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IIOJK Hight Court declares property rights fundamental amid rising property confiscations

WEB DESK

SRINAGAR

In Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir, amid an ongoing spree of property confiscations targeting Kashmiris under various pretexts, the High Court has declared that the right to property is not merely a constitutional or statutory entitlement but a fundamental human right.

According to Kashmir Media Service, the ruling came in response to a petition filed by Abdul Majeed Lone, a resident of Tangdhar in Karnah, Kupwara, seeking justice for the occupation of over 12 kanals of his land by the Indian Army since 1978 without compensation or legal acquisition.

In its judgment, the court, presided over by Justice Wasim Sadiq Nargal, ordered New Delhi to compensate Lone for decades of unauthorized land occupation. The court described the prolonged occupation without due process as a violation of fundamental human rights. "The right to property," the court asserted, "falls within the realm of human rights, encompassing shelter, livelihood, and dignity."

Lone detailed in his plea that the authorities had failed to pay rent for the occupied land or initiate acquisition proceedings, effectively depriving him of his lawful rights. The court deemed these actions illegal and unconstitutional, holding New Delhi accountable.

● Indian forces arrest dozens in IIOJK amid intensified crackdown

Indian forces intensify atrocities against unarmed Kashmiris: APHC-AJK

● Kashmir ulema urge immediate dialogue on Waqf Act amendments

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD/JAMMU/SRINAGAR



The All Parties Hurriyat Conference Azad Jammu and Kashmir (APHC-AJK) chapter has strongly condemned widespread arrests of innocent youths by Indian forces in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

According to Kashmir Media Service, APHC-AJK General Secretary Advocate Pervez Shah and senior leaders Muhammad Farooq Rehmani and Mahmood Ahmed Saghar in their statements in Islamabad said that Indian forces have intensified their brutal operations in the occupied territory. They said the occupation forces are employing violent tactics to suppress the Kashmiri freedom struggle.

The leaders highlighted the violent cordon-and-search operations in various districts, including Rajouri, Poonch, Udhampur, Reasi, and Doda, during which dozens of youths were arrested. They revealed that Indian troops invade homes during these operations, harassing residents, vandalizing property, and detaining innocent individuals arbitrarily.

The APHC-AJK leaders reiterated that India's oppressive measures would never succeed in crushing the Kashmiris' resolve for freedom. They urged the international community to pressure India to cease its atrocities against the Kashmiri people and work towards a peaceful resolution of the Kashmir dispute in accordance with international law and the aspirations of the Kashmiri people.

Meanwhile,

Indian forces have arrested dozens of people during a series of sweeping cordon and search operations and raids across multiple districts of Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

According to the Kashmir Media Service, in Kathua district, the operations were carried out by personnel from the Indian Army's Rashtriya Rifles, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), the Special Operations Group (SOG), and the Village Defense Guards (VDGs). At least 10 youths were arrested in areas such as Malhar, Bani, upper reaches of Billawar, Kana Chack, Haria Chack, Spral Pain, Chack Wajir, and Lahbju in the district. Several electronic devices were also seized during the raids.

Further operations were launched by joint teams of the Indian Army, paramilitary Central Reserve Police Force and police in the districts of Kishtwar, Doda, Rajouri, Poonch, Udhampur, and Reasi, targeting both rural and urban areas, including foothill habitations and residential neighborhoods.

According to an official statement, over 20 youths identified during the searches have been taken into custody, with investigations currently ongoing. "Several people have been detained, and their questioning is in progress," a senior official from the Zonal Police Headquarters in Jammu told the media.

The operations have intensified in recent days, with the occupation forces justifying their actions by labeling the arrested people as over-ground workers.

In another development, Indian police arrested two prominent leaders, Bupinder Singh and Sohan Chand, in the Katra area of Reasi district. Both leaders are representing laborers and shopkeepers protesting against a proposed ropeway project along the Hindu pilgrimage trek route to the Vaishno Devi shrine in the district.

Additionally, Indian police have arrested two persons, Rocky Sehgal and Murad Ali, under the draconian Public Safety Act (PSA) in Udhampur and Samba districts, respectively.

Meanwhile,

The Mutahida Majlis-E-Ulema (MMU), the prominent Muslim religious and social body representing the Muslim community in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir, has demanded dialogue on the proposed amendments to the Waqf Act, 2024 .

According to Kashmir Media Service, the MMU, under the leadership of Patron Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, in a statement in Srinagar feared that these amendments could undermine the autonomy and fundamental purpose of Waqf properties.

These amendments have sparked significant concerns and anxiety within the Kashmiri community due to their potential impact on religious, social and charitable institutions.

The organization believes that the proposed changes could have far-reaching implications on the welfare and self-governance of the Muslim community in the occupied territory.

In a letter addressed to Jagdambika Pal, Chairman Joint committee on Waqf amendment Bill, the MMU reiterated the importance of timely dialogue.

"Considering the gravity of the situation and its potential impact on the community, we once again request you to give us an audience at the earliest possible time," stated Mirwaiz Umar Farooq. He stressed that [occupied] Jammu and Kashmir, being a Muslim-majority state, requires its concerns to be heard and addressed thoughtfully.

"We believe that a meeting will provide an opportunity for meaningful dialogue rather than unilateral actions," urged the letter.

Protests in Jammu and Baramulla against lack of basic amenities

MONITORING DESK

JAMMU

In Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir, protests were held in Jammu and Baramullah districts against inadequate infrastructure and basic services.

According to Kashmir Media Service, locals gathered in Akhnoor area of Jammu to protest the stalled repair of a 500-meter stretch of the main road near the steel bridge over the Chenab River. The road has been in disrepair for three years, following delays in a road-widening project due to land acquisition issues related to bridge construction. Residents complained of worsening conditions, including soil erosion leading to water and mud entering their homes, severely disrupting daily life.

Protesters criticized the administration and the Public Works Department (PWD) for neglecting their responsibilities. They demanded immediate action to address the issue, emphasizing the challenges posed by the crumbling infrastructure.

Meanwhile, in Tangmarg's Hardu Aboora village of Baramulla district, women staged a protest outside the office of the Assistant Executive Engineer (AEE) of the Public Health Engineering (PHE) Department. They highlighted the persistent issue of water scarcity in their area, which has left them without access to clean drinking water for an extended period.

"We have been facing severe water scarcity, and no official from the PHE Department has visited our village to address the issue," a protester said.

Computerized Land Records to Bring Transparency, Speed to Muzaffarabad Division

● Commissioner Muzaffarabad Directs Expedited Completion of Land Record Computerization

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUZAFFARABAD



Commissioner Muzaffarabad Division Masood-ur-Rehman chaired a meeting to discuss the computerization of land records through the Land Records Management and Information System (LRMIS). The meeting was attended by Deputy Commissioners, IT officers, and other relevant staff.

The Commissioner sought details on ongoing and completed projects, emphasizing the need to address issues and improve future actions. IT officials explained that digital record transfers are being done under the Land Revenue Act 1967, which prohibits traditional land records and mandates the use of LRMIS for all land records.

The meeting highlighted progress in computerizing land records, including:

- Computerization Progress: 69 out of 279 villages in Muzaffarabad district, 19 out of 22 villages in Leepa, and 30 out of 62 villages in Tehsil Aathmaqam have been completed.
- Digital Service Centers: Functional centers are established at district headquarters across Muzaffarabad Division.
- Phase II Completion: Expected by June 2025.
- Service Center Setup: Delayed due to space unavailability, with the Commissioner directing Deputy Commissioners to arrange suitable spaces immediately.

The Commissioner emphasized the importance of cooperation between Revenue Department officials and IT officers to avoid delays.

AJK President Discusses IOK Situation With Former President

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD



Former President and Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir, Sardar Muhammad Yaqoob Khan held a detailed one-on-one meeting with the AJK president Barrister sultan Mehmood Chaudhry here today.During the meeting, the duo discussed in detail the issues of mutual concern with particular focus on the prevailing political and human rights situation in Indian occupied territory of Jammu and Kashmir.On the occasion, they agreed in principle to raise the issue of Kashmir forcefully at the international level and expose Indian brutalities in Kashmir before the world.On the occasion, the President, while referring to India's Extra-Territorial Killings, said that murder of Canadian citizen Hardeep Singh Nijjar by Indian agents has left India exposed at global level."India, under Modi's rule, has emerged as a global terrorist", he added.

PM directs to establish anti-riots force to tackle rioters

● National security is directly linked with economic stability, says PM Shehbaz

MUDASSER CH.

ISLAMABAD



Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday said that the government will establish an anti-riots force in Islamabad and across the country to combat future attempts to create violence and unrest in the country.

This force will be equipped with professional training and necessary equipment, on the lines of international standards.

Legal actions will be taken against those who damage public and private property, along with armed individuals, the prime minister said.

Chairing a meeting to review law and order situation in the country, the prime minister instructed that a comprehensive strategy be developed to prevent any future attempts to march towards Islamabad or any other city for personal or political gains.

He emphasized that those who attempted to bankrupt the country to save their government were brought to justice.

The prime minister was briefed on the recent protests across the country, where demonstrators targeted government property and attacked police and rangers personnel.

The government, he said demonstrated restraint by preventing armed individuals from spreading chaos under the guise of peaceful protests.

"Instead of following legal procedures, repeated efforts were made to create chaos by mobilizing forces towards Islamabad, attempting to spread unrest across the country" the prime minister said.

He said during the mobilization of these disruptive elements, several security forces' personnel were injured and martyred.

"How can these individuals claim to be revolutionary when they are attempting to destroy the nation and create chaos?" the prime minister questioned.

He directed that immediate legal action be taken against the elements involved in the violent mob that marched towards Islamabad.

The prime minister also emphasized the need for further improvements in the prosecution system.

"Once the disruptive group dispersed, the stock exchange crossed the 100,000 points mark," the prime minister pointed out. "The country suffered billions in losses due to these attempts to spread disorder."

The prime minister held the disruptive group and its masterminds responsible for the economic damage.

He called for the immediate identification and punishment of the disruptive elements within the group.

"The entire nation including myself pay tribute to the security personnel who sacrificed their lives while performing their duties during this turmoil," he added.

The prime minister also called for bringing to justice those responsible for inciting public agitation, uncertainty, and unrest during the recent events.

The meeting was attended by Federal Ministers Ahad Khan Cheema, Attaullah Tarar, Prime Minister's Advisor Rana Sanaullah, the Attorney General, and other senior officials.

Meanwhile,

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has called for collective efforts to strengthen country's economy as national security is directly linked with the economic stability.

Addressing the 26th security workshop of the National Defense University in Islamabad on Thursday, he said the national and the economic securities go hand and hand.

Shehbaz Sharif expressed the confidence that Pakistan is moving in the right direction. He said the Stock Exchange crossed the hundred thousand points, which is a big mark in Pakistan's history.

Regarding the security challenges, he said the brave soldiers of Pakistan Army, Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs), civilians, doctors, nurses, skilled workers, children, mothers and people from all walks of life rendered sacrifices to defeat terrorism.

He added that the nation paid a huge price including a loss of 89,000 lives and economic damages worth 130 billion dollars in the war against terrorism.

The prime minister said the monster of terrorism has come back and it is showing its ugly face again in parts of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

"A hefty amount of Rs600 billion has been given to KP governments since 2010 but it couldn't establish the projects of Safe City and CTD," said the prime minister.

He said that thousands of people were marching towards Islamabad with guns in their hands in order to create anarchy and chaos.

He said the marchers wanted to destroy this hard-earned stability in terms of bringing down inflation rate, increasing exports and remittances and skyrocketing stock exchange.

Replying to a question, Shehbaz Sharif said the Apex Committee has decided to launch an operation against the foreign funded movements in Balochistan.

He said the operation against such entities is going on under the umbrella of 'Azm-e-Istehkam' to ensure progress and prosperity of the people of Balochistan.

PWD demands additional Rs135 mln for repair work of govt flats in G-8

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

Pakistan Public Works Department (PWD) has demanded an additional Rs 135 million to complete the repair and renovation of government flats and blocks in Sector G-8, Islamabad.

The PWD has partially completed repair and renovation works in G-8, the project will only be finalized once the required funds are made available, an official in the department told APP.

The remaining works are expected to be completed within six months after the funds are received.

He said the scope of the repairs includes internal and external painting of all flats, replacement of worn-out shutters, bathroom repairs with all necessary accessories, replacement of glass panes, and roof treatment.

To a question, the official said that the Federal Government Employees Housing Authority (FGEHA) is actively conducting operations against unauthorized commercial use of residential buildings in Sectors G-13 and G-14 of Islamabad.

The official said the authority has already issued notices to property owners engaging in illegal commercial activities within residential areas.

According to the Islamabad Capital Territory Building Control Regulation 2020, the FGEHA has committed to taking legal action against property owners involved in the unlawful commercial use of residential buildings in these sectors, he added.



ISLAMABAD: A tractor plough the agriculture field at a Farm house in Chak shahzad in the Federal Capital. — Staff Photo

FAST Cables and UMT Collaborate to Host 'FAST Forward Sustainable Development' Forum on Water and Energy in Lahore

TAHIR CH.

LAHORE

FAST Cables organized the "FAST Forward Sustainable Development" forum on Thursday, 28th November 2024, at the University of Management and Technology (UMT), Lahore. The event provided a collaborative platform to discuss the critical nexus of water and energy, bringing together renowned experts from NGOs, government, academia, and industry to tackle Pakistan's pressing environmental challenges.

The forum featured thought-provoking discussions on water conservation, renewable energy adoption, and strategies to promote Pakistan's sustainable development. Key topics included resource conservation, water efficiency, and transitioning towards sustainable energy solutions.

The forum commenced with an inspiring welcome address by UMT President Ibrahim Hasan Murad, who highlighted academia's pivotal role in fostering sustainability. Kamal Amjad Mian, CEO of FAST Cables, delivered the keynote address, emphasizing the company's unwavering commitment to sustainable innovation and renewable energy solutions.

Prominent speakers shared their insights and actionable strategies:

Dr. Naveed Arshad, Director at LUMS Energy Institute, explored energy innovations and sustainable solutions, Dr Imran Azam, Manager of Water Stewardship at WWF, specializes in climate change and water management. He earned his PhD in Hydraulic Engineering, Dr. Fazilda Nabeel, an expert in climate and water governance, presented actionable strategies to ensure water and energy security and Mr. Rizwan Ali, Assistant Chief for Environment & Climate Change at Punjab's Planning & Development Board has extensive public policy experience.



Kamal Amjad Mian, CEO of FAST Cables, reiterated the company's dedication to addressing climate challenges:

"As Pakistan's largest cable manufacturer, we embrace our responsibility to combat the climate crisis. Pakistan, ranked among the top five most climate-vulnerable nations, requires urgent and collective action. Our 'FAST Forward Sustainable Development' platform seeks to bridge gaps between industry, academia, and society to create solutions for a sustainable future. This forum marks the beginning of a broader initiative, with upcoming events planned in Karachi and Islamabad."

A highlight of the event was the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to launch the FAST Excellence Award and FAST Sustainability Award, aimed at recognizing and rewarding impactful initiatives that contribute to sustainability across industries.

The forum concluded with an interactive Q&A session where enthusiastic students engaged with the panelists, followed by closing remarks from Ibrahim Hasan Murad. He reiterated the urgency of collective action to address Pakistan's water and energy challenges.

FAST Cables' "FAST Forward Sustainable Development" forum marked a significant milestone in fostering partnerships and generating actionable ideas to combat Pakistan's climate crisis.

Azad Kashmir's Health Department Gets Rs 895.316 Million Boost

- Salaries of Azad Kashmir Health Staff Increased, Aligning with Federal Pattern

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MUZAFFARABAD

Azad Kashmir's Health Department has received a significant boost with an allocation of Rs 895.316 million to meet the demands of doctors, paramedical staff, and allied health staff.

This development comes on the directions of Prime Minister Azad Kashmir Chaudhry Anwarul Haq and the efforts of Health Minister Dr. Nisar Ansar Abdali.

The Health Department has issued a notification to increase the salaries of doctors, paramedical staff, staff nurses, and allied health staff across all cadres in Azad Kashmir, aligning with the federal pattern.

This move follows the demand of health staff and the Supreme Court's decision.

The additional provision of Rs 895.316 million, approved by the Government of Pakistan, will cover allowances such as advance healthcare allowance, non-practicing allowance, and medical risk allowance, equivalent to those approved for federal-level employees.

These increases have been made under the Rules (Revised) 1985, following the approval of the Azad Kashmir Cabinet.

AIOU extends enrollment deadline till Dec 5

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

Allama Iqbal Open University(AIOU) has extended the enrollment deadline for its continue students till December 5.

According to the AIOU, due to the recent law and order situation, some students of the University were unable to enroll themselves.

They requested the Vice-Chancellor to provide them a special chance to enroll and save their semester from being wasted.

In response, Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood approved an extension of the enrollment deadline to December 5.

He emphasized that students' semesters will not be wasted under any circumstances.

Continuing students enrolled in Associate Degree, BBA, BS (ODL Programs), B.Ed., and Postgraduate Diploma programs can now complete their enrollment by December 5.

PAS-ANSO International Conference on Emerging Pathogens to be held in December

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD



Pakistan Academy of Sciences (PAS), in collaboration with the Alliance of National and International Science Organizations for the Belt and Road Regions (ANSO), is set to host a conference on 'Understanding and Mitigating the Threat of Emerging Pathogens: Opportunities and Challenges' on December 14-15.

According to the PAS, "This conference aims to address the growing global challenge posed by emerging pathogens and their significant impact on public health, ecosystems, and economies."

With a focus on zoonotic diseases, responsible for 75 percent of emerging infections in humans, the event will bring together leading scientists, policymakers, and health professionals from across the globe to discuss strategies for surveillance, prevention, and management.

The conference is also aimed at enhancing understanding of global disease dynamics, considering the impact of globalization, travel, trade and the environment.

The conference will delve into critical themes, including Understanding pathogen transmission from wildlife to humans; Developing effective disease surveillance and reporting systems; Exploring molecular pathology and potential drug targets; Strengthening interdisciplinary collaboration and international partnerships to mitigate future threats; Understanding treatment and prevention strategies and assessing emerging pathogens in plants.

Renowned national and international experts will deliver keynote addresses, sharing insights into tackling pandemics like Ebola, avian influenza, and corona-viruses.

The discussions will emphasize the role of globalization, urbanization, deforestation, and agricultural practices in the emergence and spread of infectious diseases.

This event offers a unique platform for researchers, students, clinicians, health workers, veterinarians, virologists, plant scientists, and policymakers to exchange knowledge and foster collaborations.

The attendees will gain valuable insights into innovative prevention and treatment strategies while exploring the role of environmental and genetic factors in disease emergence.

The organizers believe the conference will set a new benchmark in global efforts to combat emerging pathogens.

As the world continues to grapple with the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, such initiatives are vital for enhancing preparedness and safeguarding public health.

The rise of emerging pathogens and the infections they cause has become a serious health problem.

Where did PTI protesters get tear gas shells? KP IG orders investigation

STAFF REPORTER

PESHAWAR



The Central Police Office in Peshawar has formally requested all District Police Officers (DPOs) to provide detailed accounts of their tear gas stocks following allegations of its use during a recent Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) protest. The protestors are accused of allegedly using government-issued tear gas shells.

On the orders of the Inspector General of Police (IGP) for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, an investigation into the matter has been initiated. In a letter sent to relevant authorities, police officials have been asked to submit information regarding the available tear gas stock and its usage over the past week.

The letter, issued by the Central Police Office, reiterates the importance of maintaining the police department's neutrality and political independence, referencing a previous communication sent on November 21 about police impartiality. The letter also highlights reports claiming that tear gas was used during protests in Islamabad, with a team from the AIG Logistics office being assigned to gather the necessary details.

This move underscores the ongoing efforts to ensure transparency and accountability in law enforcement activities during public protests.

CASS Webinar Calls for Public-Private Partnerships to Expand Digital Education and Create an Inclusive Tech Ecosystem

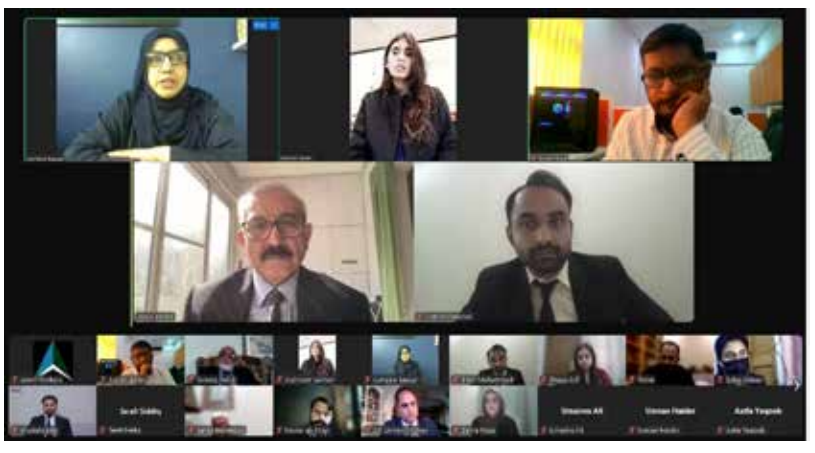
STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

The Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies (CASS), Islamabad, conducted a webinar on 'Bridging the Global Digital Divide: Access, Equity and Empowerment.' The session included speakers Dr Sumaira Kausar, Director Centre of Excellence of AI, Bahria University, Islamabad; Ms Mahnoor Salman, Senior AI Engineer & Co-founder, Atomcamp; and Mr Adnan Zaidi, CEO, Proxima AI. Shah Muhammad, Research Assistant at CASS moderated the proceedings and President CASS Air Marshal Javaid Ahmed (Retd) delivered the concluding remarks.

Speaking on the topic of 'Emerging Technologies and Academic R&D', Dr Sumaira Kausar highlighted the global disparities in adopting and commercializing emerging technologies, largely driven by geographical gaps. She noted that most digital infrastructure is concentrated in a few advanced economies, leaving many low-income countries in the early stages of AI adoption readiness. Dr Kausar explained the six stages of AI adoption, from awareness to sustainability, placing Pakistan in the exploration and experimentation phase. She emphasised that emerging technologies, including AI and quantum computing, will shape future global superpowers, urging Pakistan to prioritise these areas to close the digital divide. She called for promoting AI literacy, reskilling the workforce, and establishing ethical guidelines and regulatory frameworks to accelerate adoption. 'Education and accessibility are essential for quantum inclusion,' she said, stressing the need for strong government commitment to drive technological progress.

On the subject of 'Digital Literacy and Tech Ecosystems', Ms Mahnoor Salman emphasised the need for global cooperation to address the technological divide, advocating for technology transfer and the ethical use of AI. She highlighted the importance of Pakistan's participation in global forums like the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) to align national policies with global best practices. Ms Salman called for a holistic approach to promoting digital literacy in Pakistan and the role of Public-Private Partnerships in expanding financial access. She also stressed the need for policies to empower freelancers through skills development and vocational training tailored to market demands.



Mr Adnan Zaidi, speaking on 'Big Tech and Corporate R&D', highlighted how global tech giants can now influence national policies through lobbying, information control, government partnerships, and economic power. He warned that smaller nations face challenges like economic dependency, regulatory struggles, and threats to digital sovereignty. He also talked about the risks of digital colonialism, including data exploitation, cultural erosion, and inequitable access. To mitigate these, he recommended promoting local innovation, developing robust regulatory frameworks and focus on education, entrepreneurship and international collaboration as key priorities.

Air Marshal Javaid Ahmed (Retd), President CASS, Islamabad concluded the webinar by underscoring the need for Pakistan to address structural and institutional challenges in digital inclusion. He highlighted the importance of fostering indigenous Research and Development (R&D), digital literacy, and entrepreneurship to reduce reliance on foreign technologies and funding. President CASS urged that it was important for Pakistan to learn from global digital models while tailoring solutions to its unique needs. He also called for public-private partnerships to expand digital education and create an inclusive tech ecosystem.



Group photo of those who joined People's Party along with Minister of Mirpur Azad Kashmir Mangla Dam and Mangla Dam Housing Authority Chaudhry Qasim Majeed. — Staff Photo

NPA delegation visits safe city Islamabad

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD



The Mid-Career Management Course delegation from National Police Academy (NPA) Islamabad visited Safe City Islamabad, on Thursday.

A police spokesperson told APP that, the delegation visits the command-and-control center, the data hub unit, modern technology-equipped cameras, and the police operations center hall. They were fully briefed about the procedures and advantages of this project.

Furthermore, the delegation was informed that Safe City Islamabad is playing a significant role in various departments through modern techniques, including the Police Operations Center, Emergency Control Center, Data Hub Unit, Dispatch Control Center, E-Challan System, and the "Pucar-15" helpline.

The delegation was also apprised of the functionality and benefits of the Safe City cameras in the city. The modern cameras of Safe City are playing a crucial role in ensuring the safety of the city and preventing crimes and safeguarding the lives and property of citizens.

Face recognition cameras have been installed at the entry and exit points of the city which are playing an important role in identifying suspicious elements, he maintained.

The delegation also acknowledged the modern technical system of the Islamabad Police and its benefits. The delegation expressed special gratitude to DG Safe City Islamabad and his team for this successful visit.

World Bank, CDA joint team to prepare anti-smog plan

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD



World Bank Country Director Najy Benhassine called on Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi in Islamabad on Thursday and discussed with him a range of issues.

In the meeting, it was agreed to jointly control the smog problem. It was also decided to prepare an anti-smog plan by a joint team of the World Bank and Capital Development Authority (CDA).

Sustainable development goals in Pakistan and issues of mutual interest were also discussed during the meeting.

Mohsin Naqvi said "We have to formulate a clear and comprehensive anti-smog plan. This year, the AQI reached 271. We will welcome the World Bank's cooperation in improving Islamabad's air quality and making it a safe city."

He said every effort is being made to address the smog problem now. It is important to bring out the real causes of smog through a review report, he added.

Mohsin Naqvi said the installation of anti-smog machines in Islamabad is also being reviewed and they are looking to control air pollution in Islamabad with the help of the World Bank.

He said they started an electric bus service in the capital city to keep the atmosphere clean.

The Interior Minister said improving slums and rural areas is one of our priorities. He said providing clean water and sanitation to the people is also included in our goals.

During the meeting, the World Bank Country Director assured cooperation in achieving the goals of controlling smog.

He said they were ready to formulate anti-smog strategy in consultation with the CDA.

World Bank Country Director said report will help to reach the root of the problem.

Federal Home Secretary, Chairman CDA, Deputy Commissioner and concerned officials were also present on the occasion.

CDA unveils ambitious plans for 5-star hotels, luxury housing in Islamabad

MUDASSER CH.

ISLAMABAD



The Chairman of the Capital Development Authority (CDA), Muhammad Ali Randhawa, chaired a meeting to discuss the open auction for premium commercial plots designated for the development of 5-star hotels, as well as the upcoming launch of residential plots in Sector C-14. The meeting was attended by CDA members and the relevant senior officers.

During the meeting, Chairman CDA was briefed on two luxury hotel plots that have been offered for international auction, specifically targeting overseas Pakistani and investors. It may be noted that the bidding process for the hotel plots is set to conclude on December 17, 2024.

Chairman CDA was also briefed on the terms and conditions for both the hotel plots and upcoming balloting of residential plots in Sector C-14. It was highlighted that the CDA Board has recently approved flexible and investor-friendly terms and conditions aimed at facilitating the maximum participation. The recent initiatives introduced by CDA include easy payment plans, flexible terms and conditions as well as various incentives to encourage local and overseas Pakistanis.

Chairman CDA, Muhammad Ali Randhawa expressed his strong support for these initiatives, describing them as part of a strategic vision to attract substantial investments in Islamabad. He stated that these steps would position Islamabad as a global hub for tourism, business and modern urban living.

Chairman CDA also emphasized the need to create a conducive environment for high-end user and investors, with a particular focus on attracting investment from overseas Pakistanis. He directed the CDA to adopt a comprehensive strategy for engaging the overseas Pakistani, including active involvement of Pakistan's embassies and missions abroad, to spread awareness about the auction process and investment opportunities in Islamabad.

In addition to the commercial plots, the meeting discussed the upcoming launch of residential plots in Sector C-14, which is strategically located at the foothills of the scenic Margalla Hills. This sector is designed to offer a premium, peaceful lifestyle and will cater to overseas Pakistanis and local Pakistanis. Preference will be given to overseas Pakistanis investing in foreign currencies (USD).

Chairman Muhammad Ali Randhawa reaffirmed CDA's commitment to creating investment opportunities for both local and overseas Pakistanis, ensuring that Islamabad emerges as a leading destination for luxury and modern developments.

Internet services partially disrupted in twin cities, causing widespread inconvenience

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

Residents of Islamabad and Rawalpindi are facing significant disruptions in internet services, with browsing, downloading, and access to social media platforms being severely affected. Users across the twin cities have reported sluggish performance, even when using VPN services, making it difficult to carry out routine online activities.

The partial internet blackout has caused inconvenience in various sectors, including businesses, education, and online services. Many users have complained about delays in communications and work-related tasks, further exacerbating the impact on daily life.

The disruption has also made it challenging for students to attend online classes, and businesses that rely on smooth internet connectivity are facing interruptions in their operations. Social media platforms, which are widely used for both personal and professional purposes, are particularly slow, hindering communication and engagement.

As of now, authorities have not provided an official timeline for the full restoration of services, leaving residents and businesses in uncertainty about when normalcy will return. The cause of the disruption remains unclear, and many are hoping for a prompt resolution to mitigate the growing impact on daily activities.



Muzaffarabad Senior Member Prime Minister Inspection and Personnel Arrival Commission Ms. Parveen Akhtar Central Jail Raje (Muzaffarabad) after inspection group photo with Superintendent Jail Fazlur Rahman Abbasi and others.

32 cases lodged, 64 Afghans held over Nov 24 violent protest: RPO Pindi

STAFF REPORTER

RAWALPINDI

Regional Police Officer Rawalpindi Babar Sarfraz Alpa has said that 32 cases have been registered in connection with the 24th November violent protest of a political party.

Addressing a news conference in Rawalpindi along with the CPO Rawalpindi and DPO Attock on Thursday, Babar Alpa said 1,151 protesters have also been arrested and the verification of data has revealed that 64 of them were Afghan nationals.

The RPO Rawalpindi said that the PTI protesters were violent. He said police demonstrated restraint and none of the protestor was injured in Rawalpindi region. He however said the protestors resorted to direct firing on the police and one hundred and seventy police personnel including senior officials were injured on 24th November. He said the police vehicles were also damaged by the protestors.



The CPO Rawalpindi said the protesters also tried to ran over their vehicles on the police deployment.

The DPO Attock said law will take its course against the violent protesters and they will be brought to justice. He said the protesters attacked the police with firearms.

Attock police did not injure any of the protesters, DPO Attock said.

Babar Alpa further said the call for protest turned violent and several officers and officials including SSP and SP were injured due to violence by the protesters.

RPO further said that protesters opened fire directly on the police and threw tear gas, injuring 170 officials and 25 of them were in critical condition.

Senior Journalist Matiullah Jan found at Margalla Police Station after alleged abduction

● Journalist Matiullah Jan's two-day physical remand granted

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

Senior journalist Matiullah Jan, who was earlier reported missing after an alleged abduction in Islamabad, has been found at the Margalla Police Station, according to recent updates. The news comes after a wave of concern following claims made by prominent journalist and anchor Hamid Mir.

On Thursday morning, Mir took to X (formerly Twitter) to report that Matiullah Jan and another journalist, Saqib Bashir, had been abducted by unidentified individuals on the night of November 26. While Bashir was later released, Jan remained missing, raising alarm among journalists and the public alike.

In a follow-up, Roohan Ahmad, another journalist, confirmed that Jan was reportedly taken from outside PIMS Hospital in Islamabad. Ahmad's statement adds further context to the growing uncertainty surrounding Jan's disappearance.

The case took a dramatic turn when it was revealed that Saqib Bashir had filed a petition with the Islamabad High Court regarding the incident, seeking legal action for the abduction.

Matiullah Jan, a well-known journalist, had recently shared a controversial video on social media showing a Rangers official being run over by a vehicle in Islamabad. In the video, Jan suggested that the Rangers official was struck by his own vehicle, but later statements from Rangers officials contradicted this claim, alleging that a speeding vehicle driven by protesters had caused the incident. Jan had also reported that PIMS hospital staff were being pressured not to disclose casualties related to the operation against PTI protesters.

Amid mounting concerns over his safety, a post from journalist Arifa Noor at 9:12 AM confirmed that Matiullah Jan had been located at Margalla Police Station. Journalists were reported to be heading to the station to meet with him and clarify the situation further.



The case has sparked widespread debate about the safety and freedom of journalists in Pakistan, with many expressing solidarity with Jan and calling for a thorough investigation into the abduction claims. The circumstances surrounding his disappearance remain unclear, but the discovery of Jan at the police station has brought some relief to his colleagues and supporters.

Meanwhile,

Senior journalist Matiullah Jan was granted a two-day physical remand by an Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) in Islamabad on Thursday, following his arrest in a case filed at the Margalla Police Station. Jan, who has faced previous abduction concerns, was detained after allegedly defying police orders and being involved in an altercation at a security checkpoint.

The court hearing was presided over by Judge Tahir Abbas Sipra, who approved the remand after prosecutor Raja Naveed had requested a 30-day extension. The journalist was accused by the police of failing to stop at a security post in Sector E-9 and, instead, arguing with officers. According to authorities, Jan allegedly rammed his vehicle into a police constable, injuring him severely, and seized the constable's weapon. The police also claimed Jan appeared to be intoxicated at the time of the incident.

Jan's arrest has sparked concerns from human rights groups and the media. Imaan Zainab Mazari-Hazir, a prominent lawyer, expressed alarm over Jan's initial disappearance, stating that when she visited Margalla Police Station to meet him, he was not present, and police officials denied any knowledge of his whereabouts. Jan's son, Abdul Razzaq, further raised alarms, claiming that his father was abducted from the parking lot of the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) by unidentified individuals in an unmarked vehicle late at night.

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) condemned the incident, urging authorities to ensure Jan's safety and immediate release, while recalling his previous abduction in 2020, which remains unresolved. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) also voiced strong condemnation, calling the arrest an authoritarian attempt to silence journalists and demanding Jan's release.

Pakistan In Pursuance of Welfare State



A welfare state is a social and economic system in which state machinery undertakes responsibility for the social economic and well-being of its citizens. It has proposed courses of action to provide free health care, financial help for unemployed people, and social protection to the most suffering and deserving strata of society and implements policies to maintain the well-being of its citizens.

The genesis of the term Welfare State can be traced back to 1941. The term "Father of the Welfare State" is rightly given to Sir William Beveridge. The term is more commonly associated with the 1942 report Social Insurance and Allied Services by Sir William Beveridge.

The Islamic concept of a welfare state, or Islamic Welfare State (IWS), stems from the principles of Sharia and aims to create a society that is just, equitable, and economically thriving. The Islamic Welfare State is based on the idea that all income and wealth are gifts from God to all people. The basic principles of an IWS include protecting the lives, property, and honor of its people, eliminating discrimination based on race, color, language, or area, providing justice to the people, eradicating income and wealth inequalities, and providing basic needs to its citizens.

Since its inception, Pakistan has been in chase of implementing the welfare state principles in letter and spirit. According to Article 38 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the government of Pakistan is responsible for social security, shelter, nutrition, healthcare, and education for all dwellers of this beloved land without any prejudice based on caste, race, creed, or gender. Social protection is pivotal in building a stronger, self-sufficient, and affluent economy. It acts as a shield against inflation, safety against unemployment, protection against illness, and safeguard against other vulnerabilities and perils. Fostering inclusivity and steady development blended with social protection augments social cohesion, reduces economic disparities, and empowers people captivate the vicious cycle of poverty. It also puts economic system on the right track, promotes resilience, and pledges equity for all. Social protection is sin qua non for gearing up the economy of any state, reducing poverty, and erecting edifice of any welfare state.

In pursuance of this, the Government of Pakistan has erected many machines, of which we will have a look at a few institutions.

EOBI is a federal government organization and was launched in July 1976 to provide coverage to workers employed by industrial and commercial enterprises with five or more employees, irrespective of their status. The maximum wage limit for payment of contributions and payment of benefits is Rs. 37000/- per month. Under this scheme, the employees are entitled to benefits of old age pension, invalidity pension, survivor's pension, and old age grant. According to the existing rules, employers pay mandatory contributions of 5 percent minimum wages per month and the employees have to pay minimum contributions of 1 percent per month.

The benefits include Survivor's pension, invalidity pension, and old-age grants. The maturity age and eligibility for getting pension is 60 years for male workers and 55 years for female workers. EOBI is making marvelous contributions to the social and economic growth of the country since its inception.

First introduced in 1967, the social security law was adopted by the provinces in 1970. The board of trustees is the apex authority holder of this institution, headed by Commissioner. The benefits given by social security include sickness, maternity, work injury, invalidity, and death benefits. The law of social security is applied to industrial and commercial establishments employing 10 or more employees. In 1972 radical changes were made in the law and employees were also made liable to contribute along with employers. An array of hospitals, treatment centers, dispensaries, well-qualified doctors, paramedical staff, and ambulances are included in the networks of social security. The workers and their dependents are entitled to medical care from the first day of employment. The insured persons are entitled to injury benefits, sickness benefits, and maternity benefits inter alia other fringe benefits.

The WWF was established in 1971 under the Workers Welfare Fund Ordinance. The laborers working nationwide are the main beneficiaries of the Worker Welfare Fund.

Since its beginning the WWF is trying its best to provide benefits to the workers as well as the families of the workers. They provide low-cost housing for industrial workers, free education up to the secondary level, and scholarships for post-secondary level, marriage grants, and death grants.

Though Pakistan is trying its best to deliver to the poor people of Pakistan, some radical changes are the need of the hour to make the system vibrant people-oriented, and comprehensive. In the long run, God willing this country will become a model to be emulated in the field of social security.

Fall of Adani

The meteoric rise of Gautam Adani has become emblematic of a broader issue plaguing India's economic landscape: crony capitalism. The depth of Adani's pockets has coincided with Indian PM Narendra Modi's rise to power, going back to the start of both men's careers in the 1980s.

By 2023, Adani had become the world's third richest man, and despite a long history of credible allegations of financial fraud and graft, nothing would stick. But that year, American investment research firm Hindenburg Research, which had previously exposed several multi-billion dollar stock market frauds, released a report showing some of the Adani Group's dirty dealings. The report caused Adani and his companies to lose about half their value as the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), the country's market regulator, opened an investigation. But despite being handed the evidence on a silver platter, the investigation curiously stalled and Adani's wealth recovered, while Indian investigators turned their guns on Hindenburg for the 'crime' of exposing allegedly criminal conduct. Then, in August this year, Hindenburg released a new report alleging that the SEBI chief had a stake in some offshore companies that dealt extensively with Adani's companies. Despite outcry from opposition political parties and even the regulatory agency's own staff, the SEBI chief still has her job and has been ducking parliamentary scrutiny. But the US indictments are the biggest challenge Adani has ever faced. For the first time, his friend Modi can't protect him. Adani and his associates are charged with paying over $250 million in bribes in exchange for favourable contracts.

(Courtesy The Express Tribune)

PTI at D-Chowk

As PTI managed to overwhelm D-Chowk and bring its three days of long march on the federal capital to its zenith, it's a nail-biting situation on the political and administrative fronts. The 'Final Call' from former PM Imran Khan to rally for the resurrection of the February 8 mandate and release of political prisoners, including himself, has attained unprecedented success. It is a fact that supporters and workers of PTI braved all odds to assemble in the capital city. It is also a reality that peripheries, especially K-P, Balochistan and South Punjab, were at the vanguard as the twin-cities and Central Punjab preferred to stay away.

Baton-charge, tear-gassing and clashes with the security forces are now fine-print catalogs of the movement, and the million-dollar question is: what next? An overnight clash that left four paramilitary personnel dead, along with a cop, are unfortunate filings of the protest. The government's thrust to deal with protesters physically by bringing life to a standstill has backfired. Last but not least, scenes of agitators embracing men in uniform at the twilight of their march near the Red Zone hints at some consolation.

The triumphant speech by Bushra Bibi, flanked by the K-P CM, has frenzied the sizable crowd in the heart of the capital as they vowed to stage a sit-in. After failure to deal with the PTI through muscle-flexing and striking a preemptive deal, now is the time to usher in a perpetual political solution. It's a must that leaders from all the political parties must huddle for talking it out and let politics of people make headway, rather than giving way to undesired steps in exigency.

It is regrettable that the PTI has chosen a path of 'marching on' time and again with intimidation to press on for its demands, as this is no way to seek release of imprisoned leaders in the midst of lawful prosecution. Likewise, the state too should not weaponise law and browbeat dissent. With national life suspended and law and order situation taking a battering, it's time for both the PTI and the government to give up their egoistic attitudes, and opt for a lawful give and take.

(Courtesy The Express Tribune)

THE DESTINATION

Editor's Mail

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Tahir Chudhary — Resident Editor Lahore

VPNs are not the enemy

BY NIDA RIZWAN FARID

The discourse on VPNs (Virtual Private Network) in Pakistan has been very one-sided, and shows a complete misunderstanding and maybe deliberate misrepresentation of VPNs. Government officials usually paint VPNs as something evil used by terrorists for their criminal activities or by immoral men to watch pornographic content. But is that really true?

First, let me ask you this: Is putting our letters in an envelope and sealing with glue or tape immoral, before we send them by post? Is sending letters to friends through other friends rather than by post illegal or evil? The manager who gives an envelope stamped 'Confidential' to his trusted junior, telling him to take it to the CEO, and let no one else open it, is that a sin?

Is being in our homes – away from prying eyes, to rest and recuperate, living our ordinary lives – evil? Is talking in the safety of our homes or offices illegal? Is it immoral to lock our suitcases when checking them in for our flight? If something was stolen from your unlocked suitcase, wouldn't everyone blame your foolishness, rather than the thief?

Does everyone assume you are planning something nefarious, when inside your home or office? Or do they assume you will sleep, work, use the bathroom, drink tea, watch TV, eat food, make phone calls, talk to family, read books, walk around, exercise, daydream, play games, etc. To most people, it doesn't matter what you do at home or office. It's your private life and not their business.

All these scenarios resonate with you because you are used to them. Humans have lived like this for centuries (except phones and TVs). To you, there is nothing immoral or evil in expecting privacy in our daily lives. Right to privacy is our fundamental human right, backed by Quran and Hadith, to maintain the dignity of our person. The right to privacy and dignity of person is also enshrined in Pakistan's constitution, as well as the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which Pakistan is signatory to.

However, the context of our world has radically changed. Most communication now is through the internet. We discuss our private lives through email, social media inboxes and WhatsApp. Computers, mobile phones and the internet are so intertwined into our lives that it is impossible to determine where our non-digital lives end and our digital lives start. Our phones lie on the night-table or pillow next to us while we sleep. Many people now even use phones in the bathroom, without realising that phone cameras can be hacked.

VPNs are the envelope and glue we seal our letters with. VPNs are the room we enter to talk privately. VPNs are the walls we put up to avoid prying eyes, the locks we use to avoid theft. In fact, VPNs are the homes we retire to with an expectation of privacy and dignity.

Do terrorists and criminals use VPNs? I am sure they do. Just like I am sure they also live in homes and use their rooms for private conversations. I am sure they also lock their suitcases and seal their letters. They must also use knives to cut vegetables and fruits with for cooking and eating, just like everyone else.

Are we going to destroy all homes and ask people to live on the street, just in case 0.1 per cent of the population may be planning nefarious activities within their homes? Are we going to ban all knives and fire and just eat uncut, uncooked food because 0.01 per cent people may use knives or fire to hurt someone?

Most of our work is now done on computers or over the internet. I am writing this article on my laptop too. Any work we create becomes our intellectual property, our asset. All creative works – books, articles, business reports, software, music, artwork, videos, games, etc – are assets at risk of being stolen when we send them over the internet, unless we lock our suitcase (use a VPN).

Unless we are in the safety of our homes (use a VPN), we risk hackers spying on us or stealing our data for nefarious purposes. Just 30 years ago, they needed to enter our homes to plant cameras to spy on us. But now our phones and computers have cameras and mics. Anyone can hack in through the internet to spy on us within the privacy of our homes and offices. Our financial data and identity documents, previously kept locked in a safe, are now stored on computers and phones. We need VPNs, firewalls and antivirus software to protect ourselves from those with bad intentions. Whether they are criminals wanting to steal from us or destroy our dignity, or businesses trying to data-mine, or governments spying on us – if you are not using a VPN, it's like you have destroyed the walls around your home.

It was none of your business how we did our work, or when we used the bathroom, ate food, slept, watched TV or played games in our homes. So, why is it now your business which websites we visit to research for work, or to find recipes, play games, watch videos, read the news, or do anything within the privacy of our homes and offices?

Just because 0.1 per cent, or 1.0 per cent, or even 10 per cent of people may be planning nefarious activities while in their homes or offices, does not give anyone the right to spy on 100 per cent of the population and violate their right to privacy and dignity of person.

Harbouring suspicions and spying on others destroys trust and goodwill in a society. It destroys trust between individuals, as well as the trust between citizens and government. The moment governments start spying on citizens, people realise that those in power no longer care about serving and protecting them. Citizens know intrinsically that governments spy on them to prevent threats to their power, not to protect ordinary people. So, slowly citizens lose respect for and trust in their leaders.

While the European Union is fighting tech companies to protect EU citizens' right to privacy, why are other governments fighting to strip their citizens naked of their dignity? In Pakistan, each subsequent government over the last few terms has increased surveillance and suppression of criticism and freedom of conscience and expression of all Pakistani citizens. We are the ones who elected and hired you and pay you through our taxes to manage our country, expecting you to serve and protect us. Why do we now increasingly want to be protected from you rather than protected by you?

All people with internet access should use VPNs to protect their privacy, information, assets and dignity of person. Every cybersecurity firm, antivirus company, and technology company in the world will tell you VPNs are essential to protect yourself, your family, and your business. This is the new global reality. Even Pakistani officials use VPNs, as seen by their social media activities.

And yet the PTA requires Pakistanis to register VPNs and government officials threaten to ban them? It's like telling us to let the PTA know what medicine we use each time we are sick. You are not asking Pakistanis to register the guns they own because they can be used to hurt other citizens. You are instead asking us to register the locks and keys we use to stop armed burglars (who use those guns) from entering our homes. Why does the PTA and government need our VPN details, except to monitor our private lives? Do we now need to register our antivirus software and firewall too?

Pakistan is officially a democracy, which means all government officials, no matter what institution they belong to, are employees of Pakistani citizens. Does it make sense that employees cannot be criticised by the people who hired them? Or that employees think they have the right to spy on their employers?

The current government has promised major financial reforms and cutbacks in government spending. So, please consider why our taxes are being spent on activities that do not benefit us citizens in any way, in fact even harm us. I advise the finance ministry to identify government activities like these (which add zero value to the average citizen) and scale them back to dramatically cut government spending. A very easy filter is to consider if the activity improves the quality of life and income of the people. Or does it mainly serve the interests of those in power?

For those afraid of losing power, the solution is not to increase surveillance, but rather to increase trust between the citizens and government. Do not clamp down on criticism, but rather focus on serving the people. Focus on increasing income and quality of life of all citizens. Reduce poverty and increase literacy. Life is really difficult for the average Pakistani, who is reeling from the impact of the high taxes and high inflation of the last several years. Even middle-class individuals in Pakistan are now working two jobs to survive. Show us through your actions and results that your only focus is to improve the quality and ease of life and health and happiness of all Pakistanis, and the trust will come back. Increase trust, not surveillance.

If you are really doing your job, and have gained the trust of the people by making their quality of life better, why would they vote for someone else?

The writer is an aerospace engineer and an energy efficiency consultant, using Save Joules to help Pakistanis reduce their energy bills.

Facebook: @savejoules

(Courtesy The News)

An icon of the left

BY DR NAAZIR MAHMOOD

Saeeda Gazdar's short stories are not all about politics and repression; some are full of nostalgia and recall the pre-partition days. Her story 'Hindustani, Pakistani' is one such story that begins in London where a Pakistani man Ahmed and an Indian woman Najma meet after a long time.

They had studied together decades ago and now they recall their good old days as students in London when they were all Indians; Pakistan had just come into being. Ahmed had come from India to London but now his family had migrated to Pakistan. He had offers from Karachi University to teach but Najma wants him to go back to India with her and start a career there. They hear on the radio that the political situation in Pakistan is volatile with agitation all around. Ahmed wants Najma to move with him to Pakistan.

In flashback, Ahmed recalls his landing at Karachi port. Four years ago, he had left Bombay for London as an Indian citizen and now he was approaching Karachi in the newly created Pakistan. After joining the University of Karachi, the first objection that he receives from one of his colleagues is why he says Adaab rather than Salaam. This conversation displays an early divergence of ideas in Pakistan that ultimately led to the Khuda Haafiz discussion. The university colleague insists that Adaab was used to address Hindus but now we have a Muslim-majority country of our own where we should not use Adaab as a form of greeting.

Ahmed turned out to be an enlightened and progressive teacher who always cherished the company of his bright young students. He wants more books in the university library but the vice-chancellor objects to them as 'communist propaganda'. The VC accuses him of referring to Karl Marx too often and citing examples of the French and Russian revolutions to students in classes. Ahmed feels that the university is more of a spy network than a teaching institution; the atmosphere is suffocating and there are no alternative ideas or voices he can convey to his students who are fairly fond of him.

The VC is only interested in propagating Islamic and Pakistan ideologies so that a certain mindset prevails. The VC insists that the university professors will teach history only through a religious and nationalist lens. Ahmed retorts by saying that the VC will turn the university into a seminary and that will greatly harm education in the country. The VC insists that all universities must resemble mosques as religious centres of learning and teaching. In the VC's office there is a large photo of General Ayub Khan receiving an honorary degree from the VC.

Finally, Ahmed decides to leave the country and join an international organisation. Mind you, this story about the Pakistan of the 1950s shows how closely it resembles the Pakistan of today. Now we lament increasing extremism in the country and play naïve as if we did not know the root cause of this malaise.

Writers such as Saeeda Gazdar were consistently highlighting the perils of extremism in the country but the powers that be did not listen to them neither are they doing so now. Another of her marvellous stories is 'Aakhri manzil' (Last destination) dealing with the labour force in cities that comes from villages and has no name or address.

The story begins with a news item announcing that an under-construction building caved in killing five labourers. The death certificate of an 18-year-old reads as follows: "Name: unknown; Father's name: unknown; address: unknown." The story unfolds in flashback when a family of villagers visiting Karachi finds a small boy crying in the streets. They take the boy to their village and raise him as their own son. When the foster father dies in the village, the foster mother reveals to the boy that he is not their real son and sends him to the city to locate his real father.

'Aag Gulistaan na bani' is also a very good short story that takes its cue from the Sumerian story of Gilgamesh which narrates the struggle of Enkidu against the brutalities of Gilgamesh. Saeeda Gazdar unfolds the story of a female student whose class fellow yearns for democracy in his country. The girl faces investigative officers who press her to reveal the whereabouts of the boy who is at the forefront of the democratic struggle. They want to know the plans of the agitators against the dictatorship, but she refuses to reveal anything.

The girl recalls how they met in the library and then nurtured a friendship that brought them closer. He influenced her to change her apolitical personality into a socially conscious person who becomes concerned about the plight of her country. There is a section in the story about an overloaded donkey cart that is hard to pull by the beast of burden. The poor animal gets a thorough flogging and blood oozes out of its skin. Saeeda uses that as a metaphor for a nation being flogged under the yoke of a dictatorship.

Another story 'Charhawey ki chadar' (wreath of gratitude) is about a girl who is married to a much older man. When she is unable to conceive, the in-laws take her to one shrine after another and she has to bear the burden of taunts for being barren. As she constantly shuttles from one spiritual healer to another, she finally breaks down and shouts at her husband for being impotent. In a society where men are beyond reproach and women are nearly always on the receiving end of injustices, this story reflects a common problem in society.

Other stories such as 'Dhara' (Flow), 'Neelam', 'Laali', and 'Tamgha' (medal) are all worth reading. 'Aag Gulsitaan na bani' is a collection of stories that must be included in the compulsory reading list of students but unfortunately, you will hardly find it in any school or college library in Pakistan which are replete with volumes by Naseem Hijazi, Qudratullah Shahab, Bano Qudsia, and Ashfaq Ahmed. That shows the preference of our authorities in educational matters. The more conservative and obscurantist writer you are, the more your books are likely to find a place in libraries.

In 1982, Saeeda Gazdar brought out her collection of poetry 'Tauq o daar ka mausam' (Season of shackles and gallows). It contains politically charged poetry such as 'Qaidi gatey hain' (prisoners sing), 'Tumhari salgirah par' (On your birthday), 'Kaisey ho' (how are you), and 'Faisla' (decision). Two of her best poems that I like the most are 'Theek do bajey (Exactly at 2) and Aik Khabar (a news item). 'Theek do bajey' later appeared in her second poetry collection 'Zanjeer-e-roz o shab' as 'Subh honey wali thee' (dawn was about to break). It recalls the hours that Z A Bhutto was hanged in the dead of the night.

(Courtesy The News)

Masato Kanda elected as ADB President

BUSINESS REPORTER

ISLAMABAD



The Asian Development Bank (ADB) Board of Governors has unanimously elected Masato Kanda as ADB's 11th President.

Kanda, 59, currently serves as Special Advisor to Japan's Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, according to ADB press release received here Thursday.

He will assume office on 24 February 2025, succeeding Masatsugu Asakawa, who will leave office on 23 February 2025. Kanda will complete the unexpired term of President Asakawa, which ends on 23 November 2026.

"Mr. Kanda's extensive experience in international finance and proven leadership in multilateral settings will serve ADB well in navigating complex global economic challenges and fostering international cooperation," said Chair of the ADB Board of Governors and Governor of the Bank of Italy Fabio Panetta. "The ADB Board of Governors looks forward to working with Mr. Kanda," Panetta added

According to press release, with nearly 4 decades of experience, Kanda has held key leadership roles at the Ministry of Finance of Japan, including Vice-Minister of Finance for International Affairs.

He has extensive experience in financial sector policy and macro-fiscal policy, having served as Deputy Commissioner at the Financial Services Agency, Deputy Director-General of the Budget Bureau, and Deputy Vice-Minister for Policy Planning and Coordination. He is also a leading expert in education and science policy as well as university reform.

Kanda has been actively engaged in the G7, G20, and other international forums, addressing key policy challenges such as multilateral development bank (MDB) evolution, pandemic prevention, preparedness and response, and debt sustainability and transparency.

During his tenure as Vice-Minister of Finance for International Affairs, Japan made a record contribution of more than $1 billion to the Asian Development Fund 13th replenishment (ADF 14).



ISLAMABAD: A roadside stall holder sprinkles water at his fish stall in Chak shahzad in the Federal Capital. — Staff Photo

Finance Minister lauds SECP efforts for promoting EODB

● SECP aims for transparency, investor's confidence

BUSINESS REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, on Thursday appreciated the Security and Exchange Commission of Pakistan's (SECP) efforts for promoting ease of doing business (EODB) in Pakistan.

Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, visited SECP, Head Office in Islamabad, said a press release issued here.

During the visit, he was briefed by the Chairman SECP, Akif Saeed, and the management team on upcoming initiatives, key reforms, and achievements to date.

The minister was briefed by the Chairman SECP on efforts towards ease of doing business in Pakistan and reaping the benefits of advancement in technology through regulatory reforms, digitalization of services, and access to finance, said a press release issued here on Thursday.

He was also briefed on areas related to market development and innovation, such as regulatory sandbox and efforts to promote startups.

The minister expressed keen interest in SECP's initiatives towards sustainability reporting and investor education and protection and expressed satisfaction with the SECP initiative to launch the ESG Sustain Portal.

The minister appreciated the steps being taken by SECP to provide a one-window solution to companies and digital filing of documents and other initiatives aimed at facilitating investors, such as the Central Gateway Portal and Emlaak Financials.

While acknowledging the contribution of SECP in the launch of Government Debt Securities (GDS), he highlighted the need to create liquidity in the secondary market.

The minister emphasized the need for creating awareness regarding positive initiatives taken by SECP to provide maximum benefit to stakeholders.

He also advised SECP to maintain close liaison with the government for



effective introduction of pension reforms and to work with other regulatory bodies to provide seamless and efficient services in the financial sector.

The minister assured SECP of the government's support on the legislative reforms.

Meanwhile,

Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has aimed for greater transparency and investors confidence through effective supervision and enforcement.

The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) through its centralized Supervision function continues to maintain effective oversight of capital markets and regulated businesses, said a press release issued here on Thursday.

In a recent Commission meeting, a critical review of ongoing supervisory activities for regulated businesses was carried out, with a special focus on pooled investment related businesses, such as mutual funds, insurance companies and brokerage businesses. Measures were also discussed to further ensure safeguarding investors against illegal deposit taking and investment schemes, said a press release issued here on Thursday.

The Commission emphasized following Standard Operating Procedures to actively deal with pending court cases. At the moment, 53 investigations and 30 criminal complaints filed by the Commission are under stay order from relevant courts.

The Commission appreciated the recently concluded review of mutual fund industry, with the main objective of protecting the investors' interest.

In line with international best practices, the Commission aspires to have even stronger, robust supervisory model for pooled investment vehicles through use of technology and modern techniques. This would enable the Regulator to get early warning signals and take remedial measures in a timely manner.

Recognizing the significance of insurance business and public interest involved, SECP continues to focus on the business conduct and identification of vulnerable players to restore confidence of policy holders. The Commission appreciated the refund of an additional amount of Rs. 162 million by insurance companies to policyholders due to the regulator's intervention.

A risk-based on-site inspection of 64 securities brokers were concluded, including all brokers based in Islamabad and Lahore. The inspection was carried out by a Joint Inspection Team comprising of Pakistan Stock Exchange, Central Depository Company and National Clearing Company.

15 Banks to open on weekend for receiving Hajj applications

BUSINESS REPORTER

KARACHI



In order to facilitate the intending pilgrims to deposit Hajj applications, the State Bank of Pakistan, Thursday, directed 15 designated banks to keep their concerned branches open on this Saturday and Sunday throughout the country.

The last date for submission of Hajj applications along with dues from intending pilgrims for Hajj 2025 is December 3, 2024.

The central bank issued the directives following a request of Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony to facilitate the intending pilgrims in depositing Hajj applications along with dues for Hajj 2025, said a statement issued here.

The SBP has directed the designated banks "to keep their concerned branches open from 9:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. on November 30, 2024 and December 1, 2024 throughout the country."

Earlier, in terms of Hajj Policy, the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony has designated 15 banks (viz. National Bank of Pakistan, Habib Bank, United Bank, MCB Bank, Allied Bank, Bank of Punjab, Bank Alfalah, Zarai Taraqiati Bank, Faysal Bank, Askari Bank, Bank Al-Habib, Habib Metropolitan Bank, Soneri Bank, Meezan Bank and Bank Islami) to collect Hajj applications w.e.f. November 18, 2024 till December 3, 2024 throughout the country.

MCCI tables healthy strategic plan to state govt for survival of AJK's collapsed industrial sector

BUSINESS REPORTER

MIRPUR

Mirpur AJK Chamber of Commerce and Industries (MCCI), President Umar Shehzad Jiral has called upon the AJK government to take immediate steps for the survival of the local industrial sector through correcting the collapsed infrastructure of the Industry Estates in industrial districts of AJK.

He expressed these views while talking to a delegation of Kashmir Press Club Mirpur-AJK journalists team who met him under the leadership of the club's President, Syed Abid Hussain Shah.

"More than four hundred industrial units used to work in two industrial estates in Mirpur in the past which have shrinked to only fifty to sixty by now because of the poor policies of the authorities", Jiral underlined.

The MCCI President observed that many more units were likely to stop working. "This is a very alarming situation and I have informed the AJK Chief Secretary time and again but still the result is zero, " he added.

The newly elected KPC president congratulated the newly elected office bearers of the



MCCI and expressed his good wishes.

Arif Zia, member of the executive body of the chamber of commerce was also present on this occasion.

He said that the issues of fire brigade, water supply, security arrangements and electricity in the local industrial estates could not be resolved so far.

He further said that one window-type swift measures were indispensable to run the industry and attract investors, adding Individuals' jobs could be created through ensuring the survival of the existing operative units.

But since the existing factories are getting closed down, unemployment would resultantly increase, he feared.

The president MCCI urged the AJK government to fix its institutions to prevent tax evasion and as such the evasion would end automatically.

Jirral pointed out that thousands of youth have become unemployed due to the closure of the industry.

Umar Shehzad Jaral said that the role of the media being the fourth pillar of the state had always been exemplary and significant. He further said that the local journalist community had always done an exemplary job by raising need of early solution of the Kashmir issue, local problems and the problems of traders and industrialists.

US economy grows at 2.8% pace in third quarter on consumer spending, unchanged from first estimate

WEB DESK

WASHINGTON

The American economy expanded at a healthy 2.8% annual pace from July through September on strong consumer spending and a surge in exports, the government said Wednesday, leaving unchanged its initial estimate of third-quarter growth.

U.S. gross domestic product — the economy's output of goods and services — slowed from the April-July rate of 3%, the Commerce Department reported Wednesday.

But the GDP report still showed that the American economy — the world's largest — is proving surprisingly durable. Growth has topped 2% for eight of the last nine quarters.

Within the GDP data, a category that measures the economy's underlying strength rose at a solid 3.2% annual rate from July through September, up from 2.7% in the April-June quarter. This category includes consumer spending and private investment but excludes volatile items like exports, inventories and government spending.

Still, American voters — exasperated by high prices — were unimpressed by the steady growth and chose this month to return Donald Trump to the White House to overhaul the nation's economic policies. He will be supported by Republican majorities in the House and Senate.

But growth in business investment slowed sharply on a drop in investment in housing and in nonresidential buildings such as offices and warehouses. By contrast, spending on equipment surged.

Govt urged to incentivize private sector growth

BUSINESS REPORTER

MIRPUR

President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Nasir Mansoor Qureshi on Thursday urged the government to provide conducive environment and incentivize private sector for achieving economic growth and stability in the country. He emphasized the importance of dialogue for addressing all political issues and urged for creating a stable environment for both political and economic growth.

He urged the government to foster private sector growth by offering incentives, simplifying regulations and enhancing access to finance.

He also stressed the importance of long-term policy stability to restore investor confidence and promote sustainable economic growth. To foster a climate conducive to investment and growth, he called for a more consistent approach to economic policy making, ensuring that businesses can plan and operate with confidence.

Uzbekistan-Pak direct flight to resume on Nov 29: Ambassador Tukhtaev

BUSINESS REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

Ambassador of Uzbekistan to Pakistan Alisher Tukhtayev on Thursday said that direct flights between Uzbekistan and Pakistan would resume on November 29 (tomorrow) for enhancing regional integration.

This flight, connecting the cities of Tashkent and Lahore, aims to further strengthen bilateral cooperation between the two countries, take trade and economic relations to a new level, and facilitate tourists. Ambassador of Uzbekistan to Pakistan, Alisher Tukhtayev, told APP here.

The ambassador said that this remarkable achievement would not have been possible without the personal initiative and unwavering support of Shavkat Mirziyoyev, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

He said, "Because of the leadership and strategic vision of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, since September of this year, Uzbekistan has resumed the issuance of tourist visas for citizens of brotherly Pakistan."

"This wise decision has not only facilitated easier travel between the people from both sides but has also strengthened the bonds of friendship and created new opportunities for mutual understanding, business collaboration, and people-to-people connections between two nations," he said.

Uzbek envoy said, "Direct flights will create new opportunities for tourists and businessmen, and Uzbekistan will also serve as a unique hub for Pakistan's citizens, including business chamber representatives."

Ambassador Alisher



Tukhtayev said, "The restoration of regular direct flights is not just about connecting Tashkent and Lahore; it is a strategic step to enhance the economic and trade connectivity and will promote cultural exchange between the two countries."

"Uzbekistan has a rich cultural, historical, and natural heritage that offers immense tourism potential," he said.

"We are excited to share the common historical heritage, beautiful traditions, and unique tourism opportunities with our Pakistani friends," he added.

Replying to a question on the future of bilateral trade between the two nations, he said, "The future of trade and economic relations between Uzbekistan and Pakistan is promising, and there are untapped opportunities in different sectors of the bilateral economy to further deepen beneficial cooperation."

"Today, our trade relations are developing steadily," he informed.

He said, "In particular, over the past five years, the bilateral trade turnover has increased almost four times, and this figure amounted to $122 million in 2019 and is expected to exceed $400 million by the end of 2024."

The ambassador said, "Pakistan has an interest in the Uzbek market with its agricultural products, food, textiles, and leather products, while Uzbek industrial products, fruits, and vegetables are in high demand in Pakistan."

Alisher Tukhtayev said, "The Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) between Uzbekistan and Pakistan is fully active, and we are currently working to increase the list of preferential products under the Agreement from 17 to at least 100 items."

In June 2024, the 'Made in Pakistan' industrial exhibition was held in Tashkent, within the framework of which several new trade and investment agreements were signed, he said.

"We are planning to organize an exhibition of industrial products 'Made in Uzbekistan' in Pakistan in 2025, and such events will serve to expand the range of goods exported between our countries," he said.

He said, "I am confident that in the near future we will ensure the practical implementation of the agreement of the heads of states to increase the volume of bilateral trade up to $1 billion."

"I have no doubt that the future of trade and economic relations between Uzbekistan and Pakistan is bright, and strong political ties will serve to elevate this cooperation to a new level," the Uzbek ambassador concluded.

Israeli army using Palestinian detainees as human shields, NYT probe

WEB DESK

NEW YORK

Israeli soldiers have been using Palestinian detainees as human shields in Gaza to minimize their own battlefield risks, according to a New York Times investigation published by the newspaper.

The paper published a report on the probe, conducted by Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Natan Odenheimer on Wednesday.

Odenheimer said he decided to look into the matter after hearing an Israeli trooper talking about Palestinians being sent into tunnels used by the Hamas resistance movement.

The report, based on testimony from Israeli soldiers and former Palestinian detainees, reveals that Israeli forces regularly force captured Palestinians, including teenagers, to carry out dangerous tasks during combat operations.

While the full extent of these operations is unclear, the practice — illegal under both Israeli and international law — has reportedly been employed by at least 11 military squads in five different cities in the Gaza Strip. Israeli intelligence officers are said to have been involved in several of the incidents.

In one instance, Mohammed Shubeir, a Palestinian arrested by Israeli forces in March at the age of 17, was held for 10 days without charge. Shubeir claims that during this time he was handcuffed and forced to walk through the streets of Khan Younis, scouting for booby traps set by Hamas militants.

Another testimony by Jehad Siam, a 31-year-old Palestinian graphic designer, recounted how he and a group of detainees were forced by Israeli soldiers to walk ahead of advancing troops in a militant stronghold in Gaza City, risking their lives to shield the soldiers from ambush or explosives.



The report also alleges that Palestinians were used to move large objects, such as generators and water tanks, and search for hidden tunnels or bombs under dangerous conditions.

These kinds of practices, the newspaper said, have become more frequent and widespread since the beginning of the conflict.

The New York Times spoke to seven Israeli soldiers who confirmed either witnessing or participating in the practice, describing it as organized and conducted "with considerable logistical support and the knowledge of superiors on the battlefield."

Eight other soldiers and officials, speaking anonymously, corroborated widespread use of the tactic. Three Palestinians gave on-record accounts of being used as human shields, although the New York Times noted that no evidence was found of detainees being killed or injured.

In response, the Israel Defence Forces issued a statement condemning the practice, emphasizing that its "directives and guidelines strictly prohibit the use of detained Gaza civilians for military operations." The IDF said it would investigate the allegations.

This is not the first time Israel has faced such accusations. Israeli newspaper Haaretz in August published a similar investigation describing how Israeli soldiers forced Palestinian civilians to wear military uniforms and scout dangerous locations in Gaza under remote supervision.

A practice known as the "neighbour procedure" was used by Israeli forces in Gaza and the West Bank in the early 2000s, in which civilians were forced to approach the homes of militants to urge them to surrender. Israel's Supreme Court banned this tactic in 2005, ruling that the use of human shields violated both Israeli and international law.

According to he Gaza Health Ministry, more than 42,000 people, mostly women and children, have been killed in Gaza since October 2023. The international community has repeatedly condemned Israel for the high civilian casualty rate.

China, Indonesia to hold joint military exercise: Defense Spokesperson

WEB DESK

BEIJING

The Chinese PLA Southern Theater Command will dispatch troops to Indonesia to participate in the Peace Garuda-2024 joint HADR (Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief) exercise from late November to early December, said Chinese Defense Spokesperson Senior Colonel Wu Qian.

The spokesperson at a press conference noted that both sides will deploy army, naval and air forces to conduct drills on search and detection, medical treatment, personnel evacuation and settlement, NBC (nuclear, biological and chemical) protection, parachute delivery, and carry out cultural and sports activities.

It is learnt that this exercise is the first of its kind between the Chinese and Indonesian militaries, which will help deepen pragmatic cooperation between the two militaries, enhance their joint operational capabilities, and contribute to regional peace and stability.

ICC prosecutor seeks arrest warrant for head of Myanmar's military regime

WEB DESK

UNITED NATIONS

The Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) has filed an application for an arrest warrant against Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Commander-in-Chief of Myanmar's armed forces and Acting President, alleging his involvement in crimes against humanity targeting the Muslim Rohingya population.

The move, announced Wednesday, follows a comprehensive investigation by the ICC into the 2016 and 2017 waves of violence in Myanmar's Rakhine province targeting the minority Muslim Rohingya community.

"My Office has concluded that there are reasonable grounds to believe that Senior General and Acting President Min Aung Hlaing bears criminal responsibility for the crimes against humanity of deportation and persecution of the Rohingya, committed in Myanmar …" ICC Prosecutor Karim Khan said in a statement.

The charges stem from alleged crimes committed between 25 August and 31 December 2017 by Myanmar's armed forces, known as the Tatmadaw, in coordination with police forces, border guards and some non-Rohingya civilians.

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing has been in power since February 2021, when the military overthrew the elected government in Myanmar arresting hundreds of officials, political leaders and activists.

In addition to driving over one million Rohingya to flee their homes and seek refuge in Bangladesh, there were countless accounts of atrocities, including systematic killings of some 10,000 Rohingya men, women, children and newborns.

There were also horrific reports of gender-based violence against women and girls, including rape and sexual violence, and more than 300 villages were burnt to the ground.

The then UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein, called the brutal campaign a "textbook example of ethnic cleansing."

"This is the first application for an arrest warrant against a high-level



Myanmar government official that my Office is filing. More will follow," Karim Khan stated.

The Prosecutor's case is built on extensive evidence, including testimonies from insider witnesses, documentary proof and scientific and visual materials, gathered with support from states, civil society, and international organizations.

Khan expressed his appreciation for the "confidence and the steadfast commitment" from the Rohingya community for their cooperation. He also noted that the support of Government of Bangladesh, and the cooperation of the UN Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM) has been essential to advancing the investigation.

He also highlighted his visits to refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, southern Bangladesh, where he engaged with survivors, youth activists and elders who shared their stories and demanded justice.

"Our work, the work of the International Criminal Court, seeks to vindicate their resilience and their hope in the power of the law," he said.

During his first visit to Cox's Bazar in February 2022, Khan announced plans to accelerate investigations and provide additional resources.

He emphasized that today's developments reflected that renewed focus.

Reacting to the ICC Prosecutor's request, Nicholas Koumjian, Head of the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM), underscored the significance of the move in the fight for justice.

"This application for an arrest warrant for the person who holds the highest military position in Myanmar sends a strong message to perpetrators that no one stands above the law," Koumjian said.

The IIMM was established by the UN Human Rights Council in 2018 to collect and preserve evidence of serious international crimes committed in Myanmar since 2011 in support of justice and accountability efforts, including potential prosecutions in national, regional, and international courts.

The decision to issue the arrest warrant now rests with the ICC's Pre-Trial Chamber I judges, who will determine if the evidence meets the threshold for action. If approved, the Prosecutor will work with the ICC Registrar to coordinate efforts for Min Aung Hlaing's arrest.

Khan reiterated his commitment to justice for the Rohingya, vowing to submit additional applications in the coming months.

"We will be demonstrating, together with all of our partners, that the Rohingya have not been forgotten. That they, like all people around the world, are entitled to the protection of the law."

The Hague-based International Criminal Court (ICC) is not part of the United Nations, but they have a cooperative and complementary relationship.

Saudi Arabia approves 2025 state budget with focus on Vision 2030 Goals

WEB DESK

RIYADH



Saudi Arabia's Council of Ministers, chaired by Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman, has approved the state budget for the fiscal year 2025. The budget projects total revenues of SR1.184 trillion and expenditures of SR1.285 trillion, resulting in a projected deficit of SR101 billion.

The budget, announced on Tuesday, underscores the Kingdom's ongoing efforts to align its financial strategies with the ambitious goals of Vision 2030. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman highlighted the importance of adhering to the budget's outlined programs, strategies, and projects to ensure the successful realization of Vision 2030's transformative objectives.

The 2025 budget reflects Saudi Arabia's commitment to sustainable economic growth and diversification, with a focus on key sectors that will drive the nation's development. The budget is designed to balance significant investments in priority areas while maintaining fiscal responsibility, even amid global economic challenges.

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman stressed that this budget will play a critical role in maintaining stability while fostering the Kingdom's long-term growth, in line with the Vision 2030 roadmap. The approval marks another step in Saudi Arabia's efforts to reshape its economy, reduce dependence on oil, and boost investments in sectors such as technology, tourism, and infrastructure.

The government's strategic focus on managing the deficit and prioritizing investments reflects its determination to foster economic resilience and continue the transformation of Saudi Arabia's economic landscape.

Global agri-tech company devotes to optimize China-Pak agriculture coop model: 2024 CISCE

WEB DESK

BEIJING

Plump rice grains, full-bodied peppers, fragrant sesames... an endless stream of visitors were full of praise for the dazzling array of agricultural products at the ongoing 2024 China International Supply Chain Expo (CISCE).



"From high-quality seeds, premium agricultural inputs to the Agriculture Value Chain (AVC) comprehensive business, Syngenta Group is committed to building a win-win framework between China and Pakistan, not only helping local farmers open up new sales channels as well as increase their income, but also enriching Chinese consumers' dining tables, and making China's oilseed and cash crop import sources more diverse," a staff at Syngenta Group China, told China Economic Net.

"By supplying inputs and production services to growers, bartering with entities in core producing areas in exchange for key agricultural products, while linking China's agricultural product market demand and opening up the global upstream and downstream chains, the AVC model has brought practical benefits to farmers in Pakistan."

Sesame cultivation in Pakistan has tripled in the past five years. As most Pakistan sesame is for export, with more than 1/3 goes to China, AVC aims to link the quality sesame from Pakistani growers served by Syngenta with international value chain partners especially in China.

In May 2023, APAC's first Centrigo Flagship Center of Syngenta launched in Okara, Punjab, serving more than 500 farmers across over 10,000 acres of farming on potato, corn, rice, vegetables and sesame. All of them get top-quality agronomy inputs including seeds, fertilizer, crop protection, and services such as drones spraying and farm mechanization.

"I have 20 acres of sesame. By using drones to spray insecticides provided by Centrigo, my yields increased by 10 percent. Owe to the improved quality of exported sesame, I received a price 30 percent higher than the average market price." Mian Bashir Ahmad, one of Centrigo growers, said.

Other than the steadily advancing sesame project, Pakistani chillies have also emerged as an agricultural product favored by Chinese consumers.

"Syngenta is exploring collaborations with Chinese companies for potential chili contract farming in Pakistan. The initiative aims to develop varieties suited to Chinese tastes, with the goal of enhancing agricultural supply and value chain resilience." the staff introduced, pointing to the Pakistani dried chilis on the booth.

"During this process, we are devoted to boost the interests of local farmers and promote the upgrading of the global agricultural supply chain."

Russia fired 'cluster munitions' on Ukraine's energy grid

WEB DESK

MOSCOW

Russia fired cluster munitions at Ukrainian energy facilities in its massive attack Thursday, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky said, slamming it as a "despicable escalation" by Moscow.

Cluster munitions can be dropped from planes or fired from artillery and missiles, exploding mid-air and scattering bomblets over a wide area. Experts say both Kyiv and Moscow have used them in the almost three-year war.

"In several regions, strikes with cluster munitions were recorded, and they targeted civilian infrastructure," Zelensky said on social media.

The barrage, in which Ukraine downed 79 missiles and 35 drones, left over a million Ukrainians without electricity in freezing cold temperatures.

"This is a very despicable escalation of Russian terrorist tactics," Zelensky said.

Cluster munitions have killed or wounded over 1,000 people in Ukraine since Russia launched its war in February 2022, the Cluster Munition Coalition (CMC) said in its annual report in September.

They also pose a long-term risk since many fail to explode on impact, effectively acting as landmines that can explode years later, the CMC noted.

Neither Russia nor Ukraine is among the 112 states that are party to the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions, which prohibits the use, transfer, production and storage of cluster bombs.

The United States, also not a party to the treaty, had agreed to transfer cluster munitions to Kyiv in July 2023, a move that was criticised even by the two countries' allies.

One million without power

More than a million Ukrainians were left without power in freezing cold temperatures on Thursday after a massive nationwide Russian missile and drone attack.

Ukraine is bracing for what could be its toughest winter of the almost three-year war as Moscow steps up its aerial bombardment of the war-torn country and its troops advance on the frontlines in the east.

"There are emergency



blackouts all over the country due to the enemy's attack on our energy sector. There is no end in sight," said the CEO of the Yasno energy supplier Sergey Kovalenko.

President Volodymyr Zelensky's chief of staff said Russia was "continuing their tactics of terror", seeking to plunge Ukrainian civilians into darkness and cut of heating in the coldest months of the year.

"They stockpiled missiles for attacks on Ukrainian infrastructure, for warfare against civilians during... winter," Andriy Yermak said in a post on Telegram.

The combined missile and drone attack, launched in waves throughout the early hours of Thursday, knocked out electricity for more than a million subscribers in Ukraine's west, hundreds of kilometres from the front lines.

"As of now, 523,000 subscribers in Lviv region are without electricity," regional head Maksym Kozytskyi said on social media.

- 'Massive enemy attack' -

The western region, which borders EU and NATO member Poland, has been spared the worst of the fighting of Russia's 33-month invasion but has been targeted in Russian drone and missile attacks sporadically.

Regional officials said at least another 280,000 were cut off in the western Rivne region and another 215,000 in the northwestern Volyn region, which also borders Poland.

The full extent of the damage was still being assessed on Thursday morning, with Russian drones also having targeted the capital Kyiv, the northeastern city of Kharkiv and port city of Odesa on the Black Sea and other regions reporting power outages.

"Power engineers are working to ensure backup power supply schemes where possible. They have already started restoration work where the security situation allows," the energy ministry said.

It said it was the 11th massive Russian attack on Ukraine's civilian energy infrastructure this year.

In an early morning warning posted on social media as the strikes were unfolding, Ukraine's Energy Minister German Galushchenko said facilities were "under massive enemy attack".

Champions Trophy: Shahid Afridi supports PCB's stance against hybrid model

SPORTS REPORTER

KARACHI

Former Pakistan cricket captain Shahid Afridi has voiced his strong support for the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) as it stands firm on its decision to host the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 entirely within Pakistan despite India's demand for adopting a hybrid model.

The ninth edition of the Champions Trophy is slated to take place in the February-March window of 2025, but India's participation remains shrouded in uncertainty.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) on November 10 communicated to the PCB that the Indian government is currently unwilling to permit their cricket team to travel to Pakistan for the tournament.

In response, the PCB took proactive measures by sending a formal letter to the ICC, reflecting the concerns of the Pakistani government regarding India's withdrawal.

Furthermore, the PCB has decisively rejected the notion of a hybrid model for the Champions Trophy 2025. They reaffirmed their unwavering resolve to host the entire tournament within Pakistan as planned.

The PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi on Thursday once again reiterated the cricket board's stance against the hybrid model.

"We're still clear in our stance that it's not acceptable that we play cricket in India, and they don't play cricket here. Whatever will happen, will happen on the basis of equality. We've told the ICC very clearly, and what happens next we'll let you know," Naqvi stated.

Shahid Afridi took to his official X (formerly Twitter) account and backed Naqvi's stance in hosting the tournament completely in Pakistan. Meanwhile, he also urged the ICC to assert its authority against India.

"By intertwining politics with sports, the BCCI has placed international cricket in a precarious position," Afridi posted.

"Fully support the PCB's stance against the hybrid model – especially since Pakistan (despite security concerns) has toured India five times, including a bilateral white-ball series, post-26/11. It's time for the ICC and its Board of Directors to uphold fairness and assert their authority."



Players in action in badminton match during Intercollegiate Badminton Tournament organized by Sargodha Education Board at Government College Farooq Colony. — Staff Photo

Pakistan posts 303/6 in decisive ODI against Zimbabwe

● With a strong total on the board, Pakistan's bowlers will now have a chance to defend the total against Zimbabwe

WEB DESK

BULAWAYO



Pakistan posted a challenging total of 303/6 in their allotted 50 overs during the third and final ODI against Zimbabwe, setting up a thrilling decider in Bulawayo.

After winning the toss and opting to bat, Pakistan got off to a solid start, thanks to a 58-run opening partnership between Abdullah Shafique (52) and Saim Ayub. The pair provided a steady foundation, ensuring Pakistan remained on track for a competitive total.

However, it was Kamran Ghulam who stole the spotlight, scoring his maiden ODI century. His knock anchored Pakistan's innings and laid the platform for a big total. Ghulam's solid performance was supported by Mohammad Rizwan, who added valuable runs with a composed 41, stabilizing the middle order after a few wickets fell.

Salman Ali Agha contributed a quick cameo, scoring 24 runs, while Tayyab Tahir added fireworks in the final overs. Tahir's unbeaten 29 off 16 balls, including four boundaries, helped Pakistan accumulate 69 runs in the last five overs, pushing their total past 300.

Zimbabwe's bowlers, led by Richard Ngarava (2/55) and Blessing Muzarabani (1/66), bowled well in the middle overs but struggled towards the end, conceding runs through wides and no-balls. At one point, it seemed Pakistan might struggle to cross 275, but the late surge ensured they surpassed the 300-run mark, giving them a commanding total.

With a strong total on the board, Pakistan's bowlers will now have a chance to defend the total against Zimbabwe, who face a difficult chase to level the series.

Four matches decided in Master Oil inter club cricket tournament

SPORTS REPORTER

KARACHI



Four matches were completed in the ongoing Master Oil Inter Club Cricket Tournament, organized by the Regional Cricket Association Karachi in collaboration with Master Oil Lubricant, at various grounds across the city.

In the first match, Alamgir Gymkhana secured a dominant 10-wicket victory over Jahanabad Cricket Club at the KCCA Stadium. Jahanabad CC was bowled out for just 43 runs in 14 overs, with Muhammad Jabbar contributing 16. Alamgir Gymkhana's bowlers shined, with Ashiq Ali taking 3/3, Tariq Khan 3/12, and Abdul Hayee 2/4. Alamgir Gymkhana chased the target in 5.1 overs, with Usman Shah leading the way with 32 not out.

In the second match, Qamar Abbas Cricket Club edged past Inqilab Cricket Club by 1 wicket at Pak Star Ground. Inqilab CC posted 222/6 in 40 overs, with Awais Khan scoring 64 and Asghar Khan 53 not out. Qamar Abbas CC successfully chased the target in 34.3 overs, reaching 225/9, thanks to half-centuries from Shabih Haider (60), Mujtuba Jaffri (50), and Ibad Hassan (50). Ausaja Zaidi also contributed 3/22 with the ball for Inqilab CC.

The third match saw Shalimar Cricket Club defeat A.A.S Cricket Club by 5 wickets at Abbasi Gymkhana Ground. A.A.S CC was all out for 157 in 26.4 overs, with Azman scoring 45. Shalimar CC comfortably chased the target in 21.3 overs, finishing at 161/5. Sohail Khan top-scored with 56, while Muhammad Sami added 42.

In the final match, Air Port Star Cricket Club overcame King Star Cricket Club by 45 runs at Afza Ground. Air Port Star CC posted 253/7 in 40 overs, with Asad Ali Shah scoring a commanding 85. King Star CC was bowled out for 208 in 29.2 overs, despite a valiant 79 from Faizan Malik. Sameer Imam claimed 4/35 for Air Port Star CC.

It's unacceptable that Pakistan visit India but they don't: Mohsin Naqvi

● PCB Chairman Naqvi inspects development work at Gaddafi Stadium

TAHIR CH.

LAHORE

The chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), Mohsin Naqvi, expressed strong dissatisfaction on Thursday regarding India's refusal to send its cricket team for the upcoming ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025.

During a press conference at Gaddafi Stadium in Lahore, Naqvi emphasised the PCB's commitment to putting Pakistan cricket first.

"Our stance is very clear," he declared. "I promise we'll do what is best for Pakistan cricket. I'm constantly in touch with the ICC chairman, and my team is talking to them constantly."

"We're still clear in our stance that it's not acceptable that we play cricket in India, and they don't play cricket here. Whatever will happen, will happen on the basis of equality. We've told the ICC very clearly, and what happens next we'll let you know," Mohsin Naqvi added.

"Whatever we do, we will make sure the best outcome for Pakistan is achieved. But I repeat, and I am sure you know what I mean, it's not possible that Pakistan play in India, and they don't come here."

For the unversed, the International Cricket Council (ICC) has scheduled a crucial board meeting for November 29.

The primary agenda will be to explore the future of the Champions Trophy 2025, which is slated to take place in Pakistan during the February-March window next year.

The board members will weigh various options, including the possibility of implementing a hybrid model, relocating the event entirely to a neutral venue, or postponing the tournament.

Meanwhile,



Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman Mohsin Naqvi on Thursday visited Gaddafi Stadium and reviewed the ongoing development works.

During his visit, Mohsin Naqvi also visited the PCB headquarters building and dressing room. He also reviewed the seating area for the fans.

Talking on the occasion, Chairman PCB said that construction started on October 10 and hopefully the work will be completed between December 20 and 25.

Mohsin Naqvi said the capacity of Gaddafi Stadium will be increased to 35 to 40 thousand and the view of cricket fans will be much better.

Mohsin Naqvi said "I wanted Rawalpindi Stadium to be ready at the same time and if the Rawalpindi Stadium report had been received earlier, it would have been better."

After seeing the situation, they will come out with something better from the ICC meeting and there is constant contact with the ICC, Mohsin Naqvi said.

This is not possible that we go to India and play cricket and they should not come and play here, Mohsin Naqvi added.

Mohsin Naqvi said those who talk about political tension, come and see, the whole of Pakistan is clean.

He said two days left for the ICC meeting and whatever is best for Pakistan will come out of the ICC meeting.

I am in touch with the ICC chairman and board members, Mohsin Naqvi said.

ACC Men's U19 Asia Cup begins Friday

SPORTS REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

Pakistan will begin their journey in the ACC Men's U19 Asia Cup on Saturday as the eight-team tournament begins on Friday. The Group A matches of the 50-over event will be played at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium (DICS) while the Group B matches will take place at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium (SCS).

Pakistan, who missed out on the final in the last edition of the event, is placed in Group A, alongside India, Japan and UAE. Meanwhile, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka are placed in Group B. The top two sides from each group will play the semi-finals scheduled on December 6, while the final will take place at the DICS on December 8. All matches are set to start at 10am PKT, with the toss taking place at 09:30am PKT, said a press release.

Saad Baig-led Pakistan will face India in their opening match on 30 November 30 at the DICS. They are scheduled to play UAE and Japan on December 2 and 4, respectively at the same venue. Among the 15-member squad, four players – Mohammad Riazullah, Saad Baig, Shahzaib Khan and Tayyab Arif have featured for Pakistan in the last edition of U19 Asia Cup held at the UAE in December 2023.

Pakistan, before beginning their journey in the tournament, has been in Dubai for three weeks as they featured in the U19 tri-series featuring Afghanistan and UAE. Although they finished runners-up to Afghanistan in the final, the tournament provided valuable experience and warm-up to the team.

During the course of the tournament, Pakistan players tried to make full use of the conditions as opening batters Shahzaib Khan (330 runs, five matches, 1×100,3x50s) and Usman Khan (314 runs, five matches, 1×100, 3x50s) finished among the top three batters in the event. Similarly, in the bowling chart, right-arm fast bowlers Abdul Subhan and Ali Raza bagged nine wickets each as they too ended among the top three bowlers.

Saad Baig talking to PCB Digital on the eve of the tournament, said, "We have been in Dubai for a few weeks now and had a good outing in the tri-series tournament. Even though we couldn't win the final, it provided players a great opportunity to acclimatise to the conditions and now we are ready for the Asia Cup.

"The coaching staff has been there to guide us, and the players are fully committed to putting in their best efforts. We all understand the significance of this tournament, and everyone is motivated to give their best when an opportunity arises.

"All the teams in the tournament are strong and we know it will be a tough competition. But with that challenge comes the opportunity for our players to showcase their best. Our focus will be on executing our plans and staying consistent throughout the tournament."

Sialkot outplay Peshawar in Quaid-e-Azam Trophy

SPORTS REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

Azan Awais surpassed the 500-run milestone in the Quaid-e-Azam Trophy on his way to registering a maiden double-century as Sialkot defeated Peshawar by an innings and 57 runs with a day to spare in the triangular stage match at the Abbottabad Cricket Stadium.

Azan carried his bat for an unbeaten 203 after resuming the third day's play at 161. Sialkot were eventually bowled out for 410, having started the day at 319 for six and adding another 91 runs to their overnight total in reply to Peshawar's 171.

Trailing by 239 runs on the first innings, Peshawar were routed for 182 with fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar proving to be the destroyer-in-chief with figures of six for 51. This gave him match figures of eight for 101. Mohammad Ali also used the conditions to his advantage by following up his four for 35 with three for 43.

Squads, groups announced for WSF World Squash Team C'ships

MUDASSER CH.

ISLAMABAD



A record 195 of the world's best squash players will descend upon Hong Kong, China, to contest the 2024 WSF World Squash Team Championships, following the passing of the player registration deadline.

The championships, which will see the men's and women's events taking place concurrently for the first time in squash history, are set to be played at Hong Kong Football Club from December 9 to 15, said a press release.

A total of 23 teams will contest the women's event and 26 the men's, with all National Federations naming four-player squads for the women's event and all but debutants Peru, who have been drawn in Pool H alongside Italy, Pakistan and hosts Hong Kong, China, naming four-player squads to the men's.

Peru's decision to send just three players means a heavy workload for their No.1 and reigning individual world champion Diego Elias, with the 27-year-old set to play every pool stage match and likely to feature heavily afterwards, too.

Joining Elias at Hong Kong Football Club will be some of squash's biggest names. Reigning champions Egypt, in Pool A with Spain and Japan, have made just one change to the side that captured the title last year in Tauranga, New Zealand: former world champion and current World No.8 Karim Abdel Gawad joins a star-studded lineup of World No.1 Ali Farag, World No.2 Mostafa Asal and World No.5 Mazen Hesham.

Hoping to spoil Egypt's party will be five-time champions England, who lost out in the final last year and have been drawn into Pool B along with Canada and Nigeria. They, too, have made changes: Alexandria-born brothers Mohamed and Marwan ElShorbagy will continue to lead the team and will be supported by new additions Nathan Lake and Curtis Malik, who have replaced Patrick Rooney and Adrian Waller.

Hosts Hong Kong, China will be represented by well-balanced teams in both events, with each squad the same as those who finished runners up at both the men's and women's ASF Asian Team Championships in June of this year.

In the men's event, Hong Kong Football Club's own Tsz Kwan Lau set to be supported by Henry Leung, Ming Hong Tang and Chi Him Wong.

The women's team, meanwhile, will be represented by home favourite Tomato Ho, Sin Yuk Chan, Ka Yi Lee and Tsz Wing Tong in Pool F with Australia, South Africa and Finland.

Defending champions Egypt have raised eyebrows with their squad selection this year. Amina Orfi, who is still just 17 years of age and this year became the first ever player to win three consecutive WSF World Junior Championship titles, will make her senior team debut.

The World No.9 has joined up with the squad to replace reigning individual world champion Nouran Gohar, who will undergo surgery on a broken nose.

Orfi will come in at four for Egypt, who have won the last three editions of the event, supporting World No.1 Nour El Sherbini, World No.3 Hania El Hammamy and World No.8 Rowan Elaraby, with the team also drawn against Japan and Spain.



ISLAMABAD: Clouds hovering over the sky in the Federal Capital. — Staff Photo

Railways offer 50% concession for disable persons in trains fare

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD



Pakistan Railways is offering a 50 percent concession in rail fares to facilitate disabled persons traveling in all express and passenger trains, except the Green Line.

"The concession is granted upon the presentation of the Computerized National Identity Card (CNIC) bearing the disability logo," an official in the Ministry of Railways told APP.

He said that a 50 percent discount is also offered to the attendant accompanying visually impaired persons. About the facilities at Railway Stations and Reservation Offices, he said that wheelchairs are available at all major stations to assist disabled passengers.

Additionally, the official said that exclusive reservation and booking counters have been designated for disabled persons at reservation offices. The free-of-cost access to executive washrooms and restrooms has been provided at a few major stations for special persons.

The official said that the facility of executive washrooms at 12 major stations is also being developed and will have free access for disabled passengers.

To a question, the official said that Khushal Khan Khattak Express was discontinued in March 2020 owing to COVID-19, as train operation was suspended.

He said that Pakistan Railways is operating 98 trains on a daily basis with 1,180 serviceable coaches. The department owns 1,680 passenger coaches on books out of which 72 percent of coaches have surpassed their useful life.

The official said the overage coaches require extra resources, and maintenance costs to keep them fit for operation. At present, 2 Up and 2 Down trains are running between Peshawar and Karachi, he added.

He said that two passenger trains Bolan Mail and Monjodaro Express are operating on the Larkana section to cater to the transportation needs of the area while the restoration of Khushal Khan Khattak will be examined once the availability of coaches is improved along with consideration of the operating cost and commercial viability.

Syed Nasir Shah lays foundation stone of Gate of Sukkur

STAFF REPORTER

SUKKUR



Provincial Minister for Energy, Planning, and Development Syed Nasir Hussain Shah on Thursday visited Sukkur and Rohri where he inaugurated and laid foundation stones for various beautification projects in Sindh's third-largest commercial, cultural and historical cities.

Following the Sindh government's directives, the district administration Sukkur has expedited the work on the beautification projects of twin cities. According to details, Syed Nasir Hussain Shah laid the foundation stone of the "Gate of Sukkur," which will be constructed near the city between the Khirthar and Dadu canals. This project also includes the construction of a beautiful dual road.

During the visit to the walking track in Sukkur, the Provincial Minister was given a detailed briefing on the beautification plans and the construction of a stage similar to "Times Square. Deputy Commissioner Sukkur, Dr. MB Raja Dharejo, briefed Provincial Minister Syed Nasir Hussain Shah on the progress of the project and other measures. Meanwhile, in Rohri, he also inaugurated the Masan Road and reviewed the beautification of the Umer Kass canal, along with other development works.

He said that Sukkur is Sindh's emerging urban center, where, alongside trade, progress is also being made in the fields of education and health. The establishment of world-class universities and hospitals has further increased the city's importance he said and praised the efforts of PPP Senior leader and MNA Syed Khursheed Ahmed Shah, stating that MBA Syed Khursheed Ahmed Shah initiated major development projects in Sukkur, which they are taking forward. The purpose of these projects is to provide better facilities to citizens and enhance the city's beauty. The provincial minister further added that the beautification of Sukkur and Rohri is a top priority, with a focus on improving parks and recreational areas to provide a pleasant environment for citizens and tourists. These efforts reflect the Sindh government's commitment to public service, aiming to provide better facilities to the people of Sukkur and Rohri, he added.

COAS attends closing ceremony of 44th Pakistan Army Rifle Association Central Meet

MUDASSER CH.

RAWALPINDI



Closing Ceremony of 44th Pakistan Army Rifle Association (PARA) Central Meet was held today at Army Marksmanship Unit (AMU), Jhelum.

General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS) graced the occasion as Chief Guest. The mega shooting event was conducted from 14 October to 28 November 2024.

Over 2000 Firers from Army, Navy, Air Force, Civil Armed Forces including Rangers (Sindh & Punjab), teams ex Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, Federal Rifle Association, Lahore Garrison Shooting Gallery (LGSG) and civilians participated in the competition.

COAS and Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, NI (M), who was the Guest of Honor at the ceremony, awarded trophies and medals to the award winners and runners up in each category.

In the Inter Services matches, Pakistan Army won three contests including CJCSC, COAS and CNS matches, while Pakistan Air Force won CAS contest. Pakistan Army secured overall Championship Trophy.

FTR team trophy was won by Pakistan Army led by Lieutenant General Ahsan Gulrez, HI (M).

The President's Cup National Challenge match trophy was awarded to Naik Waseem Ahmed Khan of Pakistan Army. Pakistan Air Force won the Prime Minister 'Skills at Arms' Big Bore National Challenge. Azad Kashmir Regiment won the first prize in para firing matches (infantry squad).

The highest military shooting honor, 'The Master at Arms' Trophy was awarded to Sepoy Aftab Ahmed of Punjab Regiment. The 'Best Shot Match Trophy' Group 2 and Group 3 was awarded to Lance Dafadar Muhammad Imran of Cavalry and Havaldar Fateh Ullah Khan of EME Battalion.

While interacting with the participants, COAS appreciated the firers for their excellent standards of marksmanship. Terming shooting skill as the hallmark of a professional soldier, he said "attaining proficiency at shooting must remain at the heart of basic military training objectives".

Earlier on arrival, COAS was received by Commander Rawalpindi Corps.

Chikungunya outbreak escalates in KP as health department issues urgent advisory

STAFF REPORTER

PESHAWAR



Following a surge in dengue cases across Pakistan, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Health Department has raised alarm over a significant rise in chikungunya cases in recent weeks, particularly in Peshawar and Mansehra.

In response, the health department issued an official advisory on Wednesday, urging immediate measures to contain the spread of the viral infection.

Chikungunya, which is transmitted through mosquito bites, has now become a growing concern, with the KP health authorities noting an increase in reported cases. The disease causes symptoms similar to dengue, including high fever, severe joint pain, and rash. As a precautionary measure, the department has directed all district health officers (DHOs), medical superintendents (MS), and medical teaching institutes (MTIs) to take swift action based on guidelines from the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

The advisory emphasizes the importance of monitoring and containing the spread of the virus, especially in areas where cases have been reported. DHOs, MS, and MTIs have been instructed to conduct contact tracing to identify and evaluate potentially affected individuals. The health department has also called for increased awareness campaigns to educate the public on how chikungunya spreads and how to protect themselves from infection.

Furthermore, the advisory urges collaboration with social organizations, environmental agencies, and tehsil municipal administrations to implement preventive measures effectively. Healthcare facilities and medical institutions have been directed to ensure preparedness for managing chikungunya cases.

With mosquito-borne diseases continuing to pose a serious public health threat in the region, authorities are focusing on public education and prevention to reduce the impact of the chikungunya outbreak.

The health department has reassured the public that all necessary steps will be taken to control the spread of the virus and protect the community.

Punjab announces winter vacations for schools

- Department was also asked to create a comprehensive database of government and private buses

STAFF REPORTER

LAHORE



Punjab has announced winter vacations for government and private schools across the province.

According to details, Secretary Schools Punjab Khalid Nazir Wattoo said that schools will remain closed for 20 days from December 20, 2024 to January 10, 2025 during the winter vacations.

The announcement came after the Lahore High Court (LHC) ordered to provide pick and drop services to school children after the winter vacations to deal with the increasing threat of smog.

These instructions were given by Lahore High Court Justice Shahid Karim in a three-page written order that he issued on Monday on petitions related to smog prevention.

The court ordered that children should go to school using the transport provided by the school administration.

The LHC bench warned that schools that do not comply with these orders will have to be sealed. It also remarked that no school should issue a written declaration absolving itself of the responsibility of transporting students.

The written order further said that the Punjab government informed the court about the steps taken to deal with the smog problem and several people have been arrested for burning parathas.

The department was also asked to create a comprehensive database of government and private buses.

Earlier, the Punjab government had further relaxed smog restrictions and allowed construction work in four districts including Lahore.

Construction work was stopped after smog peaked in the province about 10 days ago, causing hardship to the people.

US issues security warning, advises citizens to avoid Serena hotel Peshawar

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD



The US Mission in Pakistan has issued a travel alert warning for its personnel and US citizens to avoid travel to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) from November 27 till December 16.

The alert also advises American citizens to avoid a five-star hotel in Peshawar near Golf Club area until December 16 and to remain vigilant, review personal security plans, stay updated through local media, carry identification, and cooperate with authorities.

The US government has maintained a Level 4 'Do Not Travel' alert for Pakistan, particularly for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP).

The region faces frequent attacks by terrorist and insurgent groups targeting civilians, NGOs, government offices, and security forces. Risks include assassination, kidnapping, and attacks on polio vaccination teams, according to the advisory.

The advisory issued on September 10, 2024, emphasizes, "Assassination and kidnapping attempts are common, including targeting polio eradication teams and Pakistani security personnel." US citizens are urged to reconsider travel plans to the region and exercise extreme.

Imran Khan's hardships increasing due to blunders of PTI leadership: Yousafzai

STAFF REPORTER

PESHAWAR



Blasting the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leadership over mismanagement of the Islamabad march, senior PTI leader and former Khyber Pakhtunkhwa minister Shaukat Yousafzai on Thursday said due to the party leadership's blunders, hardships of incarcerated party founder Imran Khan were mounting.

"All the responsibility (for this) lied on the central leadership," the PTI leader said in a statement.

He asked that if the PTI founder gave instruction to hold the sit-in at Sangjani, then why it was ignored. "Strategy in politics is made by looking at the situation," he added.

The former ruling party's "do-or-die" protest demanding Khan's release culminated with nearly 1,000 supporters being arrested by authorities.

PTI Secretary-General Salman Akram Raja, claiming that at least 20 people lost their lives, has said that the party would approach the courts against the government, the Ministry of Interior, and the interior minister

Meanwhile, Islamabad's police chief, Ali Rizvi, denied that live ammunition had been used during the operation and said that 600 protesters had been arrested in Tuesday's operation, bringing the total since the protest sit-in began on Sunday to 954.

Yousafzai said that God gave them a great opportunity which they wasted. If they had proceeded with consultation among themselves, the results would have been different today, he added.

To a query, he replied that Bushra Bibi was right to take to the streets in a bid to get her husband released from jail. "The question arises, what did the rest of the leadership do? Where was the central leadership?" he asked.

It should be noted that earlier Yousafzai had questioned the leadership of Barrister Gohar Khan and Salman Akram Raja as well.

He also asked where Sher Afzal Marwat and leadership of Punjab were during the protest.

Yousafzai expressed his frustration, stating: "Gandapur has been made a scapegoat. [Imran] Khan had agreed to Sangjani, but Bushra's [Bibi] insistence on D-Chowk cost the party heavily."

"Will the party be led by Bushra Bibi or the leadership? If the leadership lacks authority, they should resign. The D-Chowk incident was deeply regrettable," he stated.

"The only ones standing with the workers were Gandapur, Asad Qaiser, Omar Ayub, Ali Asghar and some others," he said in a video message separately.

Hamid Raza Resigns from PTI Core Committee and NA Seat

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

Hamid Raza has resigned from his position in the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) core committee and from his National Assembly seat, following the party's recent protests in Islamabad. Raza informed the PTI leadership of his decision on Thursday, citing personal reasons for stepping down from both his party role and legislative seat.

His resignation comes on the heels of another significant departure within PTI, as Salman Akram Raja also resigned from his position as the party's Secretary General earlier today. Raja, who had held the position since September 2024, stepped down for "personal reasons" but vowed to continue supporting the party in a legal capacity.

The resignations of both leaders come at a time of growing political tension within PTI, which has faced internal challenges and criticism following recent events. With these departures, PTI continues to navigate through a period of significant leadership changes and political upheaval.



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