

● Arch-rivals Pakistan, India to face-off on February 23

ICC announces Champions Trophy 2025 groups, schedule

● Champions Trophy: Mohsin Naqvi vows to welcome international teams with verve

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LAHORE

The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Tuesday unveiled official fixtures and groups for the much-awaited event, Champions Trophy 2025, which would commence on February 19 in Karachi.

The eight-team tournament will feature 15 matches, and will be played across Pakistan and in Dubai, the top cricketing body announced, adding that all matches will be day-night encounters.

In Pakistan, Rawalpindi, Lahore, and Karachi will be the three venues to host tournament. Each Pakistan venue will feature three group games apiece, with Lahore hosting the second semi-final.

Lahore will also host the final on March 9, unless India qualify, in which case it will be played in Dubai. Both the semi-finals and the final will have reserve days.

The three group matches involving India, as well as the first semi-final, will be played in Dubai.

Pakistan take on New Zealand in the Group A tournament opener in Karachi on February 19. The Dubai leg begins the following day with India taking on Bangladesh.

Group B matches will begin on 21 February, with Afghanistan squaring up against the Proteas



in Karachi.

A big weekend then kicks off with rivals England and Australia set to clash in Lahore on Saturday (22 February), with the much-anticipated Pakistan-India clash set for the day later.

The eight sides in the Champions Trophy competing for the famous white winners' jackets are the teams that finished in the top eight positions on the points table of the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023.

Group A of the tournament features current Champions Trophy holders and hosts Pakistan, along with India, New Zealand and Bangladesh,

while Group B features Cricket World Cup 2023 champions Australia, alongside Afghanistan, England and South Africa.

The final of the tournament, however, is scheduled to be played in Lahore but if India qualify then it will also be held in Dubai.

Reacting to the announcement, ICC Chairman Jay Shah wrote on X: "Very excited for the ICC Men's Champions Trophy to start in February."

The tournament encountered an obstacle after the Indian government refused to allow its players to visit Pakistan for the mega event, citing security concerns.

However, both sides had resolved the matter by agreeing on a hybrid model, with India playing their matches at a neutral venue rather than in the host country, Pakistan.

Two days earlier, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) picked United Arab Emirates (UAE) as the neutral venue for India's matches.

Under the agreement, Pakistan will also play at neutral venues in the upcoming ICC tournaments hosted by India.

The agreement will extend to the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup 2025 hosted by India, and the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 hosted by India and

Sri Lanka, the statement added.

Groups
Group A: Pakistan, India, New Zealand, Bangladesh

Group B: South Africa, Australia, Afghanistan, England

Champions Trophy schedule

February 19, Pakistan v New Zealand, Karachi

February 20, Bangladesh v India, Dubai, UAE

February 21, Afghanistan v South Africa, Karachi

February 22, Australia v England, Lahore

February 23, Pakistan v India, Dubai

February 24,

Bangladesh v New Zealand, Rawalpindi

February 25, Australia v South Africa, Rawalpindi

February 26, Afghanistan v England, Lahore

February 27, Pakistan v Bangladesh, Rawalpindi

February 28, Afghanistan v Australia, Lahore

March 1, South Africa v England, Karachi

March 2, New Zealand v India, Dubai, UAE

March 4, Semi-final 1, Dubai, UAE

March 5, Semi-final 2, Lahore

March 9, Final, Lahore (unless India qualify, when it will be played in Dubai)

March 10, Reserve day

Meanwhile, Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi vowed on Tuesday to welcome the international teams to Pakistan for the forthcoming Champions Trophy with verve.

In a statement, Naqvi dubbed hosting the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 as a "significant milestone". He said: "The tournament will promise a memorable experience for the players, officials, and fans."

He expressed Pakistan's enthusiasm to welcome the cricketing world to the event. Naqvi said: "Pakistan will look forward to showcase its renowned hospitality."

"It is a matter of delight that the matters pertaining to the Champions Trophy had been resolved in a good fashion," said Naqvi.

The ICC has announced the fixtures and groupings for the 2025 ICC Champions Trophy, scheduled to begin on February 19 in Karachi and conclude on March 9. The tournament will feature eight teams, 15 matches, and will be hosted across Pakistan and Dubai.

In Pakistan, the matches will be held at three venues: Rawalpindi, Lahore, and Karachi, each hosting three group games. Lahore is set to host the second semi-final and the final on March 9, unless India qualifies, in which case the final will be played in Dubai. Both semi-finals and the final will include reserve days.

Ex-president Alvi predicts Imran Khan will be released soon

STAFF REPORTER

PESHAWAR

Former President and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Dr. Arif Alvi on Tuesday predicted that "change is around the corner, and Imran Khan will be released soon; the planets have been moving."

Speaking to the media outside the Peshawar High Court alongside Opposition Leader in the National Assembly Omar Ayub, he called the treasury parliamentarians corrupt.

He said they have harmed democracy to keep PTI founder Imran Khan away. "He (Imran) represents 90 percent of the public," the former president added.

He said they (the government) have forbidden people to call the name of Imran Khan. They threatened the masses that their [constitutional] rights would be taken away if anyone mentioned the name of Imran, even in cricket matches. They have travelled back in time before 2018.

"Everything will have to start over again. We are worried about the country. I have to free the country from these usurpers and mafias," he continued.

Ex-president Alvi said the world would condemn trial of civilians by military courts. "The world is condemning it, but no one cares. The mafia is enjoying [privileges] while the poor have nothing to eat."

He refuted the government's claim that foreign investors were ready to come to invest \$70 billion in Pakistan. "No money is coming from any part of the world, not a single penny."

Maryam orders special discounts for Christians on Christmas

● Punjab CM directs foolproof security for Christmas celebrations

STAFF REPORTER

LAHORE

Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif said on Tuesday no lapse in the security of Christian brothers and sisters would be tolerated on Christmas.

Directing all district administrations and police officials to ensure foolproof security across the province on Christmas, she said, "Relevant departments should take all necessary measures to maintain cleanliness around churches."

The chief minister directed the authorities to increase presence of police and other security personnels in churches in all major cities including Lahore.



She also directed them to enforce proper traffic management during Christmas celebrations.

Maryam ordered special discounts for the Christian community at Sasta Bazaars. She said, "Cut cake along with the Christian community in Police Meesaq Center to express solidarity with them."

Meanwhile, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz on

Tuesday directed foolproof security arrangements for the Christmas celebrations across the province.

The chief minister also directed to enhance the security measures for prayer ceremonies in churches during Christmas and ordered all district administrations and police officials to oversee the arrangements.

CM Maryam directed

an increased deployment of police and other security personnel at churches in Lahore and other major cities.

Besides it, Maryam Nawaz emphasized the need for improved traffic management during the Christmas celebrations.

She decided to express solidarity with the Christian community by cutting a cake at the Police Meesaq Center and directed offering special discounts for the Christian community in subsidized markets.

The CM said that no negligence would be tolerated regarding the security of Christian brothers, and the relevant departments should ensure cleanliness around churches.

PML-N seeks time to address PPP's reservations by first week of Jan

● PML-N takes PPP on board over transfer posting

STAFF REPORTER

LAHORE

The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) on Tuesday sought time to address the Pakistan Peoples Party's (PPP) reservations by first week of January.

The PML-N and PPP coordination committee meeting were held during which the key developments took place regarding the power sharing agreement between the two political parties.

Meanwhile, the TORs were also decided to be implemented on the agreement. During the meeting, the PPP had also expressed its reservations in Punjab.

It was decided in the meeting that the PPP



will spearhead the district development committees of Rahim Yar Khan and Multan.

The PPP said: "The PML-N should clear the air if it does not want to move forward the matters in line with the coalition government. Otherwise, we will formulate the strategy by ourselves."

It was decided to divide the funds equally

from the constituencies from which both the parties emerged victorious.

The meeting confirmed that the PPP will get representatives in the different committees at the district level.

Moreover, the PML-N had taken the PPP on board over the transfer posting.

It was emphasised in the meeting that there

were no disagreements between the Punjab chief minister and provincial governor.

Prominent among those who attended the meeting from the PPP were Punjab Governor Haji Saleem Haider, Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, Hassan Murtaza, Makhdoom Ahmed Mehmood, Nadeem Afzal Chan, Ali Haider Gillani.

From the PML-N, deputy prime minister Ishaq Dar, Rana Sanaullah, Punjab Assembly Speaker Malik Ahmed Khan, Azam Nazeer Tarar and Marriyum Aurangzeb attended the committee meeting.

The chief secretary, Punjab IG and C&W secretary also attended the meeting.

A Nation Built on Tolerance: Muhammad Ali Jinnah

● PM, President, CJCSC, the Service Chiefs, and the Armed Forces of Pakistan pays tribute to Quaid-e-Azam on his 148th birthday

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, paying tribute to Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah on his 148th Birthday, said that Quaid-e-Azam was a leader of rare caliber who believed deeply in unity, justice and equality.

"Today, as we celebrate the 148th birth anniversary of our founding father, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, we are reminded of his extraordinary vision, unwavering courage, and unparalleled determination. He achieved what many thought impossible and gifted

us our homeland—Pakistan," the prime minister said in his message.

PM Shehbaz Sharif highlighted that his life continued to inspire countless people as an enlightened teacher, visionary lawyer, principled statesman, steadfast politician, and charismatic leader. "His journey is a testament to the power of conviction and the realization of dreams through hard work and dedication."

Meanwhile, resident Asif Ali Zardari stressed that Jinnah's vision for a democratic and self-reliant Pakistan called upon them to work harder by upholding the values of social justice,



economic equity, and the rule of law.

"To achieve Quaid's vision, we must invest in the education of our youth, ensuring they are equipped with the knowledge and skills to lead Pakistan into a brighter future. We also

need to work for the uplift of downtrodden segments of society.

Jinnah's dream of a peaceful and moderate Pakistan obliges us to promote harmony within and beyond our borders," the president said in a message on the

148th birth anniversary of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, being celebrated on December 25.

Today, the president said, on his 148th birth anniversary, they paid tribute to the Founding Father, Quaid-e-Azam

Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

"On this day, we honour the contributions of the Father of the Nation, who changed the course of history through a political struggle. Quaid-e-Azam's vision, determination, and unwavering resolve led to the creation of an independent homeland for Muslims of the sub-continent," President Secretariat Press Wing, in a press release, quoted the president as saying.

The president said Quaid-e-Azam's leadership during the most critical phase of their history demonstrated his extraordinary qualities, adding as a lawyer, a statesman, and the leader of the All-India Muslim League, he

vehemently advocated for the rights of Muslims.

"He presented the case for Pakistan with clarity and conviction, emphasizing the need for a separate homeland where Muslims could freely practice their religion, safeguard their culture, and secure their political and economic rights," he further observed.

Meanwhile, The Armed Forces honor the enduring vision and unparalleled leadership of Quaid-e-Azam, whose tireless efforts united our people and established the foundation for a sovereign and independent Pakistan. On this day of national significance, we renew our unwaver-

ing commitment to his guiding principles of Unity, Faith, and Discipline, which continue to inspire the nation.

Furthermore, the Armed Forces extend heartfelt greetings to the Christian community on the joyous occasion of Christmas. In solidarity with our Christian brothers and sisters, we celebrate the universal values of love, compassion, and peace that this occasion represents.

The Pakistan Armed Forces remain resolutely dedicated to safeguarding the nation and upholding the ideals of justice, equality, and harmony in the service of our people and our homeland.

Lt. Gen. Asif Ghafoor bids farewell after four decades of military service

STAFF REPORTER
ISLAMABAD



Lieutenant General Asif Ghafoor, the former director general (DG) for Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), and ex-spokesperson of armed forces bids farewell to military service after a glittering career.

Ghafoor, 57, got an emotional farewell from associates for leaving a legacy of strategic leadership and dedication. He was recently serving in National Defense University (NDU) and had several key positions during his career.

He was commissioned into the 87 SP Medium Regiment Artillery in 1988 and served at coveted positions throughout his career. He served as

Brigade Major, Assistant Military Secretary, GSO-I in Military Operations at GHQ, and Director of Military Operations before becoming DG ISPR from 2016 to 2020.

Known for his outspoken press conferences and active Twitter presence, Ghafoor was a prominent spokesperson during the 2019 Pakistan-India standoff. He was promoted to Lieutenant

General and became Commander of 12 Corps after the martyrdom of Lieutenant General Sarfraz Ali.

Ghafoor also contributed much as Inspector General of Communication & Information Technology. In his final role as President of NDU, he focused on fostering strategic studies and defense education, shaping the future leaders of Pakistan's military.



ISLAMABAD: Visitors looking decorated complex during celebration Christmas ceremony at a shopping mall, in the Federal Capital. — Staff Photo

Turkish Envoy Irfan Naziroglu Pays Tribute to Abdul Rahman Peshawari at Conference in Islamabad

STAFF REPORTER
ISLAMABAD



The Yunus Emre Institute, Pakistan, and Idara Farogh-e-Qaumi Zaban jointly organized a conference to commemorate the life and legacy of Abdul Rahman Peshawari, a renowned figure who symbolizes the cultural and historical ties between Turkey and Pakistan.

The conference, held at Aiwan e Urdu was presided over by Professor Dr. Kanwal Amin, Vice Chancellor, GC Women University, Faisalabad. The honorable Turkish Ambassador, Mr. Irfan Naziroglu, was the chief guest of the conference.

In his opening remarks, Yunus Emre Institute Country Director, Prof. Dr. Halil Toker, shed light on the aims and objectives of the conference. He highlighted the significance of Abdul Rahman

Peshawari's contributions to the cultural and historical heritage of both Turkey and Pakistan.

Mr. Salim Jan, the great-grandson of Abdul Rahman Peshawari, delivered the keynote address, paying tribute to the life and services of his illustrious ancestor. Prominent intellectuals and writers from Turkey and Pakistan, including Dr. Mehmet Toyran, Education Counselor, Turkish Embassy, Ms.

Sima Nu Ercan, Mr. Abdul Akbar, Dr. Farooq Adil, Dr. Sadaf Naqvi, and Dr. Ziauddin, shared their insights on Abdul Rehman Peshawari's contributions.

Turkish Ambassador Irfan Naziroglu, in his address, paid tribute to the services of Abdul Rehman Peshawari, highlighting the centuries-old brotherly relations between Turkey and Pakistan. He emphasized the importance of strengthening cultural

and historical ties between the two nations.

In her presidential address, Professor Dr. Kanwal Amin, Vice Chancellor, GC Women University, Faisalabad, emphasized the need to remember and honor the contributions of great heroes like Abdul Rahman Peshawari. She expressed her gratitude to the conference administration, particularly Prof. Dr. Halil Toker, Country Director, Yunus Emre Institute, and Prof.

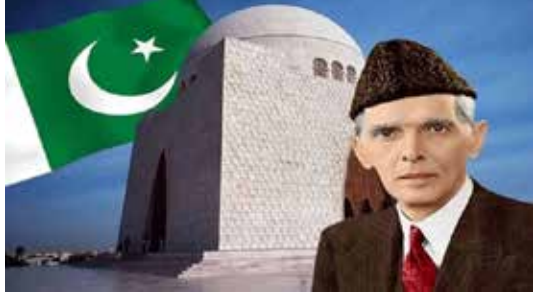
Dr. Muhammad Saleem Mazhar, Director General, Idara Farogh-e-Qaumi Zaban, Islamabad.

Director General of the Institute for the Promotion of National Language, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Salim Mazhar, thanked all the distinguished guests, especially Prof. Dr. Kanwal Amin and Turkish Ambassador Irfan Naziroglu. He reiterated that the doors of the Institute for the Promotion of National Language are always open for strengthening bilateral relations between Turkey and Pakistan.

The conference was attended by prominent scholars, researchers, and students from various universities and institutions in Pakistan. The event served as a platform to promote cultural understanding, exchange ideas, and strengthen the historical ties between Turkey and Pakistan.

KP to celebrate 148th birthday anniversary of Quaid-e-Azam with national enthusiasm on Wednesday

STAFF REPORTER
PESHAWAR



The people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are all set to celebrate the 148th birthday anniversary of Father of the Nation, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah with great national enthusiasm and patriotic zeal on Wednesday.

Schools and colleges in all districts of KP will hold debates, art competitions, and essay writing contests focusing on his leadership and principles of unity, faith, and discipline.

Television and radio channels will air special programs and documentaries throughout the day, highlighting Quaid-e-Azam's pivotal role in the creation of Pakistan.

Newspapers will publish special supplements, recounting his enduring legacy and his unparalleled contribution to the nation.

This day serves as a powerful reminder of the

vision for Pakistan as a progressive, inclusive, and democratic state.

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This day serves as a powerful reminder of the

sacrifices made during the struggle for independence and reinforces the need to uphold Quaid-e-Azam's principles to steer Pakistan toward progress, economic stability, and peace.

Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, a distinguished barrister and politician, led the All-India Muslim League from 1913 until Pakistan's independence on August 14, 1947.

Known for his unwavering determination, integrity and commitment to justice and democracy, Muhammad Ali Jinnah became Pakistan's first governor-general, serving until he passed away on September 11, 1948.

Fourth meeting of Kashmir Committee held

STAFF REPORTER
ISLAMABAD



The 4th meeting of the Kashmir Committee was held under the chairmanship of Qasim Noon here Wednesday.

The Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir also participated in the meeting and discussed the Kashmir issue and various developmental projects.

Chairman Qasim Noon stressed that Kashmir was the lifeline of Pakistan. He said that people of Pakistan were extending consistent support to Kashmiris at every level. "Pakistan stands by its Kashmiri brothers and sisters on moral, diplomatic, and all other fronts", he maintained.

Progress on the

Muzaffarabad Motorway Plan and construction of the Rathwa Hariam Bridge on the Mirpur-Islamabad Road was also reviewed in the meeting.

The Committee focused on the gross human rights violations in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) and reaffirmed its commitment to raising global awareness of the inhumane treatment of Kashmiris, particularly

following the abolition of Articles 370 and 35-A of the Indian Constitution.

The Committee discussed federal mega projects, including the Shurter Tunnel Plan, an important initiative connecting Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan.

Feasibility studies for Mirpur Airport were also part of the agenda.

The Committee also discussed the plans for the restoration of populations affected by cross-

border conflicts and infrastructure development, including education and health, were highlighted.

Qasim Noon and the Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir reaffirmed their commitment for resisting the Hindutva agenda and supporting the Kashmiri people.

The ideology of Pakistan remains central to the ongoing struggle for the rights of Kashmiris, he added.

IIUI Board of Trustees convenes 16th meeting in Riyadh

STAFF REPORTER
ISLAMABAD

Ahmad Salem Muhammad Al-Ameri, Pro-Chancellor of IIUI and Rector of Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University.

Prof. Dr. Al-Ameri welcomed participants and acknowledged the hybrid nature of the meeting, with members attending both in person at the Round Hall of the Conference Building in Riyadh and virtually from various locations.

Expressing gratitude to the President of Pakistan and Chancellor of IIUI, Asif Ali Zardari, for entrusting him with this responsibility, Prof. Dr. Al-Ameri lauded IIUI's contributions to Pakistan and the Muslim world.

He emphasized the need for collective efforts to elevate IIUI into the ranks of leading global

universities and expressed optimism about addressing institutional challenges and promoting progress.

The board deliberated on the implementation status of decisions from the 14th and 15th BOT meetings, held on June 30, 2020, and December 11, 2023, respectively.

The IIUI Strategic Plan (2022-2026), emphasizing academic excellence, research expansion, and institutional growth, received formal approval.

The session was graced by notable attendees, including the Saudi Ambassador to Pakistan, Nawaf bin Saeed Al-Malki; Director General of the Islamic Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), Dr. Salem Mohammed Al-Malik; President of

Umul Qura University, Makkah, Prof. Dr. Moaddi Mohammed Al-Madhib; President of the Islamic University of Madina, Dr. Saleh bin Ali Al-Aqla; Chairman of the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan/ Rector IIUI, Prof. Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed and the Acting President of IIUI, Prof. Dr. Ahmed Shuja Syed. Ch. Muhammad Ali Randhawa, Chairman, Capital Development Authority, Islamabad, Mohyuddin Ahmad Wani – Secretary, Federal Ministry of Education and Professional Training, Allama Muhammad Raghib Hussain Naeemi – Chairman, Council of Islamic Ideology (CII), Muhammad Shakeel Malik, Secretary to the President of Pakistan, Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Revolution in Dengue Diagnosis: Pakistani Researchers Introduce AI-Based Advanced System

● Pakistan takes immense pride in these exceptional researchers from Azad Jammu and Kashmir

STAFF REPORTER
ISLAMABAD

Pakistani researchers from the State of Azad Jammu and Kashmir have achieved a significant milestone in medical diagnostics by developing an artificial intelligence (AI)-based advanced system for the diagnosis and classification of dengue virus. The groundbreaking research has been published in the international journal Computing and Artificial Intelligence, highlighting the system's remarkable performance with 100% sensitivity, 99.8% precision, and 98.7% specificity, setting new benchmarks in dengue diagnosis.

The research was spearheaded by Mr. Safdar Hayat, an M.Phil. scholar from Iqra

University Islamabad, currently serving as a Technical Support Engineer at the Prime Minister Secretariat Muzaffarabad Azad Jammu & Kashmir. According to Safdar Hayat, the idea for this research stemmed from his personal battle with dengue fever. Reflecting on his experience, he shared, "When I contracted dengue, I came face-to-face with death. The challenges in diagnosing and treating dengue at that time motivated me to create a modern system that could aid in the early detection of the disease."

Fueled by this determination, Mr. Safdar Hayat collaborated with his team, which included Dr. Rahila Anwar, a lecturer in computer science at the Higher Education Department,



and Mr. Sartaj Aziz, an M.Phil. scholar from NUST University and an IT officer at the Prime Minister Secretariat. All three researchers hail from the State of Azad Jammu and Kashmir and worked tirelessly to develop this advanced framework based on artificial neural networks.

The AI-based system aims to assist doctors in diagnosing dengue more accurately and swiftly, overcoming the delays and resource inefficiencies of traditional diag-

nostic methods. Not only does this system expedite the diagnostic process, but it also ensures early treatment for patients. Moreover, it provides classification of the dengue virus, significantly enhancing physicians' diagnostic confidence and expertise.

If implemented at a governmental level in hospitals, this system has the potential to be a game-changer for both doctors and patients, offering a reliable, cost-effective, and timely

solution for dengue diagnosis.

This research is a testament to the brilliance and perseverance of Azad Jammu and Kashmir's talented researchers, who have excelled on a global stage despite limited resources and demanding professional routines. It underscores the potential of fostering a research-friendly environment to encourage similar groundbreaking contributions.

For more details on this innovative work, you can access the research here <https://doi.org/10.59400/cai1489>. For inquiries, reach out to safdarhayat@ajk.gov.pk.

Pakistan takes immense pride in these exceptional researchers from Azad Jammu and Kashmir.



Mirpur: Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Omar Shahzad Jaral is presenting the shield to Chicago Mayor Mary Alexandra during his visit to the United States. — Staff Photo



LAHORE: Labourers busy to install pipelines using heavy machinery at Walton Road, part of a major development project in the provincial capital. — Staff Photo

Maroof Int’l Hospital celebrates Christmas

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

Maroof International Hospital (MIH) on Tuesday hosted a Christmas cake-cutting ceremony for its staff, bringing festive cheer and fostering a spirit of unity and goodwill.

The event was a gesture of appreciation for the hard work and commitment of the hospital team throughout the year.

Haroon Naseer, CEO of MIH, shared a thoughtful message during the celebration, emphasizing the importance of interfaith harmony and inclusivity in the workplace.

“At MIH, we embrace diversity and celebrate the shared values that bring us together. This festive season is a reminder of the power of unity, compassion, and understanding across all



cultures and faiths.”

He prayed, “May this festive season bring joy, love and cherished moments with your loved ones.”

He said, “As we approach the end of the year, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to each of you for your dedication and hard work. Your efforts have been the foundation of MIH’s success, and I am proud to work alongside such an incredible team.”

He also prayed that the new year may fill with happiness, good health, and new

opportunities.” Let us continue to strive for excellence and make a lasting impact on the lives of those we serve.”

The speakers said MIH looks forward to continuing its mission of providing exceptional healthcare while promoting a culture of unity and collaboration in the coming year.

They said the event underscores MIH’s commitment to fostering a positive and inclusive work environment, where employees of all backgrounds are valued and respected.

Islamabad Police arrest 5 accused in ongoing crackdown on Sheesha Cafés

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

The Islamabad Police Kohsar police team arrested 5 individuals during an ongoing crackdown on illegal sheesha cafés in the city on Tuesday. Hookah and flavors were recovered from their possession.

A public relation officer told APP that Islamabad Police intensified crackdown against the sheesha centers in order to eliminate this menace from the city.

In this regard, the Kohsar police station team apprehended 05 accused during the crackdown against sheesha cafes. Police team also recovered hookah and flavors from their



possession. Cases were registered against the nabbed accused and further investigation is underway.

DIG Syed Ali Raza said that the Islamabad Police is actively working to ensure the safety

of citizens’ lives and property, emphasizing that no elements will be allowed to disrupt citizens’ peace. Protecting the lives, property, and dignity of citizens is the Islamabad Police’s top priority, he added.

ICT Police deploy 1,500 personnel for foolproof security on Christmas and Quaid-e-Azam Day

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police have made comprehensive security arrangements to ensure the safety of citizens during Christmas and Quaid-e-Azam Day celebrations.

A Public Relations Officer told APP that a total of 1,500 police officers and personnel will be deployed across the district to ensure security.

He said armed police personnel will be stationed at Christian places of worship, and security will be on high alert throughout the celebrations. Additional forces will be deployed at sensitive churches to



ensure the safety of worshippers.

DIG Syed Ali Raza, will personally oversee all security duties. Supervisory officers will maintain continuous communication with church administrations,

ensuring effective coordination for security arrangements, he added.

IG Islamabad Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi urged leaders of all faiths to promote interfaith harmony during Christmas. He also

confirmed that the Safe City cameras will be used to monitor the Christmas and Quaid-e-Azam Day events in real time.

The Dolphin Squad, Ababeel Squad, and police teams will conduct effective patrolling

around churches and Christian neighborhoods. Special flag marches, search, and sweep operations are also underway near churches and Christian communities before Christmas.

In addition, security will be strengthened at parks, recreational areas, foreign embassies, and other sensitive installations. The Chief Traffic Officer has been instructed to personally oversee traffic arrangements to ensure smooth operations during the celebrations.

For the safety of female citizens, female police officers will be deployed for checks, particularly at key locations during both Christmas and Quaid-e-Azam Day celebrations.

Redressal of public grievances is top priority, says DIG Islamabad

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) police, under the leadership of DIG Syed Ali Raza, reiterated its commitment to resolving public grievances on priority, emphasizing a zero-tolerance policy against corruption.

DIG said this while listening to the complaints and issues of the public as well as police officers during the Khuli Kachehri (open court) on Tuesday.

During the Khuli Kachehri, DIG listened to the complaints of the citizens and marked their applications to the concerned officers for timely action on merit.



He also directed them to send reports to his offices in the given time frame.

DIG Raza further said that strict action will be taken against officers involved in bribery or corruption and a zero-tolerance policy will be adopted in this regard.

He emphasized that

Islamabad Police would not leave any stone unturned to secure the lives and property of the citizens. “Such interaction would be continued in future to provide maximum relief to the citizens,” he added.

DIG Syed Ali Raza further said that interac-

tion during “Khuli Kachehri” would help to promote friendly policing and will also ensure self-accountability and immediate resolution of citizens’ problems. The protection of life, property and self-respect of citizens comes first, he maintained.

KOICA Post Project Support for Enhancing ICT Education in Pakistan

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

On December 19, 2024, the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) provided a post-project support amounting to \$287,407 for the Pak-Korea ICT Center for Excellence. This funding is utilized for essential roof repairs and the procurement of 103 high-speed computers equipped with licensed software for two new labs. The upgraded new labs will enhance the center’s capacity to provide high-quality ICT education, catering to the growing demand for skilled professionals in Pakistan’s ICT sector.

In addition to these



vital upgrades, KOICA has provided a state-of-the-art video conferencing system, which significantly upgrades the center’s capacity for online teaching and remote learning. The installation of monitoring cameras further aims to bolster the operational efficiency of the ICT Center.

Since its establish-

ment, KOICA has remained actively involved in the ICT Center, initially handing it over to the CTTI management in 2016. Following a series of follow-up evaluations, KOICA has recognized the center’s accomplishments and committed to this additional support. Currently, the ICT Center boasts 11 fully operational labs, and in response to increasing student demand, plans have been set in motion to develop two new specialized labs: a Graphic Designing Lab and a Data Analysis Lab.

The Graphic Designing Lab will offer a diverse curriculum, including courses in Graphic Design, Print Graphics,

Motion Graphics, and UI/UX Design. Meanwhile, the Data Analysis Lab will focus on cutting-edge topics such as Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain Technology, Data Analysis, and Data Planning. These labs are expected to accommodate 200 students annually, contributing to the center’s current enrollment of approximately 1,800 students across various courses.

Through this strategic support, KOICA continues to play a pivotal role in enhancing educational opportunities and remains dedicated to fostering skill development in Pakistan’s growing ICT sector.

AIOU inks MoU with FLI to protect endangered languages



STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed on Tuesday between Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) and the Forum for Language Initiatives (FLI) to protect endangered languages in Pakistan.

The MoU was signed by Registrar, AIOU, Raja Umar Yunus and Executive Director, FLI, Fakhruddin Akhonzada. The ceremony was presided over by the Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, AIOU, Professor Dr. Abdul Aziz Sahir.

In his address, Professor Dr. Sahir emphasized the urgent need for practical steps to protect endangered languages in Pakistan.

He highlighted that this partnership would facilitate work on languages through research, educational services, and training programs for teachers and students. He lauded the AIOU English Department’s efforts and stated that all university departments would benefit from this initiative.

Executive Director, FLI, Fakhruddin Akhonzada stated that many students express interest in enhancing their professional skills. He mentioned plans for collaborative training workshops, joint research projects, seminars, and conferences with AIOU.

Dr. Muhammad Kamal Khan, Chairman, English Department, AIOU briefed the attendees on the objectives and future action plan of the MoU.

IHC starts winter break, Chief Justice stays on duty

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

The Islamabad High Court (IHC) has commenced its two-week winter vacation, scheduled to last until January 8.

The IHC will observe reduced activity during the break, though Chief Justice of Islamabad High Court (IHC) Aamer Farooq will remain available throughout. Several other judges will be on leave for varying durations during the vacation period.

According to the office order, Justice Tariq Jahangiri’s leave extended from December 24 to January 1, while Justice Babar Sattar and Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir will be on leave from December 31 to January 1 and December 31 to January 8, respectively.

Justice Sardar Ejaz Ishaq Khan is on leave starting Tuesday until January 8, and Justice Saman Rafat Imtiaz is on leave for Tuesday only but will resume duties for the remaining days of the vacation.

Kissan Ittehad Chairman demands to increase rates of crop

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

Chairman Kissan Ittehad, Khalid Hussain Bath on Wednesday demanded to increase in the rates of crops to save the agriculture sectors as the agriculture production has already been declined due to high cost.

“The mill owners are looting farmers with both hands as the Sugar Mills Association announced to buy sugarcane at the rate of 400 per maund, while the mills are buying at 300 to 325 rupees per maund and losses are being borne by the farmers,” a press release said.

The cost of production of crops has already

increased due to the increase in the price of urea fertilizer which was available for Rs4000 now it is now available for 4600 while the rate of DAP fertilizer has also been increased upto Rs12000 rupees per sack, he added, saying that the cost of electricity was increased from Rs300 to Rs2000 rupees per hour.

He appealed govt to intervene in the matter and fixed the rate of crops concerning the cost incurred in the yielding of crops. Chairman further demanded to increase the rate of wheat up to 4 to 5 thousand rupees per maund and the price of sugarcane up to four hundred rupees per maund.



NYC established through merit, transparency: Mashhood

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

Chairman of the Prime Minister’s Youth Program, Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan, on Tuesday said that the National Youth Council (NYC) has been established through merit and transparency, comprising young experts from various sectors.

The youth would play a pivotal role in shaping policies and decisions related to youth matters and in highlighting the country’s positive image, he said while addressing a press conference.

He given credit to Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and his team’s relentless efforts and dedication for the recent positive developments in the economy.

Rana Mashhood noted, “The current government has successfully reached an agreement with the IMF, attracting interest from international investors, which reflects their trust in the government’s policies.”

“The industrial sector is flourishing, and



the nation’s genuine and positive image is emerging strongly,” he remarked.

“The Prime Minister’s Youth Program has taken significant steps in the last eight months in areas such as education, entertainment, entrepreneurship, employment, and providing loans on easy terms,” he informed.

He announced that the restructuring of the National Youth Council, which was chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif as its patron-in-chief. The council now included 100 talented youth from across the country and 13 overseas Pakistani youth. Merit and transparency were strictly adhered to in the selection process.

He explained that applications were invited for categories such as IT, education, and climate change, resulting in thousands of applications from both within Pakistan and abroad.

“Through a comprehensive process, council members were selected,” he told.

“Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has always focused on youth development, introducing initiatives like the laptop scheme, scholarships, and endowment funds,” he proudly shared.

Rana Mashhood said, “The National Youth Council will function as the Prime Minister’s National Youth Advisory Board, presenting suggestions on youth-related issues and opportunities.”

“The council will also guide decision-making to empower youth. It comprises 49 males, 49 females, and 2 transgender members. It also ensures representation of minorities and individuals with disabilities across all sectors,” he explained.

“Representation from Gilgit-Baltistan, Azad Kashmir, and all four provinces is included, alongside the 13 overseas Pakistani members. The council’s first three-day meeting will be held in Islamabad on January 26, focusing on youth-related issues,” Rana Mashhood said.

Taxing Sugary Drinks: A Triple Win for Pakistan's Economy and Public Health

Recent media reports highlight the Federal Board of Ongoing Struggle (FBO) targets, with consistent past few months. As measures agreed upon Monetary Fund (IMF), to implement several initiatives to bolster collections that includes raising the federal excise duty (FED) on aerated and sugary drinks.

The situation presents a unique opportunity for the government to transform the challenge into an advantage. Beyond fulfilling fiscal obligations, the option to increase FED on sugary drinks and aerated beverages, promises a "triple win" to the government. On the one hand, the decision would help government in generating crucial revenue, while on the other hand, it would discourage consumption of unhealthy food products, and alleviating the rapidly increasing disease-burden, particularly of the 'Non-communicable Diseases (NCDs)' on the healthcare system.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 60% of deaths in Pakistan are now because of NCDs. Diabetes in Pakistan has reached epidemic levels, with the International Diabetes Federation (IDF) reporting 33 million Pakistanis living with the disease in 2023, making Pakistan the third-highest country globally in diabetes prevalence. Obesity, another driver of NCDs, affects 40% of the population. Health experts believe that high consumption of sugary drinks is directly responsible for this health crisis, and these alarming trends necessitate bold policy measures. Currently, sugary drinks remain cheap and widely accessible, despite being one of the leading contributors to excess sugar consumption.

The economic implications of diet-related diseases are staggering. According to a study by the World Bank, diabetes-related annual healthcare costs in Pakistan reached USD 2.6 billion, a figure projected to rise if immediate action is not taken. By reducing sugary drink consumption, the government can reduce healthcare spending on preventable diseases, improving both economic and public health outcomes.

Sanaullah Ghumman, General Secretary of the Pakistan National Heart Association (PANAH), has been vocal in advocating for higher taxes on sugary drinks. "Pakistan's escalating diabetes and obesity crisis is directly linked to the overconsumption of sugary beverages. The government must prioritize public health by increasing taxes on these products and using the revenue to strengthen the healthcare system," he stated.

Globally, countries implementing taxes on sugary drinks have seen remarkable success in curbing the diabetes crisis. Mexico, for example, introduced a sugary drinks tax in 2014 and observed a significant decrease in consumption within two years. Munawar Hussain, Country Coordinator for the Global Health Advocacy Incubator (GHA), echoed similar sentiments. "Evidence from many countries shows that higher taxes on sugary drinks reduce consumption, improve health outcomes, and generate significant revenue for governments. In Pakistan, this policy could help ease the healthcare burden and fund preventive programs to combat non-communicable diseases."

Pakistan's healthcare system is already overwhelmed, with limited resources to address the growing burden of NCDs. Treating diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and obesity-related complications requires significant investments, which are currently lacking. A dedicated portion of the tax on sugary drinks could create a sustainable funding stream to invest in hospitals, clinics, and preventive health initiatives.

As Pakistan faces a twin crisis of economic instability and a rising disease burden, increasing taxes on sugary drinks is a pragmatic and necessary step. The evidence is clear: such taxes work. They reduce consumption, save lives, and bolster government revenues. Now is the time for decisive action. The government must move swiftly to implement higher taxes on sugary beverages, ensuring that revenue is reinvested in health sector improvements. The IMF agreement for increasing the sugary drinks tax should be viewed as an opportunity to align fiscal policy with public health priorities. Pakistan cannot afford to delay; the health of its people and the stability of its economy depend on it.



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Quaid-E-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah: the indomitable spirit driving Pakistan air force legacy

Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the esteemed architect of Pakistan, stands as an enduring beacon of hope and resolute determination. As the nation commemorates his birthday on 25 December, it reflects on his bold declaration that Muslims were not merely a minority but a distinct nation deserving of their own homeland. His impactful assertion, "India is not a nation; it is a subcontinent composed of nationalities," illuminated the profound differences among communities and laid the foundation for the Two Nation Theory. Through tireless negotiations with both British authorities and the Indian National Congress, Quaid transformed this theory into a political reality, culminating in the birth of Pakistan on 14 August 1947. Revered for his unwavering commitment to democracy, freedom and social justice, he also recognised the vital importance of military strength in safeguarding the nascent nation. His strong belief, "There is no power on Earth that can undo Pakistan," continues to resonate across generations, inspiring resilience and unity in the face of adversity.

Quaid's ideology and vision are not merely guiding principles; they are a lighthouse of aspiration that lights our path towards becoming a truly great nation. His conviction in unity, faith and discipline reverberates deeply within our hearts, reminding us of the strength we possess when we stand together. In a world fraught with challenges, Quaid astutely recognised the vital role of Air Power in securing the future of our fledgling nation, understanding that it was not just about military might but about safeguarding our very sovereignty. With fierce determination, he championed the establishment of Pakistan Air Force in 1947, a bold testament to his visionary leadership and an indelible mark on our national identity.

Today, Pakistan Air Force stands as a proud embodiment of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's vision and the indomitable spirit of



Pakistan. With its head held high, PAF soars with purpose and determination. Quaid's resonant words "A country without a strong Air Force is at the mercy of any aggressor. Pakistan must build up her Air Force as quickly as possible. It must be an efficient Air Force, SECOND TO NONE" continue to echo, motivating our Shaheens to perform their duties with utmost dedication. These words serve as a cornerstone of persistence, upholding his legacy while safeguarding national interests which has been the driving force behind PAF's evolution into the formidable guardian of Pakistan's skies. As it evolves into a Next Generation Air Force, PAF draws strength from its rich history and the lessons learned from past challenges.

Quaid-e-Azam was an exceptional leader whose exemplary conduct set a powerful precedent for others to follow, inspiring those around him to unite towards a common goal and establishing himself as a lasting source of motivation for leaders worldwide. His visionary ideals for Pakistan Air Force were firmly anchored in an unrelenting dedication to professionalism, integrity and an unyielding sense of duty.

Quaid famously proclaimed, "With faith, discipline and selfless devotion to duty, there is nothing worthwhile that you cannot achieve," a statement that encapsulates his profound belief in the immense potential of personnel at large and illuminates the path to greatness through dedication and hard work.

In a bold move, leadership of Pakistan Air Force has been pivotal in steering

PAF towards a transformative journey of self-reliance and indigenisation, in the last three years, empowering its personnel to confront challenges with courage and perseverance. Motivated by Quaid-e-Azam's exhortation that "I charge you to remember that only with discipline and self-reliance can Pakistan Air Force be worthy of Pakistan," the present leadership of PAF has actively catalysed significant advancements in technology and operational capabilities. At the forefront of this visionary initiative is the National Aerospace Science and Technology Park (NASTP), a ground breaking endeavour that bridges the divide between academia and industry while diminishing reliance on foreign suppliers. NASTP is not just a hub for innovation; it is a dynamic ecosystem that nurtures research and development across vital sectors, including aviation, space, information technology and cyber technologies. By spearheading advancements through its Software Development House and fostering local talent, NASTP empowers start-ups and SMEs to thrive. Furthermore, it plays a crucial role in a comprehensive modernisation drive that integrates cutting-edge technologies like artificial intelligence and machine learning, positioning Pakistan to tackle contemporary challenges head-on. With NASTP facilitating the creation of pioneering products and services, PAF stands poised to transform strategic foresight into unmatched operational prowess, driving forward a vision where innovation and modernisation converge to herald a new era of technological advancement

and sustainable economic growth.

Quaid-e-Azam expressed profound reverence for the martyrs of Pakistan, stating, "The sacrifices of our martyrs are the foundation of our freedom. We must always remember their courage and dedication, for they laid down their lives for our future" emphasising the essential role their courage and dedication played in shaping the nation's identity and progress. This sentiment profoundly reflects the legacies of valiant figures of the 1965 and 1971 wars such as Squadron Leader Sarfaraz Rafiqi, Pilot Officer Rashid Minhas and many more, who displayed extraordinary bravery and selflessness in defending the homeland. Each of PAF heroes epitomized the qualities of unity and devotion that underpin the remarkable achievements of Pakistan Air Force. Quaid urged the nation to honour their legacy by upholding the values for which they fought, reminding us that these martyrs stand as enduring symbols of courage and sacrifice, inspiring generations to safeguard our skies and sovereignty.

Quaid-e-Azam's influence on Pakistan is both profound and enduring. He not only forged the nation from struggle but also instilled values of democracy, equality and justice that resonate today. As the guiding light for future generations, his ideals serve as a moral compass, inspiring the people of Pakistan to honour his legacy and strive for a brighter, more prosperous future. His vision for Pakistan Air Force as a formidable and unparalleled fighting force underscores his understanding of the crucial role Air Power plays in modern warfare and national defence. His foresight in establishing a strong, independent Air Force not only aimed to safeguard Pakistan's sovereignty but also to instill a sense of pride and resilience in its people. By emphasising professionalism, innovation and a commitment to excellence, Quaid-e-Azam laid the foundation for an Air Force that continues to evolve and adapt, ensuring that it remains SECOND TO NONE in all aspects.

Another rate cut

The economy seems to be gradually opening up as the State Bank takes a decisive yet cautious step by cutting the key policy rate by 200 bps, bringing it down to 13%. Effective from December 17, this move comes about as the central bank's attempts to balance the dual objectives of stimulating growth and controlling inflation.

The SBP's Monetary Policy Committee attributed this rate cut to a steady decline in food inflation and the phasing out of the gas tariff hike introduced last year. November's headline inflation dropped to 4.9%, creating substantial room for easing. However, the central bank refrained from aggressive cuts, opting for a measured approach. This restraint acknowledges core inflation's stubbornness at 9.7% and the volatility in inflation expectations, which continue to cast a shadow over economic stability.

The impact of this policy shift can be gauged from the fact that the stock market index surged over 1,700 points even in anticipation of a rate cut. Investor confidence appears to be returning, and early signs of improved economic activity further reinforce the belief that Pakistan may be on the path to recovery. Businesses, however, had been vocal in their demand for a sharper reduction of 400 to 500 bps, arguing that the "still-high" cost of borrowing remains a significant impediment to growth. The SBP's decision to limit the cut to 200 bps aligns more closely with the forecasts of financial experts, who warned against drastic monetary easing. A steep reduction to single-digit interest rates could destabilise the banking sector and reignite inflation – risks the central bank seems determined to avoid.

(Courtesy The Express Tribune)

Appointment of judges

An impartial and competent judiciary is a must for ushering in rule of law. While the Constitution has bestowed the judicial arm with the space to exercise its writ in nonpartisanship, the letter from the senior puisne judge calling for induction of judges on merit is on the spot, and goes on to reflect the aspirations of an ordained society.

Justice Mansoor Ali Shah in his letter to the Chairman of the Judicial Commission of Pakistan's rule-making committee, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, has stated the obvious by urging the learned Brother jurist to comply with the fundamental essentials of making sure that judges are nominated on the premise of their "integrity, ethical standards, judicial efficiency and diversity". Perhaps Justice Mansoor felt the necessity of bringing to the fore this issue, through an open disclosure, keeping in mind the distractions that the superior judiciary is witnessing these days as judicial officers are being named randomly by the executive on the tenets of a controversial 26th amendment legislation, which is itself now in the dock. The firm contention of the puisne judge that the judges-nominating committee should hold on till the impugned amendment is reviewed by the apex court, and then chalk out "clear and transparent rules" for appointing judges to constitutional bench is lawfully righteous. Chief Justice Yahya Afridi and the honourable JCP members should ponder over the stated specifics and urgency of the letter in all solemnity, and take a call in the best interests of checks and balances that the Constitution has laid out for professional integrity, honesty and impartiality of judges. Article 175A(4) requires the JCP to establish procedures and criteria for assessing and appointing judges, without which it could lead to jeopardising rule of law, democracy and public confidence in the judiciary. It's high time judiciary, the custodian of the Constitution, was freed from politically-motivated appointments that go on to undermine the commitment of judges to the rule of law, by compromising at the hands of a politicised executive.

(Courtesy The Express Tribune)

Education: A Key to Breaking Gender Stereotypes

BY IQRA AFZAL

In a classroom in rural Pakistan, a young girl raises her hand to answer a math question. She dreams of becoming a scientist, but society has other plans for her. "Girls belong in the kitchen," she's often told. Stories like hers are all too common, not just in Pakistan but worldwide. Gender norms—society's unspoken rules about what men and women can or cannot do—continue to hold millions back.

Education, however, is rewriting this narrative. Across the globe, schools are becoming battlegrounds for change, challenging stereotypes and empowering students to imagine a world where opportunities aren't dictated by gender.

The Power of Education Education is more than just textbooks and exams—it shapes the way we think and see the world. In Pakistan, where cultural norms often prioritize boys' education, schools have the power to challenge deeply held beliefs.

Globally, examples abound: Sweden's Gender-Neutral Schools encourage children to explore all roles, from cooking to construction, breaking stereotypes before they take root.

Rwanda's STEM Programs have shown that targeted efforts to include girls in science and technology can dismantle longstanding biases about women in technical fields.

India's Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Campaign combines financial incentives and community engagement to keep girls in school, leading to a significant rise in female enrollment.

In Pakistan, similar pro-



grams are beginning to make an impact. The Malala Fund, named after Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai, has championed girls' education in areas where conflict and cultural resistance pose significant barriers.

Barriers at Home Despite these efforts, challenges remain. In many families, educating boys is seen as an investment, while girls are expected to stay home and help with household chores. Parents worry that sending daughters to school might expose them to "modern ideas" that conflict with traditional roles.

Even when families support education, infrastructure is often a hurdle. In rural Pakistan, schools are far away, unsafe, or lack basic facilities like separate bathrooms for girls. Without safe transport, many families are reluctant to let their daughters attend.

The economic burden also weighs heavily. When money is tight, boys' education is prioritized, and girls are left behind.

Sparks of Change Change, however, is on the horizon. Initiatives like Punjab's Zewar-e-Taleem program, which

offers financial incentives to families sending girls to school, have shown promise. The Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system in Peshawar has made it safer for women and girls to travel to schools and colleges.

Community efforts are also making a difference. In Bangladesh, campaigns led by local leaders increased girls' enrollment by 40%. Similar approaches in parts of Pakistan are beginning to shift mindsets, showing parents the long-term benefits of educating daughters.

A Global Perspective Pakistan isn't alone in this fight. Around the world, education is being used to challenge gender norms in innovative ways:

In Sweden, children learn about equality through gender-neutral language and activities.

In Kenya, scholarships and mentoring programs for girls have improved school retention rates.

In Finland, inclusive curriculums highlight the achievements of women in history, science, and politics.

These examples prove that with the right policies and community support, education can transform societies.

Why This Matters When girls are educated, everyone benefits. Studies show that educated women are more likely to join the workforce, delay marriage, and invest in their children's education. This ripple effect boosts economies, improves health outcomes, and fosters social harmony.

The World Bank estimates that achieving gender equality in education could add \$12 trillion to the global economy. In Pakistan, where women make up only 22% of the workforce, empowering girls through education is an untapped opportunity.

The Road Ahead So, what needs to be done?

Expand Access: Build more schools in rural areas, especially girls-only institutions, and ensure they have proper facilities.

Involve Communities: Engage parents, religious leaders, and local influencers to promote the value of girls' education.

Leverage Technology: Use e-learning platforms to reach remote areas where schools are scarce.

Monitor Progress: Regularly track enrollment and dropout rates to ensure programs are working.

A Vision for the Future Imagine a Pakistan where every girl has the chance to learn, dream, and achieve. Where classrooms are filled with future scientists, engineers, and leaders, regardless of gender. This vision is within reach—but only if education becomes a priority for all.

By investing in schools, empowering teachers, and engaging communities, Pakistan can break free from the constraints of gender norms and build a brighter, more inclusive future.

THE DESTINATION

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Khurram visits PSX; holds talks with PSX top management

BUSINESS
REPORTER
ISLAMABAD

Khurram Schehzad, Adviser to Finance Minister, was invited to the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) by CEO, PSX, Farrukh Sabzwari, to discuss strategies for enhancing the depth and performance of the capital market.

During his meeting with the CEO and senior management of PSX, Schehzad received a comprehensive overview of PSX's strategic initiatives aimed at unlocking potential of Pakistan's capital markets, said a press release issued here on Tuesday.

The CEO of PSX emphasized that, despite challenges, Pakistan's capital markets possess immense potential.

He expressed confidence that through a well-



formulated strategy, PSX could realize this potential and significantly contribute to the economy.

Schehzad reaffirmed the government's commitment to supporting capital market growth, recognizing its role in stabilizing as well as underpinning growth in the country's economy.

To achieve this goal, Mr. Schehzad urged the management to formalize recommendations for structural changes and privatization of State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs), which could advance govern-

mental goals and boost market capitalization.

Furthermore, he recommended rebranding and repositioning the GEM board to function as a platform for venture capital and startup fundraising.

The Key Initiatives planned and discussed include , taking concrete steps for high-value listings to increase market capitalization and attract foreign investment and setting an ambitious target to increase the investor base to 2% of the national population within three years, engaging brokers and mutual funds in the campaign.

Introduction of new investment products, such as Exchange-Traded Funds (ETFs), options markets, and derivatives, to enhance market attractiveness and exploring algorithmic trading and robo-advisory services, drawing insights from successful implementations in countries like China.



MUZAFFARABAD: A trader in a fruit market is decorating orange for sale. — Staff Photo

SRBC not strategic, essential organization, reiterates Cabinet committee

BUSINESS
REPORTER
ISLAMABAD

The Cabinet Committee on State-Owned Enterprises (CCoSOEs) here on Tuesday reiterated its decision to exclude the Shalimar Recording and Broadcasting Company Limited (SRBC) from the list of strategic or essential organizations, paving the way for its potential privatization or public-private partnership.

Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb chaired the CCoSOEs, according to press release issued by finance ministry.

Among others, the meeting was attended by the Minister for Planning, Development



and Special Initiatives, Ahsan Iqbal; Minister for Housing and Works, Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada; Minister for Maritime Affairs, Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh; Governor State Bank of Pakistan (SBP); Chairman Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP); Federal Secretaries; and senior officers from the Finance

Division.

According to the statement, the Committee deliberated on a summary presented by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MoIB) regarding the privatization and exploration of a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model for the Shalimar Recording and Broadcasting Company Limited (SRBC).

During the discussion, the Cabinet Committee reiterated its earlier decision that organizations like SRBC will not be classified as strategic or essential. The MoIB will be required to abide by the Cabinet's earlier decision regarding non-essential and non-strategic SOEs.

In addition, the Committee reviewed the implementation sta-

tus of decisions previously taken regarding various SOEs under the agendas of the Cabinet Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Ministry of Petroleum, Ministry of Railways, and Revenue Division.

A presentation was given highlighting the six cases currently under implementation across these ministries, with two cases pertaining to the Cabinet Division and one each for the others. The review emphasized ensuring timely execution of all decisions.

On the occasion, Ahsan Iqbal emphasized the need for a robust monitoring mechanism for SEZs and urged the implementation of reforms that can transform these zones into engines of economic growth.

Minister urges for need of legislation for animal health welfare

BUSINESS
REPORTER
ISLAMABAD

Minister for National Food Security and Research, Rana Tanveer Hussain on Tuesday emphasized the urgent need for federal legislation for animal health and welfare in the country.

Addressing the first Animal Welfare Forum here Tuesday he termed it a significant step toward promoting animal health and welfare.

The minister highlighted that livestock contributed 14.63 percent to Pakistan's national GDP and 60.84 percent to the agricultural GDP, providing livelihoods to millions, particularly in rural areas.

"The National Animal



Health, Welfare and Veterinary Public Bill 2024, approved in principle by the Federal Cabinet, is pivotal for aligning Pakistan's veterinary services with international standards", he added

He added that the bill incorporates the "One Health Approach", which integrates human, animal and environmental health to ensure a comprehensive strategy for disease control and pandemic prevention.

The Federal Minister reiterated Pakistan's focus on increasing halal meat exports in the

global market and underscored the importance of provincial cooperation in passing the bill.

He called on provincial assemblies to support this critical legislation, which will enhance inter-provincial coordination and ensure compliance with international animal health standards.

He noted that zoonotic diseases like COVID-19 have highlighted the importance of a robust health system, and the lack of comprehensive federal legislation limits Pakistan's ability to address veterinary challenges effectively.

Rana Tanveer said that strengthening the livestock sector would not only bolster food security but also contribute significantly to Pakistan's economic growth.

Pakistan has potential to double exports to US: President FPCCI

BUSINESS
REPORTER
KARACHI

The President of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FPCCI), Atif Ikram Sheikh, Tuesday, apprised that Pakistan-US trade volume that crossed \$7 billion mark in 2023 has continued the increase in 2024 as it has crossed \$6.3 billion in the first 10 months, January to October 2024.

The U.S. is one of the few countries in the world with which Pakistan enjoys a bilateral trade surplus, the FPCCI president said, in a statement issued on Tuesday.

He said, "the business community believes this volume can potentially be doubled within a short-span of few years – given the demand of Pakistani products in the U.S.; surging information technology exports and anticipated diversifica-

tion of Pakistani exports basket for the U.S."

He informed that Ambassador of Pakistan in the U.S. Rizwan Saeed Sheikh, has started a consultative process with FPCCI aimed at exploring ways and means to achieve exponential growth in exports to the U.S.

Atif Ikram Sheikh maintained that the U.S. GSP Program may be renewed and expanded and Pakistani exporters should remain agile and committed to make full use of the opportunities the enormous export market of the U.S. has to offer to Pakistan. He maintained that 55 percent Pakistani exports to the U.S. comprise of textiles; however, other sectors are catching up as IT exports to the U.S. have crossed the \$1 billion psychological mark.

The SVP FPCCI, Saquib Fayyaz Magoan, emphasized that



Pakistan, apart from textiles, should focus on export of IT, pharma, jewelry and human resource to the U.S and Pakistani exporters need to maintain quality, standards and compliance of their exports. Pakistani government needs to ensure regionally competitive cost of doing business specifically, vis-à-vis access to finance and electricity tariffs, he added.

Ambassador of Pakistan in the U.S. Rizwan Saeed Sheikh, stressed the fact that Pakistan has a very large and influential diaspora of 1 million Pakistani-Americans in the U.S.A. Pakistan is the largest importer of American cotton in the

world while the U.S. continues to be one of the top countries from where Pakistan receives foreign remittances.

He also highlighted the U.S.-Pakistan strategic partnership in the war against terror and strong bilateral defense ties and informed that 40,000 Pakistani doctors are working in America, 5,000 Pakistani nursing staff will soon be exported to the U.S. and pharmacists are expected to follow.

Ambassador Sheikh emphasized that the economies of California and Texas are ranked as the 4th and 6th largest in the world, respectively. This highlights the significance of economic, trade, industrial, investment, and B2B relations with the United States, he added.

He noted that while certain aspects of political diplomacy may seem impossible, significant achievements can be made through economic diplomacy, and that is where our focus lies.

Planning Minister reviews progress of CPEC SEZs

BUSINESS
REPORTER
ISLAMABAD

Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Professor Ahsan Iqbal, chaired a high-level meeting here on Tuesday to review the progress of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Among others, the meeting was attended by senior officials from the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), the Board of Investment (BOI) and the Ministry of Planning.

According to press release, officials from the SIFC briefed the participants on the latest updates regarding the infrastructure and operational status of SEZs across the country.

The Minister emphasized the importance of ensuring investor facilitation, noting that imposing excessive costs on investors could deter



their interest. He stressed that providing efficient and investor-friendly facilities should be the top priority of the government.

He highlighted that Pakistan's development trajectory has faced hurdles over the past 77 years, the press release added.

Drawing lessons from countries such as China, South Korea, Vietnam, and Malaysia, he identified political stability, peace, policy continuity, and reforms as the four key elements for sustainable development.

Citing Turkey's rapid progress under Tayyip Erdogan's leadership and India's growth

despite challenges like corruption, Ahsan Iqbal underscored the importance of consistent policies for economic growth.

He expressed concern about the disparity in economic performance between Pakistan and its regional counterparts, urging a long-term commitment to economic reforms.

"If, by 2047, the per capita income of Indian Muslims surpasses ours, what will we tell our future generations?" he remarked and termed the next 23 years as critical for Pakistan to compete in the global development race.

The Minister empha-

sized the need to prioritize the operationalization of existing SEZs over establishing new ones. He directed the concerned authorities to ensure the provision of basic infrastructure, including electricity and water, in all SEZs and to align the rules of technology zones with those of economic zones for enhanced synergy.

Additionally, he stressed learning from Vietnam's SEZ model and adopting their best practices to improve the performance of Pakistan's industrial zones.

To address the energy challenges in Gilgit-Baltistan, Ahsan Iqbal instructed relevant authorities to facilitate Chinese solar companies in initiating solar energy projects in the region.

He also called for the development of an action plan and monitoring matrix to accelerate the population of industrial zones, with all ministries and provinces playing a proactive role in this effort.

Poultry chicken prices rise once again up to Rs 333 in twin cities

BUSINESS
REPORTER
ISLAMABAD

In the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad, poultry prices have decreased for the past six weeks to 260 but have started to rise again up to Rs 333.

The Poultry consumables, chicken and eggs prices have been reduced for the past few weeks, and are once again out of reach of the public.

The prices of poultry items have increased by 25 percent in the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi during the last two weeks, which has created huge volatility in the market.

According to the market

survey conducted by APP here Tuesday, during past two weeks in the twin cities, a 25 percent increase was witnessed in the price of chicken, while a same 30 per cent increase in the price of poultry eggs in the last six weeks.

According to the survey, the price of live chicken in the twin cities was between Rs 333 and 340 per kg from the last week of this month of December. Similarly, chicken meat is sold at Rs 485 to 500 per kg in the market of both cities.

During this time, it was also found that poultry eggs used to be sold at Rs 320 to Rs 230 per dozen in the market of both cities.

Meanwhile, talking to APP, the farmer Chairman Pakistan Poultry Association (PPA),



Chaudhry, Muhammad Ashraf said the increase in the current prices of poultry is due to demand and supply issues.

He said that the increase in poultry business inputs and cost of doing business was seen across the country due to which the market was in crisis.

He said that many people related to the chicken business in the country were affected by the cur-

rent crisis and especially small businesses and poultry farms were closed, adding the poultry business in the four provinces including Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is suffering from the current economic crisis.

Chaudhry Ashraf said that the country's economic conditions are also an important issue and the poultry feed ingredients

imported from foreign countries are very expensive, in which soybean is important.

He said that many soybean ships have stopped at Karachi port, which has an inevitable impact on poultry prices.

Pakistan Poultry Association (PPA) has also called for a further increase in the prices of chicken and there was an increase observed in the prices of poultry items in the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

On this occasion, poultry feed industrialist and Senior Vice President of Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Hamza Sarosh said that soybean is included in the basic ingredients of poultry feed.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman of Pakistan Business Forum France Sardar Zahoor Iqbal is calling on French Ambassador Nicholas Gillie. — Staff Photo

12 dead in blast at Turkey explosives plant

● PM expresses deep grief, condolence over loss of lives in Turkiye mishap

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD/ANKARA

A powerful blast on Tuesday ripped through an explosives plant in northwest Turkey killing 13 people and injuring four others, officials said.

Footage showed shards of glass and metal scattered outside the plant, where ambulances stood by.

“According to initial reports, 12 employees died and four were taken to hospital with injuries as a result of the explosion,” local governor Ismail Ustaoglu said.

“I wish God’s mercy upon our deceased citizens and a speedy recovery to our wounded,” he added.

Officials said the wounded were not in a serious condition.

The blast took place at 8:25 am (0525 GMT) at a section of the plant which local officials said collapsed by the

force of the explosion.

Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya said the cause was not immediately known and authorities ruled out sabotage.

“We are trying to find out what caused it,” he said.

Prosecutors have launched a thorough investigation.

The plant, located in the north of Balikesir, makes munitions and explosives and flares for the domestic and international markets.

Turkey has become a major defence exporter, particularly for drones, with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan a major supporter of the industry.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday expressed his deep grief over the loss of 12 precious lives at an explosive production facility



in Balikesir province of Turkiye.

On his X handle, the prime minister expressed his heartfelt condolences to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the

Turkish brethren over the incident.

“While expressing our solidarity with the people of Turkiye, we pray for the bereaved families and swift recovery of the injured,”

he further posted.

An explosion at an explosives production facility in Turkiye’s western Balikesir province had left 12 people dead and several others injured, Turkish media

quoted the authorities.

Turkish Health Minister Kemal Memisoglu informed that five people were also injured in the blast, which occurred in the Karesi district.

Prince William Silent Amid Accusations Against King Charles of ‘Ruining Lives

WEB DESK

LONDON

Prince William and Step-Siblings Reunite for Christmas Amid Reports of Past Tension

Prince William, the Prince of Wales, is set to spend Christmas at Sandringham with his family, joined by his step-siblings Laura Lopes and Tom Parker Bowles. This comes amid resurfaced reports of past tensions between the two families following King Charles’ marriage to Queen Camilla in 2005.

Laura Lopes, 46, and Tom Parker Bowles are Queen Camilla’s children from her previous marriage to Andrew Parker Bowles. Despite early disagreements, particularly between William and Laura, the family now appears to have found common ground.

Royal expert Katie Nicholl shed light on their past dynamics in

her 2010 book Harry and William. She wrote about the heated arguments between William and Laura during their younger years, as they dealt with the complexities of their blended family. Laura reportedly blamed King Charles for disrupting her childhood, while William defended his late mother, Princess Diana.

However, the upcoming Sandringham celebrations suggest that time has healed many wounds. Laura and Tom’s presence at this cherished family gathering signals a commitment to unity within the Royal Family.

As the family prepares to celebrate Christmas together, the focus is now on the joy of the season and the bonds they continue to strengthen. Royal watchers will undoubtedly be heartened to see signs of reconciliation and harmony within the family.

Chahar Institute, IPRI jointly hold seminar in Chengdu, China

WEB DESK

BEIJING

Chahar Institute and Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) jointly held a seminar on “CPEC and China-Pak Socio-cultural Connectivity” in Chengdu, China.

A four-member delegation led by Amb Dr Raza Muhammad, President IPRI, as well as a seven-member team led by Prof. Cheng Xizhong, Senior Research Fellow, Charhar Institute, delivered their speeches at the seminar.

Prof. Cheng Xizhong said that today’s world is full of turbulence and profound changes unprecedented in a century are accelerating.

China-Pakistan relations possess strategic significance. China and Pakistan have maintained multi-level, wide-ranging and high-quality relations. China reiterates that China-Pakistan relations are a priority in China’s diplomacy, while Pakistan emphasizes that Pakistan-China relations form the cornerstone of its foreign policy.

Currently, both sides are continuously deepening cooperation across various sectors and accelerating the establishment of a closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future in the new era.

Both the Chahar Institute and the Islamabad Policy Research Institute are

non-governmental think tanks that play a pivotal role in public diplomacy. They can significantly contribute to strengthening high-level political mutual trust between the two countries, deepening high-level practical cooperation and enhancing high-level international collaboration.

With their respective advantages, they can serve the construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and the China-Pakistan community with a shared future, actively contributing their wisdom and strength to the peace, stability, development and prosperity in the world and the region.

Amb Dr Raza Muhammad, President IPRI said that today’s



event lays foundation of long term, mutually beneficial cooperation between Islamabad Policy Research Institute and the Charhar Institute.

Pakistan-China friendship has strengthened over the years. This bond of love and respect binds two nations and its people together. The vision of President Xi Jinping,

the BRI and CPEC, have augmented this relationship.

Despite multiple hurdles created by our common enemies, these are progressing well. Inclusion of other countries in it can multiply the dividends.

“China a civilisational state has no history of annexation. Using soft power and win-win economic collaboration

through BRI, rising China is being portrayed as a challenger to the prevalent global security, economic, technological and financial order”.

Consequently, we are witnessing a heightened competition, trade and tariff war, denial of markets, barring of technology and creation of multiple security and economic alliances in Asia-Pacific and Middle east to contain China.

This dynamic geostrategic and socioeconomic milieu warrants a very close and multifaceted cooperation between China and Pakistan.

BRI and CPEC, projects of colossal economic dimensions, are proving beneficial for member countries.

Poverty percentages:

India 20-25%, Pakistan 24-30%, and Afghanistan 70-80% make a convincing argument that these countries should join hands with China to fight poverty and attain societal emancipation.

BRI, a reincarnation of Old Silk Road and CPEC are massive development projects. Despite opposition, BRI flourishes with over 140 members countries, 60% of world’s population, 40%-45% of global GDP, 3000 plus projects, investments of \$4-5 trillion and potential for annual trade of over \$2.5 trillion.

BRI aims to enhance connectivity, energy production, trade and industrialization.

CPEC is an unprecedented opportunity to

boost social welfare by fostering economic growth, job creation, infrastructure development, and poverty alleviation. It also affords a more convenient and cost-effective connection to China through Gwadar deep seaport. Gwadar will also help China to avoid Malacca Dilemma.

Pakistan and China need each other, more than ever now. Hence, they should develop joint strategy to navigate through the challenges being faced.

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between the two sides to enhance mutual understanding, cooperation, and the sharing of knowledge through academic and research collaboration.

Pakistani Envoy Meets UN Official Ahead of FfD Conference

● Pakistani Envoy Emphasizes Commitment to SDGs and Economic Growth at FfD Conference

WEB DESK

UNITED NATIONS

Pakistan’s Ambassador to the United Nations, Munir Akram, met with Li Junhua, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, to discuss preparations for next year’s fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD-4), set to take place in Seville, Spain, from June 30 to July 3, 2025.

The meeting was part of the preparatory phase for the conference, which will focus on



addressing emerging global challenges, including the full implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the urgent need for reform of the international financial architecture. The FfD-4

conference aims to explore innovative solutions for financing development and improving the global economic system, with particular emphasis on supporting developing countries.

Both officials high-

lighted the significance of the conference in addressing critical financial and development issues, especially in light of the ongoing global economic challenges. Ambassador Munir Akram stressed Pakistan’s commitment to ensuring that the outcomes of the conference contribute to achieving sustainable development goals and advancing equitable economic growth worldwide.

The FfD-4 conference is expected to bring together world leaders, policymakers, and financial experts to chart a path forward for global development financing.

Mauritius holding out on Chagos deal despite US pressure

WEB DESK

NEW YORK

Mauritius is still holding out on a deal to regain control of the strategic Chagos Islands from Britain, despite pressure from the United States which has a key military base there.

After decades of negotiations, Britain agreed in October to hand back the Indian Ocean islands to Mauritius, a former colony, on condition that a UK-US military base can remain on the largest, Diego Garcia.

But a new government took power in Mauritius last month and has reopened the talks -- reportedly seeking greater financial compensation.

On Monday, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke on



the phone with the newly appointed Prime Minister Navin Ramgoolam, pushing him to finalise the treaty with Britain.

“I made him understand that we do not agree with certain things contained in the agreement concluded on October 3 by the former Mauritian prime minister and informed him that we have made a

counter-proposal which will be transmitted to him,” Ramgoolam said at a meeting of lawmakers.

The outgoing US administration is reportedly keen to finalise a deal before Donald Trump takes over the presidency in January.

On Sunday, Deputy Prime Minister Paul Berenger told a meeting in his constituency that it came down to money.

Armed groups in Syria agree to disband: Authorities report

WEB DESK

SYRIA

Syria’s new authorities announced Tuesday that they had reached an agreement with the country’s rebel groups on their dissolution and integration into the regular defence forces.

Photos published by the state-run SANA news agency showed the country’s new leader, Ahmed al-Sharaa, surrounded by the heads of several armed factions -- but not representatives of the Kurdish-led forces in Syria’s northeast.

The meeting “ended in an agreement on the dissolution of all the groups and their integration under the supervision of the ministry of defence”, said a statement carried by SANA and the authorities’ Telegram account.

On Sunday, Sharaa had said the new authorities would “absolutely not allow there to be weapons in the country outside state control”.

That also applied to the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, he said.

Last week, the military chief of Sharaa’s Hayat Tahrir al-Sham -- the Islamist group that spearheaded the offensive that toppled president Bashar al-Assad -- told AFP that Kurdish-held areas would be integrated under the new leadership, and that “Syria will not be divided”.

Thirteen years of civil war in Syria has left more than half a million people dead and fragmented the country into zones of influence controlled by different armed groups backed by regional and international powers.

Israeli defense minister claims responsibility for first time for Hamas leader Haniyeh’s assassination

WEB DESK

CAIRO

Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz admitted for the first time publicly to Israel’s killing of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Iran in July, further risking tensions between Tehran and its arch-enemy Israel in a region shaken by Israel’s war in Gaza and the conflict in Lebanon.

“These days, when the Houthi terrorist organisation is firing missiles at Israel, I want to convey a clear message to them at the beginning of my remarks: We have defeated Hamas, we have defeated Hezbollah, we have blinded Iran’s defense systems and damaged the production systems, we have toppled the Assad regime in Syria, we have dealt a severe blow to the axis of evil, and we will also deal a severe blow to the Houthi terrorist



organization in Yemen, which remains the last to stand,” Katz said.

Israel will “damage their strategic infrastructure, and we will behead their leaders – just as we did to Haniyeh, Sinwar and Nasrallah in Tehran, Gaza and Lebanon – we will do it in Hodeidah and Sana’a,” Katz said during an evening honoring defense ministry personnel.

The Iran-backed group in Yemen has been attacking commercial shipping in the Red Sea for more than a year to try to enforce a naval blockade on Israel, saying they are acting in solidarity

with Palestinians in Israel’s year-long war in Gaza.

In late July, the political leader of the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas was killed in Tehran in an assassination blamed on Israel by Iranian authorities. There was no direct claim of responsibility by Israel for the killing of Haniyeh at the time.

Haniyeh, normally based in Qatar, had been the face of Hamas’ international diplomacy as the war set off by the Hamas-led attack on Israel on Oct. 7 has raged in Gaza. He had been taking part in internationally brokered indirect talks on reaching a ceasefire in the Palestinian enclave.

Months after, Israeli forces in Gaza killed Yahya Sinwar, Haniyeh’s successor and the mastermind of the Oct. 7, 2023, attack that triggered the latest bloodshed in the decades-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Israel committing genocide in Gaza, world human rights bodies develop consensus

WEB DESK

GAZA

Global human rights organisations have evolved a consensus that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza. Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have accused the state of Israel of committing genocide against Palestinians in the Gaza war in reports published separately this month.

According to Reuters, Amnesty International published its report on December 5 while Human Rights Watch report was made public on December 19.

A few days after Amnesty’s report, the European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR) stated that “there is a legally sound argument that Israel is committing genocide against the Palestinians in Gaza”.

Médecins Sans Frontières has also reported that “its medical teams in the north of Gaza are seeing clear signs of ethnic cleansing”.



Human Rights Watch had in November also reported that Israel’s actions in Gaza amounted to “war crimes” and “crimes against humanity”, and appeared to “also meet the definition of ethnic cleansing”.

Also in November, the international criminal court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for Benjamin Netanyahu and Yoav Gallant for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity.

According to a British newspaper Guardian’s report, all these recent judgments end the year with an emphatic categorisation of the assault in Gaza as a violation of international law.

All the organisations follow the International

Commission of Jurists and the UN in condemning Israel’s war. The country, and its head of state, are now, according to the courts and human rights organisations that make up the world’s legal and moral authorities, outlaws.

“This policy, inflicted as part of a mass killing of Palestinian civilians in Gaza, means Israeli authorities have committed the crime against humanity of extermination, which is ongoing. This policy also amounts to an ‘act of genocide’ under the Genocide Convention of 1948,” Human Rights Watch said in its report.

The London-based human rights group, Amnesty International, said it reached the conclusion after months of analysis

ing incidents and statements of Israeli officials. Amnesty said the legal threshold for the crime had been met, in its first such determination during an active armed conflict.

US DEFENDS ISRAEL

The Guardian adds: But the judgments, strong language and suggested measures echo in a vacuum: there is no enforcement. The US continues to defend Israel against an emerging global consensus and to arm it. Other supporters use the language of loopholes and riddles that we have become so accustomed to since the start of the war.

The UK suspended a small portion of its arms exports, but insists that it remains a “staunch ally” of the country and would still engage with Netanyahu, but also would somehow still comply with its legal obligations. France came up with an impressive legal reading, stating that Netanyahu in fact enjoyed immunity as Israel was not a signatory to the ICC (a reading that would also extend immunity to Vladimir Putin and Omar al-Bashir).

Australia's Purcell takes voluntary provisional doping suspension

WEB DESK

AUSTRALIA

Australia's two-times Grand Slam doubles champion Max Purcell has elected to take a voluntary provisional suspension under the Tennis Anti-Doping Programme, the International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) said.

The ITIA said Purcell, the world's 12th ranked doubles player, had admitted to a breach of rules relating to the use of a "prohibited method" and requested to enter into a provisional suspension on Dec. 10, which came into effect two days later.

"Time served under provisional suspension will be credited against any future sanction," the ITIA said in a statement, without giving further details.

Tennis Australia said



the ITIA confirmed the breach related to the use of a prohibited method rather than the presence of a prohibited substance.

"As the matter is currently under investigation, it is inappropriate to comment further at this time," it added.

The 26-year-old, who won the 2022 Wimbledon doubles title and the U.S. Open doubles title this year, is prohibited from playing in, coaching at, or attending any event authorised by the governing bodies of the

sport or national associations.

Purcell is the latest Grand Slam champion to have case opened by the ITIA, an independent organisation established by the governing bodies of the sport to safeguard its integrity.

The agency said last month that French Open champion Iga Swiatek had accepted a one-month suspension after testing positive for the banned substance trimetazidine following contamination of her sleep medication.



FAISALABAD: A thrilling hockey match between Paradies Hockey Club and Shahbaz Senior Hockey Club during the 2nd Chief of Army Staff Inter Club National Hockey Championship 2024, District Level Round 1 at Hockey Stadium Faisalabad. — Staff Photo

ABL Stallions, UMT Markhors set to lock horns in Champions T20 Cup final

MUDASSER CH.

ISLAMABAD

Top-notch ABL Stallions and UMT Markhors are set to affirm Pakistan's inclination to adopt fiery and robust style of T20 cricket as they face off in the final of the Bahria Town Champions T20 Cup final in Rawalpindi on Wednesday.

Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has devised the idea of the Champions Cup to not only find new talent but also groom those who have been excelling at the domestic level but are yet to reach the international standards.

The first of such events was successfully held in the 50-over format in Faisalabad in September this year.

The Bahria Town

Champions T20 Cup targeted a new and aggressive style of T20 cricket which the top teams have adopted and it also kick-started Pakistan's preparation for the upcoming white-ball mega events including the ICC Champions Trophy and the ICC T20 World Cup in 2026.

After intense and interesting 20 matches plus the Qualifier, ABL Stallions and UMT Markhors qualified for the final, who will vie for the Trophy and a prize pot of PKR 25 million.

Both the finalists won six of their eight matches with two defeats each but ABL Stallions cruised into the final with a better net run-rate of 0.805 to UMT Markhors' 0.606. Misbah-ul-Haq mentored UMT Markhors beat Nurbur Lions in the Qualifiers. The two teams

shared a match each in the double league phase, with Stallions winning the first by 29 runs and losing the next by three runs. That sets both the teams intriguingly placed for the final.

Stallions captain Mohammad Harris described the campaign as a "topsy-turvy one."

"Overall the team's journey has been good with its ups and down," said Harris on the eve of the final. "Boys have got good chances and I have learnt a lot of things under team mentor Shoaib Malik."

Harris singled out Maaz Sadaqat, Shamyl Hussain and Mehran Mumtaz as some of the exciting youngsters in the squad, hoping hard work will take them to places.

Rival skipper Iftikhar Ahmed said the aim was to improve the style of



play and to feed aggressive players to the Pakistan team.

"We have overcome challenges and have tried to adopt new styles of T20 cricket which are prevalent at the international level and that was told to us by our mentor Misbah-ul-Haq," said Iftikhar.

"We have several good performances with Akif Javed bowling exceptionally well. Khawaja Mohammad Nafay is a new and exciting talent with Saad Masood also impressive with his skills. "Credit to Misbah and the staff for helping us and this has been a good

tournament, long enough to give maximum opportunities to young players."

Some powerful striking has been seen in the event with Abdul Samad (strike-rate 169.11), Haider Ali (161.53), Hussain Talat (156.56), Mohammad Harris

(153.08) and Khushdil Shah (151.72) – a marked improvement in the powerful batting, so much needed at the international level.

All-rounder Hussain Talat has anchored Stallions's batting with a hundred in his aggregate of 310 at an impressive strike rate of 156 while experienced Fakhar Zaman topped the chart for Markhors with 283 runs coming at a strike rate of 138.73.

Stallions can boast of fast bowler Mohammad Ali who is top on the bowlers' list with 19 wickets in eight matches while Nisar Ahmed of Markhors is third on the list with 15 wickets in nine matches. The two teams have enough firepower in all three departments, promising a mouth-watering final.

ABL Stallions road to

final:

7 Dec – beat Panthers by 35 runs

8 Dec – beat Lions by 12 runs

12 Dec – lost to Markhors by three runs

13 Dec – beat Dolphins by five runs

15 Dec – beat Panthers by six wickets

17 Dec – lost to Lions by three wickets

20 Dec – beat Markhors by 29 runs

21 Dec – beat Dolphins by six wickets

UMT Markhors road to final:

7 Dec – beat Lions by four wickets

10 Dec – beat Dolphins by two wickets

12 Dec – beat Stallions by three runs

13 Dec – lost to Panthers by six wickets

15 Dec – beat Lions by three wickets

18 Dec – beat Dolphins by eight wickets

Lindsey Vonn thinks her new titanium knee could start a trend in skiing. And pro sports in general

WEB DESK

ST. MORITZ

When Lindsey Vonn last raced on the World Cup circuit nearly six years ago, the constant pain in her knee left her in tears and led to retirement.

Flash forward to Vonn's comeback race on a titanium knee at age 40 last weekend, and the American skiing standout couldn't have felt more different.

No more pain. No more swelling. No more tears.

"The last few years of my career were so much different than they are right now. I'm skiing without thinking about my knee, which I really haven't done since I first wore my ACL in 2013. So it's been a long time that I felt this good," Vonn said Saturday after placing 14th in a super-G in St. Moritz. "I'm a little bit older, but honestly I'm a hell



of a lot stronger than I once was."

So much stronger that she's talking up her knee replacement surgery — the first of its kind in World Cup skiing — as a new frontier for the sport.

In April, Vonn had a robot-assisted replacement performed by Martin Roche, a South Florida-based orthopedist specializing in complex knee disorders. Part of the bone in her right knee was cut off and replaced by two titanium pieces. A month later, she was planning her comeback.

"It's a lot better than my non-existent cartilage," said Vonn, one of the most successful skiers of all time with 82 World Cup wins. "I've talked to a lot of skiers already about it and I really think that it could be something that should be considered."

"I feel amazing. I mean, obviously not everyone responds the same way to surgeries. For some reason, I bounce back pretty well from surgery. But I think it's something to seriously consider for athletes that have a lot of knee problems."

Cowboys beat Tampa Bay 26-24 as Baker Mayfield and the Bucs lose control of their playoff fate

WEB DESK

ARLINGTON

Baker Mayfield came home to Texas looking to keep his Tampa Bay Buccaneers on track for the playoffs.

Instead, they'll need some help.

Cooper Rush threw a touchdown pass and Brandon Aubrey kicked two 58-yarders among four field goals Sunday night, boosting the Dallas Cowboys to a 26-24 victory that cost the Bucs control of their playoff fate.

The end of a four-game winning streak left Tampa Bay (8-7) even with Atlanta atop the NFC South with two games remaining. The Falcons have the tiebreaker because they won both meetings with the Bucs, who are on a

four-year playoff run.

"We lost, we fell back in the pack," coach Todd Bowles said. "We've got to eat it, can't spend too much time on it. We had our chances. We've got to take care of us and let everything else take care of itself."

A three-year playoff streak for the Cowboys (7-8) ended when they were eliminated from postseason contention before the prime-time kickoff. Still, Dallas won for the fourth time in five games since a five-game losing streak that put those playoff hopes in peril.



Saima Mengal secures 2 Golds for Balochistan in Quaid-e-Azam Games

SPORTS REPORTER

RAWALPINDI

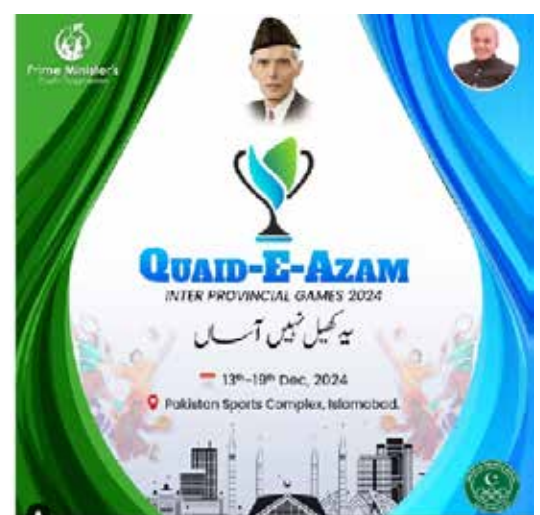
Saima Mengal, representing the Balochistan Karate Team in the Quaid-e-Azam Inter-Provincial Games has secured two gold medals to become the only dual gold medalist champion from her province.

She was decorated with the medals in the Karate game in two categories; one medal each in a 45Kg competition and in the team fight.

The 16 years young Saima participated in the Quaid-e-Azam Games for the first time and has emerged as a star Karate player in her maiden inter-provincial games.

Expressing her rejoicing moments with APP, Saima informed that she is studying in Quetta and has greater interest in karate games.

"The credit of my success goes to my family who encouraged me for games and the coaches who have polished my skills to perform well",



said Saima.

Saima said that she would continue improving her game in the training academy as she is targeting international games in the future.

"I will bring the honour for my beloved Pakistan in future fights at international level games. Agha Muhammad Mengal, my team coach and Fakhar un Nisa my coach in the academy collectively trained me to fight the games with

confidence and courage", said the young karate champ who belongs to Golden Brother Marshal Arts Academy.

The third Quaid-e-Azam Inter-Provincial Games were held in Islamabad from December 13 to 19, 2024, in which thousands of male and female athletes from Balochistan, Sindh, Punjab, Islamabad, KP, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Kashmir participated.

Abdullah Govt College hosts first Intercollegiate Kho Kho Championship

● Chief guest, DG Colleges Sindh Dr. Naveed Rab Siddiqui, distributed the prizes

SPORTS REPORTER

KARACHI

Government Girls College Al-Noor emerged victorious in the inaugural Abdullah Govt College Intercollegiate Kho Kho Championship, defeating Government College for Women, Nazimabad, by 9-3 points in a thrilling final. Organized by Abdullah Government College for Women, North Nazimabad in collaboration with the Sindh Kho Kho Association.

Tournament Director DPE Batool Kazim said that eight teams from District central participated in the tournament, including Sir Syed Government Girls College.

Nazimabad, Government Degree College for Women, Nazimabad, Government Degree Girls College Block K North Nazimabad, HI Osmania Government Girls Degree College, Government Degree Girls College Al-Noor 19 FB Area, Apwa Government College for Women, Karimabad, Nishtar Government College for Women 11-B North Karachi and the host Abdullah Government College for Women.

Batool Kazim said that I am deeply grateful to the Sindh Kho Kho Association for the incredible support and guidance provided by the college principal, teachers and students of the college. She said that



the efforts of the Sindh Kho Kho Association in promoting the game of Kho Kho, organizing tournaments, providing training opportunities are truly remarkable,

but you have also preserved the cultural heritage associated with this beautiful game.

Professor Dr. Naveed Rab Siddiqui, Director General Colleges Sindh,

along with Zohaib Memon graced the occasion as the chief guest, expressing his admiration for the girls' exceptional skills and emphasizing the potential for

Pakistan to excel internationally in Kho Kho with proper support. He announced plans to expand sports activities, including the upcoming Sindh Games

Prof. Dr. Naveed Rab Siddiqui appreciated the efforts of Director Physical Education Batool Kazim for her excellent services. Prof. Dr. Naveed Rab Siddiqui distributed trophies, certificates and shields to the winning teams and encouraged them for their excellent performance in the tournament.

On this occasion,

Subia Athar, Ghazal Hussain, Nusrat Shams, Farheen, Rashida Parveen, Uzma Askari, Fehmina Naz, Nuzhat Abbasi, Tuba Fayyaz, Hajra Hussaini, Rani Kiran, Saima Iftikhar, Amber Bashir, Nida Nasir, Jamila Burfat and others were also present.

Earlier, Government Girls College Al-Noor, Govt. College for Women Nazimabad and Abdullah Govt College secured the first, second, and third positions, respectively. The Fair Play Trophy was awarded to the Nishtar Government College for Women team. The referee duties in the tournament were performed by Aurangzeb Ahmed and Shahroz Alvi.



MULTAN: A nomad woman displaying handmade ‘Ghgho Ghode’ (colorful horses) at her stall for selling to attract the customer during a cultural festival organized by the District Government. — Staff Photo

HEC hosts an online Erasmus+ information session for Pak students

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

Higher Education Commission (HEC) has hosted an online “Erasmus+ Information Session for Pakistan” to provide insights into the Erasmus+ programme, focusing on opportunities for Pakistani Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), including International Credit Mobility (ICM), Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE), and Jean Monnet (JM).

According to HEC, the session explored these actions, their benefits, and application processes, highlighting opportunities for studying, training, and international collaboration.

The event featured HEC Chairman Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, EU Charge d’Affaires to Pakistan Mr. Philipp



Oliver Gross, HEC Advisor Mr. Muhammad Raza Chohan, Vice Chancellors, faculty members, and representatives from universities across Pakistan.

Mr. Kashif Jehan, the Erasmus+ National Focal Point (ENFP) for Pakistan, moderated the session.

Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed noted that Pakistan has ranked first globally for three consecutive years in Erasmus Mundus scholarships, with 189 students awarded in 2024.

He urged Pakistani universities to excel in other Erasmus+ compo-

nents, emphasizing their role in capacity building, joint research, and partnerships with European institutions.

Mr. Gross highlighted Erasmus+’s goals to engage, connect, and empower youth, aligning with Pakistan’s predominantly young population.

He shared that since 2021, 31 Pakistani HEIs have participated in capacity-building projects, and two universities have received Jean Monnet grants. He expressed hope for increased participation from Pakistani universities.

NADRA’s New Advisory Warns Against Photocopying Official Documents

- NADRA Warns Against Unnecessary Photocopies to Prevent Security Risk

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD



The federal government on Monday issued a schedule of public and optional holidays for 2025. You need to think twice before making unwanted copies of ID Card and other key documents as NADRA’s new rule could save you from security risks.

National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) issued public advisory urging citizens to avoid making unnecessary photocopies of official documents, stressing security risks linked with such practices.

The official clarified that for most services at its offices, only original documents or their asso-

ciated NADRA-issued numbers are required. Photocopies are only necessary in specific cases where NADRA cannot access the documents online.

In fresh advisory, the authority particularly warned against photocopying important documents like national identity cards (CNICs), family registration certificates, and other NADRA-issued paperwork.

NADRA also pointed out that unnecessary photocopies could be misused by unauthorized individuals, posing potential security threats.

Masses have been urged to report any concerns or complaints through NADRA’s dedicated complaint portal to ensure better security practices and prevent misuse of personal documents.

Chief of Romanian Naval Forces Visits Newly Commissioned PNS Yamama

- Vice Admiral Muhammad Faisal Abbasi Meets Romanian Naval Chief to Strengthen Maritime Cooperation

MUDASSER CH.

ISLAMABAD

The Chief of the Romanian Naval Forces, Vice Admiral Mihai Panait, visited the newly commissioned Pakistan Navy Ship (PNS) Yamama at Constanta Port in Romania. During the visit, Vice Admiral Panait was provided with a comprehensive briefing on the ship’s advanced capabilities and its role in enhancing the operational readiness of the Pakistan Navy.

PNS Yamama is the fourth and final Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV) built for the Pakistan Navy by DAMEN Shipyards, Galati, Romania. These



state-of-the-art vessels are designed to operate in contested maritime environments and serve as platforms for deterrence across various domains of warfare. With its commissioning

on 17 December 2024, PNS Yamama embarked on its maiden Passage Exercise with a Romanian Navy ship, marking the start of its operational duties at sea. Earlier, Vice Admiral

Muhammad Faisal Abbasi, Commander Karachi, paid a visit to Bucharest, where he met with Vice Admiral Mihai Panait. During the meeting, both naval leaders discussed mat-

ters of mutual interest, including enhancing Navy-to-Navy engagements and cooperation in maritime security. The two senior officers expressed their satisfaction with the growing relationship between the Romanian and Pakistan Navies, and both reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthening cooperation in operational and training activities.

The successful commissioning of PNS Yamama and the visit of the Romanian naval chief are seen as significant milestones in the continued partnership between the two nations, enhancing maritime security and operational collaboration.

Pakistan’s Internet Speed Set for major boost with new Cable Link with Africa

- Pakistan to Improve Internet Speeds with Modern Cable Installation

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD



Pakistan is making efforts to improve Internet Speeds, and a new cable will be connected with Africa to boost internet speed significantly.

R45,000-kilometer-long modern internet cable will link South Asian nation with Africa and the cable has a capacity of 180 terabits per second TBPS, which will improve not only social media apps’ performance but also overall internet speed.

Minister of State for I.T., Shazia Fatima, a c k n o w l e d g e d Islamabad’s internet speed is not at the level it should be. With the installation of modern cable, a significant improvement in internet speed is expected, which will pave the way for fur-

ther digital growth in Pakistan.

Lately, the country of over 240 million has faced widespread internet slowdowns, affecting browsing, media sharing, and services like WhatsApp in cities. The government officials attributed issues to security measures, noting that while X (formerly Twitter) is restricted for security reasons, other

major platforms remain operational.

She also acknowledged the country’s low internet bandwidth and infrastructure challenges but announced plans to improve connectivity, including a spectrum auction in April and the installation of four submarine cables next year to enhance speed and coverage.

As internet slowdowns

dented e-commerce, digital platforms and ride-hailing services, and disruptions was linked to testing an internet firewall, are harming businesses.

Meanwhile, digital rights activists criticized the government’s lack of transparency, pointing out the economic impact and the spread of misinformation due to the ongoing uncertainty.

Azerbaijan Defence Delegation Visits PAF to Boost Military Ties

- Azerbaijani Delegation Praises PAF’s Professionalism, Proposes Expanded Training Cooperation

STAFF REPORTER

RAWALPINDI

A high-level defence delegation from Azerbaijan, led by Deputy Minister of Defence and Director General Mr. Agil Gurbanov, along with Lieutenant General Namig Islamzade, Deputy Minister of Defence and Commander of the Azerbaijan Air Force, visited the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) Headquarters in Islamabad. The delegation met with Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff of the Pakistan Air Force.

During the meeting, the Air Chief highlighted the recent achievements of the Pakistan Air Force, showcasing its commit-

ment to operational excellence in modern warfare. He reaffirmed Pakistan’s resolve to further strengthen bilateral military ties, particularly in operational and training cooperation. Notably, over 50% of the training objectives have been successfully achieved for a large contingent of Azerbaijan’s air and ground crew currently undergoing training at a PAF operational base. This training program, scheduled to con-

clude within a month, aims to enhance the operational capabilities of the Azerbaijan Air Force.

The Azerbaijani delegation praised the professionalism of PAF personnel and commended the rapid development of Pakistan’s domestic aviation industry. They expressed satisfaction with the ongoing training of 70 aircrew and technicians and called for deeper Air Force-to-Air Force collaboration



between the two countries. Furthermore, the Azerbaijani officials proposed expanding training programs to include advanced areas such as disruptive technologies, cyber warfare, and electronic warfare, in line with the evolving nature of modern military operations.

The delegation also visited the PAF Cyber Command at Air Headquarters, where they were briefed on the operational capabilities and ongoing modernization initiatives of the PAF.

This visit underscores the strong military partnership between Pakistan and Azerbaijan, reflecting both nations’ commitment to furthering collaboration and enhancing their defence relations.

Adhering to Quaid’s principles key to prosperity: NA Speaker

- NA Speaker commends Christian community’s role in national development

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

Paying tribute to Q u a i d - e - A z a m Muhammad Ali Jinnah on his 148th birth anniversary, National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq said on Tuesday that following Jinnah’s guiding principles—Faith, Unity, and Discipline—can lead the country toward progress and prosperity.

In his message on the birth anniversary of Q u a i d - e - A z a m Muhammad Ali Jinnah, he stated that Jinnah is amongst one of the greatest leaders of the 20th century. He further remarked that leaders like Quaid-e-Azam are born in centuries. Q u a i d - e - A z a m

Muhammad Ali Jinnah’s charismatic personality played a pivotal role in inspiring the Muslims of the subcontinent to strive for freedom and unity. His exceptional leadership qualities helped ignite a sense of nationhood among Muslims, who were previously fragmented and disenfranchised.

He described Quaid-e-Azam as a principled, dignified, talented, patient, pragmatic, and resilient leader who neither compromised on his principles, nor did he attempt to impose his decisions upon others.

He expressed these thoughts in his message on the occasion of Quaid-e-Azam’s 148th birth anniversary, which is celebrated with national zeal and utmost respect on

December 25 each year.

The Speaker further emphasized that there is an even greater need for establishing unity within our ranks to confront the challenges currently being faced by the country. All political forces to set aside their differences and strive for unity in the collective effort of nation-building.

Sardar Ayaz Sadiq also added that the best way to pay homage to Quaid-e-Azam is to follow his guiding principles in order to truly transform the country into an Islamic welfare state, as envisioned by the founders of Pakistan. He noted that Quaid-e-Azam’s birth anniversary serves as a day of reaffirming our commitment to unite our ranks and work together to fulfill his



mission, thereby making this country a great nation.

On this occasion, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, Syed Mir Ghulam Mustafa Shah, stated that we must unite in our efforts to transform Pakistan into Quaid-e-Azam’s Pakistan.

He highlighted that the Muslims of the subcontinent rendered matchless sacrifices

prosperous and developed country.

Meanwhile,

National Assembly, Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, on Tuesday commended the Christian community’s role in Pakistan’s development and prosperity, highlighting their invaluable contributions in various sectors, especially in education and healthcare.

Extending warm felicitation to the Christian community on the eve of Christmas, he remarked that the Christian community is an integral part of Pakistan’s diverse society, and their role in the nation’s progress is praise-worthy.

He said that Hazrat Isa (AS) is an exalted & revered Prophet of Allah, and his birth anni-

versary is a source of happiness and blessing for all. He further emphasized that Hazrat Isa (AS) taught the values of peace, tolerance, brotherhood, and service to humanity.

He added that Christmas teaches us lessons of unity, tolerance, and fraternity, which are essential for the development and stability of society. He further stated that by following the teachings of Hazrat Isa (AS), we can promote interfaith harmony.

Ayaz Sadiq asserted that the Constitution of Pakistan guarantees the protection of the rights of all citizens, regardless of their creed, religion, or ethnicity, and provides them with the freedom to live according to their beliefs and prac-

tices. He also mentioned that the Parliament is committed to ensuring the protection of citizens’ rights and providing equal opportunities in all sectors of life through effective legislation.

Deputy Speaker National Assembly, Syed Mir Ghulam Mustafa Shah, also extended Christmas greetings to the Christian community.

He affirmed that the Parliament is resolutely committed to enacting effective legislation for the protection of minority rights and their betterment. He noted that citizens from all religious backgrounds are playing an admirable role in the nation’s development and progress.