capt. (R) Abdul Khaliq Achakzai, Speaker of the Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly Nazir Ahmad, Speaker of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly Babar Khan Swati, Speaker of the Punjab Assembly Malik Muhammad Ahmad Khan, and Speaker of the Sindh Assembly Syed Awais Qadir Shah.

The joint declaration acknowledged the sacrifices made by the people of Pakistan in establishing a democratic, federal, Islamic, and progressive welfare state where citizens' rights are safeguarded, and all provinces have equal representation in the federation.

It reaffirmed that state power in a parliamentary system, as enshrined in the Constitution and the Objectives Resolution, must solely be exercised by elected representatives of the people.

The conference underscored the need to align provincial regulations with constitutional principles to ensure accountability of the executive before the assemblies,

enhance parliamentary oversight, and restore public trust in legislative processes through accountability and transparency.

Recognizing the challenges of climate change, rapid technological advancements, socio-economic inequalities, and evolving public needs, the declaration called for enhanced collaboration among federal and provincial legislatures to address these issues effectively. The forum also emphasized the importance of parliamentary diplomacy in promoting regional and international peace, cooperation, and understanding.

The forum accepted the invitation of the Speaker of the Azad Jammu and

Kashmir Assembly to hold the 19th Speakers' Conference in Muzaffarabad in 2025 and decided to conduct quarterly review meetings to evaluate progress.

Reaffirming their commitment to democratic values, constitutional principles, and the aspirations of the Pakistani people, the Speakers and presiding officers vowed to strengthen parliamentary institutions through cooperation, innovation, and inclusivity.

The joint declaration was formally adopted on December 20, 2024, demonstrating the collective resolve of Pakistan's legislatures to serve the nation better through unity, respect, and mutual understanding.

Coca-Cola İçecek Delegation calls on Finance Minister



Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb has reiterated the government's resolve to restructure and transform the country's tax machinery for ensuring an efficient tax system and equitable taxation by introducing people-processed technology and ensuring end-to-end digitalization to end human intervention, bringing transparency and reduce corruption.

The Minister said the government remains committed to raising the country's tax-to-GDP ratio by broadening the tax base and rationalizing a disproportionate burden on the organized sectors of the economy such as manufacturing and the salaried classes.

He expressed these views during a meeting with Mr. Karim Yahi,

Global CEO of Coca-Cola İçecek (CCI), who along with Mr. Ahmet Kursad Ertin, Regional Director (South Asia & Middle East); Mr. Sunay Sanli, General Manager CCI Pakistan; and Syed Omar, Director Corporate Affairs & Sustainability CCI Pakistan, called on the Finance Minister today. Senior officers from the Finance Division and FBR were also present.

The visiting delegation provided the Minister an overview of CCI's extensive operations in Pakistan, which include seven state-of-the-art production facilities and substantial contributions to the national economy through investments and the creation of thousands of direct and indirect jobs. They also emphasized their commitment to sustainability and shared their vision for continued expansion of their business in Pakistan.

Ambassador of Kazakhstan visits TDAP



Bureau Report

KARACHI: Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Pakistan Yerzhan Kistafin visited the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan Karachi on Thursday held meeting with the Chief Executive TDAP.

The meeting, was also attended by the Secretary TDAP Sheryar Taj, Director General, Agro Food Division Athar Khokhar and Director General, Textile and Leather Division Basit Rauf focused on strengthening bilateral trade relations between Pakistan and Kazakhstan.

During the meeting, Kistafin shared details about an upcoming major event, a Big Companies Business Forum to be organized in Karachi in January 2025. The forum

will feature leading companies from the petroleum and finance sectors of Kazakhstan. He requested TDAP's support in facilitating this event, which aims to foster greater economic ties and collaboration between the two nations.

The Chief Executive TDAP assured Kistafin of full cooperation and support for the business forum. The Chief Executive also gave a brief presentation on TDAP's working structure, mandate, and ongoing initiatives to promote trade and investment.

Both sides expressed their commitment to continued discussions and agreed to hold more thought-provoking meetings in the future to further enhance bilateral trade cooperation.

BISP Organizes Christmas and Quaid-e-Azam Birthday Celebrations

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Benazir Income Support Programme today organized a ceremony to celebrate Christmas and the birthday of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah at its headquarters today. The event was attended by Chairperson BISP, Senator Rubina Khalid, Additional Secretary BISP Dr. Muhammad Tahir Noor, Director Generals from different wings, BISP employees from the Christian community, beneficiaries and media representatives.

Addressing the gathering, Chairperson Rubina Khalid highlighted the shared vision of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, the founder of BISP, and Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan—a vision of a united and peaceful Pakistan. She emphasized the importance of religious harmony, noting that all



religions advocate serving humanity. She stated that the mission of BISP is to support the poor and deserving, irrespective of religion, language, or ethnicity.

The Christian community expressed gratitude to Chairperson Senator Rubina Khalid and the BISP administration for organizing the Christmas celebration. They

offered prayer for the success of BISP's mission to serve the underprivileged. The event concluded with Senator Rubina Khalid, alongside members of the Chris-

tian community, cutting the Christmas and Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah birthday cake and distributing gifts to children from Christian families on behalf of BISP.

Zero tolerance on axle load, motorways to be barrier-free: Federal Minister

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Communications, Privatization & Board of Investment Abdul Aleem Khan has directed the National Highway Authority to prepare a regular Safety and Security Plan for all the highways being managed by this organization.

Moreover, as per this plan at all motorways and GT Roads across the country those who are injured in accidents can be rescued in the shortest possible time to provide them medical facilities immediately.

Federal Minister added that the helicopter service and provision of emergency ambulances on the patron of 1192 in all four provinces so that the injured ones can be provided relief without wasting any time.



Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan directed that

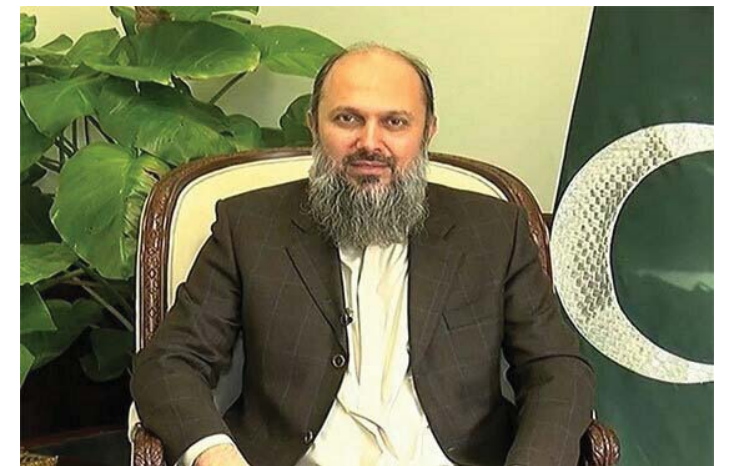
NHA should identify the establishment of Emergency Services Centers on the

highways from Karachi to Peshawar and Baluchistan and in this regard, the agency should prepare plan on an emergency basis and submit it within the next week.

Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan expressed this while chairing a high-level meeting of the National Highway Authority in which the Federal Minister for Communications issued instructions to further tighten the axle load policy and implement restrictions on Motorways and all highways not to express any leniency and to increase penalties by up to 1,000 percent so that a zero-tolerance policy can be adopted against overloading.

He said that the National Highway Authority should also make other highways barrier-free on the lines of the Lahore-Sialkot Motorway so that the time of travelers can be saved.

Federal Minister for Commerce chairs 2nd Executive Committee Meeting of NEDB



Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan chaired the second Executive Committee meeting of the National Export Development Board (NEDB) to review progress on key export-related matters and outline strategies for future growth.

During the meeting, it was suggested that export-oriented markets should have predictable, if not fixed, gas prices to ensure stability

and competitiveness.

This step was highlighted as crucial for addressing energy cost challenges and supporting exporters in achieving long-term planning and sustainability.

The meeting also reviewed the status of decisions made during previous NEDB meetings.

The Minister emphasized the importance of resolving pending issues and directed the relevant ministries to provide updates on the progress.