

Daily The Spokesman

A Leading National Daily



فرمان رسول ﷺ
ہم سے حضور بن عمر نے بیان کیا کہ ہم سے
شعبہ نے بیان کیا ان سے حکم ہے ان سے
ابراہیم بنی نے ان سے اسو نے بیان کیا
کہ میں نے عائشہ سے پوچھا کہ رسول اللہ
ﷺ کیسے گھر میں کیا کرتے تھے؟ فرمایا
نبی کریم صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم اپنے گھر کے کام
کا کرتے اور جب نماز کا وقت ہو جاتا تو نماز
کے لیے مسجد تشریف لے جاتے تھے۔
(بخاری: صفحہ نمبر 6039)
Barkat Rice Mills
(Pvt) Limited

RAWALPINDI

Moon of Rajabul Murjab sighted: First of Rajab on January 2

The Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee convened a meeting Chairman Maulana Abdul Khabir Azad presided. Following deliberations and testimonies, Maulana Abdul Khabir Azad announced that the moon of Rajabul Murjab had been sighted. The first Rajabul Murjab 1446 AH will fall on Tuesday, January 2, 2025. Shab-e-Miraj will fall on January 28



500000 more youth to be provided free IT courses in 2025: Governor Tessori

Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori on Wednesday has announced plans to provide free modern IT courses to as many as 500000 youth during 2025. Addressing the people at Governor House during New Year celebrations, he said under the Governor's Initiative, more opportunities would be provided to the people of the province.

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Aman Jirga

KOHAT: The participants of the Grand Jirga are having a conversation before Three-week-long peace jirga concluded.



Photo: Spokesman

PM expresses satisfaction over inflation rate plummeting to 81-month low

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday expressed satisfaction over inflation rate falling to 4.1% which is 81-month low.

He said in a statement issued from the Prime Minister's Office, macroeconomic stability was achieved but this was just the beginning.

PM Shehbaz Sharif said it was a welcoming progress that inflation rate came to 4.1% in December 2024.

He said the government had launched a project like Uraan Pakistan—Pakistan's Takeoff that would put Pakistan among the leading countries of the world.

"Government is pursuing a policy of economic reforms. The current account has gained surplus after 24 years. Inflation has come down from 38% to 4.1%, stock market has become the second-best market in the world," the PM added.



PM Shehbaz Sharif added that the policy rate has come down from 22% to 13% and with the hard work of the government's economic and financial team, the economy was moving towards stability. "We [the government] are aware of the people's difficulties, and therefore worked day and night to solve the problems of the masses. Insha Allah [God willing], the lives of the people will improve further," the PM said.

Peace agreement reached by warring factions in Kurram

Omer Wazir

KURRAM: A three-week-long peace jirga (tribal council) in Kohat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, concluded successfully with the signing of a 14-point peace agreement between warring factions in Kurram district.

The jirga, led by Kohat Commissioner Muataasim Billah, finally reached a resolution after several days of negotiations. The signing of the agreement was met with jubilation among jirga members, who hope it will bring lasting peace to the

troubled district. Both sides, represented by 45 individuals each, meticulously reviewed the agreement before signing.

According to Jirga member Malik Sawab Khan, the parties involved are bound by the apex committee's decisions. Outstanding issues have been largely resolved, and a ceasefire has been agreed upon. The agreement stipulates that both sides will dismantle their checkpoints, surrender heavy weaponry to government custody, and work collaboratively with law enforcement to maintain peace

and order.

Those violating the agreement will be handed over to the government. Plans are underway to reopen roads and facilitate the restoration of normalcy. Compensation for damages will also be addressed.

Kohat Commissioner Muataasim Billah confirmed the success of the Kurram negotiations, stating that only three signatures remained outstanding before the agreement was finalized.

The jirga had previously failed to reach an agreement due to the

absence of two representatives from Lower Kurram. This delay, reported earlier by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government spokesperson Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif, was attributed to the absence of two jirga members representing Sunni communities in Lower Kurram; one, former Senator Rasheed Ahmed Khan, was unable to attend due to a family bereavement. Despite this earlier setback, the agreement was finalized.

The agreement will lead to the reopening of roads to Parachinar, which have been blocked for

several weeks, causing severe shortages of food and essential supplies. While the government has airlifted aid, and organizations like the Edhi Foundation have provided assistance, the situation for those cut off from the rest of the country remains critical.

Protests continue outside the Parachinar Press Club, despite the cold weather. A poetry session promoting peace was even held during a recent protest. Further demonstrations continue in Sultan, Gosar, and Bagan areas against the road closures.



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Minister for

Ahsan for medium-term framework to deregulate sugar industry

Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Wednesday directed developing a medium-term framework for deregulating sugar industry, stressing industries to ensure data uniformity, crop zoning and backward integration.

He passed these directives while chairing a meeting of Prime Minister's Committee on Sugar stocking, forecasting and planning, notified in December

last to develop a foolproof system of monitoring and report authentic position of sugar stocks for timely decisions on exports, a news release said.

The meeting was attended by Minister for Industries and Production Rana Tanveer Hussain, and Minister of State for Finance Ali Parvez Malik.

Besides, Director General Land Information and Management System Rawalpindi, Chairman and Member (IR

operations) FBR, Joint Director General Intelligence Bureau, Executive Director Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Deputy Director General Trade Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, Senior member Pakistan Sugar Mills Association, Director General Agriculture Policy Institute, Senior Joint Secretary Ministry of Industries and Production, Member Industries Ministry of Planning were present in the meeting.

PM hopeful of achieving economic targets in next six months

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday expressed the hope that due to untiring efforts of the economic team, the government would achieve the economic targets in next six months.

Speaking at the cabinet meeting, the prime minister noted that during first five months of current fiscal year, the remittances posted record \$15 billion that he hoped would expand to \$35 billion by the end of the fiscal year.

He specifically appreciated the efforts of Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb and other cabinet members along with the relevant government officials.

He said having achieved economic stability, the country had now entered the growth

stage. "If we want to achieve the economic development, then we will have to focus on export-led growth and we have no other option."

The prime minister also appreciate the efforts of Deputy PM Ishaq Dar, Governor State Bank of Pakistan, Finance Minister and Chairman FBR for collecting additional Rs 72 billion under ADR (advance-to-tax ratio) due to which the government's target of tax revenue for December 2024 had almost been achieved.

Similarly, he said due to funding by the Bill Gates Foundation of \$6 million, the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) would become completely digitized.

The early results of this project were that the 39% time duration of container inspection had been reduced while the businessmen got relief of 89%.

Asif urges PTI to work for national interest

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Defense Khawaja Muhammad Asif on Wednesday urged the leaders of Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf (PTI), to work for national interest and avoid attacking country's security institutions in future.

PTI had found involved in May 9, riots and this practice must be stopped in future, he said while talking to a private

television channel.

In reply to a question about dialogue with Opposition, he said, we have initiated dialogue process with PTI in the larger national interest. Despite political instability created by PTI leaders since 2018, we have successfully managed to reduce inflation, the minister said.

He said Pakistan's economy is improving day by day due to continuous struggle of the incumbent government.

There must be political stability in the country so that the government could achieve economic and exports targets in a proper manner.

In reply to a question about foreign country intervention in Pakistan's internal affairs, he said, no one can dictate us on country's defense affairs.

Pakistan has full right to utilize all available resources for meeting defense requirement, he added.



Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister (KP CM) Wednesday said Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) is ready for a protest movement if ongoing talks with the government fail.

In his exclusive talk with ARY News, Gandapur said the PTI founder is holding talks with the government for the sake of Pakistan, as government lacks 'legitimate mandate' for talks.

Ali Amin Gandapur made it clear that his party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), is engaged in negotiations with the authorities, emphasizing that if their demands are not

met, they will be ready to launch a movement.

He outlined the key demands, including the release of PTI leaders, especially the founder of PTI and other political prisoners.

KP CM called for a commission to investigate the events of May 9 and November 26, while demanding transparency about Form 47 related to election results, which he claimed the ruling party does not have.

Gandapur further asserted that 2025 would be the year of "Haqiqi Azadi" (Real Freedom) for Pakistan, alleging that the incumbent government is violating the constitution and rule of law.

Speakers called for dialogue to bridge gap between different faiths

Raza Naqvi

ATTOCK: Speakers while addressing a seminar highlighted the need to foster interfaith harmony, reduce intolerance and promote acceptance of others' beliefs and ideology to ensure a just and healthy society. The seminar — under the theme "Rehmat Sab Ke Liye" — was jointly organised by National Rahmatul lil Alameen Wa Khatamun Nabiyin Authority (NRKNA) with collaboration with Sir Syed Educational Foundation at Hassanabdal on Wednesday. The event was attended by represent-

atives from various religious minorities, including Christian, Hindu, and Sikh communities. The speakers emphasized the importance of compassion and respect inherent in major world religions, particularly Islam, which advocates for unity in these challenging times. They highlighted the need for individuals to come together to strengthen bonds and promote positive relations.

National Rahmatul-lil-Aalameen Authority Director General Zafar Mahmood Malik while highlighting the Authority's commitment to fostering unity and understanding

among diverse communities. He stressed upon the need for social harmony and appreciation of diversity. Mr Malik emphasized the critical need to combat polarization within society.

In his presidential address, Chairman National Rahmatul lil Aalameen Wa Khatamun Nabiyin Authority (NRKNA) Khurshid Ahmad Nadeem has stressed upon the need of creating a peaceful society, focused on mutual understanding and appreciation of diversity. He observed that the vision, teachings and principles of Holy Prophet

(PBUH) encourage us to build bridges of understanding and to foster a spirit of brotherhood. The Project Director of the Sir Syed Educational Foundation, Qazi Zahoor ul Haq, along with President Tahir Mahmood Durran also acknowledged and commended NRKNA Chairman Khurshid Ahmad Nadeem and his team for excellent arrangements made for this event and for assembling a cohort of distinguished speakers to enlighten the participants on an important subject. PPP local leader Sardar Zulfiqar Hayat Khan, Waqar Gill and other speakers also spoke on this occasion.

8,94,69,900 fines recovered: DTO Ch. Kashif Munir Gill

Zafar Chishti

TOBA TEK SINGH: According to the details, District Traffic Police Officer (DTO) Toba Tek Singh, Choudhry Kashif Munir Gill talking to Daily The Spokesman said that the traffic police issued

1,29,364 Challans and 8,94,69,900 Fines for violating traffic rules across the district. He further said that we have taken action against over speed, overloading, pressure horn, one wayling, dangerous driving, traveling without driving license, smoke emitting vehicles, underage drivers, Black Glass, motorcycle riders without helmets and using mobiles phone fines imposed driving. Apart from this, a 222 FIR has been registered against those violating traffic rules. In the end, Ch. Kashif Munir Gill said that people should follow traffic police rules to avoid challans and fines.

ADCG Visits Health Centers at Chak No. 295 and 305 GB

Zafar Chishti

TOBA TEK SINGH: According to the vision of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, the district administration is constantly active to provide the best medical facilities to the citizens. On the instructions of Deputy Commissioner Toba Tek Singh Muhammad Naeem Sindhu, Additional Deputy Commissioner General Zeeshan Labha Masih visited primary health centers Chak No. 295 GB and 305 GB and checked the attendance of the staff. He reviewed the record of medicines in the hospital and the cleanliness of the facility. He instructed the hospital administration that any kind of lapse in the facilities provided to the citizens will not be tolerated. He said that the Punjab government is taking all possible steps to provide facilities in the primary health centers. He expressed satisfaction over the facilities provided in the hospital.

An important problem faced by the residents of Takht Bhai should be solved

Tariq Khan Yousafzai

TAKHT BHAI: The political and social circles of Takht Bhai have strongly urged the Assistant Commissioner and DSP Takht Bhai to address a significant issue faced by the residents of Takht Bhai, especially the people of Kot Road. Due to a problematic U-turn, residents of Kot, Hosei, Mazdoor Abad, Abdullah Jan Klay, Muslim Abad, Gulshan Colony, Art Koruna, Amin Klay, Usman Qila, Umar Abad, Parkho, and other areas are experiencing severe difficulties. They have warned that if the current U-turn is not immediately reopened, the residents will block the Malakand highway for all traffic, and the local administration will be held responsible. During a press conference at the Takht Bhai Press Club, local leaders, including Chairman Yousuf Khan, Nazim Umar Khan, Nazim Mian Mohibullah, Haji Gul Munir, Fawad Khan, Nazim Muhammad Iqbal Khan, Israr Khan, Faqir Khan, Syed Jan Mama, and others, expressed their grievances. They criticized the closure of the U-turn near Kot Road, which had become a crucial junction, claiming that it was shut down under the pretext of accident risks despite no such incidents ever being reported there.

Senate IT committee expresses concerns over internet shutdowns

Abdul Ghafoor Sarohi

ISLAMABAD: Senate Standing Committee on Information Technology and Telecommunication on Wednesday voiced serious concerns over persistent connectivity issues and expressed concerns about the arbitrary shutdown of internet services without justification.

Presided over by Senator Palwasha Mohammad Zai Khan, the meeting scrutinized the deficiencies in monitoring mechanisms. It criticized the lack of transparency surrounding internet disruptions, even after a detailed briefing by the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) Chairman.

The Chairperson emphasized the distinction between blocking specific content and implementing a complete internet shutdown, asserting that the latter is unwarranted.

Senator Kamran Murtaza echoed this sentiment, suggesting that such shutdowns appear politically motivated rather than based on technical considerations, and called for the process to be politicized.

Highlighting a report published in Dawn that estimated financial losses in billions due to internet disruptions, Senator Palwasha expressed concern over the poor quality of internet services in Pakistan, which ranks just above Myanmar globally despite significant investments.

She underscored that such reports often have some factual basis, though Ministry officials denied the claims, clarifying that national outages referenced in the media occurred only during elections.

The PTA Chairman informed the committee that social media applications are restricted based on the Supreme Court's and High Court's directives.

To address legal ambiguities, the Committee instructed that the Law Division provide clarity on the rules framed under the PECA Act, 2016, particularly regarding internet outages, and report back to the Committee.

The Secretary of the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication (MoITT) acknowledged the significant impacts of internet shutdowns and stressed the importance of addressing public perceptions about such actions.

The Chairperson emphasized that negative narratives often stem from genuine concerns and urged the Ministry to devise policies to counter misinformation effectively.

The Committee reviewed plans to boost the country's IT exports. The MoITT Secretary reported aggregated growth for 2023-2024 and highlighted ongoing efforts to align public perception with the progress being made in the IT sector.

CDA greenlights major development projects to transform Islamabad

ISLAMABAD: Capital Development Authority (CDA) Development Working Party (DWP) approved four key projects during its 71st meeting held here on Wednesday.

Chaired by Muhammad Ali Randhawa, Chairman CDA, the meeting was attended by officials from various ministries and CDA senior officers.

The approved initiatives span diverse sectors, focusing on beautification, urban management, hospitality, and food safety, underscoring Islamabad's commitment to becoming a world-class capital.

A project worth Rs. 490.082 million was approved for the upgradation, illumination, and beautification of Constitution Avenue, covering prominent government buildings such as Aiwan-e-Saddar, the Prime Minister's Office, and Parliament House.

Book launching

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Housing and Works Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada addressing the book launching ceremony at Pakistan Academy of Letters on Wednesday.



Photo: PID

Pakistan launches the 6th Agricultural Census 2024 Integrated Digital Enumeration

Abdul Ghafoor Sarohi

KARACHI: In a significant step towards the development of the agricultural sector in Pakistan, especially in the Sindh province, the 6th Agricultural Census 2024 Integrated Digital Enumeration was officially inaugurated today. This initiative was hailed by Provincial Minister for Livestock and Fisheries, Muhammad Ali Malkani, as a revolutionary move for the betterment of farmers, increasing livestock production, and ensuring food security.

The ceremony, held at the Sindh Secretariat in Karachi, was attended by key figures, including the Minister for Livestock and Fisheries Muhammad Ali Malkani, the Minister for Planning, Development & Energy Syed Nasir Hussain Shah, and the Chief Statistician of the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS), Dr. Naeem-ul-Zafar. Also present were secretaries, directors general, and other officers from various provincial departments.

In his speech, Dr. Naeem-ul-Zafar emphasized the importance of this agricultural census, stating, "This is



not merely a data collection exercise but a foundation through which we aim to guide the agricultural sector towards sustainable development. For the first time, we have adopted an integrated and complete digital approach, combining the enumeration of agriculture, livestock, and machinery into one comprehensive operation."

Explaining the objectives of the census, Dr. Naeem-ul-Zafar further said, "This census will provide crucial information about the agricultural

structure of Pakistan, crop patterns, livestock populations, and trends in machinery.

Provincial Minister Muhammad Ali Malkani, in his address, highlighted the historical significance of the census in modernizing agricultural practices, addressing food security, tackling environmental challenges, and promoting rural development. He remarked, "Sindh's agricultural sector holds a central position in our economy, supporting 37% of the popu-

lation. The data gathered from this census will help policymakers make better decisions and drive sustainable development."

Minister for Planning, Development & Energy Syed Nasir Hussain Shah also spoke at the event, stating, "Our government is committed to facing the challenges in the agricultural sector through modern methods. This agricultural census is a vital link in achieving this vision."

Journalists at the event raised questions about the reasons behind the 16-year gap since the last agricultural census, the accuracy of the current census, and its effectiveness, especially in the context of environmental changes.

Field operations will continue from January 1 to February 10, 2025, with final results expected by August 2025. This project represents a critical milestone in improving governance and ensuring sustainable development for Pakistan's agricultural sector through collaboration between federal and provincial governments and the use of technology.

Controversial Secretary Zia Ashraf admitted

Abdul Majid

FAISALABAD: The controversial Secretary Zia Ashraf admitted before the House today that he had taken down the commemorative photos of the European delegations including the inauguration plaque of the PIMA Complex, photos of foreign ambassadors with high commissioners, photos of former office bearers, and photos of senior members including Sheikh Mukhtar Ahmed Ibrahim Fibers, Rana Sanaullah Khan, former Interior Minister, Syed Umar Nazar Shah, owner of Aspire College, Mian Muhammad Idrees, former President of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Dr. Khurram Tariq, former President of the Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, current President of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry and others

and thrown them into the canal at the behest of Vice Chairman Usman Afzal, Membership No. 636/Associate Class and Noman Afzal, Membership No. 915/Corporate Class.

He further said that despite the issuance of a formal notice of the meeting to be held today, the association office was locked, disrupting the peaceful atmosphere of the Sutra Mandi, which has created chaos in the market that supplies yarn to the entire country's textile sector.

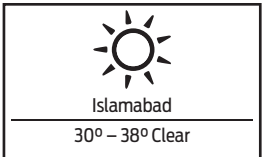
There is a fear of spreading. In addition to the committee members, a large number of members of the market, including senior and former officials, had to face trouble, which caused a lot of insult to the members.

The members of the executive committee, including senior and former officials, and the general members have decided to take strict legal action against the above-men-

tioned responsible persons for these actions. In today's meeting, Senior Vice Chairman Sheikh Muhammad Tahir, Executive Committee members including Khawaja Muhammad Owais, Shahid Mahmood Sheikh, Kamran Ali Mago, Waheed Rafiq, Mian Waqar Nasir, Sheikh Nasir Sattar, Asfandyar Fahim Shah, Shiraz Ali, Noman Saeed, Sheikh Muhammad Farooq Allahwala and Kashif Khalil, as well as senior and former chairmen of the market, including Chaudhry Jawad Asghar, Syed Fahim Mahmood Shah, Qaiser Shams Gacha, Shahid Akram Gacha, Mian Waqar Nasir, Tahir Mahmood Sheikh, Obaidullah Sheikh and Sheikh Muhammad Farooq Zafar and other members of the market, Mehr Khalid Bhola, Sheikh Muhammad Yousaf Moti, Malik Sajid Bhola, Haji Nisar Ahmed, Yasinullah Rakha, AK Yousaf, Kashif Rasool, Ahmed Zeeshan, Malik

Salman Hafeez, Faisal Zaheer, Zeeshan Akram Gacha, Muhammad Azam Broker, Malik Rashid, Sheikh Ali Bhai, Zahid Ashraf Munna, Syed Asim Shah, Khawaja Imran, Haji Saleem Chavla, Ramzan Afzal, Afzal Gul, Owais Nisar, Omar Ishaq, Mian Afzal, Malik Zunir Sajid, Ahmed Tayyab, Hassan Tahir and others.

A large number of members attended the meeting. In the meeting, the senior members, including the executive committee members, unanimously rejected all the decisions taken in the last two months and issued an order to reinstate Mumtaz-ul-Haq as Regional Secretary and announced legal action at every forum against the illegal actions taken by the Vice Chairman. A large number of members expressed their strong anger at the actions of the Vice Chairman and Secretary of the association and called it a shameful act.



SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr	5:44 am
Zohr	12:11 pm
Asr	3:33 pm
Maghrib	5:10 pm
Isha	6:39 pm

EMERGENCY

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

Women Police Stations

Islamabad	9222596
Rawalpindi	9270601-20

ENQUIRY

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

HOSPITALS

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

DEPARTMENTS

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

NKU Technologies hosts "NKU Knight of Excellence"

Commerce Desk

LAHORE: NKU Technologies (Pvt) Ltd., a leading software house based in Lahore, organized its annual event, "NKU KNIGHT OF EXCELLENCE," attended by prominent personalities of the country. The chief guests included Main Anjum Nasir (Former President LCCI & FPCCI and Vice President of SAARC CCI), Sohail Warrick (Senior Journalist), Khalid Abbas Dar (Host and Actor), Khalid Baig (Singer), Malik Abdullah (President Civil society Pakistan) M. Yaseen Khan (President Sundas Foundation Pakistan), Malik Zaheer (Director Dynamic Media) & CEO NKU Tech Mr. Naeem Ahmad K.

During the event, representatives from the company shared that NKU Technologies (Pvt) Ltd. is recognized for its expertise in providing innovative IT & AI based solutions. Furthermore, the company remains committed to contributing to Pakistan's development through IT. Their constant hard work, dedication, and exceptional performance have elevated them to a significant position, for which they expressed gratitude to ALLAH Almighty. The company also acknowledged the support and contributions of its engineers and staff.

Huawei and COMSATS University Islamabad Signed MoU

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Huawei Technologies Pakistan Pvt Ltd, a global leader in information and communications technology (ICT), and COMSATS University Islamabad have officially signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at fostering collaboration in the fields of technology.

The agreement was signed during a ceremony held at the office of Huawei Technologies in Islamabad. The event was graced by the Honorable Federal Minister of Science and Technology, Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui as the Chief Guest and was attended by key representatives from both organizations.

This partnership is set to enhance technical vocational training and skill development to create employment opportunities for students and young technicians by equipping them with the latest ICT technologies.

Under the MoU, Huawei will provide COMSATS University Islamabad with equipment and train their resources in delivering the technical training to the attendees of these courses. Initially, this program will commence with the COMSATS University Islamabad,

Lahore campus. Subsequently COMSATS University Islamabad will also help develop a similar facility in Karachi as well. This collaboration is designed to equip students with the necessary skills to thrive in a rapidly evolving digital landscape.

Dr. Tahir Naeem, Director (P, D & HRD) at COMSATS University Islamabad, expressed enthusiasm about the partnership: "This collaboration with Huawei represents a significant step forward in our mission to provide students with a comprehensive education in technology and innovation. We are excited to work together to develop programs that will enhance learning and research capabilities."

Mr. Ahmed Bilal Masud, the Director Subsidiary Board at Huawei, emphasized the importance of such collaborations: "At Huawei, we believe in the power of partnerships to drive innovation. By working with COMSATS University Islamabad, we aim to nurture talent and inspire the next generation of leaders in technology."

The MoU will also pave the way for further collaboration between both organizations including knowledge exchange and fostering an environment of innovation that benefits both institutions and the wider community.



Special Pray

ISLAMABAD: Christian community singing song during special pray on the eve of New Year 2025 at St. Thomas Church, in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

Water filtration plant inaugurated at IIUI

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The President of the International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI), Prof. Dr. Ahmed Shuja Syed, inaugurated a water filtration plant at the male hostels on the university campus. He was accompanied by Dr. Inam Ul Haq, Director Administration, representing Vice President (Academics & Finance) Prof. Dr. Abdul Rahman, along with a team from Helping Hand for Relief and Development (HHRD) Pakistan.

Speaking on the occasion, President IIUI, Prof. Dr. Ahmed Shuja Syed, emphasized the university's commitment to adopting a student-centric approach and facilitating the IIUI commu-



He highlighted the plant's benefits for the students and staff and underscored the importance of establishing a follow-up and maintenance mechanism to ensure its sustainability.

The filtration plant, valued at Rs. 2 million, has a capacity of 1000 liters per

hour and features Ultra Filtration (UT) technology with a SCADA monitoring and control system. The project was initiated by Col (R) Athar Babar, former Provost Male and current Chief Security Officer, in collaboration with Ali Rafay, Assistant Director Hostels, and the HHRD team.

Earlier, Dr. Inam Ul Haq briefed the President on the initiative and acknowledged the contributions of HHRD for their support in the installation of the plant. Representatives from HHRD, including Mr. Arsheed Baloch, Manager Health Program; Mr. Muhammad Imran, Senior Program Officer; Mr. Amjad Mehmood Amjad, Director Programs; and Mr. Raheel Ahmed, Manager Youth Program, were also present at the event.

On the occasion, Mr. Imran from HHRD explained the plant's operation, monitoring, and maintenance. He emphasized its role in preventing waterborne diseases and supporting students' academic and physical well-being.

Dr. Zulifqar Ali Bhatti visits IPO-Pakistan Headquarters

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Intellectual Property Organization of Pakistan (IPO-PAKISTAN) welcomed a high-level visit from the Parliamentary Secretary for Commerce, Dr. Zulfiqar Ali Bhatti, to its headquarters on Wednesday. The Parliamentary Secretary was warmly received by Chairperson Ambassador (R) Farukh Amil, Director General Ms. Shazia Adnan, and IPO officers. The visit was an important opportunity for the organization to showcase its functions and achievements, and to brief the Parliamentary Secretary on its key initiatives and performance.

During the visit, the Chairperson and Director General provided a comprehensive briefing and presentation to the Parliamentary Secretary, covering the organization's functions in detail. The briefing included an overview of the organization's role in promoting Intellectual Property Rights, including Trademarks, Patents, Copyrights, and Geographical indications.

The Parliamentary Secretary appreciated the performance of the organization and acknowledged the importance of its work in promoting IPRs in Pakistan. He recognized the organization's efforts to create a conducive environment for innovation and entrepreneurship, and to support the country's economic growth and development.

AIOU offers 80 educational programs for international students

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University has offered over 80 educational programs for overseas Pakistanis and international students in its admissions for the Semester Spring 2025. These programs include Matriculation, FA, I. Com, Associate Degrees in Arts, Commerce, and Education, BS programs, B. Ed programs of 1.5, 2.5, and 4 years, and Diploma Programs in 12 disciplines.

The University is offering these educational programs to international students through an online management system. All academic activities, from admissions to examinations, will be conducted online. It is noteworthy that to facilitate international students, Vice-Chancellor Professor Dr. Nasir Mahmood has activated and empowered the International Collaboration and Exchange Office at the university. This office maintains continuous contact with international students, provides them with extensive guidance, and arranges orientation sessions for new international enrollees.

While discussing international admissions, the Vice-Chancellor stated, "It is a matter of pride for us that 1,007 students from 37 countries have already enrolled, and we aim to increase this number to 5,000 within the next five years."

Overseas Pakistanis and international students can contact the International Collaboration and Exchange Office for further details via email at overseas@aiou.edu.pk or phone at +92519572495.



PODA advocates for amendment in Child Marriage Restraint Act Punjab

City Desk

KALLAR SYEDAN: During an engaging awareness-raising session organized by PODA in the hall of Tehsil Municipal Corporation, participants unanimously agreed to support an amendment in the Child Marriage Restraint Act 2015. The proposed amendment seeks to raise the minimum age of marriage for girls from 16 to 18 years, ensuring a safer and more empowering future for young girls in Punjab.

This resolution aims to safeguard adolescent girls' fundamental rights, including access to education, reproductive health, and employment opportunities. By doing so, it will ultimately contribute to the country's

development and progress. The session was part of PODA's 3-year project, "Reduce Early Marriages to Enhance Gender Equality," supported by the Norwegian Embassy in Islamabad.

Advocate Khawaja Zahid Nasim cited the Constitution of Pakistan and presented an overview of the prevailing laws concerning child marriages. He highlighted the landmark Lahore High Court verdict in which the definition of 'child' in Section 2(a) of the Child Marriage Restraint Act 1929 termed unconstitutional. Mentioning that the Sindh Child Marriage Restraint Act sets the marriageable age for both girls and boys at 18 years, Khawaja Zahid also informed that around 40 other Muslim

countries have set the minimum marriageable age for girls at 18 years to combat child marriages. Nabeela Aslam, Project Manager at PODA, emphasized that child marriages constitute a gross violation of human and child rights. By depriving children of their childhood, education, and economic empowerment opportunities, child marriages exacerbate the severe marginalization of already vulnerable children. She said that underage marriages disproportionately affect vulnerable girl children, who are often malnourished, illiterate, and powerless to advocate for their rights. This vulnerability renders them susceptible to domestic violence, as they lack the ability to defend themselves, she added.

Advocate Bano Jahangir emphasized the importance of timely nikah registration, highlighting a common issue. She briefed that typically, when parents marry off their underage daughters, the nikah is not registered.

Dr. Mariam Nawaz, a doctor working at Tehsil Headquarter Hospital, shed light on the alarming health consequences of child marriages. According to her, child marriages lead to a significant increase in early pregnancies, maternal mortality, school dropouts, and exposure to violence, emphasizing the urgent need to address this critical issue.

Arshad Bhatti, Raja Pervaiz Akhter Qadri, Hafiz Asif



Mehmood, Taskeen Badra and Syed Waqas Haider Advocate emphasized on the crucial role of education in safeguarding adolescent girls' rights and promoting economic empowerment.

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Will 2025 Be Better for Pakistan Than 2024?

The year 2024 was a defining period for Pakistan, marked by political upheaval, constitutional controversies, and economic struggles. The year began with severe economic challenges in January, including skyrocketing inflation, low GDP growth, and rising unemployment. Political tensions heightened as the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) continued protests and sit-ins, demanding early elections. In response to the growing unrest, the much-anticipated general elections were held on February 8, 2024, following a delay from 2023.

The general elections were marred by widespread allegations of rigging, particularly against the military establishment, which was accused of manipulating results to favor the Pakistan Muslim League (N) and to marginalize Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).

The PTI organized nationwide protests demanding the restoration of what they termed their "stolen mandate" and the release of detained party leaders. PTI also called for a boycott of products from companies owned by the armed forces and threatened civil disobedience, escalating tensions. The party accused the military of permeating civilian decision-making processes and undermining democratic institutions.

In 2024, Pakistan's relations with neighboring countries were marked by significant tensions and security challenges. On January 16, Iran conducted missile strikes in Pakistan's Balochistan province. In retaliation, on January 18, Pakistan carried out airstrikes in Iran's Sistan and Baluchestan province, targeting Baloch separatist militants. Similarly, on April 16, Pakistan conducted

its first notable strike in Afghanistan, targeting TTP hideouts in Kunar and Nangarhar provinces reportedly killing several militants. On December 25, Pakistan carried out additional airstrikes in Afghanistan's Paktika province, reportedly killing 46 people. Taliban interim government retaliated and carried out attack inside Pakistan claiming achieving the objectives. Relations with India also remained tense, with frequent border skirmishes and disputes over Kashmir.

In 2024, Pakistan's missile program faced heightened scrutiny as the United States imposed sanctions on four Pakistani entities, including the National Development Complex. The U. S. alleged that advancements in Pakistan's missile capabilities, such as the Shaheen-III missile with a range of 2,750 kilometers, could pose risks of regional destabilization and potential nuclear proliferation.

In the fiscal year 2023-2024, Pakistan's economy exhibited modest growth, with a 0.92% increase in the first quarter, driven by the agriculture and services sectors, but experienced contraction of industrial sector by 1.03%. Inflation rates showed a significant decline, dropping from 29.2% in 2023 to 4.9% in 2024, which allowed the State Bank of Pakistan to reduce the policy rate from 22% to 13% by December.

Regarding trade, Pakistan's exports for the fiscal year 2023-2024 were approximately \$30.68 billion, marking a 10.65% increase from \$27.72 billion in the previous fiscal year. Imports during

the same period amounted to \$63.29 billion, resulting in a trade deficit of about \$32.61 billion.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) showed signs of recovery, with a 17% increase to \$1.9 billion in July 2024, primarily sourced from China, Hong Kong, the UK, US, and Singapore. However, challenges such as complex regulations, security concerns, and energy shortages continued to hinder the investment climate.

Internationally, Pakistan maintained its support for Palestinian rights, condemning Israeli actions in Gaza and calling for a just and lasting solution based on pre-1967 borders with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as the capital of a sovereign Palestinian state. Additionally, Pakistan advocated for de-escalation in Syria, urging respect for the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. citetum-Osearch1 These positions underscore Pakistan's commitment to addressing both its internal economic challenges and its stance on key international issues.

In 2024, Pakistan faced significant challenges in governance, justice, freedom of speech, political freedom, and its international image. Freedom House's "Freedom in the World 2024" report rated Pakistan as "Partly Free," with a score of 35 out of 100, indicating limited political rights and civil liberties. The World Justice Project's Rule of Law Index placed Pakistan at 130th out of 139 countries, reflecting systemic issues in justice and governance. In terms of press freedom, Reporters Without Borders ranked Paki-

stan 150th out of 180 countries in its 2023 index, noting slight improvements but ongoing concerns about media restrictions. Additionally, Pakistan's position in the global soft power index declined from 63rd in 2021 to 84th in 2023, highlighting challenges in its international image.

In 2025, Pakistan must address its challenges with a strategic focus on political stability, economic resilience, and global engagement. Political unrest should be defused through dialogue, transparent governance, and respect for democratic principles, while ensuring judicial independence and safeguarding freedoms to rebuild public trust. Economic priorities include diversifying exports, reducing the trade deficit, attracting foreign investment by addressing systemic barriers, and reducing reliance on external financing like IMF loans to regain fiscal sovereignty.

Diplomatically, Pakistan should foster regional stability through improved ties with neighbors—India, Afghanistan, and Iran—and engage constructively with global powers like the USA, Europe, Russia, and China for mutual economic and strategic gains.

Improving governance, reducing corruption, and upholding justice and freedoms are critical for elevating Pakistan's global rankings and international image. By implementing these measures with accountability, Pakistan can achieve sustainable progress and enhance its standing on the world stage.

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



Analysis **Qamar Bashir**

China to work with all countries to promote friendship, cooperation

Chinese President Xi Jinping has said that China will work with all countries to promote friendship and cooperation as changes unseen in a century accelerate across the world.

"It is important to rise above estrangement and conflict with a broad vision and care for the future of humanity with great passion," Xi said in his New Year address on Tuesday.

He said China has contributed greatly to the maintenance of world peace and stability as a responsible major country, promoting global governance reform and deepening solidarity and cooperation among the Global South, as well as participating in and contributing to multiple bilateral and multilateral forums.

"China will work with all countries to promote friendship and cooperation, enhance mutual learning among different cultures, and build a community with a shared future for mankind. We must jointly create a better future for the world," Xi said.

Xi Jinping called for the nation to remain confident in the coming year, saying the world's second largest economy can overcome its challenges and pressure through hard work.

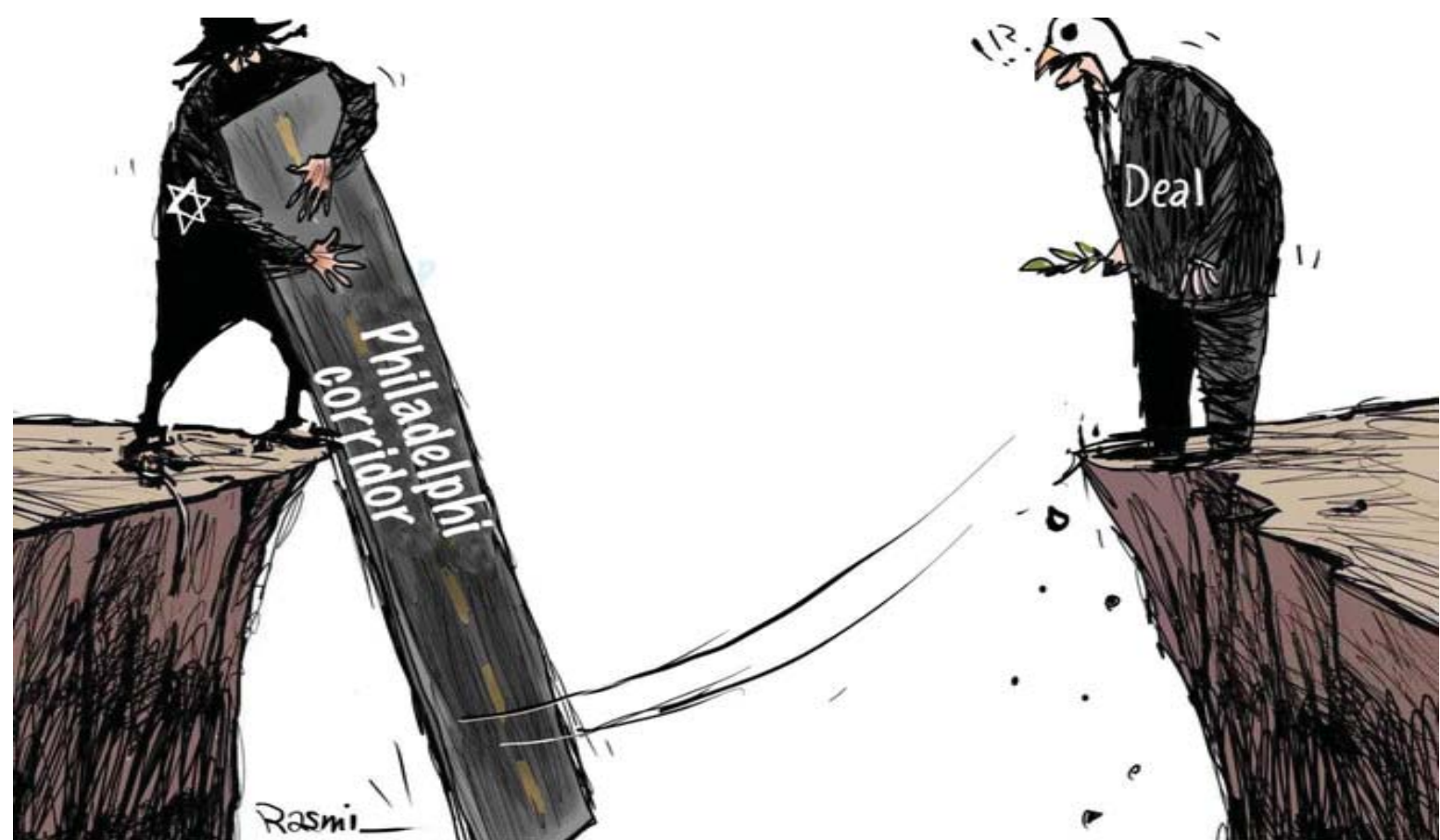
Set to fully complete its 14th Five-Year Plan in 2025, China will implement more proactive and effective policies, prioritize high-quality development, promote greater self-reliance and strength in science and technology, and maintain sound momentum in economic and social development, Xi said.

He said the Chinese economy "now faces some new conditions, including challenges of uncertainties in the external environment and pressure of transformation from old growth drivers into new ones."

"But we can prevail with our hard work. As always, we grow in the wind and rain, and we get stronger through hard times. We must be confident," Xi said.

Reviewing China's footprint in 2024, Xi said the economy has rebounded and is on an upward trajectory, with the national GDP expected to pass the mark of 130 trillion yuan (about 18.08 trillion U. S. dollars) and the country's grain output surpassing 700 million tonnes.

He also noted that China has fostered new quality productive forces, and new business sectors, forms and models have kept emerging. For the first time, China has produced more than 10 million new energy vehicles in a year, and breakthroughs have been made in fields including integrated circuit, artificial intelligence and quantum communications.



Cartoon by Amjad Rasmi. (Courtesy of Ashfaq Al-Awcat)

What About the Trials of Civilians in Your Military Courts?

It is quite fascinating to explore the history of military courts and the trials of civilians in military courts in the U. S., Europe, and other countries around the world. The U. S. legal system typically maintains a clear distinction between military and civilian jurisdictions. However, in specific situations, military courts may have jurisdiction over civilians, especially when national security is at risk or when civilian crimes occur within a military context. This overlap between military and civilian legal systems can be complex but is crucial for ensuring justice in cases that involve both military and civilian elements.

One of the earliest and most notable examples of a civilian being tried by a U. S. military court occurred after World War II. "Tokyo Rose" refers to several English-speaking female broadcasters who spread Japanese propaganda during the war, with Iva Ikuko Toguri being the most well-known. Toguri, an American citizen, was in Japan during the war and was accused of being one of the broadcasters helping to spread Japanese propaganda over the radio. After the war, she was arrested and tried by a U. S. military tribunal in 1949. Despite her claims that she had been coerced into participating and did not support the views she broadcasted, she was convicted of treason and sentenced to 10 years in prison. Her trial was significant as it highlighted the post-war use of military courts to prosecute civilians accused of aiding enemy powers.

A more contemporary example of civilians being tried in U. S. military courts emerged in the context of the War on Terror, especially after the 9/11 attacks. In the aftermath of the attacks, the U. S. government aimed to prosecute individuals connected to terrorism, including suspected al-Qaeda members and Taliban fighters, often in military tribunals rather than civilian courts.

The Irish Republican Army (IRA), a paramilitary group seeking to end British rule in Northern Ireland, engaged in violent protests and attacks on British military installations throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Their goal was to destabilize the British government and force the withdrawal of British forces from Northern Ireland. These actions were widely viewed as terrorism by the UK government.

In the context of Pakistan, the PTI attacks on military installations in 2023 are significant. On May 9, 2023, Pakistan experienced one of the darkest days in its modern political history as supporters of the opposition party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), launched coordinated, violent assaults on military installations across the country. What began as a protest over the arrest of PTI chairman Imran Khan quickly escalated into a full-scale attack on Pakistan's military infrastructure, severely impacting national security, political stability, and the integrity of the country's democratic institutions. The violence shocked the nation, marking a critical moment in Pakistan's political landscape.

The violence was brutal, with protesters showing little respect for the sanctity of state institutions or the rule of law. The desecration of military memorials, the storming of the GHQ, and the widespread destruction of government property marked an unprecedented challenge to the military's authority. These acts targeted not only buildings and infrastructure but also the very symbols of the state, making them a particularly egregious form of terrorism.

In response to the May 9 riots, the Pakistani government decided to address the violence under the Army Act and through military courts, similar to the approach taken by many other nations. These military courts, which had been temporarily suspended but were recently restored by the Supreme Court, were authorized to handle cases involving civilians

convicted for their roles in the attacks. It is crucial to note that the decisions made by these military courts can still be appealed in superior civilian courts. The trials were conducted in accordance with all legal procedures, with sufficient evidence and proof supporting the convictions.

However, the response from the US and the West has been marked by double standards. While they have employed military courts to deal with civilians in their own countries, they raised objections when Pakistan sought to address the May 9 riots and acts of terrorism through its own fair and transparent legal processes. Interestingly, the West, including the US, had previously expressed no concerns about Pakistan's military courts but only began to voice their objections in the case of Imran Khan. This selective outrage speaks volumes about the significance of Khan and his party in advancing certain geopolitical agendas.

Israel has also shown a particular interest in Imran Khan, viewing him as more aligned with their strategic interests. This shared interest from the US, the West, and Israel in Imran Khan and his party is not without reason, and the Pakistani people are well aware of these underlying motives. There is a widespread belief in Pakistan that the country may be more inclined to establish relations with Israel and consider halting its nuclear and missile programs only if Imran Khan returns to power.

The issue of dealing with terrorism is entirely Pakistan's internal matter, and many in the country feel that foreign nations, including the US, should refrain from interfering in Pakistan's domestic affairs. Pakistan has every right to address its criminals and terrorists within the framework of its own laws, which are fair and transparent. The people of Pakistan strongly condemn any external interference in the country's internal systems. Instead, they advocate for international cooperation in the fight against terrorism and instability, as a peaceful and strong Pakistan benefits not only the nation but the world as a whole.

Reason behind the Pak Irregular Political System

Today, I intended to discuss the flaws in Pakistan's political structure and explore why it fails to become regularized, patterned, and aligned with democratic norms. Reflecting on these questions, I launched a stream of consciousness to uncover potential solutions. After extensive thought and emotional engagement, I arrived at a critical conclusion regarding the root cause of the disturbances in Pakistan's political framework.

The core issue lies in the behavior of organizations, political parties, and individuals who consider themselves exempt from the principles they claim to uphold before the public. Democracy, for instance, is one of the most frequently discussed and propagated terms in Pakistan. Politicians, both personally and in their organizational roles, use democratic slogans to attract public support. However, these same individuals and organizations fail to practice the democratic norms they advocate for. While they speak of democracy, their actions often contradict these ideals, distancing themselves from the principles they demand be implemented.

This contradiction is further reinforced by Pakistan's constituency-based political system. In such a framework, party members, constituency candidates, and even the Prime Minister repeat these patterns. The very flaws of the system serve to sustain their

positions, as their power and influence depend on these inefficiencies. If they were to genuinely implement the slogans they promote, their own political existence would be threatened. They are what they are because of the system, and reforming it would render their survival difficult, if not impossible.

This inconsistency in upholding democratic ideals is not confined to politicians; it extends to the bureaucracy and judiciary. Both institutions often emphasize the need for accountability, transparency, and democratic governance. Yet, these values are seldom reflected in their personal or institutional practices. Instead, they operate in ways that prioritize self-interest over the public good. The gap between rhetoric and action remains one of the greatest setbacks to democracy in Pakistan. Leaders who loudly champion democratic slogans fail to internalize these values in their personal lives. Bureaucrats and judges, too, advocate for reforms while resisting meaningful changes in their own roles and systems.

In a country where democratic ideals are used as tools for political gain rather than genuine reform, progress remains elusive. Until individuals and institutions align their actions with their words, the political structure will continue to falter.

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Analysis **M Azam Tariq**

Role of Sayyida Khadijah Al-Kubra (RA) in the Islamic Movement is Unforgettable

Zawar Abdul Sattar Dars has brilliantly highlighted various aspects of her life in his book

Abdul Ghafoor Sarohi

KARACHI: It is impossible to present an accurate and authentic interpretation of Islamic history without acknowledging the pivotal role played by Sayyida Khadijah Al-Kubra (RA) during the early and most delicate period of the Islamic movement. She is an unparalleled figure in Islamic history who not only played an exemplary role in spreading the religion of truth but also devoted her immense wealth for its propagation.

Her unparalleled sacrifices for the cause of Islam and the deep love of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) for her can be understood from his statement:

"Allah has not blessed me with a better wife than Khadijah (RA). She

believed in me when everyone denied me, supported me with her wealth when others deprived me, and through her, Allah granted me Fatimah (RA), the leader of the women of Paradise."

These sentiments were expressed by Dr. Saeid Talibinia, Munawwar Ali Mahesar, Syed Manzar Naqvi, Zawar Abdul Sattar Dars, Mubashir Mir, Zawar Niaz Hussain Laghari, and others at the launch of Zawar Abdul Sattar Dars's new book "The Sacred Life of Sayyida Khadijah Al-Kubra (RA)" held at Liaquat National Library, Karachi, under the auspices of the Karachi Editors Club and the Department of Culture, Sindh.

The speakers highlighted the profound love the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) had for Sayyida Khadijah

(RA) and how her passing deeply grieved him, leading him to name the year of her death "Aam-ul-Huzn" (The Year of Grief).

They also praised Zawar Abdul Sattar Dars as a distinguished name in the field of research literature, known for his numerous works. In this book, he has skillfully encapsulated various aspects of the sacred life of Sayyida Khadijah (RA) in a concise yet comprehensive manner, making this a praiseworthy contribution.

The event began with the recitation of the Holy Quran by Iranian Qari Hussain Talebinia, followed by the unveiling of the book. The event was attended by hundreds of participants, with Agha Shirazi serving as the master of ceremonies.



CM Punjab approves inquiry against seven Nishtar hospital employees over HIV outbreak

Bureau Report

MULTAN: Punjab Chief Minister, Maryam Nawaz has approved an inquiry against the Vice Chancellor and six other employees of Nishtar Hospital in Multan, following an alarming HIV outbreak at the hospital's dialysis center.

According to reports, the inquiry will be carried out under the Punjab Employees Efficiency Discipline and Accountability (PEEDA) Act. A two-member committee, led by Secretary of Transport, Ahmad Javed Qazi, has been tasked with investigating the matter. The committee will look into the actions of these employees in relation to the HIV outbreak.

Following Maryam Nawaz's approval, show-cause notices have been issued to the seven employees involved in the case.

Preliminary reports suggest that Professor Dr. Ghulam Abbas, Head of the Nephrology Department, failed in his administrative duties. Similarly, Dr. Muhammad Kazim, responsible for investigating the HIV outbreak, was found to have been completely ineffective in addressing the issue. While, Dr. Poonam Khalid, a member of the Nephrology Department, is accused



of being frequently absent from her duties.

Further, Dr. Malhiya Johar Zidi failed to report an HIV-infected patient to her senior colleagues. In another disturbing revelation, Naheed Parveen is accused of reusing disposable items for patient dialysis, which violates medical protocols.

The Specialized Healthcare Department has instructed these employees to submit their responses within 14 days. An investigation into the matter is underway.

On November 2024, CM Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif expressed her displeasure over the outbreak of HIV

in Multan and sought a progress report within 24 hours.

While presiding over a special meeting on health, Maryam Nawaz said that the outbreak of HIV among dialysis patients in Multan at is not only regrettable but also shameful as well.

"Halting dialysis procedure due to non-availability of funds is regrettable," she said.

The chief minister also approved the 'Chief Minister Dialysis Program Card' in the history of Pakistan, the first of its nature in Pakistan.

Under the programme, the funds for the treatment of each dialysis patient have been increased up to Rs10 million

whereas Rs8.5 million for dialysis and Rs1.5 million for tests are being allocated for each patient suffering from kidney disease.

She directed to ensure free tests and medicines for dialysis patients, while urging to continue dialysis procedure of patients under any circumstance. It was agreed in principle to establish more dialysis units in Punjab.

The chief minister directed Punjab Healthcare Commission to ensure implementation of SOPs in dialysis centres across the province.

It was agreed to set KPIs to determine performance of the health department. A progress report on the Nawaz Sharif Cancer Hospital was presented.

A report on the ongoing projects of PIC-2 and Nawaz Sharif Institute of Cardiology, Sargodha was presented.

She directed to make PIC-2 a state-of-the-art hospital and to ensure latest technology, equipment and medicine for cardiac patients.

It is pertinent to mention that a patient has died while 30 others contracted HIV/AIDS infections during dialysis treatment at the Nishtar Hospital, Multan, as the effected patients carried the virus from the dialysis machines meant for HIV positive cases.

Pakistan to 'seek' US waiver over Iran gas pipeline

Web Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan government has decided to approach the upcoming US administration for the waiver of sanctions on the Pak-Iran gas pipeline project, quoting sources.

According to sources, Pakistan plans to seek an exemption from these sanctions to avoid potential economic repercussions.

The government is emphasizing that the gas pipeline project with Iran is a critical step toward securing affordable energy for the country, and it is therefore necessary to revisit the issue with the new US administration.

Sources with the Pakistan government indicated that the project is currently facing challenges due to the imposition of sanctions, making it essential for Pakistan to negotiate carefully.

Pakistan's authorities are working on securing an exemption from these sanctions, which would allow the project to proceed without violating US restrictions, the sources said and added that although delays have not been caused by Pakistan, the project has been significantly affected by the sanctions imposed by the US.

Additionally, efforts are being made to convince Iran that a middle path could be found to move forward with the project while addressing the concerns of all parties involved.

The Pakistani government aims to ensure that the project proceeds without running into obstacles that could affect the country's energy security and economic interests.

29 injured in aerial firing in Karachi on New Year's night

Bureau Report

KARACHI: New Year celebrations in Karachi were marred by aerial firing in various areas, resulting in injuries to at least 29 individuals, including women and children.

The incidents of air firing occurred in different parts of the city, including Liaquatabad, Tariq Road, Shah Faisal, Orangi Town, Gulshan-e-Iqbal, Azizabad, and Korangi.

In Liaquatabad, three people were injured in aerial firing. Tariq Road and Shah Faisal reported aerial firing incidents that left two women injured.

In Orangi Town and Gulshan-e-Iqbal two people were injured. In Azizabad, a child was injured due to a celebratory fire on New Year's night. Gulzar-e-Hijri and Korangi No. 6 also reported three cases of bullet injuries.

Three people in Lyari and Aram Bagh, two people in Agra Taj, Malir Kala Board, Tipu Sultan, Ferozeabad and Alfalah Dastagir also reported bullet injuries cases on New Year's night.

Meanwhile, rescue teams promptly responded and transported the injured to nearby hospitals for treatment. Authorities have urged the public to refrain from such dangerous activities in the future to ensure public safety during celebrations.

Earlier, AIG Karachi Javed Alam Odho issued a warning for the people of the port city, planning aerial firing in celebration of year 2025.

The police would register cases under the attempted murder section for aerial firing incidents that occurred on New Year's Eve, AIG Odho warned Karachiites.

Odho observed that last year, 31 individuals were injured due to aerial firing on New Year's Eve in Karachi, for which several people were booked.

Saudi Arabia dispatches first airlift of humanitarian aid to Syria

Riyadh

King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center (KSrelief) on Wednesday dispatched the first airlift of humanitarian assistance to Syria, marking the beginning of a series of aid shipments to the war-torn country.

A plane loaded with food, shelter, and medical supplies departed from King Khalid International Airport, destined for Damascus International Airport. The humanitarian initiative will help address the urgent needs of displaced individuals and other affected populations in Syria.

Dr. Abdullah Al Rabeeah, Advisor to the Royal Court and Supervisor General of KSrelief, said the airlift would be followed by a land bridge in the coming days. He emphasized the Kingdom's unwavering commitment to supporting brotherly and friendly nations in times of need.

"These efforts are a testament to Saudi Arabia's longstanding tradition of humanitarian assistance and its role in providing relief to those in crisis," he remarked, highlighting the Kingdom's extensive aid operations since the onset of the Syrian conflict in 2011.

Saudi Arabia has consistently supported internally displaced Syrians, neighboring host communities, and victims of the northern Syrian earthquake in February 2023. Through KSrelief, the Kingdom's humanitarian aid to Syria from 2011 to the end of 2024 is estimated to have reached \$856.89 million.

This latest initiative underscores Saudi Arabia's continued leadership in international humanitarian efforts and its dedication to alleviating the suffering of vulnerable populations worldwide.



ISSI holds Roundtable on Pakistan-China Relations

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The China-Pakistan Study Centre (CPSC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) hosted an In-house Roundtable discussion on 'Pakistan-China relations'. Pakistan's Ambassador to China Mr. Khalil Hashmi was the Keynote Speaker. The event brought together senior diplomats and renowned scholars to reflect on the enduring partnership between Pakistan and China and evaluate its future trajectory in the wake of the evolving bilateral, regional and global context.

In his welcome remarks, DG ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood reaffirmed the Institute's commitment to fostering meaningful dialogue on Pakistan's strategic relationships, particularly the Pakistan-China All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership. He highlighted the steady progression of Pakistan-China relations since the founding of the People's Republic in 1949, the salience of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and the implications of the evolving global order marked by major-power contestation and growing multi-polarity.

Ambassador Khalil Hashmi provided a comprehensive analysis



of China's rise, Beijing's engagement with the region and globally, and the current state of play in bilateral relations. He also underscored the efforts of the Pakistan mission in Beijing towards imparting greater depth and substance to the trade, investment and economic dimensions of the relationship.

Participants engaged in a wide-ranging exchange of ideas during the interactive session, emphasizing the importance of sustained collaboration, improvement of business-to-business (B2B) interface, and enhanced people-to-people exchanges. The participants stressed the vital importance of policy

foresight and preparedness to maximize the potential of this critical partnership in a changing global order. The event concluded with a renewed commitment to further strengthening the Pakistan-China relationship in light of contemporary challenges and opportunities.

Dumb, deaf, blind people

31 December was the last day of the year 2024. Though, I am hopeful but yet saying it with a heavy heart that we as people have become completely intellectually dumb, deaf, and blind. We have been trapped in our own selves and ideas to the extent that we completely ignored speaking the language of wisdom, listening to understand, and observing with reasoning. We have made the shrines of our own choices so high and solid that all the other rational idols except worshipping these shrines appear to us to be stone.

We will talk here about the overall mental distraction and conflict of the nation. Politically, those who love Imran Khan unconditionally see Mian

Nawaz Sharif and Bilawal Bhutto as thieves and corrupt. People of Muslim League Nawaz consider Sharif brothers as messiahs and Tehreek-e-Insaf people as rude and spoiled Pakistani.

The supporters of Bilawal Bhutto take Jialas as the only ideological and intellectual people and consider the supporters of other parties as non-political.

This is the situation with us religiously that we consider our own religious group on the right path and all the rest to hell.

This is the case with our showbiz that we consider our favorite artists heroes and everyone else zero. Just as

yesterday, I shared a brief account of my meeting with a leading artist Meera on social media, and some people criticized me. Although film star Meera has not only made her mark in Lollywood for two decades,

but has also proved herself as a dynamic actress in Bollywood.

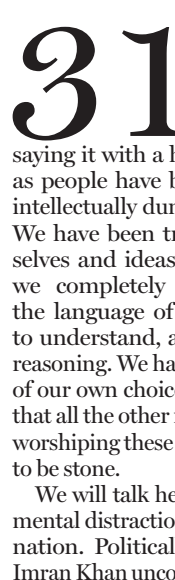
Why are we trapped in the shell of our own ideology and choices to such an extent that we have stopped recognizing other people even on the basis of humanity? Why don't we understand that one nation's heroes are another nation's villains? Why don't we make our thinking and behavior balanced and positive so that we all feel positive and right.

If someone has a political disagreement with you, it is his own likes or dislikes. But he is as credible as you are. Neither he was born through the mouth nor you. If someone has a different opinion from you religiously, still he has a complete faith in God and the Prophet (PBUH).

The fact is that developing nations mostly suffer from this disease and unless they change their thinking and behavior, no miracle will happen. Rather, we will only do PhD in unjustified criticism, making memes, and witticisms.

On the other hand, developed nations are so balanced in their behavior and thinking that even if they don't accept every new thought, culture, and/or personal likes and dislikes, they at least respect them.

Don't accept, but respect!



Analysis Afzal Choudhry

Bull & Bears PSX 100-Share Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index	
Current	Prev. Close
117,008.08	115,126.90
Day's High	Day's Low
117,341.03	114,719.89
Index Value	Change
31,567,771,511	+1881.18
Percentage	Time
+1.63%	1 Jan, 2024 5:00 pm

Europe: FTSE 100 Index	
Index Value	Change
8,173.02	+52.01
Percentage	Time
+0.64%	31 Dec, 4:35 pm GMT

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average	
Index Value	Change
42,431.89	-141.84
Percentage	Time
-0.33%	31 Dec, 11:40 am GMT-5

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average	
Index Value	Change
39,894.54	-386.62
Percentage	Time
-0.96%	30 Dec, 3:45 pm GMT+9

Open Market Forex Rates

Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	174.75	177.00
Bahrain Dinar	736.16	744.16
Canadian Dollar	194.60	197.00
China Yuan	37.99	38.39
Danish Krone	35.45	35.85
Euro	288.20	290.95
Hong Kong Dollar	35.44	35.79
Indian Rupee	3.19	3.28
Japanese Yen	1.86	1.92
Kuwaiti Dinar	897.17	906.67
Malaysian Ringgit	61.63	62.23
New Zealand \$	154.77	156.77
Norwegians Krone	24.22	24.52
Omani Riyal	720.46	728.96
Qatari Riyal	75.7	76.4
Saudi Riyal	73.80	74.35
Singapore Dollar	202.82	204.82
Swedish Korona	24.99	25.29
Swiss Franc	308.12	310.92
Thai Bhat	8	8.15
U.A.E Dirham	75.45	76.10
UK Pound Sterling	347.35	350.85
US Dollar	278.10	279.60

Rawalpindi Chamber delegation meets Federal Commerce Minister Jam Kamal Khan

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: A delegation from the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industries (RCCI), led by its President Usman Shaukat, met with Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan to discuss key issues facing the business community and the pharmaceuti-

cal industry. During the meeting, Usman Shaukat raised concerns about the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' (MOFA) attestation policy for pharmaceutical exporters and called for its review and amendment. He also sought the Commerce Ministry's support for the timely completion of the Rawalpindi Expo



Centre project. The minister assured RCCI of his and the ministry's full support in addressing these issues, emphasizing the government's commitment to promoting export-oriented industries and projects. Another critical issue discussed was the establishment of a pharmaceutical council

modeled after India's Pharma Excel. The minister informed the delegation that the proposal is under active consideration and will be implemented soon. The meeting underscored the shared commitment to enhancing Pakistan's exports and addressing challenges faced by key industries.

Inflation hits six-year low

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) has published its monthly inflation report, revealing a remarkable slowdown in the inflation rate, which dropped to 4.07% in December 2024.



Photo: Spokesman

BBoIT and FPCCI to jointly organize Balochistan Summit 2025 in January

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh, President FPCCI, has apprised that FPCCI and Balochistan Board of Investment & Trade (BBoIT) will be jointly organizing Balochistan Summit 2025 on January 27-28, 2025 in Islamabad - aimed at promoting business, investment, joint ventures industrialization and trade promotion activities in Balochistan on an international-scale.

Mr. Bilal Khan Kakar, Vice Chairman, Balochistan Board of Investment & Trade (BBoIT), Government of Balochistan, explained that the motive behind taking FPCCI onboard this year is have the backing of the entire business, industry and trade community of Pakistan; and, ensuring their participation in the Balochistan Summit 2025 - as FPCCI represents all 284 chambers, trade bodies and industry associations of Pakistan across all sectors of the national economy.

Mr. Saqib Fayyaz Magoon, SVP FPCCI, maintained that like Bank of Punjab (BoP); Bank of Khyber (BoK) and Sindh Bank, the federal and provincial governments should facilitate the establishment of the Bank of Balochistan (BoB) to make access to finance for setting up industries in Balochistan possible and viable. Only a full-fledged and dedicated bank can fill the yawning vacuum in business and industrial financing in the province, he added.



Mr. Nasir Khan, VP FPCCI from Baluchistan, maintained that the situation is grave and employment opportunities are shrinking fast for the youth as SMEs are the most affected business entities - and, SMEs are the real engine of growth for a developing country like Pakistan and generate the most employment in the country. Mian Zahid Hussain, Chairman FPCCI-PAB, highlighted the fact that the people of Balochistan are resilient; and, business, commercial, trade, investment, industrial and economic activities in the province are going on due to their

dynamism. However, cottage industries and micro, small & medium (MSMEs) should be protected to keep the provincial economy afloat.

Mr. Ahmed Chinoy, senior member FPCCI & former CPLC Chief, highlighted the need for a major marketing and PR campaign for Balochistan to attract domestic and foreign direct investment (FDI) into Balochistan through assuring the investors and entrepreneurs full safety and security. FPCCI will be fully supporting the armed forces and the government in all such endeavors, he added.

SECP notifies adoption of IFRS Sustainability Disclosure Standards

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has notified the adoption of IFRS Sustainability Disclosure Standards in a phase-wise manner in Pakistan.

The IFRS-S1, 'General Requirements for Disclosure of Sustainability-related Financial Information' and IFRS-S2, 'Climate-related Disclosures', are issued by the International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB) and recommended for

adoption in Pakistan by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Pakistan (ICAP).

IFRS-S1 requires disclosure of information about sustainability-related risks and opportunities that could reasonably be expected to affect the entity's cash flows, its access to finance or cost of capital. IFRS-S2 sets out the requirements for identifying, measuring and disclosing information about climate-related risks and opportunities. The standards are designed to meet the needs of existing and

potential investors, lenders and other creditors through provision of consistent and complete information that can be used to assess a company's exposure to and management of sustainability related risks and opportunities.

The standards have been notified after an extensive consultation process involving market readiness analysis, information and awareness sessions together with ICAP and a survey together with consultations to get stakeholders' perspective.

Pakistan Furniture Council participated in international expos

Commerce Desk

LAHORE: The Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) participated in 17 major international expos across the globe in 2024, showcasing high-quality Pakistani furniture and craftsmanship to boost exports.

Chairing here Wednesday first board of directors meeting of the year CEO PFC Mian Kashif Ashfaq said these expos provided an excellent platform to project the diversity, durability, and unique designs of Pakistani furniture, attracting buyers and investors from various countries. He said through participation we successfully promoted Pakistan's traditional and contemporary handmade woodwork and

modern designs, which resonated with global markets. The council's efforts aimed at fostering trade links, exploring new markets, and enhancing the visibility of Pakistan's furniture industry internationally. He said exhibitions not only strengthened Pakistan's trade rela-



tionships with other countries but also helped generate valuable export orders, contributing significantly to the national economy. PFC remains committed to promoting local artisans and expanding the country's footprint in the global furniture market, he concluded.

ZONG-Offering International Calling with Innovative digital solutions

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: ZONG, renowned for its innovative digital solutions, has introduced a user friendly and customizable feature for its prepaid and post-paid subscribers: "IDD Make Your Own Bundle." This revolutionary offering empowers users to create personalized International Direct Dialing (IDD) bundles tailored to their unique communication needs for respective destinations. Accessible exclusively through the My Zong App, the feature ensures convenience, flexibility, affordability, and an enhanced customer experience.

With "IDD Make Your Own Bundle," subscribers can select their destination, choose between landline and mobile calls and determine the number of minutes and validity period that best suit their preferences. Rates start as low as PKR 1 per minute for destinations like the USA, Canada, and China and go up to PKR 19 per minute for Oman, with popular locations such as Saudi Arabia, UAE, and the UK, ranging between PKR 2 to 15 per minute. A standout advantage of this service is that the per-minute rates charged are significantly lower than the standard tariffs for the respective destinations, ensuring exceptional value for customers.

Reforms in the energy sector are inevitable: Gohar Ejaz



Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Economic Policy and Business Development and former caretaker minister Gohar Ejaz has said that the reforms in the energy sector are inevitable.

While comparing Pakistan's power tariffs with other regional countries, here, he said that Pakistani power consumers are paying three and four times higher tariffs as compared to Turkey and Egypt.

He said Pakistan's industrial sector is paying Rs44.56 per unit for electricity while in Egypt the per unit rate has been Rs10.58 and in Turkey it is equal to Rs16.43.

Per unit electricity rate in Bangladesh has been 20.89, while the industries in India supplied electricity at 23.39 per unit, he said.

He said in Vietnam and Sri Lanka the power price has been 23.67 rupees per unit.

Gohar Ejaz urged the government to fix the electricity rate for consumers at Rs26 per unit.

He said reforms are compulsory in the energy sector and called for review of the agreements with independent power producers (IPPs) and they should be given payments only on power generation.

He demanded halting payments to those IPPs not producing electricity.

He also urged privatisation of the power distribution companies being run in losses.



DG Sports visited International Swimming Complex

Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: CM Khelta Punjab Games a suitable platform for young at Director General Sports Punjab Khizar Afzaal Chaudhry visited state-of-the-art Punjab International Swimming Complex on Wednesday.

Director Admin Dr M Kaleem and In-charge Punjab International Swimming Complex Mustafa Shah were also present on this occasion.

Khizar Afzaal Chaudhry also met with all the staff of the state-of-the-art Punjab International Swimming Complex and checked their attendance. He also inspected different parts of Punjab International Swimming Complex and checked the working of Relevant 66 to 2 feet staff.

Talking on this occasion, Khizar Afzaal Chaudhry said that Punjab contingent has exhibited excellent performance in the recently-held Inter-Provincial Quaid-e-Azam Games in Islamabad. "The Punjab contingent will maintain its level of performance in the next National Games as well".



He further said that the upcoming Inter-Division phase of Khelta Punjab Games will prove to be a suitable platform for young athletes of different games to demonstrate their sports skills. "The Punjab province has been blessed with exceptional sports talent and we are quite upbeat that our athletes will continue to excel in Inter-Division phase of Khelta Punjab Games".

Meanwhile, Khizar Afzaal Chaudhry presided over a meeting at National Hockey Stadium to review arrangements of Inter-Division phase of Khelta Punjab Games.

Director Admin Dr M Kaleem, Director Sports Rana Nadeem Anjum, Deputy Director Ata ur Rehman, Tariq Khanzada and other officials attended the meeting. During the meeting, multiple issues including accommodation of athletes, transport, and other facilities came under discussion.

Khizar Afzaal Chaudhry said that best facilities will be provided to all participating athletes and team officials during the Inter-Division phase of Khelta Punjab Games.

Woodward Trophy U-17 Inter Zonal Cricket Tournament



Sports Desk

KARACHI: Zone-III Whites beating Zone-V Whites by 6 wickets to become Group Champion of Group "D" and Zone-V Whites secured 2nd in the same Group both the Moved into Quarter Final in Woodward Trophy Under-17 Inter Zonal Cricket Tournament at Landhi Gymkhana.

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

Scores in Brief:

Zone-III Whites beat Zone-V Whites by 6 Wickets. Zone-V Whites 110 all out in 34.4 overs. Raheem Shah 41 6x4, Muhammad Khan 30. Anas Balouch (mf) 4/20, M. Maaz Maqbool 2/16, Nizam uddin 2/24.

Zone-III Whites 112/4 in 33.2 overs. Muhammad Hamza 51 4x4, Haider Ali 19. Muhammad Khan 2/25, Muhammad Hasnain 2/30.

After the end of the Match Saeed Jabbar Secretary Zone-V give the Medicam Man of the Match Award to Anas Balouch of Zone-III Whites.

In the 2nd Match at Young Fighter Ground Zone-I Blues beat Zone-II Green by 112 runs. Zone-I Blues 229/5 in 40 overs. Muhammad Yaqoob 64 10x4, M. Usman Khan 59 7x4, Owais Irfan 38, Mudassar Khan 26.

Zone-II Green 117 all out in 26.4 overs. M. Mudassar Siddiqui 57 4x4. Mudassar Khan (mf) 4/26, Inshal Nawab (sla) 3/8.

Later Ajmal Naseeb President Zone-I given the Medicam Man of the Match Award to Mudassar Khan of Zone-I Blues.

10th Begum Saifullah Khan Tennis Championship underway in Islamabad

Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: The 10th Begum Kulsum Saifullah Khan National Ranking Tennis Championships continued today at the PTF-SDA Tennis Complex, showcasing promising tennis talent across multiple age categories.

According to press released issued by Pakistan Tennis Federation on Wednesday, tournament patron Senator Salim Saifullah Khan made a special appearance, supporting the event that honors his late mother's memory and continues to promote tennis in Pakistan.

In men's singles, notable performances included Muzammil Murtaza defeating Sami Zeb Khan 6-3, 6-4 and Muhammad Shoaib emerging victorious against Ahmad Nael Qureshi in a challenging three-set match.

The ladies' singles saw strong showings from Laiba Iqbal who convincingly beat Fatima Ali Raja 6-2, 6-1 and Noor Malik who dominated her match with a 6-0, 6-0 win.

Young talents also impressed in junior categories. In the Boys 18 & Under category, Ahtesham Humayun and Bilal Asim advanced with straight-set victories while the younger age groups demonstrated remarkable skill and potential.

The tournament continues to serve as a crucial platform for identifying and nurturing tennis talent across Pakistan, maintaining the legacy of Begum Kulsum Saifullah Khan.

South Africa seeking ruthless edge against Pakistan in second test

CAPE TOWN: South Africa have already sealed their place in this year's World Test Championship (WTC) final ahead of the second and final test against Pakistan at Newlands on Friday but will want to keep their momentum going in the longest format.

South Africa beat Pakistan by two wickets in a tense first test in Pretoria and have won their last six red ball matches in a row, their joint best run since a team record nine victories in succession in 2002 and 2003.

This form has propelled them into the WTC final at Lord's in June but questions around their brittle batting line-up will be a major focus on what has recently been a perilous Newlands pitch.

The previous test played there against India 12 months ago lasted only 107 overs as the visitors won by seven wickets inside two days, the shortest test that has had a winner in history.

The wicket should be better this time round, but at a ground that used to be a fortress for the home team, they have lost two of their last three tests in Cape Town.

"We definitely haven't been clinical or ruthless when the opportunity or the situation is called upon," South Africa captain Temba Bavuma said. "But I think what we've done is that we've found ways to make sure that the result is on our side."

"If I look at our batting group, we don't have batters that are averaging 45-plus. All of us are mid-30s, late-30s, which shows that at some point guys are going to make some contribution to the team."

Pakistan will rue not closing out the first test having reduced South Africa to 99-8 chasing 148 on a tough Centurion Park wicket, only for all-rounder Marco Jansen and fast bowler Kagiso Rabada to carry the hosts to victory.

Pakistan captain Shan Masood has also spoken of the need for his side to be more ruthless when on top, both with the bat and the ball.

"We keep making the same mistakes but we have to get over the line and seize moments," he said. "There are moments where you get that extra cushion and we have to finish off games. We have to finish off our batting and bowling innings well."

Pakistan have won only two of their previous 16 tests in South Africa, and none since 2007. They have lost all four previous visits to Cape Town.

There is likely to be a bumper holiday crowd and they should enjoy the occasion with a sparse home calendar over the next 18 months.

According to the ICC's Future Tours Programme as it currently stands, this will be South Africa's last home test until the visit of Australia in September 2026, and their only home international across all three formats in 2025.

Squash Federation gives heroic reception to Harmas Raja for winning gold medal in US tournament

Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: US Junior Open Squash Championship was held at Philadelphia (USA) between 14 - 17 December, 2024.

The world's largest individual squash tournament with 1,007 players representing fifty-one nations, saw just three nations earn titles as Egypt, the United States and Pakistan.

Harmas Ali Raja, squash player from Rawalpindi (Pakistan) also participated in Boys U-11 age group. The player exhib-

ited outstanding performance and won Gold Medal in the championship.

After the historic victory, the player was given a warm reception by Pakistan Squash Federation on his return at Islamabad International Airport on 31 December, 2024. Apart from PSF Officials and staff, a large number of players, coaches and squash lovers also attended the welcome activity. The player was brought to Pakistan Squash Federation in the form of rally and was further accompanied to his residence in Rawal-



pindi City.

President and Senior Vice President Pakistan Squash Federation appreciated

the outclass performance and felicitated Harmas Ali Raja for the brilliant victory during prestigious event of Squash in US.

Saud Shakeel shines as Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan slip in new ICC Test rankings

Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: The latest ICC Test batting and bowling rankings, released on Wednesday, reflected a significant reshuffling of positions for Pakistani cricketers following their two-wicket defeat to South Africa in the first Test of the ongoing series.

Saud Shakeel emerged as a standout performer for Pakistan, showcasing grit against South Africa's fearsome pace attack.

Although he fell cheaply in the first innings, managing just 14 runs off six balls, Shakeel bounced back with a determined 84 in the second innings. This performance earned him a three-place jump in the ICC Test batting rankings, placing him at the sixth position with 764 points—a career-best achievement.

Former captain Babar Azam, despite



breaking his half-century drought with a vital 50 off 85 balls in the second innings, dropped two places to the

17th spot with 669 rating points. His first-innings dismissal for just four runs compounded his decline in the rank-

ings, reflecting the ongoing challenges he faces in maintaining consistency.

Wicketkeeper-batter Mohammad Rizwan's form in Test cricket remained below expectations. Scoring only 30 runs across both innings of the match, he slipped two places to the 21st spot in the ICC Test Batting Rankings, emphasizing the need for improved contributions in the second Test.

In the ICC Test bowling rankings, spinner Noman Ali and pace spearhead Shaheen Shah Afridi—who missed the first Test—each dropped one place, now sitting at ninth and eighteenth, respectively.

However, Naseem Shah delivered an impactful performance, taking four wickets across two innings. His efforts earned him a six-place rise to 33rd position, showcasing his growing prominence in Pakistan's bowling attack.

Salman Agha confident of beating Proteas in Newlands test match

Sports Desk

CAPE TOWN: All-rounder Salman Ali Agha has said that the Pakistan cricket team was confident of beating South Africa in the second and last test of the two-match series in Newlands, Cape Town starting from January 3 (Friday).

Talking to the journalists prior to a practice session in Newlands, Cape Town on Wednesday, he said the team lost the first test match in Johannesburg by a whisker, adding that the first test match was 'anyone's game' which the Proteas won due to tenacity of Kagiso Rabada and Marco Jansen.

"Team's morale is very high as we lost by a close margin in the first test while we beat the Proteas in the three-match ODI series convincingly," Salman said, expressing the hope that the second test match will be a 'cracker' of a contest.

He further said that the team has the belief that it can beat South Africa at their home soil, adding that they beat the Proteas in the ODI series but were a



bit short in the first test match in Johannesburg.

"To a question he said that the team was in good stead and no conclusions could be made about the pitch in Newlands, adding it looked a different strip from what team played on in Johannesburg with less amount of grass on the pitch.

About inclusion of a specialist spinner in the squad at Newlands, Salman Ali Agha, who is himself a spinner, said the team management will decide on it after having a look at the pitch tomorrow, adding that the statistics favour inclusion of a spinner at the Newlands.

"I just looked at the pitch and I thought I

will bowl in this test match because I have not bowled during the past the three test matches I have played," he responded to a question, adding his role will be important in the test match as an all-rounder.

About Muhammad Abbas, the all-rounder said "Muhammad Abbas is very accurate and I have not seen anyone like him as he knows his job." He was a bit rusty in the first innings of the Johannesburg test but he was outstanding in the second innings, adding it was Muhammad Abbas who brought us back in the game by claiming six scalps after Aiden Markram and Bavuma looked to finish easily. He further said it was amazing to see a quick bowler the whole first session on the fourth day of first test match in Johannesburg.

About the South African team in the WTC final, the all-rounder said that the Proteas are a formidable side with strong batting and bowling line-up, adding that their qualification for the WTC final speaks volumes about the quality of their cricketing skills.

Meeting

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



Photo: PID

Cabinet terms beginning of Pakistan's term as UNSC member, big achievement on diplomatic front

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: A meeting of the federal cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday termed Pakistan's two-year term as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) as a significant achievement on the diplomatic front.

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar earlier, briefed the cabinet about Pakistan's term at the UNSC which began today. The meeting was held

at the Prime Minister's House, according to PM Office Media Wing.

During the meeting, the prime minister directed that the details of public sector imports from Gwadar Port, over the past three months, should be presented in the next meeting of the cabinet.

The cabinet gave its principal approval for legislation on amendments to Section 3(7) of the Pakistan Telecommunication (Reorganization) Act, on the recommendation of the cabinet division/secretariat. It also recommended

approval of the regulations for the appointment of Information Group officers as Press Officers at Pakistan's diplomatic missions abroad, proposed by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

These regulations would ensure a more transparent and merit-based process for the appointment of Information Group officers at Pakistan's foreign missions.

The cabinet approved the registration/recognition of Liaquat University of Medical and Health Sciences, Thatta, on the recommendation of the

Ministry of National Health.

The cabinet, in light of the judgment in Human Rights Case No. 623-P/2017 by the honourable Supreme Court of Pakistan and the recommendation of the Ministry of National Health, approved the reconstitution of a committee to determine the prices of life-saving medical equipment.

On the recommendation of the Ministry of National Food Security and Research, the cabinet approved sending the National Food Safety, Animal and Plant Health Authority Bill to Parliament.

It also ratified the decisions taken in the meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Legislative Cases held on December 17, 2024. However, the ratification of amendments to the Citizenship Act has been deferred.

The cabinet accorded its approval to the decisions taken in the meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee held on December 18.

The cabinet ratified the decisions made in the meeting of the Cabinet Committee on State-Owned Enterprises held on December 24.

Russia, Central Asian countries want to trade through Pakistani ports: Qaiser

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh on Wednesday said that Russia and Central Asian countries wanted to trade through Pakistani ports as the world's major shipping companies were investing here which will make Pakistan an important trade hub in the region.

Addressing a press conference here, the minister said that Central Asian countries had made a lot of progress and development in the last ten years in that regard but they do not have their own ports and were intending to sell their goods through Pakistan.

He said that the institutions of the Ministry of Maritime Affairs earned a profit of Rs 90 billion last year. The profit has increased by 25 percent compared to the previous year and will increase further in the next financial year.

"Pakistan has become a gateway for maritime trade as 95 percent of the country's trade is done through Karachi Port and Port Qasim," he added.

Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh said the present government was making all-out efforts in deepening the country's ports because the eyes of the whole world are Pakistani port and interested to trade through these ports. "Cheap



goods and commodities from Central Asian countries can export through Pakistan and major companies of the world interested in investing in Pakistan, we are examining various aspects in this regard," he maintained.

When the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz government incepted, the minister said

that the profit of Karachi Port was Rs 2 billion, now its profit has increased from Rs 2 billion to Rs 10 billion, efforts were underway to further improve it, adding that the profit of Port Qasim had increased to Rs 40 billion.

"I personally sit with the Pakistan National Shipping Corporation (PNSC) for two

hours in the first week of every month to discuss all issues pertaining to the corporation," he informed. He said that 95 percent of Pakistan's imports and exports were handled through Karachi Port and Port Qasim.

Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh highlighted the important role of the maritime sector in Pakistan's economy. He said that the Ministry of Maritime's trade and overseas were the annual export of 400 million tons of fishery products, adding that Hutchison Ports has announced an investment of \$1 billion in Pakistan and AD Ports has announced an investment of \$330 million in the next three years.

Senator Rubina Khalid's big announcement for the deserving women

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Senator Rubina Khalid, made a significant announcement for the deserving women of BISP at the beginning of the New Year 2025. She announced that, starting from January 2025, the amount of the Benazir Kafalat quarterly installment has been increased from Rs. 10,500 to Rs. 13,500.

At a ceremony held at the BISP Head Office on the occasion of the New Year, Chairperson Senator Rubina Khalid, along with Secretary Amer Ali Ahmad, Additional Secretary Dr. Tahir Noor, and staff, celebrated by cutting a cake to mark this major development.

On this occasion, Senator Rubina

Khalid stated, "We are dedicating this year to the Benazir Hunarmand Program. The program aims to empower deserving families or their members by providing skill training in various fields aligned with international trends. This initiative will help them stand on their own feet and earn a sustainable livelihood."

Senator Rubina Khalid further affirmed, "This year, through the BISP platform, we will continue to serve underprivileged communities with honesty, passion, and determination."

She also extended heartfelt New Year greetings to the people of Pakistan on behalf of BISP. The ceremony not only celebrated the joy of the New Year but also reinforced the commitment to a brighter future for deserving fami-



lies. BISP's initiatives continue to be a beacon of hope and a source of positive change in the lives of the underprivileged across the country.

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DPM/FM Dar chairs preparatory committee meeting on girls' education in Muslim communities



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister/ Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Wednesday chaired a meeting of the preparatory committee for the international conference on 'Girls' education in Muslim communities: challenges and opportunities,' to be hosted by Pakistan from 11-12 January.

The meeting was attended by the Minister Youth Affairs Rana Mashood Ahmad Khan, Secretary Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Secretary Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Chairman CDA, and other senior officials of the Ministry

of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, Foreign Office Spokesperson said in a press release.

DPM/FM Dar chairs preparatory committee meeting on girls' education in Muslim communities

DPM/FM Dar chairs preparatory committee meeting on girls' education in Muslim communities. The committee reviewed the preparations for the conference, which would feature a comprehensive agenda, including discussions on barriers to girls' education; the social and economic benefits of girls' education; and innovative approaches to advancing education equity.

Pakistan Navy Ship MOAWIN seizes large cache of narcotics in North Arabian Sea



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Navy Ship MOAWIN seized a large cache of narcotics during a counter-narcotics operation in North Arabian Sea. The seized narcotics are estimated to be worth approximately USD 1 million in international market.

The cache was being transported via sea to international destinations. During the operation, PNS

MOAWIN, supported by Pakistan Navy air assets, successfully intercepted a Dhow, conducted boarding operations, and apprehended the narcotics, which were stowed in a hidden compartment of the vessel.

The successful execution of this anti-narcotics operation demonstrates Pakistan Navy's vigilance, professionalism, and resolve to deter and disrupt all illegal activities, ensuring good order at sea.

FBR achieves 97pc tax collection target in December 2024

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has achieved 97 percent of its tax collection target for December 2024, collecting Rs 1328 billion against the set amount of Rs 1370 billion.

The Rs 1328 billion collection in December represents a significant increase of 35 percent as compared to November's tax collection. Furthermore, there was a notable 56 percent increase in tax collection in comparison with December of the previous financial year.

In the first six months of the current financial year, the FBR collected Rs. 5624 billion in taxes, falling short by Rs 385 billion of its target of Rs. 6009 billion.

Earlier it was reported that the Large Taxpayer Office (LTO) Karachi set a new record in tax collection, reporting a 20 percent increase in tax receipts compared to the same period last year.

Reports suggest that, during the first five months of the fiscal year 2024-25, LTO Karachi collected

Rs1,110 billion in taxes, a significant rise from Rs924 billion in the corresponding period of the previous fiscal year.

LTO Karachi's direct tax collection during the first five months amounted to Rs542 billion, up from Rs451 billion in the same period last year, marking a 20pc increase. The office also issued Rs47 billion in refunds over the same period.

Indirect and sales tax collection by



LTO Karachi saw an 18pc rise, accumulating Rs494 billion in the first five months. This compares to Rs420 billion collected in the corresponding period last year.

The increase is largely driven by higher local transactions, where sales tax collection saw a 30pc jump to Rs203 billion.

However, challenges remain in the collection of import sales tax due to a decline in import bills, according to sources from the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR).