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Hafiz Naem says JI to hold Gaza million march in Peshawar on May 19



Soon Times Correspondent

KARACHI

Jamaat-e-Islami chief Hafiz Naemur Rehman stated on Tuesday that everyone who has violated the constitution, be it a political party or an institution, should ask for forgiveness. During a press conference here, Naem said that if every department or individual kept violating the constitution, how the country would run. Asked about the rigging in 2024 general elections, the JI chief said that Anvaarul Haq Kakar should be asked about the election candidates who won on the basis of Form 47. The JI chief declared that his party would hold a Gaza million march on May 19 in Peshawar where the party's future course of action would be announced. About the wheat import scandal, Naem said that a judicial commission should be formed to probe this scam.

IHC reserves verdict on plea against Shireen Mazari's alleged arrest

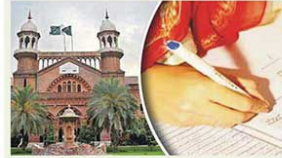


Soon Times Correspondent

ISLAMABAD

The Islamabad High Court has reserved its verdict on a petition against the alleged arrest/kidnapping of former federal minister Dr Shireen Mazari. Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani presided over Tuesday's hearing. Advocate Faisal Chaudhry appeared before the court on behalf of the petitioner, advocate Iman Mazari, while Additional Attorney General Manoor Iqbal Dogal represented the federation. At the outset of the proceedings, the court questioned the Anti-Corruption Establishment (ACE) authorities if their team had come to arrest Shireen Mazari. The ACE officials responded in the affirmative, saying that they came to arrest on May 21, 2022 and they had put Shireen Mazari on notice after registering the FIR. They told the court that the deputy commissioner had been informed beforehand and that they were accompanied by the personnel of the Kohsar Police Station.

LHC orders action against Nikah registrar in underage marriage case



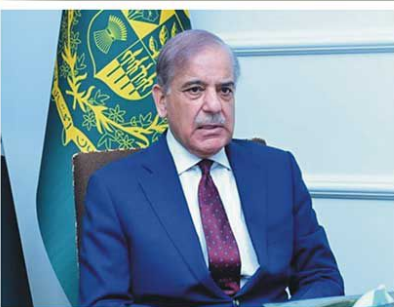
Soon Times Correspondent

LAHORE

The Lahore High Court on Tuesday ordered action against Nikah registrar for arranging the marriage of an underage girl. Justice Anwarul Haq Pannu heard the petition filed by Humaira Bibi, who brought the young girl from a shelter home and presented her in court. The petitioner stated that the girl, 15, was forced into marriage, with a case of abduction registered at Shahdara police station. Justice Pannu asked the girl if she married of her own choice, to which she responded, yes. When asked about her age, the girl stated she was between 15 to 16 years old. Justice Pannu blamed the Nikah Khawan, questioning how they facilitated the marriage of such a young girl.

All state enterprises except strategic entities to be privatised: PM Shahbaz

Loss-making SOEs to be privatised on priority basis, says Shehbaz Sharif



Soon Times Correspondent

ISLAMABAD

Pakistan will privatise all state-owned enterprises, with the exception of strategic entities, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif announced on Tuesday, broadening its initial plans to take only loss-making state firms private. The premier chaired a review meeting and green-lighted privatisation of profitable and loss-making SOEs. Shehbaz directed all federal ministries to take necessary action in this regard and cooperate with the Privatisation Commission, adding that the move aimed at ensuring a business and investment-friendly environment. Directing concerned authorities

to ensure transparency, the premier ordered to televise the privatisation process of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), including the bidding. Following the premier's instructions, the privatisation process of other institutions will also be broadcast live. A roadmap of the Privatisation Programme 2024-2029 was presented during the meeting and the ministers were informed about the progress made so far for the privatisation of SOEs. It was informed that the pre-qualification process for PIA's privatisation will be completed by the end of the month and that the privatisation of power distribution companies has also been included in the

programme. It was noted that loss-making SOEs were to be privatised on a priority basis and that a pre-qualified panel of experts is being appointed in the Privatisation Commission to speed up the sell-off process. On Sunday, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb dismissed the concept of 'strategic' SOEs, advocating for a broad privatisation strategy and reiterating the government's commitment to tax retailers. Aurangzeb's statements came during a pre-budget conference in Lahore, following Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar's announcement that the PML-N government would narrow its business scope to strategic and essential SOEs.

Govt denies impression of interference in judicial affairs



Soon Times Correspondent

ISLAMABAD

Federal Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar says the content of Justice Babar Sattar's letter wrongly gives the impression that institutions interfere in the judiciary's affairs. Federal Minister Tarar, along with Federal Information Minister Atta Tarar, said Attorney General for Pakistan Mansoor Awan also made it clear that there was no interference in the affairs of the judiciary. They said the matter of the six judges' letter to the Supreme Judicial Council was sub judice.

They said today there was a lot of discussion regarding TV, newspapers, media and social media regulator. A draft came to the cabinet for approval and some guidelines were given which are according to the constitution of Pakistan. Azam Nazeer Tarar further said Pakistan needed unity to challenge the economic crisis. Atta Tarar said if someone had dual citizenship, he had to declare it. "This one issue should not be raised as a national security issue through letters. The court was only asked for an in-camera briefing," he said. Meanwhile, Attorney General for Pakistan Mansoor Awan said nowadays the impression was being given that the relationship between the judiciary and the executive was not good. The AGP denied it. He said the letter by the judge was misconstrued.

Justice Babar Sattar highlights 'interference' in audio leak case

Soon Times Correspondent

ISLAMABAD

Islamabad High Court's (IHC) Justice Babar Sattar has pointed out alleged interference by Establishment in judicial affairs. Justice Sattar has penned a letter to IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq, informing him that he was asked to back off from the audio leak case. The case is related to the petitions filed by the PTI founder's wife Bushra Bibi and Najam Saqib, son of former chief justice of Pakistan (CJP) Saqib Nisar, last year against the audio leaks. In the letter, the IHC justice also gave reference to the case and noted: "... the Court has put on notice the heads of intelligence and investigation agencies, including ISI, IB and FIA, apart from relevant Ministries of the Federal Government and



statutory regulations such as PTA and PEMRA". "The question before the court is whether there exists a legal regime permitting surveillance of citizens," he wrote. Justice Sattar added that at some point during the hearing of the case, "I was delivered messages on behalf of top officials in the security establishment asking me to back off from extensive scrutiny of the existence and mode of surveillance." The high court judge further said he paid no heed to such intimidatory tactics and did not find that such messages created a risk of substantial detriment to the administration of justice.

Maryam wants all RO plants in Punjab functional, new ones in areas with brackish water

CM calls for a comprehensive plan for supply of clean drinking water in every Punjab area



Soon Times Correspondent

LAHORE

Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has issued instructions for making all inactive and damaged water filtration plants functional. The chief minister passed this order while chairing a meeting regarding the Aab Pak Authority here on Tuesday. During the meeting, a report was presented on the status of 5,027 water filtration plants installed

across Punjab.

The chief minister called for a comprehensive plan for the supply of clean drinking water in every area, and ordered the immediate activation of inactive and damaged reverse osmosis (RO) plants across the province. She also issued directives for the installation of new water filtration plants on a priority basis in areas with brackish water.

During the meeting, the CM directed the relevant authorities to utilise all-out resources to provide clean drinking water to citizens. It was also decided in principle to entrust the management of all water filtration plants to a single authority. The meeting was attended by Senator Pervez Rasheed, provincial minister Maryam Aurangzeb and others.

IHC bars authorities from blocking SIMs till May 27



Soon Times Correspondent

ISLAMABAD

The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Tuesday stopped the authorities concerned from blocking SIMs of non-filers. IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq heard the petition of a telecom company which questioned the rationale behind the Federal Board of Revenue insistence on blocking SIMs of non-filers. Advocate Salman Akram Raja appeared as a counsel for the company and argued that the move to block SIMs was in contravention of

Article 18 of the constitution. He said the blockage of more than 500,000 SIMs meant Rs1 billion annual loss. The court stopped the authorities from blocking SIMs and issued a stay order till May 27. The court sought a reply from the respondents. Agreement on SIMs' blockage Earlier, the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) agreed to block SIMs of non-filers after deliberations with the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR). The PTA and telecom companies agreed to block the SIMs of 5,000 non-filers every day. The development came as the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) held negotiations with the PTA and telecom companies. The FBR officials had a meeting with PTA and telecom operators for implementation of the Income Tax General Order. The purpose of the meetings was to ensure blocking of mobile SIMs of non-

As a **CORRESPONDENT**

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Green Pakistan Initiative

President Asif Ali Zardari on Tuesday visited the Green Pakistan Initiative Headquarters where he was given a detailed briefing about the Initiative, Land Information and Management System operations. Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfaraz Ahmed Bugti and Pakistan Peoples

Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari were also present on the occasion, the President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release. The president was briefed about the improved water irrigation system based on modern patterns. A briefing was also given over agriculture, dredging of canals, IT-based operations and effective irrigation water system under the Green

Pakistan Initiative. The president was also apprised of the concepts of model agrifarms and agricultural smart farms operations to facilitate the farmers' community for progress of the agriculture sector. President Zardari appreciated the working of Green Pakistan Initiative and Land Information and Management System under the Special Investment Facilitation Council

(SIFC). While lauding the team of Green Pakistan Initiative, he stressed upon working with equal zeal for the national and economic development of the country. For the bright future of Pakistan, the president also assured complete cooperation of all the provinces for achieving the objectives of Green Pakistan Initiative.

The Effectiveness of People-to-People Diplomacy in Building Trust between Nations:

Ruqia Akhter Malik
Fatima Jannah Women University

People-to-people diplomacy is when diplomats meet directly with the citizens of the host country, rather than just meeting with the official representatives of the host state. This type of diplomacy builds very strong relationships between nations, it can also be sensed as a conflict resolution strategy in which private citizens can play a role in mitigating interstate hostilities.

The relation of trust is of vital importance in building interstate relations. It's a pillar on which nations' success and failure of diplomatic efforts, treaties, and agreements depend. When nations have trust in each other this is when they are likely to go for dialogues and take conflict resolution measures, it can also help in de-escalating tensions between states. Furthermore, the key element in the formation of trade and economic relations between states is truly depending on how good allies they are of each other and what amount of trust exists between them. Trust also enhances the country's Credibility and reliability in the international arena. It's a compulsion for maintaining peace and stability in the world.

People-to-people diplomacy also involves a connection-building process that involves direct communication between the individuals which further leads to fostering good relations. This connectivity can lead to Cultural exchange programs, education initiatives, and economic programs, such interactions can lead to further building of greater trust and respect, and through such interactions, nations can clear misconceptions which will lead to stronger relationships of trust between them which will make a way forward for good diplomatic relations and a more peaceful world.

This concept was introduced in the mid-20th century during the conflicts when modern systems were prevailing with all zeal and zest. There are various initiatives through which People-to-people diplomacy can boost vitality. Student exchange programs where students from all around the world travel abroad to acquire education in esteemed institutions that not only promote cultural exchange but also build long-lasting friendships and

connections. Another way to promote people-to-people diplomacy is through Cultural Events and Festivals where countries display their Traditional attire, Music, Dances, and Cuisine, this promotes dialogues between different nations. Another way to boost people-to-people diplomacy is by providing Humanitarian Aid and Disaster relief to nations which had gone through conflicts or natural disasters, these gestures will promote goodwill and solidarity between states. Further, there are some plans of action to make people-to-people diplomacy more effective:

Cultural Exchange Programs: Student exchanges: Students from different countries visit each other's schools to learn and make friends. **Artist and cultural groups:** Artists and cultural groups visit other countries to share their art and learn about other cultures.

Sports: International sports events: Sports competitions where teams or athletes from different countries compete, promoting friendship and teamwork. **Sports exchanges:** Athletes from different countries visit each other to train and compete, building friendships.

Volunteer and Humanitarian Efforts: Disaster relief: providing help to nations to recover from natural disasters like earthquakes, floods, and tsunamis. **Community development projects:** Working with local communities to build schools, hospitals, or clean water sources, improving lives and fostering understanding.

Digital Platforms and Social Media: Online cultural exchanges: Using the internet to connect people from different countries to share their culture and learn from each other. The work is not so smooth in people-to-people diplomacy there are various challenges they have to face that hinder their work:

Political tensions and government policies can hinder diplomatic efforts e.g. Visa restrictions, and travel bans which can hinder individuals from participating in exchange programs and can also hinder international collaborations.

Lingual barriers and cultural differences will also hinder the progress of people-to-

people diplomacy when people are not able to understand each other this can somehow lead to misconceptions.

Limited funding and resources can restrict the scope and impact of people-to-people diplomacy initiatives so resource constraints also hinder the working.

In regions affected by conflict or instability, security concerns can deter individuals from participating in people-to-people diplomacy activities fear exists in individuals.

People-to-people diplomacy plays a crucial role in promoting conflict resolution and peace building. It fosters mutual understanding and empathy, which are key in reducing mistrust and hostility between nations. Activities such as cultural exchanges, sports diplomacy, and humanitarian efforts provide platforms for dialogue and reconciliation, laying the groundwork for peaceful conflict resolutions. People-to-people diplomacy enhances traditional diplomatic efforts by involving a wider array of participants in international relations. While traditional diplomacy primarily involves interactions between governments, people-to-people diplomacy engages non-governmental organizations, civil society, and individuals. This broader engagement can foster public backing for diplomatic initiatives and generate grassroots support for constructive developments.

In conclusion, our exploration has highlighted the pivotal role of people-to-people diplomacy in global relations. We've observed its capacity to forge personal bonds, cultivate mutual understanding, and drive grassroots endeavors. All pivotal in fostering trust among nations. Governments and organizations must prioritize investment in people-to-people diplomacy initiatives. These endeavors have demonstrated effectiveness in fostering comprehension, collaboration, and peace among nations. Through backing cultural exchanges, sports diplomacy, and humanitarian endeavors, governments and organizations can play a pivotal role in advancing a more harmonious and interconnected global community.

The Historical Nexus between Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and UAE



Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer

The rapidity with which the newly appointed Pakistani Prime Minister, Shehbaz Sharif, embarked on his inaugural official visit to Saudi Arabia underscored the significance of the relationship between the two nations. However, what truly captured global attention was the outcome of this visit, marked by a joint declaration that not only reaffirmed Saudi Arabia's commitment to invest \$5 billion in Pakistan but also urged for the resolution of longstanding disputes between Pakistan and India, notably the contentious issue of Jammu and Kashmir. This diplomatic move by Saudi Arabia aligns with a broader trend of Gulf nations actively engaging in efforts to facilitate peace between India and Pakistan. The United Arab Emirates, in particular, had previously brokered a crucial ceasefire between the two South Asian neighbors in 2021, effectively diffusing escalating tensions and averting potentially catastrophic cross-border conflicts that had flared up since 2019. The motivations driving Saudi Arabia and the UAE to step into the role of mediators in the India-Pakistan conflict are multifaceted and rooted in both regional geopolitics and historical dynamics. Understanding the complexities behind their intervention necessitates a nuanced appreciation of the evolving landscape in both the Middle East and South Asia. Firstly, the Gulf States have strategic interests in fostering stability in South Asia, given its proximity to the energy-rich region they inhabit. Instability or conflict in the Indian subcontinent could have ripple effects on global energy markets, which the Gulf economies heavily rely on. Additionally, Saudi Arabia and the UAE seek to position themselves as key players in regional diplomacy, enhancing their geopolitical stature and influence

on the world stage. Furthermore, both countries have historical ties with Pakistan, shaped by shared religious affiliations and longstanding economic partnerships. However, they also maintain significant relations with India, the world's largest democracy and a crucial trading partner. By advocating for peace between Islamabad and New Delhi, Saudi Arabia and the UAE aim to navigate a delicate balancing act, maintaining cordial relations with both countries while promoting regional stability. Moreover, the involvement of Gulf States in mediating the India-Pakistan conflict reflects a broader trend of increased diplomatic activism in the region. As traditional power dynamics undergo shifts and new geopolitical fault lines emerge, Saudi Arabia and the UAE are seeking to assert themselves as key arbiters of peace and stability, not only within the Middle East but also in neighboring regions.

The ties between the Middle East and South Asia have a rich and complex history, spanning centuries of commercial, religious and cultural interactions. These connections have endured through various historical epochs but recent times have seen significant developments, particularly since the establishment of modern Middle Eastern states after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the partition of India and Pakistan. Saudi Arabia emerged as a crucial supporter of Pakistan shortly after its inception in 1947. Despite being resource-constrained, Pakistan with its substantial Sunni-majority Muslim population, found a reliable ally in Saudi Arabia. Over the years, Saudi Arabia, along with the UAE, has provided Pakistan with essential financial assistance in the form of loans, grants and concessional oil. Pakistan reciprocates by sending a significant portion of its workforce, numbering 12.4 million overseas workers, predominantly to these Gulf States. These workers, constituting over 77% of nearly 830,000 who ventured abroad for employment in 2022, contribute substantially to Pakistan's economy through remittances. The relationship between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia extends beyond

economics to encompass strategic and security dimensions. Pakistan played a pivotal role in training "holy warriors" alongside Saudi Arabia and the US to combat the Soviet Union's presence in Afghanistan following its occupation in 1979. Furthermore, during the Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s, Pakistan stationed tens of thousands of troops in Saudi Arabia. Military collaboration, including training and arms exports, has been a consistent feature of Pakistan's engagement with Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Additionally, Pakistan, along with Saudi Arabia and the UAE, supported the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan during the early 1990s, perceiving it as a buffer against India. This stance contrasted with India and Iran's backing of the multi-ethnic Northern Alliance, reflecting broader regional power dynamics. Despite its close ties with Saudi Arabia and the UAE, Pakistan also seeks to maintain relations with Iran, mindful of its significant Shia minority. Iran was the first country to recognize Pakistan's independence and both nations enjoyed closer security cooperation during the reign of the shah, particularly through their involvement in the Baghdad Pact. However, the 1979 Iranian revolution altered the geopolitical landscape, fracturing alliances and forcing Pakistan to navigate a divided Middle East marked by the rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Pakistan found itself embroiled in a sectarian proxy war, exacerbated by the rise of Sunni militant groups nurtured by Saudi and American support for the Afghan jihad. Consequently, sectarian tensions have become entrenched within Pakistan, posing challenges to its internal stability. The relationship between Pakistan and the Middle East, particularly Saudi Arabia and the UAE, is multifaceted, encompassing economic, strategic, and security dimensions. However, Pakistan's engagement with the region is also influenced by its efforts to balance relations with Iran and navigate the complexities of sectarianism, reflecting the intricate geopolitical landscape of the Middle East and South Asia.

The Transformative Power of Literature:



Abdul Qayyum Ikhtrani

Educating Societal Evils Literature, as a mirror reflecting the complexities of human existence, possesses the unique ability to challenge, inspire, and ultimately

transform societies. Throughout history, it has served as a catalyst for change, offering insights into the human condition and shedding light on the injustices that plague our world. In this article, we delve into the profound impact of literature in combating societal evils, exploring how it serves as a powerful tool for enlightenment, empathy, and social reform. At its core, literature encompasses a vast spectrum of written works, ranging from novels and poetry to plays and essays. What unites these diverse forms is their capacity to capture the essence of the human experience and provoke thought and reflection. By delving into the lives of fictional characters or

examining the perspectives of real individuals, literature invites readers to step into the shoes of others, fostering empathy and understanding across cultural, social, and ideological divides. One of literature's most profound effects is its ability to cultivate empathy—the capacity to understand and share the feelings of others. Through vivid storytelling and rich character development, authors immerse readers in diverse narratives, allowing them to witness the joys, sorrows, triumphs, and struggles of individuals from all walks of life. By experiencing the world through the eyes of fictional or historical figures, readers develop a deeper appreciation for the complexities of human

emotion and the interconnectedness of humanity. Throughout history, literature has played a pivotal role in confronting and exposing societal evils, from injustice and oppression to discrimination and inequality. Writers have used their craft to shine a spotlight on pressing social issues, challenging prevailing norms and advocating for change. Whether through allegory, satire, or stark realism, literature serves as a powerful tool for critiquing the status quo and inspiring readers to envision a better, more just world. Countless works of literature stand as testaments to the transformative power of storytelling in combating societal evils. From Harriet Beecher Stowe's "Uncle Tom's Cabin,"

which exposed the horrors of slavery and galvanized support for the abolitionist movement, to George Orwell's "1984," which warned of the dangers of totalitarianism and censorship, these works have sparked conversations, provoked outrage, and mobilized individuals to take action. In today's world, literature continues to confront pressing societal challenges, ranging from environmental degradation and political corruption to systemic racism and economic inequality. Writers around the globe are using their platforms to amplify marginalized voices, challenge entrenched power structures, and advocate for meaningful change. Whether through novels exploring the

immigrant experience, poetry addressing climate change, or essays exposing corporate malfeasance, literature remains a potent force for social awareness and transformation. In conclusion, literature stands as a beacon of hope in our troubled world, offering solace, inspiration, and the promise of a better tomorrow. Through its capacity to foster empathy, confront injustice, and inspire action, literature has the power to remove the veil of ignorance and intolerance that shrouds our society. As readers and writers, let us embrace the transformative potential of literature and work together to build a more compassionate, equitable, and enlightened world for all.

SC allows Imran to appear in court via video link in NAB amendments case

Soon Times Correspondent
Islamabad
The Supreme Court (SC) granted permission to incarcerated former premier Imran Khan to appear before the court via video link in the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) amendments case. A five-judge bench led by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa presided over the hearing concerning the federal government's intra-court appeal (ICA) against the majority judgment declaring the amendments to the National Accountability Ordinance (NAO) 2002 illegal. Other members of the larger bench included Justice Aminuddin Khan, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Justice Athar Minallah, and Justice Syed Hasan Azhar Rizvi. The proceedings were live telecasted



government's arguments in the case. Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) advocate general however maintained that they would support the decision regarding the nullification of the NAB amendments. Justice Aminuddin Khan remarked that the issue was related to NAB's involvement in political engineering, and told the court that the former premier had requested to appear in court in his personal capacity. "If he wishes to present evidence via video link, he may do so," he noted. The court directed the attorney general to ensure an operational video link set up for the former PM's arguments. Justice Athar Minallah commented that when NAB ordinances were introduced, the government including Imran supported them.

on the apex court's website. At the outset of the hearing, both the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) prosecutor general and the lawyer representing the Punjab government stated that they would adhere to the federal



Islamabad: May 14, 2024: Chairman Prime Minister's Youth Programme Rana Mashood Ahmed Khan called on Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq.

Attorney general denies allegations of any interference in judiciary

Soon Times Correspondent

ISLAMABAD
Attorney General for Pakistan (AGP) Mansoor Usman Awan in a rare press talk on Tuesday refuted allegations of the government or any other state institution interfering in judiciary matters. Awan's remarks came shortly after the IHC began hearing two contempt pleas pertaining to the character assassination of IHC's Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani on social media and the leaking of Justice Babar Sattar's personal details. Awan maintained that it is necessary to issue clarification as the matter of the IHC judges' letter is being presented in a manner that implies a growing conflict between the executive and the judiciary. "It was requested to hear surveillance-related matters in-camera, to ensure the matter does not go into the public domain in order to protect the capabilities of our security and intelligence agencies," the AGP maintained, adding that this was communicated to the relevant quarters. He clarified that the office of the AGP and



to ensure sensitive information was not made public." Earlier in March, six judges of the Islamabad High Court (IHC) reached out to the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) seeking clarity on the alleged intrusion of executive members, including intelligence operatives, in the judicial matters. Six judges of the IHC—Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kiyani, Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri, Justice Babar Sattar, Justice Sardar Ejaz Ishaq Khan, Justice Arab Muhammad Tahir and Justice Saman Rafat Imtiaz—penned a letter to the SJC.

Tarar credits PM Shehbaz with promptly addressing AJK issue



making on part of the government of Shehbaz Sharif. Terming Kashmir as Pakistan's jugular vein, the minister mentioned that Pakistan had raised the matter of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir at every forum. About the country's economic situation, Tarar said that the government's efforts were yielding fruits as economic indicators were showing improvements with a downward trend in inflation and upward in investment. The minister said that international reports were signaling a positive trajectory for Pakistan's economy. Speaking on the occasion, Amor Muqam thanked Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for dealing with the issue in a timely fashion. He said there were elements who wanted to use the situation to their benefit and had nothing to do with the grievances of the Kashmiri people. Muqam said that the amicable resolution of prices issue was a defeat for such elements and victory for Pakistan and Kashmir.

Soon Times Correspondent
ISLAMABAD
Information Minister Attaullah Tarar said on Tuesday that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif averted a tragedy by addressing the demands of the people of Azad Jammu and Kashmir in a timely manner. Addressing a news conference alongside Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Amir

Muqam outside the Parliament House, the info minister, while calling the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf as Tehreek-e-Intishar, claimed that it was also planning to spread chaos on the situation in Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Tarar asserted that no one would be allowed to create chaos in AJK, saying that the resolution of the demands regarding subsidy on flour and electricity was an example of efficient decision-

We won't accept rude, arrogant behaviour of anyone: Asad Qaiser

Soon Times Correspondent
ISLAMABAD
Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Asad Qaiser said on Tuesday his party would not accept rude and arrogant behaviour of anyone. The National Assembly session started with Speaker Ayaz Sadiq in chair. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leader Asad Qaiser, in his address, said the way Khawaja Asif spoke to the speaker yesterday (Monday) was condemnable. He said Khawaja Asif was an elderly person 80 years of age. Being a senior parliamentarian he should realise this and show tolerance, said Qaiser. Speaking about erstwhile FATA, Qaiser said all parties in parliament had unanimously given tax exemption to FATA and this facility was meant to bring them on a par with other areas of the country. But, regrettably, they were deprived of basic rights, he said and added, FATA had been a war-torn area. No hospital or college had been established there so far, no development work was done in the area. That created unemployment and frustration among the people. "In such a situation, how can they be



and added that people sitting around him had been affiliated with different parties which were now part of Muslim League-Nawaz. As Ayub tried to say something about the father of Khawaja Asif, Speaker Ayaz Sadiq stopped him from talking further and told him not to mention those who were not in this world and let the session continue. Ali Muhammad Khan Leader of Tehreek-e-Insaf Ali Muhammad Khan said he wanted to talk about Pakistan. He said the house would investigate how the killers of Benazir escaped from the cameras that were installed in the bedrooms of the judges. "Those who do not like PTI founder should go to another country," he said. "My grandfather was a colleague of Quid-e-Azam and a soldier of Pakistan Movement, but he should not have been in Ayub Khan's cabinet, we all have to admit our mistakes," said Ali Muhammad Khan. He said founder of PTI was being punished because he tried to make policies without any pressure and interference. Barrister Gohar

equal to other areas and now if tax is imposed on them, it will be an unjust step," said Qaiser. "It is said that people of these areas do not pay taxes. I have all the data with me. About Rs70 billion are being collected from FATA as taxes," the PTI leader claimed. The PTI leader appealed to the speaker to form a committee on the matter including representatives from FATA. Omar Ayub Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly Omar Ayub, while reacting to Khawaja Asif's statement, said Asif used indecent language and unbecoming words while talking about his grandfather and his family. "He has not studied history correctly. I want to rectify something," said Ayub uc-

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT (RESEARCH & TRAINING WING) GOVERNMENT OF SINDH

Tender No. RTW/P&D/GOS/10/005-11/2023-24 Karachi, dated: 14th May, 2024

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI)

For Hiring of Individual Consultants for the Research Studies

Research & Training Wing of the Planning & Development Department, Government of Sindh inviting CVs from individuals who have the required considerable experience (minimum of 10 years), minimum Master's degree (18 years of education) in Social Sciences, Economics, Public Health, or other relevant fields), and professional expertise in undertaking research studies that analyze social sector initiatives, strategies, and policies to inform public sector planning and investments. The proposed studies with objectives are as under:

S. No.	Name of the Study	Main Objective	Duration of the Study
1	Regulatory Reforms to Foster Businesses in Pakistan, Especially Sindh	Conduct a thorough situational analysis of the regulatory reforms landscape in Pakistan vis-a-vis existing business reforms undertaken by the government of Sindh, analyze the institutional arrangements in support of the regulatory reforms to bolster businesses in Pakistan, especially in Sindh and develop concrete recommendations for the phased programme for effectively undertake pro-business reforms in Sindh Province	3 months
2	Snapshot Analysis of Stunting in Sindh	Conduct a thorough situational analysis of nutrition-related programme / initiatives undertaken by the Government of Sindh, analyze the institutional arrangements for tackling the issue of malnutrition and to develop concrete recommendations with indicative phased development plan and investment for effectively implementation of nutrition related initiatives	2 months
3	Post-Flood Implementation Strategy for Sindh	Conduct a thorough situational analysis of rural growth-oriented programmes / initiatives undertaken by the Government of Sindh, analyze the institutional arrangements in support of revitalization of rural economy in Sindh, also ascertain the underlying reasons for the gaps in planning & delivery and to develop concrete recommendations for implementation of phased programme for investments needed in effectively implementation of rural growth-oriented initiatives in Sindh	3 months
4	Results-Based Framework for Inclusion in Public Sector Planning & Development System	Conduct a thorough situational analysis of existing public sector planning and development systems within the government of Sindh relative to the Results-Based Framework (RBF) paradigm, and ascertain the underlying reasons for the gaps in the planning and delivery - Analyze the inimitable national and international result-based frameworks that are worthy of emulation and present an actionable roadmap for its implementation in the government's planning and development systems, and - Develop concrete recommendations to address the bottlenecks and propose the phased prioritization and implementation of the RBF in the government's systems	3 months
5	Land Use Planning and Management	Evaluate of existing effectiveness land use policies and regulation in Sindh province, identify key stakeholders involved in land use planning and management in the region, assess the impact of urbanization, agriculture and industrialization of land use patterns and to propose recommendations for sustainable and efficient land use practices in Sindh	4 months
6	Harnessing Public-Private Partnership (PPP) for Post-Flood Reconstruction	Main objective of study is to harness Public-Private Partnership (PPP) for acceleration of pace of progress in post-2022 rehabilitation and reconstruction by analyzing of priority areas, as to optimize post-flood reconstruction efforts, review analyze the institutional arrangements for public-private partnership focused on infrastructure, and make concrete recommendations for phased investments as to effectively leverage PPP particularly in post flood reconstruction	3 months
7	Revitalizing the Rural Economy of Sindh	Conduct thorough situational analysis of Sindh economy mainly rural growth-oriented relevant to programs/initiatives hitherto undertaken by the government of Sindh, analyze institutional arrangements in support of revitalization of Sindh economy and make concrete recommendations for phased investment planning for implementation of effective rural-growth oriented initiatives in Sindh	3 months

The interested individuals may submit their detailed Resume indicating Experience, description of similar assignments, experience under similar conditions, staff etc along with a covering letter, addressing to the Director General Research & Training Wing, Planning & Development Department, Government of Sindh on the address given at the bottom up to 31st May, 2024 at 2:00 pm. The individual consultant should have Master's degree in social Sciences, Economics, Public Health, or other relevant field(s) with 10 years' experience in the relevant field. The shortlisted individuals will be informed through letter as well as by posting report on SPRA website. Criteria for selection is given as under:-

This EOI along with detailed Terms & References is also available on the websites of Research & Training Wing and SPRA i.e. www.rtw.sindh.gov.pk & www.pppms.prapindh.gov.pk respectively.

"The Procuring Agency may reject any proposal submitted to relevant provision of SPP Rules 2010(Amended up-to now) and may cancel the process at any stage as per Rule -25(i) of said rules of SPP Rules 2010(Amended up-to now)." No claim in connection with preparation and submission of RFP will be entertained for Rule 72 (8).

Address for submission of Proposal:
Director General, Research & Training Wing, Planning & Development Department, Government of Sindh
Address: Fayaz Centre, Mezzanine Floor, Opp. FTC Building, Shahr-e-Faisal, Karachi.
Ph: # (021) 9932153

Bank of Khyber (BoK) has signed an agreement with Shaukat Khanum Memorial Cancer Hospital

Soon Times Correspondent
ISLAMABAD
Bank of Khyber (BoK) has signed an agreement with Shaukat Khanum Memorial Cancer Hospital (SKMCH) for access to top-tier Medical Care and Services at discounted rates for our employees and their dependents. The official agreement was signed by Muhammad Asif, Group Head HRD BoK, and Hussain Ahmad Qadri Director Business Operations SKMCH in the presence of senior executives from both organisations. Under this partnership, SKMCH will offer BoK employees and their



dependents access to a comprehensive range of outpatient department (OPD) services, including laboratory work at discounted rates. To avail these benefits,

BoK employees can simply present valid identification, such as their official Bank ID cards or digital credentials, when seeking care at SKMCH.

Russian president Putin to make a state visit to China this week



BEIJING
Russian President Vladimir Putin will make a two-day state visit to China this week, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said Tuesday, in the latest show of unity between the two authoritarian allies against the U.S.-led Western liberal global order.

Putin will meet Chinese leader Xi Jinping during his visit starting on Thursday, the ministry said, saying the two leaders would discuss "cooperation in various fields of bilateral relations... as well as international and regional issues of common concern." No details were mentioned.

The Kremlin in a statement confirmed the trip and said Putin was going on Xi's invitation. It said that this will be Putin's first foreign trip since he was sworn in as president and began his fifth term in office.



New Caledonia deploys more police as 'streets on fire' over

WELLINGTON/PARIS
Authorities in the French-ruled Pacific island of New Caledonia sent more police onto the streets, shut the international airport and imposed a curfew in the capital after protesters over the territory's voting system turned violent.

New Caledonia's capital Noumea was covered by a thick cloud of black smoke as night fell and the curfew started, local broadcaster NC La here reported, adding that a local sport facility had been set ablaze. The previous night, rioters burnt cars, supermarkets, clashed with police and set up barricades with tensions focused on plans to allow more people to take part in elections in New Caledonia, which indigenous Kanak protesters reject.



Palestinians mark 76 years of dispossession as a potentially even larger catastrophe unfolds in Gaza

Palestinians refer to it as the Nakba, Arabic for catastrophe. Some 700,000 Palestinians

JERUSALEM
Palestinians on Wednesday will mark the 76th year of their mass expulsion from what is now Israel, an event that is at the core of their national struggle. But in many ways, that experience pales in comparison to the calamity now unfolding in Gaza.

Palestinians refer to it as the Nakba, Arabic for catastrophe. Some 700,000 Palestinians—a majority of the prewar population—fled or were driven from their homes before and during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war that followed Israel's establishment. After the war, Israel refused to allow them to return because it would have resulted in a Palestinian majority within its borders. Instead, they became a seemingly permanent refugee community that now numbers some 6 million, with most living in slum-like urban refugee camps in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

In Gaza, the refugees and their descendants make up around three-quarters of the population. Israel's rejection of what Palestinians say is their right of return has been a core grievance in the conflict and was one of the thorniest issues in peace talks that last collapsed 15 years ago. The refugee camps have always been the main bastions of Palestinian militancy. Now, many Palestinians fear a repeat of their painful history on an even more cataclysmic scale.

All across Gaza, Palestinians in recent days have been loading up cars and donkey carts or setting out on foot to already overcrowded tent camps as Israel expands its offensive. The images from several rounds of mass evacuations throughout the seven-month war are strikingly similar to black-and-white photographs from 1948. Mustafa al-Gazzar, now 81, still recalls his family's monthlong flight from their village in what is now central Israel to the southern city of Rafah, when he was 5. At one point they were bombed from the air, at another, they dug holes under a tree to sleep in for warmth.

Poland to boost intelligence spending due to Russian threat

WARSAW

Poland will allocate an additional 100 million zlotys (\$25.30 million) to boost its intelligence services, Prime Minister Donald Tusk said on Tuesday, as he warned of a rising threat from Russia. Poland says its place as a distribution hub for supplies to Ukraine has made it a key target for Moscow's intelligence services, fears that were exacerbated last week when a judge who had access to military secrets defected to Russian ally Belarus.



"I decided to allocate 100 million zlotys from my reserve, the reserve of the prime minister, to strengthen the internal security and intelligence agencies," Tusk told a news conference. He said that Russian efforts to destabilise European countries, particularly Poland and the Baltic states, were set to intensify in the run-up to European elections in June.

"We will have to invest more resources, time, more actions when it comes to our special services," he said. However, he said that there was as yet nothing to indicate that several large fires in Poland in recent days were the work of external forces. Nevertheless, he said that Polish services had prevented several sabotage attempts. "In the last dozen or so weeks, also thanks to the support of our allies, Poland thwarted attempts to commit sabotage and arson," he said. Tusk added that Poland was likely to get EU funds to help strengthen its border with Belarus.

Top US and Chinese officials begin talks on AI in Geneva



GENEVA
Top envoys from the U.S. and China huddled in closed-door talks in Geneva on Tuesday to lay out their national approaches to the promise and perils of emerging artificial intelligence technology.

The talks, which Presidents Joe Biden and Xi Jinping agreed to launch in last 2023, are meant to open up bilateral dialogue between the world's two biggest economies — and increasingly, geopolitical rivals — on a fast-moving technology that already has consequences for trade, lifestyles, culture, politics, national security and defense and much more.

U.S. technology experts say the meeting — led on the American side by high-level White House and State Department officials — could offer a glimpse into Beijing's thinking about AI amid a generally tight-lipped Chinese approach to the technology.

Cofounder Jason Glassberg of Casaba Security in Redmond, Washington, an expert on new and emerging threats posed by AI, handicapped the meeting as a get-to-know-you that will likely yield few concrete results, but get the two sides talking.

"What's most important right now is that both sides realize they each have a lot to lose if AI becomes weaponized or abused," Glassberg said in an e-mail. "All parties involved are equally at risk. Right now, one of the biggest areas of risk is with deepfakes, particularly for use in disinformation campaigns." "This is just as big of a risk for the PRC as it is for the U.S. government," he added, referring to the People's Republic of China.

It was not immediately clear why the meeting was taking place in Geneva, though the internationally-minded Swiss city bills itself as a hub of diplomacy and U.N. and international institutions.

Sports & Showbiz

Sabalenka reaches Rome last 16, Djokovic returns after bottle drama



ROME
Australian Open champion Aryna Sabalenka cruised into the last 16 of the Rome Open with a straight-sets victory over Dayana Yastremska, 6-4, 6-2.

Second seed Sabalenka claimed her first win in four matches against Ukrainian Yastremska to set up a clash in the next round with either Elena Svitolina, a two-time winner at the Foro Italico, or Anna Kalinskaya. The 26-year-old Belarusian made short work of Yastremska, dispatching her opponent in one hour and 28 minutes without dropping a service

game and never looking in trouble. Sabalenka, who has never won in Rome but is a two-time champion on the Madrid clay, looks in good shape to at least match her 2022 run to the semifinals.

Earlier Maria Sakkari lined up a probable last-16 clash with Victoria Azarenka who faces 80th-ranked Egyptian Mayar Sherif later on Sunday. Novak Djokovic returns to centre court later as he takes on Chile's Alejandro Tabilo on the hunt for a sixth Rome title and a record-extending 11st Masters 1000 crown.

Only captains will be permitted to speak to referees at Euro 2024



Web Desk
Captains will be the only ones allowed to speak to the referee and discuss a decision during matches at the upcoming European Championship in a bid to facilitate clearer communication. UEFA's managing director of refereeing Roberto Rosetti said. "If any other player is found to approach the referee showing any sign of disrespect or dissent they will be shown a yellow card, Rosetti said. "Being a referee in the modern game is very difficult," Rosetti said in an open letter on Tuesday. "The official in the middle takes between 200 to 250 decisions per match—that is one every 22 seconds—in difficult and sometimes controversial situations, under huge pressure, with each of them scrutinised and re-watched from multiple different angles by fans and pundits alike. "They (referees) receive a lot of information from the Video Assistant Referee (VAR), and we are ready to speak and share more details with the players and coaches to help

them understand how a decision was taken." Rosetti said coaches and players have welcomed the new approach. "Explaining a decision with up to 22 players mobbing you is impossible for a referee. It can lead to a breakdown in communication, with the beautiful game turning very ugly very quickly," he added. "We ask that all teams ensure their captain is the only player who speaks to the referee. We ask the captains to ensure their team mates do not encroach upon and surround the referee, allowing direct conversations to take place in order that the decision be relayed in a timely and respectful manner. "Importantly, we want only the captain from the team who wishes to discuss a decision to be able to approach the referee." If the captain is a goalkeeper, Rosetti said an outfield player will be nominated to communicate with the referee. The quadrennial tournament will be held in Germany from June 14-July 14.

Alizeh Shah claps back at haters



(Web Desk)
Alizeh Shah, Pakistan entertainment industry actor, has created a stir recently due to her choice of dress at a recent award show. Her short black outfit led to a wave of criticism aimed at her as people took her to task for her bold choice of attire. It, however, appears the Ehd-e-Wafa actor has not let criticism affect her mood. Unexpectedly, Alizeh took to social media and responded, "Still looked better than the people sitting at home typing nonsense," in an Instagram Story. Before Alizeh rushing to her defence, the backlash was severe and some even compared her to Urfi Javed, an Indian actor also known for her daring fashion choices.

Record WSL goalscorer Miedema to leave Arsenal at end of season

Sports Desk
The highest Women's Super League (WSL) goalscorer of all time Vivianne Miedema will leave Arsenal in the close season after a seven-year stay, the club The Dutch international, who has 79 WSL goals to her name, joined Arsenal from Bayern Munich in 2017 and helped the club win the league in 2018-19 while setting the record for scoring the most goals (22) in a WSL campaign. "Early on at Arsenal I knew it was a place for me to grow and challenge myself as a player and a person," Miedema said in a video posted by Arsenal on social media. Miedema earned two WSL golden boots while at Arsenal, and was the top goalscorer in the Women's Champions League during their 2019-20 campaign. "Viv's goals and overall performances as an Arsenal



player have been of the highest quality, and she has created so many wonderful memories for us over the years," Arsenal's sporting director Edu Gaspar said in a statement. The 27-year-old forward struggled with injuries during her last two seasons at Arsenal, suffering an anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) injury in December 2022 that required surgery.