

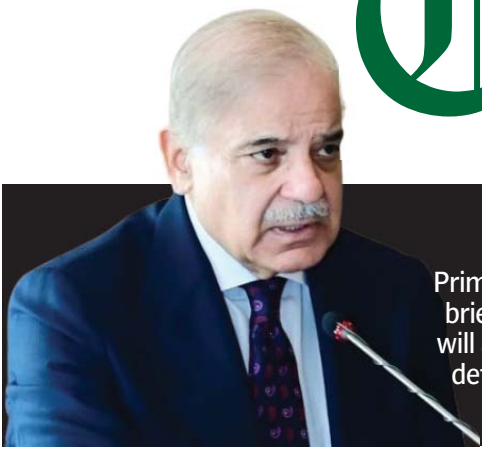
# Daily The Spokesman

A Leading National Daily



فرمان رسول ﷺ  
ہم سے محمد بن کثیر نے بیان کیا کہ ہم سے  
سیدنا ثوری نے بیان کیا ان سے ابو جازم  
نے اور ان سے اس بن سہر ساعی نے عرضی  
اللہ عنہ نے بیان کیا کہ ہم کھانا اور قبول نماز  
جو کے بعد کیا کرتے تھے۔  
(صحیح بخاری، حدیث نمبر 6279)

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## Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to visit Quetta today

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will visit Quetta on Thursday, where he will be briefed on the Jaffar Express tragedy. According to sources, federal ministers will accompany the prime minister during his visit. PM Shehbaz will receive a detailed briefing on the terrorist attack on the Jaffar Express and hold meetings with Balochistan Governor and Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti.



## Emma Alam receives UAE golden visa

Pakistani renowned figure in memory sports, speed reading, and mind mapping Emma Alam, has been awarded the United Arab Emirates (UAE) golden visa for her exceptional achievements. The UAE Golden Visa is a rare recognition, typically granted to investors, entrepreneurs, and highly skilled professionals in fields such as technology, medicine, and arts.

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## Solar tube wells

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar chaired a meeting of the Steering Committee on the conversion of Balochistan's agricultural tube wells to solar power on Wednesday.



Photo: PID

## President, PM strongly condemn terrorist attack



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif strongly condemned the terrorist attack, commending security forces for their effective response.

In a joint statement, they highlighted the bravery and professionalism of security personnel in countering terrorism.

Despite the challenging terrain, the forces remained steadfast, displaying unwavering determination. They

lauded the timely action that forced the cowardly terrorists to retreat.

Later, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif held a telephone conversation with Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti, who briefed him on the latest developments regarding the attack.

The prime minister emphasised that the nation is deeply shocked by the terrorist act but remains resolute in its commitment to peace. He noted that dozens of terrorists had been eliminated during the security operation.

# All terrorists behind Jaffar Express attack killed, hostages rescued: DG ISPR

Monitoring Desk

ISLAMABAD: All terrorists involved in the Jaffar Express attack have been eliminated, and all hostages safely rescued, said Director General of Inter-Services Public Relations (DG ISPR) Lieutenant General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry.

A total of 33 militants were killed in a large-scale operation carried out by security forces.

Speaking to a private TV channel about the attack, DG ISPR said that on March 11, at around 1pm, terrorists first blew up a section of the railway track

near Bolan. They then halted the Jaffar Express and took passengers hostage while maintaining communication with their handlers in Afghanistan.

He further stated that security forces launched a full-scale operation to secure the hostages. "All 33 terrorists present at the site have been killed," he said.

According to Lt-Gen Ahmed Sharif, army snipers successfully eliminated the suicide bombers among the militants.

"The operation was executed with precision, and no passengers were harmed. There were 440 passengers aboard Jaffar



Express," he added.

Detailing the militants' tactics, he revealed that the hostages were separated into three

groups, each guarded by suicide bombers.

The operation was conducted with extreme caution to prevent casualties.

"By last evening, we had rescued around 100 passengers, and today, we freed the remaining hostages," he said.

Emphasising the complexity of the mission, DG ISPR noted that the area was remote and difficult to access.

"The terrorists used hostages as human shields. The operation involved the Pakistan Army, Air Force, Frontier Corps, and SSG commandos. It was launched

immediately after the attack," he stated.

He further said that the rescue operation was carried out in phases.

"The terrorists had already killed 21 people before the operation commenced. During the mission, four FC personnel were martyred," he confirmed.

Jaffar Express had departed from Quetta at 9:30am on March 11. As the train passed through the Gudalar and Piro Kunri areas, unknown armed men opened fire on it. The driver was critically injured and later succumbed to his wounds.

## Sardar Yousaf distributes ration among journalists during Ramadan



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Sardar Muhammad Yousaf on Wednesday attended a ration distribution program for journalists as the chief guest during the holy month of Ramadan.

Addressing the gathering at the Information Service Academy, the minister emphasized the crucial role of journalists in societal reform, highlighting their responsibility in curbing fake news and promoting factual reporting.

He reiterated the government's commitment to the welfare of journalists and stressed that, like other segments of society, working journalists should not be overlooked during Ramadan.

Sardar Yousaf announced that the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony would observe March 15 as 'Yaum-e-Tahafuz Namous-e-Risalat (Day for the Protection of the Honor of Prophethood)'.

## Atta Tarar strongly condemns PTI, BLA & Indian media's propaganda over Jaffar Express incident

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting on Wednesday strongly condemned the propaganda launched by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) and Indian media over the terrorist attack on Jaffar Express in Balochistan.

"We thank the Almighty that the operation against the terrorists of the Baloch Liberation Army, who has an aim to hold



Pakistani citizens hostage, has reached to its logical conclusion," the minister said while talking to the media.

He said the Pakistan Army, Air Force, Frontier Corps (FC) and security forces, neutralized 33 terrorists during the operation which was conducted with exceptional professionalism and great care, averting a potential catastrophe.

"Some 440 passengers were in the train and the terrorists who were wearing suicide jackets used women and children as shields, and there was a potential of significant damage, but with the blessing of Almighty, no life was lost during the operation," the minister stressed.

He said this is not less than a miracle that there is no causality during the operation due to the meticulous planning and execution by security forces. Tragically, 21 individuals and four soldiers got martyred, prior to the operation's commencement.

## PTI shows ugly political face over Jaffar Express attack, says DPM Dar



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Wednesday said Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf had revealed its ugly political face over the Jaffar Express attack.

"When the enemy targeted innocent Pakistani citizens, PTI started blaming the army," the deputy PM said in his social media post on X. He pointed out that the nation had understood the evil nexus of the enemies. "This is treason against the nation," he added.

## Terrorists design to halt development process will bound to fail: Ahsan Iqbal

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Reforms Professor Ahsan Iqbal here Wednesday said terrorists design to halt development process will bound to fail.

Talking to media here, he said terrorists incident at Bolan was highly condemnable.

He said strong economy guarantee powerful defense.

He said that Uraan Pakistan was a national program launched for speedy development of the country and sought cooperation of provinces for its success.

Ahsan Iqbal assured support to KP Govt in devel-

opment of the province.

He said Federal Government started program to eradicate hapititous C, stunting in children and diabetes in next few years and sought provinces support in this regards.

Ahsan underscored the need of taking advantage of mineral and tourism potential of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa besides its geographical locations to increase Pakistan's trade with Central Asian Republics.

He said despite differences in political ideologies, we all are united for progress and prosperity of Pakistan.

Federal Minister Engr Amir Muqam was also present on the occasion.



# Kashmir's Self-Determination Right Must be Ensured: President AJK



**Bureau Report**

MUZAFFARABAD: President Jammu and Kashmir Barrister Sultan Mahmood Chaudhry has said that it was high time that the international community should come forward in a big way to help resolve the lingering dispute that has been the main cause and consequence of unrest and human rights violations in the region.

While addressing an Iftar dinner hosted in his honor by former government advisor Sardar Tabarak here today, the president said that he had also drawn the attention of ambassadors of Islamic countries towards the dire situation in occupied Kashmir seeking their respective countries' pivotal role to resolve the longstanding dispute peacefully.

He said that Muslim countries have always supported the Kashmiris' legitimate right for self-determination. The president also highlighted several significant initiatives, including the provision of Sui gas to Mirpur city, which were initiated under his government.

The president said that he was trying to seek Sui gas supply to Muzaffarabad as well. The president said that construction of Mirpur-Muzaffarabad-Mansehra Motorway, establishing CPEC Business Center and Airport at Mirpur and restoration and expansion of airports at Rawalakot and Muzaffarabad were among his top priorities.

On this occasion, Minister of State Chaudhry Muhammad Rashid, former advisor to the government and host Sardar Tabarak, former minister of state Chaudhry Maqbool Ahmed, Presidential Advisor Sardar Imtiaz Khan, former Chief Justice Chaudhry Muhammad Ibrahim Zia, Raja Madad, Munir Sulehria, Imtiaz Abbasi, and others were also present.

## Former PM condemns Jafar Express attack, blames foreign elements

**Spokesman Report**



MADINA MANAWARA/SAUDI ARABIA: Former Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir and President of Muslim Conference Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan, while expressing his condemnation of the Jafar Express attack in Balochistan from Madinah Munawwarah, said that the terrorist attack is extremely regrettable and condemnable. Such an incident on unarmed men, women and children during the holy month of Ramadan is clearly against Baloch traditions. He said that foreign elements are definitely involved in the terrorism taking place in Balochistan. The former Prime Minister further said that the people of Kashmir express their condolences to the families of the martyrs and express their heartfelt sympathy to the heirs of the abductees and pray for their early recovery.

The President of the Muslim Conference has appealed to the workers of the Muslim Conference, scholars in particular and the entire nation in general to organize special prayers and nawafil in their worship, prayers and nawafil on this day in the holy month of Ramadan, especially for the safe recovery of innocent and defenseless Pakistanis and the success of the operation of the armed forces of Pakistan against terrorists. Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan has specifically requested prayers and nawafil from all Pakistanis present in Baitullah Sharif and Masjid Nabvi Sharif.

## Desecrating Ramadan: Kashmir's Proud Muslims protest obscene fashion show

**Spokesman Report**



PARIS/RAWALPINDI: Chairman of Jammu and Kashmir Forum France, Member of the Central Executive Committee of PML-N, and former Coordinator to the Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir for Europe, Chaudhry Naem Akhtar, has expressed strong anger over the obscene fashion show held at the famous tourist spot Gulmarg in occupied Jammu and Kashmir during the holy month of Ramadan. In his issued statement of condemnation, Chaudhry Naem Akhtar said that it is extremely regrettable that an obscene fashion show was held in Gulmarg during the sacred month of Ramadan. The pictures and videos of the event have gone viral on social media, causing widespread outrage among the public. He stated that the Hinduva-driven Modi government is setting new records of oppression daily against religious freedom, tolerance, and harmony in occupied Kashmir. He questioned how such shamelessness could be tolerated in the occupied Kashmir valley, known for its deep religious inclinations. Those involved should be held accountable immediately. He emphasized that obscenity under the guise of promoting tourism will never be tolerated in occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

## Gold robbery under false pretenses: Police arrest accused Fayaz Khan

**Raza Naqvi**

ATTOCK: A case has been registered against four individuals, including three women, for stealing 5 tolas of gold by entering a citizen's house under the pretense of offering condolences. Accused Fayaz Khan has been arrested. According to details, Anfal Rasheed, son of Muhammad Rasheed, submitted an application at the Fateh Jang police station stating that he is a resident of Mohalla Mumtazabad and runs a tire shop. He was at home with his sister when Farzana Bibi, Rehmat Bibi, and Ayesha Bibi came to offer condolences on the passing of his uncle. Meanwhile, his sister was preparing to leave for Fateh Jang, carrying 5 tolas of gold jewelry worth 1,300,000 PKR along with other belongings. When the women arrived, she placed the jewelry on the sofa and went to the kitchen to prepare tea. However, the three women left without offering prayers, and when his sister later checked the bag containing the jewelry, it was empty, and the gold was missing. Upon confronting Rehmat Bibi's husband, Fayaz Khan, he kept delaying the matter under the pretext of arranging a community gathering (Jirga) for the recovery of the stolen gold. Fayaz Khan was also involved in the theft. Fateh Jang police immediately registered a case based on the citizen's complaint and arrested the accused Fayaz Khan, son of Riaz Khan, a resident of Mumtazabad, Fateh Jang. Further investigation is ongoing.

## Hindu Festival Holi

JAMSHORO: Students applying colors to celebrate Hindu Festival Holi at LUMHS in the city.



Photo: Online

## Commissioner Inaugurates Renovated Pakistan Air Force Aircraft at Y Cross Chowk

**Bureau Report**

MIRPUR: Commissioner Chaudhry Mukhtar Hussain formally inaugurated the renovation and beautification of the Pakistan Air Force aircraft installed at Y Cross Chowk under the Beautification of Mirpur project organized by the Mirpur Development Authority.



The renovation and beautification work of the Pakistan Air Force aircraft installed at Y Cross and the square was completed by renowned overseas personality Chaudhry Mahmood of Kalal Shahro at a cost of Rs. 1.5 million and handed over to the Mirpur Development Authority.

The formal inauguration ceremony was held in a grand manner and with great enthusiasm. On this occasion, Commissioner Chaudhry Mukhtar Hussain, President of the Supreme Court Bar Association Javed Najam Al-Saqib Advocate, President of the District Bar Association Chaudhry Mahmood Plakvi Advocate also hoisted the national flags of Pakistan and Azad Kashmir and presented the anthems of Pakistan and Azad Kashmir.

On this occasion, to raise awareness among the public regarding the Beautification of Mirpur project and in honor of the overseas personality Chaudhry Mahmood A ceremony was held at Asifa Bhutto Park, in which Chief Engineer and Director General of Development Agency Engineer Mahmood Mumtaz Rathore, President Supreme Court Bar Association Javed Najam Al-Saqib Advocate, Director Planning MDA Mirza Kaleem Ahmed Jaral and Shahid Amir Jaral addressed the ceremony.

The ceremony was attended by Director State MDA Chaudhry Amjad Iqbal, Chief Engineer Electricity Muhammad Nazir Mughal, President District Bar Association Chaudhry Mahmood Plakvi.

A Mining Cadastre System has been introduced, mapping over 3,000 mines and generating Rs 5.7 billion in royalties. The process of land acquisition for the 365-kilometer Peshawar-DI Khan Motorway has also commenced. The Chief Minister noted improvements

in the BRT service, leading to a daily increase of 150,000 passengers. KP's forestation program expanded forest cover by 12%, and food security projects worth Rs 25 billion have been initiated. Gandapur expressed full support for Uraan Pakistan's economic agenda but urged the federal government to ensure equitable funding for KP. He

## Punjab government issues notification for appointment of 22 Pediatrician Professors

**Bureau Report**

LAHORE: Provincial Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique has said that the appointment of 22 Assistant Professors of Pediatrics Medicine on a regular basis in the Department of Specialized Healthcare and Medical Education has been approved. A notification has also been issued in this regard. The successful candidates belong to Lahore, Attock, DG Khan, Muzaffargarh, Rahim Yar Khan, Toba Tek Singh, Rawalpindi, Lodhran, Khanewal, Sialkot, Chakwal, Bahawalpur, Bahawalnagar and Hafizabad.

## KP CM reaffirms commitment to Pakistan's progress, shunning political differences

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur on Wednesday emphasized unwavering commitment to Pakistan's development despite political differences.

He was addressing a consultative seminar on "Uraan Pakistan" held here at the Chief Minister's House.

The seminar, hosted with the aim of promoting sustainable economic growth.

Federal Minister Ahsan Iqbal, members of the provincial cabinet, parliamentarians, and senior officials from both provincial and federal governments attended the seminar.

The Uraan Pakistan initiative focuses on five key sectors: Exports, Equity, E-Pakistan,

Energy and Infrastructure, and Environment and Climate Change.

Addressing the participants, Chief Minister Gandapur stated that political differences would not deter the government from pursuing economic progress. He highlighted that the KP government is working towards sustainable development through financial discipline, infrastructure growth, energy capacity building, and social equity.

Gandapur revealed that the province achieved a budget surplus of Rs 169 billion in the first six months of the current fiscal year and established a Rs 70 billion Debt Management Fund to reduce liabilities.

Highlighting investment achievements, the Chief Minister

said that Rs 15 billion in private investment was secured for industrial zones, while Rs 200 million in loans were provided to entrepreneurs under the Insaaf Rozgar Scheme, creating employment opportunities for over 137,000 individuals.

He emphasized that the KP government's vision aligns with Uraan Pakistan's agenda, as seen in the revival of industrial zones in Daraban, Rashakai, and Haripur, which attracted Rs 435 million in private investment.

Gandapur mentioned that the establishment of Software Technology Parks in Peshawar and Mardan has boosted IT exports, and mineral industries have generated Rs 5 billion in revenue. Additionally, over 50,000 women-led businesses

have been supported through interest-free loans.

The Chief Minister shared that 81,000 youth have been trained in engineering, digital skills, and technical fields, while over 500,000 students have benefited from the provincial education card program. The Sehat Card Plus scheme was also reinstated, providing free medical services worth Rs 30.4 billion to around 10 million families.

The government has facilitated the construction of over 200,000 new homes, promoted e-governance, and introduced digital initiatives such as Pamir, Digital Payment Gateway, E-Domicile System, and Digital Tax Collection System.

Gandapur also highlighted the distribution of Rs 550 million to

support youth centers promoting positive activities and the provision of solar systems to 250,000 households.

He stated that 1,000 schools have already been solarized, with plans to solarize 8,000 more in the next year. Additionally, 4,000 mosques have been equipped with solar systems, with another 8,000 planned. Solarization is also underway for government offices, colleges, universities, mosques, and seminaries.

A Mining Cadastre System has been introduced, mapping over 3,000 mines and generating Rs 5.7 billion in royalties. The process of land acquisition for the 365-kilometer Peshawar-DI Khan Motorway has also commenced. The Chief Minister noted improvements



pointed out that under the Accelerated Implementation Program (AIP), the federal government allocated only Rs 215.3 billion out of the committed Rs 700 billion since 2018, with only Rs 132.1 billion actually disbursed. For the current fiscal year, Rs 42.3 billion were allocated, but only Rs 6.35 billion have been released so far.



**ISLAMABAD**  
30° - 38° Clear

**SERVICES**

**Namaz Timings**

Fajr	5:00 am
Zohr	12:18 pm
Asr	4:31 pm
Maghrib	6:13 pm
Isha	7:36 pm

**EMERGENCY**

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

**ENQUIRY**

Edhi Ambulance	115
PIA Flight Info	114
PIA Cargo	9280979
Railway Inquiry	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

**COMPLAINTS**

Water Tanker Service	
E-7, F-10 & F-11	9204654
G-5, G-6, G-7, G-8	9203883
G-9, G-10, G-11, G-12, H-8	9266316
Wapda Islamabad	9217579-80
Sui Gas Complaint	119, 9272249
Wasa Water Tank	
Rawalpindi	0331-5022125

**Terrorist attack on Jaffar Express condemned by Chaudhry Inam Zafar**

**City Desk**

RAWALPINDI: Awam Pakistan Party leader Chaudhry Inam Zafar said that he strongly condemns the terrorist attack on the Jaffar Express. I commend the security forces for their effective action. The role of the Pakistani Army has always been exemplary. The development and progress of Pakistan is a credit to the services of the Pakistani Armed Forces.

Chaudhry Inam Zafar, in an important statement issued from the Public Secretariat Rawalpindi, said that no matter how many anti-national acts terrorists carry out, failure is their destiny. Pakistan's forces are considered among the best forces in the world, which know how to give a befitting reply to every attack of the enemies. He said, "I salute the forces who risked their lives." Chaudhry Inam Zafar said that the security forces are fighting against terrorists with bravery and professionalism. The high morale of the forces during the successful operation of the Jaffar Express so far is commendable. He added that we have lost great sons in the ongoing war on terrorism. The sacrifices of the army are eternal. Our forces have always fought terrorism with courage and bravery. Terrorism will be eradicated from Pakistan, the entire nation stands by the Pakistani forces.

**CM Punjab Maryam pro-health vision**

# Provincial Health Minister visits THQ Hospital Kamalia

**Zafar Chishti**

TOBA TEK SINGH: CM Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif has taken strict notice of the tragic death of 7-year-old Asmara at Tehsil Headquarters Hospital (THQ) Kamalia due to an alleged wrong injection. On the directives of the CM, Provincial Health Minister Khawaja Imran Nazir made an emergency visit to the hospital to inspect the facilities, administrative arrangements and ongoing investigation into the incident.

Expressing deep sorrow over the child's death, CM Punjab stated that those responsible would be made an example to prevent such incidents in the future. She ordered an immediate inquiry and directed the health minister to personally oversee the investigation.

During his visit, Health Minister Khawaja Imran Nazir reviewed CCTV Photage, recorded statements from patients and their attendants and received a detailed briefing from the hospital administration. He also inspected the emergency ward, treatment facilities, and medicine availability.

The health minister later visited the grieving family of the deceased child

and offered condolences. He emphasized that CM Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif was deeply saddened by the tragedy and had issued clear directives to ensure justice. Based on preliminary findings, the health minister took decisive action by removing CEO Health Dr. Kashif Mehmood Kamboh, Medical Superintendent (MS) of THQ Hospital Kamalia Dr. Ijaz and the Chief Pharmacist from their positions. Additionally, a high-level inquiry committee has been formed to submit a comprehensive report, after which strict action will be taken against those found responsible.

The health minister was accompanied by Deputy Commissioner Toba Tek Singh Muhammad Naeem Sandhu, Assistant Commissioner Kamalia Iqra Nasir, and a seven-member technical team. They inspected various hospital departments and prepared a detailed report on the situation. Issuing a stern warning to the hospital administration, Khawaja Imran Nazir directed that all necessary medical facilities be provided to patients without any negligence. He made it clear that those endangering public health would face severe consequences.

The health minister reassured the public that the Punjab government



will not tolerate any injustice and is committed to protecting patients' rights. He affirmed that all those responsible for this incident will face the strictest legal action to prevent similar occurrences in the future.

## Ramzan Relief Package

ISLAMABAD: People buying sugar in Prime Minister Ramazan Relief Package at special Ramazan Bazaar at sector G-6 in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

## Aga Khan University approved as official site for MRCP(UK) PACES Examination

**City Desk**

KARACHI: The Aga Khan University (AKU) has achieved a significant milestone by becoming accredited as an official examination site for the MRCP(UK) Part 2 Clinical Examination (PACES). This prestigious recognition, granted by the Royal Colleges of Physicians (RCP) in the UK, reinforces AKU's role as a leader in medical education and assessment in the region.

"This is wonderful news for AKU and for hundreds of young medical trainees in Pakistan," said Dr Faisal Ismail, Regional Director,



CIME, South Asia. "Hosting the MRCP(UK) PACES exam at CIME underscores our ability to conduct high-stakes international assessments, and enables local candidates to access globally recognised qualifications closer to home." "This success is a testament to AKU's dedication to

excellence in medical education," said Dr Muhammed Tariq, Professor and Vice Dean, Medical College, AKU. "Becoming an accredited PACES exam site and having a team of internationally certified examiners places us at the forefront of medical assessments in Pakistan. We look forward to further expanding our impact through international collaborations."

With this milestone, AKU continues to solidify its position as a premier hub for clinical examinations, setting new standards for medical education and assessment in the region.

## Eid ul Fitr to mark start of Punjab's Trials for 35th National Games

**Tahir Amin Malik**

Director General and Youth Affairs Punjab Khizar Afzaal Chaudhry said that the 3-day trials for the selection of Punjab teams for 35th National Games will be conducted immediately after Eid ul Fitr.

Director General Sports and Youth Affairs Punjab Khizar Afzaal Chaudhry shared this information while chairing an important meeting at National Hockey Stadium on Wednesday.

Addressing the meeting, Director General Sports and Youth Affairs Punjab Khizar Afzaal Chaudhry said that after the trials, the training camps of Punjab teams will be organized under the supervision of qualified coaches. "All the provincial coaches have been assigned task to trace highly talented athletes from their respective tehsils and districts."

Director General Sports and Youth Affairs Punjab Khizar Afzaal Chaudhry said that after Inter-Provincial Quaid e Azam Games and Khelta Punjab Games, we have a good lot of talented athletes and we will participate in the 35th National Games with full preparations.

## DC Sindhu reviews urban flooding preparations

**Zafar Chishti**

TOBA TEK SINGH: On the directives of CM Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, Deputy Commissioner Toba Tek Singh Muhammad Naeem Sindhu chaired a meeting on urban flooding preparations. He directed all relevant departments to stay alert and ensure drainage systems remain functional.



ADCR Syed Jamil Haider Shah, Rescue 1122 and local government officials attended the meeting. DC instructed immediate action to prevent water accumulation and ensure public safety. Citizens are advised to take precautions and report emergencies.

## Mayor Karachi inaugurates model park in Metroville Site



KARACHI: Mayor Karachi, Barrister Murtaza Wahab, while speaking at the inauguration of a model park in Metroville Site said their vision was to build 50 new parks, and today they have inaugurated the second one.

He expressed gratitude to the people of Metroville for supporting the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP). He emphasized that true leadership fulfills promises and that PPP remains among the people.

He assured that the Hub Canal project would be completed by August, benefiting the public instead of the elite. He also remarked that while other political parties had their chances, only PPP would bring water from the Hub Canal.

Mayor Wahab stated that Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah, he himself, and Salman Abdullah Murad are working towards PPP's vision of clearing the city of encroachments. He asserted that the credit for this effort would go to PPP. He also mentioned ongoing work on the Gutter Baghicha project, which will focus on water recycling.

He announced plans for a sports complex in Metroville and improvements in roads and drainage systems, with Rs. 20 million allocated per UC. He highlighted the recent distribution of streetlights, instructing their installation in public areas, and promised to provide each UC chairman with 50 warranty-backed streetlights and fumigation machines before Ramazan.

Mayor Wahab also stated that by June 30, 2025, numerous development projects would be completed and that service to Karachi would continue. He invited young professionals to utilize the six vacant floors of the Liaquatabad Supermarket for IT-related work.

He acknowledged the need for improvements in hospitals and announced the establishment of an NICVD center in Baldia, which will also benefit residents of Keamari.

**Anti-Corruption Operation in Multan:**

## MDA Assistant caught red-handed taking bribe

**Special Correspondent**

MULTAN: The Anti-Corruption Establishment (ACE) Multan Region's Circle Officer Headquarters, Naveed Anjum, along with Civil Judge Magistrate First Class Multan, conducted a raid at the Multan Development Authority (MDA) Map Branch. During the operation, Assistant Rahman Hameed (BS-16) was caught red-handed accepting a bribe of Rs. 20,000 for approving a house map. The Anti-Cor-

ruption team recovered the marked currency notes on the spot and registered a case, initiating further investigations.

Director General Anti-Corruption Punjab, Sohail Zafar Chattha, has issued strict directives to all regional directors to arrest all corrupt individuals at any cost and bring them to justice to set a deterrent example.

Under the special instructions of Director Anti-Corruption Multan, Basharat Nabi, this operation was success-

fully carried out. Regarding the crackdown, Anti-Corruption spokesperson Wazir Khan Lashari (Assistant Director / PRO to Regional Director Anti-Corruption Multan) stated that they are striving for a corruption-free Punjab. He urged the public to fearlessly report corrupt individuals, ensuring they are brought to justice. The Zero-Tolerance Policy of the Punjab government and the vision of the Director General Punjab are being strictly implemented.





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# Trump Inflicts Wounds on the U.S. Economy

There was a significant plunge on Wall Street on Monday, driven by investor nervousness over the economic impact of President Trump's trade policies. Stocks in Japan, Australia, South Korea, and China all followed suit, tracking losses from the U.S. Wall Street suffered major declines as fears over the trade war escalated. The S&P 500, which tracks the largest American companies, dropped by 2%, while the Dow Jones slipped just over 2%. The tech-heavy NASDAQ took the hardest hit, plunging by 4%. These losses were sparked by concerns that tariffs would lead to higher prices for consumers and complicate the Federal Reserve's efforts to control inflation and reduce borrowing costs.

Technology companies, which had been a source of optimism in the stock market, also suffered significant losses. Tesla's stock dropped by 15%, Nvidia fell by 5%, while Alphabet (Google) and Meta (Facebook) both lost over 4%. These sharp declines indicate growing concerns about the stability of the technology sector amid ongoing trade uncertainties.

Kathleen Brooks, a research director at XTB, noted that President Trump claimed he does not closely monitor the stock market, but he may be paying more attention now after Monday's dramatic sell-off. He is scheduled to meet with top U.S. CEOs in a business roundtable discussion, which was likely requested by business leaders concerned about the stock market downturn and increasing recession risks.

The situation is expected to become even more volatile as April 2 approaches, the date when the full suite of tariffs is set

to be imposed. White House officials have urged the public to remain calm, arguing that the current market fluctuations are based on emotions rather than economic fundamentals. However, Trump's policies are raising serious concerns about the future of the U.S. economy.

One of the biggest fears is that the U.S. is trying to isolate itself in an increasingly interconnected global economy. Supply chains are deeply globalized, and while America is a powerful economic force, it still relies on international trade and strong global economic conditions. Disrupting these relationships with tariffs could have long-term negative effects.

There are already signs that the U.S. economy was naturally slowing down after years of growth. Now, the added pressure from tariffs and trade disruptions is amplifying recession fears.

Trump's aggressive economic approach includes not only broad-based tariffs but also efforts to cut government spending. However, government spending has played a significant role in driving economic growth in recent years. Reducing its role while simultaneously implementing tariffs may be an overly aggressive strategy that could push the economy into a downturn.

Trump's tariff policy includes China and Canada, which could significantly impact the U.S. economy. The stocks that tumbled this week are going to take a second hit once the Chinese tariff takes effect, which includes 15% levies on key U.S. agricul-

tural products such as chicken, wheat, corn, soybeans, pork, beef, and fruit.

China has the advantage in this situation because Americans heavily rely on Chinese goods, while China relies less on U.S. imports. This trade standoff is reminiscent of the first Trump administration, during which U.S. farmers suffered the most. Beijing seems to be taking its time to negotiate, opting to engage from a stance of strength.

But unlike China, Canada has reacted angrily to Trump's uncalculated tirade of tariffs. The Canadian Prime Minister and Ontario Prime Minister both angrily reacted to Trump and hurled counter and practical threats to Trump while sparing the American people. In their fiery speeches both Canadian leaders said that Canada is though unwillingly and with great regard to the American people who will suffer from Canadian Tariffs, levied an unprecedented 25% surcharge on electricity exports for the 1.5 million American homes and businesses that Ontario powers—homes and businesses in Minnesota, Michigan, and New York. This surcharge will cost families and businesses in these states up to \$400,000 every single day. On average, this will add around \$100 per month to the bills of hard working Americans.

They further threatened that they would not hesitate to increase this charge if necessary. If the United States escalates, they will not hesitate to shut the electricity off completely. They reiterated that their number one job is to protect the people of

Canada; they would fight like they have never fought before to protect Canada. They took a swipe on Trump and said his prudent policies are resulting in losses worth trillions in value. Companies are second-guessing investments in the American economy. American workers' jobs are at risk and the costs for hard-working American families will only go up.

As a result of these tariffs, markets are down, and inflation is set to rise dramatically across the United States. Thousands of American jobs are now at risk, particularly in industries that rely on Canadian materials or consumers. The U.S. government's actions will increase costs for American families on essential items like groceries, gas, cars, and homes. Additionally, these tariffs threaten American national security by restricting access to critical minerals, energy, building materials, and fertilizers from Canada.

With Anti-American sentiment in Canada at an all-time high, economists and security experts argue that the move does not make economic or strategic sense, as it weakens the U.S.'s position globally while strengthening adversaries like Russia and China.

Trump's policies serve as a classic example of how a leader, driven by false assumptions, can make uncalculated sweeping decisions that not only negatively impact key partners but also have lasting consequences for the stability, economy, and security of North America and the rest of the world.

*Mr. Qamar Bashir is Press Secretary to the President (Rtd), Former Press Minister at Embassy of Pakistan to France and Former MD, SRBC*



Analysis

Qamar Bashir

## Pakistan Calls for Stepped-Up Efforts to Achieve Gender Equality

Thirty years after world leaders adopted a historic blueprint to achieve gender equality, Pakistan has called for stepped up efforts to accomplish the goal of 50/50 parity.

The call was made by Dr. Nafisa Shah, a member Pakistan's National Assembly and Chairperson of the NA Committee on Gender Mainstreaming, at a high-level event organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and UN Women, part of the ongoing 69th session of the UN Commission on Status of Women.

The event marked the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and the 40th anniversary of the IPU's Forum of Women Parliamentarians.

Dr. Shah acknowledged IPU's achievements in amplifying women's voices and pushing for gender equality, noting the remarkable progress in women's parliamentary representation worldwide.

In her remarks, she also highlighted that Pakistan elected Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto as the first Muslim woman of any Islamic nation in 1988, and that she represented her country at the 1995 Beijing conference where she played a role in shaping the discourse on gender equality.

"While we assess pushbacks, and look minutely at where women are in decision-making and representation, it is no small accomplishment" that Pakistan was represented by Ms. Bhutto at this significant forum.

At the same time, Dr. Nafisa Shah, pointed out that the biggest pushback against women's rights was war, and conflict.

"As a parliamentarian from a region in South Asia that has been engulfed in decades of war, civic strife, and political instability I have experienced and witnessed how all this contributes to extremism, intolerance, and conservatism which further shrinks women's rights leading to marginalization and exclusion," the Pakistani delegate said.

As regards Pakistan, Dr. Shah noted that while women's representation in parliament peaked at 22%, it has now declined to 17% due to electoral and legal disputes over the reserved seats. She, however, expressed the hope that once the issues are resolved, the figure would return to approximately 21% in the National Assembly.

Highlighting a key success in narrowing the gender voter gap, she said: "Over the last decade, Pakistan has reduced the gender voter gap from 12% to 7% through legal reforms, increased enrollment, and gender-disaggregated data publication."

Dr. Shah lauded the role of women lawmakers, stating that despite low representation, Pakistani women lawmakers continue to make a significant impact.

"Women may constitute only 17% of the National Assembly, but they contribute 49% of the parliamentary business and have initiated 55% of the agenda. I can safely say women in Pakistan hold half the parliament in terms of performance," she asserted.



Cartoon by Amjad Rasmī. (Courtesy of Asharq Al-Awsat)

## Repatriation of Afghan Refugees

In Pakistan, one of the most pressing concerns is the security implications posed by the large Afghan refugee population. Many refugees reside in border regions like Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan, areas that are near Afghanistan and regularly experience cross-border tensions. The porous Pakistan-Afghanistan border has made it difficult to distinguish between Afghan refugees, migrants, and militants. The Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), a militant group that has been waging an insurgency against the Pakistani state for over a decade, represents one of the most significant security threats in the region. The TTP operates primarily along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border and has exploited the situation of Afghan refugees for recruitment, logistics, and operational support. Following the Taliban's return to power in 2021, there has been a significant increase in TTP activity. The group has used the relatively ungoverned spaces along the border to launch attacks into Pakistan, destabilizing already fragile regions populated by refugees. Other insurgent groups, including the Haqqani Network, have also found sanctuary in Afghan refugee camps and border areas in Pakistan. The vast, often inaccessible terrain along the border allows militants to operate covertly, resulting in rising cross-border incursions, terrorist attacks, and bombings in Pakistani cities. The TTP has frequently targeted Pakistani military, security forces, and civilian infrastructure, sometimes using Afghan refugee camps as cover to operate in regions like Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, worsening insecurity in these areas. Additionally, militant groups have been known to infiltrate refugee camps, where they sometimes radicalize vulnerable refugees, further complicating the challenges faced by Pakistani authorities in

managing the large refugee population in the region. The TTP has openly allied itself with the Taliban, and although the Taliban government has occasionally stated that it discourages cross-border violence, Pakistani officials view the Taliban's tolerance of TTP fighters operating from Afghan territory as a significant threat. In some instances, TTP leaders and fighters have sought refuge in Afghanistan, using the country as a base to launch attacks into Pakistan. The absence of a strong central government in Afghanistan following the Taliban's takeover has allowed these militant groups to operate with greater freedom. In addition to the security threats posed by Afghan refugees and militant groups, Pakistan faces significant humanitarian and socioeconomic challenges due to the presence of such a large displaced population. Already grappling with its own economic difficulties, Pakistan has been forced to allocate substantial resources to provide basic services to Afghan refugees, including food, shelter, healthcare, and education. With over 1.5 million registered refugees (and many more unregistered), the strain on Pakistan's public services is immense. The influx of refugees has placed considerable pressure on Pakistan's fragile healthcare system, where refugees often lack access to adequate medical care, leading to poor health outcomes and the spread of diseases in both refugee camps and host communities.

Furthermore, the presence of Afghan refugees has coincided with an alarming rise in terrorist incidents in Pakistan. The recent activities of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) have led to over 2,500 deaths in 2024, the highest toll in the past nine years. These terrorist attacks have disrupted foreign investment in Pakistan and created uncertainty around the country's infrastructure projects. In response to these challenges, Pakistan's Interior Ministry

has ordered all illegal foreign nationals and Afghan citizen cardholders to leave the country by March 31, 2025, with deportations set to begin on April 1, 2025. This decision has been made in response to national security concerns and economic pressures. In fact, relatively few Afghan refugees have been accepted by other countries. Germany has so far taken in 180,000 Afghan refugees, while Turkey hosts around 130,000 Afghan refugees. These figures clearly demonstrate that Pakistan is shouldering a much heavier burden than many other countries, while the pace at which other nations are accepting Afghan refugees has been slow. Pakistan has hosted Afghan refugees for the past 40 years, but given the current circumstances, this burden has become unsustainable. The repatriation of Afghan refugees has now become unavoidable due to Pakistan's national security, economic concerns, and long-term interests. The international community must take action to initiate rehabilitation projects in Afghanistan so that returning refugees can live with dignity and contribute to rebuilding their country. No nation can continue to host refugees at the expense of its own citizens. A recent example comes from the United States, where President Donald Trump proposed strict measures against illegal immigrants and foreign nationals. This action underscores that even the world's wealthiest country cannot afford to support refugees indefinitely. If the United States, with all its resources, cannot manage the cost of hosting refugees, it raises the question of how a country like Pakistan, grappling with severe economic and security challenges, can continue to do so. While Afghans are our brothers in faith, Pakistan can no longer bear the responsibility of hosting them.

The nation wholeheartedly supports the government's decision to repatriate Afghan refugees and urges that the process be expedited. The global community should also support Pakistan in its efforts for stability, as a secure and stable Pakistan benefits the entire world.



Analysis

Abdul Basit Alvi

## Local Govt Should Be Prioritized Over Diarchy in Punjab

The recent debate in the Punjab Assembly regarding the introduction of a diarchic system has sparked discussions on governance and administrative efficiency. The proposal is based on the argument that Punjab's massive population—surpassing that of nearly 170 countries—requires a more structured system of governance. Proponents believe that a diarchic system could ensure better administration by dividing responsibilities within the provincial government. However, such a proposal raises serious constitutional, political, and administrative concerns that cannot be ignored.

Rather than experimenting with new governance models that may disrupt the existing constitutional framework, the focus should be on strengthening local governments. A robust and well-functioning local government system is a proven method to enhance governance, improve service delivery, and ensure development at the grassroots level. Unfortunately, in Pakistan, local governments have often been manipulated by political actors to serve their interests rather than the people's needs.

For true governance reforms, local governments must be given the same autonomy and importance as provincial governments. This means ensuring proper financial allocation, administrative authority, and minimal political interference. If local governments are empowered effectively, they can address issues like infrastructure development, waste management, education, and healthcare directly at the community level. This would not only ease the burden on provincial governments but also make governance more transparent and efficient.

Punjab, being Pakistan's largest and most politically significant province, needs govern-

ance solutions that strengthen democratic institutions rather than complicate them. Instead of introducing a diarchic system, the provincial government should focus on making local governance more effective. This can be achieved by implementing a comprehensive framework for resource allocation, capacity-building programs for local officials, and mechanisms for accountability to prevent corruption and inefficiency.

Moreover, empowering local governments would bring governance closer to the people. Citizens would have more direct access to decision-makers, allowing for quicker resolution of local issues. It would also encourage civic participation, as people would see tangible results from their involvement in governance. A decentralized system that ensures power flows from the grassroots level upwards is far more sustainable and effective than introducing an additional administrative layer through diarchy.

In conclusion, Punjab does not need a diarchic system—it needs a strong, well-funded, and independent local government structure that ensures development reaches every corner of the province. The key to better governance lies in empowering the people at the community level, not in creating parallel administrative systems that could lead to further complexities and divisions. Strengthening local governments is not just a necessity for Punjab but for Pakistan as a whole. It is the most practical and constitutionally sound way to achieve effective governance, equitable development, and long-term political stability. Instead of experimenting with disruptive governance models, Pakistan must reinforce the system that directly connects the government to the people.

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Analysis

M Azam Tariq



# RCCI annual Iftar dinner brings together ambassadors, diplomats, and business leaders

By Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) hosted a Grand Iftar Dinner to honor ambassadors, high commissioners, diplomats, and commercial counselors. The prestigious event served as a platform to strengthen diplomatic and economic ties between Pakistan and the international community.

Among the distinguished guests were H. E. Mr. Atadjan Movlamov, Ambassador of Turkmenistan, Dean of the Diplomatic Corps in Islamabad, along with ambassadors from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Iraq, Malaysia, Romania, Myanmar, Nepal, Ireland, Kyrgyzstan, Brunei, Zimbabwe, as well as Charge d'Affaires from Indonesia, Cyprus, and Finland. Other notable attendees included Mr. Charles J. Perego and Brooke de Montluzon, Economic Counselors at the US Embassy, along with representatives from Portugal, Azerbaijan, Syria, and high commissioners from Sri Lanka and Rwanda.



Shaukat, accompanied by Group Leader Sohai Altaf, Senior Vice President Khalid Farooq Qazi, Vice President Fahad Barlas, and Zahid Latif Khan, Chairman of the Standing Committee on International Affairs, warmly welcomed the esteemed guests and expressed gratitude for their presence.

Change, Musaddiq Malik, CEO of DRAP Dr. Obaidullah, Patron-in-Chief of Sweet Homes Zamarud Khan, former RCCI presidents, executive committee members, district officials, trade association representatives, and a large number of traders were also in attendance.

Brings Together Ambassadors, Diplomats, and Business Leaders. The event successfully reinforced RCCI's commitment to strengthening economic diplomacy and fostering meaningful connections between Pakistan and global partners.



the attendees and emphasized that the annual Iftar Dinner is a longstanding tradition aimed at uniting esteemed members of the diplomatic corps with key figures from the business sector.

RCCI annual Iftar Dinner Brings Together Ambassadors, Diplomats, and Business Leaders. The event successfully reinforced RCCI's commitment to strengthening economic diplomacy and fostering meaningful connections between Pakistan and global partners.

Photos by Imtiaz Ahmed Faizi



## Shafaqat Ali Sindhu reaffirms commitment to PML-N, pledges support for overseas Pakistanis

By Chaudhry Tabraiz Aurah

LONDON: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) UK Central Vice President, Shafaqat Ali Sindhu, has reiterated his lifelong dedication to the party, declaring himself a "born and ideological supporter" of PML-N. In his first interview after assuming office, he spoke with Daily The Spokesman's UK and Europe Bureau Chief, Chaudhry Tabraiz Aurah, highlighting his commitment to strengthening the party's presence in the UK and addressing the concerns of Overseas Pakistanis.



related to family disputes, human rights, and property conflicts, which frequently become entangled in legal battles.

"I have accepted this position as a challenge to help Overseas Pakistanis. Being well-versed in the laws of both countries, I will work closely with PML-N's local leadership to address these issues effectively," Sindhu stated.

He also highlighted the growing influence of PML-N in the UK, asserting that under the leadership of Ahsan Dar, the party has strengthened its foothold among the Pakistani diaspora. Sindhu dismissed the perception

that PTI enjoys overwhelming support among Overseas Pakistanis, emphasizing that PML-N's successful events and mobilization efforts prove otherwise.

As a legal professional and political representative, Sindhu pledged to advocate for the concerns of Overseas Pakistanis before the party's central leadership, urging for meaningful reforms.

Praising the efforts of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, he credited their governance for Pakistan's economic recovery. He further lauded Mian Nawaz Sharif for his vision, stating that Pakistan is now moving towards stability and prosperity.

Sindhu assured that he remains a dedicated worker of PML-N, committed to serving both the party and the Pakistani community abroad. His appointment as PML-N UK Central Vice President marks a significant step toward a more structured and proactive representation of the party among Pakistanis living overseas.

## Muslim Hands and Meezab Group launch Open Kitchen Project in Makkah

By Chaudhry Tabraiz Aurah

LONDON: In a remarkable display of generosity, Muslim Hands, a British charitable organization, and Saudi Arabia's Meezab Group have jointly launched the Open Kitchen Project in Makkah. This initiative, which started on the first day of Ramadan, aims to provide free Suhoor (pre-dawn meal) services to low-budget Umrah pilgrims.

The project is currently operating in five hotels managed by Meezab Group, serving 1,000 freshly prepared meals daily between 3:00 AM and 5:00 AM. These hotels accommodate many pilgrims, particularly from Pakistan and other countries, who often struggle to arrange meals due to financial constraints. Acknowledging this issue, Muslim Hands and Meezab Group partnered with Dahra Faisalabad, a well-established food company in Makkah, to ensure the smooth operation of this initiative. Pilgrims have expressed deep gratitude for the service, offering prayers and appreciation for the organizations involved.

This project was made possible through the collaboration of Muslim Hands Chairman, Syed Lakht-e-Hussain Shah (Sitara-e-Pakistan),



and the owners of Meezab Group, Shahid Mahmood Anwar, and Imtiaz Chaudhry. They were further supported by Syed Bilal Kazmi, an expert in the food business, who helped address the challenges faced by Umrah pilgrims.

To ensure its successful execution, Muslim Hands UK and Meezab Group entrusted Ehsan Shahid Chaudhry (B. E. M.), the founder of the Muslim Hands Open Kitchen in Hounslow, UK, with overseeing the project arrangements in Makkah.

The official launch event took place in a local hall in Makkah, attended by Muslim Hands UK Chairman, Syed Lakht-e-Hussain Shah, who traveled to the holy city with his team, including Board of Trustees member, Sahibzada Maulana Ghulam Jilani, and Office Manager, Umar Javed Bhatti. Representing Meezab Group, Saudi partner

Mohammed Hisham Al-Habbash, along with Shahid Mahmood Anwar and Imtiaz Chaudhry, were present. The event was also attended by Dahra Faisalabad Group owners, Abdul Aziz Muslim Al-Hadhali and Syed Bilal Kazmi. During the event, Syed Lakht-e-Hussain Shah presented special shields on behalf of Muslim Hands UK to honor distinguished guests for their contributions. He extended heartfelt appreciation to Meezab Group and Dahra Faisalabad for their dedication to serving the pilgrims. In his speech, Syed Lakht-e-Hussain Shah emphasized the importance of such humanitarian efforts, stating: "Allah grants the privilege of serving others to those whom He blesses. This initiative is a testament to our commitment to supporting the guests of the holy city."

Looking ahead, he expressed hope that Meezab Group and Dahra Faisalabad would expand the Open Kitchen Project to operate year-round in Makkah and Madinah and extend its services during Hajj. This initiative marks a significant milestone in charitable efforts aimed at supporting pilgrims, ensuring they receive nourishing meals while performing their spiritual journey.

## Final call for entries: ATM Start-Up Pitch Battle seeks the region's top travel innovators

DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES: Providing a platform for the regional entrepreneurs who will shape the future of travel, Arabian Travel Market (ATM) will host the ATM Start-Up Pitch Battle in association with Intelak during the show's upcoming edition.

Taking place on 1 May at ATM's Future Stage, the competition invites startups to present their innovative and industry-changing business pitches in front of an expert panel of judges, including Ranzi Al Qassab, Managing Director Middle East at Sabre, and Njood Alkhalidi, Innovation Specialist at Intelak Hub.

As part of ATM's commitment to entrepreneurship and connectivity,

the competition invites start-ups with innovative products, services, or technologies to take advantage of this unique opportunity. The competition is open to pre-seed or seed series start-ups, enabling them to access the resources to take their businesses to the next level.

Danielle Curtis, Exhibition Director ME, Arabian Travel Market said: "ATM's primary mission is to unlock business potential for the travel and tourism industry, and entrepreneurs are becoming increasingly crucial to the sector's future. The ATM Start-Up Pitch Battle has emerged as one of the event's major highlights, showcasing inspiring ideas and the remarkable

talent this region has to offer. We look forward to receiving a diverse range of entries for this year's competition."

Last year's winner, InterLnkd, secured the top spot with their innovative approach to monetising travel bookings. The winning start-up for this year's competition will receive dedicated exhibition space at ATM 2026 and marketing and public relations support during the event. The winner will also have an exclusive opportunity to be part of a panel at ATM 2026, enabling them to share their insights with a wider audience and engage in meaningful industry discussions.

Start-ups eager to compete for the top prize must submit a brief summary

of their business and its mission by Friday, 21 March, via this link. Applications will be reviewed by Intelak, with assistance from Ahmad Alwaly, Senior Robotics Engineer at Emirates and a member of the Technology Innovation Lab. They will choose the most innovative solutions to present live at the event. Shortlisted candidates will be notified by 31 March.

Intelak is a Dubai-based technology and innovation hub dedicated to fostering entrepreneurship in the travel, tourism and aviation industries. Backed by leading industry partners, Intelak gives early and late-stage start-ups access to programmes, mentorship and a community of like-



minded individuals to launch, grow and scale their start-ups.

To further support entrepreneurial growth in travel, all shortlisted start-ups will be highlighted at the show this year. They will receive

complimentary pod space in the new Start-Up and Innovation Zone at ATM 2025, located in Zaabeel Hall 3, enabling them to showcase their solutions and network with industry leaders.

### Groundbreaking Initiative

## Al-Shifa Trust to establish South Asia's largest eye hospital in Lahore

By Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: In a monumental initiative that is set to revolutionize eye care in the region, the Al-Shifa Trust (AST) announced on Monday its plan to establish South Asia's largest eye hospital in Lahore.

This hospital, which will be a beacon of hope for those suffering from preventable blindness and visual impairment, is a testament to the trust's commitment to serving humanity.

The ambitious project, driven by the trust's committed management and supported by generous donors, aims to provide world-class eye care services to millions, particularly those from underprivileged backgrounds, a demonstration to the trust's empathy and compassion.



We have recognized the urgent need for a comprehensive, state-

of-the-art eye hospital in a region where access to specialized eye

care remains a significant challenge for the disadvantaged, said President AST, Major Gen. (Retired) Rehmat Khan.

Speaking to media about the project, Major Gen. (Retired) Rehmat Khan highlighted the crucial role of the Government of Punjab, which has generously provided 64 Kanal prime land on the Ring Road near Ada Plot, Raiwind for the hospital. This significant contribution underscores the collective effort and support behind this humanitarian cause.

He said the Chief Minister took a personal interest in allotting and transferring valuable land for the humanitarian cause. The ground will be broken in June 2025, and the project will be completed within three years.

Major Gen. (Retired) Rehmat



Khan said that the hospital will be able to serve 2000 OPD patients per day, and along with all other services, at least 500 corneal transplants will be held annually.

He informed that advanced Retina, Glaucoma, Cataract, Oculoplasty, Paediatric, and Cornea departments will be established, and a top-notch eye cancer centre will also be part of this hospital.

The trust's chief said it will be a

150-bed facility with 20 operating rooms and the latest equipment and technologies. This hospital will serve almost 20 million people in Lahore and adjacent areas, and its services will be totally free of cost.

The hospital will also extend its reach to remote and underserved communities through outreach programs using mobile eye clinics and skilled professionals to provide screening, diagnosis, and essential treatment.

We will also prioritize public awareness campaigns and educational programs that promote eye health, educate communities about common eye diseases, and encourage regular eye check-ups.

Major Gen. (Retired) Rehmat Khan said we want to empower millions of individuals facing preventable blindness to lead

productive and fulfilling lives and contribute to socio-economic development.

On this occasion, the Project Director AST Brig. (Retired) Arshad Mehmood said that preparatory work on the land has been started, the boundary is near its completion, and the construction of the hospital will be completed by September 2027.

We are currently seeking international experts to design an extensive complex that prioritizes the welfare of the patients.

The trust's visionary leadership is changing the eye care landscape in Pakistan and ensuring that no one is denied the gift of sight due to financial constraints while local and international agencies and experts also acknowledge the trust's efforts.



**Bull & Bears**  
**PSX 100-Share**  
**Index Fluctuation**

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index	
Current	Prev. Close
114,084.53	114,177.65
Day's High	Day's Low
114,661.88	114,001.50

Index Value	Change
14,832,111,315	-93.12
Percentage	Time
-0.08%	12 Mar, 2025 1:30 pm

Europe: FTSE 100 Index	
Index Value	Change
8,540.97	+44.98
Percentage	Time
+0.53%	12 Mar, 4:35 pm GMT

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average	
Index Value	Change
41,458.20	+24.72
Percentage	Time
+0.060%	12 Mar, 12:37 pm GMT-4

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average	
Index Value	Change
36,819.09	+25.98
Percentage	Time
+0.071%	12 Mar, 3:45 pm GMT+9

Open Market Forex Rates		
Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	176.25	178.50
Bahrain Dinar	740.30	748.30
Canadian Dollar	195.60	198.00
China Yuan	37.55	37.95
Danish Krone	38.45	38.85
Euro	303.75	306.50
Hong Kong Dollar	35.65	36.00
Indian Rupee	3.12	3.21
Japanese Yen	1.91	1.97
Kuwaiti Dinar	902.50	912.00
Malaysian Ringgit	62.18	62.78
New Zealand \$	157.59	159.59
Norwegians Krone	25.21	25.51
Omani Riyal	724.50	733.00
Qatari Riyal	76.18	76.88
Saudi Riyal	74.45	75.00
Singapore Dollar	209.35	211.35
Swedish Korona	27.41	27.71
Swiss Franc	311.62	314.37
Thai Bhat	8.17	8.32
U.A.E Dirham	76.25	76.60
UK Pound Sterling	361.00	364.5
US Dollar	280.25	281.75

# Pakistan, Oman discuss trade, investment, agree on Sector-Specific cooperation

**Spokesman Report**

ISLAMABAD: A high-level meeting between Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan, and Oman's Minister for Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Qais Al Yousif, was held at the Ministry in Muscat to explore avenues for enhancing bilateral trade, strengthening investment ties, and promoting

regional connectivity. During the discussions, Jam Kamal Khan emphasized Pakistan's industrial expertise and commercial strength, stating, "Oman can benefit from Pakistan's expertise, know-how, and industrial and commercial prowess to achieve the economic diversification goals set under Vision 2040 of the Sultanate." He reiterated Pakistan's commitment to



fostering deeper economic cooperation with Oman.

Qais Al Yousif acknowledged Pakistan's strategic significance in regional trade, highlighting that "historical ties and geographical proximity render Pakistan the most effective trade route to the Central Asian Republics (CARs)" said a release issued here on Wednesday.

He expressed Oman's interest in strengthening its economic partnership with Pakistan and expanding trade and investment opportunities in key sectors.

Both sides discussed strategies to enhance bilateral trade and investment, agreeing on the need to improve direct transportation linkages and utilize Pakistan as a trade route to CARs.

The Pakistani delegation highlighted the potential of Gwadar and Karachi ports as vital hubs for regional trade, offering Oman greater access to emerging markets.

The meeting also focused on sector-specific cooperation in textiles, small and medium enterprises (SMEs), agriculture, food security, and manufacturing.

## Rotary Club

ISLAMABAD: President Rotary Club of Islamabad Metropolitan Rtn. Shabbir Malik presenting Rotary Flag to Dr. Shaista Sohail CEO SOS Foundation during RCIM Seminar on International Women's Day held on Wednesday.



## Bayer Foundation supports launch of three primary health clinics in Karachi's underserved neighborhoods



**Commerce Desk**

KARACHI: Bayer Foundation supporting social innovation, has supported Mezrab, a non-profit organization in Pakistan, with a grant that enables the launch of three primary health clinics in the underserved urban neighborhoods of Karachi. Formally inaugurated on March 11, the Pehli Kiran Family Health Clinics will provide sustainable primary healthcare with a focus on women's reproductive health. "Karachi is home to some of the largest urban slums in the world, which lack basic health infrastructure and qualified health providers to cater to the primary health needs of their inhabitants,"

said Asma Balal, Director of Mezrab.

"We are very pleased that Bayer Foundation is funding this primary healthcare project with Mezrab," said Ahmed Ali, Managing Director and CEO of Bayer Pakistan Limited, "There is a tremendous need for developing sustainably funded social business models in Pakistan."

Khurram Mirza, Country Commercial Lead, Pharmaceutical Division, added, "This project will help address a serious gap in primary and reproductive healthcare access for the most vulnerable women in low-income urban neighborhoods. It also aligns very well with Bayer's strong overall commitment to women's health."

## FPCCI demands end to curtailments for 12 wind power projects

**Commerce Desk**

KARACHI: Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh, President FPCCI, has raised serious concerns regarding the ongoing curtailment on 12 wind power projects which have low tariff. He added that this is happening despite their cost-effectiveness and alignment with national energy goals, he added.

Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh has criticized the continued preference for expensive, obsolete power sources; urging the government to adhere to the Renewable Energy Policy 2006. He emphasized that the current situation is causing significant curtailments; leading to substantial financial losses for wind energy project developers. This scenario is impacting their ability to service debts; maintain operations and also compromising their return on investment (ROI) - which is jeopardizing future expansions as well.

Meanwhile, Mr. Fawad Jawed, Convener of FPCCI's Central Standing Committee on Renewable Energy, highlighted the economic and environmental advantages of wind power. He elaborated that wind energy in Pakistan offers clean, affordable electricity at a tariff of PKR.



13.8 per kWh - which is significantly lower than RLNG, RFO and coal-fired plants.

Mr. Fawad Jawed explained economic impact of the curtailments that the wind power plants have the potential to deliver exceptionally cost-effective electricity once they reach their capacity factor of around 38%. However, underutilization prevents

these cost savings from being passed on to consumers, he added.

In the interest of the national economy and power consumers, FPCCI demands an immediate and lasting end to the curtailments for 12 wind power projects which have low tariff. FPCCI also demands that the Existing Energy Purchase Agreements (EPAs) should be honoured

## Google Wallet now available for UBL customers in Pakistan



**Commerce Desk**

KARACHI: UBL has become one of Pakistan's first banks to enable Google Wallet for its Mastercard and Visa Debit Cards. By adding their cards to Google Wallet on Android and

To commemorate this milestone, senior representatives from Google, Visa, Master-

card, and Thales, visited UBL's Head Office in Karachi, on March 12th, 2025 to discuss the strategic opportunities in Pakistan's digital payment ecosystem. The visiting delegation included Mr. Chen Way Siew, Financial Institutions, Network & Transit Partnerships Lead - Google, Mr. Umar Khan, Country Manager - Visa, and Mr. Arslan Khan, Country Manager - Mastercard. UBL

was represented by Mr. Ijaz Farooq, Deputy CEO, Mr. Munawar Raza Shah, Chief Operating Officer, Mr. Sohail Aziz, Chief Information Officer, Mr. Sharjeel Shahid, Group Executive Digital Banking, and other senior executives. UBL continues to lead the way in bringing innovative digital payment solutions to its customers, making everyday banking easier and more accessible.

## Raising Tobacco Taxes: A critical move for public health and economic strength

**Spokesman Report**

ISLAMABAD: An urgent increase in the Federal Excise Duty (FED) on cigarettes is essential to curb tobacco consumption, reduce smoking-related healthcare costs, and generate additional government revenue. With over 31.6 million adult tobacco users in Pakistan, the country is grappling with a severe public health crisis. Tobacco consumption claims more than 163,000 lives annually, placing an overwhelming burden on the healthcare system and costing the economy at least 1.4% of its GDP.

Society for Alternative Media and Research (SAMAR), a leading anti-tobacco advocate working on tobacco control in Pakistan for the past two decades, stresses the need for immediate fiscal measures. Pakistan's previous tax reforms in 2022-23 significantly increased FED rates, resulting in a notable decline in cigarette consumption while simultaneously boosting revenue. However, the lack of further tax adjustments in 2023-24 has stalled this progress, posing risks to both public health gains and revenue growth. To sustain momentum, SAMAR strongly recommends a 40% increase in the FED rate in the upcoming Budget.

This measure is projected to reduce the number of smokers, generate substantial tax revenue, and recover a significant portion of smoking-related healthcare costs, stated Ashfaq Ahmad, Communication Officer at SAMAR.

The success of the 2022-23 tax reforms underscores the effectiveness of higher FED rates in achieving both public health and economic objectives. Between July 2023 and January 2024, tobacco tax revenue reached PKR 122 billion, with full-year projections exceeding PKR 200 billion. Additionally, increased FED rates contributed an estimated PKR 60 billion in additional General Sales Tax (GST) revenue from cigarettes. These figures highlight the dual benefit of tobacco taxation: discouraging smoking while bolstering government finances.

Concerns over potential illicit trade due to higher taxation have been refuted by research, which indicates that tobacco companies manipulate production figures to influence tax policies. Furthermore, the implementation of the track-and-trace system is expected to play a crucial role in curbing illicit trade, preventing tax evasion, and ensuring compliance within the tobacco industry.

## PAAPAM calls emergency meeting as tractor industry faces second major crisis in FY 24/25

**Commerce Desk**

LAHORE: The Pakistan Association of Automotive Parts & Accessories Manufacturers (PAAPAM) convened an emergency meeting to address the ongoing crisis in the tractor industry, marking the second major setback in the current financial year.

The industry's first crisis stemmed from the imposition of a 10% General Sales Tax (GST) on tractors in the Finance Bill 24/25. This measure placed the industry back into a refund regime, exacerbating existing refund delays amounting to billions of rupees from previous years. The situation was eventually rectified with the intervention of Federal Industries Minister, Mr. Rana Tanveer.

In response to these challenges, PAAPAM Chairman Usman Aslam Malik, alongside Former Chairmen Mumshad Ali, Tariq Nazeer, Former Senior Vice Chairman Saeed Iqbal, Irfan Qureshi, and the current Managing Committee, convened to strategize a way forward. The association unanimously agreed to escalate the matter in print and electronic media and to formally appeal to Chief Minister Punjab Ms. Maryam Nawaz Sharif and relevant ministries for urgent intervention and clarity on the future of the Punjab-based tractor industry.

## Gold prices up by Rs.500 to Rs306,500 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold increased by Rs.500 and was traded at Rs.306,500 on Wednesday as compared to its sale at Rs306,000 on previous trading day, All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewelers Association reported.

The prices of 10 grams of 24 karat also increased by Rs.429 to Rs 262,774 from Rs 262,345 whereas the prices of 10 gram 22 karat gold also went up by Rs.393 to Rs.240,884 from Rs 240,491 respectively.



# ICC thanks the PCB for successfully hosting the ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025

The International Cricket Council (ICC) has thanked the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) for successfully hosting the ICC Men's Champions Trophy 2025 and to the Emirates Cricket Board (ECB) for the staging of five matches, according to a release from ICC. India won the Champions Trophy title for the third time after defeating New Zealand by four wickets at the Dubai International Stadium on Sunday. The event, which took place from February 19 to March 9, saw Pakistan host their first global cricket tournament since 1996. The tournament was hosted across four venues, Karachi, Lahore and Rawal-



pindi in Pakistan and Dubai in the United Arab Emirates.

ICC Chief Executive, Geoff Allardice said, "We would like to thank and congratulate the Pakistan Cricket Board for successfully hosting the ICC Men's

Champions Trophy 2025," as quoted from a release by ICC.

"As this was the first global multi-team cricket event played in the country since 1996, this event was of huge significance for the PCB, and all those involved in renovating the stadiums, preparing the playing surfaces, delivering the matches and hosting the teams and visitors should be very proud of their efforts," he added.

"The ICC would also like to thank the Emirates Cricket Board for staging five of the matches in Dubai and continuing to provide great support to the ICC in

staging its major men's and women's events," he noted.

"The tournament once again showed the importance of ICC events as fans all over the world watched and followed it with great enthusiasm either at the venues or on satellite and digital channels," he said.

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"Thanks to the eight participating teams for making it such a compelling event, and congratulations to India for winning a third Champions Trophy title in a memorable final," he added.

## Azhar Mahmood bids farewell as Islamabad United announce new bowling coach for PSL 10

Pakistan Super League (PSL) franchise Islamabad United revealed their new bowling coach on Wednesday after Azhar Mahmood departed, ahead of the upcoming 10th edition of the league.

Three-time PSL winner Islamabad United parted ways with Azhar due to his commitment with the Pakistan men's cricket team.

The former bowling all-rounder has been replaced by Ian Buttler, who played eight Tests, 26 ODIs, and 19 T20Is for New Zealand from 2002 to 2013.

"Islamabad United, the most

successful franchise in Pakistan Super League (PSL) history, is pleased to announce Ian Buttler as the team's bowling coach for PSL 10," United said in a statement.

"At the same time, the franchise bids farewell to Azhar Mahmood, who is currently working with the Pakistan national team."

"Azhar played a key role in Islamabad United's success both as a player and a coach, winning PSL 1 in 2016 as a player and as an assistant coach in 2024," the statement added.

Ian Buttler expressed his excitement



after the appointment as bowling coach of Islamabad United.

"I'm really excited to be part of Islamabad United for PSL 10. This will be my first experience coaching in Pakistan,

and I've heard great things about the passion for cricket here."

"Islamabad United has a fantastic legacy in the PSL, and I'm looking forward to working with the talented bowling group to help the team push for another title," he said.

Former pacer also lauded Azhar Mahmood's services for the franchise and expressed his hope of building on his work.

"I'd also like to acknowledge Azhar Mahmood, who has done a fantastic job with this team, and I hope to continue building on that," he concluded.

## Quetta Gladiators name Sarfaraz Ahmed as team director for PSL 10

Former captain of Pakistan, Sarfaraz Ahmed, has been appointed as the team director of Quetta Gladiators ahead of the 2025 Pakistan Super League (PSL 10).

While announcing his appointment, Nadeem Umar, franchise owner, expressed his confidence in Sarfaraz's ability to excel in the role.

Sarfaraz Ahmed has been a key player for the Gladiators since the league began. The wicket-keeper batter led the team to its only PSL title in 2019.

The PSL 10 will begin from Friday, 11 April with defending champions Islamabad United taking on two times champions Lahore Qalandars at the Rawal-



pindi Cricket Stadium.

The six-team tournament will see 34 matches from 11 April to 18 May, with Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium set to host 13 matches, including two Eliminator and the final.

Also, the upcoming edition will

feature an exhibition match, which will be played on 8 April in Peshawar. The teams of the match will be confirmed in due course.

According to the PSL 10 schedule, Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium will host 11 matches, including Qualifier 1 on 13 May. Karachi's National Bank Stadium and Multan Cricket Stadium will host five matches each.

The marquee event will also feature three double-headers, with two matches on weekends (Saturday) and one on a national holiday (Labour Day).

Karachi Kings, the winners of the league's fifth edition, will begin their campaign on 12 April in their own

backyard against runners-up of the last edition, Multan Sultans.

The first PSL 10 match in Multan will be played on 22 April between the Multan Sultans and Lahore Qalandars.

The newly constructed Lahore's Gaddafi Stadium will welcome the tenth edition of the PSL on 24 April with home side Qalandars, winners of the seventh and eighth editions, taking on Peshawar Zalmi.

Peshawar Zalmi, champions of the PSL 2017, will play their five matches at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium, while the winners of the fourth edition, Quetta Gladiators, will play five matches at the Gaddafi Stadium.

### AKG Premier League Season 2

## United Thunder breaks Astrom Warriors' winning streak with a 7-wicket victory

The winning team chased down a target of 150 runs, losing 3 wickets. Anil Bawa scored 45 runs, while Waqab Johar was named the Man of the Match for his superb unbeaten 78 runs.

Karachi (Sports Reporter) In the second match of Round 4 of the ongoing AKG Premier League Season 2 Cricket Tournament at the historic Aga Khan Gymkhana ground, United Thunders defeated the previously unbeaten and top-ranked Storm Warriors (with 6 points from 3 matches) by 7 wickets. This win secured United Thunders 6 points, with 3 victories and



Karachi: The Chief guest of senior footballer AKG Zafar Baig, presenting a Man of the Match award to Waqab Johar for scoring 78 runs and taking a wicket.

1 loss after 4 matches.

The powerful Storm Warriors batted first and, after losing 8 wickets, managed to score 149 runs in their allotted 20 overs. Sannan Noor was the top scorer with 47 runs off 30 balls, including 4 boundaries and 1 six, while Sher Ahmed Khan contributed 27 and captain Hamid Ali added 21 runs. Aaniq Sher Ali took 2 wickets for 23 runs, while Rahil Sayani Rahim Suleman, and Waqab Johar took 1 wicket each.

In response, United Thunder chased down the target of 150 runs in 3 wickets in 19.1 overs,

securing a brilliant victory. Waqab Johar played a magnificent knock, remaining unbeaten on 78 runs from 69 balls, with 9 boundaries. Anil Bawa provided solid support, scoring 45 runs off 31 balls with 2 beautiful boundaries and 3 towering sixes. Malik Ali scored 10 not out. Saad Ali Khawaja took 2 wsenior footballer AKG Zafar Baig, presented Man of the Match award to Waqab Johar for his unbeaten 78 runs and 1 wicket.

On March 13, United Thunder will face Friends United in the first match of the 5th and final round at 1:30 PM.

## Champions Trophy 2025

The Champions Trophy 2025 was the ninth edition of the ICC Champions Trophy since its inception in 1998. It was now hosted by Pakistan Cricket Board from 19th February to 9th March 2025 and featured 15 matches held across three venues in Pakistan and one in the United Arab Emirates, their first big-ticket tournament since co-hosting the 1996 ODI World Cup.

The tournament was contested by the top eight ranked men's national teams qualified from the 2023 World Cup. Afghanistan made their debut appearance in the tournament.

Pakistan were the defending champions but they were eliminated in the group stage. India made history in this tourna-

ment by not only defeating New Zealand in the final and also became the first team to win three Champions Trophy titles. Their back to back six matches unbeaten has marked their status as the world's number one ODI team. However this victory has also created some controversy especially regarding India refusal to travel to Pakistan as India decided to play all their matches in Dubai rather than touring Pakistan which automatically has given them edge by staying at a single venue in Dubai with an unfair advantages to other teams including host Pakistan as all of them has to face the challenges of travelling between Pakistan and UAE. Pakistan was not even allowed to host the Final of Champions Trophy despite being host and if New Zealand and India Final



was held at Pakistan the result would definitely be different. Moreover, PCB officials were also not present from the Champions Trophy presentation ceremony despite being the host nation. Since the ceremony concluded,

there's been plenty of discussion all around in Pakistan over the manner in which it all unfolded. The great Pakistani legend Wasim Akram also admitted by being stunned on failing to spot a single PCB official at the ICC

Champions Trophy presentation ceremony. The incident has now landed into a huge controversy, with many questions being asked from the International Cricket Council (ICC) over the incident.

All the teams participated in the tournament and play their matches in Pakistan excluding India highly praises the hospitality and security measures adopted by PCB. I enjoy watching the whole tournament but as a Pakistani they were two disappointments: firstly is the early exit of Pakistan Cricket Team from the tournament and secondly the final was not held at Pakistan despite being host.

The Champions Trophy 2025 finally ended up on 9th March 2025 with India lifted the trophy.

Sarib Ijaz, Rawalpindi

## Pak athletes qualify 100m race, 4x100m relay finals

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Muhammad Afaq, Tabassum Nasir, and Shah Galoon have qualified for the finals of the 100m race and 4x100m relay divisioning race, respectively in



the 12th Special Olympics World Winter Games at Turin, Italy.

According to details issued here, all 10 Pakistani athletes will be in action in cross-country skiing and snowshoeing events finals on Thursday. In the final round of the 50-meter cross-country skiing race, Pakistan's two skiers, Rovina Qurban and Muneeb Ur Rehman, will compete for medals. Both athletes will also participate in the 100-meter final race on March 15.

In the 200-meter snowshoeing final races on Thursday, four Pakistani female athletes and three male athletes will compete, while Moazzam Iqbal will be in the 800-meter race. The 100-meter and relay snowshoeing races will be held on March 14, while the 400-meter race is scheduled for March 15.

Special Olympics Pakistan Chairperson Ronak Lakhani met with the Pakistani athletes and congratulated them on reaching the finals.

She said that this achievement is the result of five years of hard work, and now the athletes have made it to the finals of the World Winter Games. She urged the people of Pakistan to pray for the success of these special athletes.

## Butler joins Islamabad United



ISLAMABAD: The franchise in Pakistan Super League (PSL), Islamabad United, has announced Ian Buttler as the team's bowling coach for PSL Season 10.

Islamabad United is excited to welcome Ian Buttler as the new bowling coach for PSL 10. Buttler, an experienced bowling coach with a strong track record in international and franchise cricket, will be making his debut in the PSL. We are excited to see him with Islamabad United's coaching setup, led by head coach Mike Hesson, said a press release.

Butler on joining Islamabad United said, "I'm really excited to be part of Islamabad United for PSL 10. This will be my first experience coaching in Pakistan, and I've heard great things about the passion for cricket here. Islamabad United has a fantastic legacy in the PSL, and I'm looking forward to working with the talented bowling group to help the team push for another title. I'd also like to acknowledge Azhar Mahmood, who has done a fantastic job with this team, and I hope to continue building on that."

## Shubman Gill named ICC Men's Player of the Month for February 2025

DUBAI: Shubman Gill, the vice-captain of the Indian team, has been named the ICC Men's Player of the Month for February 2025 on Wednesday.

The opener pipped Australia's stand-in skipper Steve Smith and New Zealand's Glenn Phillips to claim the award.

The 25-year-old accumulated 406 runs at a staggering average of 101.50 in five matches over the course of the month.

In his five one-day internationals over the course of the month, Gill compiled 406 runs, averaging 101.50 at a strike rate of 94.19. The right-hander carried his good form with the bat in the Champions Trophy, after demonstrating excellent performances against England in the home series.

Shubman Gill amassed 259 runs from three matches at an average of 86.33, laced with one hundred and two fifties in the multi-nation tournament.

He was also named as Player of the series in the Indian team's landslide 3-0 victory against England.

The opener scored two half-centuries in the series against England, along with a sublime hundred in the last match of the series—his breathtaking knock of 112 from 102 balls, featured 14 fours and three sixes.

After the series, Shubman Gill started his Champions Trophy campaign with an unbeaten 101 to steer the Indian team to a comfortable victory against Bangladesh in their tournament opener.

In the second match against arch-rivals Pakistan, Gill dismantled the Pakistani pace attack with an elegant knock of 46 laced with elegant boundaries.

The opener has now bagged three ICC Player of the Month awards. Previously, he bagged the particular award in January and September 2023.

## Bangladesh's Mahmudullah Riyad retires from international cricket

Bangladesh all-rounder Mahmudullah Riyad has called time on his international career after announcing his retirement from ODIs through a social-media post on Wednesday.

Mahmudullah's retirement came after Bangladesh's early exit from the ICC Champions Trophy 2025. The 39-year-old had already taken retirement from Tests and T20Is in 2021 and 2024 respectively.

"All praises only for the Almighty Allah. I have decided to retire from international cricket," Mahmudullah wrote on his official Facebook page.

The right-hander penned a heartfelt message, thanking his family, friends and fans for supporting him throughout his career. "I would like to thank all of my team-mates, coaches and specially my fans who has always supported me."

Follow us on our Official WhatsApp channel "A big thank you to my parents, my in-laws specially my father in law & most importantly my brother Emdad Ullah who has been there for me constantly since my childhood as my coach & mentor," he added.

Mahmudullah Riyad concluded his 19-year career as the fourth-highest run-scorer for Bangladesh, trailing only Mushfiqur Rahim, Shakib Al Hasan, and Tamim Iqbal.

The all-rounder amassed 5,689 runs at an average of 36.46, which included four centuries and 32 fifties.

Mahmudullah Riyad's retirement also marked the end of Bangladesh's golden generation in cricket, as Shakib and Tamim had already announced their retirements from international cricket.

However, Mushfiqur Rahim, who announced his retirement from ODIs last week, will continue playing in the Test format.





## Group photo with PM

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in a group photo with Presidents of Chambers of Commerce across Pakistan on Wednesday.



Photo: PID

## After economic stability, journey of national development begins: PM

## Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday said that achieving economic stability was the first step while the journey of national development now began.

The prime minister expressed these views during a meeting with presidents of various chambers of commerce in Pakistan.

The prime minister directed all ministries and relevant secretaries to formulate a policy action plan based upon the suggestions of the chambers of commerce after holding consultation with them.

The delegations appreciated the government's economic stability measures and expressed gratitude for their inclusion in the consultative process, PM Office Media

Wing said in a press release.

The prime minister said that everyone should work together for the development of the economy, adding that resolution of the issues of the business community was a top priority and the government would fully support them.

Despite difficult economic conditions, he said the Pakistani business community continued industrial and commercial

activities.

"The government is taking every possible measure to facilitate the business community. Through FBR digitization and other reforms, the business community is being provided with facilities. The faceless clearance system has significantly reduced container clearance times at ports," the press release quoted the prime minister as saying.

Federal Ministers Rana Tanveer Hussain, Ahsan Iqbal, Muhammad Aurangzeb, Attaullah Tarar, Hanif Abbasi, Sardar Awais Khan Leghari, Shaza Fatima Khawaja, Ali Pervaiz Malik, Minister of State Bilal Azhar Kayani, Special Assistant Haroon Akhtar, Prime Minister's Coordinator Rana Ahsan Afzal, and other senior officials attended the meeting.

## Pak, Denmark discuss \$2 billion investment in maritime sector

## City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry held a high-level meeting with the Ambassador of Denmark to Pakistan, Jacob Linulf, to review the progress of Danish investment in Pakistan's maritime sector and explore avenues for further collaboration.

During the meeting, both sides discussed the implementation of the \$2 billion investment plan under the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed last year between Pakistan and Denmark, said a press release on Wednesday.

The investment aims to modernize Pakistan's maritime infrastructure, enhance port efficiency, and promote sustainable practices in the



shipping and logistics sector. They highlighted the breath-taking landscapes and historical sites of both countries, including Pakistan's scenic northern areas, ancient Indus

Valley Civilization landmarks, and Denmark's picturesque castles and Viking heritage.

Ambassador Jacob Linulf expressed Denmark's strong interest in expanding its footprint in Pakistan's maritime sector and reiterated his government's commitment to supporting sustainable and innovative solutions.

Minister Junaid Anwar Chaudhry welcomed this interest and assured full cooperation in facilitating Danish investors.

The meeting concluded on a positive note, with both sides agreeing to accelerate the implementation of the MoU and explore further opportunities for collaboration in trade, investment, and cultural exchange, strengthening the longstanding friendship between Pakistan and Denmark.

## China-Pak cooperation to safeguard developing countries' interest: Chinese ambassador

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of China to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong on Wednesday expressed the hope that China-Pakistan joint cooperation and coordination will safeguard the interests of developing countries.

He was addressing a seminar on "China's Spring: China's Opportunities, Shared by the World", jointly organized by China Media Group (CMG) and the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI).

He said that China and Pakistan are both developing countries and important members of the Global South.

Jiang Zaidong said, "We are willing to closely coordinate and cooperate with Pakistan to promote the development and strengthening



of the Global South, jointly promote an equal and orderly multi-polar world and inclusive and universally beneficial economic globalization, to take the world towards a bright future of peace, security, development and prosperity."

He said that Chinese modernization has taken new steps and embarked on a new chapter.

He said that in 2024, Pakistan's inaugural lunar satellite iCube-Qamar and multi-mission communication satellite PakSat-MM1 were launched from China.

## IMF rejects tax exemption demand for international investment projects

## Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has rejected Pakistan's request to grant tax exemptions on international investment projects.

Amid ongoing policy-level economic review talks in Islamabad, Pakistan has sought \$2 billion in investment from Gulf nations to construct a railway track linking Chagai to Gwadar.

However, the IMF dismissed the Special Investment Facilitation Council's (SIFC) proposal to exempt these projects from taxation.

During the discussions, SIFC officials briefed the IMF delegation on investment strategies, governance, and struc-



tural reforms, emphasising their role in bridging investors with opportunities in Pakistan.

According to finance ministry sources, a railway track is crucial for transporting minerals from Reko Diq to Gwadar.

Plans include constructing a brand-new railway line specifically for this purpose. Feasibility studies have been conducted by the Finance Ministry, Railway Ministry, and SIFC.

Gulf nations have reportedly demanded a government guarantee for their investment.

However, sources indicate that Pakistan, while under an IMF loan program, is unwilling to provide sovereign guarantees for every investment.

Discussions between the finance and law ministries are ongoing to amend regulations related to the sovereign wealth fund.

## Pakistan slams Indian ban on two Kashmiri organizations



## City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has strongly condemned the decision by Indian authorities to declare the Awami Action Committee and Jammu and Kashmir Ittihad-ul-Muslimeen as 'Unlawful Association' for five years.

The Awami Action Committee is led by prominent political and religious leader Mirwaiz Umar Farooq. The Jammu and Kashmir Ittihad-ul-Muslimeen was also founded by another notable political and religious leader Maulana Mohammad Abbas Ansari, who headed it till his demise in 2022.

In a statement released in Islamabad on Wednesday, Foreign Office spokesperson Shafiqat Ali Khan said the recent Indian decision increases

the total number of outlawed Kashmiri political parties and organizations to 16.

He further said "Banning of different political parties and organizations is yet another manifestation of the Indian authorities' iron-fisted approach in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). It reflects a desire to suppress the political activities and stifle dissent. It also shows sheer disregard of democratic norms and international human rights law."

The FO spokesperson urged the Indian government to remove the curbs on the Kashmiri political parties; release all the political prisoners; and faithfully implement the UN Security Council resolutions on Jammu and Kashmir.

## Balochistan CM vows ruthless action against terrorists, facilitators



## Bureau Report

QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti chaired a meeting to review law and order situation specially Jaffar Express incident on Wednesday. Additional Chief Secretary briefed the CM about terror attack and security forces' rescue operation.

The meeting was attended by Chief Secretary Balochistan Shakeel Qadir Khan, IG Police Moazzam Jah Ansari, IG Railway Police Rai Tahir and other relevant officials.

Addressing the meeting, CM Sarfraz Bugti made it clear that there will be no compromise on law and order situation and the government will take ruthless action against the terrorists and their facilitators.

Balochistan Chief Minister reiterated that terror attack on train is intolerable and strict action will be taken against the perpetrators, adding that the terrorists cannot occupy even an inch, the purpose of the attack is to create the impression of a violent environment.

Sarfraz Bugti said that the government has to come out of all kinds of confusion and fight the against terrorism. He made it clear that the enemy of the country cannot destroy the peace of Balochistan, they will be defeated at all costs.

CM Bugti said that all possible resources will be provided to the security agencies to protect the people, and strong action will also be taken against the facilitators of terrorists.

## Tanveer chairs meeting to review import of raw sugar

## City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain on Wednesday chaired a meeting of the committee constituted by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for import of raw sugar to stabilize sugar prices and provide relief to the people.

The meeting was attended by Minister of Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) for Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar Khan, and other senior officials, said a news release.

During the meeting, key matters related to the import of raw sugar were discussed in detail.

Rana Tanveer emphasized that importing raw sugar could help stabilize the price of domestically refined white sugar.

The committee conducted a comprehensive discussion on the feasibility, benefits, and poten-



tial concerns regarding raw sugar imports. Different international models were reviewed to assess their impact on price stability and public welfare.

Rana Tanveer instructed the concerned authorities to conduct an in-depth study to determine the modalities and implications of raw sugar imports on local growers and the economy.

The government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, remains committed to ensuring maximum relief for the public by implementing effective strategies in the food security sector.