



# Daily The Spokesman

A Leading National Daily



فرمان رسول ﷺ  
ہم سے آمین بنائیں یا اس نے بیان کیا ہے انہوں نے کہا ہم سے ظہیر نے بیان کیا ہے ان سے ابوالتیاح نے بیان کیا ہے انہوں نے اس بن مالک رضی اللہ عنہ سے سنا ہے انہوں نے کہا کہ نبی کریم صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم نے فرمایا یا مانیہ پیدا کرو، تجھی شہید کرو دو لوگوں کو تھی اور تجھی دو نذر نہ دلاؤ۔  
(صحیح بخاری، حدیث نمبر 6125)

Barkat Rice Mills (Pvt) Limited



## Pakistan Ambassador hosts dinner for South Asian Journalists

Pakistan's Ambassador to Russia, Faisal Niaz Tirmizi, hosted an official dinner at the Embassy of Pakistan in Moscow to honor South and South-east Asian journalists participating in a fellowship program organized by Sputnik News Agency with support from the Gorchakov Fund.



## Pak Envoy visits Ningbo city to mobilize B2B investments & industrial cooperation

Pakistan's Ambassador to China Khalil Hashmi visited Ningbo, a coastal city in eastern China as part of efforts by Pakistan Embassy and its Consulates in China to mobilize investments in 21 priority areas. The Ambassador delivered a keynote address at Pakistan-China (Ningbo) Industrial Cooperation Summit and spoke at two B2B Investment Roundtables in the ICT and Pharmaceutical sectors.

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## Warm welcome

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi receives Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir at Tehran Airport.



Photo: ISPR

# Field Marshal lands in Tehran for mediation push

Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: A high-level Pakistani delegation led by Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Defence Forces Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir arrived in Tehran on Wednesday, as Islamabad intensified efforts to mediate between the United States and Iran.

According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi is also

part of the delegation. The visit is aimed at advancing diplomatic engagement and easing regional tensions.

The delegation was received by Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi.

Sources said that the delegation is expected to discuss the possible next phase of negotiations.

Sources indicate a second round of US-Iran talks is likely to be held in Islamabad by the

end of next week, with authorities directed to finalise security and administrative arrangements.

The expected US delegation may include Vice President JD Vance, special envoy Steve Witkoff, and Jared Kushner. Iran is expected to be represented by Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf and Foreign Minister Araghchi.

The diplomatic push follows recent talks in Islamabad that

lasted over 20 hours but ended without agreement, as both sides remained divided on key issues including Iran's nuclear and missile programmes, the Strait of Hormuz, and US sanctions.

The conflict, which began on February 28 with a joint US-Israel campaign against Iran, escalated rapidly, disrupting regional stability and global energy routes.

A temporary two-week ceasefire was announced on April 8

after efforts led by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, who also invited both sides to Islamabad for dialogue.

Despite the lack of a breakthrough, Islamabad has continued backchannel diplomacy.

An Iranian foreign ministry spokesperson confirmed that Tehran and Washington are exchanging messages through Pakistan, underlining its growing role as a key intermediary.

# PM orders strict action against illegal practice of over-invoicing



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday directed the relevant authorities to immediately take

legal action against all individuals involved in the illegal practice of over-invoicing.

Chairing a review meeting regarding Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), the prime minister noted with concern that

from 2017 to 2022, the illegal practice of over-invoicing continued, and the relevant institutions remained consistently negligent in performing their duties.

He also directed authorities to identify those responsible for negligence and to accelerate departmental proceed-

ings against them.

During the meeting, a report of the committee formed to investigate over-invoicing was presented in the meeting. The prime minister appreciated the report of the committee headed by Mushtaq Ahmed Sukhera.

He instructed that the Financial Monitoring Unit (FMU) be made an active institution and that representatives from

the FIA and Intelligence

Bureau, be included in it.

The meeting was attended by Federal Ministers Musadik Malik, Ahad Khan Cheema, Attaullah Tarar, Attorney General Mansoor Usman Awan, Minister of State for Finance Bilal Azhar Kayani, the Chairman FBR, and other senior officials.

# PM begins tri-nation visit to Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkiye today

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will undertake official visits to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the State of Qatar and the Republic of Turkiye, starting from today till April 18, 2026.

The visits to Saudi Arabia and Qatar will be in the bilateral context, where the prime minister will meet the leadership of Saudi Arabia and Qatar to discuss ongoing bilateral cooperation as well as regional peace and security, according to a Foreign Office statement.

The prime minister will also visit Turkiye to participate in the Fifth Antalya Diplomacy Forum, where he will participate in the Leaders' Panel, alongside other world leaders, to present Pakistan's perspec-

tive.

On the sidelines of the event, Prime Minister Shehbaz is expected to hold bilateral meetings with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and other key world leaders.

Pakistan's participation in the Forum reflects its continued commitment to constructive diplomacy, multilateral cooperation, and meaningful engagement with the international community on issues of global importance.

Prime Minister Shehbaz will be accompanied by the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar, and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Syed Tariq Fatemi, as well as other senior officials.

# Afghan Taliban shelling in Bajaur claims 3 lives

Adam Khan

PESHAWAR: At least three civilians, including two children, were martyred and three others seriously injured after shelling by the Afghan Taliban targeted a residential area along the border in Bajaur, according to security sources.

The incident occurred in Malik Shaheen village of the Katkot border area, where, officials said, the shelling hit a house, killing a woman and two children from the same family. The injured were shifted to a nearby hospital for medical treatment.



Security sources described the attack as "unprovoked aggression," alleging that the Afghan Taliban had recently been attempting to infiltrate militants, referred to as "Fitna al-Khawarij," into Pakistan. The sources claimed that a timely response by the Pakistan Army had foiled the infiltration attempt.

Following the failed attempt, the Afghan Taliban targeted the civilian population in Bajaur, the sources added.

In response, the Pakistan Army carried out retaliatory action, destroying the gun positions from where the shelling

was initiated. Security officials stated that military operations are ongoing, targeting Afghan Taliban posts adjacent to Bajaur, with reports of heavy casualties.

Residents of Bajaur have strongly condemned the attack and expressed solidarity with the security forces. According to officials, security forces remain vigilant and committed to protecting lives and property, while working to ensure lasting peace in the region.

Security sources termed the targeting of civilians as evidence of "nefarious intentions and desperation."

# White House says Pakistanis incredible mediators, second round of talks likely in Islamabad

News Desk

White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt has said that a potential second round of talks between the United States and Iran is likely to be held at the same location (Islamabad) as previous discussions, while strongly praising Pakistan's role as the sole mediator in the ongoing negotiations.

Responding to questions during a press briefing, Leavitt indicated that Islamabad remains central to the diplomatic process.

"The Pakistanis have been incredible mediators throughout this process and we

really appreciate their friendship and their efforts to bring this deal to a close," she said.

She emphasized that Pakistan continues to serve as the only channel for communication between the two sides, despite interest from other countries.

"While there have been many countries around the world who want to offer their help, the president feels it is important to streamline this communication through the Pakistanis," she added.

Leavitt also dismissed reports suggesting that Washington had sought an extension of a ceasefire with Tehran, clarifying that



discussions remain ongoing. "At this moment, we remain very much engaged in these talks," she said, noting that both Donald Trump and JD Vance

had described the negotiations as productive.

She further stated that while there have been reports about possible in-person meetings,

no final decision has been announced. "Nothing is official until you hear it from us here at the White House," she added.

On the security front, Leavitt confirmed that the US naval blockade on vessels entering and leaving Iranian ports remains in place, though she declined to provide a timeline for its continuation. She clarified that the restrictions apply to Iranian ports along the Arabian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman.

At the same time, she said US forces in the region are ensuring freedom of navigation for vessels passing through the Strait of Hormuz, to and from non-Iranian ports.

# DPM/FM Dar praises ongoing diplomatic efforts by MoFA officers



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar on Wednesday chaired a meeting at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with Foreign Secretary Anna Baloch and senior MoFA

officers to review the evolving regional situation and recent diplomatic developments.

The deputy prime minister and foreign minister appreciated ongoing diplomatic efforts, and emphasized proactive engagement on key foreign policy matters.

# AJK PM chairs high-level meeting to review food department affairs and wheat supply

Abdul Majeed Tahir

MUZAFFARABAD: A high-level meeting of the Food Department was held under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Government, Faisal Mumtaz Rathore. The meeting reviewed all the affairs of the Food Department in detail.

The meeting was attended by Principal Secretary Zafar Mahmood Khan, Finance Secretary Hassan Masood, Food Secretary Sardar Sohail Azam, Commissioner Rehabilitation Masood-ur-Rehman, Director General Food Hameed Kayani, Additional Secretary Finance Sagheer Saleh and other relevant officials. In the meeting, Food Secretary Azad Kashmir Sardar Sohail Azam gave a comprehensive briefing to the Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir on the quality of wheat and flour, food delivery system, food quality and priorities set for the future, as well as other



administrative matters related to the Food Department.

On this occasion, Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir Faisal Mumtaz Rathore was also given a detailed briefing regarding the landslide in Dolai and was also informed about the steps taken by the relevant departments to restore the route after the landslide.

Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir Faisal Mumtaz Rathore directed that uninterrupted supply of quality flour to the people should be ensured at all costs, and the process of availability of

wheat should continue under a transparent procedure. He said that the Food Department should work diligently.

The performance of the Food Department is encouraging and commendable. These concrete steps to improve and organize the system will provide relief to the people. Proper use of government resources is our top priority. If the standard of living of the people improves, then the paths of real development will open.

He said that the performance of

the department in delivering food and keeping the system functional is encouraging. The government stands with the people and people-friendly steps have been taken to restore the system.

The Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir said that God willing, the revolutionary steps of the current government will open the paths of real development. In addition, the relationship of love and trust between the people and the government will be further strengthened.



Vice Chairman Sardar Zulqar Ali presenting Shield to former Director Information/Secretary Press Foundation Mr Muhammad Bashir Mirza on his retirement from service.

## Azad Kashmir Elections: Former PM Haider meets PM's Advisor Sanaullah



Bureau Report

ISLAMABAD: Former Prime Minister Azad Kashmir and PML-N leader Raja Farooq Haider met with Prime Minister's Advisor on Political Affairs Rana Sanaullah.

Discussed the upcoming elections in Azad Kashmir and other issues. Farooq Haider and Rana Sanaullah discussed various issues regarding the election situation. President PMLN Gilgit Baltistan Hafeezur Rehman was also present on the occasion.

PML-N will get a huge majority in Azad Kashmir based on its performance. Raja Farooq Haider said. The impact of the excellent performance of the Pakistani government and its international recognition will be seen in the upcoming elections. Raja Farooq Haider: The scope of development and innovation taking place across Pakistan, especially in Punjab, will be extended to Azad Kashmir.

## AJK's New PR Director vows dynamic, digital-first information system



Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: The newly appointed Director Public Relations, Azad Jammu and Kashmir State, Tariq Jamil Durrani has said that our priority is an effective and dynamic system where the dissemination of information is immediate and authentic, effective publicity of government initiatives and the positive image of the state should be highlighted. We need to make our voice effective through modern tools, digital platforms and creative content. Digital media, social media platforms, online journalism, video content and real-time information sharing have completely changed the way of communication. He expressed these views while addressing the departmental officers and staff after assuming charge. Deputy Director Ms. Qurat-ul-Ain Shabbir, Information Officers Raja Muhammad Sohail Khan, Syed Asif Hussain Naqvi, Muhammad Hanif Khawaja, Raja Abdul Basit, Sardar Shamim Anjum Aziz, Syed Asif Ali Naqvi, Sajid Nazir, Faheem Kayani were also present on the occasion. The Director Public Relations said that in the digital era, media and technology have given the world a new pace, new thinking and new trends.

## Digital Fraud Alert: PSCA urges citizens to stay vigilant against fake e-challan SMS scams



Bureau Report

LAHORE: Punjab Safe Cities Authority has warned citizens about an increase in digital fraud incidents involving fake SMS messages sent in the name of e-challan. According to Punjab Safe Cities Authority's spokesperson, fraudsters are sending messages from different mobile numbers containing fake links to deceive citizens by obtaining their bank account details and grabbing their hard earned money.

The spokesperson clarified that official e-challan messages from Punjab Safe Cities Authority are sent only from "9915". Furthermore, Safe City e-challan messages do not contain any links, nor do they instruct citizens to make online payments. If any message received from "9915" includes a link or asks for bank account details, ATM card information, or any financial data, citizens are advised to exercise extreme caution, as Safe City never requests payments or financial information via SMS. The spokesperson apprised that citizens are urged to avoid clicking on suspicious links and refrain from making payments through unverified websites. E-challan verification can only be done through the official Safe City website e-challan.psea.gov.pk, while payments can be made solely via e-Pay Punjab app by generating a PSID.

The spokesperson stated that all service providers have been notified to curb digital fraud, and legal action against individuals creating fake websites in the name of Safe City has been intensified. For further information regarding e-challan, citizens can call emergency Helpline-15 and select option 6.

The spokesperson underscored that Punjab Safe Cities Authority remains committed to protecting citizens from getting duped at the hands of swindlers and fraudsters adding that it has launched crackdown and is taking legal action against those involved in such fraudulent activities in the province.

## Fateha

KARACHI: AJK Acting President Ch. Latif Akbar visited Karachi at Quaid e Azam shrine, laid wreath and offered Fateha and paid rich tribute to Founder of Pakistan Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah departed soul.



# Chief Justice chairs key meeting, emphasizes finality of judicial policy decisions

Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: Chief Justice Azad Jammu and Kashmir/Chairman Judicial Policy Making Committee Justice Raja Saeed Akram Khan chaired the eighteenth meeting of the Judicial Policy Making Committee at the Conference Hall of the Supreme Court on Wednesday.

Senior Judge Supreme Court Justice Raza Ali Khan, Chief Justice High Court Justice Sardar Liaquat Hussain, Senior Judge High Court Justice Syed Shahid Bihar attended the meeting. Chief Justice Azad Jammu and Kashmir/Chairman Judicial Policy Making Committee Justice Raja Saeed Akram Khan said that the Judicial Policy Making Committee is the largest forum of the state judiciary, the main objective of which is to create an effective



framework and its implementation by the higher judiciary for the provision of justice to the people of the state.

The decisions taken by the forum are final and their implementation is mandatory for all state institutions.

The Chief Justice High Court presented a detailed report of the decisions taken till June 1, 2025 in the

meeting.

The report said that till June 1, 2025, a total of 6026 cases have been decided in the High Court in Muzaffarabad, Mirpur, Kotli and Rawalakot, while a total of 48 public interest cases have been decided on urgent basis.

The Chairman Judicial Policy Making Committee, Senior Judge Supreme

Court appreciated the decisions of a significant number of cases despite the shortage of judges in the High Court. In the meeting, it was decided in the High Court that the bench in all constitutional cases under trial will be headed by the Chief Justice of the High Court. The oldest cases will be decided on a priority basis according to the year of filing.

# Al-Mustafa Welfare Society's free eye camp, successful operations of 101 patients

City Desk

Muzaffarabad. The great movement for the service of humanity, Al-Mustafa Welfare Society and Al-Mustafa Trust, inaugurated the free eye camp at Al-Mustafa Complex. President Al-Mustafa Welfare Society Azad Kashmir Atiq Ahmed Kayani, General Secretary Central Bar Association Muzaffarabad Murtaza Ahmed Mira Advocate, Rashid Aziz Advocate, General Secretary of Central Press Club Shahzad



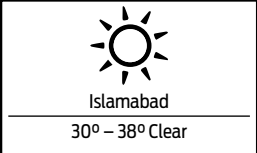
Ahmed Lullabi and the officials of Al-Mustafa Trust. More than 700 patients were examined in the camp and 101 patients underwent cataract surgery.

The opening ceremony was attended by President Mustafa Welfare Society Azad Kashmir Atiq Ahmad Kayani, General Secretary Central Bar Association Muzaffarabad Murtaza Ahmad Meer Advocate, Rashid Aziz Advocate, General Secretary Central Press Club Shahzad Ahmad Lulabi, Akhlaq Kasher, Ghulam Abbas Mir, Maulana Shujaur-Rehman, Maulana Abdul Qayyum Kayani and officials of the Mustafa Trust.

Mustafa Medical Department, Qazi Mujeeb-ur-Rehman Malik Sharaf Mustafai, Wajid Shakir, Saghir Ahmed, Syed Manzoor Hussain, Allama Aftab Hussain Chishti,

President of the Women's Department Samira Beg, Madam Sakhi Jan, Dr. Rabia Ghaffar, Dr. Aman, Dr. Haseeb Ahmed and other political and social figures were also present in the camp, while the medical staff of Mustafa and the volunteers rendered their professional services.

On this occasion, Mustafa President Atiq Ahmad Kayani said that Mustafa will continue to serve the suffering humanity. Mustafa's doors are open to every deserving person.



**SERVICES**

**Namaz Timings**

Fajr ..... 4:10 am  
Zohr ..... 12:08 pm  
Asr ..... 4:47 pm  
Maghrib ..... 6:39 pm  
Isha ..... 8:06 pm

**EMERGENCY**

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

**Women Police Stations**

Islamabad ..... 9222596  
Rawalpindi ..... 9270601-20

**ENQUIRY**

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

**HOSPITALS**

CMH ..... 561111  
MH ..... 561116  
MH ..... 561116  
Cantt Hospital ..... 9270907-11  
DHQ ..... 5556311-4  
RGH ..... 9290301-7  
Holy Family ..... 9290322-7  
PIMS ..... 9261170-79  
Polyclinic ..... 9218300-09  
Shifa International ..... 4603666

**DEPARTMENTS**

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

**COMPLAINTS**

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

**33rd Academic Council Meeting Convened at Nishtar Medical University**

**Iram Asim**

MULTAN: Prof. Dr. Mehnaz Khakwani, Vice Chancellor, Nishtar Medical University (NNU), presided over the 33rd Meeting of the Academic Council held at the Syndicate Hall.

The meeting comprehensively reviewed key academic policies, curriculum frameworks, and strategic initiatives aimed at further strengthening the quality of medical education at the university. Important agenda items were deliberated in detail, with a focus on aligning academic programs with contemporary standards and evolving educational needs.

The Vice Chancellor emphasized the need for continuous academic improvement, innovation in teaching methodologies, and strict adherence to quality benchmarks. She directed all concerned departments to implement effective and timely measures to enhance academic performance and institutional efficiency.

Reaffirming NNU's vision, she highlighted the university's commitment to excellence in medical education, research, and the development of a progressive and dynamic learning environment.

# Chairman Senate stresses Muslim unity, cites Pakistan's role in curbing Iran-US Conflict

**Kiran Asim**

SAHIWAL: Chairman Senate Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani, while talking to the media in Sahiwal, said that the world has appreciated Pakistan's efforts for establishing peace and Pakistan is playing an important role in promoting peace at the global and regional levels.

He said that in the current global situation, the Muslim Ummah needs unity and solidarity more than ever. He clarified that Pakistan is moving forward under responsible policies while being part of the government coalition.

Referring to India's aggressive actions, the Chairman Senate said that Pakistan has always shown restraint and tolerance, however, it has also vigorously exercised its right to self-defense for its sovereignty and defense. He said that Pakistan is currently going through an important test, especially in the context of the Gulf countries.

Talking about the tension between

Iran and the US, he said that Pakistan is making every effort to maintain the ceasefire, because this tension is a threat not only to the region but also to world peace. He said that world leaders are appreciating Pakistan's diplomatic efforts and the OIC is also playing its role in this regard.

He paid tribute to the Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, military leadership and diplomats, saying that they demonstrated responsible leadership and highlighted Pakistan's positive image before the world.

Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani also expressed deep sorrow and grief over the death of Federal Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Protection Pir Syed Imran Ahmed Shah at his residence in Sahiwal.

He prayed for the elevation of the deceased's rank and for patience for the bereaved family. Member Punjab Assembly Malik Muhammad Arshad and Pakistan Peoples Party leader Zaki Chaudhry were also present on the occasion.



## Call on

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari in a meeting with Alisher Tukhtaev, Ambassador of Uzbekistan to Pakistan, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online

## Ombudsman Multan Hosts Seminar to Boost Public Complaint Redressal Awareness

**Quratulain Asim**

MULTAN: On the instructions of the Provincial Ombudsman Punjab, Advisor to the Provincial Ombudsman Multan Mahmood Javed Bhatti organized a "Public Awareness Seminar" at the Municipal Committee Office Shujaabad. On this occasion, Advisor to the Provincial Ombudsman Multan 2 Waqar Hussain was also present. In the awareness seminar, Mahmood Javed Bhatti, Advisor to the Ombudsman said that the institution of the Provincial Ombudsman Punjab is striving for the immediate redressal



of public complaints regarding all government institutions of the province, where citizens are being resolved in a short time as soon as they file a complaint without a lawyer. Assistant Associate of the Regional Office of the Ombudsman Punjab, Moaz Hassan Bakhtiar, also participated in the awareness seminar. Advisor to the Provincial Ombudsman Multan Mahmood Javed Bhatti further said that in case of complaints against any provincial department, the public can also send their complaints to the regional office of the Provincial Ombudsman or the head office in Lahore by post.



A group pic of Renowned Social Worker and Humanitarian Nina Khan (Mashriqi) who attended the marriage ceremony of the Niece of Former Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gillani.

## Muzaffarabad Intensifies City Beautification Drive Following High-Level Meeting

**Bureau Report**



MUZAFFARABAD: A meeting was held on Wednesday under the chairmanship of Commissioner Muzaffarabad Division Badar Munir to review the progress of the ongoing campaign for the beautification of Muzaffarabad city in accordance with the vision of the Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir and the directions of the Chief Secretary of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The meeting was attended by Chief Engineer Central Design Office, Deputy Commissioner Muzaffarabad, Regional Heads and Representatives of National Bank of Pakistan, Kashmir Bank, United Bank, Habib Bank, Allied Bank and Agriculture Development Bank. The meeting took a detailed review of the steps taken so far for the beautification and renovation of the city and it was decided that the work of beautification of the city will be further accelerated. A comprehensive plan has been prepared to beautify the city of Muzaffarabad in accordance with the vision of the Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir and the directions of the Chief Secretary. In which all departments will play a role by utilizing their resources. The Central Design Office has prepared a plan to beautify Bank Square, which will be completed with the help of Bank Hai.

## "Pakistan's diplomatic efforts praised as key to potential US-Iran de-escalation"

**City Desk**

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Chairman Senate, Syedal Khan Nasar, on Wednesday termed the possible ceasefire and the opening of direct negotiations between United States and Iran as a major and historic diplomatic achievement of Pakistan, which is receiving widespread recognition at the global level.

Addressing the concluding session of the National Workshop Balochistan-19 (NWB-19) at Parliament House Islamabad, in honor of a 92-member delegation, he stated that Pakistan's political and military leadership played a highly effective, balanced, and prudent role in reducing decades-long mistrust between the two countries. This effort, he noted, helped avert the risk of a major global confrontation.

He emphasized that the resumption of dialogue between the United States and Iran after nearly half a century reflects the strength of Pakistan's realistic and peace-oriented foreign policy. This development, he added, has not only significantly reduced regional tensions but also contributed to global peace and stability, potentially saving countless human lives.

## TECNO CAMON 50 Launches in Pakistan

**Commerce Desk**

LAHORE: TECNO Mobile Pakistan has officially launched the TECNO CAMON 50, a feature-packed smartphone combining advanced AI, powerful imaging, and durable design for modern users. CAMON 50 smartphone comes with Aqua Mode for underwater photography, supported by IP68 and IP69K water and dust resistance, allowing users to capture clear images even in challenging environments. This makes the device ideal for both everyday use and outdoor adventures.



The smartphone features a 50MP Sony Ultra Clear Camera, paired with an 8MP ultra-wide lens, delivering sharp details and vibrant colors across different scenarios. A 32MP front camera ensures high-quality selfies and video calls. Moreover, AI-powered features like Auto Zoom and Best Moments enhance photography effortlessly.

## SECP issues guidebook for NBFCs to Promote Halal Lending

**Commerce Desk**

ISLAMABAD: Aimed at making loans accessible to people who avoid interest (riba), the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan has issued a practical guidebook to help lending Non-Banking Finance Companies (NBFCs) structure Shariah-compliant financing products.



The guideline provides guidance to NBFCs to develop and offer halal financing options for people who do not use conventional bank loans. It will enable consumers to access Shariah-compliant products such as installment plans, micro-loans, and housing finance.

Shariah-compliant digital financing will expand access for underserved groups, enabling low-income households, small businesses, farmers, freelancers, and gig workers to obtain financing more easily without traditional credit histories. The Shariah compliant lending products are based on risk-sharing and asset-backed

models, promoting responsible and ethical finance while reducing the chances of exploitation and hidden charges.

There is a growing market demand for Islamic financial services. This initiative is expected to enhance competition in the non-bank financial sector. As more NBFCs offer Islamic financing products, customers will benefit from better pricing, improved transparency, and higher service standards.

Currently, five Lending NBFCs are fully Shariah-certified and are offering products in areas such as Buy-Now-Pay-Later (BNPL), nano-lending, housing finance, and microfinance. Several other companies have also approached SECP for guidance on

developing Shariah-compliant products.

SECP's analysis of 265 products offered by 89 Lending NBFCs shows that around 16 to 17 percent of existing products are already Shariah-compliant, indicating strong momentum in the sector.

The SECP has been implementing a Strategic Action Plan to support Pakistan's transition towards a Shariah-compliant financial system, in line with constitutional requirements and the directives of the Federal Shariat Court. The guidebook is available on the SECP website at <https://www.secp.gov.pk/document/shariah-compliant-financing-by-lending-nbfc-a-detailed-guidebook-for-product-structuring/>.

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# Islamabad Dialogue: PM and Field Marshal Steer Pakistan to Diplomatic Victory

The Islamabad Dialogue between the United States and Iran is significant not for producing a final agreement but for occurring at all under extreme circumstances shaped by war and crisis. The situation began on February 28, 2026, when the United States and Israel launched Operation Epic Fury, a large-scale assault targeting Iran's nuclear, missile, and command systems. The attack killed Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and other top officials, sparking widespread mourning and anger, and prompting Iran to retaliate with heavy missile strikes on US and Israeli targets. The conflict quickly escalated into a deadly stalemate with thousands of casualties, including nearly two hundred children killed in a school strike in Minab. Iran further intensified the crisis by disrupting global oil supplies through the Strait of Hormuz, triggering worldwide economic instability. Pakistan, due to its shared border with Iran and reliance on energy routes through the strait, faced immediate threats ranging from economic disruption to regional instability and potential spillover into Balochistan, making the conflict a direct national security concern.

With traditional global institutions unable to secure peace, Pakistan assumed a central diplomatic role, leveraging its relationships with both Washington and Tehran. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif framed the conflict as a humanitarian crisis while pushing for a ceasefire, and Field Marshal Asim Munir used strong

backchannel ties with both the Trump administration and Iranian military leadership to facilitate communication. His rapport with President Donald Trump and coordination with the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps positioned Pakistan as a credible intermediary. After weeks of diplomacy, including coordination with China, Pakistan secured a breakthrough on April 7, 2026, achieving a fragile two-week ceasefire backed by Chinese security assurances to Iran. This pause enabled direct negotiations in Islamabad beginning April 10-11, where high-level delegations led by US Vice President J. D. Vance and Iran's parliamentary speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, along with key officials like Jared Kushner, Steve Witkoff, and Abbas Araghchi, engaged in 21 hours of intense talks at the Serena Hotel under Pakistani mediation. Despite serious engagement, deep divisions remained, with Iran demanding reparations, release of \$27 billion in frozen assets, and an end to hostilities, while the US insisted on reopening the Strait of Hormuz and ending Iran's nuclear enrichment program. The talks concluded on April 12 without agreement, with both sides blaming each other, but despite the lack of a deal, the dialogue itself was widely seen as a major diplomatic success for Pakistan.

The victory for Pakistan lies not in the signatures on a dotted line, but in the

very fact that the dotted line existed in Islamabad at all. For Pakistan, a nation that has often struggled with international isolation, FATF grey lists, and travel advisories warning of terrorism and instability, to host the Vice President of the United States and the Speaker of the Iranian Parliament simultaneously is a seismic shift in global perception.

The entire world was watching Pakistan, and for once, the headlines were not about bomb blasts in Peshawar or political instability in Lahore. Instead, the world saw a professionally managed, secure, and neutral venue where implacable enemies sat down face-to-face. The efforts of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Asim Munir have been lauded across the diplomatic spectrum. The White House, through Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt, praised Pakistan's "sincere efforts" to open channels of communication, while President Trump himself acknowledged the role of the Pakistani leadership in securing the initial ceasefire. The Iranian Foreign Ministry, despite the failure to reach a deal, expressed "gratitude and appreciation" for the "tireless efforts" of Sharif and Munir to end the war, a remarkable concession of praise coming from a nation that had just lost its Supreme Leader to American bombs.

The pride felt by the Pakistani nation is palpable and justified. For decades,

the people of Pakistan have endured a complex, often painful, international image. They have been told that their country is a "dangerous" place, a haven for militants, a failing economy. Yet, during the Islamabad Dialogue, they saw their Prime Minister and their Army Chief being thanked by the White House and praised by Tehran. They saw their flag waving next to the Stars and Stripes and the Iranian tricolor. This psychological uplift is a victory in itself. The civil-military leadership demonstrated a rare and potent harmony. While Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif provided the political legitimacy and the public-facing humanitarian appeal for the talks, Field Marshal Asim Munir provided the security backing and the direct military-to-military trust that allowed the negotiations to proceed. Together, they steered Pakistan away from the rocks of war and toward the shores of diplomatic relevance. The people of Pakistan feel proud that their country is now strong enough, reliable enough, and trusted enough to mediate the most intractable conflicts of the modern age. The journey from a state of isolation to a state of trust is long and arduous, but the Islamabad Dialogue has proven that Pakistan has not only completed that journey but is now ready to guide others along the same path. For Shehbaz Sharif and Asim Munir, this is not just a diplomatic victory; it is the foundation of a legacy that will define Pakistan's role in the 21st century as a bridge between East and West, between enemies, and between war and peace.



Analysis

Abdul Basit Alvi

## UNSC's dysfunction driven by veto power, Pakistan says; rejects new permanent seats

Reaffirming its consistent policy, Pakistan has called for the abolition or severe restriction of the veto power and strongly opposed any expansion of permanent membership in the UN Security Council.

Speaking in a resumed session of the long-running Intergovernmental Negotiations (IGN) aimed at reforming the 15-member Council, Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, permanent representative of Pakistan to the UN, said that Islamabad stands for broadening non-permanent seats to counter balance the veto's blocking power.

"Increased number of elected members will tilt the balance away from the permanent members," he told member states in a session devoted to discussing the 'Question of Veto'.

"We firmly believe that the paralysis that we see often at the Security Council leading to inaction on crucial matters related to international peace and security stems from the misuse or abuse of the veto power by the permanent members," the Pakistani envoy said.

"Any expansion of the veto or addition of new individual permanent members is firmly opposed, as more vetoes would only aggravate the problem," Ambassador Asim Ahmad said, adding, "This is a position of principle."

Full-scale negotiations to reform the Security Council began in the General Assembly in February 2009 on five key areas — the categories of membership, the question of veto, regional representation, size of an enlarged Security Council, and working methods of the council and its relationship with the General Assembly.

Progress towards restructuring the Security Council remains blocked as G-4 countries — India, Brazil, Germany and Japan — continue to push for permanent seats in the Council, while the Italy/Pakistan-led Uniting for Consensus (UfC) group opposes any additional permanent members, arguing it would create "new centers of privilege".

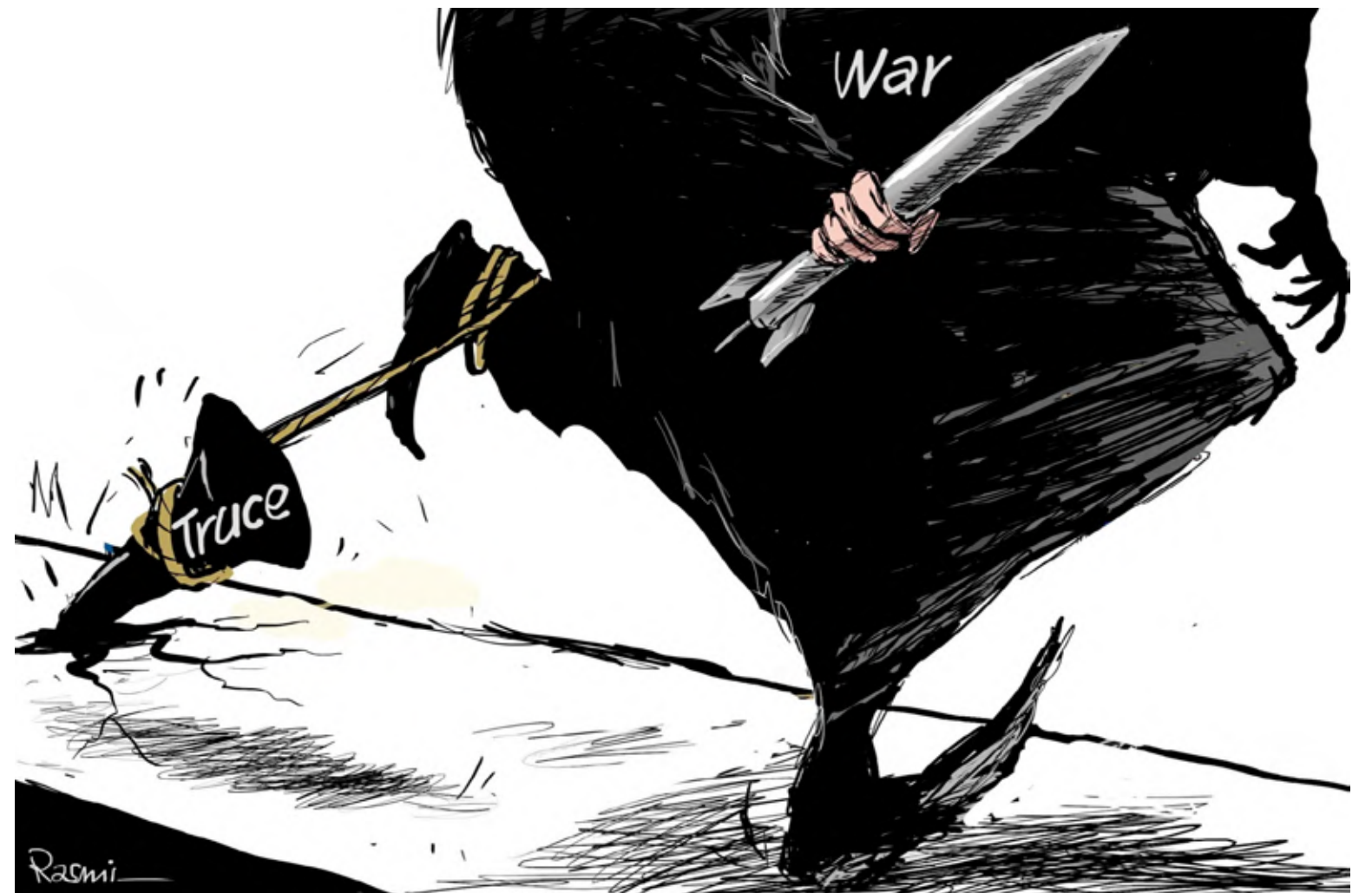
As a compromise, UfC has proposed a new category of members — not permanent members — with longer duration in terms and a possibility to get re-elected.

The Security Council is currently composed of five permanent members — Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States — and 10 non-permanent members elected to two-year terms.

"How can this dichotomy be defended", the Pakistani envoy asked. "The problem cannot be the solution."

Pakistan, he added, supports efforts to enhance accountability and transparency in the use of the veto, including existing mechanisms enabling the General Assembly to review and debate it.

"When a permanent member blocks action that was backed by a broad majority, the veto becomes more isolated and harder to justify, increasing accountability and reputational costs."



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

## Pakistan's Peace Window Reopens

After a tense pause in talks between Iran and the United States held in Islamabad on April 11, and to the relief of the entire world, diplomacy has not died; it has simply entered a more difficult and consequential phase, with Pakistan once again emerging as the venue where war-weary rivals may still search for an exit.

The collapse of the first round of direct U.S.-Iran talks in Pakistan did not end diplomacy. It exposed how far apart the two sides still are, but it also showed that both Washington and Tehran believe the crisis is too dangerous to leave to military logic alone. On April 14, President Donald Trump said a second round of talks in Pakistan could happen "over the next two days," while U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres called it "highly probable" that negotiations would restart. Pakistan's finance minister, Muhammad Aurangzeb, also said the country's leadership was "not giving up" and would keep pursuing dialogue.

That is the real story of the moment. The first session in Islamabad may have ended without a deal, but it was not a diplomatic failure in the larger sense. Vice President JD Vance himself struck a more optimistic tone on April 14, saying negotiators had made "a ton of progress," that Iranian negotiators appeared to want a deal, and that he felt "very good" about where things stood. That is a very different message from a final rupture. It suggests the breakdown was procedural and substantive, not terminal. The gap remains wide, especially over enrichment, inspections, and access, but the process is alive.

Pakistan's importance has therefore grown rather than diminished. It hosted the first direct U.S.-Iran discussion in nearly half a century, won public praise from Guterres, and is now being openly discussed again as the venue for the next

round. In diplomacy, trust is measured less by ceremony than by repetition. If two adversaries return to the same table in the same country after a failed first round, that country has already scored a quiet but significant success. Pakistan's role is no longer symbolic; it is becoming operational. The reason the world cares so intensely is obvious. The war has already imposed a severe economic shock. Reuters reported that Wall Street rallied sharply on April 14 because investors interpreted talk of renewed negotiations as a sign that the worst-case scenario might still be avoided. The S&P 500 rose 1.17%, the Nasdaq jumped 1.95%, and Brent crude fell 4.6% to \$94.79 while WTI dropped nearly 8% to \$91.20. Markets were not celebrating peace; they were pricing in the possibility that diplomacy might prevent a wider catastrophe.

The IMF's warning makes the stakes even clearer. It cut its 2026 growth forecast for the Middle East and North Africa to 1.1%, with Iran's economy projected to contract 6.1%, and warned that the conflict is already inflicting broad damage through disrupted shipping, damaged infrastructure, and energy insecurity. In other words, this is no longer a regional war with merely regional costs. It has become a global economic threat touching inflation, shipping, fertilizer, fuel, and food systems far beyond the battlefield.

That is why the Strait of Hormuz remains central to everything. About one-fifth of the world's oil trade normally passes through that corridor, and both the war and the subsequent U.S. blockade of Iranian ports have turned it into the most sensitive chokepoint in the global economy. Reuters reported that Britain and France are now preparing a 40-country diplomatic effort focused on restoring freedom of navigation, while refusing to simply fold themselves into the American approach. That alone tells us

how far the crisis has widened: even close U.S. allies are now building parallel frameworks to contain the fallout.

Iran, for its part, is also signaling that it has not shut the door. Tehran continues to insist on its rights under international law and rejects maximalist U.S. demands, but its willingness to return to talks in Pakistan indicates that it still sees diplomacy as useful, especially if the alternative is a prolonged economic siege and continued strategic pressure. Guterres' remarks, Pakistan's continued engagement, and Trump's own public comments all point in the same direction: neither side believes this crisis can be settled quickly through coercion alone.

Parallel diplomacy is also unfolding on another front, though with far less certainty. Israel and Lebanon held their first direct talks in decades in Washington on April 14, under U.S. auspices and with Secretary of State Marco Rubio participating. The talks produced agreement to continue discussions, but they also immediately revealed their core weakness: Hezbollah rejects the track, and rocket fire resumed even as diplomacy was being launched. That does not make the talks meaningless, but it does mean they cannot by themselves end the violence unless they eventually alter the military and political calculations of the armed actors on the ground.

The next 48 hours matter because they will test whether the first Islamabad round was merely an opening probe or the foundation of a real process. If talks resume, markets will likely read that as the strongest signal yet that a broader settlement remains possible. If they do not, the war economy, maritime insecurity, and political fragmentation now spreading from Tehran to Washington to Europe will deepen. For now, the most important fact is simple: the door is still open, and Pakistan is still holding it.

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

## Visionary Leadership in Population Welfare: The Story of Chaudhry Muhammad Naeem

District Health and Population Welfare Officer Toba Tek Singh Chaudhry Muhammad Naeem is widely recognized as a hard-working, honest and courteous officer. His personality reflects not only professional excellence but also strong moral values, which distinguish him among his peers. He performs his official duties with utmost integrity and considers public service his foremost priority. His tireless efforts and dedication are clearly contributing to the improved performance of the department. Chaudhry Muhammad Naeem is among those officers who

experts, social workers and religious scholars in these programs to ensure a comprehensive and balanced message. He strongly believes that sustainable solutions can only be achieved when all segments of society work together.

He has also paid special attention to women's health and well-being, recognizing the vital role women play in family planning. In this regard, he has arranged dedicated sessions and training programs for women, focusing on health, nutrition and family planning awareness. These efforts have helped empower women to make informed decisions about their health.

Chaudhry Muhammad Naeem also emphasizes the importance of educating the younger generation, as they are the foundation of the future. To achieve this, he has organized awareness lectures in educational institutions, informing students about population-related challenges and their solutions. These activities have played a key role in raising awareness among youth and encouraging them to take this national issue seriously.

Under his leadership, the Health and Population Welfare Department in Toba Tek Singh is functioning effectively and efficiently. His initiatives have not only increased public awareness but have also led to a positive shift in attitudes toward family planning. His work demonstrates that with sincerity of purpose and strong determination, even the most complex challenges can be addressed.

Undoubtedly, officers like Chaudhry Muhammad Naeem are a source of pride for any department. His services are not only praiseworthy but also serve as an inspiration



Analysis

Zafar Chishti

His contributions in the field of population welfare are particularly commendable. Rapid population growth has become a major challenge not only for Pakistan but for many countries around the world and it requires effective and timely interventions. Recognizing the seriousness of this issue, Chaudhry Muhammad Naeem has taken proactive steps to raise public awareness. He has organized seminars, corner meetings and awareness campaigns in various areas to educate people about the importance of family planning. These initiatives have reached not only urban populations but also rural communities, where awareness is often limited. He has involved health

# Ireland's St. Patrick's Day Reception in Islamabad strengthens Pakistan-Ireland ties

## Pakistan President Extends Warm St. Patrick's Day Greetings to Ireland

By Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of Ireland in Islamabad marked St. Patrick's Day with a reception held at the Serena Hotel, bringing together members of the diplomatic community, government officials, and other distinguished guests.

The event was attended by several distinguished personalities, including Chief Guest Shaza Fatima Khawaja, Federal Minister for IT and Telecommunication, alongside members of the diplomatic corps and civil society representatives.

The event held in honour of Ireland's National Day provided a meaningful opportunity to advance bilateral ties and celebrate the longstanding cultural connections between the two countries.

Ireland's Ambassador to Pakistan, Mary O'Neill, welcomed guests and reflected on Ireland's shared historical experiences of colonisation, conflict, and poverty, noting how these have shaped the country's commitment to the United Nations Charter and the promotion of human rights globally.

Speaking at the occasion, the Ambassador acknowledged Pakistan's role in promoting peace and dialogue, paying tribute to the government's recent efforts in mediation.

She echoed the sentiments of Ireland's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Helen



McEntee, who has commended Pakistan's contributions towards peace building.

The Ambassador also highlighted Ireland's longstanding engagement with the European Union, noting that over 50 years of EU membership has contributed significantly to peace and prosperity in Ireland.

She further shared that Ireland will hold the Presidency of the European Union from July this year.

The event was attended by a number of prominent figures, including Chief Guest Shaza Fatima Khawaja, Federal Minister for IT and Telecommunication, along with



members of the diplomatic corps and civil society.

The reception marked

Ireland's national day and served as an opportunity to strengthen bilateral ties and

celebrate cultural connections between Ireland and Pakistan.

Meanwhile: President Asif Ali Zardari extended his warm felicitations to the President of Ireland, Catherine Connolly, and to the people of Ireland on the occasion of St. Patrick's Day.

In a message on St. Patrick's Day observed on March 17, he said, "This day carries deep meaning for people in Ireland and for Irish communities around the world. It is a time to celebrate history, faith and traditions, and to uphold values of peace, forgiveness and generosity. Across the globe, many join in the celebration, sharing in the spirit of this day."

"While this day is marked

by music, festivity and the warmth of Irish traditions, we must also remember that the world beyond our celebrations is marked by sorrow and suffering," he said adding, "Across West Asia, hundreds of thousands of families are living through death, destruction and devastation by the war imposed on them while their homes, places of work and agricultural fields are destroyed."

He said, "The story of Saint Patrick himself is not only one of faith but of transformation, healing and reconciliation. Saint Patrick, who knew incarceration and hardships, also returned with a message of forgiveness and hope rather than revenge."

"In these troubling times, his legacy tells us that the true test of humanity is not how fiercely we fight, but how courageously we pursue peace. May this day inspire us to renew our commitment to compassion, dialogue, diplomacy and the dignity of every human life," he remarked.

He said Pakistan and Ireland share a commitment to multilateralism and peace. Relations between our countries are built on mutual respect and common values of peace and prosperity for all.

"I am confident that the friendship between our countries will continue to grow and I convey my best wishes to the

President of Ireland and the Irish people for a joyous St. Patrick's Day," he concluded.

Photos by Sultan Bashir

# Al-Shifa Trust eye camps treat 665,000 patients in one year

Spokesman Report

RAWALPINDI: Al-Shifa Trust's community outreach programmes reached more than 665,000 patients in the financial year 2024-25, while the organisation also launched a mobile operation theatre developed in collaboration with Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) to provide free eye surgeries in remote communities where fixed hospitals remain inaccessible.

While briefing media, President of Al-Shifa Trust Maj. Gen. (Retd) Rehmat Khan said that the Al-Shifa Centre for Community Ophthalmology (ACCO), set up over 1,400 eye camps, screened more than 420,000 patients and 244,000 schoolchildren for vision defects, and performed 13,777 surgeries, mostly cataract procedures in one year.

It also screened over 38,000 patients for hypertension and diabetes, reflecting a widening scope beyond ophthalmology, he added.

He informed that the newly commissioned mobile theatre comprises two specialised truck units. The first houses a generator, sterilisation equipment, and pre-operative facilities. The second expands into a full operating environ-



ment with two surgical tables, allowing surgeons to operate simultaneously and perform up to 100 surgeries per day.

MD of OGDCL Ahmed Hayat Lak

said the company has sponsored 160 surgical camps since 2017, enabling 28,000 surgeries, treating 260,000 patients, and screening 75,000 school-

children.

General Manager ACCO Dr. Hafiz Muhammad Najam-ul-Hasnat said over the past 25 years, ACCO has



conducted approximately 150,000 surgeries across all four provinces as well as AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan. In FY 2024-25, the programme expanded internationally for the first time, serving 5,632 beneficiaries and performing more than 400 cataract operations in Somalia, with plans to extend services to Afghanistan and East Africa.

Following the 2025 monsoon floods, ACCO teams also reached more than 32,000 affected people in KPK and north and south Punjab, distributing medicines, glasses, and hygiene kits.

About 26 million people in Pakistan live with vision impairment, including 1.5 million who are blind and more than 3 million children facing preventable sight loss. Nearly 90 percent live in low-income areas with limited access to care.

Pakistan has only 15 ophthalmologists, five optometrists, and nine allied ophthalmic personnel per million people, highlighting the scale of unmet need and the limits of charity-driven models without sustained public health investment.

# OIC-COMSTECH and Huawei Forge Partnership to Launch Landmark ICT Academy for Youth Empowerment

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The OIC Ministerial Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (OIC-COMSTECH) and Huawei Technologies have officially signed a landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish the joint COMSTECH-Huawei ICT Academy, marking a major step toward strengthening digital capacity and youth empowerment across the 57 OIC member and 5 observer states.

The MoU signing ceremony was held on Wednesday at the OIC-COMSTECH Secretariat in Islamabad, where the COMSTECH-Huawei ICT Academy was also formally inaugurated.

The newly opened facility is equipped with advanced digital learning infrastructure, enabling virtual instruction, hands-on ICT training, and real-time collaboration for students and professionals across the OIC region.

The ceremony was graced by the Chairman of the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), Major General (R) Hafeez Ur Rehman as the Chief Guest. He commended the

initiative as a timely and strategic investment in the region's digital future, emphasizing its importance for strengthening Pakistan's ICT ecosystem and supporting broader capacity-building efforts across OIC member states.

Speaking on occasion, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General OIC-COMSTECH, highlighted that the MoU represents a transformative step toward achieving digital self-reliance across the OIC region. He noted that by leveraging the global expertise and technological leadership of Huawei Technologies, the initiative will enable the youth of member states to acquire cutting-edge skills and actively contribute to innovation-driven socio-economic development.

Speaking on the occasion, Ethan Sun, CEO Huawei Pakistan, stated: "Huawei is proud to partner with OIC-COMSTECH in launching the ICT Academy, which reflects our long-term commitment to empowering youth with the digital skills needed to thrive in the global economy."

Leadership of Huawei Technologies reaffirmed their strong

commitment to nurturing digital talent through initiatives such as the "Seeds for the Future" programme, emphasizing that the ICT Academy will serve as a vital platform for promoting inclusive digital transformation, strengthening cybersecurity capabilities, and advancing sustainable technological growth across the OIC countries.

The academy will serve as a central hub for blended learning, providing access to Huawei's global training ecosystem and supporting the delivery of high-quality courses in emerging technologies. This initiative strengthens OIC-COMSTECH's mission to expand digital education, promote scientific advancement, and accelerate technology adoption across developing member states.

Under the partnership, the OIC-COMSTECH-Huawei ICT Academy will offer specialized certifications in 5G, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Cloud Computing, and Cybersecurity, helping bridge the global talent gap and equipping young professionals with industry-ready skills.

The event concluded with a tour of the newly inaugurated



Academy, where participants observed live demonstrations of Huawei's digital learning

technologies and future-ready training modules. Ambassadors and senior diplomats from

Somalia, Malaysia, Morocco, Mauritius, Azerbaijan, Algeria, Brunei Darussalam along with

representatives of various international and national organisations attended the ceremony.

## Bull & Bears PSX 100-Share Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index		
Current	Prev. Close	
168,519.94	165,634.84	
Day's High	Day's Low	
170,640.26	168,182.98	
Index Value	Change	
48,473,360,446	+2885.10	
Percentage	Time	
+1.74%	15 Apr, 2026 4:30 pm	
Europe: FTSE 100 Index		
Index Value	Change	
10,559.58	-49.48	
Percentage	Time	
-0.47%	15 Apr, 4:35 pm GMT	
USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average		
Index Value	Change	
48,393.39	-142.60	
Percentage	Time	
-0.29%	15 Apr, 1:34 pm GMT-4	
Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average		
Index Value	Change	
58,134.24	+256.85	
Percentage	Time	
+0.44%	15 Apr, 3:45 pm GMT+9	
Open Market Forex Rates		
Australian Dollar	195.05	198.10
Australian Dollar	197.5	204.8
Bahrain Dinar	729	739.75
Canadian Dollar	201.4	210.9
China Yuan	36.45	37.55
Danish Krone	43.25	43.65
Euro	328.25	332.75
Hong Kong Dollar	35.25	36.15
Indian Rupee	2.03	2.22
Japanese Yen	1.7387	1.8386
Kuwaiti Dinar	880.50	891.30
Malaysian Ringgit	65.25	66.65
New Zealand \$	162.4	164.05
Norwegians Krone	27.65	27.95
Omani Riyal	723.65	734.10
Qatari Riyal	71.55	72.77
Saudi Riyal	74.35	75.4
Singapore Dollar	217.73	223.25
Swedish Korona	30.20	30.50
Swiss Franc	355	358.85
Thai Bhat	8.05	8.25
U. A. E Dirham	75.9	77
UK Pound Sterling	377.76	383.25
US Dollar	279.00	280

# ConnectHear takes Sign Language AI nationwide with GSMA and Ufone

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: South Asia's leading assistive technology startup, ConnectHear, marked another major milestone by hosting the "National Deployment of Sign Language AI for Public Broadcast" in collaboration with GSMA and Ufone at the Islamabad Serena Hotel. The event brought together key stakeholders from government, telecom, UN agencies, and the humanitarian sector to advance partnerships for accessible communication for the Deaf community at a national level.

The event also served as the closing ceremony of ConnectHear's GSMA supported Early Warning AI initiative, SUNO, showcasing key achievements while launching its next phase of nationwide deployment.

British High Commissioner Jane Marriott CMG OBE said: "SUNO is a powerful example of how inclusive, locally led, and AI-driven solutions can strengthen disaster preparedness and ensure people with disabilities have equal access to life-saving early warning information. The UK is proud to back innovations that leave no one behind, including the 10 million Deaf and hard of hearing individuals across Pakistan who have the potential to benefit from this technology."

Kimberly Brown, Head of Mobile for Humanitarian Innovation, highlighted the



significance of the initiative, stating "The GSMA Innovation Fund for Humanitarian Challenges exists to support solutions that move beyond pilots to deliver real, scalable impact, and that ConnectHear's work reflects this ambition: life saving information during

emergencies, setting a global benchmark for accessibility."

Syed Atif Raza, Chief Commercial Officer, PTCL and Ufone, emphasized "Technology must go beyond connectivity to enable access and inclusion for underserved segments. Ufone

leverages its digital expertise and nationwide footprint to ensure critical information reaches everyone, especially persons with disabilities, and that initiatives like SUNO are helping build an inclusive digital ecosystem where no one is left behind."

## Policy dialogues

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Board of Investment Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh Addresses Policy Dialogue on Strengthening Governance and Implementation Strategies for CPEC 2.0 at Institute of Regional Studies on Wednesday.



Photo: PID

## Salt exporters, customs officials agree on HS Code Fix to end repeated container inspections

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Pakistan's salt exporters and customs authorities have reached an understanding on two persistent hurdles undermining the industry's global reputation — damaged packaging caused by improper resealing of containers after port inspections, and the widespread misuse of a generic trade code that has triggered repeated scrutiny of consignments.

The consensus emerged during a meeting between the Salt Manufacturers Association of Pakistan (SMAP), led by Founder Chairman Ismail Suttar, and Collector of Customs (Exports) Rizwan Mahmood, accompanied by senior officials.

SMAP representatives, including Chairperson Saima Akhtar, Senior Vice Chairman Asim Yaqoob Paracha, and member

Zohaib Akhtar, conveyed that overseas buyers had raised concerns over consignments arriving with damaged packaging. Customs officials acknowledged the issue and further pointed out that incorrect HS code declarations were a major cause of frequent inspections.

Assistant Collector Asma Sikandar and Deputy Collector Usman Hameed Butt explained that many exporters were defaulting to the catch-all "Others" category (2501.00.90), instead of using the specific codes for table salt (2501.00.10) and rock salt (2501.00.20).

To bridge the gap in compliance, Rizwan Mahmood proposed an online training session via Zoom, led by a qualified customs official, to guide exporters on correct HS code usage and documentation standards.

## Wazirabad knife makers celebrate new International Mail Office Milestone

Commerce Desk

LAHORE: Very important business meeting was held in Wazirabad, especially for those engaged in manufacturing hunting knives, cutlery, and swords for export to the United States and Europe. An International Mail Office (IMO) has now been established in District Wazirabad, marking a significant milestone.

The credit for this achievement goes entirely to the Founder Chairman, Nadeem Ahmed Warraich, and his entire team of the newly established Hunting and Sporting Knife, Sword & Accessories Association. This was openly acknowledged by the chief guests, including Director General Pakistan Post, Samiullah Khan, and DG Anti-Narcotics, Brigadier Sikandar, along with others, during their speeches. DG Pakistan Post, Samiullah Khan, also specifically mentioned and appreciated Nadeem Ahmed Warraich by name.

On this important occasion, we extend our heartfelt congratulations to the entire business community and pray for the



success of this IMO. We also look forward to more welfare-oriented and leading initiatives from the platform of the Hunting and Sporting Knife Association that will contribute to the growth of the industry.

On this occasion, representatives of the Hunting and Sporting Knife, Sword & Accessories Association—including

Vice Chairman Kamran Bhutta, Founder Member Ayaz Mahmood Chand, and Executive Body Members Abdul Hameed (Darsan Wale), Irfan Butt, Saud-ul-Hasan, and Imran Shehzad Butt—presented hunting knife gifts to the guests. The gifts were highly appreciated and admired by the attendees

## CCP Authorizes Acquisition of Pakistani Aircraft Maintenance Firm by UAE-Based FZE

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has authorized the acquisition of a shareholding in M/s. Northern Technik (Private) Limited by UAE-based M/s. International Business Company FZE, paving the way for fresh foreign direct investment (FDI) in Pakistan's aviation services sector.

M/s. International Business Company FZE, incorporated in the United Arab Emirates on September 7, 2010, operates as an importer, exporter, and general trading enterprise, with additional consultancy services in business, marketing, and management.

The target company, M/s. Northern Technik (Private) Limited, incorporated in Pakistan on September 24, 2018, provides aircraft line



maintenance services to commercial airlines operating in the country. The seller, M/s. SPARS (Private) Limited, is a diversified local entity with interests spanning real estate, aviation, telecom, pharmaceuticals, information technology, construction, and engineering services.

The transaction involves the acquisition of a significant shareholding in Northern Technik, introducing foreign investment into a specialized and high-value segment of Pakistan's aviation ecosystem.

Following a Phase-I competition assessment conducted under Section 11 of the Competition Act, 2010, the Commission determined that the transaction is unlikely to raise any competition concerns.

For the purpose of the assessment, the CCP defined the relevant market as aircraft line maintenance services in Pakistan, noting that it remains fragmented, with multiple service providers, including airlines maintaining in-house capabilities alongside independent operators.

## Grand Unveiling Ceremony launches Pakistan's OOH Media Awards in Lahore

Tahir Amin Malik

LAHORE: A grand unveiling ceremony of the Out-of-Home (OOH) Media Awards was successfully held at the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI), Where huge Audience and distinguished guests with prominent leaders, experts, and business personalities from the outdoor advertising industry across the country watched the Unveiling Ceremony.

The event was organized by MYB Outdoor Advertising with the aim of promoting Pakistan's outdoor media industry, appreciating creativity, and recognizing outstanding performance in a trans-

parent manner. During the ceremony, speakers praised the initiative, stating that the OOH Media Awards will not only raise industry standards but also play a significant role in bringing new talent to the forefront.

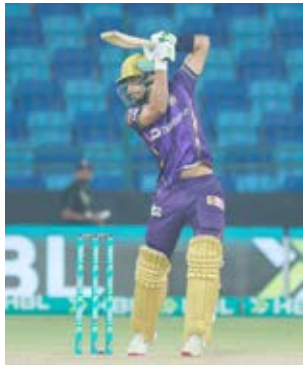
At the conclusion of the event, guests congratulated the organizers on the successful arrangement and expressed hope that these awards will become a credible benchmark for the outdoor media industry in the future. All the Guests gave the congratulation to Ch. Irfan, Chairman Out of Home Media Awards (OOH) and Waseem Hassan Awan Event Organizer to hold such a wonderful Ceremony.



# Pakistan Super League Cricket Championship Edition 11 Played at National Stadium Karachi

Asim Tanveer

KARACHI: Peshawar Zalmi Defeated Quetta Gladiators By 8 Wickets With a Brilliant Bowling and Batting. Pakistan Super League 11, Peshawar Zalmi confirms play-off, Quetta Gladiators also lost. The Peshawar Zalmi team, led by Babar Azam, has maintained its unbeaten record in the PSL. It has maintained its unbeaten record in its 7th match as well and thus has now become the first team to confirm a play-off berth with 13 points. It defeated the Gladiators by 8 wickets.



the 20th over. Hassan Nawaz was outstanding with 37 and Riley Rossouw with 26. Sufyan Muqeem took 3 wickets each for 25 and Muhammad Basit gave away 36 runs.



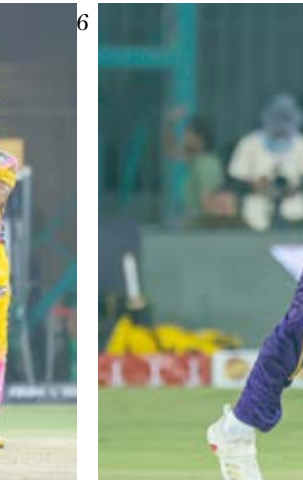
In reply, Peshawar Zalmi got off to a good start of 84 runs in less than 9 overs. Here Muhammad Haris made 35 off 28 balls. Babar Azam's form recovery came on track. He completed another half-century. Kusal Mendis scored 21 runs. When he was dismissed, Zalmi's score was 124 for 2 wickets.



Peshawar Zalmi achieved the target in 18.3 overs for 2 wickets and won the match by 8 wickets. Babar Azam remained unbeaten on 71 runs off 51 balls. He hit 10 fours. Saud Shakeel and Alzari Joseph took one wicket each.



PSL Points Table  
Peshawar Zalmi 13 points in 7 matches. First position  
Multan Sultans, 8 points in 6 matches, second position  
Islamabad United, 7 points in 6 matches, third position  
Karachi Kings, 6 points in 5 matches. Fourth position  
Quetta Gladiators 4 points in 6 matches. 5th position  
Hyderabad Kings 4 points in



matches, 6th position  
Lahore Qalandars, 4 points in 5 matches, 7th position  
Rawalpindi, zero points in 5 matches. 8th position  
PSL 11 Double Header Day  
Thursday, April 16. Hyder-



abad vs. Rawalpindi Play At National Stadium Karachi At 2-30 PM  
Thursday, April 16. Karachi Kings vs. Islamabad United Play At National Stadium Karachi at 7- PM

## Al-Noor Gymkhana Clinch Naveed Mehboob Azmi Memorial Cricket Tournament Title

Sports Desk

KARACHI: Naveed Mehboob Azmi's services for the promotion of cricket at grass root level are unforgettable and his services will always be remembered. These views were expressed by chief guest Khalid Nafees Chairman RCAA Tournament Committee while addressing the closing ceremony of Naveed Mehboob Azmi Memorial Inter Club T-20 Cricket Tournament Organized by Regional Cricket Association Karachi Zone-1. He congratulated Zone-1 Officials for organizing third tournament in short period and holding prize distribution ceremony in the ground itself and said that Zone-1 has set a brilliant example for others.



On this occasion Zone-1 President Ajmal Naseeb paid tribute to late Naveed Mehboob Azmi's services for promotion of Cricket in Zone-1, Test Cricketer Fawad Alam on this speech paid a rich tribute to late Naveed Mehboob Azmi's Services for the promotion of Cricket at grass root level. He further said that such people should come forward for the promotion of cricket.

in the ground and at this time PCB Zone-1 Inter Club Cricket Tournament Matches are in the progress. He announced that Zone-1 will continue to organize tournaments in future as well.

Arif Waheed Secretary Zone-1 given the details about the tournament and said before this Tournament we also organized two Tournaments successfully in the names of Asif Mehmood and Riazuddin and held its prize distribution ceremony

Earlier in the final match played at TMC Ground Al-Noor Gymkhana defeated Airport Gymkhana by 56 in the Final. Al-Noor Gymkhana 178/4 in allotted 20 overs. Test Cricketer Fawad

Alam scored 69 with 7x4, Farrukh Rizvi 29 not out, Ammar Iqbal 29. Muhammad Raza 2/37. In reply Airport Gymkhana 122 all-out in 17.2 overs Bahadur Ali 69 r 7x4 4x6. Ahsan Jamil took 3/ 27, Farhan Anwar 2/5, Asad Baig 2/18 Afnan Ahmed took 2/24.

At the end of the match Chief Guest Khalid Nafees distributed prizes among

the players. Winner Trophy received by Alnoor Gymkhana Skipper Test Cricketer Fawad Alam while runner trophy was received by Airport Gymkhana Captain Bahadur Ali.

The ceremony was also attended by Zone-1 Treasurer Tariq Hafeez Siddiqui, Zafar Ahmed, Dr. Arif Hafeez Media Coordinator and Muhammad Afzal Shery.

## Sjal Election, Aqeel Ahmed unanimously re-elected President for 2 years, Yousaf Anjum Secretary and Afzal Iftikhar Treasurer

Tahir Amin Malik

LAHORE: The Sports Journalists Association of Lahore (SJAL) held its Annual General Council meeting at the National Hockey Stadium, marking a significant day of reflection, remembrance, and reaffirmation of leadership.



The meeting was chaired by President Aqeel Ahmed, who was unanimously re-elected for another two-year term, alongside Yousaf Anjum as Secretary and Afzal Iftikhar as Treasurer. All office-bearers were elected unopposed, reflecting the members' confidence in the existing leadership.

The election process was overseen by Sarfraz Ahmed, Farrukh Atta Butt, and Rafiq Khan, who served as the Election Commission. Following unanimous support, Aqeel Ahmed was re-elected as President, Yousaf Anjum as Secretary, and Afzal Iftikhar as Treasurer. The newly elected body pledged to continue working for the welfare of members and the promotion of sports journalism.

Secretary Yousaf Anjum presented a detailed report covering the association's activities over the past two years. The report highlighted successful collaborations, including the London Media Match, and expressed gratitude to PCB Chairman Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi, Director Media Aamir Mir, and other officials for their support in promoting

The session began with Fateha (prayers) for departed relatives of members, including the father-in-law of former President Aamir Raza, the father of member Akhlaq Aslam, as well as Raza Hamid, Raja Abrar, and Zain Malik. Special prayers were also offered for the recovery of Election Commission member Qayyum Zahid.

The meeting was attended by senior members including Shahid Sheikh, Zahid Maqsood, Sohail Ali, and Muhammad Yaqoob. Other notable participants included Sohail Imran, Chaudhry Ashraf, Sheikh Ijaz, Ihtesham-ul-Haq, Zulqarnain Sheikh, Shehzad Malik, Rana Azar, Mian Asghar Saleemi, Hafiz Shahbaz, Qadir Khawaja, Taqweem Millat Shah, Azhar Masood, Aaqib Qureshi, Shakeel

Khattak, and Chiragh Baloch. The association also congratulated Anjad Aziz Malik on being appointed as Lifetime Honorary Executive Member of the Association of International Press, terming it a proud achievement for Pakistani sports journalists.

Congratulations from Sports Fraternity  
The newly elected SJAL body received congratulatory messages from across the sports community:

- Major General (R) Muhammad Akram Sahi, Chairman South Asian Athletics
- Brigadier (R) Wajahat Hussain Sahi, President Athletics Federation of Pakistan
- Colonel (R) Shahjahan, Secretary Athletics Federation of Pakistan
- Chaudhry Arshad Sattar, President Pakistan Wrestling Federation, and Inam Butt, Secretary
- Bilal Muqet, President Lahore East Zone Cricket Association.

### Neglected Heritage

Trader leader raises alarm over deteriorating Circular Road in Multan

Zain Khan Malghani

Riaz Shaheen, a prominent traders' leader from Bohar Gate Urdu Bazaar, has demanded the immediate removal of a filth depot established adjacent to Haram Gate Girls High School. He stated that the filth and



stench are not only severely affecting the academic environment but are also causing immense distress to residents of the nearby locality. He further said that the foul smell emanating from the depot engulfs the entire school, posing serious health risks to the students. Several female students, he claimed, are increasingly falling victim to diseases such as hepatitis, which is a matter of grave concern.

Riaz Shaheen appealed to the Commissioner Multan to take immediate notice of this critical public issue and order the relocation of the filth depot, so that students can be provided with a safe and healthy educational environment and local residents can be relieved from the unbearable stench and pollution.

Drawing on his experience and seasoned insight, Chaudhry stated that divisional leadership particularly the office of the Commissioner must prioritize resolving core civic issues alongside urban beautification. "While the renovation of Nungana Chowk has its importance, the real need lies in restoring Multan's historic Circular Road, which is not just the city's identity but its very lifeline," he remarked.

He highlighted that millions of citizens visit the area daily for business and shopping, yet the road remains in a deplorable state. "The true heart of Multan—from Bohar Gate, Haram Gate, Delhi Gate, Pak Gate to Khooni Burj—presents a picture of neglect. Broken roads, stagnant sewage water, and centuries-old gates awaiting restoration for over a hundred years reflect administrative indifference," he added.

Chaudhry further criticized the apparent imbalance in development priorities, noting that newly developed avenues such as Avenue Road continue to receive attention despite already being in relatively better condition. Meanwhile, the inner-city trading hubs where the economic pulse of Multan beats, are being consistently ignored.

He request the CM Punjab to order Commissioner Multan to personally visit Circular Road, asserting that only then would the true condition of the city's historic and commercial core become evident.

## Visionary Leadership in Population Welfare: The Story of Chaudhry Muhammad Naeem

Continued from Page 4

for others. His dedication, integrity and passion for public service ensure that he will continue to serve with the same commitment and contribute to the betterment of society.

An important aspect of his professional career is his excellent administrative capability. Despite limited resources, he consistently achieves maximum results. He maintains close coordination with his team and ensures that every officer and staff member clearly understands their responsibilities. His leadership style promotes discipline while also boosting the morale of his team, resulting in a highly motivated workforce. He has also focused on the use of modern technology to ensure timely and effective dissemination of information to the public. By utilizing social media, digital

campaigns and other platforms, he has significantly expanded the reach of family planning messages, particularly among the youth an essential segment for societal progress. Furthermore, Chaudhry Muhammad Naeem strongly believes in interdepartmental collaboration. He works closely with various government and non-government organizations to develop joint strategies for achieving population welfare goals more effectively. This approach reflects his understanding of the importance of collective efforts.

Another notable aspect of his service is his prompt attention to public complaints. He not only listens to people's issues but also takes swift action to resolve them, further strengthening public trust. These qualities make him an exemplary public servant whose contributions will be remembered for years to come.

## Over a million banking accounts of world's 100 largest banks compromised in 2025: Kaspersky

Islamabad: Financial cyberthreats shifting toward credential theft and data reuse. According to Kaspersky Digital Footprint Intelligence (DFI), in 2025 over one million online banking accounts served by the world's 100 largest banks fell victim to infostealers: credentials for these accounts were being freely shared on the dark web. The countries with the highest median number of compromised accounts per bank were India, Spain, and Brazil.

and identified by Kaspersky DFI team in 2025, remained valid as of March 2026. This means that attackers could still use cards that had been stolen months or even years prior.

74% of payment cards that were compromised by infostealer malware, published on dark web resources

Attackers are moving away from traditional PC banking malware and increasingly relying on social engineering and dark web marketplaces, while mobile financial malware continues to grow.

In 2025, the decline in users affected by financial PC malware continued as users increasingly rely on mobile devices to manage their finances. Contrary to PC

banking malware, mobile banker attacks grew by 1.5 times in 2025 compared to the previous year. Detailed information on current financial cyberthreat trends is available in Kaspersky's new report.

Traditional financial phishing has not gone away. Pages that mimicked e-shops dominated the financial phishing landscape with 48.5% in 2025, up 10.3% from 2024, followed by banks with 26.1% in 2025, down by 16.5% from 2024 and payment systems with 25.5% share in 2025, up by 6.2% from 2024.

Attackers are adapting campaigns to

regional digital habits. In the Middle East, financial phishing is overwhelmingly concentrated on e-commerce with 85.8%, indicating a heavy reliance on online retail lures, whereas in Africa bank-related phishing leads with 53.75% which may indicate that user account security there is still insufficient. Latin America shows a more balanced distribution but with a higher share of e-commerce and bank targeting, while APAC and Europe display a more even spread across all three categories, pointing to diversified attack strategies.

## Meeting

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari chairs a meeting on water resources management at Aiwan-e-Sadr on Wednesday.



Photo: PID

## President reviews water situation, calls for declared and transparent loadshedding

## News Desk

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari chaired a meeting on water resources management at Aiwan-e-Sadr today. The meeting reviewed issues related to water availability, governance and regional developments affecting Pakistan's water security.

The President expressed concern over the weaponisation of water by India by suspending the Indus

Waters Treaty. He noted that the attempt to use water as a political tool is a matter of serious consequence. He emphasised the importance of safeguarding Pakistan's water rights and ensuring that all necessary diplomatic and legal measures are pursued.

Addressing the issue of energy shortfalls linked to the regional situation, the President directed that all possible efforts be made to minimise load shedding across the

country. He stressed that any load management should be carried out strictly in a transparent and declared manner, in line with prior public announcements, so that citizens are fully informed and disruption is reduced.

The President also directed authorities to accelerate water conservation efforts across the country. He called for the swift implementation of rainwater harvesting initiatives at domestic, commer-

cial, and industrial levels, and directed that construction of small dams, recharge wells, and water storage infrastructure be expedited. The President emphasised that conserving water is a national imperative, particularly in the current regional climate.

Mr Muhammad Moeen Wattoo, Federal Minister for Water Resources; Mr Ahsan Iqbal Chaudhry, Federal Minister for Planning

Development and Special Initiatives; Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari, Federal Minister for Energy; Senator Rana Sanaullah Khan, Adviser to the Prime Minister on Political and Public Affairs and Inter Provincial Coordination; Senator Saleem Mandviwala; Senator Sherry Rehman; Secretary Water Resources; Chairman WAPDA and Pakistan Commissioner for Indus Water were present during the meeting.

## Saudi Arabia announces \$3 billion additional support, extends \$5 billion deposit, says Finance Minister

## Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, informed that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has committed USD 3 billion in additional deposits, with disbursement expected in the coming week.

According to a press release issued by the finance ministry here on Wednesday, the minister was talking to the media in Washington, D. C., on the sidelines of the World Bank-IMF Spring Meetings 2026.

He said the existing USD 5 billion Saudi deposit would no longer remain subject to

the earlier annual rollover arrangement and would instead be extended for a longer period. He shared important details regarding Saudi financial support for Pakistan and the government's external financing strategy.

Senator Aurangzeb said this support comes at a critical time for Pakistan's external financing needs and would help reinforce foreign exchange reserves and strengthen the country's external account.

He reiterated the government's commitment to maintaining reserves in line with its obligations to markets and under the IMF-supported



programme, including the objective of achieving around USD 18 billion in reserves, equivalent to approximately 3.3 months of import cover,

describing it as a "non-event," and reaffirmed that the government remained fully committed to meeting all upcoming external obligations and maturities on time. He emphasized that Pakistan's external financing plan is clearly defined and being implemented in a responsible and disciplined manner.

Referring to his engagements in Washington, Senator Aurangzeb said that he, along with the Governor, State Bank of Pakistan and Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States, had held a detailed meeting with Saudi Finance Minister, Mohammed bin Abdullah Al-Jadaan.

## Pakistan faces up to 16-hour outages in extreme heat

## Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is grappling with a worsening power crisis, with prolonged electricity outages of up to 16 hours reported across the country amid rising temperatures and surging demand.

Officials say the national power shortfall has reached around 6,500 megawatts, as demand climbs to approximately 22,000MW against a generation capacity of about 15,400MW.

The gap has triggered widespread load-shedding, with both urban and rural areas experiencing extended and, in many cases, unannounced outages, severely disrupting daily life

and economic activity.

Power generation from various sources remains insufficient. Hydro-power contributes around 1,500MW, thermal sources about 9,250MW, wind 1,200MW, solar 400MW, bagasse 200MW, and nuclear energy roughly 2,850MW.

Authorities say the situation has been exacerbated by regional tensions affecting energy supply, alongside a seasonal spike in electricity demand due to heat.

A spokesperson for the Power Division said load management of two to two-and-a-half hours is being scheduled between 5.00 p.m. and 1.00 a.m. to reduce reliance on expensive fuel. However, consumers report outages



far exceeding official schedules.

The Power Division has urged citizens to conserve electricity, particularly during nighttime hours, citing a sharp drop in hydropower generation due to reduced water releases from dams. Officials said nearly 1,991MW of hydel output was lost recently, worsening the crisis during peak demand.

In Lahore, electricity demand stands at around 3,000MW, while supply remains near 2,000MW, resulting in extensive outages affecting both busi-

nesses and households. Power supply has also been severely impacted in Sheikhupura, Gujranwala, Faisalabad and Sargodha.

In Quetta, outages range between 10 and 12 hours, extending up to 16 hours in interior Balochistan, compounding difficulties already caused by gas shortages.

In Karachi, power cuts lasting 10 to 12 hours have become routine in several areas, with even exempt localities facing outages under the pretext of faults.

## PM Shehbaz arrives in Jeddah on official visit to strengthen Pakistan-Saudi ties



## City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif arrived in Jeddah on Wednesday on an official visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), where he is scheduled to hold a key bilateral meeting with Crown Prince and Prime Minister of KSA, Mohammed bin Salman to discuss strengthening Pakistan-Saudi Arabia relations and regional developments.

Upon arrival at the airport, the prime minister and his delegation were warmly received by Governor of Makkah region, Saud bin Mishal bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Saudi Ambassador, Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki, and Ambassador of Pakistan to KSA,

Ahmed Farooq, a Prime Minister's Office news release said

During his stay in Jeddah, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is expected to hold a bilateral meeting with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. The two leaders will exchange views on enhancing bilateral cooperation in diverse sectors and review the evolving regional situation.

The prime minister is accompanied by a high-level delegation, including Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaulah Tarar, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Syed Tariq Fatemi, and the Prime Minister's spokesperson for foreign media Musharrarf Zaidi.

## SC directs PIA to pay 24-year pension to former employee

## News Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan on Wednesday ordered the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) to pay 24-year pension to a former employee.

The court also directed the Managing Director (MD) of the airline to appear in person if compliance is not ensured.

The case was heard by a three-member bench headed by Justice Shahid Waheed on a petition filed by former PIA employee Mustafa Ansari.

During the hearing, the employee's lawyer stated that his client had been retired under a scheme in 2002 and was granted pension and other

benefits under orders of the Sindh High Court. He argued that despite the court directives, arrears for the past 24 years had not been paid.

Justice Shahid Waheed questioned whether there was any law that allowed non-payment of pension, observing that other employees were receiving their pensions.

The PIA's counsel told the court that instructions would need to be obtained from the institution regarding the payment.

However, the bench warned that if the pension is not paid before the next hearing, the MD must appear personally before the court.

The hearing was adjourned until April 23.

## Punjab to launch 'Magnificent Punjab Tourism Internship Program' Phase II for 2,000 youth

## Bureau Report

LAHORE: The Government of Punjab has decided to launch Phase II of the "Magnificent Punjab Tourism Internship Program," aiming to expand opportunities for young people while boosting the province's tourism sector.

According to official details, 2,000 interns will be inducted under the second phase of the programme. The intake will be divided into four batches of 500 interns each, ensuring structured training and gradual deployment across various tourism-related projects.

The government has proposed a financial outlay of Rs360 million for stipends to be paid to the interns.

In addition, Rs80 million has been earmarked for the procurement of IT equipment and software to support digital learning and operational

needs.

A further Rs40 million has been allocated for services and practical training, with authorities emphasizing hands-on experience to equip participants with industry-relevant skills.

Officials said the initiative is designed to promote tourism in Punjab while simultaneously creating employment opportunities for the youth. The programme is also expected to enhance professional capacity in areas such as hospitality, cultural promotion, and digital tourism management.

In the first phase of the programme, 1,000 interns were successfully inducted, laying the groundwork for the expanded second phase.

