

Azad Kashmir PM Rathore declares PPP true representative of people at Kotli rally

 Bureau Report

KOTLI/CHAROHI: Jammu and Kashmir State Prime Minister Faisal Mumtaz Rathore has said that Pakistan People's Party (PPP) is the representative party of the people in true sense.

Pakistan Peoples Party is the representative party of the people in true sense, the present government has taken steps to improve the system, and is scheduling the state bank to provide tens of billions of rupees.

Health cards have been launched, newly established education boards have been notified and property tax has also been notified.

Former Prime minister of Pakistan Raja Pervez Ashraf and Minister Information Ch Rafique Nayyar and others also addressed the rally.

Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir Faisal Mumtaz Rathore visited Kotli during his visit to Kotli. On the invitation of MP Chaudhry Muhammad



Yasin, he addressed a rally at Boys College Ground. Addressing a public gathering in climbing, Azad Kashmir Minister Faisal Mumtaz Rathore said that the warm welcome from the people increases confidence.

We have a strong relationship of love and trust. Bilawal Bhutto

thanked Zardari for his nomination and Chaudhry Muhammad Yasin announced his candidacy. I am a representative congregation of the people.

Faisal Mumtaz Rathore thanks the commander and youth of Pakistan for raising the profile of the Pakistani nation. The flag is raised. Paki-

stan People's Party (PPP) has an ideological and historical relationship with Kashmir, and the poll slogan on behalf of party chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari is a continuation of that struggle.

Insha Allah, this time will prove better for both PPP and the people.

Awami Referendum

FAISALABAD: Activists of Jamaat-e-Islami stands in a queue to cast their ballots outside a polling station during Awami Referendum Local Government Acts, in the city.



Photo: Online

Army, Million Smiles Foundation Bring Warmth to Neelum Valley's Neediest

 Abdul Majed Tahir

NEELUM VALLEY: In the remote Surgan Valley of Neelum, the Pakistan Army, in collaboration with the Million Smiles Foundation, distributed warm clothing and winter kits among widows and deserving individuals. This welfare initiative aimed to provide relief to poor and needy families during the harsh winter season and in the face of rising inflation.

The distribution ceremony was attended by the Commanding Officer of Sharda Battalion, Regional Director of the Million Smiles Foundation Raja Daud, and other distin-



guished personalities. Under their

supervision, warm clothes and essen-

tial winter items were distributed in a transparent and well-organized manner among deserving families, widows, and underprivileged individuals.

On this occasion, the local community

expressed their heartfelt grati-

tude to the Pakistan Army and the Million Smiles Foundation, stating that in the current era of inflation, purchasing essential commodities and warm clothing has become beyond the purchasing power of poor people.

In such circumstances, these welfare initiatives by the Pakistan Army and charitable organizations are nothing less than a blessing.

Pharmacists' Trust Will Be Honoured, Says PPA President Alamgir Rao

 Zain Khan Malghani

MULTAN: Central President of the Pakistan Pharmacists Association (PPA), Alamgir Rao, has said that he will live up to the trust placed in him by the pharmacists community and will work day and night to resolve their issues. He expressed these views during a meeting in Multan with Abdul Rasool Saeedi, Jehanzai Khan Buzdar, and XEN WAPDA Babar Gujjar.

The participants congratulated Alamgir Rao on his landslide victory in the PPA elections and stated that, being from Multan, he has earned a



distinguished position through his competence and dedication. They noted that he is currently serving as

Deputy Secretary (Technical) in the Primary and Secondary Healthcare & Population Department, Punjab.

Speaking on the occasion, Alamgir Rao emphasized that granting pharmacists the authority to prescribe specific medicines is essential to eliminate quackery. He said he remains in continuous contact with the relevant authorities on this matter. He added that pharmacists around the world are allowed to prescribe medicines, and expressed confidence that similar legislation would soon be introduced in Pakistan. This, he said, would help ensure the provision of basic and quality healthcare facilities to the public within limited resources.

Kashmir Migrant Rights Under Fire: PAC Chairman slams campaign to abolish assembly seats

 Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: Chairman Public Accounts Committee and former Finance Minister Abdul Majid Khan has sent a detailed and reasoned letter to Prime Minister Pakistan Shehbaz Sharif, expressing serious concerns over the current negative atmosphere created by a specific group against the Kashmir migrants residing in Pakistan, baseless propaganda, and attempts to undermine their constitutional status.



Abdul Majid Khan stated that this organized campaign is not only against the reputation of the migrants but is also affecting the historical case of Jammu and Kashmir state. The letter strongly opposes the demand to abolish the 12 constitutional seats reserved for Jammu and Kashmir migrants in the Azad Kashmir Assembly, calling it unconstitutional, illegal, and immoral.

Abdul Majid Khan clarified that abolishing the migrant seats is tantamount to weakening the identity of Jammu and Kashmir state, UN resolutions, and the fundamental case of Kashmiris' right to self-determination. He pointed out that the Azad Kashmir Constitution Act 1974 gives migrants a clear, legitimate, and irrevocable constitutional right to representation in the Assembly, and these seats are the basis of the representative government of Azad Kashmir.

Abdul Majid Khan quoted Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's historical stance that "Kashmir is Pakistan's jugular vein" and attempts to deprive migrants of their legal rights are highly concerning.

Copies of the letter have been sent to the President of Pakistan, senior political leadership, federal ministers, major political parties, lawyers, and senior government officials.

Opposition Leader accuses Azad Kashmir govt of election revenge tactics



 Bureau Report

NEELUM: Shah Ghulam Qadir, Leader of Opposition and President of Muslim League (N) Azad Kashmir, addressed a press conference in Athmuqam, Neelum, saying the PPP government has started taking revenge actions to influence the upcoming elections in Azad Kashmir.

He stated the Prime Minister is consulting with him for the appointment of the Election Commissioner. Shah Ghulam Qadir said the Prime Minister of Pakistan has released Rs 40 billion for health cards for the people of Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan.

He claimed the Muslim League (N) will form the government in Azad Kashmir soon, and there won't be a single day's delay in the elections. Shah Ghulam Qadir urged the PPP government to focus on solving the people's problems instead of indulging in power struggles.

He claimed the Muslim League (N) will win the elections and continue development work in Azad Kashmir.

Fatal traffic accident in Fateh Jang: Three killed, one critically injured

 Raza Naqvi

ATTOCK: A horrific traffic accident occurred on Sunday morning near Gagan in the Fateh Jang tehsil on Kohat Road, resulting in the deaths of three people and leaving one person critically injured.

According to Rescue 1122, a speeding car went out of control, veered off the road, and crashed into a tree. As a result, three passengers in the vehicle died on the spot. Upon receiving the report, the Rescue 1122 control room immediately dispatched two ambulances to the accident site.

Rescue personnel provided first aid to the injured person, 23-year-old Nasir, and shifted him to the Tehsil Headquarters Hospital, Fateh Jang.

Rescue officials stated that the deceased included 22-year-old Aamir Khan, 26-year-old Rehman, and one unidentified person whose age is estimated to be around 26 years. All three bodies were shifted to the same hospital for necessary legal formalities.

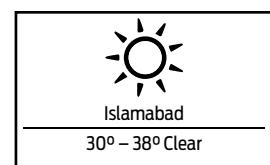
According to initial reports, all the affected individuals were residents of District Karak. Further investigations are underway to determine the cause of the accident.

Azad Kashmir Muslim Conference holds decisive workers gathering



 Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: A very important, decisive and historic workers convention of All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference is being held in Muzaffarabad, the capital of Azad Kashmir. The meeting is underway to give a resolution. All further arrangements have been completed for the convention, while many other conference leaders from other areas of Azad Kashmir including Division Muzaffarabad are expected to participate and address this workers convention. workers, leaders and affiliates led by their leaders are wandering from street to street, from village to village on both sides of the capital Muzaffarabad, where no political activity is intense in the city. The workers convention will remain the backbone in the politics of the Muslim Conference, where workers will be given the opportunity to express their views openly. According to party sources, the convention will not only hear the anxieties, frustrations, reservations and grievances of the workers, but also articulate and act upon them for practical solutions. Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference President and former Prime Minister Azad Kashmir Sardar Attique Ahmad Khan's address is of extraordinary importance in terms of political future, organizational revival and ideological stability of the Jamaat. The movement has a brilliant history, which was founded by Mujahid e Awwal, the founder of the state, former Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir, the late Sardar Abdul Qayyum Khan.


SERVICES
Namaz Timings

Fajr	5:44 am
Zohr	12:18 pm
Asr	3:47 pm
Maghrib	5:25 pm
Isha	6:52 pm

EMERGENCY

Rescue (Police)	15
Bomb Disposal	15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad	1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance	1122 & 16
& Rescue Services	4451122
Motorway Police	9266044
Motorway Police	9270601-20

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	555631-4
RGH	9290301-7
Holy Family	9290322-7
PIMS	9261170-9
Polyclinic	9218300-09
Shifa International	4603666

DEPARTMENTS

CDA	9212334-43
CDA	9208301-04
Met Office	9250360-6
RDA	5555864
TMA	5770886
Cantonment Board	9270151-3
Islamabad Metropolitan Corporation	9209224
Potowar Town	9209224
Rawal Town	5773343

COMPLAINTS

Water Tanker Service	
E-7, F-10 & F-11	9204654
G-5, G-6, G-7, G-8	9203883
G-9, G-10, G-11, G-12, H-8	92266316
Wapda Islamabad	9217579-80

Major Action by Punjab Food Authority, 18 Maunds of Dead Chickens Recovered, Two Accused Arrested

Raza Naqvi

ATTOCK: The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) carried out an operation on Sunday in Attock and recovered 18 maunds of dead chickens that were being illegally transported for human consumption. Two individuals were arrested during the operation.

According to officials, continuous monitoring was underway following reports of the supply of substandard and hazardous chicken meat to local markets. Acting on credible information, the food safety team intercepted a suspicious vehicle near 3 Meela Stop, where a large quantity of dead chickens was recovered during a search.

After a veterinary examination, the meat was confirmed to be extremely hazardous and unfit for human consumption. In accordance with food safety laws, the entire consignment was destroyed on the spot.

During the operation, the vehicle driver and helper were taken into custody and handed over to City Police Station Attock along with the vehicle for further legal proceedings.

Punjab Food Authority officials reiterated their zero-tolerance policy against the transportation and sale of unsafe and hazardous food, and urged citizens to report suspicious activities to help protect public health.

OIC Hails Start of Gaza Peace Plan Phase Two, Urges Israeli Halt to Undermining Efforts

Special Correspondent

JEDDAH: The General Secretariat of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) welcomed the start of the second phase of the comprehensive peace plan under UN Security Council Resolution 2803, as well as the announcement of the formation of the Palestinian committee to administer the Gaza Strip as a temporary transitional body.

The OIC General Secretariat also emphasizes the need to preserve the geographical and institutional unity between the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including the occupied city of Al-Quds (Jerusalem), and to pressure the Israeli occupation to stop all its crimes and policies aimed at undermining the two-state solution, including its policies of annexation, settlement, Judaization of Al-Quds (Jerusalem), forced displacement, and settler terrorism, and to compel it to release



Palestinian tax funds that are being held illegally.

It also stressed the need to enable the Palestinian government to exercise its authority over all Palestinian territories, with a view to ending the Israeli

occupation of all Palestinian territories occupied in 1967 and achieving an independent Palestinian state with East Al-Quds (Jerusalem) as its capital, based on United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Launching ceremony

ISLAMABAD: Special Secretary of Ministry of National Health Services Muhammad Aslam Ghauri, Chairperson iFeel Foundation Dr Tayyaba Siddiqui, CEO Mahrin Iqbal, posing for a group photograph during launching ceremony of iFeel Hospital Islamabad, in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

ICMA is Fulfilling the Dreams of Students and their Parents Samina Khan Kiani

Kiran Asim

MULTAN: ICMA International Pakistan Multan Branch Joint Director Samina Khan Kiani has said that we are fulfilling the dreams of students and their parents. Today, the students who graduate from here are earning excellent jobs in Pakistan and developed countries and many are CEOs in their factories and are playing their best role in the development of Pakistan.

No one can deny the usefulness of accounting education and its demand is increasing. If students work hard and keep their full focus only on educa-

tion, then there is no reason why success will be in your destiny. She expressed these views while addressing the annual

dinner and prize distribution ceremony yesterday. The special guests at the ceremony were BZU School of Commerce Director Dr. Muhammad

Ramzan Sheikh and Waqas Khalid, former Chairman ICMA, said that the future of those who study here is very bright.

Here, expert teachers in accounting education are working day and night for the development of the students. ICMA is progressing well under the leadership of Joint Director Samina Khan Kiani. Hundreds of students are bringing glory to Pakistan by winning gold medals and other medals. Umar Awan, teachers and students addressed the ceremony. Finally, prizes were distributed among those who passed ICMA.

During the alteration, PESCO Assistant Lineman Jamshed sustained

wire from the PESCO staff, used harsh language, and engaged in a scuffle with them.

During the alteration, PESCO Assistant Lineman Jamshed sustained

injuries and was immediately shifted to the Civil Hospital for medical treatment.

Cantt Police registered an FIR against the accused on the complaint

of SDO Mandhian Sub-Division Engineer Irfanullah Khan.

Following the incident, SE PESCO

Engineer Hizbulah Mehsud, XEN

PESCO Rural Division Engineer Moaz

Ahmed, and SDO PESCO Mandhian

Sub-Division Engineer Irfanullah Khan

visited the injured official at the hospital and assured him of full support.

It is pertinent to mention that

another case of electricity theft was

also registered against the same accused

at Cantt Police Station in September 2025.

Meanwhile, efforts were made to

contact the other party for their version,

but no response could be obtained.


Bureau Report

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: Cantonment Police have registered a case against a man for allegedly assaulting PESCO staff during an operation against illegal electricity connections in the limits of Cantt Police Station.

According to details, during an ongoing crackdown against power theft, the line staff of PESCO Mandhian Sub-Division removed a direct illegal electricity connection (kunda) from the house of Ramzan son of Khadim Hussain in Shahjan Shabheed Town. Upon this, the accused allegedly forcibly snatched the illegal

wire from the PESCO staff, used harsh language, and engaged in a scuffle with them. During the alteration, PESCO Assistant Lineman Jamshed sustained

injuries and was immediately shifted to the Civil Hospital for medical treatment.

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CM Murad visits Gul Plaza, says 60 people still reported missing

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Sunday evening visited Gul Plaza, the site of a devastating fire incident, where he reviewed rescue and firefighting operations and spoke to the media about the tragedy.

Talking to reporters, the chief minister said that the area is a major commercial hub, especially busy due to the ongoing wedding season. "People come here for shopping, particularly these days," he remarked.

Shah stated that reports of the fire were received after 10:00 pm last night, following which municipal authorities responded immediately and informed him. "The first fire tender reached the site at 10:27 pm and firefighting operations began without delay," he said.

He disclosed that an extensive operation was carried out to control the blaze. "A total of 26 fire tenders, four snorkels and 10 water bowsers took part in the operation," he said, adding that several institutions extended support. "Along with KMC, the Pakistan Navy, KPT provided snorkels, while the Civil Aviation Authority dispatched three firefighting machines," he noted.

Sheikh Abdul Waheed calls for immediate cut in petroleum levy

City Desk


RAWALPINDI: Trader leader Sheikh Abdul Waheed has expressed concern over the recent increase in the petroleum levy, saying it is hurting traders and the general public alike. He said higher levies on petrol and diesel have increased transport fares and production costs, making businesses harder to run.

He noted that rising fuel costs are passed on to consumers, driving up prices of essential goods, while inflation has already put traders—especially small and medium enterprises—under severe pressure. Sheikh Abdul Waheed urged the government to immediately reduce the petroleum levy to ease inflation, support business activity, and ensure economic stability.

Kamalia AC Iqra Nasir inspected development projects


Zafar Chishti

TOBA TEK SINGH: Assistant Commissioner Kamalia Iqra Nasir along with Chief Officer Municipal Committee Ali Raza, inspected various ongoing development projects in the city. During the visit, they reviewed in detail the beautification work of Iqbal Bazaar, the beautification project at Kalma Chowk and the construction progress of the Green Bus Stop. On this occasion, Assistant Commissioner Iqra Nasir directed the concerned officers to ensure that all development works are completed within the stipulated timeframe and in accordance with high-quality standards, so that better and modern facilities can be provided to citizens. She stated that enhancing the city's beauty and improving public amenities are top priorities of the administration.

Chief Officer Ali Raza briefed the Assistant Commissioner about the ongoing projects and informed that all beautification and infrastructure-related works are progressing at a fast pace and will be completed soon. At the conclusion of the visit, the Assistant Commissioner also instructed the authorities to ensure cleanliness and effective traffic management during the construction work.

Pakistan Army is our proud: Sajida Langah

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Iran is powerful...

In the last two weeks, the world has witnessed terrorist acts that took place inside Iran with the support of the United States and the Zionist regime. It all started on December 28 with a lawful and peaceful gathering of marketers protesting the economic situation.

From December 28 to December 30, we witnessed protests, primarily at the market level, by guilds and economic activists, which were completely peaceful and carried out to express their legitimate demands, which was the natural right of the protesters. Following the government's negotiations with them, the intensity of the demonstrations gradually diminished, and by the third day, the gatherings had substantially concluded.

From January 8 to 10, Western officials and the Zionist regime, through their messages, incited a number of people in various cities of Iran, those with foreign connections, to commit acts of violence.

Having experienced defeat in the imposed twelve-day war on the Islamic Republic of Iran as before, they, following their previous sinister strategy, effectively ignited this war on the streets of Iranian cities on the thirteenth day; and we witnessed armed terrorists among the protesters, firing in an organized manner at security forces, police, and civilians, with the aim of maximizing casualties during the unrest. What happened in the streets of Tehran and other cities in Iran over the past few days was no longer a protest, it was a terrorist war.

Unfortunately, a large number of those killed were ambushed from behind by the terrorist elements themselves. Terrorist like ISIS, killed the wounded, beheaded several Iranian police officers, and burned civilians alive, including hospital nurses and staff. They carried out widespread arson, targeting public spaces, government buildings, and police headquarters on a massive scale, as well as private shops and homes—destroying approximately 200 shops in several cities. In addition, they set fire to 53 fire trucks and 180 ambulances, and attacked key infrastructure, including 26 banks in Tehran alone and 53 mosques across Iran.

Distinguishing between peaceful protests and violent riots is not difficult. While the Islamic Republic of Iran considers itself fully committed to supporting and protecting the right of citizens to peaceful and lawful protest, it also considers itself obligated to prevent any actions that threaten public safety and security. More than 1,300 weapons have been recovered from the armed terrorists so far. In view of these actions, international human rights organizations must unequivocally condemn these acts of terrorism.

The recent unrest had no connection to the legitimate economic concerns of the populace. On Monday, January 12, millions of Iranians took to the streets to condemn the actions of terrorist groups backed by Israel.

How Trump Opened the Polar Door to China

The Arctic, once a frozen frontier of quiet diplomacy and carefully balanced power, is rapidly becoming a theater of geopolitical drama. What makes this moment striking is not merely China's growing presence in the polar north, but the pathway that has led it there. In a twist of strategic irony, policies designed in Washington to contain Beijing's global reach appear to have instead nudged America's closest allies toward deeper engagement with China—transforming the Arctic into a new symbol of a shifting world order.

For decades, Canada stood as one of the United States' most dependable partners, sharing not only borders and security arrangements but also a sense of political alignment rooted in NATO, democratic values, and mutual defense. Canadian soldiers fought alongside American forces in distant theaters, reinforcing the idea of a partnership that went beyond transactional interests. Yet recent years have strained that bond, as a sharper, more unilateral American posture has unsettled long-standing assumptions about alliance and trust.

The strategic implications are profound. Climate change is steadily reducing ice coverage, shortening shipping routes between Asia, Europe, and North America by as much as 40 percent. What was once a seasonal passage is edging toward year-round viability, transforming the Arctic into a critical artery for global trade, energy transport, and mineral supply chains. Control over icebreaker fleets, ports, and monitoring systems becomes a form of soft power, shaping who sets the rules for access and security.

China's Arctic engagement also dove-

tails with its broader Belt and Road Initiative, which has already linked more than 150 countries through infrastructure, logistics, and digital networks. The extension of this vision into polar waters reframes the initiative as not merely a land-and-sea project, but a planetary one—connecting continents through roads, ports, fiber-optic cables, and now, ice-cleared maritime corridors. For partner countries, the appeal lies in tangible investment and shared development rather than overt military alignment.

Europe's role in this evolving landscape reflects its own reassessment of transatlantic ties. Leaders in Paris and Berlin have spoken openly about strategic autonomy, emphasizing the need to diversify partnerships in a world where U.S. policy can shift sharply with domestic politics. High-level visits to Beijing and renewed economic engagement signal a willingness to explore avenues of cooperation that Washington has discouraged, particularly in areas like research, energy, and infrastructure.

This recalibration is not driven by ideological conversion to China's worldview, but by a pragmatic reading of interests. European states, facing energy transitions, supply chain vulnerabilities, and economic competition, see value in maintaining multiple channels of partnership. The Arctic, rich in rare earths, hydrocarbons, and strategic shipping lanes, becomes another arena where diversification seems prudent rather than provocative.

The ripple effects extend beyond the polar north. In the Middle East, China

and Russia's consistent calls for sovereignty and non-intervention have positioned them as counterweights to U.S. influence, particularly in countries wary of regime-change rhetoric. In Latin America, Beijing's infrastructure financing and trade agreements have offered alternatives to traditional U.S.-centric economic models. Together, these trends paint a picture of a world where influence is increasingly earned through development and investment as much as through security guarantees.

For Washington, the challenge lies in reconciling the desire to protect national interests with the realities of alliance management

in a multipolar era. Tariffs, threats, and public confrontations may signal resolve domestically, but they can also push partners to hedge their bets internationally. The Arctic case illustrates how strategic pressure, when perceived as overreach, can produce the opposite of its intended effect—encouraging allies to seek balance rather than alignment.

None of this suggests that the United States is losing its capacity to shape global outcomes. Its economic scale, technological leadership, and network of alliances remain formidable. But the nature of influence is evolving. In regions like the Arctic, where long-term investment, scientific cooperation, and infrastructure development determine access and authority, power is exercised quietly and incrementally rather than through dramatic declarations.

The deeper lesson may lie in the unspoken reality of international poli-

cies: every nation, whether it proclaims it or not, puts its own interests first. What differentiates successful strategies is not the assertion of primacy, but the ability to align national goals with the aspirations of partners. When cooperation feels mutually beneficial, alliances endure; when it feels conditional or coercive, alternatives emerge.

As the ice recedes and shipping lanes open, the Arctic will continue to draw the attention of powers near and far. It will test whether established alliances can adapt to new economic and environmental realities, or whether emerging networks of partnership will redefine the region's governance. In this unfolding story, China's growing presence is not solely the result of its own ambition, but also of the spaces created by others' missteps.

The coming years will reveal whether Washington chooses to recalibrate—investing in polar infrastructure, engaging allies in shared development plans, and framing Arctic security as a collective endeavor rather than a zero-sum contest. Such an approach could rebuild confidence and reassess leadership without forcing partners to choose sides.

If not, the Arctic may become a lasting symbol of a broader global shift: a world where influence flows toward those who build, connect, and invest, rather than those who command and confront. In that sense, the frozen north is no longer just a remote frontier—it is a mirror reflecting the changing dynamics of power in the twenty-first century.

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.



Analysis

Qamar Bashir



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

Middle East: Ideological Contestation, Power Politics, and a New Strategic Balance

On the political chessboard of the Middle East, the struggle between power, ideology, and interest rarely remains confined to diplomatic rhetoric; rather, it directly shapes the nerves of global powers, the fragility of financial systems, and the subtle fabric of international relations. In recent years, the intellectual and strategic gulf that has emerged between two influential Islamic states of the region has highlighted this reality in a new and deeply complex manner. On one side stands a state that has sought to cool regional tensions, manage conflicts, and align its domestic and foreign policy with economic stability and the expansion of investment. On the other side is a country propelled by ideological motivations, expansive geopolitical outreach, and the operational politics of proxy networks a role which many analysts describe as reflecting imperial-style ambitions. These contrasting trajectories are not only fragmenting the new strategic order of the region but also raising serious questions about the balance of the global system.

History demonstrates that when ideological self-assertion collides with pragmatic statecraft in any region, its consequences rarely remain confined to

diplomatic statements. Smaller states, fragile political systems, and economically vulnerable societies are often the first to fall within the blast radius of such confrontations. The same reality is visible today in the conflicts of Yemen and Sudan, where proxy actors, competing loyalties, and external influences appear to be eroding the authority of state institutions. In this context, many experts regard the situation not merely as regional politics, but as an expression of a new global engineering of power one in which narrative warfare

unfolds alongside military and diplomatic strategy with equal intensity.

It is also important to recognize that this emerging tension is not moving along a single trajectory; rather, it is opening two distinct pathways simultaneously. One path emphasizes economic cooperation, investment-driven integration, regional reconciliation, and state stability; the other is defined by ideological expansion, proxy-based influence, strategic outreach, and symbolic displays of power. These parallel paths have produced what some global observers describe as the rise of a "new Islamic axis" an axis that appears to be tilting more toward rivalry than partnership, with effects now extending well beyond

the region itself. In this light, the real question is not which state is right or wrong; rather, it is where this new contest for power will ultimately lead the future of the region. Should diplomatic engagement recede and proxy confrontation advance to the forefront, the likely outcome would be a state of prolonged instability an imbalance capable of affecting the global economy, energy supplies, maritime security routes, and even the foundational structures of international diplomacy.

This moment calls for sober reflection by the international community, regional leaderships, and the two powerful Islamic states at the center of this unfolding equation. History bears witness that when ideological gravitation and expansionist impulses overshadow diplomatic balance and responsible state strategy, the circle of disruption widens dramatically. Today, the Middle East stands at precisely such a crossroads where one road leads toward reconciliation, economic realism, and responsible strategic conduct, while the other points toward proxy confrontation, ideological rivalry, and the tense psychology of power politics.

The decision now rests with the region's leaderships whether they steer history toward stability or toward confrontation for every move on this strategic chessboard extends far beyond two countries, reaching into the very nerves of the global order.



Dr. Muhammad Tayyab Khan Singhani

Analysis

Urban Governance in Perspective of Gender Mainstreaming

Urban governance in contemporary societies has become increasingly complex due to rapid urbanization, socio-economic inequalities, and evolving demographic patterns. As cities expand, the need for inclusive and equitable governance intensifies. In this context, gender mainstreaming emerges as a crucial approach to ensure that urban planning, service delivery, and policy frameworks adequately address the differentiated needs of women, men, and marginalized gender groups. Gender mainstreaming is not merely about women's participation; it is a comprehensive process that integrates gender-responsive perspectives across all stages of governance.

One of the foundational problems in urban governance lies in the gender-blind nature of traditional policies. Historically, cities were designed around male-centric economic and social roles. Public transportation routes, urban layouts, and employment zones often reflect assumptions that overlook women's mobility patterns, caregiving responsibilities, and safety concerns.

As a result, women face disproportionate barriers in accessing education, employment, healthcare, and public spaces. Gender mainstreaming challenges these structural inequalities by ensuring that policies, programs, and planning processes evaluate their impact on different genders before implementation.

Urban planning that incorporates childcare centers, vocational training programs, women-friendly marketplaces, and microfinance opportunities can significantly boost economic inclusion. Moreover, supporting women's entrepreneurship through access to credit, digital training, and market linkages helps create more dynamic and diversified urban economies. Gender-responsive economic policies contribute to poverty reduction and more equitable urban growth.

Education and awareness campaigns also play a pivotal role in strengthening gender mainstreaming within urban governance. Public institutions, media, and civil society organizations must work together to challenge stereotypes and promote gender equality as a shared societal responsibility. Workshops

for urban planners, police officers, sanitation workers, and transport authorities can improve their understanding of gendered realities. Additionally, schools and universities in urban centers should incorporate gender studies into their curricula to cultivate a more informed and responsible citizenry.

Another important dimension is the participation of marginalized gender groups including transgender individuals and non-binary people in urban governance. Many urban systems fail to recognize or accommodate their unique needs. This results in their exclusion from housing schemes, health-care programs, and employment opportunities. Gender mainstreaming must thus adopt an intersectional approach, acknowledging that gender identities intersect with class, ethnicity, disability, and geography. Policies that protect the rights of marginalized gender groups contribute to more humane and equitable urban environments.

Effective gender mainstreaming in urban governance requires strong institutional frameworks. This includes gender units within municipal departments, gender-responsive budgeting, and monitoring mechanisms to measure progress. Collaboration between local governments, NGOs, academic institutions, and international organizations helps facilitate technical expertise and capacity-building. Laws and policies must also be strengthened to ensure accountability. Without enforcement mechanisms, gender mainstreaming risks becoming symbolic rather than transformative.

In conclusion, urban governance in the perspective of gender mainstreaming is not just a technical requirement but a democratic imperative. Inclusive cities are stronger, safer, and more resilient. By integrating gender-sensitive approaches into policy-making, planning, and service delivery, urban governments can create environments where all citizens regardless of gender have equal access to opportunities, resources, and public spaces. As globalization accelerates urban growth, gender mainstreaming provides a powerful framework to shape the future of cities, ensuring they are equitable and just for generations to come.

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Analysis

Muhammad Asif

Malaysian envoy encourages AIMS parents, eyes bilateral educational ties after grand sports event



Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: The 18th Sports Gala of AIMS Education System was held on Sunday, within the sprawling and lush green boundaries of Jinnah Complex, Islamabad, amid great fervor and passion, while strictly following the complete Islamic code of conduct. The mega event commenced with an impressive walk past of nearly 1,300 participants representing the main campus, branches and the Hifz section of AIMS Education System. The students entered the ground divided into five houses namely Tipu, Qasim, Ghaznavi, Ghouri and Khalid, led smartly by their respective house captains and head boys.

Despite an overcast sky and chilling, windy weather, the students and staff made dedicated preparations for the day, and the harsh weather conditions could not undermine their enthusiasm and commitment. The event was graced by several

distinguished guests, including His Excellency Ambassador Dato' Mohammad Azhar Mazlan, High Commissioner of Malaysia to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Chairman AIMS Education System Mr. Almas Ayoub Sabir, Dr. Moazzam Munawar Sheikh, Executive Director of AIMS Education System, Qari Tariq Saeed, Head of Awan-e-Quran, along with many other dignitaries and prominent personalities who attended to motivate the young learners.

In his address, the Chief Guest, High Commissioner of Malaysia Dato' Mohammad Azhar Mazlan, shared his views on the vision of the school and encouraged parents to work closely with the institution in providing a conducive environment and facilities for students actively involved in sports. He urged the guests and parents to mentor young athletes whenever required. The Chief Guest lauded the efforts of AIMS Education System for offering a wide range of sports



activities and stressed the importance of maintaining a healthy balance between academics and sports. He also highlighted the achievements of the institution, receiving a loud round of applause from the audience. Dato' Mohammad Azhar further admired the school's emphasis on character building and noted that exclusive training programs for parents and teachers are rare, which AIMS Education System has adopted as a permanent feature of its educational framework.

In addition, he expressed his keen interest in fostering insti-

tution-to-institution collaboration between AIMS Schools and Colleges and reputable Malaysian educational institutions, particularly in the areas of academic exchange, sports development, and capacity building. He encouraged educational leaders from both countries to explore opportunities for mutual cooperation to promote global exposure and holistic development for students.

Chairman AIMS Education System, Mr. Almas Ayoub Sabir, presented souvenirs to the Chief Guest on the occasion. Mr. Almas Ayoub Sabir, whose brainchild

is AIMS Education System, highlighted that the institution carries a legacy of more than 25 years of continuous efforts and is now expanding into a larger and stronger educational network.

The highlights of the sports day included colorful 50m, 80m and 100m races of the Primary School students. The audience was filled with freshness and patriotism while witnessing a special segment titled "Our Blessed Pakistan" presented by

the Montessori section, which emerged as one of the most memorable moments of the day. Pre-primary students delighted the audience with fun-filled races, including mixed animal race, kangaroo race, mixed vegetable race and the ever-popular win-the-chair race. The most colorful and eye-catching event was the "Blessed Pakistan Dress Up Dash," which beautifully showcased the rich culture of Pakistan.

Girls from classes 4, 5, 6 and 7 presented an elegant P. T display and an impressive drill performance that captivated the audience. Breath-holding performances by the martial arts and gymnastics teams were highly appreciated by students and spectators alike. Fun-filled races for fathers were also organized, witnessing active participation from a large number of parents, which further added to the spirit of the event.

More than 2,000 trophies were distributed among the participants. The Chief Guest expressed his delight at seeing such a large number of young children participating enthusiastically and appreciated their efforts. He remarked that learning beyond the classroom through sports serves as a rejuvenating therapy for everyone. The colorful and memorable event concluded with a collective dua by Qari Fida.

Photos Online by Sultan Bashir

Multan Commissioner Stands Out as an Effective Administrator

Timely Appreciation of a Visionary, Public-Oriented Proposal

Zain-ul-Abideen Abid

The development of any city is not determined merely by statistics-driven plans, the circulation of files, or media statements. Rather, it depends on administrators who are willing to listen to informed voices, understand ground realities, and translate timely decisions into action. In recent days, Multan's incumbent commissioner has demonstrated through administrative insight, a serious governance style, and positive decision-making that he is not only a custodian of official procedures but also a trustee of civic issues and public expectations.

Following the publication of a news report based on a timely, far-sighted and people-friendly proposal put forward by Chaudhry Zulfiqar Ali Anjum

calling for organised urban infrastructure and discouragement of encroachments, the speed with which the district and divisional administrations sprang into action was not only commendable but also a model worthy of emulation for administrative circles."

In the same context, the deputy commissioner Multan directed the traffic police to introduce improvements at major intersections and congested points in accordance with modern road engineering principles, with the aim of improving traffic flow and providing genuine ease of movement to citizens. According to a spokesperson for the district administration, the deputy commissioner emphasised that without scientifically based traffic management, effective lane marking, correct signal timing and quality road design, a permanent solution to urban traffic problems is not possible. Immediate and concrete meas-

ures issued to the relevant departments to ensure that development works are completed not only on time but also in an effective and sustainable manner, so that their benefits reach the public directly.

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ures in this regard, he stressed, are therefore indispensable.

Chaudhry Zulfiqar Ali Anjum, a prominent industrialist and member of the National Export Development Board as well as the Board of Investment, has rightly pointed out that roads in European countries are not necessarily wider than ours, yet their infrastructure is robust, well-organised and based on integrated plan-

ning. There, roads are not merely channels for movement but regulated public spaces governed by discipline and order. He further observed that in Europe, one does not encounter chaotic street carts on roads or pavements overrun by encroachments. Vendors are provided with designated and properly planned spaces, where they earn their livelihoods in an orderly manner without disrupting traffic or damaging the urban aesthetic. According to him, street vendors are an integral part of urban society in our context as well. Evicting them is not a solution; rather, providing them with appropriate, well-facilitated spaces through planning is the foundation of sustainable reform.

Chaudhry Zulfiqar Ali Anjum's position is unequivocal: true development does not lie in unnecessarily widening roads, but in their correct utilisation, strong

infrastructure and the establishment of civic discipline. Unless roads and pavements are cleared of encroachments, neither traffic problems will be resolved nor will any meaningful improvement in urban life be felt.

The culmination of this entire process is the decision by the Multan administration to approve the conversion of Gulgasht Brand Road into a model road at an estimated cost of Rs 3.6 billion. This step is a shining example of the Multan commissioner's visionary leadership and a timely, practical response to Chaudhry Zulfiqar Ali Anjum's public-oriented proposal.

Undoubtedly, the appreciation of these suggestions by the Multan commissioner and the swift implementation that followed signal that the city's administrative machinery is moving in the right direction.

If this approach is sustained, it would not be surprising if Multan soon emerges as an organised, well-facilitated and developed city, where informed voices are respected and decisive actions lead to tangible improvements in civic life.

Improvement in urban infrastructure plays a fundamental role in the overall development of any society. Better roads, modern transport systems, effective drainage, and reliable electricity and water supply not only ease the daily lives of citizens but also boost business activity, investment and employment opportunities. Strong infrastructure reduces traffic congestion, saves time and resources, lowers environmental pollution and improves access to essential services such as health and education. The result is a city that evolves into an organised, safe and prosperous society.



Bull & Bears PSX 100-Share Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index	
Current	Prev. Close
185,098.83	181,456.33
Day's High	Day's Low
185,208.98	182,559.69
Index Value	Change
53,308,364,479	+3642.50
Percentage	Time
+2.01%	16 Jan, 2026 4:30 pm

Europe: FTSE 100 Index	
Index Value	Change
10,235.29	-3.65
Percentage	Time
-0.036%	16 Jan, 4:35 pm GMT

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average	
Index Value	Change
49,415.78	-26.66
Percentage	Time
-0.054%	16 Jan, 12:24 pm GMT-5

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average

Index Value	Change
53,936.17	-174.33
Percentage	Time
-0.32%	16 Jan, 3:45 pm GMT+9

Open Market Forex Rates

Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	186.5	190.5
Bahrain Dinar	744	754
Canadian Dollar	201	206
China Yuan	39.73	40.13
Danish Krone	43.27	43.67
Euro	325.5	329
Hong Kong Dollar	35.55	35.90
Indian Rupee	3.01	3.10
Japanese Yen	1.7575	1.8575
Kuwaiti Dinar	908	918
Malaysian Ringgit	68.55	69.15
New Zealand \$	158.95	160.95
Norwegians Krone	27.56	27.86
Omani Riyal	728.6	738.6
Qatari Riyal	76.26	76.96
Saudi Riyal	74.9	75.3
Singapore Dollar	216.5	221.5
Swedish Korona	30.16	30.46
Swiss Franc	347.74	350.49
Thai Bhat	8.74	8.89
U.A.E Dirham	76.6	77.2
UK Pound Sterling	375.5	379
US Dollar	280.65	282.75

SITE Area Chairman Slams Autobahn Road Phase III Construction Delays

Commerce Desk

HYDERABAD: Zubair Ghagra, Chairman of the Hyderabad SITE Association of Trade and Industry, has expressed serious concern over the delay in the construction of Autobahn Road Phase III, which was scheduled to be completed in the early months of 2026 according to official reports. The delay is creating significant challenges for industries in the SITE area, affecting industrial production, the timely supply of raw materials, and the delivery of finished goods.

Mr. Ghagra noted that the ongoing construction, coupled with unorganized traffic, lack of alternative routes, and repeated road closures, has severely hindered the movement of heavy vehicles. This disruption is increasing operational costs for industries and slowing down overall business activity, putting both productivity and competitiveness at risk.

He highlighted that several water supply lines for industries in the SITE area pass under the sections of the road under construction. Without an alternative arrangement, the ongoing work risks disrupting the water supply, which could adversely affect industrial operations.

Commerce Desk

LAHORE: Coordinator to Federal Tax Ombudsman Saif Ur Rehman Sunday said India cannot hold rivers hostage under the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), a landmark international agreement brokered by the World Bank in 1960 to ensure equitable and predictable sharing of the Indus basin waters between India and Pakistan.

In his keynote address here today at a seminar on "Impact of Rivers on

Gul Plaza Fire Incident a Great Tragedy with Heavy Financial and Human Losses: Zubair Tufail

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: President of the United Business Group (UBG), Zubair Tufail, while terming the fire that broke out at the popular shopping center Gul Plaza located on Karachi's busiest M. A. Jinnah Road as tragic, said that the blaze and the resulting financial and human losses constitute a great tragedy. Due to the lack of timely action, six people, including a firefighter, lost their lives, while two dozen others were injured. The repeated occurrence of such incidents in Karachi is a matter of serious concern. The Sindh government should immediately compensate the affected shopkeepers and citizens of Gul Plaza for their losses.

According to a statement issued by Gulzar Feroz, Central Spokesperson of the United Business Group (UBG), President UBG Zubair Tufail said that the affected victims have



years of hard work, and their rehabilitation is the responsibility of the government. He emphasized that strict implementation of fire safety laws must be ensured and safety arrangements in commercial buildings should be reviewed afresh so that the lives and property of citizens can



be protected. He expressed heartfelt sympathy and condolences to the families of those who lost their lives in the fire and prayed for the speedy recovery of the injured.

Traditional food item

ISLAMABAD: Visitors enjoying traditional food item Pakory during an "Organic Community Market" by CDA at Local Park in Sector F-7, in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

PFC CEO demands urgent export diversification beyond traditional markets



Commerce Desk

LAHORE: CEO Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) Mian Kashif Ashfaq Sunday stressed the urgent need to diversify our exports, beyond legacy destinations, to Africa, Latin America and south east Asia and find new trade agreements efficiently to help business scale globally.

Addressing here today the board of directors meeting, he said we must broaden our outreach to non-traditional destinations in order to safeguard its export-led sectors, including the rapidly growing furniture industry, from global uncertainties. He said volatile regional dynamics, trade disruptions, and changing global alliances have underscored the importance of exploring new markets across Africa, Central Asia, and Latin America. He urged policymakers to prioritize an

SAARC expert urges coherent strategy to unlock Pakistan's trade potential in emerging African markets

Commerce Desk

LAHORE: SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry former President Iftikhar Ali Malik Sunday said to fully capitalize emerging African markets, Pakistan needs a coherent Africa-focused trade strategy, supported by strong public-private collaboration.

In a statement here today, octogenarian trade leader of South Asia, said by diversifying exports, fostering long-term partnerships and engaging with Africa as a strategic economic partner, Pakistan can unlock new growth drivers, reduce trade imbalances and secure a more resilient economic future. Africa's emergence as one of the fastest-growing regions in the world offers a timely and strategic opportunity for Pakistan to diversify its trade, expand exports and strengthen diplomatic and economic ties. With a population exceeding 1.4 billion, rapidly growing middle class and rising demand for consumer goods, Africa offers immense potential to Pakistan, he added, must be fully exploited.

He said the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the world's largest free trade by number of countries, further



enhances the attractiveness of the region. By engaging proactively with AfCFTA member states, Pakistan can gain preferential access, reduce tariff barriers and integrate into regional value chains. He said Pakistan's traditional export markets remain concentrated in a few regions, making the economy vulnerable to external threats. African markets, on the other hand, are seeking affordable, quality products in sectors where Pakistan enjoys a comparative advantage.

Iftikhar Ali Malik said beyond trade, Africa also offers opportunities for investment, joint ventures and technical cooperation. Pakistani expertise in agriculture, healthcare, education, construction and small-scale manufacturing can support Africa's development goals while opening new avenues for Pakistani businesses. Enhanced banking links, improved logistics and direct shipping routes will be crucial to facilitate smooth trade flows, he concluded.

Foreign Exchange Crisis: Pakistan's \$3 billion food import bill demands domestic crop boost

Commerce Desk

LAHORE: Convener Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry regional committee on food Shahid Imran Sunday said Pakistan can save a major chunk of its precious foreign exchange by bringing more agricultural area under the cultivation of pulses, tea, soybean and sugarcane.

Talking here today to a delegation of food importers and exporters he said according to data of Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, Pakistan's food import bill



soared to \$3.075 billion in the first four months of the current fiscal year, marking a sharp 31.38 per cent increase from \$2.340bn in the same period last year.

The surge highlights growing reliance on imported food commodities amid domestic production and supply challenges.

Federal Tax Ombudsman Coordinator: India cannot hold rivers hostage under Indus Waters Treaty

Commerce Desk

LAHORE: Coordinator to Federal Tax Ombudsman Saif Ur Rehman Sunday said India cannot hold rivers hostage under the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), a landmark international agreement brokered by the World Bank in 1960 to ensure equitable and predictable sharing of the Indus basin waters between India and Pakistan.

In his keynote address here today at a seminar on "Impact of Rivers on

Economy" he said the treaty grants Pakistan unrestricted use of the western rivers—Indus, Jhelum and Chenab—while allowing India limited, non-consumptive use for hydropower, irrigation and domestic purposes under strict technical conditions. Any attempt to manipulate flows, delay projects' dispute resolution, or use water as a political tool undermines not only the spirit of the treaty but also the foundations of regional stability.

Water is a shared lifeline, not a

weapon. For Pakistan, the Indus system sustains agriculture, food security and livelihoods of millions. Unilateral actions or coercive posturing threaten downstream rights protected by international law and set a dangerous precedent for transboundary water governance worldwide. The IWT has survived wars and crises precisely because it provides robust mechanisms for data sharing, inspections, neutral experts and arbitration. These mechanisms must be respected and strengthened,

not bypassed. He said sustainable peace in South Asia requires cooperation, transparency and adherence to treaty obligations. Climate change, glacial melt and population growth already strain water resources; politicising rivers will only magnify risks. Upholding the Indus Waters Treaty is not a concession—it is a legal duty and a moral imperative to ensure water security, trust and stability for present and future generations, he concluded.



Monday, January 19, 2026

Suspended Chess Federation President alleged in major financial embezzlement scandal

By Anwer Chohan

KHARIAN: A storm of serious financial corruption allegations has engulfed the Chess Federation of Pakistan (CFP), with its suspended President, Hanif Qureshi, at the center of a massive embezzlement scandal. Detailed official petitions and audit directives reveal a pattern of systematic plunder, suggesting that funds meant for the development of chess and the support of national athletes were instead diverted for personal gain by Qureshi and a close circle of his associates. The scale of the alleged theft runs into millions of rupees, comprising international grants, player fees, and public donations, shaking the very foundations of the sport's governing body in the coun-

try.

The most damning accusations point to the outright theft of international development funds. Hanif Qureshi is alleged to have personally received a sum of PKR 2.55 million from the World Chess Federation (FIDE) designated for Pakistan's participation in the 2022 Chess Olympiad, followed by another PKR 5.2 million for other events. Investigative documents assert that this money never entered the official federation accounts and was instead siphoned off, leaving players and officials unpaid and the funds entirely unaccounted for. Beyond international grants, Qureshi's operations are accused of pressuring the federation's treasury to release a further PKR 2.4 million for unspecified purposes,



with no paper trail to justify the withdrawal.

Further compounding the scandal is the alleged operation of an extortion racket targeting the very athletes the federation is meant to serve. Under

Qureshi's leadership, players were reportedly forced to pay illegal fees for essential services. This included charging for FIDE IDs, which are issued globally free of charge, and demanding up to PKR 30,000 for mandatory No-Objection Certificates from the Pakistan Sports Board, which are also provided without cost. These illicit charges, along with tournament entry fees, were funneled into the private bank accounts of Qureshi's frontmen, including Muhammad Waqar, Arsalan Mir, and the previously impeached Senior Vice President, Saleem Akhtar. The total amount misappropriated through these schemes is conservatively estimated to exceed PKR 17 million, funds allegedly used to finance a lifestyle of interna-

tional travel and luxury for the accused.

The overwhelming evidence of misconduct forced the Pakistan Sports Board to take drastic action. To pave the way for a complete forensic investigation, the PSB Adjudicator suspended the entire top leadership of the CFP, including Hanif Qureshi, and handed over the federation's affairs to a neutral oversight committee. The Board has formally requested the Auditor General of Pakistan to conduct a supreme audit of all CFP accounts from the last four years, freezing all federation bank accounts until the process is complete. This move underscores the severity of the breaches and the state's commitment to uncovering the truth.

This scandal serves as a critical alert to the international community.

Foreign embassies, private corporate sponsors, and international sports bodies like FIDE and the Asian Chess Federation are urged to exercise extreme caution. Any past or potential future funding directed towards Pakistani chess initiatives under the recent administration risks having been or being diverted. Stakeholders are advised to seek direct verification from the Pakistan Sports Board and to channel support only through the newly appointed, verified oversight committee to ensure their contributions genuinely benefit the sport. The future of chess in Pakistan now hinges on the outcomes of the federal audit and the ensuing legal accountability for what appears to be a profound betrayal of trust.

Run-call controversy between Babar Azam and Steve Smith dominates Australian media

Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: A brief but highly discussed on-field incident involving Steve Smith and Babar Azam during a Big Bash League (BBL) match continues to draw attention across Australian media.

According to Australian media outlets, Babar Azam felt disrespected by Steve Smith's conduct after Smith declined to take a single off the final delivery of an over, despite Babar playing a stroke.

The incident reportedly left the Pakistani batter visibly upset.

Media reports claimed that Smith had already informed Babar by the 10th over that he intended to face the first ball of the Power Surge, a strategy that paid off as Smith smashed 32 runs in the over.

However, Babar did not appear to celebrate the onslaught, fueling speculation of discontent.

Following the match, Babar reportedly remained in the Sydney Sixers' dressing room, avoided interaction with teammates, and did not come out for the customary handshakes with Sydney Thunder players at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

Australian media described Babar's reaction as an unusual display of anger, noting that even the team's coach attempted to engage him during the



tense moments.

Adding to the debate, former Australian cricketer Mark Waugh commented on Babar's post-dismissal reaction, particularly his act of striking the boundary fence with his bat.

Waugh advised that personal emotions

should be controlled on the field, stating that such expressions are not healthy for team harmony.

"I don't know where he went after the match, but not coming back onto the ground didn't look good," Waugh said, adding that Babar should have appreciated the fact that the team's strategy worked in their favor.

The incident, though minor in game-play terms, has sparked widespread discussion about team dynamics, communication, and temperament at the elite level of T20 cricket.

Inching Towards Armageddon

By Chaudhary Muhammad Faraz

The world is changing, there are clear signs and signals of the new world order setting in, countries in different regions are conspicuously realigning, strengthening and getting into defense deals, agreements and pacts with traditional or new powers.

The US dominated system is being replaced by a multipolar one, characterized by a great power competition, rising regional or mid powers with shifting alliances and changing technical and economic dynamics which also include the advent and reliance on AI (Artificial Intelligence) and new regional supply chains, challenging and replacing the existing ones.

This change was gradual and consistent, which has reshaped the world's preferences thus creating higher uncertainty and possibilities for both deeper collaborations and greater conflicts.

The emergence of strong mid-level powers have helped the regions having more control over security and trade, relying less on traditional western economic and power hubs. This has considerably shifted the power dynamics and made the west less dominant with greater influence shifting to the East or south of the globe.

The above is also attributed by emergence of more resilient and accessible localized supply chains and growing reliance on AI (Artificial Intelligence) which is rapidly reshaping the structure of power and productivity, having its own pros and cons.

Henceforth, the system with the old rules is seriously challenged by the new ambitious and interest based system pulling the old and new key actors towards the game of power, rivalry, alliances and struggle.

In this scenario the traditional Paradox points towards the denial of US in accepting the change and sharing its global influence with China, Russia and other emerging regional mid-level powers. USA's veto to multipolarity has given birth to Trump's corollary to the "Monroe Doctrine", persuasion of which seems like a desperate attempt to cling to the status of a sole super power. This approach and every effort made for its implementation by the US will further push the world towards 3rd world war.

The Trump administration insists upon elevating the western Hemisphere as a top security concern, aiming to counter Chinese and Russian influence.

ence, dis-mental narcotics Cartels and Cultural mass migration. It also emphasizes on strategic unilateralism, transactional diplomacy and Skepticism towards multilateral institutions, meaning "America First". This policy is only about focusing on the Power dynamics with a view to prioritizing the US interests, and its national security over "democratic values" and "international cooperation".

On the other hand the US military strategy (under Trump's doctrine) is of deterrence, securing America's energy independence and dominance, (energy security) and Selective disengagement i.e., picking up conflicts and battles wisely which also includes pulling back from certain international commitments and conflicts where US interests are not directly at stake (Afghanistan) to focus on priority areas like China (Indo-Pacific Region).

In addition, the Trump doctrine's priority is to strengthen bilateral bonds with the state of Israel, placing the "Security" of Israel as the core US interest.

US doesn't hesitate to amplify its commitment to preserving Israel's "qualitative edge" and "ability to defend itself".

To create a secure environment in the region for Israeli interests, the US is rigorously expanding and pursuing "Abraham Accords" in a bid to integrate Israel into the Arabs and the Muslim world, KSA being its key target.

Recently, Europe has felt the jolt of Trump's selective disengagement when the US declared its interest in acquiring the Greenland territory. Citing US National security concerns and presence of Russian and Chinese ships in the area. This move has led to tensions with Denmark and other European countries who view Trump as a threat to Nato's unity and collective defense principle.

The US administration under President Donald Trump considers Nato a liability and has repeatedly questioned the value of Nato, also suggesting that US should focus on its own interests rather than relying on collective defense. In other words, US is no longer interested in bearing the cost of Nato's defense equipment. It has also left no choice for Denmark other than defending its independent territory of Greenland.

The Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said that an attack on Greenland will be considered an attack on Denmark, referring to a 1952 directive to Danish forces to "shoot first and ask later", making it clear to the US that in case of any hostility Denmark will open fire. This will have implications for American and the western European alliances,

Nato and the global economic system. Unlike the Latin American countries and Venezuela who scammed to the US aggression and blatant violation of International law and Sovereignty of an independent country, Iran has stood up to the Israeli created US pressure.

The similarity between Iran and Venezuela is that of abundance in oil reserves and good strong ties with one another. Both factors in direct contradiction with and jeopardizing Trump's policy agenda of "energy security" of the US and also challenging the imperialistic, expansionist and isolationist, hard power approach in case of the Iran. Furthermore, the twelve day war between Iran and Israel (from June 13 to June 24, 2025) when the latter attacked Iran unprovoked in a bid to neutralize its nuclear capability but failed and got destroyed by a country, practically having no air force to defend its air space. Upon insistence of Israel the US sent its B-52 bombers and allegedly neutralized the Iranian Nuclear Capability by destroying their nuclear sites in Fordow, Nantaz and Isfahan.

The Israeli Iron Dome's myth was sheltered with the US-Israeli arrogance. This Iranian victory came with a price, the realization by the Israelis and the Americans that Iran established itself as a considerable mid power in the region with an advanced nuclear program and a super effective ballistic missile program, having hyper sonic missiles in its arsenal would only be curtailed through a regime change. This oil rich country with such potential and good ties with China, Venezuela, Russia and Pakistan doesn't go well with the equation, the US and Israel have devised for the region.

The Israeli Iron Dome's myth was sheltered with the US-Israeli arrogance. This Iranian victory came with a price, the realization by the Israelis and the Americans that Iran established itself as a considerable mid power in the region with an advanced nuclear program and a super effective ballistic missile program, having hyper sonic missiles in its arsenal would only be curtailed through a regime change. This oil rich country with such potential and good ties with China, Venezuela, Russia and Pakistan doesn't go well with the equation, the US and Israel have devised for the region.

Iran must be neutralized as per the US present policy and that is why there is chaos in the country, riots have erupted in almost 100 cities of Iran, all supported by the US. The country was practically infested with Indian and Israeli spys targeting the top Iranian Leadership almost at will. It is pertinent to mention here the recent Indo-Pak Stand off and India's crushing defeat by the Pakistan in a 4 day engagement in May 2025 which gave Pakistan a chance to identify the Indo-Israeli spy news in Iran and KSA, after which both the countries realized the game being played in the region unearthing and then eradicating the RAW and Mossad networks from their countries. That is how the Indian RAW's role was exposed, which was working in Iran and KSA on the

behest of Israel's Mossad. It seems like the Government in Iran would fall to the typical tactics of a Power like USA supported by Israel in making the regime Change happen. The only problem that the US and Israel are facing is that the Iranian population may be against the present Iranian regime but they still do not support any entity backed by US or Israel as there is enough hatred and resentment among the Iranian masses for President Trump and Israel. So Raza Shah Pehlevi's chances of coming back to power seem slim, however, someone covertly supported by the US may take over power in Iran but that needs to be seen. Presently US is considering attack options on Iran and in return Iran has threatened the US of attacking its sites in close proximity.

If this present regime in Iran falls, which seems likely, then it would create serious problems for Pakistan, exposing us to threats and hostility from 3 sides i.e., India, Afghanistan and Iran. After Markka-e-Haq, Pakistan also emerged as a mid-power in the region by impressively and decisively neutralizing India, which was USA's and western nation's safe bet to neutralize China. With Indian failure even to match the military potential of a much smaller Pakistan, serious questions arose on this bet the West, Israel the US placed an India, as it was proven that the Indians are no where near the Chinese military might and superior capability.

Presently, the Indians are being punished by their partners for letting them and their hopes down. Pakistan must consider this fact that the acknowledgement and praise from the world is for the victor who thrashed a ten time bigger rival supported by Israel, USA and rest of the western block, not for a Muslim Nation with nuclear capability which has established itself as a mid-level power in the region with Chinese support.

Besides, the US has made it clear that the support for Pakistan in 2026 depends upon its policies and behavior. USA's stance is clear, it will only look for its own interests and those of Israel. It will go for resources especially oil and rare earth minerals, no matter where they are in the world. The US will keep countering China and Russia to make the world believe that (Unipolarity still exists) and USA is the sole super power.

China, Russia and Europe will also safeguard their interests in their respective regions and the world at large, it can be predicted that the world is inching towards a major Global Conflict which may convert into a third world war or an Armageddon.

Pakistan Cycling Federation General Secretary Meets Honorable Interior Minister

By Tahir Amin Malik

LAHORE: The General Secretary of the Pakistan Cycling Federation, Mr. Moazzam Khan Klair, met with the Honorable Federal Interior Minister, Mr. Mohsin Naqvi, in a proud and inspiring national-level engagement. The meeting was also attended by Mr. Shafiq Chishti, Captain of the Pakistan Kabaddi Team.

During the meeting, Mr. Moazzam Khan Klair briefed the Honorable Interior Minister on the current progress and development of cycling at the national level, highlighting the Pakistan Cycling Federation's ongoing efforts to promote the sport across the country.

The Honorable Interior Minister appreciated the initiatives taken by the Federation and extended his best wishes for the continued growth of cycling in Pakistan.

The Pakistan Cycling Federation reaffirmed its commitment to the promotion and development of cycling at the national level.

Qasim Ali Khan clinches Quaid-e-Azam Amateur Golf Championship trophy



Sports Desk

Qasim Ali Khan emerged victorious at the Quaid-e-Azam Al Falah Amateur Golf Championship, producing a composed and resilient performance to secure the title by a narrow margin of just one stroke in a thrilling finale.

The national golfer, known for his all-round abilities and competitive temperament, once again proved his class by edging out Saad Habib of Multan in a closely contested battle. Having led after the second round, Qasim maintained his composure under pressure on the final day, demonstrating exceptional mental strength and consistency to finish on top.

Qasim Ali Khan carded rounds of 77 and 73 in the latter two days (his second-round score was earlier mistakenly reported as 70), taking his aggregate score to 220, which ultimately proved decisive. His disciplined approach and steady execution under intense competition highlighted his maturity and championship pedigree. This important victory is expected to open further opportunities for the talented national player on the competitive circuit.

Saad Habib, however, was equally impressive and pushed the champion to the limit with a polished display of technical skill and fighting spirit. He returned scores of 77, 72, and 72, finishing just one stroke behind with an aggregate of 221. His powerful ball striking and calm handling of pressure earned widespread appreciation and marked him as a strong contender for future honors.

In other notable performances, Zayd Omer secured second position in the net section, while Hussain Hamid finished third in the gross category. Muhammad Shoaib and Muhamin Maneka also delivered commendable performances and deserved special mention for their consistency throughout the championship.

The Senior category was dominated by Taimur Shabbir, who topped the standings with an outstanding display, closely followed by Ahmed Zafar Hayat of Gymkhana.

In the Boys' category, Musa Adil and Hamza Yusuf emerged as winners, showcasing promising talent for the future of the sport. The Ladies' gross titles were claimed by Najeen Ifthikhar and Bushra Fatima, both delivering strong and confident performances.

Taskin, Saif help Dhaka Capitals rout Chattogram Royals

MIRPUR: Saif Hassan's 73 from 44 balls, backed up by impressive bowling from Mohammad Saifuddin and Taskin Ahmed, helped Dhaka Capitals crush Chattogram Royals in the 30th fixture of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) 2025-26.

Chasing a stiff target of 171, Chattogram Royals were skittled for 128 in 19.4 overs.

Taskin Ahmed inflicted a poor start on Royals as Mohammad Haris was sent back for a golden duck in the first over.

Mahmud Hasan Joy followed him for six while Shadman Islam was caught behind, leaving Royals 19-3 in 2.3 overs.

After early hiccups, Hasan Nawaz and Mohammad Naim tried to arrest the slide with a brief 25-run partnership.

The scorecard read 44 in 7.4 overs before another collapse slumped them to 54-6 in 11.3 overs.

The game was done and dusted a long time ago, but Aamer Jamal resisted with a brisk 42 from 26 balls with the help of four boundaries and two sixes.

Walima ceremony

Lahore: (Left to right) Newly-wed couple Shanzeh Ali and Junaid Safdar and Punjab Chief Minister Maryam on the occasion of Walima ceremony on Sunday.

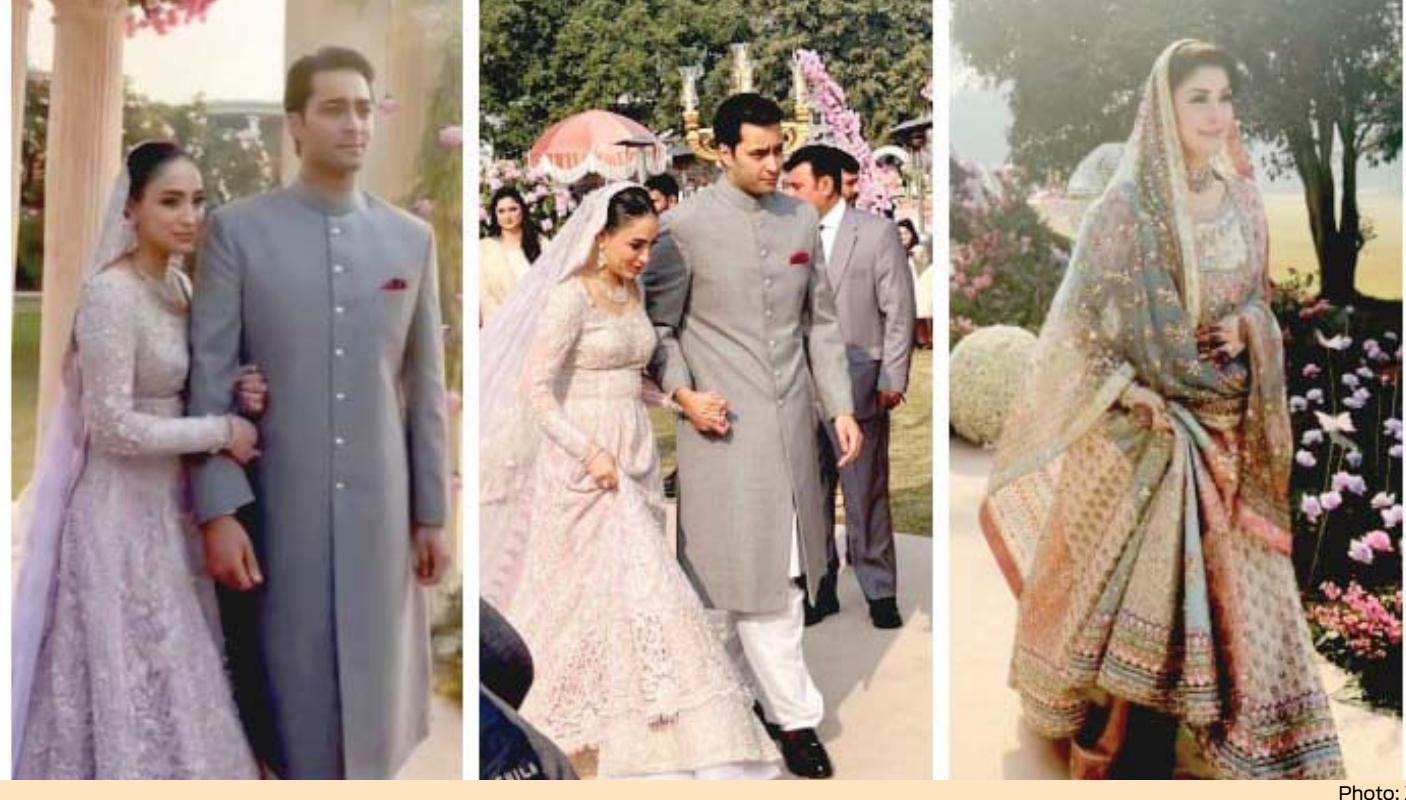


Photo: X

NA Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq Leads 2026's First Parliamentary Delegation to China

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: A parliamentary delegation led by the Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, is visiting the People's Republic of China from January 19 to January 21, 2026, on the special invitation of the Chairman of the National People's Congress (NPC) of China, Mr. Zhao Leji.

The visit marks the first state-level and maiden official visit of the Pakistani Parliament in the year 2026 to the friendly People's Republic of



China. The visit of Parliament delegation coincides with the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China, a milestone reflecting

the enduring and time-tested friendship between the two countries.

In recognition of this historic occasion, Pakistan and China have agreed to commemorate the anniversary in a befitting and meaningful manner through the organization of a series of joint events throughout the year. The Parliamentary Delegation led by Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq will hold meetings with the parliamentary and political leadership of China, focusing on strengthening parliamentary cooperation and further deepening bilateral ties.

Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Ms. Romina Khurshid Alam; the Convenor of the Pakistan-China Parliamentary Friendship Group, MNA Mr. Muhammad Numan, Parliamentary Secretary, Ms. Zeb Jaffar; and MNA Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haider are part of Pakistani Parliamentary delegation led by Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq.

No schedule announced for local bodies' polls in Punjab

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: Uncertainty persists as to when local bodies' (LBs) elections would be held in Punjab as the schedule for elections has not been announced as yet. Sources told the 24News TV channel that the Punjab government had decided to seek more time from the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) for holding the polls since neither new election rules had been framed as yet nor the demarcation of constituencies had been completed.

They said that the election commission had summoned the Punjab government on January 22.

Sources disclosed that the provincial government was likely to seek at least one month from the commission

for holding the polls.

Meanwhile, objections to the Form 45 and Form 47 have been addressed.

The procedure for the election of the mayor and the deputy mayor has also been made clear.

Govt approves effective Hajj Policy 2026: Sardar Yousaf

City Desk

Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Sardar Muhammad Yousaf has said the government has formulated and approved an effective Hajj Policy 2026 in accordance with guidelines issued by Saudi Arabia.

In a Podcast interview with Radio Pakistan's News and Current Affairs Channel, he confirmed that Pakistan's Hajj quota for 2026 stands at one hundred seventy-nine



thousand two hundred ten pilgrims.

He said approximately one hundred twenty thousand pilgrims will perform Hajj under the government scheme while sixty thousand through private operators.

He added that training for the 2026 Hajj is currently underway across the country, with mandatory sessions being

conducted in various districts.

Sardar Muhammad Yousaf said around thirty-eight thousand intending pilgrims will travel from Islamabad under the "Road to Makkah" project.

At present, this facility is available only in Islamabad and Karachi, but efforts are underway to extend it to Lahore.

Highlighting the efforts

of the Ministry for Religious Affairs in promoting interfaith harmony, he said it provides a platform for all religious minorities in Pakistan to foster an environment of unity and cohesion.

He emphasized that the Constitution of Pakistan ensures equal rights for all minority communities.

The Minister also noted that the government provides scholarships to children of minority communities, allocates funds for the rehabilitation of their worship places, and offers financial assistance to deserving individuals from these communities.

Sardar Yousaf said the Ministry of Religious Affairs has introduced a new centralized system to organize pilgrimages by Zaireen to holy sites in Iran and Iraq.

Ayaz expresses grief over deadly fire incident at Gul Plaza

ISLAMABAD: Speaker of National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq Sunday expressed deep sorrow and grief over the tragic fire incident at Gul Plaza Market in Karachi, which resulted in the loss of precious human lives and caused extensive damage to property.

In a statement, the Speaker extended his heartfelt condolences and sympathies to the families of those who lost their lives in the incident.

He said that the entire nation shares the pain and grief of the affected families in this difficult time.

Ayaz Sadiq also prayed for the early and complete recovery of the injured and termed the tragedy a moment of profound sorrow for the whole country. He said the news of loss of valuable lives and large-scale destruction of property as extremely distressing.

The Speaker urged the concerned authorities to ensure all possible assistance and relief to the affected individuals and traders.

Achakzai says all provinces have first right over their resources

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PMAP) Chairman and Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly (NA) Mehmood Khan Achakzai said on Saturday that it was unfortunate that the Father of the Nation Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah did not live long.

Addressing a public gathering in Jamshoro held in connection with the birthday of Sindhi nationalist leader GM Syed, he said that it was a practice in Pakistan that every new government was welcomed and extolled, while the former government was held responsible for all the ills afflicting the country.

Achakzai said that the sacrifices given by the people of smaller provinces were matchless.

The opposition leader said that unfortunately, all those politicians who were pro-Pakistan, were thrown in jails after the creation of

the country. "National Awami Party (NAP), whose manifesto was that all provinces will have equal rights, was founded," he said, adding that the NAP was the only party which wanted to make Pakistan a democratic state. "But unfortunately, its leaders, too, were thrown into jails."

He further said that Pakistan was 78 years old, while the civilization of Sindh was thousands of years old. "This is our country. And we have to save it," Achakzai said categorically.

He went on to say that the people of all provinces had the first right over their resources.

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Junaid Safdar's Walima ceremony held in Jati Umra

Bureau Report

LAHORE: The wedding reception of Junaid Safdar, grandson of Pakistan Muslim League-Navaz (PML-N) supremo Nawaz Sharif and son of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, was held in Lahore.

According to media reports, the Walima reception of Junaid Safdar and Shanzeh Ali took place at Jati Umra Farms, where around 800 guests were invited.

A 50-member orchestra entertained the attendees with a variety of musical performances, led by international music director Najad Ali.

The walima ceremony was attended by prominent political figures, members of the business commu-

nity, as well as international guests.

The musical band rehearsed continuously for seven days ahead of their performance at the event.

Maryam Nawaz's son Junaid Safdar marries Shanzeh Ali in Lahore

PML-N leader Senator Abid Sher Ali shared pictures from the Walima ceremony on X, congratulating Junaid Safdar on his marriage.

He extended heartfelt congratulations and prayed that Allah bless the couple's married life with love, trust and happiness.

He further expressed hope that this new journey would bring prosperity, peace and success for both families, and prayed that Allah Almighty keep this bond everlasting and grant the couple a happy and contented life.

Power Minister says no increase in circular debt, NEPRA report incomplete



Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Power Division Awaish Leghari has said that NEPRA report should have been published in August 2025 and with incomplete data, the report created misconception about power sector performance.

Addressing a press conference in Islamabad, Awaish Leghari said information about a reduction of Rs 780 billion in NEPRA's circular debt is incorrect. Federal Minister for Power said the reduction of Rs 780 billion in circular debt includes losses of Rs 193 billion by DISCOS.

He said there has been no increase

in circular debt. Minister for Power said for the first time, a significant decrease was seen last year. Minister for Power said the circular debt has come down from Rs 2.4 trillion to Rs 1.6 trillion.

He said 6-year plan to completely eliminate circular debt is underway. Federal Minister for Power said it was surprising that NEPRA does not see an increase in collections compared to the previous year. He said during the financial year 2025, the collections of DISCOS (increased from 92.4% to 96.6%). He said there has been a continuous improvement in the first six months of 2026 (July to December).

Gaza humanitarian crisis 'far from being over,' UN warns

UNITED NATIONS: Three months into the ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, the UN and partners have delivered tonnes of assistance items and carried out critical repairs, but this is only a temporary solution, a veteran aid worker has warned.

"The humanitarian situation and crisis in Gaza is far from being over," Olga Cherevko from the UN aid coordination office OCHA said in an update to journalists in Jerusalem.

"For the Palestinians in Gaza, their lives continue to be defined by displacement, trauma, uncertainty, and deprivation."

This has been further compounded by "severe recurrent storms that not only destroy people's meagre belongings, but they're also deadly – whether through crumbling buildings or by taking the lives of children who are highly susceptible to the cold".

Since the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, humanitarians have brought in over 165,000 metric tonnes of assistance into Gaza. They also repaired roads, rehabilitated hospitals, cleared rubble, and re-opened aid distribution points.

"We celebrated our gains and showed once again that when we're enabled to do so, we deliver," Ms. Cherevko said, adding that "the results speak for themselves."

During the first two months of the truce alone, over 1.3 million people received food packages, and over 1.5 million hot meals were prepared and delivered to people in need across Gaza, thus improving food security.

When torrential floods hit Gaza, putting thousands of families at risk, humanitarians worked with municipalities to find safer options. They also distributed tents, tarpaulins, mattresses and warm clothes.

Ms. Cherevko stressed that "emergency response and its transition to early recovery cannot wait for political solutions. And a ceasefire in itself is not a recovery plan."

What humanitarians working in Gaza need "remains very simple," she said, calling for parties to the conflict to respect the ceasefire, ensure civilians are protected and that humanitarian access remains predictable, sustained and unimpeded.