



# Daily The Spokesman



## Tariq Rahmam starts office as Prime Minister

Prime Minister Tariq Rahmam started his office today, a day after swearing-in as the head of the new government. Tariq Rahmam arrived at the Cabinet Division in Bangladesh Secretariat here at around 12.30 pm to chair the first cabinet meeting of his government. On his arrival, Cabinet Secretary Dr Nasimul Ghani and Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister ABM Abdus Sattar welcomed the new Prime Minister.



## Bilawal expresses grief over Karachi gas leak blast, seeks immediate probe

Chairman of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has expressed deep sorrow over the tragic loss of lives caused by a gas leakage explosion and subsequent building collapse in Karachi. In a statement issued here the party secretariat, Bilawal Bhutto extended heartfelt condolences to the families who lost their loved ones in the incident that occurred in the Soldier Bazaar area.

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## Inauguration

ISLAMABAD: Chairperson BISP, Ms. Rubina Khalid, inaugurates the Benazir Nashonuma Facilitation Centre for people at Molvi Ameer Shah Hospital.



## Trump praises PM Shehbaz, Field Marshal Munir at maiden Board of Peace meeting

APP

WASHINGTON: President of the United States Donald Trump on Thursday appreciated the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of Defence Forces and Chief of the Army Staff Field Marshal Asim Munir as he spoke at the inaugural meeting of the Board of Peace here.

"Thank you very much, Prime Minister Sharif. I like this man ... and field marshal, a great general, (and a) great field marshal," Trump told the international gathering of world leaders including those from Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkiye, the United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Indonesia, Azerbaijan, Qatar and others.

Referring to the Pakistan-India



war in May last year, the US president recalled Prime Minister

Shehbaz Sharif's remarks that he (Trump) had saved the lives of 25

million people by intervening to stop the war between nuclear

powers.

"I said, '25 million lives? Could have been much more, actually.' But it was really a beautiful thing you said that in front of a group of people," Trump said addressing Prime Minister Shehbaz who was also part of the meeting.

He said that the war raged. They were fighting — 11 jets were shot down... Pakistan and India were really going at it, and then it got worse, he added.

He said that after his intervention, both the countries reached a deal within two three days.

"They made a good deal, and I got to like them, the prime minister and the field marshal — who's a tough man, a tough good fighter, good, serious fighter. I like good fighters, actually," Trump remarked.

## Pakistan summons Afghan envoy over Bajaur terror attack

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Office summoned the Afghan Deputy Head of Mission on Wednesday and delivered a strong demarche to the Afghan Taliban regime on the terrorist attack in Bajaur on February 16, 2026, in which 11 Pakistani soldiers were martyred.

"Pakistan condemned in the strongest possible terms the vehicle-borne suicide terrorist attack followed by a fire raid on Pakistan military and law enforcement agencies' post in Bajaur carried out by Fitna Al Khwarij / TTP," a press release issued by the Foreign Office spokesperson on Thursday said.

The ministry conveyed serious concern that Fitna Al Khwarij / TTP, whose entire leadership is based in Afghanistan, operates with impunity from Afghan soil.

It was rephrased that Pakistan has repeatedly received assurances from the Afghan Taliban regime, but, regrettably, with no visible or concrete actions.

The Afghan Taliban regime has been told to take immediate, concrete and verifiable measures against all terror groups operating from its territory, including their leadership, the FO spokesperson added.

The spokesperson said that the Afghan Taliban regime has also been categorically informed that Pakistan reserves the right to respond and eliminate any Khwarij belonging to the Fitna Al Khwarij group along with their affiliates, wherever they are located, to ensure the safety of its soldiers, civilians and territorial boundaries.

## 16 killed in Karachi building collapse after gas explosion

Bureau Report

KARACHI: At least 16 people were killed and more than 14 others injured after a gas cylinder explosion ripped through a residential building in the Soldier Bazaar's Gul Rana Colony area of Karachi on Thursday.

The intensity of the blast caused the roof of the building to collapse, trapping several residents under the debris.

Rescue officials said the affected structure was a three-storey building with one room on each floor.

A large portion of the building was reduced to rubble, complicating relief efforts.

Authorities said narrow streets in the locality were making it difficult to move heavy machinery to the site.

However, rescue teams continued operations without interruption.

According to rescue sources, 10 bodies

— including a woman and a 10-year-old girl identified as Nazia — have been recovered from the debris so far.

More than 14 injured individuals were shifted to nearby hospitals for medical treatment.

Rescue workers also managed to pull another young girl alive from the rubble and provided her with urgent medical care.

Speaking to the media, Rescue 1122 Director General Brigadier Wajid said that initial information suggested the explosion occurred on the first floor of the building.

He said the blast was likely caused by a gas cylinder or a gas suction machine; however, an investigation is going on to determine the exact reason.

Brigadier Wajid said there are fears that more residents could still be trapped beneath the rubble, as rescue teams race against time to locate survivors.

According to rescue sources, 10 bodies

## No deal for PTI founder: Attaullah Tarar

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Attaullah Tarar has strongly rejected media speculations regarding any "deal" with the incarcerated founder of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).

"There is no deal or leniency for the PTI founder," Tarar said, adding that any impression of the government granting him concessions is "entirely false and misleading".

The minister, in a news statement, said the PTI founder is a convicted criminal serving sentences handed down by the courts.

He maintained that the news suggesting any "special relaxation" is baseless and has no reality.

A Leading National Daily

ABC Certified

فرمان رسوی

تمہارے ایسے بھائیں کیا کہ کہے ایسے بھائیں کیا کہے  
لے لے لے لے کے کوئی کوئی شہر آجات کے  
دن یعنی ایمان کی تھوڑے ایسی بھائیں کیا کہے  
وہ سچے چیزیں مٹا دیں یعنی  
(6135 نمبر پر ٹیکنیکی سٹیٹ ٹریک)

Barkat Rice Mills (Pvt) Limited

## PM Shehbaz in Washington to attend inaugural Board of Peace meeting



News Desk

Fatemi.

Besides attending the meeting of the Board of Peace, he is also likely to hold meetings with senior US officials during the visit.

Prime Minister Shehbaz's visit to the United States reflects Pakistan's role as a member of the Board of Peace for the establishment of global peace and its growing diplomatic successes.

The visit will also provide an opportunity for discussions on bilateral matters, as well as global issues of mutual concern.

## Compensation cheques handed over to 36 martyrs' families of Islamabad Imambargah attack



City Desk

However, the cheques are being delivered to the heirs of the remaining four martyrs hailing from Taunsa Sharif, Talagang, Astore, and Skardu.

As per the announcement, each martyr's family has received a cheque of Rs5 million. Following the February 6 attack, the prime minister had announced financial assistance of Rs5 million for each martyr's family during his visit to the Tarlai Imambargah on February 11.

## Four terrorists killed in Lakki Marwat operation: ISPR

City Desk

Weapons and ammunition were recovered from the killed terrorists, who were actively involved in multiple terrorist activities and were wanted by law enforcement agencies.

The ISPR said a clearance and sanitisation operation is continuing in the area to eliminate any remaining threats and ensure complete security.

ISPR added that the counter-terrorism campaign will proceed at full pace under Azm-e-Istehkam, approved by the Federal Apex Committee under the National Action Plan, to eradicate foreign-sponsored and supported terrorism from the country.

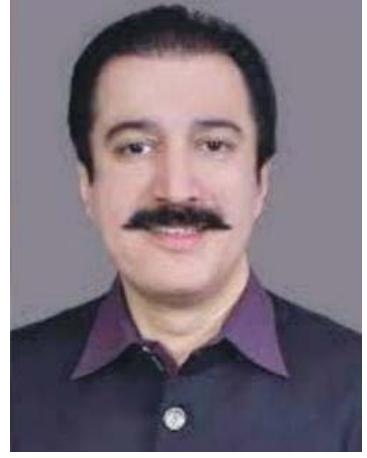
# AJK Prime Minister extends Ramazan greetings, highlights teachings of patience and unity

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Faisal Mumtaz Rathore has extended his heartfelt congratulations to Muslims all across the world on the arrival of the holy month of Ramazan.

In his message, the AJK premier, while describing Ramazan as a blessed month, say that the sacred month teaches patience, tolerance, sacrifice, and piety."

Ramazan provides us an opportunity for self-introspection, self-accountability and above all the opportunity to connect and strengthen our relationship with Allah (SWT)", the



pm remarked.

Fasting, he said, fosters self-discipline and at the same time cultivates compassion, motivating people to support the needy, orphans, and other underprivileged members of society.

He further stated that this blessed month conveys a message of unity, brotherhood, tolerance, and mutual respect."These key principles together can help build a peaceful and welfare-oriented society provided they are put into practice with a sense of sincerity", he maintained.

The Prime Minister emphasized that during the sacred days of Ramazan, special prayers should be

offered for the oppressed Muslims all across the world in particular the people of Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir and Palestine.

He also urged the public to observe cleanliness, discipline, and social responsibilities during the holy month."

Alongside their acts of worship the economically well off people must remember the poor and needy and generously support those in need", he added."May Allah Almighty grants us the ability to understand and act upon the true spirit of Ramazan, and may this blessed month bring with it peace, progress, and prosperity for the Muslim Ummah", he prayed.

## Free meal

KARACHI: People having pre-dawn meal or 'Sehri' to start their fasting during the Muslim's holy fasting month of Ramazan, at a free meal distribution center run by a charity group, in Provincial Capital.



Photo: Online

## Gas pressure guaranteed during Sehri and Iftar across Multan region

Kiran Asim

MULTAN: On the instructions of the federal government, orders have been issued to ensure uninterrupted supply of gas with full pressure during Sehri and Iftar in Multan region. General Manager Sui Gas Ahmed Jawad Khakwani told the media that arrangements have been made for continuous supply of gas with better pressure to Sui Gas consumers from 3 am to 10:30 pm.

General Manager Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited Multan said that on the orders of Prime Minister

Mian Shahbaz Sharif and Federal Minister for Petroleum and Federal Secretary, Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited is providing better facilities to the gas consumers of Multan, Bahawalpur, Dera Ghazi Khan and Sahiwal divisions in the districts of Sahiwal, Awakara, Pakpattan, Multan, Khanewal, Vehari, Lodhran, Bahawalpur, Rahim Yar Khan, Bahawalnagar, Dera Ghazi Khan, Rajanpur, Layyah, Muzaffargarh and Kot Addu. General Manager Sui Gas Multan Region Ahmed Jawad Khakwani said that gas consumers should keep the stoves



completely closed after using Sui gas so that Sui gas consumers can avoid any accident.

He further said that the leakage of Sui gas should be reported to the Sui Gas Department immediately. General Manager Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited South Punjab said that the old and worn Sui gas pipelines are being replaced, which will eliminate the leakage of Sui gas.

Special teams have been mobilized in the field for monitoring and checking of gas supply. Ahmed Jawad Khakwani further said that

## PMLN Candidate's Ch Jahanzaib Inaugurated of New Classrooms in Mamu Kanjan School

Zafar Chishti

MANUKANJAN: Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN) Candidate of PP-103 Mamu Kanjan, Chaudhary Muhammad Jahanzaib Safdar along with CEO Education Rao Abdul Kareem, Deputy District Education Officer (Female) Naheed Channa and Deputy District Education Officer (Male) Waseem formally inaugurated newly constructed classrooms at a local educational institution.

A large number of teachers, students and respected members of the community attended the inauguration ceremony. On this occasion, the school administration briefed the distinguished guests and informed them that the construction of new classrooms would provide students with a better learning environment and help overcome the issue of overcrowded classes.

Addressing the ceremony, Chaudhary Muhammad Jahanzaib Safdar stated that the current government is taking practical steps to improve the educa-



tion sector.

He said that in the past 25 years, the Education Department had not received as much funding as it has now under the leadership of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif and Rao Sikandar Hayat Punjab Education Minister for infrastructure develop-

ment and the promotion of education. He further said that Mamu Kanjan is an area that has long suffered from various deprivations, including a lack of educational facilities.

He expressed his determination that, InshaAllah, he will continue to work day and night for the develop-

ment of Mamu Kanjan and will strive to secure the rights of its people.

He added that all available resources will be utilized to bring Mamu Kanjan out of deprivation, and more projects in the field of education will soon be initiated to ensure better and quality education for the new generation.

## Ex-Justice Ghulam Mustafa Mughal Named New AJK Chief Election Commissioner

Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: The President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, on the advice of the Prime Minister of Pakistan, has approved the appointment of Justice (Retired) Ghulam Mustafa Mughal as the new Chief Election Commissioner of Azad Jammu and Kashmir.



Following the approval, the Department of Law, Justice, Parliamentary Affairs and Human Rights, Government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, has formally issued the notification regarding his appointment as Chief Election Commissioner.

The appointment has been made in accordance with the relevant constitutional and legal provisions.

## Pakistan Secures Seat at Diplomatic High Table with Board of Peace Entry, Vows Palestine Support

Bureau Report



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador Masood Khan, former President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir and former Ambassador of Pakistan to the United States and the United Nations, has described Pakistan's participation in the newly convened Board of Peace as a significant diplomatic breakthrough, stating that it provides Islamabad its first opportunity at this scale to sit at the "diplomatic high table" and influence critical decisions concerning Gaza and the broader Middle East.

In a televised interview, Ambassador Khan underscored that Pakistan brings to the Board a proven record of advocating peaceful settlement of disputes, whether on Kashmir, Palestine, or other international conflicts. He emphasized that Pakistan is not a bystander but a stakeholder, having consistently lobbied—alongside a group of Muslim countries—for an immediate ceasefire and an end to what he termed the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe and genocide in Gaza.

Referring to recent developments, he noted that ceasefire violations continue, with 600 Gazans reportedly killed since the ceasefire came into effect, alongside controversial decisions regarding annexation of the West Bank and the expansion of illegal settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories. He stressed that the credibility of the Board of Peace would depend on its ability to halt hostilities, end the humanitarian blockade, restore full humanitarian access, and ensure Israeli withdrawal from occupied territories.

## Nawaz Sharif & Maryam Nawaz Launch AJK Election Push Next Week

Abdul Majeed Tahir

ISLAMABAD: The leader of the Pakistan Muslim League (N) (PML-N), Nawaz Sharif, is scheduled to undertake an important two-day visit to Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) next week. According to sources, he will arrive in Muzaffarabad on February 23.

Chief Minister of Punjab Maryam Nawaz will accompany Nawaz Sharif during the visit. Important meetings with the party leadership and workers of PML-N in AJK have been scheduled.

During his visit, Nawaz Sharif will hold consultations with PML-N AJK President Shah Ghulam Qadir and Parliamentary Leader Raja Farooq Haider Khan, along with other senior party leaders. Discussions will focus on the prevailing political situation, organizational matters, and strategy for the upcoming general elections in AJK.

Sources indicate that meetings are also expected with candidates who have submitted applications for party tickets in the forthcoming elections. Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs Amir Muqam has confirmed Nawaz Sharif's visit to Muzaffarabad. Additionally, senior party leaders, including Rana Sanaullah, will accompany him during the visit.

Nawaz Sharif is scheduled to conclude his visit and depart on February 24. It is noteworthy that a previous visit to Muzaffarabad had been scheduled earlier but was later postponed.

## PSCA Implements Foolproof Security Arrangements in Ramazan-ul-Mubarak Across Punjab

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Punjab Safe Cities Authority (PSCA) has implemented a comprehensive and foolproof security plan across the province to ensure safety of citizens and maintain a peaceful environment during the holy month of Ramazan. Special virtual patrolling teams have been constituted at all Smart Safe City Centers across Punjab, including Lahore, to monitor security related activities round the clock.

According to the Safe City spokesperson, cameras at more than 21 Ramazan and Sahulat Bazaars in Lahore have been integrated into the Safe City system, where live surveillance is being carried out. In addition, cameras installed at more than 32 public parks and over 163 mosques and 'Imambargahs' have also been connected to the Safe City network to ensure security of citizens during offering prayers and public gatherings.

The spokesperson added that during Ramazan, Police Communication Officers are performing their duties in three shifts, ensuring 24/7 operational readiness to effectively respond to any emergency or untoward situation. Punjab Safe Cities Authority remains committed to utilizing modern technology to provide a secure and peaceful environment for citizens during this sacred month of spiritual devotion and religious observance. Citizens are encouraged to immediately report any suspicious activity or emergency by calling Punjab Emergency Helpline 15 to ensure swift action against criminal and other nefarious elements.

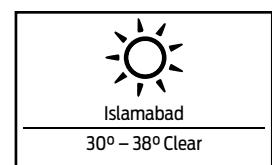
## First Iftar arranged at Negahban Dastarkhwan in Rawalpindi hospitals

RAWALPINDI: The district administration on Thursday arranged the first Iftar at the Negahban Dastarkhwan set up at District Headquarters (DHQ) Hospital and Holy Family Hospital, where Member National Assembly Tahir Aurangzeb and Deputy Commissioner Dr Hassan Waqar Cheema joined guests to break their fast.

Assistant Commissioner (City) Iman Zafar, hospital administrators and other relevant officials were also present on the occasion.

Speaking on the occasion, MNA Tahir Aurangzeb said that, in line with the vision of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, providing dignified and quality facilities to deserving and under-treatment patients during the Holy Month of Ramazan remained the government's top priority.

First Iftar arranged at Negahban Dastarkhwan in Rawalpindi hospitals. She said initiatives like the Negahban Dastarkhwan reflected public welfare and would provide tangible relief to the poor and needy.


**SERVICES**
**Namaz Timings**

Fajr	5:25 am
Zohr	12:22 pm
Asr	4:16 pm
Maghrib	5:56 pm
Isha	7:19 pm

**EMERGENCY**

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

**ENQUIRY**

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

**HOSPITALS**

CMH	561111
MH	561116
MH	561116
Cantt Hospital	9270907-11
DHQ	555631-4
RGH	9290301-7
Holy Family	9290322-7
PIMS	9261170-79
Polyclinic	9218300-09
Shifa International	4603666

**DEPARTMENTS**

CDA	921334-43
CDA	9208301-04
Met Office	9250360-6
RDA	5555864
TMA	5770886
Cantonment Board	9270151-3

*Punjab govt airline to start operations in April*

LAHORE: The airline of the Punjab government will start operations in April. Initially, seven passenger planes are being purchased for Punjab Airlines.

Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif's government is working at lightning speed to run the province's own airline.

Punjab government official sources revealed that the Punjab Airlines will operate only domestically for two years in the first phase. The airline will also start international flights two years after the start of operations.

Government sources said that Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif's existing helicopter will also be included in Punjab Airlines, rather it will be the first asset of the Punjab Airlines.

After the establishment of the provincial government's airline, Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif herself will use Punjab Airlines aircraft, no separate special aircraft will be purchased for her. All ministers and officials of the Punjab government will also travel on this airline.

Sources said that a strategy is being devised to not put additional burden on the provincial treasury to establish Punjab Airlines.

The existing and new aircraft will be used entirely for profit. The new aircraft will be used by the Chief Minister along with passengers, when the Chief Minister uses the Punjab Airlines aircraft, the full fare will be paid.

# Malaysian HC visits NUML to enhance academic collaboration

**Spokesman Report**

ISLAMABAD: H. E. Dato' Mohammad Azhar Mazlan, High Commissioner of Malaysia to Pakistan, visited the National University of Modern Languages (NUML) to explore opportunities for academic collaboration and further to strengthen bilateral educational ties between Pakistan and Malaysia.

The High Commissioner called on the Rector, NUML, and held a meeting attended by DG NUML, Brig Muhammad Rafiq Khan, Mr. Mohd Syafik Firdaus Bin Hasbullah, Counsellor, High Commission of Malaysia, Dean, Faculty of Languages, Dr. Jameel Asghar Jami, and Director, National International Linkages Office (NILO). The Rector briefed the High Commissioner on NUML's academic programs,



international linkages, and its role in promoting language and cultural diplomacy.

Both sides discussed enhancing people-to-people relations through student and faculty exchange programs, joint research, seminars, academic publications, and possible initiatives

such as establishing an Urdu Chair at a Malaysian university, introducing Malay language and cultural programs at NUML, and exploring scholarship opportunities.

H. E. Dato' Mohammad Azhar Mazlan also delivered an insightful

lecture on "Malaysia-Pakistan Bilateral Relations," followed by an interactive Q&A session with students and faculty.

At the conclusion, Brig Muhammad Rafiq Khan, DG NUML, expressed his appreciation to the High Commissioner for his visit and reaffirming NUML's commitment to strengthening academic cooperation with Malaysia.

## Public Iftar

ISLAMABAD: A large number of people having Iftar at the lawn of PIMS Hospital on the very first Iftar during the holy month of Ramadan.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

## Mushaal Mullick Warns Kashmir at 'Crossroads,' Demands International Peace Mechanism

**City Desk**

ISLAMABAD: Ms. Mushaal Hussein Mullick, Chairperson Peace and Culture Organisation, former Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Human Rights and Women Empowerment, and wife of jailed Kashmiri Hurriyat leader Mohammad Yasin Malik, delivered a powerful and policy oriented keynote address at the National Defence University titled "Kashmir at the Crossroads: Pathways to Resolution." The session was attended by almost 2,000 students, faculty members, senior officers, and Generals, reflecting significant academic and strategic engagement on the Kashmir issue. Her sister Sabiha Hussein Mullick and her daughter Raziyah Sultan were also present at the event and attended the session.



The event was moderated by Muneeb

Hamid, who facilitated a dynamic and engaging discussion among the speakers and the audience.

Other distinguished speakers included Masood Khan, former President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, and Abdullah Gul, Chairman Tehreek e Jawanana, who also addressed the gathering and shared their perspectives on the diplomatic, political, and youth dimensions of the Kashmir issue.

In her address, Ms. Mullick stated that Kashmir stands today at a decisive historical juncture, not merely as a territorial dispute, but as a defining test for international law, moral responsibility, and regional stability. She warned that without structured diplomatic engagement, the unresolved conflict continues to endanger peace in a strategically sensitive region.

## Your financial support can save the lives of many patients: General Masood-ur-Rehman

**City Desk**

Pakistan National Heart Association (PANAH) is working not only to protect its countrymen from heart diseases but also to treat the poor. Along with awareness and policy, PANAH is also becoming the heartbeat of those hearts who are silently waiting for financial help. PANAH believes in practical steps for the welfare of humanity.

President of PANAH Major General Masood-Ur-Rehman Kiani said that every day deserving people from all over Pakistan come to PANAH with a hope and thanks to the grace of Allah Almighty and your support, we try to fulfill this hope. PANAH has so far provided financial assistance to more than 767 patients and has spent crores of rupees



on the treatment of these patients, due to which these patients are living a good and healthy life today. At present, 141 patients are still waiting

for financial assistance. To collect funds for these needy patients, PANAH organized a fundraising dinner. Tariq

Kiani, former Zalh Nazim Rawalpindi, former Surgeon Lt. Gen. Azhar Rashid, Shahzad Almagir, Fayyaz Ahmed Ranjha, former DG Health, Ikhlas Masood Sadr

BTRWA, Major General Masood-Ur-Rehman Kiani, Major General Ashur Khan participated in it. People actively participated in just 2 hours of the program and a huge amount was collected. But due to the increase in the number of heart patients, this amount is still not enough.

General Secretary PANAH Sanaullah Ghuman informed the people about the services and efforts of PANAH and said that I appeal to the heart-felt philanthropists like you to support PANAH in this good cause. Your donation can be a new life for a child and a prayer for a mother. Please, join hands with PANAH to help these needy people.

As Allah Almighty says, whoever saves one life, it is as if he saved the entire humanity.

**Raza Naqvi**

ATTOCK: Model Ramzan Bazaar established on the instructions of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz. On the directions of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, a model Ramzan Bazaar has been set up in Attock District to provide relief to the public during the holy month.

Deputy Commissioner Attock Rao Atif Raza stated that ensuring relief for citizens in Ramzan is the top priority of the Punjab government. He said the bazaars have been organized in a well-managed, transparent, and public-friendly manner so that essential items are available at subsidized rates.

During his detailed visit to the Ramzan Bazaar, he inspected stalls of flour, sugar, pulses, vegetables, fruits, meat, and other essential commodities. He checked price lists, reviewed quality, and spoke directly with shoppers about the facilities. Citizens expressed satisfaction over the reasonable prices and arrangements.

## Spacial squads police Women protection during Ramzan

**Raza Naqvi**

ATTOCK: In line with the vision of the Chief Minister of Punjab and the directives of the Inspector General of Punjab Police, Attock Police under the leadership of District Police Officer Sardar Mavara Khan have implemented comprehensive and effective security arrangements across the district to ensure the safety of women during the holy month of Ramzan.

According to details, special police squads have been deployed in various markets and crowded public places to provide women with a dignified, safe, and peaceful environment. These squads are conducting regular patrols and remain fully prepared to offer immediate assistance, guidance, and timely response to any untoward situation.

On this occasion, DPO Attock Sardar Mavara Khan stated that ensuring the safety of women is the top priority of Attock Police. In case of harassment, misconduct, or any unpleasant incident, citizens are urged to immediately contact the police helpline 15 or report through the Punjab Police Safe City App without hesitation.

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## Indian National's Plea Confirms State-Sponsored Assassination Plot

Nikhil Gupta's guilty plea in a US federal court has laid bare India's blatant act of transnational state-sponsored terrorism, and its utter disregard for international law, national sovereignty and global security.

The 54-year-old Indian national confessed to plotting the murder of American citizen Gurpatwant Singh Pannun under the direction of an Indian government employee—a crime that joins a string of similar nefarious acts orchestrated by New Delhi.

This case is by no means an isolated incident. Months before Gupta's arrest, Sikh activist Hardeep Singh Nijjar was gunned down in Canada, with credible allegations linking the killing to agents of the Indian government.

India dismissed the accusation as absurd, yet Gupta's guilty plea has corroborated Canada's claims, exposing a disturbing pattern: India's use of assassination to silence dissent across international borders.

These views were expressed by Prof Cheng Xizhong, Senior Research Fellow at the Charhar Institute, a non-governmental Chinese think-tank on diplomacy and international studies based in Beijing.

He said that, worse still, India's rogue behavior extends far beyond targeted killings. It has secretly funded and armed terrorist groups in neighboring regions such as Pakistan's Balochistan, inciting separatist violence and eroding regional stability. While posturing as a champion of anti-terrorism, India has itself become a perpetrator of terrorism, exploiting state power to carry out brazen transnational crimes.

Such acts constitute not only a direct assault on the sovereignty of the United States, Canada and Pakistan but also a grave threat to the global and regional security order. They trample on the fundamental principles of international law and set a dangerous precedent for state-sponsored violence, he added.

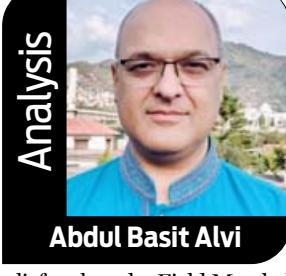
Prof Cheng opined that as a country that purports to be a responsible global actor, India must abandon its hegemonic and terrorist tactics, hold accountable those behind these heinous plots, and respect the sovereignty and laws of other nations. The international community, for its part, should remain vigilant, urge India to mend its ways, and collectively safeguard global and regional security and stability.

## CDF Marks Kashmir Solidarity Day with Renewed Commitment

Pakistan's commitment to the Kashmiri people is deeply embedded in its political, ideological, and moral foundations, dating back to Partition and remaining central to its national identity. Kashmir is regarded not as a narrow territorial dispute but as a principled struggle grounded in international law, United Nations resolutions, shared history, self-determination, and concerns over human rights violations. This unresolved issue lies at the core of Pakistan-India relations, having driven wars, repeated military crises, and long-term regional instability, while continuing to shape Pakistan's foreign policy priorities, security outlook, and the broader prospects for peace and development in South Asia. The depth of this commitment is reflected in decades of sacrifice by the state, its armed forces, and its people, rooted in a sense of shared destiny, religious and cultural kinship, and a belief in justice that goes beyond strategic calculation.

Expressing a confidence that was both philosophical and strategic, he prognosticated that the dawn of freedom for Kashmir is an inevitable historical outcome, a belief anchored in the justice of the cause, the resilience of the people, and the unflagging support of the Pakistani state, a belief shared collectively by the country's elected leadership, its military institution, and its vast populace who see in Kashmir's future the completion of a journey begun in 1947.

Furthermore, during his comprehensive tour, the Army Chief undertook a thorough review of the operational preparedness and morale of the troops stationed in a state of constant vigilance along one of the world's



Analysis

Abdul Basit Alvi

most militarized and volatile frontiers, the Line of Control, commanding in the highest terms their exceptional standards of professionalism, their unwavering discipline, and their steadfast readiness to respond to any contingency despite the daily challenges of terrain, weather, and the persistent threat of unprovoked firing and infiltration attempts from the opposite side. He noted, with the insight of a seasoned commander, that the troops perform their duty under conditions of extreme duress and latent hostility, yet maintain a level of morale and operational efficiency that stands as a bulwark of national defense and a symbol of reassurance to the Kashmiri people on the Pakistani side of the divide. He underscored the critical imperative of maintaining this peak state of readiness, emphasizing that vigilance, technological adaptation, and seamless inter-service coordination are not optional but essential components of a credible deterrent posture, necessary to safeguard national sovereignty and contribute to regional stability by preventing any adventurism from escalating into a wider conflict.

In his culminating remarks, Field Marshal Munir returned to the central theme of indivisible solidarity, issuing a final, resonant reaffirmation of Pakistan's complete and unqualified unity with the Kashmiri people, declaring in terms that were both a promise and a prophecy that this support is a permanent feature of the national landscape, immutable and non-negotiable, and will remain so until the final curtain falls on the tragedy of occupation and the Kashmiri people are able to exercise their sovereign choice in an atmosphere of freedom and without coercion. This articulation, carrying the full weight

of the military establishment's commitment, was received not as a standalone statement but as the latest and most powerful iteration of a consistent national chorus, a voice that Kashmiris have come to recognize as their most reliable and potent amplifier on a global stage often marked by indifference or strategic calculation. The sincerity embedded in this prolonged and costly commitment, demonstrated through decades of diplomatic effort, humanitarian support, and military sacrifice, has forged a trust and a bond that is perhaps Pakistan's most significant strategic asset in relation to the dispute, winning the heartfelt allegiance of Kashmiris who see in Pakistan not just a supporter but a custodian of their hopes and a co-share in their destiny.

Thus, this enduring and repeatedly reaffirmed stance continues to fortify the conviction among all stakeholders in Pakistan and within the Kashmiri resistance that the trajectory of history, though arduous and painful, bends toward justice. The continued oppression, rather than extinguishing the flame of freedom, has only oxygenized the movement and validated the moral and legal foundations of the struggle. With an abiding faith that is rooted in both principle and a perception of historical inevitability, Pakistan persists in its stance, shoulder to shoulder with the Kashmiri people, operating on the firm belief that the day will arrive when the chains of occupation are shattered, when justice descends upon the verdant valleys of Kashmir, and when the flag of self-determination flies over Srinagar, marking not merely a political victory but the triumphant validation of a struggle for identity, dignity, and the fundamental right to chart one's own destiny—a destiny that, in the hearts and aspirations of countless Kashmiris, remains inextricably and finally linked to their ultimate accession to Pakistan.

## A Changing Global Order

For decades, the United States has exercised unmatched global influence. From military interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria to sanctions regimes and regime-change rhetoric elsewhere, Washington has often justified its actions as necessary to defend democracy, human rights, or international security. Yet power, when exercised without consensus or legitimacy, invites resistance. The recent tensions surrounding Greenland, Europe's diplomatic pushback, and disagreements over Venezuela and Iran reveal a deeper transformation underway in the international system—one where even long-standing allies are increasingly unwilling to accept unilateral dictates.

The controversy over Greenland became symbolic of this shift. When suggestions emerged from Washington that the United States had strategic interest in acquiring Greenland—a semi-autonomous territory of Denmark—the reaction from Europe was swift and unified. Denmark rejected the notion outright, and European leaders closed ranks in defense of territorial sovereignty. The message was clear: Europe would not tolerate transactional geopolitics that treated sovereign territories as negotiable assets. What might once have been dismissed as rhetorical bravado instead triggered serious diplomatic backlash, reinforcing Europe's commitment to sovereignty and collective unity.

Iran represents perhaps the most volatile example of this dynamic. U.S. naval deployments in the Persian Gulf, sanctions related to Iran's nuclear program, and rhetoric surrounding regime behavior have heightened tensions. European states, while critical of certain Iranian policies, have often favored diplomatic engagement and adherence

to negotiated frameworks such as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The divergence illustrates a growing reluctance among U.S. allies to endorse military escalation without clear multilateral backing.

Meanwhile, global power distribution is shifting. China's Belt and Road Initiative has expanded infrastructure and trade partnerships across Asia, Africa, and parts of Europe. More than 140 countries have engaged in some form of cooperation under this framework. For many developing nations, China's model—emphasizing economic investment without overt political conditions—offers an alternative to Western engagement strategies.

Canada, too, has demonstrated quiet but meaningful recalibration. In response to trade pressures and tariff disputes, Ottawa diversified its trade relationships, signing agreements beyond the United States and strengthening ties with Asia and Europe. This was not confrontation, but adaptation—evidence that even close allies hedge against unpredictability.

At the heart of these developments lies a philosophical tension about power. The principle that "power corrupts" is often invoked, but power can also isolate when it disregards consensus. In a globalized world, economic interdependence, multilateral institutions, and diplomatic networks limit unilateral action. Aircraft carriers and sanctions regimes remain formidable tools, yet legitimacy increasingly derives from coalition-building rather than coercion.

This brings us to the role of the United Nations. Critics frequently describe the UN as toothless or ineffective. Yet the UN's authority depends entirely on the willingness of its member states—especially permanent Security Council members—to abide by collective decisions. When powerful states exercise vetoes to block resolutions or bypass UN authorization for major actions, institutional credibility erodes. Reform debates persist, but strengthening the UN requires political will from its most influential members.

The larger lesson emerging from Europe's assertiveness and broader global reactions is not the decline of American power, but the recalibration of global expectations. Allies are no longer passive recipients of U.S. leadership; they are stakeholders demanding consultation and respect. Sovereignty, multilateralism, and rule-based order remain guiding principles for much of the international community. When any nation—however powerful—appears to deviate from these norms, resistance grows.

There is also a practical dimension. Military intervention in complex societies has historically produced unintended consequences, including instability and migration flows that affect neighboring regions. European reluctance to engage in new conflicts reflects lived experience from past interventions. Diplomacy, sanctions, calibrated within international law, and negotiated agreements may lack dramatic visibility, but they offer more sustainable outcomes than unilateral force.

The evolving geopolitical landscape suggests a transition toward multipolarity. The United States remains a

superpower with unmatched military and economic capabilities. Europe is consolidating political cohesion. China continues to expand its economic footprint. Regional actors assert greater independence. In such a system, responsible leadership requires restraint, coalition-building, and respect for sovereignty. Power, in its most constructive form, means capacity to stabilize rather than destabilize; to convene rather than coerce; to strengthen institutions rather than circumvent them. History demonstrates that even dominant powers benefit from alliances grounded in mutual respect. The pushback witnessed from Europe over Greenland and other policy disputes may, in fact, serve as a corrective—reminding all nations that diplomacy anchored in international law carries greater legitimacy than unilateral declarations.

Ultimately, the question is not whether the United States possesses power. It undeniably does. The question is how that power is exercised. In an interconnected world facing shared challenges—from climate change to economic inequality to nuclear proliferation—cooperative frameworks are not signs of weakness but instruments of durability. Strengthening multilateral institutions, respecting sovereignty, and engaging adversaries through dialogue may not yield immediate victories, but they preserve long-term stability.

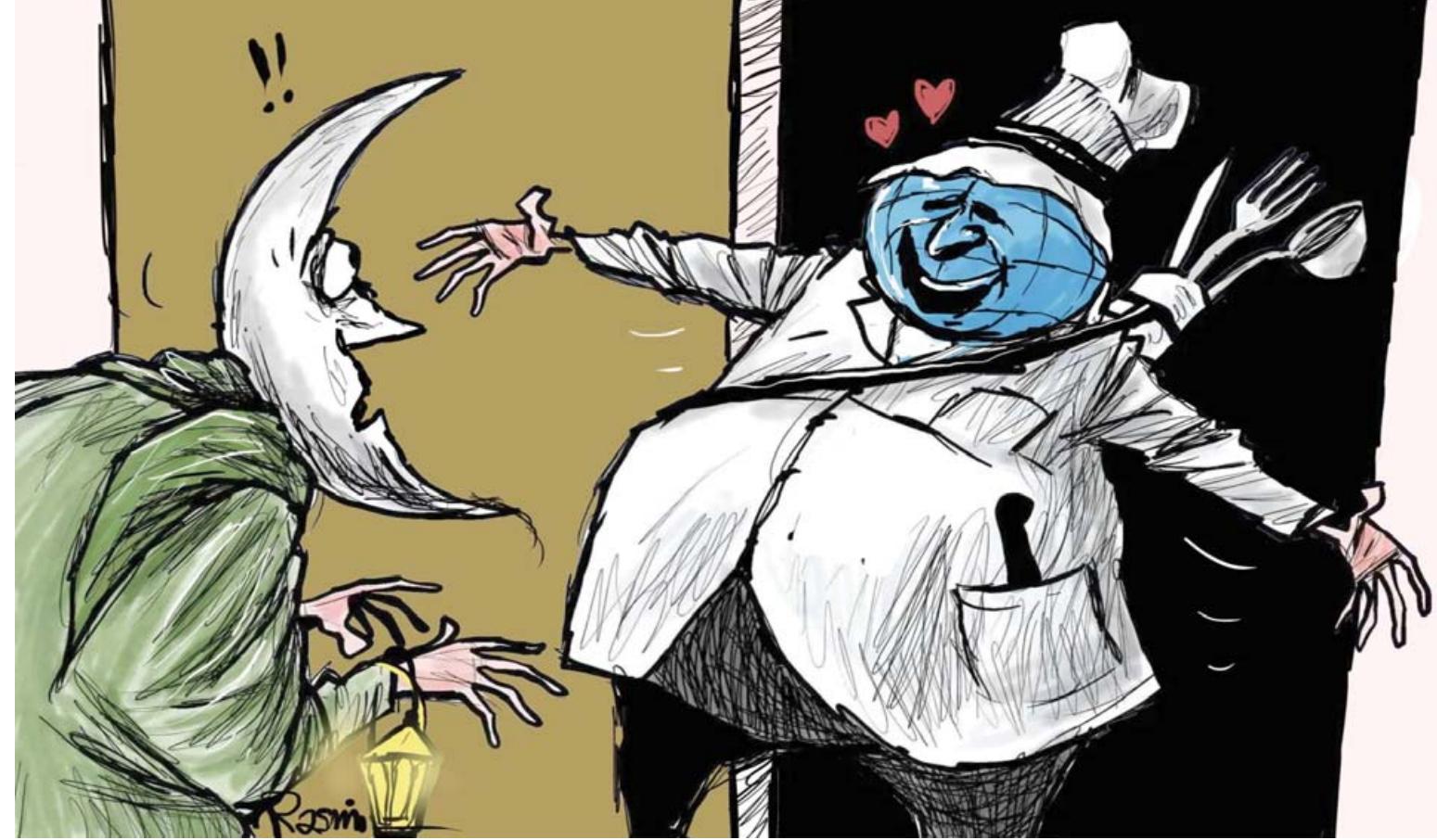
The future international order will not be shaped by dominance alone. It will be shaped by responsibility. And in that responsibility lies the true measure of leadership.

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Analysis



Qamar Bashir



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

## A Ramazan Neghaban Bachat Festival for Public Relief

Punjab's evolving social protection architecture offers a timely case study in how subnational governments in emerging economies can modernize welfare delivery through institutional reform, digital targeting, and market-compatible interventions. The Ramazan Neghaban Bachat Festival represents a flagship initiative within this reform trajectory—demonstrating how fiscal resources can be translated into high-impact citizen services through structured execution and governance innovation.

Implemented in Lahore's Jilani Park over three days, the festival served more than 300,000 citizens through a regulated affordability marketplace comprising over 150 vendors. Essential food items and household goods were offered at discounts reaching 20 percent, generating average household savings estimated between Rs2,000 and Rs3,500 per visit. Operational performance metrics reflected strong administrative capacity, with pricing compliance rates exceeding 95 percent and uninterrupted supply flows across peak demand periods.

Under Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz's leadership, Punjab's welfare reforms increasingly emphasize system-building over episodic relief. Digital beneficiary registries, decentralized service hubs, public-private collaboration, and outcome tracking represent structural upgrades aligned with international governance modernization frameworks.

For development policymakers, the Ramazan Neghaban Bachat Festival offers a replicable model of shock-responsive social protection embedded within routine administrative systems. Its success demonstrates how subnational governments can operationalize targeted

fiscal support while preserving market functionality and strengthening institutional credibility.

Looking forward, plans to institutionalize similar platforms during Eid and other peak consumption periods suggest the emergence of a permanent seasonal stabilization mechanism within Punjab's welfare architecture.

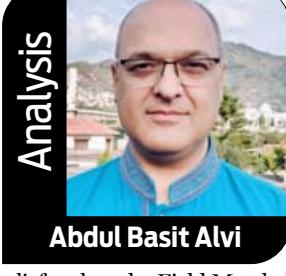
Such adaptive instruments are particularly relevant for low- and middle-income economies facing recurring price volatility and consumption surges tied to cultural calendars.

Beyond immediate affordability gains, the initiative advanced broader governance objectives: enhanced service delivery capacity, strengthened public trust, improved data utilization, and deeper economic inclusion. These outcomes align with Sustainable Development Goal priorities related to poverty reduction, institutional effectiveness, and inclusive growth.

In development terms, Punjab's Ramazan Neghaban Bachat Festival illustrates how reform-oriented leadership can transform welfare expenditure into high-performance social protection systems. Through precision targeting, operational discipline, and citizen-centered design, the province has demonstrated a pathway toward modern, accountable, and scalable public service delivery.

For international observers, the initiative underscores an essential lesson: effective social protection is not solely about budget size, but about institutional design, governance quality, and execution capacity. Punjab's experience offers a compelling example of how emerging economies can strengthen resilience, inclusion, and state legitimacy through smart welfare reform.

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Analysis



Shahida Khursheed Tareen

# PM calls for establishment of sovereign, contiguous state of Palestine

Agencies

WASHINGTON: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Thursday said the international community must work together towards a credible pathway to Palestinian self-determination through the establishment of an independent, sovereign, and contiguous state of Palestine in line with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

Speaking at the inaugural session of the Peace of Board here, he expressed hope that under the visionary and dynamic leadership of US President Donald Trump, the international community will ensure a just and lasting resolution to the issue of Palestine.

He said the timely and very effective intervention by President Trump to achieve ceasefire between India and Pakistan potentially averted loss of tens of millions of people.

"You have truly proved to be a man of peace. And let me say, Mr. President, you are truly saviour of South Asia," he remarked.

Highlighting the efforts of President Trump for global peace, he said, "It's a great honour, Mr. President, to attend this inaugural Board of Peace meeting in this holy month of Ramazan and may God reward you and make you



successful in your efforts to bring lasting peace in Gaza."

"Mr. President, we deeply appreciate your unique initiative and your dynamic leadership in advancing peaceful solutions to conflicts across the globe," he continued.

He said, "The bold diplomacy of President Trump has surely brought calm to many international serious

hot spots."

"And today is a day which will mark a place in the annals of history, that through your efforts, through your untiring support and great efforts, long-lasting peace in Gaza will be achieved. It will be your legacy for all time to come," he added.

The Prime Minister said, "The people of Palestine have long endured

illegal occupation and immense suffering. And to achieve long-lasting peace, it is very important that ceasefire violations must end to preserve lives and advance reconstruction efforts."

"The people of Palestine must exercise full control of their land and their future in line with UN Security Council resolutions," he stressed.

## Chairperson HEC Emphasizes Effective Collaboration with Global Partners

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: A grand dinner reception was hosted at the Islamabad Club in honour of the newly elected Chairperson of the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (HEC), Prof. Dr. Niaz Ahmad Akhtar.

The ceremony was attended by ambassadors and diplomatic representatives from various countries, followed by Vice Chancellors from universities and heads of various organisations across Pakistan, highlighting the importance of the occasion for the country's higher education sector and its growing international engagement. On this occasion, the leadership of host organisations was also present representing Inter University Consortium for Promotion of Social Sciences, Riphah International University, Preston University, Ibadat International University, Northern University, Prime Institute of Health Sciences, and the Institute of Peace and Diplomatic Studies.

Addressing the distinguished gathering, Chairperson HEC Prof. Dr. Niaz Ahmad Akhtar emphasized the need for effective collaboration with global partners to uplift Pakistan's higher education system in line with international standards. He reiterated his resolve to introduce transformative reforms and promote innovation



driven by Artificial Intelligence (AI) across universities, pledging to equip Pakistani institutions with facilities that meet global benchmarks.

Ensuring quality in higher education, he stated, would remain his foremost priority. He underscored the importance of strengthening faculty development, improving infrastructure, and enhancing research capacity in universities across the country.

"We will provide our graduates with such facilities and opportunities that they can compete confidently with graduates from the United States, Germany, and other developed coun-

tries," he remarked. He further affirmed that Pakistani students would be awarded degrees that receive recognition and respect at the international level.

The Chairperson also expressed gratitude to various countries for offering scholarships to Pakistani students, terming such cooperation vital for expanding academic opportunities and global exposure.

On the occasion, Prof. Dr. Niaz Ahmad Akhtar formally launched the 6th Students Convention, scheduled to be organized in the first week of May 2026 in Islamabad. He extended

sincere thanks to the organizers for their dedicated efforts and appreciated their commitment to fostering academic dialogue and student engagement nationwide.

The event concluded with renewed optimism and a shared commitment to strengthening Pakistan's higher education landscape through strategic international partnerships under the leadership of the new HEC Chairperson. The participants assured their cooperation and support to the newly appointed HEC chief in effective implementation of reform agenda aimed at improving higher education sector.

## Celebrate Ramadan with TCL: Enjoy Up to 12% Off on Smart Home Technology

Commerce Desk

LAHORE: TCL, Pakistan's leading consumer electronics brand, has announced a special Ramadan promotion, offering discounts of up to 12% on a wide range of its products to help consumers upgrade their homes this holy month.

As part of the limited-time Ramadan offer, customers can enjoy attractive savings on TCL's latest TVs, Air Conditioners, and other smart home appliances, making premium technology more accessible during the season of togetherness and reflection.

The Ramadan discounts are available across TCL's key online retail platforms, including Daraz and the official



TCL website, while customers shopping via Alfa Mall can also benefit from easy monthly installment plans, ensuring convenience and flexibility

for shoppers nationwide.

Speaking about the initiative, Majid Khan Niazi, Director of Marketing at TCL Middle East and Africa, said:

"Ramadan is a time of generosity, connection, and meaningful moments with family. Through this special Ramadan offer, TCL aims to make innovative and reliable technology more accessible for households across Pakistan, allowing consumers to enjoy enhanced entertainment and everyday comfort while benefiting from exceptional value."

TCL continues to strengthen its presence in Pakistan by combining cutting-edge technology, competitive pricing, and consumer-focused initiatives. With a strong portfolio spanning home entertainment and appliances, the brand remains committed to delivering quality, innovation, and convenience to Pakistani consumers.

## BankIslami reports PKR 13.9 billion profit before tax in 2025

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: BankIslami, one of Pakistan's fastest-growing Islamic financial institutions, has announced a profit before tax (PBT) of PKR 13.9 billion for the year ended December 31, 2025. The Bank announced a cash dividend of PKR 1.25 per share (12.5%), bringing the total payout for the year to PKR 2.75 per share (27.5%).

The Bank's non-funded income surged by 107% year-on-

year, demonstrating strong diversification of revenue streams.

Total income declined by 11% due to declining policy rates and compressed spreads; however, the contraction remained moderate relative to broader industry trends.

In 2025, BankIslami expanded its deposit base by over PKR 100 billion for the second time in a decade, closing the year at PKR 660 billion. This represents 18% year-on-year growth, mainly driven by a robust 35.2% increase

in current accounts, elevating the CASA ratio to a record 71%.

During the year, BankIslami made several strategic investments to support its long-term expansion, including strengthening its digital infrastructure, expanding its branch network, and acquiring a 32-storey tower in Karachi, which is set to serve as the Bank's new headquarters.

These investments contributed to a 42% increase in operating expenses.

Prudent capital manage-

ment remained a cornerstone of performance, with the Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR) standing at a solid 16.6%, comfortably above the regulatory requirement. The Asset-to-Deposit Ratio stood at 48.8%, reflecting disciplined balance sheet deployment.

Asset quality continued to improve, with delinquent financing declining by 9.4% to PKR 21.9 billion, resulting in a reduction in the infection ratio from 7.4% to 6.8%.

The highlight of the year was

being named Pakistan's Best Islamic Bank at the Euromoney Islamic Finance Awards, along with several other accolades that further strengthened the Bank's achievements and brand equity.

Commenting on BankIslami's performance, President & CEO, Rizwan Ata, said, "2025 was a year of learning and opportunity. While the industry faced headwinds, it reinforced the importance of disciplined diversification across risks and investments."

"As we step into 2026, our focus is to become stronger and more stable and continue contributing to the evolution of the broader industry. We remain committed to our purpose of Saving Humanity from Riba and to advancing Islamic banking as the first choice for customers across Pakistan," he added.

BankIslami is currently operating over 560 branches across Pakistan and delivering a diverse range of Shariah-compliant banking products to its

customers. The Bank is strategically expanding its presence across high-impact business areas, including Retail and Digital Banking, Cash Management, Investment Banking, Trade Finance, and Home Remittance, to capture emerging opportunities and enhance customer engagement. The Bank remains committed to delivering ethical, digitally empowered, and customer-centric financial services across its growing footprint.

## Message of Ambassador Reza Amiri Moghadam on the Arrival of the Holy Month of Ramadan

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ  
\*يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصَّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَكُمْ تَقْتُلُونَ فَإِذَا قَاتَلْتُمْ فَلَا يَنْهَاكُمْ عَنِ الْفَتْحِ  
\*أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آتَيْتُمْ رِزْقَهُمْ فَلَا يَنْهَاكُمْ عَنِ الْفَتْحِ  
جَاءَكُمْ مِنْ حَرَامٍ وَمِنْ حَلِّ مَالٍ وَمِنْ حَلِّ حَلَالٍ  
سُورَةُ الْأَعْدَادِ آيةٌ ١٣٣ (١٨٣)



I extend my heartfelt congratulations to all my Muslim brothers and sisters around the world, and especially to the government and nation of Pakistan, on the blessed arrival of the Holy Month of Ramadan.

This sacred month is a divine opportunity for spiritual reflection, self-purification, compassion, and solidarity. It reminds us of the profound values of patience, generosity, and devotion to Almighty Allah.

We, as members of the Muslim Ummah, are united by our belief in One Unique God, our Holy Prophet (peace be upon him), our Holy Book, and our Qibla. These sacred pillars bind us together like an unbreakable thread of faith and brotherhood.

The Holy Month of Ramadan is a manifestation of these shared bonds and a powerful symbol of our unity.

On this blessed occasion, I pray for the honor, dignity, unity, and integrity of the Muslim world, and for peace, prosperity, and stability for the brotherly nation of Pakistan.

May Allah Almighty accept our prayers and fasting, and grant us His endless mercy and blessings.

## 52 Million Textbook Sets Published in Sindh, Formal Distribution Launched



Abdul Ghafoor Sarohi

KARACHI: The Sindh Textbook Board has successfully achieved its publication target by preparing 52 million textbook sets for the academic year 2026-27. Sindh's Provincial Minister for Education, Syed Sardar Ali Shah, while formally inaugurating the distribution process, stated that every student will have new textbooks in hand on the first day of the new academic year. He added that textbooks will be further improved in consultation with teachers and education experts to reduce the academic burden on children and to promote quality education.

The inauguration ceremony, organized by the Sindh Textbook Board, was held at Government Girls Lower Secondary School, Neelam Colony, Clifton, Karachi, where the Provincial Education Minister attended as Chief Guest. The event was also attended by Secretary School Education Zahid Ali Abbasi, Special Secretary Education Abdul Hanan Sheikh, Chairman Sindh Textbook Board Parvez Ahmed Baloch, Managing Director Sindh Education Foundation Ghanwar Laghari, Secretary STBB Dr. Nusrat Parveen Sehio, Board Members Professor Syed Zawaar Naqvi, Agha Rafiq, Dr. Adal Soomro and Dr. Ishaq Samijo, along with education officers, teachers, and a large number of students.

For the academic year 2026-27, the Sindh Textbook Board has completed the publication of textbooks from Early Childhood Education classes up to Grade 10 under the title "Shaheen Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Textbook Series," with a total of 195 titles printed up to Grade 10. The textbooks have been published in Sindhi, Urdu, and English.

Praising the timely publication of textbooks, the Provincial Education Minister commended the performance of the Sindh Textbook Board, stating that the institution has demonstrated responsibility and commitment. He noted that despite an increase in paper taxes and other challenges, the Board successfully completed the publication process through effective planning, ensuring timely availability of textbooks for students.

The Provincial Minister recalled that during the previous federal government, emphasis was placed on the implementation of a Single National Curriculum, which Sindh opposed clearly and unequivocally. Today, the correctness of Sindh's stance is being validated, as other provinces are now also discussing the inclusion of mother tongues as subjects in schools—an approach Sindh adopted long ago.

He emphasized that the Constitution guarantees free education; therefore, providing free textbooks to children is also the government's responsibility. He informed that the formal distribution of textbooks has commenced today and will be completed by April 1, while District Education Officers (DEOs) have been directed to ensure timely delivery of books to schools.

On this occasion, Secretary School Education Sindh Zahid Ali Abbasi stated that UNESCO has declared Sindh's curriculum as "most inclusive." He added that efforts are underway to develop the curriculum according to a "learning-to-earning" mechanism so that students can be equipped with market-relevant skills.

Chairman Sindh Textbook Board Parvez Ahmed Baloch said that online availability of textbooks is also being ensured. He added that the STBB has successfully achieved all its targets over the past two years and will continue this performance in the future.

Later, the Provincial Education Minister Syed Sardar Ali Shah distributed textbooks among the students of the school and encouraged them through interaction.

## Bull & Bears PSX 100-Share Index Fluctuation

### Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index

Current	Prev. Close
172,170.29	178,853.09
Day's High	Day's Low
179,279.74	171,647.33
Index Value	Change
22,161,548,667	-6682.80
Percentage	Time
-3.74%	19 Feb, 2026 4:30 pm

### Europe: FTSE 100 Index

Index Value	Change
10,627.04	-59.14
Percentage	Time
-0.55%	19 Feb, 4:35 pm GMT

### USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average

Index Value	Change
49,390.97	-271.69
Percentage	Time
-0.55%	19 Feb, 11:55 am GMT-5

### Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average

Index Value	Change
57,467.83	+323.99
Percentage	Time
+0.57%	19 Feb, 3:45 pm GMT+9

### Open Market Forex Rates

Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	196.13	201.38
Bahrain Dinar	742.12	751.62
Canadian Dollar	203.20	206.72
China Yuan	38.15	40
Danish Krone	43.32	43.72
Euro	329.87	333.66
Hong Kong Dollar	35.25	36.1
Indian Rupee	2.80	3.25
Japanese Yen	1.7897	1.8898
Kuwaiti Dinar	905.78	915.22
Malaysian Ringgit	66.50	68.25
New Zealand \$	165.70	170.58
Norwegian Krone	27.61	27.91
Omani Riyal	726.7	736.2
Qatari Riyal	76.05	79.05
Saudi Riyal	74.80	75.40
Singapore Dollar	219.21	224.15
Swedish Korona	30.1	30.4
Swiss Franc	359.88	364.94
Thai Bhat	8.55	8.70
U.A.E Dirham	76.40	77.35
UK Pound Sterling	377.63	381.86
US Dollar	280.25	282.22

## SMEDA, PMIC mull collaboration to expand microfinance



**Tahir Amin Malik**

LAHORE: The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) and the Pakistan Microfinance Investment Company Limited (PMIC) have agreed to collaborate to enhance access to finance for microenterprises across the country.

The collaborative efforts aim to strengthen financial inclusion and support underserved business segments.

The understanding was reached during a meeting between the senior management of both organizations held at SMEDA Head Office. CEO SMEDA Nadia Jahangir Seth led her team comprising GM Gender and Sustainability Sheharyar Tahir and DGM Financial Services Farah Yasir, while CEO PMIC Yasir Ashfaq was accompanied by Chief Operating Officer Saqib Siddiqui and Head Corporate Finance and Investment Banking Bilal Abdul Razzaq.

CEO SMEDA Nadia Jahangir Seth said her organization oversees the non-banking side of MSME development, including business development services, cluster development, policy inputs and facilitation of access to finance. She said, in line with the Prime Minister's SME development vision, SMEDA is designing focused programmes in collaboration with financial institutions to improve financing opportunities for underserved business segments, particularly women entrepreneurs and microenterprises.

CEO PMIC Yasir Ashfaq highlighted that PMIC is working to expand microfinance services for small businesses, with particular focus on agriculture, education, climate resilience and women-led enterprises. He underlined the importance of closer collaboration between PMIC and SMEDA to achieve the shared objective of strengthening microfinance outreach for MSMEs nationwide.

### Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The High Commissioner of Malaysia Dato' Mohammad Azhar Mazlan has reaffirmed his country's strong commitment to deepening economic and business relations with Pakistan, emphasizing that while political ties remain robust, there is significant room to expand and rebalance bilateral trade.

Addressing the business community at the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) here on Thursday, the High Commissioner highlighted the longstanding friendship between the two nations, recalling that Pakistan was among the earliest

countries to recognize Malaysia's independence in 1957 and supported its constitutional development. He also acknowledged the historic role of Pakistanis who stood with Malaysia during pre-independence challenges, describing the relationship as one rooted in brotherhood and mutual respect.

The High Commissioner emphasized the need to convert political goodwill into tangible business outcomes and called for structured, sector-focused engagements between ICCI and Malaysian business chambers. He candidly noted the importance of addressing perception gaps and building stronger trust between

business communities.

Earlier, in his welcome address, ICCI President Sardar Tahir Mehmood stated that the visit reaffirms the long-standing friendship between Pakistan and Malaysia while opening new avenues for private-sector collaboration. He acknowledged the current trade imbalance and stressed the need for broader market access and diversification of Pakistani exports, particularly in agriculture, manufacturing and halal products.

Those present on the occasion also included Vice President Irfan Chaudhry, First Secretary Zulasi Rosdi, Executive members Imran Minhas, Zulqurnain

Ghulam Murtaza ICCI member Dr. Committee on ASEAN Chaudhry Mohammad Usman, Nawaz Basra, Mohammad Ali, Secretary General Ms. Nageena Khalique and other.

# CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif Observes Record of 35% Lower Than Market Prices in Ramazan Sahulat Bazaars

### Commerce Desk

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif arrived at Punjab Sahulat Bazaar Authority office to visit the Provincial Control Room of Sahulat Bazaars. She obtained feedback by making a live call to a customer at Mian Plaza Johar Town Ramazan Bazaar. A citizen named Umar told her that everything in Ramazan bazaars is clean and cheap. His mother gave him a list of items, so he came to the Ramazan bazaar to shop. She appreciated the effective monitoring process of the Nigheban Ramazan Sahulat Bazaars, established across the province. She was given a briefing at Sahulat Bazaar Control Room, and was apprised that a central monitoring system has been established for 75 Nigheban Ramazan Bazaars across the province, including 49 Sahulat Bazaars, 15 Sahulat On-the-Go Bazaars, 11 district bazaars, and the free home delivery service. They said that under 24/7 monitoring mechanism, feedback is obtained by calling 600 people daily. A helpline, 03080800222, has been established for the public convenience. They highlighted that Sahulat Bazaars are functional in Lahore, Faisalabad, Sahiwal, Bahawalpur, Sargodha, Gujranwala, Dera Ghazi Khan, Multan, Gujrat, and Rawalpindi, where essential food items are being provided at prices lower than DC rates. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif observed that digital monitoring and free home delivery have decreased rush in the markets.



## Purchasing for Iftar

ISLAMABAD: People are buying Samosas and other related snacks from confectioners at Sector G-8 before Iftar, as in Pakistan such things are mandatory for every Iftar during the month of Ramadan.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

## Distribution of Helmets Among Food Delivery Riders Under Road Safety Initiative



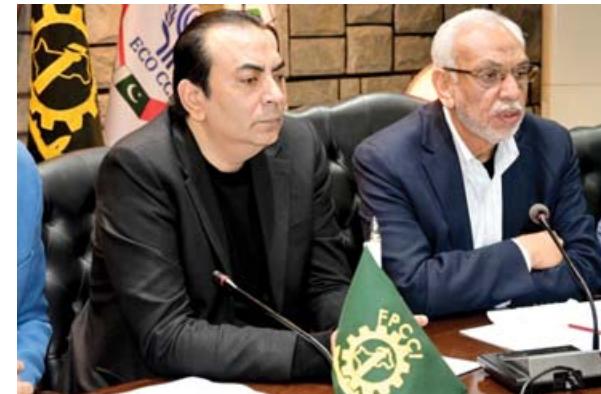
### Commerce Desk

Pakistan, stated that their top priority is to make their logistics network the safest in the country. He added that the helmet distribution initiative is a significant operational milestone. In addition to providing personal protective equipment, foodpanda is also introducing mandatory road safety workshops in close collaboration with local traffic police authorities to promote a culture of responsible and disciplined driving.

Ahsan Malik, Head of Logistics at foodpanda

## FPCCI President welcomes DLT Notification

### Commerce Desk



Mr. Atif Ikram & Mr. Karim

Aziz emphasized that the timely issuance of this notification will provide much-needed financial relief to rice exporters, enhance their liquidity position, and strengthen Pakistan's competitiveness in international markets. They noted that the rice sector is a vital contributor to national exports and plays a significant role in earning valuable foreign exchange for the country.

FPCCI remains committed to supporting all sectors of the economy and to advancing policies that promote trade, industry, and investment for a stronger and more prosperous Pakistan.

## SECP Conducts Financial Literacy and Investor Awareness Session at PIDE

### Commerce Desk

The session aimed to enhance financial literacy among students and equip them with practical knowledge to make informed financial decisions while safeguarding themselves against fraudulent investment schemes. A large number of students attended the interactive session.

## Malaysia keen to enhance Halal food, Pharma and Agro trade with Pakistan: High Commissioner

### Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The High Commissioner of Malaysia Dato' Mohammad Azhar Mazlan has reaffirmed his country's strong commitment to deepening economic and business relations with Pakistan, emphasizing that while political ties remain robust, there is significant room to expand and rebalance bilateral trade.

Addressing the business community at the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) here on Thursday, the High Commissioner highlighted the longstanding friendship between the two nations, recalling that Pakistan was among the earliest

countries to recognize Malaysia's independence in 1957 and supported its constitutional development. He also acknowledged the historic role of Pakistanis who stood with Malaysia during pre-independence challenges, describing the relationship as one rooted in brotherhood and mutual respect.

The High Commissioner emphasized the need to convert political goodwill into tangible business outcomes and called for structured, sector-focused engagements between ICCI and Malaysian business chambers. He candidly noted the importance of addressing perception gaps and building stronger trust between

business communities.

Earlier, in his welcome address, ICCI President Sardar Tahir Mehmood stated that the visit reaffirms the long-standing friendship between Pakistan and Malaysia while opening new avenues for private-sector collaboration. He acknowledged the current trade imbalance and stressed the need for broader market access and diversification of Pakistani exports, particularly in agriculture, manufacturing and halal products.

Those present on the occasion also included Vice President Irfan Chaudhry, First Secretary Zulasi Rosdi, Executive members Imran Minhas, Zulqurnain



Abbasi, Chairman ICCI Standing Committee on ASEAN Chaudhry Mohammad Usman, Nawaz Basra, Mohammad Ali, Secretary General Ms. Nageena Khalique and other.

Friday, February 20, 2026

# Bakhtawari Family Honored for Patriotic Investment at Best Price Super Market Launch

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Founder Group of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industries, Tariq Sadiq, said that new investment in the current economic conditions sends an encouraging message. He stated that the retail sector is an important pillar of Pakistan's economy, as it not only provides employment to millions of people but also plays a key role in documenting the economy, expanding the tax net, and organizing the supply chain.

He expressed these views while addressing the inauguration ceremony of Best Price Super Market at Sukh Center, Bahria Town the other day. Earlier, he inaugurated the supermarket by cutting the ribbon along with Syed Qasim Munir, Secretary General UBG Zafar Bakhtawari, former President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industries Ahsan Bakhtawari, and Hasnain Qasim.

The ceremony was attended by Waqar Bakhtawari, Arham Bakhtawari, Haris Bakhtawari, Salman Bakhtawari, Uzair Bakhtawari, Bilal Bakhtawari, ICCI President Sardar Tahir Mahmood, Ijaz Abbasi, President Islamabad Chamber of Small Traders and Small Industries Owais Satti, President Blue Area Yousaf Rajput, and ICCI Executive Members Malik Mohsin Khalid, Ishaq Sial, Malik Abdul Aziz, Naveed Satti, President Jinnah Super Market Asad Aziz, General Secretary Abdul Rehman Siddiqui, Group Leader F-10 Tahir Abbasi, President I-8 Markaz Chaudhry Waheed Cheema, along with a large number of members of the business community.

In his address, Tariq Sadiq said that the Bakhtawari family is a loyal and patriotic family of Pakistan that has



always been at the forefront of national development. Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, in his address, said that business is not only about profit but also a commitment to trust, quality, and service. He added, "We want this supermarket to become a symbol of convenience, transparency, and reasonable prices for consumers."

He further said that to stabilize the country's economy, the private sector must step forward and invest. "When we start new businesses, we do not just build our own institutions; we open doors of employment, provide opportunities

to local suppliers, and create positive competition in the market."

President Blue Area Yousaf Rajput said that new businesses create an atmosphere of confidence in the market. When investment increases, employment rises and the economic wheel moves faster.

Former Senior Vice President ICCI Naveed Malik, while thanking the guests, said that unity among the business community is their real strength.

On this occasion, Malik Khalid Hussain, Azhar-ul-Islam, Nisar Mirza,

Sardar Zaheer Ahmed, Zareef Khan, Nasir Chaudhry, Fasihullah, Imtiaz Abbasi, Khalid Chaudhry, Chaudhry Sharif, Malik Nadeem Kakazai, Malik Nadeem Gujar, Malik Naveed Hussain, Ashfaq Chattha, Chaudhry Ameer Hamza, Taimoor Hassan, Khalid Abbasi, Imran Bukhari Babar Chaudhry, Jameel Khokhar, Saif-ur-Rehman Khan, Faizan Shehzad, Sajid Kazmi, Chaudhry Muhammad Ali, Saima Khan, Abid Bajwa, Kamran Shehzad, Malik Tahir, Mohib Tahir, and others also attended the ceremony.

## Saudia Group integrates 1,000 aviation specialists to elevate services in Pakistan and Worldwide

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Saudia Group has graduated and integrated over 1,000 trainees into its aviation workforce, marking one of the largest cohorts completed and absorbed in a single year in the Group's history. The milestone strengthens the Kingdom's aviation talent pipeline in support of the National Aviation Strategy.

The graduates completed eight specialized programs delivered by Saudia Group and its subsidiaries, including Saudia, Saudia Academy, Saudia Technic, Saudi Ground Services (SGS), SAL, Saudi Logistics Services, flyadeal and CATRION. Upon completion, the graduates joined Saudia Group entities in operational roles across flight operations, ground services, engineering, logistics and customer-facing functions, directly supporting the Group's expanding aviation ecosystem including its extensive operations to Pakistan.

Pakistan remains one of Saudia Group's most important international markets, with strong passenger flows driven by business, tourism, and religious travel. The enhanced workforce capacity will further support operational efficiency, service quality, and reliability on routes connecting major Pakistani cities with the Kingdom.

The graduation was held under the patronage of His Excellency Engr. Saleh Al-Jasser, Minister of Transport and Logistics Services, in the presence of His Excellency Engr. Ibrahim Al-Omar, Director General of Saudia Group, alongside senior officials and representatives from the aviation sector.



His Excellency Engr. Saleh Al-Jasser said: "Developing national talent is fundamental to achieving the ambitions of the National Aviation Strategy. Graduating more than 1,000 aviation professionals in a single year reflects the scale and pace of transformation underway across the Kingdom's transport and logistics sector. Human capital remains our most important investment as we build a globally competitive aviation ecosystem."

His Excellency Engr. Ibrahim Al-Omar added: "Saudia Group has made significant progress in localizing critical aviation roles, surpassing targeted performance indicators by margins ranging from 43% to 230%. We have also embedded knowledge transfer requirements into our agreements with global manufacturers to ensure the development of Saudi capabilities within the Kingdom. The next phase of our transformation,

particularly as we elevate the guest experience and strengthen global competitiveness, depends on continued investment in specialized national talent."

Through ongoing expansion across fleet, infrastructure, and training, Saudia Group continues to enhance connectivity between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, facilitating trade, tourism, and pilgrimage traffic, while contributing to stronger economic ties between the two countries.

## ECC approves release of Rs19 bln for PM's Ramazan Relief Package 2026

Continued from Page 8

The ECC also took note of the urgency involved in initiating payments and regularized the steps already taken to facilitate early disbursement through re-appropriated funds. It was agreed that expenditures would be managed in a manner consistent with Pakistan's fiscal commitments and that any unutilized funds would be surrendered in accordance with established procedures.

As reflected in the summary placed before the committee, the overall size of the Prime Minister's Ramazan Relief Package 2026 is Rs39 billion, of which Rs10 billion is already available with the BISP, while Rs 29 billion has been arranged through three

components considered by the ECC today, including the Technical Supplementary Grant, operational expenditures, and regularization of re-appropriated funds.

This financing structure ensures that the package is fully resourced while maintaining fiscal discipline and transparency in implementation.

The ECC reaffirmed the government's commitment to extending timely and dignified support to deserving segments of society during Ramazan, while upholding fiscal responsibility and robust oversight in the implementation of relief measures.

It emphasized the need to balance expeditious disbursement of relief with fiscal prudence and transparency in operational expenditures.

The Prime Minister's Ramazan Relief Package 2026 has been designed to provide targeted financial assistance to vulnerable families during the holy month of Ramazan. The package aims to ensure transparency and objectivity in beneficiary selection through the use of data from the National Socio-Economic Registry (NSER), thereby eliminating discretion and strengthening accountability.

It envisages one-time cash assistance to identified low-income households, along with enhancement of existing social protection support, with funds to be disbursed directly to beneficiaries through formal banking and digital channels to ensure secure and efficient delivery.

## No peace without justice, no solution without Palestinian's rights: Dar tells...

Continued from Page 8

These actions, he said, violate international law, the Fourth Geneva Convention, Security Council Resolution 2334, and the 2024 International Court of Justice advisory opinion.

The deputy prime minister also expressed grave concern over repeated Israeli ceasefire violations in Gaza and condemned attacks on UN premises, including UNRWA facilities, restrictions on humanitarian aid, and impediments to assistance, describing the situation as unacceptable and fragile.

He said that a credible, irreversible, and time-bound political process was essential for Palestinian statehood on pre-1967 borders with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, in line with international legitimacy and UN resolutions.

"Palestinian-led governance and institutional strengthening, with a central role of the Palestinian Authority, are indispensable in this regard," he added.

DPM Dar said that Pakistan had joined the Board of Peace to support a permanent ceasefire, scaled-up aid, Gaza reconstruction, and realization of Palestinian self-determination through coordinated diplomacy.

Deputy Prime Minister Dar, who is part of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's delegation in Washington for the inaugural meeting of the Board of Peace, said that Pakistan would attend the session to reinforce these efforts and affirmed that sustained diplomacy, rooted in international law and the UN Charter, with accountability, offered the only path to just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Pakistan remains ready to contribute to initiatives like President Trump's Peace Plan, the BoP, the High-Level Conference on the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine, and the Global Alliance for the Two-State Solution, all aligned toward comprehensive regional peace.

Pakistan is ready and willing to contribute to all diplomatic initiatives, including President Trump's Peace Plan, the BoP, the High-Level Conference on the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Global Alliance for the Two-State Solution, which must reinforce one another through coordinated and concrete implementation, in the interest of our shared objective of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East," the deputy prime minister reaffirmed.

**SBP Vice-Chairman Malik Suleman chairs an important meeting**

Sports Desk



LAHORE: Sports Board Punjab's Vice-Chairman Malik Suleman has presided over an important meeting of Sports Board Punjab Human Resource (HR) Committee at the National Hockey Stadium on Thursday.

The meeting was convened to discuss the rules of appointments in Punjab Sports Department in detail.

Addressing the meeting, Sports Board Punjab's Vice-Chairman Malik Suleman said that best measures are being taken in Punjab Sports Department under the direction of Provincial Minister for Sports and Youth Affairs Malik Faisal Ayub Khokhar.

Sports Board Punjab's Vice-Chairman Malik Suleman further said that an effective human resource department has great significance for the growth and progress of an organization. "The work is under progress on best human resource for the promotion of sports culture".

**PCB's Future Stars Talent Hunt Program Lauded as milestone for Pakistan Cricket**



Sports Reporter

KARACHI: The initiative taken by the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) to establish regional academies across the country under the Future Stars Talent Hunt Program is a highly commendable step.

Recently, young cricketers from Karachi participated in the open trials to showcase their talent. The selected talented players will become part of the academy, where their skills and weaknesses will be refined under the supervision of PCB coaches.

These views were expressed by Nadeem Omar, President of the Regional Cricket Association Karachi. He stated that the program is being successfully conducted nationwide due to the efforts of Abdullah Khurram Niazi, Director of Domestic Cricket Operations at the PCB, and that this initiative will prove to be a milestone for Pakistan cricket.

He further added that regions across the country appreciate this initiative, and the program will help discover talented players who previously did not get opportunities to display their abilities. From Karachi as well, Aaqib Javed, Director of Academies at the PCB, along with his team, has identified several promising young players who are expected to bring pride to their city and country in the future.

**Trump praises PM Shehbaz, Field Marshal Munir at maiden Board of Peace meeting**

Continued from Page 1

He said that the deal was reached after he warned Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi of imposing heavy tariff if the war wasn't stopped.

This was not the first time that Trump spoke highly for Pakistan's civil and military leadership as earlier while addressing an international event on Gaza peace on October 13, 2025, he said, "I want

to thank Prime Minister Sharif of Pakistan and also I have to say my favorite Field Marshal from Pakistan who's not here but the Prime Minister is here... give him my regards."

In other instances too, he appreciated Prime Minister Shehbaz and Chief of Defence Forces calling him "a great, great guy," and "an inspiring personality," crediting them for helping avert escalation in South Asia.

## ECC Meeting

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb virtually chaired a meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet at the Finance Division on Thursday.



Photo: PID

# ECC approves release of Rs19 bln for PM's Ramazan Relief Package 2026

### Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet on Thursday approved the immediate release of Rs19 billion for the Prime Minister's Ramazan Relief Package 2026 to ensure timely disbursement of assistance, with any additional funds to be considered in line with evolving requirements and available fiscal space.

The meeting of the cabinet committee was remotely virtually chaired by the Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, said a press release issued by the Ministry of Finance.

Among others, the meeting

was attended by Federal Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Syed Imran Ahmad Shah; Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Industries and Production, Haroon Akhtar Khan, along with federal secretaries and senior officials from the concerned ministries, divisions and regulatory bodies.

The summary submitted by the Ministry of Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety sought approval of funds amounting to

Rs 25 billion for the Prime Minister's Ramazan Relief Package (PMRRP) 2026.

The Finance Division informed the Committee that Rs.19 billion had already been budgeted for the Ramazan package for the current financial year and that the remaining requirement would be released as and when necessary.

The Committee also discussed the operational expenditure component proposed in the summary and stressed the importance of providing a detailed breakdown of costs, including payments to partner financial institutions and expenses related to outreach and communication.

The ECC granted in-principle approval for operational expenses of Rs 1 billion, subject to submission of comprehensive details to the Finance Division to ensure that allocations are aligned with actual needs and financial rules.

The ECC also took note of the urgency involved in initi-

ating payments and regularized the steps already taken to facilitate early disbursement through re-appropriated funds. It was agreed that expenditures would be managed in a manner consistent with Pakistan's fiscal commitments and that any unutilized funds would be surrendered in accordance with established procedures.

As reflected in the summary placed before the committee, the overall size of the Prime Minister's Ramazan Relief Package 2026 is Rs39 billion, of which Rs10 billion is already available with the BISP, while Rs 29 billion has been arranged through three components considered by the ECC today, including the Technical Supplementary Grant, operational

expenditures, and the regularization of re-appropriated funds.

This financing structure ensures that the package is fully resourced while maintaining fiscal discipline and transparency in implementation.

The ECC reaffirmed the government's commitment to extending timely and dignified support to deserving segments of society during Ramazan, while upholding fiscal responsibility and robust oversight in the implementation of relief measures.

It emphasized the need to balance expeditious disbursement of relief with fiscal prudence and transparency in operational expenditures.

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## Punjab reports 1,695 measles cases in four weeks

### Bureau Report

LAHORE: The Punjab has reported 1,695 suspected measles cases during the first four weeks of 2026, according to a report submitted by the DG Health Services Punjab to the Lahore High Court.

The report, filed in a case concerning deaths from measles, states that 330 patients have been laboratory-confirmed as measles cases so far this year. Additionally, 40 outbreak alerts have been issued across the province.

In 2024, Punjab recorded 23,680 suspected measles cases, of which 6,747 were laboratory-confirmed,



resulting in 16 deaths. In 2025, 19,913 suspected cases were reported, with 4,000

confirmed and 4 deaths attributed to measles.

The DG Health Services noted that monitoring and surveillance systems have been strengthened in response to this year's outbreak. Several meetings have been convened under the leadership of the Chief Secretary and the Health Minister, and instructions have been issued to improve district- and hospital-level monitoring and surveillance.

Last year, a measles vaccination campaign ran from November 17 to 29, 2025, providing free vaccines to children aged six months to five years across the province.

# No peace without justice, no solution without Palestinian's rights: Dar tells UNSC



### Spokesman Report

UNITED NATIONS: Pakistan on Thursday told the United Nations Security Council that there could be no durable peace without justice, no stability without accountability, and no sustainable solution without the realization of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination.

The deputy prime minister, in his remarks at the United Nations Security Council's briefing on "the Middle East, including the Palestinian Question" held here, emphasized Pakistan's unwavering solidarity with the Palestinian people in their legitimate pursuit of dignity, freedom, and self-determination.

He strongly condemned Israel's recent illegal measures to expand control over the West Bank, including annexation attempts, settlement entrenchment, and designation of lands as "state land."

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## Ishaq Dar, Indonesian minister discuss Palestine, bilateral ties



### News Desk

NEW YORK: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar has met Indonesian Foreign Minister Sugiono on the sidelines of the high-level United Nations Security Council (UNSC) briefing on Palestine in New York.

During the meeting, they reviewed bilateral ties and expressed satisfaction at the depth and strength of the longstanding brotherly relations between the two countries, a press release issued by the Foreign Office said on Thursday.

The two leaders also exchanged views on regional and international developments, particularly the situation in Gaza and the West Bank, and agreed to work closely for a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in Palestine, in line with international law and relevant UN resolutions.

Recalling the successful visit of President Prabowo Subianto to Pakistan in December 2025, the deputy prime minister underscored its special significance, noting that it provided fresh impetus to bilateral cooperation and reflected the steady progress achieved over the decades.

## Religious ministry holds 183 workshops to educate intending Hajj pilgrims

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Religious Affairs has conducted 183 training workshops in 107 cities across Pakistan to educate and sensitize intending pilgrims about Hajj 2026 rituals and related administrative procedures.

The figures were shared by the Secretary of Religious Affairs on Thursday during a review meeting on Hajj arrangements, chaired by the Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Sardar Muhammad Yousuf.

The secretary informed the meeting that the first phase of Hajj training for pilgrims has been completed, while the second phase will commence after Ramzan.

He added that arrangements for the provision of vaccines, issuance of air tickets, and visa processing would be initiated shortly.

The meeting was further briefed that preparations related to pilgrims' accommodation, Mina camps, and food services are in their final stages.

## Gov't taking concrete steps to address issues of bars: Law Minister

### City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Law and Justice, Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar on Thursday said that in consultation with the provincial government and relevant authorities, practical and sustainable solutions would be pursued to ensure improved facilities and institutional support for the legal fraternity.

The law minister held meeting with the newly elected Members of various bar associations from across the Rawalpindi Division. Minister of State for Law and Justice, Barrister Aqeel Malik, was also present on the occasion.

During the meeting, the issues and matters pertaining to each bar association were taken up sepa-

rately and discussed in detail. The newly elected representatives apprised the Federal Minister of the professional, administrative, and facility-related challenges faced by their respective bars and shared their priorities.

The Minister listened attentively to the concerns of the bar representatives and assured them that the issues of each bar would be addressed on a priority basis. He stated that, in consultation with the provincial government and relevant authorities, practical and sustainable solutions would be pursued to ensure improved facilities and institutional support for the legal fraternity.

Minister of State Barrister Aqeel Malik also reaffirmed the Government's commitment to maintaining effective coordination and full cooperation with the lawyers' community, emphasizing continued engagement to further strengthen the justice system.

## LHC orders PTA to curb use of illegal SIMs amid terrorism concerns

### Bureau Report

LAHORE: Lahore High Court (LHC) Justice Tariq Saleem Sheikh has directed the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) to create and implement rules to prevent the use of illegal mobile SIMs.

Justice Sheikh issued the order while hearing a case against a suspect, Muhammad Usman, who was accused of selling illegal SIM cards.

Expressing concerns over the potential misuse of illegal SIMs in terrorist activities, the high court judge emphasized the importance of taking proactive measures.

He remarked, "We have already faced terrorism, and our nation has made great sacrifices. We cannot afford illegal SIMs to be used in terrorism."

During the hearing, the PTA's director general and other legal

officers appeared in court. The defense counsel argued that the case against the accused, filed by the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NCTA), was based on incorrect facts and that the suspect



should be granted bail as it is his legal right.

In response, Justice Sheikh directed the PTA to implement measures to prevent illegal SIM card sales, highlighting the urgent need for action in light of national security concerns.

The hearing was adjourned until Monday, with the court requesting progress on these issues. The case against the accused continues under the NCTA.