

High-Level Meet Reviews Final Stages of AJK's New Electoral Roll System

By Abdul Majeed Tahir

ISLAMABAD: A high-level meeting was held at Jammu and Kashmir House, Islamabad, under the chairmanship of Member Election Commission Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Syed Nazir-ul-Hassan Gilani, to review preparations for the installation of a Computerized Electoral Roll System (CERS) in the context of the upcoming General Elections in Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

The meeting was attended by Secretary Election Commission Raja Shakeel Khan, Assistant Election Commissioner Muhammad Umar Sheikh, and Secretariat Officer Raja Waseem. From NADRA, Alamdar Hussain (Head of E-Governance), Junaid Ahmed (Director Technology), Rehman Gul (Director Network), Zahid Abbas (Project Manager), Zeeshan Mughal (Software Specialist), along with a representative of the IS Department, participated. The Azad Jammu and Kashmir Information Technology



Department was represented by Secretary IT Rashid Hanif, Deputy Director Projects IT Board Nadeem Taj, IT Board Project Focal Person Mohsin Mustafa, Cyber Security Specialist Ahsan Sardar, and Assistant Director Information Khawaja Imran-ul-Haq.

NADRA officials provided a comprehensive briefing on various modules of the system, including voter data prepara-

tion, verification, and timely updates. Officials of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Information Technology Board presented proposals related to data security, cyber protection, and system hosting.

Discussions were also held on the IS system and JIP integration. The participants unanimously expressed the view that the timely installation

of the Computerized Electoral Roll System will play a key role in ensuring transparent, fair, and credible elections in Azad Jammu and Kashmir. It was agreed to further strengthen mutual cooperation, continuous coordination, and a joint working mechanism between the Election Commission, NADRA, and Information Technology institutions to achieve this objective.

Meeting

ISLAMABAD: Member Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly and Provincial President of Women's Wing Farzana Shireen along with Vice President PYO Wajahat Khan are meet with Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Faisal Mumtaz Rathore.



Photo: Online

Modi's suppression tactics will fail against Kashmir freedom movement, says Sardar Attique

By Spokesman Report

RAWALPINDI: President of the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference and former Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan, has strongly condemned the house arrests of Kashmiri leaders, terming them a clear manifestation of the Indian government's anti-Muslim policies.

While talking to media persons Sardar Attique said that all tactics employed by the Modi government to

suppress the Kashmir freedom movement will ultimately fail.

He said that following India's failure in Operation Bunyan-un-Marsoos, the increased aggression by Indian forces against Muslims in Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir is clear evidence of the Modi government's frustration and panic.

He added that the occupied valley has been completely turned into a military garrison, where illegal seizures of people's lands are being carried out. Such oppressive measures, he asserted,



cannot weaken the Kashmiri people's spirit of resistance.

He also stated that the success of Operation Bunyan-un-Marsoos has enhanced Pakistan's prestige across the world.

He paid rich tribute to Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, under whose leadership the Pakistan Armed Forces dealt a decisive blow to India. He added that, as a result, the entire nation stands united and firmly behind the Pakistan Armed Forces without any reservations.

Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto was a great and brave women leader: Shagufta Chaudhry

By Malik Saleem Shahid

VEHARI/BUREWALA: Shaheed Benazir Bhutto sacrificed her life for Pakistan but did not give up on the rights of the people, the determination of polities for service did not weaken, these views were expressed by Finance Secretary South Punjab Ms. Shagufta Chaudhry while addressing the condolence reference held at City Press Club Burewala. Mrs. Shagufta Chaudhry while addressing said that Ms. Benazir Bhutto established a women's bank during her government due to which women started their businesses by taking loans on easy terms and those women were successful in this business. Ms. Benazir Bhutto strengthened Pakistan's defense and purchased weapons and necessary defense equipment for Pakistan's defense from all over the world except China, while the Pakistan People's Party provided government jobs to more than 500,000 people during Ms. Benazir Bhutto's government. Mrs. Shagufta Chaudhry further said that the enemies of Pakistan martyred Ms. Benazir Bhutto under a well-thought-out plan.

Mrs. Shagufta Chaudhry further said that when the enemies of Pakistan



realized that Ms. Benazir Bhutto talks about taking Pakistan to the heights of development, she talks about raising the standard of living of Pakistanis, she is active in making Pakistan a successful empire, they took her life after their attempts to intimidate her failed.

Tariq Meraj Advocate performed the

duties of the presenter in the seminar held at the City Press Club, Burewala, while Pakistan Peoples Party office bearers Captain Muhammad Ismail, Murtaza Chauhan, Rao Atiq-ur-Rehman, Rao Noman, Mahmood Ali Bhatti, Syed Badar Munir Shah, Asif Javed Chaudhry, Owais Tariq and Naseem Sial and other workers also participated.

Renowned journalist Muhammad Zafar and members of the City Press Club Registered were also present on the occasion. The participants paid tribute to Shaheed Benazir Bhutto by lighting candles. The participants prayed for her forgiveness and also prayed for the security of the country

Azad Kashmir leaders gather to celebrate Shah Ghulam Qadir's Nuptials

By Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: President of the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference and former Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan, made a special appearance at the farewell ceremony of the Leader of the Opposition and President of Pakistan Muslim League (N) Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Shah Ghulam Qadir.

On the occasion, Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan extended his heartfelt congratulations to the newlyweds, expressing his best wishes and prayers for a happy and prosperous new beginning in their married life.

Former Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir Raja Farooq Haider Khan, Senator Pervaiz Rasheed, Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs Engineer Amir Muqam, Malik Nawaz, along with other prominent political and social figures, were also present at the ceremony.

Home-Based Workers are Playing an important Role in the Country's Economy. Chaudhry Amin



By Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: A session was organized by Rivets Learning and Sangi Development to create awareness about the Home-Based Workers Act 2023. These sessions were held with home-based workers of Basti Ghousia, Basti Garib Abad, Mehndipur, Basti Quariah, women, minorities and transgender groups. Addressing them, Chaudhry Muhammad Amin, Assistant Director, Labor Department, Multan, said that the Punjab government has started registration for home-based workers. From which all home-based workers can benefit. In which medical facilities, minimum wage, insurance, leave facilities and grants can be availed. In the form of accidental deaths of workers, an assistance of one million is given by the government to their survivors. The government considers these workers as assets and is trying to provide facilities up to their homes for their betterment. Which also includes the provision of interest-free loans to expand the business.

22 Schools in Attock to be upgraded under Punjab Education Reforms

By Raza Naqvi

ATTOCK: Attock district will see 22 government schools upgraded to the secondary level as part of Punjab's ongoing education reform drive, according to Jahangir Khanzada, a member of the Punjab Chief Minister's Monitoring Committee. The upgraded schools will begin offering 9th and 10th grade classes in the coming academic year, significantly improving access to secondary education, particularly for students in remote areas.

Under the plan, eight schools in Hazro, five in Pindigheb, four in Fatehjhang, two each in Attock and Hassanabdal, and one in Jand will be converted into high schools. These institutions will receive additional classrooms and trained teaching staff to support higher-level education.

Khanzada said the initiative reflects the government's commitment to investing in the future of Attock's youth and strengthening academic foundations across the district. The upgrades are part of broader education reforms introduced in 2025 by the Punjab government. In November 2025, Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif inaugurated education development projects worth Rs160 million, including new classrooms, washrooms, and boundary walls to improve learning environments and student safety.

Senator Rubina Khalid urges eligible women to use Social Protection Wallet responsibly



SHEIKHUPURA: Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Senator Rubina Khalid on Monday urged the eligible women to use Social Protection Wallet responsibly, protect their cellular SIMs, and lodge complaints against any illegal deductions.

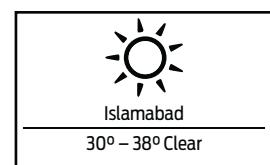
She stated this during her visit to the campsite established at Government Jamia High School, Sheikhupura, where she reviewed the process of providing free SIMs for the Social Protection Wallet to eligible women. She also directed the staff to provide complete guidance to women and ensure prompt redressal of their issues.

Chairperson BISP informed the women that the SIM provided for the Social Protection Wallet is absolutely free, and no deduction or fee is allowed. She emphasized that this SIM serves as their digital wallet, and therefore it is the responsibility of each beneficiary to keep it safe.

Addressing the women, she said that the programme is named after Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, a brave leader who made great sacrifices for her country and people. She urged the women to draw strength from Mohtarma's struggle, remain courageous, and stand firm against any injustice. She advised them to immediately report any complaint through the relevant channels.

During the visit, Senator Rubina Khalid interacted with the deserving women present at the campsite, listened to their concerns, and directed the concerned officials on the spot to ensure the immediate redressal of their issues. She instructed the staff to ensure complete transparency in the free SIM distribution process and to strengthen awareness efforts so that eligible women are fully informed of their rights and can receive their funds through the Social Protection Wallet in a safe and dignified manner.

She reiterated her commitment that the Benazir Income Support Programme will continue its efforts to empower deserving women, promote a transparent payment system, and ensure accountability at all levels.


SERVICES
Namaz Timings

Fajr	5:43 am
Zohr	12:10 pm
Asr	3:30 pm
Magrib	5:08 pm
Isha	6:37 pm

EMERGENCY

Rescue (Police)	15
Bomb Disposal	15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad	1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance	1122 & 1122 & & Rescue Services
Motorway Police	4451122
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	9212334-43
CDA	9208301-04
Met Office	9250360-6
RDA	5555864
TMA	5770886
Cantonment Board	9270151-3

Zero tolerance policy emphasised for traffic violations in Rawalpindi, says CTO Farhan Aslam

RAWALPINDI: Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Rawalpindi Farhan Aslam has emphasised a zero-tolerance approach towards traffic violations, including riding without helmets, wrong-way driving, and vehicles with tinted glasses, while reviewing traffic management and law enforcement across the city.

During a meeting at the traffic headquarters with circle, licensing, and Traffic Education Wing in-charges, the CTO assessed the performance of all circles, licensing facilities, and awareness campaigns.

He issued strict instructions to ensure uninterrupted law enforcement and smooth traffic flow in all sectors.

Farhan Aslam directed strict action against over-loading, non-use of seat belts, and vehicles with improper or fake number plates.

He also ordered that vehicles emitting excessive smoke be impounded at police stations until a valid fitness certificate is produced, in line with smog control measures. The Traffic Education Wing was instructed to provide daily awareness to drivers at bus terminals and along major roads, while encroachments causing traffic disruption should be addressed in coordination with relevant departments and violators must be booked.

Maryam Nawaz's vision realized: Jhelum District welcomes Electric Bus Fleet

Bureau Report

LAHORE: On the directions of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, electric buses were inaugurated in Jhelum district. Provincial Minister for Health

and Emergency Services Punjab Khawaja Salman Rafique attended the inauguration ceremony as the chief guest. Minister for Transport Bilal Akbar Khan, Minister of State for Finance Bilal Azhar Kayani and Advisor to Health Punjab Gener-

al (retd) Dr. Azhar Kayani attended the inauguration ceremony as the chief guests. The special guests boarded the electric bus from Jada and visited the route. After the route visit, the electric bus reached the ground of the main gathering place, Government High School. The electric bus was warmly welcomed by the citizens at several places along the route.

Provincial Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique said that the PML-N government is trying in every way to bring about improvement in the country. According to the vision of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, we are trying to provide the best health facilities to the people. So far, 22 stands have been built for electric buses, while more than 20 bus stands are under construction. Minister of State for Finance Bilal Azhar Kayani said that Maryam Nawaz Sharif is working day and night to provide convenience to the citizens. Member of National Assembly Farrukh Altaf said that we are grateful to Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz for providing the facility of electric buses in Jhelum district.



Cloudy weather

ISLAMABAD: Motorists are on their way as visibility is seems blurring during cloudy weather in Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

South Waziristan bridge blown up in Barmal, Public Movement Disrupted

Syed Tauqeer Zaidi

SOUTH WAZIRISTAN: Unknown assailants blew up the Danga Bridge in the Azam Warsak area of Tehsil Barmal by planting explosive material, causing severe difficulties for the local population. The bridge was routinely used by residents for daily commuting, and its destruction has disrupted normal life in the area.

According to sources, the road connecting Dezha Ghundai to Zalay had already been repeatedly targeted by bomb blasts, leaving this important route in a dilapidated state.

Following the destruction of the bridge, traffic has been completely suspended, forcing residents to use alternative routes. Local people have demanded an immediate



investigation into the incident and the prompt reconstruction of the destroyed bridge and road to alleviate public hardships.

Appointment of Mir Sarfraz Bugti as Chief of the Bugti Tribes is welcome: Syed Aman Shah

Bureau Report

KARACHI/QUETTA: Syed Aman Shah, Provincial Convener of Awaam Pakistan Party (APP) Balochistan, warmly welcomed the unanimous decision of the Bugti tribes to appoint Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Sarfraz Bugti, as the Chief of the Bugti Tribes, and extended heartfelt congratulations to him.

Syed Aman Shah said that the selection of Mir Sarfraz Bugti as Chief of the Bugti Tribes is a matter of pride not only for the Bugti tribe but for the entire province of Balochistan. This decision reflects strong tribal traditions, unity, and mutual trust, and is clear evidence that the tribes have full confidence in Mir Sarfraz Bugti's leadership, wisdom and commitment to public service.

He expressed hope that Mir Sarfraz Bugti, while fulfilling both responsibilities as Chief of the Bugti Tribes and Chief Minister Balochistan in an exemplary manner, will usher in a new era of peace, brotherhood, and development in the province, and play a key role in steering Balochistan out of the challenges it faces.

Kalsoom Kazmi holds consultations on education, youth and mental health in AJK

Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: Ms Kalsoom B. Kazmi, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Brilliance Foundation Inc., USA, and an educator and human rights consultant, held a series of high-level meetings with women leaders, educators and community stakeholders during her visit to Muzaffarabad, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, focusing on capacity-building, youth development and mental health awareness.

During her visit, Ms Kazmi met with women leaders from across AJK, including representatives from the education sector, schools, colleges, the legal

fraternity, teaching community, police, and other public institutions. The interactions provided a rare cross-sector platform for dialogue on women's leadership, professional development and the challenges faced by women working in public service roles.

Participants discussed practical ways to strengthen women's participation in decision-making, improve institutional support systems, and expand access to professional training, particularly for teachers, school administrators and young women entering the workforce.

In a second round of engagements, Ms Kazmi held an extensive discussion with educators,

faculty members and professors of the University of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (UAJK), along with community leaders and departmental representatives.

The conversations explored possibilities for collaborative training programmes, curriculum support, and professional development initiatives for schools, youth and women professionals in the region.

A central theme across both meetings was the growing concern over mental health stigma, particularly among young people and women. Ms Kazmi emphasised the urgent need to normalise conversations around mental health, noting that silence, social pressure and lack of awareness often prevent individuals from seeking timely support.

She highlighted suicide prevention strategies, stressing the importance of early intervention, school-based counselling, community awareness programmes and training educators to identify warning signs. Participants discussed how educational institutions and local organisations could play a proactive role in mental health education, peer support systems and referral mechanisms.

Ms Kazmi noted that addressing mental health challenges requires a collective, culturally sensitive approach,

involving educators, families, religious leaders and policymakers. She underscored that investing in mental well-being is inseparable from broader goals of educational reform, gender equity and youth empowerment. Ms Kazmi's visit to Muzaffarabad forms part of the

organisation's broader effort to strengthen cross-border academic and social collaboration, and to support locally driven solutions to global challenges such as mental health, gender inequality and youth development.



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NDMA Issues Weather Advisory Ahead of Approaching Westerly Wave

The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has issued a weather advisory in view of an approaching westerly wave expected to affect various parts of the country over the next few days. According to forecasts, a westerly wave is likely to enter the western parts of the country from the night of 29th December 2025 and is expected to intensify from 30th December 2025. The system is projected to grip most upper and central parts of the country on 31st December 2025 and persist in the upper regions till the morning of 2nd January 2026.

Under the influence of this weather system, snowfall may lead to road closures and slippery conditions in Naran, Kaghan, Dir, Swat, Kohistan, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Shangla, Astore, Hunza, Skardu, Murree, Galliyat, Neelum Valley, Bagh, Poonch and Haveli from the night of 30th December till the morning of 2nd January. There is also a likelihood of landslides and avalanches in hilly areas of upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu & Kashmir during the same period. Tourists are advised to remain extra cautious and avoid unnecessary travel to vulnerable and high-altitude areas. Meanwhile, fog conditions are expected to subside in central and southern Punjab as well as upper Sindh during the wet spell.

In view of the anticipated conditions, NDMA has advised all concerned Provincial Disaster Management Authorities (PDMA), Gilgit-Baltistan Disaster Management Authority (GBDMA), State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA), ICT Administration, to ensure all necessary preparedness and response measures. Relevant authorities have been urged to remain vigilant, ensure timely dissemination of information, keep emergency response teams on alert, and take proactive measures to minimize potential risks to life, property and critical infrastructure.

NDMA is closely monitoring the evolving situation and coordinating with relevant stakeholders to ensure timely response and mitigation efforts. The general public is advised to stay informed about the latest weather updates and advisories by using the "Pak NDMA Disaster Alert" mobile application, particularly before planning travel to affected regions.

When The Mountains Warn: Environmental Insecurity & Pakistan's Rising Flood Crisis

Roman Shireen

Environmental Insecurity has become an immediate national threat to the northern regions of Pakistan. Gilgit and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, admired for their breathtaking landscapes, beautiful mountains, and pristine rivers, are now observing unprecedented hydrological instability. Consequently, leading to floods that are frequent, destructive, and gradually man-made. The Northern regions have now become some of the most vulnerable environments in South Asia as a result of rapid climate change, unregulated development, and policy neglect. It is apparent that if this crisis is not dealt with promptly, it will become an environmental threat for Pakistan, not just the Northern regions, and will have serious consequences.

Climate change is not a distant threat, but it is unwinding in the northern mountains of Pakistan in the most horrible way possible. The Hindu-Kush Himalaya (HKH) is also referred to as the "Third Pole" for containing a large reserve of ice outside the polar regions. These glaciers are melting at an alarming rate due to the rising global temperature. Before, during the summer, rivers that were once used to flow steadily are now experiencing violent surges. Floods are triggered when the mountains are overwhelmed by the melted glaciers. Most of the time, in valleys, the water levels are rapidly increasing, so the people living there don't have enough or very little time to respond. Environmental insecurity in northern Pakistan is not only accelerated by climate change but also by the government's policy failures. Disaster management takes on a reactive approach rather than preventive: poorly maintained early warning systems, often limited to reach isolated

valleys. In spite of agencies keeping a track on glacial lakes, the poor coordination with local authorities leads communities to seldom get alerts on time, leaving them exposed to dangers that could have been minimized.

The struggle of high-risk communities clearly illustrates these shortcomings. Families in Chitral, Hunza, and Ghizer are displaced frequently due to reconstruction ignoring environmental guidelines. Development projects proceed without any geological assessments, such as roads cut into unstable slopes and homes being built in riverbeds, thus reenacting the same hazards. When floods hit, people lose homes, livestock, and generational assets. With minimal assistance from the governments, out of helplessness, locals are forced to lead their own rescue operations, clear debris, and make an attempt to rebuild their homes. Their hardships highlight a larger governance failure characterized by poorly regulated, weak planning, and short-sighted strategies to long-term threats.

Environmental insecurity in the northern regions is not just a local issue, but it directly threatens national stability. The glaciers of Chitral and Gilgit Baltistan constitute the main water source for the Indus River, the foundation of Pakistan's agriculture, drinking water supply, and hydropower generation. When rivers become unstable or glacial lakes burst, the impacts travel downstream, crops are damaged, irrigation supplies are reduced, and energy production is interrupted. On the other hand, the economic consequences are just as serious; roads in the Karakoram highway are destroyed, straining public resources and isolating trade. Frequently displacing communities further pushes mountain populations towards major cities, adding pressure on basic services like housing and jobs. If these environmental risks keep on intensifying, Pakistan will

face rising social stress, instability in energy and food systems, and mounting economic damage, turning a local problem into a nationwide threat.

Addressing this growing threat of induced flooding in northern Pakistan calls for a shift from short-term relief to long-term resilience. Moving forward, the national priority should be modernizing the early warning systems and ensuring they reach remote settlements. Similarly, all development projects should strictly undergo Environmental Assessments, which shouldn't be ignored. Furthermore, climate-resistant infrastructure, such as safe housing areas and strengthened riverbanks, is essential for the safety of vulnerable communities. Planning should also be integrated with local knowledge, with support from trained community teams that can act before calamity escalates. Ultimately, climate adaptation mandates sustained and consistent budget funding instead of occasional emergency funds and ad-hoc fixes. Without reliable investments, the cycle of destruction will never end.

Environmental Insecurity in Northern Pakistan has escalated into a national crisis, and ignoring this reality any longer is recklessly shortsighted. The intensification of GLOFs, infrastructures collapsing, and frequent displacement of communities are not just remote incidents; they are alarming signals towards a future that our country cannot afford. These catastrophes expose the outcome of the incompetence of a government and many years of environmental neglect. If the policymakers continue to show ignorance and treat climate threats as a secondary issue, the repercussions will be irreversible. Pakistan now stands at a pivotal turning point. The country must act on climate resilience with utmost seriousness and reliability, or face a scale of instability that an amount of emergency response can undo. The time for delay is over.

Israel's Somaliland Gamble

Israel is perhaps the only country on the planet that speaks a different language when it comes to words like independence, sovereignty, human rights, security, and good-neighbourly relations. It has stretched these terms so far that the mass killing of civilians in Gaza, the destruction of entire neighbourhoods, and the cutting-off of food, water and medicine are reframed as "self-defence."

The International Court of Justice has already found it plausible that Israel's actions in Gaza amount to genocide and ordered it to allow humanitarian relief and prevent further atrocities. The International Criminal Court has gone further still, issuing arrest warrants for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and others for alleged war crimes, including the use of starvation as a weapon. Yet Israel continues with near-complete impunity, striking Syria and Lebanon at will, clashing with Iran and ignoring UN resolutions and global outrage.

Into this already combustible environment, Israel has taken another extraordinary step. On 26 December 2025, it became the first country in the world to formally recognise Somaliland as an independent and sovereign state. For over three decades the world refused to cross this line. Israel not only crossed it, it celebrated the moment.

To appreciate the shockwaves this created, one must understand Somaliland's story. The territory in north-western Somalia declared independence in 1991 after the collapse of the Somali state. Since then, it has built working institutions, its own army and currency, and a relatively stable political system. On the surface, this stability strengthens its moral case for independent statehood. But no country recognises it — because African and international diplomacy rests on the principle of maintaining

inherited borders to prevent separatist domino effects. Somalia, the African Union and regional organisations have always insisted that Somaliland remains a part of Somalia's sovereign territory.

Seen from this perspective, Israel's recognition looks less like humanitarian sympathy and more like hard-nosed realpolitik. A friendly government in Somaliland offers intelligence, security and possibly — in time — military access opposite Yemen and on the maritime route that connects Asia, the Gulf and Europe. It gives Israel the opportunity to extend its rivalry with Iran and its allies into another theatre and deepen its maritime influence at a critical global artery. It also signals that international borders can be "re-interpreted" when they obstruct strategic goals — an irony not lost on those watching events in the occupied Palestinian territories.

African states understand this clearly — which is why their reaction has been so firm. Many already face separatist pressures of their own. If territorial integrity becomes negotiable here, it becomes negotiable everywhere. And once unilateral recognition is normalised, powerful states will be tempted to redraw other borders for their own advantage.

The Arab and Islamic world views the move with even deeper suspicion. For them, Israel's record — from Gaza to Lebanon and Syria — suggests that Somaliland could become an outpost for surveillance, naval projection and long-term security schemes. Some even fear it may one day be linked to displacement or demographic engineering related to the Palestinian question. Whether those fears are justified or not, the political

distrust they reflect is real — and volatile.

The United States, meanwhile, has chosen public caution. President Trump has said Washington is "not ready" to recognise Somaliland and reaffirmed support for Somalia's unity. Yet, given the intimacy of U.S.-Israeli relations, few observers believe such a dramatic step was taken without at least a reading of American sentiment.

It is entirely plausible that Israel is acting as a spearhead — testing reactions from African and Arab partners, many of whom hold trillions of dollars in U.S. assets — before Washington considers any shift toward de facto support.

If that interpretation holds, this is not merely an Israeli initiative but part of a broader divide-and-rule strategy in the Horn of Africa — a region already strained by Ethiopian-Egyptian tensions, Red Sea militarisation, Somali instability and Gulf rivalries. Rather than integration and development, the region gains another sovereignty dispute and another justification for military build-ups and strategic manoeuvring.

All of this comes at a time when Israel is already more diplomatically isolated than at any point in decades. It faces genocide proceedings in The Hague, ICC warrants against its leaders, and growing distance even from traditional partners. Opening an additional front of confrontation with Somalia, the African Union, the Arab League and the wider Islamic world only deepens the perception of Israel as a state willing to discard international norms whenever they obstruct strategic ambition. Even if Israel secures tactical advantages in Somaliland, the long-term political costs may signifi-

cantly widen its circle of hostility and mistrust.

This development must therefore not be dismissed as a narrow legal gesture. It is a political shockwave at the heart of the Horn of Africa — detonated while Gaza still bleeds, Lebanon remains tense, Syria continues under intermittent bombardment, and Iran stands in permanent confrontation. If the world accepts the fragmentation of Somalia by unilateral recognition today, it should not be surprised when similar moves appear elsewhere tomorrow, cloaked in the language of "freedom" but dictated by power rather than law.

For Somalia and its partners, the response must be firm yet constructive. They should resist this precedent at the UN, AU, Arab League and OIC, while recognising that Somaliland's grievances cannot simply be wished away. A credible federal settlement, fair resource-sharing and meaningful political inclusion remain the only sustainable alternatives to secession driven by external sponsorship.

Israel's recognition of Somaliland is therefore not merely a diplomatic handshake. It is a calculated strategic gamble — one that deepens mistrust in an already fractured region and risks turning the Horn of Africa into yet another arena of proxy competition. Whether that gamble ultimately benefits Israel, or becomes another catalyst for instability and backlash, will depend on how the international community — and above all Somalia itself — responds in the months ahead.

The writer is Press Secretary to the President (Rtd), Former Press Minister, Embassy of Pakistan to France, Former Press Attaché to Malaysia and Former MD, SRBC. He can be reached at Macomb, Michigan, USA



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

Rising Divorce Rates in Pakistan: A Silent Social Crisis

Muqadaas Samra

Marriage has long been regarded as a sacred, stable, and strong institution in Pakistani society. Deeply rooted in religious teachings, cultural traditions, and strong family structures, marriage has traditionally been seen as a lifelong commitment based on patience, compromise, and mutual respect. However, in recent years, Pakistan has witnessed a noticeable and alarming rise in divorce rates. What was once considered rare and socially discouraged is now becoming increasingly common, signaling a silent social crisis that demands urgent attention.

This growing trend is no longer limited to major urban centers such as Karachi, Lahore, or Islamabad. It is steadily spreading to smaller cities and towns, including semi-urban and rural areas, where divorce was once almost unthinkable. Family courts across the country are experiencing a surge in cases, reflecting changing social attitudes and weakening marital stability.

According to reports from major cities, divorce filings have increased by an estimated 30 to 40 percent over the past decade. Although exact national statistics remain underreported, the consistent upward trend is undeniable and deeply concerning.

Another critical issue is the absence of professional marital counseling and guidance.

In Pakistan, seeking psychological or marital counseling is often stigmatized and misunderstood. Couples usually turn to extended family members or community elders for advice. While well-intentioned, such interventions are often biased and emotionally charged, sometimes worsening conflicts instead of resolving them. The lack of neutral, trained counselors leaves many couples feeling trapped, with divorce appearing to be the only viable solution.

Divorce should remain a last resort, not an easy escape from responsibilities and challenges. Strengthening the institution of marriage is essential for the stability of families and the overall well-being of society. If this silent crisis continues to be ignored, its long-term social, emotional, and psychological consequences may prove far more damaging than we currently anticipate.

The writer is a librarian and columnist from Hyderabad, Pakistan. She writes on social issues, education, and cultural change, with a focus on promoting awareness and responsible discourse in society.

N. Korea prepares to send military technicians to Russian drone sites disguised as civilian workers

By Lee Sang-yong

North Korea's Rodong Sinmun newspaper reported on Nov. 15, 2024, that "Comrade Kim Jong Un guided on the spot the performance test of suicide attack drones of various types produced by an affiliated institute of the Unmanned Aerial Technology Complex and enterprises on Nov. 14" and ordered "full-scale mass production."

According to a Daily NK source in North Korea recently, the selection of personnel to be sent to Russia has already reached the third stage, while within the military, guidelines have been issued stating that "some technical specialists could be dispatched after assigning them a civilian identity."

Russia has reportedly told North Korea that anyone capable of drudgework, such as drone assembly, parts arrangement and transportation, can come. The two sides have agreed that Russia will lead general production based on key technologies, while North Korean personnel will handle secondary and tertiary assembly, assist in production, and verify that the produced drones operate correctly.

In selecting personnel, however, North Korea has prioritized personnel with experience in soldering, low-voltage engineering and repairs. This suggests North Korea aims to go beyond merely providing warm bodies and absorb drone production technology and expertise from Russia, the source said.

Military technicians to be reidentified as Cabinet-affiliated civilian workers

North Korea has even drawn up plans to send military technicians and skilled workers from munition plants after re-identifying them as civilian workers affiliated with the Cabinet.

North Korea previously dispatched army engineers and recovery personnel to the Kursk and Donetsk regions. However, it plans to deploy drone production personnel under a completely separate command structure from the military's.

The engineering and recovery personnel sent to Kursk and Donetsk were a typical military deployment directly managed by the Ministry of Defense and General Staff Department, but the drone production personnel will be sent under a

completely different structure — military specialists will be given civilian identities and sent as foreign-currency earners affiliated with trading companies or the Cabinet," the source said.

"By doing so, the outside world will find it difficult to determine whether the personnel constitute military support or a mere dispatch of labor," the source said. "The military clearly wants to cover up traces that it was directly involved."

Some people speculate that those selected to participate in Russia's drone production will be dispatched by the end of the year, but as for now, the authorities are still selecting personnel and conducting training, including drawing up their list of selectees, sorting assignments and preparing basic training on drone assembly and testing.

"No order on the final stage — such as issuing passports and seeking cooperation with the Foreign Ministry — has been issued," the source said. "You could say the authorities have moved past the initial dispatch preparation stage and are in an intermediate stage."

Before this, the Main Intelligence Directorate of Ukraine's Ministry



of Defense revealed in a Telegram message that Russia planned to bring 12,000 North Koreans to the Russia's Tatarstan region by the end of the year to produce suicide drones.



By Kiran Asim

ISLAMABAD: The U. S. Political Counsellor, Ms. Shelley Saxon, today. The meeting was marked by

called on Chairman Senate of Pakistan, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani at Parliament House, Islamabad, today. The meeting was marked by

a comprehensive exchange of views on Pakistan–United States bilateral relations, regional developments, and avenues for enhanced

parliamentary cooperation.

Chairman Senate of Pakistan,

Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani underscored that Pakistan's relations

US Political Counsellor meets Pakistan Senate Chairman to boost bilateral ties

with the United States constitute an important pillar of its foreign policy, describing the relationship as longstanding, broad-based, and anchored in the principles of mutual respect, shared objectives, and forward-looking cooperation.

The Chairman Senate noted with satisfaction the positive momentum generated in recent months through high-level engagements between the leadership of the two countries.

Highlighting the strong economic and trade partnership, Chairman Senate stated that the

United States remains one of Pakistan's largest trading partners and the biggest destination for Pakistani exports. He also acknowledged the robust U. S. investment footprint in Pakistan, noting that nearly 80 U. S. enterprises operate in the country, generating employment for an estimated 120,000–150,000 people.

The Chairman Senate invited fresh U. S. investments in priority sectors including agriculture, information technology, mines and minerals, and energy, and emphasized Pakistan's desire to make tangible progress through sustained institutional engagement in areas such as trade, investment, IT, energy and minerals, health, education, and agriculture.

Ms. Shelley Saxon appreciated Pakistan's perspective and reaffirmed the United States' interest in strengthening bilateral cooperation across political, economic, and people-to-people domains. Both sides agreed to remain engaged and continue working together to further deepen Pakistan–U. S. relations in the spirit of partnership and mutual benefit.

Grand Punjabi Night Held in Jeddah

By News Desk

JEDDAH: A magnificent Punjabi Night musical show was organized for the Punjabi community residing in Jeddah under the auspices of the Jeddah Group for the first time. A large number of members of the Punjabi community attended the event, which proved to be a memorable and significant step toward promoting Punjabi culture, music, and traditions.

The highlight of the Punjabi Night was the live performances by renowned Punjabi singer

Nooran Lal and popular vocalist Nomi Jatt. Both artists captivated the audience with their hit Punjabi songs, as the entire hall echoed with applause and enthusiastic chants. Nooran Lal's mesmerizing voice and Nomi Jatt's energetic performance truly showcased the vibrant spirit of Punjabi music, keeping the audience dancing and cheering throughout the night.

On this occasion, local singer Adnan Fakhar also impressed the audience with his soulful voice and received tremendous appreciation. His performance

added further color and charm to the event, making it even more memorable.

The event organizers Chaudhry Yasir, Malik Hamid, Bilal Malik, and Atiq stated that the purpose of organizing the Punjabi Night was to bring together the Punjabi community living in Jeddah on one platform and to promote Punjabi culture and music. They added that despite living far from their homeland, Punjabis in Jeddah

maintain a deep connection with their culture, and such events provide them with a sense of joy

and belonging.

At the conclusion of the performances, Nooran Lal and Nomi Jatt expressed their happiness over the love and appreciation they received in Jeddah. They said that the enthusiasm and warmth shown by the Punjabi community made the event a truly unforgettable experience for them. They also thanked the Jeddah Group for inviting them to be part of such a well-organized and successful program.

In the end, participants praised the efforts of the Jeddah Group and demanded that similar



cultural and entertainment events be organized in the future so that the Punjabi community living abroad can remain connected to their language, music, and cultural heritage.

ISRS Expert Details Uzbekistan's Pivot to Innovation in Presidential Address Analysis

By Akramjon Ne'matov

ISLAMABAD: The focal points of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's address to the Oly Majlis and the people of Uzbekistan as well as the signals conveyed to both domestic and international audiences, were highlighted in a commentary by Akramjon Ne'matov, the First Deputy Director of the Institute for Strategic and Interregional Studies (ISRS) under the President of Uzbekistan.

The expert highlighted that the primary focus of the Address was on the country's socio-economic development, the improvement of citizens' well-being, and the enhancement of the national economy's competitiveness. According to him, the President of Uzbekistan clearly emphasized that it is the economy, the sustainability of development, and the quality of growth that today define Uzbekistan's opportunities both domestically and in its external engagements.

Akramjon Ne'matov emphasized that despite a challenging and fragmented global environment, Uzbekistan's economy continues to demonstrate steady growth. For the first time in the country's history, its GDP surpassed \$145 billion this

year, whereas just nine years ago, reaching the \$100 billion mark was considered an ambitious milestone. Even amid disruptions in global supply chains, exports grew by 23% to \$33.4 billion, electricity production in 2025 reached 85 billion kilowatt-hours, and foreign exchange reserves exceeded \$60 billion. Over \$43.1 billion in investments were attracted to the national economy this year, raising the investment-to-GDP ratio to 31.9%, a clear indicator of the country's rising investment appeal.

In this context, the expert noted, maintaining high economic growth rates remains an absolute priority. However, what is particularly significant is the shift in focus from quantitative expansion toward a technological and innovative development model. This entails building a knowledge- and technology-based economy, modernizing industry, advancing the digital economy, promoting scientific research and fostering technology transfer. As Akramjon Ne'matov noted, was also given to workforce development and the creation of a new labor market architecture. The President outlined objectives for modernizing vocational education, fostering new competencies, and shaping a flexible and adaptive labor market

is the stimulation of domestic demand. According to the expert, the development of the domestic market is seen as a key driver of sustainable growth, encompassing higher household incomes, support for small and medium-sized enterprises, and broader access to financial instruments. Domestic demand, he emphasized, provides stable sources of development and helps shield the economy from external shocks.

Special attention, Akramjon Ne'matov noted, was also given to workforce development and the creation of a new labor market architecture. The President outlined objectives for modernizing vocational education, fostering new competencies, and shaping a flexible and adaptive labor market

capable of meeting the needs of a modern economy. He stressed that the labor market and professional development determine the quality of human capital – the key resource of the 21st century.

At the same time, an important focus is placed on ensuring ecological balance, developing "green energy" and the rational use of water resources. The transition to sustainable development, the adoption of renewable energy sources, improving energy and water efficiency, and adapting to climate change are regarded as strategic objectives. Ecology and "green" energy are now considered key factors for national security and sustainable development, Akramjon Ne'matov emphasized.

Among the President of

Uzbekistan's key priorities is also the formation of modern state governance and a fair judicial system.

Central to this agenda are enhancing the efficiency, transparency, and accountability of public administration, strengthening the rule of law, digitizing public services and reforming the judiciary. The expert stressed that effective governance and a fair judicial system build trust, enhance investment appeal, and ensure long-term stability.

Overall, he noted, these priorities reflect Uzbekistan's shift from quantitative growth toward a qualitative model of modernization focused on long-term outcomes.

Based on these strategic directions, Uzbekistan is shaping a framework of key cooperation priorities with international partners, aimed at deepening engagement through high-quality collaboration.

The first priority is technological and industrial partnership. This includes establishing joint high value-added production, localizing advanced technologies, and implementing collaborative research and development projects. The strategic goal is to move beyond simple technology adoption toward co-creation and practical implementation

of innovations.

The second priority is the development of human capital. This encompasses joint programs for training and retraining personnel, sustained collaboration between universities, research centers, and industry, and the cultivation of new competencies demanded by the modern economy. The objective is to ensure the sustainability of reforms and enhance the quality of the workforce.

The third priority is "green" energy and resource efficiency. The focus is on joint initiatives in renewable energy, water-saving technologies, and environmentally sustainable solutions. These efforts are viewed as key instruments for reducing ecological risks and enhancing the long-term resilience of the economy.

The fourth priority is infrastructure and multi-level connectivity. The development of transport, logistics, and digital infrastructure aims not only to deepen Uzbekistan's integration into regional and global supply chains but also to strengthen internal connectivity across the country's regions, reduce territorial disparities, and improve access to markets, services, and economic opportunities. Taken together, these initiatives reinforce

Uzbekistan's role as a stable regional hub for cooperation and transit.

The fifth priority is institutional development and the quality of public governance. This includes promoting principles of transparent and efficient governance, establishing a fair and independent judicial system, enhancing the effectiveness and professionalism of the civil service, and fostering experience-sharing in the digitalization of public services. These measures create a predictable institutional environment, strengthen trust among investors and partners, and serve as a solid foundation for sustainable, long-term international cooperation.

In conclusion, Akramjon Ne'matov emphasized that Uzbekistan views collaboration with foreign partners as a strategic priority. The country aims to transition from broad but largely quantitative engagement toward high-quality partnerships, centered on technology, human capital, and sustainable growth that align with the long-term interests of all parties.

The analyst is First Deputy Director of the Institute for Strategic and International Studies (ISRS) under the President of Uzbekistan.

Current	Prev. Close
173,896.34	172,400.73
Day's High	Day's Low
174,411.72	173,200.41
Index Value	Change
34,799,581,412	+1495.61
Percentage	Time
+0.87%	29 Dec, 2025 4:30 pm

Europe: FTSE 100 Index

Index Value	Change
9,866.53	-4.15
Percentage	Time
-0.042%	29 Dec, 4:35 pm GMT

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average

Index Value	Change
48,426.12	-284.85
Percentage	Time
-0.58%	29 Dec, 12:48 pm GMT-5

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average

Index Value	Change
50,526.92	-223.47
Percentage	Time
+0.44%	29 Dec, 3:45 pm GMT+9

Open Market Forex Rates

Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	187.5	191.5
Bahrain Dinar	743.95	753.95
Canadian Dollar	204	208
China Yuan	39.58	39.98
Danish Krone	43.72	44.12
Euro	330.25	333.75
Hong Kong Dollar	35.69	36.04
Indian Rupee	3.03	3.12
Japanese Yen	1.7825	1.8825
Kuwaiti Dinar	911.9	921.9
Malaysian Ringgit	68.6	69.20
New Zealand \$	161.24	163.24
Norwegian Krone	27.66	27.96
Omani Riyal	728.65	738.65
Qatari Riyal	76.26	76.96
Saudi Riyal	74.8	75.45
Singapore Dollar	217	222
Swedish Korona	30.25	30.55
Swiss Franc	351.82	354.57
Thai Bhat	8.88	9.03
U.A.E Dirham	76.6	77.5
UK Pound Sterling	378.75	382.75
US Dollar	281	283

DWP Technologies wins Top Solution Provider award



Commerce Desk

KARACHI: DWP Technologies, a division of Pakistan's leading business conglomerate, DWP Group, has been recognized as the FY25 Top Solution Provider for Emerging Markets in Datacenter and Storage Solutions at the prestigious Dell Technologies South Asia Partner Summit 2025.

Rohail Bashir, Chief Operating Officer of DWP Technologies, while expressing his pride in the achievement, stated, "This award reflects the tireless dedication of our teams, the trust of our customers, and the strength of our strategic partnership with Dell Technologies. As Pakistan's technology needs evolve rapidly, we are committed to pushing boundaries and leading the digital transformation journey with resilient, future-ready datacenter and storage solutions."

"Our success in datacenter and storage solutions stems from our deep understanding of local market challenges and our ability to architect tailored infrastructures that address Pakistan's unique business requirements," said Tauqir Ahmed Rana, Country Head Solutions Department at DWP Technologies. "This recognition validates our solutions-first approach and our team's expertise in delivering enterprise-grade Dell Technologies infrastructure that drives measurable business outcomes for our clients across diverse industry verticals."

CCP conducts competition assessment in key sectors in 2025

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) significantly stepped up its market research in 2025 by releasing competition assessment studies across critical sectors, including insurance, power, gold, pesticides, steel, LNG, road infrastructure, sugar and fertilizer.

To strengthen evidence-based policymaking, the CCP has recently established a Centre of Excellence in Competition Law (CECL) to conduct in-depth research across key sectors and support legal and regulatory reforms. The CECL is currently undertaking studies on the automobile industry, civil aviation market, solar energy market, cement sector, and the impact of mergers in the telecom sector, which are nearing completion.

A comprehensive CCP report on the State of Competition in Pakistan's Insurance Industry highlighted key issues, including low insurance penetration, limited outreach, and fragmented legal and regulatory framework and barriers to entry. The report noted that



Pakistan's insurance penetration stood at 0.87 percent, compared to a global average of 6.7 percent, and emphasized the need for reforms to promote competition and consumer welfare. The Commission's maiden Competition

Assessment Study of the Gold Market in Pakistan provided the first evidence-based analysis of a sector dominated by informality and pricing opacity. The study highlighted that over 90 percent of gold trading occurs

outside formal channels and underscored the potential impact of the Reko Diq copper-gold project on domestic supply chains. CCP recommended setting up Gemstone and Gold Regulatory Authority to streamline the gold market.

In addition, the CCP issued studies on the pesticide, steel, and LNG sectors, identifying structural, regulatory, and enforcement gaps affecting market efficiency. The pesticide report highlighted Pakistan's heavy reliance on imported agricultural chemicals, the prevalence of counterfeit and substandard products, regulatory bottlenecks, and weak enforcement impacting farmers and crop yields.

The LNG study identified monopolistic dominance of state-owned enterprises, restricted private sector participation, infrastructure access constraints, and the impact of circular debt exceeding PKR 2.8 trillion on market competition. The steel sector report outlined competition challenges and policy reforms needed to improve efficiency and market outcomes.

Continued on Page 7

Facilitation

ISLAMABAD: A view of the traffic on the road of newly constructed underpass of Shaheen Chowk in Federal Capital.

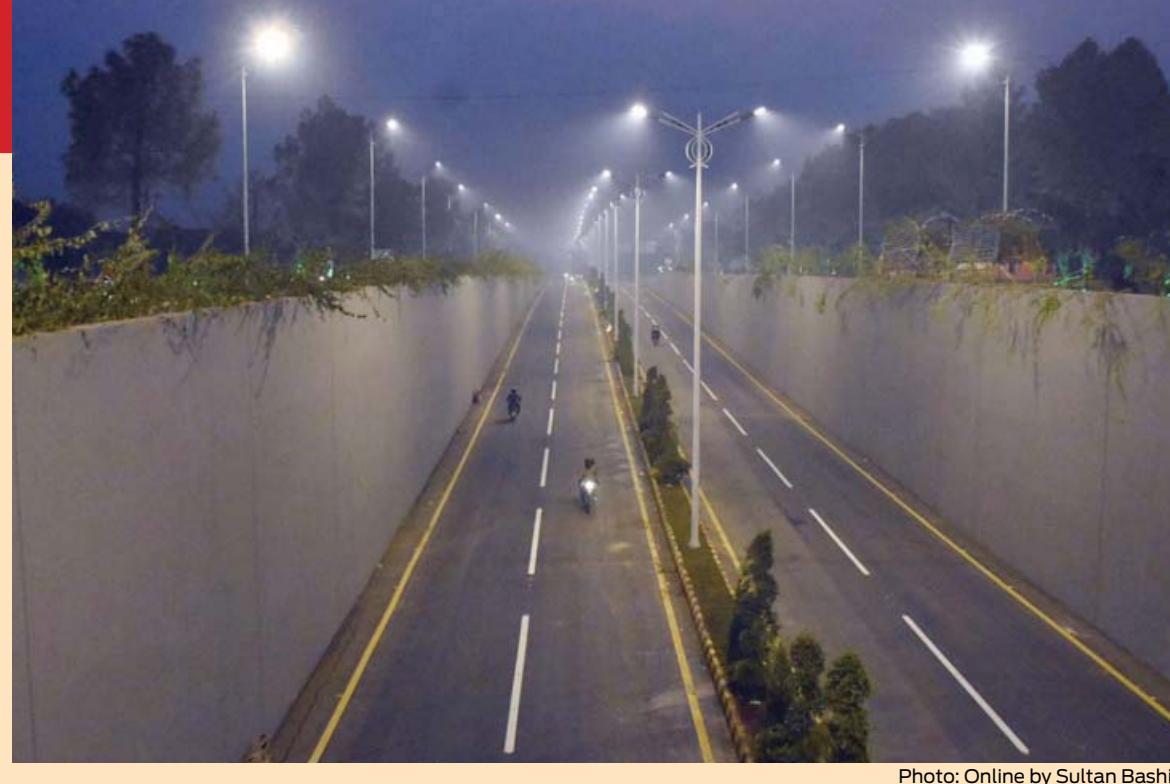


Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

Former chairman of ABAD, Arif Yusuf Jiwa, Passes Away - Condolences from UBG, ABAD, and Others

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Former Chairman of ABAD and former Vice President of FPCCI, Arif Yusuf Jiwa, an expert in the construction sector, has passed away. Arif Jiwa had been battling cancer for a long period and had been working on various construction projects in Islamabad for the past few years. His body was brought from Islamabad to Karachi, where his funeral prayer was offered late at night at Rahman Mosque in New Hayat Housing Scheme, Karachi. He was buried in a local cemetery.

Meanwhile, the Patron-in-Chief of the United Business Group (UBG), SM Tanveer, President, Secretary General, Zafar Bakhtawari, Zubair Tufail, Chairman (Sindh Region) Khalid Tawab, Secretary-General (Sindh) Hanif Goher, Spokes-

person Gulzar Feroze, Core Committee Members Malik Khuda Baksh and Tariq Haleem, FPCCI President Atif Ikram Sheikh, Senior Vice President Sagib Fayaz Magon, Vice President Aman Pracha, Asif Sakhni, Chairman of the Association of Builders and Developers (ABAD) Hassan Bakhshi, former Chairman Mohsin Sheikhani, and other members expressed deep sorrow over the passing of Arif Jiwa.

person Gulzar Feroze, Core Committee Members Malik Khuda Baksh and Tariq Haleem, FPCCI President Atif Ikram Sheikh, Senior Vice President Sagib Fayaz Magon, Vice President Aman Pracha, Asif Sakhni, Chairman of the Association of Builders and Developers (ABAD) Hassan Bakhshi, former Chairman Mohsin Sheikhani, and other members expressed deep sorrow over the passing of Arif Jiwa.

PBA Contextualizes discussion on ADR, IDR Trends, Calls for Structural Reforms

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: The Pakistan Banks Association (PBA) acknowledges the recent spotlight by the press on the banking sector's role in the economy. While appreciating the media's recognition of the industry's efforts in digitization and boosting private sector credit, the PBA clarified that certain headlines relying on dated statistics offer an incomplete picture of the sector's current trajectory.

The Association emphasized that relying on June 2025 data to define the sector's performance in December creates a misnomer, as the reality on the ground has shifted significantly since the close of the last fiscal year.

Addressing the specific statistics circulating in the media, the PBA highlighted that reports citing an Advance-to-Deposit Ratio (ADR) of 35% are based on obsolete data from June 2025.

In the months since, the sector has witnessed a consistent uptick in lending activity, with the ADR rising to approximately 38% by November 2025. This month-on-month increase is driven by a massive Rs 1.5 trillion injection into private sector credit over the current fiscal year, a momentum that proves banks are actively deploying liquidity as fast as conditions allow.

K-Electric partners with Neem Paymenow to provide earned wage access to KE employees

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Neem Paymenow is proud to announce a landmark partnership with K-Electric (KE), Pakistan's only vertically integrated power utility, to provide Shariah-compliant earned-wage access to K-Electric employees. K-Electric serves more than 3.8 million customers across a vast network. These individuals are not only skilled professionals but essential community heroes who repair faults, maintain complex systems, and respond to urgent issues so that Karachi continues to function smoothly.

"We are delighted to enable earned wage access through our collaboration with Neem. This partnership is more than just a benefit. It gives true financial flexibility and empowers our People" said Muhammad Rizwan Dalia, Chief People Officer at K-Electric.

Neem Paymenow will also execute a major enabling and financial awareness campaign in collaboration with K-Electric management to fully onboard every employee on the solution. This will include guiding employees through a step-by-step process in their preferred language, from



app registration to accessing their salary. The goal is simple: to ensure every user feels supported, confident, and ready to use the service from day one.

"Our partnership with K-Electric bridges a critical gap, giving the very people who power Karachi the financial flexibility they rightfully deserve. These are not just employees; they are the life-line of our city's energy system," said Niran

Rehman, GM & Founding partner at Neem Paymenow

This collaboration strengthens KE's mission to modernize its infrastructure while supporting the financial resilience of the people who keep Karachi powered. With Neem Paymenow, their employee will gain access to a reliable, secure solution that makes a tangible difference in their daily lives.

Zong and Huawei complete Pakistan's first full-duplex E-Band Microwave Link Field Test

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Zong, Pakistan's leading information services and technology innovation company, in collaboration with Huawei, has successfully completed Pakistan's first field test of a full-duplex E-band microwave link.

This achievement represents a significant breakthrough in ultra-high-capacity backhaul technology for Pakistan. With rapidly growing data traffic driven by high-definition video streaming, augmented reality (AR), cloud services, and

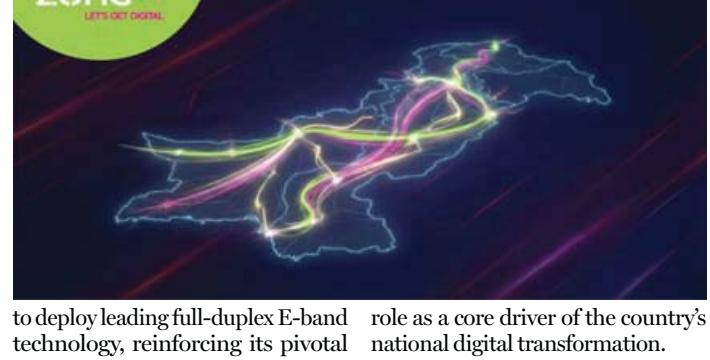
low-latency applications, traditional microwave backhaul solutions face increasing spectrum constraints. Zong's full-duplex E-band solution directly addresses these challenges, enabling next-generation network performance.

Mr. Mao Weiliang, Chief Technology Officer at Zong, congratulated the team and reaffirmed Zong's commitment to technological innovation and digital transformation: "By introducing ultra-high-capacity backhaul solutions, we are laying a solid foundation for Pakistan's digital

future. This advancement will support emerging technologies, enhance user experience, and contribute directly to national economic growth and digital inclusion."

The deployment leverages advanced E-band (80 GHz) full-duplex ultra-broadband transmission technology, supporting a maximum transmission capacity of up to 50 Gbps, a landmark achievement in Pakistan's network infrastructure development.

With this successful test, Zong becomes the first operator in Pakistan



to deploy leading full-duplex E-band technology, reinforcing its pivotal role as a core driver of the country's national digital transformation.

Effective measures being taken for development of sports culture across the province: Secretary Sports

Secretary Sports and Youth Affairs Punjab Muhammad Ali said that effective and essential measures are being taken for the development of sports culture across the province. He said this while presiding over an important meeting at the Punjab Stadium on Monday.

Director General Sports and Youth Affairs Punjab Khizar Afzaal Chaudhry, Additional Secretary Shabbir Hussain Cheema, Director Admin Abid Shaukat, Director Sports Rana Nadeem Anjum and Deputy Director Mirza Nadeem participated in the meeting.

Director General Sports Punjab Khizar Afzaal Chaudhry gave a detailed

briefing about the working of Punjab Sports Department, Sports Board Punjab, Directorate of Sports and PMU Sports.

During the briefing, it was informed

that the General Body meeting of Sports Board Punjab is going to be

held soon. Besides this a grand function is also being organized in the coming days to honour the medal-winning

athletes of the National Games.

Addressing the meeting, Secretary Sports and Youth Affairs Punjab Muhammad Ali said that all possible steps are being taken for the growth of sports culture. "The ambit of Sports Endowment Fund is also being expanded for the welfare of the top

performing athletes". Secretary Sports and Youth Affairs Punjab Muhammad Ali has appreciated the performance of Punjab athletes in the recently-held National Games at Karachi. "Our goal is the development of sports culture and healthy activities among the younger generation".

Secretary Sports and Youth Affairs Punjab Muhammad Ali said further that new sports grounds and valuable sports facilities are being built across the Punjab province. "Punjab has been blessed with immense sports potential and Punjab Sports Department is taking effective measures to nurture the talented youth".



Jubilee Life Insurance partners with Karachi United to strengthen grassroot football in Pakistan

KARACHI: Jubilee Life Insurance, Pakistan's leading life insurer, has signed on as the Title Sponsor of the 21st Karachi United School Championship (KUSC). The collaboration reflects a shared commitment to nurturing young talent, promoting healthy lifestyles, and ensuring to strengthen a bottom-up approach for sports across the country.

Recognised as one of Karachi's longest-running and most inclusive school football tournaments, KUSC provides a structured platform for students from diverse backgrounds to engage in sport, develop discipline, teamwork, and confidence, and build lifelong healthy habits. Through this partnership, Jubilee Life aims to play a meaningful role in supporting youth development while encouraging physical activity from an early age. The partnership with Karachi United strengthens this commitment at the fundamental level, where sustained, long-term impact is created.

Mr. Farhan Faridi-Group Head Retail Operations, Marketing & Administration commenting on the collabora-



tion: "At Jubilee Life, we view sport as a powerful enabler of physical well-being, social inclusion, and youth empowerment. This partnership with KUSC reflects our broader commitment to building healthier, more active communities across Pakistan. From

supporting national platforms such as the HBL PSL, which are helping revive sporting culture and bringing international players back to Pakistani grounds, to investing in grassroot initiatives, our focus remains on creating sustainable, community-wide impact through sport."

Sharing his views on the partnership, Mr. Ali Atta Director Football said: "Karachi United has always believed in using football as a platform for inclusion and positive social change. This partnership with Jubilee Life strengthens our ability to provide opportunities for children from diverse income groups and backgrounds. As we look ahead, our ambition is to take the Karachi United School Championship to the national level, creating a pathway for young talent and expanding the tournament's impact across Pakistan."

Through this collaboration, Jubilee Life and Karachi United aim to create a sustainable ecosystem for school-level football by providing young athletes with access to structured competition, professional exposure, and long-term development opportunities. As the championship continues to grow, the partnership seeks to contribute to a stronger pipeline of talent while reinforcing the importance of sport in shaping confident, disciplined, and healthy future generations.

Multan Clinch Pepsi National PD T20 Grade One Cricket Championship

Sports Reporter

KARACHI: Defending champions Multan lifted the Pepsi National PD T20 Grade One Cricket Championship for the eighth time after defeating Rawalpindi by three wickets in a thrilling final. The championship, organized under the Pakistan Physical Disability Cricket Association (PPDCA), concluded at the Rashid Latif Cricket Ground, Gulberg, where Karachi secured third position in the tournament.

The final and prize distribution ceremony was graced by former Test cricketer Tauseef Ahmed as the chief guest. He distributed trophies and awards along with PPDCA President Imran Bilwani and PPDCA Secretary General and Event Director Ameeruddin Ansari. Several notable personalities, including Haji Ashraf, Wasim Machhiara, former SSP Sindh



Police Javed Malik, Multan Regional Head Jameel Kamran, Zafar Ahmed, Islam Khan, Talal Ahmed, Amjad Rizvi, Saif Khan and others, were also present on the occasion.

Winning the toss, Rawalpindi elected to bat first and posted 155 runs in the

allotted 20 overs. Mohammad Arsalan played a brilliant knock of 60 runs off 40 balls, hitting six fours and two sixes, while Huzayfa Khan scored 35 and Mohammad Ikram added 22 runs. For Multan, Zubair Saleem 23, Asif Khichi 29 and Mohammad Irfan 35 each

claimed two wickets.

In reply, Multan chased down the target in a nail-biting finish, reaching the required total on the last ball of the match with the loss of seven wickets. Mohammad Zaman Ali played a match-winning innings of 60 runs off 44 balls, smashing four fours and four sixes. Matloob Qureshi contributed 25 runs, Jehanzaib Tuwana scored 17, while Mohammad Shehzad added 16 runs. Bilal Azeem was the standout bowler for Rawalpindi, taking three wickets for 24 runs.

At the conclusion of the championship, Majid Hussain was named the Player of the Tournament. Multan's Mohammad Zaman Ali was adjudged the Best Batter, Best Fielder and Player of the Final, while Quetta's Mithal Khan was awarded Best Bowler and received a special cash prize.

stan (DRAP) and the Punjab Food Authority (PFA) to curb deceptive marketing, strengthen monitoring of product claims, and enhance consumer protection. The Commission also signed an addendum to its MoU with the Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) to strengthen detection of collusive practices and bid rigging through the e-PADS public procurement platform.

Through evidence-based market studies and strengthened institutional collaboration, the CCP aims to bring reforms in the legal and regulatory frameworks across key sectors of the economy. Economic policy research suggests that a strong and effective legal framework is directly linked to sustainable economic growth and national development.

CCP conducts competition assessment in key sectors in 2025

Continued from Page 6

The Commission also issued a Competition Assessment Study of the Fertilizer Industry, identifying barriers to competition across production, distribution, and retail segments in a sector critical to agricultural productivity.

To enhance inter-agency cooperation, the CCP inked several MoUs in 2025 to improve coordination, data sharing, and enforcement. The Commission signed an MoU with the Federal Antimonopoly Service of the Russian Federation to strengthen cooperation in cartel enforcement, merger control, and competition policy research.

At the national level, CCP entered into MoUs with the Drug Regulatory Authority of Paki-

How to Strengthen your Immune System after Illness

Maryam Abid

The immune system is the body's natural defense mechanism that protects it against infections, viruses and serious conditions. To maintain its efficiency after illness, proper care through healthy habits is needed to rebuilds your immunity. After a period of illness, your immune system becomes weakened, as the body undergoes a stage of fighting infections, uses energy, impairs immune cells, and creates a temporary state of exhaustion. In this blog, you will learn recovery tips and some natural methods to strengthen the immune system after illness. Recovery tips to boost your immune system after being sick You can strengthen your immune system by consuming nutritious, rich foods and adopting a healthy lifestyle pattern. Wellness practices that help strengthen immunity.

· Sleep: Quality sleep of 7 to 9 hours is necessary for proper

immune function

· Stress management: Adapting physical activities (walking, exercise, and meditation) helps in managing stress which weakens the immune system

· Exercise: According to recent research, regular physical activity helps you feel better, improves your sleep cycle, maintains a healthy weight, and also supports a healthier immune system.

· Hydration: Drink plenty of water; as proper hydration helps the body and boosts immunity after illness.

· Quit smoking: Consumption of tobacco and alcohol compromises the immune system (CDC). Eat nutrient rich foods for immune recovery after illness. Post-illness, you need to eat foods that help the body heal faster and enhance immunity to fight any future infection. The following are immune-enhancing diet that naturally improves your immunity.

· Vegetables for boosting immunity, such as leafy greens (spinach, Kale), which having

high levels of vitamin C and antioxidants, help to make your immune system stronger.

· Nuts and seeds to improve immunity: Healthy snacks, such as almonds, walnuts, and sunflower seeds, which are rich in vitamins and minerals, can help support the immune system.

· Poultry rebuilds immune function after illness. Chicken soup is a good source of vitamin B6 and zinc, which help reduce inflammation and are essential for the production of new red and white blood cells, thereby strengthening the immune system against infections.

· Berries as immune boosters Add berries as a treat in your diet as they are packed with high amount of vitamins, antioxidants and immune boosting compounds.

· Citrus fruits strengthen the immune system. Citrus fruits strengthen the immune system. Fruits such as lemons, grapefruits, oranges, and tangerines, which are high in vitamin C, boost immunity by stimulating the production of white blood cells.

· Yogurt/Fish & olive oil that restores immunity. They are rich sources of probiotics, vitamin D, and omega-3 fatty acids. Adding them to your diet may strengthen your immune system and help in fighting infections. Supplements for a strong immune system after an illness. Along with nutrient-rich food, which is the foundation of immune recovery, according to research, consumption of adequate amount of supplements when needed and as per healthcare advice (vitamin C, A, D, E, selenium and zinc) is vital to support immune function and its deficiencies weaken immunity and make you more susceptible to infections. Deficiencies

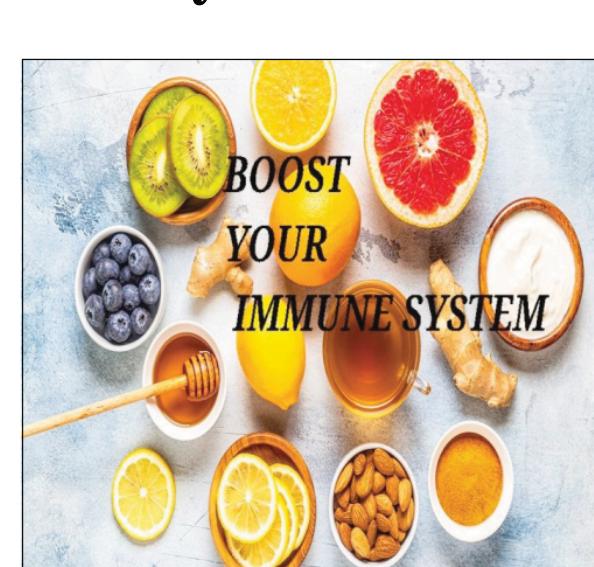
of specific vitamins (Vitamin A, C, D, E, K, B12, folate, iron, copper, and magnesium) can negatively impact immune function.

According to the European Society for Clinical Nutrition and Metabolism, low levels of these micronutrients, Vitamin A, selenium, zinc, B6, and B12, were associated with adverse outcomes in patients having viral infections. The following section describes the impact of these three vitamins on the immune function.

· Vitamin A is an important nutrient found in dairy products, eggs, fish, and organ meat. It is required for the formation and regulation of immune system cells. Adding it to your diet strengthens your immune system.

· Vitamin C is present in many fruits and vegetables (Tomatoes, potatoes, broccoli, strawberries, and citrus fruits, as mentioned above). It is an important nutrient that supports the production of immune cells and helps prevent viruses from multiplying. Its deficiency due to taking a limited variety of diet can make you more susceptible to infections.

The writer is student of MS Microbiology & Immunology in Comsats University Islamabad



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Quaid i Azam Birthday celebration

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani cutting the cake along with other dignitaries at an event held at Aiwan-e-Sadr on the 150th birth anniversary of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah.



Photo: Online

Engr Amir Muqam distributes laptops among students of Malakand University under PM Scheme

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan, SAFRON and President of Pakistan Muslim League (N) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Engineer Amir Muqam, on Monday said that Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif was working tirelessly for the youth of the country and empowering young people was the foremost priority of his government.

"Investment in youth is a guarantee of Pakistan's prosperous and bright future and that is why empowerment of students of all provinces including KP was a cornerstone of the Federal Govt policy," said while addressing the distribution ceremony of



Prime Minister Youth Laptop Scheme Phase IV at the University of Malakand.

Addressing the ceremony, the federal minister said that

the Prime Minister Youth Laptop Scheme was launched under the vision of PML-N President and former Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz

Sharif, and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif that not only restored it but also expanded it further to all provinces of Pakistan.

He said the Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif was personally overseeing educational, digital, and skills-development initiatives for empowerment of youth and ensures that the country's young generation progresses in line with the modern requirements.

Engineer Amir Muqam made it clear that the laptop scheme was entirely based on merit and transparency. He said that if even a single case is proven in which a laptop was awarded without merit, he would be ready to quit politics.

This, he said, is a clear and firm decision of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and PMLN President Muhammad Nawaz Sharif that only those students who truly deserve it will benefit from the landmark scheme.

Population growth, climate change pose major threats to food security: Rana Tanveer

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain has said that rapid population growth and climate change have emerged as the most serious challenges to Pakistan's food security.

He warned that failure to increase crop production could prevent the country from meeting its future food requirements.

He was chairing a meeting on the National Food Security Policy at the Centre of Excellence in Molecular Biology (CEMB), Punjab University, here on Monday. The meeting was attended by Chairman Pakistan Academy of Sciences Professor Dr Kausar Abdullah Malik, Director CEMB Dr Muaz ur Rehman, leading



scientists, food security experts, policymakers, and researchers.

Addressing the meeting, the federal minister said Pakistan does not lack merit in any sector, but emphasized that sustained research is essential for

long-term development and improvement. He noted that while the benefits of institutional research are often long-term, the absence of immediate results discourages governments from making adequate investments in research.

Rana Tanveer stressed that national security is directly linked to food security, underscoring the urgent need for extensive research and innovation in the agriculture and food sectors. He said climate change is having the most severe impact on agriculture, resulting in rising production costs, reduced yields, and growing challenges for farmers.

The minister said that protecting agriculture and supporting farmers is a core responsibility of the government. In this regard, he announced that the government will purchase 6 million tons of wheat from farmers at a support price of Rs 3,500 per maund. He emphasized that wheat is Pakistan's most essential crop and said achieving self-sufficiency in wheat production is vital for ensuring sustainable food security and economic stability.

KSE-100 crosses 174,400 points as investor confidence strengthens: Khurram

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Advisor to the Finance Minister Khurram Schehzad on Monday said Pakistan's equity market had achieved another major milestone, with the benchmark KSE-100 Index crossing the historic level of 174,400 points, showing a strong investor confidence and improving economic fundamentals.

The Pakistan Stock Exchange

(PSX) has emerged as one of the best-performing markets in Asia, delivering over 50 percent returns in US dollar terms since January 2025, "with 2025 being another year of strong gains for investors," he posted on X.

The consistent rise in stock market indices, he said, demonstrated growing confidence of both domestic and international investors in Pakistan's economic direction.

Highlighting the broadening participation in the equity market, Khurram said the investor base had expanded rapidly, crossing 450,000 equity investors. Over the past 18 months alone, he added, more than 120,000 new investors had entered the market, representing an increase of around 37 percent.

The advisor attributed the record-breaking performance of the PSX to sustained macroeconomic stability,

structural reforms and improved policy clarity, which had collectively strengthened market sentiment.

Khurram expressed optimism that the positive momentum in the equity market would continue. He added that the government remained committed to strengthening capital markets, enhancing transparency and encouraging wider participation to support long-term economic growth and investment-led development.

DPM reaffirms Pakistan's support for China on core issues



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar held meeting with ambassador of China Jiang Zaidong Monday afternoon and discussed matters of mutual interest.

Ambassador Jiang conveyed season's Greetings and best wishes for new year to DPM/FM on behalf of FM Wang Yi. While reciprocating New Year's greetings, DPM/FM appreciated China's strong support for Pakistan's territorial integrity, sovereignty, and national develop-

ment.

DPM/FM reaffirmed Pakistan's firm support for China on all core issues including the adherence to the One-China Principle.

He reiterated that Pakistan recognizes the People's Republic of China as the sole legitimate government representing all China, with Taiwan being an inalienable part of China.

Both sides reviewed the overall state of bilateral relations and agreed that their all weather strategic partnership remains a cornerstone of Pakistan's foreign policy and an anchor for regional peace and security.

Shaheen Chowk Underpass completed ahead of schedule; opening set for December 31



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Shaheen Chowk Underpass, a key infrastructure project aimed at easing congestion in the capital, has been completed ahead of schedule.

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi visited the site on Monday to review final preparations, including road carpeting and finishing work.

The Chairman CDA briefed the interior minister on the project's progress and technical details. The visit was attended by senior officials, including the IG Islamabad Police, Member Engineering CDA, and other relevant authorities.

Health and Education Top Priority: AJK PM Outlines Welfare Initiatives



Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Raja Faisal Mumtaz Rathore, held a meeting with Chairman REMRSCO and Rahimuddin Naeem Welfare Foundation, Rahimuddin Naeem, along with Legislative Assembly candidate from constituency Baloch, Malik Basit Sharif Awan, Syed Ashfaq Bukhari, and Saeed Abbasi. The meeting was also attended by Most Senior Minister Mian Abdul Waheed and former Adviser Sardar Amjad Yousaf.

During the meeting, detailed discussions were held on major public welfare projects. These include the dedication of a state-of-the-art 500-bed hospital for public use, the

establishment of a medical college, and a housing scheme comprising 200 houses, of which 100 houses have already been completed.

Speaking on the occasion, Prime Minister Raja Faisal Mumtaz Rathore said that the Government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir is giving top priority to public welfare initiatives. He emphasized that investment in health and education is, in fact, an investment in a secure and prosperous future for the nation.

The Prime Minister stated that the establishment of a 500-bed modern hospital and a medical college will not only provide quality healthcare facilities but will also create new opportunities for higher education and employment for local youth.