

AJK PM vows priority action on Mangla Dam displaced families' issues

ISLAMABAD: A delegation led by Raja Abdul Majeed, President of Ittehad Group New City Mirpur, called on AJK Prime Minister Faisal Mumtaz Rathore.

The delegation apprised the Prime Minister of the problems faced by sub-families of the Mangla Dam affectees. Speaking on the occasion, the Prime Minister said that the Mangla Dam affectees had made great sacrifices for Pakistan, which were highly valued. He said the government would resolve the problems of the sub-families on a priority basis.

"A strategy would be formulated in consultation with the relevant departments, in line with the suggestions of Assembly members from Mirpur," he said, adding that public issues particularly administrative, economic, and social matters related to the sub-families, were priority.

The Prime Minister said that providing relief to the people at their



doorsteps was the government's top priority. He assured the delegation that the legitimate demands of the sub-families would be met by utilizing all possible resources. He emphasized that transparency, accountability, and timely decisions were the core

of government policy, adding that resolving these issues would enhance public confidence and promote social harmony.

The delegation included Raja Abdul Qayyum, Nazir Khokhar, Raja Javed, Jahangir Khokhar, Mazharul

Haq, Raja Ilyas, Mirza Shabir Jaral, and Raja Basharat Sardar Azam. DG Political Affairs, Prime Minister's Secretariat, Amir Zeeshan Jaral, along with Chaudhry Moeez Majeed and Raja Zulfiqar Zulfi, were also present on the occasion.

Protest

FAISALABAD: Activists of Jamaat-e-Islami hold a sit protest in favor of their demands at a road in the city.



Photo: Online

AJK PM condoles death of tourism minister's brother in ancestral village

BALOCH: Prime Minister Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Faisal Mumtaz Rathore, visited the residence of Minister for Tourism, Sardar Fahim Akhtar Rabbani, in his ancestral village Chowkiyan, and expressed his condolences over the demise of his brother, Asghar Sardar Shahjan Rabbani.

The Prime Minister offered Fateha for the departed soul and conveyed his heartfelt sympathy to the bereaved family. Senior Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader Chaudhry Muhammad Riaz accompanied the Prime Minister during the visit.

Earlier, the Prime Minister also visited the mausoleum of the late former Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Colonel Mansha Khan, where he offered Fateha.

Meanwhile, PPP candidate for the Legislative Assembly Malik Basit Awan, along with his brother-in-law Malik Rahimuddin Naeem, hosted a luncheon in honour of Prime Minister Faisal Mumtaz Rathore and senior



PPP leader Chaudhry Muhammad Riaz.

On the occasion, matters of mutual interest, public issues, and party organisational affairs also came under discussion.

Among others present were Commissioner Poonch Division Chaudhry Mukhtar Hussain, Deputy Commissioner Sudhanoti Syed Muntaz Kazmi, Deputy Commissioner Poonch Sardar Umar Farooq, and

Senior Superintendent of Police Poonch Khawar Ali Shaukat, Press Secretary Asif Ali Rathore, and Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) Abbaspur Usman Saram, besides other local dignitaries.

Lawyers Protest at District Bar, Joint Resolution Passed Against India's Anti Minority Conduct

Syed Tauqeer Zaidi

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: The lawyers' community at the District Bar Association, Dera Ismail Khan, held a protest gathering against a deeply regrettable incident involving a Muslim female student in an Indian state. A large number of lawyers participated in the protest.

Addressing the gathering, District Bar President Qaisar Mian Khel said that the purpose of the lawyers' assembly was not a temporary reaction to a single incident, but an effort to expose what he termed the "dark face" of India, which he said has long been hidden behind lofty slogans of democracy and human rights.

Senior Advocate Zahid Mohibullah,

while addressing the protest, said that India's treatment of minorities is a slap in the face of its so-called democracy before the entire world. "From oppression in Gujarat to attacks on places of worship, and from violations of religious sanctity to the humiliation of Muslim women, all this proves that human rights in India exist only as claims on paper," he remarked.



Provision of improved facilities to devotees is the government's top priority: Dr. Ehsan Bhutta

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Secretary/Chief Administrator Auqaf Punjab, Dr. Ehsan Bhutta, stated that the Auqaf Department remains fully committed to the preservation of religious heritage sites and the provision of improved, respectful facilities for devotees across Punjab. He expressed these views while reviewing the progress of ongoing development schemes under the Annual Development Programme. While reviewing the Conservation and Restoration of the Shrine of Hazrat Shah Chirag, Lahore, being executed under ADP 2025-26 (GS No. 3065) at an approved cost of Rs. 10 million, he was informed that removal of old lime plaster on the exterior and intricate fresco painting on the interior are in progress. He emphasized that these initiatives are being carried out in line with the vision of Chief Minister Punjab, Maryam Nawaz, to protect religious heritage, promote cultural values, and ensure enhanced facilities for devotees.



Dr. Ehsan Bhutta also reviewed the progress of development works at Jamia Masjid Usmania, Goal Chowk, Okara, under ADP 2025-26 (GS No. 3068) with an approved cost of Rs. 10 million, where electrical works, false ceiling installation, fixing of a mechanical foldable tarpaulin, and preparations for shuttering of the manager office roof slab are underway.

DC Mela Inaugurated Day Care Center at THQ Hospital Kamalia

Zafar Chishti

TOBA TEK SINGH: A Day Care Center was formally inaugurated at Tehsil Headquarters Hospital Kamalia by the Deputy Commissioner Toba Tek Singh Umar Abbas Mela, Assistant Commissioner Kamalia Iqra Nasir, Chief Executive Officer (Health) Toba Tek Singh Dr. Kashif Nadeem and Medical Superintendent THQ Hospital Kamalia Dr. Mian Adeel Arif. This Day Care Center has been established in line with the vision of the Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif for women empowerment. The facility aims to provide a safe, secure and supportive environment for female staff members, including nurses and doctors working at the hospital. Through this initiative, approximately 85 female employees will be able to leave their children at the Day Care Center during duty hours, enabling them to perform their professional responsibilities with greater focus and peace of mind. The establishment of the Day Care Center is a practical reflection of the Chief Minister Punjab's commitment to empowering women, promoting their independence and enabling them to stand on their own feet as confident and productive members of the workforce. This initiative marks a significant milestone towards creating a women-friendly and inclusive working environment within the health sector. The participants appreciated this step and lauded the vision of the Chief Minister Punjab as well as the efforts of the district administration and hospital management in promoting the welfare and empowerment of working women.

Multan Honors Local Heroes with "My Story, In My Own Words" Series



Dr. Rashid Hussaini

MULTAN: Among the social welfare organizations of Multan, the Civil Society Forum and Shoor Development Organization enjoy a distinct identity and recognition in the city. Their driving force, Shahid Mahmood Ansari, belongs to a noble business family. Through the joint efforts of these two organizations, he has initiated a continuing series titled "Recognition of Services and Life Story - My Story, In My Own Words," aimed at acknowledging the contributions of senior social leaders and dedicated youth who have rendered outstanding services to society.

Recently in Multan, a Recognition of Services and Life Story ceremony was organized in honor of two senior social leaders. Distinguished guests at the event included former Vice Chancellor of Bahauddin Zakariya University, Professor Dr. Tariq Mahmood Ansari; Dr. Irfan Ahmed Paracha, President of the Civil Society Forum; and senior member of the organizing committee, Barrister Malik Usman Dogar.

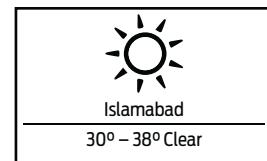
After introductory and welcome remarks by Shahid Mahmood Ansari, Multan-based social scientist Iftikhar Shakir Mughal was invited to present the life story. He began his address with the following verse:

اپنی میں کا اثر تھیم ہوتا ہے۔ زمیں تھیم ہوتی ہے۔ بشر تھیم ہوتا ہے۔

"The influence of one's soil is shared in one's blood;

When land is divided, humanity too is divided."

He spoke of his bond of affection with Shahid Mahmood Ansari, describing him as a leading figure in the social field. Recounting his own journey, he said he began his social work with the National Youth Organization (NYO), later expanding his efforts with National Youth Society under Malik Muhammad Aamir Dogar for the citizens of Multan. He also played an active role in the semi-political organization, Milli Yakjehti Council, and subsequently worked with Multan Shehri Rabta Council, Multan Youth League, Young Welfare Organization, Multan Youth Federation, and later the major youth alliance Great Alliance of Youth, contributing towards the vision of a brighter Multan. He emphasized that all these efforts were carried out selflessly, without desire for recognition, and with sincerity.

**SERVICES****Namaz Timings**

Fajr	5:39 am
Zohr	12:06 pm
Asr	3:25 pm
Maghrib	5:03 pm
Isha	6:33 pm

EMERGENCY

Rescue (Police)	15
Bomb Disposal	15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad	1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance	1122 & 16
& Rescue Services	445122
Motorway Police	9266044
Motorway Police	9270601-20

Women Police**Stations**

Islamabad	9222596
Rawalpindi	9270601-20

ENQUIRY

Edhi Ambulance	115
PIA Flight Info	114
PIA Cargo	9280979
Railway 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	921234-43
CDA	9208301-04
Met Office	9250360-6
RDA	5555864
TMA	570886
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	92266316
Wapda Islamabad	9217579-80
Sui Gas Complaint	119, 9272249
Wasa Water Tank	
Rawalpindi	0331-5022125

NADRA issues new instructions for getting new CNICs

LAHORE: The National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) has launched an awareness campaign regarding the preparation of identity cards for citizens who have completed 18 years of age.

NADRA has launched this campaign under the title "Make an identity card, prove your identity".

According to NADRA, it is mandatory for every Pakistani citizen to get a National Identity Card (NIC) upon reaching the age of 18. The agency has clarified that parents or legal guardians are obliged to get their children's NICs immediately upon their 18th birthday.

NADRA says that through the NIC, every citizen gets protection of his constitutional and legal rights as a Pakistani, while in case of not having an NIC, he may face deprivation of several civic facilities.

NADRA has warned that in case of not getting an NIC or violating the laws, imprisonment, fine or both can be given. The agency has appealed to citizens to fulfill their legal obligation by getting their NICs made on time.

Dumpukht by Pearl Continental Wins Top Honors at Annual Culinary Awards, Vows International Expansion

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: PC Hospitality is delighted to announce that its distinguished restaurant concept, "Dumpukht by Pearl Continental," has been honored with the Best Mughlai Cuisine Restaurant Brand Award at the prestigious Annual Culinary Awards.

The recognition celebrates the brand's enduring commitment to authentic flavors, traditional cooking techniques, and its rich, heritage-driven culinary identity.

Mr. Bastien Blanc, CEO of PC Hospitality, added his remarks on the achievement: "We are welcoming the recognition of Dumpukht by Pearl Continental, which validates our commitment to bringing diverse and exceptional culinary experiences through our restaurant division, The Connoisseur Collection.

This partnership aims to strengthen the brand's presence both locally and internationally, bringing the celebrated Mughlai cuisine to new markets.

by the end of 2026, we look forward to developing many locations over the coming years, starting with this award-winning brand."

Dumpukht, which is part of the Connoisseur Collection by Pearl Continental, has been consistently delighting guests with amazing flavors for over 30 years, operating at two key locations in Lahore: Pearl Continental Hotel Lahore and DHA Raya.

Building on this continuous success and recent award, PC Hospitality is entering a new phase of growth through an asset light model.

The group has entered a master franchise agreement with Global Business Bridge to support a long-term expansion strategy, with planned development across Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

With close to 60 restaurants in operation and a pipeline leading to over 80



Enjoyment Sunday

ISLAMABAD: Visitors enjoying Sunday holiday at Damn-e-Koh during pleasant weather after the rain in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

Zarkheze: Digitizing Agriculture with Seamless Credit and Smart Advisory

**City Desk**

ISLAMABAD: The Finance Division Government of Pakistan, in collaboration with State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) and the Pakistan Banks Association (PBA), has launched Zarkheze, a digital platform designed to revolutionize agricultural financing.

Commenting on the initiative, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, said: "Zarkheze exemplifies our commitment to expanding financial inclusion. By facilitating access to formal credit for small farmers, this initiative supports the Government's broader objectives of rural development and national food security."

Mr. Jameel Ahmad, Governor SBP, said: "Zarkheze is a pivotal step in improving the small farmers' access to finance. By digitising the credit journey, we are removing friction for small farmers and ensuring that formal lending is accessible, timely, and helps farmers improve their productivity. Zarkheze will also support in achieving the broader goal of protecting and nurturing digital payments in rural economy."

Mr. Zafar Masud, Chairman PBA, highlighted the banking sector's collective role in supporting the initiative, stating, "The banking industry remains committed to the successful implementation of Zarkheze. We will continue to work closely with the Ministry of Finance and the State Bank of Pakistan to expand outreach and streamline processes for farmers across the country. The Zarkheze application is now available for download on the Google Play Store. Farmers can also visit their nearest bank branch for assistance with digital onboarding."

Federal E-Office system saves Rs 9.5bn annually, official processing time falls 84%

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's federal digital reforms have helped save Rs 9.5 billion annually, reduced official processing time by 84%, and processed over 3.48 million digital files.

According to an official document available with Wealth Pakistan on Sunday, the largest quantified gains stem from the federal E-Office system, which has cut the summary processing time from 25 days to four days, reflecting a reduction of 84%. The shift to paperless work flows has helped save Rs 9.5 billion annually by cutting the expenditure on paper, printing, courier services, and manpower.

E-Office adoption now spans the federal government, with over 350 organizations on-board and full implementation in 35 of 39 divisions.

As of September 2025, over 3.48 million digital files have been processed, indicating system-wide usage rather than pilot-level deployment. According to the document, all transactions are secured through digital signatures cleared by the Cabinet Division.

Beyond internal workflows, the document highlights measurable outcomes in citizen facilitation and international services.

ICT Police nab woman thief, recover Rs 1.15 miln, gold jewellery

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police have arrested a woman involved in multiple house theft cases and recovered cash worth Rs 1.15 million along with stolen gold jewellery and other valuables.

An official told APP on Sunday that the accused woman was arrested by Koral Police during an operation carried out against organised criminal groups involved in house burglaries.

He said that during the search, police recovered Rs 1.15 million in cash, stolen gold ornaments and other household items from the possession of the accused. The recovered property was linked to several house theft incidents reported in the area.

The official added that the arrested woman had been actively involved in stealing valuables from houses, and further investigation was under way to trace her possible accomplices and other theft cases.

SSP Operations Islamabad Qazi Ali Raza said that strict legal action would be ensured to award exemplary punishment to those involved in depriving citizens of their hard-earned assets.

He said Islamabad Police would continue indiscriminate action against organised and active criminal gangs, adding that the protection of citizens' lives and property remained the top priority of the police.

Cases have been registered against the accused, and further investigation is in progress.

IESCO chief visits Regional Training Centre, reviews refresher courses for junior engineers

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO), Engineer Chaudhry Khalid Mahmood, on Sunday paid a visit to the Regional Training Centre (RTC) Islamabad.

During the visit, he met with officers attending refresher training courses and reviewed the ongoing courses as well as the overall standard of training being provided, said a press release.

During the visit, Principal RTC Muhammad Zahid briefed the IESCO



chief on the contents, objectives and progress of the refresher training programmes being conducted for the officers.

Chaudhry Khalid Mahmood also directed Director General HR & Admin Kamran Sarwar to expand the scope of these training programmes and ensure regular training for officers and staff.

Under the programme, a total of 90 Junior Engineers/SDOs are being imparted training from December 20, 2025 to January 18, 2026 in five weekend batches at the Regional Training Centre, Islamabad.

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Safety measures during snowfall, tourist surge

As the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) predicted rain in Rawalpindi and Islamabad and snowfall over the hills till December 22, the district administration of Murree said it had completed all arrangements to handle the situation.

According to Met Office, landslides and snowfall may cause road closures/slipping conditions in Naran, Kaghan, Chitral, Dir, Swat, Kohistan, Manshera, Abbottabad, Shangla, Gilgit, Astor, Hunza, Skardu, Murree, Galliyat, Neelum valley, Bagh, Poonch and Haveli on December 21.

It stated that a westerly wave was affecting western and upper parts of the country. Rain (snowfall over mountains) is expected in north/west Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan, Kashmir, Islamabad and Potohar region. Cold and partly cloudy weather is likely in other parts of the country. Fog/smog is likely to persist over districts of eastern Punjab and upper Sindh.

Talking to Dawn, Murree Deputy Commissioner Agha Zaeer Shirazi said the administration was on its toes to deal with any situation after the prediction of snowfall in the hill station. He said all hurdles had been removed from main roads for the smooth flow of traffic and the Provincial Disaster Management Authority was in contact and had provided the required machinery to remove snow from the roads.

All hurdles removed from roads, machinery provided by PDMA to remove snow from highways, says DC

He said the Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC) had been asked to clean roads and its shoulders to avoid water accumulation and open drains before the snowfall. He said traffic police will ensure smooth flow of traffic.

"We allow more than 5000 vehicles to enter the city; however, the number will increase if traffic smoothly runs on the roads." He said the health authority had already stocked life-saving medicine in the Tehsil Headquarters Hospital as well as dispensaries in all the union councils.

He said Rescue 1122 will remain on alert till the end of the winter season. Moreover, Civil Defence Department officials will also be deployed in different parts of the hill station.

To a question, the DC said road construction was being carried out at a few points but it would not affect the traffic flow towards the hill station. He said the district administration was monitoring the traffic situation through Safe City CCTV cameras.

Meanwhile, on the special instructions of Secretary Emergency Services Punjab Dr Rizwan Naseer and the Murree deputy commissioner, Rescue 1122 has finalised its preparations under an emergency cover plan.

Under the supervision of District Emergency Officer Murree Engineer Kamran Rashid, the officers and personnel will provide timely, effective and uninterrupted rescue facilities to citizens and tourists.

Rubio's Gaza Signal and Pakistan's Strategic Crossroads

When US Secretary of State Marco Rubio publicly acknowledged Pakistan's willingness to "consider being part" of the proposed International Stabilisation Force (ISF) for Gaza, he did more than offer diplomatic gratitude. He placed Pakistan—quietly but unmistakably—at the center of the most sensitive post-war experiment in the Middle East. Rubio's words, carefully hedged yet pointed, signaled that Washington sees Pakistan not as a peripheral participant, but as a key pillar of a force designed to oversee Gaza's transition from devastation to an uncertain peace.

For Islamabad, this moment marks a profound strategic crossroads. Participation in the ISF may promise international relevance, economic relief, and renewed favor in Washington. Yet it also carries the risk of deep domestic backlash, ideological rupture, and entanglement in a conflict where the lines between peacekeeping and coercion are dangerously blurred.

Financially, such missions bring dollar-denominated compensation, easing pressure on a struggling economy and reinforcing an institutional model the Pakistani military knows well. Diplomatically, participation could elevate Pakistan as a responsible global actor and secure US investment and security cooperation at a critical time.

Yet these gains are contingent—and fragile. The most glaring weakness in the ISF proposal is mandate ambiguity. Peacekeeping traditionally rests on consent, neutrality, and limited use of force. Disarmament does not. If Hamas and other resistance factions refuse to

surrender weapons voluntarily—as they have already signaled—then enforcement becomes unavoidable. In such a scenario, Pakistani troops would not merely stand by factions; they would become a party to coercion.

Compounding this is the absence of reciprocal enforcement mechanisms. The peace plan offers no clarity on what happens if Israel fails to fully withdraw from designated areas or violates post-withdrawal commitments. There is no indication that the ISF would be empowered to confront Israeli forces. The result is a one-sided enforcement architecture: Palestinian groups disarmed under international supervision, while Israel operates beyond the ISF's reach. For Pakistan, this asymmetry is politically toxic.

At home, the risks multiply. Pakistan's Islamist parties—particularly groups with strong street power such as JUI factions and Jamaat-e-Islami—are deeply opposed to US and Israeli policies in Palestine. Even with bans, arrests, and crackdowns, their ideological reach remains intact. Any perception that Pakistani soldiers are killing or detaining Palestinians—even in Gaza, even under UN authorization—could ignite nationwide protests, destabilizing cities and overwhelming civil order.

The backlash would not be confined to religious parties. Large segments of the public, already alienated by domestic political engineering and military dominance, would frame ISF participation as another example of Pakistan's security

establishment acting without popular consent. The absence of parliamentary debate or a national consensus would magnify this perception. In a country where legitimacy increasingly comes from the street rather than the chamber, this is a perilous omission.

There is also a quieter but no less serious concern: morale within the ranks. Pakistani soldiers are drawn from a society that overwhelmingly sympathizes with the Palestinian cause. Asking them to enforce disarmament against Palestinian fighters—while Israeli forces face no comparable restraint—could strain discipline and cohesion. Militaries can obey orders, but they are not immune to moral dissonance.

Internationally, Pakistan faces the risk of strategic isolation if the mission falters. Gaza remains volatile, traumatized, and heavily armed. If the ISF encounters resistance, sustains casualties, or becomes mired in urban conflict, global enthusiasm may fade. Major powers can distance themselves; troops on the ground cannot. Pakistan could find itself trapped in an open-ended deployment with no clear exit strategy, absorbing blame while others retreat to diplomatic safety.

Yet opportunities do exist—if handled with exceptional care. Pakistan could leverage its importance to insist on strict limitations: a mandate centered on civilian protection, humanitarian access, and policing ceasefire lines, explicitly excluding forced disarmament. It could



Qamar Bashir



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

U. S. Approval For F-16 Modernization: A Big Boost for Pakistan's Defense

The issuance of this profoundly extensive and strategically momentous authorization from the highest levels of the United States State Department, formalizing the comprehensive and exceptionally long-term sustainment and technologically intensive modernization package for the Pakistan Air Force's (PAF) highly regarded Lockheed Martin F-16 Fighting Falcon fleet, represents a financial commitment of an extraordinary and significant magnitude, closely approaching the substantial figure of \$686 million, a colossal sum that immediately signifies an immense and deeply embedded strategic importance far beyond the routine mechanisms of transactional defense trade. This substantial and comprehensive engagement, which has been meticulously detailed in a formal, unambiguous, and strategically reasoned notification to the U. S. Congress by the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA), fundamentally transcends the limited and purely transactional nature of conventional, short-term military equipment sales, instead establishing a deeply rooted, foundational, and enduring strategic commitment that is expressly designed to anchor the security partnership between the two nations for an exceptionally prolonged and demanding period, thereby reverberating profoundly through the intricate currents of global geopolitics, regional defense planning, and the long-term calculus of stability in South Asia. This truly colossal investment, a major infusion of advanced technical support, has been engineered with the singular, explicit

and absolutely critical purpose of ensuring the continuous operational relevance, undeniable technological superiority, and robust combat resilience of the PAF's most advanced F-16 variants, which includes a particular and pointed focus on the highly capable Block-52 models and the extensively upgraded Mid-Life Update (MLU) Falcons. The entire, meticulously planned package is specifically and pointedly aimed at effectively addressing and resolving critical flight safety concerns that naturally arise with aging airframes, comprehensively modernizing core avionics and electronic systems, and structurally refurbishing the complex airframes to effectively project their reliable service life and essential technological edge all the way to the distant, yet strategically vital, chronological benchmark of the year 2040, thereby granting the fleet an additional two decades of high-end operational utility. This unprecedented extension of chronological commitment, spanning an entire two full decades into the future, serves as an undeniable, tangible, and high-level manifestation of Washington's deliberate, long-term strategic acknowledgment that the F-16 platform, when professionally handled, rigorously maintained, and strategically employed by the highly skilled Pakistan Air Force, remains a non-negotiable, preeminent, and most technologically capable aerial asset within the complex and dynamic regional security calculus, forming the indispensable, sophisticated, and cutting-edge foundation of Pakistan's high-end air defense infrastructure, its continuous, criti-

cal counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency operations, and the broader architecture required for fostering essential strategic stability across the entire South Asian theater in a highly sensitive geopolitical and military environment, an environment characterized by persistent tension and rapid technological proliferation.

The funding structure highlights a deliberate emphasis on long-term readiness and sustainment rather than expanding offensive capability. Most of the investment is directed toward avionics upgrades, mission software, secure communications, identification systems, cryptographic equipment, logistics support, training, simulators, spare parts, and maintenance infrastructure, all aimed at preserving flight safety, interoperability, and operational effectiveness well into the future. Only a small portion is allocated to limited equipment for testing and connectivity, reinforcing that the priority lies in extending service life, ensuring technical resilience, and maintaining a fully integrated, modernized fleet rather than altering the regional military balance.

Strategically, the authorization reflects a pragmatic alignment of shared security interests, centered on interoperability with U. S. and allied forces and sustained effectiveness in counterterrorism and regional stability operations. It signals confidence in the professionalism and reliability of Pakistan's air force as a stabilizing force capable of operating advanced systems within a Western defense framework. By ensuring the long-term viability of these aircraft, the commitment affirms Pakistan's importance to broader regional security and anchors it within a long-term strategic and technological partnership that supports equilibrium amid shifting geopolitical dynamics.



Abdul Basit Alvi

2025: A Year of Reframed Governance in Punjab

Punjab's journey through 2025 has unfolded as a year in which governance was not merely asserted but demonstrated. Under Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, the administration steadily moved away from ceremonialism toward a results-oriented approach that placed citizens' everyday needs at the centre of policy. The tone of governance was purposeful, defined by urgency in delivery, institutional reform and a conscious effort to rebuild public trust in the state's capacity to serve. In a province as large and complex as Punjab, that shift alone carries political and social significance.

The most visible impact of this approach has been in the areas of social welfare and housing, where the government addressed one of the most pressing concerns of middle- and low-income households: securing shelter. Through Apni Chhat Apna Ghar, families were offered interest-free loans on manageable monthly installments, transforming home ownership from a distant aspiration into a realistic possibility. Alongside this, Apni Zameen Apna Ghar provided free residential plots to landless citizens, particularly in underserved districts. These initiatives did more than construct houses; they restored stability, encouraged long-term planning and reinforced the idea that the state can be a partner in personal progress rather than a distant authority.

As the year progressed, the government's focus on inclusion became increasingly visible, particularly in its engagement with non-muslim Pakistanis. In 2025, the Punjab government made deliberate efforts to celebrate diversity and promote interfaith harmony. The launch and expansion of the Minority Card provided quarterly financial assistance to underprivileged minority

families, offering concrete economic support rather than symbolic reassurance. Budgetary allocations for minority welfare were significantly enhanced, scholarships for minority students were expanded, and job quotas were actively reaffirmed.

With Christmas approaching, the provincial government's outreach to the Christian community has carried particular resonance. Official celebrations, public messages from the chief minister, special grants, and support for Churches and community institutions have reinforced the message that religious minorities are equal stakeholders in the social fabric. These gestures, backed by policy and funding, signal a governance philosophy that views inclusion not as an obligation imposed by law but as a strength that enriches society.

What ultimately distinguishes Punjab's performance in 2025 is coherence. Welfare schemes, economic reforms, service delivery innovations and minority inclusion initiatives appear interconnected rather than isolated. There remains no shortage of challenges, yet the direction is clear. Performance monitoring, accountability and continuous oversight have become part of the governance vocabulary, suggesting that political ownership now extends beyond announcements to outcomes.

As Punjab prepares to enter a new year, the legacy of 2025 lies in its reframing of expectations. Citizens have seen that governance can be responsive, inclusive and practical. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif's year in review is not defined by a single flagship project, but by a sustained effort to align state capacity with public need. In that alignment lies the promise of a more confident, cohesive and forward-looking Punjab.

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CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif Meets HC of Mauritius to Pakistan, H. E. Munsoo Kurrimbaccus

Spokesman Report

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif warmly welcomed and met H. E. Munsoo Kurrimbaccus, High Commissioner of Republic of Mauritius to Pakistan. She stressed on the importance of promoting business-to-business contacts, and mutual visits of trade delegations, besides organizing business exhibitions to showcase quality products of both countries. She also expressed her determination to strengthen trade and economic cooperation with Mauritius, and agreed to further enhance mutual relations in the fields like education, tourism, agriculture, and people-to-people exchanges. Both leaders also agreed to increase cooperation in the fields of halal food, technology and human resources. She extended her best wishes for H. E. Munsoo Kurrimbaccus, and expressed determina-

tion to provide all possible support for investment in blue economy. She also showed determination to further increase exports of rice, textiles and pharmaceutical products to Mauritius.

Chief Minister Punjab expressed her commitment to support Mauritius' established technology in productive cultivation and sugar industry. She welcomed Mauritius' investment in Punjab's tourism sector, and appreciated its tireless efforts against drugs and for youth development. She paid tribute to the Mauritius High Commissioner for his remarkable diplomatic services due to which Pakistan and Mauritius enjoy a long-standing friendly relations based on cultural ties and mutual respect. She noted that there are opportunities for cooperation in human capital development, especially in higher education and professional skills. She flagged that sectors like agriculture, textiles,

pharmaceuticals, and light engineering have vast trade potential.

Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif said that more than one lakh youth are being transformed into skilled workforce through the Skill Development Programme. She added that in recent years, bilateral trade between Pakistan and Mauritius has witnessed an encouraging growth. Punjab is rich in opportunities in agro-processing, textiles, pharmaceuticals and value-added food products. She highlighted that Climate Resilient Vision Action Plan Green investment, environmental protection are being promoted, and a gradual transition to forest conservation, green transportation and green energy reflects our commitment.

Chief Minister Punjab said that Punjab is a rich and diverse tourism hub. In the heart of Lahore, Shahi Qila, Badshahi Masjid, Shalimar



Gardens, Noor Mahal Tomb and other religious tourist destinations have become centers of attention of the tourists both local and foreign. She added that Punjab has faced chal-

lenges of devastating floods with great courage, and is encouraging foreign investment in its tourism sector. She said that they would welcome technical cooperation from Mauritius in

sugarcane production and value addition. H. E. Munsoo Kurrimbaccus said that promoting tourism activities will bring Pakistan's true positive image to the world.

Guard of Honor

BAGHDAD: President Asif Ali Zardari and Dr. Abdul Latif Jamal Rashid, President of Iraq, inspecting the guard of honour at Baghdad Palace.



Photo: PID

Palestinian Economy in Protracted Recession Despite 4% 2025 GDP Uptick

News Desk

RAMALLAH: The Palestinian economy remains in a deep, protracted recession, with its productive capacity severely damaged by the ongoing conflict, according to a joint economic report released today. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) and the Palestine Monetary Authority (PMA) stated that while Gross Domestic Product (GDP) showed a statistical increase of 4% in 2025 compared to 2024, it marks a catastrophic collapse of 24% from pre-war 2023 levels.

The data, which excludes parts of Jerusalem annexed by Israel in 1967 and is measured at constant prices, quantifies the staggering cumulative damage to the economic foundations of the West Bank and Gaza Strip since the escalation of hostilities. The report attributes the severe decline to the "deterioration of productive capacity and the persistence of bottlenecks in economic activities" caused by the Israeli military aggression.

The 4% uptick in 2025 does not signal a recovery but rather underscores the depth of the preceding collapse and the economy's struggle to function amidst continued constraints.

The joint publication frames the current GDP level as indicative of a prolonged recession, with the economy trapped well below its pre-conflict output.

This annual report represents the ongoing collaborative effort between the PCBS and PMA to document the economic landscape. It also includes forecasts for 2026, which are anticipated to detail the significant challenges ahead for reconstruction and recovery, contingent on the political and security situation.

The findings present a stark numerical illustration of the war's economic toll, highlighting the immense challenge of rebuilding shattered infrastruc-

ture, commerce, and livelihoods in the Palestinian territories.

During 2025, GDP recorded a sharp decline in Gaza Strip, reaching 84% compared to 2023, while it declined by 13% in the West Bank during the same period. Even though GDP in the West Bank recorded a slight increase of 4.4% in 2025 compared to 2024, GDP in Gaza Strip continued to contract, where it further declined by 8.7% during the same period.

The growth rate recorded in 2025 is mainly attributed to a relative improvement in some productive sectors and the partial return of commercial activity compared to 2024. However, the level of GDP in Palestine remains far below its pre-Israeli aggression levels, confirming that the Palestinian economy has not yet regained its productive capacity and that the road to recovery remains fragile and constrained by the repercussions of the Israeli aggression and the ongoing restrictions.

A complete collapse of all economic activities in Gaza Strip during 2025 compared to 2023, along with a sharp decline in economic activities in the West Bank, despite their increase compared to 2024.

The Palestinian economy is considered a service economy, where 60% of the Palestinian economy is services, while the productive sectors that support economic growth constitute only about 19% of the total economy. This indicates that the Palestinian economy is changeable, and is significantly impacted by the challenges.

During 2025, most economic activities in Palestine declined compared to 2023, as the construction activity recorded the highest decline, reaching 41% (29% in the West Bank, and 99% in Gaza Strip) to reach USD 296 million, followed by the industrial activity with a decline of 25% (21% in the West Bank, and 94%

in Gaza Strip) to reach USD 1,155 million, then the services activity declined by 25% (12% in the West Bank, and 82% in Gaza Strip) to reach USD 6,794 million, and agriculture activity with a decline of 18% (stable in the West Bank, and 92% in Gaza Strip) to reach USD 686 million.

In 2025, most economic activities showed marginal increases that do not indicate the beginning of recovery of the Palestinian economy's sectors compared to 2024. Most of economic activities remain about one-third below their pre-Israeli aggression levels.

A decline in the trade volume from and to Palestine in 2025 compared with 2023

The volume of trade exchange between Palestine and the outside world witnessed a 12% decline. The value of imports fell by 17%, totaling USD 7,881 million in 2025 compared to 2023. Additionally, Palestinian imports make up more than three times the value of Palestinian exports. However, the value of exports of goods and services from Palestine increased by 5%, reaching USD 2,856 million, where this rise is attributed to the fact that most Palestinian exports come from the West Bank, which recorded a relative increase during the same period. In a sense, this reflects a steady deficit in the Palestinian balance of trade. Exports and imports increased by 18% and 20% in 2025, respectively, compared to 2024, while they remain below their pre-Israeli aggression levels.

Despite this difficult reality, labor force participation rate increased in 2025 to 43.7%, partly due to individuals attempting to engage in any form of work or seek alternative livelihood opportunities after the Israeli aggression. The participation rate reached 43% in the West Bank, while it reached 38% in Gaza Strip, where such percentages are below the pre-Israeli aggression levels recorded in 2023.

Poverty and Living Standards Prior to the Israeli occupation's aggression against the Gaza Strip, poverty rates there exceeded 63%, with the poverty line in Palestine set at approximately NIS 2,717 and the extreme poverty line at about NIS 2,170.

Recently, due to the ongoing Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip, the concept of poverty has been surpassed, and we are now confronting different levels of famine and food insecurity. Consequently, total consump-

tion has dropped in 2025 by 24% (12% in the West Bank and 81% in Gaza Strip) compared with 2023, reflecting a direct impact on the standard of living in Palestine. In other words, the majority of individuals in Gaza Strip are now suffering from severe levels of food insecurity.

Unprecedented Increase in Prices Levels

At the level of prices in Palestine during 2025, prices increased by about 11% compared to 2024, due to the sharp rise of prices in Gaza Strip of around 22%, despite their slight decline in the West Bank of about 0.13%. The near-total blockade on Gaza Strip continued, leading to a severe shortage of goods entering to Gaza Strip, in addition to the regional situation that affected Palestine.

Prospects of the Palestinian Economy for 2026: A slight increase within a challenging economic reality

The Palestinian Monetary Authority and the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics have issued two reports on the economic forecasts for 2026, which are available on their websites. The two reports address forecasts of the key macroeconomic indicators of the Palestinian economy during 2026, based on a set of factors and assumptions incorporated into

the baseline scenario. The impacts of these factors are expected to be reflected in the performance of various sectors, particularly the real sector, the financial sector, and the external sector.

The baseline assumptions underlying the baseline scenario for 2026 indicate the continuation of the current economic and political conditions without any fundamental changes. This scenario assumes the persistence of strict restrictions on the movement of individuals and goods and on crossings, alongside continued limitations on economic activity in Gaza Strip due to the widespread destruction of the productive base. Economic activity is expected to remain confined to a narrow scope linked to humanitarian assistance and relief operations. This scenario also assumes that a large share of Palestinian workers will continue to be unable to access the labor market inside Israel, negatively affecting income levels and domestic demand.

At the level of public finance, the scenario assumes continued pressure on the Palestinian government's public budget, in light of the irregular transfer of clearance revenues and the persistence of Israeli deductions, alongside a decline in domestic revenues due to weak economic activity. This scenario also assumes that levels of external grants and aid will remain at their current low levels. In the external sector, performance is expected to remain affected by Israeli restrictions and obstacles imposed on the movement of individuals and goods and on crossings.

In light of these assumptions, forecasts estimate that the Palestinian economy will record growth ranging between 4.1% and 4.5% in 2026. This growth reflects the continuation of the gradual recovery path that began after the sharp contraction recorded in 2024, without indicating a broad-based recovery or a genuine restoration of productive capacity. The growth is attributed mainly to a limited improvement in the components of aggregate demand, particularly final consumption, supported by the continued flow of humanitarian aid and private transfers, in addition to a partial positive contribution from investment spending.

Given that the environment in which the Palestinian economy operates entails a high degree of risk and uncertainty, these forecasts incorporate an analysis of potential risks with varying probabilities (an optimistic scenario and a pessimistic scenario). If these risks materialize, they are expected to have positive or negative repercussions on economic performance in the short term.



Bull & Bears PSX 100-Share Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index	
Current	Prev. Close
171,404.48	171,960.64
Day's High	Day's Low
172,674.65	171,149.07
Index Value	Change
29,824,616,285	-556.16
Percentage	Time
-0.32%	19 Dec, 2025 4:30 pm

Europe: FTSE 100 Index

Index Value	Change
9,897.42	+59.65
Percentage	Time

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average

Index Value	Change
48,222.38	+270.53
Percentage	Time

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average

Index Value	Change
49,507.21	+505.71
Percentage	Time

Open Market Forex Rates

Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	184	188
Bahrain Dinar	743.5	753.5
Canadian Dollar	202	204.85
China Yuan	39.39	39.79
Danish Krone	43.81	44.21
Euro	329.5	332.5
Hong Kong Dollar	35.8	36.15
Indian Rupee	3.02	3.11
Japanese Yen	1.7875	1.8775
Kuwaiti Dinar	911.15	921.15
Malaysian Ringgit	67.75	68.35
New Zealand \$	161.43	163.43
Norwegians Krone	27.6	27.90
Omani Riyal	728.1	738.1
Qatari Riyal	76.47	77.17
Saudi Riyal	74.85	75.35
Singapore Dollar	216.1	221.1
Swedish Korona	30.11	30.41
Swiss Franc	351.34	354.09
Thai Bhat	8.73	8.88
U.A.E Dirham	76.35	77.35
UK Pound Sterling	376	379.5
US Dollar	281	283.1

Customs recovers 64,578 liters smuggled Iranian oil, vehicle of worth Rs 36.5m



ISLAMABAD: In a major intelligence-based operation, Customs Enforcement Karachi has recovered 64,578 litres of smuggled Iranian diesel and petrol valued at approximately Rs. 16.5 million and seized a Mazda vehicle worth around Rs. 20 million, bringing the total value of seizure to Rs. 36.5 million at Northern By-Pass Karachi.

Acting on the directions of Chief Collector Customs Enforcement Islamabad Basit Maqsood Abbasi and Collector of Customs Enforcement Karachi Moin Wani, a team of the Anti-Smuggling Organization (ASO), led by Assistant Collector Bisma Noor Jatoi, conducted the operation on Saturday evening, said a news release on Sunday.

During the operation, Customs teams raided five illegal dumping points operating under the guise of petrol pumps. The seized Mazda vehicle, fitted with a specially fabricated box for transportation of petroleum products was found unloading Iranian diesel.

All recovered petroleum products were shifted to the Customs warehouse for measurement through dip.

The Federal Board of Revenue reaffirms its commitment to curbing smuggling, protecting the national economy, and ensuring fair market practices through strict enforcement against illicit trade.

Furniture Council CEO demands urgent export reforms amid sluggish growth

Commerce Desk

LAHORE: Chief Executive Officer Pakistan Furniture Council Mian Kashif Ashfaq Sunday called for more urgent structural productive results oriented reforms to address the core challenges export sector facing in global markets.

Speaking here today at board of directors meeting he said although government on the persistent demand of private sector has removed 0.25 percent development surcharge on exports which will significantly boosting firms liquidity but the speed of reforms is painfully slow. He said our chances of breaking out of the low-growth trap will



remain slim unless we can boost exports substantially and at scale. Until then job creation and poverty alleviation will be hard to achieve. He pointed out its high time to do away with all policy impediments to export growth to fully ensure sustainable economic development instead of reliance on foreign remittances.

Mian Kashif Ashfaq further pointed out the export decline in last month exposes structural weaknesses in the fragile export sector showing a significant 15.4 percent year-on-year dip from \$2.8bn to roughly \$2.4bn. The

downturn also indicates that the decline may be more than a temporary blip. Overall, export proceeds have fallen by 6.39pc to \$12.84bn during the first five months of the current fiscal to November from \$13.72bn a year ago. Imports, on the other hand, continue to surge, fuelled by an uptick in economic activities, jumping to \$28.32bn from \$24.99bn. If the trend holds it will further expand the trade gap, which has already ballooned by 37.2pc to \$15.47bn this year, creating acute pressure on the home currency going forward, he concluded.

Seasonal vegetables

ISLAMABAD: People are busy is buying vegetables at a local Sunday weekly bazaar during rainy and cold weather, in Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

Iftikhar Malik: New Regional Block Essential for Pakistan's Economic Survival

Commerce Desk

LAHORE: SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry former President Iftikhar Ali Malik Sunday stressed the urgent need for formation of new regional block comprising Pakistan, Bangladesh and China to establish new supply chains lessening the region's reliance on uncertain partners, redirect investment and generate routes connecting markets.

In a statement here today octogenarian trade leader of South Asia, he said China's growing presence in South Asia is highly visible as its last year total trade with south Asian countries is close to 200 billions dollars and Pakistan is major beneficiary. He said more significantly, new bloc will shift the pivot of politics in South Asia towards successful and economically driven cooperation.

He said new bloc will develop into an effective alternative to what currently exists. He said Bangladesh has enough economic vision to keep pace and Bangladesh has already heavily invested economically in China, with trade and infrastructure initiatives amounting to billions and having completely reshaped the country's



port facilities, energy sector, and industrial base. Coming on board, therefore, is not a political stance but a wise and pragmatic policy.

He said in the case of Pakistan, politics is not merely geopolitics; it is an issue of survival. With increasing deficits, pressure on foreign exchange reserves, and prob-

lems with energy resources, the Pakistan cannot afford to have its future tied up in ideologies shaped by political animosity. It requires countries with which it can deepen investments, share trade, and work towards common geopolitical goals. China has been, and continues to be, such a country he concluded.

Roche chief urges Switzerland to pay more for new drugs after US deal

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Roche's chief executive called in an interview with Swiss media published Sunday for Switzerland to pay more for new drugs, to bring prices in line with those paid by Washington.

The Swiss pharmaceutical giant's US subsidiary Genentech figures among 14 pharmaceutical companies which have so far signed on to US President Donald Trump's push to cut some US drug prices.

Companies have been making these voluntary deals after Trump sent a letter to 17 major companies over the summer threatening sky-high tariffs if they did not lower drug prices.

Genentech joined the deal on Friday, agreeing to commit to "Most Favoured Nation" pricing: matching the lowest

price offered in other wealthy nations, including Switzerland.

Switzerland is the country that "has the most to gain and the most to lose" in this equation, Roche chief Thomas Schinecker said in an interview with Switzerland's Tamedia Group published by the Le Matin Dimanche weekly.

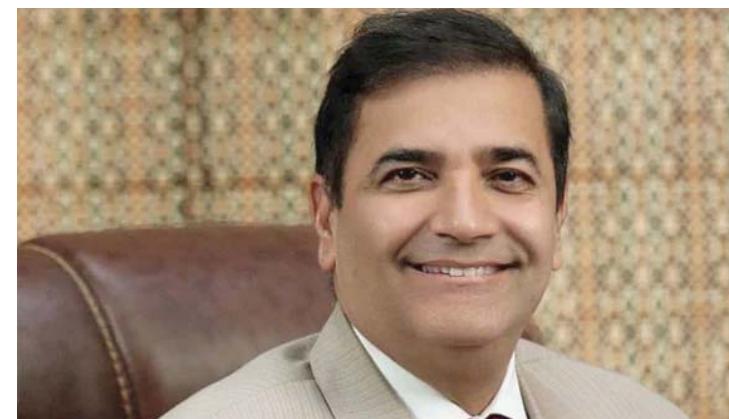
He said that the details of that agreement remained confidential, but that Washington in principle was seeking to see other wealthy countries contribute more to financing the development of new drugs, in line with their economic strength. "The US administration wants the prices of recently marketed drugs to be harmonised in the future in eight countries: Denmark, Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Italy, Japan, Canada and Switzerland," he said.

Monsoon Rains: From Destruction Vector to Power Generation Opportunity, says Saif Ur Rehman

Commerce Desk

LAHORE: Coordinator to Federal Tax Ombudsman Saif Ur Rehman Sunday said that yearly monsoon heavy downpours should be used for power generation and sustainable development rather than merely a source of destruction and humans loss.

Talking to a delegation of traders here today he stressed that Pakistan, being a water-stressed country, cannot afford to let billions of gallons of rainwater go to waste every year while facing recurring floods, energy shortages and



infrastructure damage. He urged policymakers to adopt a long-term, climate-resilient

strategy, warning that climate change will make extreme weather events more frequent. He said turning monsoon challenges into economic opportunities would protect lives, boost development and ensure sustainable growth for future generations.

He emphasized that with proper planning, investment and coordination among federal and provincial institutions, monsoon rains can be effectively harnessed through small and medium dams, urban water reservoirs and rainwater harvesting systems. He said that chan-

nelizing floodwaters towards hydropower projects could help generate affordable and clean electricity, reduce dependence on imported fuels and strengthen energy security. He further said that modern drainage systems, flood channels and water storage facilities can minimize urban flooding while supporting agriculture and groundwater recharge. The

coordinator called for incentivizing private sector participation and offering tax relief for projects related to renewable energy and water management.

Pakistan U-19 Cricket Team crush Indian U-19 Cricket Team in final match and final won by 191 runs



Asim Tanveer

DUBAI: Pakistan U-19 won the Asia Cup U-19 tournament. They defeated India U-19 in the final by 191 runs.

Multan-based batsman Sameer Minhas scored a brilliant century 172 Runs. Pakistan has won this tournament for the second time. Previously, Pakistan and India were joint winners in 2012 when the final was tied.

India U-19 won the toss and put Pakistan U-19 in bat, who scored 347 runs for the loss of 8 wickets in 50 overs.

India U-19 was bowled out for just 156 runs in 26.2 overs.

In Pakistan's innings, Sameer Minhas batted brilliantly and scored 172 runs off 113 balls with the help of 9 sixes and 17 fours. This is his second century in



lant century 172 Runs.

Pakistan

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Sameer Minhas

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Ahmed

Hussain

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50

overs

Deepesh Devendran took 3 wickets for 83 runs.

India's batting was completely at the mercy of the Pakistani bowlers who kept taking wickets at regular intervals and bringing their team closer to victory.

Vaibhav Suryavanshi scored 26 runs with the help of 3 sixes and a four before being caught by wicketkeeper Hamza Zahoor off Ali

Raza, who also took the wickets of captain Mahatre and Kanish

Chauhan and top scorer Devan

dran with 36 runs. He gave away

42 runs for these four wickets.

Muhammad Sayan Abdul

Subhan and Juzifa Ahsan took

two wickets each. Prime Minister

of Pakistan Mian Shahbaz

Sharif has congratulated Paki

stan Cricket Board Chairman



Mohsin Naqvi and Pakistan resounding victory over India in the Under-19 cricket team for their the Under-19 Asia Cup final.

Schaper holes chip in Mauritius for second straight title

Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: Jayden Schaper continued his soaring start to the 2026 European tour season when he chipped in for an eagle on the second playoff hole Sunday to win the Mauritius Open.

"That's just such an insane way to finish a tournament," said the South African after he won on extra holes for the second straight week.

The South African joined the five-event opening swing of the season when it hit his native South Africa and finished second in the Nedbank Golf Challenge in



Sun City. He followed that with his maiden tour title last week in Johannesburg, also in a playoff.

"The last three weeks have been incredible," said Schaper.

Schaper started the final round two behind American

Ryan Gerard but shot a 64 to take a lead into the club house.

Gerard responded with an 18th-hole birdie to tie.

Schaper chipped in for an eagle on the second playoff hole to win.

"I wait five years for the

first and then the following

week (to get the second) is

so cool," he said.

Schaper shot an eight-under-par 64 for a 22-under total of 266. Gerard fired a final round of 66. Casey Jarvis, a South African, earned with a 71 to finish alone in third, five off the pace.

Gerard who flew from Florida to the Indian Open in the hope of qualifying for next year's US Masters, left Mauritius with his mission accomplished. He started the tournament 57th in the world rankings but will end the year in the top 50, which guarantees an invitation to Augusta.

Ryan Gerard but shot a 64 to take a lead into the club house.

Gerard responded with an 18th-hole birdie to tie.

Schaper chipped in for an eagle on the second playoff hole to win.

"I wait five years for the

Wing 999 Inter Departmental Cricket League Matches begins from Monday 22nd December: Khalid Nafees



KARACHI: Khalid Nafees Chairman RCAA Tournament Committee announced the regular Matches of the Wing 999 Inter Departmental Cricket League Tournamen

begins from Monday 22nd Decem

ber at various Grounds of the City accord

ingly to the following schedule: Monday 22nd December! Appie Farms vs Pak

Saudi International at CAA Stadium, Tues

day 23rd December! Pakistan Stallions vs

One Ten Communications at CAA Stadium, Wednesday 24th December! Medic

am vs Custom Academy at CAA Stadium, Monday 29th December! Sindh Police vs

Mesol Solar at CAA Academy at CAA Stadium, Tuesday 30th December! D Cattle

Farms vs Pak Saudi International at CAA

Stadium, Wednesday 31st December! Saudi

Titans vs Fay International at CAA Stadi

um, Friday 1st January 2026! Pakistan

Stallions vs One Ten Communication at

CAA Stadium, Participating Departmental

Teams advised to collect their Draws Copy

for further matches to M. Touseef Siddiqui,

Tournament Secretary from RCAA Office

National Stadium from 3 to 6 pm on Tues

day 24th December.

PM congratulates cricket team on winning Under-19 Asia Cup

City Desk

ISLAMABAD:

Prime Minister

Muhammad

Shehbaz

Sherif

Sunday congrat

ulated

Pakistan

cricket

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and

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entire

nation

on

winning

the

Under-19 Asia Cup.

In a statement, he said Pakistani players performed excellently. "Pakistani players created history by defeating India in the final," he said adding, "The entire nation is proud of these young players."

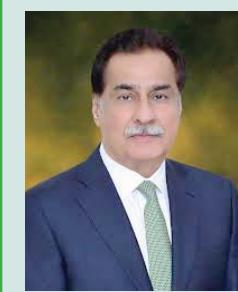
The Prime Minister said, "The Under-19 team will undoubtedly make the country's name shine on the world stage in the future as well."

"I pay tribute to the entire team management, including Paki

stan Cricket Board Chairman Mohsin Naqvi," he added.

Ayaz felicitates Pakistan U-19 cricket team for winning Asia Cup

Sports Desk



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq has congratulated the Pakistan Under-19 cricket team on winning the Asia Cup 2025, terming the victory against traditional rivals India a reflection of the young players' hard work, commitment and passion.

In a congratulatory message issued here on Sunday, the Speaker said that the national U-19 team displayed outstanding performance and consistency throughout the tournament, culminating in a memorable win in the final.

He said the triumph had brought pride and honour to the country and the nation.

Ayaz Sadiq also extended his congratulations to Chairman Pakistan Cricket Board Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi, the team management and the coaching staff for their efforts in grooming talented young cricketers.

The Speaker praised the team's unity, morale and professional approach, saying that the players demonstrated exemplary teamwork and resilience on the field.

He said that Pakistan's youth possess extraordinary potential and represent the bright future of the country.

Expressing his best wishes for the national Under-19 team, Ayaz Sadiq said that the entire nation was proud of the young cricketers' achievement and hoped they would continue to perform with the same spirit in future competitions.

PCB Chairman commends Pakistan team on Asia Cup victory

Sports Desk



ISLAMABAD:

Chairman

of the

Pakistan

Cric

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(PCB),

Mohsin

Naqvi,

has

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to the Paki

stan U-19

cricket

team

on their triumphant victory in the Asia Cup final.

In a post on social media platform X, Naqvi expressed his pride, saying, "Proud to be handing over the ACC U19 Cup to our brilliant U19 team."

He praised the team's performance, and said they played with fearless cricket and unmatched spirit.

Naqvi highlighted the exceptional performance of Sameer, describing him as "calm under pressure and outstanding on the big stage." He concluded by saying the team makes the nation proud and shines a bright light on the future of Pakistan cricket, terming their win 'what a show'.

South Korea's An equals calendar year title record

Sports Desk</div

Handed over

ISTANBUL: President of Republic of Türkiye, Recep Tayyip Erdogan hands over the Command Scroll of PNS KHAIBAR to Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf during the commissioning ceremony held at Naval Shipyard, Türkiye



Photo: PID

Pakistan Navy bolsters fleet with commissioning of 2nd Milgem Ship PNS Khaibar in Türkiye

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The commissioning ceremony of 2nd Pakistan Navy MILGEM class ship PNS KHAIBAR was held at Istanbul Naval Shipyard, Türkiye. The President of Republic of Türkiye, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, graced the occasion as Chief Guest. Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf also attended the ceremony.

While addressing on the occasion, President Recep

Tayyip Erdogan termed the brotherly relations between Pakistan-Türkiye as exemplary. The President further emphasized the need for enhanced mutual collaboration in the field of defence production in future as well.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf acknowledged the commitment of M/s ASFAT, Istanbul Naval Shipyard and the OEMs (Original Equipment Manufacturer) involved in plan-

ning, design and construction of PN MILGEM ships.

Naval Chief also appreciated the deepening defence partnership between Pakistan and Türkiye. He highlighted that bilateral engagements between Pakistan Navy and Turkish Naval Forces not only contribute immensely towards strengthening Pakistan-Türkiye defence collaboration but also reflect our enduring and deepening partnership.

Following the ceremony,

Turkish President visited the ship, where he was presented Guard of Honour and interacted with ship's crew. During the visit Turkish President and Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf exchanged views on maritime security in the region and discussed avenues for future PN-TNF joint initiatives.

PN MILGEM ships are the most technologically advanced surface platforms. These vessels are equipped with latest Command and

Control Systems integrated with modern weapons and advanced sensors.

The contract for construction of 4 MILGEM class ships for Pakistan was signed between Ministry of Defence Production, Pakistan and M/s ASFAT, Türkiye in 2018, wherein two Ships planned to be constructed at Türkiye and remaining two ships in Pakistan. Commissioning of PNS KHAIBAR marks the completion of construction of both ships at Türkiye.

Political dialogue essential for stability, development: Rana Sanaullah

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Prime Minister's Adviser on Political and Public Affairs Senator Rana Sanaullah Khan has emphasized that political stability is essential for sustainable national progress and development.

He said that dialogue, tolerance and respect for state institutions are essential for ensuring sustainable development.

Addressing the 53rd martyrdom anniversary of Khawaja Rafique Shaheed at Aiwan-e-Iqbal, organized by the Khawaja Rafique Shaheed Foundation, here on Sunday, Rana Sanaullah paid rich tribute to veteran political worker Khawaja Rafique, saying he spent his entire life in



struggle and ultimately sacrificed his life for democratic values.

He prayed for the elevation

of the martyr's ranks and said such sacrifices must never be forgotten.

The advisor said no nation

in the world had progressed through conflict, violence or anarchy, adding that attacks on defence installations were

extremely wrong and could not be justified under any circumstances. He said the issue of punishments and restrictions on meetings could only be reviewed when there was clear evidence that individuals had abandoned the path of unrest and violence.

Rana Sanaullah recalled that on May 25, 2022, Islamabad was attacked and armed individuals were brought along. He said had that attack not taken place, the assemblies would have been dissolved and elections held. He added that dialogue on elections had resumed later and matters were close to settlement, but the Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leadership sought permission from its founder, which was not granted.

Billing system replaces net metering as changes made to solar policy

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has announced major changes to the country's solar energy policies, approving a new framework for solar users under the "NEPRA Solar Consumers Regulations 2025."

The policy, finalised after months of consultation between the Ministry of Energy, NEPRA, and other stakeholders, introduces a net billing system to replace the traditional net metering arrangement.

Under the new rules, the duration of solar contracts for consumers will be reduced from seven years to five years.



Instead of the surcharge given to consumers in the previous system, consumers will now be given the facility



to exchange units. Moreover, the new solar net billing has been set at Rs 11

per unit. Earlier, consumers were benefiting from a price of Rs 25.98 per unit.

They emphasised that the NEPRA will determine solar tariffs, which may be adjusted over time, and that the policy is not expected to have a significant financial impact on consumers.

Major blow to Fitna Al Khwarij: nine terrorists neutralized in KP



City Desk

RAWALPINDI: On 19 December 2025, nine khwarij belonging to Indian Proxy Fitna Al Khwarij were killed in two separate engagements in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province.

On reported presence of khwarij, an intelligence based operation was conducted by the Security Forces in Dera Ismail Khan District. During the conduct of operation, own troops effectively engaged the khwarij location and after an intense fire exchange, four khwarij were sent to hell.

Another intelligence based operation was conducted in Bannu District. In ensuing fire exchange, five more khwarij were effectively neutralised by the security forces.

Weapons and ammunition were also recovered from killed Indian sponsored khwarij, who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities against the Security Forces, Law Enforcement agencies and target killing of innocent civilians.

Sanitization operations are being conducted to eliminate any other Indian sponsored kharji found in the area as relentless Counter Terrorism campaign under vision "Azm e Istejkam" (as approved by Federal Apex Committee on National Action Plan) by Security Forces and Law Enforcement Agencies of Pakistan will continue at full pace to wipe out menace of foreign sponsored and supported terrorism from the country.

PM appreciates security forces for killing 9 terrorists

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday paid tribute to the security forces for carrying out two separate successful operations against Fitna-Al-khwarij (terrorists) in Dera Ismail Khan district and Bannu district.

The premier appreciated the security forces for killing nine terrorists during the operations.

He stated that under vision 'Azm-i-Istejkam', security forces were achieving big successes against terrorism.

He said, "In this war against

terrorism, entire nation is standing shoulder to shoulder with Pakistan Armed Forces."

The prime minister said, "We are fully determined to root out all types of terrorism from the country."

PM congratulates Pak Navy, experts on PNS KHAIBAR's commissioning

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Sunday, congratulated Pakistan Navy, defence experts and all partners on the commissioning of Pakistan's second MILGEM-class naval ship, "PNS KHAIBAR", in Türkiye.

He said the PNS KHAIBAR's commissioning would further strengthen the protection of Pakistan's maritime frontiers.

The prime minister further said that the defence cooperation between Pakistan and Türkiye showed mutual trust and long-standing brotherly relations between the two countries.

"Enhancement of naval strength and capabilities is indispensable for country's economy, trade and the security of sea routes," said a press release by the PM Office Media Wing, quoting the prime minister as saying.

Business groups announce multi-billion dollar investments in Balochistan

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Five leading business conglomerates — Lake City Holdings, Fatima Group, Deen Group, Hilton Group, and Surti Group — have announced investments totaling billions of dollars in Balochistan.

The market value of these business groups is \$5 billion, according to a report in Business Recorder.

The announcement follows Mari Energies Limited's disclosure that its wholly owned subsidiary, Mari Minerals (Private) Limited, has signed a joint venture agreement with Globacore Minerals Limited to carry out mineral exploration projects in the province.

At a recent ceremony, former federal minister and business leader

Gohar Ijaz highlighted that the commencement of mineral development would usher in an era of peace and progress, creating job opportunities and stimulating economic growth.

Mari Minerals, owned by Mari Energies, will partner with Globacore Minerals, which brings extensive expertise in exploring gold and copper deposits in Balochistan.

The joint venture will focus on the exploration of precious minerals in Chaghai.

Ijaz emphasised that Balochistan's vast mineral wealth presents a significant opportunity for local companies and that such investments are expected to drive development, prosperity, and employment in the province.