



# Azad Kashmir PM details progress on dialogue agreement with Joint Awami Action Committee

MUZAFFARABAD: Prime Minister Azad Kashmir Faisal Mumtaz Rathore on Friday shared with media the details of the implementation of the agreement reached with the Joint Awami Action Committee. Briefing the media after a cabinet meeting, the prime minister said that the PPP government did not waste even a single moment in resolving issues related to public interest. The government, he said, accorded top priority to implementing the agreement in order to resolve the public grievances that had led people to take to the streets last year.

The prime minister emphasized the urgent need to deal with issues prudently and move forward in the right direction with a positive approach to resolving problems, particularly those related to governance. He said that the development of the state and welfare of its people



remain the first and foremost preferences of the incumbent government. PM Rathore reiterated his commitment to hold an investment conference and free and fair elections in the state. He said that safeguarding the state's vital interests takes precedence over any ego or political considerations for

the government. "Since the agreement is being implemented there is no justification for putting the ordinary citizens to the test", he remarked. Regarding the implementation of the 39-point agreement reached with the Action Committee, Minister for Finance Chaudhry Qasim Majeed provided a

clause-wise update. He said that under clause 1 of the agreement, the government has withdrawn 177 out of 192 FIRs. He further added that, in line with the agreement, the 15 FIRs related to deaths have been referred to the cabinet, and a motion has now been moved in the Supreme Court to appoint a respected judge to head two judicial commissions tasked with reviewing the FIRs. The minister emphasized that these steps demonstrate the government's commitment to fulfilling its promises under the agreement and ensuring justice while maintaining public trust.

On this occasion, government ministers Diwan Ali Khan Chughtai, Chaudhry Rafique Nayar, Chief Secretary Khushal Khan, Principal Secretary Zafar Mahmood Khan, and Information Secretary Adnan Khurshid were also present.

## Protest

KARACHI: Supporters of Peoples Labour Bureau stage protest in favor of their demands in Provincial Capital.



Photo: Online

## UMT Hosts Third International Conference on Reimagining Dispute Resolution

Bureau Report

LAHORE: The University of Management and Technology (UMT) hosted the 3rd International Conference on "Reimagining Dispute Resolution", organized by the UMT School of Law and Policy.

The conference was attended by Rector UMT Air Vice Marshal (R) Dr. Asif Raza, Dean School of Law and Policy Khushbakht, Qaisar and Mehak Zark. Distinguished guests included Justice Sardar Akbar Ali Dogar, Justice Jawad Hassan, and Justice (R) Hasanat Ahmed. Renowned legal professionals such as Barrister Owais Arshad and Advocate Saba Farooq, along with other eminent legal experts, also participated in the conference.

While addressing the conference,



Justice Jawad Hassan, Justice (R) Hasanat Ahmed, and other legal

scholars shed light on innovation in the judicial system, emerging challenges, and global trends in Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR). The speakers emphasized that modern, efficient and timely resolution of disputes requires judicial reforms aligned with contemporary global standards.

In his address, Rector UMT Air Vice Marshal (R) Dr. Asif Raza described the conference as a critical need of the present era. He stated that in view of evolving social and legal challenges, it is imperative to reimagine dispute resolution systems so that young lawyers can play an effective and meaningful role in shaping a brighter future for Pakistan.

At the conclusion of the event, Dr. Asif Raza presented souvenirs to the distinguished guests.

## Merit Violations Alleged in C&W Department Under KP PTI Government

Syed Tauqeer Zaidi

PESHAWAR: Despite repeated claims of strict adherence to merit and an anti-corruption stance, serious allegations of merit violations have surfaced within the Communication and Works (C&W) Department of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa under the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government.

According to details, a Grade-11 diploma holder, Muqarrab Khan, has allegedly been appointed and is currently holding charge of a Grade-17 position of Executive Engineer (XEN) in the C&W Department. Initially, he was given temporary charge of the post, but reports suggest that he has now effectively assumed the position, raising



serious questions about compliance with service rules and required qual-

ifications.

It is pertinent to mention that a similar incident recently came to light in Tank district, where a watchman of the Public Health Engineering Department was promoted as a Sub-Engineer, prompting action by the authorities.

PTI's ideological workers have formally lodged a complaint with the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Complaint Cell, stating that such actions are causing severe damage to the party's credibility and are a blatant violation of merit. The complainants have demanded the immediate removal of the Grade-11 diploma holder from the Grade-17 XEN post and the appointment of a qualified and eligible officer in accordance with rules and regulations.

## PML-N Spokesman Claims Rising Public Confidence, Predicts Dominance in AJK

Spokesman Report



ISLAMABAD: The Central Spokesperson of Pakistan Muslim League (N), Azad Jammu and Kashmir, has stated that the President of PML-N AJK and Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Assembly, Shah Ghulam Qadir, will undertake visits to various constituencies of Azad Kashmir in the coming days.

During these visits, senior workers and leaders from the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) are expected to formally join the Pakistan Muslim League (N). The spokesperson said that public confidence in PML-N is steadily increasing across Azad Kashmir, adding that the future of Azad Jammu and Kashmir belongs to the Pakistan Muslim League (N).

He further stated that public prosperity and development are directly linked with PML-N, as the people are well aware that PML-N is the only political party that truly delivers for the public. Other parties, he said, remain more focused on commissions rather than serving the people.

He strongly criticized the current government, stating that it lacks commitment and has adopted anti-people policies. Instead of addressing public issues, the government has prioritized commission-based practices and transfers, while remaining completely indifferent to the real problems faced by the people.

## Attack Police Deliver Strong Performance in 2025, Seize 2,636kg of Drugs and 795 Illegal Weapons

Raza Naqvi

ATTOCK: Attack Police demonstrated a strong and effective performance throughout 2025, achieving significant success in their ongoing campaign against crime and illegal activities across the district. Through sustained and targeted operations, the police ensured the writ of the state and enhanced protection of life and property.

During the year, police carried out indiscriminate action against drug peddlers, illegal arms holders, proclaimed offenders, and organized criminal networks. As a result, a total of 2,636 kilograms of narcotics were recovered, while 795 illegal weapons were seized.

Attack Police also arrested 1,080 proclaimed offenders and dismantled 98 criminal gangs, leading to recoveries worth over Rs 100 million, dealing a major blow to organized crime in the district.

In addition to crime control efforts, Attack Police focused on public service delivery. More than 44,000 driving licences were issued, while over 150,000 citizens benefited from essential services provided through the Khidmat Markaz, helping strengthen public trust in the police force.

District Police Officer (DPO) Attock, Sardar Mavarhan Khan, said these achievements were made possible through strong public cooperation and the tireless efforts of police officers and personnel. He reaffirmed that in 2026, Attack Police would continue their mission with renewed commitment to maintain peace, protect life and property, and eradicate crime from the district.

## SAU Charts Four-Year Growth Plan; VC Pledges Strong Focus on Food Security and Skills



Abdul Ghafoor Sarohi

HYDERABAD: Vice Chancellor of Sindh Agriculture University (SAU), Tandojam, Engineer Prof Dr Altaf Ali Siyal, has said that the university's academic programs are playing a vital role in driving economic transformation and that a comprehensive set of new development initiatives will be launched over the next four years. Terming food security a defining challenge of the future, he emphasized the need for collective societal efforts to reduce post-harvest losses and curb food wastage.

He was speaking at a reception held in his honour by the Dean and faculty members of the Faculty of Agricultural Engineering and Technology after assuming charge as the permanent Vice Chancellor of the university.

Prof Dr Siyal said that rapid population growth, declining land resources and accelerating climate change had intensified food security concerns. He stressed that agricultural scientists and professionals carried a crucial responsibility to improve productivity with limited water availability, develop climate-resilient crop varieties and safeguard indigenous livestock breeds. "This is a critical juncture that calls for coordinated action, innovation and shared responsibility across all segments of society," he said.

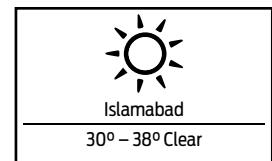
Earlier, Dean Faculty of Agricultural Engineering and Technology (FAET), Prof Dr Munir Ahmed Mangrio, welcomed the Vice Chancellor and expressed confidence that Prof Dr Siyal's leadership would steer the university towards greater academic strength and institutional excellence.

During the ceremony, chairpersons of various departments presented the Vice Chancellor with Ajrak, symbolizing Sindh's rich cultural heritage. The event was also addressed by Dr Farman Chandio, Dr Zaheer Ahmed Khan and other speakers. Prof Dr Abdul Ghafoor Siyal, Principal Khairpur College of Agriculture and Management Sciences Dr Ali Raza Shah, along with university officers and staff, attended the ceremony in large numbers.

## Punjab govt forms steering committee for burn care and reconstructive plastic surgery

LAHORE: The Punjab government has constituted a Steering/Advisory Committee for Burn Care and Reconstructive Plastic Surgery under the supervision of senior and experienced health professionals to strengthen policy-making and improve patient care across the province.

According to the Punjab Health Department on Friday, former Executive Director Jinnah Burn and Reconstructive Surgery Center, Prof. Dr. Moazzam Nazir Tarar, has been appointed as the convener of the committee. The committee comprises retired Professor of Pediatric Plastic Surgery Prof. Farrukh Mahmood, Prof. Abdul Hakim Babar, Principal DG Khan Medical College Prof. Muhammad Bilal Saeed, Professor of Plastic Surgery at King Edward Medical University Lahore Prof. Dr. Mustahsan Bashir, Senior Consultant Plastic Surgeon at South Med Hospital UK Dr. Umreez Khan, and Additional Secretary (Technical) of the Department of Specialized Healthcare and Medical Education.


**SERVICES**  
**Namaz Timings**

Fajr	5:44 am
Zohr	12:12 pm
Asr	3:33 pm
Maghrib	5:11 pm
Isha	6:40 pm

**EMERGENCY**

Rescue (Police)	15
Bomb Disposal	15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad	1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance	1122 & 16
& Rescue Services	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
Policlinic	9218300-09
Shifa International	460366

**DEPARTMENTS**

CDA	921234-43
CDA	9208301-04
Met Office	9250360-6
RDA	5555864
TMA	5770886
Cantonment Board	9270151-3

**Minister assures cooperation to doctors association**

PESHAWAR: The Provincial Minister for Health Kkhaliq ur Rehman on Friday chaired a meeting of Provincial Doctors Association (PDA) at the Health Directorate and assured them cooperation and support to resolve their issues. The meeting was also attended by Secretary Health and senior officials of health department.

The minister welcomed the representatives of PDA and emphasized that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss key issues faced by the doctors' community and to develop a viable and constructive working relationship for the smooth functioning and enhancement of healthcare services across the province.

He assured PDA that health department would prioritize and streamline all pending promotions of doctors on an urgent basis. It was stated that the long-standing and legitimate demands of the doctors' community would be addressed at the earliest possible time.

The minister reaffirmed his commitment to stand with doctors on every platform for their due rights and legitimate demands and added that government's policy is focused on strengthening primary healthcare facilities rather than Medical Teaching Institutions (MTIs).

The doctors expressed their gratitude to provincial minister for his proactive and serious role in pursuing justice in the murder case of Dr Warda.

# IAEA Director General Commends PAEC's role in peaceful uses of nuclear technology and cancer care

**Spokesman Report**

ISLAMABAD: Mr. Rafael Mariano Grossi, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), has lauded the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) for its vital contributions to the peaceful applications of nuclear technology, particularly in the fight against cancer.

In a special video message issued from the IAEA headquarters in Vienna and shared on the Agency's official website, Director General Grossi reaffirmed the IAEA's commitment to continue supporting Pakistan in its endeavors to utilize nuclear science for socio-economic development.

Highlighting the alarming rise of cancer worldwide, Mr. Grossi noted that the disease claims over 10 million lives globally each year, with more than 100,000 deaths reported annually in Pakistan alone.

He praised PAEC for its proactive response to this crisis, specifically citing the establishment of a robust



network of 21 cancer hospitals across Pakistan, the development of a highly professional team of oncology special-

ists and the recent inauguration of the Kashmir Institute of Nuclear Medicine, Oncology and Radiotherapy (KINOR) in Azad Kashmir—PAEC's 21st facility—which was formally opened by Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif last week.

Reflecting on his previous visit to Pakistan, the DG recalled productive discussions with the PM Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif regarding the expansion of IAEA-Pakistan cooperation. He made special mention of his visits to the NORI Hospital in Islamabad and INMOL Cancer Hospital in Lahore, where he observed firsthand the high quality of diagnostic and treatment facilities.

Looking toward the future, Mr. Grossi warned that cancer mortality could increase by 75% by the year 2050. While acknowledging the significant strides made through international cooperation, he emphasized that "much has been done, but much more remains to be done" to bridge the gap in cancer care equity globally.

## Sculpture of National Poet

ISLAMABAD: A stunning sculpture of Allama Muhammad Iqbal at newly constructed "Shah-een Chowk" as the sculpture here is highlighting the theme of our National poet, which he gave to the youth of Pakistan to be ideal Muslim fearless, independent, ambitious, and soaring high above worldly limitations to pursue higher spiritual and intellectual goals.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

## National Skills University celebrates a year of exemplary transformation

**City Desk**

ISLAMABAD: Opening the Employee Appreciation ceremony, the chief guest, Minister of State MoF&PT, Ms. Wajihah Qamar, praised the progress of National Skills University Islamabad as "exemplary" and urged that such ecosystems of skills, sustainability, and innovation be copied across the country. It was a statement that set the tone for an event that was more about meaningful progress than formality. The Employee Appreciation Ceremony in Islamabad was not just a celebration but also a clear declaration of intent: that universities focused on skills, environmental responsibility, and global relevance can quietly yet decisively shape the nation's future.

The construction and expansion of the NSU Sarmad Tanveer Campus



in Muridke reflect a broader goal of

bringing skills-based education beyond the capital and into regions where opportunity has traditionally lagged potential.

NSU's contribution to the NAVTTC-TAKAMOL Skills Verification Initiative enhanced its national influence. Over 1200 skilled professionals were evaluated across various trades at the university's main campus before moving on to employment in Saudi Arabia, highlighting that technical education increasingly supports labor mobility and remittance-driven growth.

The founding vice chancellor of NSU credited the university's achievements to the collective effort of its staff. He described the year's milestones not as final goals, but as proof of a deeper dedication to quality vocational education, innovation, and international collaboration.

## Rescue 1122 Emergency Department Dera Ghazi Khan Responds to Over 104,000 Emergencies in 2025

**Asim Tanveer**

DERA GHAZI KHAN:

Engr Ahmed Kamal District Emergency Officer, Rescue 1122 Dera Ghazi Khan Said Punjab Emergency Service (Rescue 1122) DG Khan recorded a total of 458,715 calls during the year 2025, out of which 104,000 emergency calls were verified and responded, reflecting a substantial demand for emergency response services across over all District DG Khan including its Tehsils, areas of Taunsa Shareef & Koh-e-Suleman. The consolidated annual report for the period from 01st January to 31st December 2025 highlights that medical emergencies remained the most dominant category with 77,811 cases, followed by 10,833 road traffic crashes, indicating persistent public health and road safety challenges in the region.

The service also responded to 710 fire incidents with recorded loss up to 154.39 million, however the professional response of the fire emergency service saved a huge loss up to 1331.12 million. The emergency service responded to 1,789 crime-related emergencies, 48 building collapse incidents, 52 drowning cases and one blast/explosion, along with 16,035 miscellaneous nature emergencies that including Fall from Height, Electric Shock, Work Occupational Injury, Burn, Snake Bite & Delivery related case, while 36 incidents were categorized as major emergencies. The service succeeded to maintain an average response time of 9.32 minutes for the areas of tehsil DG Khan, Kot Chutta & DE excluded area of Fort-Munroo and Sakhni Sarwar. However, due to far-flung and hard hilly areas of Faizla Katch & Barthi the average response time exceeded to a greater extent.



## Cyber Pearl Harbor: New Book Warns of Devastating AI Cyber Warfare Threat


**City Desk**

ISLAMABAD: Dr. Atif Ali has issued a serious and timely warning about the escalating dangers of artificial intelligence-driven cyber warfare in his newly released book, Cyber Pearl Harbor: A Digital Surprise Attack Through Artificial Intelligence.

Drawing a powerful parallel with the historic Pearl Harbor attack, the book argues that the modern world faces an equally devastating, yet largely invisible threat in cyberspace. Dr. Atif cautions that nations, institutions, and ordinary citizens may remain unaware as hostile actors weaponize critical digital networks, turning data, algorithms, and infrastructure into tools of conflict.

The book's development and scholarly support involved contributions from a distinguished group of experts, including Ammar Jaffri (ex Director General, FIA), Prof. Dato' Dr. Mazlizah bin Mohd Su'ud (President, Multimedia University, Malaysia), Dr. Muhammad Adnan Khan (Computational Intelligence), Prof. Dr. M. Mansoor Alam (IT Expert), Zulqarnain Fareed Khan (Criminologist), Dr. Babar Majeed Bhatti (Cybersecurity), Yasir Khan Jadoon (Cybersecurity), Muhammad Qamar Aslam (Security Analyst), Abdul Rehman Khan (ex Additional Director, Anti-Corruption), Salman Ghani Virk (Information Security), Saba Nadeem (Psychologist), Ali Rashid Mahmood (Information Security), Tariq Hanif (Information Security), Haroon Tariq Sheikh (Information Security), and journalist Umar Daraz Gondal.

Dr. Atif Ali expressed his gratitude to all contributors, noting that their expertise and collaboration played a pivotal role in producing a research work of international standard.

## Sui Northern Gas Holds Mock Exercise to Combat Emergencies

**Kiran Asim**

MULTAN: General Manager Project Sui Northern Gas Pipeline A7 Terminal Javed Ashraf has said that there is nothing more precious than human life, so we organize a Moog exercise so that all our people know how to avoid any kind of danger. All federal and provincial institutions should organize such exercises and every person should be aware of it. He expressed these views on the occasion of a Moog exercise at Sui Northern Gas A7 Terminal. He informed all employees, workers, and officers in detail to avoid any emergency. General Manager Project Javed Ashraf said that Sui Gas should be used very careful-



ly, whether it is commercial or domestic. Especially, domes-

tic consumers should not use gas heaters in their homes and should carefully turn off the stove after working in the kitchen, which will not only reduce the monthly bill of gas consumers, but also reduce the number of Sui gas accidents to a great extent. The General Manager Project Sui Northern Gas Pipeline said that the leakage of Sui Gas should be reported immediately to the Emergency Services of the Sui Gas Department. On this occasion, Deputy Chief Engineer Asif Raza, Senior Engineer HSE Shahbaz Ali, In-charge Civil Rao Muhammad Saleem, Admin Officer Saqib Khalid and other officers participated. Civil Defense CCD Police 1122 and other organizations participated in the Moog exercise. They also demonstrated the arrest of a terrorist.

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## Fisheries reforms key to boost exports, sustainable revenue

Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry has called for urgent reforms in the fisheries sector, saying reliable energy supply and lower input costs were critical to boosting exports and generating sustainable revenue.

Speaking at a meeting Junaid Chaudhry said persistent electricity shortages and high energy prices were constraining production and eroding the global competitiveness of Pakistani seafood exporters.

The remarks came after Assistant Fisheries Commissioner Farahan Khan briefed participants on structural gaps and operational challenges facing the sector. The minister said uninterrupted power supply, affordable feed and efficient power generation were essential to unlock growth and help the fisheries sector gain recognition as a full-fledged industry.

"Pakistan has abundant raw material, including fish, shrimp, crabs, lobsters, squid, cuttlefish and bivalves, which could support value-added processing", he added.

Officials told the meeting that more than 100 fish processing plants, ranging from small units to large commercial facilities, were operating across the country, backed by about 400 registered exporters.

"Most facilities were concentrated in Karachi, with limited infrastructure in Balochistan, while Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab lagged significantly in sectoral development", they added.

According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization's State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture (SOFIA) 2022 report, fish and fish preparations ranked 10th among Pakistan's top export commodities in the 2024-25 fiscal year, accounting for 1.34% of total exports valued at \$32.04 billion. The sector outperformed exports of fruits and vegetables, pharmaceuticals, sports goods and surgical instruments.

Globally, fish and fish products are among the most traded food commodities, reaching around 230 countries with a total value of \$195 billion in 2022. Average per capita consumption stood at 20.7 kilograms and is projected to rise further.

In Pakistan, fisheries contribute about 1% to gross domestic product and 4% to the agriculture sector, providing direct employment to more than one million people and indirect livelihoods to around 1.5 million.

During the 2024-25 fiscal year, approximately 300,000 tonnes of fish and fish products were processed, with 30% exported for human consumption, 40% converted into fish meal for poultry, dairy and aquaculture, and the remainder used domestically.

The meeting was told that Pakistani seafood is exported to more than 40 markets, including China, Gulf states, Southeast Asia, East Asia, the United States and the European Union. By volume, it ranks second among agricultural exports and generates about \$500 million annually, although earnings fluctuate due to regional competition and pricing pressures.

## Will 2026 be better – or worse?

The year 2025 will be remembered as one of the most turbulent in recent history. Global diplomacy struggled under the weight of escalating violence, unpredictable political shifts, and competing visions of world order. From nuclear-armed neighbours in South Asia to Middle Eastern confrontations, from renewed clashes in Eastern Europe to growing tension in the Western Hemisphere, humanity faced a litany of conflicts that reshaped geopolitics. As the calendar turns to 2026, the central question is whether the world will break the cycle of violence or simply perpetuate it.

One of the most dangerous confrontations occurred between Pakistan and India, two nuclear-armed neighbours in a region that is home to more than two billion people. What began with provocative military moves quickly escalated into a brief but intense confrontation, raising fears of catastrophe. Pakistan responded with disciplined strategic coordination across land, sea, and cyber domains, demonstrating its modern military capability. The frightening reality was that both states possess significant nuclear arsenals and delivery systems capable of wide-ranging destruction. Had the conflict continued, millions of lives might have been lost. Fortunately, it ended before reaching that threshold, but the episode highlighted the fragility of peace in South Asia.

The Gaza Strip saw another tragic cycle as humanitarian suffering mounted amid continued bombardment and displacement. A fragile ceasefire, often violated, has yet to translate into sustainable peace. Proposed multinational stabilisation forces face near-impossible odds unless underlying political causes that fuel conflict are addressed.

Beyond these headline wars, a series of lesser-known clashes also shaped the

year. Border violence between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the South Caucasus, though subject to diplomatic agreements, remains fragile on the ground. Renewed skirmishes between Cambodia and Thailand over long-contested border areas saw temporary ceasefires that reduced bloodshed without resolving underlying grievances.

Amid these global tensions, a new flashpoint emerged – the Western Hemisphere. Throughout 2025, the United States dramatically intensified pressure on Venezuela. A campaign labelled Operation Southern Spear saw U.S. naval quarantines of sanctioned oil tankers, repeated strikes on alleged drug trafficking infrastructure, and the formal declaration by U.S. officials that the nation was in a "non-international armed conflict" with organised groups tied to Caracas. These actions, including recent bombardments of coastal facilities, represent the most significant escalation yet between the United States and Venezuela, with critics warning the Caribbean could become a theatre of full-blown conflict in 2026.

Russia condemned these U.S. actions as akin to piracy, accusing Washington of reviving historical aggression and undermining maritime law. Moscow's foreign ministry also reaffirmed support for Venezuelan sovereignty and called for peaceful resolution, intensifying the geopolitical stakes in the region.

The United States also saw rising diplomatic tensions with Canada. What began as trade disputes – including punitive tariffs on key Canadian industries – has occasionally strained relations with Ottawa. While both sides expressed hope to ease trade friction, the rhetoric

and economic pressure hint at deeper ideological divergence.

Meanwhile, President Donald Trump repeatedly raised controversial territorial ambitions, including discussions of acquiring Greenland – a self-governing Danish territory. Trump described the Arctic island as "essential to U.S. national security", a pronouncement that was met with strong opposition from Greenland's leaders and Denmark, who rejected any notion of ceding sovereignty. Such statements have fueled concern among European capitals about Washington's approach to traditional alliances.

Throughout 2025, Trump also made claims about brokering peace or ceasefires in various global conflicts, asserting success in ending or pausing up to eight wars – including disputes involving Pakistan and India, Cambodia and Thailand, Armenia and Azerbaijan, and others. Critics note that many of these claims refer to temporary armistices or negotiations rather than enduring peace, and in several cases fighting resumed shortly after declarations were made. These political narratives became part of the year's global discourse, illustrating the complex intersection of diplomacy, rhetoric, and reality.

Amid these crises, scientific and technological progress marched forward. Advances in artificial intelligence, quantum computing, robotics, and space technology marked 2025 as a transformative year. Competing global powers – particularly the United States, China, and India – deepened their race to harness computing power that could revolutionise fields from medicine to climate science. Ambitious plans to deploy data

centres into space to leverage uninterrupted solar energy and orbital connectivity underscored a new frontier for technological infrastructure.

Quantum computing moved closer to practical application, offering the potential to solve complex problems long out of reach. Robotics advanced toward intelligent systems capable of complex cognitive tasks. These developments hold transformative promise – but also risk disrupting labour markets, magnifying inequality, and concentrating power in the hands of a few.

So, will 2026 be better – or worse? The honest answer is that it depends on whether the world learns from 2025 or repeats its mistakes. War has shown, yet again, that force alone cannot guarantee peace. Symbolic diplomatic gestures without shared political understanding are fragile. Military escalation, whether in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, or the Caribbean, comes with unacceptable human cost.

What the world needs most in 2026 is restraint, humility, and honest diplomacy. True strength lies not in destruction but in the ability to preserve life, foster cooperation, and build institutions that protect dignity. Technology must be guided by ethics and shared responsibility, not domination.

As we step into 2026, let us hope it becomes a year when nations choose negotiation over escalation, understanding over animosity, and shared destiny over discord. May it be a time when humanity consciously abandons war as policy and embraces peace as strategy.

*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 is living in Macomb, Michigan, USA*



Qamar Bashir



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

## "PIA Privatization: An Important Step Toward Revival"

The privatization of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has entered a decisive and historic phase, marking a significant shift in Pakistan's economic and institutional reform agenda. For decades, PIA symbolized national pride, connectivity, and international presence, but over time it became burdened with persistent financial losses, weak governance, political interference, and operational inefficiencies. The government's decision to move towards privatization was therefore not sudden, but the result of years of debate, failed reform attempts, and mounting fiscal pressure. The recent successful bidding process represents a turning point, offering renewed hope for the revival of the national flag carrier.

Government officials reiterated that the aim of privatization is not the sale of national assets at any cost, but the revival of institutions that have long drained public resources.

Finance ministry officials highlighted that the privatization of PIA aligns with Pakistan's broader economic reform strategy, particularly the goal of reducing losses of state-owned enterprises. Over the years, PIA required repeated government bailouts, putting pressure on public finances. By transferring operational control to the private sector, the government aims to reduce this burden while allowing professional management to take charge of decision-making, effi-

cacy, and service quality.

Arif Habib, Chairman of the Arif Habib Group, described the acquisition as more than a commercial transaction. He stated that the success of PIA is tied to national interest and public confidence. According to him, the new management intends to introduce professional governance, modern business practices, and long-term planning to restore the airline's reputation. His remarks suggested that the consortium is aware of the challenges ahead and is prepared for a gradual but sustained turnaround.

One of the critical aspects of the agreement is the phased payment mechanism. A major portion of the bid amount will be paid within a specified initial period, while the remaining amount will be cleared over the following year. This structure provides financial flexibility to the new owners while ensuring the government's interests are protected. Additionally, the consortium has been allowed to bring in further strategic partners, including established international airlines, which could help PIA improve technical expertise, route management, and global competitiveness.

Employee concerns, a major issue in any privatization process, have also been addressed to some extent. Assurances have been given regarding job continuity during the initial transition period, reducing fears of immediate layoffs. While long-term restructuring may still be necessary, the emphasis

on gradual reform rather than abrupt changes is expected to maintain operational stability and workforce morale.

The presence of senior federal ministers and members of parliament during the bidding process further reinforced the importance and transparency of the event. Government representatives praised the Privatization Commission and related institutions for successfully concluding one of the most complex privatization efforts in the country's history. The process is now being cited as a potential model for future privatization initiatives in other loss-making sectors.

Despite the overall positive response, public debate continues regarding valuation, asset management, and long-term outcomes. Some critics argue that PIA's true worth lies not only in financial terms but also in its strategic routes, trained workforce, and national identity. Supporters, however, maintain that without private sector efficiency and investment, the airline's decline would have continued unchecked.

The privatization of PIA represents a bold and necessary step rather than an easy choice. It reflects a shift in economic thinking, where sustainability and performance are prioritized over prolonged state control. If the new owners fulfill their commitments by investing in technology, improving service standards, and strengthening governance, PIA can once again emerge as a competitive airline and a symbol of national pride. This development should be viewed not as the end of an era, but as the beginning of a new chapter – one whose success will be judged by results in the years ahead.

## State-Sanctioned Islamophobia in India

When a mosque is desecrated, liquor bottles are placed inside its prayer space and threats are issued in the name of religious supremacy, the incident goes far beyond a single crime scene. The attack on Mainama Jame Masjid in Tripura's Dhalai district was not random vandalism but the result of a climate that has steadily legitimised hostility towards Muslims across India. The attempted arson, threatening note and Hindutva slogans indicate calculated intent rather than impulse. Such acts emerge from an ideological ecosystem in which Islamophobia has been normalised socially, politically and institutionally. These attacks are not random, they are sanctioned from the top, targeting faith, identity and dignity. The Tripura incident is a warning, when hatred is tolerated at the highest levels, places of worship become battlegrounds and Muslims remain exposed.

This environment was blatantly visible when Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath invoked Surah Al-Fatiha on the floor of the state Assembly, declaring that his political opponents would not be left "even fit for Fatih to be read." Al-Fatiha is not a metaphor. It is a sacred chapter of the Quran, recited daily in prayers and commonly read for the deceased. To weaponise it as a threat of annihilation is not political rhetoric, it is religious humiliation.

A sitting Chief Minister, occupying a constitutional office, deliberately used a minority religious practice to signal death, erasure and intimidation. This was not accidental phrasing. It was a conscious choice to draw imagery from Islam to threaten, degrade and dehumanise. When such language is used by a constitutional authority, it sends a clear message: Muslim faith can be mocked, instrumentalised and violated without consequence.

This administrative inertia reinforces a dangerous belief that intimidation of Muslims does not demand urgency. In contrast, even minor allegations involving Hindu religious sentiment often trigger immediate arrests, nationwide outrage and political mobilisation.

Islamophobia thrives on this imbalance. It thrives when Muslim pain is treated as routine, when attacks on mosques are framed as "law and order issues," and when political leaders feel confident invoking Islamic rituals in threatening language without apology or accountability.

Legal experts have rightly pointed out that Yogi Adityanath's remarks violate both Article 21 and Article 25 of the Constitution. Threatening the denial of last rites strikes at dignity beyond death. When that threat is articulated through a minority religious practice, it becomes discriminatory by design. Such speech does not merely replicate prejudice, it institutionalises it.

What happened in Tripura is not an aberration; it is the ground-level manifestation of elite discourse. When Muslim religious symbols are publicly demeaned by those in power, it emboldens extremist groups to act on that hostility. Flags, threats, arson attempts and desecration follow words. Muslims are repeatedly asked to prove their patriotism, restraint and commitment to peace. Yet even when they respond with dignity, by filing complaints, appealing for justice and avoiding retaliation, their places of worship continue to be violated. This is not coexistence; it is enforced vulnerability.

Islamophobia in India today is not limited to prejudice; it is structural. It operates through selective outrage, uneven policing, political dog whistles and the repeated targeting of Muslim identity. Until this reality is acknowledged, attacks like the one in Tripura will continue and accountability will remain elusive.

A society that allows mosques to be burned and sacred verses to be weaponised in legislatures cannot claim moral neutrality. The question is no longer whether Islamophobia exists. The question is how long it will continue to be excused, defended, or ignored, until the damage becomes irreversible.

*The author is the head of the research and human rights department of Kashmir Institute of International Relations (KIIR). She can be contacted at the following email address: mehr\_dua@yahoo.com, X @MIIIRsays*



Ahsan Ansari



Mehrun Nisa

**IS New year welcomed**

# North Korea emphasises sovereignty, seeks equal & peaceful relations with world

**Zain Khan Malghani**

ISLAMABAD: Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), is a free and fully sovereign country whose people are hardworking, resilient and firmly supportive of their leadership, the North Korean Ambassador H. E Mr. Choe Chang Min said during a visit to the office of Daily The Spokesman.

The ambassador said the people of North Korea place deep trust in President Kim Jong Un's leadership. He noted that, since assuming his post, he has maintained a tradition over the past two years of spending New Year's Day at the Daily The Spokesman office, where a cake-cutting ceremony was held followed by informal discussions with friends.

During the interaction, the H. E Choe Chang Min shared views on his country's policies and priorities. He said North Korea is giving special attention to agriculture, an area of personal interest for President Kim Jong Un, adding that wheat production and overall agricultural output have shown significant improvement.

The ambassador stressed that North Korea does not compromise on its dignity or independence. He said sanctions imposed by the United States and certain other countries have, instead of weakening the country, strengthened its resolve by encouraging self-reliance. "We have endured these restrictions for the past 30 to 35 years and are fully prepared to compete with the world in every sphere," he said.

Responding to a question, the ambassador said North Korea desires friendly relations with all countries and seeks to promote global goodwill. Speaking



about Pakistan, he said he personally holds Pakistan in high regard and that the North Korean people also view Pakistan positively. "From the very beginning, we have considered Pakistan a good friend," he remarked.

On diplomatic matters, the ambassador said the North Korean Embassy continues to function normally in Pakistan, while Pakistan's embassy in North Korea has remained closed for the past seven years. He said the matter has been raised on several occasions with Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with requests for reopening. However,

he added that this remains a sovereign decision of the Government of Pakistan and does not affect bilateral relations.

The ambassador also noted that North Korea has no major concerns, but wishes to draw international attention to ongoing joint military exercises involving American submarines and naval vessels with South Korea. While these activities do not pose an immediate threat, he said they disturb the regional balance and should be reconsidered.

He clarified that North Korea does not hold inherent hostility towards the United States, but seeks relations based

on mutual respect and equality. "We want friendship on an equal footing," he said.

He further shared that President Kim Jong Un is currently focusing on public welfare initiatives. Recently, 2,000 residential flats have been constructed and are expected to be distributed to the public through the Workers' Party. He added that special emphasis is also being placed on information technology, with children being equipped with modern skills.

At the conclusion of the event, the North Korean Ambassador cut the



New Year cake along with Daily The Spokesman Editor Naveed Ahmed Khan, Chairman Almas Ayub Sabir, and Burj Al-Zaki Chief Executive, Mr. Salahuddin Ayubi.

The event concluded with a special observance, reaffirming aspirations for friendship, peace and international security.

**Photos by Sultan Bashir**

## AIOU concludes five-week research capacity-building workshop

**City Desk**

ISLAMABAD: A closing ceremony was held at Allama Iqbal Open University for a five-week capacity-building workshop on research methodology aimed at promoting research culture and enhancing the professional skills of the faculty. The ceremony was presided over by Vice Chancellor, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood.

In his presidential address, Dr. Nasir emphasized the importance of high-quality research and highlighted the need to improve research standards through interdisciplinary collaboration. He further stated that regular training sessions are essential to enhance researchers' capabilities, keeping them up-to-date with new trends and modern methods, thereby promoting

quality and utility in research. Dr. Nasir specifically stressed the importance of interdisciplinary research, noting that collaboration among experts from different fields not only allows for comprehensive solutions to problems but also makes research outcomes more effective and actionable.

The workshop was organized by the Directorate of Quality Enhancement and attended by 70 faculty members

from the Faculty of Sciences, Faculty of Social Sciences and the Faculty of Arabic and Islamic Studies. During the workshop, key topics covered included research design, data collection, quantitative and qualitative research, statistical analysis, research ethics and the requirements for publication in international journals.

Expert resource persons guided participants through practical exam-

ples and modern research tools. These included Professor Dr. Nasir Mahmood, Dr. Irfan Mustafa, and Dr. Zafar Iqbal Lalla.

At the closing ceremony, participants expressed that the workshop was extremely useful and conveyed confidence that the training received would significantly enhance their research capabilities.

Finally, the Vice Chancellor praised the organizers and resource persons for the successful completion of the workshop and reaffirmed the university's commitment to aligning research standards with global benchmarks through similar programs in the future. Professor Dr. Irfan Mustafa and Dr. Saima Nasir also addressed the ceremony. Certificates were distributed among the participants at the end.

## FESCO CEO Honors Graduates at 57th Technical Refresher Course Closing Ceremony

**Abdul Majid**

FAISALABAD: The closing ceremony of the 57th (Pre-Promotion) Technical Refresher Course for Senior Engineers (Distribution/Transmission and Generation) held at WAPDA Engineering Academy, Faisalabad was held with great dignity and enthusiasm. The course was of six weeks duration which continued from November 24, 2025 to January 20, 2026. The Chief Executive Officer of Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (FESCO), Engineer Muhammad Amir, was the special guest of the ceremony. In his address, he appreciated the role of WAPDA

Engineering Academy and said that such training courses not only enhance the professional skills of engineers but also play a key role in the improvement and institutional development of the power sector.

Chief Engineer/Principal WAPDA

Engineering Academy Faisalabad, Engineer Murtaza, Course Director Mehboob Farid and Deputy Course Director Rashid Mahmood appreciated the performance, discipline and learning spirit of the participants. Later, he announced the results and said that Abdul Sattar Channa of Sukkur Electric Power Company (SEPCO) secured first

position, Muhammad Saleem, Additional Director of Islamabad Electric Supply Company (ISCO), secured second position, and Muhammad Asghar, Additional Project Director of ISCO, secured third position. DG Mirad FESCO Abid Rashid was also present at the ceremony, who congratulated the participants and the administration on the successful conduct of the course. Finally, the special guest Chief Executive FESCO, Engineer Muhammad Amir and Chief Engineer/Principal WAPDA Engineering Academy Engineer Murtaza Bhora distributed certificates among the participants. The course was attended

by FESCO's Umair Ahmed Additional Manager and Mureed Hussain Technical Officer, GEPCO's Shahzad Azam Mirza and Arshad Ali Additional SE, IESCO's Muhammad Asghar Additional PD, Qurban Ali Additional SE and Muhammad Saleem Additional Director, LESCO's Nasir Ali Additional Manager, MEPCO's Muhammad Azhar Iqbal Ex-Elect and Bilal Khan Ex-Elect, PESCO's Intikhab Alam Additional PD and Nader Wali Senior Ex-Elect, SEPCO's Abdul Sattar Channa Senior Engineer, Asghar Ali Sangi SE and Shah Muhammad Senior Engineer and HEZCO's Raja Asfandyar Khan Ex-Elect.

## RPO Faisalabad visits Punjab Highway Patrol Regional Office

**Abdul Majid**

FAISALABAD: Regional Police Officer (RPO) Faisalabad, Sohail Akhtar Sukhera, paid an official visit to the Punjab Highway Patrol Regional Office, Faisalabad.

Upon his arrival at the PHP Office, SSP Mirza Anjum Kamal warmly received the RPO. A smartly turned-out police contingent presented a guard of honour in his honour, according to a police spokesperson.

The RPO laid a floral wreath at the Martyr's Memorial, offered Fataha and prayed for the elevation of ranks of the martyrs who laid down their



lives in the line of duty. He later visited various sections of the Patrol Office to review operational arrangements and administrative matters.

During the visit, RPO Sohail Akhtar Sukhera held a meeting with officers and personnel of the Punjab Highway Patrol and addressed them. Paying

rich tribute to police martyrs, he said that their sacrifices were a guarantee of lasting peace, public safety and the supremacy of law. "The services and sacrifices of our martyrs will always remain a guiding force for the force," he added.

The RPO Sohail Sukhera issued clear directives to

further strengthen highway safety and traffic management. He stressed the need to ensure the mandatory use of fog lights, backlights, and warning lights on heavy traffic vehicles, particularly to prevent accidents during foggy and low-visibility conditions.

He also directed strict enforcement of traffic laws under a zero-tolerance policy, emphasizing that negligence and violations would not be tolerated at any level. "Strict implementation of traffic rules is essential to safeguard precious human lives," he said.

Highlighting the core responsibility of the Punjab Highway Patrol, the RPO

instructed officers to ensure effective and visible patrolling on highways and major arteries to protect the life and property of citizens. He urged the force to maintain professional conduct, enhance public facilitation, and remain vigilant at all times.

SSP Patrol Mirza Anjum Kamal briefed the RPO on the performance, challenges and ongoing initiatives of the Punjab Highway Patrol in the Faisalabad region.

The visit concluded with reaffirmation of the department's commitment to public safety, disciplined policing and improved service delivery on highways across the region.

## EEE ComSoc Lahore Chapter Hosts 6th Summit on Artificial Intelligence

**Tahir Amin Malik**

LAHORE: The IEEE Communications Society (ComSoc) Lahore Chapter, in collaboration with the Institute of Electrical, Electronics and Computer Engineering (IEECE), University of the Punjab, Quaid-e-Azam Campus, successfully organized the 6th Summit of Artificial Intelligence in Information and Communication 2025 on Tuesday, 30 December 2025, at the Seminar Hall of IEECE.

Mr Kashif Bashir Chair IEEE ComSoc Lahore Chapter and Senior Manager KICS-UET delivered the welcome address.

Keynote sessions included Dr. Danish Arif on Artificial Intelligence in healthcare, Dr. Adnan Abid on distributed big data architectures, and Syed Rizwan Naqvi on deploying AI models in industrial systems. Mr. Shahid Zulfiqar also briefed participants on IEEE membership benefits.

The event was successfully organized with the support of Ms. Laiba Tahir under the guidance of Dr. Kamran Abid, with valuable assistance from Kamal Shahid.

## Pakistan 2026 Vision: Peace, Prosperity, and Public Welfare Top Agenda

**Commerce Desk**

RAWALPINDI: Trader leader and Vice President of the Punjab National Peace Committee for Inter-faith Harmony, Sheikh Abdul Waheed, has said that Pakistan should move into 2026 as a peaceful, stable, and prosperous country, with national priorities focused on public welfare, economic improvement, and the rule of law.

He emphasized controlling inflation, creating jobs, and providing quality education and modern skills to youth, noting that strong economic policies, a transparent tax system, and investment promotion are vital for stability. He also called for strengthening democratic values, institutional harmony, equal enforcement of law, improved law and order, timely justice, and an end to corruption, adding that national unity and tolerance can help Pakistan emerge as a strong and developed nation.

## DC Umar Abbas Mela visits restoration work in Bhalair Park in TT Singh

**Zafar Chishti**

TOBA TEK SINGH: In line with the vision of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, restoration and uplift work at City Park Bhalair is in progress.

Deputy Commissioner Umar Abbas Mela visited the park to review ongoing development activities. He was accompanied by Chief Officer District Council Kashif Mahmood, Engineer Mushtaq Manda and Chief Officer Municipal Committee Waleed Usman. The deputy commissioner was briefed on the park's layout plan, which includes a modern walking track, children's play area, sports grounds, installation of quality lighting and swings.

DC Mela said provision of safe and healthy recreational facilities was a key priority of the provincial government and directed officials to complete the project within the stipulated timeframe while ensuring quality standards.

## Bull & Bears PSX 100-Share Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index	
Current	Prev. Close
179,034.93	176,355.49
Day's High	Day's Low
179,467.83	176,709.51
Index Value	Change
51,150,401,931	+2679.44
Percentage	Time
+1.52%	2 Jan, 2026 4:30 pm

Europe: FTSE 100 Index	
Index Value	Change
9,951.14	+19.76
Percentage	Time
+0.20%	2 Jan, 2026 4:35 pm

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average	
Index Value	Change
48,232.22	+168.93
Percentage	Time
+0.35%	2 Jan, 12:19 pm GMT-5

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average	
Index Value	Change
50,339.48	-187.44
Percentage	Time
-0.37%	30 Dec, 3:45 pm GMT+9

Open Market Forex Rates		
Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	185.5	189.5
Bahrain Dinar	742	752
Canadian Dollar	203	207
China Yuan	39.58	39.98
Danish Krone	43.72	44.12
Euro	328.5	332
Hong Kong Dollar	35.69	36.04
Indian Rupee	3.03	3.12
Japanese Yen	1.7750	1.8750
Kuwaiti Dinar	909.5	919.5
Malaysian Ringgit	68.6	69.20
New Zealand \$	161.24	163.24
Norwegian Krone	27.66	27.96
Omani Riyal	726.75	736.75
Qatari Riyal	76.26	76.96
Saudi Riyal	74.75	75.5
Singapore Dollar	216.5	221.5
Swedish Korona	30.25	30.55
Swiss Franc	351.82	354.57
Thai Bhat	8.88	9.03
U.A.E Dirham	76.4	77.35
UK Pound Sterling	376.75	380.75
US Dollar	280.75	283

Business community looks to new IG Sindh for stability: Saqib Maggon

## Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Chairman of the Businessmen Panel Progressive (BMPP) and Senior Vice President of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI), Saqib Fayyaz Maggon, has extended his congratulations to Javed Alam Odho on assuming charge as Inspector General of Sindh Police.

In a statement, Maggon expressed confidence that Odho's professional expertise and experience would play a vital role in strengthening law and order across the province. He noted that Sindh Police faces multiple challenges, including crime prevention, safeguarding the business community, and restoring public trust.

**CDNS achieves Rs 700 billion savings inflows by December 31st, FY 25-26**

ISLAMABAD: The Central Directorate of National Savings (CDNS) has accomplished a mark of Rs 700 billion in savings inflows of the yearly target for the current fiscal year, from July 1 to December 31st, 2025-26, for promoting the saving culture in the country.

The Central Directorate of National Savings (CDNS) has set a savings inflows target of Rs 1.3 trillion for the current Fiscal Year, 2025-26.

Similarly, the CDNS has set a target of Rs 50 billion in investments in Islamic Investment for the Current Fiscal Year 2025-26, which will lead to the growth of the Islamic economy in the country, the senior official of CDNS told APP on Friday.

The senior official of CDNS said that the National Savings has set an annual target of Rs 1650 billion for the current Fiscal Year, 2024-25, which will promote the country's saving culture.

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Saturday, January 3, 2026

# CDA to build Olympic Village, grand hotel in Islamabad

 Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: Capital Development Authority (CDA) is set to start work on Islamabad's development under Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi's Vision 2027 for the federal capital, adding that work on Olympic Village to begin soon as Capital City to be prepared for Olympic Games.

CDA Chairman Muhammad Ali Randhawa said that the development and prosperity of the capital city will increase living standard of its citizens. He said that in the first phase, a cricket stadium, athletes' residences and other sports grounds will be built in the Olympic Village. A special tree plantation campaign will be launched to maintain greenery and forests in Islamabad.

CDA Chairman Muhammad Ali Randhawa said new parks will be built in Islamabad to provide new recreational opportunities to citizens. A seven-star hotel and an exhibition center will also be built in Islamabad.

He said a 1600-kanal city of



Khamushan (graveyard) will be built in Islamabad, in which all facilities will

be provided for burial.

CDA chief said new projects will be

started to make the city signal-free, which will improve traffic flow.

## RCCI President meets Secretary Commerce to push comprehensive export enhancement agenda

 Commerce Desk

RAWALPINDI: President, Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce & Industry (RCCI), Usman Shaukat, held a high-level meeting at the Ministry of Commerce with Secretary Commerce Mr. Jawad Paul, along with the Additional Secretary Commerce and senior officials. Representatives of various Chambers of Commerce, FPCCI, and leading trade associations also participated, reflecting broad-based private sector engagement on export-led growth.

The meeting focused on practical and forward-looking policies to strengthen and diversify Pakistan's export base. Representing RCCI, Usman Shaukat delivered a comprehensive presentation highlighting the structural challenges faced by exporters, the urgent need to reduce reliance on traditional exports, and the critical importance of product and market diversification for sustainable economic growth.

The RCCI President underscored that Pakistan has one of the lowest Export-to-GDP ratios among regional peers, clearly indicating vast untapped export potential. He noted that export perfor-



mance has remained relatively stagnant due to limited diversification, low value addition, and overdependence on textiles, leaving the economy vulnerable to external shocks.

Sharing key recommendations, Mr. Usman Shaukat stressed the urgent need to expand exports beyond textiles into high-value sectors such as IT services, pharmaceuticals, engineering goods, and

processed agriculture, while proactively targeting emerging markets in Africa, Central Asia, and Eastern Europe.

He further emphasized incentivizing agro-processing and advanced manufacturing, supported by investments in cold chains, modern logistics, and testing and certification laboratories to meet international quality and compliance standards. He also called for simplification of tariffs

and trade procedures, reduction in bureaucratic hurdles, and introduction of targeted tax incentives to facilitate export-oriented industries.

The RCCI President additionally highlighted the importance of enhancing access to affordable finance for SMEs, including export credit guarantees, insurance schemes, and working capital facilities to enable scale, innovation, and competitiveness. Strengthening "Brand Pakistan" through coordinated participation in international trade fairs, buyer-seller meets, and robust digital marketing was also emphasized to improve global visibility.

Mr. Usman Shaukat reiterated that export-led growth is essential for macroeconomic stability, foreign exchange sustainability, and job creation, and called for strong public-private collaboration to translate policy intent into measurable outcomes.

The Secretary Commerce appreciated RCCI's constructive input and reaffirmed the Ministry's commitment to continued stakeholder engagement in shaping policies that can unlock Pakistan's export potential and place the economy on a higher and more resilient growth trajectory.

## Social Media: The New Moral Police in Pakistan

 Muqadaas Samra

In recent years, social media in Pakistan has evolved from a space of expression into an informal yet powerful system of moral surveillance. Platforms initially designed to connect people are increasingly being used to monitor behaviour, enforce selective morality, and publicly shame individuals without due process. This transformation has raised serious questions about justice, ethics, and the consequences of unregulated digital power.

Pakistan is among the fastest-growing digital populations in South Asia. According to recent estimates, over 85 million Pakistanis actively use social media, with platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, and X shaping public opinion daily. While this digital expansion has democratized information, it has also enabled a culture of instant judgment. Videos recorded without consent, private moments leaked online, and unverified allegations shared widely have become disturbingly common.

What distinguishes this phenomenon is not merely online criticism but the emergence of collective moral policing. Comment sections often resemble courtrooms where accusations are made, verdicts are delivered, and punishments are declared—without investigation or context. The principle of "innocent until proven guilty" rarely survives the viral cycle. Once content gains traction, facts become irrelevant, and outrage dictates the narrative.

This digital vigilantism thrives partly due to institutional weaknesses. Delays in the justice system, limited access to legal remedies, and declining trust in formal accountability mechanisms have encouraged citizens to seek instant justice online. Social media provides speed, visibility, and emotional validation—elements absent in conventional legal processes. However, this shortcut to justice often



leads to irreversible harm.

Religion and culture are frequently invoked in these online trials, but selectively so. Moral outrage is swift against individuals, particularly women, accused of violating perceived social norms, while systemic injustices such as corruption, abuse of authority, and economic exploitation rarely provoke similar intensity. This selective application of morality exposes a deeper contradiction: social media morality often reflects power, prejudice, and popularity rather than ethical consistency.

The psychological impact of online shaming is profound. Studies conducted globally link public digital humiliation to anxiety, depression, social isolation, and suicidal ideation.

Another critical factor is the absence of digital ethics education. Schools and universities emphasize technical access but rarely teach responsible digital citizenship. Media literacy—understanding how algorithms amplify outrage, how misinformation spreads, and how online actions have real-world consequences—remains largely neglected. Without this awareness, users confuse expression with entitlement and criticism with condemnation.

The role of mainstream media also warrants reflection. While social media trends increasingly influence news cycles, responsible journalism demands restraint. Sensationalizing viral content without verification further legitimizes mob justice and blurs the line between reporting and endorsement.

Addressing this issue requires a multi-layered response. Strengthening cyber law enforcement is necessary, but insufficient on its own. Educational institutions must incorporate media literacy and ethical reasoning into curricula. Civil society and digital platforms must promote responsible engagement, while individuals must learn to pause before participating in public shaming.

Most importantly, society must reclaim the distinction between accountability and humiliation. Justice is not served by destroying reputations through pixels and hashtags. Social media should amplify marginalized voices and highlight systemic issues—not replace courts, conscience, or compassion.

Until Pakistan learns to navigate its digital power responsibly, social media will continue to function as an unregulated moral police—loud, unforgiving, and dangerously convinced of its authority.

Muqadaas Samra is a columnist, writer, and librarian from Hyderabad, Pakistan. She writes on social issues, education, and cultural change with a focus on social awareness and critical thinking.

OZ Group Shortlisted Among Qualified Bidders for PSL Expansion

 Sports Desk

RAWALPINDI: OZ Group, led by Chairman Hamza Majeed Chaudhary, has achieved a significant milestone after being officially shortlisted among the qualified bidders for the expansion of the Pakistan Super League (PSL), Pakistan's flagship professional T20 cricket competition.

The PCB received 12 bids from investors based in Pakistan and overseas, underscoring the PSL's growing international appeal and commercial credibility. Following detailed scrutiny, 10 bidders were declared technically eligible to advance to the next stage of the franchise auction, scheduled to take place on January 8, 2026, at the Jinnah Convention Centre, Islamabad.

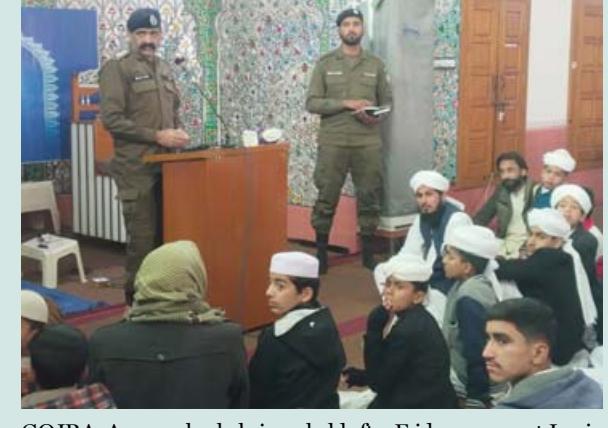
The PSL expansion will see the league grow from six to eight teams beginning with PSL Season 11, scheduled from March 26 to May 3, 2026. This marks a pivotal moment in the league's evolution, aimed at enhancing regional representation, expanding commercial opportunities, and strengthening the PSL's global sporting footprint.

Hamza Majed Chaudhary said: "Being shortlisted by the PCB is a strong endorsement of OZ Group's professional standards, financial credibility, and long-term vision. Our objective is to build a competitive and sustainable PSL franchise that delivers on-field success while also contributing to grassroots development, fan engagement, and the broader growth of cricket in Pakistan."

"Cricket has always been a unifying force for Pakistan. Through the PSL platform, we aim to nurture emerging talent, engage local communities, and contribute to the sport's long-term sustainability," Chaudhary added.

*Open Kachehri held in Gojra; Orders issued for immediate resolution of public issues*

 Special Correspondent



GOJRA: An open kachehri was held after Friday prayers at Jamia Masjid Talab Wali, Mochi Road, Gojra, under the supervision of Police Station City Gojra, District Toba Tek Singh. The session was chaired by DSP/SDPO Circle Gojra, Elim Din Malghani.

According to details, the open kachehri took place on January 2, 2026, at 2:15 pm, and was attended by a large number of local residents, with approximately 40 to 45 participants. The DSP/SDPO listened to public complaints and issues firsthand and issued on-the-spot instructions to the SHO City Gojra for their prompt resolution.

On the occasion, the DSP/SDPO appealed to the public to cooperate fully with the local police for crime prevention and the maintenance of law and order. He emphasized that a safe and peaceful society can only be ensured through mutual cooperation between the police and the public.

Participants termed the holding of the open kachehri a positive and commendable initiative and appreciated the efforts of the police. At the conclusion, Qari Sajjad Ali led a special prayer for the country and the nation, after which the open kachehri concluded peacefully.

It is pertinent to mention that such open kachehris are being held regularly in light of the directives of the Chief Minister Punjab and the DPO Toba Tek Singh, with the aim of providing justice and public services at the people's doorstep.

*Sydney Sixers captain hails 'game-smart' Babar Azam*

SYDNEY: Big Bash League (BBL) team Sydney Sixers captain Moises Henriques has lavished high praise on ace batter Babar Azam, calling him a 'humble and game-smart' presence to have around.

Speaking during an interview, Henriques talked about Babar Azam's inclusion in the Sixers squad for BBL 15 and praised him for bringing calm demeanor.

"It's been a really cool experience because he is actually like really sort of a humble, really nice guy to have around the team and around the group," Henriques said in an interview.

"I know a lot of people say that about people when they come in, but you know, given what he has achieved in world cricket, there's a whole lot of humility that he brings. Obviously game smart and just really nice to talk cricket with," he added.

## Three Pakistan Navy Rear Admirals Promoted to the Rank of Vice Admiral

 Continued from Page 8

Commander Surface Task Group-I. He also served as Instructor at UAE Naval College Abu Dhabi. Moreover, he served as Director Naval Operations, Director Naval Development Plans (Platform), Principal Secretary to Chief of the Naval Staff, Assistant Chief of the Naval Staff (Operations), Naval Secretary at Naval Headquarters Islamabad and Additional Secretary-III at MoD Rawalpindi. He is currently serving as Commander Coast. The Flag Officer has been conferred with Hilal-i-Imtiaz (Military) and Sitara-i-Basalt in acknowledgement of his distinguished services.

## Group photo

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani in a group photograph with participants of the National Workshop Balochistan at Aiwan-e-Sadr.



Photo: PID

## Three Pakistan Navy Rear Admirals Promoted to the Rank of Vice Admiral

**Bureau Report**

KARACHI: Rear Admiral Abdul Munib, Rear Admiral Syed Ahmed Salman and Rear Admiral Faisal Amin of Pakistan Navy have been promoted to the rank of Vice Admiral.

Vice Admiral Abdul Munib was commissioned in Operations Branch of Pakistan Navy in 1992. The Flag Officer is a graduate of Pakistan Navy War College Lahore, National Defence University Islamabad and qualified Naval War College Command Course from USA. The Admiral has an illustrious naval career covering vast experience of various Command and Staff appointments including Commanding Officer of PNS ALAMGIR, PNS LARKANA, PNS AKRAM, PNS AATISH and Commander Surface



Vice Admiral Abdul Munib HI(M) S Bt

Vice Admiral Syed Ahmed Salman HI(M)

Vice Admiral Faisal Amin HI(M) S Bt

Task Group-2, Commander 25th Destroyer Squadron and Commander Combined Task Force-151 at HQ US NAVCENT Bahrain. He has also served as Naval Secretary, DG Naval Intelligence,

DG (C 4I) and Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff (Operations) at Naval Headquarters Islamabad. He is currently serving as Commander Pakistan Fleet. In recognition of his meritorious services, the Flag Officer has

been awarded Hilal-i-Imtiaz (Military) and Sitara-i-Basalat. Vice Admiral Syed Ahmed Salman was commissioned in Supply Branch of Pakistan Navy in 1991. The Flag Officer is a graduate of Pakistan Navy War

College Lahore and National Defence University Islamabad. The Admiral has an illustrious service career with vast experience of Command and Staff appointments including Director Inventory Control Point and Director Procurement (Navy).

He has also served as Secretary to Chief of the Naval Staff, Director Surface Stores and Assistant Chief of the Naval Staff (Supply) at Naval Headquarters Islamabad and as Attaché Defence Procurement, UK. He is currently serving as Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff (Supply) and Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff (Admin). In recognition of his meritorious services, the Flag Officer has been awarded Hilal-i-Imtiaz (Military).

*Continued on Page 7*

## Interior Minister lauds Sindh Rangers for restoring peace in Karachi

**City Desk**

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Syed Mohsin Naqvi has said that Pakistan Rangers made huge contribution along with Pakistan Army during operation Bunyanal-Marsoos when India resorted to aggression in May 2025.

Addressing the passing out parade ceremony at the Sindh Rangers Training Center and School in Karachi, the Interior Minister said that the Rangers kept an eye on every movement of the enemy and thwarted their objectives.

Addressing the cadets, Interior Minister also commended the services of the Rangers for maintaining peace in Karachi. He lauded the sacrifices of the Rangers against external and internal threats and



also paid tribute to the martyrs of the Sindh Rangers. Naqvi thanked offered thanks to

from the past.

He said Sindh Rangers was known for their professional skills. Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi also congratulated the cadets who completed the training. Interior Minister said Sindh Rangers were working with police to eliminate dacoits in Kachha areas of Sindh.

The interior minister noted that the Rangers, in cooperation with Sindh Police, were instrumental in eliminating criminal dens in the Katcha belt, significantly improving law and order across the province. "It is due to the continuous efforts of Pakistan Rangers Sindh that today Karachi stands transformed," he said, adding that commercial and industrial activity had revived and the city had once again become an international centre for trade and culture.

## CM Maryam Nawaz launches major initiative to promote aquaculture, shrimp farming

**Bureau Report**

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has taken a major step toward promoting aquaculture in the province, particularly shrimp farming.

Under the new plan, shrimp estates will be developed over a total area of 5,600 acres in Sargodha and Alipur. The project seeks to transform barren and saline lands into productive assets through modern shrimp farming practices, marking a significant milestone in Punjab's agricultural and economic development.

According to official updates, the 15th daily progress report of the Sargodha shrimp farming project has been released. So far, nine shrimp



ponds have been completed on 20 acres, while 5,320 metres of drainage work has been finalized. Surveys for

an additional 10 acres have also been completed as part of the next phase.

Meanwhile, a quality control laboratory being established in Lahore at a cost of Rs4.5 billion is nearly complete, with 99% of construction finished. A separate laboratory in Muzaffargarh, designed to support shrimp farming research and provide a favorable environment for aquaculture, has also reached 98% completion.

To support capacity building, Pakistani experts have completed training visits to Saudi Arabia and Mexico, while international specialists Jeffrey and Jamie Dominguez have visited Pakistan to provide technical guidance. Written examinations for 100 interns selected for the shrimp farming project have also been conducted.

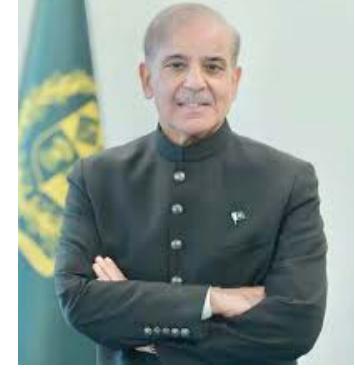
## PM expresses satisfaction over performance of stock exchange

**City Desk**

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Friday expressed satisfaction over the crossing of Stock Exchange 100 Index above 179,000 points.

He said crossing of Pakistan Stock Exchange above historic level was a reflection of confidence of business community and investors in government policies.

"Country's journey of development continues due to hard work of economic team," he said adding, "Efforts of economic team to improve country's economic direction and



take it on a path of development are commendable."

## DPM Dar visits Bangladesh HC, offers condolences over demise of Khaleda Zia



**Spokesman Report**

DHAKA: Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar visited Bangladesh High Commission in Islamabad to offer condolences over the death of former Bangladesh Prime Minister Khaleda Zia. According to Foreign Office spokesperson Tahir Hussain Andrahi, Ishaq Dar condoles the death of former Bangladesh Prime Minister Khaleda Zia. The Deputy Prime Minister also recorded his impressions in the condolence book at the Bangladesh High Commission.

Foreign Office Spokesperson said Dar said "with deep sorrow and grief, I express my condolences on the passing away of Begum Khaleda Zia, former Prime Minister of Bangladesh and Chairperson of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party."

"I express my heartfelt condolences to the government and people of Pakistan and on my own behalf to the government and people of Bangladesh, the family of the deceased and their supporters".

Begum Khaleda Zia dedicated her life to public service and the welfare of her nation. Deputy Prime Minister lauded her steadfastness and leadership in difficult times. Dar said she

will be remembered with respect by all those who value service to the country and nation.

## FPSC improves hiring process, completes 3,005 nominations in 2025

**City Desk**

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Public Service Commission (FPSC) has marked improvement in its recruitment performance during 2025, completing a total of 3,005 nominations over the year.

According to a statement issued on Friday, the Commission's performance aligns with the government's agenda to promote transparency in public sector recruitments.

"The Federal Public Service Commission is striving to ensure merit-based recruitments and appointments across various federal institutions," it said.

It further noted that the processing

time for recruitment cases has been reduced from 18-24 months to just 5-7 months.

Recruitments in the education and health sectors were carried out on a priority basis. The statement added that the FPSC successfully completed the recruitment processes for CSS 2023 (Special) and CSS 2024.

Moreover, 65 per cent of CSS 2025 interviews have already been completed, it said.

It added that on the directives of the Prime Minister, a committee has been constituted to propose reforms in the FPSC, expressing confidence that these reforms would lead to further improvement in the Commission's overall performance.

## Special health initiatives to bring major relief to south Punjab: Kh Salman Rafique

LAHORE: Punjab Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique has said that the introduction of the Hub and Spoke Model in Zahir Pir and installation of modern medical machines at Nishtar Hospital Multan will prove to be a major relief for the people of south Punjab.

He expressed these views while chairing a meeting at the Specialized Healthcare and Medical Education Department on Friday. The meeting reviewed the Hub and Spoke Model Pilot Program in Zahir Pir, Rahim Yar

Khan, and the provision of modern medical facilities at Nishtar Hospital Multan.

During the briefing, it was informed that the central hub to be established in Zahir Pir will be linked with Basic Health Units (spokes) in surrounding rural areas. The model aims to ensure timely treatment, an improved referral system and quality healthcare services.

Under this system, patients with complex medical conditions will be promptly referred and connected to larger healthcare centers.