



Recognizing the capabilities of persons with disabilities, encouraging their participation, and providing them with necessary resources and opportunities are hallmarks of a strong and progressive nation

Chairman Senate
Yousuf Raza Gilani

Iranian, Azerbaijan ministers meet PM's climate aide Romina Khurshid in Riyadh



ISLAMABAD: Iranian Minister for Agriculture Gholamreza Nouri Ghezeljeh called on Coordinator to Prime Minister on Climate Change Romina Khurshid Alam and discussed various issues of bilateral interest. During the meeting held on Monday in Riyadh, capital city of Saudi Arabia, Iranian minister proposed different initiatives to work on with Pakistan. PM's coordinator assured him to discuss this with her government and would convey to Iranian government regarding the initiatives.

PM's coordinator apprised the Iranian agriculture minister about various initiatives launched by the Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in agriculture, water, irrigation and energy sector for achieving food, climate, water, agricultural related sustainable development goals. Meanwhile, Azerbaijan's Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources, Mukhtar Babayev also held meeting with the PM's coordinator and discussed matters of bilateral interest in boosting climate resilience of both the countries and achieving environmental sustainability goals. PM's climate aide Romina Khurshid Alam thanked the officials of Iran and Azerbaijan for their generous offer of support to Pakistan in overcoming environmental and climate change-related challenges.

PM Shehbaz to visit Riyadh from today to attend 'One Water Summit': FO Spokesperson

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif will visit Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, on 3-4 December 2024 to participate in the "One Water Summit" According to a statement issued by Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch, a joint initiative of Saudi Arabia, France, Kazakhstan, and the World Bank, the Summit aims to promote global cooperation and a coherent international approach towards water resource management through high-level political commitments. FO spokesperson said that at the Summit, the Prime Minister will deliver a keynote address at a Roundtable focusing on restoration, preservation, and adaptation in the context of fresh water resources and wetlands. He will also highlight steps being taken by Pakistan to promote water conservation, strengthen climate resilience, improve water quality, create livelihoods, and conserve biodiversity. Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said that the Prime Minister will underline the importance of international cooperation to tackle the impact of climate-induced floods, erratic and extreme weather patterns, and heat stress on water resources and ecosystems. He will also call for meaningful international collaboration for sustainable water resource management. SABAH

Furthermore, the cabinet, on the recommendation of ministry of education and professional training approved nomination of Dr Habib ur Rehman and Dr Kamran Ansari as subject experts in the Board of Governors of University of Engineering and Technology (UET) Lahore and the nomination of Dr Mumtaz Muhammad Shah and Dr Muhammad Ahmed Farooqui as subject experts in Board of Governors of Center of Excellence in Mineralogy, University of Balochistan Quetta.

The federal cabinet, on the proposal of ministry of law and justice and in line with Sindh High Court orders approved the amendment in the jurisdiction of special courts.

On the recommendation of ministry of law and justice and in line with Balochistan High Court orders, the cabinet also approved amendments in the jurisdiction of special courts (customs, taxation and anti smuggling) Quetta and Khuzdar.

Similarly, on proposals of ministry of law and justice and in line with orders of Peshawar High Court, Lahore High Court, Islamabad High Court, Sindh High Court, and Balochistan High Court, the cabinet authorized the additional session judges and other relevant courts to hear the cases under lawyers welfare and protection act 2023.

Earlier, speaking on the occasion, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif appreciated his economic teams' performance saying that the country's economy was on track to progress amid stringent clamp down on smuggling, plummeting inflation and doubled revenue collection that helped improve the eroding economy.

"Today the inflation rate is at 70 months' lowest level of 4.9 per cent [which was at 7.2 per cent in October 2024] which is beyond imagination and due to the team work and blessings of the Almighty," he said while addressing the federal cabinet meeting.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said the sentiment on ground was positive as inflation had

further declined and the government would have to proceed towards growth with a focused approach to improve gross domestic product (GDP) ratio, exports, industry, employment and special economic zones (SEZs). He said all these indicators were critical as inflation was the only tool that aggravates poverty and diminishes poor man's purchasing power parity.

"Drop in inflation will incur propitious results as the State Bank after its meeting would reduce policy rate which is its prerogative," the prime minister said.

PM Shehbaz reiterated that the protests held previously caused huge economic and property losses to the nation. "Pakistan Stock Exchange also crashed from its highest trading level but after de-escalation of the situation at D-Chowk it bounced back and mitigated the previous losses," he said.

He also noted that the government had managed to maintain more revenue collection than the previous year. He noted that enforcement was the only tool in the short term to ensure revenue collection.

He mentioned that earlier due to soaring inflation, he guardedly allowed 0.79 million tonnes of Sugar export that not only helped in stabilizing the commodity prices, but rather resulted in further decline in its prices. "It will provide the country an opportunity to earn half a billion dollars from Sugar exports," he added.

The prime minister underlined that smuggling had gone zero due to Pakistan Army's complete enforcement and support as previously there were multiple law enforcement agencies on the borders but the current stringent regime remained an uphill task for them.

The FBR should deploy competent enforcement teams to achieve its revenue collection targets as that was how nations were built," he added.

Law Minister terms balanced society crucial for development



ISLAMABAD: Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar has said laws have been enacted and institutions established to combat violence against women in the country.

Addressing an event in Islamabad, he however emphasized the need for a change in behaviour

to achieve real progress. He stressed that a balanced society, where both men and women enjoy their rights equally, is crucial for development. He also highlighted that Islam recognizes and upholds the rights of women. INP

Shaza directs Ignite to organize E-sports competitions on locally developed games

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja on Monday directed Ignite to organize an e-sports competition focusing on locally developed games.

The directive was issued during the 45th meeting of the R&D Fund Policy Committee, according to a press release.

The Committee approved a budget release of Rs. 599.29 million for Ignite Company for the second quarter of FY 2024-25. Secretary IT, Zarrar Hasham Khan, and Special Secretary IT & Telecom Division, Azfar Manzoor, also attended the meeting.

Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja emphasized keeping Ignite projects short-term to ensure timely completion.

Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja stressed that every project must have a clear timeline and be delivered within the stipulated period.

Earlier, Ignite officials briefed the minister on the company's ongoing and future projects.

The meeting also confirmed the 44th R&D Fund Policy Committee meeting minutes.

Finance minister apprises FCDO of structural reforms program

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb on Monday apprised the Director General of Humanitarian and Development at the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), Ms. Melinda Bohannaon of the government's stabilization and structural reforms program.

According to press release issued by finance ministry, during the meeting with finance minister, Ms. Melinda Bohannaon was accompanied by Ms. Jo Moir, Development Director, and Louie Dame, Senior Economist. Senior officers from Finance Division also attended the meeting, the statement added. He outlined key initiatives, including the privatization agenda, rightsizing of the federal government, pension reforms, and reforms in state-owned enterprises (SOEs). He highlighted that the quarter 1 tax revenues (YOF) increased by 25.6% in FY 25. Ms. Bohannaon appreciated the government's comprehensive reforms program and assured the full support to FCDO.

The Federal Minister further shared details about the upcoming ten year Country Partner



ship Framework with the World Bank (WB), noting that Pakistan will be the first country to enter such a framework. He emphasized that the framework will address existential challenges, including population growth, child stunting and climate change, underscoring the government's commitment to sustainable development. Both the Minister and Ms. Bohannaon agreed on the importance of adopting a responsive and proactive approach to reforms. The minister also emphasized the need to stay the course to ensure that the reform initiatives achieve lasting impact and contribute to Pakistan's long-term economic and social development.

Ahsan discusses legal matters to fix responsibility for NJHPP tunnel collapse

VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Monday chaired a meeting on the Neelum Jhelum Hydropower Project (NJHPP) to finalize and present recommendations for immediate remedial measures aimed at the early rehabilitation and operationalization of the project.

The minister also discussed legal issues with the Secretary for Law and Justice and the Attorney General for Pakistan to establish a strong legal basis against those responsible for the collapse of the tunnel, a news release said.

Additionally, the minister emphasized the internal accountability process concern-

ing poor project management by WAPDA. During the meeting, officials briefed the minister on the project's technical issues, stating that while some problems had been identified, accountability was still under investigation.

Ahsan Iqbal expressed serious concerns over the delay, highlighting that it had hindered timely investigations and accountability. "From the outset, an accountability mechanism should have been in place to monitor progress and assign responsibilities, especially for a project of this scale," he remarked.

The minister directed that both approaches to the investigation be pursued, including engaging an international consultant and speeding up the completion of ongoing work, adding that all



mega projects like Diamer-Bhasha Dam must be free of poor project management. He stressed the need for an independent validation of NESPAK's work by international experts to avoid similar recurring issues in the future, and stated that the reform of NESPAK must be undertaken as a priority.

Referring to the Neelum Jhelum project's history, Ahsan Iqbal criticized the decision to launch the project without ensuring its financial closure in 2007. "The project was rushed, without proper planning, compromising the long-term viability of this critical national project," he stated.

The meeting concluded with directives to expedite the investigation process and improve the TORs.

The minister suggested involving interna-

tional experts as part of the investigative team led by Shahid Khan to ensure transparency and accountability. He recommended that the consultant and contractor be given an opportunity to respond to the findings, ensuring that no party could claim they were not given the opportunity to clarify their position. "The public has the right to know who is responsible for the delays and financial losses of such a significant project," the minister emphasized. The meeting was attended by the Attorney General for Pakistan, Secretary for Law and Justice, Secretary for Planning and Development, Secretary for Water Resources, former Federal Secretary Shahid Khan, Member of Infrastructure, Member of Energy and senior officials from relevant ministries.

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Our fragile planet

DR MURTAZA KHUHRO

Earth faces unprecedented threats. Essential resources like air and water are under strain, as human activities push the planet to its limits. Industrialization, population growth, and unsustainable consumption have triggered deforestation, pollution, and climate change – challenges demanding urgent attention. Developing countries like Pakistan bear a disproportionate burden, lacking resources to combat environmental damage effectively.

Environmental degradation over the last 200 years has intensified, threatening ecosystems and depleting natural resources. The concept of environmental rights has gained global traction, with legal frameworks emerging to protect both the planet and human well-being. Many international agreements and national constitutions now recognise the need for a healthy environment. The health of our planet directly impacts human survival. To secure a sustainable future, we must adopt eco-friendly practices and prioritize harmony with nature. Protecting the environment preserves our natural heritage and ensures a just and prosperous future for all.

Recognising the urgent need to address these challenges, the international community has made significant strides in developing a legal framework to protect the environment. This framework, comprised of international treaties, regional conventions, and domestic laws, seeks to ensure a sustainable future for generations to come.

The Industrial Revolution, a period of remarkable technological advancement, inadvertently set in motion a chain of events that would profoundly impact our planet. The relentless pursuit of production and over-production led to the exploitation of natural resources, the release of harmful pollutants, and the alteration of delicate ecosystems. As human populations soared and consumption patterns intensified, the strain on the environment grew exponentially.

Developing countries like Pakistan face a multitude of challenges, exacerbated by factors such as the absence of effective rule of law, weak governance, rampant corruption, deep societal inequalities, widespread poverty, and a disregard for the well-being of the common people. Additionally, unsustainable mining practices, harmful agricultural techniques, unsafe industrialisation, and unplanned urbanisation contribute to environmental degradation and social issues.

Deforestation, water scarcity, air pollution, and waste mismanagement are pressing issues that threaten the country's ecological balance and the well-being of its people.

Environmental rights, increasingly recognised as fundamental human rights, are embedded in numerous international declarations, resolutions, and national constitutions, emphasising the critical connection between environmental health and human well-being. The United Nations General Assembly Resolution (2022) and the Human Rights Council Resolution (2021) affirm the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment, following earlier milestones like the Stockholm Declaration (1972) and Rio Declaration (1992), which introduced principles of sustainable development and public participation in environmental governance.

Treaties like the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Aarhus Convention further enhance these rights by focusing on biodiversity conservation and access to environmental information and justice. Regionally, frameworks such as the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Article 24) and the Escazu Agreement in Latin America explicitly protect environmental rights.

Nationally, constitutions in countries like Pakistan (Article 9 and 9A), South Africa (Section 24), Brazil (Article 225), and Norway (Article 112) enshrine the right to a healthy environment, obligating states to ensure its protection for present and future generations. Emerging trends include recognising ecosystems and species as legal entities, as seen in Ecuador and New Zealand, while courts globally advance climate litigation, connecting environmental degradation to fundamental human rights. These rights are bolstered by customary international principles like the precautionary principle, polluter-pays principle, and intergenerational equity, forming a robust legal foundation for environmental justice worldwide. However, implementation challenges, particularly in developing countries, highlight the need for coordinated action across governments, international bodies, and civil society to uphold these rights for a sustainable future.

Developing countries can tackle environmental challenges with sustainable agriculture, reforestation, and renewable energy like solar, wind, biogas, and hydropower to reduce fossil fuel dependency and emissions. Effective waste management through recycling, composting, and waste-to-energy plants can curb pollution, while water conservation efforts like rainwater harvesting, efficient irrigation, and infrastructure repairs address water scarcity without costly dams. Pollution control, enforcing regulations, and conserving biodiversity through protected areas and community-based initiatives are equally vital.

Pakistan's climate resilience demands governance grounded in transparency, accountability, and the rule of law for equitable resource management. Skill development through technical education and entrepreneurial training can empower individuals, enhance productivity, and attract investment. Reliable energy, digital connectivity, and technological advancements are critical for economic transformation. This holistic strategy not only strengthens resilience but also unlocks sustainable development opportunities for Pakistan in an increasingly climate-conscious world.

The writer is an advocate of the high court and a former civil servant.



Nadeem Javaid

A 'Made in Pakistan' future

fer widely from Karachi to Copenhagen, and firms that dominate exports make it their mission to align their offerings with local values. They localise not just their products but also their messaging, tapping into cultural nuances to foster loyalty and trust among new customers. When you see how some firms successfully adapt their marketing strategies, you realise that exporting is as much about building relationships as it is about selling products.

In today's hyper-connected world, innovation is the true differentiator. Firms that rise to the top in global markets continuously find ways to stay ahead of the curve. It's not just about creating better products; it's about streamlining operations, optimising supply chains, and leveraging data to anticipate market shifts. Technology plays a pivotal role here, allowing companies to cut costs, enhance efficiency, and maintain a reputation for reliability. This is especially important in a time when consumers expect products to arrive faster and cheaper, no matter where they're shipped from.

However, cracking the code of export dominance often means knowing when to collaborate. Firms that excel in new markets don't go it alone; they build strategic partnerships with local distributors, suppliers, and sometimes even competitors. Through alliances, joint ventures, or licensing agreements, these companies quickly gain the insights and networks necessary to navigate the complexities of foreign markets. This collaborative approach reduces risks and speeds up their ability to scale in unfamiliar territories, making the process of market entry much smoother.

Adaptability is another hallmark of firms that achieve export success. The global marketplace is, by its nature, unpredictable. Political changes, economic downturns, or supply chain disruptions can throw even the most well-thought-out strategies into disarray. But companies that dominate exports are resilient; they pivot quickly in response to changing conditions. They understand that setbacks are not just inevitable but are also opportunities to refine their strategies. This mindset is crucial in today's volatile world, where flexibility is as important as foresight.

But let's turn to Pakistan, where the story is markedly different. Pak-

istani firms have the talent and potential to succeed internationally, but they face an uphill battle. The challenges aren't just internal – they are deeply rooted in the country's macroeconomic environment. Pakistan's taxation system, for instance, is heavily skewed toward import duties, with customs taxes accounting for nearly half of the country's tax revenue. This structure inadvertently punishes exporters by inflating the costs of imported raw materials needed for production. For a business already operating on thin margins, these added expenses can be crippling.

And then there's the issue of the Pakistani rupee, which has depreciated sharply in recent years. While, in theory, a weaker currency could make exports more competitive, the reality is that inflation has driven up the cost of inputs, offsetting any potential gains. Exporters are left in a difficult position: either absorb the increased costs and erode their margins or pass them on to buyers, risking their price competitiveness in foreign markets.

One of the less-discussed but equally crucial barriers is Pakistan's country-of-origin label. In a crowded global marketplace, export performance is often determined by the 'reputational comparative advantage' instead of technological or factor endowment differences alone. While 'Made in Germany' or 'Made in Japan' signals quality and reliability, 'Made in Pakistan' often struggles to evoke similar positive associations, especially in non-traditional markets. This negative perception makes it harder for Pakistani firms to break through and command premium prices, even when their products are of comparable quality.

For Pakistani firms, improving their country's reputation abroad could unlock new opportunities. By focusing on enhancing product quality and aligning with international standards, companies can start to redefine what it means to be 'Made in Pakistan'. It's about playing the long game – investing in quality improvements, obtaining globally recognised certifications, and leveraging Pakistan's rich cultural heritage to build unique brand identities. Imagine a world where 'Made in Pakistan' becomes synonymous with quality craftsmanship, ethical production, and innovation. That's not just a pipe dream – it's an achievable goal if firms and the government seriously

work together. Undeniably businesses can't do it alone. The government has a critical role to play for national branding besides creating an environment that supports exporters rather than stifles them. A fundamental shift in policy is needed – one that reduces reliance on import duties, broadens the tax base, and incentivises research and development. Offering tax credits or grants for innovation can empower firms to make necessary capital investments, ultimately enhancing their competitiveness on the global stage.

Looking forward, there are clear strategies for Pakistani firms to crack the code of export dominance. At the core of this strategy is improving the intensive margins – enhancing the value and volume of exports by existing firms. This means investing in better design, branding, and compliance with international standards.

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The writer is a professor at KSBF and former chief economist of 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



Pakistani networks are connected with the outside world via satellite and by fibre-optic lines. At the beginning of the 21st century, personal computer ownership was almost nonexistent and Internet access was sparse. Since that time, however, Pakistan experienced significant growth: by the end of the decade, the proportion of households with a personal computer had grown to almost one-tenth. While Internet access through home computers remained very limited, Internet penetration in general reached about one-tenth of the population, partly due to the popularity of shared portals such as Internet cafés.

In 1947 the newly independent Pakistan consisted of two distinct parts: the smaller but more densely populated East Pakistan, centred on the Ganges-Brahmaputra delta region, and the much larger West Pakistan, occupying the northwestern portion of the Indian subcontinent. The country's

government, functioning under a modified 1935 Government of India Act, was associated with a British-inherited parliamentary system, containing a strong central government as well as governments in the several provinces that also gave it a federal form.

To be continued....

Dwayne Johnson shares special moment with mother at 'Moana 2' premiere

Dwayne Johnson recalls heartwarming dance with his mother during Hawaii premiere



Every moment like that just means something," Dwayne Johnson shares special moment with mother at 'Moana 2' premiere. Captioning the post, the Jungle Cruise actor wrote, "If you're lucky enough to have both your parents around – absorb them and be as present as you can." "I lost my dad unexpectedly a few years back, and learned the lesson that you never know what's around the corner," he further said. Dwayne added, "If you got your parents around, love on, honour and protect your mom and dad. Meanwhile, the actor confirmed he was actually wearing a bodysuit to achieve that bulk-up Maui look for live-action movie, which will release next year.

Chinese scientists grow 'climate-proof' potatoes to combat food security threats

In a research facility in northwest Beijing, molecular biologist Li Jieping and his team have made significant strides in combating the challenges posed by climate change to food security, Reuters reported.

The team recently harvested a cluster of unusually small potatoes, one as tiny as a quail's egg, from a potted plant grown under conditions designed to simulate the high temperatures expected by the end of the century. These small potatoes, weighing just 136 grams (4.8 oz), were much smaller than the typical potatoes grown in China, where varieties are often twice the size of a baseball. Potatoes are crucial to global food security due to their high yield compared to other staple crops, and China, as the world's largest producer, plays a central role in ensuring their availability.

However, the crop is highly vulnerable to heat, and as climate change accelerates, rising temperatures, alongside intensifying droughts and floods, are threatening crop yields.

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Tech

Chinese scientists grow 'climate-proof' potatoes to combat food security threats

British law to phase out smoking clears first hurdle

Govt says it is aimed at creating Britain's first "smoke-free generation"

which was shelved earlier this year when then-prime minister Rishi Sunak called a general election. Sunak's successor Keir Starmer's new Labour government, however, has revived the proposals, which are part of a drive to ramp up preventive health measures and ease long-term pressure on the UK's state-funded National Health Service (NHS). It also gives the government powers to extend an indoor smoking ban to outdoor spaces – with children's playgrounds, outside schools and hospitals, all being considered in England,

subject to consultation.

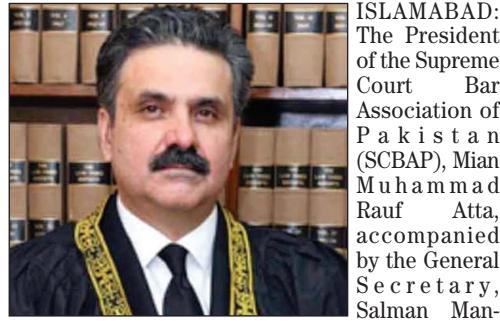
The bill will introduce restrictions on vape advertising and sponsorship, as well as restricting flavours, displays and the packaging of e-cigarettes to reduce their appeal to children and young people. It also proposed a ban on the manufacture and sale of oral tobacco snus – small pouches to be placed under the lip – in line with European Union countries other than Sweden. The government has also announced that disposable e-cigarettes will be banned next year under separate legislation. "The Tobacco and Vapes Bill provides the protection that children and young people need to avoid a life imprisoned by addiction," said health minister Wes Streeting, England, Wales and Northern Ireland outlawed smoking in enclosed public places and workplaces in 2007 following a similar ban in Scotland in 2006.

Health



CJP Justice Yahya Afridi agrees to early fixation of all types of bail applications soon after the filing

Reiterates his commitment to addressing the challenges faced by legal community & ensuring the smooth administration of justice



ISLAMABAD: The President of the Supreme Court Bar Association of Pakistan (SCBAP), Mian Muhammад Rauf Atta, accompanied by the General Secretary, Salman Mansoor, met with the Chief Justice of Pakistan, Justice Yahya Afridi, to discuss challenges faced by the legal fraternity in ensuring efficient dispensation of justice at the Supreme Court of Pakistan.

The Chief Justice was generous to accede to many genuine requests of the Bar. He agreed to early fixation of all types of bail applications soon after the filing. Similarly, the Chief Justice was also pleased to allow the request of restoration of the chamber hearing of the cases with regard to interim applications and stay matters. His lordship indicated that throughout the week, judges nominated by the Supreme Court would be hearing the cases in chamber. Following the SCBAP leadership's request, the Chief Justice agreed to increase the number of judges assigned to chamber appeals to further expedite the process. The Chief Justice also acceded to the request of the SCBAP that all applications requesting a video link would be entertained on the same day of the hearing of cases in the respective Registries. This initiative is aimed at facilitating lawyers, minimizing delays, and reducing the need for adjournments, particularly for those practicing in distant regions. Regarding the timely provision of certified copies, the Chief Justice outlined that the system is being revamped in the digitization initiative underway to streamline operations and improve service delivery. In response to concerns about file tracking and accessibility, particularly for lawyers from remote areas, the Chief Justice desired that all the Advocates of the Supreme Court should provide their designated emails and WhatsApp No's in the office so that the provisions of filing petitions directly online and issuance of certified copies and notices etc, be expedited.

The SCBAP leadership expressed appreciation for these proactive measures and reaffirmed their support for initiatives that enhance the efficiency and accessibility of the justice system. The Chief Justice reiterated his commitment to addressing the challenges faced by the legal community and ensuring the smooth administration of justice.

Pakistan, Tajikistan pledge to strengthen ties in digital media, business & culture

ISLAMABAD: Tajik Ambassador Sharifzoda Yousuf Toir on Monday called on Minister of State and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Digital Media, Fahd Haroon and discussed the evolving media and digital media landscapes.

Accompanying with Deputy Head of Mission Saidjon Shafiev, he exchanged insights on opportunities and challenges in these sectors. In addition to digital media, both sides discussed the areas of mutual interest, including business and cultural cooperation emphasizing the importance of enhancing bilateral ties in these fields. SAPM Fahd Haroon highlighted the growing importance of digital media in

shaping public discourse and outlined Pakistan's efforts to engage with global partners on digital issues, including tackling misinformation and bridging the digital divide.

They agreed on the potential for deeper collaboration in the areas of digital media, business, and culture, with a view to strengthening long-term relations.

"I look forward to continued engagement with Tajikistan and exploring new avenues for cooperation in digital media and other sectors," said Fahd Haroon following the meeting.

In conclusion, they expressed a commitment to further strengthening the bilateral relationship between Pakistan and Tajikistan.



ISLAMABAD: Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf exchanging views with Western Fleet Commander of Rear Admiral Mansour Bin Saud Al-Juaid at Naval Headquarter.

Punjab's first regulatory authority established to tackle inflation, encroachments: CM Maryam

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif chaired the first official meeting of the Punjab Enforcement and Regulatory Authority (PERA) to address crucial issues such as inflation and encroachments, here on Monday.

During the meeting, the CM set a target to make PERA operational within three months. The meeting also saw the approval of key matters related to the authority's establishment, appointments, regulations, and other procedures.

Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz directed that all appointments and hiring within PERA be carried out with complete transparency and merit. She also emphasized the need for an effective monitoring system for the authority's operations.

Additionally, the formation of committees related to PERA was approved, and positions for the headquarters, divisions, districts, and tehsils were also approved. Each tehsil will have Sub-Divisional Enforcement Officers, Investigation Officers, Senior Sergeants, and Sergeants appointed.

The meeting also approved the transfer and deputation policy for PERA and the appointment of hearing officers for appeals at enforcement stations. Furthermore, the procurement plan and determination of powers for the Director General of PERA were also approved.

The meeting also finalized the design and branding for PERA's vehicles, uniforms, and caps, as well as the formation of a special committee to review PERA's operational procedures and regulations for 2024.



ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja chairing a 45th meeting of the R&D Fund Policy Committee meeting. (Story on page 1)

Pakistan firmly committed to ensuring the full participation of persons with disabilities in all aspects of life: President Zardari

Says Pakistan recognises the importance of special education & training for PWDs

VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari has said that Pakistan is firmly committed to ensuring the full participation of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in all aspects of life. This was stated by President Asif Ali Zardari on International Day of Persons with Disabilities being observed today (Tuesday).

President Asif Ali Zardari said that today, we are observing the International Day of Persons with Disabilities to promote the rights, well-being and inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in all spheres of society. On this day, we acknowledge the resilience, strength, and invaluable contributions of PWDs and their families towards our society, he said.

He said that Pakistan is firmly committed to ensuring the full participation of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in all aspects of life. In this regard, we have made significant strides in empowering and uplifting PWDs through various legal and institutional frameworks. The promulgation of the ICT Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2020 stands as a landmark achievement, guaranteeing improved accessibility, vocational training, job opportunities, and an inclusive environment for PWDs in all walks of life.



President Asif Ali Zardari said that the establishment of the ICT Council on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities under this Act represents another critical step toward ensuring a comprehensive, coordinated, and inclusive approach to addressing the challenges faced by PWDs. This Council will serve as a central body for policy formulation, implementation, and advocacy for the rights and welfare of PWDs.

President Asif Ali Zardari said that Pakistan recognises the importance of special education and training for PWDs. To that end, we have developed a nationwide network of Special Education Centres and Vocational

Training Institutes, catering to the diverse needs of PWDs. These centres are designed to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to become self-reliant and contributing members of society. Additionally, the implementation of a special quota in government jobs ensures that PWDs have access to meaningful employment opportunities.

President Asif Ali Zardari said that while significant progress has been made, there remains much work to be done. We need to increase their access to Assistive Technology and public places and create legal, social and economic conditions to ensure their full participation in all sectors, including employment, sports, education and other socio-economic activities. We also need to provide an enabling environment for PWDs by providing them with quality education, skills, healthcare facilities, employment based on their skills and abilities, and fully implementing job quotas.

"I call on all segments of society to help create an environment where PWDs are treated with dignity and given the resources they need to thrive. Together, let us reaffirm our commitment to a more inclusive Pakistan, where every individual, regardless of their ability, has the opportunity to reach their full potential" President Asif Ali Zardari said.

Collective responsibility of all to ensure equal opportunities, rights for Persons with Disabilities: Gilani

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, on Monday, underscored the collective responsibility to ensure equal opportunities and rights for Persons with Disabilities.

On the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, Yousaf Raza Gilani said that comprehensive policies have been developed and are being implemented in Pakistan to support the welfare of persons with disabilities, enabling them to lead dignified and independent lives.

He said that recognizing the capabilities of persons with disabilities, encouraging their participation, and providing them with necessary resources and opportunities are hallmarks of a strong and progressive nation. "I pray that Allah Almighty grants us the ability to fulfil this responsibility in the best possible manner," he concluded.

Tarar grieved over death of father of editor of 'The Nation' Salman Masood

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar on Monday expressed deep grief over the death of the father of the Editor of English Daily "The Nation" Salman Masood.

In a condolence message, the minister expressed heartfelt condolences and sympathy to Salman Masood and other family members. Terming death of a father an irreparable loss, Tarar said he was deeply saddened to hear the news of the death of Salman Masood's father. Attaullah Tarar said he equally shared the grief of the bereaved family. He prayed to Allah Almighty to rest the departed soul in eternal peace and grant courage to the bereaved family to bear this loss with fortitude.

Siddiqui slams PTI for prioritising faceless victims over 131 Kurram killings

ISLAMABAD: PML-N's Parliamentary Party Leader in Senate Irfan Siddiqui on Monday criticised PTI for making hue and cry over the loss of imaginary, unnamed lives without funerals or graves, while conveniently ignoring the 131 forgotten bodies lost in Kurram, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

In a statement posted on his social media account X, Siddiqui, who also serves as the Chairman of the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, expressed his concerns over PTI's apparent disregard for the victims of Kurram. He said "The tragic incident in Kurram has claimed 131 innocent lives, each with a name, a funeral prayer, and a grave. Despite the devastating impact on families and communities, PTI seems to have overlooked this." DNA

Qaiser Sheikh lays foundation for two new public parks in Chiniot



FAISALABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh laid foundation stone for establishment of two new public parks in Chiniot on Monday and vowed his commitment to public service and urban development in the area. Among the new public parks in the city included "Fatima Ladies Park" in Mohalla Mashki Shah and "Irfan Qaiser Sheikh Park" near Lorry Adda Chiniot.

Addressing the foundation stone ceremony, the minister highlighted these projects as part of a broader initiative to create recreational spaces for the residents. "Parks and sports grounds contribute to a healthier and happier society," he said, adding that these facilities would enhance Chiniot's urban landscape and quality of life. The minister also arranged an open court at his office in Chiniot and heard public grievances relating to provision of civic amenities, utilities and health services. He said that redressal of public problems was collective responsibility. He issued on-spot directions for immediate resolution of public problems relating to electricity,

gas supply, sanitation, and healthcare facilities. Reflecting on his decade-long efforts to improve Chiniot's infrastructure, Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh expressed his vision for a prosperous and vibrant city. He said that Chiniot had tremendous potential as a hub for development and the development projects were steps towards unlocking that potential. He emphasized the importance of community participation and efficient governance in achieving sustainable growth. He reiterated his commitment to addressing public grievances and ensuring timely development and said, "Our goal is to deliver results that make a tangible difference in the lives of the citizens."

Syria- Pakistan connected with historical, religious, cultural, economic ties

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the Syrian Arab Republic in Pakistan, Dr. Ramez Alraee on Monday said that Syria and Pakistan are connected by historical, religious and cultural ties, which will help in increasing bilateral economic and trade cooperation.

The Ambassador said that Syria has always stood by Pakistan in difficult times and after the 2005 earthquake, Syria helped Pakistan in all spheres.

Pakistan and Syria are of a great geo-strategic significance in the world's political arena and due to their geographical location; both countries have also a significant place in the global economy and trade, Ambassador of the Syrian Arab Republic in Pakistan, Dr. Ramez Alraee told media here.

Recently, Pakistan has cooperated fully with Syria and provided humanitarian aid to the Syrian government, which will further strengthen the bilateral relations between the two countries, he said.

Dr Ramez Alraee said that Syria has huge importance in the Middle East with which Israel has been in conflict for decades and many countries in the region are facing Israeli aggression.

including Syria. The envoy said that Syria has a significant role in world peace and the Syrian government is paying full attention to peace, security and economic development in its country.

In response to a question, he said that economic and trade relations between Pakistan and Syria have been established for decades and are developing day by day.

The ambassador said that there are huge opportunities for religious tourism between Pakistan and Syria and a large number of Pakistanis come to Syria for the Ziarah tour, who are always welcomed by the Syrian government and people. He said that the Syrian government has provided ample facilities for the people coming for the Ziarah tour visas that are easily available in this regard and more facilities will be created in the future.

The envoy said that apart from this, Syria is a beautiful country due to its natural beauty where there are ample opportunities for traditional tourism as well. There are vast opportunities for tourists from Pakistan for which the Syrian government is providing more facilities, he

said. Dr. Ramez Alraee said that Syria is an important country in a historical and cultural context, where the heritage of other religions including Islam exists and it is the centre of attention of the whole world.

The Ambassador said that the direct flight between Pakistan and Syria started on November 18th and the first direct flight landed in Lahore it will provide facilities to the traders and business community. Earlier, Syrian Air Line had started its flight operations from Karachi in 2019 and last week this was the first flight of Syrian Airline to Lahore, for which the Foreign Affairs Ministries and Embassies of both countries have made great efforts. The Ambassador said that the first direct flight of Syrian Airlines would promote bilateral relations and people-to-people relations between the two countries.

He said that the direct flight between both of the countries would promote economic and trade relations between, and the connections between the people of both countries would be established. The Ambassador said that with the start of flight operations, where the business communities of both countries will be facilitated, tourism will also increase and bilateral economic and trade relations will be promoted.

Dr Ramez said that at this time, the business communities of both countries need to strengthen bilateral relations so that both sides' economic relations can develop and trade can increase. He said that many people from Pakistan go to Syria for the Ziarah tour and they will also get facilities after this flight operation and this will increase religious tourism.

The current ambassador of Syria to Pakistan is a Proactive ambassador in Islamabad, who is very popular in think tanks, and literary and political circles and actively participates in various think tanks, seminars and conferences in Islamabad and takes the lead in promoting his country in every forum. In addition, the Syrian Ambassador is in close contact with the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry and business associations trade with chambers and industrialists and are playing a huge role in increasing economic and trade cooperation between Pakistan and Syria. DNA