

Azad Kashmir PM pledges focus on quality education after University Pact

Spokesman Report.

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Azad Kashmir Faisal Mumtaz Rathore has said that the government is taking all possible measures to promote quality education and create better opportunities for the region's youth.

He expressed these views during his meeting with Muslim Hands Country Director Khalid Gilani, who, along with his delegation, called on him following the signing ceremony of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the University of Haveli and Muslim Hands held here today.

Describing the signing of the MoU as a positive development, the PM said that such steps were very important for the promotion of education.

He welcomed the provision of scholarships by Muslim Hands and said that this would help the deserving students of Haveli to pursue higher education besides enabling them to play a positive role in the development of the society.

He further said that the government was keen to promote collaboration between educational institutions



and welfare organizations so that the younger generation can be empowered.

It is worth mentioning that under this MoU, Muslim Hands will provide

100 scholarships to the students of the University of Haveli.

The MoU was signed by Muslim Hands Country Director Khalid Gilani

and Vice Chancellor of University of Haveli Khawaja Farooq Ahmed in the presence of the prime minister and other senior officials.

VC Nishtar Medical University Chairs Key Meetings and Attends HEC Session

Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: Prof Dr. Mehnaz Khakwani, Vice Chancellor Nishtar Medical University (NMU), reviewed institutional affairs by chairing and attending a series of important meetings.

In this regard, the Vice Chancellor chaired meetings of the BASAR Committee and the Finance & Planning Committee, where financial matters, efficient utilization of resources, and institutional development strategies were discussed in detail.

Furthermore, she attended an online meeting of the Higher Education Commission (HEC), focusing on higher education policies, academic standards, and institutional improvement.

The Vice Chancellor reiterated NMU's commitment to ensuring academic excellence, financial transparency, and sustainable institutional growth.



Muslim Conference Ready to Contest General Elections with Full Force, Says Sardar Attique



Bureau Report

MIRPUR: President of All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference and former Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan said that the Muslim Conference will compete with other political parties in the general elections with full force, the Muslim Conference is the real guardian of the slogan of Kashmir will become Pakistan, the Muslim Conference has always conveyed the two-nation theory to the new generation. On this occasion, Muslim Conference Central Vice President Raja Zafar Maroof, Chaudhry Jamil Tabassum, Abdul Shakoor Mughal, former President of the Supreme Court Bar Najam Al-Saqib Kayani Advocate, Syed Shabbir Hussain Shah, Syed Waheed Hussain Shah, Syed Shahid Shah and others were also present on the occasion, special prayers were offered for the recovery of Syed Waheed Hussain Shah. When Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan reached Mirpur Jatlal, a large number of workers gave him a grand welcome and congratulated him on performing Umrah. Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan went to the shrine of Khari Sharif Mian Muhammad Baksh and Peera Shah Ghazi, where he prayed for the freedom of Kashmir, Palestine, the security of the country of Pakistan, the success of the Pakistan Army, and the victory of the Muslim Ummah.

DG Agri Research Visits Loralai Farms; DC Promises 2 Tube Wells Under BSDI

Rafiullah Mandokhel

LORALAI: Director General Agriculture Research Balochistan, Dr Muhammad Qasim Kakar, visited the Agriculture Research Directorate, Katvi Research Farm and the Adaptive Research Farm in Loralai to assess ongoing work and field trials.

He was accompanied by Olive Commercial Project in-charge Waris Baloch, Olive Officer Miraj Khan Dumar, researchers Dr Nauman and Arabi Awan, and representatives of the Federal Seeds Certification and Registration Department. In-charge Adaptive Research Muhammad Nawaz briefed the delegation on current activities and progress.

Dr Qasim reviewed olive propagation, varietal trials and other research initiatives, and later met local growers to discuss challenges in the field and the role of applied research in improving yields and resilience.

In a subsequent meeting with the Deputy Commissioner Loralai, the DG outlined plans for a Germplasm Unit (GRU) at Katvi Research Farm. The facility, he said, would enable identification of olive varieties through DNA analysis and support the future production and distribution of certified planting material.

Amid persistent drought and water scarcity, Dr Qasim sought the installation of two tube wells at the Katvi farm to sustain plantations and research work.



Vice Chancellor Inaugurates Newly Upgraded Main Gate at Women University Multan's Katchery Campus

Iram Asim

MULTAN: The main gate of the Katchery Campus of Women University Multan has been renovated and upgraded as part of the university's ongoing efforts to enhance its infrastructure and beautify the campus environment. The newly improved entrance was formally inaugurated by Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Kalsoom Paracha in the presence of Registrar Dr. Deeba Shahwar, along with faculty members and administrative staff of the university.

The upgradation of the main gate has significantly improved the visual appeal and structural outlook of the campus entrance, symbolizing the university's commitment to maintaining a modern and welcoming academic environment. The installation and renovation work have added a distinctive and dignified appearance to the university's front façade.

Speaking on the occasion, Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Kalsoom Paracha appreciated the dedication, cooperation, and hard work of the university staff who continuously support initiatives aimed at the progress and development of the institution. She acknowledged that the commitment of the university's faculty and administrative team plays a crucial role in strengthening the institution and enhancing its academic reputation.



Protest

ISLAMABAD: Employees of CDA hold a protest in favor of their demands outside Chairman CDA office, in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

Electric bus service to start in Attock from April: minister

Raza Naqvi

ATTOCK: Punjab Minister for Transport and Mass Transit Bilal Akbar Khan said on Tuesday that the electric bus service in Attock would formally start from April, while a zero-tolerance policy would be enforced against overcharging by transporters on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr.

Chairing a meeting at the DC Office Attock, he said provision of quality, safe and affordable transport facilities to the public was the top priority of the Punjab government and the launch of the elec-

tric bus service in Attock was part of that vision.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Commissioner Attock Rao Atif Raza, Additional Deputy Commissioner General Anil Saeed, Assistant Commissioner Attock Arif Qureshi, Secretary Regional Transport Authority Attock Sardar Zaheer Ahmad Khan, former provincial minister Jahangir Khanzada, former MPA Ifthikhar Ahmad Khan, Malik Hameed Akbar Khan, former chairman municipal committee Sheikh Nasir Mehmood, Chief Officer Municipal Committee Attock Sardar Aftab Ahmad

Khan and other officials.

During a briefing, Secretary RTA Sardar Zaheer Ahmad Khan informed the meeting that a special squad had been constituted to provide relief to passengers on Eid-ul-Fitr and would take strict action against overcharging and other violations in commercial vehicles.

Bilal Akbar Khan said that in the initial phase, electric buses would operate on routes linking Attock with Haji Shah, Attock Khurd and Hazro, while the service would later be extended to other tehsils.

He said 500 electric buses had already

been supplied to 20 districts in the first batch across Punjab, while out of another 600 buses, 100 were expected to arrive soon and the rest were in production.

He said all buses were expected to be available by the end of April, adding that Attock would receive another 20 to 25 buses in the next phase. He said a plan for 1,500 more buses for next year had also been approved.

Deputy Commissioner Rao Atif Raza informed the meeting that the 120-year-old dilapidated British-era building had been reconstructed, where 36 shops had been established.

AJK PM Praises Kashmir Orphan Relief Trust's Success and Expansion

Bureau Report.

MIRPUR: Prime Minister of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir State, Faisal Mumtaz Rathore, has said that the journey of supporting orphans and helpless children started by the Chairman of the Kashmir Orphan Relief Trust, Chaudhry Muhammad Akhtar, after the 2005 earthquake, is moving towards success.

On this occasion, the Most Senior Minister of Azad Kashmir Mian Abdul Waheed, Minister for Finance and Inland Revenue Chaudhry Qasim Majeed, Minister for Energy Chaudhry Arshad Hussain, Minister for Housing and Physical Planning Chaudhry Yasir Sultan, Minister for Food Chaudhry Ali Shan Soni, Minister for Local Government and Rural

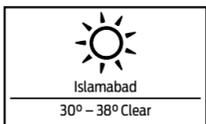


Development Chaudhry Aamir Yasin, Minister for Kashmir Cause, Environment, Arts and Languages Ms. Nabila Ayub, former Minister Chaudhry Muhammad Saeed, Advocate General Azad Kashmir Raja Nadeem Ahmed Khan Advocate, Media Advisor Syed Azadar Kazmi, DG Prime Minister's Secretariat Aamir Zeeshan Jaral, Commissioner Mirpur Division Raja Tahir Mumtaz Khan, Commissioner Inland Revenue Syed Ansar Ali,

DIG Dr. Khalid Mahmood Chohan, former Chief Justice Azad Jammu and Kashmir Justice Azam Khan, President High Court Bar Association Raja Waseem Younis Advocate, former Aspirant Assembly Mezar Khizr-ur-Rehman, former Aspirant Shahzad Iqbal, Principal Ms. Benazir Medical College Dr. Faisal Bashir, President Press Club Syed Abid Shah, President Chamber of Commerce and Industries Umar Shahzad Jaral, former Media

Advisor Murtaza Durrani, officers of divisional and district administrations, political and social and business figures and members of civil society attended. Former Station Director of Radio Pakistan Muhammad Shakeel performed the duties of the stage secretary while Chairman Court Chaudhry Muhammad Akhtar described the performance of the court. On this occasion, eminent religious scholar Dr. Allama Zubair Ahmed Naqshbandi led a prayer.

Prime Minister of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir State Faisal Mumtaz Rathore in his address said that when Chairman Court Chaudhry Muhammad Akhtar requested a place for the court's offices in Muzaffarabad, he immediately implemented it and allotted government land to the court.



SERVICES
Namaz Timings

Fajr	4:53 am
Zohr	12:16 pm
Asr	4:34 pm
Maghrib	6:17 pm
Isha	7:40 pm

EMERGENCY

Rescue (Police)	15
Bomb Disposal	15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad	1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance	1122 & 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	5556311-4
RGH	9290301-7
Holy Family	9290322-7
PIMS	9261170-79
Polyclinic	9218300-09
Shifa International	4603666

DEPARTMENTS

CDA	9221334-43
CDA	9208301-04
Met Office	9250360-6
RDA	5555864
TMA	5770886
Cantonment Board	9270151-3

CM Punjab's Vision Steering Agriculture Modernization Across Punjab

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Under the vision of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, Model Agriculture Malls have been made operational in four major cities of the province. These malls provide farmers with essential agricultural services, inputs and guidance under one roof.

Acting on the directions of Chief Minister, several farmer-friendly initiatives have been launched, including deployment of agriculture interns, establishment of agriculture malls, construction of lined water channels, bulldozer operations and laser land levelling to provide direct support to farmers.

For the first time in Punjab, around 2,000 agriculture graduate interns are working in the field to guide farmers and provide technical assistance. The presence of these interns is expected to help improve wheat production across the province. Through the CM Agriculture Internship Programme, many interns have also secured employment in the private sector after gaining practical experience in farming and crop management.

As part of the initiatives introduced under the leadership of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, Model Agriculture Malls have been made operational in four major cities of the province. These malls provide farmers with essential agricultural services, inputs and guidance under one roof.

On the directions of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif, construction of 10 additional Model Agriculture Malls is underway across Punjab to further facilitate farmers.

The Punjab government is also supporting farmers by providing laser land levelling and bulldozers to improve irrigation efficiency and agricultural productivity. In addition, the construction of lined water channels (pukka khalas) is helping ensure better water management and reducing wastage of irrigation water.

These initiatives reflect the commitment of CM Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif to modernize agriculture and provide practical support to farmers across the province.



Eid Shopping

ISLAMABAD: Women busy in shopping at Karachi Company market to preparation upcoming Eid ul Fitr festival in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

PAFLA & SI Global Solutions aim to strengthen Pakistan's freelancing ecosystem

News Desk

KARACHI: Pakistan Freelancers Association (PAFLA) and SI Global Solutions have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to foster collaboration aimed at strengthening Pakistan's rapidly growing freelancing ecosystem.

Chairman Pakistan Freelancers Association (PAFLA), Ibrahim Amin, and CEO SI Global Solutions, Dr Noman A Said, signed the MoU recently in Karachi. The agreement outlines a framework for joint initiatives, including training workshops, mentorship programs, industry linkages, and awareness campaigns to



Chairman PAFLA Ibrahim Amin said that Pakistan has immense talent, particularly among its youth. However, structured support and capacity-building initiatives are essential to harness this potential. He added that the contribution of IT companies can play a vital role in bridging skill gaps and providing freelancers with the resources they need to thrive internationally.

CEO SI Global Solutions Dr Noman A Said said that skill development and capacity building of human resources are the need of the hour to empower Pakistan's youth and guide them in the right direction. He emphasized that the role of the private sector is equally important in contributing to the country's progress and development.

Lahore's Iconic Liberty Market Goes Cashless with Zindigi and SBP

News Desk

LAHORE: Zindigi, powered by JS Bank, in collaboration with the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) Lahore, has successfully inaugurated the digitization of Liberty Market, one of the city's most prominent commercial hubs. This milestone, completed under SBP's visionary framework, represents a significant step toward strengthening financial inclusion and advancing Pakistan's transition to a truly cashless economy.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by Atif Ishaque, Chief Business Officer Zindigi; Mohsin Khan, Head of Merchant Channel &



Retail Sales Zindigi; Hammad Raza, Regional Business Head Central Zindigi; and Adnan Akram, Business Development Manager Zindigi. Officials from SBP included Bilal Shafiqat, Deputy Chief Manager; Muhammad Hammad, Assistant Chief Manager; and Hafiz Asim Mushtaq, Senior Officer. Representing the Government of Punjab were Capt. (R) Muhammad Ali Ijaz, District Commissioner Lahore, and Abdul Sami Sheikh, Assistant Commissioner Model Town.

The Liberty Market business community was represented by Mian Zahid Jawaid Ahmad, Chairman Liberty Market; Sohail Sarfraz Munj, President Liberty Market; and Darshan Singh, General Secretary.

Maryam Nawaz launches over 100 projects in two years: Azma Bokhari



Bureau Report

LAHORE: Provincial Minister for Information and Culture Punjab, Azma Bokhari, has said that Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz is serving the people of the province like a compassionate mother, taking practical steps for their welfare and well-being.

She stated that the governance model in Punjab has transformed, with the government now reaching directly to people's doorsteps. During the holy month of Ramadan, financial assistance worth billions of rupees has been delivered to millions of citizens, providing direct relief to deserving individuals.

The Information Minister further said that Maryam Nawaz does not merely make promises but delivers through concrete actions, the positive results of which are now evident. She added that the era of false promises and political gimmickry in Punjab has come to an end.

Demand for Eid Bonus and Additional Allowance for Social Security Employees in Islamabad

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: President of the Restaurants, Caterers, Sweets and Bakers Association Pakistan, Muhammad Farooq Chaudhry, and Chairman Mumtaz Ahmed have urged the federal government to grant Eid bonuses and additional allowances to registered social security employees in Islamabad, similar to those provided in Punjab.

In a joint statement, Muhammad Farooq Chaudhry and Mumtaz Ahmed said that the Punjab government's decision to provide a monthly allowance along with an additional Rs. 7,000 and an Eid bonus to social security employees is a commendable step that has provided significant financial relief. However, they expressed regret that no such measures have yet been implemented in the federal capital, Islamabad. They emphasized that employees in Islamabad are contributing equally, paying the same level of contributions as those in Punjab, yet they are being deprived of comparable facilities and benefits. They further stated that, as the federal capital, Islamabad should take a leading role and step forward to ensure that registered employees are granted similar privileges and financial incentives. They also called for the issuance of special Eid-ul-Fitr bonus orders for employees.

Al-Shifa Trust urges protective glasses as spring allergens surge

City Desk

RAWALPINDI: Pollen levels in Rawalpindi and Islamabad have climbed to dangerous levels, with Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital warning that the seasonal surge is driving a rise in painful eye allergies across the twin cities.

The Pakistan Meteorological Department has recorded 14,695 pollen particles per cubic metre of air in Islamabad's H-8 sector. Counts in G-6 and E-8 stood at 5,510 and 5,391 respectively. Paper mulberry, the dominant allergen, accounted for 14,558 particles and was classified as very high. The pollen season typically runs from mid-March through April.

Prof. Dr. Inam Ul Haq, senior consultant at Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital, said the high concentration of airborne pollen is triggering allergic conjunctivitis, in which the eyes become red, itchy and inflamed. He advised residents going outdoors to wear protective or large-frame sunglasses to block pollen from reaching the eyes.

He said pollen allergies commonly cause burning, itching, redness, tearing, swelling and sensitivity to light. People with existing allergies or asthma should also consider using air purifiers indoors.

Prof. Inam Ul Haq said climate change is worsening the problem. Warmer springs and reduced rainfall allow pollen to remain in the air for longer periods. Summer has expanded from about 150 to 180 days, while spring has shrunk from roughly 45 days to nearly 10 days, reducing the rainfall that historically cleared pollen from the atmosphere.



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USA Allies Abandon the Sinking Ship

There is an old maritime warning that when a ship begins to sink, the first to flee are those who once thrived aboard it, and today that metaphor has taken on a striking geopolitical meaning as the United States, which entered its confrontation with Iran with confidence bordering on certainty, now finds itself navigating isolation, resistance, and strategic overstretch. At the outset of the conflict, President Donald Trump projected overwhelming dominance, presenting Iran as a weakened and sanctioned state that would collapse under pressure, with expectations that a rapid military campaign would dismantle its command structure, neutralize its capabilities, and ignite internal unrest leading to regime change aligned with U.S. and Israeli interests. The numerical disparity appeared to support this belief, with U.S. defense spending estimated at roughly \$877 billion compared to Iran's far smaller military budget, creating the impression that the outcome was pre-terminated, yet wars are not decided by budgets alone and within weeks the narrative began to fracture as Iran neither collapsed nor fragmented but instead demonstrated resilience, cohesion, and strategic adaptability.

and reluctance, with European nations emphasizing that they had neither been consulted nor mandated to participate in escalation, signaling not just diplomatic caution but a deeper fracture in alliance cohesion. Countries that once followed Washington's lead are now recalibrating their positions based on economic risk, domestic pressure, and strategic autonomy, leaving the United States increasingly alone in a conflict it had expected to lead with coalition backing. This reluctance is rooted in tangible global consequences, as the Strait of Hormuz, through which nearly one-fifth of global oil supply flows, has become a central pressure point, with disruptions driving energy prices upward, insurance costs surging dramatically, and global markets experiencing volatility with trillions of dollars temporarily wiped from valuations during peak escalation, transforming what was intended as a controlled military engagement into a global economic shockwave. Iran, far from being incapacitated, has leveraged this vulnerability by signaling its ability to disrupt shipping lanes and energy flows, compelling major economies to engage directly with Tehran to secure safe passage for their vessels, marking a significant shift in which nations are negotiating with Iran rather than isolating it, while within the United States analysts have begun warning of potential shortages in energy-linked sectors, industrial inputs, and essential goods, raising concerns about inflationary pressures and supply chain disruptions that could impact everyday life.

development lies in the expansion of the battlefield beyond Iran's borders through the activation, or credible threat of activation, of Iran's regional allies across Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and beyond, where networks cultivated over decades now provide Tehran with strategic depth and the ability to exert pressure across multiple fronts simultaneously. Armed groups aligned with Iran have already demonstrated their capacity to strike U.S. bases, logistical hubs, and allied infrastructure, creating a scenario in which American interests are no longer confined to a single theater but

and allied infrastructure. This is where Iran's strategy introduces a decisive complication, as Tehran has signaled that any ports, docking facilities, shipping routes, or regional bases that provide logistical support to U.S. naval forces could be considered legitimate targets, effectively extending the battlefield to include the entire supply chain that sustains American military presence. By threatening or targeting these logistical nodes through missiles, drones, and allied proxy actions, Iran can impose a form of indirect pressure that does not require direct confrontation with U.S. naval assets but instead aims to degrade their operational sustainability over time. If supply routes become unsafe or politically untenable for host nations, the ability of these massive naval formations to maintain prolonged deployment in contested waters becomes increasingly constrained, turning what appears to be overwhelming power into a complex logistical challenge.

In strategic terms, this represents a shift from confrontation to attrition, where the objective is not necessarily to defeat U.S. forces outright but to make their continued presence costly, vulnerable, and politically difficult to sustain. As Iran's regional allies intensify pressure on U.S. installations and supply corridors while maritime threats disrupt shipping and energy flows, the United States finds itself forced to allocate resources toward defense, protection, and logistics rather than offensive dominance, gradually eroding the advantages of scale and technology. This dynamic raises critical questions about sustainability, as prolonged exposure to multi-front pressure tests not only military capabilities but also political will, economic resilience, and alliance cohesion.

Continued on Page 7



Analysis

Qamar Bashir

Citrus of KP: The likely casualty of IWT violations by India

As the first golden rays of sunlight spread across the fertile plains of Khanpur, 65-year-old farmer Sajid Abbasi quietly walks through his citrus orchard in Haripur district, his mind clouded with worries about water scarcity and the future of his crop amid repeated violations of Indus Water Treaty (IWT) by India.

The fruit must reach markets before the sun grows stronger. With only a few days of Ramadan left, demand for citrus has surged across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as families prepare for iftar gatherings and the approaching Eidul Fitr.

But for Abbasi, the season is no longer just about profits but it has also become a time of uncertainty for many citrus producers following IWT violations by India.

"After Fajr, I come here with my sons to shift oranges to the market early," Abbasi says, adjusting his white cap while carefully selecting the best fruit. "This crop represents months of work especially watering, pruning and waiting."

Across the province, juicy citrus fruits especially kinnow have become a staple on iftar tables. Their refreshing taste and nutritional value make them one of the most sought-after seasonal fruits during Iftar.

"My iftar feels incomplete without orange juice," said Khurshid Khan, a manager at the Pakistan Mineral Development Corporation, while buying fruit at a local market. "It gives strength and energy after a long fast. That's why I buy two dozen oranges every day."

For farmers like Abbasi, however, the final weeks of the harvest season bring mixed emotions.

Citrus orchards have quietly emerged as one of the most profitable seasonal crops in parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab. According to growers, a well-managed acre can generate substantial returns.

"With proper irrigation and good management, a single acre can produce hundreds of kilograms of fruit," Abbasi explains. "Farmers can earn between Rs500,000 and Rs700,000 per acre if everything goes well, especially the water supply."

But that "if of IWT violations" has become increasingly troubling for growers.

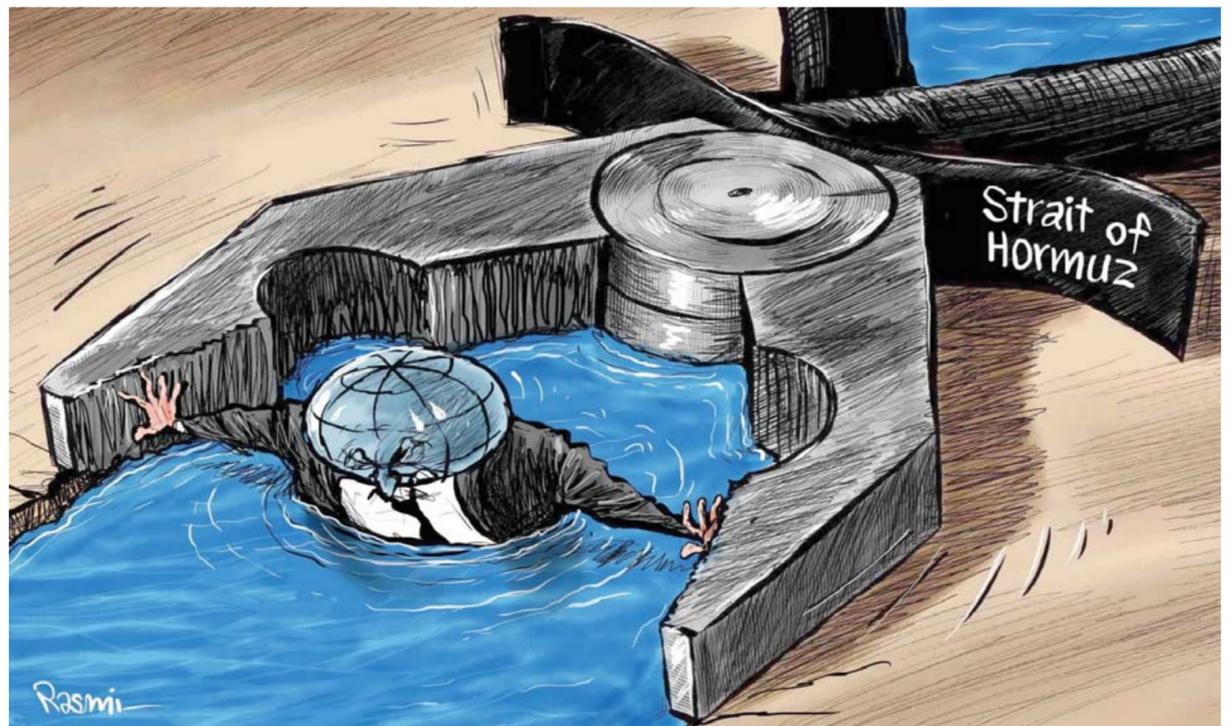
Abbasi fears that disruptions in river flows linked to repeated violations of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) by India could threaten the irrigation system that sustains his orchard.

"We depend largely on water from the River Indus," he said. "If water becomes scarce, citrus orchards like ours will suffer."

Farmers across the region share similar concerns. Orchards in districts such as Haripur and Swabi depend heavily on irrigation from the Indus Basin system through Tarbela Dam. Any reduction in water flows could directly affect seasonal crops including wheat, rice, sugarcane and fruits such as melons, strawberries and citrus.

"Water is the lifeline of agriculture," said Professor Dr. Muhammad Naem, former chairman of the Economics Department at the University of Peshawar. "If river flows decrease, fruit orchards in districts like Haripur, Swabi, Mardan, Charsadda and Swat could disappear quickly."

According to the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), the country produces between 2.13 million and 2.4 million metric tons of citrus annually, accounting for nearly 30 to 38 percent of Pakistan's total fruit production.



Cartoon by Amjad Rasmī. (Courtesy of Ashraf Al-Awcat)

Accountability Reform or Legal Engineering?

Few areas of Pakistan's legal system have generated as much controversy as the country's accountability framework. Over the past two decades, the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) has repeatedly found itself at the center of political, constitutional and institutional debates. Critics have long argued that accountability laws in Pakistan often evolve not through careful institutional reform but through political necessity.

The National Accountability (Amendment) Act, 2026 is the latest development in this contested legal landscape. Presented as a reform designed to modernize the accountability regime, the legislation has instead sparked serious questions about its timing, intent, and potential impact on the independence of accountability institutions.

The manner in which the bill was enacted has already raised eyebrows. It was introduced as a Private Member's Bill, placed on the parliamentary agenda through a supplementary agenda, and passed by both Houses of Parliament within hours despite opposition protests. Presidential assent followed the same day. Significantly, the amendments were approved just one day before the sitting NAB Chairman's term was set to expire.

In constitutional democracies, legislative speed is not inherently problematic. However, when major institutional reforms are rushed through Parliament under such circumstances, questions about motive become unavoidable.

Key Structural Changes
 The amendments introduce several notable changes to the National Accountability Ordinance, 1999.

One of the most consequential provisions concerns the tenure of the NAB Chairman. Previously, the chairman served a single non-extendable three-year term. The amendment to Section 6 now allows the chairman to serve an additional three-year extension at the discretion of the federal government.

While this may appear administratively convenient, it raises an obvious institutional concern. An accountability watchdog whose leadership depends on executive discretion for tenure extension may face implicit pressure to align with the preferences of the government of the day. Independence, once compromised, becomes difficult to restore.

Another significant change involves the expansion of the jurisdiction of accountability courts. Amendments to Section 4 clarify that these courts may now exercise appellate functions in addition to conducting trials. Though presented as a procedural clarification, this effectively expands the operational authority of accountability courts within the judicial framework.

The law also introduces a dynamic monetary threshold for NAB cases. Previously fixed at Rs 500 million, the threshold will now be adjusted annually in accordance with inflation data published by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. While this adjustment may be justified as an attempt to maintain realistic financial benchmarks, it could also gradually remove numerous corruption cases from NAB's jurisdiction.

A Controversial Second Right of Appeal
 Perhaps the most debated amendment is the introduction of Section 32A, which creates a second right of appeal to the Federal Constitutional Court following a High Court decision.

Under this provision, both the convicted individual and the Prosecutor General Accountability; if directed by the Chairman NAB; may file a second appeal within thirty days.

This provision stands out when viewed through the lens of comparative criminal law. In most common-law systems, including the United Kingdom and the United States, appellate safeguards primarily exist to protect the rights of the accused. Granting the prosecution a second right of appeal is unusual and risks creating an imbalance within the criminal justice process.

Even within Pakistan's own legal framework, no comparable provision exists in cases involving serious crimes such as murder, rape, corruption, or money laundering. The selective introduction of this appellate mechanism exclusively within the NAB regime therefore raises an unavoidable question: why was such a provision considered necessary only in accountability cases?

Institutional Implications
 The amendments also alter the broader judicial architecture by redirecting certain appeals from the Supreme Court to the Federal Constitutional Court. Critics argue that such structural changes may be perceived as judicial forum engineering, where cases are directed toward a newly structured forum rather than the traditional apex court.

Furthermore, if the Constitutional Court's jurisdiction is limited primarily to constitutional questions without permitting a full reassessment of evidence and factual findings, concerns may arise regarding compliance with Article 10A of the Constitution, which guarantees the right to a fair trial.

Taken together, these changes risk reshaping the balance between accountability institutions, the executive branch, and the judiciary.

Continued on Page 7



Analysis

Barrister Sara Ali Syed

Transforming Faisalabad: A New Era of Urban Development and Infrastructure Modernization

Faisalabad, widely recognized as the industrial backbone of Punjab is witnessing a transformative phase of urban development driven by a series of strategic, high-value infrastructure projects. With a cumulative investment exceeding Rs. 96 billion, these initiatives are designed to address long-standing civic challenges while laying the foundation for a modern, sustainable and economically vibrant city. The scope of these projects reflect a forward-looking vision focused on improving public service delivery, environmental sustainability and overall urban livability.

These multi-billion projects reflect a comprehensive vision of Punjab Government under the leadership of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz to modernize the city and enhance the quality of life for its residents. However, the Commissioner Faisalabad Raja Jahangir Anwer is making all-out efforts to execute these projects well on time. The pace of these projects is being monitored by the visionary officer on weekly basis and report being sent to the high-ups accordingly. At the heart of this transformation is the Beautification of Kutcheri Bazar, a flagship project valued at Rs. 1 billion. Kutcheri Bazar, known for its historical and commercial importance is being revitalized to meet contemporary urban standards without compromising its cultural identity. The project includes the development of pedestrian-friendly walkways, installation of modern street lighting, facade improvement of

commercial buildings and better traffic regulation mechanisms. Once completed, the area is expected to emerge as a model commercial corridor that blends heritage with modernity, enhancing both business activity and public convenience.

Equally significant is the Extension of the Water Resource Project, backed by an investment of Rs. 23 billion. As Faisalabad continues to expand in population and industrial capacity, the demand for clean and reliable water supply has intensified. This project aims to substantially increase water availability, improve distribution networks and ensure equitable access across residential, commercial and industrial zones. By strengthening water infrastructure, the initiative will play a critical role in supporting economic growth while addressing one of the most pressing urban challenges.

A landmark intervention in environmental management is the Waste Water Treatment Project, a foreign-funded initiative costing Rs. 56 billion. This project introduces modern wastewater treatment facilities that will significantly reduce the discharge of untreated sewage into natural water bodies. By adopting advanced treatment technologies, Faisalabad will not only improve its environmental footprint but also move towards sustainable water reuse practices. The project is expected to have far-reaching benefits, including improved public health, enhanced agricultural productivity through

Continued on Page 7



Analysis

Maqbool A. Malick

OIC-COMSTECH, UMS Launch Advanced Midwifery Training for Tharparkar Women

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The OIC-COMSTECH, in collaboration with The University of Modern Sciences, has announced the launch of an Advanced Midwifery Clinical Skills Training Program aimed at enhancing maternal and neonatal healthcare services in Tharparkar, Sindh.

The training program is specifically designed for female candidates from Tharparkar, particularly from Taluka Chachro and Dahili, including certified midwives and those who have appeared in final examinations of midwifery courses. The initiative will be conducted at the Indus Medical

College Hospital, Tando Muhammad Khan, and is scheduled to run from mid-April to the end of May 2026.

This fully funded program covers tuition, accommodation, and meals, reflecting a strong commitment to capacity building in underserved regions. The last date for submission of applications is March 31, 2026.

The primary objectives of the training include improving clinical competencies in safe delivery practices, strengthening emergency obstetric and neonatal care, promoting community-based maternal and child healthcare awareness, and building capacity in nutrition and emergency response.

This initiative has been undertaken as a follow-up to the two-day medical camp held in Chachro, Tharparkar, where the urgent need for skilled maternal healthcare providers was identified.

Commenting on the initiative, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General OIC-COMSTECH, stated:

"Improving maternal and child health in underserved regions like Tharparkar is a priority for OIC-COMSTECH. This training program is a direct outcome of our engagement at the grassroots level during the recent medical camp in Chachro. By equipping local

midwives with advanced clinical skills, we aim to ensure safer deliveries, reduce maternal and neonatal mortality, and empower communities through sustainable healthcare interventions.

Equally important is raising awareness about maternal mental health, particularly postpartum depression, which often goes unrecognized in remote communities. Through this initiative, we also aim to sensitize healthcare providers to identify and support mothers facing such challenges, ensuring holistic care for both mother and child."

He further emphasized that OIC-COMSTECH will continue to



partner with national institutions across marginalized areas of Pakistan to expand such impactful initiatives and other OIC member states.

International Law Experts Declare Kashmir "Test Case" for UN Integrity, Urge Action on Decades of Legal Paralysis

Spokesman Report

GENEVA: A landmark seminar on Kashmir and the right to self-determination concluded today with urgent calls for the international community to address the "systemic failure" of the United Nations to enforce its own binding resolutions. Moderated and presided over by Altaf Hussain Wani, Permanent Representative of the World Muslim Congress (WMC), the event brought together leading jurists and scholars to examine the 77 year gap between international legal obligations and the political paralysis surrounding the disputed territory.

The distinguished panel featured Ms. Amelie d'Hasusen, PhD Scholar at Geneva University; Robert Fitina, Canadian writer and international affairs analyst; Ronald Barnes; Dr. Sajjad Latief; and Naila Altaf Kani, PhD Scholar at NUML. Collectively, they dissected the status of seventeen binding UN Security Council resolutions on Kashmir—adopted between 1948 and 1971—including Resolution 47's mandate for a plebiscite that remains unimplemented.

"The international legal order possesses the hammer of self-determination as a jus cogens norm, yet states continue to control the nails," noted Altaf Hussain Wani in his opening remarks. Panelists emphasized that the 2019 abrogation of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution represented not merely a domestic constitutional alteration but a "fundamental challenge" to the international legal framework governing the dispute.

Ms. d'Hasusen analyzed the erga



omnes nature of self-determination obligations under Common Article 1 of the 1966 Human Rights Covenants, while Dr. Latief examined the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention to occupying powers in the region. Robert Fitina and Ronald Barnes explored the geopolitical vetoes that have rendered the Security Council "effectively defunct" on Kashmir,

leaving legally operative decisions to "gather dust in UN archives." Ms. Kani presented pathways forward, including potential reference to the International Court of Justice and renewed multilateral pressure through the Human Rights Council.

The seminar concluded that the UN's failure in Kashmir represents not a failure of the law itself, but of the

political will to enforce it. Referencing the late Kashmiri poet Agha Shahid Ali's description of his homeland as a "country without a post office," participants warned that without immediate remedial action, the silence on Kashmir portends grave consequences for other self-determination movements worldwide, from Palestine to Western Sahara.

DG FIA visits Zonal Office Quetta, appreciates performance of Balochistan Zone



Bureau Report

QUETTA: Director General of the Federal Investigation Agency, Dr. Usman Anwar visited the FIA Balochistan Zone Zonal Office in Quetta.

On the occasion, Director FIA Balochistan Zone, Muhammad Behram Khan briefed the DG FIA on the overall performance of the zone, ongoing renovation and construction work, and various operational initiatives.

The DG FIA reviewed the ongoing renovation and construction activities at the Zonal Office and expressed satisfaction over the progress. He appreciated the overall performance of the Balochistan Zone, particularly its actions against illegal Hawala/Hundi networks, human trafficking, and its role in the campaign against electricity theft.

During the visit, the DG FIA stated that, in addition to other zones, additional budget is also being allocated for the ongoing construction work in Balochistan Zone to further strengthen infrastructure and support more developmental projects in the region.

Dr. Usman Anwar praised the dedication and professionalism of the officers and encouraged them to continue their efforts to strengthen law enforcement and safeguard national interests.

EU urges US, Israel to end Iran war



European Union foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas urged the United States and Israel to end their war with Iran and said the EU is consulting regional governments to resolve the conflict. Kallas stressed that Europe may help restore freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, likely through diplomatic channels rather than military action. She emphasized that stopping the war is in everyone's interest to prevent escalation and humanitarian crises.

Kallas noted that multiple European nations have refused US President Donald Trump's requests to join a mission to reopen the Strait, citing unwillingness to risk forces in a conflict they did not start. The EU chief acknowledged Europe's lack of prior consultation before the war began and criticized Washington and Tel Aviv for acting without broader international input.

She highlighted ongoing consultations with Gulf states, Jordan, and Egypt to propose diplomatic solutions that allow Iran, Israel, and the US to resolve the conflict while preserving dignity for all parties. Kallas emphasized that Europe is prepared to help mediate but prefers non-military approaches similar to the UN-brokered Black Sea grain deal model. The conflict has disrupted global energy markets due to Iran's control over the Strait of Hormuz, raising concerns about food, fertilizer, and energy shortages worldwide. Kallas urged diplomatic solutions to keep the vital waterway open and warned that military interventions would escalate the crisis and risk civilian safety.

S. Korea eyes 10 tln-won investment in AI sector via state fund

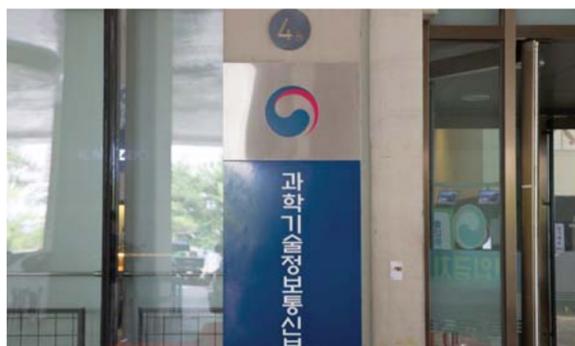
YONHAP

SEOUL: South Korea plans to invest 10 trillion won (US\$6.7 billion) in the artificial intelligence (AI) sector this year via the National Growth Fund as part of its goal to foster a Korean equivalent of U.S. tech giant Nvidia Corp., the science ministry said Tuesday.

The Ministry of Science and ICT and the Financial Services Commission (FSC) unveiled the plan as they held a conference in Seoul with AI-related companies to discuss ways to utilize the state fund to propel growth in the AI industry.

In 2025, the government introduced the National Growth Fund, which will invest at least 150 trillion won from public and private sources over five years, with the goal of securing new growth engines for Asia's fourth-largest economy.

The government earlier announced



the first batch of seven projects under the plan, including one aimed at fostering a Korean equivalent of Nvidia.

"Currently, the global AI market is led by GPUs, but some cite limitations due to massive energy consumption and astronomical costs," Science

Minister Bae Kyung-hoon said during the event.

"Big tech AI companies are seeking to overcome such limitations of GPUs through next-generation NPU technologies specialized in inference, engaging in fierce competition," Bae added, refer-

ring to graphics processing units and neural processing units.

Bae said South Korea plans to focus its efforts on fostering the domestic NPU industry to help the nation become a leading player in the global market.

FSC Chairman Lee Eog-weon echoed the view, noting the AI industry calls for large-scale initial investment along with continued hardware upgrades.

"Through the National Growth Fund, the government will invest 50 trillion won in the AI and semiconductor sectors over a five-year period, including 10 trillion won this year," Lee said.

The science ministry said it plans to continue working closely with the private sector and the FSC to find new project opportunities, along with efforts to foster a Korean equivalent of Nvidia.

Breaking Bread, Building Bridges This Ramadan, says Haroon Naseer

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Maroof International Hospital, in collaboration with the Health, Civil Administration & Police Committee of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), hosted a distinguished Iftar dinner at the Diplomatic Enclave, bringing together members of the diplomatic corps, government representatives, law enforcement offi-

cials, and civil society. The event highlighted Maroof International Hospital's commitment to excellence in healthcare, community engagement, and fostering dialogue across sectors.

The evening was graced by Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Dr. Tariq Fazal Chaudhry, along with Inspector General Islamabad Police, Syed Ali Nasir Rizvi, and other senior officials. Ambassadors from Austria, Iran, Lebanon, Philippines, Syria,

Mauritius, Zimbabwe, Rwanda, Azerbaijan, and senior representatives from the United Nations, International Organization for Migration, Germany, Italy, Russia, Turkey, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Yemen, and Nigeria attended.

Haroon Naseer, CEO of Maroof International Hospital, said "We believe that breaking bread together is more than tradition—it is a bridge of understanding, compassion, and unity that strengthens communities and nations



alike. This Iftar exemplifies our mission to lead in healthcare, foster dialogue, and create meaningful social impact."

Bull & Bears
PSX 100-Share
Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index	
Current	Prev. Close
150,016.16	149,178.66
Day's High	Day's Low
151,503.46	148,509.04
Index Value	Change
14,582,363,726	+837.50
Percentage	Time
+0.56%	17 Mar, 2026 4:30 pm

Europe: FTSE 100 Index	
Index Value	Change
10,403.60	+85.91
Percentage	Time
+0.83%	17 Mar, 4:35 pm GMT

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average	
Index Value	Change
47,115.01	+168.60
Percentage	Time
+0.36%	17 Mar, 1:04 pm GMT-4

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average	
Index Value	Change
53,700.39	-50.76
Percentage	Time
--50.76	17 Mar, 3:45 pm GMT+9

Open Market Forex Rates

Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	193.40	197
Bahrain Dinar	729.39	739.70
Canadian Dollar	200.46	206.50
China Yuan	36.50	37.75
Danish Krone	43.32	43.72
Euro	319.80	323.05
Hong Kong Dollar	34.8	35.8
Indian Rupee	2.4	2.85
Japanese Yen	1.7177	1.8164
Kuwaiti Dinar	885.36	895.25
Malaysian Ringgit	65.30	66.50
New Zealand \$	162.77	166.25
Norwegians Krone	27.61	27.91
Omani Riyal	715.10	725.10
Qatari Riyal	74.6	75.3
Saudi Riyal	73.70	74.65
Singapore Dollar	214.47	218.25
Swedish Korona	30.15	30.45
Swiss Franc	355	358.85
Thai Bhat	8.05	8.15
U.A.E Dirham	75.45	76.65
UK Pound Sterling	370.31	374.25
US Dollar	279.25	280.30

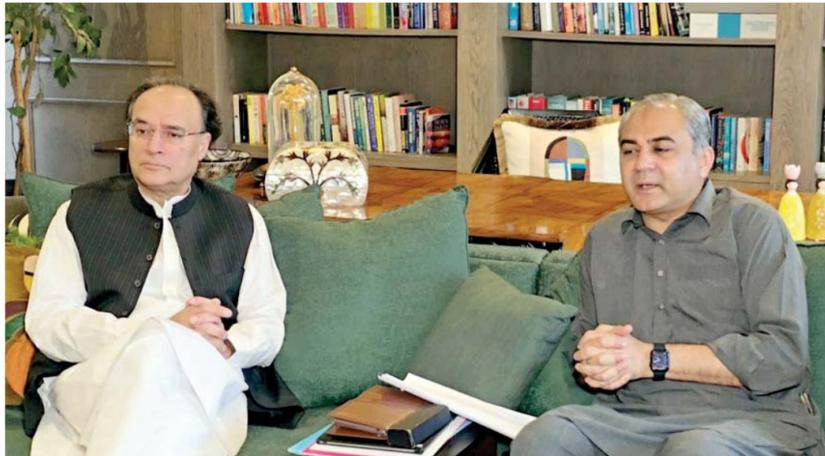
Pakistan launches major crackdown on money laundering, Hawala/Hundi Networks

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: In a high-level special meeting chaired by Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Federal Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, the government on Tuesday approved an aggressive nationwide crackdown against money laundering and the hawala/hundi networks operating across the country.

The meeting resolved that strict action will be taken against major business figures and institutions involved in illegally transferring funds abroad. Officials agreed that no leniency would be extended to individuals or entities engaged in money laundering or hawala/hundi operations.

It was decided that overseas remittances must be sent strictly through banking channels and other legally approved mechanisms. The process of sending money abroad through money changers will



The ministers emphasized that the entire mechanism for foreign remittances will be streamlined to eliminate loopholes and ensure complete transparency.

made "transparent and foolproof." All illegal channels used for transferring funds abroad will be discouraged at every level.

A strong resolve was expressed to take firm action against "big money launderers," with the ministers reiterating that the business of hawala/hundi would not be tolerated under any circumstances.

The meeting also approved the formation of a joint working group of the State Bank of Pakistan and the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA). The group will regularly review progress on all relevant matters linked to combating illegal financial flows.

During the session, the Governor of the State Bank briefed participants on the current system of fund transfers through banking channels. The meeting was attended by the DG FIA, the Governor of the State Bank, and the Federal Finance Secretary.

Jewelry

RAWALPINDI: Mar 17- Women are busy in buying jewelry at a shop in Moti Bazaar to preparation upcoming Eid Ul Fitr festival, in the city.



Photo: Online



Renowned Architecture Akmal Bukhari receiving the gift from Ceo Altect Engineers Luqman Khan.

Pakistan Business Council and Pakistan Initiative Launch Startup Pitch Prize at Pakistan Conference at Harvard 2026

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Business Council (PBC) and the Pakistan Initiative (TPI) have announced their first Startup Pitch Competition to spotlight high-potential Pakistani and Pakistan-focused ventures at one of the most prominent Pakistan convenings in North America.

This partnership reflects a clear intent from the private sector to back innovation that is commercially viable and globally relevant. Platforms such as the Pakistan Conference at Harvard provide an important bridge, connecting Pakistani talent and enterprise with international capital, networks and credibility. It is through such interventions that we can begin to shift the narrative from potential to performance," said Dr Zeelaf Munir, Chairperson, Pakistan Business Council.

Commenting on the PBC-TPI Startup Pitch Prize, Ziad Bashir, Vice Chairman, Pakistan Business Council, said, "The PBC-TPI partnership reflects the willingness of Pakistani enterprises in backing startups that can scale responsibly and competitively. Pakistan needs such startups for growth and to raise productivity and this platform brings them into one of the world's most influential academic ecosystems."

Sannan Pervaiz and Muhammad Hadi, Co-Founders of the Pakistan Initiative, said the Pitch Competition is a way

to convert ambitions into implementations. "The first-ever innovation forum and the Startup Pitch Prize, in collaboration with PBC, brings a new dimension to the agenda: it bridges the scale gap and promotes productivity and investment in the Pakistani ecosystem," they said.

Hashaam Javed, MBA student at the Harvard Business School and the Chair Lead for the Pakistan Conference at Harvard 2026 reflected on the Startup Pitch Competition as a direct extension of creating tangible impact beyond conversations, commenting on the importance of enabling "a credible platform for Pakistani-origin founders to showcase what they are building on a global stage," and emphasizing the objective to "highlight performance, not just potential, and to demonstrate that globally competitive companies are being built by Pakistani founders across the world."

"This initiative reflects our belief in business as a catalyst for innovation, investment and job creation. The Startup Pitch Competition is designed as a practical platform to connect founders with investors, business leaders and global networks. By focusing on ventures that demonstrate both ambition and execution, we aim to support ideas that can scale, create jobs and contribute meaningfully to Pakistan's productivity and competitiveness," noted Javed Kureshi, CEO, Pakistan Business Council.

Yango becomes first ride-hailing service to secure Transport Network Company operating license in Punjab

Commerce Desk

KARACHI/LAHORE: Yango Ride, part of global technology company Yango Group, has become the first ride-hailing platform in Pakistan to receive an official Transport Network Company (TNC) operating license from the Punjab Provincial Transport Authority, marking a significant milestone for the country's rapidly evolving mobility sector.

The license authorizes Yango Ride to operate under the Provincial Motor Vehicle (Amendment) Act, 2025 which regulates ride-hailing services in Punjab.

The approval follows several months of effective engagement between Yango Ride and the Punjab Transport Ministry, along with other government stakeholders, during the process of implementing the new licensing framework for digital mobility platforms across the province.

"We are grateful to the Punjab Transport Authority for granting us the license and appreciate the professionalism demonstrated throughout the process," said Miral Sharif, Country Manager for Yango Pakistan.

"This milestone reflects our commitment to working closely with regulators to support the development of a safer, affordable, and reliable ride-hailing



ecosystem in Pakistan. Receiving the license also reaffirms our long-term presence in the market and our dedication to meeting the high regulatory and safety standards for both our partner drivers and passengers."

SECP Tightens Oversight of SOEs, Issues 66 Notices Over Compliance Lapses

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has issued show cause notices to 41 state owned enterprises (SOEs) for failing to submit their annual audited accounts and annual returns. Hearings for the non-compliant entities have been scheduled.

The action is part of SECP's ongoing efforts to improve transparency, strengthen corporate governance and support the government's reform agenda aimed at enhancing accountability in the SOE sector.

The SECP found that 33 SOEs have not filed their annual audited accounts, while 26 companies have failed to submit their annual returns. In addition, seven companies have not held their Annual

General Meetings. In total, 66 show cause notices have been issued to 41 companies.

Following due process of law, the Commission will conclude the proceedings and issue penalty orders after adjudication. The names of the non-compliant SOEs will be published on the Commission's website. Copies of the orders will also be shared with the relevant

Principal Accounting Officers and the Director General of the Central Monitoring Unit.

In addition, four SOEs are operating without appointed Chief Executive Officers.

The SECP has advised the concerned entities to fill these positions at the earliest. Copies of the communication are also being shared with the Principal

Accounting Officers and the Central Monitoring Unit.

To strengthen oversight, the SECP has developed a comprehensive enforcement plan to monitor financial reporting and governance practices of SOEs. The Commission is also establishing a dedicated wing at its head office to oversee compliance and monitoring of state-owned enterprises.

Get a sound upgrade for your Eid gatherings with the TCL TP200K Party Speaker

Commerce Desk

LAHORE: TCL, Pakistan's No.1 LED TV Brand, has introduced the TP200K Party Speaker in Pakistan, bringing powerful sound, dynamic lighting, and modern connectivity to elevate Eid celebrations, house parties, and family gatherings.

The speaker market in Pakistan has a clear gap: options are either expensive or, if affordable, often compromise on sound, durability, and features. TCL fills this gap with the TP200K, offering premium performance, versatile features, and accessible pricing.

As families and friends come together during the festive season, the TP200K transforms any space into a lively entertainment environment. Whether it's an Eid get-together at home or a celebration with friends, the speaker delivers powerful sound and immersive bass that keeps every gathering energized.

At its core, the TP200K offers 220W maximum audio power, producing rich, room-filling sound with deep bass, balanced mids, and crisp highs for an immersive listening experience across all music genres.

Gold prices edge higher on Tuesday

NEW YORK:

Gold prices edged higher on Tuesday, with spot gold increasing by 0.4 percent to \$5,023.19 per ounce as of 02:51 GMT.

US gold futures for April delivery rose by 0.5 percent to \$5,027.20.

Spot silver rose by 0.6 percent to \$81.28 per ounce. Spot platinum gained 2.2 percent to \$2,161.35, and palladium was up 1.4 percent to \$1,620.45.



Minister of Foreign Affairs briefs diplomatic corps on escalating settler terrorism in West Bank

Wafa

RAMALLAH: Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, Varsen Shahin, held an extensive briefing on Tuesday for the diplomatic corps accredited to the State of Palestine, reviewing the escalating settler terrorism in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

The minister stated that Israeli authorities are exploiting the international community's focus on regional crises to intensify settlement policies and accelerate creeping annexation.

This includes expanding settlements and implementing legislative and administrative measures that entrench permanent control over Palestinian land, undermine the two-state solution, and threaten the Palestinian people's right to self-determination.

Shahin emphasized that settler terrorism has reached unprecedented levels, with daily



organized attacks targeting Palestinians and their property.

These attacks include killings, physical assaults, arson of homes and vehicles, destruction of agricultural lands, and seizure of natural resources; often under the direct protection of Israeli forces.

She also highlighted ongoing violations against religious sites, particularly the continued closure of Al-Aqsa Mosque since the beginning of the conflict and restrictions preventing worshippers from performing prayers during the holy month of Ramadan, clear violations of freedom of worship.

The briefing featured testimonies from local leaders directly affected by the escalation. Ayman Hamayel, head of the Abu Falah Village Council; Ahmad Inaya, Mayor of Azzun; and Amin Abu Alia, head of the Al-Mughayyir Village Council, described how

killings have become part of the daily attacks. Residents face direct gunfire from settlers, often in the presence of Israeli forces, resulting in deaths and injuries with no accountability.

They also highlighted the repeated and complete closure of village entrances with iron gates, isolating Palestinian communities and severely restricting movement. These measures are accompanied by frequent raids, arson attacks, land seizures, and the creation of new settlement outposts, deepening residents' suffering and threatening their continued presence on their land.

In conclusion, Minister Shahin called on the international community to assume its legal and moral responsibilities and take concrete steps to halt these violations, providing protection for the Palestinian people in accordance with international law and relevant United Nations resolutions.

Regional Tensions Pose New Challenges for Pakistan's Economy, Say Business Leaders

Sports Desk

KARACHI: Rising geopolitical tensions in South and West Asia, including ongoing clashes along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border and escalating conflicts in the Gulf region, are creating new challenges for Pakistan's economy and industrial sector, according to Shamooin Zaki, President of the Pakistan-Indonesia Business Forum and prominent industrialist.

In a statement Zaki warned that these regional developments are already having a tangible impact on global trade, supply chains, and energy markets. "Volatility in Gulf energy markets and rising shipping costs are likely to feed directly into Pakistan's industrial production and export competitiveness," he said.

Pakistan's industries are already under pressure due to high energy costs,

rising raw material prices, and financial constraints. Zaki stressed that further regional instability could exacerbate these challenges, particularly in key sectors such as textiles, steel, chemicals, and food processing.

The business leader highlighted that the situation along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border is especially critical, not only for bilateral trade but also for transit routes connecting Pakistan to Central Asia. "Any escalation in cross-border tensions threatens trade flows and logistics networks, potentially undermining regional economic integration," he noted.

Despite the challenges, Zaki pointed to opportunities for Pakistan to diversify its trade partnerships. "Global uncertainty often prompts countries to seek alternative markets, and Pakistan must



seize this moment to expand its exports beyond traditional destinations," he said. Zaki identified Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia, Malaysia, and other ASEAN nations, as promising partners. "Strengthening trade rela-

tions with these countries, especially in textiles, agricultural products, food processing, pharmaceuticals, and palm oil, can provide both an economic lifeline and new investment opportunities for Pakistan," he added.

Calling on the government to support industry, Zaki urged policymakers to stabilize energy supplies, provide practical incentives for exporters, and implement measures that safeguard domestic industries against global shocks.

He also underscored Pakistan's strategic geographic importance, noting that the country's ports and trade corridors could be leveraged to boost economic diplomacy. "With coordinated action by both government and the business community, Pakistan can transform current challenges into tangible economic opportunities," Zaki concluded.

Foolproof Security Plan Finalised for Chand Raat and Eid-ul-Fitr

Abdul Majid

FAISALABAD: Regional Police Officer (RPO) Faisalabad, Sohail Akhtar Sukhera, has directed all district police formations to ensure foolproof security arrangements on the occasions of Chand Raat and Eid-ul-Fitr across the region. Acting on his instructions, the City Police Officer (CPO) Faisalabad and District Police Officers (DPOs) of Jhang, Toba Tek Singh and Chinot have finalised comprehensive security plans to maintain law and order and facilitate citizens during the festive period.

Under the Chand Raat security plan, a total of 5,558 police officers and personnel will be deployed at 79 busy markets and major thoroughfares across the Faisal-

abad region. In Faisalabad district alone, 4,873 personnel will perform security duties at 59 key markets and rush-prone areas, while 168 personnel will be deployed in seven markets in Jhang, 335 personnel in eight markets in Toba Tek Singh, and 182 personnel in five markets in Chinot. To further strengthen surveillance, 1,495 CCTV cameras have been installed at sensitive and crowded locations.

For Eid-ul-Fitr congregations, elaborate security arrangements have also been put in place. In Faisalabad district, Eid prayers will be offered at 911 enclosed and 236 open venues, while Jhang will have 387 enclosed and 24 open venues. Similarly, 203 enclosed and 17 open venues have been designated in Toba Tek Singh, and 170 enclosed and 23 open venues

in Chinot. Overall, across the Faisalabad region, Eid prayers will be held at 1,671 enclosed and 300 open locations. To secure these gatherings, 6,744 police officers and personnel will be deployed, supported by continuous patrolling of the Elite Force, Dolphin Squad and other mobile units.

In view of increased public activity during Eid holidays, special attention has also been given to recreational and public places. Security arrangements have been ensured at 37 parks, eight riverside 138 shopping malls and restaurants, 108 shrines, and 34 graveyards, where families are expected to gather in large numbers. For this purpose, 2,066 police officers and personnel have been assigned duties, including the deployment of plain-



clothes officials and women police officers to facilitate families and ensure effective crowd management.

RPO Faisalabad Sohail Akhtar Sukhera has further directed that strict security measures be implemented at financial institutions, including the State Bank of Pakistan, commercial banks and money exchange outlets, to prevent any untoward incidents. He also instructed that traffic flow be maintained smoothly, with Chief Traffic Officer Faisalabad and relevant SP Traffic officers ensuring proper parking arrangements at congested areas to avoid inconvenience to the public.

Transforming Faisalabad: A New Era of Urban Development and Infrastructure Modernization

Continued from Page 4

treated water reuse and compliance with international environmental standards.

Complementing this effort is the Rehabilitation and Upgradation of the Sewage System under the Punjab Development Program, with an allocation of Rs. 12 billion. Aging and inadequate sewerage infrastructure has long been a source of concern for residents, particularly during the monsoon season when urban flooding disrupts daily life. This project focuses on replacing obsolete sewer lines, enhancing drainage capacity and implementing modern engineering solutions to ensure efficient wastewater disposal. The result

will be a more resilient urban system capable of withstanding seasonal challenges while improving sanitation standards.

In parallel, the Rehabilitation of City Roads under the Municipal Corporation Faisalabad (MCF), with a budget of Rs. 4.30 billion is set to significantly improve the city's transportation network. The project includes the reconstruction and resurfacing of major roads, repair of damaged sections and measures to streamline traffic flow. Improved road infrastructure will not only reduce travel time and vehicle operating costs but also enhance road safety for commuters. As mobility improves, economic activity is expected

to receive a substantial boost, further strengthening Faisalabad's position as a key industrial hub. Collectively, these development initiatives represent a holistic approach to urban planning, addressing interconnected challenges such as water scarcity, environmental degradation, inadequate sanitation and deteriorating infrastructure. Beyond their immediate impact, these projects are poised to generate long-term economic benefits by attracting investment, creating employment opportunities and fostering a business-friendly environment.

Moreover, the emphasis on sustainability and modern infrastructure signals a shift towards smarter urban

governance. By integrating advanced technologies and adopting environmentally responsible practices, Faisalabad is positioning itself as a forward-looking city prepared to meet the demands of the future. As implementation progresses, these projects stand as a testament to a strong commitment to public welfare and infrastructure development. They reflect a clear vision of transforming Faisalabad into a cleaner, greener, and more efficient urban center one that not only meets the needs of its residents today but also secures a prosperous and sustainable future for generations to come.

The writer is Director Public Relations in Faisalabad

Punjab Sports Secretary Reviews 21 Schemes Ahead of SAF Games Preparations

Sports Desk

LAHORE: Secretary Sports and Youth Affairs Punjab Muhammad Ali has presided over an important meeting of Departmental Development Sub-Committee at the Punjab Stadium, Lahore.

21 new sports development schemes were reviewed in the meeting which was attended by Director General Sports Punjab Muhammad Tariq Qureshi, Additional Secretary Sports Shabbir Hussain Cheema, Director PMU Sports Khalid Raza, Deputy Director Mirza Nadeem, Deputy Director Finance and P&D officers.

Addressing the meeting, Secretary Sports and Youth Affairs Punjab Muhammad Ali said that the sports complex is being built in a modern style as part of SAF Games preparations. "Punjab Stadium will also be upgraded in a modern style where food court and shops will also be constructed ahead of mega SAF Games".

Secretary Sports and Youth Affairs Punjab Muhammad Ali said that modern sports grounds are being constructed in North and South Punjab at the cost of billions of rupees. "Punjab Sports Department is taking effective measures for the promotion of sports culture across the province".

Secretary Sports and Youth Affairs Punjab Muhammad Ali said that Punjab International Swimming Complex is being upgraded in modern style. "The Squash Complex is also in the final stages of completion. A modern Padel Tennis Courts is under construction at Nishtar Park Sports Complex".

Secretary Sports and Youth Affairs Punjab Muhammad Ali further said that a sports complex is being constructed in Tehsil Bhawana, District Chinot. "Floodlights will be installed at Burewala Stadium and a Sports Indoor Hall will be constructed in Ahmedpur Sharqia, Bahawalpur".



Airport-Grade Safety: LONGi Hi-MO X10 Modules Power Lahore Airport Expansion

LAHORE: As Pakistan accelerates its shift to clean, sustainable energy, its critical national infrastructure is embracing cutting-edge solar technology to set new standards for efficiency and safety. In a landmark move, LONGi's Hi-MO X10 monofacial solar modules—engineered with airport-grade fire resistance, high efficiency, a pure all-black appearance, and 30-year extreme reliability—have been selected to power a 1 MW solar installation for the terminal expansion project of Allama Iqbal International Airport, a key symbol of Pakistan's global connectivity.

Set to commence within the next 2-3 months, this project marks the first deployment of solar modules at a major Pakistani airport. The initial 1 MW phase is more than just a solar installation; it represents the strategic integration of advanced renewable technology into one of the country's busiest transportation hubs, aligning with Pakistan's national sustainability goals while reinforcing the airport's role as a modern, eco-friendly gateway.

Airports are among the most demanding infrastructure environments—requiring solutions that meet uncompromising standards of safety, long-term reliability, and visual integration. As a primary national gateway, Allama Iqbal International Airport serves millions of travelers annually and forms a key first impression of Pakistan for international visitors. For project stakeholders, these requirements were non-negotiable: the selected solar technology must ensure operational safety, deliver dependable performance for decades, and harmonize with the airport's architectural design.



USA Allies Abandon the Sinking Ship

Continued from Page 4

Domestically, these pressures are beginning to influence public discourse, as rising economic uncertainty, market instability, and the perception of strategic overreach contribute to growing skepticism about the objectives and necessity of the conflict. As support becomes more conditional and debates intensify over national interest versus geopolitical alignment, the space for escalation narrows while the urgency for diplomatic resolution increases. At the same time, Iran's negotiating posture reflects confidence shaped by battlefield endurance and regional leverage, with demands framed not as concessions but as prerequisites for de-escalation, underscoring a reversal in

expectations from the early days of the conflict.

The broader implication is that the traditional model of power projection, built on overwhelming force and reliable alliances, is being tested by a combination of resilience, asymmetric strategy, and regional interconnectedness, where the ability to sustain pressure over time becomes as important as the ability to deliver decisive strikes. Observers in major powers such as China and Russia are closely studying these developments, analyzing the interplay between military capability, logistical vulnerability, alliance dynamics, and economic impact to refine their own strategic doctrines in an increasingly multipolar world.

At this juncture, the United

States faces a critical choice between continued escalation, with its attendant risks and uncertainties, and strategic recalibration that acknowledges the changing nature of global power and conflict. The assumption that superiority guarantees success has been challenged, and the expectation of automatic alliance support has been replaced by a reality of selective engagement and strategic autonomy among partners. In this environment, the metaphor of the sinking ship resonates not as a prediction of collapse but as a warning about miscalculation, where confidence without adaptability can lead to isolation, and where the true test of power lies not only in its projection but in its sustainability.

As the conflict evolves, one conclu-

sion becomes increasingly difficult to ignore: this is no longer a narrow confrontation but a widening contest shaped by endurance, logistics, alliances, and perception, and if Iran chooses to further activate its regional networks while maintaining pressure on supply chains and economic lifelines, the United States may find that the challenge it faces is not simply defeating an adversary but navigating a complex and expanding environment in which the cost of engagement continues to rise and the path to resolution becomes ever more uncertain.

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

Accountability Reform or Legal Engineering?

Continued from Page 4

Reform or Political Expediency?

Supporters of the amendments argue that the reforms are necessary to modernize Pakistan's accountability system and improve procedural efficiency. However, the timing of the legislation, the manner of its passage, and several of its substantive provisions have fueled skepticism among legal observers and opposition parties.

Opposition groups, particularly Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), have characterized the legislation as an example of political engineering through legal instruments rather than genuine institutional reform.

Ultimately, the strength of any accountability system lies not only in the laws that establish it but in the perception of fairness, neutrality, and independence with which those laws are applied.

When accountability laws appear to be shaped by immediate political calculations rather than long-term institutional principles, the damage extends beyond individual cases.

It begins to erode something far more fundamental: public trust in the rule of law itself.

The writer is Advocate High Court and also President Multan Division of the Association of International Lawyers (AII Global),

Back to homes

RAWALPINDI: People stand in a queue to buy tickets at a bus station on their way home in preparation for the Eid al-Fitr celebration at Faizabad area, which marks the conclusion of the holy month of Ramadan, in the city.



Photo: Online

Senate Chairman saves Rs.750 million with strict austerity measures starting at the top

Kiran Asim

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Drives Rs. 700-750 Million Savings Through Austerity Measures Led from His Own Office

Chairman Senate Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani chaired a high-level meeting at the Senate Secretariat to review and implement austerity measures in light of the prevailing economic situation, focusing on significant cuts in budgetary spending of the Senate, beginning with substantial reductions in the expenditures of the Chairman's Office.

Adopting a top-to-bottom approach to fiscal discipline, the Chairman Senate directed that austerity measures must begin at the highest level. Accordingly, significant cuts have been ordered in the operational budget of the Chairman's Office, setting a precedent for all departments to follow.

The Chairman issued comprehensive directions for immediate enforcement of austerity measures across the Secretariat, including a complete ban on foreign travel, a fifty percent reduction in POL consumption, grounding of sixty percent of official vehicles, a



strict ban on non-essential procurements, and implementation of deductions/contributions from salaries in line with government policy.

Additionally, administrative arrangements have been introduced for HR Management on rotation-based pick-and-drop facilities, aimed at minimizing operational costs and ensuring reduced consumption. Any future purchase must be reviewed and approved by a dedicated Senate Austerity Committee.

As a result of these measures, the Senate Secretariat has projected a reduction of more than fifty percent in its remaining budgetary utilization for the current fiscal year, translating into estimated savings of Rs. 700 to 750 million.

Pakistan Armed Forces strike terror bases in Kabul, Nangarhar: Tarar

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar said Pakistan's Armed Forces, under Operation Ghazab Lil Haq, successfully executed precision airstrikes on the night of March 16, hitting terrorism-sponsoring military installations of the Afghan Taliban regime in Kabul and Nangarhar.

In a post on social media platform X, the minister stated that technical support infrastructure and ammunition storage facilities at two sites in Kabul were successfully destroyed. He added that visible secondary explosions following the strikes confirmed the presence of large ammunition depots at the targeted locations.



In Nangarhar, the Armed Forces carried out strikes on four Afghan Taliban regime-linked military sites, destroying logistics hubs, ammunition depots, and technical infrastructure associated with the targets. Tarar said the strikes were

carried out with precision, targeting only those facilities used by the Afghan Taliban regime to support its multiple terror proxies, including Fitna Al Khawarij and Fitna Al Hindustan. He added that the accompanying footage clearly shows the nature of the targeted infrastructure.

The statement said the Taliban regime's propaganda cannot befool Afghans or the international community about its heinous actions in supporting and sponsoring terrorism in the region.

Tarar added that operations under Ghazab Lil Haq, aimed at protecting Pakistani citizens from terrorism waged by the "Master Terror Proxy," would continue until the stated objectives are fully achieved.

BISP Chairperson visits injured women at Sheikh Zayed Hospital RYK

News Desk

RAHIM YAR KHAN: Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) Chairperson, Senator Rubina Khalid, visited Sheikh Zayed Hospital Rahim Yar Khan on Monday to inquire after women injured in a tragic incident that occurred a day earlier.

During the visit, she met the injured beneficiaries, expressed her concern, and directed the concerned authorities to ensure the provision of the best possible medical care and extend full support to the affected individuals. Member of Provincial Assembly Sardar Habib-ur-Rehman, the hospital's Medical Superintendent, and BISP officials were also present on the occasion.

Speaking to media representatives, Senator Rubina Khalid said that a comprehensive investigation into the incident is underway and those found



responsible will face strict legal action. She noted that stipends under BISP are distributed through partner banks, and in light of the incident, notice has been issued to the relevant bank over negligence, along with the imposition of a

heavy fine. She said her visit aimed to express solidarity and sympathy with the affected families. The Chairperson announced that families of the deceased women will be provided financial assis-

tance of Rs1 million each, while the injured will receive Rs300,000 each. She further stated that medical treatment for the injured women will be provided free of cost, and educational stipends for children of the affected families will continue to ensure their studies are not disrupted.

She further said that while payments are currently being made through partner banks, the new system will eliminate the monopoly of bank retailers and make the process more transparent and efficient.

Later, the BISP Chairperson visited the homes of four deceased beneficiaries—Anwar Mai (Chak 123), Parveen Bibi (Chak 123), Shehnaz Khatoon (Chak 125), and Aleema Khatoon (Chak 114). She offered condolences, prayed for the departed souls, and expressed heartfelt sympathy with the bereaved families.

PARC restructuring approved



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: A meeting held under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Tuesday, in-principal granted approval for the restructuring of the Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC) aiming to transform it into a modern, high-performing institution to strengthen Pakistan's agriculture sector and ensure food security.

Chairing a high-level meeting on the matters of Ministry of National Food Security and Research and PARC, the prime minister directed authorities to prepare a comprehensive restructuring plan with a defined timeline.

He emphasized that agricul-

tural research played a critical role in increasing productivity, boosting exports, and addressing food security challenges, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Khan Cheema, Minister for National Food Security Rana Tanveer Hussain, Minister for Climate Change Musadik Malik, Adviser to the Prime Minister Rana Sanaulah, Minister of State for Finance Bilal Azhar Kayani, Special Assistants to PM Haroon Akhtar, Tariq Bajwa, PM Coordinator on Agriculture Ahmad Umair and other senior officials.

DPM Dar, Azerbaijan FM discuss ongoing regional situation



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Tuesday spoke with Foreign Minister of Azer-

baijan Jeyhun Bayramov.

During the conversation, they exchanged views on the latest developments in the ongoing regional situation and discussed bilateral matters of mutual interest.

CTD kills four terrorists, foils major attack in Karachi

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) Sindh carried out a major operation in Karachi on Tuesday, killing four most-wanted terrorists, including a key commander of the banned Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), while foiling a major terrorist attack in Shahr-e-Quaid.

The operation took place in Shah Latif Town, Malir, following intelligence from terrorists arrested on February 17.

A fierce gunfight ensued, resulting in the deaths of four militants. Three have been identified; the fourth remains unknown.

Authorities identified one of the slain as Sohail Baloch alias Garak, a notorious BLA commander previously associated with Fitna-ul-Hindu-

stan and the Baloch Liberation Front.

He was involved in planning multiple terrorist operations and providing weapons and logistical support to militants.

Sohail Baloch was allegedly responsible for the target killing of the Deputy Commissioner of Panjgur and implicated in the deaths of over 50 security personnel and civilians.

He reportedly coordinated with terrorist leaders Rehman Gul, Mullah Amin, and Dr. Makhu, and dispatched five suicide bombers in the Jaffar Express attack. He was also involved in lootings through road-blocks.

Officials said the elimination of Sohail Baloch is a significant blow to the terrorist network and that the operation prevented a major attack in Karachi.

N. Korea shows off 'human-like' robots at polling station, schools

SEOUL: North Korea has showed off "human-like" robots at a polling station and schools, in apparent efforts by Pyongyang to catch up with fast-growing global robotics technology.

Choson Sinbo, a pro-North Korea newspaper based in Japan, published a photo of a robot with a humanoid appearance at a university in Pyongyang in its Tuesday issue. The photo showed a robot wearing a white and navy hanbok dress.

The newspaper said the robots are being actively used by teachers and students, describing them as working in cooperation with teachers to provide educational assistance to students.

How the robots move or operate could not be confirmed in the absence of video footage, and the newspaper did not provide details on whether they can move or are immobile.

A similar female humanoid was also introduced to foreign diplomats posted in North Korea, with the Russian Embassy in Pyongyang uploading an image of the robot deployed at a polling station during parliamentary elections held last Sunday.

"A robot in the form of a young lady wearing traditional (Korean) dress welcomed voters," the embassy said on its Telegram account Monday, saying the robot provided information on how to vote.