



Daily The Spokesman

A Leading National Daily



فرمان رسول ﷺ

ہم سے عروین عالم نے بیان کیا کہ ہم سے ہمارے بیان کیا ان سے قادیان سے کہ میں نے اس ریحی اللہ سے پوچھا کہ کیا مصافحہ کا دستور نبی کریم صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم کے صحابہ میں تھا؟ انہوں نے کہا کہ جی ہاں ضرور تھا۔ (کنز العمال، حدیث نمبر 6263)

Barkat Rice Mills (Pvt) Limited



President approves three university bills

President Asif Ali Zardari has approved three university bills. These bills include: The Akhuwat Institute Kasur Bill 2025, The Institute of Management Sciences and Technology Bill 2025 and The Nippon Institute of Advanced Sciences Bill 2025.



NAB chairman gets three-year extension

Lt. Gen. (ret) Nazir Ahmed will continue as Chairman of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) for another three years after the federal government issued a notification approving the extension on Friday. According to the notification, the extension will take effect from March 6, 2026. The Ministry of Law and Justice confirmed that the decision has been made under the relevant accountability legislation.

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High-level meeting

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting regarding petroleum products.



Photo: PID

PM orders sealing, license cancellation of petrol pumps hoarding fuel

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday directed the provincial governments to immediately seal, cancel the license and initiate legal proceedings against any petrol pump involved in creating artificial shortages of petroleum products in the country.

The prime minister, chairing a high-level meeting on the availability of petroleum products, instructed the provincial governments to take strict legal action against hoarders of petroleum products.

During the briefing by Ministry of Petroleum on the availability of petroleum products amid the changing

regional situation, it was said that adequate stocks of petroleum products were available in the country to meet national requirements.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar, Federal Ministers Jam Kamal Khan, Ahmad Khan Cheema, Muhammad Aurangzeb, Attaullah Tarar, Ali Pervaiz Malik, Awais Khan Leghari, Minister of State Bilal Azhar Kayani, Special Assistant Haroon Akhtar, Governor State Bank Jameel Ahmad, chief secretaries of all four provinces, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, and Gilgit-Baltistan, along with senior government officials.

Dar chairs meeting on petroleum reserves, global oil price surge



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar chaired a high-level meeting to review the country's petroleum product reserves and the impact of rising global oil prices, officials said on Friday.

The meeting examined recommendations presented by the Petroleum Division regarding possible adjustments in the prices of petroleum products.

Participants discussed the current international oil market situation and its potential implications for

Pakistan. Officials said the final decision regarding the revised prices of petroleum products will come into effect from the intervening night of March 6 and 7.

The meeting was attended by the federal ministers for finance, petroleum and commerce, along with other senior government officials.

Senior representatives from the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA), Pak-Arab Refinery Company and other relevant institutions also participated in the meeting to provide technical input on the petroleum supply and pricing situation.

Iran claims attacks on U.S., Israeli targets as Israel intercepting Iranian missiles

Xinhua

TEHRAN/JERUSALEM: Iran's armed forces said Friday that they attacked U.S. and Israeli targets across the region, while the Israel Defense Forces said its air defense systems were intercepting another missile launch from Iran.

In a statement, Iran's army said

its ground force has targeted U.S. military bases in Kuwait with drones launched in large numbers, vowing that the attacks will continue in the coming hours.

Meanwhile, Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) said it has launched a large number of Khorramshahr-4, Kheibar and Fatah

missiles towards Israeli and U.S. targets in its 22nd wave of attacks, according to a statement published on its official news outlet Sepah News.

In another statement, the IRGC said in the latest wave, the Khorramshahr-4 missiles carried 2-ton warheads and hit the targets with speeds of above

Mach 14. The IRGC listed the targets as U.S. bases in regional countries, as well as Tel Aviv, Ben Gurion Airport and military centers in Haifa.

For its part, the Israel Defense Forces said in a statement that, "a short while ago, the IDF identified missiles launched from Iran...

Defensive systems are operating to intercept the threat."

On Saturday morning, Israel and the United States launched joint attacks on Tehran and several other Iranian cities. Iran responded through several waves of missile and drone attacks targeting Israel and U.S. bases in the Middle East.

Ali Pervaiz Malik, Sweden Ambassador discuss bilateral cooperation

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Petroleum, Ali Pervaiz Malik, held a meeting with Alexandra Berg von Linde, Ambassador of Sweden to Pakistan, to discuss ongoing bilateral cooperation and explore new avenues of partnership, particularly in the mining and energy sectors.

During the meeting, both sides acknowledged the long-standing relationship between Pakistan and Sweden and emphasised the importance of strengthening economic and industrial collaboration, said a news release.

Alexandra Berg von Linde noted that Sweden has maintained strong engagement with Pakistan for the past 77 years, with cooperation spanning multiple sectors including transport, telecommunications, packaging, and industry.

She highlighted that more than 40 companies are currently members of the Swedish Business Council in Pakistan, reflecting the depth of Swedish commercial presence in the country.

The Ambassador underscored mining as a promising sector for future collaboration, stating that Sweden possesses extensive expertise in mining, particularly in digitalization, sustainability, mining services, and environmental protection.



sives parts.

Ali Pervaiz Malik appreciated the continued Swedish investment and business presence in Pakistan, noting that the government is committed to working with international partners to develop the country's natural resource sector.

He described the Reko Diq Project as "the jewel of Pakistan's mining sector," adding that it is commendable that despite challenges, the project has not faced a single day of delay, crediting all companies and stakeholders involved for their professionalism and dedication.

Operation Ghazab-lil-Haq: Over 500 Taliban fighters killed

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information Attaullah Tarar released updated figures on Friday in a statement posted on social media platform X. According to Tarar, 527 Afghan Taliban operatives have been killed and more than 755 wounded since the operation began.

He added that 237 Afghan Taliban checkpoints have been destroyed, while Pakistani security forces have captured 38 additional posts.

The minister said the operation was launched to deliver a strong response to terrorism and unprovoked aggression originating from Afghanistan.

Pakistan's military has also destroyed 205 tanks, armoured vehicles and artillery guns belonging to the Afghan Taliban regime, Tarar said.

He added that 62 locations across Afghanistan had been effectively targeted in air operations.

Security sources said Pakistani forces continue decisive operations against Afghan Taliban positions following cross-border aggression.

In the Kurram sector along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, Pakistani forces destroyed several Taliban posts during a successful operation.

Militant hideouts near the Zhob



and Qila Saifullah sectors were also destroyed, according to security officials.

Sources said Pakistani forces used heavy artillery fire to target positions of the Afghan Taliban and Fitna al-Khawarij, forcing militants to abandon their posts and flee.

Security officials said the Taliban and allied militants have suffered heavy losses and setbacks due to Pakistan's effective strategy.

Operation Ghazab-lil-Haq, they added, will continue until its objectives are achieved.

The operation began after what Pakistan described as unprovoked aggression by Afghan Taliban forces along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border on the night of February 26.

In response, Pakistani forces carried out strikes inside Afghanistan, targeting military installations in Kabul, Kandahar and Paktia, among other locations, destroying several checkpoints.

Govt pursuing privatization of power distribution companies: Leghari

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Energy Sardar Awais Ahmed Khan Leghari says the government is actively pursuing the privatization of its power distribution companies to ensure long-term sustainability and efficiency.

He expressed these views during a virtual meeting with Türkiye's Minister for Energy and Natural Resources, Alparslan Bayraktar.

Awais Ahmed Khan Leghari emphasized that the

privatization process is being carried out in a transparent, competitive, and well-structured manner.

The Minister highlighted that Turkish companies could play a constructive role in the successful privatization of Pakistan's distribution companies.

In his remarks, Türkiye's Minister Alparslan Bayraktar noted that Turkish investors are closely following developments in Pakistan's power sector and have shown considerable interest in the privatization process.

AJK PM, former PM mourn loss of PPP AJK President's daughter

Spokesman Report

MAKKAH MAKARMA/ISLAM-ABAD: Azad Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister Raja Faisal Mumtaz Rathore has expressed deep sorrow and grief over the death of the daughter of PPP Azad Kashmir President Chaudhry Muhammad Yasin in the UK. He expressed his condolences to Chaudhry Muhammad Yasin and prayed that Allah Almighty may elevate the ranks of the deceased and grant patience to the bereaved. Meanwhile, former Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir and Pres-



ident of Muslim Conference Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan has also expressed deep sorrow and grief over the death of the daughter of Pakistan Peoples Party Azad Kashmir President Chaudhry Muhammad Yasin in a condolence message from Saudi Arabia.

Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan, who is currently in Makkah Makarima to perform Umrah, expressed his sympathy with Chaudhry Muhammad Yasin and the families of the deceased in England and Pakistan and prayed for the elevation of the ranks of the deceased.

Training Critical for Effective Governance, Says J&K Chief Secretary

Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD:

Chief Secretary of the Azad Government of the State of Jammu and Kashmir, Khushhal Khan, has said that the professional training of government officers not only enhances their administrative capabilities but also plays a key role in policy formulation, planning, and the effective implementation of development programs. He emphasized that to effectively address the challenges faced by state institutions, officers must promote modern administrative practices, transparency, effective governance, and improved institutional coordination.

He stated that the performance of institutions can only be improved and quality services delivered to the public through professional competence, a strong sense of responsibility, and timely decision-making.

The ceremony was also attended by Secretary Services and General Administration Chaudhry Intiaz Ahmed, Secretary Higher Education Tehzeeb-un-Nisa, Secretary Food Sohail Azam, and Additional Secretary Anjad Mughal.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, Chief Secretary Khushhal Khan distributed certificates among the 39 participants of the Professional Planning and Management Course. On the occasion, Director General of the Kashmir Institute of Management, Dr. Muqem-ul-Islam, thanked the Chief Secretary and presented him with a commemorative shield.



Protest

KARACHI: Shiite Muslims take part in a protest rally to condemn the killing of Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, in the Provincial Capital.



Photo: Online

AJK Govt Greenlights Honorariums and Perks for Local Leaders

Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: The Government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir has approved honorariums and other privileges for the Chairmen, Vice Chairmen, Mayors and Deputy Mayors of local government institutions, and a formal notification has been issued in this regard.

The approval has been granted in light of the special directives of the Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Raja Faisal Mumtaz Rathore. The decision was made following the recommendations of a committee headed by the Minister for Local Government and Rural Development, Chaudhry Aamir Yasin, thereby fulfilling a longstanding demand of local government institutions.

Elected local representatives had been demanding the determination of honorariums and other privileges for office holders of District Councils, Municipal Corporations, Municipal Committees, and Town Committees since immediately after the local government elections. In this regard, negotiations between local government representatives and government ministers had been ongoing for the past two years. As a result of these discussions, the Department of Local Government and Rural Development has now issued the formal notification.

The honorariums and other benefits have been determined on the basis of the income of the respective local government institutions.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister for Local Government and Rural Development Chaudhry Aamir Yasin said that strengthening the local government system would improve the quality of service delivery across the state. He added that the government is making concerted efforts to address the issues of local government institutions on a priority basis in order to make the system more effective.

AJK Health Minister Lauds State-of-the-Art Facilities at Abdul Ghani Medical Institute

Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: Minister for Health, Government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Syed Bazil Ali Naqvi paid a special visit to the renowned educational institution Abdul Ghani Institute of Medical Sciences in Muzaffarabad.

Upon his arrival, Managing Director Dr. Naveed Fareed Butt (RPh) warmly welcomed the Health Minister and gave him a detailed tour of the institute's various departments. During the visit, the Health Minister inspected the institute's modern and fully equipped laboratories built according to international standards and highly appreciated the practical training facilities being provided to students.

He remarked that such high-quality practical facilities provide students with a strong foundation for success in their professional careers. The Minister also praised the institute's well-organized infrastructure, spacious and modern classrooms, advanced digital library, and its excellent academic environment.

During his interaction with the students, he appreciated their enthusiasm, confidence, and academic standards, stating that these young individuals represent the bright future of the medical sector in Azad Kashmir.



AJK Ex-PM slams Israel's expansionism, cites Modi-Netanyahu Nexus

Raja Muhammad Farooq Haider Khan, has said that Israel, driven by expansionist ambitions, has put global peace at stake. He stated that during the Iran-Israel conflict the world has clearly witnessed the nexus between Narendra Modi and Benjamin Netanyahu.

Talking to the media, he said that Israel's attack on Iran has once again highlighted why it is essential for every country to maintain a strong defence. By the grace of Allah, Pakistan's defence is impregnable.

He said that the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Shehbaz Sharif, and Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir have elevated Pakistan's prestige across the world.

He further said that those who claim that Pakistan could be the next target after Iran should remember that no one can dare cast an evil eye on Pakistan.

He added that the national leadership has made it clear that a world without Pakistan on the map is unacceptable for the nation.

Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: Former Prime

Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Parliamentary Leader of the Pakistan Muslim League (N) in AJK,

Kashmir Observes 59th Death Anniversary of Freedom Movement Leader Mirwaiz Maulvi Muhammad Yousuf Shah

Bureau Report.

MUZAFFARABAD: The 59th death anniversary of renowned leader of the Kashmir freedom movement, Islamic scholar and former President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Mirwaiz Maulvi Muhammad Yousuf Shah, was observed across Azad Jammu and Kashmir with great reverence, ideological spirit and enthusiasm. Speakers paid rich tribute to the late leader and his family for their invaluable services to the cause of Islam and the Kashmir freedom movement.

On the occasion of the anniversary, a dignified ceremony was held at his mausoleum in the capital city of Muzaffarabad.

The event was attended by the Government of AJK spokesperson Shaukat Javed Mir, along with representatives of political, social and religious organizations, lawyers, traders,



students, government officials, members of civil society, journalistic bodies and members of local government institutions.

Participants visited the mausoleum in groups and laid floral wreaths and chadars.

Special prayers and Fateha were

offered for the security and stability of Pakistan, the freedom of Jammu and Kashmir under Indian occupation, unity of the Muslim Ummah, and for the souls of the martyrs of Kashmir and the martyrs of the Pakistan Armed Forces.

Speaking to the media after attending the ceremony, Shaukat Javed Mir, Central Deputy Secretary Information of the Pakistan Peoples Party Azad Kashmir, candidate for Assembly Constituency No. 7 and spokesperson for the Prime Minister of AJK, said that Mirwaiz Maulvi Muhammad Yousuf Shah was a sincere and steadfast leader, an Islamic preacher and a symbol of the state's identity and national dignity.

He said the late leader never bowed before adversaries, never compromised on principles, and remained firm in his struggle.

US- Israel- Iran war can trigger far-reaching consequences for the Muslim world: Ambassador Masood Khan

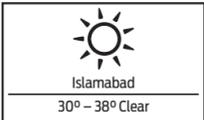
Spokesman Report



ISLAMABAD: Former President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir and former Ambassador of Pakistan to the United States and Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Masood Khan, has warned that the ongoing confrontation involving the United States, Israel, and Iran could trigger far-reaching consequences for the Muslim world and the global political system.

In an analysis, Ambassador Masood Khan in a televised analysis stated that regardless of how the conflict ultimately concludes, the Muslim Ummah is likely to suffer significant strategic and economic losses. He noted that the escalation has already destabilized the Gulf region—an area previously known for economic prosperity, social development, and relative stability—which has long attracted global investment and international business.

"The unfolding crisis," Ambassador Masood Khan concluded, "illustrates the erosion of the post-World War II order and may well mark the transition toward a more fragmented and uncertain multipolar world."



SERVICES

Namaz Timings
 Fajr 5:08 am
 Zohr 12:19 pm
 Asr 4:27 pm
 Maghrib 6:08 pm
 Isha 7:31 pm

EMERGENCY

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

Women Police Stations

Islamabad 9222596
 Rawalpindi 9270601-20

ENQUIRY

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

HOSPITALS

CMH 561111
 MH 561116
 MH 561116
 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
 Islamabad Metropolitan
 Corporation 9209224
 Potohar Town 9209224
 Rawal Town 5773343

COMPLAINTS

Water Tanker Service
 E-7, F-10 & F-11 9204654
 G-5, G-6, G-7, G-8 9203883
 G-9, G-10, G-11, G-12, H-8 9266316
 Wapda Islamabad 9217579-80
 Sui Gas Complaint 119, 9272249
 Wasa Water Tank
 Rawalpindi 0331-5022125

DC Noman Siddique Chairs Key Meeting on Ramadan Price Control and City Cleanliness Drive

Kiran Asim

MULTAN: An important meeting of the district departments was held under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Noman Siddique in which a detailed review was taken of the implementation of food prices, cleanliness situation and steps to eliminate encroachments during the month of Ramadan. Officers of various departments attended the meeting.

Addressing the meeting, Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Noman Siddique said that providing relief to the citizens during the month of Ramadan is the top priority of the district administration and price gouging will not be tolerated under any circumstances. He took a detailed review of the performance of the Price Control Magistrates and directed that strict monitoring of food prices in the markets and markets be ensured.

The Deputy Commissioner said that action is being taken against those who are selling food on a daily basis during Ramadan and fines have also been imposed on several shopkeepers. He directed the concerned officers to be present in the field to provide maximum relief to the public and keep prices under control.

The meeting also formulated an effective strategy to launch a thorough cleaning operation across the city in view of Eid-ul-Fitr and eliminate encroachments. The Deputy Commissioner directed that the cleaning operation should be further intensified in the streets, markets and main highways so that a clean environment could be provided to the citizens.

Decision taken to clear flood zones in Punjab within three months; CM approves plan

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif has approved a decision to clear flood zones across the province within three months.

The approval was granted during a special meeting on post-flood management chaired by the chief minister, where relevant departments presented a detailed briefing. The chief minister directed authorities to strictly enforce the ban on construction within river passages and waterways. It was also decided that no financial assistance would be provided if illegal constructions built within water channels collapse during floods.

The meeting also approved the restructuring of the Provincial Disaster Management Authority and the creation of eight new wings to strengthen disaster response capacity.

Participants agreed on a proposal to construct 17 mini dams at different loca-

tions across Punjab. A decision was also taken to enhance water storage capacity at Kalabagh and Sadhrai Barrage. The chief minister further directed the introduction of inflatable dam technology in the province.

During the meeting, approval was also granted for the establishment of District Emergency Operation Centers, regional disaster centers and warehouses. The chief minister also approved the provision of modern equipment to Rescue 1122 for flood operations.

It was further informed that along the five major rivers of the province, 1,990 areas fall under high-risk flood zones, 1,278 under medium-risk zones and 3,169 under low-risk zones. The meeting was also briefed that 183 irrigation projects are currently underway in Punjab, while desilting work will be carried out on 298 drains and flood channels and 67 drainage systems.

The chief minister was also presented



with a detailed report outlining short-, medium- and long-term planning for flood management across the province.

Protest against US and Israel

ISLAMABAD: Activists of Jamaat-e-Islami shouting slogans during protest against U.S and Israel attack on Iran, in the Fedral Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

NMU Leadership Directs Educational Reforms Amidst Key Meetings

Iram Asim

MULTAN: Various educational and administrative activities are underway in the university under the leadership of Vice Chancellor Nishtar Medical University Multan, Professor Dr. Mehnaz Khakwani Sahiba. In this regard, an online meeting of the Provincial Admission Committee and PGAC was held under the chairmanship of Secretary Health Punjab, Mr. Azmat Mahmood, in which the Vice Chancellor Nishtar Medical University also participated.

The meeting considered various matters related to postgraduate medical educa-



tion and admissions. Meanwhile, Dr. Abrar

Ahmed (N-29) donated surgical items for the ENT Department of Nishtar Hospital. The university administration appreciated this initiative and said that such cooperation will help in providing better medical facilities to the patients.

Vice Chancellor Nishtar Medical University, Professor Dr. Mehnaz Khakwani Sahiba, congratulated Professor Dr. Samreen Mushtaq on being elected as a regular professor in the Department of Radiology and said that this achievement is a recognition of her professional skills, hard work and services to the field of medicine.

Women's entrepreneurial ambitions rise to 88% in Pakistan, ACCA survey reveals

News Desk

LAHORE: New survey data shows that 88% of women working in finance and accountancy in Pakistan now aspire to become entrepreneurs, up from 74% last year. The findings are drawn from early insights from ACCA's global survey of over 11,000 finance professionals across 175 countries, with the full report due for publication in May 2026.

The increase signals growing confidence among

women in using accountancy and finance training as a springboard for business ownership. While entrepreneurial ambitions remain higher among men overall, the narrowing gap reflects a significant shift in career confidence and long-term aspirations.

The data also indicates that entrepreneurial ambition is most pronounced among younger female professionals, particularly Generation Z and Millennials, with half suggesting they want to be

entrepreneurs in the future. This points to a generational drive towards autonomy, impact and financial independence.

The findings are released ahead of International Women's Day 2026 and align with the global theme set by UN Women: 'Rights. Justice. Action. For ALL women and girls.'

Helen Brand, chief executive of ACCA, said: 'Entrepreneurship represents economic empowerment in action. The number of women

aspiring to business ownership is an encouraging signal that finance and accountancy skills are equipping women not only to lead within organisations, but to build enterprises of their own. Accountancy provides a powerful platform for entrepreneurial success, combining financial expertise, governance, risk management, technology and strategic insight. Supporting women to translate ambition into enterprise is essential not just for equality, but for economic growth.'

CECOS University and Rehman Medical Institute Launch "Umeed Digital Lab" at Central Jail Peshawar



News Desk

PESHAWAR: In a significant step toward social responsibility and rehabilitation through education, CECOS University and Rehman Medical Institute (RMI) launched the Umeed Digital Lab at Central Jail Peshawar as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative aimed at empowering incarcerated individuals with digital skills and learning opportunities.

The lab was inaugurated by Mr. Aftab Alam Afridi, Minister of Law, Parliamentary Affairs and Human Rights, KP and Mr. Rehan Gul Khattak, Inspector General of Prisons, KP. The ceremony was further graced by Ms. Aisha Bano, Former Member of the Provincial Assembly of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, along with officials and staff of Central Jail Peshawar.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by senior representatives from the partner institutions. Mr. Shafique Ur Rehman, Chief Executive Officer, Rehman Medical Institute and from CECOS University, the attendees included Engr. Sohaib Tanveer (Vice President), Prof. Dr. Muhammad Mohsin Khan (Vice Chancellor), Muhammad Sajid (Manager Admin), Muhammad Hamza (Coordinator to the Vice President), and Sar Zamin (Network Administrator).

Following the ceremony, the delegates also visited the Industrial Prison Peshawar to observe the vocational training and skill development activities being carried out for inmates.

Robbery gang arrested with the help of PSCA's latest surveillance cameras in Rahim Yar Khan

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Owing to timely assistance of Punjab Safe Cities Authority's advanced surveillance cameras, a gang involved in robbing a citizen at gunpoint has been arrested. According to the Safe City spokesperson, the suspects stopped a citizen near Pathanistan Chowk in Rahim Yar Khan and snatched his mobile phone and cash at gunpoint before fleeing the scene.

Upon receiving the information, the Virtual Patrolling Officer of Smart Safe City Rahim Yar Khan immediately initiated surveillance for the suspects using latest Safe City cameras. The spokesperson added that the suspects' vehicle was identified at multiple locations through Safe City surveillance cameras. During fleeing the site, suspects also changed vehicle's number plate; however, tracing process continued through PSCA's cameras.

According to the Safe City spokesperson, modern Safe City cameras installed across the city are playing a vital role in crime prevention along with swift identification of suspects. The spokesperson urged citizens to remain cautious in markets, crowded places and immediately report any suspicious activity or untoward incident on Emergency Helpline -15 so that timely action can be carried in this regard.

University of Kamalia, THQ Hospital sign MoU for academic and clinical collaboration

Zafar Chishti

TOBA TEK SINGH: The University of Kamalia and Tehsil Headquarters (THQ) Hospital Kamalia have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at promoting academic and clinical collaboration in the field of Allied Health Sciences. The agreement was signed under the leadership of Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Yasir Nawab from the University of Kamalia and Medical Superintendent Dr. Adeel Arif from THQ Hospital Kamalia. The ceremony was also attended by Registrar Dr. Rais Ashraf and Director Legal Dr. Zahid Farooq of the university. Under the agreement, students enrolled in programmes including BS Human Nutrition and Dietetics, BS Nursing and BS Medical Laboratory Technology will be provided opportunities for clinical training, internships, research collaboration and access to hospital laboratories and other medical facilities at THQ Hospital Kamalia. On the hospital's side, Admin Officer Ali Tasar and HR Officer Waseem Dogar were also present at the ceremony.

Participants said the initiative would strengthen practical learning opportunities for students and promote closer cooperation between the academic sector and the healthcare system.

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UK and France Join U. S.-Israel War Against Iran

When the first strikes were launched against Iran, the British government attempted to create distance from the unfolding conflict. Prime Minister Keir Starmer initially told the public that the United Kingdom was not involved in the attacks and would not participate in offensive military operations against Iran. The message was clear: Britain would support stability, protect its citizens, and avoid becoming another direct participant in a Middle Eastern war.

Yet within days that narrative began to unravel. Standing before reporters at Downing Street, Starmer revealed that Britain had in fact been preparing for the crisis long before the war formally began. Throughout January and February, the United Kingdom had already moved fighter jets, air-defense systems, radar installations, and other military assets to bases in Cyprus and Qatar, placing the country in what he described as a "heightened state of readiness." Shortly after the strikes began, British aircraft reportedly intercepted drones approaching a base housing British personnel. Additional deployments followed quickly: four more fighter jets were dispatched to Qatar, helicopters equipped with anti-drone capabilities were sent to Cyprus, and the Royal Navy destroyer HMS Dragon was ordered into the eastern Mediterranean.

These developments revealed a deeper reality. Once aircraft, warships, missile defenses, and surveillance systems are placed inside a conflict zone, a country cannot convincingly claim to be merely watching events unfold. Whether described as defensive or not, those

assets become part of the military architecture of war.

That reality became evident almost immediately. A drone strike targeted the British air base at Akrotiri in Cyprus, prompting criticism from Cypriot officials who said they had not been adequately informed of the risks surrounding British military activity on the island. The attack demonstrated how quickly military installations become targets in an expanding conflict. Even if Britain insists it is not directly participating in offensive strikes, its bases, personnel, and equipment are already inside the operational theatre.

Meanwhile the war has also strained relations between London and Washington. President Donald Trump publicly criticized Starmer for hesitating to provide full support for American operations, particularly after the British government initially resisted allowing the United States to use the Diego Garcia base in the Indian Ocean for strikes against Iran. Although Britain later permitted certain defensive uses of British facilities, the episode exposed unusual tension in what both governments continue to call the "special relationship."

Starmer now finds himself walking a political tightrope. On one side lies Britain's long-standing strategic alliance with the United States. On the other lies deep domestic skepticism about another Western intervention in the Middle East. Memories of Iraq remain powerful in British politics, and public opinion reflects that caution. Recent polling

suggests that nearly half of British voters oppose the U. S. strikes on Iran, while only a minority support them.

Yet while Western leaders frame the war as necessary for stability and security, critics point to the familiar language that has accompanied earlier interventions. Iraq was presented as a mission of liberation. Libya was described as a humanitarian necessity. Afghanistan was framed as a campaign to rebuild a nation. In each case the promises of stability and prosperity ultimately gave way to fractured societies, weakened economies, and prolonged instability.

Now Iran faces a similar concentration of Western military power. The combined strength of the United States, Britain, and France vastly exceeds Iran's conventional capabilities. France has already moved the aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle and accompanying naval forces toward the Mediterranean, while Britain has reinforced its regional presence through aircraft, missile defenses, and naval deployments.

The imbalance of power is obvious. Iran has lived for decades under sanctions that have restricted access to modern aircraft and advanced military systems. Its air force and defense infrastructure cannot easily match the technological superiority of the Western coalition now gathering around it. In that context, triumphant declarations of military superiority begin to sound less like strategic analysis and more like expressions of overwhelming force against a far weaker adversary.

Another striking contradiction lies in the moral justification being offered for the war. Western leaders frequently argue that their actions are intended to protect the Iranian people from repression. Yet the human cost of the conflict already raises uncomfortable questions.

Reports emerging from the region indicate that more than a thousand people have been killed since the beginning of the strikes. Many of those casualties are civilians — the same ordinary citizens whose protection is repeatedly cited as one of the war's objectives. Bridges, hospitals, economic facilities, and military installations have all been hit in the course of the expanding campaign, leaving ordinary Iranians to endure the consequences of decisions made far beyond their control.

The rhetoric surrounding regime change has also revealed a troubling attitude toward those who were once seen as potential political partners. During a press interaction, President Trump was asked whether any names existed to replace Iran's current leadership. His response was stark. According to his remarks, many of the individuals once considered potential alternatives had already been killed, and others who might replace them could also be eliminated in the course of the conflict.

The statement highlighted a grim reality of modern geopolitical struggles. Individuals cultivated as future allies or political alternatives can quickly become expendable once military escalation takes precedence over diplomacy. The very people once viewed as assets capable of shaping a post-conflict political landscape can disappear in the fog of war.

Continued on Page 7

Pakistan's first National Strategy on Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence

The Ministry of Human Rights, Government of Pakistan, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), launched Pakistan's first National Strategy on Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) in Islamabad. The launch marks a significant national milestone in advancing a coordinated, survivor-centred, and rights-based response to technology-facilitated harm against women and girls.

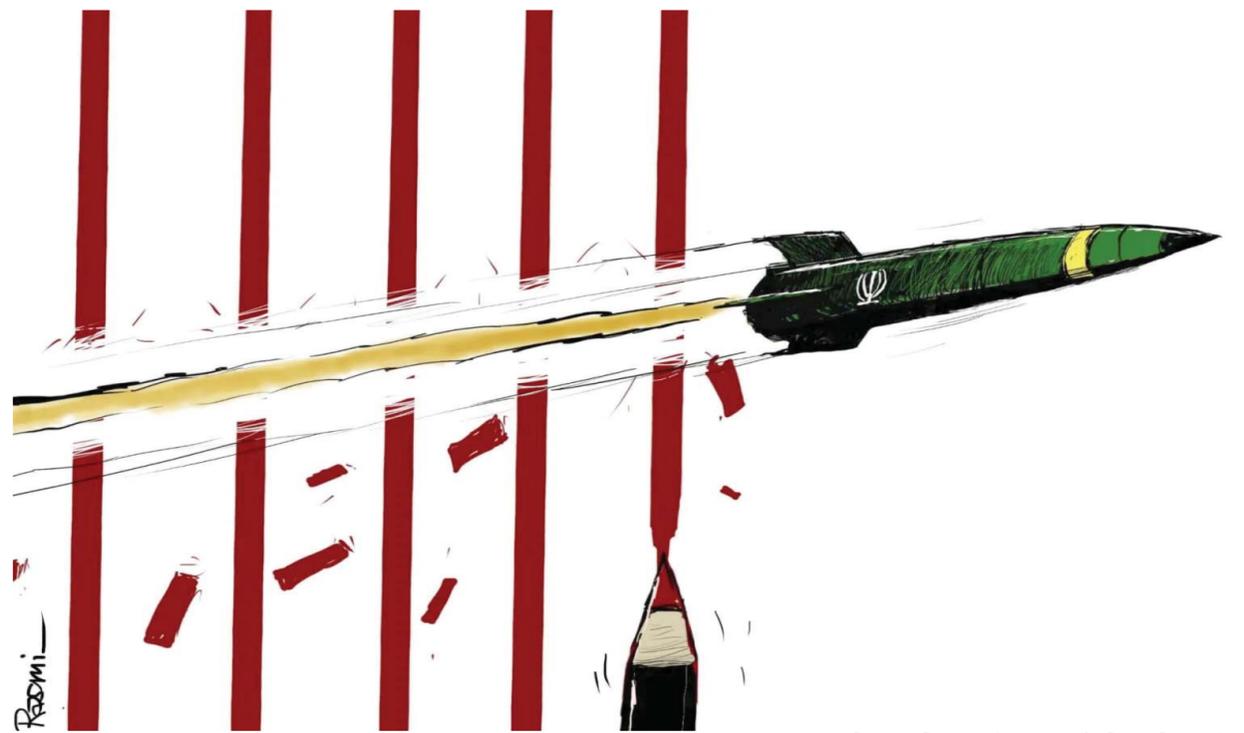
As digital spaces reshape civic, economic, and public life, the Strategy positions digital safety as a governance priority and highlights the growing urgency of addressing online harms through stronger prevention and protection mechanisms, institutional coordination, and accountability.

Inaugurating the launch, Barrister Aqeel Malik, Minister of State for Law and Justice, described the Strategy as a landmark initiative: "Pakistan has made significant progress in strengthening legal frameworks to protect women from gender-based violence, harassment, and workplace discrimination. As more women and girls engage in digital spaces for education, work, and civic participation, new threats, such as cyber stalking, doxxing, coordinated trolling, and AI-generated abuse, have emerged, affecting individuals across all social and professional backgrounds. Pakistan's first National Strategy on Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence will strengthen institutional coordination, ensure survivor protection, promote responsible engagement with digital platforms, and prioritise awareness and prevention. This marks an important milestone in creating safer, more inclusive, and empowering digital spaces for all women and girls," he said.

Abdul Khaliq Sheikh, Secretary of the Ministry of Human Rights, outlined the government's roadmap for operationalizing the Strategy, emphasizing strengthened inter-agency coordination and institutional accountability to ensure its effective implementation. In 2024, eight million new female users came online, reflecting meaningful progress in digital inclusion. Yet the protection gap remains stark: the same year saw 135,000 cybercrime complaints, with only 826 cases proceeding to prosecution — a rate of just 0.6%.

The programme featured a strategic overview of the national framework, a discussion on key implementation considerations, and a panel discussion on translating the strategy into effective institutional response and survivor-centred delivery, with contributions from key public institutions, oversight bodies, and civil society stakeholders.

As digital technologies become increasingly embedded in everyday life, the National Strategy on TFGBV provides a structured pathway to strengthen institutional response, protect rights, and ensure and advance safer digital protection for women and girls across Pakistan.



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

Analysis of Educational Reforms and Its Impact on Primary Education in Pakistan

Pakistan grapples with a deeply entrenched primary education crisis, where millions of children remain excluded from schooling, dropout rates soar before completing grade five, and learning achievements lag severely, with many older students unable to master basic reading or simple calculations. Government spending, though substantial, fails to translate into outcomes due to persistent problems like ghost schools, teacher absenteeism, untrained staff, crumbling infrastructure, and stark urban-rural divides. Major reforms — including the Single National Curriculum, the Education Emer-



Dr. T. M. Malik

gency package, foundational literacy and numeracy initiatives, provincial stipend programs, and school rationalization efforts — hold promise but suffer from inconsistent execution, inadequate funding, political interference, and failure to address root inequities. This detailed analysis explores the design and rollout of these reforms, their tangible effects on enrollment, retention, and learning, provincial variations, underlying challenges, illustrative success stories, and a comprehensive blueprint for meaningful transformation.

At the forefront stands the Single National Curriculum (SNC), introduced to create a level playing field by standardizing content for early grades across public schools, private institutions, and madrassas. It delivers a unified set of textbooks covering essential subjects such as mathematics, English, Urdu, Islamiyat, general knowledge, and introductory sciences, significantly lightening the load on students and families by consolidating multiple books into a cohesive package. The curriculum also weaves in elements of critical thinking, ethical values, environmental awareness, and basic digital skills, aiming to produce well-rounded learners. Rollout has seen widespread distribution of free textbooks, development of teacher resource manuals, and professional development workshops to ensure consistent delivery. In practice, it has brought notable benefits: rural classrooms now mirror urban ones in content, fostering a sense of national cohesion; pass rates in core subjects have improved in underserved districts; and dropout tendencies eased as parents perceive parity with elite systems. Private schools, after initial pushback, adapted, leading to better alignment in foundational skills like language proficiency between socioeconomic groups.

Despite these advances, the SNC grapples with significant shortcomings. The hurried development process led to an overload of religious and moral content, which sparked concerns from minority communities and prompted selective opt-outs or modifications in sensitive areas. Teacher training programs covered only a fraction of the workforce, resulting in patchy implementation where rote memorization persisted over interactive methods. Elite private institutions complained of diluted standards, while low-fee schools struggled with resource constraints to deliver the new material effectively. Overall, while access improved modestly, deeper learning metrics in areas like problem-solving and comprehension showed limited progress, especially for girls in remote locations where cultural barriers compound access issues.

Complementing the SNC, the Education Emergency launched under recent leadership

targets the out-of-school population through a multi-pronged approach: reviving long-closed primary schools, recruiting teachers strictly on merit, introducing licensing requirements to elevate professionalism, establishing vocational pathways from the middle stage, and deploying foundational literacy and numeracy hubs to tackle early-grade skill deficits. Stipend schemes incentivize continued attendance, particularly for girls, while school consolidation merges under-enrolled units into sustainable facilities. Infrastructure enhancements in disaster-prone regions incorporate resilient features like raised floors and solar power. In Punjab, mergers have streamlined operations and freed resources for quality upgrades; in Sindh, literacy centers have made inroads against foundational weaknesses.

These efforts build on prior waves. The National Education Policy framework emphasized universal access, leading to new school construction, widespread free textbook programs, and conditional cash transfers that notably boosted girls' persistence in several provinces. Biometric attendance systems curbed ghost payrolls, and rationalization policies consolidated tiny, unviable schools into functional ones, improving teacher-student ratios. Devolution after the 18th Amendment empowered provinces to tailor solutions, yielding province-specific gains in enrollment and gender balance in urban centers.

The impacts manifest unevenly but encouragingly. Enrollment has expanded considerably in reform-active areas; foundational programs demonstrate marked improvements in early reading and counting abilities; the SNC contributes to curriculum harmony in far-flung regions; selective technology introductions, like tablet-based learning, heighten student interest and participation; stipends effectively stem exits driven by economic pressures.

Continued on Page 7

Sewerage Infrastructure Overhaul in Punjab

Punjab has embarked on one of the most ambitious urban infrastructure transformations in its history through the Punjab Development Program (PDP), placing sewerage and stormwater management at the center of public policy reform. While roads and visible megaprojects often dominate political narratives, sanitation infrastructure remains the hidden foundation of urban health, economic productivity, and environmental sustainability. The initiative reflects a growing recognition that modern cities cannot function — or compete economically — without resilient underground systems capable of managing wastewater and climate-driven rainfall pressures.

Urban sanitation is far more than an engineering concern; it is a critical determinant of public health outcomes. Poor sewerage systems, contaminated water supplies, and unmanaged waste enable the spread of waterborne diseases such as cholera, typhoid, hepatitis A and E, diarrhoea, and dysentery. The World Health Organization estimates that unsafe water and inadequate sanitation contribute to nearly 829,000 deaths globally each year from diarrheal diseases alone, while millions more suffer preventable illnesses that weaken productivity and burden healthcare systems. In developing urban regions, sanitation failures account for a significant share of environmentally linked disease. Punjab's renewed investment in sewerage infrastructure, therefore, represents not only urban development but also a preventive healthcare strategy aimed at reducing long-term public health costs.

At the core of this transformation is the Rs. 204 billion WASA component of the PDP, currently

being implemented across 15 districts. Unlike earlier piecemeal municipal interventions that addressed crises after they emerged, the program adopts a coordinated province-wide framework to resolve structural deficiencies in sewerage networks, stormwater drainage, and disposal systems simultaneously. These weaknesses have historically contributed to urban flooding, groundwater contamination, and environmental degradation across rapidly expanding cities.

The scale of intervention is unprecedented. Across districts including Faisalabad, Gujranwala, Multan, Rawalpindi, Sialkot, Dera Ghazi Khan, Jhelum, Gujrat, Sargodha, Okara, Hafizabad, Jhang, Sahiwal, Nankana Sahib, and Sheikhpura, approximately 2,264 kilometres of new sewerage pipelines are being laid, while 706 kilometres of aging networks are being rehabilitated to restore operational capacity. Additionally, 189 kilometres of primary and roadside drains are under development to strengthen stormwater flow and reduce flooding risks.

Disposal infrastructure expansion forms another critical pillar of the program. Plans include 27 new disposal stations alongside the rehabilitation of 59 existing facilities, significantly improving pumping capacity and wastewater discharge efficiency. Nine mega stormwater storage tanks with a combined capacity of 8.3 million gallons are also being constructed to temporarily store excess rainwater during peak monsoon periods. Such retention infrastructure aligns with global urban resilience practices increasingly adopted in climate-vulnerable regions facing high-intensity rainfall events.

Continued on Page 7



Tallyl Bin Nasir

King Salman Relief Centre Successfully Completes Large-Scale Winterization Initiative in Pakistan

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre (KSrelief) has successfully completed its large-scale Winterization Initiative in Pakistan, distributing 22,000 Winter Kits to vulnerable communities across the country under its annual winter support program.

Under this humanitarian initiative, 22,000 Winter Kits were distributed among residents of 28 of the coldest and snow-bound districts nationwide. The assistance targeted regions severely affected by harsh winter conditions, including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, Gilgit-Baltistan, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, as well as selected areas of Punjab and Sindh experiencing low temperatures during the winter season.

Each Winter Kit included two polyester quilts, warm shawls for men and women, and winter clothing for children and adults, helping families cope with extreme weather conditions and



reducing winter-related vulnerabilities.

The project was implemented in close coordination with the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), Provincial Disaster Management Authorities (PDMAs), the Relief, Rehabilitation and Settlement Department (RRSD) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Gilgit-Baltistan Disaster Management Authority (GBDMA), the State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA), local administrations, and Hayat Foundation to ensure transparency, coordination, and effective

delivery of assistance. Through this coordinated effort, the initiative successfully benefited more than 151,236 individuals, reaffirming



KSrelief's continued commitment to alleviating winter-related hardships and improving the well-being of vulnerable populations across Pakistan, while strengthening humanitarian cooperation between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.

AlHuda CIBE and BAHAA Impact Consulting Forge Strategic Alliance

Spokesman Report

DUBAI, UAE: AlHuda Centre of Islamic Banking & Economics (CIBE), a globally recognized advisory and capacity-building institution in Islamic banking and finance, has signed a Strategic Partnership Agreement with BAHAA Impact Consulting Ltd., a Rwanda-based consulting firm specializing in impact-driven financial and development solutions.

The partnership establishes a structured framework for collaboration in Islamic banking and finance advisory, Sukuk structuring, education and training programs, conferences, and market development initiatives. By combining AlHuda CIBE's technical depth and global experience with BAHAA Impact Consulting's regional

insight and implementation strength, the alliance aims to support the growth of Shariah-compliant financial solutions across Africa and emerging markets.

Under the agreement, AlHuda CIBE will provide advisory and consultancy support to BAHAA Impact Consulting, particularly in Islamic banking, micro-finance, Takaful, and Sukuk issuance and structuring. Both institutions will also jointly organize workshops, seminars, training programs, and conferences, while collaborating on distance learning initiatives to build skilled human capital in Islamic finance.

Mr. Muhammad Zubair Mughal, Chief Executive Officer of AlHuda CIBE, stated:

"Strategic partnerships are central to our mission of expanding Islamic



finance through knowledge, advisory, and practical implementation. Our collaboration with BAHAA Impact Consulting reflects a shared vision to strengthen Islamic financial ecosystems in Africa by combining global

best practices with strong local execution."

Mr. Mohammed EDRIS, Founder and Managing Director of BAHAA Impact Consulting Ltd., commented: "This partnership with AlHuda CIBE brings world-class Islamic finance expertise to our impact-focused work. Together, we aim to design and deliver Shariah-compliant financial solutions that support sustainable development, financial inclusion, and ethical investment across the region."

The agreement also includes mutual promotion of services, joint branding as strategic partners, and defined revenue-sharing arrangements for training programs and educational initiatives. The partnership is initially valid for one year, with the option for renewal by mutual consent.

British Council Women in STEM scholarships to study in the UK now open to applicants

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The Women in STEM scholarship programme, part of the British Council's Going Global Partnerships, provides funding for one-year master's degree courses at top ranking universities and research institutions within the UK, with the objective of increasing opportunities for women in STEM, strengthening female leadership in science and innovation, and promoting a more diverse and gender-representative STEM sector. To date, the programme has engaged 43 leading UK universities and awarded around 500 scholarships.

Each scholarship for the 2026-27



academic year is worth a minimum of £40,000, including tuition fees, living stipends, travel and visa costs, health coverage fees and English language support. The life-changing scholarships provide access to world-leading science and research universities in

the UK and platforms to connect with experts in STEM and the UK's global network of alumni.

Globally, 90 scholarships are available, and eligible applicants span 30 countries. 25 scholarships are open to applicants from South Asia, working with 5 UK universities.

The British Council's Country Director in Pakistan, James Hampson said: "The British Council's Women in STEM Scholarship demonstrates our commitment to supporting talented women from Pakistan by accessing world-class education in the UK and become the next generation of leaders."

The British Council's Global Head of Enabling Research & Science, Dr Jen

Bardsley, said: "It's fantastic to be able to run our Women in STEM scholarship programme again for the 2026-27 academic year. The programme represents lowering barriers to STEM careers for women and really creating a more inclusive and diverse set of voices in science, which we know leads to better science and improved outcomes for everyone."

For more information, including a full list of eligible countries and territories, and participating UK universities, please visit the global British Council website. To see details of scholarships which are available in Pakistan please visit British Council scholarships for women in STEM | British Council

Hyderabad Police Bust: Female drug dealer arrested, 36 kg cannabis seized

Abdul Ghafoor Sarohi

HYDERABAD: Hyderabad police conducted a successful raid based on a tip-off, arresting a female drug dealer with a significant quantity of cannabis.

Under the special instructions of SSP Hyderabad, Shahzeeb Chachar, A-Section police have intensified operations against drug suppliers and dealers. SHO Naik Muhammad Khuhsu reported that the operation took place near Double Road, Unit 11, Latifabad, where Kubra Chauhan Rajput was arrested.

During the raid, authorities seized 36 kilograms of cannabis from the suspect. In her initial statement, the suspect revealed that she, along with her husband, was involved in drug distribution across Karachi, Hyderabad, and surrounding areas. Her husband is already serving a sentence in Karachi jail for drug-related offenses.

A-Section police have registered a case against the suspect under FIR No. 129/2026, Sections 9(i) and 3(d) of the CNS Act, and further investigation is ongoing.



Japan Boosts Islamabad Blood Supply with \$65K Grant for PRCS Vehicle

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The Government of Japan, under its Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects (GGP) Program, has decided to provide grant assistance of USD 65,470 (equivalent to PKR 18 million) to the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) for a project to enhance blood donation services in capital region.

The grant contract was signed between His Excellency Mr. AKAMATSU Shuichi, Ambassador of Japan to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and representatives of PRCS at the Embassy of Japan in Islamabad on March 6, 2026. The project, titled "The Project for the Refurbishment of Second-hand Blood Donation Vehicle for the Pakistan Red Crescent Society Regional Blood Donation Center," aims to strengthen the capacity of Regional Blood Donation Center to collect and supply safe blood to vulnerable patients and emergency cases.



Defense First or Economy First? Strategic Lessons for Iran's Issue

Abdul Basit Alvi

Pakistan's grief over developments in Iran, particularly the reported martyrdom of Seyyed Ali Hosseini Khamenei, is portrayed as both an emotional moment and a strategic warning, reinforced by Iran's pressures, Venezuela's prolonged crisis, and the missile scare in the United Arab Emirates, all underscoring that natural wealth and economic prosperity alone cannot ensure sovereignty without strong governance and credible defense. In this volatile regional environment, Pakistan's proven and formidable military capability—especially its nuclear deterrent—is presented as the ultimate guarantor of ideological and territorial integrity, providing citizens with security and stability through decades of sacrifice and investment. This strength, validated in real confrontations with India and symbolized by the widely resonant "Marka Huq," underpins national morale, reinforces foreign policy credibility, and enables Pakistan to advocate peace, dialogue, and justice from a position of confidence and demonstrated capability rather than fear, with its armed forces serving as vigilant guardians against the vulnerabilities seen in resource-rich but defense-poor states.

Therefore, the complex and deeply saddening situation unfolding in Iran,

viewed through the clarifying lens of strategic analysis, should serve as the ultimate, the most powerful, and the most urgent eye-opener for the entire nation. It must function as a stark, flashing warning bell, a final wake-up call for those voices, both within Pakistan and in the broader discourse, who persist in advocating for a false, dangerous, and ultimately suicidal choice. There is a persistent, often naive, and sometimes deliberately misleading narrative that posits a fundamental, zero-sum trade-off between building a strong economy and maintaining a strong defense. This narrative, often heard in drawing-rooms, on talk shows, and in certain academic circles, argues, with a veneer of pseudo-sophistication, that the vast resources allocated to the military and national defense are resources effectively stolen from the people, resources that could have been spent on schools, hospitals, roads, and social welfare programs. This is not merely a flawed or incomplete argument; it is a perilous, insidious, and deeply dangerous fallacy, a line of thinking that the recent, dramatic, and tragic regional events have not just challenged but have utterly and conclusively debunked with the force of a thunderbolt. The argument, so glibly repeated, that "we need a strong economy at the price of our strong defense" is not just strategically unwise; it is a clear, unambiguous, and horrifyingly effective

blueprint for eventual national suicide, for the slow or rapid dismantling of everything that generations have fought and sacrificed to build. The living, breathing examples of nations that prioritized the glittering facade of economic prosperity over the hardened steel of defensive capability are now written indelibly in the anxious, terrified alerts of the UAE's population fleeing their skyscrapers and in the tragic, humiliating political turmoil and compromised sovereignty of Venezuela. Their immense, resource-based wealth could not purchase them even a moment of genuine security when the moment of ultimate strategic truth arrived, when the missiles were in the air or the foreign operatives were on the ground. They were forced to learn the hardest and most bitter lesson of all: that a massive bank account, a thriving stock market, and a portfolio of global investments are rendered completely and utterly meaningless if the nation itself is not alive, not sovereign, and not in control of its own destiny to spend, enjoy, or leverage that wealth. In the current era, an era characterized by the proliferation of missile technology, the complexities of hybrid warfare involving state and non-state actors, and the ever-

present reality of cyber and information warfare, a strong economy is not a fortress; it is a hostage, a prize waiting to be claimed, if it is not protected by a strong, credible, and modern defense apparatus. The economy provides the essential resources for the well-being and prosperity of the people, but it is the national defense that provides the fundamental, non-negotiable precondition for the very existence of the people, and the nation itself, to be in a position to enjoy those resources in peace and freedom.

This, in its clearest and most urgent formulation, is the monumental, history-altering lesson for Pakistan, a lesson that demands not a reduction in defense preparedness in a naive pursuit of short-term economic gains, but an even greater, more focused, and more sustained national effort to strengthen and modernize it. The rapidly evolving, increasingly volatile, and unpredictable situation in the region, with its dizzying shifts in alliances, its intensifying great power rivalries playing out in our neighborhood, its persistent and evolving threats from both state and non-state actors, and its rapid technological advancements in weaponry, necessitates that Pakistan's defense and deterrence posture is not merely

maintained at its current level, which is a significant achievement in itself, but is continuously, relentlessly, and strategically reviewed, upgraded, upgraded further, and reinforced to meet the challenges of tomorrow, not just the challenges of yesterday. Complacency, in the realm of national security, is not just an attitude; it is the most dangerous and unforgivable enemy of long-term survival. The peace, the relative stability, and the secure environment that the people of Pakistan are privileged to enjoy today are not a gift of geography or a historical accident; they are the direct, earned, and continually maintained product of the vigilance, the sacrifices, and the credible strength of yesterday and today. To ensure, with any degree of confidence, the peace, the security, and the sovereignty of Pakistan for the generations yet to come, the national investment in defense, in all its dimensions, must be viewed not as a burdensome expenditure that competes with development, but as the single most critical, most essential, and most non-negotiable insurance premium that the nation can possibly pay. It is the ultimate and indispensable safeguard for every citizen's personal dreams and aspirations, for every farmer's hope for a good harvest in a secure land, for every industrialist's investment in the nation's future, and for every child's right to grow up in a free, independent, and respected country. The national

narrative, the public discourse, and the strategic thinking of the elite must fundamentally and permanently shift from questioning the utility and the cost of the armed forces to celebrating, supporting, and strengthening them as the very reason, the foundational pillar, upon which the entire edifice of Pakistan's existence as a free, independent, proud, and respected nation on the world map is built. The tears of solidarity and sorrow that are shed for the martyrs and the suffering of brotherly nations like Iran must not be allowed to remain as mere expressions of transient grief. They must be transformed, through conscious national effort, into a hardened, unshakable, and permanent national resolve, a sacred commitment to never allow Pakistan, through neglect, naivety, or false economic priorities, to ever find itself in a position of similar vulnerability, where its wealth becomes a curse and its people are left exposed. We must learn, with deep humility and unflinching honesty, from their sorrows, internalize every painful lesson their experiences offer, and dedicate ourselves, our resources, and our collective will, to the perpetual, unwavering, and sacred task of strengthening the shield, the mighty defense, that guarantees our survival, our cherished sovereignty, and our ability to sleep peacefully, securely, and proudly under the starry skies of our beloved homeland.



Abdul Basit Alvi

Bull & Bears PSX 100-Share Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index

Current	Prev. Close
157,496.10	161,210.67
Day's High	Day's Low
161,435.83	157,072.64
Index Value	Change
18,782,789,868	-3714.57
Percentage	Time
-2.3%	6 Mar, 2026 4:30 pm

Europe: FTSE 100 Index

Index Value	Change
10,284.75	-129.19
Percentage	Time
-1.24%	6 Mar, 4:35 pm GMT

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average

Index Value	Change
47,356.86	-597.88
Percentage	Time
-1.25%	6 Mar, 1:54 pm GMT-5

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average

Index Value	Change
55,620.84	+342.78
Percentage	Time
+0.62%	6 Mar, 3:45 pm GMT+9

Open Market Forex Rates

Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	193.15	197.25
Bahrain Dinar	733.60	743.70
Canadian Dollar	201.60	205.25
China Yuan	38	39.05
Danish Krone	43.32	43.72
Euro	325.31	329.05
Hong Kong Dollar	34.94	35.94
Indian Rupee	2.6	3.02
Japanese Yen	1.7234	1.8234
Kuwaiti Dinar	888.85	898.30
Malaysian Ringgit	65.60	66.25
New Zealand \$	162.59	166.25
Norwegians Krone	27.61	27.91
Omani Riyal	718.50	728.60
Qatari Riyal	74.79	75.55
Saudi Riyal	73.80	74.80
Singapore Dollar	215.55	222.25
Swedish Korona	30.15	30.45
Swiss Franc	355	358.85
Thai Bhat	7.5	7.75
U.A.E Dirham	75.75	77
UK Pound Sterling	374.83	378.25
US Dollar	279.00	280.45

SECP Registers 3,444 New Companies in February; Total Reaches 287,049

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) registered 3,444 new companies in February, bringing the total number of registered companies in the country to 287,049, reflecting continued growth in Pakistan's corporate sector.

Private limited companies accounted for 59 percent of the new registrations, followed by single-member companies at 38 percent. The remaining 3 percent comprised public unlisted companies, not-for-profit organizations, limited liability partnerships, and foreign companies.

Foreign investment remained robust, with 82 newly incorporated companies receiving international shareholding. China emerged as the leading source of investment with participation in 44 companies, followed by the United States with investments in seven companies. Investors from Palau and Germany participated in three companies each, while Egypt, the United Kingdom, Australia, Afghanistan, Yemen, and Indonesia invested in two companies each. Additional investment originated from Azerbaijan, Nigeria, Jordan, Canada, Sweden, Denmark, the Philippines, Turkey, Portugal, Belgium, and other countries.

From a regional perspective, Punjab led



with 1,696 new companies, followed by the Islamabad Capital Territory with 656, Sindh with 555, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with 317, Gilgit-Baltistan with 174, and Balochistan with 46, demonstrating broad-based geographic expansion of corporate activity.

Sector-wise, the information technology and e-commerce sectors remained the leading drivers of growth with 723 new incorporations, followed by the trading sector with 531 registrations, services with 434, and real estate development and construction with 323 new companies.

Further diversification was observed across

multiple sectors, including tourism and transport (194), food and beverages (165), education (107), mining and quarrying (79), textile (69), marketing and advertisement (64), chemicals (58), pharmaceuticals (58), corporate agricultural farming (57), healthcare (56), engineering (52), cosmetics (50), communications (44), fuel and energy (42), lodging (37), and auto-allied industries (35).

In addition, 266 companies were incorporated across various other sectors, including cables and electric goods, sports, and paper and board, reflecting the continued broadening of Pakistan's industrial and business base.

Uses of Shipping Containers

ISLAMABAD: A view of Aabpara roads closed with heavy shipping containers due to Jamaat-e-Islami protest against U.S and Israel attack on Iran, in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

Pakistan must incentivize grid-scale battery storage — not penalize solar growth

Commerce Desk

LAHORE: Pakistan's energy transition stands at a decisive inflection point. Over the past decade, the country has expanded rooftop solar, wind capacity in Sindh, and hydropower generation. Yet the structural flaw in our power system remains unchanged: we generate clean electricity during the day but burn imported fossil fuels at night to meet peak demand.

This imbalance is not merely technical — it is fiscal. In FY 2023-24, Pakistan's fossil fuel import bill accounted for roughly 10.6% of GDP and nearly one-third of total imports. A significant portion of this expenditure is driven by expensive evening

peak generation, primarily LNG-based plants operating for limited hours at high marginal costs. Meanwhile, distributed solar is estimated to produce nearly 20 TWh annually — much of which cannot be optimally utilized after sunset.

Recent net-metering reforms by National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) aim to reduce the financial burden on distribution companies. While concerns regarding cross-subsidization are legitimate, discouraging rooftop solar without enabling structural solutions risks slowing renewable momentum and eroding investor confidence. The real problem is not solar growth — it is the absence of storage.

RCCI Delegation Meets Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar Khan

Commerce Desk

RAWALPINDI: A delegation of the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI), led by Group Leader Sohail Altaf and President Usman Shaukat, met with the Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Industries and Production, Haroon Akhtar Khan.

During the meeting, RCCI President Usman Shaukat briefed the Special Assistant about the Chamber's recent trade delegation visit to the United States. He also presented proposals regarding the protection of foreign investment in Pakistan through special arbitration mechanisms and improved security arrangements. In response, Haroon Akhtar Khan stated that the necessary legal provisions have already been incorporated into the forthcoming Industrial Policy, which will be announced soon.

The meeting also discussed the global economic landscape and the prevailing geopolitical tensions, along with Pakistan's economic policies and the challenges currently being faced by the business community. The RCCI leadership presented several key recommendations to support economic growth and industrial revival.

President Usman Shaukat and Group Leader Sohail Altaf emphasized that in



order to ensure that economic benefits reach the grassroots level, the policy rate should be reduced to single digits. They further recommended lowering the corporate tax rate to promote industrial activity and enhance exports.

The RCCI leadership also urged the government to immediately announce a construction package to kick-start industrial activity. They pointed out that more than forty allied industries are directly linked with the construction and real estate sector, providing employment to millions of people across the country.

Matters related to the development of

industrial zones, particularly around the Rawalpindi Ring Road, were also discussed during the meeting.

Special Assistant Haroon Akhtar Khan assured the delegation that RCCI's recommendations regarding the construction package would be incorporated. He also stated that a high-level meeting on the Rawalpindi Ring Road would soon be convened. He appreciated the Chamber's proposals for industrial development and termed them commendable.

The delegation included Senior Vice President Khalid Farooq Qazi, Executive Member Imran Ali, and others.

OECD Highlights CCP's Use of AI Tools to detect over 200 Competition Cases

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has detected more than 200 potential competition law violations and merger cases during the past two years using artificial intelligence and automated digital tools developed by its Market Intelligence Unit (MIU).

A paper titled "Leveraging Artificial Intelligence for Detecting Anti-Competitive Activities: Pakistan's Journey toward Modernized Competition Enforcement," published in the Asia-Pacific Competition Update of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), outlines CCP's initiatives to strengthen and modernize its enforcement functions through the use of advanced technologies and AI-driven monitoring tools.

Pakistan's rapidly digi-

tizing markets and the surge in unstructured data from procurement, advertising, and financial disclosures prompted the CCP to establish the Market Intelligence Unit in October 2023, shifting from complaint-based enforcement to proactive, AI-driven market monitoring.

One of CCP's key initiatives is an AI-driven public procurement monitoring system that analyses thousands of tender documents to detect suspicious bidding patterns and possible collusion. This system can process tens of thousands of records in hours instead of months of manual review.

CCP has also introduced an Automated Digital Market Intelligence System that continuously monitors online advertisements, social media content, and digital platforms to detect deceptive marketing practices.

Haji Ameer Khan Mehsud Elected PPDA President Sindh



Commerce Desk

KARACHI: The Pakistan Petroleum Dealers Association (PPDA) has announced key organizational appointments to further strengthen and activate its affairs. Prominent businessman from Sindh, Haji Ameer Khan Mehsud, has been elected as the President of PPDA Sindh, while Saeed Khan has been appointed as the President of Karachi Division.

In addition, Malik Khuda Bakhsh has been nominated as Adviser to the Chairman of the Pakistan Petroleum Dealers Association, Abdul Sami Khan.

A formal notification in this regard was issued by PPDA Chairman Abdul Sami Khan. In his statement, the chairman said that the services of these leaders for the association have been commendable and expressed hope that they will utilize their experience and capabilities to play an effective role in resolving the issues faced by petroleum dealers.

On this occasion, newly elected PPDA Sindh President Haji Ameer Khan Mehsud thanked Chairman Abdul Sami Khan, the executive committee, the general body, and petroleum dealers across the country for their trust.

He said that he considers this important responsibility an honor and will work under the leadership of Chairman Abdul Sami Khan to resolve the issues faced by petroleum dealers, protect their rights, and make the association stronger and more active.

Regular Monitoring Continued of Development Projects in Toba Tek Singh, Naveed Olakh

Zafar Chishti

TOBA TEK SINGH: Reports regarding the progress of ongoing development projects in Toba Tek Singh district are being regularly obtained from the relevant departments and presented before senior officials during meetings to ensure the timely completion and quality of the projects. This was stated by Dr. Naveed Ifkhar Olakh Deputy Director Development Toba Tek Singh

District, while speaking exclusively with our correspondent. He said that an organized and coordinated system has been established to effectively monitor the development schemes underway in the district. Under this system, all relevant departments regularly submit detailed reports on the latest progress of their ongoing schemes to the Deputy Director Development Office.

Dr. Naveed Ifkhar Olakh explained that regular meetings

are held on the basis of the received reports, in which officers from various departments participate. During these meetings, a comprehensive review is conducted of the pace, quality, utilization of funds and completion stages of the ongoing development projects. He added that if any delay or obstacle arises in a project, it is immediately identified and brought to the attention of the relevant authorities so that a timely solution can be found.



Evolving Situation in Iran and Pakistan's Policy Response

The Centre for Afghanistan, Middle East and Africa (CAMEA) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) organised a Roundtable Discussion on "Evolving Situation in Iran and Pakistan's Policy Response" on March 06, 2026. Former

diplomats, leading academics and prominent practitioners joined the discussion, which focused on the evolving situation in Iran, its regional implications, and Pakistan's current and future policy outlook.

Participants noted that the situation in Iran remains highly tense following the

recent United States and Israeli strikes and Iran's subsequent retaliatory actions. These developments have heightened tensions across the Middle East and raised concerns about regional stability and security. The importance of dialogue and diplomatic engagement to prevent further escalation was also underlined,

while safeguarding regional stability and Pakistan's security and foreign policy interests. Pakistan's role as a potential mediator in promoting diplomatic engagement and regional stability amid growing uncertainties in the Middle East was also highlighted. The meeting was held under the Chatham House Rule.

The ABS Developers National T20 Cup will start today in Peshawar

Tahir Amin Malik

LAHORE: The 12-day ABS Developers National T20 Cup is set to begin at the Imran Khan Cricket Stadium in Peshawar with the 10 regional teams vying for the title currently held by Lahore Blues. The defending champions are drawn in Group B alongside Abbottabad, Karachi Blues, Multan and Sialkot regions.

The tournament will kick off with two Group A fixtures as Lahore Whites will take on Peshawar in the game starting at 4.15pm, while Faisalabad will be up against Karachi Whites at 9.15pm. The fifth team in Group A is Bahawalpur.

A prize pot of PKR 8.5 million will be up



for grabs as the winners will be awarded PKR five million and runners up PKR 2.5 million. Best batter, bowler, wicket-keeper and player of the tournament will pocket PKR 100,000 each. Player of the match will get PKR 25,000, while player of the final will get PKR 50,000.

Karachi Blues and Bahawalpur are the two teams who have advanced to this tournament by playing the final of the 10-team Qualifier event held in Lahore from 14 to 24 February.

Bahawalpur topped their group after winning three out of four matches and beat

the Blues in the final by 59 runs. Karachi Blues, meanwhile, won all their four matches before falling short in the final.

The tournament will be broadcast live with the help of 22 high-definition cameras, while the fans can watch the action on Geo Super, A Sports, PTV Sports, PTV National and Fast Sports. It will also be live-streamed on Tapmad in Pakistan and the foreign fans can tune into the live-stream on the PCB's official YouTube channel.

Former Pakistan Test Team Captain Salman Butt and Aiman Anwer will be joined by Ali Younis, Shah Faisal, Raja Asad and Imranullah in the commentary panel.

Motorways Without the Gateway: The Neglect of Sindh in Pakistan's Transport Planning...

Motorways play a vital role in economic growth, trade, and national connectivity. In Pakistan, most of the country's imports and exports move through the seaports located in the province of Sindh. From these ports, goods are transported by road to the inland provinces and dry ports. Therefore, motorway planning should logically start from the coastal areas and move towards the interior regions. Unfortunately, the current development pattern does not follow this economic logic.

According to the plans of the National Highway Authority, several motorways were proposed to pass through Sindh. However, only a small portion of these plans has been implemented. The M-5 Motorway is the only completed project in Sindh. Its 126-kilometre portion from Kashmore to Sukkur has been built successfully.

The remaining projects are still pending. The M-6 Motorway, which is about 306 kilometres long and connects Sukkur with Hyderabad, has not yet

started. Similarly, the M-7 Motorway from Dadu to Hub has not begun in the Sindh section. The M-8 Motorway also passes through Sindh, but the 64-kilometre stretch from Ratodero to Qubo Saeed Khan has not been upgraded to motorway standards.

Other important routes also remain incomplete. The M-9 Motorway connecting Karachi and Hyderabad still lacks full motorway standards. The M-10 Motorway has also not been converted into a proper motorway. In addition, a proposed new motorway from Hyderabad to Karachi via Kirthar National Park has not yet started.

In total, the National Highway Authority had planned about 957 kilometres of motorways in Sindh. However, only 126 kilometres have been completed, while about 831 kilometres are still pending.

This delay is surprising because Sindh

is the gateway of Pakistan's trade. The country's major seaports — Port of Karachi, Port Qasim, and Gwadar Port — handle cargo that moves to the inland provinces such as Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Ideally, high-speed motorways should connect these ports with the rest of the country.

However, the present situation is different. There is still no continuous motorway corridor across Sindh. Because of this, heavy trucks and trailers move slowly on ordinary highways. Transporters often take two to three days to travel about 700 kilometres, which could normally be covered in about ten hours on a proper motorway. This increases transportation costs and slows down trade.

The imbalance becomes clearer when we look at the overall motorway development in Pakistan. Out of about 4,000 kilometres of planned motorways, nearly 2,300 kilometres have already been built

in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In contrast, 831 kilometres in Sindh and about 870 kilometres in Balochistan are still waiting for construction.

A wise national transport policy should be based on economic needs and national equality, not on provincial differences. From a trade perspective, motorway construction should begin from the seaports and then extend toward the dry ports and markets of the interior provinces. Unfortunately, the current planning appears to be the opposite.

For many years, whenever motorway projects in Sindh are discussed, they are delayed with the explanation of lack of funds. However, continuous development of motorways in other regions raises serious questions about planning priorities.

In conclusion, the motorway network of Pakistan should be developed in a balanced and strategic way. Sindh, as the country's main gateway for trade, deserves proper motorway connectivity. Investing in these routes will not only benefit Sindh but will strengthen the entire national economy of Pakistan.



Analysis

Rehmatullah Buriro

UK and France Join U. S.-Israel War Against Iran

Continued from Page 4

Beyond the immediate battlefield, the strategic stakes extend even further. The Strait of Hormuz — through which a significant portion of the world's oil supply passes — remains one of the most important chokepoints in global trade. Any escalation in the region risks disrupting the flow of energy to markets across Europe and Asia. At the same time, an expanded Western naval presence in the region would effectively place one of the world's most vital maritime corridors under heavy military oversight.

Such developments inevitably raise questions about the broader geopolitical objectives of the war. While the official narrative emphasizes security and stability, the strategic implications of controlling key maritime routes and supply chains cannot be ignored.

Inside Britain, the government continues to emphasize that its role remains defensive and limited. Yet the pattern is familiar to anyone

who has observed the early stages of past conflicts. Wars rarely appear all at once. They arrive gradually: a deployment here, a protective mission there, a logistical necessity followed by a defensive authorization. Each step appears modest when viewed individually. Taken together, they reveal a steady movement toward deeper involvement.

History offers many examples of this process. Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria all began with limited objectives and carefully framed justifications. Over time those conflicts expanded beyond their original scope, leaving behind societies struggling to rebuild amid political fragmentation and economic devastation.

The danger today is not simply that another war is unfolding. The deeper concern is that the lessons of previous interventions seem to fade each time a new crisis emerges.

Modern societies possess extraordinary scientific knowledge, technological capability, and access to infor-

mation. Yet the same nations that lead the world in education and innovation often find themselves repeating patterns that history has already judged harshly.

Perhaps the most sobering conclusion is that history itself rarely lacks clear warnings. The tragedies of past wars remain visible for anyone willing to examine them. What often disappears is the willingness to listen.

When power becomes intoxicating and strategic dominance appears irresistible, the lessons of history are easily dismissed as relics of another era. And when that happens, humanity does not move forward through wisdom. It moves in circles — rediscovering through destruction what it once knew through memory.

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Analysis of Educational Reforms...

Continued from Page 4

Provincial showcases include attendance surges from monitoring tools, better retention for girls through targeted support, and cost efficiencies from smart consolidations.

Provincial landscapes vary sharply. Punjab leverages data-driven monitoring and mergers for broad coverage; Sindh advances through stipends and upgradation but contends with mismanagement and stark urban-rural contrasts; Khyber Pakhtunkhwa gains from rationalization amid security hurdles; Balochistan battles isolation and low female participation, where even modest stipends yield incremental access amid infrastructural voids.

Deep-rooted obstacles endure. Learning proficiency remains alarmingly low across subjects; teachers frequently absent or lacking pedagogical skills; facilities often miss essentials like separate toilets, secure roofs, or boundary walls, disproportionately affecting girls; socioeconomic inequities privilege city dwellers over village children; factors like child labor, long travel distances, early marriages, family

priorities, and administrative neglect fuel dropouts; post-devolution budgets favor recurrent costs over development; corruption in procurement and payrolls saps resources. External shocks — pandemics, militancy, natural calamities — exacerbate exclusion.

Dropout dynamics stem from intertwined causes: economic hardships pushing child work, physical barriers like distant or dilapidated schools, teacher unreliability, cultural norms favoring boys or early unions, poor administration including absent facilities, and child-specific issues like health or disinterest.

Inspiring cases abound: partnerships blending public funds with private delivery offer free quality seats to the needy; incentives for female educators in conservative pockets enhance girls' comfort and retention; resilient school models with renewable energy sustain operations in off-grid areas.

A bold reinvention demands priority. Elevate budget share with ring-fenced primary allocation, massively scale literacy hubs incorporating adaptive digital tools in mother tongues, overhaul teacher pipelines with rigorous

entry tests, incentives for performance, and continuous upskilling. Embark on nationwide infrastructure renewal through public-private collaborations for all-weather, gender-segregated facilities. Universalize financial and transport support for vulnerable children, strengthen anti-labor enforcement, and evolve curricula to flexible, skill-centric digital formats with play integration. Fortify monitoring via real-time data platforms and annual independent assessments. Activate communities with empowered parent-teacher associations controlling local budgets.

While reforms advance access and lay equity foundations, quality and inclusion gaps yawn wide. Unified political determination, inter-provincial collaboration, and long-term fiscal resolve are non-negotiable. Revitalizing primary education catalyzes human development, economic vitality, and societal equity. The nation's youngest citizens merit not sporadic gestures, but a resolute overhaul.

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Sewerage Infrastructure Overhaul in Punjab

Continued from Page 4

These interventions represent structural correction rather than incremental expansion. Much of Punjab's sewerage infrastructure was installed decades ago for far smaller populations. Lahore's population alone has expanded nearly fourfold since the 1980s, while secondary cities have grown rapidly without proportional infrastructure upgrades. Urban planners typically estimate a life-cycle of 20–25 years for modern sewerage systems, yet many networks in operation today have

long exceeded that limit, resulting in frequent overflows and system failures. The PDP aims to break this cycle of temporary fixes by investing in long-term resilience.

Institutional reform has accompanied infrastructure development. Within six months, operational Water and Sanitation Agencies expanded from five to forty-one, transforming WASA from a metropolitan utility into a province-wide governance framework. The phased rollout during 2025 brought multiple districts under dedicated sanitation authorities, enabling decentralized

implementation and faster local response. Sub-WASAs at tehsil levels further strengthened monitoring, accountability, and service delivery capacity.

The program also signals a broader shift from reactive urban management toward preventive planning. Punjab's cities have long faced monsoon-related waterlogging that disrupts traffic, damages property, and interrupts commercial activity. Heavy rainfall during 2025 exposed the limitations of legacy drainage systems, requiring costly emergency dewatering operations. By expanding drainage

capacity and redesigning stormwater systems, the PDP seeks to reduce reliance on crisis response and move toward climate-resilient urban management.

Administrative oversight has emerged as a defining operational feature. Active field monitoring by senior leadership, supported by digital dashboards and real-time progress tracking, aims to improve coordination between engineering, financial, and administrative wings. Performance-based supervision mechanisms have been introduced to minimize delays that traditionally slow large public-

sector projects, indicating an effort to combine infrastructure investment with governance reform.

Beyond engineering improvements, the economic implications are substantial. Global sanitation studies suggest that every dollar invested in sanitation generates nearly five dollars in economic returns through reduced healthcare costs, improved productivity, and environmental protection. Urban flooding can reduce commercial activity by up to 20–30 percent during disruption periods, disproportionately affecting small traders and daily

wage earners. Improved sewerage systems help mitigate these losses, enhance property values, and strengthen investor confidence in emerging urban centers.

Improved sanitation also reduces untreated wastewater discharge into canals and rivers, protecting groundwater and agricultural ecosystems. In many districts, sewerage rehabilitation is paired with road restoration and urban upgrading, improving mobility and overall livability.

Ultimately, the Punjab Development Program represents more than a construction initiative; it

signals a long-term urban reset. By investing heavily in foundational yet often invisible infrastructure, the province is strengthening systems that determine how cities grow and withstand future climate pressures. If implemented effectively and maintained consistently, the program could redefine sanitation governance and urban resilience across Punjab's secondary and mid-sized cities for decades to come.

(The writer is a Lahore-based Governance & Public Policy Analyst and can be reached on X @Iam_Tallal)

Fourth Ramadan Hockey League Begins



Sports Desk

KARACHI: The Fourth Ramadan Hockey League has started at the Olympian Islahuddin and Dr. Muhammad Ali Shah Hockey Academy. The event was inaugurated by former Olympian Qamar Ibrahim.

On this occasion, Olympian Kamran Ashraf, Olympian Kashif Jawad, Olympian Syed Sameer Hussain, former international Abuzar Amrao, Latafat Hussain Shah, Syed Alay Hassan, Aslam Khan, Moeen Alam, Azmat Pasha, Junaid Aslam, Uzair Ahmed, Muhammad Wahid, Tariq Khan and others were also present.

In the opening match of the Ramadan hockey League, Olympian Abdul Waheed Khan XI beat Olympian Anwar Ahmed Khan XI by four goals to two. For the winning team, Babar Saadat, Usman Ashraf, Nauman Khan and Arif Khan scored one goal each. For Olympian Anwar Ahmed Khan XI, Usman Khan and Wajid Khan scored the goals.

Five teams are participating in the Ramadan League: Olympian Anwar Ahmed Khan XI, Olympian Abdul Waheed Khan XI, Olympian Munawar-uz-Zaman XI, Olympian Zafar Ali Khan XI, and Zakir Ali Khan XI. One match will be played daily during the event.

AIOU Holds Second Session of Weekly Seerat Lecture Series

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has organized the second session of its weekly Seerat Lecture Series which was attended by a large number of students and university employees. The session focused on the moral excellence and social aspects of the Seerat-e-Tayyiba (the blessed life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad SAW), highlighting the importance of ethical values in the contemporary context.



Renowned scholar Dr. Hafiz Tahir Islam delivered the keynote lecture on the topic "Seerat-e-Tayyiba and Ideal Social Character." In his address, he stated that the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW) stands as a shining beacon of morality, offering timeless guidance for individuals to improve both their personal and collective lives.

Dr. Tahir Islam emphasized that the Holy Prophet (SAW) demonstrated exceptional tolerance and kindness even toward his opponents, supported the oppressed, uplifted the weak and established remarkable examples of justice and equality that continue to guide humanity.

He further noted that in today's world, where societies face challenges such as social unrest, intolerance and moral decline, drawing guidance from the Seerat-e-Tayyiba has become more important than ever.

The weekly Seerat sessions are being organized jointly by the Central Library and the Faculty of Arabic and Islamic Studies at AIOU. These sessions provide an academic and intellectual platform for discussing various aspects of the life and teachings of the Holy Prophet (SAW).

It is worth mentioning that Syed Ghulam Kazim Ali, after assuming charge of the Central Library has taken several initiatives to strengthen its academic and intellectual role. Under his leadership, the library is being developed not only as an active center for research and study but also as a hub for scholarly and intellectual activities. The weekly Seerat Lecture Series is an important part of these efforts.

ECC meeting

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



Photo: PID

ECC okays multi-billions rupee funding for energy, education and disaster preparedness

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet Friday approved a series of financial allocations and policy measures. During the meeting chaired by Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, the ECC approved Rs13.1 million for Pakistan's membership

in the International Energy Forum.

The committee also approved Rs3 billion for projects aimed at supplying natural gas to villages located near gas fields.

The initiative is expected to address long-standing demands for the equitable distribution of natural resources among residents living near gas

fields.

In the education sector, the ECC approved Rs200 million to pay outstanding dues to teachers working in Basic Education Community Schools.

The committee further endorsed additional funding of \$4 million from the World Bank for a project being implemented by the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan.

To ensure preparedness for natural disasters, particularly during the monsoon season, the ECC approved Rs3.63 billion for the National Disaster Management Authority to cover expenditures related to monsoon 2025 operations and emergency response activities.

Additionally, the committee sanctioned Rs1.3 billion for the Power Division to support

projects under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) programme.

In a key policy decision, the ECC approved a comprehensive reform package for the power sector.

The committee also approved Rs1.47 billion for the payment of outstanding dues related to government public awareness campaigns.



Agencies

TEHRAN: Ali Larjani, secretary of the Supreme National Security Council of Iran,

has issued a stern warning to the United States following reports suggesting a possible limited ground operation in Iran.

Iran warns US against ground invasion, Larjani issues strong message

In a statement posted on X, Larjani said Iran was fully prepared to confront any such move.

He said some American officials had indicated plans to enter Iranian territory with several thousand troops,

prompting a sharp response from Tehran.

"The sacred land of Iran is no place for the servants of hell," said.

"The valiant sons of Imam Khomeini and Imam Khamenei are waiting for you,

ready to disgrace those corrupt American officials by killing and capturing thousands," he added.

Earlier, Karoline Leavitt had said that the United States currently has no plans to deploy ground forces in Iran.

Govt raises petrol, diesel prices by Rs55 per litre

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has sharply increased petroleum prices, raising the rates of petrol and high-speed diesel by Rs55 per litre amid rising global oil prices and growing regional uncertainty.

According to government sources,

the increase comes as Islamabad moves towards a weekly review mechanism for petroleum prices, replacing the existing fortnightly system.

The decision follows recommendations from a committee formed to monitor petroleum prices.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif approved the proposal in principle,

while the federal cabinet is expected to grant formal approval.

Officials said the committee recommended weekly price reviews due to the volatile regional situation and persistent fluctuations in international oil markets.

Following the prime minister's approval, fuel prices are expected to be



reviewed every week in the coming days.

Meanwhile, global petroleum prices have surged sharply in recent weeks, a trend that has begun to affect Pakistan's domestic market.

The latest increase of about Rs55 per litre marks one of the steepest increases in recent months.

Democracies thrive when women have equal role in decision-making: Gilani

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani on Friday said democracies can only prosper when women participate in decision-making on an equal footing.

He expressed these views while addressing a national event organised by the Women's Parliamentary Caucus at the Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services (PIPS) to mark International Women's Day 2026.

The event was held under the global theme "Rights. Justice. Action. For All Women and Girls."

Gilani said the Senate would continue to support the socio-economic and political empowerment of women in line with its constitutional, legislative and oversight responsibilities.

He welcomed the launch of the Pakistan Women Parliamentary Leaders



Portal, describing it as an important step towards institutional cooperation, knowledge-sharing and inclusive political engagement.

The event brought together national and provincial lawmakers, representatives of women parliamentary caucuses, civil society members, development partners and other stakeholders to discuss ways to strengthen women's

political participation and leadership in Pakistan.

Gilani said this year's Women's Day theme was not just a slogan but a call for action. "Equality delayed is justice denied," he said, adding that inclusive representation is both a democratic requirement and a national necessity.

He stressed that achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals requires the inclusion of women and youth in development processes through meaningful political and economic empowerment.

He also highlighted the responsibility of parliamentarians to remove structural barriers and introduce laws and policies that ensure inclusive and fair governance.

Recalling his tenure as prime minister, Gilani referred to several laws

introduced to protect women's rights, including the Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act 2010, the Acid Control and Acid Crime Prevention Act 2010, the Prevention of Anti-Women Practices Act 2011, and the Women in Distress and Detention Fund (Amendment) Act 2011.

He also mentioned the launch of the Benazir Income Support Programme, calling it a major initiative that strengthened women economically by providing financial support directly to them. He said the programme helped move from charity to empowerment.

The chairman paid tribute to prominent women leaders who played a key role in Pakistan's democratic journey, including Fatima Jinnah, Rana Liaquat Ali Khan, Shaista Ikramullah, Jahanara Shahnavaz and Benazir Bhutto.

PM condemns drone attacks on Nakhchivan exclave; assures Pakistan's complete solidarity



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Friday during a telephone conversation with President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev condemned, in the strongest terms, the drone attacks on Nakhchivan exclave of Azerbaijan yesterday that targeted innocent civilians.

The prime minister also assured the Azerbaijani leadership that Pakistan stands in complete solidarity and support with the brotherly people of Azerbaijan at this difficult

time, a Prime Minister's Office news release said.

He apprised President Aliyev of Pakistan's diplomatic outreach efforts in the aftermath of the ongoing crisis in Iran and the Gulf region.

President Aliyev thanked the Prime Minister for the telephone call and appreciated the sentiment of solidarity and support of the people of Pakistan at this challenging time.

The two leaders stressed on the need for de-escalation and restoration of peace in the region. They agreed to remain in touch.

PM Shehbaz visits Mohsin Naqvi residence to inquire about his health

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Friday arrived at the residence of Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and inquired about his health.

The premier expressed good wishes for the federal minister. Mohsin Naqvi got injured last Sunday in Islamabad during talks with protesters. During the meeting, views were exchanged on the country's internal security and the overall situation.

Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi briefed the PM about the measures taken to maintain law and order. The PM expressed satisfaction over the steps taken regarding



internal security.

Shehbaz Sharif said: "No effort should be spared to protect the lives and property of people." Mohsin Naqvi informed the PM that clear instructions have been issued to law-enforcement agencies, including the police, in this regard. He informed the prime minister that he was personally monitoring the security arrangements.

Ishaq Dar, Iranian FM discuss regional situation in phone call

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Pakistan Ishaq Dar held a telephone conversation with Iranian Foreign Minister Seyyed Abbas Araqchi to discuss the current situation in the region, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

A spokesperson for the Foreign Office said on Friday that Ishaq Dar expressed concern over the evolving regional situation during the conversation. Both sides exchanged views on recent developments and their possible implications for regional stability.

The Pakistani deputy prime



minister emphasized the importance of maintaining peace and stability in the region, the spokesperson added.

During the call, the two foreign ministers also agreed to remain in close contact and continue consultations regarding the latest developments.

Iran-US war disrupts global aviation, thousands of flights cancelled

Agencies

ISLAMABAD: The sudden war between Iran and the United States has severely impacted the global aviation industry, with more than 24,000 flights cancelled worldwide in the past six days, according to aviation sources.

Officials said the cancellations, involving hundreds of airlines including carriers operating in Pakistan, have affected millions of passengers.

The disruption has also resulted

in billions of rupees in losses for the aviation sector due to reduced landing, take-off and related charges.

At Allama Iqbal International Airport in Lahore, 144 flights were cancelled on Friday.

However, airport sources said four flights departed for Saudi Arabia during the day. Aviation sources also reported a noticeable decline in the number of Umrah pilgrims amid the ongoing conflict.

Authorities said aviation operations are being closely monitored as the situation continues to evolve.