



Informed the National Assembly that under the constitution, maintenance of law and order was the prime responsibility of respective provincial governments

Minister for Law and Justice
Azam Nazeer Tarar

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COAS Gen Syed Asim Munir meets with Pak Army team that secured prestigious Gold Medal in the 'Exercise Cambrian Patrol' held in UK

COAS commends the team on their outstanding accomplishment for upholding the honor of Pakistan on an int'l platform



RAWALPINDI: General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS), met with the Pakistan Army team that secured the prestigious Gold Medal in the "Exercise Cambrian Patrol" held in the United Kingdom from 4 to 13 October 2024.

According to the statement issued by the ISPTR, the Cambrian Patrol, recognized as one of the most challenging military exercises globally, witnessed participation from 143 teams. The Pakistan Army contingent demonstrated exceptional skill and resilience, marking the sixth occasion that the Pakistan Army has clinched this coveted honor.

COAS commended the team on their outstanding accomplishment for upholding the honor of Pakistan on an international platform.

The Exercise Cambrian Patrol, conducted in the unforgiving mountainous terrain of mid-Wales, United Kingdom, is an arduous test of physical endurance, tactical acumen, and mental fortitude. It emphasizes teamwork, leadership, self-discipline, courage, and determination under the most demanding operational scenarios, serving as a benchmark for military excellence. PR



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs the Federal Cabinet Meeting.

Mechanism for return of Pakistani nationals from Syria finalised: PM tells cabinet

Cabinet gives nod to eight IPPs settlement agreements to bring down power tariff

VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday said that the government has finalised a mechanism to ensure the safe return of Pakistani nationals stranded in Syria, in coordination with the Lebanese government.

The prime minister, addressing the meeting of the federal cabinet he chaired, said that 250 Pakistani pilgrims were stranded in Syria where the situation was charged altogether within a few days and Pakistan took a neutral position. Besides, another 300 Pakistani nationals, including teachers and students, living in Syria also expressed their desire to leave the country.

He said that Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and the foreign ministry were in contact with Pakistan's ambassador in Damascus to ensure the safe return of the Pakistani nationals.

He told the meeting that he held a telephone conversation with Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati on Monday, during which the latter expressed his willingness to allow the return of Pakistani nationals through a char-

tered flight from Beirut Airport and also expressed his gratitude to the government and people of Pakistan for their support during the crisis caused by Israeli aggression.

Regarding the economic situation, Prime Minister Shehbaz expressed satisfaction that inflation had declined further to 3.57% and that foreign remittances had increased record high comparing last year.

He told the cabinet members that in their Monday meeting, the Ambassador of Azerbaijan in Islamabad emphasized the finalisation of feasibility and other formalities for Azerbaijan's \$2 billion investment projects in Pakistan to enable the signing of agreements during the prime minister's visit to Baku in February next year.

Reiterating that both economic and political stability were inter-linked, he referred to the meeting on the law and order situation he chaired on Monday and gave clear instructions not to forgive those found involved in conspiracies and attacking the federal capital on November 26 and not to harass the innocent people.

Meanwhile, The Federal Cabinet in its meeting, with Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in the chair, on Tuesday approved set-

tlement agreements with eight independent power plants (IPPs) running on bagasse.

The meeting granted its approval on the recommendation of the Ministry of Energy and the Power Division.

These power plants included DW Unit I, Unit II, RYK Mills, Chiniot Power, Hamza Sugar, Al-Moez Industries, Thal Industries and Chinar Industries.

After the approval of these agreements, the Central Power Purchasing Agency would contact NEPRA regarding a reduction in the power tariffs produced by these power plants.

As a result of these agreements, electricity prices for the general public would decrease and the national exchequer would benefit by Rs 238 billion, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

Addressing the meeting, the prime minister said the government was taking all possible steps to reduce electricity prices for the common man. He emphasized that the national interests should always be prioritized in every decision and action and also mentioned that the promotion of the private sector and industries in the country was a key priority for the government.

Nobody will be allowed to stoke anarchy in the country: Tarar

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar Advocate says the government has taken notice of the targeted campaign on social media aimed at inciting attacks on journalists.

Addressing a news conference in Islamabad on Tuesday, Attaullah Tarar said the online harassment of journalists is being incentivized by the PTI. The Information Minister expressed regret that details about journalists' children and their addresses are being shared online, emphasizing that this is completely unacceptable. He said data of all such accounts is being collected, and assured that strict action will be taken with the cooperation of Interior Ministry. He expressed the resolve that individuals behind this online campaign will not be spared, but exposed. Attaullah Tarar said nobody will be allowed to stoke anarchy in the country. He added that digital terrorism will also be brought to end.

The Information Minister appreciated those members of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, who termed the civil disobedience call by the PTI founder as inappropriate and decided not to implement it. Regretting the PTI's campaign of boycotting certain home-made products, the Information Minister said they are taking forward the foreign agenda. He said strong military is inevitable for a strong Pakistan. He said our armed forces are known for their professionalism and capability around the world. Attaullah Tarar said the PTI wants to weaken armed forces of Pakistan so that the foreign elements can take advantage of it.

Pakistan-Tajikistan Joint Commission meeting on Wednesday

ISLAMABAD: The meeting of the Joint Commission between Pakistan and Tajikistan will be held here on Wednesday, December 11, with an aim to further strengthen bilateral trade ties between the two countries. This meeting, hosted by the Ministry of Economic Affairs, will be co-chaired by Federal Minister of Energy Sardar Awaiz Laghari and Tajik Minister for Energy and Water Resources Juma Daler Shofaqr, according to press release issued by Economic Affairs Division here Tuesday.

The joint commission aims to review progress in increasing cooperation in various sectors, including energy, and sign memorandums of understanding. This development is a significant step forward in the two nations' relationship, which has been growing steadily. In recent years, Pakistan and Tajikistan have made notable efforts to enhance their economic and trade cooperation. The two countries have signed several agreements to boost ties. DNA

Cooperation of USA in enhancing the capacity of LEAs is of utmost importance: Naqvi

Says equipping the civil armed forces with modern weapon & equipment is the top priority



ISLAMABAD: Federal Interior Minister Senator Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi held a meeting with Acting US Ambassador Natalie Baker in Islamabad. Country Director, International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement Lynn Nelson was also present on the occasion.

Acting US Ambassador Natalie Baker expressed condolences over the martyrdom of police and Rangers personnel in Islamabad. During the meeting, detailed discussions were held on enhancing bilateral cooperation and Pak-US relations. Moreover, the holding of the

ICC Champions Trophy tournament in Pakistan was also discussed during the meeting.

Natalie Baker expressed her best wishes for the successful holding of the Champions Trophy in Pakistan. Mohsin Naqvi expressed his desire to make the FIA a modern institution on the lines of the FBI. He stated that he would welcome the cooperation of the United States in this regard. During the meeting, it was agreed that the United States would provide support in modernizing the FIA on the lines of FBI. It was also agreed that the US will provide assistance in making the National Forensic Agency more effective in accordance with the modern requirements. Interior Minister said that cooperation of USA in enhancing the capacity of law enforcement agencies is of utmost importance. He stressed the need for providing modern weapon and equipment to the civil armed forces to effectively deal with terrorism and emergencies.

Security forces kill 15 terrorists in general area Sambaza, Zhob District: ISPR

During intense exchange of fire Sepoy Arifur Rehman embraces martyrdom

RAWALPINDI: On Tuesday, security forces conducted an intelligence based operation in general area Sambaza, Zhob District. According to the statement issued by the ISPR, during the conduct of operation, own troops effectively engaged the terrorist location and resultantly 15 terrorists were killed.

A large quantity of weapons, ammunition and explosives were also recovered from the killed terrorists. However, during intense exchange of fire, Sepoy Arifur Rehman (age 32 years; resident of Mansehra District), having fought gallantly, paid the ultimate sacrifice and embraced Shahadat.

Sanitization operation is being conducted to neutralize any other terrorist present in the area.

Security forces of Pakistan, in step with the nation, remain determined to wipe out the menace of terrorism from the country and sacrifices of our brave soldiers further strengthen our resolve. PR

Pakistan strongly condemns Israeli aggression against Syria & seizure of the Syrian territory

Mumtaz Zahra Baloch says we urge int'l community, including the UNSC, to take immediate & decisive steps to end Israeli impunity

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has condemned in the strongest possible terms, Israeli aggression against Syria and its illegal seizure of the Syrian territory.

According to a statement issued by Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch, this assault on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria is a grave breach of international law.

FO spokesperson said that Israel's provocative actions are a dangerous development in an already volatile region. Israel has continued to blatantly defy international law and violate UN Security Council Resolutions, she said.

Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said that Pakistan expresses full support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria and rejects Israeli acquisition of territory by force. FO spokesperson said that we reaffirm our support for the UN Security Council Resolution 497, which

declares Israeli annexation of the Golan Heights "null and void and without international legal effect."

Mumtaz Zahra Baloch we urge the international community, including the United Nations Security Council, to take immediate and decisive steps to end Israeli impunity, its repeated violations of international law, and aggression against countries of the region.

She said that Pakistan also reiterates that peace in the Middle East cannot be achieved without complete Israeli withdrawal from Occupied Palestine and other occupied territories, including the Syrian Golan.



Gender-inclusive policies are essential for women's political and economic empowerment: President COPAIR

Women in diplomacy bring unique perspectives to tackling global challenges: Amb Dilsad EmpowerHER: A Landmark National Roundtable for Advancing Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: The Centre of Pakistan and International Relations (COPAIR) hosted a groundbreaking event, "EmpowerHER - A National Roadmap for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment," uniting policymakers, diplomats, thought leaders, and gender influencers to chart pathways for a more equitable and inclusive society. This roundtable served as a transformative dialogue, addressing critical issues surrounding women's rights and gender equality.

The event brought together a diverse group of 30 prominent gender influencers, including activists, artists, entrepreneurs, journalists, policymakers, and thought leaders from various industries and countries. These extraordinary women, renowned for their significant contributions to advancing gender equality, shared their perspectives and actionable strategies for fostering empowerment and inclusion. Ms. Amna Munawwar Awan, President

of COPAIR, highlighted women's rights as human rights and there is a need of gender inclusive policies for women political and economic empowerment. COPAIR President also launched an A Chatbot to support women in distress by giving basic guidelines how to address those critical challenges. President COPAIR also shared 1 Million Women Digital skill programs covering the virtual internship and digital Certification for women

The chief guest of the ceremony H.E. Dilsad Senol, ambassador of Cyprus to Pakistan said that I am delighted to acknowledge COPAIR's groundbreaking initiative, EmpowerHER - A National Roadmap for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment.

Ambassador Dilsad said Women's rights are not only a moral imperative but also a cornerstone of empowerment. Diplomacy serves as a powerful tool in this endeavor, with women in diplomacy offering unique perspectives to address global challenges. Emphasizing both regional and global collaboration is essential to tackle issues affecting



women, as collective efforts can generate impactful synergies and drive meaningful change. She said today's event marks a significant step towards fostering inclusivity and creating opportunities for women across all sectors. It emphasizes the

importance of actionable strategies to bridge gender disparities and empower women as equal contributors to society. Such initiatives are vital for building resilient communities and achieving sustainable development. I commend COPAIR for its commitment to advanc-

ing gender equality and inspiring meaningful change. Together, we can pave the way for a more equitable future. THE event featured compelling discussions from leading experts and thought leaders. The dialogue covered vital topics such as gender equality's role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), empowering women through digital skills, the critical contribution of women in peace and security, and the universality of women's rights. Each speaker illuminated pathways for empowering women as catalysts for sustainable development and change.

Interactive sessions with parliamentarians, government officials, diplomats, and civil society leaders created a collaborative environment, generating practical recommendations for addressing gender disparities.

The eminent participants were Senator Krishna Kumari, Gulmina Bilal, Tasdeeq Hussain Gillani, Amb Dilshad Sinol, Christina Afridi, Daniella, Aasiya Nasir, Sadia Sabir and many others. The dialogue emphasized the urgent need for coordinated action and policy innovation

to advance the rights of women and girls across Pakistan and beyond.

In her closing statement, Ms. Amna Munawwar Awan praised the event's participants for their dedication and insights, emphasizing that the conference marked the beginning of a collective movement. She expressed COPAIR's commitment to sustaining these dialogues and transforming them into impactful initiatives. Senator Krishna Kumari echoed these sentiments, encouraging attendees to carry forward the momentum of the day's discussions into tangible actions. Tagdees Gillani shared her view on political Empowerment. Amb of Northern Cyprus Dilshan Sinol shared role of women in public diplomacy. Sadia Sabir highlighted their organization initiative of women, peace and security.

EmpowerHER reflects COPAIR's mission to foster gender equity through digital skills, financial inclusion and public diplomacy. As the event concluded, participants reaffirmed their commitment to collaboration, innovation, and advocacy to create a future where women lead and thrive in all spheres of life.

Editor-in-Chief: Amna Munawwar Awan
 Editor: Muhammad Hasam
 Office # 408, 4th Floor, Evacuee Trust,
 Agha Khan Road, F-5/1 Islamabad
 Phone: + 92 51 8354964

Beyond the numbers

FURQAN ALI

In its last meeting, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) decided to cut the policy rate by 250 basis points to 15 per cent. Per the MPC Statement, "Taking into account the inherent risks associated with these factors, the MPC assessed that the near-term inflation may remain volatile before stabilising within the target range." Lo and behold: Pakistan has achieved a year-on-year headline inflation rate of 4.9 per cent, the lowest since May 2018. However, inflation, like any economic metric, is merely an indicator and does not incarnate the underlying economic realities. Inflation, at its core, measures the rate of change of increase in overall prices. When the base is astronomically high, as it was in November 2023 with a CPI of 29.2 per cent — where currency depreciation and global commodity shocks incited food and energy prices to a crescendo — in this situation, the rate of change will naturally appear subdued. Furthermore, inflation figures often fail to capture the full picture due to methodological shortcomings. The outdated base year of 2015-16 does not reflect current consumption patterns, and the weights of items in the consumer basket are derived from the Household Integrated Income and Consumption Survey (HIICS) conducted in the same period. This fails to account for the dynamic nature of consumer behaviour and the limited range of goods and services currently captured by the CPI. The calculation of the National CPI also involves the weighted average of Urban CPI and Rural CPI across 12 commodity groups. Urban CPI covers 356 items from 35 cities, while Rural CPI includes 244 items from 27 rural centres. Price data is gathered through four quotations from selected markets with high sales volume, though this limits representativeness. This signifies under-representation due to the limited rural sample size, as well as inadequate weighting for major cities, given the disproportionate sample size attributed to them. Further, in an import-driven economy like Pakistan, global economic trends heavily influence domestic inflation. The broader cooling and monetary easing of major economies such as the US and China has reduced inflationary pressures worldwide, calming commodity markets. This external factor has temporarily provided respite to Pakistan's inflation metrics as well.

While the inflation rate offers some optimism, the economic reality behind the numbers remains grim. The energy sector continues to face systemic issues, with full cost recovery resulting in ever-rising tariffs that have reduced demand (17 per cent YoY in August). The recent solar glut axes demand further, leading to more and more capacity payment per kWh. And then, fueling the fire, DISCOs also contribute a lion's share in the already financially distressed power sector by letting T&D and recovery losses thrive. Taxation policies remain regressive, with an over-reliance on indirect taxes that disproportionately burden the poor. Despite these measures, revenue targets are frequently missed, and contingency plans with the IMF often lead to further tax hikes (that is, taxing the taxed). Meanwhile, current expenditures have ballooned, with a 30 per cent year-on-year increase in Budget 25. Alarmingly, 56 per cent of the budget is allocated to interest payments, leaving little room for development spending, which has plummeted by 156 per cent since FY2016. Privatisation efforts have also faltered, as evidenced by the PIA bidding debacle. State-owned enterprises (SOEs) continue to bleed resources, while private-sector credit remains low, with credits by banks offered at just 12 per cent of GDP. Foreign investments, including expected inflows from Saudi Arabia and debt rollovers from China, have yet to materialise. Economic growth remains insufficient to keep pace with population growth, further compounding fiscal challenges. The generic sentiment on social media to significantly cut the policy rate more steeply amidst such global and domestic uncertainties may prove premature. For instance, the potential return of trade curbs (and so strengthening the dollar and triggering an import bill) under a Trump administration could trigger a global recession, severely impacting Pakistan's import-dependent economy. Domestically, real money (M2) growth at 15.2 per cent year-on-year (as of October 25, 2024) has already surpassed the 20-year average; this may orchestrate high inflation in the near future. A more cautious approach would involve a mindful cut (if any) in the policy rate in the short run and addressing structural weaknesses in the long run. To achieve sustainable financial stability, Pakistan must adopt a holistic approach to its economic challenges. Fiscal discipline, including cutting costs related to inefficient SOEs, elitist tax expenditures, and pension liabilities, is paramount. As suggested by the fiscal theory of the price level, prudent fiscal policies are essential to control inflation. Fiscal policy should guide monetary policy to ensure coherence between the two. Investments in development projects should be prioritised to achieve fiscal sovereignty and reduce dependence on imports. These projects must be free from political interference, focused on development rather than mere infrastructure, and contribute to the welfare and economic growth of the people. Export diversification is crucial, and reducing non-essential imports, currently estimated at 25 per cent by the LSE, should be a short-term goal. Over the long term, substitution strategies for the remaining 72 per cent of imports must be implemented.

Tax reforms are imperative to shift the burden from the poor to the elite. Better governance of the withholding regime, along with restructuring subsidies using tools like the National Socio-Economic Registry (NSER) scorecard (as in BISP), can ensure targeted welfare distribution. The energy sector requires an overhaul to address inefficiencies, pulverise rent-seeking, and stabilise the circular debt. Currency and forex reserves strengthened to shield the economy from external shocks. Efforts to digitise and formalise the economy could also improve revenue collection and reduce leakages.

The writer is a Peshawar-based researcher who works in the financial sector.



YOSSI MEKELBERG

Landmines still kill thousands despite 27-year-old ban

When, in 1997, 142 countries voted at the UN General Assembly in favor of the Ottawa Treaty, which prohibits the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of antipersonnel mines, they did not expect that, 26 years later, in 2023, more than 5,757 people would still fall victim to landmines or explosive remnants of war. Among these, 1,983 were killed and 3,663 were hurt, many of them suffering life-changing injuries. This horrendous statistic is not confined to events in current war zones, as incidents were recorded in more than 50 countries, of which 38 are states parties to the treaty. To add to the horror, up to 84 percent of all recorded casualties in 2023 were civilians and 37 percent of the civilian casualties were children. Hence, last month's meeting of the Fifth Review Conference of the Anti Personnel Mine Ban Convention in Cambodia was timely, serving as a reminder that, despite much progress, there is an urgent need to press ahead with a global commitment to eradicate antipersonnel mines.

The landmine issue rose to international prominence the same year the Ottawa Treaty was signed, when Princess Diana visited places such as Angola and Bosnia to observe clearance activities first-hand and meet victims. Shortly after these visits, the treaty was signed, calling for all countries to unite to rid the world of landmines. But despite a significant

reduction, we still live with this murderous phenomenon. To be sure, 25 years ago, landmines killed or maimed more than 20,000 people annually — mostly civilians — and much of the improvement should be attributed to a majority of parties to the treaty complying with it. But progress does not mean linear progression toward the elimination of this issue. The Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor group claimed last month that Russia had been using antipersonnel mines "extensively" in Ukraine and that the US responded by providing Kyiv with its own mines to try and stall Russian progress on the battlefield. Hence, despite 164 countries now having adopted the treaty, further steps are needed to push us toward a world free of antipersonnel mines and the casualties they cause.

Antipersonnel mines, like cluster bombs, are a particularly nasty weapon that have a lasting impact on victims and their families and communities. By their very design, landmines are inherently indiscriminate weapons — they are not intended to target a specific person, but rather hurt those who belong to a certain nationality or ethnic group and terrorise the rest of their communities. Hence, injury can be inflicted on whoever triggers the mine, no matter whether that is a child or a soldier, as well as anybody who happens to be in close proximity. What makes this munition particularly nasty is that it has lifelong consequences on the victims and their families. If it does not kill, the injuries inflicted, including losing limbs, are so severe that the victim will likely require lifelong care. And

since they disproportionately affect young people, this means protracted disability and suffering, with dire personal and economic consequences. Moreover, landmines do not come with a limited shelf life. Some of these explosives are more than half a century old and have been lying in wait all this time, as deadly today as the day they were planted. It makes them an ongoing threat, wreaking havoc on populations that are trying to rebuild their lives postwar. Armies are tempted to use antipersonnel landmines because they terrorize both military personnel and civilians and leave a huge impact, in addition to being extremely cheap to make and distribute. Producing a landmine could cost as little as \$3. However, the cost of removing them safely is immense, especially if their locations are not mapped beforehand. The cost of safely removing a single mine in such circumstances has been estimated at \$1,000. Therefore, clearing all existing landmines around the world is projected to cost up to \$100 billion, while new landmines are still being planted in various war zones.

While clearing landmines is one side of the story, recovering from their impact is another. Cambodia, which hosted the Fifth Review Conference, is one of the countries that has been most affected by landmines, the result of 30 years of war and political disorder that came to an end in 1998. There are up to 6 million mines or unexploded munitions littering the country, holding back its recovery, rehabilitation and economic development, in addition to the psychological impact.

Hence, the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention is not only about stopping the production and use of mines, it also requires states to help the hundreds of thousands of landmine victims with their rehabilitation. Since most of the victims are in developing countries, where access to health and rehabilitation facilities is more limited, the majority of the costs should be borne by more affluent countries — and, in many cases, these are where these vicious weapons have been produced. Sadly, while progress has been made on limiting the use of mines, victim assistance is one of the areas in which progress has been sluggish. Bear in mind that many of the victims of landmines reside in remote rural areas, where there is a huge shortage of specialist medical treatment and rehabilitation, not to mention a lack of investment in access to schools, workplaces and at home, as well as psychological support. It is tragic enough to get injured by a mine, but to condemn the victims to being unable to fulfill their human potential due to a lack of resources is unforgivable.

And while the need to reduce the proliferation of landmines and to support those who fall victim to them is paramount, we must not forget the many thousands who risk their lives every day in the dangerous and nerve-racking activity of removing these landmines. They also need recognition and, above all, the resources to guarantee their safety.

Yossi Mekelberg is a professor of international relations and an associate fellow of the MENA Program at Chatham House.
 X: @YMEkelberg

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



Pakistan announced its status as a country with nuclear weapons by detonating several devices in 1998. The nuclear-weapons program has always been the special preserve of the Pakistani army, although its scientists and technicians are drawn primarily from civilian life. Internal security is provided by a variety of local and provincial police departments, as well as by paramilitary forces such as the Pakistan Rangers, whose task is largely to provide border security. A number of paramilitary groups, such as the famed Khyber Rifles, are officially part of the army but frequently engage in security work, such as combating terrorists. The Inter-Security Intelligence Directorate is the country's largest intelligence collection body, and it has often been extremely successful in influencing government policy.

Although Pakistan has made progress in improving health conditions, a large part of the population does not receive modern medical care. There are insufficient numbers of doctors and nurses, especially in rural areas. Sanitation facilities are also inadequate; only a small percentage of the population has access to safe drinking water and sanitary sewage disposal facilities. Malaria, tuberculosis and other respiratory diseases, and intestinal diseases are among the leading causes of death. Drug addiction is an increasingly serious problem; although drug use is reported most commonly among urban literate males, many others (for whom documentation is more difficult to compile) are also abusers. Pakistan was among the first developing countries to establish a state-funded family planning program, which began in the early 1960s. The program ran into political difficulties

in the late 1960s as a result of opposition by Islamic groups. The regimes of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Zia ul-Haq, and Benazir Bhutto gave family planning a relatively low priority. Consequently, Pakistan's total fertility and population growth rates are relatively high by world standards—this despite the fact that infant and maternal mortality rates are also relatively high. The zakat and ushr taxes are used to provide social welfare funds, which go to provincial, division, and district committees for distribution among organizations engaged in social welfare activities or directly to needy persons. Zakat funds are also used for scholarships. The development of a number of non-governmental organizations in the country and the increasing use of private religious endowments to assist the needy have been increasing. Those efforts have been most

notable in the fields of education and basic health care. Existing housing stocks do not meet national needs, and demands for housing have far outpaced the ability of the economy to produce more living space. Sufficient housing, in fact, has not traditionally been a high priority of the government, although in 1987 it did establish a National Housing Authority with the goal of developing housing units for the country's burgeoning low-income population. However, such attempts were abandoned in the 1990s for want of adequate resources. In 2001 a National Housing Policy was approved to review the status of nationwide housing and to identify sources of revenue, land availability, incentives to developers and contractors, and the conditions needed to make construction cost-effective.

To be continued....

Ryan Reynolds, Andrew Garfield dish on Golden Globes kiss from 2017

Ryan Reynolds and Andrew Garfield recall viral Golden Globes kiss from 2017

Ryan Reynolds and Andrew Garfield still seem to have that bromance going. The actors recently reunited and reflected on their memorable Golden Globe Awards kiss that went viral in 2017, discussing the light-hearted moment during a new episode of *Variety's Actors on Actors* series on Monday. The playful kiss happened after Reynolds lost the Best Actor in a Comedy or Musical award to Ryan Gosling for *La La Land*. "And of course, Gosling absolutely did not deserve it," Reynolds joked. "I'm actually a genuine, nutty fan of his." Garfield chimed in, saying, "I'm glad that you were game for that, and I also retrospectively felt a little bit insensi-



tive towards Ryan's moment." Reynolds agreed, sharing, "I did too, but I was so grateful that it was such a wide shot that nobody actually noticed until later, and it was actually kind of perfect." The kiss, which sparked a wave of online reactions, was only noticed in real time by Reynolds' wife, Blake Lively, and a woman seated next to Garfield. Garfield recalled feeling the need to apologize to Gosling, saying, "But I was able to apologize to Ryan about that, thankfully, and say I'm so, so sorry!" Reynolds, keeping the conversation light, joked, "I actually just egged his house, which is super childish to do, but I didn't feel so great about losing."

Google unveils top search trends of Pakistan in 2024

Sports, entertainment, food and technology dominated the search history of Pakistan's users in 2024 as Google's Year in Search released a captivating narrative of Pakistan's digital landscape. The search trends were overtaken by cricket with the ICC T20 World Cup capturing the nation's attention. Searches for PSL 2024 schedules and matchups, alongside queries for star players like Shoaib Malik and Sajid Khan, further demonstrated Pakistan's love for the game. Olympic gold medalist Arshad Nadeem also attracted significant attention from Pakistani users after he won the first Gold medal for the country in almost three decades. This enthusiasm for notable figures extended beyond the sports world, with searches for media personalities Sana Javed and Zoya Nasir, Indian business tycoon Mukesh Ambani, and social media figures Hareem Shah and Minahil Malik. Entertainment also held a prominent place in

Pakistan's digital landscape, with the enduring appeal of Pakistani dramas evident in searches for shows like *Ishq Murshid* and *Kabhi Main Kabhi Tum*. Bollywood films like *Animal*, *Dunki*, *Bhool Bhulaiyaa 3*, and *Street 2* also generated buzz, along with the reality show *Bigg Boss* and the eagerly awaited *Mirzapur Season 3*. Beyond entertainment, Pakistanis turned to Google for a taste of culinary delights, with searches for recipes ranging from banana bread and creamy pasta to local favourites like *malpura* and *tawa kaleji*. The popularity of quick bites like garlic bread and egg noodles, along with seasonal drinks like peach iced tea, further showcased the nation's diverse palate. On the tech front, searches for Gemini, and Remaker AI highlighted the growing interest in AI tools, while queries for the latest smartphones, including models from Infinix, Redmi, Vivo, and Apple, demonstrated a desire to stay connected.

Ultra-processed foods fatten muscles even if not eaten in large amounts, study finds

People whose diets are heavy in highly processed foods increased thigh muscle fattiness even if they did not eat excessive calories, scientists have found, in another sign the products' health risks could stretch beyond overconsumption. The study, to be presented on Wednesday at the annual meeting of the Radiological Society of North America in Chicago, will intensify debate over the risks of so-called ultra-processed foods. While attention has focused on how the industrial addition of appealing ingredients such as flavourings, sugars, fats and salt can lead to overconsumption and obesity, new research on other possible health problems caused by UPFs is still emerging. "Muscle fattiness seemed to happen regardless of calorie intake," said Zehra Akkaya, part of the team of Turkey- and US-based researchers. "We

hypothesise that muscle fatty infiltration is related to the type of food — ultra-processed foods in the diet." UPFs refer to mass-produced goods, made mostly from substances extracted from whole foods, such as fats, starches and added sugars, and formulated to be more palatable to consumers. There is no generally agreed definition of the term, which was coined by Brazilian nutritional scientist Carlos Monteiro as part of the Nova food classification system he developed to assess the diets' impact on health. Early studies have linked UPFs to diseases including cancer, obesity and heart diseases. Research since has suggested they may contribute to many other health problems, from tooth decay to dementia and accelerated ageing. The scientists examined muscle fattiness grades

from magnetic resonance images of 666 participants at risk of osteoarthritis, a chronic joint condition that causes pain, swelling and restricted movement and estimated to affect more than half a billion people worldwide. Osteoarthritis may be linked to deterioration in the health of the thighs, as streaks of fat replace muscle fibres. The study's subjects — more than two-thirds of whom were men — were on average 60 years old and overweight, with a body mass index of 27. About 40 per cent of the foods they ate in the previous year were ultra-processed, the researchers said. The scientists used a questionnaire that asked how often and in what quantities participants had consumed particular foods and drinks over the previous 12 months. They used the classification system developed by Monteiro and others to assess processing levels.



Health

Lt. Gen (ret) Faiz Hameed formally charged for political activities, misuse of authority & govt resources: ISPR

Says Lt. Gen. Faiz Hamid (Retd) is being afforded with all legal rights as per the law

RAWALPINDI: On 12 August 2024, process of FGCM was initiated against Lt. Gen. Faiz Hamid (Retd) under provisions of Pakistan Army Act and in first place Lt. Gen. Faiz Hamid (Retd) has been formally arraigned on charges of engaging in political activities, violations of Official Secret Act detrimental to safety and interest of the state, misuse of authority and government resources and causing wrongful loss to a person (s).

According to the statement issued by the ISPR on Tuesday, during the process, involvement of Lt. Gen. Faiz Hamid (Retd), in events related to creating agitation and unrest, leading up to multiple incidents including but not limited to 9th May 2023 incident for fomenting instability; at the behest of and in collusion with vested political interests, is also being separately investigated.

Lt. Gen. Faiz Hamid (Retd) is being afforded with all legal rights as per the law.

SAARC Delegation Meets Federal Commerce Minister to Strengthen Regional Trade

ISLAMABAD: A high-level delegation from the SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SAARC CCI), accompanied by the leadership of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), met with Federal Commerce Minister Jam Kamal Khan today. The discussions focused on fostering economic integration and revitalizing trade within the South Asian region. The Minister warmly welcomed the delegation, acknowledging the significance of SAARC as a platform for regional cooperation. Jam emphasized the need for member countries to strengthen trade ties and pledged Pakistan's commitment to facilitating businesses to promote regional commerce.

Minister Jam also highlighted the outcomes of the recently concluded Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Conference, showcasing Pakistan's efforts to enhance trade connectivity with Central and South Asia. Minister Jam underscored the importance of revitalizing SAARC to promote regional trade. He called for direct flights between Pakistan and Bangladesh to facilitate trade and people-to-people connectivity. The Bangladeshi delegation expressed interest in Pakistani fashion, particularly clothing and jewelry. The Minister invited them to visit the Pakistan Institute of Fashion and Design (PIFD) in Lahore, which they graciously accepted. Bangladesh also highlighted their demand for Pakistani food products, including onions and potatoes, and expressed willingness to import construction materials such as stones. APP



ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar chaired a high level meeting to discuss the ongoing process of outsourcing of airports and privatisation of SOES, at Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Rana Tanveer meets Uzbekistan's Deputy Minister for Agriculture



VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for National Food Security and Research, Rana Tanveer Hussain on Tuesday met with the Deputy Minister Agriculture of Uzbekistan and discussed matters relating to strengthen agricultural cooperation between both the countries. The discussions specially focused on reviv-

ing potato exports from Pakistan, besides expanding bilateral trade and cooperation between the two countries, said a press release.

Rana Tanveer Hussain welcomed the Uzbek delegation and acknowledged their efforts to enhance bilateral ties. He emphasized the historical and strategic significance of Pakistan-Uzbekistan relations, with agriculture serving as a cornerstone of mutual collabora-

tion. The minister also highlighted the outcomes of the 9th Intergovernmental Commission (IGC) as a key milestone, which has laid the groundwork for seamless and timely implementation of agreed initiatives.

He highlighted Pakistan's position as the 14th largest potato producer, with Punjab contributing 97.8% of the national yield and exports to 37 countries.

Uzbekistan imported about 419 metric tons of potatoes in 2022 as compared to the imports of 2,139 metric tons of the year 2023, though trade was suspended in 2024, he added.

A recent B2B session between exporters from both countries discussed pathways to revive this trade, he added. The minister reaffirmed the commitment to meet Uzbekistan's phytosanitary standards and proposed enhanced collaboration between quarantine authorities of the both countries.

He also suggested joint research initiatives for climate-resilient potato varieties and fostering direct partnerships between private sector entities.

Rana Tanveer expressed gratitude for Uzbekistan's efforts to enhance trade and reiterated Pakistan's dedication to providing high-quality agricultural products to fulfill its requirements.

Dar reaffirms Pak's commitment to rights, freedoms of all individuals

ISLAMABAD: As the international community observes International Human Rights Day on Tuesday, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to ensuring the fundamental rights and freedoms of all individuals, regardless of race, religion, gender, or nationality. The deputy prime minister, in his message, said that the Day symbolized international community's shared resolve to respect and uphold human dignity and to promote the human rights agenda without any distinction or discrimination.

"This year's theme for Human Rights Day, 'Our rights, our future, right now,' remains relevant for millions of people across the globe, from the Occupied Palestinian Territories to Indian-Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJK), who continue to suffer under occupation and gross human rights violations in their just struggle for inalienable right to self-determination," he said. Besides, DPM Dar said that the alarming surge in Islamophobia worldwide, fuelled by discriminatory laws, populist politics, and xenophobic narratives, also remained a challenge for the international community. He said that Pakistan had made significant progress in the advancement of the human rights agenda through a range of legislative, institutional, and policy measures and was committed to fulfilling its obligations under the international human rights framework. It is constructively engaged with human rights mechanisms under the auspices of the United Nations, Dar added. DNA

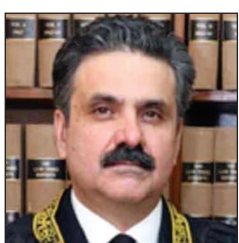
Danyal assesses 'Free Medicine Project' at Rawalpindi Institute of Cardiology

ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary Secretary for Information and Broadcasting, Barrister Danyal Chaudhry on Tuesday conducted an extensive visit to the Rawalpindi Institute of Cardiology today to monitor and evaluate the progress of the "Free Medicine Project", a key initiative under the Punjab government's health reforms. The hospital serves as a critical healthcare hub, providing treatment not only to residents of Rawalpindi but also to patients from across Pakistan, including regions from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to Potohar, said a press release.

During the visit, Barrister Danyal inspected various wards, received detailed briefings from hospital management, and interacted with patients to address concerns over the reported shortage of medicines. He emphasized the government's commitment in ensuring that all resources allocated for public welfare are utilized efficiently and transparently.

Marking Human Rights Day, Barrister Danyal reiterated that "the availability of complete treatment, including medicines, is a fundamental right of every patient." His visit reinforced the government's resolve to uphold these rights through practical measures. The parliamentary secretary pledged to resolve challenges faced by heart patients and ensure that the Free Medicine Project benefited those in need.

CJP for ensuring justice for marginalized segments of society



ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP), Justice Yahya Afridi, while highlighting the importance of ensuring access to justice for marginalized sections of society, stressed enhancing attendance and facilitating justice delivery for these sections of the society.

The CJP said this during a meeting with Judicial Officers and representatives of the Makran Bar Association at Judicial Complex Makran.

Addressing the bar members, he underscored the integral relationship between the bench and the bar, emphasizing that the judiciary relies on the bar's cooperation to perform its constitutional duties.

He reiterated that, under the principle of the trichotomy of powers, the judiciary is entrusted with interpreting the law and safeguarding the fundamental rights of the people as enshrined in the Constitution of Pakistan.

Furthermore, the Bar expressed its deep concern over extrajudicial killings and enforced dis-

appearances, urging the Chief Justice to take appropriate action on these pressing issues. The CJP assured the bar that the matter would be looked into.

He emphasized the pivotal role of the Court of Judicial Magistrates as the first judicial forum to hear legal matters and provide relief to the public in accordance with the law without any influence.

Focusing on justice system reforms, he pointed out the necessity of improving case management and incorporating innovative practices such as automation, alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, and human resource development.

He acknowledged that these endeavours require meticulous planning, sustained patience, and the collective efforts of the judiciary, including the support of the Bar and the High Courts.

In his interaction with the bar, the CJP listened to their concerns regarding the administration of justice and assured them that their grievances would be addressed effectively. Earlier the Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan gave a briefing to the lawyers of Makran Division about the opportunity for lawyers under Access to Justice Development Fund.

AI can be game changer in law and justice: Gilani

MULTAN: Chairman Senate, Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani, on Tuesday stated that Artificial Intelligence (AI) is reshaping every sphere of life including pursuit for justice and in creating ease and forming integrated systems in all sectors.

Speaking at the inaugural ceremony of University Gilani Law College BZU international conference on "Role of Artificial Intelligence in Access to Justice in Pakistan Shaping the Future of Law, Peace and Equality", he said that seeking justice in our society is quite difficult, and cases often remain pending for many years. The use of AI in the fields of law and justice could be a game changer, he added.

"AI is not just an idea rather a reality," Mr Gilani maintained. "For many Pakistanis seeking justice is an uphill task and we know justice delayed is justice denied," the Chairman Senate noted. He acknowledged that while there are challenges in utilizing AI, its global promotion has already helped in solving issues across various fields. He emphasized that before AI is integrated into the legal system, proper training is essential. He stated that AI would enable the delivery of swift justice to people in remote areas. He also highlighted that technology could strengthen institutions. Mr Gilani mentioned that the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) government had consistently worked on developmental projects in South Punjab.

Pak Navy Ship Saif conducts joint exercise with Royal Navy of Oman

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Navy Ship Saif conducted Joint Patrol and Passage Exercise with Royal Navy of Oman Vessel (RNOV), AL-Seeb and Spanish Navy Ship Santa Maria.

Exercises were aimed to develop synergy and mutual understanding between Navies operating in the region while demonstrating interoperability to undertake Joint Operations.

The exercise between Royal Navy of Oman Ship Al-Seeb, Pakistan Navy Ship Saif and Pakistan Maritime Security Agency Ship Kashmir was conducted during Focused Operation 'Karakoram Resolve' under Pakistan led Combined Task Force (CTF-150), said a news release issued by Directorate General Public Relations (Pak Navy) on Tuesday.

"Upon culmination of Focused Operation 'Karakoram Resolve'; PNS Saif also conducted exercise with Spanish Navy Ship Santa Maria and rehearsed various maritime operations to enhance interoperability," it said.

Pakistan Navy has always been at the forefront of international efforts towards Maritime Security by maintaining permanent presence in the



vital areas of Indian Ocean Region (IOR), it further said.

In addition, Pakistan Navy and Royal Navy of Oman regularly conduct Bilateral Exercise Thamar Al Tayyib to enhance mutual cooperation and understanding between brotherly navies.

"Pakistan Navy and Royal Navy of Oman share a history of operating together for promoting regional peace and stability; wherein regular visits and interaction are being conducted between both navies," it added. PR

Ahsan chairs meeting to review mutually agreed projects between Pakistan, China

VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Prof Ahsan Iqbal on Wednesday chaired an important meeting to follow up on the Prime Minister's recent visit to China, focusing on the progress of mutually agreed projects between Pakistan and China.

The meeting was attended by Secretary Planning Awaiz Manzoor Sumra, along with senior officials from the Ministry of Food Security and Research, the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication, Ministry of Power, National Highway Authority (NHA) and the CPEC Secretariat, said a news release.

During the visit of the Prime Minister, it was agreed that Huawei will deliver training to 200,000 students across Pakistan.

The minister directed the Ministry of Information Technology to identify university computer labs across Pak-



isthan could serve as Huawei's training centers, and the duration of the certificates to be offered.

He emphasized the importance of involving private IT sector stakeholders for their feedback to ensure relevant skill development. Meanwhile, Ahsan Iqbal instructed for the involvement of Higher Education Commission (HEC) stating that

academies, highlighting the need for thorough preparation to operationalize the training of 200,000 students. He also inquired about the Digital Pakistan Initiative and instructed the preparation of a comprehensive national digitalization strategy. In discussing the plan for training 1,000 agricultural professionals in China, the minister directed that fresh graduates be provided with specific skills in targeted areas.

The training certificates should have durations of three to six months and one year, with courses divided into two categories for skill upgrades: a six-month course and a one-year course.

These trainings are expected to significantly enhance the agricultural sector's expertise and productivity in Pakistan.

Regarding the solarization of tube wells, the Ministry of Food Security and Research reported that there are 1.5 million tube wells in Pakistan, of which 80% are powered by diesel, consuming 3.15 billion liters of diesel worth Rs. 908 billion annually. Converting these diesel-powered tube wells to solar energy would be cost-effective and environment friendly. The National Highway Authority provided a briefing on its projects, including the signed Framework Agreement for the Realignment of KKH Phase II (Thakot-Raikot) covering 241 km, and various signed MoUs and feasibility studies.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Azerbaijan Khazar Farhadov in a meeting with Senator Saleem Mandviwalla, Chairman Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Revenue. DNA

Asif criticised PTI for propagating false claims

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif on Tuesday lambasted Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) for propagating false claims about casualties during the November 26 protests in Islamabad.

Replying to PTI opposition Leader Omar Ayub Khan's claims in the National Assembly, he challenged PTI to provide proof for 12 alleged deaths. "Show evidence, images of funerals or their CNIC numbers or any other information about the deceased's families."

Asif said that PTI leader Latif Khossa had made exaggerated claims of 278 deaths in a television interview while some claimed 40,50,70 and other numbers of deaths, adding there was a rift among the PTI leadership and were fuelling

a flood of lies and baseless allegations. He added that PTI leadership fled from the scene of violent protest on November 26 leaving their supporters behind and now were trying to play the Pashtun card.

The minister said that PTI's call for civil disobedience would be met with the same fate as the founder of PTI did ten years ago by setting utility bills on fire.

Asif added that Pakistan's remittance flow and stock exchange index had increased, and the inflation rate decreased while PTI led the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government which had no funds for universities, colleges, hospitals and development was continuously creating anarchy in the country. APP