



Daily The Spokesman

A Leading National Daily



فرمان رسول
بسمہ حق بن محمد بن علی بن ابی طالب
بشام نے بیان کیا ان سے قادیان سے
اس رخصی اللہ عزوجل نے کیا کہ نبی کریم صلی
اللہ علیہ وسلم نے دو میٹر صول کی قرانی کی اور
ذبح کرتے وقت بسم اللہ اللہ اکبر پڑھا
(کنجشاد: حدیث نمبر 7399)

Barkat Rice Mills
(Pvt) Limited



AGP elected to ICGFM Board of Directors for 2-year term

The Auditor General of Pakistan (AGP) has been elected as an Organizational Member Representative to the Board of Directors of International Consortium on Governmental Financial Management (ICGFM), Virginia USA for a two-year term. The appointment became effective on January 1, 2026, and will continue through December 31, 2027, according to AGP press release issue here Monday.



ICT Police to hold three-day self-defence course for citizens

Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police has announced a three-day self-defence course aimed at enhancing personal safety skills and confidence among citizens. A police spokesperson told APP on Monday that the course, open to both male and female participants, will commence from Tuesday, February 17, 2026, at the Police Lines Headquarters, H-11, Islamabad.

Simultaneously published from Islamabad, Lahore and Multan

Sha'abanul Moazzam 28, Tuesday, February 17, 2026



www.dailyspokesman.net



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Daily Spokesman Vol: 19, Issue: 303

Price Rs. 25.00 Pages 8

Delegation level talk

VIENNA: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in delegation level talks with Austrian Chancellor Christian Stocker on Monday.



Photo: PID

PM invites Austrian investors, business companies to invest in Pakistan

Spokesman Report

VIENNA: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday underscored Pakistan's commitment to boosting bilateral economic cooperation with Austria while highlighting the country's vast potential in key sectors such as renewable energy, agriculture, mining, and human resource development.

The prime minister said that Pakistan was an agrarian country

and more than 60% people lived in the rural areas, calling upon Austrian expertise to enhance value-addition in citrus and other produce for export markets.

He also invited Austrian investors to explore opportunities in mining, tourism and engineering sectors.

"Austria has world-class expertise in engineering, renewable energy, environmental technology and advanced manufacturing," he said while addressing

the Pakistan-Austria Business Forum in Vienna.

He invited Austrian companies to participate in Pakistan's renewable energy projects, grid modernization and energy logging initiatives.

PM Shehbaz Sharif extended a personal invitation to Austrian business leaders to visit Pakistan, promising to showcase investment opportunities and the country's scenic treasures from snow-capped mountains

to vibrant cultural hubs.

The prime minister said both countries shared a longstanding friendship grounded in historical ties and decades of Austrian business engagement in Pakistan, particularly in areas such as cable car installations, minerals and renewable energy technology.

"Although the level of economic activity in recent years has declined for a variety of reasons, Austrian firms have

made impactful contributions in Pakistan," he said.

The prime minister noted that discussions with the Austrian Federal Chancellor had been very warm, fruitful and productive, where both leaders agreed to follow up the meetings to take discussions to their logical conclusion.

He also expressed the resolve to combat illegal immigration in collaboration with partners like Austria, Germany and France.

SOEs losses declining gradually; go down by Rs.74 billion: Finance Minister

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb said here on Monday that financial losses of the State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) have steadily declined over the past three years, falling by Rs74 billion during the period as part of the government's ongoing reform and restructuring efforts.

In a televised media message, the minister while commenting on the Federal State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) Annual Aggregate Report for FY2025, said the losses of SOEs stood at Rs. 905 billion in 2023, Rs.



851 billion in 2024 and Rs.832 billion last year. "So over the

last three years, the losses have declined by approximately by Rs.74 billion... approximately Rs.142 million per day (we) saved over the period," he remarked.

The minister emphasized that the fiscal picture surrounding SOEs was not one-sided adding that it was important to understand that while the government has had to support these entities financially, there has been a substantial return in the form of taxes and dividends.

Illustrating the balance between outflows and inflows, the minister said, in 2023, the government provided an outflow of 2.078 trillion rupees in support of SOEs, however, in the same

year, it received inflows of 2.119 trillion rupees, primarily from taxes, dividends and markups paid. He said, it was around Rs.40 billion positive inflow.

He clarified that these losses were accumulating since decades and outlined key steps taken by the government to improve transparency and governance.

The Minister further acknowledged that while some profitable companies, such as those in the oil and gas sector, continued to remain profitable, their profits had decreased due to global factors such as falling oil prices. Despite these challenges, operational improvements have been observed in many sectors.

Field Marshal Asim Munir holds talks with UAE National Security Adviser



Spokesman Report

ABU DHABI: Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) and Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir met Sheikh Tahnoon bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Ruler of Abu Dhabi and National Security Adviser of the United Arab Emirates, in Abu Dhabi on Monday.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed ways to further strengthen bilateral cooperation across various sectors, particularly in the fields of economic collaboration, investment and security, according to a statement issued by the ISPR.

They also exchanged views on regional developments and emphasised the importance of continued coordination to promote peace and stability in the region.

Field Marshal Asim Munir expressed his sincere appreciation and gratitude to the UAE Government for its longstanding investments and continued support to Pakistan's economy and security over the decades, the statement added.

He noted that such support reflects the deep-rooted historical relations between the two brotherly countries and commended the constructive role of the UAE leadership in advancing economic and social development in Pakistan.

He reiterated Pakistan's firm commitment to continuing joint efforts to further strengthen this partnership in all fields, in a manner that serves the interests of both brotherly peoples and contributes to peace, stability, and prosperity in the region, the ISPR statement added.

Closures of motorways by PTI protestors no service to people: Muqam

Bureau Report

PESHAWAR: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs, Engineer Amir Muqam, here Monday said that the closure of the motorway is causing severe difficulties for the public and that the government should immediately take action against those responsible from PTI.

In his statement, Amir Muqam said that during his journey from Swat to Islamabad, he saw children, women, and sick people stranded on the way.

He stated that due to the motorway's closure, not only are people suffering greatly, but many are also missing their flights, and patients heading to hospitals are unable to reach

their destinations on time.

The Federal Minister demanded that the government direct the IG of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to immediately register FIRs against those causing hardship to the public and take strict action against the responsible members of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).

He said that cases of prisoners should be fought in the courts, but the public should not have to face unnecessary difficulties.

Amir Muqam emphasized that the injustice being done to the people must be stopped and that the state should take immediate action to ensure that citizens' daily lives are not disrupted.

Sit-in at Parliament enters fourth day amid Imran's health concerns

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: A sit-in by the opposition alliance at the Parliament House continued for a fourth consecutive day on Monday, with leaders insisting the protest will remain in place until Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan is provided what they describe as adequate medical facilities.

The protest is being led by the Tehreek Tahafuz-e-Aiyeen Pakistan (TTAP) and PTI lawmakers over concerns about Khan's health, particularly his eyesight.

National Assembly Opposition Leader Mehmood Khan

Achakzai, Senate Opposition Leader Allama Raja Nasir Abbas, PTI Chairman Gohar Ali Khan, former speaker Asad Qaiser and other lawmakers were present at the Parliament House.

In parallel, PTI provincial legislators are holding a sit-in at KP House in Islamabad under the leadership of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi.

The opposition alliance has demanded that Khan be allowed an eye examination under the supervision of his personal physician, saying this is necessary to establish the "true facts" regarding his health.

Dr Tariq Fazal shares update on PTI founder's treatment

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry on Monday shared details of the medical treatment of the PTI founder, saying

initial reports show a clear reduction in swelling and improvement in vision, with no major complications so far.

In a statement on X, the minister said a detailed medical examination of the former prime

minister was conducted inside Adiala Jail on Sunday afternoon under government instructions and in a transparent manner.

He said all necessary facilities were provided to ensure proper medical care.

According to him, a CT scan machine, slit lamp equipment, and a fully equipped ambulance were arranged at the jail for the examination.

The physical check-up was carried out by Dr Muhammad

Arif Khan from PIMS and Dr Nadeem Qureshi from Shifa Hospital, while senior specialists Dr Aasim Yusuf and Dr Mirza joined through a video link. PTI chief Barrister Gohar Ali Khan was kept informed about the process.

PM AJK Unveils Roadmap for Economic Security at Overseas Kashmiris Conference

 **Bureau Report**

MUZAFFARABAD: Prime Minister Azad Kashmir, Faisal Mumtaz Rathore has said that the Overseas Kashmiris Conference is not simply a ceremonial event but a significant milestone signaling the start of the region's path towards a prosperous and economically secure future.

Addressing the Overseas Kashmiris Convention, held here today in collaboration with the Overseas Pakistanis Foundation, the AJK premier said it was time to move beyond conventional thinking, adopt out-of-the-box solutions, and evolve a comprehensive strategy to effectively address the region's fundamental challenges. The conference, he said, serves as a comprehensive roadmap for the state's economic progress.

"Restoring investor confidence is the government's fundamental responsibility", he said, adding that the government has decided to establish Special Real Estate Courts (SREC) that would be bound to deliver decisions within 90 days.

"The establishment of SRECs will make the investment process more transparent while providing full legal



protection to government decisions", he remarked. In collaboration with NADRA, the system is being further integrated and digitized to eliminate unnecessary bureaucratic procedures for investors", the pm said. Terming Information Technology and Artificial Intelligence as the backbone of the modern economy, he said that shifting the liberated territory towards a digital economy remains one of his government's foremost priorities.

He said that work on establishing

IT parks was in progress and assured that enhanced connectivity through PTCL fiber networks would be introduced in the near future. "Special training programs will be introduced to equip youth with IT skills, software development, freelancing, e-commerce, and artificial intelligence", he said. He commended MTBC for generating employment opportunities for four thousand youth, describing it as evidence that Azad Kashmir can emerge as a prominent IT hub if

provided with a conducive environment. Prime minister Faisal Mumtaz Rathore said that public-private partnerships were being encouraged in the education sector to enhance quality and introduce curricula that meet contemporary standards.

Highlighting the untapped natural resources, the Prime Minister said, "Azad Kashmir is rich in rare earth minerals, gemstones, and other mineral resources, offering immense investment opportunities".

Plantation

ISLAMABAD: Gardeners of Capital Development Authority are busy in planting plant sapling at the green belt in middle of the Constitution Avenue in Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

Overseas Kashmiris Convention 2026: Minister Hails Diaspora's Economic and Diplomatic Contributions

 **Abdul Majeed Tahir**

MUZAFFARABAD: Federal Minister for Kashmir and Gilgit Affairs addresses Overseas Kashmiris Convention 2026 held in collaboration with Owasis Pakistani Foundation Pakistanis and Kashmiris are valuable assets of the country and are strengthening the country's economy by sending billions of dollars home every year. Thank you for coming from so far to the overseas convention, the overseas community has stood with Pakistan in all difficult times. Pakistani Ambassador said that the problem of Kashmir is becoming highlighted worldwide due to the efforts of Pakistan-is living abroad. He said that the overseas convention held in Islamabad was a positive and commendable step. They mentioned the development projects given by the Prime Minister for Azad Kashmir on behalf of Pakistan and said




that the Prime Minister has given such a project here that does not include the demand of the people. While the establishment of Danish University has also been announced in the future, the federal minister said that modern motorway projects in Azad Kashmir, especially

Muzaffarabad, Mirpur and Manshara motorways are expected to be launched soon. Speaking on the ongoing Indian oppression in occupied Jammu and Kashmir, he said that injustice has been continuing against the Sakshimi people for the last seven decades.

There are children. He paid tribute to the sentiment of the Kashmiri people saying, "Kashmiris bury their martyrs in the Pakistani flag. This sentiment is an example to the world. A flashpoint has occurred and after May 10, Pakistan's prestige has increased.

Kashmir Development Foundation Submits Policy Recommendations on People-Centred Development and Overseas Kashmiris Engagement

 **Bureau Report**



MUZAFFARABAD: The Kashmir Development Foundation (KDF) has formally submitted a set of policy recommendations aimed at strengthening people-centred development and credible diaspora engagement in Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The recommendations were presented in the context of the Overseas Kashmiris Convention in Muzaffarabad and shared with both the Federal Minister for

Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan and the Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

Sardar Aftab Khan, Executive Director Kashmir Development Foundation said that "KDF's recommendations focus on practical measures within existing constitutional and administrative frameworks, including support for local livelihoods and small enterprises, investment in cultural and economic infrastructure, community-owned tourism models, improved digital and service delivery, and greater transparency in development reporting." The Foundation stresses that diaspora engagement is most effective when it is anchored in credible local conditions rather than symbolic announcements.

DFP anguished over Indian court's deferment of bail hearing of its party president

 **Abdul Majeed Tahir**



SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party (DFP) has taken strong exception to the postponement of the bail hearing of its party president, Shabir Ahmed Shah, by an Indian court, terming it a well-thought-out policy aimed at prolonging his detention.

In a statement issued here today, the DFP spokesman advocate Arshad Iqbal said that Indian courts has a long history of using

deferment, adjournment, and procedural delays to postpone final adjudication of the cases related to Kashmiri prisoners.

"This deliberate approach effectively prolongs the detention of the accused, particularly in matters involving pre-trial or preventive custody," he said, adding that rather than issuing a decision on the long-pending plea, the bench granted additional time to the NIA, which has yet to present any substantive evidence against Shah before the court.

He said that hearing was originally scheduled for the second week of the month but has now been postponed to February 25.

The party spokesman criticized the Indian judiciary, saying that its decisions appear politically influenced rather than based on justice.

He noted that Shabir Shah has faced unproven charges since 1968, and even after eight years in Delhi's Tihar Jail, no court has substantiated the allegations against him.

He asserted that Shabir Shah and other Hurriyat leaders are being punished solely for advocating peaceful resolution of the Kashmir dispute and for voicing the concerns of the oppressed Kashmiri people.

He urged the world human rights organizations to take effective notice of the matter and play their much needed role to help secure early release of Shabir Ahmed Shah and other prisoners who despite suffering from multiple and acute ailments continue to languish in Indian jails.

Sudhaar Elementary Girls School Kamalia Distributes Prizes Among Successful Students

 **Zafar Chishti**

TOBA TEK SINGH: Sudhaar Elementary Girls School Kamalia Organized a prestigious ceremony at Two Star Marquee in connection with the announcement of its annual examination results. A large number of students, parents, teachers, community members and media representatives attended the event.

The chief guest on the occasion was former independent candidate for Provincial Assembly constituency PP-123 Chaudhry Shahid Iqbal Gujjar. He distributed prizes among the students who successfully passed the annual examinations and appreciated their outstanding performance. Addressing the ceremony, Chaudhry Shahid Iqbal Gujjar emphasized that education is essential for every individual. He urged parents to provide higher education opportunities to their children so they can excel in life and bring pride to their families as well as to Pakistan. The school's Director Rana Umar Farooq also distributed awards among high-achieving students. In his speech, he stated that Sudhaar Elementary Girls School is committed to providing quality education. The Managing Director of the school Rana Amir Sohail also presented prizes to successful students. He stated that the institution strives to deliver high-standard education and prepare students to face the challenges of practical life with confidence. Among others who attended the ceremony were Dr. Idrees Ansari, Rana Naeem Khan, Shehanshah Ansari, Azhar, Rana Sanaulah Khan, Saeed Ansari and Shahzaib Dar. They congratulated the students on their achievements and appreciated the efforts of the school administration. At the conclusion of the event, students and parents praised the school's management for its continuous efforts and expressed best wishes for further success in the field of education.



 **Abdul Majeed Tahir**

MUZAFFARABAD: Leader of

Opposition Shah Ghulam Qadir in Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly said that

Opposition Leader Praises Overseas Kashmiris Convention, Pledges Support for State Development and Liberation

holding Overseas Kashmiris Convention was a good initiative of the Azad Kashmir government. Together with the Kashmiris overseas, we will play our full role in the development of the state and the liberation of occupied Kashmir. Overseas Kashmiri ordinary people are not only strong pillars of the country's economy but also play an important role in the economy. Overseas Kashmiris are hard-working and honest people. You

always raised the prestige of the country. The hearts of overseas Kashmiris beat with us. You want to invest here but maybe we can't give you a chance. He is followed by Ghazi Milt Sardar Muhammad Ibrahim Khan, Mujahid

I Sardar Abdul Qayyum Khan and KH Khurshid. They said that we will keep the car of democracy in Azad Kashmir running. There were many protests and talk of ending immigrant seats. I said give her an alternative too

but nobody has answers to our questions. The state has given state subjects to 42 lakh Hindus in Asuquat occupied Kashmir while we want to deprive our 6 lakh immigrants of rightful representation.



Islamabad

30° – 38° Clear

SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr5:28 am
Zohr12:22 pm
Asr4:14 pm
Maghrib5:53 pm
Isha7:16 pm

EMERGENCY

Rescue (Police) 15
Bomb Disposal 15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/
Islamabad1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance 1122 &
& Rescue Services 4451122
Motorway Police 9266044
Motorway Police 9270601-20

Women Police

Stations

Islamabad 9222596
Rawalpindi 9270601-20

ENQUIRY

Edhi Ambulance115
PIA Flight Info 114
PIA Cargo 9280979
Railway Inquiry117
Railway Exchange9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi5555489
CAA 9281092

HOSPITALS

CMH561111
MH561116
MH561116
Cantt Hospital.....9270907-11
DHQ5556311-4
RGH9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS9261170-79
Polyclinic9218300-09
Shifa International4603666

DEPARTMENTS

CDA 9221334-43
CDA 9208301-04
Met Office 9250360-6
RDA 5555864
TMA 5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3
Islamabad Metropolitan
Corporation 9209224
Potohar Town..... 9209224
Rawal Town 5773343

COMPLAINTS

Water Tanker Service
E-7, F-10 & F-11 9204654
G-5, G-6, G-7, G-8,9203883
G-9, G-10, G-11, G-12, H-89266316
Wapda Islamabad.....9217579-80
Sui Gas Complaint.....119, 9272249
Wasa Water Tank
Rawalpindi.....0331-5022125

Hum Hospital Foundation Chairman Meets LCCI President to Discuss Social Services

City Desk

LAHORE: Farooq Baloch, Chairman of Hum Hospital Foundation, recently held a cordial meeting with the newly elected President of Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI), Faheem-ur-Rehman Sehgal, and Vice President Khurram Lodhi. The discussion focused on matters of mutual interest and the promotion of social services.

Baloch congratulated Faheem-ur-Rehman Sehgal and Khurram Lodhi on assuming their new roles and extended his best wishes. He emphasized the crucial role of the business community as the backbone of the nation's economy and highlighted their significant contributions to the social sector.

LCCI President Faheem-ur-Rehman Sehgal welcomed the Chairman of Hum Hospital Foundation and commended the foundation's performance. He praised Farooq Baloch for his commendable work in serving humanity, noting that such welfare initiatives offer a ray of hope for society.

The meeting concluded with a mutual commitment to fostering cooperation and further expanding the scope of social services.

28th Convocation of Bahria University held



Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The 28th Convocation of Bahria University Islamabad was held on Monday to confer degrees in various disciplines.

Chief of the Naval Staff (CNS) and Pro-Chancellor of Bahria University,

Admiral Naveed Ashraf graced the occasion as the chief guest and conferred degrees upon the graduating students, said a news release issued by Directorate General Public Relations (Pak Navy).

During the convocation, over 3,300 graduates were awarded degrees in various disciplines. Additionally, 108 gold medals

and 105 silver medals were awarded to students in recognition of their exceptional academic achievements, it further said.

While addressing the ceremony, Chief of the Naval Staff congratulated the graduating students and their parents on the successful achievement of this important academic milestone.

He emphasized the vital role of higher education institutions in national development.

The CNS also commended Bahria University's remarkable growth and its transformation into one of the country's most prestigious national institutions.

He appreciated the launch of a variety

of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, as well as the progressive expansion of the University's infrastructure in major cities across Pakistan.

The ceremony was attended by senior naval officers, members of the civilian community, Bahria University officials, and parents of the graduating students.

Water splash

ISLAMABAD: Workers of Capital Development Authority are busy in watering the plants on green belt in middle of the Constitution Avenue in Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

Sindh Home Minister Demands Report After Deadly Nawabshah Land Violence

Anwar Adil khanzada

NAWABSHAH: Three people, including two girls, were killed in a land dispute in the Qazi Ahmed area of Nawabshah. Five years ago, five people, including an SHO, were killed in a land conflict. Sindh Home Minister Zia-ul-Hasan Lanjar takes notice of the loss of precious lives in a land dispute in Shaheed Benazirabad district. Zia-ul-Hasan Lanjar has sought a detailed report of the incident from SSP Shaheed Benazirabad. Three people died in a firing incident in DH Bombhai. The Home



Minister expressed his sorrow. The Home Minister expressed his heartfelt sympathy and condolences to the families of

the deceased. Zia-ul-Hasan Lanjar directed to provide the best medical facilities to the injured. The police were directed to take all possible steps for the immediate arrest of the accused. Land disputes should be resolved within the ambit of law. No one will be allowed to take the law into their own hands. The Home Minister expressed deep sorrow and grief over the loss of innocent girls. Law and order should be maintained in the area at all costs. Sindh Home Minister Al-Hasan Lanjar says that justice will be ensured to the affected families.

Russian, German, and English Editions of the Book "Najmi Healing Energy" Published

City Desk

KARACHI: Najmi Healing Energy, an Islamic spiritual-scientific healing method, was first introduced through the book Najmi Shifai Tawanai (Najmi Healing Energy) authored by Dr. Syed Shahzad Ali Najmi.

The book was originally published in Urdu in July 2013 by Al-Sihat Foundation, Karachi, Pakistan. In response to growing international interest, the work has now been released in several major global languages.

The Russian edition was published on November 17, 2025, by Najmi International, Moscow, Russia. The German edition was released on July 10, 2025, in Berlin, Germany, while the English edition was published on July 2, 2025, in Denver, USA.

All editions of the book are available free of charge online for study and to promote the dissemination of knowledge worldwide.

Dr. Syed Shahzad Ali Najmi, a Pakistani Sufi inspired by the renowned spiritual figure Qalander Baba Auliya, developed this healing system after recognizing the need for an Islamic spiritual alternative to contemporary energy-healing practices. Following extensive research and practical experimentation between 2001 and 2012, he introduced this method under the name Najmi Healing Energy and authored a scientifically structured book to explain its principles.



Rethinking Europe's Middle East Policy: Balancing Interests and Values



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Afghanistan, Middle East and Africa (CAMEA) at the Institute of Strategic Studies (ISSI) organized a public talk under its Distinguished Lecture series, titled, 'Rethinking Europe's Middle East Policy: Balancing Interests and Values.' The Distinguished Speaker at the event was Dr. Flavius Caba Maria, President of the Middle East Political and Economic Institute (MEPEI), Romania., Dr. Amina Khan, Director CAMEA and Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman, BOG, ISSI also spoke on the occasion.

Dr. Amina Khan, in her welcome remarks, highlighted three inter-linked priorities shaping EU policy: engagement with the Gulf region, the evolving dynamics of the Israel-Palestine conflict amid the ongoing war in Gaza, and diplomatic management of relations with Iran.

Dr. Flavius Caba Maria argued that the European Union's Middle East policy reflects a cautious, legally anchored, and internally fragmented approach shaped by shifting geopolitical realities. On Gaza, he noted that the EU has reinforced existing international frameworks, welcoming UN Security Council Resolution 2803 and referencing the "Board of Peace" strictly within a UN-led structure, while reaffirming its commitment to international law and the two-state solution and voicing concern over developments in the West Bank that threaten its viability.

Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, in his remarks, noted that Europe's evolving role in the Middle East reflects a balance between its stated values, human rights, humanitarian principles, and international law—and its strategic interests in regional stability and security.

39 kite flyers, sellers held in ICT Police crackdown

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Police launched a large-scale crackdown against kite flyers and kite sellers across the federal capital, arresting 39 individuals during the past 24 hours.

An official told APP on Monday that police teams conducted raids in various areas and apprehended 39 kite flyers and kite sellers. A large number of kites and kite strings were also recovered from their possession.

He said cases have been registered against the arrested accused at the relevant police stations, while further investigation is underway.

SSP Operations Islamabad Qazi Ali Raza said that kite flying is a dangerous and unlawful activity which poses serious risks to human life. He emphasized that the loss of innocent lives due to this hazardous practice will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

He urged parents to educate their children about the dangers and legal consequences of kite flying and advised citizens to fulfill their social and legal responsibilities by discouraging the activity.

PRCS Media Engagement Session Highlights Humanitarian Response in Bajaur

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS), with the support of the Norwegian Red Cross and the European Union (ECHO), organized a comprehensive Media Engagement Session at its National Headquarters in Islamabad to brief print and electronic media professionals, vloggers, and bloggers on ongoing humanitarian response activities in Bajaur. The session aimed to provide an overview of relief operations, project progress, and assistance being delivered to conflict- and disaster-affected communities.

Journalists, social workers, and PRCS staff attended the event. In his opening remarks, Assistant Director Media Mr. Rehan Ali presented a detailed overview of the situation in Bajaur and highlighted the coordinated efforts of PRCS National Headquarters, facilitated by the PRCS Merged Areas Branch, and partner organizations. Mr. Amad Yousaf,



Deputy Director for the Norwegian Red Cross Program, informed participants that affected families are receiving emergency relief assistance, Mobile Health Team services, access to safe drinking water, hygiene awareness support, psychosocial assistance for restoring

family links, and cash assistance.

Deputy Director Media Mr. Sher Zaman, during the session provided an overview of the global Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, including the roles of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

and the International Committee of the Red Cross, along with PRCS's ongoing humanitarian initiatives across the country.

Media representatives were briefed on project outcomes, the number of beneficiary families, and future plans. An interactive question-and-answer session allowed journalists to seek clarifications, reinforcing PRCS's commitment to transparency, accountability, and effective communication.

In his concluding remarks, Secretary General PRCS Mr. Muhammad Abaid-ullah Khan appreciated the constructive role of the media, noting that timely and responsible reporting amplifies the voices of affected communities and contributes significantly to improving humanitarian response efforts. He emphasized that the media plays a vital role in highlighting the challenges faced by vulnerable populations and bringing their concerns to the attention of decision-makers.

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Russian Scientists Find a Way to Reduce Child Mortality From Burns

Researchers at the Tyumen Medical University have found, using drugs that regulate the immune system in the first hours after injury can improve survival rates and speed up treatment for children with burns. The university reported that the study revealed the mechanism behind immune system deterioration in young children following burn injuries.

Burns are one of the leading causes of hospitalization among children under four to five, according to scientists at Tyumen Medical University. In about 75% of cases, children suffer thermal injuries from scalding liquids such as boiling water, tea, soup, or steam.

“Burns rank eleventh among the causes of death in children aged one to nine, and they are also the fifth most common cause of non-fatal injuries in children. Each year, more than half a million children worldwide are hospitalized with burn injuries. According to UNICEF statistics, 260 children die every day from thermal injuries and their consequences,” said Sergey Sakharov, head of the Department of Healthcare Mobilization Training and Disaster Medicine at the university and a practicing surgeon.

According to him, the main cause of illness and mortality following burn injuries is infectious complications, since thermal trauma significantly weakens the body’s immune defenses.

At present, the mechanisms of immune protection in burn patients are still insufficiently studied, and specialists are searching for ways to improve treatment effectiveness, the researcher noted.

Specialists at Tyumen Medical University studied the activity of blood T-lymphocytes in young children with burn injuries. T-lymphocytes are key immune system cells — a type of white blood cell that matures in the thymus and is responsible for adaptive immunity. They identify and destroy virus-infected, bacterial, or tumor cells and regulate immune responses.

“We examined children under six years old — patients at the burn center of Tyumen Regional Clinical Hospital No. 1. As a result, we were able to determine the role of T-lymphocytes in the development of burn disease, the disruption of their function, and the subsequent mechanism of post-burn immunodeficiency,” Sakharov said.

The scientists concluded that treatment of children with burn injuries using immune-regulating drugs (immunomodulators) should begin within the first hours after thermal trauma.

“Monitoring patients’ immune status alongside therapy will help prevent secondary bacterial infection and accelerate wound healing or make skin transplantation more successful,” the surgeon added.

Researchers at Tyumen Medical University plan to prepare clinical guidelines for physicians based on these findings in the near future.

Trump Defies Israel on Iran Strategy

Benjamin Netanyahu’s recent rush to Washington was not routine diplomacy. It was a geopolitical stress test. Since President Donald Trump resumed office, the Israeli prime minister has maintained close coordination with Washington. Yet this visit carried an urgency that signaled concern — perhaps even anxiety. The core question hovering over the meeting was unmistakable: Would the United States once again expand confrontation with Iran under Israeli pressure, or was Washington beginning to assert strategic independence?

The regional environment is tense. The United States has reinforced its military posture across the Gulf and Eastern Mediterranean, citing deterrence and stability. Iran’s nuclear enrichment levels — reportedly reaching up to 60% purity according to the International Atomic Energy Agency — remain the focal point of Western concern. Tehran insists its program is peaceful and reversible, while Israel views it as an existential threshold.

Netanyahu arrived seeking expansion of the negotiation framework. Israel has long argued that any agreement must go beyond uranium enrichment to include limits on Iran’s ballistic missile program and restrictions on its regional alliances. In Israeli strategic doctrine, Iran’s missile range and regional deterrence network form a unified threat architecture.

Yet post-meeting signals from Washington were restrained. President Trump indicated that nuclear talks would continue — but remain confined to the nuclear file. No immediate commitment was made to incorporate missile restrictions or regional dismantlement demands. That silence spoke volumes.

For decades, Washington’s Middle East posture closely mirrored Israeli security framing. This time, the United States appeared to draw a boundary. Why now?

First, domestic opinion is shifting. The

Gaza war has deeply polarized American society. Estimates from humanitarian agencies suggest total Palestinian fatalities — direct and indirect — have surpassed 80,000 since the conflict’s escalation. The scale of destruction has fueled sustained protests across American universities and major cities. Younger voters increasingly question unconditional military assistance and open-ended strategic alignment.

Organizations such as the American Israel Public Affairs Committee remain influential, but the environment has changed. Campaign contributions and policy alignments are scrutinized in real time through digital media ecosystems. Lawmakers now face direct public questioning regarding foreign aid allocations and lobbying relationships.

Second, the economic calculus is sobering. A full-scale war with Iran would dwarf previous Middle Eastern interventions. The Iraq War cost the United States an estimated \$2–3 trillion over two decades. Iran is geographically larger, militarily more advanced, and strategically integrated into regional networks. Disruption of the Strait of Hormuz — through which roughly 20% of global oil supply flows — could send crude prices above \$150 per barrel. Inflationary shocks would ripple through American households already burdened by high interest rates and federal debt exceeding \$34 trillion.

Third, the geopolitical landscape is no longer unipolar. China and Russia maintain strategic partnerships with Tehran. Europe has little appetite for another Middle Eastern war. The Global South increasingly resists Western military adventurism. Any unilateral escalation risks diplomatic isolation rather

than coalition-building. In this context, “America First” takes on new meaning. Strategic restraint becomes not weakness, but prudence.

Netanyahu’s urgency reflects Israel’s own vulnerability calculations. From Jerusalem’s perspective, Iran’s missile program and regional alliances create encirclement risk. Israel’s security doctrine prioritizes preemption and dominance. But Washington’s calculus is broader: preserving global stability, economic balance, and strategic bandwidth across multiple theaters — including Ukraine and the Indo-Pacific.

Nuclear containment through verifiable inspection may be imperfect, but it is far less costly than war. The International Atomic Energy Agency remains central to any enforceable framework. If Iran restores comprehensive inspection access and caps enrichment levels, escalation logic weakens. Tehran frequently references a religious decree prohibiting nuclear weapons, though Western governments demand technical verification over theological assurances.

Washington increasingly recognizes that unqualified alignment with Israel carries reputational costs. In a world where emerging powers challenge U. S. moral authority, strategic overreach erodes influence.

There is also the question of sustainability. Continuous regional fragmentation — Iraq, Syria, Libya — has not produced durable stability. Military decapitation strategies have often created power vacuums rather than order. Iran, unlike those states, possesses cohesive national institutions and deep historical identity. Attempting regime destabilization would carry unpredictable consequences.

The emerging signal from Washington



Analysis

Qamar Bashir



Cartoon by Amjad Rasmi. (Courtesy of Ashfaq Al-Awsat)

HEC and the New Innovation Landscape

The appointment of Prof. Dr. Niaz Ahmad Akhtar (Sitara-i-Imtiaz), an accomplished engineer and former Chairman of the Pakistan Engineering Council, as Chairman of the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan marks a decisive and forward-looking moment for the country’s higher education system. At a time when Pakistan faces interconnected challenges of graduate employability, weak university–industry linkages, limited industrial competitiveness, and fiscal pressures on public institutions, higher education must redefine its national purpose. Universities can no longer remain confined to the traditional role of degree-awarding bodies; they must emerge as engines of industrial innovation, economic growth, good governance, and global competitiveness.

Across the world, higher education commissions reflect national priorities and development models. In the United States, higher education is governed through a decentralized framework involving the Department of Education, regional accreditation councils, and powerful research funding agencies such as the National Science Foundation (NSF) and National Institutes of Health (NIH). This ecosystem encourages competition, innovation, and strong university–industry collaboration. The United Kingdom follows a more centralized and accountability-driven approach through the Office for Students (OfS) and UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), linking public funding with quality assurance and performance-based research outcomes. China, through its Ministry of Education (MoE), strategically aligns universities with national development goals under

initiatives such as the Double First-Class Program, integrating higher education with industrial upgrading, technology transfer, and global ranking ambitions. Pakistan’s HEC represents a hybrid model—drawing on global best practices while responding to local realities—focusing on quality assurance, faculty development, research support, digital connectivity, and international collaboration to transform universities into drivers of national development.

Under Dr. Atta-ur-Rahman’s stewardship, HEC introduced unprecedented faculty development programs, foreign and indigenous PhD scholarships, and international travel grants. These initiatives created a critical mass of highly trained scholars and laid the foundation for a sustainable research culture. His early emphasis on information technology, digital connectivity, and modern research infrastructure proved visionary; today, Pakistan’s growing presence in IT services and knowledge-based industries reflects that foresight.

During periods of acute financial uncertainty, Dr. Mukhtar Ahmad, former Chairman HEC, played a decisive stabilizing role. Through disciplined financial management reforms, improved governance mechanisms, and strategic engagement with policymakers, he secured approval for sustainable funding arrangements when HEC faced severe fiscal constraints. His leadership protected academic continuity, safeguarded research programs, and preserved institutional credibility at a critical juncture.

At the collective leadership level, Prof. Dr. Iqbal Ahmad Khan, as current Chairman of the Punjab Higher Education Commission (PHEC)

and former Chairman of the Vice Chancellors’ Committee, contributed significantly to policy deliberations, inter-university coordination, and strategic planning. His introduction of R&D clusters, joint research platforms, inter-university collaboration, and structured Vice Chancellors’ Conferences provided a practical roadmap for university revamping. Such collaborative leadership is essential for translating national policy into institutional action across the higher education sector.

Over the past two decades, Pakistan’s higher education landscape has expanded from nearly 100 to over 250 universities, increasing access while progressively raising quality benchmarks. The HEC model proved influential enough that several neighboring countries adopted similar frameworks. This experience reinforces a fundamental global lesson: advanced economies invest heavily in higher education because it fuels industrial innovation, technological advancement, and sustainable economic growth.

Today, Pakistani graduates serve with distinction in industries, research organizations, academia, and policy institutions at home and abroad. Their impact affirms a critical truth—investment in higher education is not an expense; it is a nation-building strategy. Under the leadership of Prof.

Dr. Niaz Ahmad Akhtar, HEC has a renewed opportunity to consolidate past gains and advance a new innovation landscape centered on university mentoring, governance reforms, digitalization, and global graduate branding. If pursued with consistency and political support, this agenda can position Pakistan’s universities as true catalysts of industrial transformation and long-term national development.

The writer is former Professor and Chairman, Department of Entomology, University of Agriculture, Faisalabad

Analysis



Professor Dr. Muhammad Jalal Arif

Rathore’s Leadership Propels Landmark Overseas Kashmiris Convention

After weeks and months of planning and sincere day-and-night teamwork, the Almighty blessed the young parliamentarian and Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Raja Faisal Mumtaz Rathore, with a unique honor in the seventy-year history of the state when the Overseas Kashmiris Convention held in the capital, Muzaffarabad —the base

camp of the Kashmir Freedom Movement—achieved remarkable success. Although the credit primarily goes to the Kashmiri diaspora, who, out of love for their homeland, left their businesses and busy lives abroad to return to their native soil. Their purpose was to invest their hard-earned wealth in Kashmir, revive its culture, heritage, and traditional crafts, and help connect Kashmiri skills and products to the global market.

The Government of Azad Kashmir, along with the Government of Pakistan, deserves appreciation for providing resources and ensuring fool-proof security arrangements. Special thanks were expressed to the President of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of Army Staff Asim Munir as well as national security institutions, for strengthening the vision of Quaid-e-Azam that Kashmir is the jugular vein of Pakistan.

Prime Minister Raja Faisal Mumtaz Rathore is described as a God-gifted politician who inherited his love for the people from his father, former Prime Minister Raja Mumtaz Hussain Rathore. His political upbringing was influenced by the ideology and public-friendly philosophy of Pakistan’s great leaders, including Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto

and Benazir Bhutto.

With the guidance and support of the political leadership, he rose to the position of Prime Minister and achieved significant accomplishments in a short period through dedication and hard work. The article also states that despite conspiracies to sabotage the convention and block roads, the event remained highly successful. Leaders of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference

and other delegations participated and effectively presented the background and importance of the Kashmir freedom struggle.

This convention is expected to expose Indian atrocities in occupied Kashmir and create new opportunities for Kashmiri youth at the global level. Overseas Kashmiris were offered attractive incentives to invest in sectors such as tourism, minerals, hydropower, carpet weaving, and handicrafts.

The Prime Minister, in his address, highlighted key policy points and reaffirmed his commitment to constitutional supremacy, good governance, and merit. He also acknowledged the contributions of government officials, political workers, and members of civil society who played a role in making the convention successful.

The success of this convention is expected to have far-reaching economic, political, and social impacts on Pakistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir strengthening stability and providing hope for future generations.

The article concludes with a poetic tribute to the Prime Minister’s leadership:

“I started alone on the journey toward the destination,

People kept joining, and together it became a movement.”

Analysis



Shaukat Javed Mir

President Algeria sends message of condolences and sympathy to President Pakistan

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: The President of the Democratic People's Republic of Algeria Mr. Abdul Majeed Taboun sent a message of condolences, sympathy to the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Mr. Asif Ali Zardari, following the suicide bombing that occurred in the Khadija Grand Mosque in the Tarlay Kalan area of the capital Islamabad, while performing Friday prayer on February 6, 2026, which dozens after The dead and the wounded

President Abdul Majeed Taboun asserted his Pakistani counterpart, "This despicable criminal act, which is at odds with our permissible Islamic values, will only increase the strength, stability and cohesion of the brother-



hood of Pakistan to face this calamity and ensure security, security and stability prevail in their country." "The President of the People's Demo-

cratic Republic of Algeria, Mr. Abdelmadjid Tebboune, sent a message of condolence, sympathy, and compassion to the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Mr. Asif Ali Zardari, following the suicide bombing that occurred at the Khadija Tul Kubra Mosque in Tarlai Kalan in the capital Islamabad, during Friday prayers on February 6, 2026, resulting the killing of numerous victims and many others injured.

President Abdelmadjid Tebboune affirmed to his Pakistani counterpart that "this abhorrent criminal act, incompatible with our tolerant Islamic values, will only increase the brotherly Pakistani people's strength, resolve and cohesion to confront this scourge and ensure security, safety, and stability in their country."

Comrade Kim Jong Un Inspects Memorial Museum of Combat Feats at Overseas Military Operations under Construction



history as a banner of invincibility.

The Memorial Museum of Combat Feats at the Overseas Military Operations is, before being a simple architectural structure, the crystallization of the noble respect paid by our Party, country and people to the sacred souls of the heroic martyrs who will be immortal for all ages, and the platform of dignity and honour for respectfully exalting their worthwhile life, he added.

Stressing the need to create all elements to be ideologically and artistically perfect to the last detail, he clarified a series of tasks and ways of modification.

He called upon the service personnel, designers and creators, involved in the construction of the memorial museum, to deeply cherish the profound feelings of respect of the Party and people and successfully build the museum into a sacred temple, a grand monumental edifice representative of the era, which will be everlasting as a symbol of the feats and immortality of the martyrs.

KCNA

Kim Jong Un, general secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea and president of the State Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, inspected the Memorial Museum of Combat Feats at the Overseas Military Operations under construction on February 13.

He was greeted on the spot by Ju Chang Il, department director of the Central Committee of the WPK, commanding officers of the army units involved in the construction and officials of the design and creation units.

Going round the construction site, Comrade Kim Jong Un acquainted himself in detail with the progress in construction and creation and fitting of sculptures.

Highly appreciating that the outer wall decorative engravings were created well to preserve the theme-specific features, he said that the matchless bravery and mass heroism displayed by soldiers of the Korean People's Army, involved in the overseas military operations, must be imposingly etched in



Fasset Partners with Habib Rafiq to Revolutionize Digital Investment and Financial Inclusion in Pakistan

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Fasset, an American-founded digital banking and investment platform, announced its plans to enter the Pakistani market through a strategic partnership with Habib Rafiq Limited (HRL) at a high-profile event in Islamabad, signaling a major shift in how global capital interacts with Pakistani assets.

The gathering drew an influential crowd of senior government officials, business leaders, and digital economy stakeholders. Shaza Fatima Khawaja, Federal Minister for IT & Telecommunication attended as a Chief Guest, along with Jahanzaib Zahid Vice Chairman, HRL Group, Raafi Hossain, CEO and Co-Founder of Fasset, senior government officials, business leaders, interna-

tional organizations, embassy representatives, celebrities, and key influencers from across Pakistan.

Unlocking the "Hidden" Trillions

The partnership aims to bridge the gap between global investors and Pakistan's massive untapped asset pool. Key initiatives of the collaboration include:

- Asset Tokenization: Creating digital pathways to invest in Pakistan's \$1.5 trillion real estate and domestic asset market.
- Empowering the Gig Economy: Providing real-time, low-friction payout solutions for Pakistan's freelancers-the world's 4th largest freelance workforce.
- Foreign Direct Investment (FDI): Streamlining the flow of global capital into local projects through transparent, blockchain-enabled infrastructure.

Speaking at the event Shaza Fatima Khawaja, Federal Minister for IT & Telecommunication, said "Pakistan's digital economy is at a defining moment, powered by a young, skilled, and globally competitive workforce. As our freelancers and tech professionals continue to earn and export at scale, it is essential to build financial infrastructure that enables them to securely receive, manage, and reinvest their income. Partnerships like this highlight the role of innovation and international collaboration in expanding financial inclusion, attracting investment, and strengthening Pakistan's position in the global digital economy. In line with digital nation Pakistan vision under the leadership of Honourable Prime Minister of Pakistan."

Speaking at the event, Mohammad Raafi Hossain, CEO and Co-Founder of Fasset, said "Our mission is to enable 100 million people globally to own their wealth. Pakistan represents one of the most dynamic and high-potential markets, and this partnership with Habib Rafiq Limited will help connect global capital with Pakistani opportunity, ensuring that Pakistan's digital workforce and domestic assets are accessible to the world."

Jahanzaib Zahid, Vice Chairman, HRL Group added: "This collaboration opens new doors for overseas Pakistanis and global investors alike. By combining HRL's deep-rooted physical infrastructure with Fasset's digital expertise, we are building a transparent, accessible future for Pakistani investments."



Why Our Students Struggle: The Gap Between Theory and Reality



Hira Saqib

In Pakistan, we celebrate education as a path to success but there is a big problem: our schools and colleges focus too much on memorizing facts and not enough on learning by doing. Students spend years studying textbooks, passing exams, and scoring high marks, yet when they step into the real world, many feel unprepared and unsure.

Our education system rarely encourages hands-on experience. Labs, workshops, internships, or real-life projects are limited, often poorly organized, or treated as a formality. This means students graduate with certificates but without the practical skills, confidence, or problem-solving ability that workplaces and businesses actually need.

The impact is clear. Employers often find fresh graduates lacking essential skills. Innovation, entrepreneurship, and scientific research, areas where practical learning is key, remain weak. Students miss the chance to explore, experiment, and make mistakes safely, which is how real learning happens.

Countries that succeed in education balance theory with practice. Students there are exposed to real projects, work experience, and creative problem-solving from early on. Pakistan can do the same, but it will take investment, teacher training, and a willingness to change traditional methods.

Education should not just be about memorizing chapters; it should prepare students to think, do, and succeed in life. Bridging this gap between theory and practice is not just an option, it is a necessity if we want our youth to thrive in the real world.

Halal Academy launched, 'Golden Halal' seal unveiled at Makkah Halal Forum 2026

MAKKAH: The third edition of the Makkah Halal Forum 2026 witnessed the launch of the "Halal Academy" and the unveiling of the "Golden Halal" logo, a unified mark of excellence aimed at strengthening consumer confidence and elevating standards across the global halal industry.

The two initiatives represent a strategic step toward institutionalizing the sector, enhancing professional competencies, and establishing clear regulatory and quality benchmarks that reinforce the credibility and competitiveness of halal products in domestic and international markets.

Halal Academy launched, 'Golden Halal' seal unveiled at Makkah Halal Forum 2026

Minister of Commerce Majid bin Abdullah Al-Kassabi inaugurated the forum, organized by the Manafe'a initiative under the theme "Halal: A Professional Industry." The event took place at the Makkah Chamber of Commerce and Industry Exhibition and Events Center, drawing senior officials, industry leaders, regulatory authorities, and representatives of economic institutions from around the world.

In his address, Al-Kassabi stated that the forum reflects the qualitative transformation of the halal sector from a rapidly expanding market into an integrated, governance-driven industry founded on transparency and internationally recognized quality standards.

He noted that the Kingdom adopts a comprehensive strategic approach to consolidate its position as a global hub for halal industries through advanced legislative frameworks and regulatory modernization. He added that the Ministry of Commerce continues to foster a competitive ecosystem that supports innovation, entrepreneurship, and sustainable growth within this vital sector.

Halal Academy launched, 'Golden Halal' seal unveiled at Makkah Halal Forum 2026

Abdullah Saleh Kamel, President of the Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Development, President of the Federation of Saudi Chambers, and Chairman of the Makkah Chamber, said the forum had evolved into an influential international platform for policy direction and decision-making. He described it as a strategic venue that contributes to redefining the halal industry and shaping a future vision commensurate with its expanding footprint in the global economy.

He added that halal transcends the concept of a conventional industry, representing instead a comprehensive global framework that harmonizes ethical values with economic advancement. Hosting the forum in Makkah, he noted, underscores the principles of integrity, quality, transparency, and commitment that define the sector and resonate strongly with today's global consumers.

The forum also witnessed the signing of strategic memoranda of understanding, including an agreement between the Saudi Food and Drug Authority and the Halal Products Guarantee Agency of the Republic of Indonesia to enhance quality assurance mechanisms for halal products. Another memorandum was signed with the Central Islamic Council of Thailand to strengthen bilateral cooperation and expand technical collaboration in the halal sector.

Halal Academy launched, 'Golden Halal' seal unveiled at Makkah Halal Forum 2026

These agreements mark a significant step toward harmonizing standards, reinforcing accreditation reliability, and broadening international recognition of certifications issued by the Kingdom.

Bull & Bears

PSX 100-Share

Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index	
Current	Prev. Close
174,453.93	179,603.73
Day's High	Day's Low
179,969.22	173,574.26
Index Value	Change
37,382,003,783	−5149.80
Percentage	Time
−2.87%	16 Feb, 2026 4:30 pm
Europe: FTSE 100 Index	
Index Value	Change
10,465.56	+19.21
Percentage	Time
+0.21%	16 Feb, 4:26 pm GMT
USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average	
Index Value	Change
49,500.93	+48.95
Percentage	Time
+0.099%	13 Feb, 4:55 pm GMT-5
Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average	
Index Value	Change
56,806.41	−135.56
Percentage	Time
−0.24%	16 Feb, 3:45 pm GMT+9
Open Market Forex Rates	

Rising Use of AI Taxi

Services Overseas

Dangerous for Pakistani

Drivers, Says APP

Provincial Convener

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Syed Aman Shah, Provincial Convener Balochistan of Awaam Pakistan Party, has expressed deep concern over the rapid expansion of artificial intelligence (AI)-powered autonomous taxi services in Gulf countries and other developed nations. He stated that this swift technological transformation could pose serious threats to the livelihoods of thousands of Pakistani drivers working abroad, with consequences not only for their families but also for Pakistan's national economy.

He noted that advanced autonomous transport systems are being introduced in Gulf states and other developed countries, significantly reducing the demand for human drivers in the traditional transportation sector. A large number of Pakistani drivers are employed in these countries and send substantial foreign remittances back home every year. These remittances serve as the backbone of Pakistan's economy. Any disruption to their employment could therefore have serious negative economic repercussions.

Gold prices

drop sharply by

Rs.3,200 per tola

ISLAMABAD: Gold prices witnessed a significant decline in both domestic and international markets on Monday as 24 karat gold per tola rates decreased by Rs3,200 to settle at Rs523,762. All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association reported.

The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold fell by Rs2,743 to Rs449,041, while that of 10 grams of 22 karat gold dropped by Rs2,515 to Rs411,635.

In the international market, gold prices declined by \$32 to \$5,010 per ounce. Meanwhile, silver prices also recorded a downward trend. The price of silver per tola decreased by Rs55 to Rs8,164, while 10 grams of silver declined by Rs47 to Rs6,999. In the international market, silver prices fell by \$0.55 to \$76.80 per ounce.

FPCCI, Hungary to Boost

Economic Cooperation in Agri, IT,

and Energy Sectors

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The Hungarian Ambassador to Pakistan, Zoltán Varga-Haszonits, visited the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) to meet with President Atif Ikram Sheikh.

The meeting was also attended by FPCCI Vice Presidents Tariq Jadoon, Mr. Muhammad Raziq, Capital Office Chairman Karim Aziz Malik, Mr. Zahid Maqbool, Mr. Rashid Humayion, Mr. Badar Haroon, Mr. Dost Ali Jan, Mr. Asif Javed, Ms. Aliya Agha, Ms. Rabia Raheel, Ms. Ayesha Khan and.

The discussions focused on enhancing bilateral trade, investment, and industrial cooperation between Pakistan and Hungary. Both parties discussed increasing the current trade volume and the exchange of business delegations. Exploratory talks were held regarding potential joint venture projects.

President Atif Ikram Sheikh emphasized an



expanding cooperation in Agricultural Technology, Food Processing, Pharmaceuticals, and

IT. He highlighted that Pakistan is offering a “One-Window” facility and a favorable envi-

ronment for foreign investors. He specifically invited the Hungarian companies to explore: Energy and Infrastructure, Auto Parts Manufacturing. He invited Hungarian investors to take advantage of the vast opportunities within Pakistan's industrial hubs. Atif Ikram Sheikh, President FPCCI further said that There is a need for effective and practical steps to increase economic cooperation. Organizing B2B meetings and joint business forums will give a new dimension to our bilateral trade relations.

Ambassador Zoltán Varga-Haszonits reaffirmed that Hungary is keen to solidify its economic ties with Pakistan. He noted that Hungarian companies possess specialized expertise in, Modern Agricultural Machinery, Water Management, Healthcare Technology. The Ambassador assured full support for promoting investment and stated that the economic partnership between the two nations is set to enter a new phase of growth.

Hard Work

ISLAMABAD: Workers are busy in their working to install new gas pipe lines at Sector G-6 in Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

Fuel price hike to

cripple businesses,

hit exports: Saquib

Fayyaz Magoon

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Saquib Fayyaz Magoon, Chairman of the Businessmen Panel Progressive(BMPP) and Senior Vice President of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI), has reacted sharply to the latest increase in petroleum prices, warning that the decision will further strain an already fragile economy and undermine the competitiveness of local industry.

Saquib Fayyaz Magoon, described the hike as “another serious jolt” to businesses struggling with high energy tariffs and elevated borrowing costs. He urged the government to immediately review its decision and consider the wider economic fallout.



In a statement, he said higher fuel prices would inevitably push up transportation expenses, increasing the cost of moving raw materials to factories and delivering finished goods to markets.

“This translates directly into higher production costs,” he said, adding that the burden would ultimately be passed on to consumers through rising prices.

Standard Chartered’s Market

Outlook event offers key insights on

local and global economic trends

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Standard Chartered Pakistan held the Market Outlook 2026 at the Marriott Hotel, Karachi. This was the first session in a series of market outlook events that the Bank hosts for its clients throughout the year. The event brought together the Bank's Affluent clients and experts from its product partners to discuss the prevailing global and local economic landscape and share insights on the future of financial markets.

Saadya Riaz, Head, Wealth & Retail Banking, Standard Chartered Pakistan, stated, “As global dynamics evolve,



and Pakistan's economic fundamentals strengthen, informed asset allocation and disciplined strategy become even more critical.

Addressing clients, Manpreet

Gill, Chief Investment Officer, AMEE, Standard Chartered, via video message, highlighted that demand for gold has remained strong, driven by persistent geopolitical tensions

and the continued weakening of the US dollar.

The panel comprised Muhammad Asim, CFA, CIO, MCB Funds, Asif Ali Qureshi, CEO UBL Funds, and Iffat Zehra Mankani, CEO JS Investments. The session was moderated by Murtaza Hasan, Head of Investment Advisory, Standard Chartered Pakistan, and shed light on the macroeconomic outlook against the backdrop of global developments, wealth planning through efficient and diversified solutions, and the need for protection solutions in client portfolios.

Standard Chartered looks forward to organising similar events for its clients.

Kiran Asim

MULTAN: The meeting of the Board of Directors of Multan Jasmine Lions Club was held under the chairmanship of President Asma Arsalan. The ongoing and future welfare activities of the club were discussed in detail in the meeting. President Asma Arsalan, while addressing the gathering, said that ration and gifts will be distributed among the deserving and needy people during the holy month of Ramadan so that relief can be provided to as many fami-

lies as possible. She said that service to the people is the main objective of the club and under this spirit, all members should unite and participate in welfare works.

The meeting also discussed the annual visit and various administrative matters. On this occasion, Sadia Malik, Shaista Zeba, Rifat Azam, Alia Afzal, Shahnaz Zulfiqar Ali and Farhat Shafiq attended and presented their suggestions. At the end of the meeting, the commitment to make the welfare projects more effective was expressed.

Minister Highlights Youth Empowerment & Cultural

Economy at ISLOO International Fashion Tourism

Festival–2026

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: Logo of the ISLOO International Fashion Tourism Festival – 2026 was officially unveiled at a high-profile ceremony attended by diplomats, industry stakeholders, designers, and members of the creative sector.

The ceremony was graced by Aurangzeb Khan Khitchi, Honorable Minister for National Heritage & Culture, as Chief Guest, while Mr Jamal Shah (Senior Actor, Artist and Former Federal Minister for Culture) was the Brand Ambassador for this Fashion Tourism Festival from

Royal Rovers. Event was hosted by Mr. Adnan Hafeez, founder of the Royal Rovers.

In his remarks, the Minister emphasized the idea of Fashion Tourism as a key component of the creative economy and a strategic tool for cultural diplomacy and tourism promotion.

He appreciated the initiative for creating a scalable platform that empowers emerging talent, enhances international engagement, and strengthens Pakistan's positioning in the global fashion tourism value chain.

Organized under the flagship of Royal Rovers, the festival aims to

drive cross-border collaboration, youth entrepreneurship, participation of institutions and textile designing innovation.

The logo was conceptualized and designed by the students of National Textile University Faisalabad, acknowledging contributions from Dr. Zafar Javed and the university's faculty and students.

The ISLOO International Fashion Festival is expected to convene designers, creative entrepreneurs, and investors from Pakistan and abroad, positioning Islamabad as an emerging regional hub for fashion Tourism.



Pakistan, Sri Lanka agree to deepen security, sports cooperation

Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Interior and Narcotics Control Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Monday held a series of meetings with senior officials of Sri Lanka, agreeing to strengthen cooperation in security, law enforcement, and sports.

During his meeting with Sri Lankan Interior and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Ananda Wijepala, both sides agreed to enhance institutional cooperation between their interior ministries.

They decided to improve coordination to curb illegal immigration and drug trafficking and discussed joint training programmes for police and paramilitary forces.

Mohsin Naqvi offered training opportunities for Sri Lankan police officers at



Pakistan's National Police Academy, saying that exchange programmes would help improve professional capacity in both countries. He also invited his counterpart to visit Pakistan.

The Sri Lankan minister said his country would continue to promote cooperation with Pakistan in areas of mutual interest.

Separately, Mohsin Naqvi met Sri Lankan Minister for

Sports and Youth Affairs Sunil Kumara Gamage, where both sides agreed to expand collaboration in sports, particularly cricket.

They decided to promote joint

initiatives to strengthen sporting ties, and Naqvi extended an invitation to the sports minister to visit Pakistan.

In another meeting with Sri Lankan Defence Secretary Sampath Thuyacontha, the two sides discussed security cooperation and defence-related matters.

Both countries reaffirmed their commitment to enhancing bilateral security ties. The Sri Lankan official said his country had also suffered from terrorism and acknowledged Pakistan's strong support in counterterrorism efforts.

"We are deeply grateful for Pakistan's assistance," he said.

Mohsin Naqvi said Pakistan-Sri Lanka security relations had remained strong in every phase and would continue to grow through mutual trust and cooperation.

Khelta Punjab Pink Games, the biggest sports event for Punjab's women, conclude

Tahir Amin Malik

Khelta Punjab Pink Games 2026, the biggest sports event for women in the province, concluded with a grand closing ceremony at Nishtar Park Sports Complex Gymnasium Hall on Sunday. Lahore division were declared champions with 35 medals (25 gold, 10 silver), Faisalabad remained second with 25 medals (9 gold, 16 silver) while Multan finished third with 15 medals (9 gold, 6 silver medals).

Punjab Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs Malik Faisal Ayub Khokhar awarded winners' trophy to Lahore division team. He also distributed the cash prizes and trophies among other prominent performers.

Vice Chairman SBP Malik Sulaiman, Coordinator Sports Malik Anooosh Khokhar, Director General Sports Punjab Khizar Afzaal Chaudhry, Director Admin Abid Shaukat, Director Sports Rana Nadeem Anjum and all Divisional Sports Officers were also present at the closing ceremony.

Addressing the prize distribution ceremony, Punjab Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs Malik Faisal Ayub Khokhar lauded Secretary Sports Punjab Muhammad Ali, Director General Sports Punjab Khizar Afzaal Chaudhry and their team for making Khelta Punjab Pink Games a successful event. He said the sheer hard work of the administrators of Sports Board Punjab is also highly appreciable.

Punjab Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs Malik Faisal Ayub Khokhar said that a record 3,400 athletes from all



parts of the province participated in the 5-day Khelta Punjab Pink Games. "Such a massive women's sports event has never been held before in any province of the country".

Punjab Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs Malik Faisal Ayub Khokhar also awarded cash prizes worth Rs 7 million among the winning teams at the closing ceremony. "Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has also announced Rs 20 million rewards for the top performing players of the grand event".

Punjab Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs Malik Faisal Ayub Khokhar further said that several talented female athletes have been identified from the Khelta Punjab Pink Games and we are quite upbeat that these talented athletes will also win laurels for the country in

international sports events in future.

Punjab Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs Malik Faisal Ayub Khokhar also announced to award scholarships to top performers from Punjab Sports Endowment Fund. "In Platinum Category, the athletes will be awarded Rs 100,000 per month, in Gold Category the monthly scholarship is Rs 75,000 per month while in Silver Category, the players will be given Rs 50,000 per month".

Punjab Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs Malik Faisal Ayub Khokhar paid tribute to the Chief Minister Punjab for patronizing the sports of the province. He expressed his gratitude to Chief Minister Punjab for providing every daughter of the province an equal opportunity. "The credit for the success of Khelta Punjab Pink Games goes to the Chief Minister

of Punjab. New stadiums, sports courts and tracks will be built in International Sports City project".

Director General Sports Punjab Khizar Afzaal Chaudhry in his address expressed his gratitude to Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz for patronizing the Khelta Punjab Pink Games and announcing the hefty cash prizes for top performing athletes of the grand event.

Director General Sports Punjab Khizar Afzaal Chaudhry said Punjab Sports Department organized the Khelta Punjab Pink Games in a successful manner as per directions of Punjab Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs Malik Faisal Ayub Khokhar. "The entire team of Sports Board Punjab, including divisional, district and tehsil sports officers, coaches and other staff members put in extraordinary efforts for making this event a success".

Director General Sports Punjab Khizar Afzaal Chaudhry said that several new sports disciplines such as padel tennis were introduced in the Pink Games. "The next edition of Pink Games will be organized in more disciplined manner and at a bigger level".

Pink Games final medals table			
Division	Gold	Silver	Total
Lahore	25	10	35
Faisalabad	9	16	25
Multan	9	6	15
Rawalpindi	7	12	19
Bahawalpur	7	9	16
Gujranwala	7	7	14
Sargodha	2	5	7
Sahiwal	2	2	4
DG Khan	1	2	3.

112 Deserving Couples under the programme Dhee Rani

Raza Naqvi

ATTOCK: Tahira Aurangzeb, Member of the National Assembly and senior leader of Pakistan Muslim League-N, said that the Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif's welfare initiative "Dhee Rani" is a historic and commendable step for the daughters of the province and deserving families. She stated that this series of collective marriages is not only promoting social harmony but also providing practical support to underpriv-

ileged segments of society.

She was addressing a dignified ceremony in Attock as the chief guest, organized under the Chief Minister Punjab's "Dhee Rani" program for collective marriages. A total of 112 deserving couples were married collectively at the event. The Government of Punjab provided financial assistance of Rs. 200,000 per couple, for which the beneficiary families expressed their gratitude to the Chief Minister.

The ceremony was attended by Sheikh

Aftab Ahmed, Parliamentary Secretary for Information & Culture Punjab Shazia Rizwan, Chairman WASA and MPA Chaudhry Sher Ali Khan, Commissioner Rawalpindi Engineer Aamir Khattak, Deputy Commissioner Attock Rao Atif Raza, Director General Social Welfare Tariq Qureshi, District Police Officer Sardar Murrahan Khan, Additional Deputy Commissioner (Finance & Planning) Nosheen Israr, Assistant Commissioner Attock Arif Qureshi, PML-N leader Malik Hameed Akbar,

former Member Provincial Assembly Iftikhar Ahmed Khan, District President PML-N Saleem Shehzad, Senior Vice President Mir Naveed Akhtar, Senior Vice President Rawalpindi Javed Mughal, representative of MNA Malik Sohail Khan, Malik Nadeem Khan, Divisional Director Social Welfare Rana Shahid, Deputy Director Social Welfare Haseeb Khalid, Manager Sanat Zar Arif Mehmood Siddiqui and women leader Khalida Rana, along with other distinguished guests.

Purples and Blues secured victories in the RCAK Challenge Cup U-17 Cricket Tournament

Sports Desk

KARACHI: Two more matches were decided in the RCAK Challenge Cup Under-17 Cricket Tournament here at different Ground.

The highlights of the days play was some good batting by Muhammad Asif 61 and Deadly bowling by right arm leg spinner Ameer Hamza 5/35, Slow left arm spinner Shahzail Farooq 4/14.

Scores in Brief:

RCAK Under-17 Purples defeated RCAK Under-17 Greens by 3 Wickets. RCAK Greens 133 all-out in 27.5 overs. Muhammad Roman 27, Bilal Aqeel 22, Hassan Noman 18. Shahzil Farooq (sla) 4/14, Arbaz Ahmed 2/27.

In reply RCAK Under-17 Purples 135/7 in 24.3 overs. Muhammad Naveed 34, Arbaz Ahmed 24 not out, Muhammad Bilal 21. Abdul Wahab (rlb) 3/46, Syed Asif Pai 2/19.

In the 2nd Match RCAK Under-17 Blues beat RCAK Under-17 Yellow by 34 runs. RCAK Under-17 Blues 223 allout in 39.4 overs. Muhammad Asif 61 11x4, Muhammad Hasnain 55 5x4 2x6, Efaz uddin 21. Abdul Salam (mf) 3/33, Sagheer Ahmed 2/28, Muhammad Murtaza Taji 2/31, Abdul Aziz 2/47.

In reply RCAK Under-17 Yellow 189 all-out in 29.5 overs. Ashar ullah 43 6x4 1x6, Talal Mehmood 41, Asif ur Rehman 30, Sagheer Ahmed 27. Ameer Hamza (rlb) 5/35, Arshman Riaz 2/31, Muhammad Ali 2/40.

Sindhi Journalists Panel Backs Shah Muhammad Detho for NPC Vice President Role



News Desk

ISLAMABAD: A meeting of Sindhi journalists affiliated with the Journalist Panel was held at the National Press Club, where deliberations were held regarding the nomination for the post of Vice President in the upcoming annual elections of the National Press Club Islamabad. Several names were proposed during the meeting; however, a consensus was reached on the name of Shah Muhammad Detho as the final candidate.

It was also decided that soon after the elections, another meeting of all Sindhi journalists associated with the Journalist Panel would be convened.

The participants further agreed that, upon being elected as Vice President, Shah Muhammad Detho would call a meeting of Journalist Panel members every three months to ensure effective steps for the betterment of the Sindhi community, the National Press Club, and the broader journalistic fraternity.

During the meeting, Shah Muhammad Detho's performance over the past two years was highly appreciated, and he was paid tribute for his services. The participants also expressed hope that if elected again as Vice President, he would make his performance even more effective.

The meeting was chaired by senior journalist Ejaz Ali Mehr.

Among those who attended were: President PRA senior journalist M. B. Soomro, journalist Asad Shar, senior journalist Shakir Solangi, journalist Nazeer Ahmed Charn, journalist Jameel Babar, journalist Ghulam Rasool Kumbhar, journalist Zulfikar Gramani, journalist Tahira Baloch, journalist Muslim Mirani, journalist Zahid Jatoi, journalist Sarwan Chandio, journalist Tanveer Chandio, journalist Manzoor Chandio, journalist Zahid Korai, journalist Rehan Ghouri, journalist Qadir Ghouri, journalist Akhtar Mehr, journalist Ali Bux Lanjwani, journalist Aamir Abbasi, journalist Athar Rajput, journalist Majid Khaskheli, journalist Muhammad Ali, journalist Arif Jalalani, journalist Saddam Hussain, journalist Irfan Khaskheli, and others.

Earlier, a separate meeting of Sindhi journalists working in Islamabad was also held regarding the Press Club elections, which was attended by the above-mentioned colleagues as well as senior journalist Qurban Baloch and senior journalist Abdul Razzaq Khatti

Awards ceremony of 21st TDCP International Cholistan Desert Rally

BAHAWALPUR: The prize distribution ceremony of the 21st TDCP International Cholistan Desert Rally was held in a grand manner at TDCP Resort Derawar, where trophies and prizes were awarded to winning drivers and navigators.

Senior Provincial Minister Maryam Aurangzeb attended as chief guest, accompanied by provincial ministers Kazim Ali Pirzada, Sohaib Ahmad Bherth, Bilal Akbar Khan, Parliamentary Secretary Rana Arif Iqbal, and MPA Sahibzada Gazain Abbasi.

Addressing the ceremony, Maryam Aurangzeb congratulated participants and highlighted that the revival of major cultural and sporting events reflects the vision of CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif.

She noted that large-scale activities in Cholistan promote tourism, employment, and regional economic growth, with international participation portraying Pakistan's positive cultural image.

International Day for the Prevention of Violent Extremism held

Quratulain Asim

MULTAN: A special awareness program was organized at The Women's University Multan on the occasion of the International Day on Prevention of Violent Extremism.

According to the spokesperson, the program aimed to counter violent extremism, promote peace and interfaith harmony.

The program was organized under the supervision of the Directorate of Student Affairs (DSA) in collaboration with the Department of Mass Communication, Department of Political Science, Department of International Relations, and Depart-

ment of History and Pakistan Studies.

The coordination of the event was done by Dr. Asma Akbar, Chairperson Department of Political Science as the focal person.

The event was graced by the patronage of the Vice Chancellor of the Women's University Multan, Professor Dr. Kulsoom Paracha, while the special guests included DSP Headquarters Police Department Multan Jafar Bukhari and Sub-Inspector Bushra Ahmed, who highlighted the prevention of extremism and the role of youth.

On this occasion, Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Kulsoom Paracha said that extremism

undermines the roots of any society, therefore, combating it through education, tolerance and dialogue is the need of the hour. She said that universities are not only educational institutions but also centers of social reform, where students are given awareness of critical thinking, tolerance and interfaith harmony.

She further said that the tendencies of extremism can be reduced by attracting the young generation towards positive activities, research and dialogue.

Dr. Kulsoom Paracha reiterated the commitment that The Women's University Multan will continue its responsibilities for the promotion of peace, tolerance

and harmony in the society. DSP Jafar Bukhari said in his address that the law enforcement agencies are taking practical steps to eradicate extremism, however, the cooperation of educational institutions and students is indispensable in this regard.

He urged the students to adopt a responsible attitude on every platform including social media and report any suspicious activity to the relevant institutions.

Sub-Inspector Bushra Ahmed said that women and young students can become ambassadors of peace in the society.

He said that tolerance, dialogue and mutual respect are the basis of a peaceful society. At



the end of the ceremony, special prayers will be offered for the security, stability and interfaith

harmony of the country and it was pledged that such activities will be continued in the future

so that the message of peace and moderation can be spread among the young generation.

47th Meeting of LJCP

ISLAMABAD: Mr. Justice Yahya Afridi, thc Chief Justice of Pakistan/ Chairman, Law and Justice Commission of Pakistan chairing the 47th meeting of the LJCP at the Supreme Court of Pakistan on Monday.



President Zardari offers condolences on demise of Gopang tribe chief

Bureau Report

RAHIM YAR KHAN,: President of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari visited Basti Ranjhay Khan to offer condolences and participate in the Fateha for the late chief of the Gopang tribe, Sardar Ranjhay Khan Gopang. The President extended his heartfelt sympathies to the bereaved family and prayed for the eternal peace of the departed soul. He met with the deceased's brother, Sardar Habib ur Rehman Khan Gopang, who serves as a Member of the Provincial Assembly (MPA) and also as the District President of Pakistan Peoples Party Rahim Yar Khan. During the visit, prominent



representatives and elders of the Gopang tribe were also present. They expressed gratitude to the President for personally visiting and standing with the family in

their moment of grief. The visit reflected solidarity, respect for tribal leadership, and the strong bond between the political leadership and the local community of Rahim Yar Khan. On this occasion, President Asif Ali Zardari also placed the traditional turban of chieftainship upon the head of the late leader's eldest son, Chief Sardar Noor-ul-Zaman Khan Gopang, formally conferring upon him the honour and responsibilities of tribal leadership. Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider, MNA Makhdoom Mustafa Mahmood, and President Pakistan People's Party South Punjab Makhdoom Ahmed Mahmood were also present on the occasion.

NHA operates with a 43 billion Pkr surplus, defying “Loss-Making” Labels

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The recent reports labeling the National Highway Authority (NHA) as a loss-making State-Owned Enterprise (SOE) are rooted in a fundamental misunderstanding of accounting entries versus actual operational health. While news outlets cite a staggering deficit, a closer look at the audited financial statements indicates that the NHA is not experiencing actual financial losses. For the F.Y. 2024-25, the Authority reported a robust Net Operating Income of 43.612 billion PKR, calculated from 122.021 billion PKR in revenue against 78.409 billion PKR in operating expenditures. The reported “accounting deficit” of 288.541 billion PKR



arises almost entirely from non-cash entries—specifically 133.771 billion PKR in depreciation and 193.488 billion PKR in finance costs—which do not involve any direct cash outflows. To ensure long-term sustainability, the NHA is undergoing a transformation aimed at operational efficiency and debt restructuring. Under the leadership of Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan, the recent milestones include a 63% growth in operating income (rising from 66.8 billion to 108.27 billion PKR) and a 31% reduction in maintenance-related expenditures. The Authority has also revolutionized revenue collection, with 81% of tolling now conducted via M-Tag as of January 2025. Through the ADB-funded SOE Transformation Programme, the NHA is currently rationalizing its debt by classifying projects into categories based on their commercial viability. These measures reinforce the fact that the NHA's operations remain cash-positive and are a testament to its financial resilience.

Pakistan slams Israeli settlement expansion in West Bank

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Monday strongly condemned the latest attempt by the Israeli occupying power to convert areas of the Occupied West Bank into so-called state property, and to expand illegal settlement activities. In a statement, the Foreign Office said that such steps are in clear violation of international law as well as relevant United Nations Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, and must be rejected by the international community. The occupying power's continued disregard for inter-

national law and its provocative actions undermine the prospects for a just, comprehensive, and lasting peace in the region. Pakistan called on the international community to take concrete measures to end Israeli impunity and ensure respect for international law, the foreign office added. Pakistan reaffirmed full support for the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and for the establishment of an independent, viable, and contiguous State of Palestine, based on pre-1967 borders, with Al Quds Al Sharif as its capital.

Supreme Court sets 45-day target to clear death row, life term cases

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan has set a 45-day target to clear all pending death sentence and life imprisonment cases, as part of efforts to fast-track criminal justice reforms. According to an official statement, the initiative is being implemented under the leadership of the Chief Justice Yahya Afridi, with a focus on reducing long-pending criminal appeals. The court said that since October 2024, the total

number of pending criminal cases has declined from 19,549 to 12,705, reflecting a significant improvement in case disposal. Between February 9 and 14, 2026, the Supreme Court disposed of 354 cases related to death sentences and life imprisonment. During the same period, 131 new cases were filed. On a weekly basis, the disposal rate was nearly 270 per cent higher than the number of newly instituted cases, indicating accelerated judicial processing.

The statement said it has been decided that all death penalty cases pending up to January 2026 will be taken up and decided on a priority basis. The Chief Justice has also issued directives to streamline and expedite jail petitions related to undertrial prisoners, aiming to improve access to justice and reduce prolonged detention. Officials said the measures are part of broader institutional reforms to ensure timely adjudication and strengthen public confidence in the judicial system.

PM Shehbaz, Chancellor Stocker co-chair CEOs’ forum of renowned Austrian-Pakistani companies



Spokesman Report

VIENNA: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and the Federal Chancellor of the Republic of Austria, Christian Stocker on Monday co-chaired a forum of CEOs of renowned Austrian and Pakistani companies here at the Federal Chancellery. The companies represented at the CEOs Forum included those working in renewable energies, energy efficiency, industrial manufacturing and construction, IT, textiles, surgical equipment, leather and sports products, healthcare, tourism and hospitality and food and agro-industries. In their remarks, both leaders highlighted the enormous poten-

tial to enhance trade, cooperation in AI and digital technology and other priority sectors. The prime minister invited the Austrian businesses and companies to expand their investments in Pakistan, particularly in the priority sectors for win-win partnerships between the private sectors of both countries. The prime minister also invited Austrian companies to visit Pakistan and participate in the upcoming EU-Pakistan Business Forum to be held in Islamabad in April this year. Later, the prime minister addressed the Pakistan-Austria Business Forum, organized by the Austrian Chamber of Commerce, WKO.

Jam Kamal warns security comes first in Pak-Afghan trade ties



Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan has said that Pakistan will not compromise on national security in its trade and diplomatic engagement with Afghanistan, declaring terrorism originating from Afghan soil “unacceptable.” In a strong statement on Pakistan-Afghanistan trade relations, Jam Kamal said peace, commerce, and dialogue were conditional on the elimination of terrorism. He stressed that militants using Afghan territory must be stopped, adding that Pakistan has been raising its concerns for years with supporting

evidence. The minister said that resolving the issue of terrorism was essential before any engagement at any level, warning that recent months had seen a worrying rise in militant attacks. “Pakistan supports dialogue and trade, but security remains our top priority,” he said. He added that progress in other areas would not be possible as long as terrorists continued to find safe havens. Jam Kamal reiterated that Pakistan's sovereignty and national security were paramount, stressing that meaningful improvement in bilateral relations would remain difficult without eliminating terrorism.