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Disagreements between PML-N, PPP on the issue of privatization



TENSIONS are brewing as the coalition partners brace for a looming showdown over the contentious issue of privatizing key state-owned enterprises, including Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) and the Steel Mills. This clash is expected to come to a head amid discussions surrounding the National Finance Commission Award (NFC), presenting yet another formidable challenge for the coalition.

The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leadership has taken a firm stance against the privatization of the national flag carrier, PIA. Their opposition is not solely rooted in concerns over potential declines in PIA's performance post-privatization, but rather in the fear of mass layoffs that could affect tens of

thousands of employees. These employees, many of whom were hired during various tenures of the PPP government, now face the prospect of unemployment should privatization proceed unchecked. The Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) is facing significant challenges due to its excessive staffing levels and longstanding financial losses. This over-staffing has contributed substantially to the airline's inefficiency and financial woes over the years. Many positions within the organization are filled based on political affiliations rather than merit, resulting in a workforce that often lacks the skills and motivation necessary to drive the airline's growth.

Furthermore, the PIA continues to grapple with the repercussions of being banned from operating in European countries. This ban was imposed following the revelation of fake degrees held by some Pakistani pilots during the PTI government's tenure. This incident not only tarnished the reputation of the airline but also underscored broader issues of regulatory compliance and safety standards within the aviation industry. The Pakistan Steel Mills stands as a poignant example of a burdensome venture draining resources without yielding commensurate benefits. Despite its potential, the institution has become synonymous with inefficiency, with a significant portion of its workforce seemingly more focused on reaping perks than contributing to its productivity. The prevalent presence of employees affiliated with political parties such as the PPP and MQM further complicates matters, as any attempts to privatize or reform the Steel Mills are met with staunch resistance, effectively thwarting much-needed efforts for revitalization and efficiency enhancement.

One plausible explanation for the PPP's decision not to join the cabinet could be its reluctance to be in a position where opposing the privatization process would be challenging. Anticipating this scenario, the PPP may opt to exert pressure on the PML-N government in the near future, leveraging their awareness that the government's stability hinges significantly on PPP support. This strategic move could potentially empower the PPP to influence policy directions more effectively, using their political leverage to shape governance outcomes in alignment with their priorities. A significant political negotiation looms over the distribution of the NFC (National Finance Commission) award, spurred by the IMF's push for a return to pre-18th amendment allocations. Prior to the 18th amendment, 47.5 percent of the federal government's total revenues were distributed among the provinces. However, post-amendment, this volume was raised to 50.5 percent, reflecting a significant increase. The IMF contends that this shift has led to an imbalance, asserting that the provinces are receiving an excessive share and advocating for a rationalization of the distribution. Given that the PPP played a pivotal role in championing the 18th amendment, it is poised to resist any alterations to the NFC award. Their historical stance on decentralization and provincial autonomy aligns with the increased allocations to the provinces post-amendment. Consequently, the PPP is likely to vehemently oppose any attempts to roll back these allocations, viewing it as a regression in the devolution of powers and resources to the provinces.

Chief Editor's Profile: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti is a career journalist. He started off as District Correspondent of Daily The Muslim in 1988 from Gujrat. Later he moved to Islamabad and joined Pakistan Observer as Sub-Editor / Op-ed Writer, in 1993. In 1995 he again moved to The Muslim as Sub-Editor and he left The Muslim in 1997 to join THE Nation as City Editor and Diplomatic Correspondent, where he remained till 2002. His association with the The News spans over three years from 2002 to 2005 as columnist. In 2005 Mr. Bhatti switched over to Khabrain Group as Columnist / Special Correspondent. In 2010 he was made Resident Editor of The Post, a sister publication of daily Khabrain. In 2010, he launched his own publication Centreline. He has authored two books on European Union. He also served in Pakistan Telecommunication Company (PTCL) as Media Advisor/ Director Communication. He launched Diplomatic News Agency (DNA) in 2012. In May 2020 he launched Pakistan's First & only Diplomatic Newspaper Daily Islamabad POST.

Will the govt complete its term?

Ansar M Bhatti



THE incumbent government's honeymoon period is likely to be spoiled by the Opposition parties, which appear to have girded up their loins for a mass

movement after Eid. The PTI ostensibly will be leading this movement. In a highly charged press interview on Saturday, April 6, 2024, Imran Khan not only launched scathing verbal attacks against the incumbent chief of the army staff but also revealed the presence of dissenting elements within his own party. These disclosures serve to further fuel and bolster the impending movement, setting the stage for intensified political turbulence in the coming weeks.

Khan's adoption of a belligerent posture towards the Establishment can be attributed to primarily two factors. Firstly, the perception was growing that the founder of PTI was receiving preferential treatment from the courts, hinting at a potential arrangement with the Establishment to expedite his release from incarceration. Although there might be some clandestine negotiations between the Establishment and the PTI founder underway, Khan's recent interview serves to reassure PTI supporters who were disheartened by speculations of a covert agreement. Additionally, as highlighted earlier, the PTI required a compelling narrative to underpin its anti-government campaign effectively. Opposition parties assert that a narrative critical of the Establishment is more likely to garner widespread acceptance and support across various segments of society.

In the past, both the PML and the PPP sought to bolster their strength and popularity by challenging the Establishment of the time. Figures like Nawaz Sharif and

“The sole solution to escape this quagmire is through holding free and fair elections, facilitating a people’s representative government to assume power. Any interim measures, including the current one, will only exacerbate our problems”

Maryam Nawaz from the PML-N made brazen threats against the Establishment, while the incumbent President Asif Zardari, in a public address, boldly asserted the enduring presence of politicians compared to the transient nature of the Establishment's influence. These tactics seemed to pay off, as both parties eventually ascended to power. Building upon these historical precedents, it's clear that Imran Khan is prepared to embark on a similar path, fueled by the conviction that his vocal opposition to the Establishment will yield comparable dividends for his political aspirations. This assertion gains further credence given his stature as the foremost leader in the nation. The recent decision by the Islamabad High Court judges to write a letter to the Supreme Judicial Council highlighting spy agencies interference in their matters seems to have favored the PTI founder and provides additional momentum to Khan's cause. In the prevailing political landscape, the absence of PPP's participation in the government could pose significant challenges to the longevity of the Shehbaz Sharif administration. History and precedent suggest that prime ministers typically maintain their position for around two to two and a half years. However, without the support of PPP, the Shehbaz government's ability to sustain itself for even a two-year tenure seems uncertain. The burgeoning opposition protest movement presents yet another formidable challenge to the government's ongoing stability.

The inherent tension between the Establishment and the government is a longstanding feature of Pakistani politics, deeply ingrained in its polity. This tension can manifest gradually over time or erupt immediately upon a new government as-

suming power. Unfortunately, the Shehbaz government appears to have quickly fallen victim to this dynamic.

From the outset, the appointment of finance and interior ministers within the Shehbaz administration drew discontent within the PML-N ranks. Despite Shehbaz Sharif's purported pro-Establishment stance, he has seemingly failed to reconcile with these appointments, indicating a fracture within the party's alignment.

Regrettably, this discord is only the tip of the iceberg. The ongoing tug-of-war between the government and the Establishment is poised to escalate into more contentious territory in the days ahead. Such developments bode poorly for Shehbaz Sharif and his administration, signaling potential challenges and hurdles on the horizon. All said and done. Politicians possess the capability to effectively address these challenges. Cultivating genuine connections with ordinary citizens is crucial, achievable through meaningful engagement and incentives. However, regrettably, many politicians overlook this vital aspect. Consequently, when they are ousted from power, the public often expresses relief. Imran Khan, inter alia, tried to deviate from the path of status quo and showed his intention to help out the have-nots. What happened to him afterwards needs no elaboration. Even if a new setup replaces the Shehbaz government, it cannot guarantee political and economic stability. The sole solution to escape this quagmire is through holding free and fair elections, facilitating a people's representative government to assume power. Any interim measures, including the current one, will only exacerbate our problems.

The writer is the newspaper editor.

Austrian envoy calls for women empowerment

Empowering Artisans: Serena Hotels and Behbud Association Collaborate for Cultural Celebration

ISLAMABAD: Serena Hotels under the Cultural Diplomacy initiative collaborated with Behbud Association to jointly organize the two-day Handicraft Eid Bazaar to support women artisans from all over Pakistan and to foster their economic empowerment. The chief guest of the event, the Ambassador of Austria H.E. Andrea Wicke, who inaugurated the Eid Bazaar said, this is a way to celebrate the artistry and creativity of home-based workers. I understand the dedicational passion required to create beautiful pieces of art; therefore, I am particularly delighted to witness the exquisite craftsmanship on this event and I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Behbud and Serena Hotels for organizing such a beautiful event to promote women empowerment. The two-day bazaar aimed to celebrate the strength and creativity of home-based workers and women artisans across Pakistan, who continue in crafting remarkable artifacts despite facing challenging circumstances. Guests were treated to a diverse array of traditional crafts and needlework originating from various regions of Pakistan, including Ralli, Hand & Machine Embroidery, Kantha, Chikankari, Block Printing, Smocking, Cutwork, Cross-stitch, Taarkashi, Phulkari, Crochet, Knitting, and more. The artisans graced the stalls, offering live demonstrations of their craft and techniques. The exhibition attracted many visitors, who thoroughly enjoyed exploring the intricate craftsmanship on display. The President of Behbud Association Ms. Abida Malik said, Behbud has been steadily working in the pursuit of the economic empowerment of the women from the most overlook communities of Pakistan. Over the years, it has touched the life of thousands of women and their families in a very positive way. By investing in women, we invest in the future of our communities and our country. We recognize the immense potential and talent that women possess, and it is our mission to create an environment where they can succeed. Serena Hotels, renowned for its support of cultural preservation and community empowerment, provided invaluable support for these initiatives. The collaboration with Behbud Association highlights their ongoing commitment to uplifting local artisans and celebrating Pakistan's rich heritage. By hosting events such as the Handicraft Bazaar, Serena Hotels actively promotes sustainable tourism while showcasing the talents of home-based workers and women artisans to a global audience. – DNA



A Journey through Karabakh



Ahsan Hamid Durrani

IN the heart of the Caucasus, amidst the echoes of a turbulent past, lies the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. It was a land scarred by conflict, where the shadows of Armenian occupation once loomed large. Yet, it was also a land of resilience and hope, where the spirit of its people soared above the ruins left by the ravages of war. My journey to Karabakh was not merely a trip but an expedition of sorts, a quest to bear witness to history in the making. Accompanied by a group of international visitors, I traversed through the remnants of Armenian occupation, a grim reminder of the toll that conflict can exact upon a land and its people. Arriving in the city of Fuzuli, I was greeted by the desolation of a community reduced to ruins. Mosques, churches, homes, and schools lay shattered, a testament to the rampage unleashed by the departing Armenian forces. Watching the ghostly ruins of this city, I felt the weight of history pressing down upon me, the echoes of the past whispering tales of sorrow and loss. But amidst the rubble, a flicker of hope emerged as I traveled deep into the city center. New buildings rose defiantly from the ashes, a testament to the indomitable spirit of the Azerbaijani people. Fuzuli was not just a city in ruins; it was a canvas upon

which the resilience of a nation was painted with blood and sweat. As locals toiled tirelessly to rebuild their shattered lives, I witnessed the birth of a new chapter in the city's history—a chapter defined not by destruction, but by resilience and renewal. More than 400 families have started living in this city. Venturing further into the heart of Karabakh, I arrived in the enchanting city of Shusha, a jewel nestled amidst lush green mountains and pristine snow. Here, amidst the echoes of a bygone era, I witnessed the rebirth of a cultural capital reclaiming its rightful place in the annals of history. The Yukhari Govhar Agha Mosque, once desecrated by Armenian forces where they housed cattle and pigs, stood tall once more, its walls echoing with the prayers of the faithful.

“In Shusha, I delved into the rich tapestry of Azerbaijani culture, immersing myself in the legacy of a renowned singer Murtuza Mammadov, affectionately known as Bulbul by the locals. His museum, a tribute to his enduring legacy, stood as a testament to the resilience of the human spirit—a spirit that transcended the boundaries of time and conflict.”

The mosque was completely restored by Azerbaijani authorities. Nearby, a new luxury hotel stood as a beacon of hope, a symbol of Shusha's resurgence as a vibrant tourist destination. Yet, amidst the gleaming facades and bustling streets, reminders of the city's tumultuous past lingered—houses and buildings destroyed by the occupation forces of Armenia. In Shusha, I delved into the rich tapestry of Azerbaijani culture, immersing myself in the legacy of a renowned singer Murtuza Mammadov, affectionately known as Bulbul by

the locals. His museum, a tribute to his enduring legacy, stood as a testament to the resilience of the human spirit—a spirit that transcended the boundaries of time and conflict. His vandalized statue stood beside a newly erected one bearing testament to the scars left Armenian forces in an effort to destroy the soul of this city. As I gazed upon the snow-capped peaks of Karabakh, I couldn't help but marvel at the transformation that had taken place. Where once the echoes of gunfire had pierced the air, now the strains of folk songs resonated, a celebration of newfound freedom and unity. New constructed roads, monuments, and residential and commercial buildings lifted the spirit of the city. It's indeed a wonderful achievement that such progress has been

achieved in merely a span of three years. The Azerbaijani flag, once a distant dream, now fluttered proudly atop the lofty mountains, a symbol of hope and reconciliation. My journey through Karabakh was more than just a voyage through a land scarred by conflict—it was a testament to the resilience of the human spirit, a reminder that even amidst the darkest of times, hope can still bloom. As I bid farewell to this land, I carried with me not just memories, but a renewed sense of hope for a future where peace and prosperity reign supreme.

IS attacks in Moscow Likely to give new turn to global strategic moves

Opinion

The Taliban regime time and again has been making claims of strengthening its intelligence network against IS but all these foreign groups and individuals have already established better understanding with the Afghan Taliban, majority of whom are now in control of important offices

Shamim Shahid

LATEST Islamic State Khorasan firing against occupants of a concert hall in Moscow has not only jolted the world but it is now giving new turns and directions to global strategic battling which is still controlled by two traditional rivals US and Russian Federation (successor of USSR). Whatever may be directions and targets of follow up of Moscow firing incidents, its epicenter wouldn't be other than border regions between former British India and Afghanistan, dominated by Pushtoos. No one can deny the fact that Pushtoos are no more independent as they have been made slaves and hostages by spymasters led in the sacred name of Islam and Jihad. The Islamic States (IS) also called Daesh is the latest of Mujahideen, sponsored, trained, financed and encouraged by US led allies against the former Soviet Union. The IS came into being at the time when at the last moment of the first decade of millennium, US lead allies were fed up by continuous resistance by Taliban in war devastated Afghanistan. At early stages, the IS focused almost its attention and strategies against Shia Iran whereas it was engaged in efforts for the survival of the Syrian government. Despite wholehearted support of US led allies, the IS had failed in the Syrian war. IS militants after its failure, returned to war devastated Afghanistan at the time when Pakistan also pulled Al Qaeda remains out of tribal regions by

commencing military operation Zarb-i-Azab on June 15, 2014 last. Making Afghanistan as its base camp like Al Qaeda, the IS had made hellish lives of all those progressive, nationalists, democrats and moderate Pushtoon elders who are known for opposition to extremism and terrorism. At this stage, the IS constituted a 40-member council (Shura) for making its decisions and strategies. Majority of the 40-member council were those who remain in important offices in banned Tehrik Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Still the IS is commanded by Pakistani origin Taliban who are in cordial and friendly links with Taliban (Emirate Islami Afghanistan) governing Afghanistan. The Emirate Islami has already declared Afghanistan as a free and safe place for like-minded militants from all over the world. It doesn't mean that with the killing of Osama Bin Laden and Dr. Aiman Al Zawahiri, Al Qaeda lost its existence or its contacts with other hardliners, operating/active on the soil of Afghanistan since the so-called cold war. Taliban regime in Afghanistan like in the late 90's, once again gave another life to almost alleged terrorist groups. Similarly like in the past, the US is still maintaining dual standards on the issue of Muslim extremism. Through one or the other ways, the US spy masters are still in command of influencing Taliban (both Afghani and Pakistani), Al Qaeda

and its affiliated groups from different countries through its experienced and tested allies like Pakistan and Saudis like Afghan Mujahideen. In 2019, the US helped Afghan in joint combat against IS in Afghanistan's eastern zone bordering with Pakistan. Over three thousand IS militants, mostly Pakistanis have been arrested during the crackdown but the Emirate Islami took credit for their release after returning into power on August 15th 2021 last. Like Pakistani militants associated with both Pakistani and Afghan Taliban, a large number of CAR militants already joined IS. There are also reports of Afghan Taliban and Mujahideen joining the IS. Some of these Afghan Taliban were disheartened when they were neglected in appointment against choice political, civil and military offices. Though apparently, the Emirate Islami Afghanistan is making claims of stern action against the IS militants, it seems hard as it (Emirate) does not want to harm all those who either played a role either in Afghan war against former USSR or War on terror, declared by US against Al Qaeda lead militants after 9/11. The Taliban regime time and again has been making claims of strengthening its intelligence network against IS but all these foreign groups and individuals have already established better understanding with the Afghan Taliban, majority of whom are now in control of important offices. Pakistan is still in a bid to get relevance in the region. The US and China are compelled to have relations with Pakistan. Economically and politically, Pakistan seems to be losing in the race against India. India is considered the biggest consumer market in Asia, therefore, China didn't afford Pakistan-India hostilities. The new government of Shehbaz Sharif is making its best to have cordial relations between New Delhi and Islamabad but Pakistan's powerful military establishment is thinking on other lines. Russian Federation President Putin has declared an Emergency and War like situation, by saying that NATO troops are in Ukraine. In such a circumstance it could be hard for Pakistan to stay away from another round of Soviet-US tussles. There are apprehensions that like the so-called cold war, Afghanistan, especially Pushtoos dominated areas on both sides of Pak-Afghan border would again be front line in the new battle, commencing through IS.

- The views expressed in the article are the writer's own.

CEO and Founder of the Monal Group Luqman Ali Afzal hosts grand iftaar for friends





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Captivating Qawwali night at Serena Hotels

Legendary Fareed Ayaz and Abu Muhammad Qawal steal the show

Through this collaborative endeavor, Serena Hotels CEO reaffirmed his commitment to promoting cultural diversity and inclusivity, enriching the fabric of society with the timeless beauty of music and tradition: Aziz Boolani

Ansar M Bhatti

ISLAMABAD: A harmonious fusion of culture and entertainment unfolded as Serena Hotels and Hum TV Presented a captivating Qawwali Night with the Legendary Fared Ayaz and Abu Muhammad Qawal.

In a harmonious collaboration, Serena Hotels and Hum TV came together to curate an unforgettable evening of soul-stirring Qawwali, featuring the renowned maestros Fared Ayaz and Abu Muhammad Qawal. This captivating event, held under the esteemed Serena Hotels Cultural Diplomacy initiative, not only celebrated the rich heritage of Qawwali music but also fostered cultural exchange and unity.

Welcoming esteemed guests with warmth and grace, Aziz Boolani, the CEO of Ser-

ena Hotels (Global), set the stage for an enchanting journey through the mystical realms of Qawwali. In his insightful remarks, he underscored the significance of such cultural gatherings in promoting mutual understanding and appreciation among diverse communities.

The event, a highlight of Serena Hotels' cultural calendar, holds special significance as it coincides with the holy month of Ramadan, a time of spiritual reflection and communal harmony. As attendees immersed themselves in the soulful melodies and powerful verses of Qawwali, they were transported to a realm where borders dissolve, and hearts resonate in unison.

With every note resonating in the air, the Qawwali night became a testament to the enduring legacy of art in bridging

divides and fostering unity. Through this collaborative endeavor, Serena Hotels CEO reaffirmed his commitment to promoting cultural diversity and inclusivity, enriching the fabric of society with the timeless beauty of music and tradition. Another notable aspect of the event was the distinguished presence of especially the European diplomats, including Ambassadors from France, Norway, Italy, Poland, Jordan, TRNC who thoroughly enjoyed the festivities.

Ambassador Mohammad Karmoune of Morocco, known for his consistent attendance at Serena Hotels' events, expressed his appreciation for the performances and commended CEO Aziz Boolani for offering the diplomatic community an enriching experience of traditional Pakistani Sufi music.





Malaysian envoy hosts iftar dinner for the MTCP ex-participants

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The High Commissioner of Malaysia to Pakistan, Ambassador Mohammad Azhar Mazlan hosted the "Iftar Dinner Reception for Pakistan's former participants of the Malaysia Technical Cooperation Programme (MTCP)" at the Malaysian High Commission in Islamabad. The reception was attended by distinguished guests including officials from Pakistan's key ministries, the Malaysian High Commission and Pakistan's former participants of the MTCP. The purpose of the reception was to promote continuous engagements with the aim of fostering a long-lasting and strong bond of friendship between the officials of both countries.

During the reception, Ambassador Azhar in his speech welcomed the guests and shared salient features of the program. He stated that the event aimed to establish

closer relations and strengthen networking between the High Commission of Malaysia in Islamabad and Pakistan's former MTCP participants. Malaysia attaches great importance to its bilateral relations with Pakistan. He added that the long-standing bilateral relations and close cooperation between the two brotherly countries have covered various areas including trade, investment, education, tourism, culture, defense, and technical assistance on human capital development, among others.

The MTCP was officially launched on 7 September 1980 at the Second Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting to signify Malaysia's commitment to South-South Cooperation in particular technical cooperation among developing countries, with its main objective to achieve sustainable economic and social development among the countries. The MTCP is a flagship programme of the Malaysian government,

aimed at providing technical assistance and capacity-building to developing countries. The MTCP also emphasises human resources development mainly through training, short-term courses in public and private Malaysian training institutions, and long-term courses in Malaysian public universities. It entails prioritising developing countries of strategic interests, focusing on Malaysia's area of expertise, demand-driven courses/ programmes, cultivation of potential participants who would later serve as 'Friends of Malaysia', Public-Private Partnership, and collaboration with new development partners beyond MTCP's traditional partners. Annually, Malaysia's flagship MTCP offers more than 60 technical training and capacity-building programmes in vast areas of development in collaboration with leading local training institutions and international development partners.





ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Azerbaijan Khazar Farhadov hosted iftar dinner for Dr. Abrarul Hasnain, the renowned dentist of Islamabad. The Ambassador hosted Iftar dinner at his residence. – DNA

Pakistan can play important role in global economy: envoy

Saifullah Ansar

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Brazil to Pakistan, Olyntho Vieira on Wednesday said that Pakistan can play an important role in the global economy by becoming a part of the international multilateral forum BRICS. Pakistan is a big market in terms of its population which can play an important role in BRICS and promote trade with these countries, the Ambassador said. Ambassador of Brazil to Pakistan, Olyntho Vieira said this in call on meeting with President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari and Secretary General UBG, FPCCI Zafar Bakhtawri. The Brazilian ambassador said that the BRICs have an important role in the future global economy and with it, South-South cooperation will also grow and international multilateralism will be strengthened. He said that Pakistan is the largest market in terms of population in the Islamic world, which is important because of its geo- Strategic location and there is a need to strengthen the trade relations between Brazil and Pakistan. He said that Pakistan and Brazil have vast trade and cooperation opportunities in technology and fruits, especially mango and Citrus, which need to be expanded further. Brazilian Envoy said that Brazil is part of various economic and trade integration forums in the world and South, South Cooperation are very important from which Pakistan can take full benefits. The Ambassador said that between Pakistan and Brazil there is a mutual trade of \$45 mil-

lion in which Brazil is in trade surplus. He said that Brazil is exporting soybeans and cotton to Pakistan, while Pakistan is exporting surgical equipments, textiles and fruits to Brazil. He said that in the same way, Brazil is a big market with which Pakistan can be connected with the market of South America by being economically connected. Meanwhile, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that the signing of Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between Pakistan and Brazil will promote mutual trade in both countries and both countries will be able to benefit from each other's markets. He said that the role of the business community is

very important for the promotion of mutual trade relations between Pakistan and Brazil and ICCI is ready to play its full role in this regard. Ahsan said that Brazil is a big trade market which is connected to a big trade block like BRICs and its trade and economic relations with Pakistan are important. He said that there are wide possibilities of cooperation between Pakistan and Brazil in the field of sports, especially in football. Brazil can co-promote football in Pakistan. Meanwhile, Zafar Bakhtawari highlighted the international importance of Brazil and its role in global trade and expressed hope for the expansion of mutual economic and trade relations between the two countries in the future.



CEO Serena Hotels Global, Aziz Boolani hosts Iftar dinner





CEO Serena Hotels Global, Aziz Boolani hosts Iftar dinner



CEO Serena Hotels Global, Aziz Boolani hosts Iftar dinner





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AIR LINK BRAND SPECIFIC STORE
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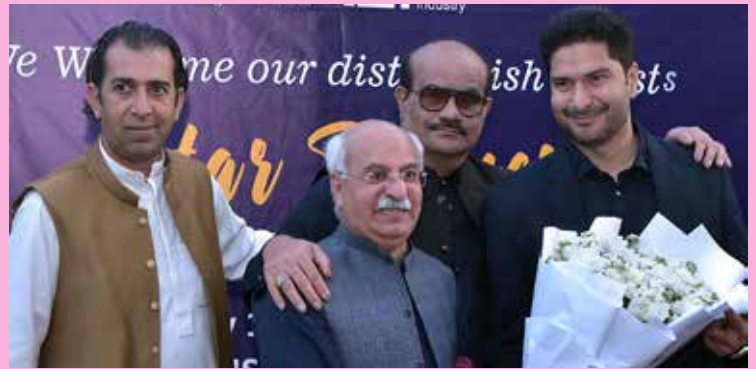
Brunei high commissioner hosts Ifar for Rising Stars Hockey Club



ISLAMABAD: High Commissioner Col (r) Kamal Ahmed of Brunei extended a gracious gesture by hosting an iftar dinner for the players of the Rising Stars Hockey Club at his residence. It's noteworthy that Ambassador Kamal himself is an active member of the Rising Stars Hockey Club. — DNA

Chairman PAEI Khurshid Barlas hosts Iftar dinner







Azerbaijan embassy distributed Ramadan package among the needy people

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador Khazar Farhadov of Azerbaijan, along with his wife, graciously distributed essential food items among the under-

privileged individuals at the Sundas Foundation. It's heartening to note that the Embassy of Azerbaijan consistently extends support by providing Ramadan packages annually to those in need in Pakistan. This act of kindness underscores the strong bond between Azerbaijan and Pakistan, characterized by mutual assistance, particularly during challenging times. Such gestures exemplify the spirit of solidarity and cooperation between our nations. – DNA



Barrister Mansoor Shah hosts Iftar dinner



Samson's Group, CDA join hands for tree plantation drive



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Samson's Group of Companies launches 'Samson's Million Tree Plantation Drive 2024', in collaboration with CDA, aiming to restore landscapes and combat climate change in Pakistan. The inauguration was held on the International Day of Forests, March 21st, 2024, at

F-9 Park, Islamabad. Mr. Sami-ur-Rehman, Chairman of Samson's Group of Companies, Barrister Mansoor Shah, Chief of Corporate Affairs Samson's, Mr. Khazar Farhadov Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan, Mr. Qaiser Khattak, Director CDA & Mr. Yaqub Ali, Deputy Inspector General Forests & Climate Change with other stakeholders inaugurated the ceremony by planting a tree on Jinnah Avenue Green Belt.

Football League organised by the UAE embassy





ISLAMABAD: Dr. Maen KHREASAT Ambassador of Jordan received Mohammad Yahaya, the new UN Resident Coordinator, and Humanitarian Coordinator in Pakistan. They had an interesting discussion on the way forward in collaboration with member states. – DNA



RAWALPINDI: Isphanyar Bhandara Spokesperson Federal Government visited Krishna Mandar and greeted the member of the Hindu community on the occasion of holy ritual. Isphanyar Bhandara's visit to Krishna Mandir in Rawalpindi, where he extended warm greetings to members of the Hindu community, presents a significant opportunity to enhance the fabric of social harmony and inclusivity in city. – DNA

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President RCCI Sakib Rafiq hosts Iftar dinner





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SIFC's Agriculture Plans and Water Scarcity...



Qamar Bashir

UPON perusing the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC)'s website, one encounters an impressive brochure detailing the Green Pakistan initiative. The brochure boasts a professional design, featuring easily readable text accompanied by high-definition images showcasing various facets of the GPI, painting an impressive picture. The initiative commences with a vision statement, which articulates its overarching goal: "Ensure food security and optimize agricultural production in Pakistan through innovative technologies and sustainable, precision-driven agricultural practices based on the agro-ecological potential of the land, while safeguarding the well-being of rural communities and preserving the environment." Furthermore, the brochure outlines the mechanism to achieve this mission, emphasizing the utilization of innovative technologies and sustainable, precision-driven agricultural practices tailored to Pakistan's agro-ecological potential. It underscores the importance of prioritizing the welfare of rural communities and the conservation of the environment in the pursuit of food security and agricultural optimization. In an effort to attract investors, the brochure leverages Pakistan's diverse climate zones and vast land resources, encompassing a total of 79.6 million hectares. Within this expanse, 24.1 million hectares are cultivated, with an additional 9.1 million hectares available for agriculture, and 22.4 million hectares designated for range use. Through strategic marketing, smart business propositions are being presented to potential investors, promising enticing returns on investment. These plans aim to catalyze a transformation in Pakistan's agriculture, livestock, and afforestation

sectors by deploying state-of-the-art machinery and cutting-edge digital technologies. The objective is to transition to modern mechanisms, maximizing output, and unlocking Pakistan's immense agricultural potential. But what it does not tell is that Pakistan is Water scarce country facing a frightening situation. The country ranks 14 among the 17 'extremely high water risk' countries of the world, a list that includes hot and dry countries like Israel, Lebanon, Jordan, Iran and Saudi Arabia.

It also does not factor in the 1991 Water Accord, canal water allocation among provinces based on a baseline volume of 144.8 billion cubic feet (BCF). 48% of this water is allocated to Punjab, 42% to Sindh, 7 percent to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and 3 percent to Balochistan. The brochure was also silent about the fact that Pakistan is already facing climate-related threats to water resources as is evident from the change in monsoon patterns, receding glaciers, rising temperatures and recurrence of floods and droughts. As per IMF, Pakistan's per capita annual water availability has reduced from 1500 cubic meters in 2009 to 1017 cubic meters in 2021.

Perhaps the brochure was also silent over the fact over 80 percent of its population experiencing 'severe water scarcity' for at least one month annually, largely due to the over-extraction of groundwater for irrigation purposes. This unsustainable practice has led to the depletion of Pakistan's groundwater resources, which serve as a crucial backup water supply. If current trends persist, the entire country may confront water scarcity by 2025. Complicating matters further is Pakistan's status as a lower riparian country to India, with 78 percent of its water inflows originating from there. Moreover, inefficient water usage exacerbates the crisis, with only two-thirds of available water being utilized, while one-third is lost or discharged into the sea.

It also did not mention that Pakistan ranks 36th globally in total renewable water resources while most efficient countries in terms of renewable water resources are Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Norway and the bottom five water-stressed countries are Yemen, Qatar, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Lebanon and Israel. This shift from water abundance to water stress is evident in Pakistan's diminishing share of global renewable water resources, accounting for just 0.5 percent despite its 2.8 percent share of the global population. Particularly alarming is the state of the Indus Basin aquifer, ranked as the 2nd most over-stressed underground water reserve globally. With over 60 percent of irrigation, 70 percent of drinking water, and 100 percent of industrial water dependency on groundwater.

As the SIFC's brochure entices investors to invest in bringing an additional 9.1 million hectares of land under cultivation and developing 22.4 million hectares of range land for livestock development, it must address a crucial question: how will it provide the immense amount of additional water required for such a vast expansion, especially considering Pakistan's looming water crisis?

By 2025, Pakistan is projected to require 274 million acre-feet (MAF) of water, while its current water resources remain at 191 MAF, resulting in a staggering demand-supply gap of approximately 83 MAF. With a water consumption rate per hectare calculated at around 7.93 MAF per million hectares, cultivating an additional 9.1 million hectares of land and developing 22.4 million hectares of range land would necessitate approximately 72.23 MAF and 177.83 MAF (totaling 250 MAF) of additional water, respectively. This demand represents 130% more than the country's current water resources. Addressing this critical water scarcity challenge is paramount for any investment initiative aiming to expand agricultural and livestock development in Pakistan, necessitating innovative solutions and comprehensive water management strategies to bridge the widening gap between water demand and supply.

As the beacon of hope for Pakistan's agricultural and range land development, the SIFC has the potential to catalyze the realization of the nation's aspirations for rapid progress. The accompanying brochure should outline a comprehensive strategy to address the formidable challenge of bringing an additional 250 MAF of water into the country's water system to remain within the 1991 water accord and to preempt any possible political uprising, as every province zealously guard every drop of water which has been allocated to it.

While this goal may seem daunting, it is achievable through political commitment, consensus-building, meticulous planning, resource allocation, and leveraging human expertise, intellect, and knowledge, along with regional and international cooperation. A multifaceted approach is necessary, focusing on innovative solutions and strategic investments. Firstly, the SIFC can provide leadership and allocation of resources to construction of new dams, delay action dams, reservoirs, and storage facilities to capture and store water during periods of abundance, ensuring a dependable water supply during dry seasons.

- Press Secretary to the President (Rtd) Former Press Minister at Embassy of Pakistan to France Former MD, SRBC

US Engagement with Ukraine



Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer

AS the conflict between Russia and Ukraine continues, people are getting tired of emotional appeals about Ukrainian bravery and Russian actions. Republicans have valid concerns: they want to cut government spending, make sure U.S. aid to Ukraine isn't misused by corrupt officials, and figure out where helping Ukraine fits in U.S. priorities. One thing most Americans agree on is the importance of a strong U.S. military. However, President Biden is providing enough aid for Ukraine to keep fighting but not enough to win. There's a strong argument from conservatives to increase U.S. assistance to Ukraine. For a relatively small cost, Americans can support Ukraine in a war that NATO was worried about. It's important to note that a significant portion of U.S. aid to Ukraine goes to American companies that produce weapons for Kyiv. Engaging with Ukraine is also revealing weaknesses in the U.S. defense system. To fund defense adequately, changes to entitlement programs like Social Security and Medicare are necessary. Both Democrats and Republicans need to reconsider their stance on entitlement reform, as these programs make up a large portion of federal spending. If not addressed, the cost of entitlements will limit spending on defense and other domestic programs. There's also a need for better border policies. Many Americans don't understand why the U.S. military doesn't protect the country's borders. Immigration policy is closely tied to foreign policy and the U.S. economy. A majority of Americans think the U.S. is doing a poor job managing its borders, and there's a surge in illegal border crossings. The military is restricted by the Posse Comitatus Act from acting as a

domestic police force, but political leaders should invest in border security. This includes more funding for the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Agency, as well as technology to track migrant movements. Cooperation with Mexico and addressing the root causes of migration are also crucial. Failure to regulate immigration properly hinders the U.S. from maximizing its geopolitical opportunities, especially in North American cooperation. Clearer immigration policies could lead to stronger collaboration with neighboring countries, benefiting the U.S. economy. However, until Americans are confident in border control, they may be hesitant to support these cooperation opportunities. According to experts at the Brennan Center, many Americans are confused about why the U.S. military doesn't protect the country's borders. Republicans could improve their policies on this issue. Immigration is crucial for foreign policy and the U.S. economy. A survey in January 2021 by Pew Research Institute showed that 68% of Americans believe the U.S. is not managing its borders well. Indeed, since January 2020, about 200,000 people try to enter the U.S. illegally every month through the Mexican border, the highest in 20 years. Contrary to what the media says, most of these people are adults, not kids. The 1878 Posse Comitatus Act stops the military from acting like a police force within the U.S. Generals, who are already busy, don't want to protect the borders, fearing it might harm people's respect for the military. To get more support for U.S. activities abroad, leaders need to show they can put more effort and resources into border security. A survey in January 2023 found that most Americans want to give more money to the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Agency. It's not just about money and more people. Over 60% of recent migrants aren't from Mexico or Central America but start their journey in places like Colombia, Cuba, Peru, and Venezuela. The U.S. should invest in surveillance and technology to track migrants in Central America, speed up asylum claims in new immigration courts, work more with Mexico to stop migrants passing through, and engage with migrants' home countries to solve problems and help those who don't meet U.S. immigration rules return. Not handling immigration properly makes the U.S. miss its biggest opportunity for North American cooperation. Politicians should worry more about Mexico becoming unsafe and find creative ways to make Canada, Mexico, and the U.S. work together in energy, labor, and manufacturing. With better immigration policies, we can relocate supply chains to Mexico, strengthen

energy grids in California and Texas by trading energy with Canada and Mexico, and create opportunities for neighbors to prosper, boosting the U.S. economy. But until Americans trust that the U.S. controls its borders, they may not support these cooperation opportunities.

The world that the United States and its friends made after World War II made America safer and richer. But we must remember that if the U.S. doesn't make sure this global order is followed, someone else will, probably China. If China takes charge, the world could become dangerous. China, along with its authoritarian allies like Russia and Iran, might gather enough military and economic power to force a repressive vision on the world. To make things better, the U.S. should rejoin the Trans-Pacific Partnership, make and approve other trade agreements, spend more on defense while fixing entitlements and reducing national debt, secure the U.S.-Mexican border, and help countries fighting for their freedom. These are big goals. Fred Kagan, a scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, says people don't want to die for the international order because it's too vague. But convincing voters to support a foreign policy that helps other countries might not be as hard as politicians think. They should focus on concrete arguments based on U.S. national interest. The Biden administration and some Republican leaders are making misleading appeals that say internationalism makes the U.S. weaker or that caring about the U.S. national interest means ignoring the world. This is not true. The choices the U.S. makes internationally affect its own well-being. Right now, leaders are making confusing foreign policy decisions that make the country less safe and less prosperous, and fixing them will be difficult later on. The U.S. is divided politically, and many people are confused and disappointed. A Pew poll from June-July 2023 found that only 16% of Americans trust the federal government, the lowest in 70 years. Only 10% feel hopeful about politics. In an August Wall Street Journal poll, 93% of likely Republican voters thought the U.S. is headed in the wrong direction. These are not good results, but they also present an opportunity for good policies because people are clearly unhappy. The solution is not to adopt policies that give up on trade, weaken the military, leave the U.S.-Mexican border in chaos, and stop helping deserving allies. Americans still want the U.S. to be a leader in the world for the sake of the country and their own safety and prosperity. U.S. leaders need to prove they know how to do it.

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vi)	CONSTRUCTION OF PCC STREETS AT KALLAR KAHAR TEHSIL KALLAR DISTRICT CHAKWAL	3,445,411	150,000	2,000	03-months	C-6
vii)	CONSTRUCTION OF PCC STREETS AT U.C MIANI TEHSIL KALLAR KAHAR DISTRICT CHAKWAL	6,890,783	300,000	2,000	03-months	C-6
viii)	CONSTRUCTION OF PCC STREETS AT VILLAGE PATALIAN AND ROOPWAL U.C KOT CHAUDHRIAN TEHSIL & DISTRICT CHAKWAL	3,445,340	130,000	2,000	03-months	C-6
ix)	CONSTRUCTION OF PCC STREETS AT U.C KARSAL & MAINGAN TEHSIL & DISTRICT CHAKWAL	6,889,992	300,000	2,000	03-months	C-6
x)	CONSTRUCTION OF NALLAH & WIDENING OF ROAD FROM DARBAR STOP TO JINNAZGAH TEHSIL & DISTRICT TALAGANG.	5,870,329	250,000	2,000	03-months	C-6

Other Terms and conditions:-

1. Bid security in the shape of Deposit at call in favour of the Executive Engineer, Project Civil Division No.II Pak.P.W.D. Islamabad issued by any scheduled bank functioning at Islamabad /Rawalpindi from the account of the firm may please be submitted with the application.
2. The applicant firm should submit separate application for issuance of each bidding alongwith all relevant documents .
3. An affidavit on judicial paper worth Rs. 100/- to the effect that the contractor /firm is not in any dispute /litigation with any Government Department is a prerequisite for issuance of tenders.
4. The tenders shall be issued only to the owner of the firm or his authorized representative having legal Authority Letter/Power of Attorney. In case of joint venture the applicant shall have to produce partnership deed duly registered with the court of law whereas in the case of a sole proprietor, the tenders shall be issued only to the sole proprietor of the firm.
5. No applications for issuance of tenders through e-mail, fax, Telex would be entertained.
6. No tenders would be sold on the specified opening date.
7. Any information/clarification regarding the details of work, specifications and conditions etc, can be seen in the office of the undersigned on any working day during office hours.
8. The submission of bids implies that the bidder is fully conversant with the nature of work, scope, site conditions, applicable rules and codes etc.
9. Under Rule 33(1) of PPRA Rule 2004, the undersigned reserve the right to accept or reject all bids /tenders at any time prior to of bid /tender.

PID(II) 5712/23

Executive Engineer,

Project Civil Division No.II

Pak.P.W.D, Islamabad. Ph # 051-9260118



GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN PAKISTAN PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

No.EE.PCD.II/AB/552

Dated Islamabad the, 22 /03/2024

NOTICE INVITING TENDERS

Sealed Tenders, as per "single stage, single envelope", PPRA procedure for the following works are invited on percentage rate basis at the **Pak.PWD Schedule of rate 2022** from Pakistan Engineering Council approved contractors /firms having proper renewal in relevant category as mentioned against each work and above for the current financial year. The contractors /firms should be registered with income tax Department as Active Taxpayers on the list of Federal Board of Revenue. Tender documents can be purchased from the office of the undersigned during office hours on any working day upto **08.04.2024** on written request at company's letter pad accompanied with attested copies of CNIC, PEC, Firm Documents, NTN & Bid Security.

The tenders should reach in the office of undersigned on **09.04.2024** upto **12:00 noon** and will be opened on same day at **12:30 pm** in the presence of participants or their authorized representatives.

S. No	Name of Scheme	N.I.T Cost	Fixed Bid Security as per rule 25 of PPRA	Tender Cost	Completion Time	PEC Category
1	12 NOS DEVELOPMENT UNDER SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS ACHIEVEMENT PROGRAMME (SAP) 2023-24 IN DISTRICT TALAGANG & CHAKWAL.					
i)	CONSTRUCTION OF PCC STREETS AT U.C KOT GULLA, U.C PICHNAND & U.C KOT QAZI DISTRICT TALAGANG	15,759,175	630,000	2,000	03-months	C-6
ii)	CONSTRUCTION OF PCC STREETS AT U.C MULTAN KHURD, DHOLAR, THOA MEHRAM KHAN & PIRRA FATEHAL TALAGANG	14,470,756	575,000	2,000	03-months	C-6
iii)	CONSTRUCTION OF PCC STREETS AT U.C BIDHER WANHAR DISTRICT TALAGANG	4,823,585	200,000	2,000	03-months	C-6
iv)	CONSTRUCTION OF PCC STREETS AT DIFFERENT U.C OF PP-23 DISTRICT TALAGANG	6,890,783	300,000	2,000	03-months	C-6

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