



Daily The Spokesman



Pakistan inaugurates new consulate building in Jeddah, pledges improved services for expatriates

Pakistan on Saturday inaugurated a new chancery building for its consulate in the Saudi city of Jeddah, underlining the government's resolve to improve consular services for millions of Pakistanis living and working in the Kingdom.



Pakistan to achieve 60 percent renewables in power mix by 2030: Romina

Romina Khurshid Alam MNA, Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Climate Change, delivering Pakistan's national statement to the 16th International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) Assembly detailed the country's swift, people-driven shift to renewables.

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Fateha

LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif offers Fateha on the death of Maulana Fazal ur Rahim Ashrafi, Mohtamam Aala Jamia Ashrafia on Sunday.



Photo: PID

Dar at OIC

Pakistan slams Israel's Somaliland recognition as 'political aggression'

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister (DPM/FM) Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Sunday, expressing Pakistan's unwavering support for the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Somalia, said the illegal and unlawful recognition by Israel of the Somaliland region, was 'a direct assault on Somalia's internationally recognized borders, which constitutes a flagrant violation of international law.'

"Pakistan also voiced its firm support for Somalia and condemned Israel's actions during the UN Security Council's briefing on the issue. The principle of state sovereignty and territorial integrity constitutes a peremptory norm of international law from which no deviation or derogation is permitted," he stressed.

The DPM/FM maintained that the internationally recognized borders of Somalia were sacrosanct and inviolable, and

the deputy prime minister/foreign minister strongly condemned the Israel's announcement and the subsequent unwarranted and highly provocative visit of its foreign minister to Somaliland.

"Pakistan also voiced its firm support for Somalia and condemned Israel's actions during the UN Security Council's briefing on the issue. The principle of state sovereignty and territorial integrity constitutes a peremptory norm of international law from which no deviation or derogation is permitted," he stressed.

The DPM/FM maintained that the internationally recognized borders of Somalia were sacrosanct and inviolable, and



the Somaliland region remained an integral, inseparable and inalienable part of Somalia.

"No external actor has either the legal standing or the moral authority to alter that fundamental reality. Any act, statement, or recognition thereof by a state or an external entity regarding any part of the Federal Republic of Somalia should therefore be considered null and void,

producing no political or legal effects," the Foreign Office Spokesperson, in a press release, quoted the DPM/FM as saying.

Dar said that they believed that such recognition of an integral part of a sovereign State was not a diplomatic act, but an act of political aggression that set a perilous precedent, threatening peace and security in the Horn of Africa, the Red Sea region, and beyond.

Pakistan joined the group of OIC countries in unequivocally rejecting the unlawful Israeli move through the Joint statement released in the immediate aftermath of the supposed Israeli recognition of 'Somaliland', he added.

Bride and groom among 8 killed in gas cylinder blast in Islamabad

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: A gas cylinder exploded in a house in Islamabad where wedding festivities were going on early Sunday, killing eight people, including the bride and groom, and injuring several others, police said.

Authorities said the explosion occurred around 2am, shortly after the wedding procession arrived at the house in Sector G-7/2, Alpura.

The blast was so powerful that it caused the building to collapse, trapping several people under the debris.

Six people, including the bride and groom, died on the spot.

The injured were taken to nearby hospitals, where two more victims succumbed to their injuries, raising the death toll to eight.



Police confirmed that the explosion damaged four homes, including the one where the wedding function was being held.

Rescue operations are

ongoing, with authorities working to clear debris and ensure no one else is trapped.

Rescue workers have so far pulled 15 people from the rubble.

Ten of the injured were shifted to nearby hospitals,

with officials saying the condition of some remains critical.

Sahibzada Yousaf said rescue teams were making every possible effort to locate and recover anyone still trapped beneath the debris.

He confirmed that 15 people had been rescued so far and said the search operation would continue.

Residents of the area said the sound of the explosion was heard from far away.

After the blast, police cordoned off the area, while gas and electricity supplies were temporarily suspended to prevent any further accidents.

Authorities said a full investigation would be conducted to determine the exact cause of the explosion and to take necessary measures to prevent similar incidents in the future.

PM expresses grief over Islamabad cylinder accident, orders probe

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has expressed deep sorrow over the loss of precious lives in a cylinder accident in Islamabad and prayed for the speedy recovery of the injured.

The Prime Minister on Sunday directed the Federal Minister for Health, Secretary Health, and the administration of Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) to remain on high alert and ensure that all possible medical assistance was provided to the injured.

He further instructed that the best medical facilities be ensured for the injured until their complete recovery.

Taking notice of the incident, the Prime Minister directed the Secretary Interior to conduct a thorough investigation and submit a detailed report to determine the causes of the accident and fix responsibility.

A Leading National Daily



فرمان رسوی
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تمہرے عین چیزیں یاں کیا کیا ہے
لیشنا ہے یا یاں سے چل نے
ان سے ان شباب نے ان سے گرفتار
ان سے چاکر پھیل یاں کیا کی
کریم علی چاکر پھیل یاں کیا کی
ہوں کہ فیض اور لالہ ہے اور یہ یونی کوئی
بات نہیں جانتے ہیں یہیں سے یہیں یاں
کیا کیوں ہے دو ہی اوری مٹا چکے
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Barkat Rice Mills (Pvt) Limited

PM visits Jamia Ashrafia, expresses condolence

Bureau Report

Qari Maulana Owais Hassan were also present.

LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday visited Jamia Ashrafia to express condolence over the sad demise of Jamia Ashrafia Mohtamim Maulana Hafiz Fazal ur Raheem Ashrafi.

The prime minister offered condolences to the current Mohtamim-e-Aala Maulana Qari Arshad

Ubaid, Deputy Mohtamim-e-Aala Hafiz Asad Ubaid, Deputy Mohtamim and son of the late Maulana Fazal ur Raheem Ashrafi Zubair Hasan and Nazim-e-Aala

During the visit, National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar and Special Assistant Talha Barki were also present.

President expresses deep grief over loss of lives in gas cylinder blast

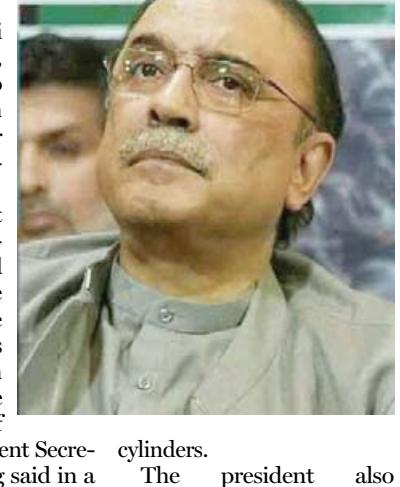
City Desk

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari, Sunday, expressed deep sorrow and concern over the gas cylinder explosion in Islamabad.

The president conveyed his heartfelt condolences and sympathies to the families of those who lost their lives in the explosion and prayed for the speedy recovery of the injured, President Secretariat Media Wing said in a press release.

Terming the incident as tragic and extremely distressing, he said that entire nation stood in solidarity with the bereaved families in their hour of grief.

He directed the relevant authorities to ensure strict enforcement of safety regulations related to the manufacture, quality, and use of gas cylinders.



The president also instructed the provincial governments and the Islamabad administration to launch public awareness campaigns regarding the safe use of gas cylinders.

"Saving precious human lives is the foremost responsibility of the state and effective measures are essential to prevent such incidents," he further stressed.

Woman held in chains in DHA flat freed by Karachi police

Bureau Report

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He further instructed that the best medical facilities be ensured for the injured until their complete recovery.

Taking notice of the incident, the Prime Minister directed the Secretary Interior to conduct a thorough investigation and submit a detailed report to determine the causes of the accident and fix responsibility.

Preliminary investigations indicate that the woman's



former husband lured her to the flat under the pretext of discussing child-related expenses and, with the help of an accomplice, restrained her with chains before fleeing the scene.

The victim told police that she has three children and that her divorce proceedings are currently pending in court.

She stated that issues relating to the custody and maintenance of children had already been settled outside the court.

AJK PM meets PML-N delegation, stresses unity for regional progress

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: A delegation led by senior Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader and former government minister Raja Muhammad Yasin called on Prime Minister Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Faisal Mumtaz Rathore, here on Sunday.

The delegation congratulated the Prime Minister on assuming office and conveyed their best wishes. During the meeting, the overall political situation, public issues, development initiatives, and other challenges facing the region were discussed in detail.

Speaking on the occasion, Prime Minister Faisal Mumtaz Rathore said that the development of Azad Jammu and Kashmir and the welfare of its people were the foremost priorities of his government.

He emphasized that the prevailing situation demands collective efforts from all political forces. Stressing the need for protecting the larger interest of the state, he remarked that unity



and togetherness were key to finding sustainable solutions to the problems faced by the people.

The Prime Minister added that the current government believes in transparent governance, institutional reforms, and the promotion of merit.

He assured the delegation that political tolerance, mutual respect, and democratic values would be upheld

and promoted in Azad Kashmir.

He further said that the government would take all political stakeholders on board, adding that the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) respects all schools of thought and opinions.

The Prime Minister reiterated that the protection of the rights of the Kashmiri people and continued moral and political support for the

people of occupied Kashmir was the fundamental responsibility of the Azad Kashmir government, which would not be relinquished under any circumstances.

The delegation included Raja Khurshid Alam, Sardar Shahid Aftab, Sardar Mansoor, Raja Asher, Raja Shakeel, Raja Iqbal, Raja Maqbool, and Raja Shamil.

Protest against USA

LAHORE: Activists of Imamia Students Organization shouting slogans during protest against USA in front of press club, in the Provincial Capital.



Photo: Online

All Development Work at Data Darbar Must Be Completed on Time: Dr. Ehsan Bhutta

Bureau Report

LAHORE: "All development work at Data Darbar shrine must be completed within the stipulated time," said Secretary/Chief Administrator Auqaf Punjab Dr. Ehsan Bhutta during his visit to the Data Darbar shrine and its affiliated hospital, where he reviewed the progress of ongoing development activities.

Dr. Ehsan Bhutta inspected various components of the mega uplift project and expressed satisfaction over the coordinated efforts of all concerned departments. He directed officers to ensure high-quality workmanship, strict adherence to timelines, and effective inter-departmental coordination so that the project is completed without delay.

Dr. Ehsan Bhutta stated that this mega development project is being

closely monitored by Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz, and Chief Secretary Punjab Zahid Akhtar Zaman, reflecting the government's strong commitment to the timely completion of the project.

He further disclosed that development and demolition work has also started in the outer areas from Bhatti Gate up to Karbala Gamay Shah, which

is an important component of the overall plan aimed at improving infrastructure, traffic management, and the surrounding environment of the historic shrine.

Dr. Ehsan Bhutta added that the development work outside Data Darbar will be completed by March 2025, and all departments have been directed to maintain efficiency, pace, and quality standards.

Recognizing the Pulpit

For decades, mosque imams have quietly carried the weight of their communities—leading prayers, counseling families, guiding moral choices, and shaping social norms—while often struggling to make ends meet. Many survived on small, irregular donations, which are mostly far below what is needed to meet basic household expenses. Their societal influence contrasted sharply with their economic vulnerability, a paradox that the Punjab government has now decisively addressed.

With the launch of the Chief Minister Punjab Honorarium Card, more than 66,000 registered imams across the province will now receive a monthly honorarium of Rs25,000. For the first time in the province's history, mosque leaders are being formally integrated into a transparent, state-supported system of regular income through digital payments. Beneficiaries will have access to ATM-enabled cards, combining convenience with accountability. The programme, costing around Rs20 billion annually, signals a serious

and sustained commitment to social welfare, far beyond a routine stipend.

Unveiled by Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif in Lahore, the initiative has been widely praised for its vision and foresight. At the launch ceremony, she described the hardships faced by mosque imams and underscored the government's duty to provide them a dignified livelihood. She revealed that while an initial proposal suggested a lower stipend, it was raised to Rs25,000 on the advice of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, ensuring that the support is meaningful rather than symbolic.

The Honorarium Card addresses a deep-seated structural gap in Pakistan's social framework. Imams occupy a central role in community life: they lead prayers, officiate weddings and funerals, mediate disputes, and counsel families on ethical and social matters. Yet financial insecurity often limits their ability to serve effectively. By institutionalizing a stable and dignified income, the Punjab government is acknowledging the vital societal role of religious leaders and enhancing their capacity to contribute positively to

social cohesion.

Beyond financial relief, the programme is a model of transparent and accountable governance. Payments are made directly to registered beneficiaries through a digital system, reducing intermediaries and ensuring timely delivery. Clear eligibility criteria link support to lawful conduct, reflecting a balance between welfare and responsibility. Imams involved in criminal activity, hate speech, or actions undermining public order risk suspension, ensuring that public funds serve the public good.

The reform also carries broader implications for social harmony. Imams wield moral authority in communities where state presence is often limited. By providing them with stability, the government is enabling them to counter extremist narratives, promote tolerance, and reinforce civic values. At the launch, CM Maryam

Nawaz Sharif emphasized that religion must never be exploited to sow division, reiterating the protection of religious minorities and the importance of justice and social balance.

Administratively, the programme reflects Punjab's push toward modernization and digital governance. Direct electronic transfers and ATM access enhance efficiency, traceability, and financial inclusion, particularly in rural districts. In a country where informal arrangements have long dominated charitable sectors, this step toward formalization is notable, ensuring that aid reaches its intended recipients securely and reliably.

The initiative also redefines the state-religion interface in a constructive manner. It respects religious autonomy while acknowledging the social role of imams as community leaders deserving institutional support. The Honorarium Card does not interfere with religious prac-

AJK Health Minister Visits Mirpur, Praises District Health Office Performance



Bureau Report

MIRPUR: The Minister for Public Health and Population Welfare, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Syed Bazil Ali Naqvi, paid an official visit to the District Health Office Mirpur.

Upon his arrival, the District Health Officer, Dr. Fida Hussain Raja, warmly welcomed the Minister and presented him with a bouquet. Dr. Fida Hussain Raja briefed the Minister in detail about the ongoing health projects, departmental performance, and the overall healthcare services being provided in the district. He also introduced the officers and staff of the Health Department to the Minister and appreciated their dedication, hard work, and commitment towards serving the public.

The Minister for Public Health lauded the performance of the District Health Office Mirpur and expressed satisfaction over the quality of healthcare facilities and services being delivered to the public. He emphasized the importance of continued efforts to further improve healthcare standards and ensure better medical facilities for the people.

At the conclusion of the visit, Dr. Fida Hussain Raja presented a commemorative shield to Syed Bazil Ali Naqvi as a token of appreciation and recognition for his leadership and support to the health sector.

Shaukat Javed Praises PM Rathore's Leadership, Cites Mega Project Approvals

Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: Central Deputy Secretary Information of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Azad Kashmir and candidate for Assembly Constituency No. 7, Shaukat Javed, has said that the political conspiracies being hatched by the opposition out of fear of the growing popularity of the PPP government under the leadership of young and capable parliamentarian Raja Faisal Mumtaz Rathore will be swept away like straw in a public tide once the general elections are announced.



He stated that Chaudhry Riaz's role in strengthening the Pakistan Peoples Party and in the formation of the government in Azad Kashmir is unprecedented in political history. He added that Chaudhry Riaz is respected not only within the party but also by workers of other political parties for defending the dignity and honor of political workers without discrimination.

He described Prime Minister Raja Faisal Mumtaz Rathore as a dignified, patient, and tolerant political leader whose rising popularity among the masses has unsettled those dreaming of forming the government. As a result, he said, such elements have resorted to palace intrigues and baseless propaganda against the government.

He expressed confidence that under the leadership of Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Chairperson Faryal Talpur, In-charge Political Affairs Chaudhry Riaz, Party President Chaudhry Muhammad Yasin, and Speaker Chaudhry Latif Akbar, the PPP's nominated candidates will secure a simple majority and form the government once again without any coalition, ensuring continuity of public service.

He further said that the federal government's generosity in approving mega projects such as Danish Schools in Neelum and Leepa valleys, due to the serious efforts of the Prime Minister, is a major breakthrough in strengthening ideological and developmental ties.

Severe cold wave continues in Lahore

LAHORE: Along with severe cold wave across the country including Lahore, icy winds further increased the intensity of the weather on Sunday.

The minimum temperature was recorded in Islamabad as zero, 1 in Peshawar and Muree, three in Lahore, and 9 degrees Celsius in Karachi. Most districts of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan began to experience bitter cold, where the mercury dropped several degrees below freezing point.

The mercury in Leh was minus 14, minus 13 in Skardu, minus 10 in Astore, Gopis, minus 8 in Hunza, Gilgit, while minus 6 in Kalat, Bagrot and minus 5 degrees were recorded in Dir. PDMA Punjab has issued a letter stating that the severity of the cold weather across Punjab is likely to increase further by January 16.

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Ultimately, Punjab's Honorarium Card is more than a policy; it is an affirmation of dignity, responsibility, and long-term vision. It recognizes those who shape the moral conscience of society, strengthens state-community relations, and sets a precedent for how welfare, faith, and governance can align. By valuing imams and formalizing their support, Punjab has sent a clear message: moral leadership deserves recognition, stability, and the tools to guide society responsibly.

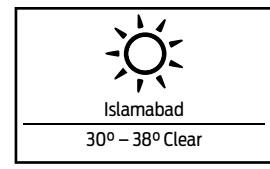
Through this initiative, the Punjab province has demonstrated that reform can be practical, socially sensitive, and forward-looking. The Honorarium Card is a bold and thoughtful step toward a society where faith, governance, and civic welfare reinforce one another—a model that could inspire similar approaches across Pakistan and beyond.

(The writer is a Lahore-based public policy analyst and can be reached at qudratullah@gmail.com)



Analysis

Qudrat Ullah

**SERVICES****Namaz Timings**

Fajr	5:45 am
Zohr	12:15 pm
Asr	3:41 pm
Maghrab	5:18 pm
Isha	6:47 pm

EMERGENCY

Rescue (Police)	15
Bomb Disposal	15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad	1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance	1122 & 7
& 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	9208301-4
Met Office	9250360-6
RDA	5555864

Ex-AJK PM condemns violence in IIOJK

Abdul Majeed Tahir: MUZAFFARABAD / ISLAMABAD: The former Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir, and President of All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference has strongly condemned the brutal killing of innocent Kashmiri girl Asifa Bano in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), terming it a clear manifestation of Indian state terrorism and a blatant exposure of the hollow claims of so-called democracy.

The former Prime Minister and President Muslim Conference, has said that escalating human rights violations, excessive use of force, and blatant breaches of international laws by Indian forces in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK).

In a statement, he said that for years India has turned the occupied territory into a military garrison through constitutional aggression, political engineering, and an iron-fisted security apparatus. He noted that draconian laws such as the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), Public Safety Act (PSA), and Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) have effectively suspended the fundamental civil rights of Kashmiris, weakened judicial oversight, and made access to justice nearly impossible.

During the visit, hundreds of people joined the campaign—including traders, youth, women, civil society members and local residents—expressing solidarity with the demand for justice and the release of Yasin Malik. The delegation walked through Kalan Bazaar and Purana Qila, engaging directly with citizens across markets, shops and nearby mohallas, building public momentum and strength-

ening the people-to-people outreach for Yasin Malik's freedom.

Addressing the gathering, Ms. Mushaal

Hussein Mullick delivered a powerful speech in Urdu, stating that Muhammad Yasin Malik has consistently led a peaceful freedom struggle and remains a central

voice and key stakeholder for a peaceful resolution of the Kashmir dispute. She warned that if her husband is harmed or executed in the hanging case, it will have dire consequences for peace and stability in the region, and would severely undermine prospects for dialogue and lasting peace.

Renowned writer and banker Zafar

Masood, Hammad Ghaznavi, Iftikhar

Arif, Dr. Inam-ul-Haq Javed and

renowned artist Munawar Saeed, along

with other prominent poets and writers,

participated in the events and presented

their poetry and thoughts in memory

of Jaun Elia.

The speakers described Jaun Elia

as a unique, bold and question-raising

voice of Urdu literature and said that

his poetry still shakes the mind and

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Warraich, Fawad Hassan Fawad, Ajmal

Jamali and other guests said that such

literary activities are not only a means

of paying tribute to great poets but also

play an important role in connecting

the new generation with the tradition

of Urdu literature, study and dialogue.

The organizers According to Jashan

Jaun Elia, Ishqabad is an important link

in the promotion of literary and cultural

activities in Faisalabad, which concluded

with a grand poetry recital on Sunday.

CM Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif orders expedited completion of new hospitals

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has directed the authorities to ensure the swift

completion and operationalisation of key healthcare projects across the province, setting strict deadlines for their inauguration.

The chief minister ordered that the Nawaz Sharif Institute of Cancer Treatment and Research and the Jinnah Institute of Cardiology in Lahore be opened within the current month. She also fixed timelines for the early completion of the Nawaz Sharif Institutes of Cardiology in Jinnah and Sargodha, along with other ongoing hospital projects.

According to officials, construction of the basement and ground floor of the Nawaz Sharif Institute of Cancer Treatment and Research has been completed. Essential facilities, including patient waiting areas, a mosque, and residential accommodations for doctors, have

also been finalised.

Pakistan's first Nawaz Sharif Institute of Cancer Treatment and Research is scheduled to become operational later this month.

Recruitment of doctors and professional staff has begun, with interviews underway for 219 positions. The chief minister also approved re-advertisement of the post for the head of the institute to ensure the appointment of a highly qualified professional.

Maryam Nawaz further set January 31 as the deadline for the launch of the Jinnah Institute of Cardiology in Lahore and directed that renovation work at Lady Willingdon Hospital be completed at the earliest as well.

Reaffirming her government's commitment to public healthcare, the chief minister said the Nawaz Sharif Institute of Cancer Treatment and Research would provide treatment to cancer patients from across Pakistan, ensuring access to quality medical care without discrimination.



Called on

LAHORE: Mrs. Samina Amjad Randhawa, Amjad Karim Randhawa, parents of late Arfa Karim Randhawa, and Tabinda Islam, CEO Arfa Karim Foundation called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday.



Photo: PID

Public outreach for the release of Kashmiri Hurriyat leader Yasin Malik

City Desk

RAWALPINDI: As part of the ongoing "Rabita Awami Campaign" for the release of Kashmiri Hurriyat leader Muhammad Yasin Malik, Ms. Mushaal Hussein Mullick (Chairperson, Peace & Culture Organisation; former SAPM on Human Rights & Women Empowerment), accompanied by her daughter and her sister, Ms. Sabiha Hussein Mullick (Secretary General, Peace & Culture Organisation), visited Kalan Bazaar and Purana Qila, Rawalpindi, today at 3:30 PM.

During the visit, hundreds of people joined the campaign—including traders, youth, women, civil society members and local residents—expressing solidarity with the demand for justice and the release of Yasin Malik. The delegation walked through Kalan Bazaar and Purana Qila, engaging directly with citizens across markets, shops and nearby mohallas, building public momentum and strength-



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Faisalabad Festival concludes, celebrating legacy and poetry of Jaun Elia

Abdul Majid

FAISALABAD: The three-day Jashan Jaun Elia Ashqabad festival in Faisalabad concluded with a celebration of literature, thought and love. The three-day literary festival held at the Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan Auditorium of the Faisalabad Arts Council in memory of the great poet, philosopher and intellectual

Jaun Elia was organized by renowned poet Abbas Tabish in collaboration with the Punjab Council of Arts.

Commissioner Faisalabad Raja Jahangir Anwar attended the opening day as the special guest. Asghar Nadeem Syed, Iftikhar Arif, Hammad Ghaznavi, Abbas Tabish, DG FDA Muhammad Asif Chaudhry, Vice Chancellor Medical

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New dimensions of Pakistan-Russia relations

The world map appears to be shifting in the coming years. In this rapidly changing global system, the transfer of the power center from the West to the East is creating new alignments in the region and significantly undermining American dominance. During this time, Pakistan-Russia relations have developed into a strong strategic partnership. In fact, over the past 75 years, the complete breakdown of Pakistan-Russia relations has not occurred; rather, these multifaceted ties have undergone significant evolution based on harmony in various aspects.

Russia's pivot toward Pakistan after the Ukraine war aligns with its strategic interests, coinciding with Pakistan's shift from "Look West" to "Look East," largely influenced by the American stance. Cooperation in counter-terrorism, defense, energy, agriculture and parliamentary links marks a new era of mutual understanding, characterized by the absence of differences. Both nations share strategic and geopolitical interests that can yield economic benefits, exemplified by the launch of the first Asian forum for Pakistan-Russia strategic dialogue in 2025 to address unconventional security challenges and promote regional cooperation in Eurasia. Historically, relations have seen many ups and downs since diplomatic ties were established on May 1, 1948, when Andrei A. Gromyko and Pakistan's Foreign Minister Zafarullah Khan signed an agreement in New York, leading to embassies in Karachi and Moscow.

The construction of Pakistan Steel Mills in Karachi stands as a prime example of strong Pakistan-Russia relations. The Soviet Union assisted Pakistan in the thermal energy sector and played a key role in the establishment of OGDC for gas exploration and development. The Guddu Thermal Power Plant in Pakistan was also built with the collaboration of Russian experts. Since 2006, Pakistan has been participating in NATO-Russia Council training programs for personnel from Afghanistan and Central Asian states and since 2010, bilateral collaboration in drug control has been on the rise. Currently, hundreds of Pakistani students are studying at Russian universities and in 2011, Russia strongly supported Pakistan's inclusion in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

There are also proper military relations established between Russia and Pakistan and both countries are members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. In 2014, Pakistan and Russia initiated joint defense cooperation, which includes military intelligence exchange, joint military exercises and arms sales. This is why high-level military ties have been established between the two countries. Their interconnected interests have led to cautious intelligence exchanges, diplomatic consultations and limited defense cooperation, including the annual Druzhba military exercises, which have been ongoing since 2016 and joint naval drills like Arabian Monksoon.

A Tale of Two Protests: The United States and Iran

Across two very different geographies, two very different political systems, and two very different societies, demonstrations are unfolding that strangely mirror each other in spirit while diverging sharply in treatment and global reaction. One is taking place inside the United States, across nearly a thousand cities, towns, and metropolitan centers. The other is unfolding in Iran, a country long accustomed to protests, sanctions, and foreign pressure. Together, they tell a single, uncomfortable story about power, sovereignty, and the selective morality of intervention.

In the United States, protests erupted following a series of aggressive Immigration and Customs Enforcement actions that, according to eyewitness accounts and local officials, have crossed legal and ethical boundaries. These actions were ostensibly aimed at undocumented immigrants, yet in practice they have ensnared legal residents and U.S. citizens alike. The tipping point came after a fatal incident in Minnesota, where an ICE operation ended with the shooting death of a white American woman during a traffic confrontation in snowy conditions.

Yet this domestic unrest is not occurring in isolation. The same assertive, coercive posture has been projected outward. The world watched in disbelief as the United States escalated its confrontation with Venezuela, culminating in what many international observers described as the effective seizure of a sovereign state's leadership and economic arteries. By detaining President Nicolás Maduro and asserting control over Venezuelan oil exports, Washington did not merely target an individual but placed an entire nation under de facto

custody. Senior U.S. officials publicly stated that Venezuela's oil sector would be reorganized under American oversight, with proceeds used to compensate U.S. companies nationalized during earlier Venezuelan reforms. More than six oil tankers were reportedly intercepted or frozen, and oil valued in the billions of dollars was declared subject to U.S. strategic use. Even Chinese and Russian-linked vessels were halted, a move that signaled how far Washington was willing to stretch maritime and economic power.

Strikingly, China and Russia limited their response to measured warnings. Analysts noted that both powers may see strategic advantage in allowing Washington to normalize such behavior, thereby creating precedents they could later invoke in Taiwan or Ukraine. What appears as silence, in this reading, is calculated patience.

A similar logic underpins Washington's renewed rhetoric about Greenland, an autonomous territory within the Kingdom of Denmark. Statements suggesting U.S. acquisition of the island, justified by security and resource concerns, shocked European capitals. Europe now faces a sobering realization: reliance on American security guarantees does not shield allies from coercion. In fact, it may invite it.

This realization has led to a quiet but significant shift in European thinking. Long-standing assumptions about the permanence of U.S. protection are eroding. As an old diplomatic aphorism goes, being an enemy of the United States

is dangerous, but being its friend can be even more so.

Against this global backdrop, Iran presents the third and most instructive case. Protests inside Iran have intensified following economic hardship exacerbated by sanctions and the sharp devaluation of the national currency after the recent twelve-day conflict involving Iran, Israel, and the United States. The war shattered long-held perceptions of Israeli invulnerability and exposed the extent to which

regional defense architectures are designed to preserve Israeli security at all costs.

Iranian protests are not new. In 1953, mass unrest, fueled and guided by British and American intelligence, led to the overthrow of Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh and the installation of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. In 1979, another wave of popular mobilization toppled the Shah himself, ushering in the Islamic Republic under Ayatollah Khomeini. Since then, Iran has endured decades of sanctions that have hollowed out its economy while entrenching powerful elites.

Today's protests are driven by familiar grievances: inflation, unemployment, social restrictions, and fatigue from perpetual isolation. Yet the international response could not be more different from that toward U.S. demonstrations. When Americans protest federal violence, no foreign power threatens intervention. No missiles are readied, no sanctions imposed, no leaders warn that force will be used to "protect demonstrators."

In Iran's case, however, senior U.S. officials openly warned that any crackdown would invite retaliation. History suggests that such "retaliation" rarely harms ruling elites and almost always devastates ordinary citizens. Bombs do not discriminate between policymakers and shopkeepers. Sanctions do not skip children.

The moral inconsistency is stark. If sovereignty is inviolable in the United States, it must be inviolable everywhere. If regime change must be organic and driven by citizens in Washington or Minnesota, the same principle must apply in Tehran. Iranians, like Americans, have proven repeatedly that when they truly want change, they can achieve it themselves.

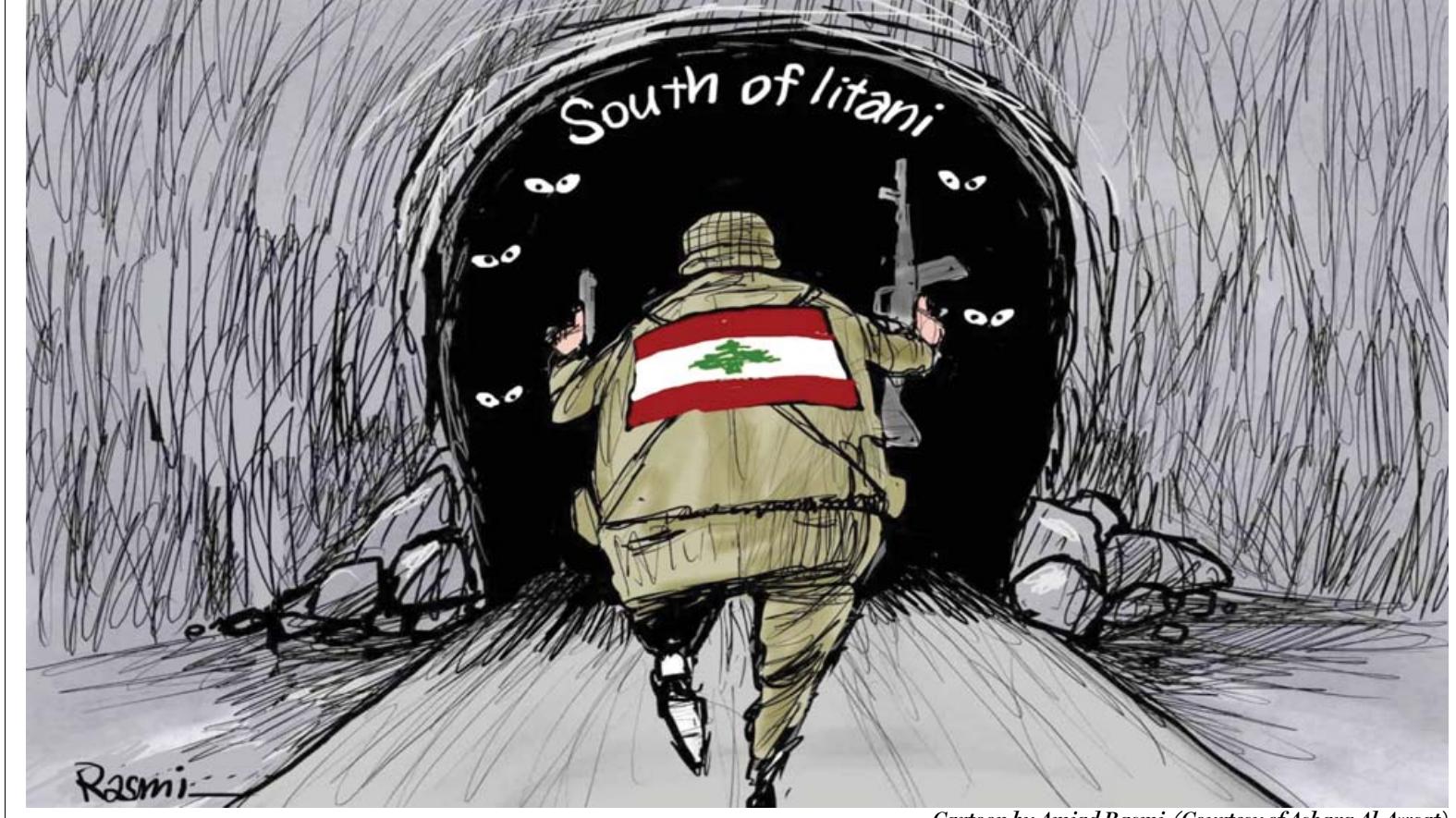
The lesson emerging from these parallel demonstrations is painfully clear. Interference in the internal political, social, and cultural dynamics of sovereign states produces not stability but chaos. It fuels violence, poverty, displacement, and mass migration. It creates cycles of despair that spill across borders and generations.

Peace will not come from dismantling international institutions or bending them to the will of the powerful. It will come from strengthening international law, respecting sovereignty, and allowing peoples, everywhere, to determine their own futures. Until that lesson is learned, the streets of Minnesota and Tehran will continue to echo each other, separated by continents but bound by the same unanswered question: who guards the people when power runs unchecked?

The writer is Press Secretary to the President (Rtd), Former Press Minister, Embassy of Pakistan to France, Former Press Attaché to Malaysia and Former MD, SRBC. He is living in Macomb, Michigan



Qamar Bashir



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

Building Indigenous Strength: Pakistan's Rise as a Defense Equipment Exporter

Australia has entered into a preliminary, non-binding arrangement with Pakistan to examine the potential acquisition of JF-17 Thunder Block III fighter aircraft, signaling a step toward broader defense cooperation and fleet diversification. The understanding establishes a framework for technical assessments and operational evaluations as part of Australia's wider effort to modernize its air combat forces, adapt to changing regional security conditions, and reduce reliance on a limited set of traditional suppliers. The aircraft is viewed as a flexible and comparatively affordable 4.5-generation option that could complement existing high-end platforms while supporting long-term resilience in procurement and sustainment.

For Pakistan, the agreement represents an important validation of its growing defense manufacturing capabilities and ambitions as an exporter of advanced military equipment. Beyond potential economic benefits, such cooperation is seen as enhancing international credibility and opening pathways for deeper institutional ties, including training, technical support, and joint professional engagement. At the same time, reports of a separate, large-scale defense export deal with Libya—featuring both combat and training aircraft—underscore Pakistan's expanding footprint in the global arms market and highlight the JF-17's emergence as a flagship platform for its versatility, cost efficiency, and broad mission applicability.

For the citizens of Pakistan, it is deeply encouraging and a profound source of collective national pride to witness the steady, deliberate building of indigenous strength and the visible

rise of Pakistan as a recognized defense equipment exporter, a transformation that reflects years, indeed decades, of sustained institutional effort, deliberate institutional learning, patient strategic planning, and considerable national investment. In recent times, the Pakistan Army, as the vanguard institution, has demonstrably shown a consistently high level of professionalism, operational preparedness, and tactical capability, which many within the country interpret as clear and unambiguous evidence of its growing excellence and combat

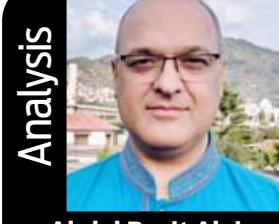
readiness, particularly in the tense context of regional challenges and ongoing tensions along its frontiers. Events such as Marka-e-Haq are widely viewed by the patriotic public as defining moments that reinforced national confidence in the country's defensive posture and vividly highlighted the effectiveness of Pakistan's military leadership, its rigorous training standards, and its improving technological readiness.

This growing reservoir of national confidence is, importantly, not limited to domestic perceptions and patriotic sentiment alone, as Pakistan's armed forces and the equipment they operate and now produce have been receiving notable and increasing attention and appreciation in international defense forums and publications. Defense analysts, military observers, and partner countries have taken a marked interest in Pakistan's demonstrated ability to develop, manufacture, field, and now export reliable military hardware, particularly in niche areas such as aviation, training platforms, armored vehicles, and multi-role combat systems. The operational credibility earned through actual performance in national service and in multinational exercises has played an indispensable

role in enhancing external trust in Pakistan's defense products, making them more attractive to pragmatic countries seeking effective yet cost-efficient military solutions without restrictive political strings. This shift is historically significant because it marks a decisive departure from Pakistan's earlier and long-held status as a country largely dependent on foreign suppliers for its defense needs, toward an empowered position where it can confidently offer its own battle-tested equipment to international markets.

The growing interest shown by a diverse set of countries such as Libya, Australia, and others is therefore seen by Pakistanis as a natural and justifiable outcome of the nation's demonstrated military capability and its expanding, sophisticated defense industrial base. For the people of Pakistan, this development symbolizes tangible national progress, hard-won self-reliance, and the successful integration of hard-earned military experience with growing domestic production capacity and design ingenuity. It also carries broader and more hopeful implications for sustainable economic growth, indigenous technological advancement, and elevated international standing, as serious defense exports contribute not only to financial stability and job creation but also to long-term industrial and scientific development through research and development imperatives.

The profound sense of pride felt by the public is intimately and inextricably tied to the widespread belief that these achievements are the direct result of the Pakistan Army's unwavering dedication, relentless professionalism, and steadfast commitment to national defense and sovereignty, qualities which have collectively enabled the nation to enter what many people now hopefully describe as a promising and indeed golden phase in its strategic, industrial, and national evolution.



Abdul Basit Alvi

Indian State Sponsored Violations and its International Legal Reckoning

A recent global risk assessment by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's Early Warning Project has placed India among the countries facing a heightened risk of intrastate mass violence in the coming years. Ranked fourth out of 168 countries, India stands out as the most vulnerable state not already experiencing large-scale mass killings. While such assessments do not predict inevitable outcomes, they serve as serious alarms—particularly when warning signs align with documented patterns of systemic discrimination, ideological extremism, and state-enabled violence.

At the core of these concerns lies the growing Hindu nationalist extremism ideology, closely associated with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). The RSS, which provides the ideological foundation of India's ruling political establishment, has long been linked by scholars, journalists, and human rights observers to campaigns of exclusion and hostility against Muslims, Christians, Dalits, and other minorities. Over the past decade, India has witnessed a state-sponsored disturbing rise in mob lynchings, attacks on religious sites, forced conversions, and hate-driven violence, often met with silence or inaction by state authorities. When perpetrators enjoy impunity and victims are denied justice, violence ceases to be sporadic and becomes systemic.

The Early Warning Project's findings are based on historical precedent: mass atrocities are rarely sudden. They are preceded by

years of dehumanizing rhetoric, erosion of legal safeguards, suppression of dissent, and selective application of justice. India today exhibits many of these warning signs. Journalists, academics, and civil society activists increasingly face intimidation and legal harassment, while independent institutions meant to uphold constitutional protections appear weakened.

From an international standpoint, India's trajectory raises serious questions under the principle of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), which affirms that states bear the primary responsibility to protect from genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and ethnic cleansing. When a state fails in this duty—whether through action, inaction, or ideological alignment—it risks international scrutiny and long-term damage to its credibility.

As India claims itself as a champion of democratic values, but the reality is altogether different, Indian state is systematically attacking Muslims Christians and other minorities and in particular the people of occupied Jammu and Kashmir. Addressing ideological extremism, ending impunity, reversing discriminatory policies, and upholding international law are not concessions—they are obligations. The cost of denial will not only be borne by India's minorities but will also reverberate across the international system that India claims to respect and lead within.



Syed Faiz Naqshbandi

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NPPs ranked top performers among 149 power entities

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) has released its Annual Performance Report for the fiscal year 2024-25, highlighting the Health, Safety, and Environment (HSE) standards across Pakistan's power generation, transmission, and distribution sectors.

The report identifies the Chashma Nuclear Power Plants and Karachi Nuclear Power Plants, operated by the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC), as the best-performing entities in the country.

NEPRA lauded these nuclear facilities for maintaining exceptional safety standards and ensuring rigorous compliance with all regulatory and environmental requirements.

Out of a comprehensive audit involving 149 entities across the power sector, the nuclear plants emerged as leaders in operational excellence. The report notes that both the Chashma and Karachi plants have demonstrated consistent performance improvements over recent years, which reflects a robust management structure and effective strategic planning.

NEPRA officials stated that these



results serve as an encouraging benchmark for the entire energy sector, proving that high performance is achievable through professional management and stringent safety protocols. The authority expressed optimism that other power generation

companies will emulate the success of the nuclear sector to further enhance their own safety and administrative systems.

According to the report, the high performance of these nuclear power plants represents a milestone for

the stability of the national energy system, public trust, and employee safety. Beyond their vital contribution to the national grid, these plants are recognized as successful models for safe, eco-friendly, and modern energy systems in Pakistan.

SECP's reforms boost company registrations, enhance business transparency

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The digital and administrative reforms introduced by the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) have led to a significant increase in company registrations while improving transparency and ease of doing business across the country, the commission said here.

In a statement issued here Sunday, the SECP said that 35,087 new companies were registered during fiscal year 2024-25, compared to 27,542 companies registered in the previous year. During the current fiscal year, from July to December 2025, a total of 21,542 companies were registered.

It said, the reforms had simplified the process of starting a business, reduced compliance-related costs and strengthened investor confidence. As a result, company registrations increased



by 51 percent compared to 2020.

According to the statement, 99.9 percent of company registrations were completed entirely through the online system, reflecting the success of the digitalization drive. The core focus of the reforms, the SECP said, is the complete digitalization of the company registration process through its eZfile system.

The SECP said that the eZfile system is integrated with various institutions, including the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), Employees' Old-Age Benefits

Institution (EOBI) and provincial departments.

Following integration with the government's One Window system, the registration certificate is issued automatically, eliminating the need for visits to multiple offices and resulting in significant savings in time and cost.

The Commission said that its reform initiatives had also received international recognition. It noted that Pakistan was ranked sixth among 50 countries on the business start-up indicator in the World Bank's Business Ready 2024 report, while an IFC survey ranked the SECP first among 65 federal regulatory authorities for government-to-business digital services and IT preparedness.

The statement further said that to strengthen transparency and corporate governance, companies had been required to ensure financial reporting

and detailed disclosures in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards. It added that the anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing framework had been strengthened, a Corporate Ultimate Beneficial Owner Registry established, and a risk-based supervisory system aligned with FATF standards introduced.

The statement said that on the occasion of the launch of national regulatory reforms, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif declared the SECP a "Reforms Champion" and appreciated the Commission's role in improving the business environment.

The Commission reaffirmed that it would continue the reform process through a modern, technology-based regulatory system to promote ease of doing business, transparency and sustainable economic growth.

Toxic Liquor Kingpin Killed by CCD in Multan Encounter

Zain Khan Malghani

MULTAN: The Crime Control Department (CCD) scored a major and decisive success in the early days of 2026 when notorious drug dealer Khalid Seenwala, was killed in a CCD (police) encounter. The criminal, infamous for manufacturing and distributing toxic liquor, was directly responsible for the loss of numerous lives during the festive Eid season.

A resident of Androon Boher Gate, Multan, Khalid Seenwala had a long criminal record spanning hundreds of cases related to fake and adulterated liquor across South Punjab. He operated illegal distilleries in Hasan Parwana and other parts of the city, later acquiring a rice mill near Kabir Wala and converting it into a small-scale liquor factory, from where he supplied his toxic products across the region for years.



According to sources, Khalid amassed significant wealth from his illicit trade, building several houses in the Suraj Miani area. He procured liquor shipments from interior Sindh, particularly Kashmore, for distribution throughout South Punjab. Small and large liquor vendors in the city also sold his products, and at one point, his liquor was even sold through local bars. He would fill empty bottles of well-known companies, purchased from scrap dealers, guest houses, and hotels across the country, with toxic liquor, leading to multiple deaths every Eid over the years.

Details of the police operation

indicate that during a patrol and

checkpoint near Thokar Chajoo

Shah Bridge last night, four suspicious individuals on two motorcycles

approached from the Chajoo Shah

settlement. When police signaled

them to stop, the suspects opened

fire. One suspect abandoned his

manufacturing and selling toxic liquor, including bottles imitating well-known brands, resulting in numerous deaths.

Questions have arisen as to why no they protest was made in defense of the citizens who had lost their lives to his products. Our sources say that several so-called journalists were also involved in facilitating him, repeatedly securing his release from police stations. Today, a major chapter of wrongdoing has been brought to an end.

Residents of South Punjab have hailed the CM Punjab, CCD and the leadership of Kamran Amir Khan for their effective operations against criminal networks and narcotics syndicates, saying such efforts are crucial in steering society in the right direction. The agency's presence, they note, is a true blessing for the public, symbolizing security, law enforcement, and the rule of law.

In fact, drug misuse has become a deeply ingrained societal challenge, steadily undermining Pakistan's socio-economic fabric. Shockingly, nearly 6.7 million Pakistanis reportedly abuse controlled substances, with cannabis remaining the most commonly used drug, while heroin addiction affects hundreds of thousands across the country. Consequently, cannabis, opioids, cocaine and a growing variety of synthetic narcotics not only endanger personal health but also threaten public safety and national stability. Moreover, June 26, designated as the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking by the UNODC, offers a vital moment to unite society against this scourge. Interestingly, the 2026 theme emphasizes community-led prevention, stronger treatment programs, and the elimination of stigma highlighting that long-term solutions require both empathy and collective action.

Substance abuse, clinically recog-

nized as addiction, involves the compulsive and often uncontrolled use of narcotics that alter mood or relieve pain but eventually cause severe physical and psychological harm. While hard drugs like heroin, methamphetamine, ecstasy and ICE have especially devastating consequences, even so-called "soft drugs" such as marijuana, sedatives and certain prescription medications can gradually lead to serious health complications. Alarmingly, Pakistan's youth, comprising 64% of the population, remain particularly vulnerable; a complex mix of peer pressure, family discord, academic stress, unemployment and social uncertainty often pushes young people toward these destructive coping mechanisms.

Geographically speaking, Pakistan lies within the Golden Crescent along-

side Afghanistan and Iran, acting as

both a transit and consumption hub

for opiates. Historically, the Golden

Crescent has surpassed Southeast

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production, and as a result, a signifi-

cant share of Afghan opiates destined for international markets continues to pass through Pakistan's land and maritime routes. Against this backdrop, law enforcement has expanded its operational reach to confront the challenge. Notably, RPO DIG Faisalabad Sohail Akhtar Sukhera has promoted multimodal, multi-sectoral strategies to curb crime and dismantle drug networks at the grassroots level. Through intelligence driven operations, targeted raids and community engagement, thousands of individuals including professional drug peddlers, habitual offenders and addicts occupying public spaces have been apprehended. In one recent operation alone, over 2,800 people were detained from marketplaces, transit hubs and educational institutions, with hundreds subsequently booked for criminal involvement.

Furthermore, Sohail Akhtar Sukhera has devised activity-based intervention modules to foster confidence, resilience and decision-making skills among students, enabling them to withstand peer pressure and refrain from indulging in negative behaviours such as drug abuse. Simultaneously, he actively engages community stakeholders, including business leaders, educators, and civil society actors, to develop cooperative crime-prevention frameworks that strengthen information sharing, enhance neighbourhood safety, and reinforce the principle that public security is a shared responsibility. Legally, the Control of Narcotic Substances Act (CNSA) of 1997 provides the framework for prosecuting drug traffickers, prescribing life imprisonment or even the death penalty for trafficking substantial

quantities of narcotics. Nevertheless, long prison sentences alone are insufficient; comprehensive prevention, expanded rehabilitation services, and the de-stigmatization of treatment seekers are urgently required.

Beyond health consequences, the drug trade carries profound social and economic repercussions. Illicit drugs erode community trust, fuel crime, foster corruption and divert vast sums into informal economies, thereby undermining legitimate growth. Meanwhile, addiction places immense pressure on families and healthcare systems, particularly in areas where social support and medical infrastructure remain weak or non-existent.

Recognizing addiction as a medical and social issue rather than merely a criminal offense, the Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) has established model treatment and rehabilitation facilities across Pakistan. However, the sheer magnitude of the problem necessitates hundreds more such institutions, especially in regions grappling with youth unemployment and social dislocation.

Only through comprehensive, accessible and sustained treatment pathways can individuals break the cycle of dependency and reintegrate into society as productive citizens. Therefore, on World Drug Day 2026, Pakistan must reaffirm its commitment to building resilient communities, enhancing educational and employment opportunities for youth and strengthening inter-agency coordination to dismantle domestic and transnational drug networks. Clearly, police, ANF, customs authorities, paramilitary forces, and community partners must act in unison to make drug abuse and illicit trafficking both less profitable and less pervasive. Ultimately, combating the drug menace demands unwavering political will, social cohesion and sustained collective effort that prioritizes human dignity, prevention, and rehabilitation. Through shared resolve and coordinated action, the devastation caused by addiction can be reduced, bringing society closer to safety, opportunity and well-being for all its members.

Hassan Abdal to Receive Massive Development Funds

Raza Naqvi

ATTOCK: Pledging to bring Hassan Abdal at par with other developed regions, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader and Member of the National Assembly Sheikh Aftab Ahmed on Sunday announced that the tehsil would receive development funds worth millions of rupees to accelerate infrastructure growth and improve public facilities.

He was speaking as the chief guest at the inauguration of a road construction project in Jhuj village of Union Council Sultanpur, Hassan Abdal. The project is being executed by the Public Health Engineering Department, Attock, at a cost of Rs17.758 million.

Sheikh Aftab said that under the leadership of PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, Pakistan and Punjab were once again on the path of progress and development. He added that years of neglect had pushed Hassan Abdal into deprivation, but the present government was determined to reverse this trend through sustained investment in infrastructure.

Former MPA Sardar Iftikhar Ahmed Khan (Mithu Khan), PML-N PP-2 General Secretary Abid Shahzad Malik, district vice-president Mir Naveed and other party leaders also addressed the gathering. They praised Sheikh Aftab's development-focused agenda and described the inauguration of roads in Bhidiyan, Pir Mandralah, Pord Miana and Jhuj as evidence of his strong attachment to the constituency.

A large number of party workers, local notables and residents attended the ceremony. During the event, Sheikh Aftab Ahmed and Sardar Iftikhar Ahmed Khan distributed Maryam Nawaz Rashan Cards among Suthra Punjab sanitation workers. The MNA was given a warm welcome, with flower petals showered on him and garlands placed around his neck before the unveiling of the project plaque.

Addressing the gathering, Sheikh Aftab said that under the leadership of Field Marshal General Asim Munir, Pakistan's armed forces were safeguarding the country's borders with unmatched resolve. He said billions of rupees were being spent in Hassan Abdal on gas supply, electricity, roads, streets and drainage systems.

Recalling the past, he said that when Hassan Abdal remained detached from his constituency for 16 years, no meaningful development took place despite prominent political figures being elected from the area, turning it into a "virtual ruin." He added that the newly inaugurated road had deteriorated to such an extent that travel had become nearly impossible for vehicles and motorcyclists.

The MNA stated that no village in his constituency, including Hazro and Attock tehsils, was deprived of basic facilities such as gas and electricity. He said more than 16 road projects in Hassan Abdal had been completed or were nearing completion within the last one and a half years, with more schemes in the pipeline.

Acknowledging that recent floods had temporarily slowed development work due to funding constraints, he assured that losses would soon be compensated. Sheikh Aftab concluded by reaffirming his commitment to ensuring equitable development and long-term uplift of Hassan Abdal and its surrounding villages.

Nordics reject Trump's claim of Chinese, Russian ships around Greenland



Nordic diplomats have rejected US President Donald Trump's claims that Russian and Chinese naval vessels and submarines are operating near Greenland, saying there is no evidence of such activity in recent years, according to a Financial Times report.

Diplomats with access to NATO intelligence briefings said no Russian or Chinese ships or submarines have been detected near Greenland's waters, countering Trump's assertions. One senior Nordic diplomat said bluntly that the claims were "simply not true" and that there were 'no ships, no submarines'. Another added that any such foreign naval activity is restricted to the Russian side of the Arctic, not around Greenland.

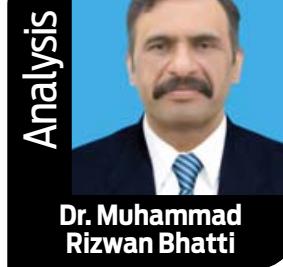
Trump has repeatedly stated that Russian and Chinese vessels are active near Greenland, a strategic and mineral-rich territory of Denmark, and has used the claim to argue that the United States must control the island to keep other powers out.

However, Denmark and Nordic officials dispute this narrative, with Danish Foreign Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen calling the image of foreign ships near Greenland 'not correct'. Vessel-tracking data from MarineTraffic and LSEG also show no presence of Chinese or Russian ships near Greenland's coast.

In response to the controversy, Greenland's assembly has moved up a meeting to discuss how to address growing US statements about exerting control over the autonomous territory. Many of Greenland's roughly 57,000 residents aim for eventual independence, and the renewed push from the U. S. has raised significant concern among locals.

This development is part of broader tensions between the U. S. and its Nordic allies over the future of Greenland and the accuracy of assertions regarding foreign military presence in Arctic waters.

Drug Abuse: A Deepening Threat to Society



Analysis

Dr. Muhammad Rizwan Bhatti

In fact, drug misuse has become a deeply ingrained societal challenge, steadily undermining Pakistan's socio-economic fabric. Shockingly, nearly 6.7 million Pakistanis reportedly abuse controlled substances, with cannabis remaining the most commonly used drug, while heroin addiction affects hundreds of thousands across the country. Consequently, cannabis, opioids, cocaine and a growing variety of synthetic narcotics not only endanger personal health but also threaten public safety and national stability. Moreover, June 26, designated as the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking by the UNODC, offers a vital moment to unite society against this scourge. Interestingly, the 2026 theme emphasizes community-led prevention, stronger treatment programs, and the elimination of stigma highlighting that long-term solutions require both empathy and collective action.

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Bull & Bears PSX 100-Share Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index	
Current	Prev. Close
184,409.67	185,543.01
Day's High	Day's Low
186,180.32	183,700.83
Index Value	Change
36,715,643,369	-1133.34
Percentage	Time
-0.61%	9 Jan, 2026 4:30 pm

Europe: FTSE 100 Index

Index Value	Change
10,130.55	+85.86
Percentage	Time

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average

Index Value	Change
49,418.06	+151.95
Percentage	Time

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average

Index Value	Change
51,939.89	+822.63
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
Norwegians 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

Huge surge in gold prices



LAHORE: The price of gold in Pakistan has also seen a huge increase on Saturday.

According to the local Sarafa Association sources, the price has again seen a huge increase in the global and local gold markets. 24-carat gold per tola has increased by Rs3,700 to Rs473,262, the price of ten grams of gold has increased by Rs1,722 to Rs4,05,745.

Likewise, the price of silver per tola has increased by Rs270 to Rs8,465, and gold per ounce has become more expensive by \$37 in the global market to \$4,509.

PBF proposes steps to strengthen agri yield, exports

LAHORE: The Pakistan Business Forum (PBF) presented a set of proposals to the government for strengthening agricultural production and boosting agro-based exports.

PBF Chief Organiser Ahmad Jawad told media here Sunday that in view of the repeated floods, climate shocks, and financial stress faced by farmers and exporters, the PBF strongly recommends that the normal tax regime imposed through Finance Bill 2024 be postponed for at least two years. During this interim period, the earlier system of one percent tax on export remittances should be restored as a full and final tax to provide certainty, liquidity, and relief to the export sector at a critical time.

PBF Chief Organiser urged the government to urgently operationalise Pakistan Horticulture Development and Export Company (PHDEC) ensuring effective support to agricultural and horticultural exports. The company should also be strengthened by appointing a new Board of Directors (BoD) comprising professionals with proven experience in agriculture policy, international trade, and export development so that it can function as a results-oriented body.

In Pakistan, approximately 74 per cent of women and girls engaged in the

Over 1.5 billion Shares Benefitted Small PSX Investors

PBA Congratulates Industry on Historic Performance

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Banks' Association (PBA) extended its heartiest congratulations to the entire banking industry, and specifically to the seven Pakistani banks that have secured positions in the top 15 Asia-Pacific banks in 2025, as ranked by S&P Global Market Intelligence.

This global accolade is not just an institutional victory; it is a win for the common man. With a combined total return of the seven top performing banks alone, the value creation is massive. It directly benefits the small investors holding over 1.5 billion shares at the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX), who are the real owners of this success story.



In a statement the CEO and Secretary General of PBA, Muneer Kamal, highlighted that the sheer volume of shares rallying signifies that the benefits of this performance are reaching the grassroots level of the capital market.

United Bank Limited (UBL) leading the industry with the highest market capitalization and continues to balance scale with exceptional returns proving that large-cap stability and agility can go hand in hand.

Public Sector excellence & governance is very much evident in the rankings with historic performance by the public sector banks. The Bank of Punjab topping the entire Asia-Pacific ranking in terms of total percentage return, followed by the National Bank of Pakistan and

The Bank of Khyber. This stellar turnout is a testament of good governance and strategic oversight on the part of the Government and the State Bank of Pakistan.

The list also features the epic turn-around of Bank Makramah and emergence of Askari Bank, which have uplifted a massive shareholder base.

In the Islamic banking space, Faysal Bank has set a new benchmark of returns, reinforcing the strength of the Shariah-compliant model.

"It is a rarity that banks create such board-based shareholder value" Mr. Muneer Kamal noted. "Even more remarkable is the fact that this is achieved alongside creating real impact and fueling the real economy."

Unloading

MULTAN: Labourers are busy unloading potato sacks from the delivery truck at Vegetable Market on Sunday.



Photo: Courtesy APP

Sindh's coastal communities face crisis as crab exports to China halted

Kamran Khamiso Khowaja

THATTA: The ban on the export of crabs to China has added to the misery of the fishing community living along the coastlines of the Thatta, Badin, Karachi, and Sujawal districts. For the past couple of weeks, the supply of crabs from the coastal areas of Pakistan to China has been suspended by the government authorities without citing any specific cause behind the decision.

Members of the Sindh Coastal Belt Association and the Fishermen Welfare Society expressed their reservations regarding the ban imposed on the supply of crabs. Holding a press conference at a local press club in Thatta the other day, Majeed Thaheem and other members of the Coastal Belt Association claimed that the suspension of the crab supply has affected around one million people across the coastal areas of Sindh who are directly or indirectly associated with the business of crab catching and supply.

"Pakistan has suffered a financial loss of 50 million owing to the cessation of the crab supply," Majeed Thaheem claimed. Abdul Rahim Malah, a leader of the local



fishermen, said that they had not been receiving the standard price per crab in the market of Karachi for the past few months; despite the fact that this business had been providing them a financial boon, the current ban on the crab supply has shattered their hopes.

During the winter, local fishermen rely

on crabs as their key source of livelihood, but this time it has not proven beneficial following the ongoing restrictions. The affected communities urged the federal government, including the Ministry of Maritime Affairs, and the provincial government to take measures to lift the ban on crab exports.

itiveness and discouraged both domestic and foreign investors. Addressing these structural weaknesses must therefore be a central pillar of economic reform. A sustainable reform agenda should begin with improving governance and financial discipline across the power sector. Reducing line losses, curbing theft and ensuring timely payments along the supply chain can significantly lower overall costs. Transparent tariff structures, aligned with actual generation costs and market realities, will enhance investor confidence while protecting affordable electricity.

Chairing here today board of directors meeting he said high power tariffs, frequent outages and inefficiencies in transmission and distribution have eroded industrial competence.

Hyderabad Traders Blast Soaring Power Tariffs Threatening Local Industry Competitiveness

Commerce Desk

HYDERABAD: Muhammad Saleem Memon, President of the Hyderabad Chamber of Small Traders & Small Industry (HCSTSI), has strongly condemned the recent increase in electricity tariffs, stating that any per-unit hike directly raises industrial production costs. He warned that such increases would render local industries uncompetitive, severely impacting exports, employment, and overall economic activity.

The President highlighted that industrial consumers in Pakistan currently pay approximately 13.5 cents per unit of electricity, which is significantly higher than neighboring countries: Tajikistan (2-3 cents), India (6-7 cents), Bangladesh (8-9 cents), and Sri Lanka (9-12 cents). Under these conditions, Pakistani industries cannot compete on price with regional economies such as Tajikistan, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, and others while European markets are virtually out of reach.



Land for Women Farmers: FPCCI Calls for Action to Bolster Pakistan Agriculture

Commerce Desk

LAHORE: Convener Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry regional committee on food Shahid Imran Sunday calls for the allocation of unused federal and provincial land to landless rural women farmers, with access to water and input subsidies to achieve bumper crops production as 74 percent of women are contributing to agriculture in Pakistan.

Speaking here today to a gathering of women farmers in connection with "FAO International Year of Woman Farmer 2026" this global campaign aimed at recognising women's indispensable yet often overlooked contributions to global agri-food systems and to galvanising efforts to close persistent gender gaps.

In Pakistan, approximately 74 per cent of women and girls engaged in the



labour force work in the agriculture sector, which generates about 40pc of household income.

However, protection issues faced by women farmers remain poorly documented and insufficiently addressed.

lakes and natural depressions, and investment in diversion channels and recharge basins. Community participation and provincial coordination are essential. By treating floodwater as a resource rather than a threat, Pakistan can reduce disaster losses while securing its long-term water future, he added.

He said such an approach also brings environmental and economic benefits. Recharged wetlands enhance biodiversity, support fisheries and livestock grazing, and improve local livelihoods. Groundwater replenishment lowers pumping costs for farmers and strengthens resilience against droughts.

Olympian Syed Sameer Hussain scored a brilliant hat-trick, while Asif Ahmed Khan netted two goals

Sports Desk

HYDERABAD: The exhibition match between Pakistan Veterans Hockey Club and Hyderabad Veterans Hockey Club was played at the Hyderabad Public School Astro Turf, where Pakistan Veterans produced a dominant performance to secure a convincing 7-1 victory.

For the winning side, Syed Sameer Hussain scored in the 10th, 15th, and 30th minutes. Former international Asif Ahmed Khan scored in the 5th and 35th minutes, while captain Qamar Ibrahim and Sameer Saleem found the net in the 7th and 34th minutes, respectively. Hyderabad Veterans' lone goal was scored by Muhammad Zaigham.

Pakistan Veterans Hockey Club was represented by Olympian Qamar Ibrahim, Olympian Syed Sameer Hussain, Former international Asif Ahmed Khan, Sumair Saleem, goal keeper Waqas Hasan, Shahzad Hanif, Zahid Ghaffar, Naeem Haider, former international Asim Khan, Talha Ghouri, Wasif Raza, Syed

Aaly Hasan, former international Arif Bhopali, Irfan Ali, former international Muhammad Asim, Junaid Aslam, Uzair Ahmed, Moeen Alam, and Nadeem Saeed.

For media coverage, Saleh Umar specially travelled from Karachi and also accompanied the team.

Speaking at the closing ceremony, team captain Qamar Ibrahim praised the Hyderabad Hockey Association for its efforts in promoting hockey in the city. He said the installation of an astro turf at the Public School was a valuable gift for hockey lovers. He thanked Secretary Akhtar Khanzada and Tahir Habib for inviting the team to Hyderabad and providing the opportunity to play, and congratulated the entire organizing team.

He added that the Pakistan Hockey Federation is working to promote hockey across the country and expressed confidence that the sport will soon regain its lost glory. Sameer Hussain, Akhtar Khanzada, and Tahir Habib also addressed the ceremony.

At the end, the organizers



presented players with traditional Sindhi topis and ajraks, along with

commemorative shields. The patron of Pakistan Veterans

Hockey Club, Olympian Islahuddin Siddiqui, congratulated the team on the victory and said that the win was a wonderful birthday gift for him.

Governor Punjab Distributes 1000 chrome Books in Jand

Raza Naqvi

ATTOCK: Punjab Governor Sardar Saleem Haider Khan Distributes New Chromebooks in Jand. Announces New Welfare and Health Initiatives for Attock Punjab Governor Sardar Saleem Haider Khan said that every moment of his life is dedicated to public service and that the welfare of the people remains the central focus of his politics.

He made these remarks while addressing a Chromebook/laptop distribution ceremony in Jand Tehsil of Attock district. The governor stated that, with the support of TT Global Foundation, 1,000 Chromebooks and laptops have been provided to students of Attock to equip them with modern technology. He said these devices were distributed equally among students of government schools across all five tehsils of the district, calling the initiative an important milestone towards educational progress.

He added that development is not possible without promoting modern education. He further announced that, with continued support from TT Global Foundation, computers would be provided over the next two years to all students of grades 9, 10, 11 and 12 in government schools across Attock so they can keep pace with modern requirements and play an effective role in the digital



world. Highlighting development measures undertaken during his tenure, the governor said electric bus services were launched in Fateh Jang and Hassan Abdal to facilitate commuters.

He added that a passport office was established in Hazro for public convenience, while water supply and other basic facilities were provided in remote villages of Fateh Jang, Pindi Gheb and Jand. He said that, with the cooperation of OGDCL, an 18-kilometre road from

Mari to Jalwal was constructed, and dialysis centres and blood banks were set up in Pindi Gheb and Fateh Jang.

He announced that a dialysis centre would also be established at THQ Jand in the near future, equipped with five modern machines. He also said that within the next one to one-and-a-half months, a fully facilitated Mother and Child Centre would be established in Jand, with the posting of a specialist lady doctor.

The governor further said that collective weddings for 35 deserving families would be arranged later this month, adding that he would host a meal for around 2,000 guests on the occasion. He informed that deserving families may contact Malik Kamran Khaki in Fateh Jang and Syed Atif Hussain Shah in Jand regarding marriage arrangements. Appreciating Punjab Education Minister Rama Sikandar Hayat, the governor said he is taking effective steps for the improvement of government schools and that these schools would soon be equipped with modern facilities.

He directed the CEO Education Attock to establish a special cell at the Governor House for Attock schools to ensure provision of advanced facilities, and said solar panels would also be installed in schools.

The ceremony was attended by TT Global Foundation CEO Rashid Minhas, Farid Shehzad, CEO Education Attock Dr Muhammad Azhar, PPP leader Malik Amanat Rawal, Syed Atif Hussain Shah, Assistant Commissioner Ahmad Ali Raza, Haji Akhtar Ghareebwala, Sardar Muhammad Ali, students, and a large number of people from different walks of life. TT Global Foundation President Rashid Minhas, Malik Amanat Rawal, Syed Atif Hussain Shah and Dr Muhammad Azhar also addressed the gathering. At the end, Chromebooks/laptops were distributed among students.

Arts Council organizes watercolour Art exhibition by renowned artist Hamir Soomro

News Desk

KARACHI: Arts Council of Pakistan Karachi organized a watercolour-based art exhibition by renowned artist Hamir Soomro titled "Celebrating the Heritage of Karachi Volume 3" at the Ahmed Pervez Art Gallery. The exhibition was inaugurated by President of the Arts Council, Muhammad Ahmed Shah, along with renowned artist Hamir Soomro. The exhibition was attended by Consul General of Japan HATTORI Masaru, Consul General of Italy Fabrizio Bielli, Director General MOFA Irfan Soomro, Chairman Fine Arts Committee Farrukh Tanveer Shahab, along with a large number of personalities associated with the field of fine arts. A total of 71 outstanding watercolour artworks became the center of attention for visitors. Through his artworks, Hamir Soomro has captured Karachi's heritage buildings, including Flagstaff House, St. Patrick's Church, Khalid Dina Hall, Denso Hall, and several other historic structures. On this occasion, President Arts Council Muhammad Ahmed Shah expressed his views and said that he is thankful to all artists and the media. He said that Hamir Soomro is an outstanding artist who has depicted Karachi's heritage buildings, and his specialty is that he does not sell his artworks. Artist Hamir Soomro said that Ahmed Shah has always encouraged him. He added that Karachi's historic buildings are gradually disappearing, which is why he decided to paint them on his canvas. He said that people do not realize the beauty of these buildings due to a lack of awareness. He emphasized that we must value this heritage. He further said that we have ample resources, Karachi is a very beautiful city, and with strong ownership, this city can become even more beautiful.



Four militants killed, three injured in security forces operation in Baitani Hills of Lakki Marwat

Syed Tauqeer Zaidi

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: Security forces conducted a successful search and clearance operation in the Baitani mountain range of Lakki Marwat following reports about the presence of militants in the area. According to sources, during the operation, the militants opened fire on the security forces, who responded effectively. As a result of the intense exchange of fire, four militants were killed while three others were seriously injured.

During the operation, security forces also destroyed three major hideouts of the militants. Sources said that gunship helicopters, artillery, and all available resources were used effectively, leading to the complete destruction of militant sanctuaries established in the Baitani hills.

Security officials stated that this operation will prove to be highly significant in dismantling the militant network in the area and restoring peace. The main objective of the operation was to eliminate safe havens of terrorists and provide relief to the local population, in which the security forces have achieved remarkable success.

Nawabshah: House Roof Collapse Claims Two Young Lives, Injures Five

Anwar Adil Khanzada

NAWABSHAH: Two children died and five people were injured when the roof of a house collapsed in the Golimar area of Nawabshah. Among the dead were two children, including 5-year-old Ahmed and 4-year-old Imad. Among the injured were two children, two men and a woman. They were shifted to the hospital for medical assistance.

Rescue 1122 launched the operation on the instructions of District Manager SIEFS Aqsa Jamali and Rehabilitation Advisor Gianchand Israni. They expressed grief over the loss of lives. The Sindh government is making rescue agencies more effective for emergency response and public protection. Two children died and five people were injured when the roof of a house collapsed in the Golimar area of



Nawabshah. As soon as the incident was reported, the Rescue 1122 and SIEHS teams took timely action and immediately shifted the affected people to the nearest hospital. The deceased included two children, 5-year-old Ahmed and 4-year-old Imad, while the injured included two children, two men and a woman. On the instructions of Rehabilitation Advisor Gianchand Israni, Rescue 1122 staff immediately performed an operation and shifted the affected people to the hospital. Gianchand Israni expressed his condolences to the families of the deceased and said that the Sindh government is making the rescue agencies

more effective for quick response and protection of the public. The personnel of Rescue 1122 and SIEHS have shown courage, dedication and sense of duty. They are ready to deal with any emergency situation.

Economic Independence and Women Empowerment

Muqaddas Samra

Economic independence is one of the strongest pillars of women empowerment. It goes beyond earning money; it represents freedom of choice, dignity, confidence, and the ability to shape one's own life. A woman who is economically independent can take decisions for herself and her family, challenge social barriers, and actively contribute to national development. In today's world, women empowerment cannot be imagined without ensuring women's access to education, employment, equal wages, and financial resources.

Historically, women have played a significant role in society, yet their contributions were often limited to unpaid domestic work. For centuries, economic systems were designed in a way that favored men, leaving women financially

dependent on fathers, husbands, or families. This dependence restricted women's voices and reduced their participation in decision-making processes. Economic independence breaks this cycle by giving women control over resources and the confidence to assert their rights.

Education is the foundation of economic independence. An educated woman is more likely to secure employment, start a business, or develop skills that generate income. Education not only enhances professional abilities but also builds awareness about legal rights, financial literacy, and social responsibilities. When girls are educated, they grow into women who can support themselves and uplift others around them. Societies that invest in girls' education witness lower poverty rates, improved health indicators, and stronger economic growth.

Employment opportunities play a crucial role in empowering

women economically. When women enter the workforce, they gain financial stability and self-respect. However, despite progress, women still face challenges such as wage gaps, limited career growth, workplace discrimination, and lack of safe working environments. Equal pay for equal work remains a global issue. Addressing these inequalities is essential to ensure that women are not just employed but fairly compensated for their contributions.

Entrepreneurship has emerged as a powerful tool for women empowerment. Women-led businesses create employment, promote innovation, and contribute to economic development. Access to microfinance, loans, and government schemes enables women to start and sustain businesses, especially in rural and marginalized communities. Financial inclusion empowers women to save, invest, and plan for the future. When women manage

finances, families tend to prioritize education, health, and overall well-being.

Economic independence also strengthens women's decision-making power within households. A financially independent woman is more likely to participate in decisions related to children's education, healthcare, and family planning. This leads to healthier families and balanced societies. Moreover, economic empowerment reduces women's vulnerability to domestic violence and exploitation, as financial security provides the means to escape abusive situations and seek justice.

Despite these benefits, social and cultural barriers continue to hinder women's economic progress. Traditional gender roles often limit women's mobility and career choices. In many societies, women are expected to prioritize household responsibilities over professional aspirations. Lack of childcare facilities, societal pres-

sure, and unequal distribution of unpaid care work further restrict women's participation in the workforce. Challenging these norms requires collective efforts from families, communities, and policymakers.

Government policies and legal

frameworks play a vital role in promoting women's economic independence. Laws ensuring equal wages, maternity benefits, workplace safety, and property rights empower women to participate fully in the economy. Skill development programs, vocational training, and digital literacy initiatives equip women with tools to adapt to changing economic landscapes. Additionally, social security schemes and support systems help women balance work and family responsibilities.

The role of men in women empowerment cannot be overlooked. Economic independence for women should not be viewed as a threat but as a shared benefit.

When men support women's education and careers, families prosper, and societies become more inclusive. Gender equality in economic participation fosters mutual respect and partnership, leading to sustainable development.

In the modern era, technology has opened new avenues for women's economic empowerment. Remote work, online businesses, and digital platforms allow women to overcome geographical and social barriers. Access to technology and the internet enables women to acquire skills, market products, and connect with global opportunities. Bridging the digital gender gap is essential to ensure that women are not left behind in the digital economy.

Economic independence is not just a matter of justice; it is a necessity for building a progressive, inclusive, and prosperous world. When women rise economically, families thrive, societies progress, and nations move forward.

Flotilla Visits Oman

Pakistan Navy Flotilla visits Oman during overseas deployment.



Trump briefed on military options for Iran, as protests continue: US media reports

Monitoring Desk

NEW YORK: US President Donald Trump has been given military options for a strike on Iran amid continuing protests in Iranian cities, but has not made a final decision, according to reports in two leading American newspapers; The New York Times and Wall Street Journal.

In a defiant response, Iran's National Defence Council warned that Tehran would not necessarily limit itself to retaliatory responses if it perceives concrete threats to its security.

In a statement published by Iranian media, the Council said that Iran's "security, independence, and territorial integrity" constitute an "uncrossable redline," and that any encroachment on those interests would be met with an "appropriate, targeted, and decisive response."



"Within the framework of legitimate self-defence, the Islamic Republic of Iran does not consider itself limited to reacting after the action and considers objective signs of threat to be part of the security equation," the statement said.

Meanwhile, Trump also posted on social media that "Iran is looking at FREEDOM, perhaps like never before. The USA stands ready to help!!!"

The US State Department

separately warned: "Do not play games with President Trump. When he says he'll do something, he means it."

The New York Times report says Trump is seriously considering authorizing a strike in

response to the Iranian regime's efforts to suppress demonstrations, and the options presented to him include non-military sites in Tehran. But no further details were given.

As protests escalate, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei signalled a coming clampdown, despite US warnings. Iran's attorney general, Mohammad Movahedi Azad, warned that anyone taking part in protests or "helping rioters" will be considered an "enemy of God," a death-penalty charge.

"Proceedings must be conducted without leniency, compassion or indulgence," he said.

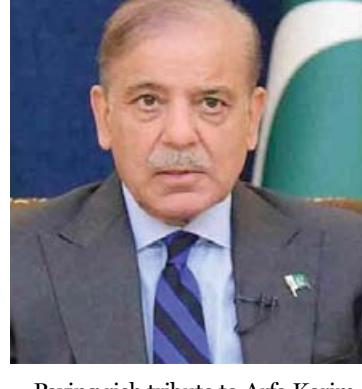
State television and news agencies have played video of purported protesters shooting at security forces with firearms, according to reports.

PM reaffirms commitment to IT education, youth empowerment

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has said that providing Pakistani youth with internationally competitive education and training in the information technology sector is among the government's top priorities.

The prime minister expressed these views during a meeting on Sunday with the parents of late IT prodigy Arfa Karim Randhawa, Samina Amjad and Amjad Karim Randhawa, along with the Chief Executive of the Arfa Karim Foundation, Tabinda Islam.



Paying rich tribute to Arfa Karim,

the prime minister lauded her remarkable contributions to the IT sector at a young age and for bringing pride to Pakistan on the global stage. He said that in recognition of her lasting services, the IT Tower in Lahore has been named Arfa Karim Tower.

The prime minister stated that the government was working round-the-clock to transform Pakistan into a regional hub for the IT sector. He added that special emphasis was being placed on IT education and training for youth, along with the promotion of entrepreneurship in the technology sector.

He said that the federal government was continuing its laptop distribution programme this year as well, to encourage high-performing male and female students.

Terming the establishment of the Arfa Karim Foundation as a positive step towards the promotion of IT development, the prime minister assured full government support at all levels.

The parents of late Arfa Karim appreciated the government's initiatives for the development of the IT sector under the leadership of Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Islam survives through trials, not comforts: Fazlur Rehman

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman said on Sunday that the survival of Islam does not lie in comfort and ease but in facing trials with patience and faith.

Addressing a gathering in Lahore, Maulana Fazlur Rehman said that the real duty of today's generation is to keep alive the mission and vision of their elders. "Everyone who comes into this world has to leave one day. No one stays forever," he said, adding that at the end of the day, intentions matter more than actions.

He said every human being is responsible for his own deeds and that the acceptance of any effort depends on one's intention. "Islam is a religion of balance. If moderation is ignored, things fall apart and society moves towards extremes," he remarked.

The JUI-F chief said that the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was both a teacher and a guide, and that



education and moral training are central to prophethood. He said religious seminaries focus on teaching respect and discipline, values that

help people stay on the straight path. Maulana Fazlur Rehman expressed concern that today's youth are being disconnected from their

elders and historical roots. "Young people are being pushed to cut ties with their traditions and values," he said.

Pakistan Navy Flotilla Visits Oman During Overseas Deployment

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Navy Flotilla comprising of PNS RAH NAWARD (Sail Ship), PNS MADADGAR and Pakistan Maritime Security Agency (PMSA) ship PMSS KASHMIR visited Port Sultan Qaboos, Muscat, Oman. Upon arrival at the port, the ships were warmly welcomed by Omani authorities.

During the visit, Mission Commander, Commodore Amir Iqbal, along with the Commanding Officers held meetings with naval leadership of Oman.

Mission Commander called on Acting Commander of Royal Navy of Oman (RNO), DG Ops and Plans, Commander Maritime Security Centre, Commander Said Bin Sultan Naval Base and Command-

dant Sultan Qaboos Naval Academy. During these interactions, matters of mutual interest, Navy-to-Navy engagements, and cooperation in maritime security were discussed.

RNO Officers and Midshipmen also visited onboard ships and discussed topics of mutual maritime interest with PN officers.

Pakistan Navy Ships were opened for visitors; wherein, large number of Pakistani community and students from Pakistan School, Muscat visited onboard.

Following the port call, PN and PMSA ships conducted a Passage Exercise with Royal Oman Navy ship KHASAB.

The exercise at sea aimed to enhance interoperability between the two navies and promote shared learning through bilateral conduct of naval exercises.

Gujranwala to be connected with motorway, says Aleem Khan



Bureau Report

KAMOKE, GUJRANWALA: President of the Istehkam Pakistan Party & Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan has said that due to the brave leadership of the Pakistan Armed Forces under the Army Chief, Field Marshal Syed Hafiz Asim Munir, Allah Almighty has bestowed honor upon Pakistan.

Our courageous Armed Forces have humbled the enemy and earned global respect for Pakistan that today no one dares look at us with ill intent. He expressed these views while addressing Party Workers' Convention in Kamoke as chief guest.

He said it has never happened before that seven enemy aircrafts were shot down while not a single one of ours was lost.

Our brave falcons downed four Indian Rafale jets; today even their manufacturer company claiming that it was not their fault rather that the Indian pilots did not know how to fly.

Upon Abdul Aleem Khan's

arrival in Kamoke, Punjab Provincial President Rana Nazir Ahmed Khan, along with Chaudhry Zaheeruddin, Mamoon Jafar Tarrar, Tahseen Nawaz Gardazi, Mian Junaid Zulfiqar, Brigadier Qaiser Mahey, Rana Umar Nazir Ahmed, and Barrister Rana Aamir Nazir, gave him a warm welcome. From the Women's Wing, Taskeen Khawani, Rubina Sullahri, and Dr. Javeria Sehrwari were present, along with Lahore General Secretary Rana Javed Iqbal. Central General Secretary IPP Pakistan Mian Khalid Mahmood, Punjab General Secretary and MPA Shoib Siddiqui and Minority Wing President Haroon Imran Gill also attended the Convention from Lahore with Abdul Aleem Khan.

Punjab Provincial Party President Rana Nazir Ahmed Khan thanked Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan for linking Kamoke and Gujranwala with the Motorway, providing U-turns on GT Road, and resolving other local issues.

DPM Dar meets Saudi counterpart on the sideline of OIC meeting



News Desk

JEDDAH: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister met Saudi Deputy Foreign Minister Waleed bin Abdulkarim Al-Khereiji on the sidelines of Extraordinary Session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers in Jeddah today.

They discussed strengthening Pakistan-Saudi strategic partnership and reaffirmed close cooperation within the OIC for peace, stability and security in the region.

Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, after attending the extraordinary session of OIC Council of Foreign Ministers in Jeddah today.

He offered prayers for Pakistan, fellow Pakistanis, and for the nation's peace and prosperity.

The Deputy Prime Minister also prayed for the well-being and unity of the entire Muslim Ummah.