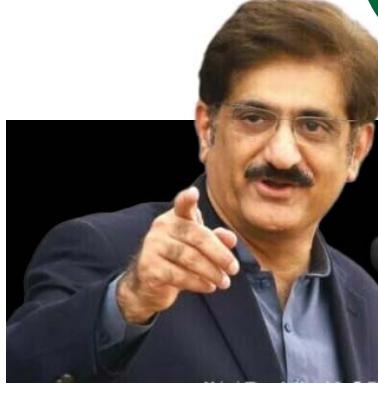




Daily The Spokesman



Sindh CM approves Rs95bn Karachi transformation plan

Six priority projects worth Rs10.7bn to start first as government targets faster, world-class development. Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Wednesday approved an Rs84.8 billion Karachi Transformation Plan and announced a partnership with the Frontier Works Organisation (FWO) to fast-track major infrastructure and connectivity projects in the city.



M4, M5 motorways closed due to dense fog

According to Syed Imran Ahmed, spokesperson for the Motorways Police Central Region, the M4 motorway from Khanewal to Multan has been closed because of poor visibility caused by fog. In addition, the M5 motorway near Zahir Peer has also been shut to traffic under similar conditions.

Simultaneously published from Islamabad, Lahore and Multan

Rajab-ul-Murajjah 18, Thursday, January 8, 2026

www.dailyspokesman.net



@daily_spokesman



Daily Spokesman



Vol: 19, Issue: 263 Price Rs. 25.00 Pages 8

High-level meeting

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a high level meeting on loans to SME and Agri-Sector, Wednesday.



Photo: PID

PM directs easing credit for SMEs, small farmers to boost economic inclusion

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday directed the State Bank of Pakistan and commercial banks to further simplify and expand credit mechanisms for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), new businesses and small farmers amid terming improved access to finance a top government priority for economic growth and inclusion.

The prime minister made these remarks while chairing a high-level review meeting on facilitation of loans for SMEs, small farmers here, a Prime Minister's Office news release said.

PM Shehbaz Sharif emphasized that priority financing should be ensured for service providers to promote innovation in the agriculture sector. He also instructed that modern technology and machinery loans

for SMEs and small farmers be made more accessible to enhance productivity and competitiveness.

The prime minister directed his Special Assistant on Industries and Production, Haroon Akhtar, along with the SMEDA team, to undertake visits to all provinces, including Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir, and work closely with provincial governments to formulate a comprehensive,

coordinated SME facilitation policy.

The SMEDA officials informed the meeting that it would soon launch a program to enhance financial literacy and awareness among SMEs. Participants were also briefed on Punjab's program providing loans to service providers for supplying modern agricultural machinery, and the State Bank's fully digital "Zarkhez-e App," launched to facilitate small farmers, which is benefiting a large number of users.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, Minister of State Bilal Azhar Kiyani, SAPM Haroon Akhtar, State Bank Governor Jameel Ahmad, senior federal officials, and chief secretaries of all four provinces, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

PTI's planned protest doomed to fail, federal govt can enforce governor's rule in KP: Sanaullah warns

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: PM's Adviser on Political Affairs Rana Sanaullah on Wednesday expressed concern over the PTI's stance, warning that the federal government had the constitutional authority to impose governor's rule in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and that continued confrontation by the PTI founder would invite seri-

ous consequences, while dismissing the party's planned protest as bound to fail.

While speaking to a local news channel, Rana Sanaullah hailed the DG ISPR's press conference the other day, describing his remarks as clear and important.

He said the government had responsibly offered a dialogue with the PTI three times on the floor of the house through the

Prime Minister, but the party did not respond.

Now, he added, PTI has again planned a protest, which is likely to fail, criticizing the PTI chairman for pursuing politics through street movements and unrest.

He also condemned the May 9 incidents of violence and anarchy, saying such actions would not be tolerated.

Regarding Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sanaullah accused the provincial PTI government of obstructing counter-terrorism operations and said their actions demonstrated alignment with the enemies' narrative instead of cooperation with the state.

He emphasized that the federal government was fully aware of the situation and had constitutional options to act, including

the imposition of governor's rule in KP.

When asked directly about the possibility of governor's rule in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sanaullah replied that the government has options available and will not hesitate to use them if the PTI continues to defy the state, underscoring that any further protest or street agitation by the party would be doomed to fail.

IPEMC unanimously approve National Education Emergency Plan

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The 38th Inter-Provincial Education Ministers Conference (IPEMC), chaired by Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, has unanimously endorsed and approved the National Education Emergency Action Plan for OOSC with the provincial components and other key educational projects following extensive consultations.

The high-level meeting was attended by Minister of State for

Education Wajihah Qamar, Federal Parliamentary Secretary Farah Naz Akbar, Secretary Education Nadeem Mahbub, and provincial ministers, including Rahila Hameed Durrani (Balochistan), Muhammad Ismail Rahoo (Sindh), Rana Iqbal Sikandar (Punjab, via video link), and Arshad Ayub Khan (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, via video link). Heads of Federal educational bodies, including the Chairman of the Federal Board and the Executive Director of IBCC, were also present, said a press release on

Wednesday.

During the session, participants were briefed on a special federal 'Challenge Fund' designed to bring out-of-school children back into the educational fold, with the federal government providing support to all provinces to tackle this national crisis.

In a historic display of unity, all administrative units set aside political affiliations to reach a consensus on implementing the education emergency, facilitating the return of out-of-school children, and introducing interna-

tional-standard examination and curricular reforms aimed at providing equitable, quality education to every child in Pakistan.

Provincial representatives shared significant progress reports: Punjab's Education Minister Rana Sikandar announced the elimination of 1.8 million ghost students and the outsourcing of 10,000 schools; Sindh's Muhammad Ismail Rahoo confirmed the merit-based recruitment of 93,000 teachers; and Balochistan's Rahila Hameed

Durrani reported the restoration of 3,200 closed schools, bringing 140,000 children back to classes. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa confirmed a 6% increase in enrollment alongside the recruitment of 10,000 teachers, while Azad Kashmir's Minister Malik Zafar highlighted the allocation of 7 billion rupees for 10,000 new classrooms despite LoC challenges.

Gilgit-Baltistan also shared initiatives regarding special funds for out-of-school children and the expansion of the 'School Meal Program.'

A Leading National Daily

ABC Certified

فرمان رسوی
فیصل علی
بہم کچل نے، ان سے ایں شہاب نے،
ایک سامنے خودی اور بیکن جہادیں
مر رخیا شہاب نے خود کر سر اسلام
الشہید و ملک فیصل اسلام کا ہائی
بے ایک پرے اور جو شہاب کے عالی
کی خود روت پوری کر میں لے گا شہاب
اس کی خود روت پوری اور جات پوری کے مگر
(6951-6952)

Barkat Rice Mills
(Pvt) Limited

M4, M5 motorways closed due to dense fog

According to Syed Imran Ahmed, spokesperson for the Motorways Police Central Region, the M4 motorway from Khanewal to Multan has been closed because of poor visibility caused by fog. In addition, the M5 motorway near Zahir Peer has also been shut to traffic under similar conditions.

DPM Dar reviews preparations for 9th OIC Ministerial Conference on Women



City Desk

statement issued by the Foreign Office.

He highlighted that the upcoming conference reflects Pakistan's commitment to promoting women's rights and strengthening their role across social, economic, and political spheres.

The meeting was attended by the Federal Minister for Law & Justice; SAPM Tariq Bajwa; Secretaries of Foreign Affairs, Cabinet, Human Rights, and other relevant divisions, and senior officials from concerned Ministries.

93% public complaints resolved in 2025 as parliamentary affairs ministry handles 21,281 cases

News Desk

included in the total number of cases processed.

The ministry said it remains committed to resolving public complaints within timeframes to strengthen transparency, ensure accountability, and build public trust in government institutions. To improve access to government offices, the complaints wing introduced a universal access number 554-555-111, allowing citizens to register grievances more easily.

The figures were shared in an official statement outlining steps taken to improve public access, accountability, and transparency in government processes.

According to the ministry, most complaints received by the Prime Minister's Public Affairs and Grievances Wing related to land occupation, delay in registration of FIRs, police conduct, irregularities in utility bills, and issues linked to financial assistance. Applications from overseas Pakistanis were also

DAMAC Properties' delegation visits IT Ministry to explore digital, PropTech opportunities

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: A high-level business delegation of Dubai's renowned real estate company DAMAC Properties, led by Sajwani, called on the Federal Minister for Information Technology & Telecommunication, Shazia Fatima Khawaja, to explore collaboration in Pakistan's growing digital and technology ecosystem.

Welcoming the delegation, the Federal Minister underscored that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's Digital Nation Pakistan (DNP) vision forms the foundation of the government's digital policies and reforms, aimed at building an inclusive, innovation-driven digital economy, said a press release here on Wednesday.

The DAMAC delegation comprised Ameera Hussain

(Co-Managing Director, DAMAC Group & CEO, Pryco), Syed Zeeshan Shah Chairman, ONE Group, Aqib Hassan (Chief Commercial Officer, One Homes), and Joseph L. Um (General Manager Tokenisation, Pryco).

The Sajwani delegation praised the talent of Pakistani youth and the country's digitization framework, and expressed strong confidence in Pakistan's vast potential for PropTech, tokenization, and technology-led investment.

Federal Minister of Information Technology & Telecommunication reaffirmed the commitment to facilitate global partnerships, enable innovation, and create a conducive digital environment to attract international investment and accelerate Pakistan's digital transformation.

A high-level meeting held under the chairmanship of PM Faisal Mumtaz Rathore

 Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: A high-level meeting, chaired by Prime Minister Faisal Mumtaz Rathore, was held on Wednesday to review the preparations for hosting the Overseas Kashmiri Conference.

During the meeting threadbare discussions were held on exploring investment opportunities and accelerating pace of development in different sectors including the tourism, IT and hydropower sectors.

The meeting expressed optimism that the conference would prove instrumental in improving the economic outlook and growth of Azad Kashmir, while also helping forge a sustainable and long-term partnership between overseas Kashmiris and the people of Azad Kashmir.

The meeting decided to notify a committee to resolve the issues of overseas Kashmiris on priority basis.



He said, will prove to be a game-changer in terms of attracting foreign investment to the region. He said that Azad Kashmir offers massive investment opportunities in tourism, industry, energy and IT sectors.

Reiterating his commitment to addressing the region's economic challenges such as the growing unemployment, he said that effective measures would be taken to create a conducive environment for investment through the establishment of Special Economic Zones and a One-Window Operation.

"The local population will also be given priority in investment", he said, adding that the government would take citizen-centric measures to ensure that the region's deprivations are effectively addressed.

The meeting was attended by Senior Minister Mian Abdul Waheed, government ministers Sardar Javed Ayub, Chaudhry Qasim Majeed, Sardar Zia Al-Qamar, advisor to the government Sardar Fahad Yaqoob, Chief Secretary Azad Kashmir Khushal Khan, secretaries to the government Zafar Mahmood, Qazi Inayat, Hassan Masood, Naem Bismil, Rashid Hanif, Chairman TEVTA Chaudhry Tayyab and others.

Kashmiri Tea

ISLAMABAD: A street vendor is selling traditional "Pink Tea" at Aabpara Market as during cold weather the demand of such tasty food is high in Federal Capital.

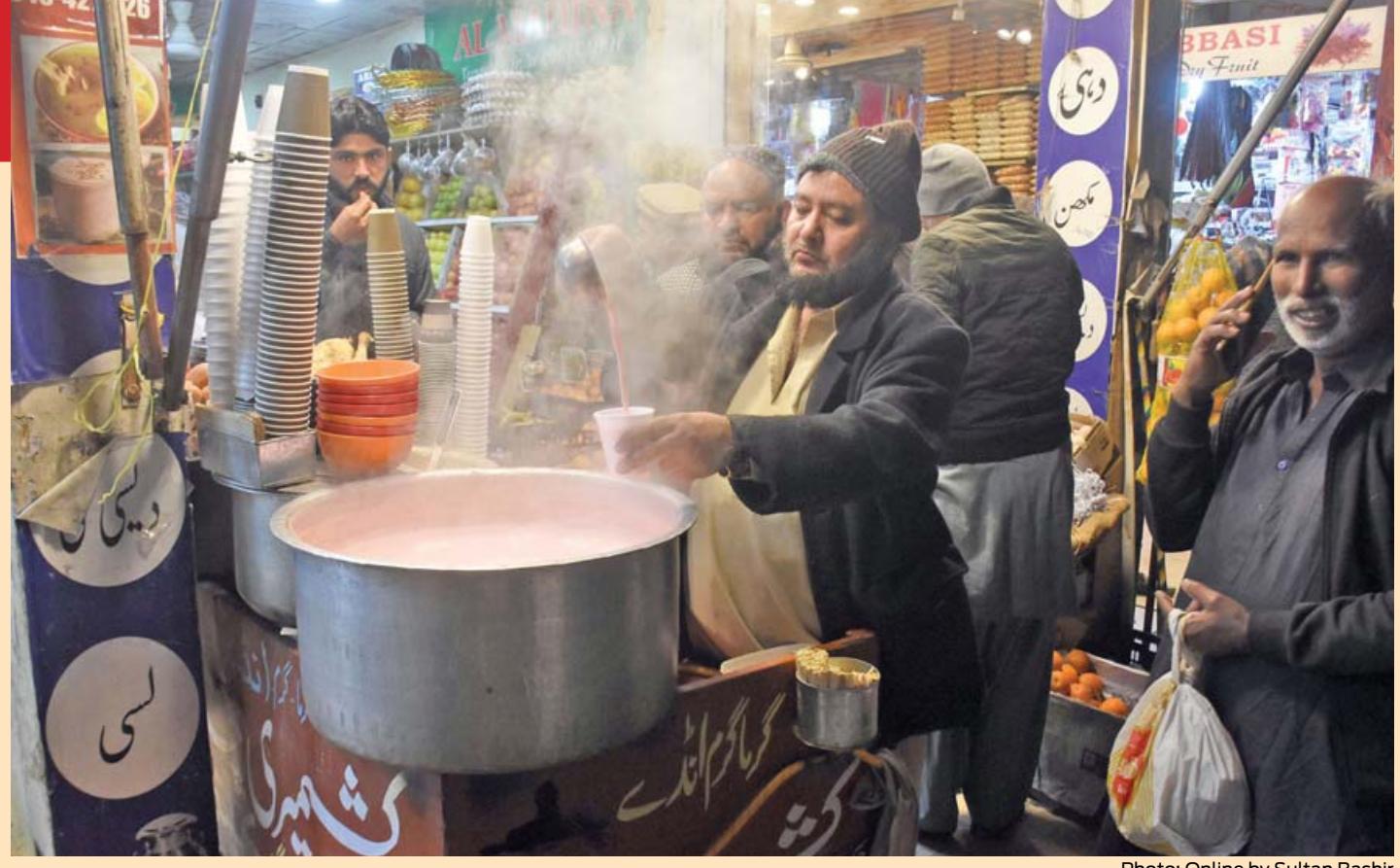


Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

Press clubs' issues will be resolved on priority basis: Minister Information AJK

 Abdul Majeed Tahir

MUZAFFARABAD: Azad Kashmir Minister for Information, Endowments and Religious Affairs Chaudhry Muhammad Rafiq Nayyar has said that Central Press Club is the heart of Azad Kashmir.

We are the brothers of the action committee, we are ready to talk about it at any time, we will take guidance from the media, we will solve the problems of the press clubs on a priority basis, the government will give us power for a month and a half.

He expressed these views while addressing a press conference at Central Press Club Muzaffarabad. Information Secretary Sardar Adnan Khurshid, Public Relations Director Raja Amjad Hussain Minhas, President Central Press Club Sajad Mir, Vice Chairman Azad Jammu and Kashmir Press Foundation Sardar Zulfiqar Ali were also present on this occasion.

The government has provided the required Rs 2.9 billion to the bank to get the status of scheduled



bank. He visited press clubs across Azad Kashmir and tried to solve the problem.

He said that I wanted and tried to unite the Central Press Club at that

time but later the Press Club was reunited which I was satisfied with. To this end, the government has approved Hariala and Pathiali Hydal Projects in Muzaffarabad.

The government has appointed three hundred ad-hoc lecturers in educational institutions purely on merit basis so that students' education is not affected.

Expansion of Family Planning Program in Rural Sindh

 News Desk

KARACHI: In collaboration with other stakeholders, the private sector has announced the expansion and further strengthening of its family planning program under strategic agreements to improve access to reproductive health services in underdeveloped areas of rural Sindh.

The Shine Humanity family planning program is currently operating



clinics.

To strengthen frontline service delivery and ensure quality care, Shine Humanity, in collaboration with Vital Pakistan Trust, provided joint training to CHWs in Karachi. Commenting on the initiative, Shine Humanity Pakistan's Chief Executive Officer, Faheem Khan, stated that through partnerships

with the Population Welfare Department and Vital Pakistan Trust, they are strengthening community-based health models that empower women and families. He added that this initiative is an important step toward eliminating harmful social misconceptions and delivering reproductive health services to those who need them the most.

Irrigation Department Zilladar Caught Red-Handed Taking Bribe in Khanewal



 Zain Khan Malghani

MULTAN: On the directions of Director General Anti-Corruption Punjab, Sohail Zafar Chattha, the crackdown against corrupt elements across the province has been further intensified. In line with these directives, a major operation was carried out under the supervision of Regional Director Anti-Corruption Multan, Basharat Nabi.

Circle Officer Anti-Corruption Khanewal, Sajid Ali, conducted a successful raid and arrested Falak Sher, a Zilladar of the Irrigation Department Khanewal, red-handed while accepting a bribe.

According to details, the accused had demanded a bribe of Rs 20,000 from a citizen in exchange for approving a watercourse (khal). Acting on the citizen's complaint, the Anti-Corruption team conducted a trap raid under the supervision of a First Class Magistrate in Khanewal.

During the raid, the accused was caught red-handed while receiving the bribe, and the marked currency notes worth Rs 20,000 were recovered from his possession.

Legal proceedings have been initiated against the accused, while further investigation is underway. Anti-Corruption officials stated that strict implementation of the zero-tolerance policy of the Director General Anti-Corruption Punjab is being ensured, and indiscriminate action against corrupt elements will continue.

Progressive Lawyers Forum Sweeps Top Sujawal Bar Posts; Vice-President and Joint Secretary Tie

 Kamran Khamiso Khowaja

SUJAWAL: The candidates of Progressive Lawyers Forum secured the seats of President, General Secretary, and Treasurer after a nail-biting contest with the candidates of Independent Lawyers Group in the annual elections of District Bar Association Sujawal on Wednesday. Around 54 members exercised their right to vote in the elections held for the period 2026-27. Qadir Khaskheli of Progressive Lawyers Group won the presidency, securing 26 votes against Ayaz Nazar Ali Khowaja, who received 24 votes and lost by a narrow margin of two votes. Syed Ali Imran Shah defeated Irfan Gul Memon by 14 votes and secured a total of 33 votes, while Ali Raza Jat trounced Dewan Sunny Khanna to win the treasurer seat. In an interesting turn of events, the contest for Vice President and Joint Secretary resulted in a tie between the candidates of Progressive Lawyers Group and Independent Lawyers Group, each securing 26 votes. Acting President Sajad Ali Khowaja expressed his satisfaction at the smooth transfer of power and authority in a democratic manner. The candidate for President from the Independent Lawyers Group, Advocate Ayaz Nazar Ali Khowaja, expressed his gratitude for the support extended to him and the Independent Lawyers Group. No decision regarding the seats of Vice President and Joint Secretary was made by the returning officer until the filing of this report.

Ten panic buttons installed across Attock to enhance emergency response

 Raza Naqvi

ATTOCK: In a significant move to strengthen public safety, Attock police have installed panic buttons at key locations across the district to ensure swift emergency response, particularly for women and vulnerable citizens.

According to police officials, a total of 20 panic buttons have been made operational under the initiative. Of these, 10 have been installed in Attock tehsil, while the remaining 10 are operational in Hasan Abdal tehsil.

The project has been launched in line with the vision of the Punjab government and directives issued by the Inspector General of Police, aiming to introduce modern, technology-driven solutions to enhance public security. Police authorities explained that once a panic button is pressed, the nearest police unit is immediately alerted and dispatched to the location, ensuring a rapid response. The system is expected to significantly reduce response time and boost the sense of security in public spaces.

Private School Fined Rs700,000 for Violating Winter Vacation Orders in Attock

 Raza Naqvi

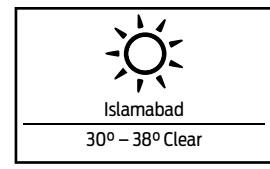
ATTOCK: District education authorities in Attock have imposed a fine of Rs700,000 on a private school for violating government-notified winter vacation orders and endangering students by remaining open during extreme cold weather.

The action was taken on the directives of the Chief Executive Officer (Education), Attock, after the school was found operating despite the officially announced winter holidays.

According to official sources, District Education Officer (Male) Syed Taqi Abbas conducted a surprise inspection and discovered a private school near Fateh Jang Chowk open, with students attending classes. Authorities noted that summoning children to school amid harsh weather conditions posed a serious risk to their health and safety and constituted a clear violation of government instructions.

Taking serious notice of the breach, the CEO Education ordered the imposition of a Rs700,000 fine on the institution. The school management has also been issued a show-cause notice and summoned for a personal hearing to explain its actions.

The district education administration has reiterated that violations of officially notified winter and summer vacations will not be tolerated. Officials warned that strict legal action will continue against any institution defying government directives, stressing that the wellbeing and safety of students remain the department's top priority.


SERVICES
Namaz Timings

Fajr	5:45 am
Zohr	12:14 pm
Asr	3:37 pm
Maghrib	5:15 pm

Isha 6:43 pm

EMERGENCY

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

Women Police
Stations

Islamabad 9222596

Rawalpindi 9270601-20

ENQUIRY

Edhi Ambulance	115
PIA Flight Info	114
PIA Cargo	9280979
Railway Inquiry	117
Railway Exchange	9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi	5555489
CAA	9281092

HOSPITALS

CMH	561111
MH	561116
MH	561116
Cantt Hospital	9270907-11
DHQ	5556311-4
RGH	929301-7
Holy Family	9293022-7
PIMS	9261170-79
Polyclinic	9218300-99
Shifa International	4603666

DEPARTMENTS

CDA	921234-43
CDA	9208301-04
Met Office	9250360-6
RDA	5555864
TMA	5770886
Cantonment Board	9270151-3
Islamabad Metropolitan Corporation	9209224
Potohar Town	9209224
Rawal Town	5773343

COMPLAINTS

Water Tanker Service E-7, F-10 & F-11	9204654
G-5, G-6, G-7, G-8	9203883
G-9, G-10, G-11, G-12, H-8	9226316
Wapda Islamabad	9217579-80
Sui Gas Complaint	119, 9272249
Wasa Water Tank Rawalpindi	0331-5022125

The role of human resource is key for the country's development, President RCCI

Commerce Desk

RAWALPINDI: President Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) Usman Shaikh has said that human resources are fundamental in the sustainable development of any country and economic prosperity cannot be imagined without harnessing the talents of the youth. He along with senior vice president Khalid Farooq Qazi and executive committee member Ali Waqas was speaking as a special guest at the job fair held at Iqra University Islamabad.

President RCCI termed collaboration between academia and industry as the need of the hour and said that Chambers of Commerce and business community are always working with educational institutions to empower the youth and create employment opportunities, so as to make the future of Pakistan safe and bright.

Punjab believes in proactive, not reactive governance: Maryam Nawaz Sharif

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif on Tuesday said the provincial government believes in proactive governance rather than reacting after problems emerge, emphasising that preventive healthcare remains central to her administration's vision.

Addressing the launching ceremony of the Community Health Inspectors programme, Chief Minister Punjab said that once 55,000 community health inspectors step into the field, diseases will be driven out of Punjab. "The government no longer waits for people to come to it; instead, it goes door to door," she said, adding that prevention is far less painful than treatment after illness has already taken hold.

Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif said that when mothers, sisters and daughters come forward to serve in the field, no one can defeat Punjab. She described the Community Health Inspectors initiative as a transformative step, stating that Punjab's women have the strength and determination to change the province's destiny.

Congratulating Provincial Minister for Health and Population Welfare Khawaja Imran Nazir, the health secretary and their



entire team, the Chief Minister Punjab

praised their tireless efforts in making the

programme a reality. She said the inspec-

tors undergo months of training and are

now ready to serve humanity by delivering

healthcare at the grassroots level.

Calling the community health inspec-

tors her "eyes, ears and pride," the Chief

Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif

said, Punjab, by the grace of Allah, is

becoming self-reliant across sectors. She

noted that women play a defining role

in Punjab's development and contribute

effectively to improving public health

outcomes.

Concluding her address, Chief Minister

Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif told

community health inspectors that their

role is not merely a job but a mission to

serve humanity.

Winter's gift

ISLAMABAD: A street vendor is preparing fried Fish for customers at Sitara Market as during cold weather the demand of such tasty food is high in Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

Iqra Connect 2026 – University Job Fair

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Iqra University Islamabad (H-9 Campus) successfully hosted IQRA CONNECT 2026 – University Job Fair, a flagship initiative organized by the Career Services Office to strengthen academia-industry linkages and enhance graduate employability under the theme "Your Career, Your Journey: From Classroom to Industry."

The Inauguration Ceremony and Ribbon Cutting was held at 9:15 AM at the Main Lawn and was graced by Mr. Usman Shaikh, President, Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI), as Chief Guest. The event leadership included Mr. Badar Abbas Shah, Incharge Career Services Office, along with senior university management comprising Dr. Eattaz Ahmad, Dr. Sajid Bashir, and Dr. Adnan Sohail (Deans). All Heads of Departments were also in attendance, demonstrating strong institutional commitment to career development initiatives.

During the event, nine Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) were signed



between Iqra University and participating organizations, marking a significant step toward long-term collaboration in recruitment, internships, training, and industry engagement.

IQRA CONNECT 2026 concluded

as a highly impactful event, reaffirming Iqra University Islamabad's commitment to bridge the gap between classroom learning and industry needs, while preparing students for successful professional careers.

PIDE Seminar Calls for Urgent Action as Pakistan's Housing Crisis Deepens

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) organized a policy seminar titled "National Housing Policy: A Framework for Affordable, Inclusive, and Sustainable Shelter for All" at the institute in Islamabad, to deliberate on Pakistan's worsening housing crisis and the policy responses required to address it.

Speaking at the seminar, Dr. Malik Asghar Naeem, Coordinator of the National Housing Policy Working Group and Chief Planner at the Federal Government's Employees Housing Authority (FGEHA), described housing as a fundamental human right and a shared national responsibility. He highlighted the gravity of Pakistan's housing crisis, noting that rapid population growth and accelerating urbanization



have resulted in a housing shortage of nearly 9-10 million units, while approximately 50 percent of the urban population now lives in slums and informal settlements, including katchi abadis.

The session was moderated by Usama Abdul Rauf, Assistant Chief

(Policy) at PIDE, and brought together policymakers, academics, researchers, and practitioners to examine the structural causes of housing shortages and explore pathways for inclusive and sustainable housing development.

Providing an overview of the policy process, Dr. Naeem noted that the National Housing Policy 2025

is currently in its final draft stage and expected to be submitted to the federal cabinet shortly, is based on a multi-stakeholder and evidence-based approach. The drafting process involved extensive consultations with experts from academia, urban development authorities, civil society, and international development partners, including UN-Habitat, the World Bank, and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), to ensure practical relevance and alignment with international best practices.

Concluding the seminar, participants emphasized that sustainable urban planning, inclusive finance, corporate engagement, and stronger institutional coordination are essential to addressing Pakistan's housing shortage and ensuring equitable access to decent shelter for all.

DC Chiniot Ayesha Rizwan, Administrator Wasiq Abbas Haral visited Railway Station Road

Abdul Majid

CHINIOT: Deputy Commissioner Chiniot Ayesha Rizwan, along with Administrator Wasiq Abbas Haral, visited Railway Station Road, Ali Hospital Park, Mohalla Mushki Shah and other places and made a detailed review of beautification, establishment of food street and other issues. Administrator Wasiq Abbas Haral gave a detailed briefing to Deputy Commissioner Ayesha Rizwan regarding both the sites and informed him about all the issues. The Deputy Commissioner issued instructions to the Administrator to point out more sites and establish beautification and parks in the city. Deputy Commissioner Ayesha Rizwan said on this occasion that work will soon be started for the establishment of food street and new park for citizens, especially families, and all facilities will be provided.



Group Chairman/Chief Editor: Almass Ayoub Sabir
 Vice Chairman: Asim Nazir Ahmad
 Editor: Naveed Ahmad Khan
 Head Editorial Advisory Board: Amjad Mehmood
 Bureau Chief Karachi: Khurram Jaffrani (jaffrani@adplus.pk)
 Bureau Chief Lahore: Syed Afraz Ali Nazish (afrazalishah@gmail.com)
 Head Office: AIMS Building, Street No. 4, H-8/1, Islamabad. spokesmanislamabad@gmail.com
 Phone: +92 51 2227123, WhatsApp +92 346 5008408
 Karachi Office: A111, Block C, Gulsha-e-Jamal, PRECHS, Karachi Phone: 021-33399390 Email: spokesmankarachi@gmail.com
 Lahore Office: 7-E, Samanberg, Johar Town. spokesmanlahore@gmail.com
 Daily The Spokesman available only on annual subscription

UK enforces junk food advertising ban to tackle childhood obesity

The UK government has enacted sweeping restrictions on junk food advertising, banning ads for less healthy food and drinks on television before 9 pm and online at all times in what the government calls "world-leading" action to combat childhood obesity, according to FoodFirst.

The regulations, which came into force today, are projected to remove up to 7.2 billion calories from children's diets annually, reduce the number of children living with obesity by 20,000, and deliver approximately £2 billion (US\$2.7 billion) in health benefits over time.

"We promised to do everything we can to give every child the best and healthiest start in life," says Health Minister Ashley Dalton. "By restricting adverts for junk food before 9 pm and banning paid adverts online, we can remove excessive exposure to unhealthy foods — making the healthy choice the easy choice for parents and children."

The government cites evidence showing that advertising influences what and when children eat, shaping preferences from a young age and thereby increasing the risk of obesity. At the start of primary school, 22.1% of children in England are living with overweight or obesity, rising to 35.8% by the time they leave.

The UK's Department of Health and Social Care says it is working closely with health campaigners and industry leaders to balance public health commitments with economic growth considerations. F&B companies have voluntarily adhered to the restrictions since October 2025, ahead of legal enforcement.

Officials note that previous interventions, including the Soft Drinks Industry Levy, prompted businesses to reformulate products. The advertising restrictions have already driven similar reformulation efforts and the promotion of healthier alternatives.

Katharine Jenner, executive director of the Obesity Health Alliance, describes the ban as "a welcome and long-awaited step toward better protecting children from unhealthy food and drink advertising that can harm their health and well-being."

"It's been one battle after another, but we are finally going to see children being protected from the worst offending junk food adverts," Jenner says.

Malcolm Clark, senior policy manager at Cancer Research UK, says: "The measures announced today — if properly enforced — are a crucial step toward creating an environment that protects children and empowers healthy lifestyle changes."

"Obesity and overweight causes at least 13 different types of cancer, and children living with obesity are much more likely to live with obesity as adults too. The UK Government must build on this landmark legislation with further bold action to make a healthy diet more accessible and reduce people's risk of cancer in the future."

The New Trump Doctrine: Venezuela Taken — Greenland Next?

Donald Trump has ignited a geopolitical storm by openly declaring that Denmark has no rightful historical, legal, political, or moral authority over Greenland, the massive Arctic territory with barely 30,000 inhabitants but immense strategic and mineral value. According to Trump, Greenland is practically uninhabited land, poorly governed and inadequately protected, where Chinese and Russian vessels now freely operate in Arctic waters because Denmark lacks the military strength, strategic will, or appetite to defend it. He went further, suggesting that Greenland is essential for the security and survival of the United States in the modern era, as it needs the territory to establish forward-operating bases, secure northern sea routes, and push Chinese and Russian presence away from American borders. When asked whether the United States intended to invade Denmark or seize Greenland by force, Trump scoffed at the idea, saying that Denmark was powerless to resist and possessed neither a capable military nor nuclear deterrent. He laughed that when Denmark heard of his Greenland intentions, the only enhanced security measure introduced was dog-sled patrols. The implication was unmistakable — a superpower could, if it chose, simply take what it wanted.

He stated bluntly that the United States is a superpower, and under President Trump it intended to act like one. When challenged over the arrest and removal of Venezuelan president Nicolás Maduro, Miller was unapologetic, interjecting sharply that "Damn straight we did!" before insisting the U.S. would not allow hostile or communist governments

to threaten American borders, export drugs or weapons into U.S. cities, or fall into the hands of rival powers.

On Greenland, he struck the same defiant chord. He questioned what right Denmark had to govern a territory so strategic to American security, arguing that no nation on earth would dare challenge the United States militarily over the Arctic. In other words, Greenland was too important to be left in the hands of a country lacking the power to defend it. His earlier social media commentary had already hinted that the Western world had been naive to relinquish its empires after World War II. Now, that thinking appeared to be migrating from fringe rhetoric into governing doctrine.

The Greenland narrative, however, is not simply about Arctic ice sheets or buried rare-earth minerals. It reflects a deeper transformation in how the United States now sees itself in the global hierarchy. Once, American leadership rested on economic dominance, trade reach, investment appeal, technological leadership, alliance cohesion, and moral influence. But increasingly, those pillars are weakening. The U.S. is being challenged by China in trade, manufacturing, and global infrastructure development. Its soft image has been battered by wars, sanctions, unilateral interventions, and political polarization. Many European allies are now openly questioning American reliability, while regions that once depended heavily on U.S. investment are now turning to China, Russia, or regional blocs.

In such a climate, hard power becomes

the primary remaining tool. It is the one arena where the U.S. remains unquestionably formidable. Greenland therefore becomes symbolic — not only as a military and resource prize but as proof that the United States can still impose its will when it chooses. Stephen Miller's comments strip away diplomatic language and reveal the raw calculation beneath. If Denmark cannot protect Greenland, and if China and Russia are already moving into the Arctic, then the U.S. will move more aggressively still.

And if force is required, force will be used. Yet this approach also represents a departure from the moral language traditionally associated with American power. In Venezuela, the justification narrative focused on dictatorship, corruption, and human rights violations. But Denmark cannot be painted as a tyrannical state. It is one of the world's strongest democracies, consistently ranked among the happiest, freest, most just, and most socially equitable nations.

Greenland, too, is a democratic autonomous territory whose people repeatedly affirm their partnership within the Danish realm. So the doctrine must shift from moral rescue to strategic entitlement. That shift is profound — and profoundly dangerous.

Because once a superpower declares that territory can be seized on the basis of strategic need, the entire post-war global security architecture fractures. NATO unity collapses. European trust evaporates. International law is discarded. The message received globally is that sovereignty is conditional and survival depends

only on military strength. In that world, every nation becomes more paranoid, more armed, more volatile. The rule-based order dissolves into the law of the jungle.

And yet, Russia and China may not rush to intervene. They may instead sit back and allow the United States to bleed its credibility, erode its alliances, and expose its desperation. Because beneath the chest-beating lies a quieter truth — the United States is losing its global economic primacy, losing trade leverage, losing investment dominance, losing moral authority, and losing its aura as a stabilizer rather than a disruptor. As these softer forms of power weaken, military force becomes the last remaining marker of superpower identity. So the temptation grows to use it — loudly, defiantly, repeatedly — to prove that America still commands the world stage.

But superpower status is not measured only by the ability to occupy territory. True power is earned by respect, stability, restraint, partnership, and legitimacy. If the United States chooses instead to move toward annexation rhetoric and gunboat doctrine, then Greenland is unlikely to be the end. It will simply be the opening act in a broader unraveling — one in which the U.S. asserts dominance even as its foundations quietly erode beneath it. And history has shown again and again that superpowers fall fastest not when they are challenged from outside — but when they begin to devour the very principles that once made them strong.

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



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

Global Outcry After Caracas Operation

There are moments in history that descend upon its pages like a storm events that are not merely military operations, but intense portraits of power, global politics, diplomatic aggression, and ethical questions which future generations study either as a warning or as a lesson. The situation that emerged after Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and his wife were taken into the custody of a U.S. special unit is also not just a military operation, but a broader political experiment a story of fearless power projection and a shaken global balance of authority, whose effects extend beyond regions and continents, reaching minds and consciences alike.

The Venezuelan Defense Minister's declaration that this was the worst act of aggression in the country's history was not merely an emotional response; it was the cry of a nation whose land was struck by missiles, whose civilian population trembled, whose civil and military installations were targeted, and whose capital Caracas was engulfed in towering columns of fire and smoke.

The global response that followed was equally extraordinary

China condemned it as a blatant use of force, Russia demanded the release of the elected president,

Iran and several Latin American countries termed it a grave violation of regional integrity,

while the European Union and other Western states emphasized adherence to legal and humanitarian principles.

Thus, the incident no longer remained a matter between two states; rather, it appeared to redraw global diplomatic alignments along tense and polarized axes.

According to the U.S. position, Maduro faces serious criminal charges, narcotics allegations,

and cases concerning human rights violations. His wife, Cilia Flores, was also targeted due to her perceived behind-the-scenes political influence and alleged connections. But the real question is not what the accusations are; the question is whether any allegation in the modern global system now supersedes the sanctity of territorial sovereignty.

Can a single powerful nation claim moral or legal authority to overthrow a government or abduct a sitting head of state? Or is this the return of that old era where the law of the jungle overpowers the language of diplomacy?

Another disturbing dimension emerges when this operation is linked with transitional administration, restoration of oil infrastructure, and the intervention of American corporations revealing a broader framework of political restructuring and resource control. This recalls the echoes of old colonial doctrines where "reconstruction" precedes control, "security" cloaks dominance, and economic recovery becomes a prelude to political redesign. If this is the shape of the future, then the world appears to be walking back toward the shadows of past imperialism.

Maduro's own political persona is not without contradictions on one side, centralized authority, rigid governance, and tightening space around political dissent; on the other, an image of a people's leader dancing at rallies, speaking in a soft tone, projecting simplicity and accessibility. This style may have earned him domestic sympathy, yet simultaneously created intense global criticism. Even so, the manner, timing, and method of his arrest could trigger a crisis whose effects may not remain confined within Venezuela's borders.

American analytical circles also note that regime change achieved through force rarely produces stability instead, history repeatedly

shows that it results in greater chaos, mass migration, economic collapse, and regional friction. Should political confrontation intensify in the Caribbean following this operation whether through armed resistance or institutional conflict, its consequences may spread far beyond Venezuela.

It is for this reason that a large number of Americans themselves express hesitation toward such military action because history proves that a chapter opened through force seldom closes peacefully.

On another level, Venezuela's decision to approach the UN Security Council indicates that international legal platforms remain the final refuge for weaker states. But when powerful nations begin to challenge the supremacy of these very institutions, the foundations of the global order begin to tremble.

Today's question is not whose stance is correct; the real question is whether the world now stands at the brink of a new conflict between power and law.

This incident is not merely a story of military success or political defeat; it is also the narrative of a moral discomfort in which powerful states may launch attacks at will, try cases elsewhere, and later wrap their actions in the cloak of peace and stability. If such precedents continue, sovereignty will become a symbolic term and weaker nations will no longer rely on constitutional structures for their security, but on the changing moods of global powers.

The days ahead are extremely challenging for Venezuela; its institutions are under tremendous strain, its people stand trapped in fear and uncertainty, and its politics stands at a decisive turning point where every step is being written into history.

Yet perhaps the greater test belongs to the international community whether it wishes to see law subjugated to power, or power brought within the limits of law. This very question will determine the political and moral future of the coming world.

The Myth of Exam Stress: What Students Don't Want to Admit

Sundas Arshad

Exam stress is widely perceived as an inevitable and harmful consequence of academic assessment. Educational institutions across the globe increasingly frame examinations as a major contributor to declining student mental health. While psychological pressure around examinations is real, this article argues that exam stress is frequently misunderstood and misattributed. Rather than being caused primarily by examinations themselves, stress often arises from procrastination, inadequate preparation, poor self-regulation, and unrealistic expectations. By reframing exam stress as a symptom rather than a cause, this article highlights the role of personal responsibility, effective learning strategies, and adaptive stress management in academic success.

Examinations do not generate this stress; rather, they serve as deadlines that reveal accumulated avoidance behaviors. When students report overwhelming exam stress, it often reflects time scarcity rather than task difficulty.

Avoidance of Responsibility and External Attribution

Attributing stress solely to examinations can foster a culture of external blame. While systemic issues in assessment design may exist, habitual externalization reduces students' perceived control over outcomes. Educational psychology literature demonstrates that students with an internal locus of control and strong self-efficacy experience lower anxiety and greater academic resilience.

Viewing oneself as a passive victim of an unfair system diminishes motivation for behavioral change and perpetuates stress cycles.

Contemporary academic environments intensify stress through constant social comparison. Peer competition and curated portrayals of

success — particularly through social media — create unrealistic benchmarks for achievement. Students may interpret normal academic struggle as personal inadequacy, amplifying anxiety.

This comparison culture shifts focus from mastery and progress to performance and validation, making examinations emotionally charged experiences rather than neutral assessments.

Rather than being viewed as punitive measures, examinations can be reframed as structured checkpoints within the learning process. Beyond content mastery, exams assess essential life skills including time management, consistency, prioritization, emotional regulation, and perseverance.

When preparation is continuous and intentional, stress becomes functional rather than debilitating. It signals importance and readiness, supporting rather than sabotaging performance.

What Students Rarely Acknowledge

Honest self-reflection reveals factors often omitted from discussions on exam stress:

- Irregular study habits
- Underestimation of syllabus demands
- Overreliance on short-term memorization
- Poor planning and time allocation

Acknowledging these elements restores agency and enables constructive change.

The widespread portrayal of examinations as inherently harmful oversimplifies a complex issue. Exams do not independently create stress; they expose preparation patterns, study behaviors, and coping capacities. While institutions must continue to support student mental health, cultivating responsibility, self-regulation, and realistic planning is equally essential.

Exam stress, therefore, is not merely a problem to be eliminated but a signal to be interpreted. When addressed constructively, it becomes a catalyst for academic growth rather than a barrier to success.

Pakistan, United Arab Emirates pledge to enhance cooperation in education and technical training

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Federal Education and Professional Training, Wajihah Qamar, on Monday met with the Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates to Pakistan, Salem Al Zaabi, at the UAE Embassy in Islamabad. During the meeting, detailed discussions were held on further strengthening bilateral cooperation in the fields

of education, technical and vocational training, skills development, and human resource exchange.

Minister of State Wajihah Qamar stated on the occasion that Pakistan is placing special emphasis on aligning youth employment-related skills with international standards so that they can meet the requirements of the global labor market. She stressed the importance of cooperation in joint certification programs,

teacher and student exchange initiatives, and capacity-building projects.

The meeting also reviewed prospects for collaboration between Pakistan's higher education institutions and the Higher Education Commission, including mutual recognition of academic qualifications, research collaboration, and the promotion of academic mobility.

Both sides expressed keen interest in



developing an effective and coordinated system for the structured exchange of skilled manpower in priority sectors, in order to benefit the workforce of both countries and promote shared economic growth.

UAE Ambassador Salem Al Zaabi

reaffirmed his country's commitment to expanding education and skills-based cooperation with Pakistan, stating that such partnership initiatives would play an important role in strengthening long-term bilateral relations and in the development of human resources.

At the conclusion of the meeting, it was agreed that concrete frameworks would be developed for cooperation in the fields of education and technical training, along with joint initiatives to further strengthen people-to-people contacts between the two countries.

OIC-COMSTECH and UNI Launch Online Digital Courses for Students from OIC Member States

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Organization of Islamic Cooperation's Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (OIC-COMSTECH), in collaboration with UNI and leading Chinese technical institutions, officially launched a series of Online Digital Courses aimed at strengthening skills development, digital literacy, and human capital across OIC Member States.

The launching ceremony was held virtually and brought together senior academic leaders, policymakers, and industry representatives from across the OIC region and partner countries. The distinguished participants included Mr. Cheng Shuqiang, President of Shaanxi Technical College of Finance & Economics; Mr. Kang Kun, Vice President of Henan Institute of Economics and Trade; Mr. Wu Jiaoyu, President of Guangzhou Songtian Poly-



Zong Advances Autonomous Network Capabilities with Pilot Launch of Self-Intelligent RAN Optimization Platform

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Zong, Pakistan's leading information services and technology innovation company, has successfully completed the pilot launch of its Self-Intelligent Radio Access Network (RAN) Optimization Platform, marking a significant milestone in the evolution toward autonomous network operations.

The AI-powered platform introduces intelligent, self-optimizing capabilities that enable the network

to detect, analyze, and resolve performance issues in real time. By eliminating manual intervention, the solution significantly reduces response times and enhances network efficiency, particularly during peak usage periods.

Commenting on the development, Waqas Munim, Head of Digital Intelligence, Zong said, "At Zong, we are transforming Pakistan's telecom landscape with intelligent, autonomous networks. The successful pilot of our Self-Intelligent RAN Optimiza-

tion Platform demonstrates how AI-driven innovation can enhance network efficiency, reduce manual intervention, and deliver an exceptional experience for our customers. This milestone is a key step toward building a future-ready, resilient digital ecosystem across Pakistan."

The successful pilot reinforces Zong's commitment to leveraging AI-driven innovation to strengthen Pakistan's digital infrastructure and deliver reliable, future-ready connectivity nationwide.

SSGC's New Chairman Asif Inam is a Valuable Asset, Malik Khuda Bakhsh

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Malik Khuda Bakhsh, President of Pakistan Business Group (Karachi Region), Convenor of FPCCI's Energy Standing Committee, and Senior Vice Chairman of PPD, congratulated FPCCI's Vice President Asif Inam on his appointment as Chairman of the Board of Directors of Sui Southern Gas Company Limited (SSGC).

Malik Khuda Bakhsh stated that Asif Inam is a distinguished Pakistani businessman and industrialist with a strong presence in the textile sector. He also serves as Vice President of FPCCI and is an active leader of the United Busi-



ness Group. Having traveled extensively across the United States, the United Kingdom, the European Union, Canada, the Middle East, and the Far East, Asif Inam has gained broad international exposure. He is an expert in the cotton and textile sectors and

has conducted significant research in these fields. He possesses detailed knowledge of various cotton varieties and has a deep understanding of the national energy challenges, particularly those affecting the textile industry. His views on economic, trade, and industrial matters are widely recognized, and his opinions are frequently sought by national media platforms.

Malik Khuda Bakhsh further mentioned that Asif Inam is the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Diamond International Corporation Limited, a leading textile spinning enterprise with an annual turnover of approximately Rs 12 billion, and also serves as the Chairman

and Director of Cotton Mills Limited, another prominent spinning mill with an annual turnover of about Rs 14 billion.

He added that Asif Inam is a valuable asset to the gas sector, and his knowledge is invaluable. It is hoped that he will focus on addressing the issues faced by the business community in the energy sector with great dedication. Malik Khuda Bakhsh also congratulated the newly elected directors, including Zuhair Siddiqui, Saira Najeem Ahmed, Usman Ahmed Chaudhry, Muhammad Dawood Bazai, Muhammad Akram, Muhammad Rehan Hashmi, Mohammad Ali Khan, Khalid Rahman, Salma Feerasta, and Naveed Malik.

Rapid population growth impacts human life in poverty-stricken Balochistan

Rafiullah Mandokhel

QUETTA: On a chilly winter morning, 34-year-old Bakhtawar is desperate for her turn in the crowded waiting area under the open sky at a rural health facility.

The typical tribal mother is cradling her youngest ailing infant while her two other barefoot children are playing close by. She is the mother of eleven children in total; however the rest are at home with her 58-member extended family on the outskirts of Zohb.

Bakhtawar like many other poverty-stricken mothers here, is heavily dependent on this government-run facility in northern Balochistan. Although it was established for a smaller population, but as the population grew, now it is no longer capable of delivering quality health services to this marginalized community.

"Our village comprises nearly a thousand households, with a population of around ten thousand people. Sometimes we are sent back home empty-handed because the pharmacy runs out within a few working days," she laments.

Bakhtawar's story is far from unique; across this pover-

ty-stricken province, thousands of women with large families face similar hardships. For families like Bakhtawar's, the strain is immediate and relentless.

Balochistan, covering nearly 44% of the country's landmass, is under rapid population growth. Its impact is evident on families, health services, education, and basic infrastructure in every nook and corner. The pressure is felt not only in the cities but in villages as well, which are expanding rapidly with each passing year.

The official population data shows that Pakistan's population reached around 255 million in 2025, making it the world's fifth-most populous country. Balochistan recorded the highest provincial population growth rate, estimated at about 3.2 per cent annually. Separately, its total fertility rate stands at 4.0 births per woman, compared to the national average of 3.6.

"The rapid population growth, fueled by poverty, is creating a humanitarian strain," explains Population Officer, Haseeb Mandokhel, adding, "If current fertility and growth trends continue that outpacing development, Balochistan's population could increase to around 35

million by 2050," he warns. Syed Aman Shah, the District Support Manager at PPHI (People's Primary Healthcare Initiative), says hundreds of patients, mostly women and children, visit this facility on a daily basis, where Bakhtawar gets her child treated. The staff has left no stone unturned to ensure the healthcare facilities; however, the steadily growing number of patients with each passing day poses a major challenge for them to respond effectively.

The Pakistan Maternal Mortality Survey shows that Balochistan records a death rate of 298 deaths per 100,000 live births, the highest in the country. The infant mortality rate stands at 66 per 1,000, while the under-5 mortality rate is 78 per 1,000. The indicators are

highlighting poor child survival outcomes.

Mothers like Bakhtawar often give birth at home with no official record. Her last delivery was also attended by an elderly traditional birth attendant, who has been attending delivery cases for a decade. This situation is underscoring the scarcity of maternal health services in rural Balochistan.

Health experts believe that birth spacing could significantly improve maternal and child health without conflicting with cultural or religious norms. Yet, in the hilly Balochistan, such services always remained scarce and inaccessible.

"Despite the visible strain, family planning remains a sensitive and misunderstood issue. Male dominance, cultural

barriers and misinformation prevent many women from accessing such services," Haseeb laments.

Bakhtawar's story doesn't end here. Only two out of her eleven children go to a private school in town.

"The rest of my children are out of school because we cannot afford their fee and transportation burden. Let alone when they get sick. They are left at the mercy of Allah," she regrets.

The impact of rapid population growth extends beyond healthcare into education. In a government-run primary school on the outskirts of Zohb, 120 students cram into a single classroom. Some sit cross-legged on the hard and cold floor, while the rest lean against the dirty walls. A single teacher for this over-

crowded classroom is standing with a piece of white chalk in his dust-stained fingers, as there is no space left even for his chair to sit on. The majority of these grade one students in the heart of the town share torn textbooks with other poor and unfortunate classmates.

"I spend one hour merely checking their attendance, let alone teaching them. This is no longer teaching but a crowd and noise control responsibility," the teacher Dawood Khan admits.

According to the Pakistan Economic Survey 2024-25, Balochistan's literacy rate stands at around 42%, the lowest rate in the country. The dropout rate in the province is the highest in the country, a factor that undermines the quality of education.

UNICEF data indicates

that Balochistan has one of the highest proportions of out-of-school children in Pakistan. An estimated 3.5 million children, nearly 69% of the provincial school-age population, are out of school. Gallup Pakistan reveals that 41% of households in Balochistan reported no child attending school. This situation paints a grim picture.

"Our marginalized communities in Balochistan are paying the highest price," says Qutab Khan Afzaq, who has been working in the development sector with the Balochistan Rural Support Programme for over a decade.

For districts like Zhob and neighborhoods where Bakhtawar and Noor live, this is not just a statistic. It is seen in overcrowded classrooms, long hospital queues, dried-up wells, empty water containers, and extended families struggling to survive. Behind every number is a family like Bakhtawar's; born too many, served too little, yet still optimistic for change.

The writer is a Balochistan-based freelance journalist and member of the Media Coalition Group at the Population Council. He can be reached at: mandokhail.rafi@gmail.com



Bull & Bears PSX 100-Share Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index		
Current	Prev. Close	
186,518.71	185,062.10	
Day's High	Day's Low	
187,015.11	184,896.70	
Index Value	Change	
66,182,185,079	+1456.61	
Percentage	Time	
+0.79%	7 Jan, 2026 4:30 pm	
Europe: FTSE 100 Index		
Index Value	Change	
10,048.21	-74.52	
Percentage	Time	
-0.74%	7 Jan, 4:35 pm GMT	
USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average		
Index Value	Change	
49,377.20	-84.88	
Percentage	Time	
-0.17%	7 Jan, 12:45 pm GMT-5	
Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average		
Index Value	Change	
51,961.98	-556.10	
Percentage	Time	
-1.06%	7 Jan, 3:45 pm GMT+9	
Open Market Forex Rates		
Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	188	192
Bahrain Dinar	744	754
Canadian Dollar	202	206
China Yuan	39.58	39.98
Danish Krone	43.72	44.12
Euro	327.75	331.5
Hong Kong Dollar	35.69	36.04
Indian Rupee	3.03	3.12
Japanese Yen	1.7800	1.8800
Kuwaiti Dinar	908	918
Malaysian Ringgit	68.6	69.20
New Zealand \$	161.24	163.24
Norwegian Krone	27.66	27.96
Omani Riyal	728.6	738.6
Qatari Riyal	76.26	76.96
Saudi Riyal	74.85	75.5
Singapore Dollar	217.5	221.5
Swedish Korona	30.25	30.55
Swiss Franc	351.82	354.57
Thai Bhat	8.88	9.03
U.A.E Dirham	76.55	77.55
UK Pound Sterling	379	383
US Dollar	280.75	282.8

Teknofest: Experts urge youth to acquire tech, entrepreneurial skills



Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Renowned experts from the technology and business sectors urged students and young professionals to equip themselves with skills in emerging technologies, entrepreneurship, and business communication, while upholding strong ethical and religious values to build sustainable and successful careers both locally and internationally.

The experts were addressing a large gathering at the Teknofest Conference held at Expo Centre, Karachi, as part of the Mera Brand Pakistan exhibition, which attracted thousands of students, freelancers, startups, and young professionals from across the city.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Norman Said, IT expert and CEO of SI Global Solutions, highlighted that Pakistan's IT industry is gradually gaining global recognition; however, he stressed that companies and professionals must focus on innovation, quality delivery, and brand building to compete in high-end international markets.

Saad Shah, IT expert and CEO of Hexalyze, said that while universities are producing a large number of graduates each year, there remains a gap between academic knowledge and industry requirements.

Ibrahim Amin, Chairman of the Pakistan Freelancers Association (PAFLA), said that the global workforce is undergoing a major transformation, with remote work, freelancing, and digital entrepreneurship becoming mainstream career paths.

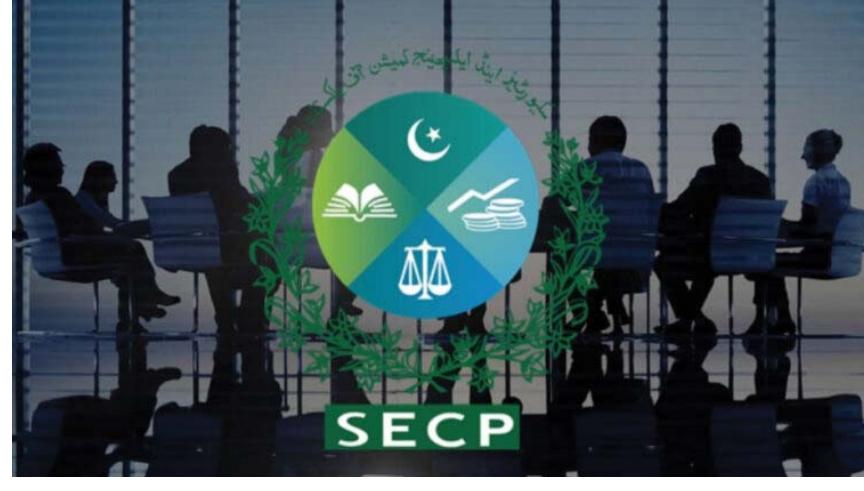
SECP approves prospectus for initial public offering of Pak-Qatar General Takaful Limited

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has accorded approval for issuance, circulation and publication of the Prospectus for the Initial Public Offering (IPO) of 30,000,000 Ordinary Shares of Pak-Qatar General Takaful Limited (PQGTL), representing 29.67% of the total post-IPO paid up capital of PQGTL.

The IPO is being made through the book building method, with seventy-five percent of the IPO shares being allocated to the book building portion and the remaining twenty-five percent offered to retail investors.

PQGTL is a Shariah-compliant insurer, dedicated to providing various general (non-life) Takaful products. PQGTL will be the first dedicated General Takaful company to be listed on



the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX).

The IPO segment is exhibiting phenomenal activity during FY 2025-26, with this offering representing the sixth IPO transaction on the PSX Main Board to date. Approval of the PQGTL prospectus also marks the second prospectus to be approved by the SECP within the first week of calendar year 2026.

New IPOs promote market development by enhancing transparency, corporate governance, and investment avenues. Listings provide issuers access to long-term capital and opportunities for value creation, while giving investors access to enhanced disclosures for better informed investment decisions.

The SECP remains committed to fostering a facilitative regulatory environment that encourages new listings as a sustainable source of financing and investment activities.

Visited

ISLAMABAD: The Sajwani business delegation of Dubai's renowned real estate company DAMAC Properties, visited the Ministry of IT and Telecom on Wednesday.



Photo: Online

BYD Maintains World's No.1 NEV Ranking, Achieves 4.6 Million Global Sales in 2025

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: BYD, the world's No. 1 manufacturer of New Energy Vehicles (NEVs), announced its global sales results for 2025, delivering more than 4.6 million NEVs and securing the global sales championship once again. This achievement highlights BYD's global dominance that is strengthened by a commitment to innovation, quality and customer satisfaction across the world.

As part of its international expansion, the Company also revealed that overseas sales achieved a new milestone, surpassing 1 million units for the first time in a single year, showcasing the growing acceptance and appeal of its brands, and vehicles across global markets.

"2025 has been a defining year for us at BYD, where



besides record sales, we are witnessing exceptional acceptance not just at home but abroad as well", noted Lei Jian, Country Head of BYD Pakistan. Launched in 2024 in Pakistan, the Company sells its category defining models including the BYD ATTO 3, BYD SEAL and BYD SHARK 6, bringing a wave of excitement to the local market. "In Pakistan, our lineup has received an unbelievable response as customers gravitate towards state-of-the-art technologies that we are continuously evolving, pushing the barriers for what's possible in the automotive space."

TCL Displays the Future of Visual Technologies



Commerce Desk

LAHORE: TCL, Pakistan's No. 1 LED TV brand, unveils a new generation of visual technology breakthroughs and AI-powered products at CES 2026. This year, TCL introduces a series of world-first display panels, display technologies, and products, along with a full portfolio of intelligent devices designed to elevate

smart living, immersive entertainment, and productivity.

TCL continues to push the boundaries of display technologies across all screen sizes.

At CES 2026, TCL debuts its SQD-Mini LED Technology, a revolutionary leap in Mini LED performance.

By transforming the local dimming zones of conventional Mini LEDs into Precise

Dimming Series, it enables precise light control across the screen and delivers exceptional performance in highlights and shadows.

It also incorporates TCL's Super QLED technology and an Ultra Color Filter Panel, offering longer service life, better color, higher peak brightness, a more stable global high color gamut, and a refined appearance.

FBR Seals Two Chutes of Chanar Sugar Mill Over Track and Trace System Violation

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pursuing its zero-tolerance policy against tax evasion in the sugar sector, the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has continued its stern enforcement actions against sugar mills found involved in violation of the Track and Trace System and the electronic monitoring system of FBR.

In continuation of these efforts and ongoing monitoring of sugar mills, on 05 January 2026, FBR staff stationed at Chanar Sugar Mill, Samundri, Faisalabad, sealed two chutes due to violation of the Track and Trace System. Similarly, on 06 January 2026, Safina Sugar

Mills, Lalian, Chiniot, has been sealed for violations of FBR's electronic monitoring system.

The Government of Pakistan reiterates its zero-tolerance policy against tax evasion and non-compliance in the sugar sector. These enforcement actions form part of a broader campaign to strengthen tax compliance, safeguard government revenue, and ensure transparency within the sugar industry.

Strict monitoring and swift enforcement actions will continue, even after the close of the crushing season, to ensure regular supply of sugar to end consumers after recovery of due taxes.

Chinese Hoymiles partners with Harisun Energy and Superstar to launch high-tech storage solutions

Commerce Desk

LAHORE: Renowned Chinese inverter manufacturer Hoymiles has fostered partnership with Harisun Energy and Superstar to provide high-tech, long-duration energy storage solutions for residential, commercial, and industrial buildings utilizing solar systems for electricity consumption in Pakistan.

"Pakistan's growing solar sector is facing a major challenge related to long-hour backup and energy storage solutions, which will soon be addressed with the entry of a global leader in energy solutions," said Haris Jamsheed, CEO of Harisun Energy. "Our partnership with the Chinese company will provide innovative energy storage solutions for residential, commercial, and industrial solar systems, enabling uninterrupted electricity supply at workplaces, factories, and homes during nighttime hours."

Solarization has continued to expand across the country on a large scale due to prolonged

load-shedding in remote areas and the high cost of electricity, which has become unaffordable for many households and industrial units, particularly in recent years.

"We have vowed to bring an energy revolution to Pakistan through innovative storage solutions, as the industrial and commercial sectors can enhance productivity with low-cost electricity backup systems," said Saleem Umar, Chairman of Superstar. "Affordable electricity will reduce operational costs at the domestic level, enabling exporters to compete more effectively in global markets."

Superstar Solar Energy and Harisun Energy are introducing Hoymiles' innovative range of solar inverters, energy storage solutions, and smart energy management systems to the Pakistani market. These solutions are designed to deliver reliable, efficient, and sustainable energy, empowering individuals and businesses to harness solar power as a clean and green energy source.



Thursday, January 8, 2026

Pakistan's Usman Khan tops FEI Middle East & Africa Eventing Rankings

 Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's equestrian rider Usman Khan has been ranked No. 1 in the Middle East and Africa Eventing Zone in the 2025 World Rankings released by the International Equestrian Federation (FEI).

The FEI announced the rankings on January 6, placing Usman Khan at the top of the regional standings and elevating Pakistan to the No.1 position in the Middle East and Africa Zone.

Talking to APP on phone from Sydney, Usman Khan termed the achievement a proud moment for the country.

"This is a great honour for me and for Pakistan. Reaching the No.1 position again after my injury makes this achievement even more special," he said.

Usman Khan had earlier dominated the regional rankings from 2019 to 2021, before a serious accident temporarily halted his career.

"The journey back was challenging, but I remained focused and committed.



I hope this success inspires young riders in Pakistan," he added.

The FEI divides the world into six geographical eventing zones to determine regional leaders and championship rankings.

Auction for PSL new teams at Convention Centre tomorrow

 Sports Desk

LAHORE: The auction for the two new teams in the HBL Pakistan Super League (PSL) is set to take place on Thursday, 8 January at the Jinnah Convention Centre in Islamabad.

The ceremony will begin at 4.15pm and will be live-streamed on the HBL PSL, PCB official YouTube Channels, Tapmad, Tamasha, Myco, and PCB Live (UK Region). Renowned singer Rahat Fateh Ali Khan will also perform at the event following the conclusion of the bidding process.

Prior to the start of the bidding process the winning squads of the Pakistan Shaheens team, which lifted the Men's Rising Stars Asia Cup 2025 in Doha and the triumphant Hong Kong Super Sixes squad, will be felicitated for their achievements.

A total of 10 technically qualified bidders will be vying for two teams as the HBL PSL is set to expand from six to eight teams in its 11th and land-



mark season, which is scheduled to take place between 26 March and 3 May 2026.

The bidders include diverse pool of businesses ranging from areas like agrobusiness, telecommunication, real estate, a software company from the United States and Tech companies from Pakistan and abroad.

The pool of cities shortlisted for potential franchise allocation includes Faisalabad, Gilgit, Hyderabad, Muzaffarabad, Rawalpindi and Sialkot.

Two of these teams will now become household names alongside three-time champions each Lahore Qalandars (2022, 2023 and 2025) and Islamabad United (2016, 2018, 2024), 2017

champions Peshawar Zalmi, 2019 winners Quetta Gladiators, 2020 champions Karachi Kings and 2021 triumphant team Multan Sultans.

Following the massive success of the two HBL PSL roadshows in London and New York on 7 and 13 December 2025, respectively, 12 parties filed bids for the two new teams but after a thorough technical evaluation process the following 10 bidders are set to fight out for ownership of two new teams through an open auction:

Aim Next Inc – Mr. Umar Mushtaq and Mr. Ali Mushtaq

Deharki Sugar Mills – Mr. Makhdoom Syed Ali Mahmud

FKS – Mr. Fawad Sarwar

Inverex – Mr. Muhammad Zakir Ali

i2c – Mr. Amir Wain

Jazz – Mr. Amir Ibrahim

OZ Developers – Mr. Hamza

Majeed

Prism Developers – CEO Mr.

Masood Alvi

VGO TEL – Mr. Naveed Gaba

PRAC and Corporate Pakistan Group to Convene First Pakistan Policy Dialogue in Islamabad

 News Desk

ISLAMABAD: Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Pakistan, will be the Chief Guest at the first Pakistan Policy Dialogue, scheduled to take place on 14 January, 2026 in Islamabad.

The Dialogue is geared towards fostering constructive engagement between the public and private sectors. It comes at a critical juncture for Pakistan's economy, with a focus on the need for pragmatic reforms, growth-oriented policy choices, and institutional strengthening.

Organized under the theme "Correcting Course: Pakistan's Economic Reset," the Dialogue is being convened by the Policy Research and Advisory Council (PRAC) in collaboration with the Corporate Pakistan Group (CPG). The Founding Partners are Ministry of Commerce (MoC) and

Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) with the support of Bank Alfalah, BankIslami, and Nutshell Group.

The event will feature keynotes and addresses by Prof. Ahsan Iqbal, Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Reforms; Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue; Senator Dr. Musadik Malik, Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination; and Muhammad Ali, Federal Minister for Privatisation.

Esteemed panelists include Dr. Samuel Rizk, Resident Representative, UNDP Pakistan; Khurram Schehzad, Adviser to Finance Minister; Zarrar H. Khan, Federal Secretary IT & Telecom & Chairman, PTCL; Dr. Ihsrat Husain, N. I. H. I. Author, Economist, former Federal Minister & Governor, State Bank of Pakistan; Aamir Ibrahim, Chief Executive Officer, Jazz and Chairman, Mobilink Microfinance Bank; Maheen Rahman, Chief Executive Officer, InfraZamin Pakistan; Nadia Rahman, Member, Planning Commission of Pakistan; Saqib Ahmad, Global Chief Growth Officer, Systems Limited; Mujeeb Zahur, Managing Director Pakistan, S&P Global; Sajeed Aslam, Partner & Co-Founder, Spectreco LLC, USA; Atif A. Bajwa, President, Bank Alfalah Limited; Mohammad Ali Tabba, CEO, Lucky Cement; Ayla Majid, Founder & CEO, Planete; Zubair Motiwala, Chairman, Businessmen Group (BMG) KCCI; Mohammad Jawed Bilwani, Chairman, J. B. Industries & former KCCI President; Asad Hameed Khan, Country Head Pakistan, ACCA; Huma Fakhar, Founder, MAS Capital & MAP Group; Mohammad Younis Dagha, Chairman, PRAC; and Muhammad Azfar Ahsan, Former Minister for Investment

and Chairman, Corporate Pakistan Group, along with other leading corporate, policy, and development sector voices.

The central theme will be Resetting Pakistan's Economic Direction, with dedicated sessions exploring priority areas including Export-Led Growth, Bridging the Digital Divide, Green Growth Pathways for a Climate-Vulnerable Pakistan, and Advancing Pakistan's Growth Agenda. These conversations will be led and moderated by senior policymakers, corporate leaders, and sector specialists from across Pakistan.

The Pakistan Policy Dialogue is envisioned as a recurring national platform to promote evidence-based policy discourse, encourage meaningful private-sector participation in reform thinking, and translate dialogue into actionable outcomes for sustainable economic growth.

Lucky Investments Surpasses PKR 130 Billion AUM Within First Year, Emerging as Pakistan's Fastest-Growing Islamic Asset Manager

 Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Lucky Investments Limited has crossed PKR 130 billion in Assets Under Management (AUM) within its first year of operations, marking a major milestone and positioning the Company as Pakistan's fastest-growing Islamic Asset Management Company (AMC).

Launched with a focused mandate to promote Shariah-compliant, ethical, and disciplined investing, Lucky Investments introduced its first Islamic fund in April 2025. In less than nine months,

the Company expanded its platform to seven Islamic funds and multiple investment plans, catering to a rapidly growing base of individual and institutional investors. The strong growth reflects rising investor confidence in Islamic finance and a robust product strategy backed by governance, transparency, and professional fund management.

Commenting on the achievement, Mohammad Shoaib, CFA, Chief Executive Officer of Lucky Investments, said "Crossing PKR 130 billion in AUM within our first year is a clear endorsement of our

values-driven investment philosophy. Our objective is to enable long-term wealth creation through Shariah-compliant solutions while supporting financial inclusion and sustainable economic growth in Pakistan."

Lucky Investments operates under the guidance of an experienced Board of Directors and respected Shariah scholars, ensuring the highest standards of compliance, governance, and risk management.

Further strengthening its credentials in Islamic finance, the Company was recently recognized as 'Emerging Islamic Finance Entity of the Year 2025 - South Asia' at the 10th Islamic Finance Forum of South Asia (IFFSA).

As Pakistan's Islamic finance sector continues to expand, Lucky Investments remains committed to playing a leading role by delivering trust-based, purpose-led, and innovation-driven investment solutions.

Lucky Investments Limited, a group company of the Yunus Brothers (Lucky) Group, is a full-fledged Islamic Asset Management Company. The Yunus Brothers Group is one of Pakistan's most respected business conglomerates,

known for strong governance, integrity, and long-term value creation.

Muhammad Shoaib, CFA, Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer, is widely regarded as a pioneer of Islamic asset management in Pakistan, with over three decades of experience in capital markets and Islamic finance. The Company's Shariah governance is overseen by renowned scholar Mufti Muhammad Hassaan Kaleem, serving as Shariah Advisor.

Lucky Investments aspires to be the preferred choice for

Wing 999 Inter Departmental Cricket League Tournament

 Sports Desk

KARACHI: Three more matches were decided in the Wing 999 Inter Departmental Cricket League Tournament at various Grounds of the City.

The highlights of the days was brilliant Centuries by Hamza Qureshi 115, Abdul Rehman Niazi 107 and equally some good batting by Muhammad Azan and Ahmer Ghaziani both scored 75 each.

The Tournament is being organized by Regional Cricket Association Karachi with the collaboration of Wing 999 Sports.

Scores in Brief:

J. Sports beat D Cattle Farms in their 2nd Match at Eid Gah Ground Korangi. D Cattle Farms 244/5 in 40 overs. Muhammad Azan 75 4x4 3x6, Aibaad Khan 40 8x4, Yasir Mushtaq 40 4x4 1x6, Salah Khan 29 not out, Asad ul Haq 25. Aliyan Mahmood (ob) 2/28, Muhammad Owais (ob) 2/47.

In reply D Cattle Farms 206 all-out in 37 overs. Ahmer Ghaziani 75 10x4 1x6, Arsalan Farzand 68 8x4, Noor Wali 23, Yasir Mushtaq (ob) 3/2, Waheed Ahmed (ob) 2/23, Israr Ahmed (sla) 2/61.

In the 2nd Match Fay International beat Medicam Group by 1 Wicket at CAA Cricket Stadium. Medicam Group 238/8 in 40 overs. Ubaid ulah 67 10x4, Khan Shah 55 4x4, Naimat Khan 35, Ali Butt 28, Muhammad Yaseen 26, Huzifa Saud (sla) 2/43, Abdul Razaq (mf) 2/46, Yasir Khan (mf) 2/47.

In reply Fay International 242/9 in 39.3 overs. Hamza Qureshi 115 12x4 4x6, Abdulla Hayee 28, Abdulla Khan 21, Asad Akhtar (mf) 2/34, M. Hamza Qureshi (sla) 2/41, Afnan Khan (sla) 2/42. In the 3rd Match Pakistan Stallions beat Pak Saudi International by 31 runs at Agha Khan Gymkhana Ground. Pakistan Stallions 265/5 in 40 overs. Abdul Rehman Niazi 107 10x4 1x6, Muhammad Hammad 51 3x4 1x6, Khaifid ul Nabi 26 not out, Kahaf Patel 22, Usman Bin Rashid 3/61.

In reply Pak Saudi International 234 all-out in 36.5 overs. Ali Hassan 61 1x4, Fahad Nadeem 55 9x4, Saifullah Khan 37, Rao Waqar 28, Abdullah Babar 23, Khaifid ul Nabi (sla) 4/41, Rafay Safdar (sla) 2/39.

Farhan, bowlers power Pakistan to victory over Sri Lanka

 Sports Desk



DAMBULLA: Clinical bowling performance, backed by Sahibzada Farhan's half-century, helped Pakistan down Sri Lanka by six wickets in the T20I series opener here at the Rangiri Dambulla International Cricket Stadium on Wednesday.

The Green Shirts chased down a mere 128-run target on four wickets with 20 balls to spare.

Sahibzada Farhan's and Saim Ayub's brisk opening stand of 59 runs in 5.5 overs made the contest one-sided affair.

The duo came with an aggressive approach, particularly Farhan, who accumulated 12 from Nuwan Thushara's opening over.

The pair kept the charge, with Saim and Farhan taking down Maheesh Theekshana and Thushara with nine and 19 runs from the second and third over.

Saim was eventually bowled by Theekshana for 24 from 18, which included three fours and a six. Farhan remained firm, stitching a 35-run partnership with skipper Salman Ali Agha.

The scorecard read 94 in 10.2 overs when Agha was caught after making 16 from 11 deliveries.

Sri Lanka tried to hold things back, but it was too little too late as Farhan and Fakhar Zaman were removed in quick time.

Sahibzada Farhan top-scored with 51 from 36, striking two maximums and four boundaries, while Fakhar managed only five from 10 balls.

At 106-4 in 13.2 overs, Pakistan's chase was steadied by an unbeaten 23-run partnership between Shadab Khan and Usman Khan, which saw the visitors reach the target comfortably.

Shadab scored 18 off 12 balls with the aid of three boundaries. Usman scored an unbeaten seven from 13 deliveries.

Shadab scored an unbeaten seven from 13 deliveries.

For Sri Lanka, Wanindu Hasaranga, Dushmantha Chameera, Maheesh Theekshana, and Dhananjaya de Silva scalped one wicket apiece.

Earlier, Pacer Salman Mirza led the bowling attack, while spinners Abrar Ahmed and Shadab Khan provided strong support as Pakistan skittled Sri Lanka for a below-par 128 run total in 19.2 overs. Pakistan pacers mounted pressure on the home side batters right from the onset as openers Pathum Nissanka and Kamil Mishara were sent back in 3.2 overs.

Nissanka made 12, whereas Mishara could not open his account.

As a result, Sri Lanka were in early trouble with 15-2 with Dhananjaya de Silva and Kusal Mendis at the crease.

The duo tried to stabilize the innings with a brief 22-run stand before both getting dismissed in a span of two deliveries.

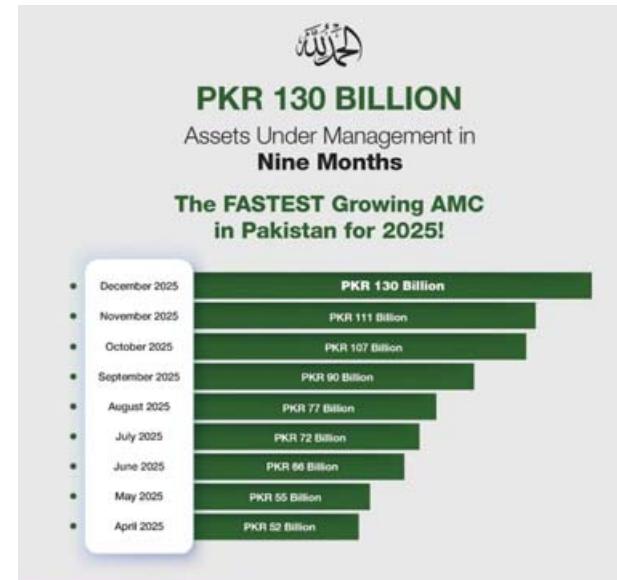
Returning Shadab Khan made an immediate impact with the ball, trapping Mendis lbw for 14 while De Silva was caught behind for 10.

With quick wickets, the Islanders were again in recovery mode as Charith Asalanka and Janith Liyanage tried to arrest the slide with a 34-run partnership.

The pair eventually eased their side's trouble as the scorecard read 72-5 in 11.3 overs.

But it was Abrar Ahmed this time, who made the crucial breakthrough with Asalanka's wicket. The former captain scored 18 off 15 balls with the aid of a single boundary.

Meanwhile, Liyanage held the innings with a string of partnerships down the order. He first stitched a 38-run partnership with Wanindu Hasaranga, which was followed by another 17-run stand with skipper Dasun Shanaka, briefly stabilizing their innings.



Shariah-compliant investments, through integrity, innovation, and fostering sustainable growth, investor confidence

National Seminar

ISLAMABAD: NDMA conducted National Seminar on Infrastructure Audit Program 2026 at NDMA HQs, Wednesday.



Photo: PID

Aurangzeb meets Sajwani business delegation to explore collaboration in digital finance

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb on Wednesday held a high-level meeting with Sajwani business delegation to explore potential collaboration in digital finance and emerging technologies.

The delegation was led by Syed Zeeshan Shah, Chairman, One Group, said a news release.

The meeting focused on emerging global trends in tokenisation, artificial intelligence (AI), blockchain and digital infrastructure, and the potential for collaboration in support of Pakistan's ongoing financial sector reforms and digital transformation agenda.

Senator Aurangzeb welcomed the delegation's interest and appreciated



their willingness to engage constructively with Pakistan. He underscored the government's commitment to responsible innovation, strong governance and regulatory compliance, noting that

Pakistan is actively engaging credible international partners to evaluate new technologies that can strengthen its financial ecosystem.

The minister emphasised that any future collaboration

would be guided by national priorities, transparency and applicable laws and policies.

The visiting delegation expressed strong interest in partnering with the government of Pakistan and offered

technical expertise, advisory support and capacity building in areas such as tokenisation of real-world assets, blockchain-based platforms, AI-driven solutions and modern digital infrastructure.

The delegation highlighted global best practices and private-sector innovation that could support Pakistan in enhancing transparency, efficiency, investor access and financial inclusion, while fully respecting the country's legal and regulatory framework.

The visiting delegation also included Amira Hussain Sajwani, Co-Managing Director, DAMAC Group and Co-Founder and CEO, Prypco; Aqib Hassan, Chief Commercial Officer, One Homes; Alp Ozentalp, Chief of Staff; and Joseph El Am, General Manager Tokenisation, Prypco.

NDC proposes president, PM and Nawaz Sharif to lead dialogue with opposition

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The National Dialogue Committee (NDC) on Wednesday called for the formation of a talks committee comprising President Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Nawaz Sharif to advance dialogue with political prisoners and ease political tensions.

The demand was made in a joint declaration issued after an NDC conference held in Islamabad.

The committee said Pakistan faces serious political, economic and social challenges that can only be addressed through sustained



and meaningful dialogue. The NDC is headed by former Pakistan Tehreek-e-

Insaf (PTI) leaders Fawad Chaudhry, Imran Ismail and Mahmood Moulvi.

No representatives from PTI, PML-N or the Pakistan Peoples Party attended the

meeting.

However, Awam Pakistan Party chief and former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, Jamaat-e-Islami leader Liaquat Baloch and MNA Sher Afzal Marwat were among the participants.

The declaration called for the immediate appointment of opposition leaders in the Senate and the National Assembly, restoration of women political workers, an end to media censorship, and withdrawal of cases against political figures.

It said the release of political workers would help build confidence in the negotiation process and reduce political confrontation.

PM directs to expedite institutional reforms augmenting exports, provision of facilities to exporters

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday directed to expedite institutional reforms regarding increase in exports and provision of facilities to exporters amid expressing zero tolerance for negligence regarding tax refund to the exporters.

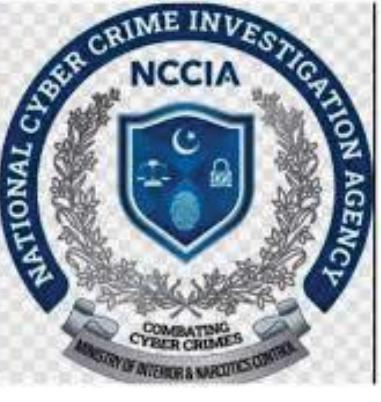
The prime minister chaired a review meeting on promotion of exports and issued directives to prepare a plan of action pertaining to enhancing exports, especially agricultural exports, and reduction in trade deficit, a Prime Minister's Office news release said.

The officials briefed the forum

on government strategy regarding increase in exports, whereas trade statistics from July to December 2025 were presented in the meeting. The forum was briefed on increasing exports of high-value sectors such as engineering, pharmaceuticals, medical devices and processed food.

The meeting was attended by Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar, Minister of State for Finance and Railways Bilal Azhar Kayani, Governor State Bank of Pakistan M. Jamil Ahmed and senior government officials.

Former NCCIA director general Waqaruddin Syed suspended



Monitoring Desk

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has suspended former director general of the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA), Waqaruddin Syed, with immediate effect, according to an official notification issued by the Establishment Division on Wednesday.

The notification stated that Waqaruddin Syed, a Grade-20 officer of the Police Service of Pakistan, has been placed under suspension for an initial period of 120 days under the Civil Servants (Efficiency and Discipline) Rules, 2020. The suspension will

remain in effect until further notice.

According to the Establishment Division, the decision has been implemented with immediate effect as part of ongoing administrative and disciplinary proceedings.

It may be recalled that Waqaruddin Syed was removed from the post of Director General, NCCIA, on October 28, 2025, following various allegations. Since his removal, he had been awaiting a new posting in the Establishment Division.

Further details regarding the allegations or the outcome of the proceedings have not been disclosed so far.

Abbas calls for national dialogue, warns of elite control and leadership failure

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi on Wednesday said that all segments of society share responsibility for Pakistan's current political and economic crisis, stressing that the absence of rule of law has directly damaged the country's economy.

Speaking on the prevailing situation, Abbasi said the country would not move forward unless all stakeholders sit together to find a solution. "Until everyone sits down, the situation will not improve," he said, adding that dialogue was the only way out of the ongoing instability.

He criticized what he described as decades of "hybrid governance," stating that such arrangements have existed in the country for nearly 60 years. Abbasi remarked that political engineering has distorted democratic

norms, contributing to long-term institutional weakness. He emphasized that the issue facing the country was not about the release of any individual leader, including the founding chairman of a political party, but about systemic failures.

Highlighting the importance of overseas Pakistanis, Abbasi noted that expatriates sent nearly \$38 billion in remittances last year, underscoring their continued trust in the country despite internal challenges.

However, he warned that economic contributions alone could not compensate for governance failures.

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Wednesday said a Special Protection Unit (SPU) is being established in the federal capital specifically for the protection of Chinese nationals.

Naqvi said this while briefing his Chinese counterpart on the steps taken for the security of Chinese nationals in the country, stating that the protection of Chinese nationals and joint interest projects is a top priority.

Earlier, the security czar arrived at the headquarters of the Chinese Ministry of Public



Security, where he was warmly welcomed by Chinese Minister of Public Security Wang Xiaohong and his delegation.

During a three-and-a-half-hour meeting, the two minis-

ters discussed Pak-China bilateral relations and joint counter-terrorism measures.

Detailed talks were held on enhancing cooperation in counter-terrorism, police

training exchange programs, and areas of mutual interest.

Both sides agreed to hold joint working group meetings every three months and an annual meeting at the interior ministers' level.

The Chinese public security minister expressed satisfaction with the measures taken for the protection of Chinese citizens and projects in Pakistan, thanking Naqvi and his team.

Xiaohong lauded Pakistan's efforts in internal security and stated that China highly values Pakistan's sacrifices in the war against terrorism.

The two leaders agreed to make the joint rapid response

Asif urges KP govt to stand with LEAs to flush out terrorism

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Defense Khawaja Muhammad Asif on Wednesday urged the provincial government to stand with law enforcement agencies (LEAs), and security institutions for complete eradication of terrorism and lasting peace in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa areas.

Talking to a private television channel, he said, half-hearted cooperation of KP government could not produce results regarding

terrorism. He said that provincial government should support security institutions and coordinate with federal government so that terrorism issues could be addressed in a befitting manner.

In reply to a question about dialogue with Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), he said dialogue with PTI is imperative to move forward.

Commenting on peace force for Gaza, he said that civil and military leadership would decide the matter.