



Hania Aamir reveals her favourite Bollywood films

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PTI hopeful of positive outcomes of govt-PTI talks for country's peace, stability

AURF MEHMOOD KHAN
ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday assuring the government's sincere efforts and contributions, expressed the hope that bilateral talks initiated between the ruling coalition and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf would bring about positive outcomes to promote peace and economic stability in the country.

Ayaz Sadiq's initiative, the first round of talks with PTI was held on Monday with the second one scheduled on January 2, 2025.

He said the government's committee comprised Ishaq Dar, Rana Sanaullah, Irfan Siddiqui, Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, Naveed Qamar, Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, Abdul Aleem Khan, Ijazul Haq and Khalid Magsi.

He said the process would meet success only if both parties set aside their likes and dislikes for the sake of national interests.

"I do not doubt any-



one's intentions. I hope both PTI and the government party will bring about the outcomes for the country's benefits and promote the economic stability of the prime minister said and mentioned the reduced policy rate to 13%, inflation below 5%, constant surge in exports and remittances.

Referring to his meetings with Bangladesh's Chief Advisor Dr Yunus, and the presidents of Indonesia and Turkey on the sidelines of the D-8 Summit in Cairo, he said Pakistan-Bangladesh ties were entering a new era as the latter had abolished erstwhile 100% scanning of Pakistan's export products and special desk at airports for screening Pakistani passport holders.

Military courts' verdicts announced under law enacted by parliament: FO

HUMA REHAN
ISLAMABAD: In response to statements on recent verdicts by military courts, the Foreign Office on Tuesday reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to fulfilling all its international human rights obligations, said that the verdicts had been made under a law enacted by the Parliament of Pakistan and in line with the judgment of the Supreme Court of Pakistan.

"Pakistan's legal system is consistent with international human rights law including provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)," the FO Spokesperson said in a statement.

The spokesperson added that the country's legal system had remedies of judicial review by the superior courts and guaranteed the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The statement added that Pakistan believed in constructive and productive dialogue to promote principles of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

Defence delegation of Azerbaijan calls on Air Chief Zaheer Ahmed Sidhu

SAMRA ATHAR
ISLAMABAD: A high level defence delegation led by Deputy Minister of Defence of the Republic of Azerbaijan-Director General Agli Gurbanov, along with Lieutenant General Naim Islamzade, Deputy Minister of Defence-Commander of the Azerbaijan Air Force called on Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force here Tuesday at Air Headquarters.

bolizing his vision of operational excellence in the realm of contemporary warfare domains, said a press release issued by Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR).

The Air Chief reiterated his resolve to further enhance the existing bilateral ties between the armed forces and particularly cooperation with Pakistan Air Force in operational and training domains.

He also highlighted the importance of training cooperation; wherein, a large contingent of Azeri air and ground crew is currently undergoing training at an operational PAF base.



He noted that the training program is on schedule, with over 50% of the training objectives successfully achieved.

He further emphasized that the initiative is expected to culminate within one-month time frame, reflecting the commitment of PAF to enhance the operational capabilities of Azerbaijan Air Force.

the personnel of Pakistan Air Force and praised PAF's notable progress in developing a thriving domestic capability in the aviation industry in a short time frame.

The dignitaries expressed satisfaction on the training imparted to 70 aircrew & technicians getting trained in PAF and expressed their desire for enhanced Air Force to Air Force collaboration between the two sides. Emphasizing on the need to adapting to the evolving landscape of modern warfare, the Azerbaijan military leadership also proposed the establishment of a more comprehensive training

regimen focusing on niche and disruptive technologies, as well as cyber and electronic warfare capabilities.

Later the delegation visited PAF Cyber Command, established at Air Headquarters, where it was briefed about the operational capabilities and ongoing projects of PAF's modernization drive.

The visit of this high level defence delegation from Azerbaijan to Air Headquarters Islamabad signifies a resolute commitment of both countries to reinforce their military partnership, fostering collaboration and promoting robust relations.

Pakistan coming out of tough times, says Mohsin Naqvi

MOHSIN ALI
ISLAMABAD: Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) Chairman and Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui called on Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi in Islamabad on Tuesday and held in-depth talks with him on a variety of issues.

Talking on the occasion, Mohsin Naqvi said that Pakistan is coming out of difficult situation as economic indicators are moving towards improvement.

Every coming day is promising Pakistan's bright future, Mohsin Naqvi said and added disappointment is a sin and the agent of the rejected elements is something else.

In the meeting, issues of mutual interest and overall political situation prevailing in the country were discussed.

The two federal ministers also pondered over measures to provide relief to the people and for long-term solution to public's problems.

Pakistan shrugs off US sanctions on missile programme

KOMAL BUTT
ISLAMABAD: Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said "unnecessary" US sanctions on missile programme will not affect Pakistan's defence or its decisions.

She clearly stated that Pakistan's security decisions will be made by the Pakistani nation and no external pressure will influence them.

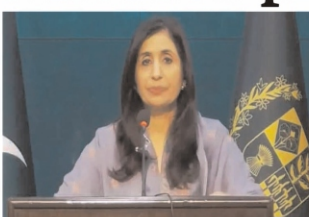
She termed the US sanctions imposed unnecessary and unjust, adding that these actions could not weaken Pakistan's

defence position.

She recalled that Pakistan has faced various sanctions in the past but has always focused on its security. The US has no reason to be concerned about the missile programme of the country, she added.

Baloch highlighted that it was India which started the arms race in the region. She urged the world powers should take strict measures against India to stop it.

In response to the European Union's concerns regarding sentences awarded to civilians by



military courts, the FO spokesperson said that Pakistan's constitution and courts have the full capacity to address internal matters.

"The Pakistani nation knows how to resolve its internal issues, and there is no need for any external

interference in it," she said.

Earlier, the European Union also criticised these verdicts, calling them unjust and against the ICCPR.

The EU spokesperson highlighted that under the Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+), beneficiary countries, including Pakistan, have voluntarily committed to effectively implementing 27 core international conventions, including the ICCPR, to retain their GSP+ status.

Separately, at a press conference in Peshawar,

PTI Central Information Secretary Waqas Akram echoed these concerns, stating that military trials violate both international and domestic laws.

He emphasised that the EU spokesperson's concerns are "serious" and align with the PTI's stance, expressed immediately after the news broke.

On Dec 20, Pakistan's military courts sentenced 25 individuals involved in the May 9 events to 2-10 years of rigorous imprisonment for actions against state institutions.

Bilawal felicitates candidates of Arts Council of Pakistan elections

JAVED KHAN
ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has extended his heartfelt congratulations to the Ahmed Shah and Ijaz Farooqi's panel for their success in the Arts Council of Pakistan, Karachi elections.

In a congratulatory message, he praised the newly elected President Muzammam Ahmed Shah and Secretary Professor Ijaz Farooqi, expressing his best wishes for their future endeavors.

He also congratulated the newly elected Joint Secretary Noor-ul-Huda

Shah and Treasurer Qudsiya Akbar, along with all other successful candidates, acknowledging their continued hard work and dedication to the field of arts.

Bilawal Bhutto expressed hope that the newly elected officials will continue their relentless efforts to promote the arts in the country.

"Art is undoubtedly the frontline defense in our fight against extremism and intolerance," he emphasized, highlighting the importance of creative expression in fostering a progressive and inclusive society.

Sustainable Development Policy Institute hosts landmark NNET steering committee meeting

AYESHA REHAN
ISLAMABAD: The Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) hosted the inaugural steering committee meeting of the National Network of Economic Think-Tanks (NNET) in a collaborative effort to bridge the gap between academia, industry, and policymakers.

NNET, the network, initiated in 2018, seeks to unite think-tanks, civil society, and academia under one platform. Representing a geographically and sectorally inclusive body, members from academia, industry, and policymakers.

Dr. Abid Qayyum Suleri, facilitator of NNET, emphasized the importance of an impar-

tial and solution-oriented approach. "Think-tanks may remain objective and bridge the gap between research and actionable solutions," he remarked, noting Pakistan's "improved macroeconomic indicators but stressing the need for comprehensive reforms.

Secretariat is to promote NNET's mission is to promote policy research and effective communication strategies. The network has already published 15 policy papers, with as many underway, and held 40 public-private dialogues. The group has also conducted workshops and province-wide economic reporting sessions to turn policy recommendations into actionable frameworks.

"We aim to develop NNET as a national advi-



sory body, expanding its influence both locally and globally," Engr. Ahmad Nazir stated, emphasizing its success in advocating for initiatives like the Strategic Trade Policy Framework and Power Wheeling Policy.

The speakers highlighted systemic barriers hindering progress, including financial constraints in academia, weak industry-academia linkages, and the lack of grassroots research.

Zafar Masud, President of the Bank of Punjab, highlighted the critical need for stronger collaboration between academia, think-tanks, and industry in Pakistan, drawing comparisons from international model. He emphasized the untapped potential in the environmental sector, calling it a major opportunity for the business community. "The integration

of technology and capacity building for farmers is essential to modernize agricultural practices," he said.

Masud also pointed to the persistent challenge of access to financing, urging stakeholders to explore global best practices to address the issue. "We need to crack this riddle and find innovative solutions to enable progress," he added.

Dr. Khalid Hafeez, Vice-Chancellor of Balochistan University of Information Technology, Engineering and Management Sciences (NNET), stressed the need for data-driven policies to address Balochistan's challenges, including climate change and the water-food-energy nexus.

"We are pioneering data intelligence pro-

grams and working on initiatives like olive oil production and smart disaster risk management labs," said Dr. Hafeez. He envisions Zhob, Balochistan, becoming the country's next food basket, given its untapped potential in organic farming.

Quratulain, CEO of AIN Consulting, stressed the need for greater coordination between departments to guide entrepreneurship efforts. "The youth have potential but lack direction," she said.

Dr. Safdar Rehman, the Acting Vice Chancellor of Bannu University, addressed critical issues related to the region's agricultural potential and water resources. He added that while Bannu has an abundance of water, the quality of rice production

remains a significant challenge that requires urgent attention and improvement. He also pointed out that the soil in Bannu is particularly well-suited for the cultivation of turmeric, an opportunity that could be explored further to enhance the local agricultural sector.

Additionally, he highlighted the untapped potential of vast tracts of land stretching from Karak to D Khan and from Mianwali to Muzaffargarh, much of which remains barren.

According to Dr. Rehman, transforming these lands into productive agricultural areas could greatly contribute to Pakistan's national economy. He called for focused research projects aimed at bringing these underutilized lands into cultivation, thereby

boosting agricultural productivity and economic growth in the region.

Zafarullah Khan from CIPE advocated for inclusive and transparent policymaking, calling for district-level economic research and the revival of colonial-era economic planning frameworks.

"Private partnerships are critical to unlocking innovation and driving economic growth," he asserted.

NNET's ambitious agenda includes forming thematic working groups, enhancing policy advocacy, and monitoring outcomes. With a coalition of stakeholders driving impactful projects, NNET is poised to redress economic policy discourse in Pakistan, fostering sustainable and inclusive growth.



Pakistan excited to embark on Champions Trophy journey as ICC greenlights schedule

ARIF MEHMOOD KHAN

ISLAMABAD: The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Tuesday announced fixtures and groupings of the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 to be played under 'fusion formula' in Pakistan and Dubai (UAE).

Pakistan is the host country for the Champions Trophy 2025 but Dubai has been added as a venue to accommodate India to play its matches here after the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) refused to send its team to Pakistan on dubious grounds. Final will be played in Dubai if India qualifies for the final.

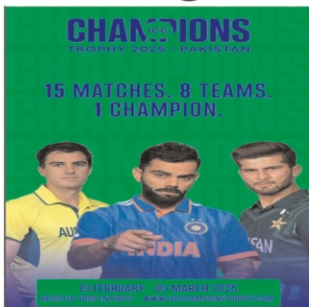


with the final on 9 March. 15 matches will be played across Pakistan and in Dubai, Rawalpindi, Lahore, and Karachi will be the three venues to host tournament play. Each Pakistan venue will feature three group games apiece, with Lahore hosting the second semi-final. The three group matches involving India, as well as the first semi-final, will be played in Dubai. Lahore will also host the final on 9 March,

unless India qualifies, in that case it will be played in Dubai. Both the semi-finals and the final will have reserve days.

Pakistan takes on New Zealand in the Group A tournament opener in Karachi on 19 February. The Dubai leg begins the following day with India taking on Bangladesh. Group B begins on 21 February, with Afghanistan squaring up against the Proteas in Karachi.

A big weekend then kicks off with rivals England and Australia set to clash in Lahore on Saturday (21 February), with the much-anticipated Pakistan-India clash set for the day later. The eight sides in the Champions Trophy competing for the famous white winners' jackets are the teams that finished in the top



eight positions on the points table of the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023. Group A of the tournament features current Champions Trophy holders and hosts Pakistan, along with England, New Zealand and Bangladesh, while Group B features Cricket World Cup 2023 champions Australia,

alongside Afghanistan, England and South Africa.

Group A: Pakistan, India, New Zealand, Bangladesh, Group B: South Africa, Australia, Afghanistan, England. Champions Trophy Schedule: 19 February, Pakistan v New Zealand, Karachi, Pakistan 20 February, Bangladesh v India, Dubai 21 February, Bangladesh v New Zealand, Rawalpindi, Pakistan 25 February, Australia v South Africa, Rawalpindi, Pakistan 26 February, Afghanistan v England, Lahore, Pakistan 27 February, Pakistan v South Africa, Rawalpindi, Pakistan 28 February, Australia v South Africa, Rawalpindi, Pakistan 29 February, Pakistan v South Africa, Rawalpindi, Pakistan 1 March, South Africa v England, Karachi, Pakistan 2

Table with 2 columns: Match Date, Match Details. Includes dates from 19 February to 10 March and venues like Karachi, Rawalpindi, Lahore, Dubai.

India, Dubai 4 March, Semi-final 1, Dubai 5 March, Semi-final 2, Lahore, Pakistan 9 Reserve day.

West Indies to reach Pakistan for first Test series in 19 years

JAVED KHAN

ISLAMABAD: West Indies will reach Pakistan to play their first red-ball series in the country in 19 years, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) said in a statement on Tuesday.

The visitors will arrive in Islamabad on January 6 after playing a three-day match against Pakistan Shaheens from January 10-12 at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium.

The Kraigg Brathwaite-led side will then play two back-to-back Tests in Multan against the Green Shirts. The first Test will be played from January 21, while the second Test will be held from January 25-29.

Both Tests are part of the International Cricket Council (ICC) Test Championship.

Last time the team played Tests in Pakistan was back in



November 2006 comprising three matches. Meanwhile, their last away Test series against Pakistan was in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in October 2016.

The West Indies have thrice toured Pakistan since April 2008 — once for the ODI series (June 2022) and twice for the T20 series (April 2018 and December 2021).

The national side will be eyeing to replicate their performance in the home series against England where they secured a 3-0 victory against the visitors in October — their first home Test series victory since January 2021.

West Indies squad: Kraigg Brathwaite (C), Joshua Da Silva (vc), Alick Athanaze, Keacy Carter, Justin Greaves, Kavem Hodge, Tevin Imlach, Amir Jango, Mikyle Louis, Gudakesh Motie, Anderson Phillip, Kemar Roach, Kevin Sinclair, Jayden Seales, and Jomel Warrin.

Tour schedule: January 10-12 — three-day match vs Pakistan Shaheens, Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium January 17-21 — first Test, Multan Cricket Stadium January 25-29 — second Test, Multan Cricket Stadium.

Fakhar opens up about controversial tweet supporting Babar Azam

SAMRA ATHAR

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan batsman Fakhar Zaman has denied criticising the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) in a tweet posted by him after Babar Azam was dropped for the second and third Test matches against England in October this year. The left-hand batsman, who has not been picked for national squad since his tweet, clarified that his social media post was aimed for journalists and former cricketers, who had been demanding for his return to Babar from the team while ignoring his performance.

He said for a moment, he thought he shouldn't have shared the tweet because his statement was completely misinterpreted.

While responding to a



question about fitness, Zaman said he had requested a two-month break from the PCB after he was diagnosed with hyperthyroidism. It is recalled that the board had also issued a show-cause notice to him after he expressed concerns over removal of Babar Azam from the team in the England Test matches. Fakhar on X had stated that dropping Babar was concerning, especially since India did not drop

Virat Kohli despite his poor form from 2020 to 2023. "It's concerning to hear suggestions about dropping Babar Azam. India didn't bench Virat Kohli during his rough stretch between 2020 and 2023, when he averaged 19.33, 28.21, and 26.50, respectively. If we are considering sidelining our premier batsman, arguably the best Pakistan," he wrote in the tweet.

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

KOMAL BUTT

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

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

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

The Bahria Town Champions T20 Cup targeted a new and aggressive style of T20 cricket which the top teams have adopted and it also kick-



started Pakistan's preparation for the upcoming white-ball mega events including the ICC Champions Trophy and the ICC T20 World Cup in 2026. After intense and interesting 20 matches plus the Qualifier, ABL Stallions and UMT Markhors qualified for

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

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

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

Harris singled out Maaz Sadaqat, Shamyil Hussain and Mehran Mustafa as some of the exciting youngsters in the squad, hoping hard work will take them to places. Rival skipper Iftikhar

Ahmed said the aim was to improve the style of play and to feed aggressive players to the Pakistan team.

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

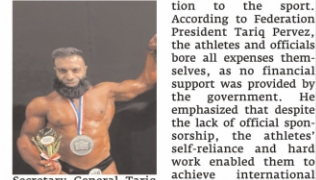
"We have several good performances with Akiif Jawid bowling exceptionally well. Khawaja Mohammad Nafay is a new and exciting talent with Saad Masood also impressive with his skills."

"Credit to Misbah and the staff for helping us and this has been a good tournament, long enough to give maximum opportunities to young players." Some powerful striking in the Quaid-e-Azam Games for the first time and has emerged as a star Karate player in her maiden inter-provincial games.

Pakistani Bodybuilder Zahid Nadeem Mughal Secures Silver Medal at Tokyo World Cup

PEAK POINT

PESHAWAR: Pakistan's Pakistani bodybuilder Zahid Nadeem Mughal brought pride to the nation by winning a silver medal in the 90kg category at the Bodybuilding World Cup held in Tokyo, Japan. Under the leadership of the Pakistan Bodybuilding and Fitness Federation, two athletes represented the country in the competition. Zahid Nadeem Mughal from WAPDA competed in the bodybuilding category, while Islamabad's Faisal Khan participated in the Men's Physique category. The federation's



Secretary General Tariq Zafar and Sheikh Shakeel Ilyas accompanied the team as officials. Zahid Nadeem's remarkable performance not only raised Pakistan's flag on the global stage but also highlighted his dedication to the sport.

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

PEAK POINT

RAWALPINDI: Saima Mengal, representing the Balochistan Karate Team in the Quaid-e-Azam Inter-Provincial Games has secured two gold medals in two categories. She was decorated with the medals in the Karate game in two categories: one medal each in a 45kg competition and in the team fight. The 16 years young Saima participated in the Quaid-e-Azam Games for the first time and has emerged as a star Karate player in her maiden inter-provincial games. Expressing her rejoicing moments with APP, Saima informed that she is studying in Quetta and



our for my beloved Pakistan in future fights at international level games. Agha Muhammad Mengal, my team coach and Fakhar ul Nisa my coach in the academy collectively trained me to fight the games with confidence and courage," said the young karate champ who belongs to Golden Brother Marshal Arts Academy. "I will bring the hon-

Volleyball team of GHSS Amndi umer khan Bannu won the match against Malakand By 2-0



PEAK POINT

MARDAN: The volleyball team of Government Higher

Secondary School Amndi Umar Khan won the Provincial School Tournament held at Mardan won by score 2-0 against

Malakand II in volleyball. The key to all this success is the school volleyball team coordinator Taj Malooh, Sadullah Khan, Shoukat mehmood volleyball team coordinator and specially principal Hafiz Doctor Ameen ullah khan.



RAWALPINDI: A beautiful view of the plants in a Garden prepared by the administration in Ayub National Park.

Delays in Power Sector Projects Spark Concerns in Senate Meeting

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Key issues surrounding delays in power sector projects and provincial development initiatives were raised during a Senate Standing Committee meeting held at the Parliament House chaired by Senator Saifullah Abro. The Special Secretary of the Ministry of Economic Affairs provided an update on various power sector projects. However, Senator Saifullah Abro criticized the lack of fully completed initiatives, citing examples like the Tarbella 5th Extension Hydropower Project (T5HP) and the 500 KV double circuit transmission line under the World Bank's supervision. Signed in July 2022, these projects faced defects soon after contract finalization. Abro questioned whether performance guarantees were secured before signing agreements and called attention to prolonged delays in project execution. Concerns were also raised about the National Transmission and Dispatch Company (NTDC) projects, which Senator Abro criticized for excessive delays.

Contracts signed as far back as 2019 were still unresolved. The Deputy Managing Director of NTDC acknowledged the need for improved procurement practices, revealing that a revised procurement policy aiming to address corruption and employee negligence would be presented by mid-August 2025. He promised to share the draft policy with relevant stakeholders. The Dasu Hydropower Project (HP) 765KV transmission line also drew significant scrutiny. Of the 366 planned transmission towers, 114 were completed, but significant delays plagued the remaining construction. Senator Abro demanded deadlines for pending foundations and an explanation for delays. He also called for detailed project schedules and accountability for inefficiencies. Attention shifted to discrepancies in hiring consultants for the NTDC's 765 KV transmission line project, the first of its kind. Abro noted that the bidding process, citing examples of inadequate experience and technical approaches among consultants. He requested bidding data sheets and tender documents for review. In the case of Lot IV of the Dasu HP transmission line, serious irregularities were identified. A Rs. 35 billion contract revealed discrepancies in tax amounts included post-bid. The committee decided to escalate the matter by writing to the Federal Minister for Energy (Power Division) and recommended recovering amounts from the winning firm. A list of involved officials and bidding firms was also requested. The Committee concluded its meeting by briefly examining delays in irrigation and mass transit projects under Sindh's provincial government. Abro recommended the Ministry of Economic Affairs address inefficiencies by writing to Sindh's Chief Secretary. He also emphasized the need for accountability and active participation from concerned officials in future reviews. Attendees included Senators Kamran Murratza, Fakhir Naz, Kamal Ali Akhgar, Haji Hidayatullah Khan, and senior officials from various relevant departments.

Maroof International Hospital Fined for Alleged Negligence Resulting in Patient's Death

NADEEM TANOLI

ISLAMABAD: A meeting of the National Assembly Standing Committee on National Health Services, Regulations, and Coordination was chaired by Dr. Mahesh Kumar Malani at the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations, and Coordination. During the session, Dr. Amjad Ali Khan informed committee members that the Islamabad Healthcare Regulatory Authority (IHRA) had imposed a fine of Rs. 400,000 on Maroof International Hospital for negligence leading to the death of a patient. Dr. Amjad emphasized that, according to IHRA's report, the fatality was attributed to administrative negligence. However, he argued that it was, in fact, medical negligence that

resulted in the death of the 22-year-old victim. Dr. Amjad demanded the cancellation of licenses for the accused doctors and called for barring them from future medical practice. He criticized private medical institutions, accusing them of prioritizing profit over human lives. The Chairman of the Committee directed IHRA representatives to attend the next meeting to address the issue comprehensively. The committee also deferred consideration of several legislative proposals, including the "Pakistan Nursing Council (Amendment) Bill, 2024," "Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (Amendment) Bill, 2024," "Islamabad Healthcare Regulation (Amendment) Bill, 2024," and "The Pharmacy (Amendment) Bill, 2024," to the next session. The Chairman highlighted widespread

public dissatisfaction with the MDCAT examination, particularly regarding transparency and fairness. The committee stressed the importance of conducting a fair and just test scheduled for 30th December 2024. Concerns were raised about 30 out-of-syllabus questions, which reportedly undermined students' preparation efforts. The committee urged sufficient preparation time for intermediate students and recommended scheduling the MDCAT immediately after the announcement of intermediate results. Additionally, members called for equitable seat allocations, particularly addressing the limited availability for students with ICT domicile. They resolved to engage with the Punjab government to ensure a balanced distribution of seats based on domicile. The committee

received updates on the re-conduct of the Medical and Dental College Admission Test (MDCAT). Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto Medical University (SZABMU) is set to hold the test on 30th December 2024 for candidates from AJK, GB, ICT, and international locations like Dubai and Riyadh. Of the 22,556 candidates who appeared on 22nd September 2024, over 8,600 have registered for the re-test. The matter remains sub judice in the Islamabad High Court, and authorities have pledged transparent arrangements. A total of 32,208 out of 38,684 registered candidates appeared. Of these, 13,718 qualified for MBBS and 16,074 for the BDS program.

Khurram visits PSX; holds talks with PSX top management

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Khurram Shehzad, Advisor to Finance Minister, was invited to the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) by CEO, PSX, Farrukh Sahrawari, to discuss strategies for enhancing the depth and performance of the capital market. During his meeting with the CEO

and senior management of PSX, Shehzad received a comprehensive overview of PSX's strategic initiatives. The meeting aimed at unlocking potential of Pakistan's capital markets, said a press release issued here on Tuesday. The CEO of PSX emphasized that, despite challenges, Pakistan's capital markets possess immense potential. He expressed confidence that through a well-formulated strategy, PSX could realize its full potential and significantly contribute to the economy. Shehzad reaffirmed the government's commitment to supporting capital market growth, recognizing its role in stabilizing as well as underpinning growth in the country's economy.

Opinion & Editorial

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Broke but flashy

Mustafa Tariq Wynne
 One would think that a country like Pakistan, already teetering on the edge of an economic crisis and highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, would prioritise policies that are not only equitable but also sustainable. Surely, with a stretched development budget and underwhelming revenue collection from the Feroz Khan, the plan that recently fell short of its target by over Rs350 billion, we'd see a more cautious and strategic approach to spending.

Every week, another headline trumpets a new 'mega project' aimed at 'reducing congestion'. Billions of rupees are funneled into widening roads and constructing more flyovers. On the surface, these projects seem like progress. But dig a little deeper, and it becomes painfully obvious who benefits. It's not the everyday Pakistani handling the chaos of public transport, and it's certainly not the majority of people, those who rely on motorcycles, public transport, or simply their feet. These projects serve the small minority, less than 10 per cent of Pakistanis, who own private vehicles. For these privileged car-owners, the chaos of public officeholders have practically rolled out the red carpet. It's a city-planning philosophy straight out of a dystopian handbook.

But you'd be wrong. Dead wrong. Instead, Pakistan's urban planning remains fixated on vanity projects, flyovers, underpasses, and highways, that cater almost exclusively to the less than 10 per cent of Pakistanis who own private cars. Every year, billions of rupees are sunk into these unsustainable, car-centric projects, even as the rest of the country struggles with crumbling public transport, high inflation, and worsening air pollution. The question isn't just why, but how. How is it that in the face of fiscal constraints and an under-performing economy, we continue to prioritise projects that serve the privileged few while ignoring the needs of the majority? Surprisingly, or not, depending on how cynical you are, that is precisely what isn't happening. Lahore leads the way with its Metrobus, Orange Line, and an expanding network of feeder routes. Islamabad and Rawalpindi have made strides with their Metrobus system and new feeder route buses. Peshawar's BRT has shown promise. But these efforts, while commendable, are grossly insufficient. Karachi, the country's economic heart, remains an embarrassment. Despite being home to over 20 million people, the city lacks a functional mass transit system. The World Bank reports that Karachi needs more than 10,000 buses to meet public demand, yet

fewer than 1,000 operate today. Similarly, Lahore needs over 10,000 buses, and Islamabad-Rawalpindi requires more than 1,000 additional buses to make its system sustainable. This is the reality of our first-tier cities. The situation in second-tier cities is even bleaker. There is no mass transit, no urban planning, and no effort to address the mobility needs of millions. The root of this dysfunction lies in governance or, more accurately, the lack of it. Local governments, which should spearhead urban planning, are either non-existent or stripped of any meaningful power. In their absence, unelected bureaucrats call the shots, investing through flawed policies and approving unsustainable, big flashy mega projects. These projects, while visually impressive, fail to address the real issues of climate resilience, equitable mobility, and sustainable growth. By the time the consequences of their actions unfold, these 'technocrats' have already been transferred elsewhere. The reality is stark: one, we don't have the money for such projects; two, we borrow to make ends meet; and three, the borrowed money is spent on projects that do little to benefit the masses. At a time when the economy is stretched thin, every rupee spent should create maximum impact. Instead, we are investing in monuments to inefficiency, projects that serve the privileged few while leaving the majority to fend for themselves in crumbling urban environments. Such misplaced priorities must be called out and actively discouraged. Because without that shift in thinking, we are simply building towards failure.

Enter the talks
 Arifa Noor
 It may be the season to be jolly in some parts of the world, but here, at home, it's the time for some 'talking-shalking'. The PTI was the first to celebrate this season of joy and peace when it expressed its willingness to talk to other parties and announced the names of members of a negotiation team. Though this didn't stop Imran Khan from blowing hot and cold, the rest of his party appears quite keen on the idea of a rapprochement. So much so that Khan has had to tell them off for being too soft on the government, especially in the wake of the shooting of party workers during the Nov 26 drama. In fact, just recently he expressed his disapproval of All Amin Gandapur's warm welcome to Mohsin Khan, who is thinking of behaving more like a kiddy party, than Khan's wrath hasn't stopped his men from showing their eagerness to talk. On the other hand, the government's second tier — no one has access to ask what the first tier, the Sharif family, is thinking. It appears more like a kiddy party and less like their counterparts in the PTI. Most of those on the treasury benches are busy behaving like an enraged Hulk, and still using their favourite adjectives for the PTI, though there have been a few times when they are equating the name-calling with words about a ceasefire. For instance, some people such as Rana Sanaullah, have conceded the need for gun-shup, even if others continue to talk about May 9 and conspiracy. Before we knew it, the government also announced a committee, which appears more like a kiddy party, as everyone from every party in parliament has been added to it, including people like Aleem Khan, who don't even have a party as such. But the decision to do so is also a message in itself. It means the dialogue is on. Now we know what the agenda on the government side is, though the messengers of the prisoners that be keep announcing that the PTI's social media needs to be politer and respectful. Courtesy Dawn

Terror continues

On the night of December 20 and 21, another 16 brave lives were martyred in Pakistan's seemingly never-ending war on terror. A group of TTP members (Khwari) attempted to attack a security forces check-post in the general area Maken, South Waziristan district, leading to an exchange of fire in which 16 soldiers of the Pakistan Army were martyred while eight terrorists were killed. While there can be no doubting the resolve of the country's security forces, it is becoming increasingly clear that the fight against terrorism is heading in the wrong direction. Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS) data shows that total militant attacks have risen from 645 in 2023 to 856 this year, an over 32 per cent rise, not counting the month of December. Deaths due to militant attacks have now soared well past the 1000 mark. Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have been the most affected, with the latter also experiencing deadly tribal clashes with the Kurram district that has claimed over a hundred lives. Sadly, these are exactly the things that the country needs to resolve and the country needs to urgently fine-tune its anti-terror strategy in order to restore peace and safety. This will be hard to achieve without a broad-based political consensus and a security atmosphere where one does not have to worry about the capital being under siege every few weeks. This is the level of terror and instability are simply unsustainable and the country needs to urgently fine-tune its anti-terror strategy in order to restore peace and safety. This will be hard to achieve without a broad-based political consensus and a security atmosphere where one does not have to worry about the capital being under siege every few weeks. Sadly, these are exactly the things that the country needs to resolve and the country needs to urgently fine-tune its anti-terror strategy in order to restore peace and safety. This will be hard to achieve without a broad-based political consensus and a security atmosphere where one does not have to worry about the capital being under siege every few weeks. This is the level of terror and instability are simply unsustainable and the country needs to urgently fine-tune its anti-terror strategy in order to restore peace and safety. This will be hard to achieve without a broad-based political consensus and a security atmosphere where one does not have to worry about the capital being under siege every few weeks.

Envoys of Romania, Somalia, Nepal, Japan & Bangladesh present credentials to President Asif Ali Zardari



ARSHAD MALIK Bangladesh on Tuesday presented their diplomatic credentials to President Asif Ali Zardari during a ceremony held at Alwan-e-Sadr. The president received credentials from the Ambassador-designate of Romania, Dan Stoiculescu; the Ambassador-designate of the Federal Republic of Somalia, Sheikh Nur Mohamed Hassan; the Ambassador-designate of Nepal, Rita Dhital; the Ambassador-designate of Japan, Akamatsu Shuichi; and the High Commissioner-designate of Bangladesh, Md. Iqbal Hussain Khan. Welcoming the envoys, the president congratulated them on their appointments and expressed hope that they would play their role in further strengthening bilateral relations with Pakistan in the areas of trade, economy, and culture. Earlier, the envoys were accorded a guard of honour by a contingent of the Pakistan Armed Forces upon their arrival at Alwan-e-Sadr.

Pakistan has potential to double exports to US: President FPCCI

PEAK POINT

KARACHI: The President of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FPCCI), Atif Ikram Sheikh, Tuesday, apprised that Pakistan-US trade volume that crossed \$7 billion mark in 2023 has continued the increase in 2024 as it has crossed \$6.3 billion in the first 10 months, January to October 2024. The U.S. is one of the few countries in the world with which Pakistan enjoys a bilateral trade surplus, the FPCCI president said, in a statement issued on Tuesday. He said, "the business community believes this volume can potentially be doubled within a short-span of few years - given the demand of Pakistani products in the U.S.; surging information technology exports and anticipated diversification of Pakistani exports basket for the U.S."



Ambassador of Pakistan in the U.S., Rizwan Saeed Sheikh, has started a consultative process with FPCCI aimed at exploring ways and means to achieve exponential growth in exports to the U.S. Atif Ikram Sheikh maintained that the U.S. GSP Program may be renewed and expanded and Pakistani exporters should remain agile and committed to make full use of the opportunities the enormous export market of the U.S. has to offer to Pakistan. He maintained that 55 percent Pakistani exports to the U.S. comprise of textiles; however, other sectors are catching up as IT exports to the U.S. have crossed the \$1 billion psychological mark. The SVP FPCCI, Saqib Fayaz Magoon, emphasized that Pakistan, apart from exports of IT, pharma, jewelry and human resource to the U.S. and Pakistani exporters need to maintain quality, standards and compliance of their exports. Pakistani government needs to ensure regionally competitive cost of doing business specifically, vis-a-vis access to finance and electricity tariffs, he added.

Gillani extends Christmas greetings to Christian community

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani extended heartfelt Christmas greetings to the Christian community in Pakistan and across the globe on Tuesday. In his message, Gillani described Christmas as a sacred occasion for Christians and highlighted the importance of fostering interfaith harmony. "Respecting each other's beliefs is a fundamental responsibility, and on this peaceful coexistence can we achieve new milestones of progress," he added. The Chairman underscored Pakistan's commitment to interfaith and interreligious harmony, affirming that minorities in the country enjoy full religious freedom. He highlighted his tenure as Prime Minister, during which he established a dedicated Ministry for Minority Affairs and ensured

NYC established through merit, transparency: Rana Mashhood

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Prime Minister's Youth Program, Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan, on Tuesday said that the National Youth Council (NYC) has been established through merit and transparency, comprising young experts from various sectors. The youth would play a pivotal role in shaping policies and decisions related to youth matters and in highlighting the country's positive image, he said while addressing at a press conference. He also expressed confidence that the Christian community would continue contributing to Pakistan's development, prosperity, and peace.



Senate's proactive initiatives to promote interfaith harmony and safeguard the rights of minorities, reaffirming his dedication to an inclusive and harmonious Pakistan. The Secretary of the Ministry of Energy (Power Division) ensure that electricity Closure schedules are made publicly available through online platforms and other accessible forums. In a letter penned by the Assistant Director of PIC, the Commission emphasized the critical role of transparency in governance, as enshrined in the preamble of the Right of Access to Information Act, 2017. The Act aims to enhance government accountability, improve citizen participation in public affairs, and uphold good governance and human rights. The letter highlighted the inconvenience caused to the public due to unannounced power disruptions, whether for maintenance or other operational reasons. To address this, the PIC invoked Section 5 of the Right of Access to Information Act, 2017, which mandates public bodies to publish and upload information about their services on the internet. Furthermore, Section 20 grants the Information Commission the authority to enforce compliance with the Act. "Closure of essential services is an important

Planning Minister reviews progress of CPEC SEZs

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Professor Ahsan Iqbal, chaired a high-level meeting here on Tuesday to review the progress of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Amongst others, the meeting was attended by senior officials from the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), the Board of Investment (BOI) and the Ministry of Planning.

According to press release, officials from the SIFC briefed the participants on the latest updates regarding the infrastructure and operational status of SEZs across the country. The Minister emphasized the importance of ensuring investor facilitation, noting that imposing excessive costs on investors could deter their interest. He stressed that providing efficient and investor-friendly facilities should be the top priority of the government. He highlighted that Pakistan's development trajectory has faced hurdles over the past 77 years, the press release added. Drawing lessons from countries such as China, South Korea, Vietnam, and Malaysia, he identified political stability, peace, policy continuity, and reforms as the four key elements for sustainable development. Citing Turkey's rapid progress under Tayyip Erdogan's leadership and India's growth despite challenges like corruption, Ahsan Iqbal underscored the importance of consistent policies for economic growth. He expressed concern about the disparity in economic performance between Pakistan and its regional counterparts, urging a long-term commitment to economic reforms. "If, by 2047, the per capita income of Indian Muslims surpasses ours, what will we tell our future generations?" he remarked and termed the next 23 years as critical for Pakistan to compete in the global development race. The Minister emphasized the need to prioritize the operationalization of existing SEZs over establishing new ones.

SIC challenges 26th Amendment in Apex Court

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Sunni Itehad Council (SIC) has filed a petition in Supreme Court challenging the 26th Constitutional Amendment. In the petition filed on Tuesday, the SIC requested the apex court that 26th Constitutional Amendment should be declared as unconstitutional. It was further requested that independent investigation into the method of obtaining votes in favour of 26th Amendment should be conducted. Allegations of coercive measures and illegal methods to pass the amendment should be investigated, further requested in petition.

PIC Urges Public Disclosure of Power Closure Schedules

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Information Commission (PIC) has directed that the Secretary of the Ministry of Energy (Power Division) ensure that electricity Closure schedules are made publicly available through online platforms and other accessible forums. In a letter penned by the Assistant Director of PIC, the Commission emphasized the critical role of transparency in governance, as enshrined in the preamble of the Right of Access to Information Act, 2017. The Act aims to enhance government accountability, improve citizen participation in public affairs, and uphold good governance and human rights. The letter highlighted the inconvenience caused to the public due to unannounced power disruptions, whether for maintenance or other operational reasons. To address this, the PIC invoked Section 5 of the Right of Access to Information Act, 2017, which mandates public bodies to publish and upload information about their services on the internet. Furthermore, Section 20 grants the Information Commission the authority to enforce compliance with the Act. "Closure of essential services is an important

piece of information for the people," the letter stated. It proposed that strong instructions be issued to the Secretary of the Ministry of Energy (Power Division) to direct all the Distribution Companies (DISCOs) to share advance notice of power Closure S within their respective areas. The Commission warned that failure to comply with this directive could lead to action under the Right of Access to Information Act, 2017. The PIC's intervention underscores the importance of proactive information dissemination in mitigating public inconvenience and ensuring transparency in essential services.

PTI Dissolves Charsadda and Mardan District Bodies, Announces Reorganization

PEAK POINT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development & Special Initiatives, Ahsan Iqbal chairing a high-level meeting to review the progress of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).



PTI Dissolves Charsadda and Mardan District Bodies, Announces Reorganization

YOUSAFZAI MARDAN: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leadership has dissolved its district organizations in Charsadda and Mardan, announcing plans for reorganization. The notification was issued by PTI Peshawar Region President Asim Khan to the General Secretary Kamran Bangash. According to a notification, the decision was made under the powers granted by the party's constitution and man-

ifesto. It aims to enhance governance and improve organizational performance in alignment with PTI's principles. After thorough deliberation, all district-level office-bearers in Charsadda and Mardan have been relieved of their duties. They are required to hand over all official documents and records to designated representatives within seven days. The reorganization process invites interested candidates to submit applications to join the newly structured district organizations. Applications must be submitted to the office of the General Secretary through designated channels within seven days of the notification's issuance. Late submissions will not be entertained. The notification also acknowledged the contributions of outgoing office-bearers and urged qualified candidates to actively participate in the reorganization process to strengthen the party's framework.