



Pakistan, Ethiopia vow to strengthen bilateral relationship



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Ethiopia have expressed commitment to further strengthening the bilateral relationship for enhancing bilateral trade and financial collaborations. The understanding to this effect reached during a meeting between Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb and Ambassador of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to Pakistan Jemal Beker Abdula in Islamabad. The Finance Minister extended a warm welcome to the Ambassador and provided an overview of the economic reforms currently underway in Pakistan. He said these reforms are part of a broader home-grown agenda aimed at achieving economic stability. The Minister highlighted recent positive developments, including improvements in foreign exchange reserves, state-owned enterprise (SOE) reforms and advancements in the power sector. He said international rating agencies have started acknowledging the economic stability as a result of Government's economic decisions. The Minister also highlighted that country's economic outlook has improved as confirmed by recent Fitch reports and now government aims at achieving economic sustainability. The Ethiopian Ambassador praised and appreciated Pakistan's macroeconomic stability and shared insights on Ethiopia's similar approach to home-grown economic reforms. He detailed Ethiopia's initiatives inspired by Pakistan's experience, particularly in stabilizing its currency and fostering economic resilience. He also proposed the exploration of educational cooperation, specifically the promotion of student exchange and scholarship programs. This initiative aims at providing Ethiopian students with opportunities to study in Pakistan, fostering educational and cultural ties between the two nations. On the occasion, the Minister agreed on the importance of fostering deeper ties between the two nations and welcomed the proposed collaborations. INI



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairing a consultative meeting of Allied Parties regarding deteriorating situation in Palestine.

Commonwealth Secretary General calls on PM

Haniyeh's martyrdom in Tehran a flagrant violation of int'l laws: PM Shehbaz

VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: Commonwealth Secretary-General Patricia Scotland, leading a five-member delegation, met with Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif at the Prime Minister House on Thursday. The prime minister welcomed Secretary-General Scotland on her first official visit to Pakistan. Appreciating the Commonwealth's consistent support for Pakistan's socio-economic and democratic institutions, the prime minister reaffirmed the government's desire to work with the Commonwealth on issues of common interest, particularly on youth empowerment, good governance and climate change. Noting that young people below the age of 30 accounted for two-thirds of Pakistan's population, the prime minister said that providing modern education and technical training to the youth was one of the government's highest priorities. He highlighted the various initiatives taken by the Prime Minister's Youth Programme and reiterated the government's commitment to working with the Commonwealth to help Pakistan's youth by enhancing access and opportunities for them in today's high-tech global economy. Secretary-General Scotland appreciated the Prime Minister's Youth Programme and said that the prime minister's leadership and direct supervision of this Programme was reflective of his personal interest and commitment to

youth empowerment initiatives.

Order to further improve the performance of government departments and know progress in real time, Ms Patricia offered the Commonwealth's Performance Management System. She also invited Pakistan to join the Commonwealth Artificial Intelligence Consortium (CAIC). The prime minister expressed keen desire to evaluate the Commonwealth Performance Management System for further improving governance and transparency in Pakistan's public sector. He also welcomed the invitation to join CAIC where Pakistan's youth will have opportunities for training and could benefit from global innovations such as cloud computing and generative AI and shall be more empowered to play their role in sustainable economic development. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also described combating climate change as a common priority for both Pakistan and the Commonwealth.

He appreciated the Secretary-General's climate advocacy for Pakistan, following the devastating 2022 floods. The prime minister said Pakistan wanted to work with the Commonwealth in helping mobilize more international support for climate-vulnerable countries like Pakistan at the forthcoming COP29 in Baku.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday strongly denounced the attack that led to martyrdom of Ismail

Haniyeh, chief of Hamas Political Bureau, in Tehran, terming it a barbaric act that was a flagrant violation of international laws and rules.

The extraterritorial assassination, he said, had sparked widespread condemnation across the world including Pakistan, Turkiye, Russia, Iran, China and Malaysia which had denounced the attack in the strongest words. Ismail Haniyeh's children and grandchildren had also been ruthlessly martyred, he added. The prime minister was chairing a meeting on the situation of Palestine which was attended by the parliamentarians representing the government's allied political parties. Shehbaz Sharif said that the bloodshed in Palestine continued for last nine months claiming lives of many innocent Palestinians everyday. Over 40,000 Palestinians including thousands of children had been martyred till date.

"The world is silent over this barbarism," he said. "Such terrorism and extremism is highly condemnable." The prime minister said Netanyahu was out to destroy Palestine. Despite clear verdicts of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and resolutions of the United Nations, Israel could not be stopped from its barbaric acts. He expressed gratitude to the countries from the West such as Ireland and Spain who had openly supported the Palestinian cause and its two-state resolution.

As part of reform agenda, privatization process of DISCOs has begun: Tarar



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar said, as part of the present government's reform agenda, the process of privatization of DISCOs has been started after an amendment in the State Owned Enterprises Act. Addressing a press conference along with MuttahidaQaumi Movement leader Mustafa Kamal here Thursday, the information minister said that he pointed out that inefficiency and corruption of DISCOs span over several decades. Therefore, he said it was decided to bring competent and professional people from the private sector to run the DISCOs free from any political interference. He said a delegation of MQM Pakistan comprising Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui and Mustafa Kamal met Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and matters related to electricity bills and IPP issue were discussed. The minister appreciated the MQM for always showing responsibility and constructive approach towards resolving national issues and played a positive role in the reforms agenda. He said that he was grateful to the Muttahida Qaumi Movement for raising its voice on this issue. Attaullah Tarar said that the matter of electricity tariff was the issue of the entire nation and a collective approach was needed to overcome this issue. "When the PML-N government came to power in 2013, it ended 18-hour load shedding," the minister said, adding that at that time Punjab and Federal Governments had installed the cheapest power plants. Through this amendment, he added, the process of privatization of discos has started. He said that electricity consumers using 200 units were given a Rs 50 billion subsidy for three months and this amount was taken from PSDP budget to provide relief to the electricity consumers in summer, adding that steps were also afoot regarding the cases of over-billing, controlling power theft in collaboration with the provincial governments. The minister said that the deadline for payment of electricity bills had been extended by 10 days to facilitate the consumers. The minister maintained that IPPs were not a political issue and discussions were going on over the issue of IPPs. Everyone wants electricity to be cheap, Information Minister Attaullah Tarar said and added that the economic reforms agenda was aimed to create fiscal space to make electricity cheaper, as everyone wanted to reduce power tariff. APP

Pakistan, Kazakhstan to work jointly for making Central Asia climate resilient



ISLAMABAD: In a significant development towards global climate action, Pakistan and Kazakhstan have reaffirmed their commitment and agreed to boost collaboration for coping with climate risks, environmental, energy, air pollution and water scarcity challenges being faced by these two countries. This agreement was reached during a meeting held here on Thursday between Romina Khurshid Alam, coordinator to the Prime Minister on Climate Change and a Kazakhstan embassy delegation led by Ambassador of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Yerzhan Kistafin, a news release said. The Kazakhstan's envoy informed the PM's climate aide that his country was deeply inter-

ested to strengthen people-to-people contact through tourism and engagement in various socio-economic development sectors including bilateral trade, education and research, environment, climate change, disaster risk reduction, renewable energy, efficient water management, aiming to improve quality of the life and environment of the both countries. He also offered his country's all-out technical, technological and financial support through the joint working with the climate change & environmental coordination ministry to build Pakistan's climate resilience, promote eco-tourism, climate-smart agriculture and boost power generation from renewable energy sources. Romina Khurshid Alam thanked the Kazakhstan's ambassador for extending his country's offer to engagement with the ministry for building up collaboration in climate change, energy, agriculture, water and eco-tourism sectors.

Continued on Page 4

Mohsin Naqvi visits development projects in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi conducted a detailed and sudden visit of ongoing development projects in Islamabad here on Thursday. He made four hours long visit of the three different development projects during the night. Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa briefed the Interior Minister regarding these projects. He reviewed the progress of work on Islamabad Expressway and Park Road projects. He also reviewed the upgradation work at Jinnah Convention Center. Mohsin Naqvi inspected the 7 km long Expressway route and the ongoing construction work on Bhinder Bridge. Minister directed 100 percent completion of the Expressway project from PWD Chowk to T-Chowk within two months and also sought a plan to make the Expressway a controlled corridor. The FWO officials briefed the Interior Minister on the progress of the development work. Interior Minister planted a sapling in the lawn of FWO's camp office. Later, the Interior Minister also reviewed the 7.2 km long Park Road widening project and directed its completion before September this year.

No need to freak-out if the debt has raised to \$150bn, says Dar

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar said that there was no need to worry as Pakistan was on its way to financial stability. Ishaq Dar while addressing a gathering on Thursday said that there was a strong need to curb negative behaviors from the society. He said that the potential to accelerate the economy existed in Pakistan and all it needed was to remove the barriers stopping Pakistan from financial stability.

He also warned that elements are present in and outside Pakistan who want Pakistan to end up as a default state. "On the other hand the government was working on a single agenda and that was to save Pakistan from bankruptcy," he said. Dar reiterated that we are strongly facing all the challenges. Even with limited resources the government



was working continuously on developmental projects, Dar said. The Foreign Minister claimed that the inflation rate had reduced from 30 percent to 10 percent. "We fought bravely for 15 months to save Pakistan from bankruptcy and we succeeded, there was no need to worry even when Pakistan's foreign debt had raised to 130 billion dollars." Ishaq Dar said INP

Senator Ayesha acknowledged the Act's new initiatives against sexual violence

Improving Pakistan's Response to Gender-Based Violence – A discussion on implementation of the Anti-Rape Act 2021

VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: Ayesha Raza Farooq acknowledged the significant new initiatives under the Act for combating sexual violence and ensuring justice for survivors. She emphasised the critical need for improving the response to rising instances of sexual violence in society and called for a holistic government approach to ensure implementation of the Anti-Rape Act. She called for the creation of "a society where justice prevails, and survivors of sexual violence receive the support and protection they need." The Ministry of Law and Justice, in collaboration with the UK-Pakistan Serious Crime and Law Enforcement (UPSCALE) programme, organized a panel discussion to increase awareness of the Anti-Rape Act (Investigation and Trial), Act 2021. The event featured experts with experience in implementing the Anti-Rape Act and dealing with cases of gender-based

violence. The session was inaugurated by Federal Secretary for Law and Justice, Raja Naeem Akbar and chaired by Ayesha Raza Farooq, Chairperson of the Anti-Rape Special Committee. Notable experts from law enforcement and civil society including Gulam Sarwar Nihung, Prosecutor General ICT, Dr. Inam Waheed Khan, DIG Police and Advisor UPSCALE, Barrister Usama Malik, Director, Directorate of Legal Education Pakistan, and Nida Aly, Executive Director of the Asma Jehangir Legal Aid Cell, provided perspectives on the challenges police, prosecution and lawyers face in ensuring justice for women in gender-based violence cases. Zainab Mustafa, member of the Special Committee, and Community Protection Advisor at UPSCALE concluded the plenary session by highlighting the government's commitment to improving investigation and trial of gender-based violence crimes. Secretary Law and Justice, Raja Naeem



Akbar stated, "This seminar aims to create awareness on the rights of the citizens under the Anti-Rape Act, 2021. In future, I hope to see continued commitment from the Ministry of Law and Justice, the Special Committee, and all those present today towards creating a society where fundamental human rights are protected especially for the most vulnerable groups." Community Protection Advisor



(UPSCALE), Omar Maniar set the context for the discussion by summarising the new framework for survivors of sexual violence including anti-rape crisis cells, specialized investigation units, designated prosecutors, creation of special courts and the creation of the national sex offenders register which will allow police to monitor convicted offenders and reduce reoffending. Despite these legal provisions, data collected by the

Ministry of Law and Justice from across Pakistan showed that while these structures have been created, there is a critical need to ensure that they are used effectively. Anti-Rape Crisis Cells are available in most districts however police have not begun to refer cases as required by the law. Similarly, victim protection measures are rarely used and as a result, survivors of sexual violence often withdraw from lengthy trials leading to a

conviction rate of just 4.5% across the country. The panel discussed challenges faced by survivors in seeking justice in gender-based violence cases. Several key issues were discussed including low referral of cases to crisis cells, low conviction rates, acquittals due to resiling of witnesses, delays in trials, and repeat offending by convicts. Specialised structures and mechanisms provided under the Anti-Rape Act can comprehensively address these issues but effective implementation remains a challenge. For example, the Act passed in 2021 calls for the establishment national sex offender's register, and rules were notified in September 2023, however, the register is still not functional. The event concluded with an acknowledgement of the collaborative effort required to implement the Anti-Rape Act 2021 effectively and reaffirmed the commitment of all stakeholders to fostering a safer and more just society.

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Elite colonizers of Pakistan

HISSAN UR REHMAN

In Pakistan, a powerful few are pulling the strings of the economy, using their control to advance their own interests rather than benefiting the public. As the nation has till recently been suffocating under the weight of a staggering 20.50 per cent benchmark interest rate, it's clear that these economic elites are exploiting the situation for their gain. While this aggressive monetary policy has been implemented to combat inflation, its efficacy is increasingly questionable given the nuanced nature of the inflationary pressures facing the country. A glimpse of hope arose from JP Morgan's projection of a potential 6.0 per cent interest rate cut in FY25. This has suggested significant room for maneuver by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The bank is anticipated to implement at least 500-600 basis points in rate cuts, potentially accelerating the easing process in the 1H FY25, if external conditions permit. However, the efficacy of such tough measures in addressing Pakistan's unique inflationary challenges remains a subject of intense debate. The question remains: is this aggressive stance the most effective, or even necessary, path to economic stability? Inflation in Pakistan predominantly stems from cost-push factors rather than demand-pull dynamics. Historically, inflationary pressures have shifted from being demand-driven to being more influenced by rising production costs and supply chain disruptions. High interest rates are typically employed to counteract demand-pull inflation, which arises from increased consumer spending. However, with current inflation largely driven by cost-push elements, this monetary approach may be misaligned with the root causes of inflation. Several indicators underscore the cost-push nature of Pakistan's inflation. One is rising energy costs. The price of petrol in Pakistan has experienced a dramatic increase, rising from Rs116.60 per liter in January 2020 to over Rs275 per liter by mid-2024. This significant escalation in energy costs has had a profound impact on the economy. The higher prices for energy have amplified production and transportation expenses, which, in turn, have driven up prices across various sectors, including essential food items. As a result, consumers are facing higher costs of living, and industries are experiencing increased operational expenses. Second is the increased cost of imported goods. The depreciation of the Pakistani rupee has significantly impacted the cost of imported goods. The exchange rate has risen from around Rs155 in January 2020 to over Rs279 by mid-2024. This depreciation has directly inflated the prices of imported goods, including basic staples and essential commodities. As the cost of imports increases, so do the prices for consumers, adding to the overall inflationary pressures in the country. Third is agricultural input costs. A persistent upward spiral has gripped the cost of agricultural inputs in Pakistan. At the epicentre of this crisis is DAP fertilizer, whose price has surged from Rs4,000 to over Rs11,500 per bag between 2020 and mid-2024. These escalating costs have reverberated through the agricultural ecosystem, inflating the price of agricultural produce. As food constitutes a significant portion of the consumer basket, this upward pressure on food prices has contributed materially to the overall inflationary burden shouldered by Pakistani consumers. The fourth factor is global commodity prices, which have also contributed to domestic inflation in Pakistan. The FAO Food Price Index rose from 105.4 points in 2020 to 120.4 points by 2024. This increase in global commodity prices has translated into higher domestic costs for imported goods, further fueling inflation. As the cost of commodities rises on the global market, these increased costs are passed on to consumers, exacerbating the inflationary pressures within the country. The high interest rates have a profound impact on Pakistan's fiscal health, especially concerning government borrowing and debt servicing. Over 80 per cent of the country's borrowing is allocated towards debt servicing, consuming approximately 57 per cent of tax revenue. This situation severely limits the fiscal space available for development and welfare initiatives. For perspective, Pakistan's debt per capita increased from \$823 in 2011 to \$1,122 in 2023, while GDP per capita declined from \$1,295 to \$1,223 over the same period. The external debt has nearly doubled, and domestic debt has grown six-fold. Servicing this debt, particularly with high interest rates, constraints economic growth and exacerbates fiscal challenges. High interest rates elevate the cost of borrowing for businesses, dampening investment and employment opportunities. A reduction in interest rates by just 2.0 per cent could potentially save around Rs60 billion annually on interest payments. This reduction could mitigate the tax burden on the salaried class and stimulate economic activity by making borrowing cheaper for businesses. Enhanced economic activity could, in turn, boost tax revenues through increased business and consumer spending. Examining regional economies reveals a stark contrast in monetary policies. For example, India has maintained a repo rate of 6.5 per cent despite facing similar inflationary pressures. Other regional counterparts, including China, Bangladesh, and Iran, have managed interest rates to balance economic growth and inflation control more effectively. The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) is responsible for setting interest rates. Although the IMF may offer recommendations, the final decision rests with the MPC, which comprises a few key individuals. Concerns exist about potential undue influence from commercial banks on the MPC's decisions, necessitating scrutiny to ensure decisions are made with national economic interests in mind. The high interest rate policy in Pakistan requires a comprehensive reevaluation. Given the cost-push nature of current inflation and the substantial burden of government debt, a more tailored approach is warranted. This is why the interest rate could easily have been brought down by much more now that expected inflation is less than 13.5 per cent in 2025. A mere 1.0 per cent reduction isn't enough, and it is imperative for Pakistan's economic policymakers to embrace a realistic approach.

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MOHAMED CHEBARO

I could not help but notice that the step taken last week by Germany to ban the Islamic Center Hamburg, an association that had been under investigation for several months, over its links to Iran's supreme leader and militant groups across the Middle East such as Hezbollah, received relatively limited coverage in the Western press.

Maybe that important bit of news got buried by Kamala Harris' likely nomination for the US presidency or by the spectacular opening of the Olympic Games in Paris. Only some Middle Eastern outlets and Israeli media gave the prominence it deserved, since Iran has been accused of meddling in the affairs of various countries in the region for decades. Gradually, most Western powers now seem to be waking up to Iran's direct or indirect criminal activities, which have been creeping into their cities.

Many in the Arab and Islamic worlds have long been warning about the emergence of new forms of extremism, this time born and bred in European nations, especially among migrant groups. This has resulted in lone wolf or organized militants incubating among others involved with similar organizations spread across the length and breadth of most European countries.

Equally obvious for decades has been the role and great influence such organizations have had in acting as a rallying forum, as well as being indoctrination hubs, for various residents and new migrant arrivals in Germany and other European countries. They have promoted among minorities a narrative close to that of the Iranian regime's view of the world, sowing the seeds of an Islamist political identity and set of values that promotes resistance, militancy and, in some cases, violence.

These are not only at odds with migrants' new host country's democratic and liberal values, but also in many cases go as far as propagating

Germany acts on Iranian influence but is it enough?

a sense of undermining, opposing and even calling for the overthrow of such countries' systems, which ensure freedom of worship, freedom of expression, democracy and liberty for all.

The German government accused the Iran-linked center in Hamburg of having a political agenda, not a purely religious one, and it was found to be an "Islamist extremist

in some cases too lenient vis-a-vis hubs of extremism sprouting on its soil. Such countries have given persecuted refugees sanctuary, only for these organizations to evolve and become hubs of toxic thought and teachings that spread among exiles and minorities from every part of the world. Some of these people become the foot soldiers for ideologies, organizations, movements and regimes

According to an investigation by The Wall Street Journal that was published in March, Europe's terror threat no longer emanates just from traditional affiliates and actors on behalf of the extreme right or Daesh, but also from Iran and Iran-linked organizations like Hamas and Hezbollah.

Until recently, those militant organizations had used Europe as a business and fundraising hub and as a safe place for their operatives. However, the ongoing Gaza war has shown that such groups and Iran have pivoted to plotting assassinations and sabotage in Europe, in addition to organizing protests that help them win new recruits to their cause.

Many residents hailing from the Middle East and Muslim-majority nations in Europe have long been suspicious and surprised about how tolerant the authorities in Western nations have been to the multiplication of mosques that are run by unscrupulous organizations, which are often linked to questionable donor groups.

Few of these organizations have ever hidden their toxic narrative or ideological tenets that sit on the opposite end of the spectrum to the Western values of tolerance, liberty and democracy. Western nations have for many years chosen to tolerate such groups' business, fundraising and shady activities that have often bordered on criminality.

No doubt that the closure of this "outpost of the Iranian inhumane regime is a real blow against Islamist extremism," as the regional government of Hamburg claimed. But one fears that this action by Germany is a case of too little, too late, since the influence of such religious centers' teaching has spread and taken root within many communities across Europe.

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If anything, the German action seems to be a measured and reserved one, even quite limited in its scope

organization pursuing anti-constitutional objectives."

The German Interior Ministry also said that its investigations revealed that the center is a "direct representative of Iran's supreme leader" and spreads the Tehran regime's ideology "in an aggressive and militant manner." It seeks to "establish authoritarian, theocratic rule" in place of a democracy, the ministry said, accusing the center of backing the "military and political dimension" of organizations like Hezbollah.

Tehran, as expected, reacted with fury, summoning Germany's ambassador to Iran to condemn a "hostile action" it branded as a "clear example of Islamophobia." It claimed that such actions are contrary to all teachings of the "Abrahamic faiths," violate freedom of expression and promote violence and extremism.

If anything, the German action seems to be a measured and reserved one, even quite limited in its scope. The authorities searched only 55 addresses across the country allegedly related to the banned center, seizing a "high number of IT devices" along with cash and documents with links to Hezbollah and Hamas. The ban has also been extended to cover several organizations related to the Hamburg center, including four Shiite mosques.

Germany, like many Western nations, has been exceptionally tolerant and

that were the reason many of them fled their home countries in the first place.

One cannot deny that the latest Gaza war has helped expose some facets of these religious centers that were, until recently, classified purely as places of worship, despite all the warnings from Arab and Muslim countries to the contrary. European nations have suddenly discovered that these were always centers propagating anti-Western and, above all, antisemitic beliefs.

Founded by Iranian immigrants in 1953, the Islamic Center Hamburg had been under surveillance by German domestic intelligence for some time. In November last year, investigators conducted raids on its premises and other related sites across seven of Germany's 16 states, with "extensive evidence" found that confirmed suspicions and were sufficient to order its closure.

Unlike the US, which proscribed Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps in 2019, most Western nations, including Germany, have so far refused to ban the group. Instead, they have preferred to proscribe or sanction Hamas and Hezbollah elements, despite the fact that Germany and many other EU nations have been grappling with Iran-linked threats that have recently galvanized new actors due to the Israel-Hamas war.

Disclaimer: Views expressed by writers in this section are their own and do not necessarily reflect The Asian Telegraph's point-of-view

Today in History

History of Pakistan



Even after that event, Pakistan has had difficulty reconciling rival claims. Punjab, being the largest and most significant province, has always been perceived as imposing its will on the others, and even attempts at establishing quotas for governmental and non-governmental opportunities and resources have not satisfied the discontented. The demands for an independent Sindh Desh for the Sindhis and a Pakhtunistan for the Pathans, and the violently rebellious circumstances in Balochistan in the 1980s and

since 2002, illustrate the nature and depth of the problem of national integration. Because these various struggles have been directed against centralized authority, they have merged with the democratic struggle. But their express aims have been to secure greater regional representation in the bureaucratic and military establishment, especially in the higher echelons, and to achieve effective decentralization of powers within the federal system by emphasizing regional autonomy.

A third conflict sprang from the struggle over economic resources and development funds among the more-deprived regions and strata of the population. This resulted in a number of violent confrontations between the less-privileged segments of society and the state. Some of these confrontations, such as those in 1969 and 1977, led to the fall of constitutional government and the imposition of martial law. A fourth conflict took place between the landed aristocracy that dominated Pakistan's political and economic life

for much of the country's history and a new urban elite that began to assert itself in the late 1980s. One manifestation of this conflict was the struggle that broke out between Punjab provincial leaders and federal authorities in the late 1980s. Under the Islamic Democratic Alliance, the Punjab government continued to back the interests of the landed aristocracy, while the national government—headed by Benazir Bhutto.

To be continued....

Showbiz

50 Cent recalls Eminem helped him perform at 2022 Super Bowl Halftime Show

50 Cent addresses 2022 Super Bowl Halftime Show



50 Cent has recently recalled how Eminem helped him perform at the 2022 Super Bowl Halftime Show. Speaking with The Hollywood Reporter, the rapper revealed, "They didn't want me there." "Eminem wouldn't do it without me. That's how I ended up on the show because he was not coming if I didn't do it," explained the In da Club crooner. 50 Cent stated, "When that happens, you go, 'Damn, so you just lost Eminem because you didn't bring 50? Damn. All right.'" "Bring 50 then." But if it was up to them, they would not have me there," remarked the rapper. 50 Cent told the outlet, "I'm the surprise. I'm not on the bill at all."

"But they couldn't get Em to do it without me," he added. Eminem mentioned the rapper "is like a brother to me." "50 has proven again and again that there's really nothing he can't do, and nobody gets in the way of him getting it done," added the Mockingbird crooner. Earlier in January 2023, 50 Cent disclosed that he was making the 2002 movie 8 Mile into a TV show during an appearance on the BigBoyTV YouTube channel. The rapper pointed out at the time, "I'm gonna bring his 8 Mile to television." "It's gonna be big. I'm working. I ain't got no duds. I'm batting 100," stated 50 Cent. He added, "I think it should be there for his legacy because it's important to me that they understand it."

Tech

PTA chairman says lifting of ban on X links to govt's directives

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) Chairman Hafeezur Rehman has said that the lifting of ban on social media site X is linked to the government's directives. The PTA chairman said this while attending a meeting of the Senate's Standing Committee on Cabinet Secretariat chaired by Rana Mahmoodul Hasan in Islamabad on Thursday. Pakistan authorities suspended the social media platform in the country on February 17, citing national security concerns. However, it can be accessed through a virtual private network (VPN). Following the ban, various petitions were filed in the Sindh High Court (SHC) against the restrictions on the microblogging website and intermittent suspension of internet services in the country. Last month, the federal government defended the ban on X in its response submitted to the SHC, saying that the move was "legitimate" when addressing national security concerns.

The matter also came under discussion today during the Senate body meeting when Senator Abdul Qadir asked whether the telecom regulator plans on removing the ban from the website. "We will [remove the ban on X] on the day that the government asks us," said Rehman. The chairman informed the lawmakers that only 7% of the complaints forwarded to the platform in the last three months have been addressed and that X has the lowest compliance ratio among all platforms. Rehman explained that they only block social media platforms at the government's request. He added that they reach out to the platforms about any complaints related to social media that violate Pakistani law. Speaking about the usage of VPNs in Pakistan, the PTA chairman said that the usage of X in Pakistan has decreased by 70% despite the availability of VPNs. "Only 30% of people are using VPN," he said, highlighting that VPNs can be blocked.

Health

Health experts say vaccination campaign can prevent measles

LAHORE:Punjab Province has been able to thwart the spike in measles cases in the last four weeks owing to a number of targeted interventions, yet experts have advised a country-wide vaccination drive as the only answer to looming threat of outbreaks. Experts also advised enhanced focus on urban and peri urban slums during a meeting of the EPI Steering Committee that finalised its recommendations under the chair of Director General Health Services Punjab Dr Ilyas Gondal at his office on Wednesday. The steering committee is the apex technical forum that analyses the data, challenges and progress of vaccination programme, disease outbreak trends, and advises the programme on technical areas. Director Expanded Programme on Immunisation Punjab Dr Mukhtar shared that measles cases in the last four weeks had dropped

to just over 3,000, which were less than half of the cases reported in the preceding four weeks. Besides strengthening of surveillance system at teaching hospitals, Punjab had conducted a measles outbreak response in 148 selected UCs of Rawalpindi, Multan, Lahore and Sheikhupura. The meeting was attended by renowned pediatricians from Children's Hospital, Mayo Hospital, Services Hospital, public health experts from WHO, UNICEF and programme managers from the Primary and Secondary Healthcare Department. The meeting, convened on directions from the Minister Primary and Secondary Healthcare Department Khawaja Imran Nazir, reviewed preparations for the introduction of Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) vaccine in Punjab. DG Health Dr Ilyas Gondal shared that Punjab and Sindh would introduce the HPV vaccine in

their routine immunisation schedule in the year 2025 and this would be followed by a phase-wise introduction in AJK, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan and Gilgit-Baltistan in 2026-27. Additional Director EPI Dr Samra Khuram shared that cervical cancer is the third most leading cancer in women of all ages in Pakistan and the second most common cancer in women of reproductive age group (15 - 44 years). In Pakistan, an estimated 5008 women were diagnosed with cervical cancer annually nearly 3,200 losing lives from the disease. Dr Imran Qureshi from WHO said that in order to achieve measles/rubella free Punjab, the province needs to achieve at least 95% immunisation coverage. He said that due to a complex supply and demand equation, development of a robust implementation strategy was the need of the hour.



PTI should shun politics of vandalism, apologize to nation if wants to join mainstream

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal said on Thursday that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) must abandon its politics of instability and apologize to the nation for the vandalism of state institutions and sensitive installations of the armed forces if it wanted to integrate into the national mainstream. In an interview with Voice of America (VOA), he said no democracy in the world could support a party that engaged in destructive politics and undermined national interests for political gain. When asked about the possibility of banning PTI, the minister mentioned that recent information suggested PTI's social media had connections with anti-state elements abroad. The 'surfaced information,' he said, was currently being thoroughly examined by the relevant departments to determine the appropriate legal and constitutional actions. Ahsan Iqbal said the PTI was banned or not, but it was evident that the party's politics were a 'direct attack' on national interests. He added that some political parties were also trying to exploit the current situation while the country was recovering economically. He described the vandalism of May 9 as a well-conceived plan by PTI; and said that no one in the country supported politics of destruction and instability which only benefited anti-state elements. In response to another question, the minister said Pakistan wanted to strengthen trade relations with all friendly countries, as the country's economic future depended significantly on increasing exports. DNA

UAE envoy calls on Defence Minister



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Salem Al Zaabi called on Minister for Defence and Defence Production and Aviation Khawaja Muhammad Asif on Thursday. The Minister lauded the vision and efforts of President and Supreme Commander of UAE Armed Forces, Sheikh Muhammad Bin Zayed Al-Nahyan for development and transformation of UAE, a news release said. Khawaja Muhammad Asif said: "Pakistani Nationals are playing a productive role in various fields for the progress of UAE. Pakistan will continue to extend its support for UAE in civil and defence sectors." He expressed that there was a lot of potential of cooperation between Armed Forces for enhancement of existing cooperation. Matters pertaining to commercial/civil aviation sector of Pakistan and UAE were also discussed for enhancing scope in aviation sector between both countries.

Gilani reiterates Pakistan's resolve for enhancing cooperation with the UK in the economic, defence & trade sectors

Calls for an immediate ceasefire & resolution of the Palestine dispute



ISLAMABAD: Chairman, Senate of Pakistan, Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani met UK Minister of State for South Asia Hamish Falconer MP at the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) in London. High Commissioner of Pakistan to the UK, Dr. Mohammad Faisal was also present. Chairman Senate congratulated Minister Falconer on his appointment. He underscored the importance of a robust Pakistan-UK partnership for advancing both countries' interests in the bilateral and regional domains. The Chairman Senate highlighted the contributions of the 1.6 million strong British-Pakistani diaspora to enriching ties between the two countries. Chairman Senate stated that it is high time that the enhanced strategic dialogue initiated

between two countries in 2011, may now be transformed into an enhanced strategic partnership. He reiterated Pakistan's resolve for enhancing cooperation with the UK in the economic, defence and trade sectors. Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani also emphasized the importance of the resolution of the Jammu & Kashmir dispute in accordance with the United Nations Security Council resolutions and international law for achieving lasting peace and stability in South Asia. While expressing concern about the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza, he called for an immediate ceasefire and resolution of the Palestine dispute. Minister of State Falconer thanked the Chairman Senate for his visit to the FCDO. He reaffirmed his desire to work with the Government of Pakistan to further enhance the Pakistan-UK partnership by deepening cooperation in various sectors including trade & investment, climate change, defence, education and socio-economic development. The Minister also recalled his stay in Multan during the 2010 floods. SABAH

Pakistan, Kazakhstan to work...

Continued from Page 1

The PM's climate aide assured the ambassador of her all-out support, saying: "I would mobilise every possible resource to engaged with Kazakhstan government through the embassy to benefit from experiences of Kazakhstan regarding climate risk management, tapping of renewable energy, efficient water management, disaster management, sustainable farming practices and eco-tourism." Romina Khurshid also highlighted during the meeting that the Central Asia region is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change due to its unique geographical and climatic conditions. "The Central Asia region is also experiencing significant warming, with temperatures rising faster than the global average. This has been leading to more frequent and severe heatwaves, affecting agriculture, water resources and human health," she added. Romina Khurshid further said that the region's glaciers are shrinking at a rapid pace, particularly in the Tien Shan and Pamir mountain ranges. These glaciers are crucial for providing water to rivers and lakes that support agriculture and drinking water supplies. As they

recede, there's an increased risk of reduced water availability. The PM's climate aide highlighted that what is interesting to note that like Pakistan, the region is gripped by identical environmental and climate change risks including growing water scarcity, extreme weather events like floods and heatwaves, desertification and biodiversity loss. "Addressing these vulnerabilities requires an over-arching regional approach, including improving water management, adopting climate-resilient agricultural practices, and investing in infrastructure to cope with extreme weather events. Regional cooperation is also crucial, as many of the issues, such as trans-boundary water management, involve multiple countries in Central Asia," Romina Khurshid stressed. The Kazakhstan's ambassador agreed with the PM's coordinator, saying that the region was confronted with common challenges of environment and climate change. "My country would do utilize every possible resources and work closely with Pakistan to tackle these challenges through not only bilateral but also a regional approach involving other climate-vulnerable countries from Central Asia," the ambassador Yerzhan Kistafin said.

ISLAMABAD: The government allied parties on Thursday decided that the nation would observe a day of mourning across the country on August 2 (Friday) in solidarity with the Palestinian brothers and sisters and to condemn the Israeli state-sponsored terrorism in Palestine. A consultative meeting of the allied parties on the deteriorating situation in Palestine, in a joint declaration, also announced that the funeral prayer in absentia for Ismail Haniyeh, chief of Hamas Political Bureau, who was assassinated in Tehran on Wednesday, would be offered by the nation after Friday prayers. The meeting, which was presided over by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, also decided to present a resolution in the Parliament to express full solidarity with the people of Palestine. The participants of the meeting strongly condemned the ongoing Israeli brutalities in Palestine for last nine months, and

expressed full solidarity with the Palestinian brothers and sisters. They also expressed deep sorrow and grief over the martyrdom of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh. They were of the view that the Hamas leader's assassination incident was a conspiracy to sabotage the efforts to get stopped the ongoing Israeli atrocities on the Palestinians and establish peace in the region. Such incidents destroyed the world peace. The prime minister termed the ongoing Israeli state-sponsored terrorism in Palestine a tragedy for the Muslim Ummah. The meeting demanded to ensure immediate provision of humanitarian aid to the unarmed Palestinians. It was decided that Pakistan would continue to provide relief goods, besides taking effective measures for the medical assistance of the oppressed Palestinian brothers and sisters. It was further decided that the injured Palestinians would be brought to Pakistan for treatment.

The meeting also decided that Palestinian medical students would be admitted to medical colleges in Pakistan with financial support to continue their education. The participants were of the view that with the ongoing genocide and state-sponsored terrorism in Palestine, Israel was violating the resolutions of the United Nations, the decisions of the International Court of Justice and international laws, while the world community remained a silent spectator. They asked the international community to adopt a clear stand against the Israeli brutalities, as otherwise it would be a question mark against viability of international laws and institutions for future generations. The meeting also urged the international community, including the United Nations to break their silence and immediately get stopped the ongoing genocide of the oppressed Palestinians by the Zionist forces and bring Israel to justice for war crimes. APP

Nation to observe day of mourning on Friday to show solidarity with Palestinians

IHC seeks plan to ban protests in D-Chowk, Red Zone

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court has issued notices to the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad and the Ministry of Interior regarding a petition seeking a ban on protests in D-Chowk and the Red Zone. The court, presided over by Chief Justice Aamir Farooq, has requested a comprehensive plan to address the issue. The petition was brought forward by the Federal Welfare Association, represented by lawyer Chaudhry Waseem Bahadur. The petitioner's counsel argued that protests in D-Chowk disrupt business activities, leading to closures. The plea sought a prohibition on such gatherings to prevent further disruptions. In response, the Advocate General Islamabad acknowledged that not all businesses are affected, noting that only certain areas experience closures during protests. Chief Justice Aamir Farooq questioned the measures in place, asking whether D-Chowk falls within the Red Zone. The Advocate General explained that the Red Zone begins at D-Chowk and that Section 144 is enforced in Islamabad to manage such situations. INP



ISLAMABAD: The joint meeting of the Sugar Advisory Board and Cabinet Committee on Monitoring Sugar Export was presided over by Federal Minister for Industries and Production, Rana Tanveer Hussain.

President Zardari for a viable solution to rising energy costs

Says he was aware of the problems being faced by Pakistani businesses



VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari has called for finding a win-win solution to address the issue of rising energy costs in the country. He proposed that the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) should form a committee and work with the President's office to develop a viable solution to the issue of paying capacity charges to Independent Power Producers (IPPs). President Asif Ali Zardari gave these remarks while talking to a delegation of FPCCI comprising of businessmen and

office-bearers of 40 regional business associations, led by Dr Gohar Ejaz, at Aiwan-e-Sadr on Thursday. Talking to the delegation, President Asif Ali Zardari announced that the President's office would collaborate with a smaller committee from the business community to find a win-win solution for the Government, the people, the business community and IPPs. He urged for evolving a consensus solution so that none of stakeholders lose out. He said that he was aware of the problems being faced by Pakistani businesses, that were in a "triple-whammy" due to high input, energy, and fuel costs.

Dr. Gohar Ejaz highlighted that rising energy costs were overburdening the people, industry, agriculture and exports sector. He emphasised the need for reforming the energy sector to bring down energy prices. Dr. Gohar Ejaz requested the President to intervene in the matter and play his role in resolving the issues faced by Pakistan's industries and businesses due to high electricity prices. The President assured the delegation of his support in coming up with a solution to their problems and taking up the matter with relevant quarters.

UN Report endorses Pakistan's view on terrorists' hideouts in Afghanistan: FO



ISLAMABAD: Foreign Office says the latest UN Security Council report endorses Pakistan's view that Afghanistan has hideouts and sanctuaries for terrorist groups including "Fitna al-Khawarij", the banned TTP. At her weekly news briefing in Islamabad on Tuesday, Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said the report contains the view that the TTP could transform into an extra regional threat as well as umbrella organization of other terror groups. The spokesperson said the UN Report points out that TTP operatives and its new recruits are being trained in Afghanistan. Mumtaz Zahra Baloch urged Afghanistan to take immediate, effective and robust action against the terrorist groups including Fitna al-Khawarij. She said the Afghan side should ensure that their land is not used for terrorist activities inside Pakistan. Referring to the killing of Chief of the Political Bureau of Hamas Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran, she said targeting individuals inside sovereign states is a violation of international law and global norms. Such acts carry the seeds of further escalation. She said it is yet another demonstration of indiscriminate and disproportionate Israeli aggression that has continued unabated to the detriment of regional and global peace and security. The spokesperson said Israel must be held accountable for its transgressions and actions. She said Israeli's extraterritorial acts have endangered regional security. She urged the backers of Israel to prevail on Israel to end its unlawful military operations in violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of countries in the region. Mumtaz Zahra Baloch reiterated Pakistan's support for the realization of the inalienable right to self-determination of the Palestinian people, their right of return to Palestine and the establishment of an independent state of Palestine with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. As regards the situation in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir, the spokesperson urged India to reverse the illegal and unilateral actions taken there since 5th August 2019. She said India should take necessary steps to create an environment conducive to peaceful resolution of Jammu and Kashmir dispute in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions and the wishes of the Kashmiri people. INP

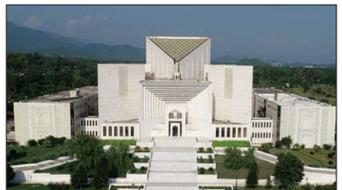
Shaza declares data regulation, cyber-security govt's topmost priorities



ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Information Technology and Telecommunication, Shaza Fatima Khawaja has declared the data regulation and cyber-security as top priorities of the incumbent government. Addressing Roundtable on Open Data Flows & Pakistan's Digital Economy held at Ministry of IT on Thursday, she said, "The Ministry of IT & Telecom is committed for the growth of IT sector, as taking IT exports up to \$25 billion is our target." Managing Director Asia Internet Coalition (AIC) Jeff Paine, Google and Meta representa-

tives attended the Roundtable session. Convener Digital Pakistan Committee Tania Airdus and Secretary IT Aisha Humera Chaudhry were also present. Shaza Fatima said that on the directives of the Prime Minister, private sector was being fully supported and facilitated in the country. She said that steps were being taken for transforming Pakistan into Digital Economy. Detailed discussion was held on data localisation, and the participants also gave recommendations regarding data hosting and data sensitivity. Authorities of Pakistan Software Houses Association (P@SHA), PTA, SECP, State Bank of Pakistan, NITB, and senior officers of the Ministry of IT also participated in the Roundtable session. INP

SC forms larger bench to hear Arshad Sharif's murder case



ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court (SC) of Pakistan on Thursday constituted a five-member larger bench to hear a suo motu case pertaining to murder of senior journalist and former TV anchor Arshad Sharif. The Practice and Procedure Committee of SC led by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa decided to form a five-member larger bench instead of a three-member bench with a 2-1 majority vote. The sources privy to the development said that CJP Qazi Faez Isa suggested keeping the 3-member bench intact, but Justice Mansoor Ali Shah and Justice Munib Akhtar, the other two members of the committee, voted in favor of forming a larger bench. The new bench of headed by Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail and comprising Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Justice Ayesha Malik, Justice Hasan Azhar Rizvi, and Justice Athar Minallah will hear the case to a date which will be announced later. INP