



Daily The Spokesman



Xi congratulates Central African Republic president on reelection

Chinese President Xi Jinping on Tuesday congratulated Faustin-Archange Touadera on his reelection as president of the Central African Republic. In his message, Xi noted that in recent years, China and the Central African Republic have continued to deepen political mutual trust.



Kh Asif stresses need for power transfer to local governments

Speaking in the National Assembly during a discussion on Karachi fire incident, Khawaja Asif said that it was after the 18th Amendment that powers were transferred to the federating units, and now there was a need to transfer these powers to local bodies. "There exists a strong local government system in China," he added.

Simultaneously published from Islamabad, Lahore and Multan

Sha'abanul Moazzam 1, Wednesday, January 21, 2026



www.dailyspokesman.net



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Daily Spokesman Vol: 19, Issue: 276

Price Rs. 25.00 Pages 8

Tribute to martyrs

ISLAMABAD: Field Marshal Asim Munir visited the National Police Academy, paid tribute to martyrs, and emphasized the importance of a strong, professional police force.



Photo: ISPR

Field Marshal Munir meets police leadership, pledges Armed Forces support

By Naveed Ahmad Khan

RAWALPINDI: Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), HJ, COAS & CDF, visited the National Police Academy, Islamabad, where he interacted with officers of the Police Service of Pakistan. The Federal Minister for Interior, along with the Minister of State for Interior were also present during the visit.

Upon arrival, the Field Marshal was warmly received by the Commandant National

Police Academy and was presented with a guard of honour by a smartly turned-out police contingent. The Field Marshal laid a wreath at the Police Martyrs' Monument and offered Feteha, paying solemn tribute to the Shuhada of the Police who laid down their lives in the line of duty while safeguarding peace, upholding the rule of law, and ensuring public safety across the country. He acknowledged the supreme sacrifices rendered by police personnel in the face

of terrorism, crime and internal security challenges.

During the visit, the Field Marshal was briefed on the School for High-Impact Elite Law Enforcement Development (SHELID), as well as training programs and initiatives aimed at capacity building and modernization of the police.

He also interacted with Cadet Assistant Superintendents of Police (ASPs), where he highlighted the pivotal role of the police as the first line of defence

in safeguarding the lives, property, and honour of citizens.

While addressing Inspectors General of Police (IGPs), Additional IGPs, and senior police officials, he underscored the importance of inter-agency cooperation, modern policing practices and fostering public trust in law enforcement agencies.

He emphasized that a strong, professional, and people-centric police force is indispensable for ensuring internal security and

the rule of law. The Field Marshal remarked that the duty of the police to enforce law and order is a sacred trust and that the Armed Forces will always stand fully with the brave and proud police personnel of Pakistan.

The senior police leadership reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthening policing standards, enhancing professional capacity and advancing necessary institutional reforms to meet contemporary security challenges.

Pakistan, Somalia agree to strengthen bilateral relations

By News Desk

ISLAMABAD: Sheikhur Mohamed Hassan, ambassador of the Federal Republic of Somalia, paid a courtesy call on Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif on Tuesday.

The meeting was held in a cordial atmosphere, during which both sides exchanged warm greetings and discussed matters of mutual interest.

During the meeting, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif highlighted the longstanding friendly



relations between Pakistan and Somalia, noting that the ties are deeply rooted in shared values and strong people-to-people

connections. He reaffirmed Pakistan's continued support for peace, stability and capacity-building initiatives in Somalia.

Both sides reiterated their commitment to further strengthening bilateral relations and agreed to enhance cooperation through continued dialogue and engagement on areas of mutual interest.

Joint session of parliament postponed indefinitely

By City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The joint session of the Parliament, which was scheduled to be held on January 21 (Wednesday-tomorrow), was postponed indefinitely due to the absence of Speaker of the National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq.

According to details, a summary regarding the holding of a joint session of the Parliament was forwarded to the Aiwan-e-Sadr for approval.

The session was postponed as National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq was abroad. He is on a visit to China.

After his return, he will announce the next date for holding the joint session after consulting with the Senate Chairman Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani.

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has decided to keep its airspace closed to Indian-registered aircraft, extending the existing restriction until February 24 at 5:00 a.m., the Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA) said on Tuesday.

In a statement, the PAA confirmed that the ban has been

extended through a fresh Notice to Airmen (NOTAM). The restriction applies to all aircraft owned, operated, or leased by Indian airlines, including military flights. Officials said the decision was taken on security and administrative grounds. As a result, Indian-registered aircraft will remain unable to use Pakistani airspace for the specified period.

The PAA said the restriction will remain in force unless reviewed earlier through another NOTAM. Pakistan first imposed airspace restrictions on Indian aircraft in 2019 following heightened bilateral tensions.

While limited relaxations were introduced at different times, curbs on Indian-operated and Indian-reg-

istered flights have remained a recurring feature amid unresolved political and security issues.

The prolonged ban has continued to affect Indian airlines operationally and financially, forcing them to use longer alternate routes for west-bound international flights, particularly to destinations in the Middle East, Europe, and North America.

A Leading National Daily

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فرمان رسوی
فیصلہ علیہ
ہم سے عمدہ احتجاج بنے یا ان کیاں سے
ایپسے ان سے ہے اپنے ایجاد نے ان سے
عینہ جا شد خلیل عینہ یا کیا کیا
تینیاں یا ان یعنیان و میراب کے شکر میں الیا
کیا اپنے سلسلہ احتجاج و میراب کے شکر میں
میزج دلوں کو کھو کر تینیاں اپنیں
نے لاد بیتی کی کی میں گیاں و میراب میں
تینیاں نے اپنے سے میں
(6774) گلگت بادشاہی

Barkat Rice Mills (Pvt) Limited

PM Shehbaz vows to eliminate Khawarij completely



By City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has reaffirmed his government's commitment to root out the monster of terrorism from the country through collective efforts of the nation and the Armed Forces of Pakistan, vowing that the government would not rest until the complete elimination of Khawarij.

PM Shehbaz was addressing the participants of the National Workshop of the National Workshop belonging to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Islamabad.

Prime Minister Shehbaz said national security is among the top most priorities of the incumbent government and a comprehensive strategy is

being implemented to counter internal and external security challenges.

Shehbaz Sharif said the government, with support of the nation and Armed Forces of Pakistan, is fully prepared to deal with these challenges and the time is not far when we, through hard work, trust and honesty, will definitely achieve the position that Pakistan deserves among the comity of nations.

He said Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is a strategically important province of Pakistan, which remained at the forefront in the war against terrorism.

Prime Minister Shehbaz said national security is among the top most priorities of the province and security forces rendered matchless sacrifices in this war.

Continued on Page 7

10th ECO ministerial meeting kicks off in Islamabad today

By City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The 10th Ministerial Meeting of the Economic Cooperation Organization on Disaster Risk Reduction will commence in Islamabad today.

The high-level regional gathering will bring together ministers and senior officials from ECO Member States, along with representatives of the ECO Secretariat and

regional and international partner organizations.

Delegations from ECO Member States, including Pakistan, Türkiye, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Iran, Uzbekistan, and Afghanistan,

are expected to participate in the two-day engagement being held at the headquarters of the National Disaster Management Authority.

Gul Plaza fire: Rescue operation enters fourth day as death toll hits 27

By Bureau Report

KARACHI: Rescue and search operations continued for a fourth consecutive day at Karachi's Gul Plaza shopping centre on Tuesday, as authorities confirmed the recovery of 27 bodies and said 85 people remained missing following a massive fire that ripped through the building over the weekend.

Rescue officials said teams had cleared the basement and first floor of the commercial complex and had begun systematic searches on the second and third floors.

During Tuesday's operation, the body of a child was also recovered from the damaged structure.

The fire has yet to be declared fully extinguished, with officials maintaining heightened alert amid concerns over structural instability.

Two more firefighters were injured during operations on Tuesday, one of them critically. Authorities have also warned of a possible collapse risk to

the adjacent Rampa Plaza building.

According to Police Surgeon Dr Samia Syed, eight of the 27 recovered bodies have so far been identified.

Two victims were identified through national identity cards and driving licences found at the site.

Forensic identification is ongoing, with 51 DNA samples collected from relatives of the missing and sent to the Sindh Forensic DNA and Serology Laboratory and the University of Karachi.

Dr Syed said human remains recovered from the building were also undergoing forensic examination.

One victim, 33-year-old Misbah, was identified with the help of a locket. Her body will be handed over to her family shortly. Four other members of her family are still missing.

Sources said rescue work was progressing slowly due to a shortage of required resources, as teams navigated debris, smoke and unstable sections of the building.

Pakistan extends airspace ban on Indian aircraft until Feb 24

By News Desk

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istered flights have remained a recurring feature amid unresolved political and security issues.

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AJK PM pays homage at Urs of Hazrat Syed Sakhi Saheli Sarkar, prays for Pakistan's stability

 Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Faisal Mumtaz Rathore, attended the concluding ceremony of the 126th annual Urs of Hazrat Syed Sakhi Saheli Sarkar. On this occasion, the Prime Minister paid homage at the shrine, laid a floral wreath, and offered special prayers for the security and stability of Pakistan and the success of the Kashmir Freedom Movement.

Minister for Awqaf, Religious Affairs and Information, Chaudhry Muhammad Rafiq Nair; Advisor for Sports, Youth and Culture, Ahmad Saghir; Principal Secretary, Zafar Mahmood Khan; Special Assistant, Mubashir Munir Awan; Chairman Ulema and Mashaikh Council, Sahibzada Zulfiqar; Spokesperson to the



Prime Minister of AJK, Shaukat Javed Mir; Pakistan Peoples Party leader Mukhtar Ahmad Abbasi; Raja Ijaz Advocate; Sheikh Azhar, along with a large number of devotees and

the general public, were also present. Talking to the media, the Prime Minister said that the role of religious scholars in spreading Islam in the Subcontinent has been highly

significant. He added that the government had made comprehensive and improved arrangements for the pilgrims and devotees attending the Urs of Sain Sakhi Saheli Sarkar.

Responding to journalists' questions, the Prime Minister stated that the resolution of long-pending issues within a period of two months is a clear manifestation of the government's effective governance. He emphasized that the government is working tirelessly, day and night, to improve governance.

The Prime Minister said that within sixty days, the government has set matters on the path of improvement and is fully devoted to strengthening governance. He added that positive messages are also being received from the Awami Action Committee, and the government is always ready for dialogue at every forum.

Exhibition

LAHORE: Visitors are taking interest in the art pieces of the students during an exhibition at Government College University (GCU) in Provincial Capital.



Photo: Online

AI era demands media evolution: Secretary takes charge of Information Department

 Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: Secretary Information and IT, Muhammad Rashid Hanif, stated that in the rapidly advancing era of Artificial Intelligence, the role of media has become extremely important. He said that innovation and positive changes in the Information Department are a promise of better outcomes. He added that the Information Department is the face of the government and serves as a vital bridge between the government and the public. In line with the Prime Minister's vision, the department will play a proactive and effective role in further strengthening the state media.

He expressed these views while addressing a briefing given by the Information Department after assuming charge of his office. The briefing was attended by Director General Public Relations Raja Amjad Hussain Minhas, Director Social and



Digital Media Muhammad Bashir Mirza, Deputy Secretary Information and IT Farrukh Nadeem Tamana, Deputy Director Ms. Qurat-ul-Ain Shabbir, Information Officers Raja Muhammad Sohail Khan, Syed Asif Hussain Naqvi, Muhammad Hanif, Raja Abdul Basit, Khizar Hayat,

Programmer Shamim Anjum Aziz, Advertising Officer Saghir Ahmed, Admin Officer Faheem Kiyani, Sajid Nazir, and other officials.

The Secretary was briefed on the administrative structure of the department, its daily working, and ongoing and proposed development projects. Muhammad Rashid Hanif stated that all available resources would be utilized to enhance the capacity and efficiency of the Information Department so that government performance, development projects, and public welfare initiatives could be highlighted effectively.

AJK Finance Minister chairs key meeting on development budget utilization

 Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: A meeting of the Finance Department was held under the chairmanship of the Minister for Finance and Inland Revenue, Chaudhry Qasim Majeed. The meeting reviewed the current status of the budget for the ongoing financial year, including revenues and expenditures, with special focus on matters related to the development budget.

During the meeting, the concerned officials briefed the Minister on the overall financial position, ongoing development projects, and the utilization of the development budget. The



Minister directed that all complexities related to the release and utilization of development funds be resolved in a timely manner.

Chaudhry Qasim Majeed stated

that the government is committed to promoting development activities while maintaining financial discipline. He emphasized that transparency, accountability, and prioritization

must be ensured in budget planning so that optimal results can be achieved despite limited resources. He reiterated that projects aimed at public welfare remain the government's top priority.

Women's Wing Chief Samia SJid Raja Leads Vibrant Procession at Muzaffarabad Convention

 Bureau Report



MUZAFFARABAD: All the party leaders of Muzaffarabad division played an important role to successfully organize the convention but Muslim Conference Chairperson Women Wing Mohtarma Samia SJid Raja played role was very exclusive and highly lived who led large procession of women hoisted congregational flags at the convention venue and welcomed them to applause from Quaid-e-Muslim Conference Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan and others.

RPO Kohat Division Irfan Tariq Khan visits Karak, reviews law and order situation



 Staff Reporter

KARAK: Regional Police Officer (RPO) Kohat Division, Irfan Tariq Khan, paid an official visit to Karak district. Upon his arrival at Police Lines Karak, he was presented with a guard of honor by a smartly turned-out police contingent.

The RPO laid a floral wreath at the Martyrs' Memorial and offered Fataha, praying for the elevation of the ranks of the martyrs.

Later, an important meeting was held under the chairmanship of the RPO to review the overall law and order and crime situation in the district. The meeting was attended by DPO Karak and other senior police officers.

The DPO briefed the meeting in detail about the security situation, crime prevention measures, and the overall performance of the district police.

While addressing the meeting, RPO Irfan Tariq Khan issued strict instructions for indiscriminate and effective action against major drug trafficking networks. He said that drugs are destroying the foundations of society and emphasized that strong and result-oriented operations must be carried out against the main culprits. He made it clear that no leniency would be shown to criminals.

At the end of the visit, the RPO expressed satisfaction over the overall performance of Karak police and issued clear instructions to further improve it.

 Made in Pakistan-SME Cluster showcase Expo-2026

Federal Secretary Industries reviewed final arrangements

 Tahir Amin Malik

LAHORE: The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA), as per guidance of the Ministry of Industries and Production (MOIP), has completed the arrangements to hold the first ever "Made in Pakistan-SME Cluster showcase Expo-2026" from January 24 to January 26 at Lahore Expo Center. Secretary Industries and Production Saif Anjum took a briefing the other day from CEO SMEDA Ms. Nadia Jahangir Seth to review the preparatory arrangements. He was informed that the Expo has also attracted the foreign delegates, besides the buyers, sellers and vendors of the MSME sector. The delegates from Azerbaijan, Malaysia and Tajikistan will visit the Expo. CEO SMEDA said adding that a number of the other countries' missions have also evinced keen interest to visit the Exhibition.

Secretary MOIP said that the aim of holding this expo is to strengthen the country's micro, small and medium enterprise ecosystem, expand market access and position SME clusters as a competitive pillar of the national economy as per SME development vision of the Prime Minister being executed by the SAPM Haroon Akhtar Khan and SMEDA Board Members.

The three-day expo having more than 200 SMEs representing 30-plus clusters from all over the country will be inaugurated by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. The event will also have dialogue and discussion sessions and an awards ceremony as recognition of SMEs contributing to Pakistan's economic growth. It is notable that the Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Industries & Production Haroon Akhtar Khan and the Secretary MoIP Saif Anjum are directly supervising the arrangements to make the event a real reflection of the SME development approach of the present government.

Governor KP expresses solidarity with Sindh over Karachi tragedy



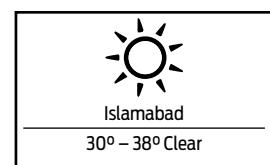
PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi on Tuesday expressed deep sorrow and solidarity with the Government and people of Sindh over the tragic fire incident at Gul Plaza in Karachi, which claimed precious lives and left several people injured.

In a condolence letter addressed to Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, Governor Kundi said he was deeply saddened to learn about the devastating fire that occurred on January 17. He termed the loss of human lives and the suffering of affected families as truly heart-wrenching.

The Governor extended heartfelt condolences on behalf of the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to the Government of Sindh and, most importantly, to the bereaved families. He also prayed for the swift and complete recovery of those injured in the incident.

Governor Kundi said that in moments of national tragedy, the grief of one province is felt across the entire country. He reaffirmed that the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa stand in solidarity and compassion with the people and government of Sindh during this difficult time.

He conveyed his deepest sympathies and assured continued support, underscoring national unity in the face of tragedy.

**SERVICES****Namaz Timings**

Fajr	5:44 am
Zohr	12:19 pm
Asr	3:49 pm
Maghrib	5:27 pm
Isha	6:54 pm

EMERGENCY

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

Women Police**Stations**

Islamabad	9222596
Rawalpindi	9270601-20

ENQUIRY

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

HOSPITALS

CMH	561111
MH	561116
MH	561116
Cant Hospital	9270907-11
DHQ	5556311-4
RGH	9290301-7
Holy Family	9290322-7
PIMS	9261170-79
Polyclinic	9218300-09
Shifa International	4603666

DEPARTMENTS

CDA	921234-43
CDA	9208301-04
Met Office	9250360-6
RDA	5555864
TMA	5770886

Ghulam Muhammad Safi Denounces Indian Forces' War Crimes' in Occupied Kashmir**Abdul Majeed Tahir**

MUZAFFARABAD: The Convenor of All Parties Hurriyat Conference (AJK and Pakistan Chapter), Mr. Ghulam Muhammad Safi, in an important statement, declared the month of January as the "Month of Massacre," while paying glowing tributes to the innocent civilians who were martyred by the Indian occupation forces in Sopore, Srinagar, Handwara, and Kupwara in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

Mr. Safi expressed deep sorrow over the brutal actions of Indian forces during the month of January, when unarmed Kashmiris were subjected to indiscriminate firing, arson, and explosive attacks in Sopore, Srinagar, Handwara, and Kupwara. These atrocities resulted in the martyrdom of hundreds of Kashmiris and injuries to many more, while homes, markets, and public buildings were set ablaze and reduced to ashes. He lamented that, to this day, no Indian military officer or soldier has been held accountable for these war crimes.

In conclusion, Mr. Ghulam Muhammad Safi expressed complete solidarity with the families of the martyrs and stated that the Kashmiri freedom struggle is entering a decisive phase, in which the Kashmiri people will remain the central force and ultimate custodians of their destiny.

Language holds Foundational Importance Across All Academic and Research Disciplines; Rector UMT

News Desk

LAHORE: The University of Management and Technology (UMT) organized its first International Conference on Language and Interdisciplinary Research, aimed at highlighting the interconnection between language, education and contemporary research while promoting emerging trends in interdisciplinary scholarship.

Punjab Minister for Education Rana Sikandar Hayat attended the conference as the chief guest. The event was also graced by Rector UMT Air Vice Marshal (R) Dr. Asif Raza, MPA Aamir Inayat, Dean School of Liberal Arts Dr. Nadia Anwar along with a large number of national and international scholars, researchers, educationists and students. During the international colloquium, research papers were presented on diverse themes including language studies, artificial intelligence (AI), education and interdisciplinary research.

Addressing the conference, Rector UMT Dr. Asif Raza stated that UMT is playing a proactive role in promoting new academic and research trends.

He emphasized that youth must play a pivotal role in national development and prosperity, adding that language holds fundamental importance across all academic and research disciplines.

Dr. Nadia Anwar thanked the distinguished guests for their participation and stressed that highlighting the importance of language, education and interdisciplinary research has become a pressing need of the time, as these elements form the foundation of modern knowledge based and national development.

Speaking at the conference, Punjab Education Minister Rana Sikandar Hayat said that the government is promoting the teaching of Urdu, Punjabi, as well as other regional and international languages in public schools. He urged students to use modern tools such as AI with caution and responsibility, noting that while these technologies offer convenience, their misuse can also lead to serious negative consequences.

At the end of the session, Rector UMT Dr. Asif Raza presented souvenirs to Punjab Education Minister Rana Sikandar Hayat and other distinguished guests.

**Group Photo**

ISLAMABAD: Federal Secretary Health, Hameed Yakub Sheikh along with Director I-SAPS Ahmed Ali and others are posing for photograph holding 15th edition of I-SAPS flagship report on education Financing in Pakistan, in Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

96th birth anniversary of Rasool Bux Palijo marked

Qayoom Sarohi

HYDERABAD: On the occasion of the 96th birth anniversary of the great revolutionary leader, the Leader of the Revolution, respected Rasool Bux Palijo, a ceremony was held by Sindhyan Tehreek at the Arts Council, Sukkur, during which a birthday cake was cut.

The ceremony was attended by Awami Tehreek's Central Senior Vice President Noor

Katiar, Sindhyan Tehreek District Sukkur President Shamshad Bapar, Paras Bhatti, Sindhi Adabi Sangat leader Majid Nawaz Mughal, renowned poet

Khadim Mangio, Jagarta Forum leader Faiz Soomro, journalist Taj Rand, Dr. Khadem Channa, Awami Tehreek central leader Advocate Sarwan Jatoi, Advocate Sachal Bhatti, Ayaz Kalwar,

Advocate Rehana Jatoi, Hina Jatoi, and many other leaders. Addressing the gathering, the leaders said that Rasool Bux Palijo is an everlasting, radiant sun of Sindh's politics. His thought, character,

and struggle are a beacon of light for the oppressed people of Sindh, which will continue to guide future generations toward freedom, equality, and justice.

The leaders stated that, in the light of Marxism, Rasool Bux Palijo gave a central role in revolutionary struggle to workers, women, and marginalized classes. He clearly explained that in backward societies like Sindh, women have been the most exploited; therefore, without women's leadership in the front ranks, social transformation is impossible. Sindhyan Tehreek is the practical continuation of this thought.

Kasim Kasuri stressed that Beaconhouse teachers are contributing over 10 hours each of training for teachers of schools serving underserved and underprivileged communities across Pakistan, a fact that was appreciated by the Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah.

The Chief Minister recognised Beaconhouse for raising standards and delivering consistent, quality education through standardised curricula, contributing to nation-building and shared national purpose. Referring to the launch, Syed Murad Ali Shah.

Pakistan's Education Spending Reaches Rs. 5.03 trillion, as families now contributing more than government

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: For the first time in Pakistan's history, household spending on education (Rs. 2.8 trillion) has exceeded government investment (Rs 2.23 trillion), according to a new report released today by the Institute of Social and Policy Sciences (I-SAPS). The finding, unveiled at the National Policy Dialogue to launch I-SAPS's 15th annual report on Public Financing of Education here on Tuesday, signaled a major shift in the country's education landscape.

Pakistani families are now bearing the majority of the Rs. 5.03 trillion total cost of education, raising serious questions around equity, access, and the state's responsibility in providing quality education for all, according to the findings of the report.

Dr Salman Humayun, Executive Director of I-SAPS, Mr Mazhar Siraj, Education Team Leader at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), Ms Izzah Farrukh, Senior Education Specialist at the World Bank, Dr Shahid Soroya, Director General of the Pakistan Institute of Education, Mr Hamed Yaqoob Sheikh, Federal Secretary for Health and former Federal Secretary for Finance, Ahmad Ali, Director Programmes at I-SAPS highlighted the importance of sustained evidence generation, and acknowledged the efforts of the federal ministry and development partners in strengthening annual education data consolidation.

RPO Faisalabad Stresses Police-Media Cooperation During Press Club Visit

Abdul Majid

FAISALABAD: Regional Police Officer (RPO) Faisalabad, Sohail Akhtar Sukhira, visited the Faisalabad Press Club accompanied by SP Lyallpur Town Abid Hussain Zafar, SDPOs and other senior police officers.

RPO Sohail Sukhira was received by Press Club President Shahid Ali, office-bearers and senior journalists. The meeting focused on strengthening coordination between the police and the media, ensuring timely and credible information for the public and promoting a positive image of law enforcement.

The RPO Sohail Sukhira lauded the media's constructive and responsible role, saying an impartial press was essential for social stability and development. He assured journalists of full cooperation in addressing their concerns and implementing practical suggestions.

RPO Sohail Sukhira said a comprehensive strategy would be adopted to counter misinformation, rumours and negative propaganda, adding that public awareness about law and order situations depended largely on the media's continuous efforts.

Media representatives reaffirmed their commitment to providing factual and transparent reporting. The RPO said police, with media support, would continue efforts to maintain peace, curb crime and resolve public grievances, terming police-media cooperation vital for societal stability.

Syed Murad Ali Shah commends Beaconhouse for Playing a Key Role in Nation-Building

News Desk

KARACHI: Chief Minister of Sindh, Syed Murad Ali Shah, who was the chief guest at an event commemorating 50 years of Beaconhouse, commended Beaconhouse's long-standing role in strengthening national integration through imparting quality education in all the provinces of Pakistan, and Azad Jammu & Kashmir. The event was held at the Beaconhouse PECHS Campus, Karachi.

Those present on the occasion included Senator Nisar Ahmad Khubro, Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, former Foreign Minister of Paki-

stan, former Federal Minister Javed Jabbar, former Federal Minister & Vice Chancellor SZABIST, Shehnaz Wazir Ali, former Minister of State Mr. Wajid Jawad, Afzal Ahmed, Director General, and Rafia Mallah, Additional Director, School Education & Literacy Department, Ali Ahmad Khan, COO BSS and Mr Ali Raza, Group Director, teachers and senior students.

The Chief Minister recognised Beaconhouse for raising standards and delivering consistent, quality education through standardised curricula, contributing to nation-building and shared national purpose. Referring to the launch, Syed Murad Ali Shah.



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Kashmir and the Criminalization of Dissent

The recent conviction of three prominent Kashmiri women leaders—Asiya Andrabi, Fahmeeda Sofi, and Nahida Nasreen—by a National Investigation Agency (NIA) court in Delhi underscores a disturbing trend in India's governance of Jammu and Kashmir: the systematic criminalization of peaceful political dissent under the guise of counterterrorism.

The three women were convicted under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), a law widely criticized by international human rights experts for its vague definitions, prolonged pre-trial detention, and use as a tool to silence critics. Asiya Andrabi, Fahmeeda Sofi, and Nahida Nasreen are associated with Dukhtaran-e-Millat, a constituent of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC)—a coalition that has long advocated a peaceful, negotiated resolution of the Kashmir dispute in accordance with United Nations resolutions.

This case is not an anomaly. It reflects a broader pattern in which India's counterterrorism laws are deployed not to address genuine security threats, but to suppress political expression and civic activism in Kashmir.

International concern over India's counterterrorism framework is well documented. On May 6, 2020, nine United Nations Special Rapporteurs, together with the Chair of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, formally warned India that amendments to the UAPA were incompatible with its obligations under international human rights law. They expressed particular alarm over provisions allowing individuals to be designated as "terrorists" without due process, noting that such powers were being exercised in a context of discrimination against religious minorities, human rights defenders, and political dissidents.

Leading human rights organizations have echoed these warnings. Aakar Patel, former Chair of Amnesty International India, observed that authorities were using "bogus foreign-funding and terrorism charges" to intimidate and silence critics, in violation of international financial and legal standards. Human Rights Watch, in multiple reports including one issued in November 2023, has urged India to stop abusing counterterrorism regulations that have created what its Asia leadership describes as a "dangerous arsenal" against civil society.

The allegations against Asiya Andrabi, Fahmeeda Sofi, and Nahida Nasreen center largely on their use of social media and public messaging that, according to prosecutors, threatened India's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Yet a closer look reveals that their advocacy focused on demanding the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolutions on Kashmir—resolutions that explicitly recognize Kashmir as a disputed territory and call for the people of the region to determine their political future.

These resolutions were not imposed on India from the outside. They were adopted with India's participation and, in several instances, with language proposed by Indian representatives themselves. Peacefully invoking international law and UN-mandated processes cannot credibly be equated with terrorism.

A Decisive Turn Against Terrorism: National Unity, State Resolve, and Pakistan's Future

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif's recent statement is not merely a political speech; it reflects the collective state of mind of Pakistan at a time when the growing threat of terrorism is once again demanding a resolute national response. When he declares that terrorism will be uprooted from Pakistan's soil and drowned in the Arabian Sea, he is, in essence, articulating a synthesis of national resolve, state response, and the bitter lessons of the past. It is no longer hidden from anyone that terrorism is re-emerging in an organized form within the country and that behind it lie not only internal factors, but also regional and global interests at play.

By invoking the example of 2018, the Prime Minister effectively reminded the nation that when the state stands united, when political leadership and the military are aligned, and when the nation rallies with collective determination, even a complex war like terrorism can be won. Operations Zarb-e-Azb and Radd-ul-Fasaad stand as clear evidence: decisive action dismantled terrorist networks, severed their financial lifelines, and forced them into retreat. Today, the imperative is

to revive this model in light of new realities this time not only on the military front, but also across economic, social, and diplomatic domains.

The link between terrorism and the economy is profound. Poverty, unemployment, and economic instability create the very vacuum in which extremist ideologies take root. The Prime Minister's assertion that Pakistan must break free from debt, eradicate poverty, and uproot terrorism points

toward a comprehensive national agenda. Without education, employment, and hope for a better future, young people remain vulnerable to manipulation by hostile elements. Hence, the fight against terrorism cannot be waged by force alone; it must also be pursued through economic reform, social justice, and improved governance.

In the international context, the Prime Minister's statement carries exceptional significance. Pakistan has not only shed the blood of its citizens in the global fight against terrorism, but has also shielded the world from grave dangers. Its role in combating Al-Qaeda, ISIS, and other transnational extremist organizations is a recognized reality. Yet, the international community has often responded with

double standards. The time has come to remind the world that had Pakistan not stood firm on this front, the reach of terrorism would have been far wider. Words of gratitude may not heal wounds, but fairness and genuine cooperation can help bring this war to a logical and just conclusion.

The emphasis on national unity and cohesion is particularly critical in today's polarized political environment. Internal political tensions, mutual accusations, and deepening divisions have drained national energy. The war against terrorism is not the responsibility of any single party, institution, or government; it is a collective national struggle. If political differences are not set aside, even temporarily, in the interest of national security, hostile forces will exploit these very fissures. History bears witness that when a nation stands united, even the gravest threats can be overcome.

In conclusion, the Prime Minister's statement serves both as a warning and a pledge. A warning because failure to learn from past mistakes could drag the country back to conditions that took years to escape. And a pledge because the State of Pakistan can no longer afford ambiguity. To eradicate terrorism at its roots, decisive action, internal unity, a strong economy, and proactive diplomacy are indispensable. This is the path that can lead Pakistan toward a future that is not only secure, but also sovereign, stable, and dignified.

Analysis

Dr. Muhammad Tayyab Khan Singhani

'Islamabad's Green Future, Forest Cover and Tree Plantation Efforts'

Islamabad has long been recognized as one of Pakistan's most environmentally planned and green cities. Surrounded by the Margalla Hills and supported by green belts, parks, and urban forests, the capital has historically enjoyed better air quality and a relatively balanced urban climate. However, recent satellite-based assessments by Global Forest Watch (GFW) indicate that Islamabad's tree cover has faced gradual but consistent pressure over the past two decades, despite intensified plantation efforts in recent years.

According to Global Forest Watch data, Islamabad lost approximately 14 hectares of tree cover between 2001 and 2024. This loss represents nearly 0.45 percent of the city's total tree cover recorded in 2000. While the percentage may appear small, it is environmentally significant for a compact capital where forest land is limited and the replacement of mature trees takes decades. Urban forests in Islamabad play a vital role in temperature regulation, air purification, recreation, and ecological stability.

The decline in tree cover has also resulted in measurable climate impacts. GFW estimates show that this loss led to approximately 5.5 kilo tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions over the same period. Trees act as natural carbon sinks, and when they are removed, both their carbon absorption capacity and stored carbon are lost, contributing to rising temperatures and climate stress.

A closer analysis of the data highlights the main causes behind this decline. Fires

accounted for nearly 35 percent of the recorded tree cover loss, particularly affecting forested areas near the Margalla Hills. The remaining loss resulted from non-fire factors such as urban expansion, infrastructure development, road construction, and land-use change.

These trends indicate that both environmental events and human activity are jointly responsible for the gradual reduction of Islamabad's tree cover.

Recent data from 2021 to 2024 raises further concern, as most of the recorded loss during this period occurred in natural forest areas rather than plantations or roadside trees. Natural forests are ecologically more valuable because they support biodiversity, stabilize soil, regulate water flow, and provide habitat for wildlife. Damage to these forests has long-term consequences that cannot be easily compensated through short-term plantation drives.

At the national level, Islamabad's experience reflects a broader environmental challenge. Across Pakistan, approximately 9.5 thousand hectares of tree cover were lost between 2001 and 2024, according to Global Forest Watch. Forests currently cover only about 5 percent of Pakistan's total land area, placing the country well below the global average. This makes the protection of urban and peri-urban forests, including those in Islamabad, critically important for

climate resilience and environmental sustainability.

Alongside these losses, significant tree plantation efforts have been undertaken in Islamabad over the last three years, reflecting an increased policy focus on environmental restoration. In 2023, various government departments, civic bodies, educational institutions, and community organizations carried out plantation activities across green belts, public parks, and peri-urban areas. Satellite vegetation indicators during this period showed localized improvements in vegetation density, particularly around the Margalla Hills and along major corridors.

In 2024, Islamabad became a central focus of a large-scale federal tree plantation initiative. Authorities announced

plans to plant around 4 million trees within the capital region, aiming to restore degraded forest areas, improve wildlife habitats, and reduce the urban heat island effect. The campaign emphasized native and climate-resilient species, acknowledging that survival rates and long-term ecological value are more important than short-term planting numbers.

The momentum continued in 2025, when Islamabad was included in the Spring Tree Plantation Campaign under the expanded Green Pakistan Programme.

Although nationwide in scope, the capital and its surrounding areas

received special attention due to their environmental significance. Millions of saplings were planted across the country, including species suitable for Islamabad's urban and forest landscapes, to enhance tree cover and strengthen climate adaptation.

In addition to new plantations, authorities addressed public health and ecological concerns by removing tens of thousands of invasive paper mulberry trees, which are linked to pollen allergies in the capital. These removals were accompanied by replacement plantation of native and less allergenic species, ensuring that tree removal did not result in a net loss of green cover. Tens of thousands of replacement trees have already been planted, with further planting planned.

Overall, the data presents a mixed but instructive picture. Islamabad has experienced measurable tree cover loss, particularly in natural forest areas, yet large-scale plantation efforts over the last three years demonstrate a strong policy response. The long-term success of these initiatives will depend on sapling survival, maintenance, protection from encroachment, and effective urban planning.

Global Forest Watch statistics combined with recent plantation data highlight both the challenges and opportunities for Islamabad's green future. While tree cover loss has affected climate resilience and environmental health, sustained plantation drives, strict protection of natural forests, and responsible development policies can help preserve Islamabad's identity as a green, livable, and environmentally balanced capital.

Analysis



Ahsan Ansari



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

The Role of Moral Values in Social Peace and Development

Throughout history, human societies have always aspired to achieve peace, stability, and progress. Yet history testifies that mere economic prosperity, scientific advancement, or military strength cannot bring lasting peace and genuine development. The foundation of all these aspects lies in moral values. Morality is the chain that restrains humans from deviation, prevents injustice, and guides them toward the paths of virtue, justice, and love. Social peace and development become possible only when individuals embody qualities such as honesty, integrity, justice, patience, sacrifice, tolerance, and sincerity.

In Islamic teachings, moral values are considered the core of social life. The Holy Qur'an states: "Indeed, Allah commands justice and excellence." (Surah An-Nahl 16:90). This verse clearly defines the principles of balance and righteousness in human society. The Prophet Muhammad also declared the purpose of his mission: "I have been sent only to perfect good moral character." When people uphold truth, integrity, and justice in their words and deeds, social relations strengthen, and a peaceful atmosphere prevails.

Unfortunately, in the present age, moral values have been neglected. Materialism, selfishness, dishonesty, bribery, deceit, and opportunism have weakened the social structure. People have lost trust in one another, and society is plagued by restlessness and division. Every sector education, politics, economy, and judiciary bears the marks of moral decay. Under such circumstances, expecting social peace and progress is merely wishful thinking.

One crucial aspect of moral values is that they awaken a sense of social responsibility within individuals. A morally upright person is not only conscious of their own rights but also cares deeply for the rights of others. They do not lie because they understand the importance of truth; they do not accept bribes because they know it fuels corruption; they uphold justice because they realize that society cannot survive without it. This sense of responsibility is the cornerstone of social harmony.

Moral training begins at home. If parents teach their chil-

dren from an early age to speak truthfully, show respect, treat others kindly, and act justly, those children grow up to become responsible citizens. Educational institutions also play a vital role in promoting moral values. Education should not be limited to securing employment; it must also focus on character-building. A well-educated but unethical society is more dangerous because knowledge without morality becomes a tool of destruction rather than development.

In today's era, media and social media platforms can play a significant role in shaping moral consciousness. If these platforms promote messages of honesty, tolerance, and national unity, they can help nurture a morally awakened society. Likewise, religious scholars, teachers, intellectuals, and leaders must embody these values in their conduct because morality is learned more through action than through words.

According to Islamic principles, true development is not merely material; it combines moral and spiritual advancement. The Qur'an repeatedly commands piety, truth, justice, honesty, and goodness, emphasizing that God created human-kind to establish justice and peace on earth and to represent virtue and morality. When humans abandon this divine purpose, society inevitably descends into corruption and ruin. In conclusion, the path to social peace and progress runs through the promotion of moral values. If, as a nation, we adopt honesty, justice, integrity, service, and tolerance as guiding principles, conflicts will diminish, and a peaceful, strong, and prosperous Pakistan can emerge. We must leave behind a society for future generations that stands not on materialism but on the foundation of moral character; for moral individuals are the true architects of peaceful societies.

Moral values are the soul of humanity and the lifeblood of society. Without them, no system, government, or development can endure. Until we restore morality to its rightful place in our personal and collective lives, social peace and progress will remain mere slogans. Islam's message is clear: "The best among you is those who are most beneficial to others." Thus, moral values are the lamps that can transform the darkness of society into light.

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Analysis



Muhammad Asif

Analysis

Dr. Muhammad Tayyab Khan Singhani

NAB restores public trust by returning Rs 1.2 billion to Bankers City victims after two decades

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) (Islamabad/Rawalpindi) held a ceremony at NAB Headquarters today to return recovered funds to the victims of the Bankers City Housing Scheme fraud.

This event marks a major milestone in NAB's mission to provide justice to those affected by long-standing financial scams.

The ceremony was presided over by the Chairman NAB, Lt. Gen. (Retd) Nazir Ahmed, and attended by senior officials including Deputy Chairman Sohail Nasir, Prosecutor General Accountability Syed Ehtesham Qadir Shahvarious Directors General and a large number of affectees.

The Bankers City scandal first emerged in 2006, leading to a formal investigation in 2007 following numerous public complaints. The housing society had been registered with the SECP in 2003 and claimed to possess 14,000 kanals of land across Islamabad, Rawalpindi, and Haripur. However, investigations revealed that the management used misleading advertisements and unverified documentation to collect money from hundreds of citizens, despite the fact that the land was neither approved by the relevant regulatory authority nor consolidated, and the promised plots were never delivered. Through a



rigorous and persistent investigation and chronic litigation NAB successfully recovered a total of Rs 1,209 million from the accused. Efforts are underway to affect more recovery.

In an exceptional achievement, NAB has returned an amount to the victims

that is two and a half times greater than their original investment. While appreciation the efforts of NAB's Investigation Team led by DG, NAB Islamabad/Rawalpindi also admired the contributions of Prosecutor General Accountability for keeping the case alive he also

thanked Lahore high court, Rawalpindi bench for dismissing the appeal of accused and reminding the case back to trial court in the interest of public at large.

During today's ceremony, a total of Rs 341 million was distributed to 476

victims. This included Rs 120 million handed over to 316 applicants via Payment Orders and Rs 221 million transferred to 160 applicants through online transactions. The remaining recovered funds will continue to be distributed to the rest of the 2,200

victims in subsequent phases after due verification.

Addressing the participants, Chairman NAB expressed his personal satisfaction in seeing justice served in a case that many believed had no hope of resolution. He credited the success to the coordinated efforts of the NAB Rawalpindi team and the legal prosecution department. He reaffirmed that NAB is a people-friendly institution committed to protecting the life savings of the public and warned that the bureau will continue to pursue those who deceive innocent citizens. He also urged the public to verify the legal status of housing schemes before making any investments.

The Director General of NAB (Islamabad/Rawalpindi) Waqar Ahmed Chohan highlighted the complexities faced by the investigation team in tracking down hidden assets and frozen accounts. To ensure total transparency and inclusivity, the bureau announced that new claims from legitimate victims are still being accepted.

A Chinese national, an affected investor, commended NAB for its fair treatment and praised the investigation team's professionalism in handling affected individuals.

The ceremony concluded with the Chairman awarding appreciation shields and an Umrah package to the investigation team members for their extraordinary dedication to this case.

China appoints Gulmina as first Chairperson of CGPTC

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Government of China has appointed Ms Gulmina Bilal, Chairperson of Pakistan's National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTC), as the first Chairperson of the China Global Professional and Technical Certification Center (CGPTC), marking a significant milestone for Pakistan as it assumes leadership of this newly established international body.

According to details, the Government of China has

formally established the China Global Professional and Technical Certification Center as a multilateral platform, with China, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, and Malaysia joining as founding members.

In the next phase, countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) are also planned to be included in the platform, said a press release on Monday.

The establishment of CGPTC aims to promote mutual recognition of professional and technical skills and qualifications among participating countries, harmonize certification standards, and

facilitate cross-border mobility of skilled human resources.

The Center is being viewed as a major step toward building a shared skills ecosystem across Asia and the Middle East. Through this initiative, member countries will work together to develop mutually recognized educational and professional qualification frameworks, enhance skills portability, and expand employment opportunities.

CGPTC is expected to strengthen confidence among employers, educational institu-

tions, and regulators, while also providing students and professionals with improved access to regional and international labor markets.

A key objective of the Center is the formal recognition of skills acquired by students and professionals in member countries, helping to reduce barriers to employment, training, and career progression, and effectively meet the evolving workforce needs of the region.

In the coming phases, the China Global Professional and Technical Certification Center



plans to further expand its membership and partnerships, and will collaborate closely with governments, certification bodies, training organizations, and industry stakeholders to

establish a reliable, integrated, and effective professional certification system.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs Holds Israel Responsible for the Storming and Demolition of UNRWA Facilities in Jerusalem

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates strongly condemns the storming by the Israeli occupation authorities, on Tuesday, of the headquarters of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of occupied Jerusalem. The occupation authorities carried out demolition works, seized the Agency's property, and raised the flag of the occupying power over the premises, in a blatant violation of international law and the inviolability of United Nations facilities.

The Ministry affirms that this attack constitutes a serious breach of all rules and norms of international law, and a clear violation of Israel's obligations, as

the occupying power, under the Fourth Geneva Convention, particularly those related to the protection of public property and ensuring the unhindered operation of international humanitarian organizations. It also violates the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations of 1946.

The Ministry stresses that any legislation or decisions issued by the occupation authorities have no legal effect on the legal status of UNRWA or on its presence and activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes an integral part of the occupied territory under international law and relevant United Nations resolutions.

The Ministry warns of the gravity of this deliberate escalation against

UNRWA, which comes within the framework of a systematic targeting of its role and UN mandate, and an attempt to undermine the international protection system for Palestinian refugees and their inalienable rights, foremost among them the right of return.

The Ministry holds Israel fully responsible for this attack and calls on the United Nations and its member states, especially supporters of UNRWA, to take urgent action to halt these violations and protect the Agency's work. The Ministry also affirms it will continue diplomatic and legal efforts to hold the occupying state accountable for its grave and ongoing violations of international law, and to protect the presence of the United Nations in the occupied Palestinian territory.

The Commission has made it clear that compliance with standards related to medication management and patient safety will be strictly

PHC Directs Establishment of Pharmacy Services in All Public and Private Hospitals Across Punjab

Special Correspondent

MULTAN: A long-standing demand of the Pakistan Pharmacists Association (PPA) has finally been accepted, as the Punjab Healthcare Commission (PHC) has issued directives for the establishment of pharmacy services in all public and private hospitals across the province.

According to the official notification issued by the Punjab Healthcare Commission, under the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) Act 2012 and the standards prescribed by PHC, it will now be mandatory for every hospital to ensure the presence of qualified clinical pharmacists, safe medication practices, a pharmacovigilance cell, and the effective and safe use of medicines.

The Commission has made it clear that compliance with standards related to medication management and patient safety will be strictly

monitored on a regular basis.

Commenting on this development, Central President of the Pakistan Pharmacists Association, Alamgir Rao, termed the decision of the Punjab Healthcare Commission as a positive and welcome step. He stated that the role of clinical pharmacists has now been clearly defined in the MSD/DS list, and during all healthcare commission inspections, this aspect will be specifically checked and ensured.

He further said that the Pakistan Pharmacists Association had presented two major demands before the Healthcare Commission.

The first demand was the appointment of clinical pharmacists in all public and private hospitals, which, by the grace of Allah, has now been fulfilled. This step will increase employment opportunities for pharmacists and ensure the provision of better and higher-quality healthcare

services to the public. The biggest benefit of this initiative will be a reduction in the increasing cases of drug side effects, thereby improving patient safety.

The second demand was related to community pharmacies and private medical pharmacies, seeking permission to provide pharmacy services as approved by DRAP and the Pharmacy Council.

He added that this demand is also under consideration and work on it is progressing rapidly. God willing, this demand will also be fulfilled soon.

Following this initiative, pharmacists will be able to provide community pharmacy services in the private sector. The most significant benefit of this will be the elimination of quackery, and pharmacists will be able to ensure the delivery of the best possible healthcare services to patients through their professional presence.

Al-Shifa Trust raised Rs35 million at a fundraising event

City Desk

RAWALPINDI: Donors contributed around Rs35 million to Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital during a fundraising dinner titled "Noor Phir Sey" held at the Pakistan National Council of the Arts in Islamabad, the trust said.

The funds will support Trust's free and subsidised eye care services throughout the country.

The fundraising event combined charitable appeals with cultural and Sufi music performances and drew participation from corporate entities, philanthropists, and members of civil society. Several attendees

also pledged to donate their eyes posthumously.

Major contributors included leading corporations, foundations, and individual donors. President of the Al-Shifa Trust, Maj Gen (retd) Rehmat Khan, thanked individual and corporate donors for their support and said sustained philanthropy remained critical for addressing preventable blindness in Pakistan.

He said the trust had grown from serving around 25 patients daily in its early years to treating nearly 5,000 patients a day over the past three decades.

He added that the trust's cross-subsidisation model

allowed paying patients to finance free treatment for those unable to afford care. Nearly 80 percent of patients receive free treatment at its hospitals in Rawalpindi, Chakwal, Kohat, Sukkur, Muzaffarabad, and Gilgit. Lahore Eye Hospital is expected to begin operations by 2027.

He informed that construction of the Haveli Lakha facility has been completed and that it will be inaugurated during the month of Ramadan. The total project cost is Rs162 million, with Rs122 million allocated to construction and Rs40 million to medical equipment.

Notable donors included

OGDCL, Askari Bank, Bank of Punjab, Rupani Foundation, Dr. Tahira Idrees, and Group Capt. Imtiaz Ali Khan.

Pakistan's blindness rate has declined from 1.78 percent in 1990 to about 0.5 percent today, attributing the improvement partly to expanded access to cataract surgery and early diagnosis.

Health experts note that much visual impairment remains avoidable in Pakistan, but rising costs and limited facilities strain rural households. Funds from "Noor Phir Sey" will expand surgical capacity, outreach, and subsidised treatment in underserved regions.



Bull & Bears PSX 100-Share Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index	
Current	Prev. Close
188,621.78	187,761.69
Day's High	Day's Low
188,958.37	187,192.01
Index Value	Change
45,362,946,399	+860.09
Percentage	Time
+0.46%	20 Jan, 2026 4:30 pm

Europe: FTSE 100 Index	
Index Value	Change
10,126.78	-68.57
Percentage	Time
-0.67%	20 Jan, 4:35 pm GMT

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average

Index Value	Change
48,803.70	-555.63
Percentage	Time
-1.13%	20 Jan, 12:11 pm GMT-5

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average

Index Value	Change
52,991.10	-592.47
Percentage	Time
-1.11%	20 Jan, 3:45 pm GMT+9

Open Market Forex Rates

Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	187.65	192.68
Bahrain Dinar	743.90	753.89
Canadian Dollar	201.42	204.90
China Yuan	38.00	42.50
Danish Krone	43.27	43.67
Euro	327.06	330.30
Hong Kong Dollar	35.50	36.38
Indian Rupee	2.80	3.31
Japanese Yen	1.7617	1.8603
Kuwaiti Dinar	908.00	917.97
Malaysian Ringgit	68.55	69.15
New Zealand \$	162.15	166.93
Norwegian Krone	27.56	27.86
Omani Riyal	728.60	738.59
Qatari Riyal	76.12	79.12
Saudi Riyal	74.95	75.35
Singapore Dollar	216.81	221.70
Swedish Korona	30.16	30.46
Swiss Franc	350.27	355.23
Thai Bhat	8.50	9.71
U.A.E Dirham	76.55	77.30
UK Pound Sterling	376.99	380.79
US Dollar	280.75	282.95

Pak-Qatar General Takaful IPO's Book Building Starts today

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: The book building process of Pak Qatar General Takaful Limited's IPO will start on 21st January and continue till 22nd January where high net worth individuals and institutional investors will subscribe to 75 percent of the issue size while the remaining 25% will be allocated to the general public.

Under the current offering, PQGTL will issue 30 million shares, with a floor price of Rs. 10 per share and a ceiling price of Rs. 14 per share. Of the total offering, 22.5 million shares (75%) will be allocated to institutional investors, while 7.5 million shares (25%) will be offered to the retail public. The general public subscription is scheduled for January 28-29.

Through this IPO, PQGTL is aiming to raise up to ~Rs. 420 million. The book building would start at Rs.10.00 per share with a maximum price band of up to 40%, it can go up to Rs. 14.00 per share.

Shahid Ali Habib, CEO of Arif Habib Ltd., the lead manager for the IPO said that country's first-ever IPO of any dedicated General Takaful Company is all set to make its historic debut at PSX which is receiving strong interest from HNWIs and institutional investors.

The listing forms part of PQGTL's strategy to enhance its paid-up capital base, enabling the company to meet applicable regulatory capital requirements for non-life insurers and Takaful operators, while supporting future growth initiatives.

Gold prices jump by Rs 4,300 per tola

ISLAMABAD: Gold prices recorded a notable increase in the local market on Tuesday as the price of 24-karat gold per tola surged by Rs 4,300 to Rs 493,662.

The price of 10 grams of 24-karat gold increased by Rs3,686 to Rs423,235, while the price of 10 grams of 22-karat gold rose by Rs3,379 to Rs387,979, according to the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association.

US Diplomat Highlights Potential for Major US-Pakistan Trade Growth During Sialkot Visit

By Faisal Khawar Butt

ISLAMABAD: During her recent visit to Sialkot, U. S. Chargé d'Affaires to Pakistan Natalie A. Baker praised the city's vibrant business community and underscored the potential

for even stronger bilateral U.S.-Pakistan trade and investment to increase mutual prosperity.

Speaking at a lunch hosted by the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce, CDA Baker underscored the depth of the bilateral commercial relationship. Highlighting the growth in trade



between the United States and Pakistan, which was projected to reach over \$8 billion in 2025, she said, "Expanding trade reflects a strong foundation that highlights the positive impact of U.S. economic engagement in Pakistan and globally."

CDA Baker also visited Forward Sports, First American Corporation Limited (FAC), and CA Sports, globally recognized leaders in Sialkot's sporting goods industry; toured the Sialkot International Airport; and met with AirSials's leadership. These engagements underscored the importance of U.S.-Pakistan collaboration in global supply chains, job creation, and

trade-led economic development. For example, nearly 70 percent of FAC's exports are to the United States, highlighting the strength of American markets and consumer demand. "We are committed to bringing the best of American technology, innovation, and entrepreneurship to help create jobs and uplift communities in both our countries," CDA Baker said.

"The United States remains deeply invested in Pakistan and its people," CDA Baker added, "building on a partnership that dates back to Pakistan's independence and continues to grow through trade, innovation, education, and cultural exchange."

Souvenir

ISLAMABAD: A Souvenir being presented to Chairman Senate, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani by Organizer of the 4th All Pakistan Women Chambers Presidents International Conference & Gala Dinner on Tuesday.



Photo: Online

WCCI Multan gears up for 11th blue phase: Showcase of 100 female artisans



By Kiran Asim

Former President Masooma Sibtai further said that the purpose of the edition Blue Phase is to encourage skilled women, as well as provide an opportunity for Eid shopping for families of Multan and surrounding areas, and stalls selling blue pottery, Multani khasa, children's and women's clothes and food will also be set up on the occasion of the exhibition. This is the best opportunity for shopping and entertainment for the people of Multan to participate fully on this occasion because the history of Multan The holding of Blue Phase is of utmost importance where it will be possible to provide goods at reasonable rates, especially to women.

Multan floats future as EV fair showcases green commute solutions

By Quratulain Asim

MULTAN: Chamber of Commerce and Industry Multan President Mian Bakhtawar Tanveer Sheikh inaugurated the two-day Electric Vehicle Fair held at DHA Arena along with Vice President Azhar Baloch, SP Cantt Kainat Azhar, Kashif Niazi, Asif Niazi, Secretary General of the Chamber Muhammad Shafiq and other distinguished guests. On this occasion, he inspected various stalls set up in the fair and reviewed the latest electric vehicles and motorcycles. Special awareness stalls were also set up by the Traffic Police and the Police Department at the fair. Addressing the ceremony, President of the Chamber of Commerce Mian Bakhtawar Tanveer Sheikh said that pollution is becoming a serious problem and the promotion of electric vehicles is the need of the hour to solve it. He said that according to expert reports, motorcycles produce about 80 percent of smog, the main reason for which is dependence on petrol. The use of electric vehicles will not only clean the environment but also save lives from expensive petrol.



Mian Bakhtawar Tanveer Sheikh further said that Pakistan has to import petrol, which costs valuable foreign exchange (dollars). The promotion of electric vehicles will reduce the import of petrol and will have a positive impact on the economy. Asif Niazi said that electric vehicles are

the need of the future and in the coming time they will become an important part of public transport. He said that through this fair, consumers are getting an opportunity to see and compare electric vehicles of different companies at one place.

NECA and Malik Group Discuss Delays in Nationwide EV Charging Station Deployment

By Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: A productive and forward-looking meeting was held in the office of Mr. Hamayon Khan, Additional Secretary & Managing Director, NEECA, with Mr. Malik Khuda Bakhsh, CEO, Malik Group of Companies, to address critical challenges delaying the nationwide roll-out of Electric Vehicle (EV) charging stations.

The discussion centered on procedural bottlenecks, including delays in electricity connections, prolonged sepa-

rate meter installations, and NOC approvals from relevant DISCOs and Oil Marketing Companies—despite the issuance of 13 NEECA licenses and the arrival of 5 EV charging stations at designated sites.

Mr. Malik shared the approved roadmap for installing 3,000 EV Charging Stations across Pakistan. In response, Mr. Humayon Khan assured full institutional support and expressed strong commitment to scaling the initiative further to 6,000 EV charging stations nationwide.

UBL with AUTON8 concludes core banking data migration of Ex-Silk Bank branches

By Commerce Desk

KARACHI: United Bank Limited (UBL) has successfully completed a large-scale core banking data migration with AUTON8 in six months, transitioning data from Ex-Silkbank's Temenos T24 core banking system to UBL's Symbols platform.

Farasat Ali Naqvi, EVP Core Banking at UBL, added: "The successful completion of this migration within 6 months represents a significant milestone for UBL. AUTON8 MORPH proved to be a game-changer for us—with its no-code, governed and traceable transformation approach made it possible to deliver this outcome at speed. AUTON8's structured execution ensures data integrity, mini-



mized operational risk and enabled a smooth post-migration transition."

Ali Raza, Chief Operating Officer at AUTON8, said: "This project reflects AUTON8's strength in delivering mission-critical banking transformations under tight timelines. Migrating customer records across 105 branches between two entirely different core banking systems, while ensuring zero critical data loss, demonstrates our automation-led execution and deep banking domain expertise. AUTON8 MORPH—our no-code transformation platform—enabled governed, fully traceable mapping and conversion at scale, which is how we delivered within such a compressed time frame."

Wednesday, January 21, 2026

Hundreds of female athletes participate in Lahore Division trials of taekwondo, weightlifting and basketball

 Sports Desk

LAHORE: The trials of women's biggest sports event Khelta Punjab Pink Games continued on the second day in all divisions of Punjab on Tuesday.

The Khelta Punjab Pink Games are being organized under the leadership of Punjab Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs Malik Faisal Ayub Khokhar while Director General Sports and Youth Affairs Punjab Khizar Afzaal Chaudhry is supervising the arrangements of the mega event.

Hundreds of female athletes participated in Lahore Division trials of taekwondo, weightlifting and basketball. On the second day, the Lahore Division trials of taekwondo and weightlifting were conducted at Elite Training Centre while the trials of basketball were organ-



ised at Nishtar Park Sports Complex Gymnasium Hall.

Director Sports Rana Nadeem Anjum, Director Admin Abid Shaukat, Divi-

sional Sports Officer Lahore Tariq Khanzada, District Sports Officer Tanveer Abbas and Sports Consultant Hafeez Bhatti also witnessed the trials at both

the venues.

Around 170 female athletes appeared in taekwondo trials, more than 95 girls attended basketball trials while more than 20 girl athletes participated in weightlifting trials.

The trials were conducted under the supervision of expert coaches. Aqeel Javed Butt, Ms Nuzhat Jabeen and Naila Maqsood Butt conducted weightlifting trials while the basketball trials were held under the supervision of Syed Maudood Jafri and Imran Afzal.

Nadeem Ali Janjua and Rao Ali Afzal supervised the taekwondo trials where players appeared in 38kg, 42 kg, 46 kg, 50 kg, 54 kg, 58 kg, 62 kg and 66 kg weight categories.

Medical camps were also arranged at Nishtar Park Sports Complex on the occasion of trials.

Competition Policy Key to Industrial Growth, Say Economic Experts

 Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Economic policy experts have emphasized that competition policy is essential for industrial growth and economic transformation and must be treated as a central pillar of industrial and growth strategy.

These views were highlighted by Dr. Nadeem Javed, Vice Chancellor of the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), during his lecture to officials of the Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP). He stressed that without effective competition, industrial policies often fail to deliver their intended outcomes, leading to inefficiencies and weak productivity.

The Competition Commission of Pakistan hosted the sixth lecture of its ongoing Lecture Series on Competition Law on the topic "Role of Industry in Promoting Market Competition." The session examined Pakistan's industrial structure, productivity challenges, and the impact of weak competition on long-term economic growth.



Welcoming the participants, Chairman CCP Dr. Kabir Ahmed Sidhu underscored that competition is not merely a legal or regulatory concept but a core economic policy tool. He reaffirmed CCP's commitment to strengthening competition enforcement as a means to

enhance productivity, boost exports, and promote sustainable industrial growth.

In his presentation, Dr. Nadeem Javed highlighted Pakistan's persistent productivity gap and the dominance of highly concentrated industries, including cement, sugar, fertilizer,

steel, and automobiles. He explained that weak competitive pressures, regulatory discretion, and protection of incumbents have constrained firm growth, innovation, and export competitiveness. Drawing on international experience from countries such as South Korea, Vietnam, Turkey, and Chile, he noted that disciplined competition, openness to trade and investment, and strong rule-based enforcement were key to escaping low-productivity traps.

The lecture concluded that competition policy must be integrated into industrial and growth strategies. Without effective competition, industrial policies risk reinforcing inefficiencies and protecting rents rather than promoting productivity and economic transformation.

The CCP's Lecture Series aims to promote informed debate on competition law and policy by engaging leading academics, policymakers, and practitioners, and to strengthen understanding of competition's role in Pakistan's economic development.

A New Era of Science Backed, Personalized Skincare

 News Desk

KARACHI: Sk'n Theory, a premium skincare clinic founded by the renowned aesthetic physician Dr. Saba Jerjees, opened its doors to Karachi with an exclusive star-studded event held on the evening of 18th January. The event marked the debut of skincare that seamlessly blends medical expertise, dermatological science, and modern skincare innovation.

Situated in uptown Karachi, Sk'n Theory is built on the philosophy that skincare is not one-size-fits-all. Rooted in clinical knowledge and evidence-based formulations, the clinic aims to deliver effective, results-driven solutions tailored to diverse skin concerns, tones, and textures.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Saba Jerjees shared her vision behind the brand: "Sk'n Theory is Pakistan's first-of-its-kind skin clinic, redefining skincare through setting a gold standard of

modern, science-backed treatments. We are here to offer a new, elevated experience in aesthetic excellence."

The stellar launch event was attended by notable figures from the fashion, beauty, and wellness industries, along with media representatives, influencers, and skincare enthusiasts. In attendance on the grand launch were Salman Iqbal, Ahsan Khan, Fahad Mustafa, Emmad Irfan, Nida Yasir & Yasir Nawaz, Shaista Lodhi, Ushma Shah & Hamza Amin, Sumita Marshall & Hasan Ahmed, Humayun Saeed and Samina Humayun, Sana Shahnawaz, Mansha Pasha, Wajahat & Shazia Rauf, Ajiaz Aslam, Zoya Nasir, Faysal Quraishi, Aehsun Talish, Nadia Khan, Zhalay Sarhadi, Ayesha Sohail, Dua Asif, Rabya & Rehan, Sonya Khan, Aneesha Ali, Haroon Khan, Hassan Choudary, Sidra Iqbal, Vardah Aziz, Benita David, Malika Rehman, and Aamna Isani.

Guests were introduced to Sk'n Theory's core range of treatments, which focus on skin health, repair, and long-term results using carefully selected active ingredients.



The newly launched Sk'n Theory guarantees longevity, anti-aging, and IV wellness for beautifully elevated skin.

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Meeting

DAVOS: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, holding a meeting today in Davos with His Excellency Mohamed Al Hussaini, Minister of State for Financial Affairs of the United Arab Emirates, on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting.



Finance Minister meets UAE Minister to review economic engagement and strengthen investment cooperation at WEF

Commerce Desk

DAVOS: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, met today in Davos with His Excellency Mohamed Al Hussaini, Minister of State for Financial Affairs of the United Arab Emirates, on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting.

The meeting provided an opportunity for both sides to review ongoing economic

engagement and discuss ways to further strengthen the close and multifaceted relationship between Pakistan and the UAE.

During the meeting, the Emirati Minister inquired about the progress of Pakistan's engagement with the International Monetary Fund. Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb briefed his counterpart on the smooth continuation of the IMF programme, including the ongoing review under the Extended Fund Facility and

the first review of the Climate Resilience programme. He expressed appreciation for the UAE's continued support and noted that bilateral relations were further strengthening, particularly in light of the recent visit of the President of the United Arab Emirates to Pakistan.

His Excellency Mohamed Al Hussaini appreciated the strong level of relations between the leadership of both countries and highlighted the

importance of close people-to-people ties, which continue to underpin the longstanding partnership between Pakistan and the UAE.

The Finance Minister thanked the UAE for its ongoing financial cooperation, including bilateral deposits and transactions, and emphasized the shared objective of transforming traditional support into long-term investment partnerships, describing this

approach as mutually beneficial and essential for sustainable growth. The Emirati Minister concurred, underscoring the importance of investment-led cooperation in supporting economic stability and long-term development.

The meeting concluded on a positive note, with both dignitaries reaffirming their shared commitment to deepening economic cooperation and advancing mutually beneficial initiatives between Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates.

Junaid Safdar's wedding issue raised in Punjab Assembly

Bureau Report

LAHORE: The wedding of Junaid Safdar, son of the Chief Minister of Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, has become a matter of debate in the Punjab Assembly on Tuesday, after a Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) lawmaker submitted a motion for adjournment alleging violations of wedding-related laws.

PTI member Sheikh Imtiaz submitted the motion, claiming that wedding festivities continued beyond



10:00 pm, in violation of the

prescribed timings.

The motion further alleged that the One-Dish Law was

breached during the ceremony, asserting that 12 different dishes were served at the event.

The parliamentarian questioned the selective implementation of laws, stating that ordinary citizens face strict restrictions, while influential individuals appear to enjoy exemptions.

"Are laws meant only for the poor?" the motion asked.

Sheikh Imtiaz demanded that the House suspend its regular proceedings to hold a detailed discussion on the

matter, terming it an issue of public importance and legal accountability.

The motion has added to political tension in the provincial assembly, with opposition members pressing for clarity and equal enforcement of laws, while government benches have yet to formally respond to the allegations.

The development has reignited debate over governance, rule of law, and the perception of double standards in the enforcement of public regulations in Punjab.

Education, Technology and Business Community Key to Investment-Led Growth: Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Federal Minister for the Board of Investment, Mr. Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh, attended the funding ceremony of the Chiniot Shaiikh Society, Karachi, as Chief Guest, where he underscored the critical role of education, skills development, and small enterprises in achieving sustainable economic growth and poverty alleviation.

Addressing the gathering, the Federal Minister stated that no nation can eliminate poverty without modern education and advanced technology. He highlighted China's development trajectory as a leading global example, noting



that strategic investment in education and technology has enabled China to lift millions out of poverty and attract

large-scale investment.

Mr. Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh emphasized that economic development and

investment promotion are not solely the responsibility of governments. He stressed that the business community and organized communities play a pivotal role in social welfare, employment generation, and entrepreneurial growth. He appreciated the contributions of the Chiniot Shaiikh community in promoting education, skills training, and small enterprise development.

The Federal Minister further stated that investment in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) is essential for broad-based economic growth, as SMEs create employment opportunities and strengthen the national economy at the grassroots level.

PM Shehbaz leaves for Switzerland to attend World Economic Forum

World Economic Forum to be held in Switzerland from January 20 to 22.

The Prime Minister will present his position on global and regional peace, development and Pakistan's economic vision.



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif left Islamabad on Tuesday for Davos, Switzerland to attend the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Ishaq Dar also joined the high-level delegation which accompanied the prime minister on the visit.

PM Shehbaz Sharif will attend the

According to a Foreign Office statement issued in Islamabad on Tuesday,

The Prime Minister's programme includes multiple substantive engagements, including participation in the WEF's Informal Gathering of World Economic Leaders (IGWEL) session on "Restoring a Spirit of Dialogue in a Divided World".

The Prime Minister will also host/

chair a Pakistan-specific "High-level Business Roundtable" with different corporate leaders.

On the sidelines, the Prime Minister is expected to interact with several world leaders, including business executives.

Pak-China Agri Investment Conference Unlocks USD 4.5 billion investment



Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research, Rana Tanveer Hussain, has announced that the Pakistan-China Agri Investment Conference, held on 19 January 2026, has resulted in 79 Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) between Pakistani and Chinese companies with an approximate investment value of USD 4.5 billion, signaling unprecedented confidence of Chinese investors in Pakistan's agriculture and food sectors.

Talking to the media, the minister said the scale and depth of investment commitments reflect a decisive shift from dialogue to on-ground, investment-led collaboration. He stated that the conference was specifically structured to deliver tangible outcomes through direct B2B match-

making, targeted sectoral engagement and project-based investment facilitation, rather than conventional discussions.

He noted that the Ministry of National Food Security and Research undertook extensive preparatory work prior to the conference, including structured engagements with Pakistani industry bodies and Chinese enterprises, to align investment proposals with market demand, technology requirements and national priorities. As a result, investment agreements were concluded across ten high-impact agricultural and allied sub-sectors, including food processing and value addition, agri-technology, seeds and plant protection, livestock and dairy, meat and poultry, fruits and vegetables, fisheries and aquaculture, animal feed, post-harvest infrastructure, and agricultural inputs.

ECP restores membership of 23 lawmakers after submission of financial statements

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has restored the membership of 23 additional lawmakers after they submitted mandatory details of their assets and liabilities, including those of their families. According to the Election Commission, the memberships of 23 lawmakers have been reinstated after they complied with the requirement of submitting their asset declarations.

Among them, the memberships of 11 National Assembly members, including Saira Afzal Tarar, have been restored.

The ECP also reinstated the memberships of two senators, including Federal Minister Musadik Malik.

At the provincial level, the ECP restored the memberships of three members each from the Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assemblies, as well as three members of the Punjab Assembly.

In addition, the membership of

Malik Naeem Khan Bazai, a member of the Balochistan Assembly, has also been reinstated.

The Election Commission had earlier suspended the memberships of 159 lawmakers for failing to submit their financial statements within the stipulated timeframe.

So far, the memberships of 113 lawmakers have been restored after compliance.

However, the ECP confirmed that the memberships of 46 lawmakers remain suspended due to their continued failure to submit the required financial declarations.

