



# Daily The Spokesman

A Leading National Daily



فرمان رسول ﷺ  
نبی کریم صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم نے دو طرح کے پہاڑوں سے اور دو طرح کی خرید و فروخت سے منع فرمایا تھا۔ اشتیاقِ صماء اور ایک کپڑے میں اس طرح احتیاء کرنے سے کہ انسان کی شرمگاہ کوئی چیز نہ ہو اور عیادت اور ملازمت سے۔ اس روایت کی متابعت معزز محمد بن ابی حفصہ اور عبد اللہ بن بکر نے زہری سے کی ہے۔  
(مشکوٰۃ: ص ۱۰۷، حدیث نمبر ۶۲۸۴)  
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## Iran asking for ceasefire, but no truce until Strait of Hormuz reopens, says Trump

President Donald Trump said Wednesday that Iran had asked for a ceasefire, but ruled out any truce until the vital Strait of Hormuz was reopened for crucial energy shipments. The White House said the president would make "an important" national address today (Thursday)



## Despite ceasefire, Gaza death toll surges to 72,289 since October 2023

Although a ceasefire in Gaza went into effect on October 11, the death toll in the Gaza Strip has continued to rise, reaching 72,289, mostly women and children, since the beginning of the Israeli aggression in October 2023. At least 172,040 others have also been injured.

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## Meeting on economic effects

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting on strategy to curtail economic effects on public in the wake of current regional situation, in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online

# PM orders a comprehensive strategy to curtail economic effects on people amid regional situation

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday directed the relevant authorities to formulate a comprehensive strategy to curtail economic effects on public in the wake of current regional situation.

He stressed that the strategy should not disrupt production or the balance of supply and demand across economic sectors.

The prime minister further directed that both external and internal macroeconomic factors be carefully evaluated while formulating the strategy.

Chairing a review meeting to formulate the strategy aimed at safeguarding the country from financial and economic impacts arising from the tense regional situation, the prime minister said that many countries around the world were facing difficulties in maintaining the balance of

supply and demand for essential commodities due to the current situation. However, he noted with satisfaction that Pakistan was effectively and successfully managing this challenge.

He appreciated that all relevant institutions had taken timely and effective measures to prevent any emergency situation in the supply and demand of essential goods.

The prime minister further highlighted that, after meeting domestic requirements for food

and essential commodities, progress was being made successfully on a comprehensive strategy to export surplus production.

He reaffirmed that the government remained committed to taking all necessary steps for economic stability, growth, and public welfare.

The meeting was attended by Minister for Planning Ahsan Iqbal, Minister for Finance Muhammad Aurangzeb, Minister for Power Division

Sardar Owais Ahmed Khan Leghari, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar, Minister for Climate Change Musadik Malik, Minister for National Food Security Rana Tanveer Hussain, Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik, Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Khan Cheema, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Haroon Akhtar, Governor State Bank Jameel Ahmad, and other senior officials.

## Chinese FM conveys praise, support for Pakistan's efforts for West Asia peace

News Desk

BEIJING: Minister of Foreign Affairs of China Wang Yi has conveyed his country's appreciation and support to Pakistan's active diplomatic role and efforts to end the conflict and promote peace in West Asia.

The bilateral ties and regional developments were discussed in a meeting between Wang Yi and Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator



Mohammad Ishaq Dar, who paid an official visit to Beijing on March 31-April 1, 2026, at the invitation of his Chinese counterpart.

The meeting was marked by traditional warmth and cordiality. Both dignitaries exchanged notes on the regional developments in West Asia and bilateral relations, according to a Foreign Office press release.

Deputy Prime Minister Dar briefed Foreign Minister Wang

Yi in detail on the efforts Pakistan continued to make towards the cessation of conflict and the resumption of dialogue, including the recent meeting in Islamabad among foreign ministers of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Egypt.

Both sides reviewed the regional security environment and expressed deep concern over its serious socio-economic repercussions on developing countries.

## Abbasi pays tribute for successful operation against terrorist in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi Wednesday paid rich tribute to the security forces for their successful operations against terrorists in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

In a statement, the minister lauded the elimination of 13 militants during operations conducted in Bannu and Bara, calling it a clear reflection of the professionalism and operational capability of the security forces.

He said that the unwavering resolve of the armed forces in the fight against terrorism is a matter of pride for the entire nation.

"The whole nation stands behind its security forces and takes pride in their courage and sacrifices," he added.

Hanif Abbasi reaffirmed that anti-state elements would be confronted with full force on every front, emphasizing that Pakistan remains determined to root out terrorism in all its forms.

He said that the bravery and sacrifices rendered by the security personnel are



unforgettable and will always be remembered with honor.

The minister underscored that the nation remains united and resolute in its commitment to eliminate terrorism completely.

He also assured that the sacrifices made for the peace and stability of the country would not go in vain.

Highlighting national unity, Abbasi said that all state institutions are on the same page in the ongoing fight against terrorism and together, they will ensure lasting peace in the country.

## Thirteen Indian Proxy Terrorists Eliminated in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Operations

City Desk

RAWALPINDI: On 30 March 2026, thirteen khwarij belonging to Indian Proxy Fitna Al Khwarij were killed in two separate engagements in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province.



effectively neutralised.

On reported presence of khwarij, an intelligence based operation was conducted by the Security Forces in general area Bara, Khyber District. During the conduct of operation, own troops effectively engaged khwarijs' location and after an intense fire exchange, ten khwarij were sent to hell.

Another intelligence based operation was conducted by Security forces in Bannu District. In ensuing fire exchange, three khwarij were

Sanitization operations are being conducted to eliminate any other Indian-sponsored kharji found in the area, as the relentless Counter Terrorism campaign under vision "Azm-e-Istehkam" (as approved by the Federal Apex Committee on National Action Plan) by Security Forces and Law Enforcement Agencies of Pakistan will continue at full pace to wipe out the menace of foreign-sponsored and supported terrorism from the country.

## President, PM pay tribute to security forces for successful operations against terrorists in KP

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday paid tribute to the security forces for successful operations against Fitna al Khawarij terrorists in the Khyber and Bannu districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, in which 13 terrorists were killed.



President Zardari stated that operations against terrorists, backed by external elements, must continue to ensure national security and the protection of citizens.

In separate statements, the president and the prime minister expressed their unwavering resolve to completely eradicate terrorism from the country.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said that the security forces were standing like an iron wall against terrorism to safeguard the country.

## PM expresses condolences with Leghari over mother-in-law's demise

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif visited the residence of Federal Minister for Power Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari in Islamabad today, and expressed deep grief and sorrow over the demise of the Federal Minister's mother-in-law.

The Prime Minister prayed for the forgiveness of the departed soul and for patience and strength for the bereaved family.

Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar, and Adviser Rana Sanaulah also accompanied the Prime Minister.

## Pakistan's role for peace to be remembered in history: Dr. Tariq Fazal

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Tariq Fazal Chaudhry said that when history is written, Pakistan's name will be inscribed in golden words for its principled stand for peace, stability, and responsible leadership in a turbulent region.

In a post on X, he said that at a time of rising tensions, Pakistan emerged not as a spectator but as a force for balance and diplomacy.

They coordinated efforts, he added, not only safeguarded Pakistan's interests but also contributed meaningfully to de-escalation, dialogue, and regional harmony. "This is the Pakistan the world witnesses today — a nation that stands firm, acts wisely, and leads with responsibility," he said.

He said the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz

# PM Rathore chairs EPA meeting, urges climate action and plastic ban

**Bureau Report**

MUZAFFARABAD: A high-level meeting of the Environment Protection Agency (EPA), chaired by Prime Minister Faisal Murtaz Rathore, highlighted the urgency of adopting timely, coordinated, and effective measures to tackle the growing climate challenges facing the region.

He stressed the need to prioritize environment-friendly policies, strengthen institutional performance, and ensure the protection of future generations through sustainable development initiatives.

Prime Minister Rathore directed the authorities concerned to finalize the framework for banning use of plastic (polythene) shopping bags at the earliest.

"A comprehensive public awareness campaign with a clear timeline must be launched to inform citizens in advance," he remarked.

To ensure effective enforcement of environmental laws, he said that there was a dire need for strong coordination



between the administration and the Environment Protection Agency. He assured us that the government would provide all necessary resources for environmental protection.

He further directed that immediate steps be taken to prevent smog and reduce air pollution.

On this occasion, the EPA officials gave a comprehensive briefing to the prime minister on its overall performance under the Environment Protec-

tion Act 2000, including its institutional structure, legal framework, and ongoing projects.

The meeting also reviewed progress on the Design Support System, Sustainable Development Fund, State Environmental Quality Standards, and Environmental Guidelines.

Key projects highlighted included solid waste management, hospital waste management, air quality laboratories, vehicle emission testing, water

quality labs, water source protection, and glacier retreat studies.

The meeting was attended by Minister for Kashmir Cause, Languages and Arts, Ms. Nabila Ayub, Principal Secretary Zafar Mahmood, Secretary P&A Aamir Latif, Director General Environment Protection Agency Chaudhry Shaukat, Director Environment Shafiq Abbasi, Deputy Director Environment Ali Saleem, Assistant Director Shrish Munsif and others.

## AJK PM Vows 'Charter of Deliverance' Amid Political Stalemate Breakthrough

**Bureau Report**

MUZAFFARABAD: Prime Minister Azad Kashmir Faisal Murtaz Rathore has said that the PPP government has successfully broken the political stalemate and was effectively addressing the region's pressing concerns. He expressed these views while addressing the oath-taking ceremony of the newly elected office bearers of the Central Press Club Muzaffarabad here today. Referring to the daunting challenges he faced upon taking office, the Prime Minister said a "Charter of Demands" greeted him when he assumed office. He, however, expressed his determination that the government would deliver a "Charter of Deliverance" by the end of its term. He said that the government, despite difficult circumstances, has opened new avenues for public welfare. He noted that the state's situation has seen notable improvement since the PPP government assumed power.



He said the government has maintained a liaison with the public at the grassroots level, listening to and addressing their concerns. "When the voice of the people is heard, there is no need for protest," he remarked.

## AJK Election Commission Seeks Legislation for Separate Non-Muslim Voter Lists

**Bureau Report**

MUZAFFARABAD: A press release issued by the Spokesperson/Secretary Azad Jammu and Kashmir Election Commission said that in the meeting of representatives of political parties held on March 28, 2026, some political representatives demanded the preparation of a separate list of non-Muslims/Qadianis in the electoral lists. Since this matter is related to legislation, the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Election Commission has moved the government for legislation in this regard. Implementation of this demand can be possible only after legislation. In response to the increase in the time for preparation of electoral rolls by the political representatives in the meeting, the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Election Commission has increased the schedule for preparation of electoral rolls of refugees residing in Pakistan and Azad Kashmir by another 05 days. Thus, now the registration of votes in the electoral rolls will continue from 24 March 2026 to 07 April 2026.



## AJK Food Authority Refutes Social Media Smear Campaign, Cites Functional Mobile Lab Success

**Bureau Report**

MUZAFFARABAD: The spokesperson of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Food Authority, while strongly denying the continuous baseless and untrue negative propaganda by some elements regarding the Food Authority on social media, has clarified that the establishment of a mobile food testing lab for the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Food Authority has been implemented on the pattern of the food authorities of the four provinces and Islamabad.

While the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Food Authority often sends the same samples to PCSIR Lahore after on-spot testing, their results were found to be similar. The Azad Jammu and Kashmir Food Authority was established a few years ago. And the mobile food testing laboratories have been functional for about 14 months. After this period, till date, the Food Authority has registered 11689 food business operators, fines of Rs. 21,295,789 were imposed on the sale of substandard items. In addition, food items worth crores of rupees were destroyed.

## Supreme Court Summons Public Health Secretary Over Delayed Certificate Verification

**Bureau Report**

MUZAFFARABAD: The Supreme Court has ordered the Secretary Public Health of the Azad government to appear in person in the contempt of court proceedings on April 6. After the appointments to the vacant posts of the Health Department in Hattian Bala, the affected candidates had challenged the certificates of those appointed, for which the Supreme Court had given two months for verification, but despite the passage of three months, it has not been implemented, on which action has been initiated.

The Honorable Judge of the Supreme Court, Justice Khalid Rashid, while hearing Shamim Akhtar's contempt of court petition, has issued a show cause notice to Brigadier Aamir Tipu, summoning him in person on Monday, 06/04/2026. Young lawyer Hammad Mushtaq Janjua Advocate High Court followed the case on behalf of the petitioner Shamim Akhtar, while the legal advisor appeared on behalf of the Health Department.

## DSP Rahim Butt says, PHP Ensures Round-the-Clock Highway Safety in TT Singh

**Zafar Chishti**

TOBA TEK SINGH: DSP Punjab Highway Patrol (PHP)Toba Tek Singh Asif Rahim Butt has stated that effective and continuous patrolling is being carried out on highways to prevent crime and ensure the protection of citizens' lives and property. He said that providing a safe environment for travelers on highways is the department's top priority. He added that patrolling teams remain active day and night, closely monitoring suspicious individuals and vehicles. Checking processes have also been further tightened through checkpoints at different locations to effectively deal with any untoward incident in a timely manner. The DSP further stated that indiscriminate action against criminal elements is ongoing and there is no place for lawbreakers on highways. DSP Asif Rahim Butt said that the Highway Patrol Police are not only playing a key role in crime prevention but are also providing timely assistance and guidance to travelers. In case of any emergency, accident or vehicle breakdown, citizens can contact the helpline, where immediate response is ensured. He appealed to the public to follow traffic rules during travel, avoid unnecessary over-speeding and promptly report any suspicious activity to the relevant authorities to help ensure a safe and peaceful society.

## Anti-Encroachment operation

ISLAMABAD: Residents are sitting near belongings after demolished their houses during an Anti-Encroachment operation at Said Pur Village, in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online

## Middle-class faces growing hardships: Chaudhry Inam

**City Desk**

RAWALPINDI: Political and social leader Chaudhry Inam Zafar stated that although there has been no increase in petroleum prices, the rising costs of food items and local transport fares have made life increasingly difficult for ordinary citizens. He emphasized that the government must take serious and practical measures to provide relief to the public, especially

since the middle class is already under severe pressure.

In his important statement, Chaudhry Inam Zafar highlighted that prices of basic necessities are increasing daily and that hoarding of food items continues, allowing profiteers to exploit the difficult situation for higher gains. Local transport operators have also raised fares, further burdening the public. He noted that the current wave of inflation is severely affecting

everyday life and poses a significant challenge for the government to adopt an effective strategy to provide immediate relief. Chaudhry Inam Zafar stressed that if prompt measures are not taken, the rising inflation will make life even more difficult for ordinary citizens. He called on the government to improve its performance, control market prices of essential commodities, and prevent further increases in local transport fares so that the public



can be relieved from the heavy burden of inflation.

## Alleged Robber Killed During Resistance, Family Protests Claiming Innocence

**Abdul Ghafoor Sarohi**

HYDERABAD: An alleged robber was killed during a robbery attempt near Tando Jam within the jurisdiction of Hoshi Police Station, sparking protests by the deceased's family, who claimed he was innocent and staged a sit-in outside Tando Jam Police Station with the body.

According to police, the incident occurred near Hoshi Mor on Tando Muhammad Khan Road. The complainant stated in the FIR that he, along with his relative Abdullah Brohi, was traveling on a motorcycle to their village when two armed men intercepted them and attempted to rob them. Upon resistance, an exchange of fire took place. During the



firing, one of the suspects was injured, allegedly by his accomplice's weapon, while the other managed to escape. Police

said the suspect, identified as Farhan Khaskheli, later died at the hospital. Another suspect, Mubashir Rajput, a resident of

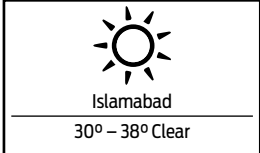
Bismillah Town Hyderabad, was arrested and handed over to the police. Weapons and a 125cc motorcycle were also recovered

from the suspects.

However, the deceased's family rejected the police version, claiming that Farhan Khaskheli was innocent and worked as a hand pump mechanic. They alleged that members of the Brohi community were involved in his killing and that the incident was being falsely portrayed as a robbery.

The family further accused the police of siding with influential individuals and questioned whether civilians have the right to shoot someone in public.

In protest, the family staged a sit-in outside Tando Jam Police Station for about an hour, demanding a transparent investigation and the arrest of those responsible. Police have registered a case and stated that further investigation is underway.



**SERVICES**

**Namaz Timings**

Fajr ..... 4:31 am  
Zohr ..... 12:12 pm  
Asr ..... 4:41 pm  
Maghrib ..... 6:28 pm  
Isha ..... 7:53 pm

**EMERGENCY**

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

**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

**PSCA's Virtual Blood Bank Revolutionizes Emergency Response with Faster, Life-Saving Blood Access**

**Bureau Report**

LAHORE: Punjab Safe Cities Authority's Virtual Blood Bank has once again demonstrated its effectiveness by ensuring timely assistance during critical medical emergency situation, saving precious life of a 4-year-old child.

According to details, a child named Saddam Hussain, belonging to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and suffering from blood cancer, was in dire need of O+ blood group admitted at Shaukat Khanum Hospital, Lahore. His father contacted Emergency Helpline-15 for seeking immediate assistance for blood arrangement.

According to PSCA's spokesperson, Safe City's officer responded swiftly and utilized Virtual Blood Bank database to locate a suitable donor without delay. PSCA's officer coordinated conference call as a result of which immediate contact was established between the donor and the affected family. The donor promptly reached the hospital and donated blood, ensuring timely transfusion and ultimately saving innocent child's precious life.

The spokesperson further stated that the family expressed heartfelt gratitude to the Safe City team for their prompt and effective response. Citizens are encouraged to seek assistance in any medical emergency by calling Emergency Helpline-15 and pressing 4 for immediate support. The spokesperson added that Safe City's Virtual Blood Bank remains operational and committed 24/7 to serving the citizens and safeguarding precious human lives through timely and efficient response.

# UMT Seminar Illuminates Guiding Light of Hazrat Khadija's (RA) Life for Women

**Bureau Report**

LAHORE: The University of Management and Technology (UMT), through Women Institute of Learning and Leadership (WILL), organized a special seminar highlighting different aspects of the blessed life of Hazrat Khadija (RA). The event witnessed enthusiastic participation from female students and women belonging to diverse professional backgrounds.

The seminar was attended by the Chairperson Women Institute of Learning and Leadership Dr. Naushaba Hasan Murad, Head of Public Information Wing Rescue 1122 Punjab Deeba Shahnaz Akhtar, Regional Director HR PTCL Pakistan Sadaf Cheema, renowned scholar Khanum Tayyaba Naqvi, educationist Nighat Hashmi and other distinguished speakers.

In her address, Dr. Naushaba Hasan Murad stated that the life of Hazrat

Khadija (RA) stands as a shining example of sacrifice, loyalty, patience and perseverance, offering valuable guidance for the character development of women. She highlighted that Hazrat Khadija (RA) demonstrated extraordinary courage and strength in the face of life's challenges, making her life a guiding light for women for all times.

Speaking on the occasion, Sadaf Cheema said that despite being a wealthy and highly respected businesswoman, Hazrat Khadija (RA) remained a symbol of humility and grace.

Nighat Hashmi and Khanum Tayyaba Naqvi also spoke about various dimensions of Hazrat Khadija's (RA) life, describing her as a complete role model for women. They emphasized that the life and legacy of Hazrat Khadija (RA) should inspire women in contemporary society.

On the occasion, Dr. Naushaba Hasan Murad distributed souvenirs among the distinguished guests.



## Beautiful view

ISLAMABAD: A view of white clouds behind the globe on Constitution Avenue, in the Federal Capital.

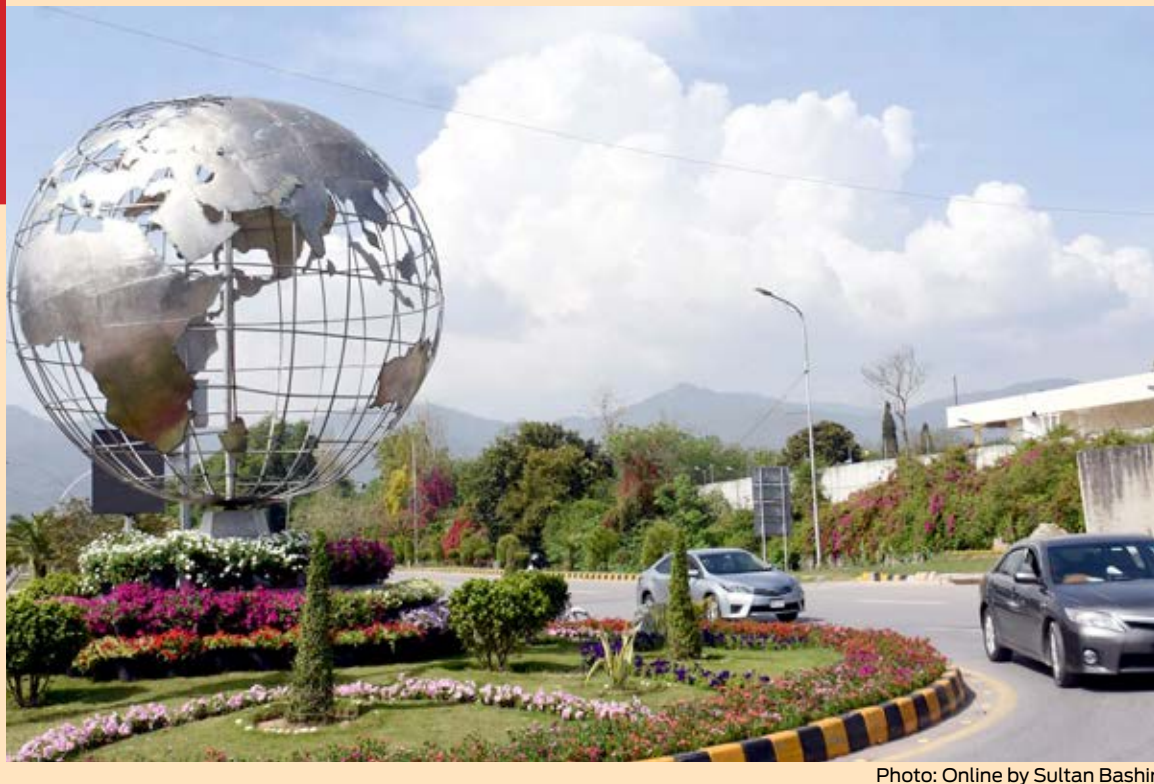


Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

## Visit of UK Director General Political to Pakistan

**News Desk**

ISLAMABAD: Ed Llewellyn CVO OBE, the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's Director General Political, visited Islamabad on 1 April for a series of senior-level engagements. He reaffirmed the UK's commitment to promoting peace and stability in the region.

During his visit, the Director General welcomed Pakistani efforts to de-escalate tensions in the Middle East and re-iterated the UK's call for a cessation in attacks against civilian infrastructure. He also recognised the impact of terrorism on Pakistan's people, and the sacrifices made by its law enforcement and security forces in seeking to combat it. He re-affirmed that the UK stood shoulder-to-shoulder with Pakistan in the fight against terrorism and



emphasised our commitment to deepening our cooperation to this end.

He also underlined the UK's support for Pakistan's long term economic growth and highlighted the importance of continued partnership on

climate resilience, development and people-to-people links.

British Director General Political, Ed Llewellyn CVO OBE, said "This visit highlights the strength and depth of the UK-Pakistan relation-

ship at a time global instability. Our partnership is rooted in shared interests, and continued dialogue is essential as we work together to support regional stability and tackle joint security challenges."

## VC Nishtar Medical University Dr Mahnaz Khakwani visits PET scan



**Kiran Asim**

MULTAN: Vice Chancellor Nishtar Medical University Multan, Prof. Dr. Mehnaz Khakwani, along with Controller Examinations Prof. Azam Khan, visited the PET scan site and Pediatric Medicine Emergency Parking Area.

During the visit, the Vice Chancellor reviewed the ongoing development affairs and facilities and directed the concerned authorities to complete the projects on time so that better facilities can be provided to the patients.

Later, the Vice Chancellor also reviewed the examination process of VIVA / OSPE of Final Year MBBS (Gynaecology) and appreciated the arrangements, transparency and discipline. He directed that the examination system should be continued in an organized and transparent manner so that a fair environment can be provided to the students.

The Vice Chancellor expressed his determination that steps will be taken to improve the educational quality, examination transparency and medical facilities at Nishtar Medical University.

## Rumors About Mosque Plot in Muhammadi Ground Declared Baseless; Facts Emerge



**Zain Khan Malghani**

MULTAN: Social media messages circulating over the past month, claiming that the land allocated for a Jamia Mosque in Muhammadi Ground had been revoked, have been declared misleading and unfounded by credible sources and concerned stakeholders.

According to verified information, the plot designated for the mosque in C Block, opposite Nishat School in New Shah Shams Colony, remains intact and officially allocated by the Multan Development Authority (MDA). Construction plans are already underway, as prominent industrialist and philanthropist Chaudhry Zulfiqar Ali Anjum has formally submitted an application to the MDA and the Deputy Commissioner Multan for approval.

Praising Chaudhry Zulfiqar Ali Anjum, Mufti Umar Farooq described him as a benefactor of the region, noting that he provides employment to thousands and has ensured the supply of free RO water in New Shah Shams Colony as part of his welfare initiatives. He further stated that Anjum possesses the capability to efficiently manage not only the construction but also future administrative responsibilities of the mosque, including utility payments and security arrangements.

Meanwhile, Qari Hanif Jalandhri, the administrator of Jamia Khair-ul-Madaris, has appealed to the district administration to allocate the plot on merit to the Ahl-e-Sunnat Deoband school of thought.

Mufti Muhammad Umar Farooq urged the district administration of Multan to convene an immediate meeting and issue a No Objection Certificate (NOC) for the mosque's construction, so that negative propaganda can be countered and religious as well as social harmony in the area can be strengthened.

## AKU Surgical Expo 2026 Showcases Latest Innovations in Surgical Technology

**News Desk**

KARACHI: The AKU Surgical Expo 2026, currently underway at Aga Khan University (AKU), is drawing strong interest from clinicians, trainees, and healthcare professionals as it showcases the latest advancements in surgical instruments, implants, and medical technologies.

Held as part of the 11th AKU Annual Surgical Conference & Expo 2026 (#11AASC), the Expo is taking place on March 31 and April 1 at the Gymnasium, Sports and Rehabilitation Centre, AKU, featuring more than 30 stalls by leading industry partners.

The exhibition floor is offering attendees a unique



opportunity to explore cutting-edge innovations in surgical care, engage directly with manufacturers and distributors, and gain hands-on exposure to new tools and technologies shaping modern operating rooms.

Speaking about the importance of the Expo, Dr. Zia ur Rehman, Conference Chair, highlighted its role in bridging the gap between innovation and clinical practice. "The AKU Surgical Expo provides an important platform for clinicians to directly engage with the latest advancements in surgical technology," said Dr. Zia ur Rehman. "By bringing industry and healthcare professionals together, the Expo enables

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# USA-Iran War: Oil, Deception, and Illusions

The unfolding conflict involving the United States, Israel, and Iran has entered a phase where perception and reality are dangerously misaligned. Publicly, the language of mediation, ceasefire, and diplomacy dominates official statements. Privately and on the battlefield, however, the tempo of war continues to intensify. What appears to be a pause for peace is, in fact, a calculated window—used by all sides to reposition militarily, economically, and strategically for what could become a far more devastating phase of conflict.

At the core of this crisis lies a deep distrust of U. S.-led diplomacy. Iran's skepticism is not theoretical; it is rooted in recent experience. During earlier rounds of negotiations in mid-2025 and again in early 2026, diplomatic engagement coincided with military escalations. To Tehran, this pattern suggests that negotiations are being used as a tactical cover—buying time for force buildup rather than genuinely seeking peace. This perception has shaped Iran's current posture: resistant, cautious, and unwilling to accept any framework that resembles surrender.

The United States, under Donald J. Trump, has reportedly advanced a comprehensive mediation framework—often described as a 15-point proposal. These demands include dismantling Iran's nuclear facilities, surrendering enriched uranium stockpiles, halting its ballistic missile program, ending support for regional allies such as Hezbollah and other groups, accepting intrusive international inspections, and aligning its regional policies with U. S. and Israeli security interests. Additional expecta-

tations reportedly extend to granting oversight of critical waterways such as the Strait of Hormuz and contributing toward war-related compensation.

From Iran's perspective, these are not negotiation points but conditions of capitulation. Accepting even a fraction would dismantle its deterrence capability, undermine sovereignty, and expose it to future vulnerabilities. Consequently, Iran has rejected these proposals outright and presented its own counter-framework: guarantees against future attacks, recognition of its right under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to pursue peaceful nuclear enrichment under International Atomic Energy Agency supervision, preservation of its ballistic missile program, refusal to abandon regional alliances, and compensation for war damages.

This stark divergence has rendered the mediation process effectively a non-starter. Countries such as Pakistan, Oman, Turkey, and Egypt have attempted to bridge the gap, but their efforts are constrained by the fundamental incompatibility of the positions.

Meanwhile, Israel has used the current operational window to intensify its campaign against Iranian targets. Its objective appears clear: degrade Iran's military infrastructure, energy facilities, and command networks as much as possible before any ceasefire takes hold. Iran, in response, has escalated its missile and drone operations with increasing effectiveness. Despite Israel's advanced defense systems—Iron Dome, David's

Sling, and Arrow—there have been instances where Iranian projectiles have penetrated these layers, causing damage in key urban and industrial areas.

The asymmetry of geography and scale is critical here. Israel's small territorial footprint makes it particularly vulnerable to sustained bombardment. In contrast, Iran's vast size, large population of approximately 85–90 million, and extensive military reserves—including the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and hundreds of thousands of trained personnel—position it for prolonged resistance. Historical precedents reinforce this reality: even non-state actors such as Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon have withstood sustained campaigns. A state-level adversary like Iran presents a far more complex challenge.

For the United States, the situation is increasingly precarious. With an estimated 40,000 to 50,000 troops deployed across the Middle East, supported by carrier strike groups and amphibious forces, the logistical burden is immense. These forces depend on regional bases and supply lines for fuel, food, and operational continuity. Iran has explicitly warned that any entity supporting these supply chains could become a target, raising concerns about the sustainability of prolonged deployment.

The economic dimension of the war is equally significant—and perhaps even more consequential. The partial disruption of the Strait of Hormuz, through which roughly 20% of global oil supply

flows, has triggered volatility in energy markets. Oil prices have surged, driving inflation across major economies. In the United States, rising gasoline prices are translating into higher living costs, increased transportation expenses, and broader economic anxiety.

For Middle Eastern economies, the impact is even more severe. Countries that rely heavily on oil exports are facing declining revenues due to disrupted production, damaged infrastructure, and soaring shipping insurance costs. This financial strain is directly affecting their ability to honor previously pledged investments in the United States—commitments that reportedly approached \$3 trillion. These investments, once seen as pillars of economic partnership, are now under threat as regional governments prioritize domestic stability over external commitments.

This shift has broader implications. The erosion of financial flows from the Gulf to the United States weakens a key channel of economic interdependence. At the same time, trust in U. S. security guarantees is diminishing. Many regional actors now question whether U. S. military presence serves their interests or primarily protects Israel. This perception is reshaping alliances and recalibrating geopolitical alignments.

At the same time, Iran appears prepared for a long war. Its strategy is not to seek immediate ceasefire but to endure, escalate selectively, and leverage its geographic and strategic advantages. By threatening key chokepoints and maintaining pressure on adversaries, Iran is positioning itself as a resilient actor capable of imposing significant costs.

*Continued on Page 7*



**Qamar Bashir**

## Digitizing Peaks: The key to unlocking Pakistan's tourism goldmine

As spring winds descend from the snow-clad mighty Tirich Mir, a renewed sense of excitement and thrill ripples amid hide and seek between sunshine and clouds over the remote valleys of Chitral.

Towering at 7,708 meters, the highest peak of Trichmir outside Gilgit-Baltistan stands as both a natural marvel and an untapped economic opportunity that experts said can only be fully realized through digital transformation.

With blossoms carpeting the valleys and birds heralding the change of season, Tirichmir offers an irresistible draw for mountaineers and adventure seekers.

Despite its grandeur and majesty, the peak remains largely under-promoted on global platforms, limiting its potential to contribute meaningfully to Pakistan's tourism economy.

First summited in 1950 by a Norwegian expedition, Tirichmir has long been cloaked in mystique—its snow-clad ridges, dense pine forests, and cascading waterfalls forming a landscape that rivals some of the world's most celebrated mountains destinations.

Now, it is at the center of a renewed promotion push by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA) to position the province as a global hub for mountaineering and adventure tourism.

This vision began taking tangible shape on July 13, 2025, when the base camp of Tirichmir welcomed its first group of national and international trekkers under an organized initiative.

For many locals, the event symbolized more than tourism but it marked the revival of livelihoods, preservation of culture, and renewed hope for economic uplift through mountains wealth.

According to General Manager KP Tourism and Culture Authority (KPTCA) Muhammad Ali Syed, a series of climbing events is being planned at Trichmir from July through August in phases, ensuring active participation of local guides and porters so that economic benefits reach grassroots communities.

Data from the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) underscored this disparity and uninclusive plans. Pakistan's tourism sector contributed only \$15 billion to the economy in 2019 before declining to \$11.6 billion in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. In contrast, countries like China generated over \$800 billion from tourism in 2022, highlighting the gap in strategy and execution.

To bridge this significant divide, KPCTA is planning transformative projects, including a 16-kilometer Madaklasht-Kumrat cable car system, expected to be among the highest in the world.

With an estimated cost of \$200 million, the project aims to improve accessibility, reduce travel time, and attract over a million visitors annually.



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

## Dear Tulsi Gabbard! The Real Threat is from India, Not Pakistan

The March 18, 2026 testimony of Tulsi Gabbard before the Senate Intelligence Committee heightened tensions by claiming the United States could face a potential threat from Pakistani nuclear missiles, placing Pakistan alongside Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran as states developing systems capable of reaching the US and warning its program might include ICBMs, contributing to a projected global arsenal exceeding 16,000 missiles by 2035. This view is challenged as a misinterpretation that ignores geography, missile range realities, and Pakistan's defensive posture, arguing instead that India's nuclear ambitions are the more immediate concern; a strike from South Asia to the US would require 10,000–13,000 km range, while Pakistan's longest-range Shaheen-III reaches about 2,750 km and is designed to cover India, with other systems like Shaheen-II, Ghauri, Shaheen-I, Abdali, Babur, and Ra'ad having even shorter regional ranges, whereas India's Agni-V approaches intercontinental range and the under-development Agni-VI is estimated at 6,000–12,000 km with MIRV capability, indicating a program designed to extend beyond the region.

Pakistan's strategic doctrine reinforces this regional focus, with figures like Jalil Abbas Jilani rejecting claims that it can target the US and emphasizing its India-centric deterrence policy, a stance echoed by the Foreign Office and supported by analysts such as Tughlur Yamin and Rabia Akhtar, who argue that US assessments rely on worst-case speculation and overlook India's longer-range capabilities; Pakistan's nuclear forces are structured to deter India due to geographic vulnerability and

would gain nothing from targeting the US. In contrast, India's expanding arsenal, including Agni-V, Agni-VI, and submarine-launched systems like the K-5 deployed on Arihant-class submarines, is portrayed as enabling global reach and second-strike capability, raising broader security concerns and suggesting a shift beyond minimum deterrence, while Pakistan's record of restraint, crisis management, and willingness to de-escalate—praised by Donald Trump in relation to the May 2025 conflict—contrasts with India's more assertive posture and comparatively strained relations with the United States.

Throughout 2025 and into 2026, Pakistan has successfully re-established itself in Washington as an indispensable and reliable partner through strategic prudence. This new phase of cooperation encompasses multiple dimensions: counterterrorism cooperation has been restored, a major trade agreement reducing tariffs between the two nations was finalized in July 2025, and the United States has committed to jointly developing Pakistan's oil reserves. In a significant military-to-military development, Pakistan received US approval for the upgrade of its F-16 aircraft, a \$686 million defense package that ensures the modernization of critical systems and enhances electronic warfare capabilities, signaling a deep trust in Pakistan's role as a security partner. The diplomatic synchronization between Washington and Islamabad has reached unprecedented levels, with Field Marshal Asim Munir making multiple visits to the United States, including a private lunch with President Trump at the White House—an honor rarely extended to a foreign military chief who is not also a head of state. This rapprochement

is built on shared interests, particularly regional stability, and stands as a testament to the fact that the current US administration recognizes the value of Pakistan's role as a mediator and a force for stability. Pakistan's strategic importance has only grown, as evidenced by its role in brokering behind-the-scenes diplomacy between the US and Iran, leveraging its unique geographical and political position to reduce tensions in the Middle East. In this context, the allegations made by Tulsi Gabbard appear not only divorced from strategic reality but dangerously misaligned with the broader objectives of the US administration she serves, which has been actively cultivating the very partnership her words threaten to undermine.

The narrative put forward by Tulsi Gabbard regarding a Pakistani missile threat to the United States is a construct built on a foundation of flawed assumptions, ignored data, and a willful disregard for the established strategic doctrines of the nations involved. The facts are irrefutable: Pakistan's missile systems, with a maximum range of 2,750 kilometers, are defensive in nature and calibrated solely to deter its existential adversary, India. Meanwhile, India is actively developing and deploying a fleet of intercontinental ballistic missiles like the Agni-VI, with ranges extending up to 12,000 kilometers, alongside a sophisticated naval nuclear triad designed for global power projection. The argument that Pakistan's short-range arsenal poses a threat to the US mainland defies the basic laws of physics and geography, while the suggestion that India's rapidly expanding ICBM program is somehow a regional or benign development is a dangerous delusion. Pakistan's history is one of restraint; it has never initiated a conflict and has repeatedly demonstrated its maturity in de-escalating crises—a fact acknowledged and appreciated by President Trump and the international community.



**Abdul Basit Alvi**

## Degrees in Doubt: PMDC Alert Sparks Row with HEC, Universities Cry Foul

The ongoing conflict between Times University Multan and Pakistan Medical and Dental Council, along with nine other universities, raises a fundamental question: is this institution shaping students' futures or placing them in jeopardy? The controversy intensified when PMDC issued a "Doctors Alert," expressing concerns about certain academic programs. This alert did not only target Times University but also nine other institutions, creating an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty across the academic landscape. Students and parents are now left wondering: which institution should they trust, and whose decision should be considered final?

The stance of Times University Multan is clear and firm. According to the institution, the programs under question are duly approved by the Higher Education Commission Pakistan. This raises an important issue: if a program is recognized by the country's top higher education regulatory body, on what grounds can it be declared invalid? Can one regulatory authority intervene in the jurisdiction of another?

From a legal and administrative perspective, PMDC's mandate is primarily limited to medical and dental education specifically clinical programs such as MBBS and BDS. In contrast, disciplines like Business Administration, Public Health Management, and other non-clinical fields generally fall under the juris-

dition of the Higher Education Commission. This distinction forms the core argument of Times University.

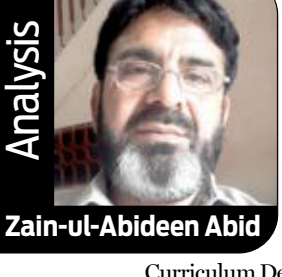
PMDC's reference to Sections 25 and 34 in issuing the alert has also drawn criticism. Experts argue that these provisions mainly apply to medical practice and clinical qualifications, not to every degree a doctor might pursue in other fields. For instance, if an MBBS doctor wishes to pursue an MBA or a Master's in Health Management, must they necessarily choose an institution approved by PMDC?

Logically, the answer appears to be no, as such programs fall outside clinical practice and belong to administrative or research domains.

A letter had already been issued prior to the "Doctor's Alert" dated 16 March 2026, titled "Reaffirmation of HEC's Mandate Regarding National Qualification Framework Curriculum Development, Faculty Standards, and Program & Institutional Performance Evaluation Standards in Higher Education." This communication clearly establishes that the Higher Education Commission (HEC) is the sole regulatory authority in matters concerning higher education in Pakistan.

It is pertinent to highlight an important and surprising fact: a significant number of universities and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across the country are offering MS, M. Phil., and PhD programmes in Public Health after duly obtaining No Objection Certificates (NOCs) from the Higher Education Commission, Islamabad. The details of these approved programmes are publicly available on the official

*Continued on Page 7*



**Zain-ul-Abideen Abid**

# Condolence Book opened in Islamabad following death of former Algerian President Liamine Zeroual

**Naveed Ahmed Khan**

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of has announced the opening of a condolence book following the demise of former President, who passed away on Sunday, March 29, 2026.

In an official statement, the embassy expressed deep sorrow over the passing of the former head of state, who served as President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria from 1994 to 1999.

The condolence book will be open at the embassy premises (House No. 107, Street No. 9, Sector E-7, Islamabad) on Wednesday, April 1, and Thursday, April 2, 2026. Timings will be from 10:00am to 12:00pm and 2:00pm to 4:00pm on both days.

Born on July 3, 1941, in Batna, Liamine Zeroual was a distinguished military and political figure. He joined the National Liberation Army in 1957



during Algeria's War of Independence and later held several key leadership positions in the People's National Army following independence. He also received military training in the former Soviet Union and at the French War College.

During his military career, Zeroual served as commander of the Cherchell Military Academy and led multiple military regions. He rose to the rank of Major General before resigning from military service in 1989.

Transitioning into public service, he

was appointed Algeria's ambassador to Romania from 1990 to 1991, and later served as Minister of National Defense in 1993. He assumed the presidency on January 31, 1994, and was elected President in November 1995, serving until April 1999.

Zeroual led Algeria during the turbulent "Black Decade," a period marked by intense internal conflict. He is widely credited with introducing the Civil Concord Law, a reconciliation initiative aimed at restoring peace and stability in the country.

He was also noted for his commitment to democratic principles, stepping down from office and facilitating a peaceful transfer of power to his successor, following early presidential elections. Zeroual is remembered as a statesman who played a pivotal role in stabilizing Algeria during a critical period in its history.

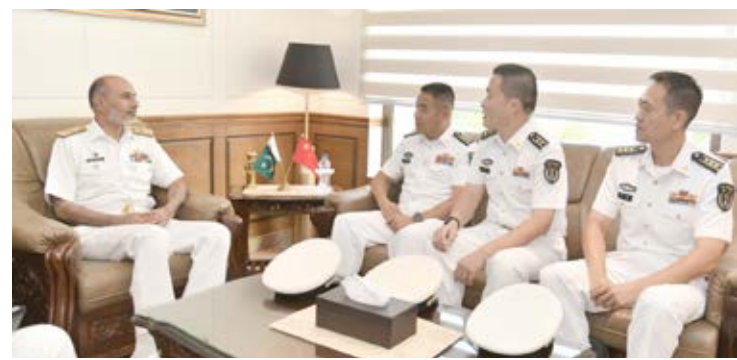
## New Chinese Consul General meets Punjab Officials to Boost Agri Cooperation



**Abdul Majid**

FAISALABAD: The newly appointed Consul General of China in Lahore, Sun Yan, visited the Agriculture House. On this occasion, an important meeting was held with Minister for Agriculture and Livestock Punjab Syed Ashiq Hussain Kirmani, Secretary Agriculture Punjab Iftikhar Ali Sahu and Secretary Livestock Ahmed Aziz Tarar. The meeting was attended by Director General Agriculture Information Punjab Naveed Ismat Kahlon and officers of other relevant departments. On this occasion, Minister for Agriculture and Livestock Punjab Syed Ashiq Hussain Kirmani said that under the leadership of the Chief Minister Punjab, several steps are being implemented to increase agricultural production. He further said that interest-free loan facility of more than Rs 200 billion is being provided to 800,000 farmers through Kisan Card, and the purchase of agricultural inputs through Kisan Card is having a positive impact on the per acre production of crops. The current government has spent Rs 66 billion to promote mechanization in the agricultural sector. In addition, 4 agri-malls are functional while 10 agri-malls are under construction under one-stop solution for farmers. In addition, 10,000 super seeders are being provided on subsidy to control smog. Syed Ashiq Hussain Kirmani said that China's cooperation is required to remove obstacles to frozen meat export. 8 compartments have been established for animals protected from foot-and-mouth disease in livestock. He said that the Agriculture Transformation Plan introduced on the instructions of the Chief Minister Punjab is receiving great appreciation from the farmers. On this occasion, Secretary Agriculture Punjab Iftikhar Ali Sahu said that the Chief Minister Punjab inspected the manufacturing plants of agricultural machinery during his visit to China. In addition, a high-level delegation of the Agriculture Department led by the Minister of Agriculture Punjab successfully visited China in October 2025. 7 important MoUs were signed during the visit and all of them are being implemented. The cooperation of the Consulate General Lahore is required for further acceleration. Iftikhar Ali Sahu said that special cooperation from China is required for cotton seed research and germplasm. During the meeting, Chinese Consul General Sun Yan said that Chinese experts will provide technical support to deal with the problems faced by the agricultural sector due to climate change, and China will fully cooperate with the Punjab government to promote smart agriculture. He added that cooperation with the agricultural sector of Punjab is among my priorities. Secretary Livestock and Dairy Development Punjab Ahmed Aziz Tarar also informed about the details of the departmental activities.

# Pak-China Joint Naval Exercise Sea Guardian IV Culminates at Karachi



**Bureau Report**

KARACHI: Exercise SEA GUARDIAN IV, conducted from 25 Mar to 1 Apr 2026 between Pakistan Navy and PLA (N), aimed to enhance interoperability and maritime cooperation between the two navies. The exercise comprised two phases, including a five-day port visit to Karachi and a two-day sea phase in the North Arabian Sea.

PLA (N) Ship DAQING was

accorded a warm welcome by PNS TAIMUR upon arrival for Exercise SEA GUARDIAN IV. The exercise featured various bilateral activities, including exchange visits onboard fleet units, orientation visits to naval installations, and professional discussions focusing on contemporary maritime challenges. A maiden Young Officers Seminar was also conducted, along with preparations for the sea phase.

Upon culmination of the port visit, PN and PLA (N) ships participated in



the sea phase of the exercise. Major exercises conducted during the sea phase included Air Defence Exercises encompassing tactics to counter multi-domain swarm attacks, exercises with a Pakistan Navy submarine, a conventional War at Sea exercise and Live Gunnery Firing. These activities enhanced interoperability between

the two navies at both operational and tactical levels.

The successful culmination of Exercise SEA GUARDIAN IV was followed by a PN-PLA (N) Coordinated Patrol in the Arabian Sea, underscoring the commitment and resolve of both navies towards maritime security and stability in the region.

## Experts discuss AI's role in transforming social responsibility

RIYADH: Experts in social development and artificial intelligence explored the rapid evolution of social responsibility amid the growing influence of data and AI. They emphasized the need to adopt innovative, data-driven models and AI-powered decision-making to enhance the efficiency of initiatives and strengthen their long-term social impact.

These discussions took place during the Saudi Social Responsibility Day Forum, held yesterday, with the participation of more than 200 stakeholders from universities and government entities.

The forum, which coincided with the Year of Artificial Intelligence 2026, featured four main sessions addressing key themes, including the evolving concept of social responsibility in the data era, the development of community initiatives in the Kingdom, and the role of data in analyzing societal needs and designing impactful programs.

# Pakistan, Bangladesh Reaffirm Commitment to Stronger Bilateral Ties at Independence Day Reception in Islamabad

**Naveed Ahmed Khan**

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain on Tuesday congratulated the government and people of Bangladesh on the occasion of their Independence and National Day, reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to strengthening bilateral relations.

He was addressing a reception held to mark the 55th anniversary of Bangladesh's Independence and National Day, celebrated in the federal capital with enthusiasm and diplomatic goodwill. The event was hosted by the Bangladesh High Commission at the Serena Hotel Islamabad.

Bangladesh High Commissioner to Pakistan Md. Iqbal Hossain Khan, along with mission officials, warmly received the guests.

The ceremony was attended by a wide range of dignitaries, including the Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, federal ministers, the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, senators, members of national and provincial assemblies, ambassadors, high commissioners, representatives of the United Nations and other international organisations, as well as senior civil and military officials,



business leaders, journalists, civil society members, media personalities and members of the Bangladeshi diaspora.

The programme commenced with the national anthems of Pakistan and Bangladesh.

In his remarks, Rana Tanveer Hussain lauded Bangladesh's significant socio-economic progress and stressed the importance of further enhancing cooperation between the two countries for mutual benefit.

In his welcome address, High Commissioner Md. Iqbal Hossain Khan highlighted the shared aspirations of both nations to deepen bilateral ties and promote regional cooperation in South Asia. He emphasized Bangladesh's commitment to expanding collaboration with Pakistan in areas such as trade, direct air and maritime connectivity, education, tourism, culture, industry, healthcare, agriculture and energy.

Referring to his coun-

try's foreign policy direction, he noted that the government, under the leadership of Tarique Rahman, is focused on advancing development and safeguarding national interests through stronger engagement with friendly countries.

He also sought Pakistan's support for Bangladesh's candidate, Foreign Minister Dr Khalilur Rahman, for the presidency of the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly.

**Photo by Sultan Bashir**

**Bull & Bears**  
PSX 100-Share  
Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index		
Current	Prev. Close	
155,511.56	148,743.31	
Day's High	Day's Low	
157,347.17	151,262.76	
Index Value	Change	
38,476,463,715	+6768.25	
Percentage	Time	
+4.55%	1 Apr, 2026 4:30 pm	
Europe: FTSE 100 Index		
Index Value	Change	
10,364.79	+188.34	
Percentage	Time	
+1.85%	1 Apr, 4:35 pm GMT	
USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average		
Index Value	Change	
46,793.97	+452.46	
Percentage	Time	
+0.98%	1 Apr, 1:21 pm GMT-4	
Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average		
Index Value	Change	
53,739.68	+2,675.96	
Percentage	Time	
+5.24%	1 Apr, 3:45 pm GMT+9	
Open Market Forex Rates		
Australian Dollar	195.05	198.10
Australian Dollar	189.97	197
Bahrain Dinar	732	743.15
Canadian Dollar	198.38	204.15
China Yuan	36.65	37.6
Danish Krone	43.25	43.65
Euro	322.13	329.51
Hong Kong Dollar	35.01	36.01
Indian Rupee	2.05	2.31
Japanese Yen	1.7210	1.8199
Kuwaiti Dinar	889.40	901.45
Malaysian Ringgit	65.25	66.45
New Zealand \$	157.75	164.57
Norwegians Krone	27.65	27.95
Omani Riyal	719.15	734.1
Qatari Riyal	73.33	74.3
Saudi Riyal	74.30	75.45
Singapore Dollar	213.87	221.83
Swedish Korona	30.20	30.50
Swiss Franc	355	358.85
Thai Bhat	8	8.15
U.A.E Dirham	75.97	77.27
UK Pound Sterling	370.17	377.47
US Dollar	279	280.15

# PM's Committee on SECP discusses reforms to strengthen enforcement and reduce case backlog

**Commerce Desk**

ISLAMABAD: A high-level meeting of the Prime Minister's Committee on strengthening the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) was held under the chairmanship of Federal Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar to discuss measures for improving enforcement, reducing litigation backlog, and enhancing investor protection.

The meeting was held in pursuance of the committee constituted by the Prime Minister to review and propose reforms for strengthening SECP and improving its regulatory effectiveness.

The Committee, constituted to review measures for strengthening SECP, comprises the Federal Minister for Law and Justice as Chair, along with the Cabinet Secretary, Secretary Finance, Secretary Law and Justice, Chairman of Pakistan (CCP),



Chairman SECP, Dr. Kabir Ahmed Sidhu, informed the meeting that over 2,000 cases related to SECP are currently pending in courts,

leading to delays in enforcement and low recovery of penalties despite significant recoverable amounts. He highlighted the need for stronger enforcement powers and proposed the establishment of dedicated tribunals for speedy disposal of cases. He also suggested a shift towards a civil enforcement regime, particularly for market-related violations, in line with international best practices.

It was agreed that SECP's enforcement powers need to be strengthened, including through legislative amendments and decriminalization of certain offences to enable effective civil penalties.

The Minister directed SECP to present a comprehensive reform roadmap in the next meeting, including proposals on tribunal structure, recovery mechanisms, legal amendments, and measures to improve internal efficiency and enforcement.

## Called on

ISLAMABAD: Group CEO Of multinational telecommunication and digital company VEON Mr. Kaan Terzioglu called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in on Wednesday.



Photo: PID

## Pakistan Lists of First PKR-Denominated Green Bond on PSX

**Commerce Desk**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan today marked a milestone in its sustainable finance landscape with the listing of the country's first PKR-denominated Green Bond on the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX). Developed with technical assistance from the UK Government's MOBILIST programme, the Parwaaz Financial Services Limited (PFSL) Green Bond is designed to mobilise private capital for climate-aligned investments across renewable energy, clean agriculture, and green transportation.

The listing was commemorated at a Gong Ceremony in Islamabad, bringing together senior representatives from the Ministry of Finance (MoF), Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination (MoCC&EC), Pakistan Stock Exchange Limited (PSX), Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP), Karandaaz Pakistan, Parwaaz Financial Services Limited (PFSL), and the British High Commission.

Speaking at the occasion British High Commissioner to Pakistan, Jane Marriott



CMG OBE, said: "The UK is proud to have helped facilitate the Parwaaz Green Bond. This initiative demonstrates how innovative development finance can support local markets in mobilising private capital for investment in climate action and sustainable development."

Mr Ruhail Muhammad, Chairman of Pakistan Stock Exchange Limited, stated: "The Pakistan Stock Exchange is committed to supporting innovative financial instruments that contribute to sustainable economic growth."

Speaking on behalf of the issuer, Mr Javed Iqbal, CEO of Parwaaz Financial Services Limited, said: "The PFSL Green Bond highlights capital markets' role in supporting sustainable investments."

## CCP Successfully Enforces Order in Deceptive "Ice Cream" Case

**Commerce Desk**

ISLAMABAD: The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has successfully enforced its order against two manufacturers of frozen desserts for misleading consumers by advertising their products as "ice cream," and has recovered PKR 35 million in penalties from the undertakings.

The case was initiated on a complaint filed by M/s Pakistan Fruit Juice Company (Private) Limited, manufacturers of "Hico" ice cream, alleging that M/s Unilever Pakistan and M/s Friesland Campina Engro were engaged in deceptive marketing by portraying their frozen dessert products as ice cream through television and social media advertisements.

Following a formal enquiry under the Competition Act, 2010, the Commission concluded that the undertakings had disseminated false and misleading information to consumers in violation of Section 10 of the Act. The Commission had originally imposed penalties of PKR 75 million each on the two companies. Additionally, a penalty of PKR 20 million was imposed on Unilever Pakistan for making false comparative claims by portraying its frozen dessert as healthier than dairy-based ice cream.

In its order, the Commission relied on standards issued by the Pakistan Standards and Quality Control Authority (PSQCA) and the Punjab Pure Food Regulations 2018, which clearly distinguish between "ice cream" and "frozen desserts." While ice cream is made from milk, cream, or other dairy ingredients, frozen desserts may include edible vegetable oils and are classified as a separate product category.

The successful recovery of penalties marks an important step in enforcement of the Commission's orders and reinforces CCP's commitment to protecting consumers from deceptive marketing practices while ensuring fair competition in the marketplace.

## Punjab, SECP launch digital integration of motor third party insurance with route permit system

**Commerce Desk**

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP), in collaboration with the Government of Punjab, the Central Depository Company (CDC), and the Insurance Association of Pakistan, marked the go-live of a major digital integration to enforce motor third party insurance in the province.

The ceremony was attended by SECP Chairman Dr. Kabir Ahmed Sidhu, Secretary Punjab Transport Authority Mr. Hassan Ahsan, CEO CDC Mr. Badiud-Din, senior officials from insurance companies, and other stakeholders.

This initiative will directly benefit road users by ensuring that passengers, drivers, and third parties are financially protected and can receive timely compensation in case of road accidents.

Under this initiative, the Government of Punjab has made it mandatory for all public transport vehicles to obtain third-party motor insurance. All public transport route permits are now linked with this requirement, ensuring compliance before issuance and renewal.

Punjab has also digitized its Vehicle Route Permit Regime, which is now inte-



grated with CDC's Motor Insurance Repository for real-time verification of insurance policies, enhancing transparency, enforcement, and ease of doing business.

Speaking at the ceremony, Chairman SECP Dr Kabir Sidhu stated that the initiative reflects a shift towards digital enforcement and highlights insurance as a critical tool for financial protection. He emphasized the need for timely compensation for accident victims and stronger road safety measures.

He noted that while the repository currently contains data of around one million insured vehicles, this remains low compared to nearly 30 million vehicles on the roads, underscoring the need to expand insurance coverage nationwide.

SECP is also working on reforms, including introducing a no-fault regime and strengthening enforcement through amendments in the Motor Vehicles Act, 1939, while aiming to increase insurance penetration from 0.8 percent to 1.5 percent.

## Khurram Ijaz Decries 'Unfair Penalties' on Exporters as Containers Stranded Post-Iran War Fallout

**Commerce Desk**

KARACHI: Khurram Ijaz, foreign trade and logistics expert and former Vice President Federation Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Indus-

ping lines, as exporters face mounting demurrage and detention charges on consignments stranded in the wake of the Iran war fallout.

Khurram Ijaz said exporters had fulfilled all obligations—



payments cleared, bookings confirmed, and containers delivered to ports well before the escalation of regional tensions in late February. Yet, with vessel operations disrupted, shipments remained stuck at terminals. "It is highly unjustified that exporters are now being penalized for delays entirely beyond their control," he asserted.

## PMEX introduces Sahulat Account to simplify access to regulated Futures Trading

**Commerce Desk**

KARACHI: Pakistan Mercantile Exchange Limited (PMEX) has launched the Sahulat Account, a highly simplified trading account that allows Pakistani residents to enter regulated Futures Trading quickly and conveniently. PMEX is the only commodity futures exchange in Pakistan, licensed and regulated by the SECP.

The Sahulat Account sets a maximum investment limit of PKR 1 million. It does not allow leverage, so traders' exposure is limited to their deposited funds.

The Sahulat Account removes common barriers to entry to commodity futures trading. It offers exceptional ease of account opening, allowing investors to open an account online through any PMEX-registered broker using

only their CNIC. Investors can upgrade their Sahulat Account to a standard trading account to increase limits or access higher exposure once they complete the required regulatory and documentation procedures.

"The Sahulat Account reflects PMEX's commitment to expanding regulated Futures Trading through a clearly defined framework that prioritizes accessibility

and investor protection," said Mr. Khurram Zafar, CEO and MD of PMEX. "The Sahulat Account enables individuals to participate in regulated Futures Markets without leverage and within firm exposure limits, offering a simpler, lower-risk entry point — with the option to transition to a regular trading account upon completing the required onboarding and risk assessment."



## HBL Pakistan Super League Cricket Championship Edition 11

# Multan Sultans Defeat Hyderabad Kings By 6 Wickets. Hyderabad Kingsmen Suffered their Third Consecutive Defeat

Asim Tanveer

LAHORE: Habib Bank Limited Pakistan Super League Cricket Championship 11 Edition Match Played at Gaddafi Stadium Lahore, Marnus Labuschagne won the toss and announced to bat first for Hyderabad Kingsmen. He started with a smoky 59 runs in 5 overs.

Moaz Sadaqat appeared in his real form for the first time. He completed a brilliant fastest fifty and was out after scoring 62 runs in just 26 balls. Five sixes and five fours were the highlight of his innings.

Marnus Labuschagne was not much better, he could score 8 runs in six balls. Saim Ayub scored 27 runs. The highlight of the innings was that Sharjeel Khan, who was playing a PSL match after three years and Hyderabad Kings gave him a chance today by sitting him out for two matches, took full advantage of it. He scored 51 runs off 26 balls. There were four sixes and three fours and he remained not out, but the important thing is that he batted brilliantly in the 19th over of the innings and added 27 runs. He also got two no-balls, which he took full advantage



of and hit sixes. This was his 7th fifty-plus score in the PSL. Hyderabad Kings set a big target of 225 runs for five wickets in the stipulated 20 overs. Muhammad Wasim was the most successful bowler for Multan Sultans. He took two wickets for 37 runs in four overs. Apart from them, Peter Siddle gave 39 runs for one wicket and Ashton Turner, who is the captain, took one wicket for 28 runs. Shahzad Gul, who was the main fast bowler, took a big hit. He was given 60 runs in four overs and could not take any wickets.

In response, Multan Sultans accepted this target and set such a killing program from the early

overs that Hyderabad Kings forgot that they were playing PSL. The opening partnership of 104 runs was to be seen in 8 overs. Steven Smith scored 46 runs in 20 balls with four sixes and two fours. Even after that, the matter did not stop, because the opener Sahibzada Farhan came with him. He had the ambition of playing the entire 20 overs or winning the match in the entire innings. Before him, Josh Phillips was dismissed for a run. Shan Masood also batted a little better. Today, he scored 29 runs in 16 balls. Captain Turner could only score four runs but then Arafat Minhas came in at the end and joined Sahibzada Farhan.

Farhan scored his second century in PSL. After Sahibzada Farhan's brilliant century, the match became easier. He came in with 106 runs not out on 57 balls. He hit 8 sixes and 7 fours, while Arafat Minhas added the fastest 26 runs on 11 balls. Thus, Multan Sultans easily achieved the seemingly difficult target by scoring 227 runs for four wickets in 18.4 overs and won the match by 6 wickets. With this win, it was their second consecutive win in the event and Hyderabad Kings completed a hat-trick of failures. This was their third defeat. Everyone on the bowling side disappointed and Saim Ayub took two wickets for 43 runs. All

the other bowlers failed. With this prestigious win, Sultans have not only completed four points but

have also occupied the first position with a better net run rate. Karachi Kings are in second place with four points and needless to say, Hyderabad Kings are in 8th and last place with three failures.

## Expert Warns: Rising CKD/SKD Imports Threaten Pakistan's Economic Stability

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: The Expert Auto Sector & Director SEMDA Mashood Khan said Pakistan's auto industry is facing a growing structural challenge as the import of CKD and SKD kits continues to rise leading towards an import-driven assembly of vehicles. What was originally designed to promote localization and technology transfer which could not be achieved, instead increased reliance on imported components continues.

This trend is particularly concerning given Pakistan's limited foreign exchange reserves and narrow export base, where rising imports directly contribute to a widening trade deficit and increased dependence on external financing.

Historically, CKD and SKD imports were intended as temporary mechanisms to support the development of domestic manufacturing capacity. However, instead of declining with industrial maturity, imports have steadily increased from 2021-22 to 2025-26.

This reflects that localization has not kept pace with industry growth.

Rather than evolving into a value-added manufacturing sector, the industry is increasingly operating as a sub-assembly ecosystem, with minimal local content.

A key factor behind this imbalance is the policy framework that allows new entrant OEMs to import CKD/SKD kits at concessional tariff rates with relatively relaxed localization requirements. These incentives were initially aimed at attracting investment, increasing competition, and promoting technology transfer. However, the ground reality suggests otherwise. Many new entrants have established assembly-based operations, importing major components from countries such as China and Korea while contributing limited localization



within Pakistan.

"The policy intent was localization — the outcome is import dependence," Mashood Khan stated.

Pakistan's auto market remains relatively small compared to regional economies, yet the rising import bill is placing disproportionate pressure on the economy.

Mashood Khan said, the entry of Japanese, Korean, and Chinese brands has undoubtedly increased competition and improved consumer choice through better features, designs, and pricing. However, this has also highlighted structural weakness.

Beyond any doubt, this is a real fact if you recall mid 80's you will find that SUZUKI came in our market and developed auto parts entrepreneurs, followed by two other Japanese's players who followed suit by developing vendor bases in our country. "We appreciate and need

same sprite and encouragement for our SME entrepreneurs". Mashood Khan said.

Unlike earlier industry players who gradually developed local vendor networks, now many new entrants have yet to demonstrate meaningful progress in achieving Localization targets, Technology transfer, Vendor development.

Mashood Khan said that the lack of localization has directly affected Pakistan's auto parts manufacturing sector, causing a decline in demand, Loss of growth opportunities & stagnation in technological advancement

Established industry players have demonstrated that localization is achievable through consistent policy support and long-term commitment. They have successfully developed local supply chains, reduced import dependency & supported SME growth

As the government prepares a new

auto policy, it is essential to critically evaluate past outcomes and failures. The key areas must be focused to make the policy practical and realistic to implement and achieve the desired goals.

- Heavy Sub Assembly model should be removed to obstruct import reliant model

- All New Entrant OEM must be induced to indigenize 30% of entire parts manufacturing in the vehicle within two years.

- Any discrimination between the existing and new entrant should not be made and all corporate players should be governed under one AUTO Policy. This will develop competition, industrial growth and high technological expertise which will drive the OEM and APMS both to strive for more export.

- Linking incentives to actual technology transfer and local parts manufacturing

- Any policy gap must not be incorporated and the way forward should be defined with clarity in the policy. This should be mandatory

"If Pakistan does not strengthen local manufacturing, it will remain trapped in a cycle of borrowing to finance imports," Mashood Khan emphasized.

In my view that "Pakistan must decide whether it wants to be an assembly economy or a manufacturing economy — the current trajectory cannot sustain both growth and stability," Said Mashood Khan.

The auto sector has the potential to drive industrial growth, employment, and exports, but only if supported by consistent policies focused on localization, innovation, and self-reliance.

Investing in Pakistan's local manufacturing ecosystem is not just an economic priority—it is a national necessity.

This is a time to make an objective policy now to correct the present short coming in the previous policy.

## Punjab conducts trials for U-18 Youth Hockey C'ship

Sports Desk

ISLAMABAD: Sports Board Punjab's selection committees conducted the under-18 hockey trials of all divisions at Lahore, Faisalabad and Bahawalpur on Wednesday.

The trials were conducted with the collaboration of Punjab Hockey Association to select Punjab's four hockey teams which will participate in the upcoming U-18 Youth Hockey Championship being organised at Naseer Bunda Hockey Stadium, Islamabad under the auspices of Pakistan Sports Board (PSB).

More than 110 young hockey players from Lahore and Gujranwala Divisions participated in the trials held at the National Hockey Stadium Pitch-2, Olympian Kh. Junaid, Director Sports Chand Perveen and Divisional Sports Officer Lahore Tariq Khanzada supervised the selection process.

## Merit Ignored: Dr. Aslam Khan Kakar Pakistan's Most Educated Cricket Referee Left Out of PSL 11

Sports Desk

KARACHI: In a system that often claims to prioritize merit, the omission of Dr. Muhammad Aslam Khan Kakar from PSL Season 11 raises serious and uncomfortable questions. Widely regarded as one of the most competent cricket referees from Balochistan, Dr. Aslam Khan Kakar is not just another official he represents a rare blend of practical expertise and academic excellence in Pakistan cricket.

Ranked among the top on the PCB's referee panel, his exclusion has sparked concern across cricketing circles, with social media platforms and credible voices within the sporting community highlighting what appears to be a glaring inconsistency in the selection process. At a time when Pakistan cricket needs transparency and credibility more than ever, such decisions risk eroding confidence in institutional fairness.

Dr. Aslam's profile is anything but ordinary. He serves as an Assistant Professor at Al-Hamd University, Islamabad, and holds the unique distinction of being the only Pakistani to have pursued specialized PhD-level research in cricket. His work is centered on integrating modern research methodologies, education-based officiating models, and analytical techniques into the game an approach that aligns closely with global best practices.

Observers and stakeholders argue that individuals like Dr. Aslam Khan Kakar are exactly the kind of professionals Pakistan should be promoting.



## Degrees in Doubt: PMDC Alert Sparks Row with HEC, Universities Cry Foul

Continued from Page 4

HEC website as well as on the Pakistan Qualification Register (PQR).

However, it is a matter of serious concern that the names of several such recognized institutions have not been included in the "Doctor's Alert" issued by the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC). This omission reflects apparent inconsistency and raises questions of discrimination.

The following universities and HEIs, despite being duly recognized and approved, have not been mentioned in the said alert:

• University of Azad Jammu & Kashmir, Bhimber, Aga Khan University, Karachi  
• Alhamd Islamic University,

Quetta, Cholistan University of Veterinary & Animal Sciences, Bahawalpur, Government College University, Faisalabad, Imperial College of Business Studies, Lahore, Muhammad Nawaz Sharif University of Agriculture, Multan, Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Medical University, Larkana, Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto Institute of Science & Technology (SZABIST), Karachi, Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto Medical University, Islamabad

Green International University, Lahore, Superior University, Lahore, University of Agriculture, Faisalabad, University of Haripur, Haripur, Dow University of Health Sciences, Karachi, Jinnah Sindh Medical University, Karachi, Khyber Medical University, Peshawar

Rawalpindi Medical University, Rawalpindi, Sohail University, Karachi, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Ziauddin University, Karachi.

In light of the above, the selective exclusion of these institutions from the "Doctor's Alert" warrants serious reconsideration. It is imperative to ensure transparency, consistency, and fairness in regulatory communications to avoid confusion among students and stakeholders.

At its core, this issue is not merely about legal interpretation it is also about institutional coordination. When regulatory bodies overlap or interfere in each other's domains, students suffer the most. On one hand, a program is approved by HEC; on the other, it is questioned by

another authority. The result is confusion, diminished credibility of degrees, and uncertainty surrounding students' career prospects.

Another crucial aspect of this situation is transparency. When an institution issues an "alert," its language, context, and legal basis must be precise and unambiguous to prevent misunderstandings. Vague or generalized statements not only create confusion but also damage the reputation of educational institutions. What is needed is not an institutional ego clash but a constructive and serious dialogue. Both HEC and PMDC must collaboratively define clear boundaries of their authority, placing students' interests above all else. Additionally, the government should develop a

comprehensive policy framework to harmonize the roles of different regulatory bodies, preventing such conflicts in the future.

In short, the central question remains: is Times University Multan securing students' futures or putting them at risk? While time may ultimately provide the answer, it is evident that the real danger lies not in a single institution but in a system lacking clear policies, effective communication, and institutional harmony. If this issue is not resolved with seriousness and clarity, its impact will extend far beyond one university, affecting the entire education system, and the greatest loss will be borne by the students who look to these institutions to fulfill their dreams.

## USA-Iran War: Oil, Deception, and Illusions

Continued from Page 4

The risk, however, extends far beyond the immediate participants. A prolonged conflict could trigger a global economic downturn, disrupt supply chains, and exacerbate inflation worldwide. Energy shortages, rising prices, and financial instability could push vulnerable economies into recession and deepen global inequality.

In this context, the current mediation efforts resemble less a pathway to peace and more a strategic pause—one that masks ongoing preparation for further escalation. The illusion of diplomacy cannot indefinitely conceal the realities of war.

If a genuine resolution is to

emerge, it will require a fundamental shift: from maximalist demands to realistic compromise, from strategic maneuvering to genuine engagement, and from unilateral pressure to mutual recognition of sovereignty and security concerns.

Until then, the world remains caught in a dangerous paradox—where the language of peace coexists with the machinery of war, and where every pause may simply be the prelude to a more devastating confrontation.

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

## Meeting with IFC

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, holding a meeting with IFC Divisional Director Mr. Simon Andrews, World Bank Country Director for Pakistan Ms. Bolormaa Amgaabazar, and IFC Country Manager Ms. Naz Khan to discuss investment expansion, infrastructure development, and job creation at the Finance Division.



Photo: PID

## Finance Minister, IFC discuss expanding investment, infrastructure and job creation

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb held a meeting with Mr. Simon Andrews, Divisional Director for Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia at the International Finance Corporation (IFC), who called on the Minister at the Finance Division along with Ms. Bolormaa Amgaabazar, World Bank Country Director for Pakistan, and Ms. Naz Khan, Country

Manager IFC.

The Minister welcomed Mr. Andrews on his recent appointment and appreciated the IFC's enhanced engagement in Pakistan over the past few years, particularly in investment, trade finance, and advisory support. He acknowledged the positive impact of IFC's on-ground leadership and responsiveness, noting that increased senior-level presence has significantly strengthened collaboration and delivery.

The IFC delegation briefed the Minister on its growing portfolio in Pakistan, which now exceeds \$2 billion annually, with approximately \$2.7 billion committed this year. Key areas of engagement include financial sector support through risk-sharing and guarantee facilities to promote trade and SME financing, expansion of local currency financing to mitigate foreign exchange risks, and upcoming initiatives such as a diversified payment rights

facility and a green bond issuance with a leading local bank.

Discussions focused on further scaling private sector investment, particularly in infrastructure and public-private partnerships. While progress has been made in areas such as urban water management and distribution efficiency projects, both sides acknowledged the need to develop a stronger pipeline of bankable projects and enhance coordination to unlock larger-scale private investment

in sectors including energy, transport, and logistics.

The meeting also covered collaboration on job creation, entrepreneurship, and innovation, including proposals for developing a venture capital ecosystem and strengthening private sector engagement in policy formulation. Both sides discussed mechanisms to further institutionalize dialogue between government and business stakeholders to support effective and responsive policymaking.

## UN condemn Israel's death penalty law against Palestinian prisoners

Wafa

NEW YORK: The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, said Tuesday that enforcing Israel's death penalty law against Palestinian prisoners would constitute a war crime.

In a statement, Türk said the implementation of this discriminatory law "would constitute an additional, particularly egregious violation of international law. Its application to residents of the occupied Palestinian territory would constitute a war crime."

He stressed that the law "is patently inconsistent with Israel's international law obligations, including in relation



to the right to life. It raises serious concerns about due process violations, is deeply discriminatory, and must be promptly repealed."

"The death penalty is profoundly difficult to reconcile with human dignity, and it raises the unacceptable risk of executing innocent people," said the High Commissioner. Meanwhile, UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said, "We stand against the death penalty in all its aspects, wherever," adding that "the nature of this particular law makes it particularly cruel and discriminatory."

He also urged the Israeli government to repeal the law and refrain from enforcing it.

## Pakistan presses Afghan Taliban on terrorist sanctuaries

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The first round of trilateral talks between Pakistan, Afghanistan and China concluded in Urumqi on Wednesday, marking a cautious diplomatic re-engagement after weeks of heightened tensions along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, official sources said.

Senior officials from all three countries participated in the meeting, with Pakistan represented by Additional Foreign Secretary Syed Ali Asad Gillani. The Afghan Taliban delegation comprised six members, while China hosted and facilitated the dialogue.

According to sources, Pakistan strongly reiterated its demand for the elimination of terrorist sanctuaries inside Afghanistan, particularly those linked to the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

Islamabad also called for a verifiable and written mechanism to ensure



concrete action against such groups.

The Afghan Taliban side, after internal consultations, indicated a positive

response to Pakistan's concerns, signalling potential movement toward de-escalation, sources added.

remain elusive unless the Afghan Taliban government severed all links with terrorist organisations.

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## Youth potential being harnessed as NAVTTC programs show positive results: PM



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday said that the government was prioritising to provide technical and vocational training to the youth with international certifications in skills with high global demand.

The prime minister, chairing a meeting on enhancing employment opportunities for the country's youth, said that positive results had started emerging from the comprehensive training programs launched through the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTC) to harness the youth's potential.

Expressing satisfaction over the

performance of the Prime Minister's Youth Program under the leadership of Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan, the prime minister called the youth "future of our nation" and highlighted the government's initiatives to provide them with professional certifications in skills with the workforce.

Federal ministers Dr. Musadik Malik, Ahmad Khan Cheema, Muhammad Aurangzeb, Attaullah Tarar, Chaudhry Salik Hussain, Dr. Ahsan Iqbal, Shaza Fatima Khawaja, Minister of State Bilal Azhar Kiani, Chairman of PM Youth Program Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan, HEC Chairman, and senior officials of the relevant departments attended the meeting.

## Third-Party evaluation & new check-and-balance mechanism for NHA

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan has approved large-scale new policies to ensure transparency and accountability in the National Highway Authority.

Taking strict notice of heavy expenditures under the guise of maintenance, Federal Minister made it clear that any form of corruption under the cover of repair work will not be tolerated.

Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan directed the Chairman NHA to immediately formulate a comprehensive and integrated plan for institutional reforms.

He stated that while efforts are being made to save every penny, it is unacceptable that funds are being misused at lower levels.

Therefore, any financial irregularity or corruption at any level will

not be accepted. He further instructed NHA to hire competent, capable and honest executives from the private sector to improve the Institution's performance.

Abdul Aleem Khan emphasized the need to complete pending inquiries promptly, ensure full accountability of utilized funds and implement a strict monitoring system.

Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan also directed on-site inspections of maintenance work, the establishment of an effective check-and-balance system and the introduction of third-party evaluations to ensure transparency.

He ordered the immediate resolution of construction-related complaints on the Abdul Hakeem Motorway (M-3), stating that responsibility must be clearly fixed in case of any deficiencies in developmental projects.

## Pakistan, Norway sign first climate finance agreement

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Norway have signed the country's first bilateral agreement for climate finance and investment in clean energy under Paris Agreement.

The agreement was signed in Islamabad under the auspices of the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Musadik Malik said it would create a pathway for international cooperation and investment in climate-related sectors.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Norway's Ambassador to Pakistan Per Albert Ilsaas said the agreement marked a new phase in bilateral environmental cooperation.

## Government providing all possible facilities to investors in digital, telecom industry: PM

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday said that the government was providing all possible facilities to investors in the digital and telecom sectors to promote the country's digital economy.

"The recent successful auction of 5G spectrum in Pakistan reflects that the government is moving in the right direction," the prime minister said while speaking to VEON Group CEO Kaan Terzioglu, who along with a delegation called on him at the PM House. He stated that Pakistan was pursuing a comprehensive and effective strategy to increase foreign investment and promote innovation in the information technology sector.

"Effective use of information technology to achieve a cashless economy is among the government's top priorities," he said, adding that digitalization of the economic sector would help ensure transparency.

Following the 5G spectrum auction, the prime minister noted that all relevant institutions were working in close coordination to provide high-quality internet services to the public through telecom operators.

He further emphasized that Pakistan's youth could play a vital role in strengthening the economy and improving service delivery through active participation in information technology and digital platforms.