



Pakistan's concerns over hostilities in the Middle East, endangering the regional peace and security. He will sign the Charter for ECO Clean Energy Center

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator
Ishaq Dar

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CJCS General Sahir Shamshad Mirza visits forward Naval Operational Base, Ormara

Expresses satisfaction on operational readiness of deployed elements



RAWALPINDI: Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCS) General Sahir Shamshad Mirza visited forward Naval Operational Base, Ormara on Friday.

According to the press release issued by the ISPR, upon arrival, a comprehensive operational brief was presented to Chairman JCSC on prevailing threat environment and defence of the area.

General Sahir Shamshad Mirza visited operational assets of Navy including Surface Ships and a Submarine and reviewed operational preparedness and combat readiness of the units in sea.

During interactions with troops at Coastal Area and onboard ships, Chairman JCSC expressed satisfaction on operational readiness of deployed elements. He also appreciated the morale of troops and directed the field units to ensure optimal utilization of latest weapons and equipment with zeal and zest in order to ensure defence of the motherland. PR

JMC to set new standards of healthcare, research in capital: Ahsan Iqbal

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal has chaired a meeting to review progress on the Jinnah Medical Complex (JMC) project, which would set new standards of healthcare and research in the Federal Capital. Key officials, including Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Health Dr Malik Mukhtar Ahmad Bharath, Secretary National Health Services Prof. Khalid Saeed Akhtar, CDA chairman and representatives from Bostan Consultants, attended the meeting, a news release said on Friday.

A detailed presentation on the project's master plan was given by Bostan Consultants, followed by a thorough discussion.

The committee approved the plan, and Ahsan Iqbal proposed renaming the project as the Jinnah Medical Research Center to reflect its focus on advanced medical research and healthcare. The minister emphasized the importance of modern designs, green building principles, and combining traditional construction methods with advanced techniques like pre-cast structures to ensure top-quality construction.



ISLAMABAD: PM Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a high level meeting regarding law and order.

PM for efforts to quash PTI's inimical designs of invading Islamabad

VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Friday urged the country's civil and military leadership to formulate a strategy to avert the repeat of PTI's invasion of Islamabad aimed at sabotaging the hard earned peace and macroeconomic stability. "Pakistan's image has been tarnished all over. This has been the third to fourth invasion against the federal capital during the past eight months by the PTI. There was no concept of such unholy acts and designs before 2014. It started in 2014 with the 126-day long sit-in that damaged the economy and country's image," the prime minister said addressing a high level meeting he chaired on the law and order situation in the country.

The meeting was attended by members of the federal cabinet, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, Chief of the Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir, and other senior government officers and law enforcement agencies. Calling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (Tehreek-e-Takhrreeb (Insurgency Movement), the prime minister censured its leadership for running over the federal capital repeatedly to sabotage the hard earned peace, macroeconomic stability and revival of heftily foreign capital investments into the country.

"The country's economy again witnessed a major blow as according to a guardedly estimate such protests cause Rs190 billion per day loss to the national economy. The impact on the exports, imports, production, services, private businesses, loss of public and private offices is huge," Prime Minister Shehbaz said.

He reiterated that a mob from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) invaded the federal capital with all the public resources of KP provincial government that unleashed gunshots on the law enforcement agencies, injured people and damaged infrastructure in the capital.

"If the country enemies are hell bent on sabotaging the country's peace and prosperity; are we going to lie down like a lame duck and we should allow them to run over everything? This should be the last thing that we should imagine in our remotest imagination. We should make all out efforts to quash such inimical designs intended to harm the nation as these opportunities do not come again," the prime minister said.

The PTI-led regime in KP, he said had no regard for declining inflation from 32% to below 7%, policy rate from 22%-15% and friendly nations interested in investing in Pakistan as the party just wanted to roll back everything.

"Federal government's senior leadership, COAS and his entire team are present here. Time and tide wait for none. It's (PTI) not a political party but an abettor and a saboteurs and miscreants' group that should be taken to task as per law. It's our national duty to expose them and, if not, history will judge us in a very bad light and posterity will not forgive us," the prime minister said.

Calling the KP a "beautiful" province with its people very brave, strong and patriots, he called for a focus on the development initiatives for them.

He said the recent killings in Parachinar city of KP was a clandestine move to damage country's peace, but it was painful to see the KP

government's indifference to the situation. He noted that the violence by PTI miscreants' clique in Islamabad resulted in the martyrdoms of a police and four Rangers personnel with dozens of police officers and constables injured.

The prime minister repeated that the due to the PTI's 126-day sit-in in 2014, the Chinese President's visit was deferred and was rescheduled seven months later in April 2015, following myriads of efforts.

The prime minister also recalled the PTI's attempts to sabotage the SCO conference hosted by Islamabad and undermine the Pakistan-Saudi brotherly relations by baseless propaganda by the party leadership.

He said PTI's latest protest failed to impact the Belarusian President's visit as the foreign dignitary successfully completed his three-day visit and also attended the luncheon reception hosted by Nawaz Sharif in Murree.

Mentioning his participation at GHQ in the funeral prayers of the Rangers' personnel who were martyred while containing the saboteurs' violence, the prime minister expressed gratitude to Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, interior secretary, IG Islamabad Police, and LEAs, as well as the chief ministers of Sindh and Punjab for their support to the federal government to cope with the violence.

Highlighting the government's achievements at the economic front, he said indicators were improving gradually and macroeconomic stability was being witnessed in the economy as the Pakistan Stock Exchange crossed its highest ever trading volume which was earlier achieved during Nawaz Sharif's government.

Ethiopia, Pakistan Forging Cooperation for Holding Single Country Exhibition in Addis Ababa



VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on Friday decided to expand the bilateral cooperation for holding a successful Single Country Exhibition in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia next year by ensuring a large number of traders from both the sides.

The decision to this effect was taken during a meeting between H.E. Dr. Jemal Beker Abdulla, Special Envoy and Ambassador Extraordinary of the FDR Ethiopia to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and H.E. Jam Kamal Khan, Federal Minister of Pakistan for Commerce.

During the meeting, both the sides discussed matters of mutual interest including bilateral cooperation for enhancing the bilateral trade between the two countries that enjoy a long standing brotherly relations.

H.E. Ambassador Dr. Jemal Beker noted the growing bilateral cooperation in various areas such as finance, trade, culture, aviation, science and technology especially after the opening the Ethiopian Mission in Islamabad.

He said the bilateral relations are on upward trajectory, citing recently signed Memoranda of Understanding between the two nations in the areas of business, trade, investment, aviation, science and technology, start of the Ethiopian Airlines operations in Karachi, and exchange of delegations from business, trade, aviation, education, health and cultural sectors.

The Ambassador briefed the Minister about the Home Grown Economic Reforms which had shown promising results in Ethiopia, addressing macroeconomic imbalances, increasing productivity, creating ease of doing business and providing a conducive environment for attracting the foreign direct investment.

Ethiopia is a gateway to Africa which is a huge market of more than 1.4 billion population, he said while underscoring the significance of the Single Country Exhibition in Addis Ababa which would not only connect the Pakistani traders with the Ethiopian counterparts but also with the African market.

On the other hand, the Minister said the Ministry of Commerce, and the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan is making all the necessary preparation regarding the Single Country Exhibition in Addis Ababa.

He said the Government of Pakistan is committed to Look Africa and Engage Africa Policy and has been taking all possible steps to strengthen its relations with the African countries including Ethiopia which is growth star of the African Continent, registering consistent economic growth under the leadership of Prime Minister of Ethiopia Dr. Abiy Ahmed.

Govt determined to enhance connectivity & improve digital infrastructure: Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb

Highlights the importance of digital economy & digital integration as a critical component of economic transformation of country

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb chaired a meeting of the Advisory Committee on Release of IMT Spectrum for Improvement of Next Generation Mobile Broadband Services in Pakistan at the Finance Division on Friday. The meeting was attended by Minister for Industries and Production Rana Tanveer Husain, Minister of State for Information Technology and Telecommunication of Pakistan Shaza Fatima Khawaja (virtual), Chairman PTA, Secretary Ministry of Information Technology, Secretary Ministry of Law and senior officers from concerned ministries and departments. The meeting discussed various issues and reviewed the progress of work done by the US-based consultant firm NERA hired by the PTA as per

PPRA Rules / EPADS in November 2024 to study and assess the Pakistan market, undertake consultation with stakeholders and prepare policy recommendations regarding sector reforms and a roadmap for a successful spectrum auction by April next year.

Finance Minister Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb highlighted the importance of digital economy and digital integration as a critical component of the economic transformation of the country. He said the government was determined to enhance connectivity and improve digital infrastructure to ensure mass adoption of emerging digital technologies and innovative applications for cross-sector socio-economic development, transformation of economic activities and achievement of sustainable development goals.

Ishaq Dar to pay official visit to Mashhad, Iran from Monday to attend the 28th meeting of the Council of Ministers of ECO

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar will pay a two-day official visit to Mashhad, Iran from Monday to attend the 28th meeting of the Council of Ministers of Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO).

In his address at the meeting, the Deputy Prime Minister will reiterate Pakistan's commitment to the ECO charter and highlight the potential of greater connectivity in the region through development of rail and road networks, liberalization of visa regimes and simplification of border procedures.

Ishaq Dar will also reiterate Pakistan's concerns over hostilities in the Middle East, endangering the regional peace and security. He will sign the Charter for ECO Clean Energy Center.

The Deputy Prime Minister will hold meetings with participating ministers and other dignitaries on the sidelines of the ministerial meeting.

COAS appreciates professionalism & high morale of participants being displayed during Pak-China Joint Exercise

RAWALPINDI: Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir visited the National Counter Terrorism Center, Pabbi on Friday.

During the visit, he interacted with the participants of Pak - China Joint Exercise Warrior-VIII between Pakistan Army and Peoples' Liberation Army of China. He was briefed on the scope and conduct of the exercise.

The Army Chief appreciated the professionalism and high morale of participants being displayed during the Joint Exercise.

Pak - China Joint Exercise Warrior-VIII commenced on 19th of this month.



Three weeks long Exercise in Counter Terrorism domain is 8th in the series of bilateral exercise being conducted annually.

Earlier upon arrival at the National Counter Terrorism Center Pabbi, the Army Chief was received by Commander Rawalpindi Corps. PR

Participation of foreigners in political gatherings in Pakistan is illegal: FO Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch has reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to pursuing good relations with all countries. She said that the participation of foreigners in political gatherings in Pakistan is illegal, adding that we will ask all the foreigners to keep themselves away from Pakistan's political matters.

At her weekly news briefing in Islamabad on Friday, FO Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch stated that Pakistan does not believe in zero-sum relationships. The expansion of our relations with one country should not be considered as coming at the expense of our relationship with any other country. Responding to a question, the FO Spokesperson once again stated that there is no dialogue taking place



between Pakistan and the TTP. She emphasized that Pakistan has stated on a number of occasions that the proposals to initiate talks with the TTP are an affront to the families of thousands of victims of terrorism. FO Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch

said that at the invitation of Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, President of the Republic of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko visited Islamabad from 25-27 November 2024.

During his visit to Islamabad, President Lukashenko held extensive talks with the Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. The two sides discussed areas of bilateral cooperation and engagement; and key regional and global developments. The two sides reaffirmed the commitment to promote mutually beneficial cooperation, deepen political dialogue, strengthen inter-parliamentary exchanges, and enhance trade and economic cooperation.

The two leaders signed several agreements and Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) focussing on cooperation in

environmental protection, disaster management, halal trade, financial intelligence sharing, vocational education and science & technology.

A key outcome of the visit was signing of the "Roadmap for Comprehensive Cooperation between Pakistan and Belarus for 2025-2027". The roadmap outlined a strategic framework for enhancing economic ties through high-level meetings, inter-governmental commissions, and targeted collaborative initiatives, reinforcing the importance of regional economic integration, connectivity and legal frameworks needed to facilitate bilateral economic collaboration.

Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said that Speaker of the National Assembly of Pakistan, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, is on an official visit to Moscow, on a special invitation of his

Russian counterpart, Chairman of the State Duma of the Russian Federation, Volodin Vyacheslav Victorovich.

In Moscow, the National Assembly Speaker held bilateral meetings with the Chairman of the State Duma, Volodin Vyacheslav Victorovich; Chairperson of the Federation Council, Valentina Matvienko; Vice Chairman of State Duma, Alexander Babakov; and Deputy Chairman of the Council of Muftis Damir Mukhtidinov.

The visit aims to further strengthen and expand friendly ties between the governments and the people of the two countries through parliamentary exchanges. An MoU will also be signed between the State Duma and the National Assembly of Pakistan, on expanding parliamentary cooperation and exchanges.

FO Spokesperson said that Foreign Secretary Ms. Anna Baloch participated in the second meeting of the "Global Alliance for the Implementation of the Two-State Solution" held in Brussels, Belgium on Thursday.

At the forum, the Foreign Secretary reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering support for the Palestinian cause. She called for a ceasefire in Gaza; a comprehensive approach for resolution of the Palestinian question, with the establishment of a sovereign and independent State of Palestine, with pre-1967 borders and Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital; and full membership of Palestine in the United Nations. The Foreign Secretary also emphasized the imperative for the international community to intensify its efforts for lasting peace in the region. SABAH

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Educating students for an AI-collaborative future

MOHAMMED A. AL-QARNI

Artificial intelligence is poised to revolutionize every corner of society, but when it comes to education, we seem to be focusing on the wrong end of the spectrum. As an educator and tech enthusiast, I have been closely following the buzz around AI in the classroom. Yet, there is a critical conversation we are not having: We are preparing students for a rapidly disappearing world, while neglecting the reality of an AI-augmented future.

When AI is discussed in the context of education, two themes usually dominate. The first is using AI to enhance teaching and learning — think personalized learning algorithms or AI tutors. The second is the push to teach students AI skills, such as coding and data analysis. These are undoubtedly important, but fail to capture the full scope of what's coming.

What is missing — and what I believe will have the most significant impact — is preparing students for a future in which AI is not just a tool, but also a constant collaborator. We are not talking about a few tech-savvy professions but a world where AI will touch virtually every job in some capacity.

Now, before you start picturing a dystopian future where robots replace humans, let me be clear: I do not believe AI will make people obsolete. But I find it hard to imagine any profession that AI will not transform in some way. Whether it is automating repetitive tasks or providing sophisticated insights, AI will become as integral to work as computers are today.

So, what does this mean for education? We need to shift our focus. Instead of solely teaching students how to use AI or create it, we need to teach them how to thrive in a world where AI is a collaborator in virtually every field.

Consider the future accountant, who will not just be crunching numbers, but will need to interpret complex AI-generated financial models to provide strategic advice. Think of the future doctor, who will not simply diagnose illnesses, but will need to integrate AI-driven diagnostic data into holistic patient care. Imagine an architect working alongside AI to simulate multiple design variations in real time, or a teacher customizing lesson plans based on AI insights into student performance patterns.

Here is what I believe we should prioritize: uniquely human skills. First, critical thinking. In a world awash with AI-generated content and data, we need individuals who can evaluate information critically, question AI's outputs, and make informed decisions. It is not enough to accept AI's conclusions at face value; we need people who can challenge and improve on them.

Creativity is another skill with which AI, despite all its computational power, still struggles. AI can assist in generating ideas, but it is human ingenuity that drives true innovation. We need to cultivate that creative spark, the ability to think outside the box, that makes humans irreplaceable.

Then there is emotional intelligence. As AI takes over more routine tasks, human interactions — our ability to empathize, communicate, and collaborate — will become even more essential. Machines may handle data, but humans handle relationships, and that is something AI cannot replicate, at least not yet.

But it is not just about soft skills. We also need to teach a new kind of tech-savviness — one that I like to call "AI interaction literacy." Not everyone needs to be a coder, but everyone needs a basic understanding of how AI works, its capabilities, and its limitations. This literacy means understanding how AI makes decisions, why it sometimes fails, and how to leverage its strengths, while being mindful of its weaknesses.

And perhaps most importantly, we need to instill a sense of ethics. As AI systems become more deeply embedded in decision-making processes that affect our lives — whether it is determining creditworthiness, diagnosing diseases, or even influencing court rulings — we need professionals who can ensure these systems are fair, transparent, and aligned with human values. Left unchecked, AI can perpetuate biases, and the consequences can be profound. Our students must be prepared to navigate these complex moral and ethical waters. This is not just theoretical. We are already seeing how this plays out in various professions. Accountants are increasingly relying on AI for analytics, but they still need to provide human judgment. Doctors are using AI to improve diagnostics, but they must maintain the patient's trust and the human touch. Across every sector, the story is the same: AI enhances our capabilities, but humans remain indispensable for interpretation, empathy, and innovation.

The bottom line is this: AI is not just another tool or subject to teach. It is a fundamental shift in how we work and live, and our education system needs to reflect that reality. The skills we cultivate today will determine how successfully our students navigate tomorrow's AI-driven world.

So, to educators, policymakers, and parents, let's broaden our approach to AI in education. Yes, let's use AI to enhance learning and teach technical AI skills. But, above all, let's prepare our students for a future where working with AI is as natural as working with a colleague. Because in the future, success won't belong to those who can outdo AI — it will belong to those who can work alongside it.

The future is collaborative, and it is time our education system caught up.

Mohammed A. Al-Qarni is an academic and consultant on AI for business.



Dr Luay Shabaneh

A new role for men

Pakistan, a great nation brimming with resources, talent, and a vibrant history of inspiring leaders who created a great country, deserves a higher standing on the global stage. However, its current ranking on the global social indicators does not reflect that.

The country's position at 137th on the Sustainable Development Index (SDI) and 134th on the Social Progress Index (SPI) — encompassing 57 indicators across basic needs, well-being, and opportunity — is a stark contrast to its potential. Pakistan is also placed at the fifth tier of low social progress countries, penultimate on the gender parity index, and ranked among the five least performing countries along with Afghanistan on the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI) which evaluates education, health, and economics. The country deserves better social progress.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has emphasized that Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) cannot be achieved without gender equality. Therefore, Pakistan will not be able to improve its global indices unless women and girls enjoy their rights to education, economic opportunities and healthcare including reproductive health.

Pakistani men wield enormous influence over many aspects of women's lives; they hold positions of power including the top leaders and ministers, religious leaders, judges, and tribal leaders. This dominance grants them considerable power in shaping women's lives, they design and implement policies that affect women's lives and well-being. Currently, one in three women in Pakistan experiences gender-based violence, a phenomenon often rooted in

deep-seated social norms that perpetuate male dominance.

Paradoxically, these same norms also leave men uninformed and unsupported when it comes to addressing their own sexual and reproductive health issues — creating a critical gap that hinders progress on gender equality and overall social well-being. This dichotomy plays out in various spheres of life. At the community level, women's lives are a private affair, yet they are judged as a public affair according to social norms. Within families, men's actions or decisions profoundly impact women's status, achievements, and reproductive life.

Recognising this dynamic, many development practitioners advocate for engaging men as agents of change in empowering women. In this vein, Executive Director of UNFPA Dr Natalia Kanem aptly emphasises that the mindset needs to shift, power dynamics need to change and for this to happen, men and boys need to be part of the solution, not merely be passive bystanders. However, to be a game-changer men and boys themselves need to have greater awareness and wellbeing.

In Pakistan, husbands play a dominant role in their wives' health and well-being, particularly during pregnancy, childbirth, the postpartum period, and decisions related to family planning. Empirical research suggests that men can be powerful allies in promoting women's well-being if they are allowed to better understand women's sexual and reproductive health (SRH) issues, interact positively, and offer support. However, for men to play this role, it is crucial that they first understand their own SRH matters and have access to relevant health services. Men's reproductive health is rarely discussed in public or development contexts.

In male-dominated societies like Pakistan, the prevailing narrative assumes that men are inherently sexually healthy, as any sexual illness is seen as undermining their manhood

and superiority in the power dynamics of sexual relationships. As a result, men often adhere to stereotypical behaviours where they are expected to not show emotions, not respond to pain, and avoid seeking medical support. In many cases, they place the blame on their wives for dysfunctional sexual relationships, particularly in the early years of marriage. This dysfunctionality often impacts the mental health of men and boys. Seeking psychosocial help and counseling for these issues is also considered taboo, which leads to increased aggression among men. Additionally, families frequently put social pressure on women regarding infertility but seldom speak openly to men. In response to this pressure, women may resort to exaggerated medical intake and expose themselves to unreliable and sometimes unsafe treatments by quack practitioners and charlatans, driven by the fear of polygamy or divorce. This puts their reproductive and mental health at significant risk.

There is a widespread lack of awareness around men's sexual health issues. Men are not only transmitters of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV but are also vulnerable to depression due to sexual dysfunctionality which in turn impacts the well-being of women and children, severely impairing family health and stability. Often, these issues are intertwined with a high prevalence of gender-based violence (GBV).

Men's sexual health is a vital yet neglected aspect of community health. Sexual dysfunction in men can increase the likelihood of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) through the mechanisms of masculine discrepancy — stress and anger. In older ages, it is recommended that men undergo regular checkups for sexual health risks such as prostate cancer, particularly after the age of 55.

In Pakistan, prevailing social norms often overlook the significant role men can play in improving maternal and postpartum health, reducing infant mortality, and alleviating

maternal stress. Redefining these roles is essential for addressing broader health and gender equity challenges. While men are often viewed as perpetrators of gender-based violence (GBV), there is a growing global recognition of men as victims, particularly in cases of sexual violence faced by young boys and adolescents.

In many parts of the world, including Pakistan, societal norms around masculinity discourage vulnerability and victimhood. The lack of services tailored to male victims further discourages them from coming forward. While this recognition of men and young boys as victims of GBV is becoming more widespread in Western countries, it is also slowly gaining attention in Asia, particularly in countries like India and South Korea. There, domestic violence against men and sexual abuse of adolescents are beginning to be acknowledged in legal frameworks, though significant cultural barriers remain.

The role of men and boys is crucial for making a breakthrough in women's status and consequently improving Pakistan's overall ranking on global social indices. A genuine shift in men's role, from dominating to supporting women, is vital for both families and communities. Men must be educated about women's rights and their role in the positive gains they get when their partner woman is strong, protected and able to enjoy her rights.

Pakistan needs a transformative counter-narrative on men's sexual and reproductive health — one that redefines traditional views of masculinity often centred around narrow notions of dominance and sexuality and instead promotes a broader vision of support, protection, and respect for women's rights. This shift necessitates not only public dialogue but also targeted services and policies that actively engage men as allies in advancing gender equality.

The writer is the UNFPA representative in Pakistan.

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



All the main cities are connected by major highways, and Pakistan is connected to each of its neighbours, including China, by road. The great majority of roads are paved. The country's main rail route runs more than 1,000 miles (1,600 km) north from Karachi to Peshawar, via Lahore and Rawalpindi. Another main line branches northwestward from Sukkur to Quetta. Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), established in 1954, is the national carrier; until the mid-1990s it was the sole domestic carrier, but since then a number of small regional airlines and charter services have been established. (PIA also runs international

flights to Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and East Asia, as well as to neighbouring Afghanistan.) The principal airports are located at Karachi, Lahore, Rawalpindi, Quetta, and Peshawar. Karachi, Port Q Sim, and Gwadar are the principal port cities. Since 2012 management and modernization of Gwadar's port have been handled by a Chinese state-owned firm. A number of small harbours along the Makran Coast handle the small boats that ply between Pakistan and the Persian Gulf states. In the early 1990s the limitations of the transportation system emerged as a major constraint on the modernization of the economy, prompting the

government to undertake large-scale investments in the highway sector. Private entrepreneurs were invited to participate on the basis of a "build-operate-transfer" (BOT) approach, which subsequently became popular in other developing countries. (In the BOT system, private entrepreneurs build and operate infrastructure facilities such as ports, highways, and power plants and then recover their costs by charging tariffs from the users. Once the investors have recovered their outlay, the facility created is transferred to the government.) Pakistan's telephone system has developed and expanded since the first years of independence. Since

1988 the government has stimulated investment in telecommunications and prompted the development of an efficient national system. Pakistan Telecommunications Company, Ltd.—originally founded in 1947 as the state-run Pakistan Posts and Telegraph Department and partly privatized in 1994—is the country's largest carrier. Despite increasing capacity, standard telephone service is generally sparse, with only a fraction of households having a landline and rural areas generally still without any standard services. Mobile phone usage, however, has increased dramatically.

To be continued....

Showbiz

Salma Hayek lauds Ariana Grande, Cynthia Erivo for 'Wicked' performance

Salma Hayek shares rare photos from red carpet of newly released film Wicked's premiere

Salma Hayek lauded Ariana Grande and Cynthia Erivo for their remarkable performances in Wicked. On November 8, the 58-year-old actress took to her Instagram handle to share behind-the-scenes photos and video clips from the premiere of the musical fantasy film. In the first snapshot, Hayek was beaming alongside Grande and Erivo at the star-studded event. The mother-of-one penned a congratulatory caption, "Congratulations @arianagrande, @cynthiaerivo, and the entire Wicked team for the magic you've brought to our screens!" According to Daily Mail, in 2011, Hayek was set to produce an eight-



hour miniseries based on a similar concept to Wicked. ABC Productions had earlier announced that Hayek and Jose Tamez, her partner at Ventanarosa Productions, would serve as executive producers on the project. However, the project was cancelled due to pre-production issues and was ultimately never made. For the unknowns, Wicked was released in theatres on November 22, 2024. The film stars Grande, Erivo, Ethan Slater, Jonathan Bailey, Peter Dinklage, and others. Reportedly, the film smashed box office records by earning 112.5 million dollars since its release.

Tech

Australia 'rushed' law banning youngsters from social media: Tech Giants

SYDNEY: Tech Giants companies on Friday criticised a historic Australian law that prohibits children under 16 from using social media, claiming it was "rushed" through the parliament. Late Thursday, Australia enacted a ban on youngsters using social media. TikTok, Instagram, Facebook owner Meta, and other digital firms are required by legislation to prevent minors from logging in or risk fines of up to A\$49.5 million (\$32 million). TikTok, the hugely popular platform where teen users upload and share videos, said in a statement to Reuters on Friday that it was likely the ban could see young people pushed to darker corners of the internet. "Moving forward, it's critical that the Australian government works closely with industry to fix issues created by this rushed process. We want to work together to keep teens safe and reduce the unintended consequences of this law for all Australians," it said. The government had warned Big Tech of its plans for months, and first announced the ban after a parliamentary inquiry earlier

this year that heard testimony from parents of children who had self-harmed due to cyber bullying. Albanese's Labor party, which does not control the Senate, won crucial support from the opposition conservatives for the bill, allowing it to progress quickly.

The bill was introduced into parliament last Thursday and sent to a select committee on Friday where interested parties had 24 hours to make a submission. The legislation was passed on Thursday as part of 31 bills that were pushed through in a chaotic final day of parliament for the year.

Meta criticised the law saying it was a "pre-determined process". "Last week, the parliament's own committee said the 'causal link with social media appears unclear,' with respect to the mental health of young Australians, whereas this week the rushed Senate Committee report pronounced that social media caused harm," it said in a statement in the early hours of Friday.

Health

Pakistan's 2024 poliovirus tally reaches 56 after fresh case reported in KP

In a worrying development, a new case of poliovirus was reported in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Dera Ismail Khan, taking the total number of cases to 56 in Pakistan this year. A 27-month-old child was diagnosed with poliovirus in DI Khan's Drazanda tehsil, said the health department on Wednesday. So far, a total of seven cases have been reported in the district. According to the officials, several children have been crippled by the virus as the "perilous security situation" affecting the anti-polio drive in southern part of the province. Meanwhile, the department said that this was the 15th polio case reported in KP. Last week, two cases of poliovirus were reported in Balochistan while another was reported in KP. Balochistan has reported the highest number of poliovirus cases in 2024 followed by KP. Sindh has

reported 13 cases, whereas Punjab and Islamabad have each reported one case of polio this year. The fresh cases come as Pakistan remains one of the last two countries in the world where the wild poliovirus continues to spread. This persistence is largely attributed to obstacles such as insecurity, misinformation, and community reluctance, which hinder vaccination efforts. The highly contagious viral disease predominantly affects children under five, particularly those with weak immunity or inadequate vaccination. Health authorities have time and again underscored the importance of vaccination campaigns to curb the spread of this preventable disease, which remains a significant public health challenge in the country. Meanwhile, the increasing cases of the crippling disease have prompted the Polio Oversight Board

(POB) to emphasise the need to intensify routine immunisation (RI) efforts in Balochistan and south KP. During a recent visit to the country from November 20 to 22, the board underscored the significance of ensuring consistent access to vulnerable children and achieving complete eradication of polio from the country. The POB, the highest decision-making body under the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI), comprises leaders from the World Health Organisation (WHO), United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef), the CDC, Rotary International and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The delegation, led by Dr Chris Elias, included WHO Regional Director Dr Hanan Balkhy, UNICEF Regional Director Sanjay Wijesekera, US CDC Deputy Director Andi Fristedt, and representatives from KS Relief.



European Aviation Safety Agency lifts ban on PIA for flights to Europe after a gap of nearly four years

Khawaja Asif says it is a momentous day to announce that European Commission & EASA lifted the suspension on PIA flights to Europe



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Defence, Defence Production and Aviation Khawaja Muhammad Asif on Friday announced that the European Commission and European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) lifted the ban on Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) for flights to Europe after a gap of nearly four years.

In 2020, after a PIA plane crash in Karachi killed nearly 100, followed by a fake pilot licence scandal, the EASA banned the airline from its most lucrative routes in Europe and Britain.

The ban costed the airline annual revenue of nearly Rs40 billion. In March, Khawaja Muhammad Asif claimed that PIA flights to the UK would resume soon after clearance from EASA by mid-May. The minister's remarks were based on conversations with "relevant quarters".

In a post on X on Friday, Khawaja Asif said: "It is a momentous day to announce that European Commission and EASA has lifted the suspension on PIA flights to Europe." He added that Third Country Operator authorisation was also issued to Airblue. Khawaja Asif said the development was made possible due to the aviation ministry's "complete focus" on strengthening the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA) and ensuring safety oversight in line with the standards of the International Civil Aviation Organisation.

"Our government has taken significant measures to strengthen PCAA, including enactment of PCAA Act, smooth segregation of regulator and service providers, appointment of professional leadership and training to build the capacity.

"I am grateful to European Commission and EASA for conducting a transparent process and our commitment to ensure aviation safety in Pakistan."

It is worth mentioning here that the ban was imposed on Pakistani flights to Europe on the unverified statement of former aviation minister Ghulam Sarwar Khan during the tenure of prime minister Imran Khan's government in 2020. Ghulam Sarwar Khan had stated that the degrees of Pakistani pilots are fake. It is worth mentioning here that Pakistani and international agencies have declared the claim of Ghulam Sarwar Khan as wrong after investigations. SABAH



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb chaired a meeting of the Advisory Committee on release of ITM spectrum for improvement of next generation Mobile Boardbands Services in Pakistan. (Story on page 1)

Pakistan wants to enhance its economic, trade ties with Russia: Ayaz



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq has said that Pakistan wanted to enhance its economic and trade ties with Russian Federation. The Speaker along with a parliamentary delegation called on the Speaker of the Federal Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, Ms. Valentina Matvienko, at the Federal Assembly of Russia, said a press release received here on Friday. The parliamentary delegation comprised Members of the National Assembly Rana Muhammad Hayat Khan, Syed Agha Rafiqullah, Abdul Qadir Patel, Dr. Muhammad Farooq Sattar, and Sher Ali Arbah. During his meeting, Ayaz Sadiq has

satisfaction with the growing ties between the two countries at the parliamentary, diplomatic, and governmental levels

expressed gratitude for the warm reception extended by Ms. Valentina Matvienko to him and his delegation. Ms. Valentina Matvienko, referencing her recent visit to Pakistan, lauded the hospitality and reception extended to her by Pakistan's parliament. Ayaz Sadiq while underscoring the significance of strengthening Pak-Russia parliamentary ties said that parliamentary cooperation could play a pivotal role in solidifying ties between both the countries.

He appreciated the participation and support of his Russian counterpart at the first Speakers' Conference held at Islamabad under the auspices of the National Assembly of Pakistan in 2014. Ayaz Sadiq also said that the invitation extended to him by his Russian counterpart to officially visit Russia is an important step towards strengthening parliamentary ties.

The Speaker expressed satisfaction with the growing ties between the two countries at the parliamentary, diplomatic, and governmental levels. He highlighted recent high-

level engagements, including meetings between the Presidents and Prime Ministers of both nations, the visit of Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister to Russia, Ms. Matvienko's visit to Pakistan, and visits by Pakistan's Federal Ministers for Energy and Privatization to Russia, as encouraging developments.

Ayaz Sadiq emphasized the need to enhance interactions between the parliamentarians of both nations. He reiterated Pakistan's desire to strengthen economic and trade ties between Pakistan and Russia. He further stressed the importance of fostering connections between the business communities of both countries to promote economic and trade cooperation.

Ms. Valentina Matvienko said that Russia highly values its growing diplomatic, parliamentary, and economic relations with Pakistan. She further said that this meeting marks a significant step toward fortifying bilateral relations and exploring new avenues of collaboration between Pakistan and Russia.

1,121 individuals get loan under 'Apni Chhat Apna Ghar' scheme

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister's 'Apni Chhat, Apna Ghar' scheme is successfully underway. The Punjab Housing and Town Planning Agency has released the statistics of beneficiaries under the scheme initiated by Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz.

According to DG PHATA, Saif Anwar Jappa, so far, 1121 individuals have obtained loans under the scheme and started constructing their homes. The owners of these under-construction houses will soon receive their second installment. A total of over Rs. 878 million has been disbursed to 1121 applicants for constructing houses.

By the end of 2024, an additional 6,000 individuals will be provided with loans. In this regard, three microfinance institutions are verifying 130,000 applicants for loan disbursement. Saif Anwar Jappa clarified that by the end of the current financial year, loans will be provided to 40,000 applicants who have submitted their requests.

Under the directives of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, loan disbursement is being ensured based on 100% merit. Interested individuals can submit their loan applications through the online portal or by calling the toll-free number 080009100.

ECP appoints Returning Officers NA-262 by-polls

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Friday appointed the District Returning Officer, Returning Officer and Assistant Returning Officers to oversee the by-election for the vacant seat of NA-262 Quetta-I, which will be held on January 16, Pakistan's cuisine

The seat became vacant following the disqualification of MNA Adil Khan Bazzi.

According to the notification, Syed Samiullah, Additional Commissioner in Quetta, has been appointed as the District Returning Officer. Niamat Ullah Tareen, Assistant Commissioner (Revenue) in Quetta, has been appointed as the Returning Officer, while Sherdil, Tehsildar of Sariab, and Hamayun Khan, Tehsildar of City, will serve as Assistant Returning Officers for the NA-262 Quetta-I election process.



ISLAMABAD: Governor Balochistan Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhail Friday called on Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar and discussed matters related to mutual interests.

SC makes significant strides in dispensation of justice under the leadership of CJP Yahya Afridi: SC PRO Dr. Shahid Hussain Kamboyo

Says Supreme Court remains steadfast in its resolve to deliver justice promptly & uphold the rule of law

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan has made significant strides in the dispensation of justice under the leadership of the Chief Justice of Pakistan, Justice Yahya Afridi. According to the statement issued by Public Relations Officer of Supreme Court Dr. Shahid Hussain Kamboyo, during the period from October 28, 2024 (Monday) to November 29, 2024 (Friday), the Court disposed of 4,372 cases, while 1853 new cases were instituted.

These achievements reflect a renewed impetus towards clearing the backlog of cases and providing timely relief. The Chief Justice and brother Judges have worked relentlessly to ensure that the highest court of the country remain responsive to the needs of the public. In addition to accelerating case disposal, the Chief Justice has placed judicial reforms at the forefront of his agenda. Over the past month, he has chaired several sessions to review progress in key areas, including advancements in information technology to modernize court operations, improvements in case management

processes, and the optimization of human resources. These efforts aim to streamline workflows, reduce delays, and enhance the capacity of judicial staff. The Chief Justice has also prioritized capacity-building and training initiatives to equip judicial officers and staff with the skills needed to address evolving challenges.

Recognizing the importance of public engagement, the Chief Justice has emphasized broader consultation with stakeholders through feedback mechanisms. These initiatives are designed to make the judiciary more transparent, accessible, and citizen-focused, ensuring that the Supreme Court continues to uphold its constitutional mandate with integrity and efficiency.

The Supreme Court of Pakistan remains steadfast in its resolve to deliver justice promptly and uphold the rule of law. Under the leadership of the Chief Justice, the institution is poised to continue its efforts toward institutional growth, judicial excellence, and public trust. SABAH



IHC suspends order of journalist's physical remand

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Friday suspended the verdict regarding the physical remand of journalist Matiuallah Jan in terrorism and narcotics case.

The court said that the journalist would be considered on judicial remand. A two-judge bench comprising Chief Justice Aamer Farooq and Justice Arbah Muhammad Tahir heard the case against the remand of Matiuallah Jan. President Islamabad High Court Bar Association Riasat Ali Azad read the content of the FIR on the directives of the court. The lawyer said that the FIR didn't mention the sell and purchase of drugs.

He said that this case is fabricated and baseless. The bench removed the objections against the petition and suspended the order of anti-terrorism court for two days remand of the journalist. The court adjourned further hearing of the case till Monday. APP

DIG Islamabad orders to ensure effective checking at checkpoints to curb crimes

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) Syed Ali Raza on Friday addressed the officers and personnel stationed at various checkpoints in the federal capital during a briefing held at Police Lines Headquarters under the Special Initiative Police Station (SIPS) program.

A police spokesman told APP that the briefing was attended by senior police officers and officials deployed at various checkpoints.

DIG Islamabad orders to ensure effective checking at checkpoints to curb crimes. Addressing the officers, DIG Ali Raza emphasized ensuring effective checking processes to combat crime in Islamabad. DIG urged the officers to perform their duties with honesty and integrity. Ali Raza stated, "We will protect this city and its residents while eliminating criminal elements." The officers on checkpoint duty were directed to ensure thorough and effective checking during their duties and to interact courteously with citizens.

Outstanding performance of stock market boosts investors' confidence

ISLAMABAD: Qaiser Ahmed Shaikh, Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs said on Friday that the outstanding performance of Karachi Stock Exchange (KSE-100 index) has boosted the confidence of local and foreign investors as it achieved milestone i.e up to 142 percent increase in shares values within 17 last months. KSE-100 Index ranks second position regarding performance, he said while talking to media. The minister highlighted that the progress in stock market points had opened the new avenues of progress and development in the country and also restored the confidence of the investors with increase in the return on investment.

"All the stakeholders are satisfied with the growth of the economy", Qaiser said by adding that the development of once crippling economy gave new hope to the people regarding reduction in inflation and improvement in their life style.



Ambassador Hashmi Inaugurates Permanent Display Showcasing Pakistan Beauty at Peace Garden Museum

BEIJING: Pakistan Ambassador to China, Khalil Hashmi and Dr Li Ruohong, founder of the World Peace Foundation, an official partner of UNESCO, jointly unveiled a captivating collection of photographs highlighting Pakistan's natural beauty and cultural heritage at the Peace Garden Museum. These photographs, contributed by the Embassy of Pakistan in Beijing, were taken by Chinese tour operators who explored Pakistan during the Year of China-Pakistan Tourism Exchanges. The collection is now part of the Museum permanent display.

In his remarks, Ambassador Hashmi emphasized that the photographs illustrate the profound connections fostered through travel, culture, and shared experiences. He highlighted that they not only narrate stories of mutual respect and understanding but also underscore the historical ties between the two nations, dating back to the Gandhara civilization. This display serves as a powerful symbol of the enduring people-to-people bonds that form the cornerstone



of the Pakistan-China relationship, the Ambassador said.

He also commended Dr. Li Ruohong for his dedication to strengthening bilateral ties and expressed gratitude for ensuring the photographs permanent display at the Peace Garden Museum. He noted that the exhibit offers a unique opportunity for visitors to appreciate and reflect on Pakistan beauty and the shared legacy of friendship between the two countries. Dr. Li, reflecting on his own visits to

BISP aims to improve lives of its beneficiaries through providing technical training: Chairperson BISP

ISLAMABAD: Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) Senator Rubina Khalid Monday said that BISP is aimed at improving the lives of its beneficiaries through providing technical training, ensuring their employability.

She was chaired a review meeting at BISP Headquarters to follow up on her recent visit to London.

The meeting assessed progress on key discussions held during her trip, where she, along with Secretary BISP Amer Ali Ahmad, engaged with representatives from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), Lives & Livelihoods Fund (LLF), Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), Karandaz, and the State Bank of Pakistan. Senator Rubina Khalid highlighted that the primary goal of these meetings was to explore strategies and potential collaborations to uplift

the lives of BISP beneficiaries.

She noted that the LLF and Women Empowerment Wing BMGF expressed strong interest in partnering with BISP to develop skill training initiatives aimed at empowering deserving individuals.

The Chairperson instructed senior BISP officials to draft a concept note outlining potential collaborations with LLF, BMGF, and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), emphasizing the importance of leveraging their financial and technical expertise to benefit BISP's target communities.

"We have opportunities before us, and we must utilize them effectively to further support our beneficiaries," said Senator Rubina Khalid. She also directed that review meetings be held every 15 days to ensure steady progress on these initiatives.

Senator Siddiqui slams Omar Ayub for fostering divisions among security forces

ISLAMABAD: PML-N's Parliamentary leader in the Senate, Senator Irfan ul Haq Siddiqui, on Friday condemned the Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly, Omar Ayub Khan, for sowing division among security forces instead of reflecting on their humiliating retreat of final call and reconsidering their fascist tactics.

In a post on X, Irfan Siddiqui criticized Umer Ayub of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) for blaming security forces and inciting rebellion. He emphasized that the constitution defines the role of the armed forces and law enforcement to thwart attacks from those acting under the guise of a political party.

He firmly stated that during PTI's recent attack on the federation, no law enforcement agencies fired shots, nor was there any order to do so against PTI's miscreants. He questioned whether PTI could still be considered a political party. He firmly stated that during PTI's recent attack on the federation, no law enforcement agencies fired shots, nor was there any order to do so against PTI's miscreants. APP