



Canada imposing 25% tariffs on \$30 bln of US imports: Trudeau

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau made the announcement just hours after U. S. President Donald Trump slapped 25% tariffs on imports from Mexico and Canada. "There is absolutely no justification or need whatsoever for these tariffs today," Trudeau said.



Tourists throng Murree and Northern Areas after snowfall

Foreign citizens residing illegally in Pakistan now have only 0 days to leave the country or face deportation. Foreigners living illegally must leave Pakistan by October 31 or law enforcement agencies will ensure their arrest and deportation. In the recent meeting of the Apex Committee of the National Action Plan, it had been decided to take strict action against the illegal immigrants living in Pakistan and the trade and properties of illegal immigrants

Simultaneously published from Islamabad, Lahore and Multan

Special Meeting

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif addresses the special meeting of the Federal Cabinet, convened to review the 1 year performance of the Federal Government, in Islamabad on March 4, 2025.



Photo: PID

PM urges cabinet members to keep contributing towards economic stability, prosperity

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday lauded the performance of his cabinet members during the last one year and urged them to continue contributing towards economic stability with their untiring efforts as all the economic indicators were showing positive trajectory. Addressing a special meeting of the cabinet members at the Jinnah Convention Center to review the one-year performance of the government, the

prime minister said that during the last one year, it was a matter of satisfaction, that neither a single case of corruption had surfaced nor a false single allegation in this regard was leveled by the opposition. The prime minister said that they should have to work hard to provide succour to hapless and financially weaker segments of society with all kind of assistance and compassion especially in the holy month of Ramazan, adding that the government had rolled out the Rs20 billion Ramazan package

to benefit four million deserving families through digital wallets system. Each family would get Rs5,000 each, thus the new system would shut doors on all kind of allegations of financial mismanagement which had badly marred the functioning of entities like Utility Stores Corporation, he said, terming the relief initiative as 'quantum jump which will succeed'. He said that they took the challenge of saving the country from running into default. With hard work, the govern-

ment succeeded in achieving the economic turnaround and steering the country out of the financial straits. For the first time in country's history, meeting of the federal cabinet was witnessed by people from different section of society and mediapersons present in the Convention Center besides, it was telecast live by the national TV channels. The prime minister said all the macroeconomic indicators were on the high scale and asked the members to work hard with dedication and commitment

as these were prerequisite for making Pakistan one trillion economy till the year 2035. He also thanked leadership of all the coalition partners in the government including PPP, MQM, BAP, IPP etc, for their support in the most difficult times. "We are the bearers of May 28 achievement and not of May 9," he said, questioning that a political party who was running a provincial government had written letters to IMF pressing against any agreement with the government.

Tensions escalated at Torkham border as Pakistan, Afghanistan forces clash

Bureau Report

TORKHAM: People stand next to parked trucks loaded with supplies at the Torkham border crossing following the closure of the border crossing between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Tensions have escalated at the Torkham border, with clashes between Pakistan and Afghanistan forces, as sources said that both sides have resorted to using small and large arms during exchanges of fire. A significant five-hour fire exchange occurred on Monday, resulting in injuries to three Frontier Corps personnel. Three Afghan soldiers were reported killed during retaliatory actions by security forces. The situation has been tense

since Afghan forces began "suspicious" construction activities near the Torkham border more than a week ago, which further resulted in the closure of all traffic. The border remained closed for trade activities and pedestrian movement for the 10th consecutive day on Monday. The Torkham crossing point, a crucial land trade route between Pakistan and Afghanistan, has faced repeated closures in recent years due to border tensions, skirmishes, and armed conflicts. In August, the Torkham border was closed for three days after the Afghan Taliban stated they were looking into claims of Pakistani fighter jets allegedly breaching Afghan airspace over Nangarhar and Kunar provinces.



Hamas urges Arab summit to 'thwart' Gaza displacement plan

AFF

GAZA: Hamas urged Arab leaders Tuesday to "thwart" the relocation of Palestinians from Gaza as they meet in Cairo to counter U.S. President Donald Trump's widely condemned proposal. "We look forward to an effective Arab role that ends the humanitarian tragedy created by the occupation in the Gaza Strip... and thwarts the (Israeli) occupation's plans to displace

(Palestinians)," a statement by the militant group said. Arab leaders gathered in Cairo on Tuesday to discuss an alternative to Trump's proposal for a US takeover of the war-battered territory and the relocation of its inhabitants to Egypt and Jordan. The meeting comes amid deadlock between Hamas and Israel over next steps in a fragile January 19 ceasefire in Gaza. After the first phase of the truce ended over the weekend

without agreement on how to continue, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office announced a halt to "all entry of goods and supplies" into the territory. Israel's "closure of the Gaza Strip crossings for the third consecutive day, and its prevention of the entry of aid and goods, represents a Zionist insistence on violating the ceasefire agreement, and a clear war crime", Hamas said in its statement.



Six militants killed as security forces repulse terror attack on Bannu Cantt, 9 civilian 'martyred'



City Desk

RAWALPINDI: Security forces on Tuesday thwarted a terrorist attack on Bannu Cantonment and killed six terrorists while repulsing the attack. According to security sources, terrorists tried to enter the Cantonment after Iftar, but the security forces took timely action and repulsed the attack. The terrorists came in two explosive-laden vehicles and

crashed the vehicles into the Cantonment's walls. Security personnel deployed at various entry points of the Cantonment retaliated and neutralised the terrorists. The explosion damaged a nearby mosque and houses, resulting in injuries to 16 civilians. Also, there are reports of nine civilian casualties in the incident. Security forces have launched a clearance operation in the area.

Attaullah Tarar vows to continue efforts to transform national broadcaster PTV



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage, and Culture Attaullah Tarar on Tuesday said that the issues of "sifari-shi culture" (favoritism) and incompetence that had long affected Pakistan Television (PTV) have now been eliminated. The Committee met under the chairmanship of Pullain Baloch, MNA. Addressing the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Information and Broadcasting, Tarar highlighted the recent steps initiated in PTV for making it more vibrant and self-sustaining. "We've worked hard to bring balance to PTV in this challenging national context,"

Tarar said. He further said that, "if an anchor gets a good salary sitting inside the private sector and the rating of his channel is good, then PTV is not a no-go area. PTV is not a taboo that private anchors can't sit here." He further stressed that PTV was now open to professional anchors from the private sector, dismissing the notion that it was a "no-go" area for successful broadcasters. The minister also took aim at past practices, revealing how the PTV was once tarnished by unqualified individuals who were promoted to anchor and analyst roles despite lacking basic communication skills. "Some people who didn't even know how to speak Urdu were made anchors," he said, vowing to continue his efforts to transform the national broadcaster.

Japan's worst wildfire in half a century spreads

TOKYO: Firefighters were on Tuesday battling Japan's worst wildfire in half a century, which has left one dead and forced the evacuation of nearly 4,000 local residents. White smoke billowed from a forested area around the northern city of Ofunato, aerial TV footage showed, five days after the blaze began after record low rainfall. The fire also follows Japan's hottest summer on record last year, as climate change pushes up temperatures worldwide. As of Tuesday morning, the wildfire had engulfed around

2,600 hectares (6,400 acres), the fire and disaster management agency said — over seven times the area of New York's Central Park. That makes it Japan's largest wildfire since 1975 when 2,700 hectares burnt in Kushiro on northern Hokkaido island. It is estimated to have damaged at least 80 buildings by Sunday, although details were still being assessed, the agency said. Military and fire department helicopters are trying to douse the Ofunato fire, a city official told reporters.

Protest in Thatta, Sujawal against six-canal scheme

Kamran Khamiso Khawaja

THATTA/SUJAWAL: A large number of political workers belonging to Awami Tehreek and Quomi Awami Tahreek staged a protest in Jhumpir town of Thatta district and Bannu town of Sujawal district against the controversial six-canal scheme and corporate farming, demanding protection of the Indus Delta and Sindh's biodiversity.

Advocate Wasant Thari, Central President of Awami Tahreek, who led the protest in Jhumpir, said that the Indus River carries a history spanning thousands of years and they would not allow anyone to usurp Sindh's riparian rights. He noted that lands in different parts of Sindh were being illegally occupied to facilitate corporate farming projects.

Hussain Katiyar criticized the Sindh government for its indifferent attitude towards the issue of water canals on the Indus River, pointing out that the Sindh Assembly had not passed a resolution against the scheme, showing their lack of seriousness towards the issue. The protesters announced plans to pay floral tribute to the Indus River on March 14, marking International Day for Rivers.



In Bannu town, Sujawal district, Ashraf Palijo, Zain Soomro, and Rasheed Gopang, among others, termed the six-canal scheme a conspiracy to turn Sindh's land barren and bring economic instability to the province. They feared that if the scheme was executed, Sindh would become a

desert by 2030. Ali Hassan Lashari accused President Asif Ali Zardari of selling Sindh's resources and mentioned that the Green Pakistan Scheme was actually the Green Punjab Scheme. He further stated that the pilferage of Sindh's water was a transgression of international

humanitarian laws and the Constitution.

The protesters urged the urban population of Sindh and people from other ethnic backgrounds to join hands for the survival of the Indus River, vowing to continue their struggle until the scheme is foiled.

Senior Minister inspects AJK Medical College building



Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: The Most Senior Minister of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Government, Col. (ret'd) Waqar Ahmed Noor, along with the Minister for Roads and Public Works Chaudhry Azhar Sadiq, inspected the newly constructed building of AJK Medical College. The Principal of AJK Medical College, Prof. Dr. Adnan Meraj and the concerned Chief Engineer briefed him. The Most Senior Minister directed to complete the remaining work of the college building within a month so that the medical college can be shifted as soon as possible.

Food Authority conducts quality check in Muzaffarabad markets

Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: Additional Deputy Commissioner Imran Abbas Naqvi, District Food Controller Barar Ahmed Mir, Food Analyst Anila Abbasi, along with the Food Authority team, checked the quality of food items in various markets through a mobile food testing lab. In order to maintain the quality of food items during Ramadan and ensure the provision of food to the public in accordance with the principles of hygiene, the Food Authority Muzaffarabad checked the quality of beverages, oil, banaspati, sweets and water, etc. through an instant mobile food testing lab. District Food Controller Muzaffarabad Abrar Ahmed Mir said that citizens should contact the Food Authority on 1280 in case of any complaint.



PPP Leader Chaudhry Riaz embarks on Umrah Pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia



Spokesman Report

SAUDI ARABIA: Pakistan Peoples Party's senior central leader Chaudhry Riaz reached Saudi Arabia yesterday to perform Umrah, where he will visit the holy places by visiting the Holy Shrine of the Prophet, perform five-day prayers and recite the Holy Quran at the Prophet's Mosque, and perform Nawafil prayers. At the Shrine of the Prophet, he will pray to Allah Almighty for the security of Pakistan, the freedom of occupied Jammu and Kashmir and Palestine, the unity and solidarity of the Muslim Ummah, and the invincible defense of the beloved Islamic Republic of Pakistan against terrorism, extremism, and lawlessness. Senior central leader of the People's Party Chaudhry Riaz has been fortunate enough to perform Umrah many times before and is invited to Saudi Arabia twice a year as a royal guest. Chaudhry Riaz will return home in the second ten days of Ramadan.

International Civil Defence Day awareness seminar held

Zafar Chishti

TOBA TEK SINGH: On the directives of Director Civil Defence Punjab, Mr. Zamir Hussain, and Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Naem Sandhu, an awareness seminar and training session were held at Imitiaz Model Girls High School, Toba Tek Singh, for International Civil Defence Day.

Supervised by Civil Defence Officer Mehmood Hussain Gill, the session focused on first aid, emergency response, and fire safety under the theme "Civil Defence - A Guarantee for Population Safety." He emphasized the importance of public awareness and preparedness.

Students and teachers found the training highly useful, while the district administration pledged to continue such initiatives for community safety.

Iftari

KARACHI: Fishermen wait for (iftar) to break their Ramadan fast on their boats in Provincial Capital.



Photo: Online

Nigehban Ramazan Package delivered to deserving families

Zafar Chishti

TOBA TEK SINGH: Under the directives of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, financial aid from the Nigehban Ramazan Package 2025 is being delivered directly to deserving families. Each eligible household is receiving a Rs. 10,000 pay order to help them manage essential

expenses during Ramadan. Deputy Commissioner Toba Tek Singh, Muhammad Naem Sandhu, visited various areas to oversee the distribution process, accompanied by Assistant Commissioner Ali Sameer. He instructed officials to ensure complete transparency, emphasizing that negligence would not be tolerated. He stated that the Punjab

government has allocated Rs. 31 billion for this initiative to provide maximum relief to low-income families. The district administration is ensuring a smooth and transparent disbursement process. Beneficiaries welcomed the initiative, calling it a great relief amid rising inflation. The Deputy Commissioner reaffirmed that strict moni-



toring is in place, with immediate action on any complaints.

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TENDER NOS	DESCRIPTION	QTY.	TENDER DOCUMENTS SUBMISSION TIME & DATE	TENDER OPENING TIME & DATE	BID SECURITY	COST OF TENDER FORM
FN/FB-474	CONTINUOUS FORM OCR/RED BLEED MICR PRODUCTION PRINTER	01 NO	Upto 11:00 AM on 08.04.2025	11:30 AM on 08.04.2025	2% OF TOTAL BID AMOUNT	Rs.1500/- + GST

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PID K. 2709/24

--SD--
Muhammad Asad Khan
Deputy General Manager
(Purchase)

PANAH's call for policy measures to combat the growing burden of obesity and other NCDs in Pakistan

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The overweight, obesity and diet related NCDs are on an alarming rise in Pakistan. More than 40% of people in Pakistan are obese or overweight. The prevalence of overweight among the children under 5 has almost doubled from 2011 to 2018. The obesity and overweight increased in women of reproductive age from 28% to 38% in five years. Ultra-processed products often high in sugar, salt or trans-fats are among the major contributors to obesity and many other non-communicable diseases. Government must take immediate policy actions to reduce the obesity and NCDs in Pakistan. This was said in a symposium on world obesity day organized by Pakistan National Heart Association (PANAH) at a local hotel in Islamabad that brought together the distinguished experts,



health professionals, policy makers, civil society and media.

Speakers delved into policies aimed at reducing the consumption of ultra-processed products with a special focus on higher taxes and enactment of FOPWLS on products high in nutrients of concern like salt, sugar, fats, or having any amount of non-sugar sweeteners. Taxing ultra-processed foods is a triple win for the government as it reduces the obesity and other risk factors

of non-communicable diseases, generates additional revenue, and policy has low or no cost for the government. The speakers urged the Ministry of Finance of Pakistan and International Monetary Fund as well to increase FED on unhealthy foods instead of fuel, energy and salaries class.

Dr Saba Amjad From Heartfile delivered a keynote address shedding light on modifiable risk factors associated with non-communicable

diseases and obesity. He said that overweight and obesity are the key modifiable risk factors for cardiovascular and many other fatal non-communicable diseases.

Sanaullah Ghuman briefed the participants about PANAH's campaign on the reduction of the consumption of ultra-processed foods. He said that PANAH is not only working to raise awareness of the general public on health harms of ultra-processed foods but also working with policy makers for formulation of effective policies to reduce their consumption. He said that "while Pakistan government is taking several measures to stabilize the economy, increasing tax on sugary drinks and taxing other ultra-processed food products is an evidence based and sensible strategy to not only reduce the disease burden, but also generate significant revenue for the country".

Islamabad
30° - 38° Clear

SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr	5:10 am
Zohr	12:20 pm
Asr	4:26 pm
Maghrib	6:07 pm
Isha	7:30 pm

EMERGENCY

Rescue (Police)	15
Bomb Disposal	15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad	1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance	1122 & 4451122
& Rescue Services	9266044
Motorway Police	9270601-20

Women Police Stations

Islamabad	9222596
Rawalpindi	9270601-20

ENQUIRY

Edhi Ambulance	115
PIA Flight Info	114
PIA Cargo	9280979
Railway Enquiry	117
Railway Exchange	9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi	5555489
CAA	9281092

HOSPITALS

CMH	561111
MH	561116
MH	561116
Cantt Hospital	9270907-11
DHQ	5556311-4
RGH	9290301-7
Holy Family	9290322-7
PIMS	9261170-79
Polyclinic	9218300-09
Shifa International	4603666

DEPARTMENTS

CDA	9221334-43
CDA	9208301-04
Met Office	9250360-6
RDA	5555864
TMA	5770886
Cantonment Board	9270151-3
Islamabad Metropolitan Corporation	9209224
Potohar Town	9209224
Rawal Town	5773343

WASA launches awareness campaign on water conservation

FAISALABAD: Water & Sanitation Agency (WASA) has launched a vigorous campaign to sensitize the citizens about water conservation.

Managing Director WASA Aamer Aziz said here on Tuesday that Citizen Liaison Cell (CLC) WASA has initiated the awareness campaign under "Water Conservation Program".

The CLC staff visited Government Boys Secondary School Raza Abad where they conducted a special awareness session for the students on the importance of saving water at home. Informative pamphlets outlining practical water conservation tips were also distributed among the students, he added.

The MD WASA also stressed the need to adopt a comprehensive and effective strategy to conserve water for future generations. He said that water is a divine blessing and must be used responsibly. "Preventing the wastage of drinking water is our collective responsibility. Every household must ensure careful use of water and avoid its unnecessary wastage", he added.

Chairman Senate Emphasizes Importance of Education and Health

Quatul Ain

MULTAN: Chairman Senate Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani met with Commissioner Multan Aamir Karim Khan. Briefing was given on ongoing development projects in Multan and the under-construction Yousuf Raza Gilani Cadet College.

Chairman Senate Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani met with Commissioner Multan Aamir Karim Khan at Gilani House, Multan. Member National Assembly Syed Ali Musa Gilani, MPA Rana Iqbal Siraj and former member provincial assembly Dr. Javed Siddiqui were also present in the meeting. The Commissioner briefed the Chairman Senate about the development projects of Multan, the under-construction Yousuf Raza Gilani Cadet College and its completion.

On this occasion, Chairman Senate Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani said that no compromise will be made on the development and prosperity of Multan and southern Punjab. He said that when he was the Prime Minister, the development

of Multan was a mission for him, which was fulfilled.

Even now, the deprivations and backwardness of southern Punjab will be removed. Later, the Chairman Senate along with the Commissioner visited the site of the under-construction Yousuf Raza Gilani Cadet College in Multan and reviewed the construction work.

On this occasion, he said that the construction of Yousuf Raza Gilani Cadet College will especially benefit the students of southern Punjab and Multan. This project of Yousuf Raza Gilani Cadet College is an educational There is a revolutionary project in the field, which will be completed soon.

Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani said that providing health, education and other basic needs to the people is the top priority of the government. Talking to a private TV channel, he further said that this project of Cadet College was started during my visit to the government, but whichever government came, it put obstacles in the Yousuf Raza Gilani Cadet College.



In response to a question, the Chairman Senate said that today's meeting between Bilawal Bhutto and the Prime Minister will be important

because the agreements made with us are not being implemented.

Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani said that the issues of Punjab will be discussed in

today's meeting. In response to another question, he said that it is hoped that the production order of Ijaz Chaudhry will be implemented soon.

Hall of Fame

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Portugal to Pakistan Frederico Silva visiting the "Hall of Fame" at Pakistan Literature Academy in Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

Pakistani-origin Mehwish Salman Ali selected in Forbes Technology Council

City Desk

KARACHI: Mehwish Salman Ali, of Pakistani origin, has been selected as a member of the Forbes Technology Council. She is the only female IT and fourth technology expert in the prestigious think tank listed as Pakistani.

Born and raised in Pakistan, she moved to the United Arab Emirates and then the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. She established Pakistan's first women-led solar-powered data center with headquarters in Pakistan and

offshore offices in different countries. She also founded a company- Data Vault, in Pakistan which is both a technological and cultural breakthrough—combining sustainability, security, and innovation to provide a green, future-ready infrastructure for enterprises.

Beyond infrastructure, Mehwish is driving the next wave of AI innovation, actively working on agentic and generative AI projects that push the boundaries of automation, intelligence, and enterprise security.



Lucky Investments Limited inaugurates Head Office at the Finance & Trade Centre

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Mohammad Ali Tabba, the prominent business leader of Lucky Group (YBG) group inaugurated Head Office of Lucky Investments Limited (Formerly Interloop Asset Management Limited) at Finance & Trade Centre on Friday.

Present at the occasion were directors and senior management of the company including Chairman Mohammad Ali Tabba, Director Jawed Tabba and CEO, Mohammad Shoaib, CFA.

Speaking at the occasion, Mr. Muhammad Ali Tabba, the chairman of the company said: "The launch of Lucky Investments marks a significant milestone in our journey. Financial Services is a new vertical that Lucky Group



is adding to its lines of businesses. As we embark on this new chapter, we remain dedicated to providing Shariah-compliant investment solutions that meet the evolving needs of institutional and retail clients.

Mr. Mohammad Shoaib, CFA, also speaking at the occasion said: "The launch of Lucky Investments is a testament to Lucky Group's values of innovation and excellence. As a first Islamic asset management company being launched by a business conglomerate in Pakistan, Lucky Investments is committed to providing comprehensive wealth management solutions to its customers. This will help to increase the rate of savings in Pakistan which is currently very low at 13% of GDP.

U.S FDA's Authorization of ZYN Nicotine Pouches Opens Doors for Pakistan to Tackle Smoking Crisis

City Desk

KARACHI: The U. S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has granted marketing authorization to ZYN nicotine pouches, reinforcing tobacco harm reduction (THR) as a key strategy in reducing smoking-related harm. This landmark decision, based on extensive scientific review, leaves Pakistan with little choice but to reconsider its restrictive stance on THR products, given its alarmingly high smoking rates.

With 31 million smokers and over 160,000 smoking-related deaths annually, Pakistan is grappling with a smoking crisis. Existing measures have failed to curb smoking prevalence, and the need for better alternatives has never been more urgent.

"To receive marketing authorizations, the FDA must have sufficient evidence that the new products offer greater benefits to population health than risks," said Matthew Farrelly, Ph. D., director of the Office of Science in the FDA's Center for Tobacco Products. "In this case, the data show that these nicotine pouch products meet that bar by benefiting adults who use cigarettes and completely switch to these products."

IBA Karachi hosted IMF delegation for faculty discussion and student interaction



Commerce Desk

KARACHI: IBA Karachi had the honor of hosting a distinguished delegation from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), organized by the IBA Center for Business and Economic Research (IBA-CBER), led by Mr. Nathan Porter, Mission Chief to Pakistan, IMF, along with Mr. Mahir Binici, Resident Representative for Pakistan, IMF, and Mr. Muhammad Ali, Office Manager, IMF Pakistan, at the IBA Main Campus. The delegation engaged in discussions with faculty members from the IBA School of Economics and Social Sciences (IBA-SESS) and interacted with students on Pakistan's economic trajectory.

Dr. Aadir Nakhoda, Assistant Professor and Research Fellow, IBA-CBER, welcomed the delegation. The visit commenced with an insightful faculty discussion. Notable faculty members in attendance included Dr. Asma Hyder, Dean, IBA-SESS, and esteemed members of the Economics Department—Dr. Muhammad Nasir, Chairperson; Dr. Qazi Masood Ahmed, Professor; Dr. Muhammad Salman Khalid and Dr. Syed Ateeb Akhter Shah, Assistant Professors; and Ms. Javeria Younas Abbasi, Lecturer. They engaged in an in-depth exchange with the IMF representatives on key economic and policy matters.

Concluding the visit, Dr. Hyder expressed gratitude to the IMF delegation and presented a token of appreciation to Mr. Porter on behalf of the IBA fraternity. Additionally, Dr. Qazi honored Mr. Binici with a token of appreciation.

Zong 4G launches official WhatsApp channel for seamless customer engagement

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Zong 4G, Pakistan's leading telecom operator, has become the first in the industry to launch its Official WhatsApp Channel to enhance customer engagement and provide a more personalized and interactive experience.

The WhatsApp Channel will deliver real-time updates on the latest promotions, exclusive discounts, and exciting deals directly to customers. It will also serve as a platform to promote the My Zong App, enabling users to explore its full suite of features and manage their accounts with ease. Additionally, customers will receive timely updates on new SIM activations and Mobile Number Portability (MNP), ensuring they stay informed about the latest services.

"The launch of our Official WhatsApp Channel is a significant step towards enhancing our customer engagement," said Sajid Munir, Director Marketing. "We are committed to making communication more seamless, convenient, and enjoyable for our valued users, keeping them at the heart of everything we do."

The Zong 4G WhatsApp Channel is set to become a key touchpoint for customer interaction, revolutionizing the way users connect with the brand. Subscribe today to experience seamless communication and stay informed with Zong 4G.

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Nurses playing critical role in healthcare delivery system

Muhammad Shakeel

As population grows unbridled, many sectors including health often face dearth of professionals especially well-qualified and experienced nurses although it is the most respected profession in healthcare globally.

Not only in Pakistan but globally, many countries always remain in need of qualified nurses that also provides opportunities to professionals in developing countries to proceed abroad and earn respectable living.

Pakistan is also not an exception where ever growing demand of professional nurses, who play a critical role in patients care, disease prevention and healthcare, is seldom met. Since, we also failed to produce well-qualified, we also miss our due share in global nursing market.

"The demand for qualified nurses is ascending globally due to factors like population growth, increased chronic diseases and rapid expansion of healthcare services," said Farid Khan, a male nurse in Peshawar. "Spread of various diseases including recent COVID-19 pandemic has further enhanced the demand of nursing professionals."

In many countries including developed and progressing nations, there is a significant shortage of nursing professionals due to increased healthcare demands, heavy workloads, migration of healthcare professionals, pandemics, natural disasters and increasing popu-

lation.

"I do not see any chance that demands for nurses would decrease as governments have always prioritized development of healthcare delivery systems aiming the welfare and assistance of people," he remarked. "Therefore, boys and girls are seen taking admissions in Bachelor of Nursing course to seek employment opportunities in the country and abroad."

He said Pakistani doctors have grabbed a reasonable share of in international job market but in nursing sector "we miss lot of opportunities due to less qualification and falling short of international criteria for hiring nurses."

"Still there is demand in gulf and European countries and we can grab these slot by improving our standard of teaching and training," Fairds Khan said.

As quality education and training of nurses remains a challenge for us since decades, our institutions must need to revisit their syllabus and modes of training to win due share in global market. Recently, Khyber Medical University has entered into an agreement with SAME RSP, UK to train nurses. The agreement is aimed at imparting advanced training to KP nurses through esteemed medical schools in the UK.

"Through this initiative, the KP government would fund training for 503 public sector nurses to enhance nursing care across the region," said, KMu Spokesman. "Recently, the KMu has also organized nursing leadership and capacity building course in collaboration with SAME RPS UK, and health

department."

According to rough estimates, in Pakistani hospitals, the current nurse-patient ratio is 1:40 while the Pakistan Nursing Council recommends a nurse-patient ratio of 3:10. Deficiency in actual number of nurses is also aggravated by seats remaining vacant due to shortage of skilled nurses that also compels health institutions to compromise on quality of nursing care.

Shortage in nursing strength locally is also due to an urge in professionals to move overseas particularly the Gulf countries for a better living that apprehend that even after producing quality nurses, the shortage would continue to persist. This reality, demands from the governments and the policy makers to evolve a strategy for not only producing well qualified nurses but also ensuring for them better employment opportunities locally.

The situation is even worst in private sector particularly in small hospitals that hire less trained or self-trained staff on meager salary and poor employment terms and conditions on the pretext of shortage of qualified nurses.

Larger private health setups often resort to make shift arrangements by engaging nurses employed in the public hospital for second shift. Such nurses are required to work for up to 16 hours a day affecting quality of patient care.

"The demand of nursing is increasing with every passing day that can only be addressed by adopting multi-faceted approach including policy changes, advance education and improved

working conditions," opined Dr. Liaquat Ali, a medical professional.

He suggested that increasing nursing education opportunities, establishment of nursing schools and programs, job security, better wages, providing scholarships and financial aid to encourage young nurses can help improve working of this sector.

"Investing in nursing education and improving working conditions would help ensuring a sustainable and well-equipped nursing workforce to meet our demand," he said. "Nurses are backbone of healthcare systems and we must focus on their training, ensure them due status and job security to improve patient care."

Cognizant of the situation, Director General KP Health Services, Dr. Muhammad Saleem said, the department has introduced some new courses to equip nurses with modern leadership and professional skills.

"This would help KP nurses to seek opportunities in field of health allied sciences worldwide," Dr Saleem said. "As doctors and nurses lead from the front by providing much needed assistance to victims of different diseases and calamities."

Appreciating their dedication and hard work during pandemics and disasters, he said, the government is also working to facilitate and incentivize them. "KP doctors and health professionals have proved their worth in the country and abroad and training we have planned, would further enhance their professional capabilities and leadership skills."

Punjab govt unveils Rs. 132 billion package to empower youth

People-friendly governments always play a vital role in fostering employment and business opportunities for the youth to bring about positive social change for economic development.

In today's rapidly evolving economic landscape, job creation is a cornerstone for economic growth, poverty alleviation, and social stability. Therefore, governments always come up with out-of-the-box solutions and various ways and means to create an enabling environment by launching initiatives that support entrepreneurship, skill-development, and business opportunities.

The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has a history of launching initiatives to create employment and business opportunities, particularly in Punjab. The youth employment scheme has proved instrumental in provision of internships and training to young graduates to enhance their professional skills.

In order to empower people, especially the youth of the province in the first month of the year 2025, Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz has allocated Rs. 132 billion for its two initiatives: Rs. 84bn for the Punjab Easy Business Finance Scheme, and Rs. 48bn for the Punjab Easy Business Card scheme.

Although the key initiative aimed at youth empowerment in the country is the Prime Minister's Youth Business Scheme, which offers financing and skill development programs. The scheme provides low-interest loans ranging from Rs. 0.5 million to Rs. 7.5 million for individuals aged 18 to 45, helping young entrepreneurs establish their businesses and enhance their employability.

The Punjab Easy Business Finance Scheme, worth Rs. 84 billion, will offer over Rs. 36 billion in interest-free loans. This program is designed to support men, women, transgender individuals, and persons with disabilities aged 25 to 55 in Punjab. The Punjab Easy Business Card Scheme, valued at Rs. 48 billion, further extends financial assistance to aspiring entrepreneurs.

Another notable initiative is the e-bike scheme, aimed at improving student mobility. The Punjab government has already distributed 20,000 electric bikes and scooters to students in both public and private educational institutions.

In the next phase, nearly 100,000 more e-bikes will be distributed, further facilitating students' transportation needs. With these great initiatives, the Punjab government continues to take significant steps towards fostering economic growth, reducing unemployment, and empowering the youth to build a prosperous future.

The Punjab government has also announced provision of free bikes to orphan students, ensuring that even those with underprivileged backgrounds could benefit from the initiative.

Expressing her gratitude for the government's efforts, Fatima Dilawar, a student at a private college, shared how the e-bike scheme transformed her daily commute. Previously relying on public transport for her journey from Sheranwala Gate to Raiwind Road, she described the initiative as a life-changing gift that made her routine more convenient and comfortable.

Highlighting the broader impact of youth-focused initiatives, Prof. Dr. Sajid Hussain, Head of the Mass Communication Department at Superior University Lahore, stated the Punjab government's commitment to foster economic growth through job creation and entrepreneurship.



Cartoon by Amjad Rasmī. (Courtesy of Ashfaq Al-Awlat)

Climate Change – A challenge for water resource, agriculture

Yasrab Iftikhar

Continued global warming and extreme weather events occurred in recent years have rung alarms bells across the globe, threatening many nations of upcoming water scarcity and food security challenges.

As the earth temperature continues to rise uninterrupted, the experts fear that many countries may fall victim to this phenomenon in terms of floods, disturbed rainfall, agricultural produce shortfall and consequently drought-like situation or starvation.

According to a 2024 report submitted by Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Pakistan ranks among the top 10 countries worldwide most affected by climate change.

The disaster occurred in the summer of 2022 illustrates the entanglement between rapid onset and slow onset events. Rain-induced floods were compounded by glacier retreat and landslides with simultaneous severe heat wave on the other hand.

According to weather experts, the country has experienced significant temperature increases over the past few decades as annual temperature has increased by about 0.5°C since 1960s. By 2050, it is projected that average temperature will rise by an additional 1.3°C to 1.5°C.

Rainfall patterns are becoming increasingly erratic and annual precipitation is expected to decrease in some regions while others may see more intense and unpredictable rainfall events.

Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) has issued severe drought advisory for Punjab due to 40 percent below normal rainfall for the first time in province's history. A similar alert issued by Pakistan Meteorological Department's National Drought Moni-

toring Center (NDMC) has noted that from September 1, 2024 to January 15, 2025, rainfall across Pakistan was 40 per cent below normal, with a reduction of 42 pc in Punjab.

This drastic reduction in rainfall is expected to exacerbate water stress in cultivated lands, particularly in rain-fed regions, due to the limited supply of irrigation water for Rabi crops.

"Lesser rainfall leaves a major financial impact on farmers, whether they have a big holding or a small one," remarked Sajjad Ahmed, a farmer owning land in the outskirts of Lahore. "This is critical. Small farmers are already giving up and looking for jobs."

He informed that potato crop average in his area had remained very low this year. "Usually, we could easily get 100 to 120 sacks per acre. But, this winter we could get only 60 sacks per acre."

Worried about overall agricultural productivity, Sajjad said, "this spell of dry weather affected our potato crop and we fear, if this trend continues, it would also have adverse effects on other crops."

The persistent drought conditions in Punjab's rain-fed regions are anticipated to worsen in February and March in the absence of significant rainfall and the PDMA has requested local administrations to take preemptive measures for drought risk management in their respective divisions and districts.

As the situation may also result in water shortage, PDMA Director General Irfan Ali Kathiya has advised that farmers should be informed in advance about this situation.

Since water is lifeline for every crop, wheat cultivating farmers are also worried about per acre yield of wheat if they had to face a dry spell during February.

"Rainfall during January and February is of much importance for wheat crop," said Ishfaq Ahmed, a wheat farmer from Multan. "This

time the weather is unusual and we fear dearth of rain for wheat crop."

He said even five years ago we used to receive winter rains for a week at a time. Even if that was low rainfall, it had been sufficient for our wheat crop. "This time we still await downpour and if it doesn't happen soon, it would affect per acre yield."

Thinking is also the same at Punjab Agriculture Department where experts are worried about prevailing dry spell as an official said, "if ongoing dry weather condition continues to prevail, it will have negative impact on water resource and agricultural production."

Besides potato and wheat, this dry spell and 40 percent less rainfall may also affect yield of cotton, rice and other crops thus leading to an overall food security challenge.

Cognizant of the situation, the Punjab government had started working on strategies for water management, awareness campaign for farmers and steps to conserve underground water. It is also engaging with academia and experts to deal with this situation.

"As the government is in touch with academia and researchers to avert climate change impact on agriculture, we recommend to immediately focus forestry and energy sectors," remarked Punjab University Agriculture Department Dean Prof. Dr Muhammad Saleem Haider.

Moreover, he said, to deal with dry weather and proper water management, there is a need for adopting modern agriculture techniques, water conservation, adaptation practices and introducing climate-resistant

"Climate change is a common challenge and researchers, academia, media and above all the government departments must collectively forge ahead to deal with this challenge," Prof Saleem Haider remarked. "If we failed to move in right direction, the situation would be more worrisome for coming generations."

Metro, E-bus services win public acclaim

Kashif Khan

As urban mobility in federal capital transforms into an affordable and comfortable journey, commuters have expressed satisfaction and appreciation for improved and time and money saving transport system.

Both the Metro Bus and E-Bus services have validly won public acclaim for respectfully facilitating women and elderly people as gone are the days when commuters were left on the mercy of rude wagon and mini-bus owners.

The modernized transport network has not only made commuting easier but has also contributed to reducing traffic congestion and environmental pollution. These bus services, covering key areas of Islamabad and Rawalpindi, have significantly reduced travelling time and provided a comfortable, affordable and reliable mode of transportation.

"I was once used to see my elders suffering from pangs of travelling by privately owned vehicles as it was exhausting and sometimes intimidating to rely on those old vans," remarked Maryam Sultan, a high school teacher who commutes daily from Rawalpindi to Islamabad.

"But, now I feel much safer traveling to and from work especially during the evening hours," she shared her enthusiasm for the upgraded transport system. "As a working woman, the new bus services have been a pleasant experience for me and many others of my class."

Maryam Sultan was not alone to appreciate this new mode of travelling as thousands others daily commuters like her, had the same feelings. "I used to spend hours in traffic jams daily and it was often painful to stall amidst blowing horns and smoke emitted by vehicles," said Ahmed Ali, a government employee. "It was costing me much, disturbing my monthly budget. But, now, I just hop on Metro Bus and reach my office in

30 minutes. It's affordable, comfortable and saves my time."

Recent addition of E-Bus service has further upgraded public transport system in Islamabad. These eco-friendly buses running on electric power have been integrated into existing Metro Bus network, providing seamless connectivity across the city. This service operates on 14 routes, covering major destinations.

"E-buses are amazing. They are quiet, clean and environmentally friendly. I feel good knowing that I'm contributing to reducing pollution by using this transport," said Ayesha Khan, a university student.

Affordability of these services has also been a reason for their popularity. With fares as low as Rs. 50 per ride, the Metro Bus and e-bus services are accessible to people from all walks of life.

The main challenge is availability of sufficient charging points as some commuters complain of longer time margin of buses on some routes while others have drawn attention towards better maintenance of bus stations. Some among them also complained of heavy rush during peak hours and suggested to enhance number of vehicles.

However, the CDA is committed to addressing these issues and improving frequency of the service as commuters demand grows.

As Islamabad continues to grow and develop, the public transport system will play a crucial role in ensuring the city's sustainability and accessibility. The residents of Islamabad can look forward to a future where reliable, affordable and eco-friendly transportation options are readily available, making their daily travelling more convenient and enjoyable.

With the people of twin cities wholeheartedly embracing this modern public transport system, the future of public transportation in Rawalpindi and Islamabad looks promising, paving the way for a more connected and sustainable urban environment.

Hope 4 Humanity's Warm Haven Project provides crucial support amid cost of living crisis

Chaudhry Tabraiz Aurah

LONDON: Hope 4 Humanity, a charitable organization dedicated to supporting communities in need, continues to make a significant impact through its various initiatives. The organization runs multiple community projects, including the Food Support Program, Warm Haven, Kids Holiday Club, Well Newham, Vitamin D, and Healthy Start, all aimed at improving the lives of local residents.

Warm Haven: A Lifeline During Winter, One of its key initiatives, Warm Haven, operates during the winter months, addressing multiple challenges faced by communities, particu-

larly amid rising inflation and the cost-of-living crisis. Junaid Ali, Head of Operations at Hope 4 Humanity, emphasized that Warm Haven is not just about financial support—it also plays a crucial role in mental health and well-being. "The current cost of living has severely impacted the quality of life. Along with financial hardships, residents, including children, are experiencing adverse effects on their mental health and well-being," said Junaid Ali.

Warm Haven sessions, held twice a week, offer residents a welcoming environment where they can engage in activities designed to boost physical and mental well-being. Attendees benefit from: Yoga and Zumba

sessions, promoting physical activity and relaxation. Live music sessions, fostering a sense of community and joy. Hot meals, which not only provide nourishment but also help families reduce their food expenses. Additionally, by participating in Warm Haven, residents can cut down on their energy bills, as they spend time in a heated space rather than using their own home heating systems. Hope 4 Humanity's projects reflect a deep commitment to supporting vulnerable individuals and families. As the economic climate remains challenging, initiatives like Warm Haven serve as a crucial support system, ensuring that financial difficulties do not lead to social isolation,



poor mental health, or food insecurity. With continued community engagement and charitable efforts, Hope 4 Humanity is striving to create a more resilient and connected society, one initiative at a time.

Criminal Lawyer Muhammad Shafeeque Chaudhry calls for stricter measures to tackle child grooming

Chaudhry Tabraiz Aurah

LONDON: Renowned criminal lawyer Muhammad Shafeeque Chaudhry, image4.jpeg senior partner At Allied Law Chambers Solicitors has spoken out on the urgent need for stronger legal measures and community awareness to combat the rising threat of child grooming. Highlighting the severity of the issue, he emphasized that grooming is not just a criminal act but a deeply rooted societal problem that requires a multi-faceted approach involving law enforcement, policymakers, and the community.

Speaking on the legal framework surrounding child grooming, Shafeeque stressed the need for stricter laws and harsher penalties for offenders. Child grooming is a heinous crime that preys on the most vulnerable members of our society. While existing laws provide a foundation, there is an urgent need for



more stringent sentences and proactive enforcement to ensure that perpetrators face the full force of the law," he stated. He also pointed out that loopholes in legal proceedings often allow offenders to exploit weaknesses in the system, delaying justice for victims.

Shafeeque advocates for greater public awareness to prevent grooming before it occurs. He highlighted the role of schools, parents, and social institutions in educating children about the dangers of online and offline predators. Prevention is as critical as prosecution. If children and parents are made aware of grooming tactics, we can significantly reduce the number of cases before they even happen," he explained. He urged social media platforms to take greater responsibility in monitoring suspicious activities and called for stronger digital safeguarding policies to prevent online grooming.

Muhammad Shafeeque further emphasized the importance of early intervention and psychological support for victims to help them rebuild their lives. He urged authorities to allocate more resources to victim support services, ensuring that survivors receive the care and justice they deserve. Justice is not just about punishing the offender; it is also about restoring the victim's dignity and helping them heal. A robust support system is crucial for survivors to move forward," he said. As a respected criminal lawyer, Muhammad Shafeeque continues to advocate for a holistic approach—combining legal action, education, and community involvement—to combat child grooming effectively. His call for tougher laws, greater awareness, and systemic reforms underscores the need for a united effort to protect children and ensure a safer future for society.

Future of UK Immigration A Digital Revolution in Progress

Chaudhry Tabraiz Aurah

The UK's shift towards a fully digital immigration system is no longer just an aspiration—it is rapidly becoming a reality. With over 4 million visa holders having already created accounts to access their eVisa, the Home Office's ambitious plan to modernize and streamline border control is well underway. However, the estimated 600,000 individuals yet to transition from physical immigration documents to an eVisa highlight the challenges of such a large-scale digital transformation.

The Plan for Change, under which eVisas have been introduced, is designed to enhance security, efficiency, and accessibility in the UK's immigration system. The move away

from physical documents is a reflection of the global trend towards digital governance, where paper-based systems are being phased out in favor of secure, online solutions. This transition promises to make immigration status more convenient to access, harder to forge, and easier to manage for both individuals and authorities. Recognizing the scale of the shift, the Home Office has wisely extended the grace period for expired biometric residence permits (BRP) and EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) biometric residence cards (BRC). Initially set to end on 31 March 2025, the period has been extended to 1 June 2025, allowing individuals with expired documents to continue using them for international travel.

This extension is a pragmatic move,

preventing potential disruptions for those still in the process of securing their eVisa accounts. However, from 2 June 2025, expired BRPs and BRCs will no longer be valid for travel. This marks a clear deadline for those yet to act.

While the transition to eVisas has been smooth for the majority, the remaining 600,000 individuals must be urged to complete the process to avoid any difficulties. While the government's vision for a fully digital immigration system is commendable, it does come with practical challenges. The exact number of people still needing to create an eVisa account is difficult to determine, as immigration data fluctuates daily due to visa expirations, departures, and changes in status. Additionally, issues such as duplicate UKVI

accounts, created unintentionally by some applicants, need to be resolved to ensure a seamless experience.

The government's continued commitment to monitoring and refining the system will be key to ensuring that the remaining visa holders can make the transition without unnecessary hurdles. The government is urging those who have not yet created their eVisa account to do so as soon as possible. The process is free and straightforward, particularly for those who already hold physical or paper-based immigration documents.

All EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) status holders have already transitioned, demonstrating that the system is functional and reliable. For those with Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR), who



currently rely on passport ink stamps or vignettes, there is no immediate requirement to switch. However, moving to an eVisa is strongly recommended to take advantage of the secu-

rency, accessibility, and efficiency it offers. The UK's move towards a digital immigration system is a sign of progress, aligning with global trends in border security and digital governance. The transition reduces risks of document fraud, makes immigration status easier to verify, and simplifies interactions with employers, landlords, and government services.

While change often brings uncertainty, the benefits of a digital immigration system far outweigh the temporary challenges. The Home Office's extension of the grace period is a welcome decision, but it must be used wisely by those who have yet to act. As the final deadline of 1 June 2025 approaches, visa holders should ensure they are ready for the digital future.

Pakistan Stock Exchange welcomes distinguished delegation from Iraq

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) welcomed a distinguished delegation of Iraqi scholars from the Scientific Foundation for Financial Transactions (SFFT Iraq) to explore opportunities for collaboration in Islamic finance and strengthen the Islamic capital markets in both nations. The delegation included esteemed scholars: Ayatollah Syed Izz-al-Din-Ai-Hakim, Allama Syed Ahmed Ezz-El-Din-El-Hakim, Allama Sheikh Qasim Al-Issawi, Sheikh Muayyad-al-Abbadi, and Allama Sheikh Sajid Raza Khan Najafi. SFFT is a leading Iraqi research institute specialising in Islamic finance, and the visit was facilitated by the Al-Sadiq (AS) Institute, Karachi.

Mr. Farrukh H. Sabzwari (PSX's MD and CEO) and PSX's senior management welcomed the delegation. Also in attendance were distinguished members from PSX's Shariah Focus Group, including Mr. Mohammad



Shoab (CEO of Lucky Investment Company), Ms Sarwat Ahson (Executive Director of CFA Society Pakistan), Mr Harris Munawwar (Head of Investment, Bank Islami) and Mr Hasan Raza.

During the session, PSX officials provided an overview of Pakistan's capital market and highlighted the country's evolving landscape of Islamic finance.

The discussions focused on key areas such as the debt market, equity segments, listing options on the Main and GEM boards, and capacity-building initiatives to enhance bilateral cooperation.

The Iraqi scholars expressed their gratitude for PSX's hospitality and shared their keen interest in learning from Pakistan's successful Islamic finance

practices. A delegation member remarked, "Our objective is to leverage Pakistan's proven models of Islamic finance to benefit our own market. With 50 percent of Iraqi banks operating on Islamic principles and remarkable growth—from 200 billion dinars to a trillion dinars over the past six years—we see immense potential for collaboration in Islamic

finance." The scholars emphasized that this interaction, rooted in the strong brotherly ties between Pakistan and Iraq, aims to catalyze the development of the Iraqi capital market. They also highlighted the importance of joint innovation in financial products tailored to Islamic finance, which could drive substantial growth in

their market. Commenting on the visit, Mr. Sabzwari stated, "We are thrilled to host our esteemed Iraqi counterparts and explore partnership opportunities. Our discussions have opened new avenues in areas such as ETFs, debt markets, equity, and specialised boards like the GEM board. By focusing on capacity building and product

innovation, we are confident that our collaborative efforts will benefit both Pakistani and Iraqi capital markets."

This visit marks a significant step toward deepening economic and financial cooperation between Pakistan and Iraq, fostering an environment of mutual learning and innovation, particularly in Islamic finance.

Bull & Bears
PSX 100-Share
Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index	
Current	Prev. Close
112,743.79	111,986.88
Day's High	Day's Low
112,877.01	111,717.17
Index Value	Change
7,903,357,259	+756.91
Percentage	Time
+0.68%	4 Mar, 2025 5:00 pm

Europe: FTSE 100 Index	
Index Value	Change
8,791.99	-79.32
Percentage	Time
-0.88%	4 Mar, 4:35 pm GMT

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average	
Index Value	Change
43,191.24	0.00
Percentage	Time
0.00%	3 Mar, 4:47 pm GMT-5

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average	
Index Value	Change
37,331.18	-454.29
Percentage	Time
-1.20%	4 Mar, 3:45 pm GMT+9

Open Market Forex Rates

Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	174.25	176.50
Bahrain Dinar	738.85	746.85
Canadian Dollar	193.85	196.25
China Yuan	37.59	37.99
Danish Krone	38.48	38.88
Euro	292.75	295.50
Hong Kong Dollar	35.62	35.97
Indian Rupee	3.11	3.20
Japanese Yen	1.88	1.94
Kuwaiti Dinar	900.00	909.50
Malaysian Ringgit	62.54	63.14
New Zealand \$	158.9	160.90
Norwegians Krone	24.81	25.11
Omani Riyal	723.15	731.65
Qatari Riyal	75.3	76.00
Saudi Riyal	74.45	75.00
Singapore Dollar	209.25	211.25
Swedish Korona	25.35	25.65
Swiss Franc	303.71	306.51
Thai Bhat	8.13	8.28
U.A.E Dirham	75.95	76.60
UK Pound Sterling	355.00	358.5
US Dollar	280	281.50

CCP breaks ground for new Headquarters, strengthening market oversight

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) marked a significant milestone with the groundbreaking ceremony of its head office building in the Mauve Area, G-10, Islamabad. Deputy Prime Minister Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar, along with Federal Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb laid the foundation stone.

The ceremony was also attended by Federal Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik, Federal Secretary for Law and Justice Raja Naeem, Chairman CCP Dr. Kabir Ahmed Sidhu, Chairman, Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) Akif Saeed, and other senior officials.

Speaking at the occasion, Deputy Prime Minister Senator Ishaq Dar emphasized the government's resolve to create an enabling environment for businesses, stating, "Our economic reforms are designed to promote competition, reduce barriers, and ensure a level playing field for all businesses." Ishaq Dar underscored the importance of a strong Competition Commission in ensuring a level playing field for businesses and fostering investment in Pakistan. He expressed hope that under the leadership of Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar and Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, the Competition Commission would achieve further success. Dar praised Chairman, CCP Dr. Kabir Ahmed Sidhu for effectively steering the commission in the right direction.



Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb stated that macroeconomic stability has been achieved in the country, and structural reforms are ongoing. He emphasized that while it is important for the Competition Commission to have its own building, it is equally crucial for the Commission to continue its efforts with the same dedication. Federal Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik highlighted the significant role of the Competition Commission as a regulatory body, noting that it plays a vital part in improving markets and the economy by promoting fair competition.

On this occasion, Federal Minister for Law, Azam Nazeer Tarar, congratulated the entire team of the Competition Commission and praised Chairman CCP, Dr. Kabir Ahmed Sidhu, for his professional achievements. He expressed confidence in Dr. Sidhu's leadership abilities as Chairman of the CCP.

Speaking at the event, Chairman CCP Dr. Kabir Ahmed Sidhu stated that the Competition Commission has restructured its legal department to effectively pursue cases in courts.

Additionally, it has established a Market Intelligence Unit, a new department dedicated to identifying cartelization and anti-competitive practices in the market. To raise public awareness about cartelization and its detection, the Commission has launched an awareness campaign, which has received highly encouraging feedback. Dr. Sidhu also announced the establishment of a Center of Excellence to conduct research on markets and relevant industrial sectors.

Since inception, CCP has investigated cartels, prevented abuse of dominance, and curbed deceptive marketing and unfair trade. In 2024, CCP imposed Rs. 275 million in penalties for cartelization, collusion, and deceptive marketing, recovered PKR 100 million, resolved 73 court cases, and issued 32 show-cause notices across fertilizer, real estate, education, public procurement, and pharmaceuticals.

The new headquarters will enable CCP to enhance its enforcement mechanisms, ensuring a robust and competitive economic framework for Pakistan.

Award

Mobilink Bank officials accept an award at the 'Global Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Benchmarks (GDEIB) Awards 2025', where the bank was recognized as one of the 'Top 10 Inclusive Companies of the Year', excelling in 14 out of 15 categories for its outstanding efforts in promoting diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI).



Mobilink Bank recognized among 'Top 10 Inclusive Companies' at GDEIB Awards 2025

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's leading digital microfinance bank, Mobilink Bank, has been named one of the 'Top 10 Inclusive Companies of the Year' at the prestigious Global Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Benchmarks (GDEIB) Awards 2025. The Bank secured 14 out of 15 award categories, reflecting its commitment to global DEI best practices and its efforts to accelerate women's social and economic progress in Pakistan.

This unprecedented success is driven by the bank's transformative DEI initiatives, including the Women Inspirational Network (WIN), which promotes gender diversity and leadership develop-

ment; Humqadam that builds an inclusive and accessible workforce for Persons with Disabilities; MobiCare, an Employee Assistance Program designed to support employees' mental, physical, financial, and workplace well-being; and MobilinkHER, a returnship program for females coming after a career break. Additionally, Mobilink Bank's Inheritance Calculator has been launched to promote financial equity and women's empowerment by ensuring their rightful share in inheritance.

Complementing these efforts, the Bank's equal opportunity and safe workplace policies guarantee fairness, respect, and growth opportunities for all employees. The bank has made significant strides in advancing diversity and inclusion,

reducing its Gender Pay Gap from 11% in 2023 to 2% in 2024, increasing female hiring from 24% in 2023 to 26% in 2024, and enhancing overall diversity from 13.8% to 16% during the same period.

"These awards affirm our commitment to a society rooted in diversity, equity, and inclusion," said Haaris Mahmood Chaudhary, President & CEO, Mobilink Bank. "As a future-ready Bank, we strive to create an environment where everyone—within our organization and beyond—can thrive and achieve their ambitions in today's digital world. From empowering employees to supporting customers and championing women across Pakistan, we are driving sustainable economic transformation."

KMBL partners with Qazi Shariah Consultancy to expand Islamic Banking Offerings

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Khushhali Microfinance Bank Limited (KMBL) has taken a significant step toward expanding its Islamic banking offerings by collaborating with Qazi Shariah Consultancy. This strategic partnership is aligned with the State Bank of Pakistan's Vision 2028, which aims to facilitate the transition of conventional banks into Shariah-compliant financial institutions, in line with the Federal Shariat Court's decision.

Speaking on the occasion,



Aameer Karachiwalla, CEO of KMBL, emphasized the signif-

icance of this partnership, "As part of our commitment to financial inclusion and ethical banking, KMBL is proud to join hands with Qazi Shariah Consultancy.

This partnership marks a milestone in our journey toward offering fully Shariah-compliant financial solutions, in line with the State Bank of Pakistan's vision for the industry. We are dedicated to ensuring that our customers have access to innovative, riba-free banking services that meet their financial needs while adhering to Islamic principles."

Cybersecurity Boost: PTA and Huawei Ink Landmark Agreement



Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) and Huawei have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) at the GSMA Mobile World Congress 2025 in Barcelona, reinforcing their commitment to enhancing Pakistan's cybersecurity landscape.

The agreement focuses on knowledge sharing, capacity building, and deploying advanced cybersecurity solutions. The signing ceremony was attended by Major General (R) Hafeez Ur Rehman, Chairman PTA, Iqbal Choudry, Coordinator General COMSTECH, Jeff Wang, President of Huawei Global Cybersecurity and Privacy Department, Ethan Sun, CEO Huawei Paki-

stan, Ahmed Bilal Masud, Director Subsidiary Board & Deputy CEO, Sultan Mahmood, Chief Security Officer Huawei Gulf North, and Yu Shaoning, Vice CEO Huawei Pakistan.

Chairman PTA highlighted the crucial role of public-private partnerships in addressing emerging cyber threats and fostering a secure digital ecosystem and appreciated Huawei's commitment and efforts to ensure a secure digital environment.

Jeff Wang emphasized Huawei's dedication to strengthening cybersecurity in Pakistan, ensuring a resilient digital infrastructure. The MoU marks a significant step in fostering a safer, more sustainable digital future for Pakistan.

Bernhard H. Mayer unveils Alto Ceramic Collection

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Bernhard H. Mayer, prestigious Swiss luxury brand, has launched its newest Swiss-made timepiece collection, Alto Ceramic. This exquisite series harmoniously blends innovative design with everyday elegance, setting a new standard in versatile luxury.

Inspired by the timeless contrast of piano keys, the Alto Ceramic Collection is available in classic black and white. The watches feature a high-polish ceramic case and bracelet, offering a lustrous finish that's both scratch-resistant and hypoallergenic. This careful material selection underscores Bernhard



H. Mayer's commitment to both aesthetics and wearer comfort.

Bernhard H. Mayer, representing the fourth generation of the Mayer family, emphasized the collection's adaptability: "Alto Ceramic embodies our vision of contemporary luxury. These timepieces effortlessly transition from day to night, meeting the demands of today's dynamic lifestyles while maintaining an air of sophistication."

Rupee sheds 10 paise against dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Rupee on Tuesday depreciated by 10 paise against the US Dollar in the interbank trading and closed at Rs279.76 against the previous day's closing of Rs279.66.

However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and

selling rates of the dollar in the open market stood at Rs280 and Rs281.50, respectively.

The price of the Euro increased by Rs2.63 to close at Rs293.49 against the last day's closing of Rs290.86, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

JS Bank records consolidated profit before tax of PKR 30.7 billion in 2024

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: JS Bank Limited continued to strengthen itself through sustainable growth and innovative financial solutions, solidifying its position as one of the fastest-growing banks in the country. As a result, JS Bank recorded a consolidated Profit Before Tax (PBT) of PKR 30.7 billion for the year 2024 as compared to PKR 18.7 billion for the year 2023, showing a growth of 64%. Whereas on a standalone basis, the PBT stood at PKR 6.4 billion for the same year.

The bank's profitability, based on the consolidated financial statements, was driven by an 87.2% surge in net mark-up/interest income, which reached PKR 73.9 billion compared to PKR 39.5 billion last year. The increase was coupled by a 67.8% rise in mark-up/interest earned, amounting to PKR 221.5 billion and optimization of funding pool to contain the increase in interest expense at a level of 59% YoY. Additionally, non-markup income contributed significantly rising by 23.3% to PKR 16.28 billion, with Fee and Commission income increase by 52% YoY to reach at PKR 8.98 billion (2023: PKR 5.97 billion), and a 288.64% increase in gains on securities.

Gold prices increase by Rs.4,800 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold increased by Rs.4,800 and was sold at Rs 306,300 on Tuesday against its sale at Rs 301,500 on previous trading day. All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association reported.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs.4,115 to Rs.262,602 from Rs. 258,487 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat went up by Rs.3,772 to Rs.240,727 from Rs. 236,955.

The prices of per tola silver increased by Rs.45 to Rs.3,315 whereas that of ten gram silver went up by Rs.39 to Rs.2,842.

The price of gold in the international market increased by \$47 to \$2,916 from \$2,869 whereas the prices of silver in international market increased by \$0.39 to \$31.80, the Association reported.

Pakistan name ODI and T20I squads for New Zealand tour

Tahir Amin Malik

LAHORE: Salman Ali Agha has been named Pakistan's T20I captain, with Shadab Khan as vice-captain, for the five-match T20I series against New Zealand from 16-26 March. Mohammad Rizwan will continue as ODI captain, with Salman serving as his deputy for the three 50-over matches scheduled at the back of the tour from 29 March to 5 April.

The decision to appoint Salman and Shadab as T20I captain and vice-captain, respectively, has been made with an eye on two major upcoming tournaments—the ACC Men's T20 Asia Cup 2025 (September 2025) and the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 (February/March 2026). Salman previously led Pakistan in a T20I series against Zimbabwe last year, winning 2-1.

As part of preparations for the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026, Pakistan is set to play a minimum of five T20Is in the ACC Asia Cup 2025 and three T20Is each against West Indies (away,

July), Afghanistan (home, August), Ireland (home, September), South Africa (home, September/October), Sri Lanka (home, November) and Australia (home, January 2026).

Mohammad Rizwan will continue leading the ODI side as Pakistan builds towards the ICC Men's 50-over Cricket World Cup 2027, which will take place in Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe in October/November 2027.

Pakistan squads for New Zealand tour:

T20I squad—Salman Ali Agha (captain), Shadab Khan (vice-captain), Abdul Samad, Abrar Ahmed, Haris Rauf, Hasan Nawaz, Jahandad Khan, Khushdil Shah, Mohammad Abbas Afridi, Mohammad Ali, Mohammad Haris, Muhammad Irfan Khan, Omair Bin Yousaf, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Sufyan Moqim and Usman Khan.

ODI squad—Mohammad Rizwan (captain), Salman Ali Agha (vice-captain), Abdullah Shafique, Abrar Ahmed, Akif Javed, Babar Azam, Faheem Ashraf, Imam-ul-Haq, Khushdil Shah, Mohammad Ali, Mohammad Wasim

Jnr, Muhammad Irfan Khan, Naseem Shah, Sufyan Moqim and Tayyab Tahir. A wicketkeeper/batter will be added to the ODI squad following the T20Is.

In the T20I squad, there are three uncapped players – Abdul Samad, Hasan Nawaz and Mohammad Ali – while Akif Javed and Mohammad Ali the two players who have yet to debut in ODIs. The four players have been rewarded for their impressive performances in the Champions One-Day and T20 Cups.

In the Champions T20 Cup, Abdul Samad scored 115 runs at a strike-rate of 166.67 after aggregating 145 runs at a strike-rate of 122.88 in the Champions One-Day Cup. Likewise, Hasan Nawaz had a staller Champions T20 Cup, finishing as the second leading run-getter with 312 runs at a strike-rate of 142.47. Mohammad Ali with 22 wickets was the leading wicket-taker in Champions T20 Cup, while he took three wickets in the Champions One-Day Cup. Akif Javed has been selected in the ODI side after his seven wickets in five Champions



One-Day Cup matches, while he took 15 wickets in the Champions T20 Cup. Openers Fakhar Zaman and Saim Ayub were not considered for either format on medical advice. Fakhar suffered a left lower intercostal muscle sprain during Pakistan's ICC Champions Trophy 2025 opener against New Zealand, while Saim is recovering from a right ankle fracture sustained on the first day of the Cape Town Test against South Africa in January. Both are expected to be fully fit for the HBL Pakistan Super League 10, starting in Rawalpindi on 11 April 2025. Aqib Javed will continue as interim head coach for the New Zealand tour.

His original term was until the ICC Champions Trophy 2025, but he has been asked to extend his tenure while the search for a permanent head coach begins. Mohammad Yousuf has been appointed as batting coach. Player Support Personnel—Naveed Akram Cheema (team manager), Aqib Javed (interim head coach), Azhar Mahmood (assistant coach), Mohammad Yousuf (batting coach), Mohammad Masroor (fielding coach), Cliffe Deacon (physiotherapist), Drikus Saiman (strength and conditioning coach), Talha Butt (analyst), Irtiza Komail (security manager), Dr Wajid Ali Rafai (team doctor), Syed Naeem

Ahmad (media and digital manager) and Sergio Basil Mullins (masseur). **New Zealand tour schedule:** 16 Mar – first T20I, Hagley Oval, Christchurch; 18 Mar – second T20I, University Oval, Dunedin; 21 Mar – third T20I, Eden Park, Auckland; 23 Mar – fourth T20I, Bay Oval, Mount Maunganui; 26 Mar – fifth T20I, Sky Stadium, Wellington; 29 Mar – first ODI, McLean Park, Napier; 2 Apr – second ODI, Seddon Park, Hamilton; 5 Apr – third ODI, Bay Oval, Mount Maunganui

National Games' toppers to be awarded scholarships from Endowment Fund: Sports Minister

Tahir Amin Malik

LAHORE: Punjab's top performing athletes will be awarded scholarships from Sports Endowment Fund on the basis of their performance in the 35th National Games which are scheduled to be organized at Karachi from May 6 to 14, 2025.

Punjab Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs Malik Faisal Ayub Khokhar made this announcement in a statement on Tuesday.

Faisal Khokhar said that Punjab contingent will participate in 35th National Games with complete preparations. "Strict directions have been issued to provincial selection committees to select all Punjab teams purely on merit," he added.

He further said that Punjab athletes had exhibited wonderful performance in Inter-Provincial Quaid-e-Azam Games and now we expect that our players will maintain their level of performance in mega event of National Games.

He said that the training camps of Punjab teams for the preparation of 35th National Games will be conducted under the supervision of qualified coaches after Ramazan ul Mubarak. "Sports Board Punjab will provide best facilities to all coaches during training camps."

He said that Punjab province has plenty of potential in all game disciplines. "Several talented athletes were emerged during Khelta Punjab Games," he added.

Pakistan CC and Alamgir Gymkhana Dominate in Nighat Umar T-20 Tournament

Khawaja Nafay, Jahanzeb Sultan and Kashif Ali hit tons



KARACHI: Pakistan Cricket Club and Alamgir Gymkhana have stormed into the semi-finals of the inaugural Nighat Umar T-20 Cricket Tournament, organized by the Regional Cricket Association Karachi Zone VI, with commanding victories. In the first match at Naya Nazimabad Gymkhana Ground, Pakistan Cricket Club posted a formidable 288/3 in their 20 overs, fueled by explosive centuries from openers Khawaja Muhammad Nafay and Jahanzeb Sultan. Sultan smashed 127 runs with 10 fours and 12 sixes, while Nafay remained unbeaten on 113, including 10 fours and 8 sixes. Orangi Star Cricket Club were

subsequently bowled out for 151 in 18.3 overs, with Hassan Ali scoring 60. Abdul Moez took 3/25, leading Pakistan CC's bowling attack. The second match saw Alamgir Gymkhana achieve a record-breaking 315/2, powered by Kashif Ali's blistering 182 runs, featuring 12 fours and 19 sixes. Orangi United Cricket Club were decimated, managing only 50 runs in 11.2 overs. Abdul Hai's 3/6 led a dominant bowling performance, with Hasnain Khan, Tariq Khan, and Ziaullah each taking two wickets. The two victories have set up exciting semi final matches.

PCB and Television Channels have a full of protocol for indian journalists who are staunchly anti-Pakistan.

Kiran Asim

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani journalists found it extremely difficult to obtain Indian visas two years ago. About fifty journalists applied for Indian visas for the World Cup, but only ten journalists got visas. These journalists were asked to leave India as soon as the Pakistani team was eliminated from the tournament... But for the Champions Trophy, the Pakistan Cricket Board opened its doors to biased Indian journalists. About ten Indian journalists were easily given visas from the Pakistani embassy in Delhi, which exempted them from reporting. And even Indians were allowed to go to Multan and Taxila, where tournament matches were not scheduled, so that they could visit their religious places. Among these Indian journalists was the foul-mouthed journalist Vikrant Gupta, who had also spewed venom against Pakistan before the Champions Trophy. When there was a deadlock between India and Pakistan over the holding of the Champions Trophy, Gupta called Pakistan a mediocre country and said that Pakistan would be kicked out of cricket like a fly out of milk... This foul-mouthed journalist was not only invited to Pakistan, but according to sources, the PCB also booked a hotel for him and other journalists... Gupta was also honored by being made a guest by two Pakistani television channels. The same journalist will now go to India and repay this hospitality with his biased words.



World Cricket Champions Trophy 2025

India defeated Australia by 4 wickets to qualify for the final: Knocking Australia out in the semi-final

Asim Tanveer

DUBAI: The Champions Trophy final was also moved out of Pakistan. In the first semi-final of the Champions Trophy on Tuesday in Dubai, India eliminated Australia with a 4-wicket victory, securing their spot in the final. As a result, Pakistan is now only hosting the second semi-final. The final on March 9 will also take place in Dubai.

Australia's batting lineup collapsed in the last 10 overs of their innings, costing them the match, while poor fielding further sealed their defeat.

In Dubai, Australia won the toss and chose to bat first. This decision was in line with what Pakistan and Bangladesh had done in their group matches after winning the toss.

Australia's innings started disastrously. The newly introduced player, Cooper Connolly, was dismissed for a duck by Mohammed Shami. However, after that, Travis Head and Steve Smith built up the score. India got a major breakthrough at 54 runs when the dangerous Travis Head was dismissed for 39 by Chakravarthy Varun, with

Shubman Gill taking the catch. This was a big blow to Australia. Marnus Labuschagne came in to bat and took the score to 110 before he was dismissed for 29 runs by Ravindra Jadeja. India's fourth breakthrough came soon after when Josh Inglis was dismissed for 11 at a score of 144. However, Alex Carey then took charge and, along with Steve Smith, pushed the total to 198. With more than 13 overs remaining and six wickets in hand, Australia looked set for a big total.

At this point, Steve Smith played a highly irresponsible shot, attempting to cross-hit a full-toss from Shami, only to have his stumps shattered. He scored 73 runs off 96 balls. Glenn Maxwell followed, hitting a six but getting bowled on the very next delivery by Axar Patel—an irresponsible approach from the senior players. Australia lost their fifth and sixth



wickets at scores of 198 and 205, respectively. After that, Ben Dwarshuis joined Alex Carey, hoping to push the total higher, but the scoring rate slowed down. By the 44th over, Australia was at 234/6. Then, wickets kept tumbling—
- The seventh wicket fell at 239,
- The eighth at 249,
- The ninth at 262,
- And the tenth at 264 with three balls left in the innings. Among the dismissed players, Alex Carey was run out after scoring 61, while Adam Zampa and Nathan Ellis scored 7 and 10 runs, respectively. For India, Mohammed Shami took 3 wickets for 48 runs in his 10 overs. Chakravarthy Varun took 2 wickets for 49 runs in 10 overs. Ravindra Jadeja claimed 2 wickets for 40 runs in 8 overs. Axar Patel picked up 1 wicket for

43 runs in 8 overs, while Hardik Pandya also took one wicket. In response, India's innings began with slight concern when Shubman Gill was dismissed for 8 runs at a total score of 30. Soon after, Rohit Sharma was out for 28 runs off 29 balls at a score of 43. This was a strong start for Australia, but then Virat Kohli and Shreyas Iyer stabilized the innings. During this phase, Australian fielders dropped multiple catches, giving both Kohli and Iyer extra chances. Australia finally got their third breakthrough at 134 when Shreyas Iyer was bowled by Adam Zampa after scoring a brilliant 45 runs. However, this did not cause much trouble for India. Axar Patel then joined Kohli and took the score to 178 before getting bowled by Nathan Ellis for 27 runs. Despite losing wickets, India



remained under control as they maintained a run-a-ball pace. Australia's most crucial wicket came in the form of Virat Kohli, who was nearing a century. He was caught by Dwarshuis off Zampa's bowling after scoring 84 runs off 98 balls, including five fours. At this stage, India needed runs at a ball-to-ball rate, with 37 required off 37 balls, making the match exciting. KL Rahul and Hardik Pandya then accelerated the scoring, hitting sixes and ensuring Australia had no chance of a comeback. Their aggressive batting made the match one-sided. When India was just 6 runs away from victory, Hardik Pandya got out after scoring 28 runs off 24 balls, caught by Glenn Maxwell off Nathan Ellis. His innings included three sixes and a four, and he had built a 34-run

partnership with KL Rahul. India needed only 4 runs off the last 12 balls. They comfortably chased the target in 48.5 overs, winning the semi-final by 4 wickets. KL Rahul remained unbeaten on 42. For Australia, fast bowler Nathan Ellis took 2 wickets for 49

runs, while spinner Adam Zampa claimed 2 wickets for 60 runs. The second semi-final will take place tomorrow, March 5, in Lahore between South Africa and New Zealand. The winner will face India in the final of the 9th ICC Champions Trophy 2025 on March 9 in Dubai.



Meeting

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, chaired the 2nd meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Essential/Cash Crops on Tuesday.



Photo: PID

PM forms committee for early realisation of accords with Azerbaijan



Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday formed a committee to ensure the early realisation of the Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) and agreements signed with Azerbaijan during his recent visit to the country. The prime minister, chairing a meeting to review the implementation of accords, directed the author-

ities concerned to present an action plan to take the Pakistan-Azerbaijan current trade volume to \$2 billion.

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar will head the newly-formed committee that will prepare agreements in the energy and infrastructure sectors, according to a PM Office press release.

The prime minister also directed to complete all preparations on a priority basis ahead of the expected visit of the President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev to Pakistan next month.

He also instructed the appointment of trade officers in Azerbaijan and other countries with a significant potential for trade with Pakistan.

Prime Minister Shehbaz highlighting the longstanding brotherly relations between Pakistan and Azerbaijan, said that the government was taking priority measures to fully capitalize on the vast trade and investment potential between Pakistan and Central Asian states.

Pakistan-IMF talks enter crucial phase, details sought on losses in SOEs

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have entered a crucial stage, with the global lender seeking detailed information on financial losses incurred by state-owned enterprises (SOEs).

Further details on the Financial Monitoring Unit (FMU) have also been requested, according to sources familiar with the discussions.

Sources indicate that the IMF has raised questions about the latest intelligence received by the FMU, particularly regarding banking transaction reports and their role in revenue enhancement strategies.

Additionally, detailed data on non-banking transactions has been sought, with the IMF inquiring how such information is utilized within Pakistan's financial system.

During the talks, the IMF also questioned the efficiency



of invoice machines installed at chain outlets in Pakistan, though it expressed satisfaction with the Federal Board of

Revenue's (FBR) briefing on the matter.

The IMF's economic review mission has formally commenced policy negotiations with Pakistan's economic team at the Ministry of Finance.

The discussions, which are part of the \$7 billion loan programme review, are being led by Federal Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb on Pakistan's side, while the IMF's delegation is headed by Nathan Porter.

BISP Chairperson meets Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal MD to Discuss Data Sharing and Welfare Initiatives



Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Chairperson BISP congratulates Shaheen Khalid Butt on assuming the post of MD Bait-ul-Mal. The discussion focused on ways to enhance cooperation between BISP and Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal in various fields, as well as measures for the welfare of deserving individuals.

Senator Rubina Khalid stated that BISP is launching Benazir Hunarmand Program to provide global employment opportunities to deserving individuals. She emphasized that, in light of the increasing demand for skilled labor in the global market, certified training is necessary for these individuals to secure employment internationally.

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Chairperson Benazir Income Support Program (BISP), Senator Rubina Khalid, today met MD Bait-ul-Mal, Senator Captain Shaheen Khalid Butt, in his office. During the meeting, Chairperson BISP congratulated

Dar to participate in extraordinary session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM)

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar will travel to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to take part in the Extraordinary Session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM), which is set to take place on March 7, 2025, in Jeddah.

This high-level meeting will bring together Foreign Ministers and senior officials from OIC member countries to discuss joint actions in



response to the deteriorating conditions in Palestine due to ongoing Israeli aggression, violations of Palestinian rights,

and calls for their displacement.

As a strong supporter of the Palestinian cause, Pakistan

has consistently highlighted this issue on various international platforms. At the upcoming OIC-CFM session, the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister will reaffirm Pakistan's steadfast support for the Palestinian cause and emphasize its principled position.

He will advocate for the full withdrawal of Israel from all occupied territories, including Jerusalem, denounce the unacceptable proposal for further displacing Palestinians, and call for restoration

of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, such as their right to return to their homeland and the establishment of a viable, contiguous, and sovereign Palestinian state based on the pre-June 1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

Additionally, on the sidelines of the OIC-CFM, the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister is anticipated to hold bilateral meetings with counterparts from important OIC member states.

Mohsin Naqvi lauds Security Forces for foiling terrorist attack in Bannu Cantt

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has praised the security forces for successfully thwarting a terrorist attack by Khawarij militants in Bannu Cantt.

In a statement, he commended their swift and decisive action, which resulted in the elimination of six terrorists.

Naqvi emphasized that the nation takes immense pride in the professionalism and courage of its security forces. "Their timely response not only saved lives but also crushed the nefarious intentions of the attackers," he said.

Expressing deep sorrow over the loss of precious lives in the attack, the interior minister extended heartfelt condolences to the families of the martyrs. He assured them of the government's unwavering support during this difficult time.

Additionally, Naqvi prayed for the swift recovery of those injured in the incident. "We stand with the families of the martyrs in this hour of grief," he stated.

PCB announces free Iftar for fans during semi-final of CT 2025



Asim Tanveer

LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has announced that fans attending the semi-final match of Champions Trophy 2025 between New Zealand and South Africa at Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore, on March 5, will receive free Iftar.

According to the PCB, spectators can present their match ticket to receive an Iftar box

containing dates, juice, and a mini pizza. Additionally, food stalls inside the stadium will remain open for fans to purchase other snacks and beverages.

This initiative aims to enhance the match-day experience during Ramadan, ensuring that spectators can break their fast comfortably while enjoying the high-stakes game of Champions Trophy 2025.

With the match set to begin at 2 PM and Iftar scheduled for 6:05 PM, PCB's initiative is a commendable effort to enhance the match day experience, making it not just about cricket but also about community and togetherness during the holy month.

It's worth noting that the ICC Champions Trophy 2025 edition marks return after an eight-year break, with the last

tournament being held in 2017, where Pakistan defeated their arch-rivals India in the final.

The eight-team tournament will feature 15 matches over 19 days, taking place in Pakistan and Dubai.

The teams are divided into two groups for the initial stage. Each team will play three group-stage matches, with the top two teams from each group advancing to the semi-finals.

Mustafa Amir murder case: Key suspect dodges investigators, avoids clear answers



News Desk

KARACHI: The Federal Investigation Agency's (FIA) cybercrime and anti-money laundering teams have begun questioning Armaghan and Shiraz, key suspects in the high-profile Mustafa Amir murder case.

However, Armaghan, appearing intoxicated, failed to provide any clear answers during the interrogation.

The FIA intends to conduct a forensic analysis of electronic devices recovered from the suspects before proceeding with further questioning.

Despite repeated requests, the Sindh Police have yet to hand over Armaghan's laptops, mobile phones,

and other relevant case records to the FIA.

A five-member FIA team questioned the suspects at the Anti-Violent Crime Cell (AVCC) centre, where Shiraz revealed that Armaghan had always treated him as an inferior since childhood.

According to FIA sources, a letter was sent to the Sindh Inspector General on February 28 requesting access to digital devices, FIRs, and confiscated items. However, the agency has not yet received the requested evidence.

The FIA has also not been provided with the names of the officers involved in the raid that led to Armaghan's arrest.