



# Daily The Spokesman

A Leading National Daily



فرمان رسول ﷺ

ہم سے اس میں بن عبد اللہ نے بیان کیا، انہوں نے کہا کہ مجھ سے لاہور سے بیان کیا، ان سے تاریخ نے بیان کیا اور ان سے عبد اللہ بن عمر رضی اللہ عنہما نے بیان کیا کہ نبی کریم صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم نے فرمایا کوئی شخص کسی دوسرے شخص کو اس کے پیچھے کی جگہ سے نہ اٹھائے کہ خود وہاں بیٹھ جائے۔ (بخاری، حدیث نمبر 6269)

Barkat Rice Mills (Pvt) Limited



## UN chief welcomes Israel-Lebanon ceasefire, urges full compliance with int'l law

The United Nations welcomed the announcement of a 10-day ceasefire between Lebanon and Israel, with Secretary-General Antonio Guterres expressing support for efforts to end the prolonged conflict.



## PM approves reduction in diesel price by Rs 32.12

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif Friday approved reduction in diesel price by Rs 32.12 to provide relief to the nation. After the approval, the price of diesel has decreased from Rs 385.54 to Rs 353.43. The Prime Minister said the impact of the reduction in oil prices will be transferred to the public as soon as possible.

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## Meeting

ANTALYA: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif held a bilateral meeting with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Türkiye on the sidelines of the 5th Antalya Diplomacy Forum (ADF 2026) on Friday.



Photo: Online

## PM welcomes ceasefire announcement in Lebanon



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday welcomed the announcement of a ceasefire in Lebanon, facilitated through bold and sagacious diplomatic efforts led by President Donald Trump.

In his post on 'X', the prime minister expressed the hope

that the announcement of ceasefire will pave the way for sustainable peace in the region. "Pakistan reaffirms its unwavering support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon, and will continue to support all efforts aimed at lasting peace in the region," the prime minister added.

## Ishaq Dar, Bangladesh's FM exchange views on Pakistan's role in facilitating Iran-US dialogue



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Friday met Foreign Minister of Bangladesh Dr. Khalilur Rahman, on the sidelines of Antalya Diplomacy Forum in Antalya, Türkiye.

During the meeting, they

discussed strengthening Pakistan-Bangladesh ties and exchanged views on regional developments, including Pakistan's role in facilitating dialogue.

Both sides look forward to their continued positive and forward-looking engagement, a statement issued by the Foreign Office Spokesperson said.

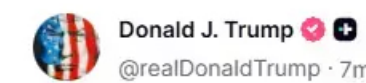
# Trump thanks PM Shehbaz, Field Marshal Munir after Hormuz reopening

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: US President Donald Trump has thanked Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir following Iran's announcement to reopen the Strait of Hormuz during the ongoing ceasefire.

In a series of posts on his social media platform Truth Social, Trump described the development as "a great day for the world" and praised Pakistan's leadership for playing a central role in mediating between the United States and Iran.

He referred to PM Shehbaz and



Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump · 7m

Thank you to Pakistan and its Great Prime Minister and Field Marshall, two fantastic people!!! President DONALD J. TRUMP

78

197

898

Field Marshal Asim Munir as "two fantastic people" and expressed his gratitude for their efforts.

The remarks came shortly after Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi announced that the vital waterway would remain

open for commercial shipping during the remaining period of the ceasefire.

Trump confirmed that while the Strait of Hormuz is now open and commercial activity has resumed, the US naval blockade

would remain in place and apply specifically to Iran.

He said restrictions on Iranian vessels would continue until a "100%" agreement is reached between Washington and Tehran.

The US president also claimed

that NATO had offered assistance after the situation de-escalated, but he rejected the proposal, criticising the alliance as ineffective when it was needed.

In a separate message, Trump thanked Gulf nations, including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar, for what he described as their "great bravery and help."

The developments follow a 40-day conflict triggered after US and Israeli strikes on Iran on February 28.

During the hostilities, Tehran had closed the Strait of Hormuz and warned enemy-linked commercial vessels against transit.

## Leghari welcomes reopening of Strait of Hormuz, expects relief in fuel prices

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Energy (Power Division) Sardar Awaiz Ahmed Khan Leghari on Friday welcomed the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz for commercial navigation, expressing hope that the development would lead to a reduction in fuel prices and improved energy availability in Pakistan.

In a message shared on social media platform X, the minister thanked Almighty Allah and said Pakistan had played a constructive role in promoting global peace under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of Army Staff Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir.

He noted that a ceasefire in Lebanon and the reopening of the key maritime route would positively impact global energy supplies.

The minister expressed confidence that the improved situation would help bring down petrol and diesel prices in the near future, while better availability of liquefied natural gas (LNG) would enhance electricity generation and ensure greater power supply across the country.

## PM, President Erdogan reaffirm resolve to strengthen strategic partnership

Spokesman Report

ANTALYA: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and President of Türkiye Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Friday reaffirmed their resolve to further strengthen the strategic partnership between Pakistan and Türkiye, building on fraternal ties, and a shared vision for peace and prosperity.

The meeting held on the sidelines of the 5th Antalya Diplomacy Forum in Antalya was attended by Deputy Prime Minister & Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Minister for Information Attaulah Tatar and other senior officials.

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan and other senior Turkish officials were also present.

During the warm and cordial meeting, President Erdogan

welcomed the Prime Minister to Türkiye and thanked him for his participation in the 5th Antalya Diplomacy Forum.

He praised the Prime Minister's peace efforts and said Türkiye would continue to support Pakistan's diplomatic initiative to bring peace to the region.

The Prime Minister thanked President Erdogan for his warm invitation and traditional Turkish hospitality extended to him and his delegation during his stay in Antalya.

He congratulated the Turkish President on the success of the 5th Antalya Diplomacy Forum, which he said, had transformed into an important global event.

The two leaders exchanged views on recent regional developments, particularly the evolving situation in the Middle East.

## Unannounced load-shedding continues despite govt directives

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's electricity shortfall has dropped to below 3,000 megawatts, but unannounced load-shedding continues to disrupt daily life across the country.

The power deficit has reduced by around 1,000MW in recent days following government intervention, yet consumers are still facing prolonged outages.

The crisis has persisted for over a week, affecting households and businesses alike.

Markets have been forced to close by 8pm, while educational institutions and offices remain shut on Fridays and Saturdays.

Despite these measures, unannounced power cuts continue to compound difficulties for citizens.

The federal government has taken notice of the situation and directed the Power Division to end unscheduled load-shedding. It has also instructed authorities to shift gas-based power plants to alternative energy sources to ease the burden.

However, outages remain in place, with urban areas experiencing up to three hours of load-shedding, while rural areas face cuts of up to four hours.

In Lahore, electricity demand stands at 2,700MW, but supply is limited to 2,300MW, leaving a shortfall of 400MW.

Authorities have increased load-shedding duration in high line-loss areas to manage the gap.

Officials say efforts are ongoing to stabilize supply, but challenges persist in fully meeting demand.

## Pakistan's mediation efforts thwart regional conflict; says Iranian minister



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Iran on Thursday has formally acknowledged Pakistan's key role in helping ease recent regional tensions, with Iranian Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni describing Islamabad's diplomatic intervention as "historic" during a high-level meeting in Tehran with Pakistan's Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi.

In the meeting, Momeni thanked Pakistan for mediating a ceasefire at a critical moment when the region appeared to be edging toward a broader conflict. He said Iran would "always remember"

Pakistan's sincere and positive role in preventing escalation, noting that the ceasefire was made possible through Islamabad's timely engagement.

Naqvi reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to regional stability, stressing that the country's foreign policy is rooted in the pursuit of peace. He said war could never resolve disputes and emphasized that lasting solutions can only be achieved through dialogue and diplomacy. He added that Pakistan is actively working with regional partners to find a durable settlement to ongoing tensions in the Middle East.

# AJK Prime Minister vows public welfare focus despite resource constraints

Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: The Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir, Faisal Mumtaz Rathore, has said that the present government is taking practical steps for the welfare of the public despite facing resource limitations. Addressing the oath-taking ceremony of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Forester/Forest Guard Association here today, Prime Minister Rathore said that decisions were being made keeping in view the ground realities and available resources. "Practical steps are being taken to protect the rights of farmers, laborers, and the poor," the prime minister said. The PPP government, he said, has always prioritized the solution of public problems in all circumstances. "The ad hoc employees are the responsibility of the government," he said, adding that tangible efforts were being made to



secure their future.

The AJK premier also hailed Pakistan's historic role in defusing tensions in the Middle East. He termed Israel's aggressive policies a threat to regional and world peace. "Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir's unprecedented role in bringing warring parties on the negotiating table is being appreciated all over the world," Rathore said, adding that

Field Marshal visited Iran to convey a message of peace and solidarity to the world. He said that Pakistan's political and military leadership was playing an exemplary role in establishing peace in the region and beyond. Earlier, Prime Minister Rathore administered the oath to the newly elected office bearers of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Forester/Forest Guard Association.

On this occasion, Minister for Forests of Azad Kashmir Sardar Javed Ayub, Secretary Forest Chaudhry Farid, Director General of Forests (Principal) Sardar Ifikhar Khan, Director General (Regional) Malik Asad Mahmood, Director General of Forests (Regional) Senior Adviser Raja Abid Khan, President Forest Guard Association Saleem Awan, local government represent-

## Solidarity

RAWALPINDI: A view of portraits of Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir displayed on panaflex, fixed on street lights poles on 6th Road overhead bridge in the city, with wording, We the guardians of peace, pay tribute to Field Marshal, Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir, and Prime Minister of Pakistan Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif for their efforts in promoting peace in the world and upholding the dignity of Pakistan.



Photo: Online

# AJK PM Rathore Stresses Inseparable Pakistan-Kashmir Bond at PPP Gathering

Spokesman Report

WAH CANTT: The Prime Minister Azad Kashmir Faisal Mumtaz Rathore, while highlighting the deep-rooted historic, cultural, and emotional bond between the people of Pakistan and Kashmir, has said that they are inseparable identities. Addressing a reception ceremony hosted in his honour by Usman Khalid at the Taj Marquee, the prime minister said that the Pakistan Peoples Party is a symbol of federation. The PPP, he said enjoys massive support from the people in Azad Kashmir as well as Gilgit-Baltistan. Given the large support base, he expressed the optimism that the PPP would form the government in the future. He said that under the young and dynamic leadership of Bilawal Bhutto, the PPP



was regaining its foothold in Punjab. "The PPP will surprise all by winning all seats refugees", he added. Prime Minister said that the PPP leadership has always fought for the rights of the people and the party workers. He urged the workers to unite and take the party's message to every door so that they can achieve success in the upcoming elections. Earlier, Prime Minister Faisal

Mumtaz Rathore was given a rousing welcome upon his arrival by Usman Khalid along with PPP and PSF activists. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Faisal Mumtaz Rathore visited the residence of Pakistan Peoples Party Rawalpindi Division President Sardar Ashar Hayat and expressed his condolences on the death of his father Dr. Sikandar Hayat. He prayed to Allah Almighty to rest the

departed soul and grant patience to the bereaved. In a separate statement, Prime Minister Faisal Mumtaz Rathore expressed deep sorrow over the death of the paternal aunt of PPP Deputy Secretary Information Shaukat Javed Mir. In his condolence message, the Prime Minister extended his sympathies to the bereaved and prayed for the departed soul.

# Awan Community of Nagrar Karkah Joins Abid Afzal Butt's Camp

Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: Senior leader of All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference and candidate for Legislative Assembly constituency LA-25 Neelum-01, Abid Afzal Butt, conducted a detailed visit to Union Council Nagrar as part of his election campaign. During the visit, he met with local elders, community leaders, youth, and the general public in various areas, listening to their issues. On this occasion, the public warmly welcomed Abid Afzal Butt and expressed full confidence in his leadership. During the visit, several members of the Awan community from Nagrar Karkah Dadar—including Rizwan



Awan, Zakir Awan, Iqbal Awan, Zafar Awan, Rashid Awan, Altaf Awan, and Samiullah Awan—announced the end of their previous political affiliations and expressed confidence in the leadership of Abid Afzal Butt. They formally joined the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference. This development

is being seen as a significant shift in the region's political landscape, likely to further strengthen the position of the Muslim Conference.

Welcoming the new members, Abid Afzal Butt stated that the Muslim Conference believes in public service, merit, and honest politics. He said

that people are now fed up with traditional politics and are seeking positive change, for which the Muslim Conference provides a strong platform. He emphasized that meeting the expectations of the people is his top priority and that he will take practical steps to resolve local issues.

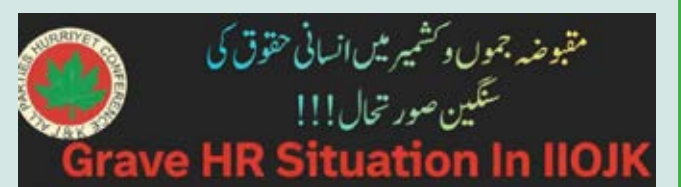
## Condolence

Spokesman Report



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Azad Jammu and Kashmir Faisal Mumtaz Rathore has expressed deep sorrow and grief over the death of PPP Deputy Secretary Information and Spokesperson of Prime Minister Shaukat Javed Mir's maternal aunt. In his condolence statement, the Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir prayed for the highest ranks of the deceased and for the patience of her family.

## DFP concerned over loss of innocent Kashmiri youth, demands impartial investigation and justice



Spokesman Report

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party has strongly condemned the recent killing of a youth Tanvir Ahmed Chupan by a gang of cow vigilantes in the Ramban area of Jammu and cold-blooded murder of Ganderbal youth Rashid Mughal in a staged fake encounter by the Indian army.

In a statement issued here today, the DFP spokesman advocate Arshad Iqbal said, "Such actions raise serious questions about accountability, transparency, and adherence to the rule of law".

The loss of young lives under such circumstances, he said, was not only tragic but also reflects a disturbing pattern that demands impartial investigation and justice.

"The repeated occurrence of such incidents reveals a grim pattern of systematic killings that are too often ignored, leaving victims without justice and families without answers", he said adding that there was a dire need to investigate such killings and bring perpetrators to justice.

He also expressed grave concern over the continued incarceration of party president Shabir Ahmed Shah and other Kashmiri political leaders and activists currently languishing in Indian jails.

"Prolonged detention without fair and transparent legal processes undermines democratic principles and suppresses legitimate political expression", he added.

## Muslim Conference focuses on state above politics as new leader joins ranks



Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD/DHIRKOT: President of Muslim Conference Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan inducted Manzoor Abbasi, a well-known businessman of Tehsil Dhirkot and an active political figure of the Muslim League-N, into the Muslim Conference. He welcomed him by wearing a necklace. A large number of workers were present on the occasion. The joining ceremony turned into a grand ceremony. Speaking on the occasion, President of Muslim Conference and former Prime Minister Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan said that instead of saving politics, the Muslim Conference adopted a policy of saving the state and did not allow the state's identity to be damaged. The Muslim Conference is making every possible effort for the party's success in the general elections of Azad Kashmir. The enthusiasm of the workers is visible. The workers should run in a united and organized manner. The Muslim Conference will not be a part of any chaos and disorder. We have to follow the political line given by Mujahid e Awwal. Success is possible by following the ideas and thoughts of Mujahid e Awwal.

On this occasion, Manzoor Abbasi, a well-known businessman of Tehsil Dhirkot and owner of Kashmir Furniture House, who left the Muslim League-N and joined the Muslim Conference, assured to play a full role for the success of the party.

## PPP Azad Kashmir President Lays Foundation for Crucial Manil Link Road Project



City Desk

KOTLI: President Pakistan Peoples Party Azad Kashmir Chaudhry Muhammad Yasin along with Member District Council Abid Iqbal Chaudhry laid the foundation stone of House of Sadiq Kayani on Manil Link Road, which is being termed as an important step towards the development of the area.

A large number of local people attended the ceremony and warmly welcomed the distinguished guests. The participants showered flower petals on the occasion and expressed their happiness through slogans. Local people said that this project will not only improve traffic but will also open new doors for development in the area.

Addressing the ceremony, President PPP Azad Kashmir Chaudhry Muhammad Yasin said that serving the people is his top priority and he will continue the development work without discrimination.

He assured that provision of basic facilities will be ensured in Manil and other areas as well.

After laying the foundation stone, Sadiq Kayani thanked Chaudhry Muhammad Yasin on behalf of the local people and said that this project was a long-standing need of the area. He said that the people of Manil are standing with him at every step and will fully support him in the upcoming elections. At the end of the ceremony, the residents of the area expressed hope that the timely completion of this project will significantly reduce local problems and the area will be on the path of further development.



**SERVICES**

**Namaz Timings**

Fajr ..... 4:08 am  
 Zohr ..... 12:08 pm  
 Asr ..... 4:48 pm  
 Maghrib ..... 6:40 pm  
 Isha ..... 8:08 pm

*Azad Kashmir Newspaper Owners Meet Federal Minister Over Financial Woes*

**Abdul Majeed Tahir.**

ISLAMABAD: A high-level delegation of the All Kashmir Newspapers Society (AKNS), the representative organization of newspaper owners of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, held an important meeting with the Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Amir Muqam, in which detailed and fruitful discussions were held on the financial, administrative and policy issues faced by newspapers published from Azad Kashmir. The meeting also agreed to further strengthen mutual cooperation between the government and the newspaper industry.

According to sources, the delegation, led by AKNS General Secretary Zulfiqar Hussain Butt, included senior journalistic figures Naseer Anwar, Javed Iqbal Chaudhry, Sarfaraz Mir and Hamraz Chaudhry. The delegation apprised the Federal Minister of the challenges faced by newspapers in Azad Kashmir, saying that issues such as limited resources, reduction in advertisement quotas, and non-payment of outstanding dues were posing a threat to the survival of the newspaper industry.

The delegation demanded that the Federal Ministry of Information and Broadcasting immediately restore the advertisement quota for Azad Kashmir newspapers and complete all pending payments as soon as possible so that the newspapers can continue their professional responsibilities effectively.

On this occasion, Federal Minister Amir Muqam listened carefully to the concerns of the delegation and assured that the government would take serious and practical steps to resolve the issues of Azad Kashmir newspapers and journalists. He said that the state newspapers are playing a very important role in highlighting the Kashmir freedom movement at the global level, which the government values.

The Federal Minister further said that the Government of Pakistan is taking vigorous steps at all levels for the resolution of the problems of the Kashmiri people and the success of the Kashmir freedom movement. He appreciated the effective diplomatic and defense strategy adopted under the leadership of the Prime Minister of Pakistan and said that Pakistan has vigorously highlighted the Kashmir issue at the global level.

# Mian Zahid Hussain urges policy consistency to capitalize on record investment surge

**Business Reporter**

KARACHI: Mian Zahid Hussain, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum & All Karachi Industrial Alliance, Chairman National Business Group Pakistan, Chairman Policy Advisory Board FPCCI, and Former Provincial Minister Information Technology, declared that sustainable foreign direct investment is the central pillar for achieving inclusive macroeconomic prosperity in the country.

Delivering a keynote address on the topic of driving inclusive economic growth through foreign investment at the Pakistan-China Investment Seminar 2026, he emphasized that grassroots uplift in regions like Balochistan depends heavily on joint industrial ventures. The high-profile seminar, jointly organized by the Balochistan Board of Investment & Trade and the China Pakistan Economic and Cultural Council, was held at the Consu-



late General of China in Karachi.

Discussing the massive scale of bilateral cooperation, Hussain reminded the business community that Chinese investment in Pakistan under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) had already risen to \$62 billion by the year 2022. He explained that as the corridor transitions

into its second phase, the focus has rightfully shifted from foundational infrastructure to deep industrial embeddedness and manufacturing. To facilitate this transformation, the Board of Investment officially announced on January 16, 2026, that the number of approved Special Economic Zones under CPEC Phase II has been vastly expanded from 7 to 44. This rapid expansion of newly notified zones aims to accelerate local job creation, streamline supply chains, and enhance technological integration across various sectors.

Concluding his comprehensive address, Mian Zahid Hussain urged federal and provincial authorities to maintain policy consistency and eliminate bureaucratic hurdles to ensure a seamless environment for foreign investors. He reiterated that true economic inclusion occurs when mega-projects integrate domestic small and medium enterprises into their supply chains, thereby distributing wealth horizontally.

## People's worries

ISLAMABAD: Passengers stand in front of closed bus terminal at Faizabad, in the Federal Capital. Authorities on Friday stepped up security, launching large-scale search operations and shutting key transport hubs for a possible new round of talks between the Iran and United States.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

# All Officers to Continue Effective Operations Against Criminal Elements: DIG Dogar

**Quatulain Asim**

MULTAN: City Police Officer Multan DIG Sadiq Ali Dogar held a meeting at the CPO Complex in which a briefing was given on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and pending challans and a detailed review of police performance was taken.

SSP Investigation Multan Muhammad Tahir accompanied CPO Multan in this meeting while Divisional SPs, SDPOs and other police officers of Multan Police attended.

CPO Multan discussed in detail the overall performance of the police, crime prevention,



redressal of public grievances, and the law and order situation during the meeting.

Topics related to timely submission of challans to the court and proper handling of other legal matters were

discussed during the meeting.

He directed the officers to ensure the safety of lives and property of citizens at all costs and to improve all aspects of policing.

CPO Multan directed all

officers to continue effective operations against criminal elements and conduct targeted operations against drug dealers, illegal arms holders, dacoit gangs and elements involved in other crimes.

## Strict Crackdown and Awareness Drive Launched to Enforce Traffic Laws in Multan



**Zain Khan Malghani**

MULTAN: On the directives of Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Multan, Kainat Azhar Khan, a strict crackdown alongside a comprehensive awareness campaign is underway to ensure the enforcement of traffic laws across the city.

As part of the campaign, awareness activities regarding stop lines and lane discipline are being conducted at various major intersections. Traffic staff are actively engaging with citizens at key points including Tariq Road, Eid Gah Chowk, Syedan Wala Bypass Chowk, and Chungi No. 9, where commuters halted at traffic signals are being briefed on the importance of maintaining lane and line discipline.

Motorcyclists, in particular, are being instructed to drive in the extreme left lane to ensure smoother traffic flow and enhanced road safety.

In addition to awareness efforts, a citywide crackdown against traffic violations is also in full swing. Heavy fines are being imposed on drivers found violating traffic rules.

Authorities are taking strict action against one-way violations, driving without a license or helmet, underage driving, illegal parking, and the use of tinted windows. The campaign aims to make roads safer, more organized, and disciplined for all road users.

## DIG Gondal Directs Awareness Session: IPR Crucial for Modern Policing



**Kiran Asim**

MULTAN: On the Directions of the Regional Police Officer (RPO) DIG Usman Akram Gondal Multan, a workshop on Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) was organized to raise awareness among police officers regarding the significance of protecting intellectual assets in the modern era.

Barrister Malik Muhammad Bilal Haider, Senior Manager IPR, delivered a detailed briefing to senior police officers on the importance and scope of intellectual property rights. He highlighted that IPR plays a vital role in safeguarding creativity, innovation, and business development in today's fast-paced and competitive world.

The workshop was attended by SSP Investigation Muhammad Tahir, SP Cantt Kainat Azhar, SP Sadr Muneer Badr, SP Gulgasht Saifullah, along with SDPOs and Investigation Incharges from across the region.

During his address, Barrister Bilal Haider explained that intellectual property rights include patents, copyrights, and trademarks, which legally protect the creations of individuals and organizations. He emphasized that the protection of IPR not only secures the rights of creators but also promotes economic growth, encourages investment, and fosters innovation.

## Pakistani Film "Psycho" Set for Worldwide Release on Eid-ul-Adha 2026

**NEWS DESK**

Lahore: A unique and thought-provoking addition to the Pakistani film industry, "Psycho" is all set for a global release on May 27, 2026, coinciding with Eid-ul-Adha. The film is being described as a serious, psychological, and thematic project that moves beyond conventional commercial cinema to explore the complexities of the human mind.

The story revolves around the idea that reality is not always simple or absolute; rather, it is shaped by power dynamics, social pressures, personal interests, and hidden motivations. Produced by Suleman Butt, CEO of Red Lipstick Productions, "Psycho" integrates advanced technology, high-quality cinematography, international-standard visual effects, and global storytelling techniques.

The aim is to position Pakistani cinema with a stronger identity on the international stage. The film features a stellar cast including Shaan Shahid, Meera, Sonia Hussyn, and Javed Sheikh, Nayyar Ijaz, Shabbir Jan, Adnan Butt, all of whom have delivered intense and realistic performances. The teaser of the film was previously showcased at London's iconic O2 Arena, marking a significant international milestone for Pakistani cinema. Early responses suggest that "Psycho" has already captured the attention of audiences and critics alike ahead of its release.

## Belief in the Future

# How United Bank Limited is redefining banking through youth, innovation, and impact

**Spokesman Report**

In the dynamic and often unpredictable financial landscape of Pakistan, institutions are increasingly being judged not only by their financial performance but by the broader impact they create in society. Over decades, a few names have risen beyond conventional definitions of banking to become part of the country's economic and cultural identity. Among them, United Bank Limited (UBL) stands out—not just as a financial institution, but as a symbol of

resilience, trust, and forward-looking vision. In recent years, UBL has redefined its role, positioning itself at the intersection of innovation, inclusion, and national progress, with a renewed focus on empowering Pakistan's youth.

Building Careers, Not Just Numbers While many organizations speak of growth in abstract terms, UBL has translated ambition into tangible, life-changing outcomes. Over the past three years, the bank has generated more than 20,000 new jobs, establishing itself as Pakistan's largest private-sector white-collar employer. Yet, these numbers tell only part of

the story. Crucially, UBL complements employment with education. Through financial support of up to PKR 150,000, employees are encouraged to continue their academic journeys. This dual focus ensures that individuals are not merely earning a livelihood but are actively building a future—equipped with skills, confidence, and long-term career prospects.

**Expanding Horizons Across Pakistan** UBL's growth strategy extends beyond human capital to physical and technological infrastructure. With an investment exceeding PKR

100 billion, the bank has significantly expanded its footprint, opening more than 500 new branches across the country. This expansion has resulted in one of the largest and most accessible banking networks in Pakistan.

However, the significance of this growth lies not just in scale, but in its reach. By extending services to underserved and remote areas, UBL is playing a vital role in advancing financial inclusion. It is connecting individuals and small businesses to formal financial systems, enabling them to save securely, access credit, and participate more actively in the economy.

**A Bank That Believes in Youth**

What truly distinguishes UBL is its unwavering faith in Pakistan's youth. At a time when unemployment and underemployment remain pressing challenges, the bank has taken a proactive stance, transforming potential into possibility. Its initiatives are designed not just to employ young people, but to nurture them—combining practical experience with continuous learning.

**Leading with Vision**

Innovation, inclusivity, and impact form the pillars of UBL's modern identity. Its recent journey illustrates what

is possible when institutional growth is aligned with national priorities. The bank's efforts reflect a deeper understanding that sustainable success is rooted in shared progress.

As United Bank Limited continues to evolve, it reinforces its place not just in the financial sector, but in the story of Pakistan itself. From supporting generations of customers to shaping the aspirations of today's youth, UBL has become a groundbreaking institution—one that is deeply entrenched in the country's history and woven into its cultural and economic fabric.

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# Trump to Visit Islamabad to Seal Iran Peace Deal

The Iran-United States standoff has reached a decisive moment. After weeks of tension, destruction, and global anxiety, President Donald Trump has signaled that a peace agreement with Iran is not only possible but near. Reuters reported on April 16 that Trump said he might go to Islamabad if the deal is signed there, while Pakistan confirmed that diplomacy is still active even though no date has yet been fixed for another round of talks. That makes Islamabad not just a venue, but the emerging diplomatic center of one of the world's most dangerous crises.

At the heart of this breakthrough are two long-standing sticking points. First, Iran's willingness to formally commit that it will not pursue nuclear weapons. Second, Trump's claim that Iran is prepared to hand over what he called the buried enriched material or "nuclear dust" after earlier strikes on key nuclear sites. Whether every detail is ultimately verified through a final written accord remains to be seen, but politically these two points give both sides a framework to claim success: Washington can say it stopped nuclear escalation, and Tehran can say it preserved the state while opening the door to sanctions relief and normal engagement.

This shift comes at a staggering cost. The conflict has already killed thousands across the region, disrupted trade, and shaken financial markets. The Strait of Hormuz remains the central economic

flashpoint. Official and major news reporting continues to note that roughly one-fifth of global oil trade moves through that corridor, so any disruption there instantly becomes a worldwide inflation tax. Reuters has also reported fuel stress inside the United States, while AP has warned that Europe faces severe jet-fuel pressure if normal flows do not resume. In other words, this war has not remained a battlefield event; it has become a global cost-of-living event.

Against this backdrop, Trump's possible visit to Islamabad to sign a peace agreement with Iranian leaders is not symbolic theater. It is a strategic turning point. A signing in Pakistan would show that the crisis has moved from bombs to bargaining, from blockades to diplomacy, and from military coercion to structured de-escalation. For Iran, such a meeting would signal the possible beginning of normalized state-to-state relations with the United States after more than four decades of sanctions, hostility, and mutual distrust. For Washington, it would create a face-saving exit from a risky conflict while preserving its declared objective of preventing an Iranian nuclear weapons path.

For Iran, the economic upside is enormous. Even partial sanctions relief could unlock tens of billions of dollars a year by restoring oil export capacity, reopening

access to financing channels, and reviving deferred investment. A reasonable peace-dividend range for Iran is \$50-100 billion annually, including renewed oil sales and broader economic normalization. For the United States, the gain lies less in direct trade and more in avoided damage: lower energy prices, less inflation pressure, reduced military expenditure, and calmer markets. If a durable accord brings oil down meaningfully from crisis highs, the U. S. and its consumers could benefit from a broader global energy relief effect worth well over \$100 billion, while averted war escalation could spare Washington and its allies additional costs running into the hundreds of billions. These are not marginal improvements; they are strategic savings.

Domestic politics in Washington have helped push events in this direction, but that factor should be understood as a nudge, not the whole story. The War Powers Resolution in the House voted by just 213-214, with one Republican voting present, a narrower margin than the earlier 212-219 vote, showing that resistance to a prolonged Iran war is growing. That tightening gap matters because it warns the White House that escalation is becoming politically more expensive. But the larger story is not congressional arithmetic; it is that the administration

now sees more value in a deal than in a drawn-out confrontation.

Europe also stands to gain substantially. AP's reporting on jet-fuel risk underscores how quickly Gulf supply disruption can hit European transport, tourism, freight, and manufacturing. If Hormuz normalizes and oil and refined-product flows resume, Europe could avoid tens of billions in emergency energy costs and secondary losses. A prudent estimate is that Europe's peace dividend could reach \$100-200 billion annually through lower fuel costs, restored industrial confidence, and reduced inflationary strain. The Middle East itself could gain even more. Stabilized energy markets, improved investor sentiment, reduced shipping risk, and resumed regional projects could yield \$200-400 billion a year in combined benefits across Gulf producers, transport corridors, and reconstruction-linked sectors.

China and Russia both have major stakes in de-escalation, though in different ways. China, as a giant energy importer and a leading Belt and Road power, gains from open sea lanes, cheaper hydrocarbons, and secure corridor expansion westward. Russia, though an energy exporter, still benefits from lower geopolitical volatility in trade and finance and from more stable Eurasian connectivity. It is reasonable to estimate that China's direct and indirect peace dividend could run to \$80-120 billion annually, while Russia's could be in the \$20-40 billion range through steadier energy planning.

*Continued on Page 7*



Analysis

Qamar Bashir

## Kashmir: A Chronicle of Broken Promises and Unfinished Justice

If promises were meant to be broken, Kashmir would stand as their most tragic testament. Few regions in modern history have endured such a relentless pattern of pledges made, solemnly declared before the world, and then quietly abandoned. The story of Kashmir is not merely a territorial dispute—it is a chronicle of betrayal stretching across empires, governments, and international institutions.

The roots of this tragedy lie in the Treaty of Amritsar, when the British Empire sold Kashmir and its people to Maharaja Gulab Singh as though they were commodities. This act of imperial convenience set the tone for a future in which the will of the Kashmiri people would repeatedly be subordinated to political expediency.

Under princely rule, Kashmir became a land of contrasts—rich in culture and spiritual pluralism yet burdened by repression. The Muslim-majority population endured systemic discrimination, heavy taxation, and political exclusion. When protests emerged, they were crushed with brutality, most notably in 1931 when 22 peaceful demonstrators were gunned down. These early injustices were met with indifference by the colonial power that had claimed a "civilizing mission," marking the first of many broken promises.

The end of British rule in 1947 did not bring clarity; it deepened the betrayal.

As princely states were given the option to accede to India or Pakistan—or remain independent—the guiding principle, articulated by leaders including Jawaharlal Nehru, was that the will of the people must prevail in disputed cases. Kashmir, with its Muslim majority and Hindu ruler, was the quintessential test case for this principle. Yet when the moment came, that promise evaporated.

India's military intervention in October 1947, followed by its appeal to the United Nations, led to United Nations Security Council Resolution 47, adopted on April 21, 1948, which called for a plebiscite to determine Kashmir's future. The commitment was reiterated publicly by Nehru and endorsed internationally. But as political realities shifted, so too did India's stance. What had been pledged as a democratic exercise became an indefinitely postponed obligation.

Over time, the pattern hardened: commitments made in good faith—or at least public appearance—were consistently abandoned. From the Tashkent Agreement of 1966 to the Simla Agreement of 1972 and the Lahore Declaration of 1999, each diplomatic engagement carried the promise of meaningful dialogue on Kashmir. Each ended in stalemate, with the core issue of Kashmir deferred or dismissed.

## Time Now for Kashmir Resolution and an End to Indian Occupation and Repression

The conscience of humanity demands an immediate end to Indian repression and occupation of Jammu and Kashmir. There can be no enduring peace in South Asia without a just and lasting resolution of the Kashmir dispute as per aspirations of Kashmiris. This enduring reality has gained renewed relevance in a world increasingly defined by geopolitical tensions and the urgent need for diplomacy and conflict resolution.

In this evolving global context, Pakistan has demonstrated remarkable diplomatic maturity by facilitating dialogue between the United States and Iran. "The recent engagement hosted in Islamabad reflects Pakistan's growing stature as a responsible and credible mediator. Under the leadership of Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Pakistan has successfully positioned itself at the center of a sensitive and complex diplomatic initiative, drawing global attention and appreciation."

By bringing two long-standing adversaries to the negotiating table, Pakistan has reinforced the principle that sustained dialogue remains the only viable path to peace. This achievement highlights Pakistan's commitment to regional and global stability and underscores its potential role as a bridge between conflicting powers.

However, while Pakistan contributes constructively to international peace efforts, the Indian occupation of Kashmir followed by regime of atrocities continues to cast a long shadow over South Asia. The situation in Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK) remains deeply concerning, with persistent Indian denial of fundamental freedoms, heavy militarization,

and measures that have intensified the suffering of the Kashmiris. India had deployed plus nine hundred thousand troops in occupied Kashmir making it highest militarized zone of the world where everyone is under arrest. Laws stands framed to facilitate human right violations. Systemic democratic changes are taking place on Israeli patterns. No freedom of expression visible.

From the standpoint of international law, the Kashmir dispute is firmly established as an internationally recognized issue. The United Nations Security Council resolutions explicitly call for a free and impartial plebiscite to enable the people of Jammu and Kashmir to exercise their right to self-determination.

The legal obligations in this regard are further reinforced by key provisions of the United Nations Charter. Article 1(2) affirms the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples. Article 2(4) clearly prohibits the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, emphasizing the need for peaceful settlement of disputes. Additionally, Article 25 of the UN Charter obligates member states to accept and carry out the decisions of the Security Council, thereby underscoring the binding nature of relevant resolutions on Kashmir.

Furthermore, Article 33 of the UN Charter calls upon parties to any dispute likely to endanger international peace and security to seek resolution through peaceful means, including negotiation, mediation, and arbitration. These provisions collectively establish a comprehensive legal framework that supports a just and peaceful resolution of the Kashmir dispute.

Beyond the UN Charter, international humanitarian law also carries significant relevance. The

Fourth Geneva Convention (1949) mandates the protection of civilians in situations of conflict and occupation, placing clear responsibilities on occupying powers to ensure the rights and dignity of the population under their control.

The continued failure of India to implement these legal obligations and commitments raises serious concerns regarding adherence to international norms. Kashmiris and Pakistan are demanding implementation of UN resolutions in letter and spirit. The persistence of the Kashmir dispute, Indian occupation coupled with ongoing Indian crimes against humanity, poses a direct challenge to peace and stability in South Asia.

The contrast is striking: Pakistan is actively facilitating dialogue between major global actors and contributing to peace building efforts, while the Kashmir issue remains unresolved despite clear international legal frameworks and long-standing commitments.

It is therefore imperative for the international community to renew its focus on Kashmir with sincerity and urgency. Just as diplomatic engagement is being encouraged in other global conflicts, similar efforts must be directed toward resolving this longstanding dispute in accordance with international law and the aspirations of the Kashmiri people. US President Trump can also play a significant role for resolution of Kashmir and add this binding of longstanding disputes into his account.

To sum up, peace in South Asia cannot be achieved in isolation from justice. Pakistan's recent diplomatic successes demonstrate that even the most entrenched conflicts can be addressed through dialogue and principled engagement. The same commitment must now be extended to Kashmir.

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Analysis

Syed Faiz Naqshbandi



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

## US-Iran 2nd Round: Pakistan Peace Priority UP

Global politics stands at a sensitive inflection point where the distance between confrontation and reconciliation has grown increasingly narrow. In this evolving environment, the second round of talks between the United States and Iran signals a gradual but meaningful shift from hostility toward engagement. This development is not confined to bilateral diplomacy; it carries wider implications for regional stability, global energy markets, and the broader international order.

The first round of negotiations helped establish a tentative atmosphere of trust. However, it is the second phase that will determine whether dialogue can translate into concrete outcomes. This stage demands practical compromises, credible assurances, and a willingness on both sides to move beyond entrenched positions. It is here that the international community watches most closely, as each step forward or backward has the potential to reshape geopolitical realities.

The U. S.-Iran relationship is deeply complex, shaped by decades of mistrust, ideological divergence, and competing strategic priorities. Against this backdrop, the continuation of talks itself represents a notable breakthrough. The second round is therefore seen as an effort to stabilize and build upon this fragile progress. If successful, it could reduce tensions in the Middle East, improve the global energy outlook, and open avenues for broader economic cooperation.

These negotiations are unfolding at a time when the world faces multiple interconnected crises. The Ukraine conflict, persistent economic pressures, and ongoing energy inse-

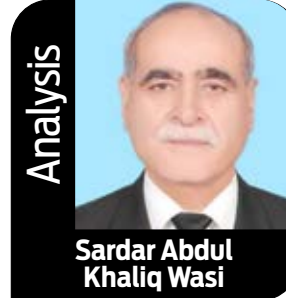
curity have compelled major powers to reconsider the costs of prolonged confrontation. For the United States, easing tensions in the Middle East aligns with its broader strategic recalibration, while for Iran, relief from sanctions and reintegration into the global economy remain pressing priorities.

Within this complex geopolitical landscape, Pakistan's role has assumed renewed importance. Its geographic location, coupled with a foreign policy rooted in balance and pragmatism, positions it as a credible and constructive actor. Under the leadership of Shehbaz Sharif, Pakistan has sought to project a positive and responsible image on the global stage. Meanwhile, Ishaq Dar, serving as Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, has actively worked to strengthen diplomatic engagement and rebuild international confidence.

Equally significant is the role of Pakistan's military leadership. Under Asim Munir, the country has maintained internal stability and reinforced its image as a secure and dependable state. Such internal cohesion is essential for sustaining credible foreign policy initiatives and for ensuring that diplomatic efforts are backed by institutional strength.

At the same time, it is important to recognize that not all regional actors view these negotiations through the same lens. History suggests that efforts toward reconciliation are often accompanied by countervailing pressures. In the context of the current talks, countries such as Israel and India may perceive a shifting regional balance as contrary to their strategic interests. Their policies have frequently reflected concerns about regional dominance

*Continued on Page 7*



Analysis

Sardar Abdul Khaliq Wasi

263rd Nepali Army Day

# Nepal reaffirms commitment to peacekeeping, deepens defence links with Pakistan

Naveed Ahmed Khan

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of Nepal in Islamabad marked the 263rd Nepali Army Day with a dignified ceremony held at a local hotel, highlighting the growing defence cooperation between Nepal and Pakistan.

Lieutenant General Tabassam Habib of the Pakistan Army attended the event as chief guest. Among other distinguished attendees were Prime Minister's Coordinator on Tourism Sardar Yasir Ilyas, Director General at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Sajjad Haider Khan, Dean of the Diplomatic Corps and Ambassador of Turkmenistan Atadjan Movlamov, along with diplomats, military attachés, business leaders, and media representatives.

Ambassador of Nepal to Pakistan, Rita Dhital, and Military Attaché Brigadier General Bhes Bahadur KC warmly received the guests.

In her remarks, Ambassador Dhital paid tribute to the discipline, dedication, and professionalism of the Nepali Army, noting that its legacy continues to inspire future generations. She highlighted Nepal's significant contributions to United Nations peacekeeping missions, describing the country as one of the leading troop contributors committed to global peace and security.

Emphasizing bilateral relations, she said ties between Nepal and Pakistan are rooted in



mutual respect, trust, and cooperation. She noted that defence

relations have steadily strengthened through training exchanges, professional engagements, and shared experiences, fostering both institutional collaboration and enduring friendships. She also acknowledged the support of the Pakistan Armed Forces in providing training opportunities to Nepali personnel.

Speaking on the occasion, Brigadier General Bhes Bahadur KC traced the history of the Nepali Army back to 1763, when Prithvi Narayan Shah initiated the unification of modern Nepal. He said that for over two and a half centuries, the army has remained a symbol of bravery, discipline, and resili-



ence, playing a vital role in safeguarding national sovereignty, responding to natural disasters, and contributing to infrastructure development.

He further noted that since 1958, Nepal has been actively participating in UN peacekeeping missions. Both Nepal and Pakistan, he added, consistently rank among the top troop-contributing countries, reflecting their shared commitment to international peace and stability.

Brigadier General KC also paid tribute to the sacrifices of military personnel and acknowledged the vital support of their

families. Referring to recent political developments, he mentioned that a new government has taken office in Nepal following general elections, with a focus on governance reforms and economic transformation. He added that Nepal's foreign policy aims to promote development through diplomacy, alongside enhanced economic, cultural, and technological cooperation.

Highlighting bilateral prospects, he said Nepal and Pakistan enjoy an enduring friendship with significant potential to expand cooperation across multiple sectors, particularly in

defence through long-standing training exchanges that have contributed to the professional development of Nepali officers. Concluding his remarks, he extended greetings on the Nepali New Year, Vikram Samvat 2083, and noted that April 15 has been declared International Wellness Day by the United Nations General Assembly on Nepal's proposal. He wished continued health and prosperity for all.

The ceremony witnessed the shared commitment of both countries to regional peace, stability, and strengthened cooperation.

Photo by Sultan Bashir

## Special Prayer at Faisal Masjid seeks success for COAS, emphasizes unity and peace

Adnan Yaqoob

ISLAMABAD: A special prayer was offered at Faisal Masjid following the Juma sermon, seeking continued peace, stability and prosperity for Pakistan, and success for the Government in its efforts toward national progress and cohesion. The prayer was led by the Acting Rector and President, Professor Dr. Ahmed Saad Alahmed.

The prayer congregation was attended by a number of senior officials, distinguished guests and a large gathering of worshippers from Islamabad and Rawalpindi, reflecting a collective spirit of unity, faith and supplication. In this context, the efforts of the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) and Chief of Defence Forces (CDF), Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir, were



acknowledged, and supplications were offered for his continued success in contributing to national security and to Pakistan's constructive role in fostering peace at both regional and international levels.

On the occasion, Professor Dr. Ahmad Saad Alahmed

addressed key challenges confronting the Muslim Ummah and highlighted the importance of unity, solidarity and cooperation among Muslim countries. He emphasized that in the present global context, strengthening mutual understanding and collective

resolve remains essential for ensuring stability and progress across the Muslim world.



At the conclusion of the sermon, special prayers were offered for the unity of the Muslim Ummah, the guidance of its leadership, and peace and security across the

world. Prayers were also made for Pakistan's continued role in promoting regional and international peace and stability.

The congregation concluded with a renewed sense of collective responsibility, reflecting a shared commitment to unity, faith and the pursuit of peace.

## Punjab Safe Cities Authority Completes Recruitment of Police Communication Officers

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Punjab Safe Cities Authority (PSCA) has successfully completed recruitment process of new Police Communication Officers and formal professional training of selected candidates has commenced.

According to PSCA's spokesperson, the entire recruitment process was conducted strictly on merit and transparency, with candidates undergoing multiple stages including written exam-

inations and interviews. In the first phase, a total of 247 Police Communication Officers were selected under open merit, women quota, and minority quota.

The spokesperson further stated that the newly recruited officers have expressed their commitment to becoming part of the Safe City system, which is based on modern technology and artificial intelligence. In this regard, an introductory session was held with the Managing Director, Chief Oper-

ating Officer, and other senior officials, where the officers were briefed about the organizational structure, responsibilities, and modern operational procedures.

The spokesperson apprised that after completion of the training phase, these officers will be deployed at the Operations and Monitoring Center, Emergency 15 Center, and other key departments, where they will play an active role in ensuring timely and effective services for the welfare of citizens. The young

officers stated that they feel proud to be part of this technologically advanced initiative and are determined to work with full dedication to support the field police in maintaining a safer city.

The spokesperson added that Punjab Safe Cities Authority remains committed to inducting competent human resources through a modern, transparent, and merit-based system, while leveraging advanced technology to further strengthen public safety across the province.

## Pakistan's Youth Delegation Actively Participates in UN ECOSOC Youth Forum 2026

Adnan Yaqoob

NEW YORK: The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Youth Forum 2026 was successfully held from April 14 to 16 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, convening young leaders, policymakers, and stakeholders from across the globe. The Forum serves as a premier platform for youth engagement in advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

This year's Forum focused on accelerating youth-led solutions for sustainable development, aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with particular emphasis on inclusive growth, climate action, digital transformation, and meaningful youth participation in policymaking.

Pakistan was prominently represented



by a dynamic youth delegation nominated under the Prime Minister's Youth Programme (PMYP), under the leadership of Mr. Rana Mashhood Ahmed Khan, Chairman PMYP.

The delegation comprised: Mr. Amsal Zaman, Deputy Director PMYP, Ms. Bisma Qamar, Member, National Youth Council (USA Chapter), Mr. Fakhar Jabran, Member, National Youth Council (AJK Chapter), Mr.

Fsahat ul Hassan, Coordinator to Chairman PMYP on OIC, Mr. Rahim Sattar, Youth Delegate (Chicago, USA)

They were joined and supported by officials from the Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the United Nations, including Ms. Saima Saleem, Counsellor.

Throughout the three-day Forum, the Pakistani youth delegates demonstrated active and meaningful engagement by participating in high-level plenary sessions, contributing to thematic and side events, moderating discussions in various parallel sessions, engaged in bilateral and multilateral meetings with key international stakeholders.

The delegation held productive interactions with distinguished counterparts, including the President of the ECOSOC Youth Forum, senior leadership from the UN Youth Office (Assistant Secre-

tary-General level), the President of the Islamic Cooperation Youth Forum (ICYF), the Youth Minister of Zambia, as well as youth representatives and counterpart delegates from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), Turkey, Azerbaijan, the United Kingdom, France, and other countries, fostering international collaboration and exchange of best practices.

On the sidelines of the Forum, H. E. Mr. Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, hosted a welcome dinner in honor of the PMYP delegation. The gathering was also attended by Dr. Shabana Saleem, Director General (Population), Ministry of National Health Services, along with senior officials including Mr. Usman Jadoon (Deputy Permanent Representative), Ms. Saima Saleem, Mr. Rashid, and Mr. Imran.

## NDF Pakistan Officially Takes Over the Secretariat of ADDTF Islamabad



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Secretariat of the Aging, Disability and Diversity Task Force (ADDTF) Islamabad has been formally handed over from Humanity & Inclusion (Handicap International-HI) to the National Disability & Development Forum (NDF) Pakistan. This step will prove to be a milestone in promoting inclusive development across the country.

The handover ceremony, held in Islamabad, was attended by key members and representatives of ADDTF and NDF Pakistan. On this occasion, participants expressed their commitment to further strengthening inclusion related to disability, aging populations, and diversity in Pakistan.

Abid Lashari, Tamgha-e-Imtiaz, President of NDF Pakistan and Chair of ADDTF, stated "I am grateful to all members of ADDTF who have placed their trust in NDF Pakistan. This responsibility reflects the confidence reposed in us. We are committed to promoting inclusive policies, strengthening linkages among various stakeholders, and ensuring that persons with disabilities, older persons, and other marginalized groups are fully included in humanitarian actions."

## Regular increase in tobacco taxation demanded to reduce cigarette consumption

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Health and economic policy experts have urged the government to introduce a regular increase in tobacco taxes and gradually transition to a single-tier taxation structure, as consistent fiscal measures are essential to reduce cigarette consumption and enhance public health outcomes.

Speaking at a webinar titled: "Stagnant Tobacco Taxes in Pakistan: Implications for Affordability, Public Health, and Revenue Mobilization" organized by Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), the experts called for predictable long-term tax policy to address affordability of cigarettes and structural weaknesses in Pakistan's taxation framework.

Presenting findings from a tobacco taxation scorecard analysis, Dr. Waseem Iftikhar Janjua, Visiting Researcher at SDPI, said tobacco taxes in Pakistan had not been increased since 2023, which had impacted the effectiveness of earlier gains achieved through a major tax hike that year. Pakistan's tobacco taxation scorecard stood at 2.38 compared with the global average of 2.01, while the Eastern Mediterranean region averaged 1.58, indicating room for further policy improvement, he pointed out.

Asif Iqbal, Managing Director of the Social Policy Development Centre (SPDC), stressed the need for a predictable multi-year taxation framework to ensure stability and effectiveness in policy implementation. He said production data shows recovery in cigarette output over the past two years, reflecting improved affordability in the absence of tax increases. He emphasized that inflation-adjusted automatic tax revisions could help maintain the real value of revenues.

Waseem Saleem of the World Health Organization (WHO) said evidence from Pakistan showed cigarette demand responded strongly to price increases, suggesting taxation remained one of the most effective tools to reduce consumption.

Syed Ali Wasif Naqvi, Senior Research Associate, Centre for Health Policy & Innovation, SDPI said a consistent taxation strategy, combined with enforcement against illicit trade and gradual structural reforms, could significantly reduce tobacco consumption while increasing government revenues and improving public health indicators in the country.

## Bull & Bears PSX 100-Share Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index	
Current	Prev. Close
173,939.01	169,911.95
Day's High	Day's Low
174,404.03	170,758.25
Index Value	Change
55,554,880,494	+4027.06
Percentage	Time
+2.37%	17 Apr, 2026 4:30 pm

Europe: FTSE 100 Index	
Index Value	Change
10,667.63	+77.64
Percentage	Time
+0.73%	17 Apr, 4:35 pm GMT

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average	
Index Value	Change
49,516.30	+937.58
Percentage	Time
+1.93%	17 Apr, 2:05 pm GMT-4

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average	
Index Value	Change
58,475.90	-1,042.44
Percentage	Time
-1.75%	17 Apr, 3:45 pm GMT+9

### Open Market Forex Rates

Australian Dollar	195.05	198.10
Australian Dollar	198.78	204.95
Bahrain Dinar	729	739.75
Canadian Dollar	202.05	207.9
China Yuan	36.45	37.55
Danish Krone	43.25	43.65
Euro	328.79	332.85
Hong Kong Dollar	35.25	36.15
Indian Rupee	2.03	2.22
Japanese Yen	1.7387	1.8386
Kuwaiti Dinar	878.15	889.30
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	74.40	75.35
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	75.95	77.05
UK Pound Sterling	378.34	383.65
US Dollar	279.04	280.05

# Solar Pakistan 2026 opens in Lahore, showcasing alternative energy solutions

Tahir Amin Malik

LAHORE: Solar Pakistan 2026, Region's Largest Solar Energy Event, opened today at Expo Center, Lahore. Organized by Fakt Exhibitions (Pvt.) Ltd., the three-day mega event will continue till April 19, and will bring together more than 400 companies from 10

countries.

The inauguration ceremony was graced by Faisal Ayub Khokhar (Minister for Energy, Government of the Punjab) and Muhammad Mansha Ullah Butt (Minister for Labour and Human Resources, Government of the Punjab), as the Chief Guests. In their remarks, he appreciated the efforts of Fakt Exhibitions



and stressed the importance of switching to alternative energy. "Pakistan is facing increasing energy demands and environmental challenges. Clean and sustainable energy is the way forward. Lahore and Punjab have great solar potential, and this exhibition is a step in the right direction," he said.

The exhibition features cutting-edge solar solutions—from high-efficiency panels to smart storage and grid systems—encouraging collaboration between investors, tech providers, consultants, and government representatives. Saleem Khan Tanoli, CEO of Fakt Exhibitions, said: "Solar Pakistan 2026" plays a

vital role in Pakistan's clean energy journey. By organizing it in Lahore, we're highlighting the solar potential of Punjab. It's a platform where innovation meets action and paves the way for a greener future."

With a strong focus on innovation, collaboration, and sustainability, Solar Pakistan 2026 serves as a timely platform to promote cleaner and smarter energy solutions. As Pakistan moves towards a more energy-secure and environmentally responsible future, the exhibition reinforces the urgent need to adopt alternative energy on a wider scale — starting from regions with untapped solar potential like Punjab.

## Meeting

Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan meets with Ambassador of Türkiye to Pakistan H.E. Dr. Irfan Neziroğlu, to offer Condolences for deadly school shootings in the provinces of Kahramanmaraş and Sanliurfa in Türkiye.



Photo: PID

## Pakistan Economy Reels from Soaring Oil Prices and Supply Shocks

Abdul Majid

FAISALABAD: The closure of the Strait of Hormuz by Tehran due to the attacks on Iran by the US and Israel has caused oil prices to plummet in global markets. Continuously rising oil prices have shaken economies around the world. This was said by the Patron-in-Chief Markazi Tanzeem Tajran-E-Pakistan and President of the Anjum Tajran City Registered Faisalabad, Khawaja Shahid Razzak Sikka while talking to the media. He further said that the prices of petrol and diesel in Pakistan have also started skyrocketing. As a result of Iran's drone attacks, Qatar's LNG gas facilities have also been shut down, which has affected global supply. Khawaja Shahid Razzak Saka says that



according to the government's economic policy advisors, inflation may increase further and uncertainty in investment may increase further. According to him, "We have to be prepared for a long-term uncertainty. Pakistan needs to make its energy supply more stable. Along with the energy crisis, the ongoing war in Iran has also created problems for the shipping industry. Due to which our industry is also on the verge of collapse."

## PTCL Signs Strategic Partnership Agreement with Indus Cloud to Deliver Huawei Cloud Stack in Pakistan

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL) has signed a strategic partnership agreement with Indus Cloud, part of the Master Group, to introduce advanced cloud solutions powered by Huawei Cloud in Pakistan.

The partnership agreement was signed by Asif Ahmad, Chief Business Solutions Officer, PTCL & Ufone 5G, and Rumman Arshad Dar, Chief Investment and Information Officer, Indus Cloud Limited. Also present at the signing ceremony were Muhammad Sharukh Malik, Director Product Management Cloud & Digital, B2B Strategy & Product Management, PTCL & Ufone 5G, and Syeda Amina Ahmed, Head of Enterprise Business, Indus Cloud Limited.

Speaking on the occasion, Asif Ahmad said, "As organisations across Pakistan accelerate their digital transformation, the need for secure, scalable and locally hosted cloud infrastructure has become mission-critical. At PTCL, we are building the country's most comprehensive digital infrastructure ecosystem, combining connectivity, data centers and cloud to enable this transition at scale."

Rumman Arshad Dar, Chief Investment and Information Officer, Indus



Cloud Limited, said, "PTCL's nationwide reach provides a strong foundation to extend Huawei Cloud stack capabilities to organisations seeking robust and locally compliant cloud solutions. We look forward to building on this partnership and

supporting customers with infrastructure that meets evolving market requirements."

The partnership adds further depth to PTCL's cloud portfolio and reflects a shared focus on strengthening local access to enterprise-grade cloud infrastructure in Pakistan.

## Pakistan High Commission Showcases Culinary Delicacies



News Desk

OTTAWA: The High Commission participated in the "2026 Y Embassy Chef Showcase", organized by the YMCA in Ottawa. The vibrant event brought together talented chefs from 15 participating diplomatic missions serving their respective national dishes in a spirit of friendly competition.

The High Commission showcased a rich array of traditional Pakistani cuisine, highlighting the country's diverse culinary heritage. The participants appreciated the distinctive flavors,

aromatic spices and cultural authenticity.

The famous annual Embassy Chef Showcase event provided the opportunity to promote cultural understanding through food as visitors experienced a wide variety of cuisines from around the world.

Speaking on the occasion, High Commissioner Muhammad Saleem emphasised that culinary diplomacy serves as an effective way of projecting the culture and strengthening people-to-people ties. The event contributed to the Mission's ongoing cultural diplomacy and outreach efforts.

## PHEVs lead early shift to electrified mobility as Chery Master Pakistan crosses 2,000 Bookings!

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (PHEVs) are emerging as the preferred entry point for electrified mobility in Pakistan and other emerging markets, as infrastructure and cost constraints slow the adoption of fully electric vehicles (EVs), according to industry data and recent market activity. The trend comes amid a

broader global shift led by China, which has overtaken Japan and Germany to become the world's largest car exporter, driven largely by new energy vehicles, including EVs and hybrid variants.

In Pakistan, early indicators suggest consumer demand is tilting toward PHEVs, with Chery Master Pakistan reporting over 2,000 bookings for its plug-in hybrid SUV

lineup within a short period of market entry, company official said.

The bookings span the company's Tiggo PHEV range — including the Tiggo 7, Tiggo 8 and Tiggo 9 — reflecting strong initial traction in multiple segments, from urban commuters to family and premium SUV buyers, he added.

Auto industry analysts say

the shift is being driven by fuel economics and usability considerations rather than upfront vehicle pricing alone. With petrol prices remaining elevated, a conventional vehicle averaging around 10 kilometres per litre results in significantly higher per-kilometre costs compared to hybrid and plug-in hybrid alternatives, particularly in city driving conditions.



## SECP Opens New REIT Investment Avenue for PSX Investors

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Investors will soon have a new opportunity to invest in income-generating real estate, as the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has approved the Offer for Sale of units of JS Rental REIT (JSRR).

The offering allows the general public to participate in a rental Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT) scheme, providing exposure to real estate-backed returns through the capital market.

This marks the 9th listing on the Main Board of Pakistan Stock Exchange during FY 2025-26, reflecting strong IPO momentum. JSRR will be the third REIT listed this year, taking the total number of listed REITs to six. The Offer for Sale comprises 25% of total units, with 53.6 million units being offered to investors through a fixed price mechanism. The REIT is managed by JS Investments Limited.

The growing pipeline of listings highlights increasing investor confidence and expanding avenues for participation in Pakistan's capital markets.

## Gold prices decline by Rs 3,300 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The prices of gold decreased in the local market on Friday, with 24 karat gold per tola falling by Rs 3,300 to settle at Rs 501,562 compared to Rs 504,862 on the previous trading day, according to rates issued by the All Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association.

Similarly, the price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold decreased by Rs 2,829 to Rs 430,008 from Rs 432,837, whereas 10 grams of 22 karat gold went down by Rs 2,593 to Rs 394,188 against Rs 396,781.

In the international market, the price of gold decreased by \$33 to \$4,792 per ounce from \$4,825.

## PSL Pakistan Super League Cricket Championship Edition 11

## Islamabad United played a brilliant cricket and Defeated Karachi Kings by 8 wickets

Asim Tanveer

KARACHI: In the Pakistan Super League match, Islamabad United Cricket Team played a brilliant Cricket and defeated Karachi Kings by 8 wickets at National Stadium Karachi. Islamabad United is even higher than Multan. A big shock for Karachi Kings. After a big defeat to Islamabad United, more difficulties have increased for them on the points table. A match ago, Hyderabad Kingsmen had left Karachi behind and now Karachi had a chance to beat Islamabad and come back to the top but they lost by wickets. As a result, Islamabad United has now taken the second position on the points table and has pushed Multan Sultans to the third position. Peshawar Zalmi is still number one and Hyderabad Kingsmen is fourth. Although Karachi Kings is still at fifth place after the defeat, the situation is deteriorating rapidly. Gladiators are at sixth place.

Islamabad United won the toss of the 25th match of PSL 11 played at the National Bank Arena and decided to field first and this decision was correct as



the Karachi Kings team could only score 150 runs for 6 wickets in the game of 20 overs. Although opener Saad Baig was dismissed early after scoring 6 runs, Jason Roy and Reza Hendricks took Karachi Kings to 69 runs for the second wicket. Here Jason Roy was dismissed for 39 runs off 27 balls, while newcomer Salman Ali Agha played a full over and was dismissed for only four runs. Azam Khan tried to take charge and was playing well to a large extent but was dismissed at the top. Azam Khan made 34, along with Khushdil Shah 2, Moeen Ali, who was captaining, was on 8. Reza Hendricks played an unbeaten innings of 51 runs off

44 balls. There were four fours. Well, surprisingly, two sixes were hit by Jason Roy in the Karachi Kings innings. One by Azam Khan and one by Moeen Ali, there were a total of four sixes and 11 were only fours. That is why only 150 could be scored. Islamabad United's Imad Wasim was given 36 runs in four overs. He could not take any wickets, but Richard Gleeson took two wickets for 22 runs in four overs and Shadab Khan also bowled well. He took two wickets for 28 runs in four overs. Faheem Ashraf and Mohammad Hasnain got one wicket each.

In reply, Islamabad United started very confidently. Devon Conway and Sameer Minhas gave



a great opening stand and these two batsmen provided a start of 93 runs in 10 overs. This is where the first wicket fell, when Sameer Minhas was stumped by Moeen Ali's ball. He scored 58 runs off 36 balls. The score increased as the new batsman Mohammad played. Karachi's second wicket fell at 110, when Mohammad Faiq made 5. Shadab Khan came and took the



score forward. Both teams came out winning by 8 wickets. Islamabad United achieved the target of 153 runs in 16 overs with just 2 wickets. Shadab Khan returned unbeaten on 31 off 16 balls and Devon Conway returned unbeaten on 53 off 36 balls. Hasan Ali and Moeen Ali took one wicket each.

Earlier in the day's match, Hyderabad defeated Kingsmen to move to fourth position on the table. Rawalpindi suffered its sixth consecutive defeat.



## PSL Points Table

Peshawar Zalmi 13 points in 7 matches. 1st position  
Islamabad United, 9 points in 7 matches, 2nd position  
Multan Sultans, 8 points in 6 matches, 3rd position  
Hyderabad Kings 6 points in 7 matches. 4th position  
Karachi Kings, 6 points in 6 matches. 5th position  
Quetta Gladiators 4 points in 6 matches. 6th position  
Lahore Qalandars, 4 points in 5 matches, 7th position  
Rawalpindi, 0 points in 6 matches. 8th position

## Sheikh Aftab Says Pakistan Nearing Final Stage of Peace Efforts in Iran-US-Israel

Raza Naqvi

ATTOCK: Member of the National Assembly and Judicial Commission member Sheikh Aftab Ahmed stated on Friday that Pakistan is in the final stages of peace efforts for the second time in the conflict involving Iran, the United States, and Israel.

He said that the global peace initiatives undertaken by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of Army Staff Asim Munir would be remembered in history with great respect.

He expressed these views while addressing a large public gathering in the historic village of Attock Khurd, located along the River Indus, during the inauguration of streets and drainage projects worth Rs15 million.

The ceremony was held at the residence of Malik Khalid Mahmood, where Sheikh Aftab unveiled the inauguration plaque. Candidate for PP-3 Malik Hameed Akbar Khan and PML-N District President Muhammad Saleem Shahzad also addressed the gathering.

Other attendees included former Chairman Municipal Committee Attock Sheikh Shahid Mahmood Shahidi, former Punjab Assembly candidate



Sheikh Suleman Sarwar and his son Muad Suleman, former Union Council Chairman Haji Malik Muhammad Naseem, PML-N leader Malik Ali Hamza Safdar, Sheikh Muhammad Arif, District Information Secretary Dr. Mian Rashid Mushtaq, Muhammad Arshad Baig (Kaka Baig), Sheikh Ali Mahmood, Sajid Mahmood, Sheikh Zuhur Elahi, Muhammad Talha, and others.

Sheikh Aftab stated that since the crea-

tion of Pakistan, major development projects have primarily been completed during the tenures of the Pakistan Muslim League (N), particularly under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif.

He added that Nawaz Sharif made Pakistan the first Islamic nuclear power, constructed motorways, eliminated electricity load-shedding, restored peace in Karachi and other regions, and played a key role in eradicating terrorism and

advancing national development.

He further stated that Pakistan had once reached a point where, after repaying an IMF installment, it indicated it would no longer require additional loans. However, he blamed subsequent governments for weak economic policies that pushed the country back toward reliance on the IMF and World Bank.

Discussing the regional situation, Sheikh Aftab claimed that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and General Asim Munir played a significant role in efforts to resolve the Iran-US-Israel conflict, which, according to him, enhanced Pakistan's global standing and strengthened its role in the Muslim world.

He expressed confidence that these diplomatic efforts and international engagements would yield positive results.

Highlighting development work in his constituency, he said that projects worth billions of rupees in Attock are nearing completion and will soon be inaugurated. He also claimed that providing sui gas to all villages in his constituency is a record in Pakistan, adding that efforts have been made to supply electricity and other essential facilities to bring Attock in line with developed areas.

## Trump to Visit Islamabad to Seal Iran Peace Deal

Continued from Page 4

logistics, and regional commerce. Those figures are necessarily scenario-based, but the direction is beyond dispute: peace pays, and war taxes everyone.

However, the country that may gain the most strategically from this accord is Pakistan. Pakistan's role as mediator has already elevated its standing. It hosted the talks, kept channels open after the 21-hour breakdown in Islamabad, and retained the confidence of both Washington and Tehran at a time when very few capitals could do so. That diplomatic success now has a direct economic translation. Pakistan's existing two-way goods trade with the United States was about \$7.23 billion in 2024, with the U. S. remaining Pakistan's largest goods export market at \$5.12 billion. Iran and Pakistan, meanwhile, have publicly targeted \$10 billion in annual bilateral trade. If peace removes sanctions-related friction and unlocks energy and transit cooperation, Pakistan could realistically position itself for an incremental economic gain of \$15-25 billion annually within a few years: roughly \$7-8 billion from

scaling Pakistan-Iran trade toward the \$10 billion target, \$3-5 billion in annual energy savings from a revived Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline, \$1-2 billion from stronger U. S.-Pakistan trade and investment momentum, and several more billions from transit, logistics, warehousing, border markets, services, and Gulf-linked agriculture and infrastructure inflows. Over a decade, if corridor integration through CPEC extends into Iran and toward Central Asia and the Middle East, Pakistan's cumulative strategic economic upside could run into the tens of billions more, potentially crossing \$50 billion in combined direct and indirect value. This is why the Islamabad peace track is not merely diplomatic theater for Pakistan; it is a possible economic turning point.

That is also why the peace dividend for Pakistan is larger than simple trade arithmetic. Peace would strengthen Pakistan's reputation with Washington, Tehran, Beijing, Riyadh, Ankara, and the Gulf monarchies all at once. It would improve investor confidence at a moment when Pakistan still needs reserve support and external financing, as shown by the recent additional \$3 billion Saudi

support package reported by Reuters. A successful mediation would allow Pakistan to market itself not as a security risk at the edge of crises, but as the state that prevented a wider war and made regional commerce possible. That kind of reputational shift lowers financing risk, improves deal flow, and can turn diplomacy into development.

At the geopolitical level, the emerging U. S.-Iran rapprochement may also reorder the regional equation. Israel, long a central force in the confrontation with Iran, appears less central to the actual peace architecture now taking shape. The more Washington and Tehran negotiate directly, the more the region shifts from confrontation through intermediaries to pragmatic statecraft. That does not erase old rivalries, but it does signal that the next chapter may be written less by missile launches and more by summit tables.

Yet caution remains necessary. The ceasefire is still fragile. Verification of nuclear commitments, sequencing of sanctions relief, security guarantees, shipping normalization, and the politics of implementation in Tehran and Wash-

ington will all matter. A single military incident or political reversal could still spoil the process. But even with that uncertainty, the direction of travel is now clearer than it was days ago: diplomacy has regained momentum because war has exposed its own unbearable cost.

Still, the balance sheet is compelling. The war may already have inflicted global economic damage in the high hundreds of billions of dollars. Peace, by contrast, could unlock a multi-year dividend that plausibly reaches \$1-2 trillion across energy, trade, shipping, reconstruction, investment, inflation relief, and avoided military escalation. In that larger picture, Pakistan's role is neither ceremonial nor incidental. It is central. Islamabad has offered the table, the channel, and the trust that others could not. If the accord is signed there, Pakistan will not merely have hosted history. It will have helped redirect 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

## Partnership Agreement Finalized Between Hamdard Pakistan and Karachi Kings



## Bureau Report

KARACHI: Hamdard Pakistan, a reputable and prominent name not only in the healthcare sector but also in nutritious food products and spices, has consistently been striving to promote public health and an active lifestyle.

In line with this mission, Hamdard Pakistan has officially announced its partnership with Karachi Kings, a team participating in PSL 2026. This collaboration marks a significant milestone for Hamdard.

To celebrate this partnership, Hamdard Pakistan hosted a special meet-and-greet and introductory session with the Karachi Kings team, during which a formal agreement was signed between the two organizations. This prestigious ceremony was held at a local hotel in Karachi on April 17, 2026.

This partnership between Hamdard Pakistan and Karachi Kings will foster synergy between the fields of sports and health and will play an important role in building a healthier and stronger society.

The event was attended by Karachi Kings players, team management, members, senior leadership of Hamdard Pakistan, and other distinguished guests. Notable attendees included Chairperson of Hamdard Pakistan, Ms. Sadia Rashid; Managing Director & CEO, Fatema Munir Ahmed; Group Director HR, Abu Talib Bhutto; and owner of Karachi Kings and President & CEO of ARY, Salman Iqbal.

This collaboration reflects Hamdard Pakistan's long-standing commitment to promoting health, energy, and well-being.

Hamdard Pakistan takes pride in partnering with a popular franchise like Karachi Kings and aims to expand the message of public health while highlighting the importance of a healthy lifestyle through this association.

On this occasion, CEO of Hamdard Pakistan, Mr. Faisal Nadeem Mangroria, stated that given the immense popularity of cricket in Pakistan, this agreement represents a major milestone.

The partnership between Hamdard Pakistan and Karachi Kings will provide a dynamic national platform through which the message of a healthy lifestyle can be promoted on a broader scale.

## Pakistan finish runners-up, qualify for next round at ITF

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Thursday concluded a commendable campaign at the ITF Asia 12 and Under Team Competition-South Asia 2026, finishing as runners-up after a hard-fought final against arch-rivals India.

Despite a determined effort, Pakistan fell short in the final, however, the team's outstanding performance throughout the event ensured qualification for the next round of the competition, said a press release.

The Pakistani players displayed exceptional skill, resilience, and team spirit during the tournament, securing crucial victories en route to the final. Their consistent performance highlights the growing strength of junior tennis in the country.

The President Pakistan Tennis Federation (PTF), Secretary General PTF, and the entire management appreciated the team's efforts and congratulated them on qualifying for the next stage.

## US-Iran 2nd Round: Pakistan Peace Priority UP

Continued from Page 4

and security recalibration, which can, at times, contribute to heightened tensions.

A more stable Middle East, combined with a diplomatically assertive Pakistan, does not necessarily align with all regional calculations. In such scenarios, the risk of diplomatic friction, narrative contestation, or indirect pressures cannot be entirely discounted. These dynamics are part of the broader reality of international relations, where

competing interests often intersect with peace initiatives.

Encouragingly, Pakistan's political, diplomatic, and military leadership appears fully aware of these complexities. The strategic clarity demonstrated by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the diplomatic outreach led by Ishaq Dar, and the institutional preparedness under Field Marshal Asim Munir reflect a state that is both vigilant and capable. This awareness, coupled with the ability to respond effectively, strengthens

Pakistan's position as a responsible and resilient actor in a rapidly changing world.

It is also important to acknowledge that the respect Pakistan has garnered in this context is not the result of short-term positioning. Rather, it is rooted in a broader continuum of policy thinking. The vision of Nawaz Sharif, which emphasized balanced diplomacy, economic prioritization, and sovereign decision-making, continues to inform Pakistan's external outlook. His approach

underscored that sustainable foreign policy must be anchored in national interest while remaining open to constructive global engagement.

The prospects for the success of the second round of talks remain cautiously optimistic. Significant challenges persist, including mutual distrust, regional rivalries, and the influence of external stakeholders. Yet, the continuation of dialogue itself is a positive sign. History repeatedly demonstrates that even the most intractable

conflicts can find resolution through sustained engagement and political will.

For Pakistan, this evolving situation presents both an opportunity and a responsibility. The country has already received international recognition for its constructive diplomatic posture. Moving forward, it can leverage this momentum to strengthen economic partnerships, particularly in areas such as energy cooperation, regional connectivity, and trade expansion. A more stable regional

environment would naturally support these objectives.

In conclusion, the second round of U. S.-Iran talks represents more than a diplomatic exercise; it reflects a broader shift in global thinking toward dialogue and de-escalation. At this critical juncture, Pakistan's political, diplomatic, and military leadership has demonstrated commendable coherence, foresight, and commitment to national interest. The leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the diplomatic

engagement of Ishaq Dar, and the strategic stewardship of Field Marshal Asim Munir have collectively enhanced Pakistan's standing as a reliable and dignified state. Supported by the enduring vision of Nawaz Sharif, this unified approach not only underscores Pakistan's current relevance but also points toward a more stable, confident, and globally engaged future.

The writer is a politician, Lawyer and columnist. He is Former Member of Kashmir Council

## Financial Agreement

WASHINGTON, D.C.: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, witnessed the signing of an important financial agreement in the presence of the Ambassador of Pakistan to the United States, on the sidelines of the World Bank-IMF Spring Meetings 2026 on Friday.



Photo: PID

## Finance Minister Witnesses Signing of Saudi Deposit Extension Agreement with State Bank of Pakistan

Commerce Desk

WASHINGTON, D. C.: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, witnessed the signing of an important financial agreement in Washington, D. C., in the presence of the Ambassador of Pakistan to the United States, on the sidelines of the World Bank-IMF Spring Meetings 2026.

The agreement, signed between the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) and the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), provides for the extension

in the maturity of a USD 3 billion deposit placed by SFD with the State Bank of Pakistan.

The agreement was signed by H. E. Mr. Sultan bin Abdulrahman Al-Marshad, Chief Executive Officer of the Saudi Fund for Development, on behalf of SFD, and Mr. Jameel Ahmad, Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan, on behalf of SBP.

The extension of the deposit reflects the strong and longstanding economic partnership between Pakistan and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and will further support Pakistan's external sector stability.

## Punjab unveils major education reforms with free Google courses, e-buses



Bureau Report

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz on Friday approved a major package of education reforms, including free Google certification courses and electric bus facilities for college students.

The decisions were taken during a special meeting chaired by the chief minister to review progress on projects in the school and higher education sectors.

Under the initiative, more than 100,000 students across Punjab will receive free certification courses in collaboration with Google. The courses, which typically cost between \$400 and \$1,000, will be offered free of charge.

Fields covered include cyberse-

curity, artificial intelligence, and business intelligence, with course durations ranging from three to six months.

The meeting also approved the provision of electric bus facilities for college students and introduced a standardisation framework for colleges across the province for the first time.

Under the Honhaar Scholarship Programme, more than 62,000 students will receive stipends, with the chief minister directing that all eligible candidates be included.

Separately, Maryam Nawaz took notice of a robbery incident in Lahore and directed police to ensure the immediate arrest of the suspect, stressing that the safety of women must be guaranteed.

## President welcomes Lebanon ceasefire, expresses hope for permanent cessation of hostilities in West Asia

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari has welcomed the announcement of a ceasefire in Lebanon, terming it an important step towards reducing tensions and restoring calm in the region.

The President emphasised that Pakistan attaches high importance to regional stability and believes that sustainable peace can only be

achieved through dialogue, mutual respect for sovereignty and adherence to international law. He said the ceasefire presents an opportunity to move towards lasting peace.

Reaffirming Pakistan's consistent support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon, the President said that Pakistan remains actively engaged with regional and international stakeholders, to ease tensions



between the United States and Iran, recognising that lasting peace in West Asia depends on addressing the broader drivers of conflict. He added that Pakistan will continue to support all sincere initiatives that advance de-escalation and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace across the region.

The President cautioned that the current momentum towards de-escalation remains

fragile, noting that the broader understanding underpinning the ongoing two-week cessation of hostilities between the United States and Iran envisaged restraint included in Lebanon, which was later violated by Israel. He observed that any deviation from this spirit risks aggravating tensions. He stressed the importance of restraint and responsible conduct by all parties at this crucial juncture.

## Finance Minister meets OPEC Fund CEO, explores expanded development financing cooperation

Commerce Desk

WASHINGTON, D.C.: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, held an important meeting with Dr. Abdulhamid Alkhalifa, Chief Executive Officer of the OPEC Fund for International Development, on the sidelines of the World Bank-IMF Spring Meetings 2026.

During the meeting, the Finance Minister appreciated the OPEC Fund's growing and active engagement with Pakistan, noting with satisfac-

tion several recently approved and ongoing transactions. He acknowledged Pakistan's strong track record as a borrower and expressed satisfaction with the depth and quality of the existing collaboration.

Senator Aurangzeb expressed keen interest in fully leveraging the OPEC Fund's three complementary financing windows, including sovereign lending for the public sector, private sector financing, and Islamic finance instruments.

The Finance Minister encouraged the OPEC Fund to further deepen its engage-



ment with Pakistan's private sector and expressed interest in exploring policy-based budget support operations.

Highlighting emerging

priorities, Senator Aurangzeb underscored that water infrastructure projects have assumed a national security dimension for Pakistan in light of the

prevailing regional context. He further noted that the OPEC Fund's three thematic priorities—climate action, food security, and digital transformation—are closely aligned with Pakistan's development agenda.

The Finance Minister extended an invitation to Dr. Alkhalifa to visit Pakistan and further strengthen bilateral cooperation. The meeting concluded with Senator Aurangzeb expressing appreciation for Dr. Alkhalifa's invitation to attend an upcoming OPEC Fund event in Vienna.

## Algeria and Pakistan Deepen Ties After Productive Antalya Talks

Spokesman Report

ANTALYA: On the sidelines of his participation in the "Antalya Diplomacy Forum," the Minister of State, Minister of Foreign Affairs, National Community Abroad and African Affairs, Mr. Ahmed Attaf, held bilateral talks today in Antalya with the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the brotherly Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Mr. Muhammad Ishaq Dar.

The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss various aspects of the distinguished relations between Algeria and Pakistan, and to emphasize the importance of intensifying joint efforts to elevate them to higher levels. In this context, Minister Ahmed Attaf received an invitation from his Pakistani counterpart to pay an official visit to Pakistan.



Furthermore, the two sides discussed developments in the Middle East and the Arabian Gulf region. Minister Ahmed Attaf commended Pakistan's mediation efforts to reach a ceasefire agreement between the parties involved. Both sides expressed their hope that these ongoing good offices would culminate in the formulation of final solutions to the various existing disputes, thus ensuring lasting security and sustainable stability throughout the region.

## Diplomacy, Loud Pride: Pakistan's Role in Shaping the Negotiation Narrative

At a time when many voices hastily declared the failure of negotiations, I chose to hold a different view—and today, that perspective stands validated. While public discourse leaned toward pessimism, I maintained that negotiations had not collapsed. They were ongoing, evolving beyond the visible stage. The reality is now clearer: negotiations are still underway, and crucial backdoor engagements continue to shape outcomes behind closed doors.

A significant moment came when Donald Trump openly praised Paki-

stan's Chief of Defence Forces, Asim Mumin, calling him "a fantastic person." This was not merely a diplomatic courtesy—it was a recognition of Pakistan's strategic role and measured conduct. Trump further remarked, "Why should we go to another country when we have no relation with them?" This statement, subtle yet powerful, reflects the evolving dynamics of international engagement and highlights Pakistan's ability to assert itself as a stabilizing force.

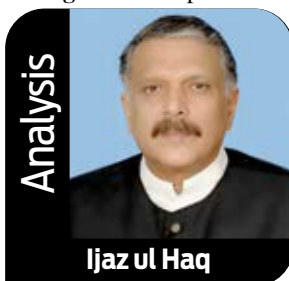
The role Pakistan has played in this delicate situation cannot be overlooked. It is a role marked by restraint, intelligence, and calculated diplomacy. Today,

wherever Pakistanis reside across the globe, their heads are held high with pride. As a Pakistani, this moment brings a profound sense of honor—that Allah has bestowed such dignity upon our nation.

This recognition is not limited to institutions alone. It extends to leadership. Our Chief of Defence Forces, Field Marshal Asim Mumin, has been honored with global acknowledgment, and our Prime Minister,

Shehbaz Sharif, too, has been granted respect on the international stage. The dignity of our country is, ultimately, our own dignity.

It is equally important to acknowledge the collective efforts of other nations that worked toward de-escalation. To every country that contributed to stopping this conflict, we extend heartfelt gratitude. Their role in pursuing peace deserves sincere recognition.



Analysis

Ijaz ul Haq