

AJK Government Priorities: Health, Education, Employment Top Agenda: Minister Nayyar

 **Berou Report**

MUZAFFARABAD: A detailed meeting was held between the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Minister for Information and Religious Affairs, Chaudhry Rafiq Nayyar, and the Spokesperson to the Prime Minister, Pakistan Peoples Party AJK, and Central Deputy Secretary Information, Shaukat Javed Mir.

During the meeting, discussions were held on effectively highlighting the performance of the Pakistan Peoples Party government formed under the leadership of Prime Minister Raja Faisal Mumtaz Rathore, and on preparing fact-based figures to counter the baseless narratives of political opponents.

Chaudhry Rafiq Nayyar and Shaukat Javed Mir agreed to convene a high-level meeting to further deliberate on these matters.

Talking to the media after the meeting, Minister for Information



Chaudhry Rafiq Nayyar said that the government of Prime Minister Raja Faisal Mumtaz Rathore truly represents the aspirations of the people. He stated that health, education, employment and infrastructure are the core priorities of the govern-

ment's national agenda, adding that the approval of an education package in the near future will transform Azad Kashmir into an "educational state." Speaking on the occasion, Central Deputy Secretary Information of the PPP, Spokesperson to

the Prime Minister and candidate for Assembly Constituency No. 7, Shaukat Javed Mir, said that the leadership of Pakistan Muslim League (N) has fulfilled its duty of guiding the government through criticism, adding that if they begin praising the achievements of Prime Minister Faisal Rathore's government, they would not even find candidates in more than half of the constituencies in the next general elections.

Shaukat Javed Mir emphasized that the government seeks guidance from all democratic forces and warned that confrontation leads to chaos in the state, which is detrimental to national unity and harms public interests. Consultations were also held on curbing the trend of maligning the ideology of Pakistan's stability, the Pakistan Armed Forces, and national security institutions. Prayers were offered for the martyrs of Kashmir, the Pakistan Armed Forces, and democracy.

Welcome

QUETTA: Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfaraz Ahmad Bugti welcomes Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif at Quetta airport.



Photo: Online

AJK Minister urges students to harness social media responsibly for national progress

 **Abdul Majeed Tahir**

MUZAFFARABAD: Azad Jammu and Kashmir Minister for Information, Auqaf and Religious Affairs, Chaudhry Muhammad Rafiq Nayyar, has emphasized that students should make positive and responsible use of modern technology and social media to benefit from it. He said that students are the bright future of the country and the nation, and the modern educational, technical and digital facilities available to them today must be used responsibly—not only for their personal development but also for the betterment of society.

He was addressing a special awareness workshop on media literacy and social media, organized



by PID Pakistan in Muzaffarabad, as the chief guest. Students, media representatives and individuals from various walks of life participated in the workshop. Assistant Director

Admin, Pakistan Information Department Islamabad Mujtaba Ahmed, Dr. Mubashir Naqvi, Raja Nasir Latif, and others also spoke on the occasion.

The Information Minister said that in the past, students had to acquire education with very limited resources, whereas today technology has made access to knowledge much easier. He shared that he obtained his law degree from Punjab University in 1983, at a time when there was neither internet nor social media, yet students progressed through hard work and discipline.

He stressed that discipline, punctuality and moral values are essential for success in life, adding that only a well-informed and morally upright youth can lay the foundation of a strong and progressive society.

At the conclusion of the workshop, the Information Minister distributed certificates among the participants of the media literacy workshop.

South Punjab health official inspects Nishtar Hospital emergency ward

 **Asim Tanveer**

MULTAN: Special Secretary, Specialized Healthcare and Medical Education Department South Punjab Amanullah paid a detailed visit to the Emergency Department of Nishtar Hospital Multan.

The purpose of the visit was to review the medical facilities provided in the emergency, services provided to the patients and administrative matters. Vice Chancellor Nishtar Medical University Professor Dr. Mehnaz Khakwani, AMS Admin Dr. Abdul Qadir Khan, Director Emergency Dr. Zahid and Deputy Medical Superintendent Dr. Ayoub Qazi were also present on the occasion.



The Special Secretary visited the patients undergoing treatment in

the emergency ward and inquired about the facilities provided to them. The administration gave a briefing to the Special Secretary regarding the ongoing reform measures in the emergency department, available facilities, medical equipment and deployment of staff. The Special Secretary directed that cleanliness, discipline and patient convenience in the emergency should be further improved and immediate redressal of complaints should be ensured.

He said that the Punjab government is striving to provide quality and timely medical facilities to the people and the role of large institutions like Nishtar Hospital is very important in this regard.

Sardar Atiq Ahmed Khan Directs Full Mobilization for 'Kashmir Banega Pakistan' Event

 **Spokesman Report**

RAWALPINDI: Following successful workers' conventions in Dadiyal and Bhimber, the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference will hold a Muzaffarabad Division Workers' Convention on Monday, January 19, in Muzaffarabad.



In this regard, President of the Muslim Conference Sardar Atiq Ahmed Khan, while issuing directives to party office-bearers and workers for the preparations of the convention, said that party workers, MSF, Youth Wing, Women Wing, Lawyers Wing, Traders Wing, and all other affiliated organizations should actively participate and play a key role in making the "Kashmir Banega Pakistan" a success.

He said that the slogan "Kashmir Banega Pakistan" is a major guarantee for a secure future of South Asia. He further stated that the Muslim Conference is a party of the past, present, and future, and that workers are the most valuable asset of any political party. He urged workers to maintain unity and cohesion within their ranks, expressing confidence that, God willing, the future of the state belongs to the Muslim Conference.

Sardar Atiq Ahmed Khan reaffirmed that the Muslim Conference is the standard-bearer of the Kashmir Freedom Movement and the custodian of the ideology of accession to Pakistan. He said that the development works carried out during the Muslim Conference's tenure have no parallel, and that the party has been working since day one—and will continue to work—for the survival of Pakistan and the Kashmir region.

Kashmiri Leader Slams Indian Move to Empower LG Over Elected Officials

 **Spokesman Report**

KARACHI: Member of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly and former Minister for Information, Maulana Pir Muhammad Mazhar Saeed Shah, has strongly condemned the Indian government's move to give preference to the Lieutenant Governor over locally elected representatives.



In a statement, he said that this decision reflects a deliberate attempt to sabotage peace in Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir. He added that the elected representatives of Jammu and Kashmir have already been reduced to mere rubber stamps, and the latest transfer of powers will further deprive the Kashmiri people of their fundamental rights.

Maulana Pir Muhammad Mazhar Saeed Shah stated that this step is not only a blatant violation of democratic norms but also another clear example of India's oppression and repression. He urged the international community to take serious notice of the ongoing human rights violations and injustices being inflicted upon the Kashmiri people in occupied Kashmir.

The former Information Minister emphasized that the people of Kashmir will continue their struggle for their legitimate and fundamental rights, and that such tactics cannot weaken their resolve.

Green Crescent Trust Rendering Exceptional Services in School Education for Underprivileged Communities: RCCI President Usman Shaukat

 **Commerce Desk**

ISLAMABAD: President of the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce & Industry (RCCI), Mr. Usman Shaukat, has lauded the Green Crescent Trust (GCT) for its outstanding contribution to providing quality school education to underprivileged communities in Pakistan, particularly in rural and underserved areas of Sindh.

He expressed these views while delivering the keynote address at a special event hosted in honour of Green Crescent Trust, aimed at mobilizing support from Islamabad's business community for GCT's ongoing education campaign. The event was attended by a large number of prominent philanthropists and donors from the federal capital, who announced generous contributions to support the enrolment of out-of-school children. The funds raised will enable GCT to provide quality education to nearly 5,000 students for one year.

RCCI President emphasized the urgent need for a robust, transparent, and well-monitored mechanism—developed with the active involvement of civil society—to ensure effective utilization of the trillions of rupees allocated annually by federal and provincial governments for public health and education. He noted that Pakistan spends approximately Rs 3.2 trillion every year on these sectors, underscoring the importance of strict oversight to ensure these funds truly benefit the most vulnerable segments of society.

GCT Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Zahid Saeed TI, in his presentation highlighted the severity of Pakistan's education crisis and outlined GCT's proven, scalable model. He shared that GCT has established 173 charitable schools over the past 31 years, educating more than 34,660 students—over 40 percent of them girls—and supporting 2,150 orphaned students. He also shared GCT's Vision 2030 to expand its network to 250 schools serving 100,000 students.

Gen. (R) Amjad Khattak, Member GCT Management Committee, appreciated the unwavering support of RCCI President Usman Shaukat for social causes, particularly his steadfast backing of Green Crescent Trust's noble mission.

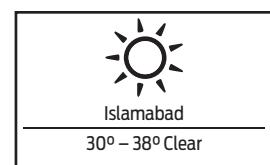
Gandapur launches special transport cards for special persons, reaffirms their support

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: Former Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sardar Ali Amin Gandapur, has said that caring for special persons is a collective social responsibility, emphasizing that they deserve dignity, respect and support.

He said that looking after vulnerable segments of society reflects the true spirit of a welfare state.

He was speaking as the chief guest at a dignified ceremony in Dera Ismail Khan, organized by the Regional Transport Authority (RTA) Dera in collaboration with the Social Welfare Department, where more than 300 Special Transport Cards for persons with disabilities were issued. On the occasion, 59 tricycles were also distributed and hearing aids were provided to 50 persons with special needs.

Gandapur appreciated the RTA Dera for launching the Special Transport Card for persons with disabilities, calling it a commendable initiative. He said the card would enable special persons to avail a 50 percent concession on public transport, significantly easing their mobility and daily travel. Highlighting development efforts in the district, he said work on mega projects in Dera Ismail Khan was progressing at a fast pace. He urged upon the citizens to consider these development schemes as their own, acknowledging that while such projects may cause temporary inconvenience, they would bring long-term benefits.


SERVICES
Namaz Timings

Fajr	5:45 am
Zohr	12:14 pm
Asr	3:38 pm
Maghrib	5:16 pm
Isha	6:44 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	9290301-7
Holy Family	9290322-7
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	9204654
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	9231-5022125

Murad, Hanif agree to launch transformative rail partnership in Sindh

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah and Federal Minister for Railways Hanif Abbasi, in their decisive meeting, agreed on a multi-billion-ruppee plan to modernise the provincial railway network – starting from Karachi to Kashmore and Karachi to Tharparkar – to provide state-of-the-art transportation to millions.

"We are ready to invest Rs 6.6 billion to replace 100 out of the 308 manned railway crossings across the province, rehabilitate the railway system, and launch six trains from its resources in the first phase and another six in the next phase," the chief minister committed. He also ordered the immediate release of the funds.

The meeting, held at the CM House, was attended by Sindh Minister for Transport Sharjeel Inam Memon, Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister Agha Wasif, and Secretary Transport Asad Zamir. The federal minister's delegation included Secretary Railways Mazar Ali Shah, General Manager Railways Aamir Baloch, and other senior officers.

The centrepiece of the discussions was a comprehensive Rail-Based Suburban Transportation Plan designed to offer 'city centre to city centre' connectivity.

The long-standing efforts of Shabnam Zafar, former Vice President of FPCCI and Patron-in-Chief of the Khairpur Chamber of Commerce and Industry, have borne fruit as the Directorate General of Trade Organizations (DGTO), an attached department of the Ministry of Commerce, has renewed the license of the Khairpur Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

On the renewal of the cham-

Legendary Pakistani Cricketer Shahid Khan Afridi visits TMUC, Islamabad

ISLAMABAD: TMUC Higher Education Group and Champions Hub formalised a landmark partnership through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) at TMUC Islamabad, aimed at empowering youth, fostering excellence, and creating meaningful opportunities for the leaders of tomorrow says a press release.

The ceremony was graced by the presence of Legendary Pakistani cricketer and global sports icon, Shahid Khan Afridi, and Mr Aamir Chottani, entrepreneur and co-founder of Alliance Sports Ventures (ASV), whose visit generated great enthusiasm among TMUC students. The campus witnessed an atmosphere of excitement and inspiration as students had the opportunity to meet, interact with, and learn from two prominent figures shaping Pakistan's sports and business landscape.

Welcoming the Champions Hub leadership, Dr. Faisal Mushtaq TI, Founder and CEO of TMUC Higher Education Group, warmly received Mr. Shahid Afridi and Mr. Aamir Chottani and delivered an address to the students,

emphasising the importance of discipline, leadership, and holistic development alongside academic excellence. Dr. Faisal Mushtaq highlighted the value of industry-academia partnerships in preparing students for future careers and encouraged them to actively pursue opportunities that combine education, innovation, and sports.

Founded by internationally renowned sports icon Mr. Shahid Afridi and seasoned entrepreneur Mr. Aamir Chottani, ASV combines exceptional brand equity, industry credibility, and operational expertise to develop scalable, high-impact sports ventures across the country.

Representatives from both institutions reaffirmed their shared commitment to nation-building through education, sports, and innovation, noting that this collaboration will contribute significantly to developing confident, capable, and socially responsible future leaders.

The TMUC x Champions Hub partnership reflects a forward-looking vision of integrating education with physical development, entrepreneurship, and



leadership, supporting a stronger and more dynamic future for Pakistan's youth.

Laptop Distribution Ceremony

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Dr. Musadik Malik addresses the Laptop Distribution Ceremony at COMSATS University on Thursday.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

Annual Students' Art Show held at Punjab Arts Council

City Desk

RAWALPINDI: Punjab Arts Council Rawalpindi organised the Annual Students' Art Show at the gallery of Arts Council, showcasing creative works by emerging artists across multiple disciplines.

The exhibition was inaugurated by the chief guests, Ms Shazia Rizwan, Parliamentary Secretary, Information & Culture Department, and Ms Anum Fatima, Deputy Director General (Enforcement), CDA, and Director, Municipal Corporation Islamabad.

Artworks by students from the departments of Calligraphy, Painting & Sketching, Graphic Designing, Fashion & Textile Design, and Interior Designing were displayed, reflecting creativity, skill, and contemporary artistic expression.

A total of 50 students were awarded with certificates in recognition of their artistic achievements. The event was organised under the guidance of faculty members Khuram Babur, Younis Roomi, Samra



Humayun, Waqar Ali, Quratulain, Usman Ahmed Mirza, and Sameeha Khalid, whose efforts were appreciated by the guests. The chief guests commended the students and faculty for promoting art education and encouraging young talent, emphasizing the role of arts in cultural development and creative growth.

Director Arts Council Mr Shakoor paid special gratitude to all. Show will continue till January 12.



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Shabnam Zafar said that, as

in the past, they will continue

to remain part of the UBG platform and keep raising the voice of traders of Khairpur.

Meanwhile, UBG central leaders Malik Khuda Baksh, Central Spokesperson Gulzar Feroz, Momin Ali Malik, along with members of the Managing Committee of the Khairpur Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Nadeem Waris and Farhat Manzoor, congratulated Shabnam Zafar on the renewal of the license of the Khairpur Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Recommendation for Strict Action Against PEF School for Remaining Open During Winter Vacations

Raza Naqvi

ATTOCK: The District Education Authority Attock has taken serious notice of a violation of the Government of Punjab's orders regarding winter vacations and has recommended strict action against a school operating under the Punjab Education Foundation (PEF).

According to a report submitted by the Deputy District Education Officer (M-EE), Tehsil Hassan Abdal, an unannounced inspection was conducted on 8 January 2026 at Government Boys Primary School Bhui Garh, which is outsourced under PEF. During the inspection, it was found that the school was open, teachers and non-teaching staff were present, and regular teaching activities were being conducted with students, despite the fact that the Government of Punjab had officially announced winter vacations.

Taking the matter with utmost seriousness, the Chief Executive Officer (Education) Attock, Dr. Muhammad Azhar, has recommended the cancellation of the concerned PEF school's license and has forwarded the recommendation to the Punjab Education Foundation to ensure strict compliance with government directives in the future.

Dera Ismail Khan Police Issue Annual Performance Report 2025


Syed Tauqeer Zaidi

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: The District Police Dera Ismail Khan have issued their Annual Performance Report for the year 2025.

According to details, under the vision of Inspector General of Police Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Zulfiqar Hameed and on the directives of Regional Police Officer Dera Syed Ashfaq Anwar, the Dera Ismail Khan Police, under the supervision of District Police Officer Sajjad Ahmed Sahibzada, achieved significant successes against crime during the year 2025.

The police conducted indiscriminate operations against various crimes including theft, dacoity, robbery and burglary. A total of 441 cases were worked out and 642 accused were arrested. During these operations, the police recovered 07 cars, 128 motorcycles and cash amounting to Rs 21,952 million from the possession of the accused.

In the campaign against illegal weapons and ammunition, 707 cases were registered and the accused were arrested. The recovered weapons included 59 Kalashnikovs, 99 guns, 54 rifles, 99 pistols, 07 hand grenades, 09 knives and 101,284 rounds of ammunition of different bores.

Similarly, in operations against drug dealers and smugglers, the police registered 916 cases and arrested 927 accused. The recoveries included 711 kilograms of charas, 74 kilograms of heroin, 152 kilograms of ice (crystal meth), 900 grams of opium, 400 grams of bhang and 2,078 bottles of liquor.

Syed Aman Shah Extends Heartfelt Congratulations to Newly Appointed IG Sindh

Bureau Report

KARACHI: Syed Aman Shah, Provincial Convener of Awaam Pakistan Party Balochistan, has extended his heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to the newly appointed Inspector General of Police Sindh, Mr. Javed Alam Odho, on assuming charge of his office.

Syed Aman Shah stated that this appointment has been made at a crucial time when the province of Sindh is facing serious and sensitive challenges related to law and order, crime control, and the protection of life and property of the people. He added that the position of IG Sindh carries immense responsibility and trust, and he is confident that Mr. Javed Alam Odho, with his vast experience, professional competence, and integrity, will play a significant role in making the police force more active, organized and people-friendly.

The Provincial Convener further said that improving the law and order situation, curbing street crime, and taking effective action against drugs, criminal elements, and illegal activities are among the most pressing needs of the time. He expressed hope that the new IG Sindh will strengthen the policing system through meaningful police reforms, the use of modern technology and merit-based decisions.

DGTO renews Khairpur Chamber license following successful efforts by Shabnam Zafar

KARACHI: The long-standing efforts of Shabnam Zafar, former Vice President of FPCCI and Patron-in-Chief of the Khairpur Chamber of Commerce and Industry, have borne fruit as the Directorate General of Trade Organizations (DGTO), an attached department of the Ministry of Commerce, has renewed the license of the Khairpur Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

On the renewal of the cham-

ber's license, Patron-in-Chief Shabnam Zafar expressed her gratitude to the Ministry of Commerce, DGTO, United Business Group (UBG) Patron-in-Chief S. M. Tanveer, and FPCCI Vice President Abdul Mohsin Khan for their efforts, while paying tribute to the leadership of UBG. She also thanked FPCCI President Atif Ikram, UBG President Zubair Tufail, and senior leaders Khalid Tawab and

Hanif Gohar.

Shabnam Zafar said that, as

in the past, they will continue

to remain part of the UBG platform and keep raising the voice of traders of Khairpur.

Hanif G

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Venezuela's people must be heard, insists UN human rights chief

Responding to the seizure of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro by the United States, UN human rights chief Volker Türk has reiterated deep concerns that the military operation undermined fundamental protections for sovereign countries.

The US action made "all States less safe around the world", said Ravina Shamdasani, spokesperson for the High Commissioner.

Speaking to journalists in Geneva, Ms. Shamdasani rejected the US justification for its intervention on the grounds of the Venezuelan Government's "longstanding and appalling" human rights record.

"Accountability for human rights violations cannot be achieved by unilateral military intervention in violation of international law," she insisted.

"Far from being a victory for human rights, this military intervention, which is in contravention of Venezuelan sovereignty and the UN Charter, damages the architecture of international security... And this is a point that the Secretary-General has also made."

Ms Shamdasani explained the High Commissioner's position that the military operation "violates the fundamental principle of international law (and) the UN Charter, which states that States must not threaten or use force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State".

The UN human rights office, OHCHR, was expelled from Venezuela in February 2024, following its consistent reporting on the deteriorating situation there. Independent probes commissioned by the Human Rights Council have also detailed grave and ongoing abuses against opponents of the country's ruling party.

A state of emergency was declared on Saturday that restricts the free movement of people, the seizure of property necessary for national defence and the suspension of the right to assembly and to protest, Ms. Shamdasani noted. "We're particularly concerned, given the record that the Government has in suppressing free speech, protest, freedom of assembly, using the pretext of national security."

"The High Commissioner calls on the US and the Venezuelan authorities, as well as the international community, to ensure full respect for international law, including human rights," she said, adding that the future of Venezuela "must be determined by the Venezuelan people alone, with full respect for their human rights, including the right to self-determination, and sovereignty over their lives and their resources".

Beyond the political crisis in Venezuela, almost eight million people, or one in four people, need humanitarian assistance today, after years of economic decline, repression and instability.

The UN aid coordination office, OCHA, said that a response plan remains in place requiring approximately \$600 million.

What Venezuela's Latest Incident Teaches About Strong Defense and Federation

Across the developing world, Venezuela is widely seen not as an isolated crisis but as a revealing example of how global power politics operate and how vulnerable states without sufficient national strength can become. Observers in Africa and Asia interpret its experience as part of a recurring pattern in which powerful actors employ sanctions, diplomatic pressure, propaganda, covert measures, and military threats to bend weaker states to their will. This interpretation resonates strongly in Pakistan, where historical experiences of conflict and external pressure have fostered the belief that moral arguments, resource wealth, or popular leadership alone offer little protection in an international system driven by interests and power. As a result, Venezuela's predicament is absorbed as a cautionary tale rather than distant news.

Pakistan's own history reinforces this outlook, shaping a conviction that survival depends on demonstrable strength, particularly robust defense capabilities and credible deterrence. The development of its armed forces and the acquisition of nuclear deterrence are viewed as existential necessities that safeguarded sovereignty in a hostile regional environment. In contrast, Venezuela's trajectory is seen as a warning: despite vast oil wealth and assertive leadership, internal polarization, economic collapse, and weakened institutions eroded national cohesion and defense capacity, leaving the state vulnerable to external pressure and intervention.

For many in Pakistan and the wider developing world, the central lesson is that internal fragmentation and perceived weakness invite foreign interference, while unity and credible strength remain the most reliable shields for national independence.

pendence.

This chain of reasoning culminates in the assertive conviction that a strong army is not a luxury, an anachronism, or a symbol of undesirable militarism, but an absolute necessity for survival within an unforgiving and anarchic international system. Economic development, social progress, and democratic stability are all universally acknowledged as vital and desirable national goals, but they are simultaneously regarded as fragile and potentially ephemeral achievements unless they are underwritten and protected by robust, credible, and alert defense capabilities. From this perspective, even a strong and thriving economy is viewed as ultimately vulnerable—a tempting prize—if the nation-state cannot physically defend its borders, deter military aggression, or resist multifarious forms of external coercion. Venezuela's vast but ultimately unsecured oil wealth is routinely cited as definitive proof that natural resources and economic potential alone are hollow guarantees of true security or meaningful independence.

The argument derived from this geopolitical realism is further extended to inform internal debates within Pakistan, including those pertaining to regions like Azad Jammu and Kashmir. When voices advocating for separation or complete independence from Pakistan are raised, proponents of national unity often employ Venezuela's experience as a potent cautionary tale. Their contention is that small, fledgling, or newly formed states located in perpetually hostile neighborhoods face immense, often

insurmountable, challenges in maintaining genuine sovereignty and security autonomy.

In a world order still fundamentally driven by raw power politics, fragmented regions lacking in comprehensive national strength—particularly in defensive capacity—may swiftly become easy targets for external manipulation, becoming pawns in larger geopolitical games rather than masters of their own destiny. Therefore, the argument follows that unity with Pakistan, despite all its well-documented internal challenges and governance complexities, offers infinitely greater collective security, strategic depth, and diplomatic heft than would a precarious and isolated existence in an uncertain and often predatory global environment.

Recent regional crises and military confrontations, often referred to within Pakistan's strategic discourse as defining moments of national testing, are consistently invoked to reinforce this foundational belief. The prevailing view is that Pakistan's demonstrated ability to stand firm during such acute crises, to maintain its dignity and agency on the world stage, and to avoid catastrophic outcomes is directly and causally linked to its relentless military preparedness and the sobering shadow of its nuclear deterrence. According to this entrenched narrative, any visible hesitation, public discord within the security apparatus, or perceived weakness in national resolve would inevitably invite the same kind of treatment that other vulnerable countries have endured, potentially transforming Pakistan from a respected actor into yet

another cautionary example in the annals of post-colonial geopolitics.

Thus, the central message distilled from Venezuela's recent ordeal is not primarily framed within Pakistan as a moral or legal judgment on the specific rights and wrongs of actions taken by various international actors towards Caracas. Rather, it is internalized as a stark, unambiguous, and sobering reminder of the enduring realities of international power. Survival in today's world, it is concluded, depends on a synergistic combination of internal unity, strong and resilient state institutions, credible and modern defense capabilities, and unwavering national resolve. For Pakistan, translating this lesson into practice is seen to necessitate a continuous commitment to strengthening its armed forces through sustained investment in modern equipment, rigorous training, and doctrinal innovation; to maintaining the credibility and security of its nuclear deterrent; and to fostering a durable sense of unity and purpose among its diverse populace. It also implies a conscious national effort to reject and counter what are perceived as agendas—whether born of external inspiration or internal division—that seek to weaken the state from within through sectarian or ethnic polarization, political extremism, or the persistent cultivation of hostility toward the country's core national institutions. In this comprehensively held worldview, a strong, united, and cohesive Pakistan, underpinned by a capable, professional, and respected military, is therefore not merely a source of national pride or a ceremonial artifact of statehood. It is, instead, the very bedrock, the non-negotiable foundation, upon which the nation's continued independence, its sovereign prerogatives, and its hard-won dignity ultimately and irrevocably rest.



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

How the Pandemic Redefined International Threats Beyond Health

Noorish Nasir

The COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally transformed the global understanding of security. Traditionally, international security was defined through military strength, power politics, and inter-state conflicts. However, the pandemic revealed how non-military threats such as disease, economic instability, misinformation, and social disruption can equally endanger the survival of nations and individuals. Drawing from the post-Cold War broadening of the security concept discussed by Heurlein and Kristensen (2002), this article explores how COVID-19 redefined global threats, exposed institutional weaknesses, and reshaped the idea of interdependence and human security within the international system. It argues that the pandemic established health as a core dimension of international security, emphasizing the need for cooperative, multidimensional approaches to global stability.

Beyond economics and politics, the pandemic generated a profound human security crisis. School closures disrupted education for over 1.6 billion learners (UNESCO, 2021), while millions faced unemployment and social isolation. Rates of domestic violence, depression, and anxiety rose sharply, demonstrating that insecurity is also psychological and social. These challenges reflect what Heurlein and Kristensen (2002) term the "individual as victim," where threats endanger not only physical health but also identity, dignity, and societal coherence. The pandemic widened global inequalities, with marginalized populations—migrant workers, refugees, and women—bearing the heaviest burdens. It highlighted the interconnection between public health and

human rights, emphasizing that international security must include human well-being and equality to ensure sustainable peace.

COVID-19 accelerated digital transformation but also exposed new vulnerabilities. As governments, corporations, and schools shifted online, cyberattacks on health and research institutions increased dramatically. The World Health Organization reported a fivefold rise in cyberattacks in 2020. Simultaneously, misinformation and conspiracy theories spread through social media, creating what the WHO labeled an "infodemic." This information disorder became a global threat, undermining trust in governments and vaccines. Heurlein and Kristensen's (2002) notion of "new technology security" anticipated such challenges, warning that advanced technology can become both a safeguard and a source of insecurity. COVID-19 validated this prediction, as digital platforms became critical battlegrounds for influence, control, and misinformation.

The pandemic's impact in South Asia further demonstrates how health crises intersect with fragile governance and regional insecurity. In Pakistan and Afghanistan, weak healthcare infrastructure, economic dependency, and political instability magnified the crisis. Border closures disrupted trade and refugee movement, while misinformation limited vaccination efforts. Health workers were frequently targeted, linking public health insecurity with broader threats of violence and governance failure. These cases represent what Heurlein and Kristensen (2002) call societal and regional security, where instability within one state endangers neighboring regions and contributes to international insecurity.

The pandemic reinforced the principle of global interdependence. Heurlein and Kris-

tensen (2002) describe the modern world as "one world or none," meaning that isolationism and nationalism themselves can be threats to global survival. COVID-19 made this statement more relevant than ever. No state could contain the virus alone; global health required shared information, coordinated policies, and equitable vaccine distribution. Initiatives such as COVAX and international health diplomacy represented steps toward collective security, yet vaccine nationalism and inequality undermined their success. The crisis highlighted that in a deeply interconnected system, the insecurity of one region can rapidly endanger the entire world. Global peace and prosperity thus depend on strengthening international institutions, fostering transparency, and embedding health resilience into the broader architecture of security.

COVID-19 redefined international security by demonstrating that the gravest threats to human survival may emerge not from conflict but from within societies themselves. It blurred distinctions between health, economy, technology, and politics, proving that insecurity is multidimensional and globally shared. As Heurlein and Kristensen (2002) argue, the sustainability of the world depends on cooperative norms and collective awareness—the realization that true security cannot exist in isolation. The pandemic has therefore transformed the discourse of international relations, emphasizing human and global security as central to future stability. It challenges policymakers to integrate health preparedness, digital safety, and social resilience into national and international strategies. The ultimate lesson of COVID-19 is clear: in an interconnected world, the security of one nation depends on the security of all.

The writer is Student of BSIR-4 in IIUI

Thought Paper: The Role of the United Nations in Maintaining Global Security

Emama Batool

World organization (UN) was founded in the aftermath of the war, World War II and it was hoped that the world would never meet such devastation in future. It is basically created to ensure peace and security in nations. Whenever I consider the current job of the UN, I imagine it to be an organization, which, despite the good intentions, good results has evident flaws. By knowing the strong points as well as the weak points of the UN, we become able to re-evaluate our thoughts regarding the way the world security is formed and how much it has already contributed to the global security.

There is however also the bad or the shadowy side of the UN particularly when the mighty countries exercise their might to shield their interests. The Syrian conflict is one example evident in which the Security Council has been divided over years. The decision to veto resolutions were frequently employed by countries such as the United States, Russia, and China that could have led to less violence. Through this, millions of people were affected and the UN could not be stern. The struggle between Ukraine and Russia can be described as another example. Although the UN general assembly was shown to condemn the invasion, the Security council was unable to do anything that mattered since Russia herself is a permanent member and has the power of veto. This fact creates some doubts on the subject of fairness and effectiveness, how could an organization uphold international security when created with an ability to block action against one of the states participating in a conflict? In previous African conflicts, including Democratic

Republic of Congo, peacekeepers of the UN have on other occasions been accused of not protecting the civilians or being very slow. These collapses indicate that the UN is not necessarily resourceful, powerful, or unified to respond to rapid crises.

As I consider the two aspects of the good and bad roles of the UN, I know global security cannot rely on this organization. When national interests conflict with world accountability, the UN is weak since countries will operate in cooperation and international laws, but when there is willingness to assume international responsibility, it becomes magnified. The experience of Sierra Leone, Liberia and Iran nuclear deal demonstrates that peace can be achieved when countries unite. However, the cases in Syria and Ukraine remind us about the fact that the UN is often simply not able to do anything due to the structure of this institution, in particular, the veto system. These hues and shades of both success and failure make the UN a symbol of both hope and limitation.

To conclude, the United Nations is a role that is significant yet has flaws in ensuring world peace. It has assisted in the destruction of wars, peace processes, and it has offered a platform through which dialogue can be held among countries. Meanwhile, its shortcomings have enabled protracted battles to persist and innocent people to perish. My conclusion on this is that the UN is needed though it should be reformed, more united among major nations, and less politicking about. It can only do that at that time as the protector of world peace. Nevertheless, I do not think that the problems that the UN has been facing justify the disregard of its work, still, it is one of the very few organizations that can show the world the way to cooperate, but not compete, and that is why its activity still has a lot of deep meaning.

The writer is Student of BSIR-4 in IIUI

Air Chief Calls on Senior Military Leadership of Saudi Arabia

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force, called on HRH Lieutenant General Turki bin Bander bin Abdulaziz, Commander of the Royal Saudi Air Force, and General Fayyadh bin Hameed Al-Rowailly, Chief of the General Staff of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, during his official visit to KSA. On his arrival, the Air Chief was accorded a historic welcome, as a smartly turned-out contingent of Royal Saudi Air Force presented him Guard of Honour. During the meetings, bilateral cooperation, regional security dynamics and future defence collaboration were discussed. Both sides expressed satisfaction with the existing cooperation and agreed to further strengthen engagement through training, operational collaboration and exchange of professional expertise. The Defence Agreement between Pakistan and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was highlighted as a powerful affirmation of mutual trust,

strategic alignment and enduring brotherly ties. Both sides agreed to broaden the horizon of collaboration by exploring new avenues of defence cooperation.

The Air Chief highlighted the historic, time-tested and fraternal relations between Pakistan and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, founded on shared religious values, mutual respect and strategic alignment. Chief of the Air Staff reiterated his unwavering commitment to enhancing existing ties in the realm of military-to-military cooperation through bilateral and multilateral exercises. He underscored the profound transformation of Pakistan Air Force in recent years, with particular emphasis on its evolution into a robust Multi Domain Force. The Air Chief emphasized that this enhanced capability, seamlessly integrating space, electronic warfare, cyber, niche technologies and artificial intelligence domains was decisively manifested during the May 25 conflict, reflecting PAF's operational prowess, adaptability and combat effectiveness.

The Saudi defence leadership praised the robust bond of fraternity between the two brotherly nations and commended the close, enduring cooperation that exists between their respective Air Forces. The Saudi military leadership also praised the professionalism, operational excellence and combat readiness of Pakistan Air Force, while acknowledging its growing indigenous capacity in the aviation and aerospace industry. Acknowledging the growing significance of Multi Domain Operations in addressing the complexities of modern warfare, the military leadership of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia conveyed strong interest in leveraging Pakistan Air Force's rich operational experience through enhanced joint training and operational collaboration. They also appreciated Pakistan's constructive role and efforts in promoting regional peace, stability and security, while expressing keen interest in further expanding cooperation across diverse areas of mutual interest.

The visit of Chief of the Air Staff



to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia underscores the depth and vitality of the enduring strategic partnership

between the two countries. It serves as a clear testament to the unwavering commitment of both nations to further consolidate their strategic ties through enhanced cooperation in the defence and aviation sectors.

Women University Multan Envisions a Purpose-Driven 2026 at Seminar on Ethical Growth and Institutional Progress.

Kiran Asim

MULTAN: Women University Multan in collaboration with the Civil Development Organization, organized a comprehensive and thought-provoking seminar titled "What Should the New Year 2026 Be Like?" The seminar aimed to inspire students and faculty to reflect on moral responsibility, civic consciousness, and the pursuit of collective progress as the new year unfolds.

The event was organized under the auspices of the Directorate of Students Affairs and witnessed active participation from academia, civil society, and invited guests. The seminar was presided over by the Vice Chancellor, Women University Multan, Prof. Dr. Kalsoom Paracha, whose visionary address set a reflective and aspirational tone for the gathering. In her keynote speech, she emphasized that the year 2026 should be embraced as a year of ethical awakening, purposeful action, and unwavering commitment to doing good.

She urged students to internalize the teachings of the Holy Prophet

Muhammad (ﷺ) as a complete code of life, guiding individuals to uphold truth, justice, patience, and compassion even in the face of discouragement and adversity.

Prof. Dr. Kalsoom Paracha stressed that true progress—whether personal, institutional, or national—cannot be achieved without moral integrity and respect for the rule of law.

She highlighted the importance of honesty, accountability, and discipline as pillars of a just society. Referring to an inspiring incident from the life of Hazrat Anas (R. A.), she eloquently explained how steadfastness on the right path, even during difficult circumstances, leads to lasting success and inner fulfillment.

She further stated that Women University Multan envisions 2026 as a year marked by academic excellence, research innovation, character building, and meaningful community engagement, with students playing a central role in shaping the university's progressive future.

Addressing the gathering, Dr. Adeela Saeed, Director Students Affairs, highlighted the role of university

s in nurturing not only intellectual capabilities but also ethical sensibilities among students.

She emphasized that the Directorate of Students Affairs remains committed to organizing activities that promote moral values, leadership skills, and social responsibility. Dr. Adeela Saeed encouraged students to translate positive intentions into practical good deeds, stating that small acts of honesty, kindness, and discipline collectively contribute to a healthier and more progressive society.

The seminar featured a distinguished panel of speakers who enriched the discourse with their insights and experiences. Engineer Mumtaz Khan, Former Director Kalabagh Dam, spoke on sustainable development, strategic planning, and the necessity of integrity in national projects.

Mir Ahmed Kamran Magsi highlighted the importance of civic responsibility and ethical citizenship in shaping a better future. Sajjad Jahaniya, Director Information, underscored the role of responsible communication and media ethics in



promoting truth and social harmony.

Aamir Shehzad Siddiqui, Chairman Civil Development Organization, emphasized the significance of community development, volunteerism, and youth participation in nation-building. Yasmin Khakwani, CEO Civil Development Organization, shared her views on collaborative partnerships between educational institutions and civil society to foster inclusive

growth and moral leadership.

Zehra Sajjad Zaidi discussed women's empowerment and their vital role in ethical and social progress, while Abrar Khan highlighted the importance of law enforcement, discipline, and civic order.

Taj M. Taj and Noor Amin further reflected on national unity, tolerance, and character building as essential components for a prosperous 2026.

The seminar concluded on a note of optimism and renewed commitment, encouraging participants to make 2026 a year defined by good deeds, moral courage, and academic advancement. The event reaffirmed Women University Multan's dedication to holistic education—one that blends knowledge with values and prepares students to become responsible leaders and agents of positive change.

EPADS Expansion: PPRA, GBPPRA to Modernize Procurement in Gilgit-Baltistan

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) and the Gilgit-Baltistan Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (GBPPRA) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to roll out the e-Pakistan Acquisition and Disposal System (EPADS) in Gilgit-Baltistan.

The MoU was signed by Sheikh Afzal Raza, Project Director EPADS, PPRA, and Najeeb Alam, Managing Director/Secretary Finance, GBPPRA. The signing ceremony was attended by the Managing Director Federal PPRA, Hasnat Ahmed Qureshi, and Chief Secretary Gilgit-Baltistan, Abrar Ahmed Mirza.

Managing Director of the Federal Public Procurement Regulatory Authority,



Hasnat Ahmed Qureshi, while speaking on the occasion, stated that expansion and nationwide implementation of EPADS is part of the Prime Minister of Pakistan's Economic Governance Reform Program agenda.

Chief Secretary Abrar Ahmed Mirza termed the initiative a significant step in public procurement reforms for GB. He said the implementation of EPADS would make government procurement more transparent, fair, and efficient, and requested sustained collaboration and technical assistance from the federal authority to ensure

smooth and effective implementation.

Under the MoU, EPADS will be formally rolled out in Gilgit-Baltistan. In the initial phase, extensive training sessions will be conducted for officers and departmental teams to ensure seamless adoption and to address any technical or administrative challenges.

At the end of the ceremony, MD Hasnat Ahmed Qureshi presented a commemorative shield to Chief Secretary Abrar Ahmed Mirza.

The signing of this MoU marks a decisive step toward implementing a modern, fully digital procurement system in Gilgit-Baltistan.

The platform is designed to ensure transparency, accountability, and seamless monitoring across every stage of public procurement, thereby reinforcing the principles of good governance.



ment of global power. He highlighted China's successful state-led development model and robust investment in technology in contrast to the market-driven approach and coercive power utilized by the United States to protect its strategic dominance.

Dr. Ahsan Abbas, Director, CASS Lahore, delivered the opening address, noting that the evolving global order requires a renewed approach to balance competition and cooperation between major powers to ensure international stability.

Mr. Shahid Javed Burki, an eminent economist and former finance minister, stated that the global order is undergoing a fundamental transformation as China's rapid economic growth positions it to challenge the US, reflecting a significant realignment.

In his concluding remarks, Air

Marshal Asim Suleiman (Retd), President, CASS, Lahore, highlighted that the China-US relationship is the decisive factor reshaping the strategic, economic, and institutional contours of the twenty-first century. He observed that while strategic rivalry is structural and enduring, cooperation in areas of shared interest remains a practical necessity for global stability. He further noted that technology competition has emerged as a central fault line, requiring a balance between legitimate security concerns and the benefits of economic efficiency to avoid fragmenting the global economy.

The event concluded with a lively interactive session. The discussion explored Pakistan's balancing policy between China and the United States, the prospects of CPEC 2.0, and the strategic positioning of regional actors amidst great power competition. The participants appreciated CASS Lahore's initiative in hosting an engaging and thoughtful discussion.

Israel forces kill four in Gaza, say they hit rocket launch site

Hamas claims over 1,100 Israeli ceasefire violations since October; Israel demands handover of final body under truce

Reuters

Mourners react as they attend the funeral of a Palestinian who, according to medics, was killed in an Israeli strike, at Nasser Hospital, in Khan Younis, in the southern Gaza Strip, on January 8, 2026. Reuters

Israeli forces killed at least four Palestinians in two separate strikes in the Gaza Strip on Thursday, hours after the military said it had hit the site of a failed militant rocket launch, the latest violence to jeopardise the ceasefire.

Medics said an Israeli airstrike killed at least three people and wounded three others, including children, in a tent in the western area of Khan Younis in the

southern Gaza Strip. Another strike killed a person east of the city, near where Israeli forces operate.

There was no immediate Israeli comment on the death reports.

Earlier, the military said it had struck a launch site shortly after the firing of a rocket that had failed to reach Israeli territory. It accused Hamas of violating the ceasefire twice in the past 24 hours. A source from the Palestinian militant group told Reuters it was checking the allegation.

A ceasefire agreed in October has not progressed beyond the first phase, under which major fighting stopped. Israel withdrew from less than half of Gaza

and Hamas fighters released live hostages, and human remains in return for detained Palestinians.

Under future phases yet to be hammered out, U.S. President Donald Trump's plan envisages Hamas disarming, Israel pulling out further and an internationally backed administration rebuilding Gaza. But little progress has been made on the next steps. More than 400 Palestinians and three Israeli soldiers have been killed since the ceasefire took effect, and nearly all of Gaza's more than two million people now live in makeshift homes or damaged buildings in a sliver of territory where Israeli troops have withdrawn, and Hamas has reasserted control.

Israel is awaiting the handover of the final body under the initial stage of the truce. An Israeli official said Israel would not move to the next phase of the ceasefire until Hamas returns the remains of the last Israeli hostage still held in Gaza.

Israel has yet to open the Rafah

crossing between Gaza and Egypt, another condition of the U.S.-backed plan, saying it will do so only once the remains are returned.

Ceasefire Looking Fragile

Israel and Hamas have accused each other of major breaches of the ceasefire deal and remain far apart on the more difficult steps envisaged for the next phase.

Israel has continued to carry out air strikes and targeted operations across Gaza. The Israeli military said it views "with utmost severity" any attempts by militant groups in Gaza to attack Israel.

A Hamas official told Reuters on Thursday the group had documented more than 1,100 Israeli

violations of the ceasefire since October and had urged mediators to intervene. The violations include killings, injuries, artillery and aerial strikes, home demolitions and detention of people, he said. Hamas has refused to disarm and has been reasserting its control. Israel has said it will resume military action if Hamas is not disarmed peacefully.

Hamas-led fighters killed some 1,200 people and abducted 251 others in an assault on Israel on October 7, 2023, according to Israeli figures. More than 71,000 Palestinians have been killed in Israel's offensive in Gaza since then, according to the territory's health ministry.



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ceasefire until Hamas returns

the remains of the last Israeli hostage

still held in Gaza.

Israel has yet to open the Rafah

Bull & Bears

PSX 100-Share Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index

Current	Prev. Close
185,543.01	186,518.71
Day's High	Day's Low
187,905.16	185,199.36
Index Value	Change
70,390,283,529	-975.70
Percentage	Time
-0.52%	8 Jan, 2026 4:30 pm

Europe: FTSE 100 Index

Index Value	Change
10,021.68	-26.53
Percentage	Time

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average

Index Value	Change
48,996.08	0.00
Percentage	Time

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average

Index Value	Change
51,117.26	-844.72
Percentage	Time

Open Market Forex Rates

Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	186.5	191
Bahrain Dinar	744	754
Canadian Dollar	201	205
China Yuan	39.58	39.98
Danish Krone	43.72	44.12
Euro	327	330.5
Hong Kong Dollar	35.69	36.04
Indian Rupee	3.03	3.12
Japanese Yen	1.7775	1.8775
Kuwaiti Dinar	908	918
Malaysian Ringgit	68.6	69.20
New Zealand \$	161.24	163.24
Norwegian Krone	27.66	27.96
Omani Riyal	728.5	738.5
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	76.45	77.35
UK Pound Sterling	377	381
US Dollar	280.8	282.75

How TikTok is becoming Pakistan's go-to content discovery platform

Search on TikTok

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: TikTok's Search feature has become a powerful discovery tool, where millions increasingly come to the platform to explore new ideas, learn practical skills, find inspiration, and engage with content that reflects their culture, language, and everyday lives. People are now turning to TikTok as a video-first search engine, especially when they want answers explained visually and quickly. They come to the platform to search for short videos that show, explain, and contextualise information in real time — from how to prepare for an exam or plan a trip, to understanding breaking news or learning a new skill. This shift reflects a broader preference for authentic, creator-led video explanations that feel relatable, practical, and easier to understand.

In Pakistan, TikTok has evolved far beyond just an entertainment platform. With TikTok's Search feature, it has become a dynamic, visual discovery experience built around curiosity and real-life utility. In the past year, the region saw significant increases in searches related to education, culture, food, travel, beauty, lifestyle, news explainers, and every day "how-to" moments, demonstrating how people now turn to TikTok to learn, understand, and connect.

Insights reveal that the TikTok community in Pakistan is searching for answers to real-world questions at an unprecedented rate. Searches for several popular content hashtags rose in Pakistan over the past year, pointing to growing use of the platform as a discovery tool. Searches linked to #TravelTikTok increased by 53%, while #FoodTikTok rose by 52%. #StudyTikTok searches were up 60%, and #FitnessTikTok recorded the largest jump, growing 66% year-on-year. The figures suggest Pakistani users are increasingly turning to TikTok to find content aligned with their interests and curiosity.

Punjab Marriage Halls, Marquees and Lawns Owners Association demands relaxation in laws

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of the Punjab Marriage Halls, Marquees and Lawns Owners Association has demanded relaxation in wedding event timings, decisions through

consultation, an end to unjustified fines and sealing, and facilities for the marriage hall industry at par with other businesses.

The delegation met Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider and urged him to ease existing laws to protect the marriage



hall industry and facilitate the public.

The meeting was attended by Patron of the Punjab Marriage Halls, Marquees and Lawns Owners Association Mian Ilyas, President Khalid Idrees Bhatti, General Secretary Rawalpindi Marriage Hall and Marque Association Asif Iqbal, Malik Aqeel, and other office bearers.

They further highlighted that marriage hall owners are facing multiple notices and tax deductions from the Federal Board of Revenue under sections 236C and 236CB, along with heavy property tax, Punjab Revenue Authority (PRA) taxes, and soaring

electricity and gas bills. Unjustified actions by police and other departments, they added, are further deteriorating the business environment.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider assured the delegation that steps would be taken to resolve their issues and that a meeting with Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif would be arranged soon.

He also said that appropriate amendments would be made to simplify the laws. The delegation thanked Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider for his assurance.

Meeting with American business council

KARACHI: Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan holding a meeting with the American Business Council to discuss Pakistan's economic recovery, reforms, and strengthened public-private sector engagement.



Photo: Online

Emirates Premium Economy reach with expanded city rollout to include Karachi



Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Emirates will continue rolling out its retrofitted Boeing 777 and new A350 aircraft to key destinations across Asia, the Middle East, Europe, North America, Africa, and Australia, bringing Premium Economy and its latest onboard products to more cities across its network. Starting on 1 March*, Emirates' retrofitted three-class Boeing 777-200LR will begin

operating daily to Karachi on EK606/607

Customers can look forward to Emirates' award-winning Premium Economy experience, complete with extra legroom and added amenities, elevated dining, and more. The airline will deploy its Premium Economy retrofitted A380, Boeing 777 and A350 aircraft with the latest cabin interiors on more than 84 routes by 1 July, underscoring its focus on delivering a premium and consistent experience across

its network. Tickets can be booked on emirates.com, the Emirates App, or via both online and offline travel agents as well as Emirates' retail stores.

Other cities to be covered under the planned Premium Economy route expansions, across Asia, Australia, Africa, Middle East, Europe and North America include Addis Ababa, Barcelona, Basra, Cochin, Copenhagen, Mexico City, Rome, Taipei and Tehran

SECP Revamps Research Analyst Regulations to Enhance Investor Confidence and Transparency

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has notified amendments to the Research Analyst Regulations, 2015 (Regulations), reaffirming its commitment to strengthening governance practices and upholding market integrity. The amended regulatory framework is expected to enable investors to make informed investment decisions, increase transparency, and enhance investor confidence in the capital market.

These amendments mark a significant improvement from the earlier framework, establishing a robust and systematic process for regulating research analysts. The previous Regulations were limited to providing a guiding framework and did not prescribe any mechanism for registration. The amendments now mandate SECP registration for research analysts. These amendments have been finalized after extensive consultations with key stakeholders, including research analysts, brokerage houses, asset managers, and industry associations. The SECP published a consultation paper to solicit feedback, held multiple consultation sessions, and subsequently issued draft amendments for public comment. In response to market feedback, several key reforms were incorporated to enhance clarity and effectiveness.

realme Teases the All-New C85, Combining 7000mAh Titan Battery



realme, following the remarkable market response and strong sales performance of the realme C85 Pro, is once again gearing up to disrupt the smartphone segment with the teaser reveal of its new model, the upcoming realme C85. The new smartphone highlights realme's focus on delivering an Ultra Battery and Ultra Display experience, aimed at redefining endurance and viewing excellence for power users.

Ultra Battery Built for

Unstoppable Power. At the heart of the realme C85 is a massive 7000mAh Titan Battery, engineered for users who demand extended performance without compromise. Designed to keep up with today's always-on lifestyles, the ultra-large battery allows users to go through long workdays, extended travel, and heavy content consumption without constantly worrying about recharging.

OICCI engages DG TPO Dr. Najeeb Memon on investor-centric tax policy priorities

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: The Overseas Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OICCI), the collective body of top 200 foreign investors, hosted Dr. Najeeb Memon, Director General, Tax Policy Office (TPO), Finance Division, on Thursday for an interactive session with OICCI members, aimed at enabling constructive engagement on tax policy challenges and reform priorities impacting Pakistan's investment climate.

During the session, OICCI members shared overarching busi-

ness and investment-related tax concerns, deliberately focusing on systemic and structural issues rather than operational or case-specific matters. The dialogue reflected evolving investor sentiment, with members acknowledging progress on macroeconomic stability while emphasizing the need for predictability, consistency, and transparency in tax policy and implementation.

Speaking at the session, Dr. Najeeb Memon, Director General, Tax Policy Office, appreciated the quality of engagement with OICCI members and assured participants



that stakeholder input remains central to effective tax policymaking.

Businesses plan over long horizons, and frequent changes, unclear interpretations, and retrospective measures undermine confidence and raise the cost of capital. A consultative, well-signalled, medium-term tax policy framework focused on broadening the tax base, simplifying compliance, and aligning taxation with national priorities such as investment, exports, and job creation would significantly improve investor sentiment and support sustainable economic growth," he said.

M. Abdul Aleem, OICCI Secretary General, emphasized the importance of tax reforms to sustain investor confidence. "Foreign investors are increasingly looking beyond short-term stabilization towards structural reforms."

The session concluded with both sides agreeing to maintain regular engagement to ensure that investor perspectives continue to help facilitate tax policy discussions, with the shared objective of improving predictability, consistency, and investor confidence in Pakistan's tax framework.

PSL expands to eight teams as Hyderabad, Sialkot fetch Rs3.6bn

Sports Desk

LAHORE: FKS Group bought the seventh franchise for Rs1.75 billion and finalised the name Hyderabad.

The Pakistan Super League (PSL) on Thursday expanded to eight teams after two new franchises, Hyderabad and Sialkot, were sold at auction for a combined Rs3.6 billion.

The auction was held at the Jinnah Convention Centre in Islamabad and was attended by Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman Mohsin Naqvi, federal ministers, senior officials and players.

Proceedings began with the introduction of 10 bidders and six short-listed cities.

PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi formally opened the auction by ringing the bell, while former Pakistan captain Wasim Akram served as the auctioneer.

Bidding for the seventh PSL team opened at Rs1.1 billion and saw a competitive contest between FKS Group and I2C Group.

FKS Group secured the franchise with a winning bid of Rs1.75 billion

and selected Hyderabad as the team's home city.

In the second and final round, bidding for the eighth team began at Rs1.7 billion.

OZ Developers emerged as the highest bidder, acquiring the most expensive franchise for Rs1.85 billion and naming the team Sialkot.

With the addition of Hyderabad and Sialkot, the number of PSL teams has increased from six to eight, marking a significant milestone in the league's growth.

Addressing the ceremony, Mohsin Naqvi congratulated the successful bidders and praised the efforts of the PCB and PSL management in strengthening the league.

The event also featured prize distribution for national teams.

The Pakistan Shaheens and the Hong Kong Sixes team were honoured for recent tournament successes.

The PCB awarded Rs90 million to the Rising Stars Asia Cup-winning team, while the Hong Kong Sixes champions received Rs1.85 million in prize money.

The 11th edition of the PSL will be held from March 26 to May 3, 2026, featuring all eight teams in action: Karachi Kings, Peshawar Zalmi, Lahore Qalandars, Islamabad United, Quetta Gladiators, Multan Sultans, Hyderabad, and Sialkot.

New teams to generate Rs36bn in next 10 years

Chairman PCB Mohsin Naqvi said the auction was successfully completed and projected that the new teams will generate Rs36 billion in revenue over the next 10 years.

He added that four to five US-based companies participated in the bidding, and commended Pakistani-origin bidders living overseas for their love of cricket.

US Ambassador to Pakistan, Natalie Baker, congratulated the successful bidders and noted the growing interest of American business in Pakistan cricket.

"Both countries' relations are strengthening through such initiatives," she said.

Hyderabad franchise owner Fawad Sarwar described the acquisition as a



lifelong dream come true, saying, "We love cricket and will contribute to its growth and improvement."

Sialkot owner Hamza Majeed said, "Cricket is in our blood. Overseas Pakistanis stand with Pakistan. After airports and airlines, now a cricket team is here. Our target is to win the 11th edition of PSL."

Punjab boosts endowment scholarships for National Games medal winners

Tahir Amin Maik

LAHORE: The Punjab Sports Department celebrated its medal-winning athletes from the 35th National Games with a grand prize distribution ceremony at Punjab Stadium, Lahore.

Punjab Minister for Energy, Youth Affairs and Sports Malik Faisal Ayub Khokhar awarded cash prizes worth over Rs 30 million along with appreciation certificates to 126 athletes who brought laurels to the province.

In individual events, gold medalists received Rs 5 lakh each, silver medalists Rs 3 lakh, and bronze medalists Rs 2 lakh. For team events, gold medal winners were awarded Rs 8 lakh, silver medalists Rs.5 lakh, and bronze medalists Rs 3 lakh.

The minister announced enhancements to the Sports Endowment Fund, raising the Platinum category scholarships from Rs75,000 to Rs100,000, Gold from Rs50,000 to Rs. 75,000 and Silver category from Rs. 30,000 to Rs. 50,000 for one year.

Addressing the gathering, the provincial minister announced that monthly stipends for athletes are being increased on the CM's directives and revealed plans to issue Health Cards for top-performing players, coaches, and sports journalists.

The minister praised the efforts of DG Sports Punjab Khizar Afzaal, former Secretary Muzaffar Khan Sial and the



coaching staff for their effective role in Punjab's success. He highlighted that Punjab had surpassed several top institutions on the medals table after 36 years, adding that many of these athletes are expected to represent Pakistan at the next Olympic Games.

Secretary Sports M Ali credited the achievement to teamwork under sports

minister's leadership, while DG Sports Khizar Afzaal Chaudhry emphasised the role of the Endowment Fund and facilities provided by the department. He expressed confidence that Punjab will deliver even better results when it hosts the National Games in 2027.

The ceremony was attended by Secretary Sports Punjab M Ali, former Secretary Sports Punjab Muzaffar Khan Sial, DG Sports Punjab Khizar Afzaal Chaudhry, Additional Secretary Sports Shabbir Cheema, CEO Punjab Olympic Association Idris Haider Khawaja, and other senior officials. A large number of athletes, parents, coaches, and sports association representatives were also present.

Tary Sports Punjab Muzaffar Khan Sial, DG Sports Punjab Khizar Afzaal Chaudhry, Additional Secretary Sports Shabbir Cheema, CEO Punjab Olympic Association Idris Haider Khawaja, and other senior officials. A large number of athletes, parents, coaches, and sports association representatives were also present.

Aurangzeb meets Visa CEMEA leadership

Continued from Page 1

He outlined ongoing initiatives including the establishment of the Pakistan Digital Authority, reforms in payment rails under the State Bank of Pakistan, and efforts to digitize government receipts and expenditures to enhance transparency, efficiency, and service delivery.

The Visa delegation shared insights from their engagement with banks, fintechs, and other stakeholders in Pakistan, noting strong confidence driven by macroeconomic stabilization and growing interest in expanding digital payments, financial inclusion, and innovation.

visitors.

Discussions covered cash displacement, fraud prevention, support for small and nano businesses, QR and tap-to-phone solutions, and the importance of expanding acceptance infrastructure, particularly in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities.

The delegation also emphasized the value of maintaining optionality and competition across payment channels to foster innovation, manage risk, and deliver better outcomes for consumers and merchants.

The meeting also addressed emerging areas such as remittances, e-commerce,

tourism-related spending by overseas Pakistanis, and the potential use of new technologies including blockchain and digital assets within a regulated framework.

The minister noted that Pakistan is examining these developments carefully, balancing innovation with financial stability and regulatory oversight, and shared perspectives on potential use cases including public debt, remittances, and government payments.

Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to continued collaboration, including technical engagement and knowledge-sharing on government

payments digitization and financial inclusion initiatives.

The meeting concluded with an understanding to maintain close coordination between Visa, the Ministry of Finance, and relevant regulators to support Pakistan's digital payments ecosystem and broader economic reform and growth agenda.

The visiting Visa delegation also included Leila Serhan, Senior Vice President NALIP; Joanne Kubba, Senior Vice President Government Affairs CEMEA; Umar Khan, Country Manager Visa Pakistan; and Nauman Majeed, Visa Government Sales.

PM Shehbaz launches major infrastructure, education initiatives for Balochistan's uplift

Continued from Page 1

PM Sharif said no society could progress without investing in knowledge. He announced the launch of five Daanish Schools in Dera Bugti, Sibi, Zhob, Killa Saifullah and Sohbatpur, and further announced two additional Daanish Schools in Chagai and Washuk to address the urgent needs of southern Balochistan.

He said Daanish Schools were producing doctors, engineers and globally competitive students from underprivileged backgrounds.

He also referred to the Kachhi Canal project, describing it as vital for agricultural development in Balochistan. He said the project required Rs40 billion immediately and that a final decision would be taken within the next four weeks after consultations in Islamabad.

The prime minister highlighted youth empowerment initiatives, including the laptop scheme under which 100,000

laptops were distributed on merit, with Balochistan receiving a higher share in proportion to its population. He also

spoke about post-2022 flood rehabilitation, stating that significant financial assistance had been mobilised for Balochistan, including housing reconstruction and cash support to affected families.

Earlier, Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan, in his welcome

remarks, said it was a historic day for the National Highway Authority, noting that around 40 per cent of the NHA road network lay in Balochistan, making it the "heart of the country" in terms of connectivity.

He thanked the prime minister for his special attention to infrastructure projects in the province, particularly the Pakistan Expressway from Quetta to Chaman, and said special funds had been diverted from the petroleum levy to accelerate development in Balochistan. He added that NHA

was currently working on 16 projects worth

Rs735 billion, with several road projects in remote areas already completed.

Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfaraz Bugti said the prime minister had taken the provincial government into confidence while deciding the launch of the Pakistan Expressway, adding that national resources had been prioritised for the uplift of Balochistan.

He assured full cooperation and capacity support from the Balochistan government for timely completion of mega projects.

The chief minister also thanked the prime minister for announcing multiple Daanish Schools for the province and for providing development funds beyond Balochistan's constitutional share.

Governor Balochistan, Jaffar Khan Mandokhel, Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Ahsan Iqbal, Speaker National Assembly, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, senior military officials and representatives from different walks of life were also present on the occasion.

Anthony Joshua pays tribute to close friends killed in crash

Former world heavyweight champion Anthony Joshua paid a moving tribute on Thursday to the two close friends killed in a car crash in Nigeria, labelling them "brothers" and "great men".

Joshua suffered minor injuries in the December 29 crash, and after being

discharged from hospital he returned to England before attending the funerals of Latif Ayodele and Sina Ghani last Sunday.

"Thank you for all the love and care you have shown my brothers," Joshua posted on Instagram.

"I didn't even realise how special they are. I'll just be walking with them and cracking jokes with them, not even knowing God kept me in the presence of great men."

Wing 999, One Ten Communication and Saudi Titans win in Inter Departmental Cricket League

KARACHI: Wing 999, One Ten Communication and Saudi Titans won their 2nd Match in the Wing 999 Inter Departmental Cricket League at various Grounds of the City.

The highlights of the days was Dashing Century by Ahsan Ali 117 with 13 boundaries and 10 sixes in 37 balls, Deadly Bowling by Jahanzaib Razzaq capturing 6 wickets only 17 runs.

Scores in Brief:

Wing 999 beat Custom Academy by 2 Wickets at Agha Khan Gymkhana Ground. Custom Academy 204/9 in 40 overs. Hashir Nawaz 53 8x4, Jahanzaib Razzaq 34, Aun Jaffri 28, Sameer 19, Tariq Khan (ob) 3/34, Waleed Ahmed 2/33.

In reply Wing 999 205/8 in 32.3 overs. Abdullah Alam 59 7x4 2x6, Usman Raheem 38, Shah Raza 34, Arif Khan 20, Muhammad Afzal 19 not out.

In the 2nd Match One Ten Communication beat Appie Farms by 8 Wickets at CAA Cricket Stadium. Appie Farms 243/9 in 40 overs. Abuzar 61 4x4 2x6, Sunny Nazir 48 7x4, Hamza Sarwar 47 4x4 2x6, Abdulla Khurram 27. Wahid 2/17.

In reply One Ten Communication 246/2 in 17 overs. Ahsan Ali 117 13x4 10x6 (in 37bBalls), Wahaj Riaz 68 10x4 2x6, Sami Arshad 35, Asif Ansai 21 not out.

In the 3rd Match Saudi Titans beat Sindh Police by 6 Wickets at Gulberg Gymkhana Ground. Sindh Police 186 allout in 35.4 overs. Noman Khan 35, Hanan Acakzai 34, Arshad Khan 34, Imtiaz 27, Ejaz Sawati 26. Basit Khan (mf) 3/14, Rohail Ahmed (rlb) 2/24, Ismail Khan (ob) 2/41.

In reply Saudi Titans 187/4 in 26.5 overs. Huzaifa Munir 69 2x4 7x6, Nabeel Wahid 41 6x4, Basit Khan 37, Hassan Iqbal 22, Hassan Arain (ob) 2/17.

Hyderabad, Sialkot join PSL ahead of landmark season 11

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Super League (PSL) officially expanded on Thursday ahead of season 11 as Hyderabad and Sialkot were confirmed as the two new franchises following a high-stakes auction held at the Jinnah Convention Centre.

The two teams will make their debut in PSL season 11, joining the existing six franchises, Karachi Kings, Lahore Qalandars, Peshawar Zalmi, Quetta Gladiators, Islamabad United and Multan Sultans.

The official names of the Hyderabad and Sialkot teams will be announced at a later stage.

Follow us on our Official WhatsApp channel. The auction witnessed intense competition among qualified bidders, with aggressive offers reflecting the growing commercial value of the league.

The Hyderabad franchise was secured by the FKS Group, owned by Fawad Sarwar, after a successful bid of Rs 1.75 billion.

Later, OZ Developers, owned by Hamza Majeed, clinched the Sialkot franchise with a record-breaking bid of Rs1.85 billion, the highest figure of the auction.

As per PSL auction rules, successful bidders were given the option to choose their home cities from a PCB-approved list that included Faisalabad, Rawalpindi, Hyderabad, Sialkot, Muzaffarabad and Gilgit.

Hyderabad and Sialkot ultimately emerged as the preferred choices.

With the addition of two new teams, PSL 11 is set to be the biggest edition of the tournament to date. The upcoming season is scheduled to run from March 26 to May 3.

National Junior Wrestling Championship kicks off across Pakistan

The U17 and U-19 National Wrestling Championship has officially commenced across Pakistan under the joint collaboration of the Pakistan Army and the Pakistan Wrestling Federation (PWF).

The championship aims to identify and promote young and talented wrestlers at the national and international levels.

In this regard, trials for District Gujranwala will be held on Friday, 9 January 2026, at the Gujranwala Sports Complex.

The national event will feature the participation of international wrestlers, national medalists, and emerging young talent.

The event will also provide young athletes with an opportunity to make a case for selection in the national team.

The National Wrestling Championship eligibility criteria and weight classes to ensure fair play are mentioned below.

Addressees

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif addresses a meeting of political leadership of Balochistan Assembly in Quetta on Thursday.



Photo: PID

PM vows to eradicate terrorism, ensure fast-track Balochistan's development

Bureau Report

QUETTA: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has reaffirmed his government's commitment to ensuring peace and prosperity in Balochistan, calling the province the geographical heart of the country.

Addressing political leaders, parliamentarians and provincial ministers in Quetta on

Thursday, he emphasized that national unity and strong federal-provincial cooperation were vital to overcoming Balochistan's security and economic challenges.

The Prime Minister paid tribute to the sacrifices of the Armed Forces, Police, Frontier Corps and civilians in the fight against terrorism. He condemned Fitna-al-Khawarij and expressed regret over the

support extended to terrorists by certain neighboring countries.

Praising military leadership, he lauded Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir for his professional excellence, recalling his decisive command during the events of May 2025. "The government and the military will not rest until terrorism is completely uprooted," he declared.

The meeting was attended

by Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, Governor Balochistan Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhail, Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti, Dr. Malik Baloch, and Maulana Abdul Wasey.

Speaker of the National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, Deputy Chairman Senate Syedaa Khan, Federal Ministers of Assembly, Senator Abdul Aleem Iqbal and Abdul Aleem Khan, Advisor to the Prime Minister Rana

Sanaullah, Leader of the Opposition in the Balochistan Assembly Mir Younis Aziz Zehri, Balochistan Provincial Ministers Mir Saleem Khosa, Mir Shoab Nosherwani, and Mir Zahoor Ahmed Buledi, Provincial Advisor Nawabzada Zareen Magsi, Members of Assembly, Senator Abdul Qadir and representatives of all the political parties were also present.

Pakistan, Bangladesh agree to boost defence ties

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Chief of Air Staff of the Bangladesh Air Force, Air Chief Marshal Hasan Mahmood Khan, called on Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf at Naval Headquarters in Islamabad. ISPR

Chief of Air Staff of the Bangladesh Air Force, Air Chief Marshal Hasan Mahmood Khan, called on Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf at Naval Headquarters, Islamabad, to discuss regional security and bilateral defence cooperation, the military's media wing said on Thursday.

The two sides reviewed matters of professional interest, the evolving regional security situation and ways to further strengthen military-to-military ties, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said.

Admiral Ashraf highlighted the Pakistan Navy's role in promoting maritime peace and stability through



regional and multinational initiatives.

Air Chief Marshal Khan praised the professional standards of the Pakistan

Navy and expressed interest in expanding cooperation between the armed forces of the two countries.

Both leaders agreed

on increasing high-level exchanges and joint training activities to enhance operational coordination.

The visit follows Admiral

Ashraf's trip to Dhaka in late 2025 and reflects the growing pace of defence engagement between Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Any defence deal with Saudi Arabia will be confirmed after formal completion: Foreign Office

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Office on Thursday firmly rejected any suggestion that the Pakistan Air Force could participate in armed conflicts abroad, while condemning statements by India's foreign minister as "irresponsible".

In a weekly media briefing, spokesperson Tahir Andrabi dismissed the Indian foreign minister's remarks made in Luxembourg, calling them an attempt to divert attention from Indian-sponsored terrorism.

He said India should focus on reviewing its own policies rather than lecturing Pakistan, stressing that its accusations cannot hide its anti-peace actions on the international stage.

Highlighting Pakistan's regional stance, Andrabi said Islamabad maintains close cooperation with Saudi Arabia across multiple sectors,



including defence, and strongly opposes any foreign aggression against Iran. He added that Pakistan is also

opposed to the use of force by external actors and called for verifiable written assurances from the Afghan Taliban regime to ensure Afghan territory is not used for terrorism.

Addressing questions on the role of the Pakistan Air Force, the spokesperson clarified, "The Pakistan Air Force is not participating in any armed conflict anywhere in the world."

Andrabi also reiterated Pakistan's position on water treaties, emphasising the restoration of the Indus Waters Treaty and opposing India's unilateral suspension of the agreement, stating that India cannot build dams on the Jhelum or Neelum rivers.

Touching on the Kashmir issue, he noted that the right to self-determination day was recently observed.

The spokesperson highlighted that thousands of political leaders remain imprisoned in the Indian-occupied territory.

Pakistan, Bangladesh vow to deepen defence cooperation



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Air Chief Marshal Hasan Mahmood Khan, Chief of Air Staff of the Bangladesh Air Force, called on Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Defence Forces, at General Headquarters in Rawalpindi, the military's media wing said on Thursday.

Air Chief Marshal Hasan Mahmood Khan, Chief of Air Staff of the Bangladesh Air Force, called on Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Defence Forces, at General Headquarters in Rawalpindi, the military's media wing said on Thursday.

According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the two sides discussed matters of mutual interest, evolving regional security dynamics

and ways to strengthen bilateral defence and military cooperation.

They emphasised the importance of closer professional engagement, training exchanges and sustained defence collaboration between the armed forces of Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The visiting air chief praised the professionalism of the Pakistan Armed Forces and acknowledged their role in promoting regional peace and stability.

Field Marshal Asim Munir reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to building long-term and resilient defence ties with Bangladesh.

The meeting highlighted the long-standing relations and shared bonds between the two countries.

PM to inaugurate Murree Expressway soon, says Abdul Aleem Khan

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan conducted a detailed inspection of the Islamabad-Murree Expressway and reviewed the completed beautification, expansion and other development works. Federal Minister for Communications directed that Mosques be constructed at rest areas on both sides of the Islamabad-Murree Expressway (IMDC) with separate prayer arrangements for women.

On the occasion, the Federal Minister was briefed that all major works on the Expressway (IMDC) have been completed and the project is ready for inauguration which will be carried out by the Prime Minister of Pakistan in near future. Expressing satisfaction over the facilities provided at the Murree Expressway Rest Areas, Abdul Aleem Khan personally iden-

tified locations for the expansion of Mosques, construction of ablution areas and other allied facilities under his supervision.

He directed the concerned officers to complete the remaining works on the Murree Expressway within a final deadline of one week, emphasizing that quality and long-lasting construction must be ensured at all costs.

Abdul Aleem Khan stated that the National Highway Authority (NHA) has maintained high construction standards throughout the project while ensuring the provision of excellent lighting, green areas, service roads and other essential facilities.

Salaried class pays Rs266bn income tax in July-Dec 2025: FBR



Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The salaried class paid Rs266 billion in income tax during July-December 2025, accounting for nearly 10 per cent of the country's total income tax collection, according to sources in the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR).

The tax contribution from salaried individuals was nine per cent higher than the same period of the previous fiscal year, despite what officials describe as one of the highest tax burdens on wage earners in Pakistan.

FBR data shows that the salaried class is paying around 38 per cent of its income in taxes.

Sources said employees in Pakistan face a heavier direct tax burden compared to other segments of the economy.

Breaking down the figures, non-corporate salaried employees contributed Rs117 billion in income tax, reflecting a 14 per cent increase year-on-year.

Employees in the corporate

sector paid Rs82 billion during the six-month period.

Provincial government employees paid Rs39 billion in income tax, marking a seven per cent decline compared to last year, while federal government employees contributed a combined Rs27 billion, according to FBR sources.

Meanwhile, withholding tax collections from the real estate sector rose sharply.

Receipts from real estate withholding tax reached Rs126 billion, up 17 per cent from the previous year.

Withholding tax on the sale of plots surged by nearly two-thirds to Rs87 billion.

In contrast, tax collection on the purchase of plots fell by 29 per cent to Rs39 billion, indicating subdued buying activity in the property market.

Officials said the figures highlight a growing reliance on salaried individuals and withholding taxes for revenue collection amid broader challenges in expanding the tax base.