

Finance Minister Qasim Majeed attends Benazir Bhutto Remembrance Event in Islamgarh

ISLAMGARH/MIRPUR: The 18th death anniversary of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto was observed with great reverence and respect at the Peoples Secretariat, Islamgarh. The commemorative event was organized by Councillor Municipal Committee Islamgarh, Chaudhry Muhammad Arif. The special guest on the occasion was Minister for Finance and Land Revenue, Chairman Kashmir Bank-Chaudhry Qasim Majeed.

A large number of party leaders, elected representatives, social figures and workers attended the ceremony, including contractor Chaudhry Mehrban, Councillor Raja Faisal Bawali, Musheer Chaudhry Razzaq, Musheer Chaudhry Khurshid, Master Younas Chaudhry, Chaudhry Roohan Mehrban, Chaudhry Muhammad Nawaz, former Staff Officer Raja Hazar-ur-Rehman, Chaudhry Nazakat Bandori, former coun-



cillor candidate Chaudhry Arsalan Khadri, Chaudhry Aashiq, Naeem Raza Naqeeb, Haji Naib Hussain, Master Malik Arif, Chaudhry Khalid Mahmood, Chaudhry Rukhsar, Malik

Naeem, contractor Sajid Awan, Malik Inayat Awan, Babu Sadiq, contractor Chaudhry Sabir Hussain, former Deputy Administrator Municipal Committee Chaudhry Ameen, Master

Fazal-ur-Rehman, Chaudhry Rafiq and a large number of party workers.

The ceremony was also addressed by President Pakistan Peoples Party District Mirpur Chaudhry Yasir Mumtaz, Councillor Municipal Committee Islamgarh Chaudhry Muhammad Arif, Member Central Executive Committee PPP Chaudhry Mahmood Ahmed Qazi, former

Member Central Executive Committee Chaudhry Nazim Hussain, Councillor Chaudhry Talib Hussain, and former Administrator Municipality Haji Azeem Bhatti.

The event began with recitation from the Holy Quran by Mushtaq Mughal, followed by Naat presented by Mirza Abdul Rehman. Stage Secretary duties were performed by Advocate Chaudhry Mansha Taj.

Councillor Municipal Committee Islamgarh Chaudhry Muhammad Arif, in his address, said that the martyrdom of Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto was a tragic incident, and that her entire life was devoted to the struggle for democracy and the progress of Pakistan.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, Syed Azam Shah offered a special prayer for Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Shaheed, the leaders and martyrs of the Pakistan Peoples Party, and for the entire Muslim Ummah.

Happy New Year

ISLAMABAD: A stunning view of the illuminated digits of 2026, at Blue area as the youngsters of Capital City are getting prepare to celebrate the new Year eve with great Zeal.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

Review Meeting on Progress of Data Darbar Shrine Expansion and External Parking

Spokesman Report

LAHORE: Secretary/Chief Administrator Augaf Punjab, Dr. Ehsan Bhutta, said that the teachings of Sufi saints continue to guide society towards peace, tolerance, and spiritual enlightenment. He stated that Sufi saints have left indelible marks of love, humanity, and mutual respect in history, and their role in illuminating the Subcontinent with knowledge, peace, and spiritual light is truly unforgettable.

Dr. Ehsan Bhutta chaired a detailed review meeting at Hajveri Hall, Data Darbar, with officers of TEPA, C&W, LDA, Augaf Department, Madinah Foundation, and NESPAK. The meeting comprehensively reviewed



the pace, quality, and overall progress of the shrine expansion and develop-

ment projects, along with the external parking facility.

The meeting was attended by Director General Religious Affairs Shahid Hassan Kalyani, Director Administration Augaf Muhammad Shakir Sandhu, Director Projects Augaf Rafiq Noor Wattu, Group Advisor Madinah Foundation Muhammad Aslam Tareen, General Manager NESPAK Adil Nazir, Administrator Data Darbar Sheikh Jameel Ahmed, and officers and representatives of Lahore Development Authority and other relevant departments. Participants reaffirmed their commitment to ensuring timely and quality completion of the projects and agreed to further strengthen inter-departmental coordination.

PPP leader cites Rathore's leadership for surge in Pro-Pakistan Sentiment in AJK

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Azad Jammu and Kashmir Central Deputy Secretary Information and Candidate for LA-07 Leepa Valley, Shaukat Javed Mir, has said that the short yet impactful tenure of Prime Minister Azad Kashmir Raja Faisal Mumtaz Rathore has proven to be a historic breakthrough in restoring public confidence in the democratic system, particularly among the youth.

Speaking to party workers, PSF and Peoples Youth Organization office-bearers after returning from the death anniversary of Daughter of the East, Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, Shaukat Javed Mir stated that the unprecedented rise in pro-Pakistan slogans and renewed public engagement reflects the visionary leadership, political wisdom and farsighted policies of Prime Minister Raja Faisal Mumtaz Rathore.

He said that establishing a dignified and effective working relationship with the federal government and securing multi-billion-rupee education projects are living examples of the Prime Minister's capable and credible leadership. Within just one and a quarter months, the government has successfully taken the people out of an atmosphere of distrust, frustration and political alienation and reconnected them with the national mainstream through confidence-building measures.

Shaukat Javed Mir said that strengthening the identity of the state, public dignity and the ideology of Pakistan, while reinforcing everlasting ideological bonds, is nothing less than a historic victory. He added that Prime Minister Raja Faisal Mumtaz Rathore, like his respected father Raja Mumtaz Hussain Rathore, has earned a unique place in the hearts of the people in a very short period through the philosophy of public partnership in governance.

PFA Launches Major Crackdown Against Food Adulteration in Toba Tek Singh

Zafar Chishti

TOBA TEK SINGH: Under the vision of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, the zero-tolerance policy against food adulteration is being strictly implemented across the district. Under the supervision of Deputy Commissioner Toba Tek Singh Umar Abbas Mela, the Punjab Food Authority (PFA) carried out a large-scale crackdown in Toba Tek Singh. According to Deputy Director Punjab Food Authority Toba Tek Singh Yasir Mushtaq, the operation resulted in the closure of one production unit, while fines exceeding Rs 150,000 were imposed on 14 food points. A total of 134 food points and suppliers were inspected across the district. He stated that during the inspections, more than two and a half maunds of rotten potatoes, adulterated milk, large quantities of snacks and papad, expired beverages and prohibited ingredients were seized and destroyed. On the orders of the Director General Punjab Food Authority, strict early-morning checkpoints were set up in Toba city, Kamalia, Rajana and surrounding areas, during which 10,000 liters of milk from 41 milk suppliers were checked. Yasir Mushtaq further revealed that several food points were found violating previous instructions. Poor hygiene conditions in processing areas, presence of insects, foul-smelling mixing areas, dirty water on broken floors and the absence of mandatory testing records and employees' medical certificates were also observed.

Punjab Speaker calls education 'big challenge' amidst 25 million out-of-school children



Kiran Asim

MULTAN: Speaker Punjab Assembly Malik Ahmed Khan has said that making every citizen educated is a big challenge for the state. Even now, 25 million children are out of school. The number of children deprived of education in proportion to the population has been the same for the last two decades. However, the current Punjab government has allocated record funds for education for the first time and has increased the education budget from 17 billion to 46 billion rupees. He was addressing the Times University Convocation 2025 in Multan as the chief guest. On this occasion, League leaders Dr. Akhtar Malik, Sheikh Tariq Rashid, Abdul Ghaffar Dogar, Javed Ansari, city elders Sardar Muzaffar Mahmood Sial, Chaudhry Zulfiqar Anjum, Sarfaraz Muzaffar, Muhammad Aslam Shad and others were also present. The Speaker Punjab Assembly said that private educational institutions spend ten to sixty thousand rupees per week on their students, while government institutions, where 97 percent of children study, spend twenty-five to thirty thousand rupees per year. In such a situation, how can children of government institutions compete with students of private institutions? Malik Ahmed Khan said that private institutions should utilize their resources for educational equality.

Peoples Lawyers Forum mark the 18th death anniversary of Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto



Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: Member of National Assembly Syed Ali Qasim Gillani paid tribute to Mohtarma Shaheed Benazir Bhutto on the occasion of 18th Martyrdom Day organized by People's Lawyers Forum South Punjab at the District Bar Association Multan hall. On this occasion, he said that

Mohtarma Bhutto paved the way for women to play an important role in Pakistani politics and her sacrifices will always be remembered.

On this occasion, Syed Ali Qasim Gillani addressed lawyers, party leaders and people from different walks of life. Appreciating the role of People's Lawyers Forum South

Punjab, he said that the organization has always rendered important services for national unity and public welfare. He shed light on Mohtarma Bhutto's vision, public service and political struggle and said that democracy in Pakistan was strengthened due to her sacrifices.

The ceremony was attended by PPP leaders Habibullah Shakir, Mrs. Bushra Naqvi, Syed Arif Shah, Nasheed Arif Gondal, Zwar Hussain Qureshi, Manzoor Qadri, Chaudhry Saeed AD Baloch, Rana Javed Akhtar, Niaz Khan also Addressing to the Peoples Lawyers Forum Members.

From East London to Pakistan

Hope 4 Humanity delegation visits Pakistan to map out free medical assistance initiative

By Amjad Mehmood

In a move aimed at expanding community-level humanitarian support, Hope 4 Humanity (UK-registered charity) has partnered with a local Pakistani organization, YCDO (Youth Community Development Organization), to deliver free medical support for the most vulnerable segments of society, particularly those who remain unable to access essential healthcare due to poverty. According to both organizations, the collaboration is designed to reach individuals and families who are effectively excluded from basic treatment because of financial hardship. The initiative is being positioned as a practical, needs-driven response, focused on delivering medical assistance where formal access is limited and out-of-pocket costs have become prohibitive for low-income communities.

The partnership coincides with an official visit to Pakistan by Hope 4 Humanity, as the UK charity moves to extend its operations and explore a broader footprint in the country through local collaboration and on-ground assessment. The H4H officials visit is part of a wider engagement plan aimed at strengthening service delivery mechanisms in Pakistan, with YCDO supporting outreach and local coordination. As part of their engagements during the tour, Hope 4 Humanity officials Mr. Junaid Ali BEM (Head of Strategy) and Ms. Simone Thompson (Operational Manager) visited the office of The Daily Spokesman in Islamabad, following an invitation from the Editor, Mr. Naveed Ahmed Khan.

Mr. Junaid Ali BEM, founder of Hope 4 Humanity and a widely recognized British humanitarian has emerged as a leading voice in community welfare on both sides of the UK-Pakistan corridor, steering large-scale initiatives that range from the distribution of more than 150,000 food parcels in London to the provision of free welfare, housing and legal advice services, while also developing community hubs to support families through the cost-of-living crisis and extending humanitarian and medical relief to vulnerable communities in Punjab and Sindh; with a Pakistan humanitarian delegation scheduled for January 2026 focusing on youth empowerment, healthcare and rural development, he remains keen to engage on the challenges of community welfare, British Pakistani civic participation, youth responsibility, and the evolving portfolio of ongoing charity projects in the UK and Pakistan.

The visiting delegation was received by Mr. Naveed Ahmed Khan, Editor and members of The Daily Spokesman team, who extended a warm welcome and arranged a guided tour of the newspaper's editorial and publication operations. The visit offered the guests an overview of the newspaper's newsroom workflow, production process, and wider editorial functioning, an exchange framed by both sides as an opportunity to strengthen communication links between humanitarian work and public-facing reporting. In a goodwill gesture, Mr. Naveed Ahmed Khan presented a commemorative shield to the Hope 4 Humanity officials on behalf of The Daily Spokesman, acknowledging the organization's visit and expressing appreciation for its humanitarian engagement.

Speaking on the occasion, Ms. Simone Thompson highlighted the newspaper's overseas footprint, noting that: Daily Spokesman's English news publications extend beyond Pakistan, with exclusive coverage in the United Kingdom and Europe. Her remarks were received as recognition of the publication's international audience and its potential role in amplifying community-impact initiatives to a broader readership.

Participants described the meeting as reflective of a shared commitment to impactful communication and global outreach, underscoring how media coverage and humanitarian service can complement each other, one by delivering support on the ground, the other by ensuring visibility, accountability, and wider engagement across borders. With Hope 4 Humanity currently on an official tour and YCDO positioned as its local partner for medical assistance programmes, stakeholders expect further announcements regarding the scope, locations, and delivery framework of the planned free medical support. For communities most affected by poverty-linked health exclusion, the collaboration signals a timely intervention, one that aims to convert charitable intent into direct, accessible care.

In East London, where the pressure of rising living costs has turned everyday budgeting into a weekly calculation, "Hope4Humanity," widely recognized by the public as "Hope 2 Humanity," has established itself as a steady, community-facing presence as winter pressures deepen across



for families and individuals living on the edge of hardship. From its base on Katherine Road in Newham, the organization operates with a simple but demanding mandate: respond quickly to a crisis, then stay alongside people long enough for that crisis to ease.

Hope4Humanity is formally registered in the United Kingdom as Hope 4 Humanity Appeal and is also incorporated as HOPE 4 HUMANITY APPEAL LTD, a not-for-profit structure limited by guarantee and established on 7 October 2016 with three trustees and three volunteers, an indication of a lean set-up that relies on targeted expertise and practical delivery rather than a large administrative footprint. Yet the scope of its work is far larger than its size might suggest, shaped by the realities of modern deprivation where food insecurity, housing instability, legal complications, and mental strain frequently arrive together.

The organization's day-to-day work is anchored in poverty relief, but its operational style goes beyond emergency handouts. Food support is the most visible entry point. Hope4Humanity reports distributing over a hundred thousand food parcels through its community initiatives, a figure that points to sustained operations rather than seasonal charity drives. In Newham and surrounding boroughs, the charity's food support works through a networked model, aligned with local partners such as the Newham Food Alliance and organized across multiple distribution points, allowing donated supplies to be collected, sorted and redistributed to people who would otherwise go without. For many service users, the food parcel is also the doorway to stabilizing support. Alongside emergency provision, Hope4Humanity is known for offering practical guidance on welfare benefits, debt pressures, and housing pathways by connecting relief with advice.

A distinctive feature of its service mix is the weekly law clinic, structured and predictable rather than ad hoc. Delivered with professional legal capacity, the clinic focuses particularly on family and immigration matters, including support relevant to asylum seekers. In communities where a single unresolved legal issue can block access to housing, employment, or benefits, such advice can be decisive.

The charity's work with children and families is channeled through its Hope Assistance Family (HAF) programmes, which expand significantly during school holidays. In a period when many low-income households struggle to cover both meals and meaningful activity for children, the organization runs children's holiday clubs and camps designed around healthy food, physical activity and safe, supervised environments.

Hope4Humanity's community programming also extends into youth and women-focused engagement, using accessible sessions, ranging from fitness and wellbeing activities to creative and digital media exposure to build confidence, participation and social inclusion. These activities serve a dual purpose: they provide constructive routines and supportive spaces while strengthening community bonds in areas often marked by isolation and economic strain.

As winter pressures deepen across



the UK, the charity has also developed a practical response to the cost-of-living crisis through "Warm Havens" initiatives, safe indoor spaces offered in coordination with council-linked partners. The model is straightforward: provide a warm, welcoming environment during the cold season, coupled with meal support, including takeaway provision on Saturdays and indoor meal arrangements on Sundays at Katherine Road locations.

The organization's preventive-health

work includes targeted interventions for older residents, such as free vitamin D supplementation for Newham residents aged 60 and above, reflecting an effort to address vulnerability before it escalates into avoidable health decline.

While its strongest visibility remains rooted in East London, Hope4Humanity has also built a humanitarian outreach profile beyond the UK, including relief work in Pakistan. The organization has been active in flood-affected areas of Punjab and Sindh, as well as in Naran in Khyber

In a time when many organiza-

tions are judged by branding as much as delivery, Hope4Humanity's identity is shaped more by repeat service than occasional visibility, food parcels that arrive week after week, legal advice that runs on a fixed schedule, warm

community spaces that open through the winter, and youth programmes that fill the gaps where hardship often hits hardest.

Photos by Sultan Bashir

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Benazir Bhutto: Continuing the Legacy of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto Through Unwavering Struggle

The vision and political philosophy of Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto were clearly reflected among the people. She was a deeply committed and highly focused politician. She carried forward the political legacy of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in an exemplary manner. I firmly believe that Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's decision to appoint Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto as his political successor was a wise and far-sighted one.

With her revolutionary thinking, Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto not only upheld Shaheed Bhutto's vision but also advanced his struggle further. She endured years of exile, faced immense hardships, suffered imprisonment, and bore great personal sacrifices, yet she never retreated. Through her unwavering struggle, she revived the Pakistan Peoples Party as the true party of the people, just as envisioned by Shaheed Bhutto.

When Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto returned to active politics, much of the senior party leadership had abandoned her and aligned themselves with the dictator General Zia-ul-Haq. In 1985, non-party-based elections were held, which the Pakistan Peoples Party boycotted. In hindsight, we believe that this boycott caused political damage, as many individuals elected on a non-party basis later joined the so-called King's Party.

Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto continued her struggle relentlessly. She approached the courts and ultimately succeeded in restoring party-based elections. Following this achievement, the Pakistan Peoples Party emerged victorious, and Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto became the first woman Prime Minister of Pakistan and the first female Prime Minister of any Muslim country, assuming office at the young age of 35. She reorganized and strengthened the party further.

Her journey, however, was not easy. Many forces did not want a progressive, democratic, and globally respected leader to govern Pakistan. Conspiracies were hatched against her, acts of terrorism were carried out, and her elected government was dismissed. Yet, even after being removed from office, she resumed her struggle with renewed determination.

Through her international friends and partners, she exerted pressure on the military ruler General Pervaiz Musharraf to remove his uniform and announce free, fair, and transparent elections. Eventually, elections were announced. On 18th October, when she arrived in Karachi, she received a historic welcome attended by millions. On that very day, an attempt was made to eliminate her, but by the grace of Allah, she survived. Later, during the election campaign in Rawalpindi, the tragic incident occurred in which Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto embraced martyrdom.

Across the world, leaders rarely relinquish their powers. Yet President Asif Ali Zardari, in line with Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto's vision and the Charter of Democracy, voluntarily transferred his constitutional powers to Parliament. Parliamentary supremacy was restored, democratic institutions were strengthened, and the parliamentary form of government was firmly re-established. We dismantled a hybrid system that was neither truly presidential nor parliamentary, and instead reinforced a genuine parliamentary democracy in Pakistan.

Pakistan's Point of View on US Gaza Mission Scope

Gaza is described as enduring a severe humanitarian catastrophe after years of blockade and repeated military assaults, with widespread destruction of homes, hospitals, schools, and essential infrastructure. Civilians face acute shortages of food, water, electricity, and medical care, alongside mass displacement into overcrowded and unsafe shelters and growing risks of famine and disease. The collapse of the health system and deep psychological trauma underscore the absence of any safe refuge. Many states criticize the international community for failing to stop the violence or ensure accountability, arguing that temporary ceasefires are inadequate without justice, an end to occupation, and recognition of Palestinian rights.

In response, a US-backed proposal for an International Stabilization Force has triggered sharp divisions at the United Nations. While supporters see it as a means to protect civilians and coordinate aid and reconstruction, many countries—particularly Arab states, Pakistan, China, and Russia—warn that without a clear political pathway to Palestinian self-determination it could entrench the status quo. Israel, from the opposite perspective, argues the plan insufficiently addresses its security concerns and limits its control. Skepticism within the US and the UN centers on feasibility, funding, command, and the risk of an open-ended intervention. As Washington prepares a revised draft, the debate reflects broader tensions between humanitarian management and demands from the Global South for a politically grounded, just, and lasting solution to the conflict.

The sophisticated chambers of the UN, where high-stakes resolutions are debated and negotiated in often polished, technical language, stand in stark and tragic contrast to the bombed-out streets of Gaza, where hunger, disease, and death speak a more raw and powerful truth than any diplomatic statement ever could. Images of children desperately rummaging through debris for mere scraps of food, families forced to sleep amid the ruins of their homes, and hospitals overflowing with the injured and the dying. These deeply unsettling images, constantly transmitted across the entire world, have effectively galvanized massive public outrage and strongly reinforced the resolve of countries like Pakistan to demand that the UN's actions must be guided not by political expedience but by uncompromising justice. It is within this profound and tragic chasm—between the high-level, procedural negotiations and the horrific, ground-level human suffering—that the true and enduring meaning of Pakistan's principled stance can be most fully and accurately understood.

This entire episode also clearly illustrates a broader, significant transformation in global diplomacy. The traditional dominance of the Security Council's permanent members is being increasingly and effectively challenged by influential middle-power states that are now firmly refusing to remain silent spectators to such devastating humanitarian crises. Pakistan's proactive partnership with the Arab bloc and other non-aligned nations marks a growing and confident assertion of the Global South, which is now insistently demanding that the core principles

of equity and justice must fundamentally shape all international interventions. Their collective and powerful message is strikingly clear: a lasting peace cannot be simply imposed through superior force; it must be diligently built upon the unshakable foundations of legitimacy, compassion, and accountability.

It has also been suggested that Pakistan may be assigned a humanitarian and logistics assistance role, which is a positive development. Of course, every Pakistani wants to help the innocent people of Gaza. However, at the same time, the primary focus must remain on the core issue of Palestine—the establishment of a separate, independent Palestinian state in accordance with the will of its people. Additionally, the ceasefire must be strictly enforced, as Israel has not been adhering to it and continues its attacks on Palestine. Israel should be held accountable under international norms and agreements and be firmly urged to comply with all agreements and the ceasefire.

As the sensitive developments continue to unfold in Washington and New York, the terrible humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza continues to worsen with every passing, critical hour. The crippling lack of clean water, the rapid spread of virulent disease, and the relentless, compounding trauma of displacement have collectively created conditions that humanitarian organizations now fear are bordering on a potential genocide. Against this unbearable human reality, the world's diplomats continue to deliberate endlessly over mere words, commas, and procedural clauses—



Abdul Basit Alvi



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

The Enemy Within – and the American Habit of Fixing It

War Secretary Pete Hegseth's recent address to defense-industry leaders began not with warnings about China or Russia, but with a stark admission that the gravest threat to American military readiness comes from inside the Pentagon itself—not the people, he stressed, but the entrenched acquisition bureaucracy that governs them. He described this culture as one of centralized planning and rigid five-year cycles that choke innovation, punish initiative, and turn paperwork into a substitute for performance. For a moment it sounded as though he were describing the old Soviet system or the Chinese Communist Party—until he delivered the line that made the room fall silent: the adversary, he said, is the Pentagon's process.



Qamar Bashir

tural truth about the United States: this country remains powerful not because it is flawless, but because it possesses built-in mechanisms of reform, criticism and self-correction. When processes fail, leaders say so. When systems slow, they are publicly challenged. When institutions fall behind reality, the political and administrative machinery eventually pushes them forward again.

That culture of internal inspection is loud, messy and often uncomfortable. Democrats reform institutions in one way, Republicans in another. They criticize each other, undo each other's work, and reshape systems again. But the result, over time, is not paralysis. It is continuous institutional evolution. That is why the U.S. military still fields the most capable force in the world. That is why the defense-industrial base, despite its flaws, still produces unmatched innovation. And that is why American universities, laboratories, companies and alliances continue to set global standards.

Hegseth followed his words with action, signing directives to streamline acquisition, break bottlenecks inside each service branch, expand surge manufacturing capacity, and unify arms-transfer authorities so that U.S. weapons reach allies faster when approved. The message was clear: process must once again serve readiness, not the other way around. Capability must matter more than compliance. And the system must be restored to wartime speed, not remain trapped in peacetime ritual.

Your central observation sits at the heart of this development. The United States has something many other nations lack—the courage and institutional space to admit fault and correct course. Authoritarian states bury failure, silence critics

and falsify results. America argues, audits, investigates, legislates and reforms. This is not weakness. It is the only strength that survives history. It is the reason the country remains at the top of science, technology, defense, education, finance, diplomacy and culture, despite the demands and contradictions of global leadership.

Yes, American weapons feature in conflicts around the world—and that reality sparks intense ethical, strategic and humanitarian debate. But unlike systems that suppress dissent, the United States allows these debates to unfold in Congress, the press, universities, think tanks and courts. Excesses are scrutinized, decisions questioned, policy direction contested. It is an open-loop feedback system—sometimes slow, sometimes painful, but always alive.

In that sense, Hegseth's speech is not an admission of decline. It is a reminder that a nation remains strong only as long as it remains honest with itself. When the machine jams, it must be repaired. When culture hardens into ritual, it must be shaken. When systems fall behind events, they must be dragged forward—not once, but repeatedly, across generations. The United States has done this again and again. That is why it still leads.

If America's greatest adversary sometimes lies within its own bureaucracy, then its greatest strength lies there too—in the constant habit of self-examination, internal checks and balances, and relentless renewal. Other powers deny failure. America fixes it. And as long as that instinct endures, the nation will remain loudly, imperfectly, but decisively—at the top of the world.

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The Unyielding Shadow: Four Letters that Haunt the Occupation

Altaf Hussain Wani

In the carefully curated theatre of "normalcy" that India attempts to stage in occupied Jammu and Kashmir, even the smallest, most symbolic gestures are policed with an intensity that betrays a profound anxiety. The recent episode surrounding Mirwaiz Umar Farooq—presured, as he states, by occupation authorities to remove the title "APHC Chairman" from his social media profile—is not a minor administrative squabble. It is a stark, revealing moment that lays bare the central contradiction of Indian policy in the region. If the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) is indeed a defunct entity with no public support, as officials in New Delhi and Srinagar routinely claim, then why does the mere use of its titular prefix inspire such fear and necessitate such coercive control?

The debate over who currently holds the chairmanship within the APHCs is immaterial, whether it is Masrat Alam in prison, or Mirwaiz leading a faction in the Valley. The occupation authorities' interference in this internal matter proves that their target is not a specific person, but the title itself. The title "APHC Chairman" carries a weight that transcends the individual. It connects to the memory of the mass mobilizations of the 1990s and 2000s, to the narratives of self-determination, and to the enduring political identity that refuses to legitimize India's constitutional changes imposed by diktat.

This is the power of the "four digits"—APHC. It is a symbolic vessel for Kashmiri aspiration. By trying to ban even its nominal use, India acknowledges that its material power—armies, laws, prisons—has not succeeded in conquering the political imagination of the people. The failure is evident. If New Delhi's policies of development, "Naya Kashmir," and the abrogation of Article 370 were genuinely and over-

whelmingly popular, the specter of a banned, silenced, and leaderless conference would hold no power. It would be a historical footnote, not a threat requiring daily negation.

The irony is palpable. A state with one of the world's largest security deployments in the region, having dismantled the region's autonomy and political status, finds itself unnerved by four letters on a social media bio. This is not the behavior of a confident state that has won the hearts and minds of a population. It is the behavior of an occupying power deeply insecure about the legitimacy of its control, aware that its project rests not on consent but on coercion. The violence of the repression is directly proportional to the potency of the symbol it seeks to destroy.

The people of Jammu and Kashmir, navigating an unprecedented landscape of demographic and political re-engineering, read these actions clearly. Their continued faith, as noted, lies with the leadership that is behind bars, not with those anointed by New Delhi to fill the vacuum. The authorities can imprison the person, but by trying to erase the title, they admit they cannot imprison the idea it represents. Every FIR filed against someone for mentioning the APHC, every property attached, every media gag order, and now, every pressure applied to change a social media handle, is a testament to the unresolved Kashmir dispute. It is an admission that the "four digits" symbolize a resistance that outlives bullets, laws, and internet shutdowns—a resistance of memory and political will that continues to cast an unyielding shadow over the machinations of power. Until that core political question is addressed justly, no amount of erasure can bring the peace India claims to seek. The very fear of the title proves its enduring resonance.

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Bull & Bears
PSX 100-Share Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index		
Current	Prev. Close	
172,400.73	170,830.22	
Day's High	Day's Low	
172,582.95	171,146.14	
Index Value	Change	
28,915,999,160	+1570.51	
Percentage	Time	
+0.92%	26 Dec, 2025 4:30 pm	
Europe: FTSE 100 Index		
Index Value	Change	
9,870.68	-18.54	
Percentage	Time	
-0.19%	24 Dec, 4:35 pm GMT	
USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average		
Index Value	Change	
48,653.41	-77.75	
Percentage	Time	
-0.16%	26 Dec, 12:25 pm GMT-5	
Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average		
Index Value	Change	
50,750.39	+342.60	
Percentage	Time	
+0.68%	26 Dec, 3:45 pm GMT+9	
Open Market Forex Rates		
Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	187.5	191
Bahrain Dinar	744	754
Canadian Dollar	203.5	208
China Yuan	39.39	39.79
Danish Krone	43.81	44.21
Euro	330.5	334
Hong Kong Dollar	35.8	36.15
Indian Rupee	3.02	3.11
Japanese Yen	1.7850	1.8850
Kuwaiti Dinar	912	922
Malaysian Ringgit	67.75	68.35
New Zealand \$	161.43	163.43
Norwegians Krone	27.6	27.90
Omani Riyal	728.65	738.65
Qatari Riyal	76.47	77.17
Saudi Riyal	74.85	75.5
Singapore Dollar	217.3	222.3
Swedish Korona	30.11	30.41
Swiss Franc	351.34	354.09
Thai Bhat	8.73	8.88
U.A.E Dirham	76.65	77.50
UK Pound Sterling	378.75	382.75
US Dollar	281	283

PIFD to seek Italy collaboration for promotion of fashion industry in global markets

Commerce Desk

LAHORE: Chairperson Board of Industrial Collaboration to Enhance Fashion Exports Mian Kashif Ashfaq Sunday said that strategic international collaboration, especially with Italy, would significantly boost Pakistan's fashion exports and help position the country as a competitive player in the global fashion industry.

Chairing board of directors meeting here today he emphasised that Pakistan possesses immense potential in fashion and textiles due to its strong cotton base, skilled workforce and rich cultural heritage, but lacks adequate global branding and innovation. He said Pakistan Institute of Fashion and Design (PIFD) as a premier fashion education institution, will play a pivotal role in bridging this gap by aligning local talent with international market requirements. VC PIFD a chartered university by government of Pakistan Ms Hina Tayyaba Khalil was also present among other directors.



CCP wraps up 2025 with strong enforcement against cartelization

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) took strong enforcement action in 2025 against cartelization, price fixing, and other anti-competitive practices across key sectors, including sugar, steel, poultry, fertilizer, education, transport, advertising, power supply, and manufacturing, to protect consumers and ensure fair markets.

In the sugar sector, CCP issued show cause notices to ten sugar mills in Punjab for colluding on the start of the crushing season and fixing the sugarcane procurement price at Rs. 400 per maund. The Commission found that the mills jointly decided to delay crushing during a meeting held on November 10, 2025,

Ahsan Iqbal launches Quaid-e-Azam's 150th Anniversary Commemorations

City Desk

ISLAMABAD:—A national tribute to Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah was held today by the Federal Minister for Planning, Development & Special Initiatives, Professor Ahsan Iqbal Chaudhary. It was the launch of Quaid's 150th birth anniversary celebrations at a grand and celebratory event held at the Jinnah Convention Centre, Islamabad.

The landmark ceremony brought together senior political leadership, renowned celeb-

rities including Ahsan Khan and Sarwat Gilani, leading Quaid scholars, youth representatives, and members from diverse segments of society to reflect on the life, vision, and enduring legacy of the Founder of Pakistan.

The prestigious celebrations was also attended by Mr. Tariq Fatimi, Federal Minister for Information & Broadcasting Mr. Attaullah Tarar, and the Minister of State for Education Wajila Qamar, alongside other dignitaries and senior officials.



The ceremony also featured an address by the Honorable Minister for Information & Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar, who highlighted the role of media, education, and culture in keeping Quaid-e-Azam's message alive for future generations.

The event concluded with a keynote address by Professor Ahsan Iqbal Chaudhary, who formally announced the commencement of a year-long series of activities, dialogues, and national engagements dedicated to cele-

brating Quaid-e-Azam's 150th birth anniversary.

He underscored the importance of translating Quaid-e-Azam's vision into practical national development, good governance, and inclusive progress.

The launch marks the beginning of a comprehensive national campaign aimed at honoring the Founder of the Nation and reinvigorating his ideals across Pakistan throughout the year.

Under construction

FAISALABAD: Labourers are busy in construction work of new model bazaar in the city.



Photo: Online

Pakistan Banks Association elects Zafar Masud as Chairman and Constitutes 16-Member Executive Committee

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Banks Association (PBA) elected and constituted a new 16-member Executive Committee, including two female members and eight newly inducted member banks, marking a strategic shift toward greater inclusivity and broader industry representation.

Following the elections, the Executive Committee unanimously elected Mr. Zafar Masud, President and Chief Executive Officer of The Bank of Punjab, as Chairman of the PBA.

Commenting on his election, Mr. Masud said the newly constituted Executive Committee represents an important evolution in the Association's governance. He noted that the expanded and more diverse membership strengthens the PBA's ability to advance a National Economic Agenda, with a focus on bridging credit gaps in priority sectors, accelerating financial inclusion through digital channels, and supporting Pakistan's sustainable economic recovery.

The leadership team also includes Mr. Nassir Salim, President and Chief Executive Officer of Habib Bank Limited, as Senior Vice Chairman, and Mr. Yousaf Hussain, President and Chief Executive Officer of Faysal Bank Limited, as Vice Chairman.

Mr. Nassir Salim emphasized the importance of resilience and strong compliance



frameworks amid global headwinds, while Mr. Yousaf Hussain highlighted modernization, technology adoption, and agility as key priorities to ensure the banking sector remains innovative and regionally competitive.

Commenting on the milestone, Mr.

Muneer Kamal, Chief Executive Officer and Secretary General of the PBA, said that the expansion of the Executive Committee, including the historic inclusion of female representation, reflects the Association's commitment to diversity and modern governance.

Iftikhar Malik urges international pressure on India to restore Indus Waters Treaty

Commerce Desk

LAHORE: SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry former President Iftikhar Ali Malik Sunday urged the international community to exert pressure on India for the immediate restoration of the Indus Waters Treaty, brokered by the World Bank in 1960, remains a vital pillar of regional stability and cooperation.

Cautioning that continued violations could destabilise peace and economic stability in South Asia.

In a statement issued here today, the octogenarian and widely respected trade leader of South Asia said the Indus Waters Treaty, brokered by the World Bank in 1960, remains a vital pillar of regional stability and cooperation. He said India must stop the weaponisation of water, uphold international law and honour its treaty obligations. "Water is a basic

human right and a shared natural resource. Using it as a political tool violates international norms and undermines trust between neighbouring countries," he added.

Highlighting Pakistan's dependence on the Indus river system, Malik said any disruption in water flows could severely impact agriculture, food security and the livelihoods of millions of people, stressed that peace, trade and economic development in South Asia are closely interlinked and cannot flourish in an atmosphere of uncertainty and coercion. He called upon the United Nations, World Bank and other international stakeholders to play a proactive role in ensuring the sanctity of the treaty through impartial monitoring and effective enforcement.

BZU Scholar Saima Parveen Successfully Defends PhD Thesis on Enhancing Health Benefits of Moringa


Special Correspondent

MULTAN: Ms. Saima Parveen has successfully defended her doctoral thesis in a public viva voce examination held at the Department of Food Science & Technology, Bahauddin Zakariya University (BZU). Her research, conducted under the supervision of renowned food scientist Dr. Tariq Ismail, marks a significant advancement in improving the nutritional and therapeutic potential of Moringa oleifera, a plant globally valued for its health benefits.

Her PhD study, titled "Improving Health Perspectives of M. oleifera by Lactic Acid Fermentation," addresses key scientific gaps in maximizing the use of moringa as a safe and effective functional food. The research scientifically identifies full maturity as the optimal harvesting stage for moringa leaves and floral buds, revealing the highest levels of protein, dietary fiber, and beneficial phytochemicals at this stage.

A major highlight of the study is the development of an innovative, low-cost lactic acid fermentation process. This process not only preserves moringa but significantly enhances its health-promoting properties.

In the poultry sector, CCP imposed a collective fine of Rs. 155 million on eight major poultry hatcheries for cartelization and price fixing of day-old broiler chicks, which contributed to higher poultry prices.

In the fertilizer sector, CCP imposed penalties of Rs. 50 million each on six major urea manufacturers and Rs. 75 million on a leading industry association, totaling Rs. 375 million, for coordinated conduct that restricted competition.

CCP also fined the Transporters of Goods Association and the Local Goods Transport Association Rs. 5 million each for rate fixing through collective decisions that restricted independent pricing by transporters.

Strong enforcement actions were also taken

through raids and inspections. CCP conducted raids in Lahore on entities linked to cartelization in the out-of-home advertising market over alleged price fixing and bid coordination. Similar raids were carried out on suppliers involved in transformer reclamation materials for power distribution companies over suspected bid rigging.

In Gujrat, CCP conducted search and inspection operations at the premises of two electric fan manufacturers and their industry association over suspected cartelization and price fixing, securing documents and digital evidence.

Moreover, significant progress was made on the litigation front, as the Competition Appellate Tribunal (CAT) upheld key carteli-

zation cases. CAT disposed of the long-pending Pakistan Poultry Association (PPA) cartel case, upheld CCP's findings, and ordered recovery of a reduced penalty of Rs. 25 million.

The Tribunal also upheld CCP's order against the Pakistan Flour Mills Association (PFMA) for fixing wheat flour prices and directed payment of a Rs. 35 million fine. In the poultry sector, CAT admitted and fixed for hearing the appeals of eight hatcheries fined Rs. 155 million for cartelization in day-old chick prices, while attempts to stall the proceedings were rejected by the Lahore High Court.

Through these actions in 2025, the CCP reinforced its zero-tolerance approach to cartelization and its commitment to fair, transparent, and competitive markets.

A Heart of Compassion & A Spirit of Passion

Guinness World Record Holder Dr. Naeem Taj charts a life of Skill, Service & Standards

By Amjad Mehmood

Confident, articulate, and quietly assured, Mr. Naeem Taj, son of the late Colonel Taj Muhammad, a pioneer of Pakistan Army Signals whose legacy is enshrined at the Military College of Signals, Rawalpindi, through the naming of the TM Block in his honor, speaks of a life shaped by both ambition and discipline, recalling a defining crossroads where his twin passions, cricket and academics, demanded a single choice: pursue the game professionally or commit to medicine, a decision he ultimately sealed in favor of medical education when he joined Quaid-e-Azam Medical College, Bahawalpur, in 1985.

Mr. Naeem built his name in competitive cricket before medicine became his formal path, featuring at the Under-19 level and in major domestic tournaments, including the Quaid-e-Azam Trophy and the Wills Cup, performances that earned him recognition and selection for the Pakistan camp. One of the most memorable chapters of that journey, he recalls, was a side match against the Sri Lankan team in which he claimed the wicket of their celebrated batsman, Arjuna Ranatunga, a moment he still describes as a defining highlight.

Cricket, in many ways, ran through the family. His elder brother was also a known cricketer on the domestic circuit, while his sister chose the medical profession, an early reflection of the household's blend of competitive ambition and academic discipline. At the center of it all stood his father, Colonel Taj Muhammad, who did not impose a career decision but allowed his son to choose freely, offering only a quiet principle: the respect earned by doctors grows over time because their work is service to humanity.

Even after joining a medical college, Mr. Naeem did not abandon the game. He became part of the Bahawalpur cricket team and, through consistently strong performances, quickly emerged as one of its standout players. He remembers one incident from those years with particular clarity: concerned that cricket might dilute academic focus, his Principal wrote to his father requesting support to steer him toward studies alone. The reply came back firm yet reassuring—his son, Colonel Taj Muhammad, wrote, was focused and fully capable of achieving his goals. For Mr. Naeem, that vote of confidence became a lifelong anchor, strengthening his resolve and helping him remain among the top-performing students throughout his MBBS years.

The Daily Spokesman has arranged an exclusive interview with one of Pakistan's most renowned Laparoscopic and Bariatric surgeons, who has twice named in the Guinness Book of World Records, to chronicle his personal and professional journey and present it for the public's knowledge and inspiration. Dr Naeem Taj earned his MBBS and FCPS qualifications in Pakistan, and later pursued advanced credentials abroad, completing FRCS in the United Kingdom and FACS in the United States.

After completing his MBBS, Dr. Naeem Taj began his house job at Polyclinic Hospital, Islamabad, in 1991, while during the same year, he performed a successful appendectomy, a moment his father marked with pride by informally bestowing on him the title of "surgeon." Not long after, his father passed away due to renal failure, an event Dr. Naeem describes as the turning point that transformed medicine from a career into a commitment.



"After five years of specialization, a doctor learns how to operate; after ten years, he learns when to operate; and after twenty years of experience, he finally understands when not to operate."

—says Dr. Naeem Taj

He credits his late father for instilling the principles and confidence that continue to shape his professional life.

Following house job, Dr. Naeem joined Fauji Foundation Hospital, Jhelum, where he served for two years and cleared FCPS Part-I, an achievement he notes with particular satisfaction, given the common perception that the hospital was not a typical pathway toward higher qualifications. He later moved to Fauji Foundation Hospital, Rawalpindi, where he secured his early promotions before taking a decisive step in his training journey.

In 1996, driven by a deliberate pursuit of high-volume clinical exposure, he joined Rawalpindi General Hospital (RGH), now known as Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Hospital, and served there until 2006. He describes the hospital's government setup as austere, with limited facilities but an extraordinary patient load under demanding senior supervision. Yet he chose it willingly, regarding it as an unmatched environment for surgical learning. He recalls that in the late 1990s and early 2000s, RGH functioned as the primary receiving center in the division for emergencies, including bullet injuries, road traffic accidents, stabbing cases, and other critical trauma. In those early years, he says, surgeries ran around the clock. It was in that relentless theatre schedule, he believes, that his skills were refined into consistency and precision, work that earned recognition from senior colleagues for dependable outcomes and disciplined technique.

Reflecting on his decade-long stay at Rawalpindi General Hospital (RGH), Dr. Naeem Taj describes it as the most defining phase of his surgical formation in which he absorbed rigorous



training from senior mentors and, in turn, passed those skills on to junior doctors. He completed his specialist qualification with commendations from examiners and began mastering laparoscopic surgery at a time when the technique was still new to Pakistan's clinical landscape.

During his RGH tenure, he rose through the academic ranks, earning promotions from assistant to associate professor, as his standing in the medical community grew steadily. With his reputation spreading beyond the public sector, private hospitals and clinics actively sought his services, an interest that eventually extended to the Capital Development Authority (CDA) Hospital, which he joined in 2006. Among the episodes he recalls from those high-pressure initial years at CDA Hospital, where he completed a surgery under emergency conditions, using a mobile phone's light after a power failure, an illustration, he suggests, of the improvisation and resilience that often define care in resource-constrained settings.

In October 2024, Dr. Naeem Taj was appointed Executive Director of CDA Hospital, Islamabad, a role he describes as carrying full institutional backing from the CDA Chairman and senior management to modernize the hospital and raise service standards for the public. Within his first year, he steered the hospital toward recognition as an authorized center for postgraduate (PG) training, facilitating inspections and engagement with relevant regulatory bodies. He informed that about 40 doctors have completed specialist training and are serving at the hospital, while 25 PG trainees are currently enrolled. Dr. Naeem said doctors and staffing shortages were addressed through merit-based recruitment, enabling expanded clinical capacity and continuity of care. He further stated that key services have been strengthened or made fully functional, including OPD and emergency care, pediatrics, cardiac surgery, stenting-related services, a stroke center, diabetes clinics, a day-care center, and chronic care OPD. He added that allied support services, such as on-site pharmacy and patient amenities including a mosque and canteen, have been organized to better serve patients and attendants.

He also highlighted initiatives aimed at clinical innovation and public outreach, including an Obesity Week that brought together national and international specialists, with live surgical procedures supported through sponsorship to benefit underprivileged patients. Among the hospital's reported milestones, he cited the establishment of a colorectal surgery department, described as the first of its kind at the facility and the introduction of bariatric surgery for weight loss. He noted that the hospital now has specialist coverage across critical disciplines, including neurosurgery, spinal surgery, anesthesia, and gynecology, and said the institutional focus has shifted decisively toward quality and standardized care.

Looking ahead, Dr. Naeem Taj said proposals are under consideration to introduce private clinic services within



Internationally renowned as a two-time Guinness World Records holder

Dr. Muhammad Naeem Taj is a Pakistani surgeon & Executive Director at Islamabad Capital (CDA) Hospital. He set two records, first, he removed the longest gallbladder in the world (25.5 cm) via laparoscopy; second, he operated on the youngest patient (4-year old) to remove gallstones and the gallbladder.

the hospital, intended to improve financial sustainability while enhancing service delivery for residents of the twin cities. He also outlined plans to move toward paperless and cashless operations, aiming for greater transparency, efficiency, and environmental responsibility. In addition, he stated that CDA Hospital is offering house jobs to medical graduates on open merit, aligning early-career training with a broader agenda of accountable, public-centered healthcare delivery.

Discussing his expertise in minimally invasive surgery, Dr. Naeem Taj said that for nearly a century, traditional open procedures dominated surgical practice, until the late 1980s when minimally invasive techniques powered by rapidly advancing technology began to transform the medical landscape. With proper training and experience, he said, surgeons can offer patients clear advantages with less pain, smaller incisions, faster recovery, and an earlier return to normal life. He added that the field is now moving steadily toward robotic surgery in developed healthcare systems, and that the future of surgery will be defined by greater precision and improved outcomes.

He explained that he routinely travels abroad to learn emerging techniques and incorporate them into his practice in Pakistan. However, he stressed that surgical mastery has no shortcuts; it is refined through time in the operation theatre and through a disciplined, step-by-step learning process that develops both technical competence and sound clinical judgement. In this journey, he said, senior surgeons remain an invaluable resource for young doctors just as he learned from his own mentors before building his skills and reputation through sustained effort. Concluding his remarks, he emphasized that medicine is not a business but a service that demands care, compassion, and a commitment to easing patients' suffering through responsible and ethical treatment.

Addressing ways to strengthen Pakistan's healthcare system, he argued that the country needs an integrated, tiered structure from primary to secondary care rather than parallel arrangements that distort patient flow and overload facilities. He stressed that experienced, well-trained senior doctors form the



backbone of an effective system and should be treated as key stakeholders in policy design so that decisions reflect clinical realities rather than administrative assumptions.

Pointing to models in developed countries, he cautioned that health policy cannot be run by "yes-men" alone; it requires competent leadership, evidence-based planning, and genuine stakeholder participation. He further emphasized that training and continuous monitoring are essential pillars of a functioning health system. Warning of the public health burden ahead, he said that Pakistan is rapidly rising in rankings for diabetes and cardiovascular diseases, trends that will become far more difficult to manage without stronger prevention, early intervention, and system-wide capacity.

Commenting on the spread of unqualified practitioners and quackery in Pakistan's health sector, he urged the public to avoid non-professional treatment and seek care from properly trained, skilled doctors. He cautioned that delaying appropriate medical attention can allow disease to worsen, turning a manageable condition into a clinical challenge and, in some cases, a life-altering nightmare.

Drawing on his experience as a bariatric surgeon, Dr. Naeem Taj added that cosmetic procedures such as tummy tucks are not substitutes for sustainable medical weight-loss solutions. He also warned against the unsupervised or inappropriate use of weight-loss injections such as Ozempic (semaglutide), noting reports of serious adverse effects internationally, and advised that patients with diabetes and a BMI above 30 should consult an experienced specialist to assess whether bariatric surgery is the safer long-term option for preventing future complications.

Advising young doctors, he emphasized that sincerity and hard work must be matched with meaningful time spent with patients, strong communication skills, and sound clinical knowledge. He stressed the importance of developing competent surgical technique where relevant, and of treating every patient with the same care and responsibility one would extend to a family member. Above all, he concluded, an unhurried approach, professional attitude, and empathy are essential foundations for lasting success in the medical profession.



PCB to take up Indian U19 team's unsportsmanlike conduct with ICC

 Sports Desk

LAHORE: Chairman Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Mohsin Naqvi has said the Board is in the process of filing an official complaint with the International Cricket Council (ICC) against the unsportsmanlike conduct of the Indian cricket team during the recently concluded Asia U19 tournament.

Addressing a press conference at the Gaddafi Stadium here on Sunday, he said if the Indian U19 team did not shake hands with the Pakistan team, the gesture will be reciprocated, adding that the conduct of the Indian teams was against the spirit of the gentleman's sport.

Pakistan beat Indian U19 team in the final of the Asia Cup but Indian team's conduct was controversial. It all started when the Indian Men's cricket team refused to shake hands with the Men in Green during the Asia Cup 2025 referring to the estranged politi-

cal relations between the two governments in the wake of alleged Pehlcam attack in Indian-held Kashmir and downing of Indian warplanes by the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) in April and May this year.

"PCB wishes to keep cricket and politics apart under the instructions of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif," he said, adding that all sporting relations with India will be on equal footing. He said Indian cricketers will be paid in the same coin in future and all matters will be dealt with as per the rules.

Praising performance of the Pakistani youth team, Mohsin Naqvi said Pakistan Shaheens and U19 teams have recently done well, adding that the PCB wishes to nurture young talent so that strong player replacements are available. He said U19 cricketers will be groomed in such a manner to harness their talents while PCB has started school cricket



so that the raw talent could be discovered at an early stage. He said cricket clubs are being scrutinized through a renowned international audit firm KPMG. Naqvi also claimed to start work on Asia's best cricket academy at the NCA.

On PSL 11, PCB Chairman said former fast-bowling great Wasim Akram has been appointed brand ambassador of PSL 11 and he will lead the auction of the two new franchises at the Convention Center, Islamabad on January 8. He said 10 bidders have

qualified for the auction process, expressing the hope that the interest shown by different groups during the roadshows in London and New York will reflect at the auction.

On Multan Sultans, Naqvi said former Multan Sultans owner Ali Tareen was eligible to bid for a new franchise at the January 8 auction, adding the matters of Multan Sultans ownership were done and dusted. He said PCB will run the Multan Sultans franchise for a year during the PSL 11 through his nominee, a cricketer to be announced shortly. "The PEPRA rules stopped PCB from auctioning Multan Sultans this year but the process has been started and the franchise will get a new owner in PSL 12," Naqvi responded.

Naqvi floated the idea of starting PSL 11 on March 23 instead of the already announced day of March 26, adding that the start of the premier franchise league on March 23 will

add to the celebrations of Pakistan Day – the historic day when Lahore Resolution was adopted for a separate homeland in 1940 which marked the creation of Pakistan. "However, the decision to start PSL 11 on March 23 is pending consultations with all franchise owners," he responded.

Mohsin Naqvi also announced the appointment of renowned UK-based physiotherapist Javed Mughal on the PCB panel for the immediate treatment of Pakistani players' injuries. He will join PCB on January 11. He said careers of different injured players were put at risk due to negligence or lack of medical resources in the past, adding the appointment of a professional will save careers of many cricketers in future.

PCB Chairman said that there has been no change and Australian Men's team scheduled to play three T20Is against Pakistan in January-February 2026.

Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz's initiative brings organized, affordable shopping to Lahore

 Bureau Report

LAHORE: Punjab's first-of-its-kind 'Sahulat On-the-Go Bazaar' has emerged as a major public attraction, offering quality essential items at official DC rates while providing dignified livelihoods to the street vendors.

Launched on the directions of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, the initiative aims to ensure affordable commodities for citizens and a regulated, respectable business environment for vendors. More than 400 stalls have been allotted to vendors through an open balloting process.

In the first phase, Sahulat On-the-Go Bazaars have become functional at ten locations in Lahore, including Gulshan Ravi, Shadman, Madar-e-Millat Road, Madina Market, Township, Sundar Road and Kotha Pind, Faisal Town. Additional bazaars are also operational at Kharak Nala, Awan Town, Valencia and Shahdara.

The bazaars offer fruits, vegetables, chicken and grocery items at DC-notified rates. Facilities such as security, clean washrooms, proper sanitation and a drive-through shopping option have also been provided to facilitate citizens.

Officials said that by February, five more On-the-Go Bazaars will be made



functional in Lahore, while projects at Barki, Sadar, Nishtar Town, Raiwind Phase II, Faisal Town, Moon Market and Ferozewala are in their final stages of completion.

Vendors expressed satisfaction over the initiative, saying they have moved

from operating pushcarts to becoming owners of proper shops. "We are no longer roadside hawkers; we now have our own shops," several vendors said, thanking the chief minister for introducing a dignified and organised system instead of removing street vendors.

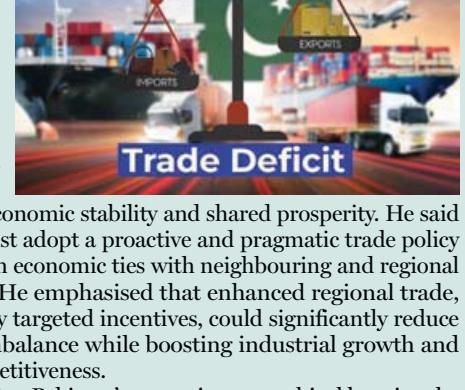
Meanwhile, the chairman of the Punjab Sahulat Bazaar Authority said the initiative would help reduce the need for subsidies traditionally provided during Ramazan bazaars, as affordable commodities would now be available throughout the year.

Tax Official urges incentives to shrink regional trade deficit

 Commerce Desk

LAHORE: Coordinator to Federal Tax Ombudsman Saif Ur Rehman Sunday urged the government to narrow down the widening trade deficit with regional countries by offering a comprehensive package of incentives aimed at promoting economic integration.

Talking to a delegation of traders here today he said trade with Afghanistan, China, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Iran, Nepal, Bhutan and Maldives has dipped 17.05 percent to \$1.635 billion during the last five months. He said regional economic cooperation was no longer an option but a necessity for



long-term economic stability and shared prosperity. He said Pakistan must adopt a proactive and pragmatic trade policy to strengthen economic ties with neighbouring and regional economies. He emphasised that enhanced regional trade, supported by targeted incentives, could significantly reduce the trade imbalance while boosting industrial growth and export competitiveness.

Highlighting Pakistan's strategic geographical location, he said the country could emerge as a regional trade and transit hub if trade facilitation measures were aligned with regional economic realities. He stressed that stronger economic integration would not only help conserve foreign exchange reserves but also generate employment, enhance productivity and stabilise the national economy.

Counterfeit pesticides threaten Pakistan's agriculture and food security, warns FPCCI expert

 Commerce Desk

LAHORE: Convener Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry Regional Committee on Food, Shahid Imran, Sunday strongly called for strict action against unscrupulous elements indulged in unchecked sale of counterfeit and adulterated pesticides, causing serious threat to the agriculture sector and national food security.

Talking to a delegation of farmers here today, he said substandard pesticides were causing massive financial losses to innocent farmers, who invest their hard-earned money with the hope of better yields but instead suffer crop



damage with reduced productivity and mounting debts. He added that the rampant sale of adulterated agrochemicals not only weakens farmers' confidence but also results in low-quality agricultural produce, adversely affecting exports in international markets.

He also called for close coordination between agriculture departments, pesticide regulators and law enforcement agencies to curb this menace effectively. Shahid Imran emphasized the need for farmer awareness campaigns to educate growers about identifying genuine products, adding that protecting farmers is essential for sustainable agricultural growth and economic stability.

PM commends PAEC's health services; terms serving humanity as noble cause

 Continued from Page 1

He said the 20 cancer treatment centers set up with support of PAEC was bearing 80 percent load of cancer patients across the country.

He said through awareness, screening and diagnosing the disease, they were providing the latest facilities and care.

He said the KINOR would be the 21st facility in the country and would provide quality healthcare service to the residents of AJK close to their homes with the latest and modernized equipment under the supervision of PAEC experts of oncology.

Nearly 60 percent of patients presented at advanced stages, requiring the urgent need for early

screening, awareness, and timely diagnosis. From AJK specifically, nearly 1,000 new cancer patients travelled each year to PAEC hospitals in other provinces to seek treatment, facing long distances and financial burden, he added.

A message of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi was also screened.

He congratulated government of Pakistan on establishing cancer treatment facilities and also commended PAEC's role for serving humanity with the latest treatment equipment and centers.

Earlier, the prime minister also visited various departments of the hospital where he was briefed over different facilities.

Sahiwal hosts Quaid-e-Azam Inter Divisional Chess Championship finale

 Zain Khan Malghani

MULTAN: The Quaid-e-Azam Inter Divisional Chess Championship 2025 concluded at the historic Sahiwal Club on Thursday, with players from across Punjab showcasing strategic brilliance in one of the province's most competitive mind-sport events.

Organised by the Chess Association of Punjab (CAP) under the patronage of Commissioner Sahiwal Division Dr Asif Tufail, the two-day championship attracted 172 players from all divisions of Punjab. The tournament was played over seven rounds under the Swiss system.

Dr Asif Tufail attended the closing ceremony as chief guest and distributed trophies, medals and cash prizes worth Rs400,000 among the winners. Divisional Sports Officer Sahiwal Nisar

Ul Haq and CAP Secretary General Raja Gauhar Iqbal were also present.

In the Open Category, Zohaib Gillani of Lahore clinched the title, while Saif Ullah of Sargodha secured the first runner-up position and Zorez Shabkhez of Lahore finished third. National Master Shahzad Chohan of Faisalabad and Syed Zain Nasir of Multan were also among the top performers. Abbas Ali Chaudhry of Sahiwal was declared Emerging Male Player for his notable performance.

The Women's Category was won by Hafiza Mashal Rashid of Gujranwala. Fareeha Siddiqi of Lahore claimed the first runner-up spot, while Sahiwal's Rumaisa Batool finished third. Noor Fatima of Bahawalpur and Memona Anum of Faisalabad also featured prominently. Mishal Asif of Sahiwal received the Emerging Female Player

award.

In the Under-16 Category, Muhammad Ayan of Lahore emerged champion, followed by Amr Iftikhar Hashmi and Muhammad Bin Ammar, both from Lahore. Raja Hattam Ur Rahman of Rawalpindi and M Ashaj Tariq of Multan completed the top five.

Addressing the ceremony, Dr Asif Tufail said chess was a powerful tool for developing discipline, critical thinking and foresight among youth, adding that Sahiwal was proud to host an event promoting intellectual sports. Raja Gauhar Iqbal termed the championship a major step towards strengthening chess at grassroots and competitive levels across Punjab.

The event was played in a rapid format with a time control of 10 minutes plus a five-second increment



per move. Special local prizes were introduced to encourage emerging talent from Sahiwal, while organisers also arranged complimentary refresh-

ments for participants.

The Quaid-e-Azam Inter Divisional Chess Championship is regarded as one of Punjab's premier chess tourna-

ments and aims to identify and nurture talent while paying tribute to Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah through the strategic spirit of the game.

Smog

LAHORE: A view of deserted Minto Park, during Sunday holiday, in the Provincial Capital on Sunday.



Photo: Online

Pakistan, other Muslim nations condemn Israel's Somaliland recognition

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The foreign ministers of more than 20 Muslim-majority countries, along with the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), have strongly condemned Israel's recognition of the "Somaliland" region of Somalia, calling the move a violation of international law with serious regional and global implications.

In a joint statement, the ministers said the recognition, announced by Israel on 26 December 2025, threatens peace and security in the Horn



of Africa, the Red Sea, and beyond, and demonstrates Israel's "blatant disregard" for

international law.

The ministers, representing countries including Jordan,

Egypt, Algeria, the Comoros, Djibouti, Gambia, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Maldives, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Turkey, and Yemen, emphasised their full support for Somalia's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The ministers rejected any

measures that undermine the unity of Somalia, its territorial integrity or its sovereignty over its entire territory.

They warned that recogni-

tion of parts of a state sets a dangerous precedent, under-

mining the unity and sover-

ignty of nations, and could have far-reaching conse-

quences for international peace and security.

The statement also rejected any link between Israel's deci-

sion and attempts to forcibly

expel the Palestinian people

from their land, describing

such actions as unacceptable

in principle.

The ministers' statement

comes amid growing diplo-

matic tensions in the region,

with calls for adherence to the

United Nations Charter and

respect for the sovereignty of

all states.

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: Due to the efforts of the Special Investment and Facilitation Council (SIFC) to strengthen trade relations between Pakistan and Brazil, both countries agreed to explore bilateral collaboration in the livestock, dairy and meat processing sectors, reported 24NewsHD TV Channel on Sunday.

Federal Minister for National Food Security & Research, Rana Tanveer Hussain, held a high-level meeting with the Ambassador of Brazil to Pakistan, Olynto Vieira, in Islamabad.

During the meeting, the Federal Minister highlighted that Brazil is internationally acknowledged as a global leader in livestock produc-



tion, meat processing, dairy development, and agri-food exports.

Both countries agreed to form a joint working group

for the promotion of the latest technology and exchange of experts, holding a training programme and training of Pakistani professionals in

Brazil.

Brazil possesses the world's

largest commercial cattle herd,

exceeding 230 million head,

and is the largest exporter of

beef and poultry, with beef exports reaching approximately 2.9 million metric tonnes valued at over USD 12 billion in 2024.

Chilly Gaza braces for more winter rain and word of any progress in ceasefire talks

Agencies

DEIR AL-BALAH, GAZA STRIP: Barefoot children played on chilly sand as Gaza's thousands of displaced people prepared threadbare tents on Saturday for another round of winter rain.

Some families in the central town of Deir al-Balah said they had been living in tents for about two years, or for most of the war between Israel and Hamas that has devastated the territory.

Fathers braced fraying tents with old pieces of wood or inspected the ragged edges of holes torn in tarps. Inside the dim homes, daylight through tiny holes shone like stars.

Mother battled the damp, slinging clothing over poles or cord to dry in the wind between the downpours



that turn paths into puddles. One mother pulled a tiny child away from a mildewing patch of carpet.

"We have been living in this tent for two years. Every time it rains and the tent collapses over our heads, we try

to put up new pieces of wood," said Shaima Wadi, a mother of four children who was displaced from Jabaliya in the north. "With how expensive everything has become, and without any income, we can barely afford clothes for our children or mattresses for them to sleep on."

Gaza's Health Ministry, part of the Hamas-run government, has said dozens of people, including a two-week-old infant, have died from hypothermia or after weather-related collapses of war-damaged homes. Aid organizations have called for more shelters and other humanitarian aid to be allowed into the territory.

Emergency workers have warned people not to stay in damaged buildings. But with so much of the territory reduced to rubble, there are few places to escape the rain.

CM Maryam, Nawaz Sharif leave for Dubai



News Desk

Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) President Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif leave for two-day visit to United Arab Emirates on Sunday.

On the eve of new year, former Prime Minister Mian Muhammad

Nawaz Sharif and Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif will stay in Dubai for two days. Nawaz Sharif is also expected to leave for London after his stay in Dubai.

PML-N president Nawaz Sharif will issue invitations to guests in Dubai for Junaid Safdar's wedding.

Mustafa Kamal alleges MQM founder involved in Dr Imran Farooq's murder



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Senior leader of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement Pakistan (MQM-P) and Federal Health Minister Mustafa Kamal has alleged that MQM founder Altaf Hussain was involved in the 2010 murder of Dr Imran Farooq.

Speaking at a press conference in Karachi on Sunday, Kamal levelled serious allegations against Altaf Hussain and claimed he had detailed evidence of Altaf Hussain's involvement in the murder.

He said Dr Farooq's widow, Shumail Imran, recently passed away in London and had expressed the wish to be buried in Pakistan.

Kamal stated that Altaf Hussain

launched an appeal for donations for the repatriation of the body of Dr Farooq's widow.

He said that Altaf Hussain staged unnecessary drama over the funeral of Shumail Imran, while large sums of money collected were unaccounted for.

He claimed that millions of pounds were collected worldwide under the pretext of sending the body of Shumail Imran to Pakistan.

Kamal added that Dr Farooq's family was abandoned by the MQM founder following his death.

The federal minister accused Altaf Hussain of orchestrating the murder and rewarding the killers, calling it a "sensational and shocking game."

Student dies, seven injured as passenger coaster overturns in Kotli Sattian

Imran Satti

KOTLI SATTIAN: At least one student was killed and seven others injured when a passenger coaster overturned in Kotli Sattian, in Azad Jammu Kashmir.

According to Rescue 1122, the coaster was carrying 15 students at the time of the accident.

The vehicle lost control and over-

turned, leaving several passengers injured. Rescue officials confirmed that one student succumbed to injuries, while seven others sustained injuries in the incident. Seven of the wounded were shifted to Rawalpindi for medical



treatment.

Rescue teams rushed to the scene immediately after the incident and launched a relief operation.

Officials said that one person remained trapped inside the over-turned coaster, and efforts were underway to rescue and extricate the victim.

Entry of vehicles without M-tag to be banned in capital from Jan 1, 2026: Naqvi

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Syed Mohsin Naqvi said on Sunday that Islamabad would become the first smart city in the country.

During his visit to the Safe City Headquarters along with Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry, he said that the entry of vehicles without M-tag in the federal capital would be banned from January 1, 2026.

Ordering to speed up work on the smart city project, the minister said that the project would later be extended to the entire country. "The project will be adopted as a model," he added. He further said that reforms

in the Safe City and an effective use of technology were of need of the hour.

He informed that facilities such as Rescue 1122, traffic and security would be merged into a centralized system.

On the occasion, Naqvi sought a comprehensive plan for making the federal capital a smart city.

He also went to the control room and watched the staff at work.

