



Daily The Spokesman

A Leading National Daily



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Dar, UN chief discuss regional situation, peace efforts

Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar held a telephone conversation with United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres to discuss the prevailing regional situation and Islamabad's ongoing diplomatic initiatives, the Foreign Office spokesperson said on Tuesday. The two sides exchanged views on key regional developments, with a particular focus on Pakistan's efforts to promote dialogue and stability through diplomatic channels.



Iran praises Pakistan's diplomatic role, calls dialogue key to regional stability

Iran's Ambassador Reza Amiri Mughadam has praised Pakistan's diplomatic efforts, saying the country's role in promoting peace is commendable, according to remarks cited by Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar. Dar said the Iranian envoy appreciated the efforts of Pakistan's Foreign Office and the preparation of its diplomats, which he said played an important role in the success of negotiations.

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EU delegation met with PM Shehbaz

ISLAMABAD: A business delegation of the European Union meets Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday.



Photo: PID

PM assures efforts to facilitate growth of trade, investment ties with EU

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of senior officials of the European Union and business representatives from prominent European companies called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif here on Tuesday, who assured them of his government's continuous serious efforts to facilitate the growth of trade and investment relations

with EU.

The prime minister assured the EU delegation of the Government of Pakistan's firm resolve to continue working towards the stabilization of the economy, despite regional challenges, including the recent spike in oil prices due to the situation in the Middle East.

The delegation was led by Peteris Ustubs, Director (Asia

Pacific) of the European Commission's Directorate General of International Partnerships, and comprised Hourya Triki of the EU Investment Bank and senior executives of top European companies including Manuel Pauser Vice President, Adidas, Vice President of Andritz, Karl Shloegelbauer and Regional Director of IKEA, Dieter Metkke. The delegation members spoke

about their respective experiences of investments in Pakistan and stated that there was enormous potential for further growth of these B2B ties between the EU and Pakistan in various sectors, including energy, communications, IT, etc. More than 600 B2B meetings are expected on the sidelines of the EU-Pakistan Business Forum.

From Pakistan side, Deputy

Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan, Minister for Law, Justice and Human Rights Azam Nazeer Tarar, Advisor to the PM Dr. Tauqir Shah, Minister of State for Finance Bilal Azhar Kayani, SAPMs Syed Tariq Fatemi and Haroon Akhtar Khan as well as senior government officials were also present in the meeting.

Pakistan's economy shows signs of stability, moving towards growth: Finance Minister

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, on Tuesday expressed confidence in Pakistan's economic trajectory, stating that the country is demonstrating strong performance across both internal and external sectors, paving the way for sustainable growth.

Addressing the High-Level EU-Pakistan Business Forum 2026, the finance minister highlighted that key economic indicators, including foreign exchange reserves, remittances, taxation, tariffs, and public debt, are showing encouraging trends, reflecting overall macroeconomic stability.

The Minister underscored that economic stability forms

the foundation for long-term development, while reiterating that sustained economic growth remains the government's foremost priority.

Aurangzeb noted that wide-ranging structural reforms are underway in critical sectors, including privatization, right-sizing of public institutions, tax system improvements, and public debt management.

He added that these measures are already contributing positively to the country's economic outlook.

Discussing Pakistan's economic ties with the European Union, the minister said the EU remains Pakistan's largest export destination.

The forum, he explained, aims to deepen, diversify, and promote environmentally sustainable trade



relations. He also announced the launch of the EU-Pakistan Business Network, which connects over

300 European companies operating in Pakistan.

Providing an update on external accounts, Aurangzeb revealed that Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves have reached \$18 billion, sufficient to cover three months of imports. He further shared that investments under the Roshan Digital Account have gained momentum, rising from an average of \$200 million per month to \$260 million in March.

The minister also highlighted a notable increase in workers' remittances, attributing it to growing confidence among overseas Pakistanis.

Remittances reached \$3.8 billion in March, marking a 17 percent increase compared to February.

Pakistan test-fires indigenous Fateh-II missile



Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Tuesday conducted a successful training launch of the indigenously developed Fateh-II missile system, the military's media wing said.

According to the Inter-Services Public Relations, the launch was conducted by the Army Rocket Force Command as part of a training exercise aimed at enhancing operational preparedness and validating key technical parameters.

The ISPR said the Fateh-II missile system is equipped with advanced avionics and state-of-the-art navigational aids.

The exercise focused on troop training, evaluation of

various subsystems, and assessment of the missile's performance to ensure improved accuracy and survivability.

The training launch was witnessed by senior officers of the Army Rocket Force Command, officials from the Strategic Plans Division, as well as scientists and engineers from strategic organisations.

Military leadership praised the successful exercise, noting the progress in the development of the indigenous Fateh missile series.

President Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, and services chiefs congratulated the teams involved, commending their technical expertise, dedication, and commitment.

DPM reviews implementation status of austerity measures, expresses satisfaction on compliance



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister (DPM/FM) Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Tuesday reviewed the implementation status of austerity measures and expressed satisfaction on its compliance.

The deputy prime minister chaired a meeting of the Cabinet Committee for Monitoring and Implementation of Fuel Conservation and Additional Austerity Measures, a DPM's Office news release said.

The DPM/FM stressed that

given the current challenges, it was essential that all sectors practice conservation and austerity until circumstances improve. Minister Ishaq also displayed the dashboard prepared for tracking implementation of the austerity measures.

The DPM/FM further emphasized that only those cases for exemption from these austerity measures be brought to the committee which are essential in carrying out critical and time-bound work of the Government.

The meeting was attended by the Federal Ministers of IT, Climate Change, SAPM Tariq Bajwa, Secretaries of Cabinet Division, National Security Division, Petroleum Division, Planning Division, Chief Secretaries of all provinces and other senior officials from concerned ministries.

Cambodia agrees to repatriate 54 Pakistanis after crackdown on scam compound

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The country's Foreign Office confirmed on Tuesday that Cambodian authorities have agreed to the early repatriation of 54 Pakistani nationals detained following a raid on a suspected scam compound, offering relief amid concerns over the conditions of those held in custody.

The development follows reports suggesting that more than 200 Pakistanis were being held by Cambodian police in overcrowded detention centres, with limited access to basic facilities. The situation had raised alarm among officials and prompted urgent diplomatic engagement.

According to the Foreign Office, Pakistan's embassy in Cambodia actively pursued the matter with the host government. The intervention came under the direction of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, who had instructed officials to take all necessary steps to support Pakistani nationals abroad.

As a result of these efforts, Cambodian authorities agreed to facilitate the early return of 54 detainees arrested in Siem Reap province during a crackdown on a scamming compound. Officials said arrangements are now under way to organise their departure, with the individuals expected to leave Cambodia once flight plans are finalised.

Pakistan's recent global peace making successes have enhanced its reputation: Sardar Yousuf

News Desk

MANSEHRA: Federal Minister for Religious Affairs Sardar Muhammad Yousaf has said that Pakistan's recent success on the global front has enhanced its reputation, with the world acknowledging the profession-

al capabilities of its armed forces. He expressed these views while addressing an inauguration ceremony of a link road in Siran Valley and a newly established NADRA office in Jabori.

The event was also attended by Sardar Shahjehan Yousaf, President of PML-N Hazara Division

and Parliamentary Leader in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, who also spoke on the occasion.

The federal minister credited Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of Army Staff Syed Asim Munir for their leadership and diplomatic efforts, stating that Pakistan has played a constructive

role in promoting global stability. He added that the country's positive international engagement has strengthened its prestige worldwide.

Speaking at the ceremony, Sardar Shahjehan Yousaf said that the establishment of the NADRA office in Jabori would provide

essential services at the doorstep of local residents, while efforts are also ongoing to expand electricity supply to different areas.

Other speakers at the event included Member of Provincial Assembly Sonia Shah, PML-N Vice President Syed Riaz Hussain Shah, former District Nazim

Kashmir Youth Pool Talent, But Awareness Gap Hinders Progress, says AJK PM



Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: The Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir, Faisal Mumtaz Rathore, has said that while there was no shortage of talent in the liberated territory, however, lack of awareness among youth remains a major challenge that needs urgent attention. Addressing participants at a two-day Youth Leadership Workshop organized by the Kashmir Institute of Management, here today, the AJK premier

noted that youth constitute nearly 64 percent of Azad Kashmir's population, adding that with proper guidance they could become a key driver of the region's development.

He said Kashmiri youth were already holding key positions across Pakistan, reflecting their capabilities and potential. Prime Minister Rathore urged young people to make effective use of modern technology. He observed that access to information had become easier than ever.

He, however, cautioned that success required sustained effort, discipline, and difficult decisions, rather than instant gains. He advised youth to avoid negative trends, take responsibility for their failures, and move beyond the tendency to blame others. "Governments can facilitate youth by providing resources, training, and education, but hard work remains the responsibility of individuals," he remarked. Highlighting the importance of self-accountability, the prime

minister encouraged young people to identify their weaknesses and strive for continuous improvement.

He expressed hope that the workshop would help nurture future youth leaders. Minister for Finance and Inland Revenue Chaudhry Qasim Majeed, Advisor on Sports and Youth Affairs Sardar Ahmed Saghir, Secretary Sports, Youth, and Culture Ansar Yaqoob, and the prime minister's spokesperson Shaukat Javed Mir were also present on the occasion.

Senior Officer Muhammad Javed Malik Promoted to Deputy Director Information Mirpur

Bureau Report

MIRPUR: Muhammad Javed Malik elevated as Dy Director Information Mirpur Division.

According to the notification of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Government, the most senior and talented officer of the Information Department of Azad Kashmir, Muhammad Javed Malik, has been promoted to Deputy Director Information, Mirpur, Grade B-18. He has assumed the charge of his slot and started performing his duties.

Civil society and journalistic community congratulated Mr Malik and welcomed the step of government.



AJK PM's aide meets PPP Islamabad President to discuss party organization

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Syed Azadar Hussain Kazmi, Political Assistant to the Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, was called on by former Member of Legislative Assembly Azad Kashmir and President Pakistan Peoples Party District Islamabad, Ms. Shahzada Kausar Gilani. During the meeting, the organizational matters of the party in Islamabad were discussed. Ms. Shahzada Kausar Gilani presented a bouquet to Syed Azadar Hussain Kazmi, congratulated him and expressed her best wishes for him.



Azad Kashmir Elections Carry Global Significance, Says Sardar Attique



Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD/GHAZIABAD: A delegation of the Muslim Conference from Khawra constituency met with President Muslim Conference and former Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan at Mujahid e Awwal House, Ghaziabad, in which organizational matters, public issues and future political strategy were discussed. On this occasion, Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan said that the elections in Azad Kashmir should not be considered as just a change of government, but the effects of the general elections in Azad Kashmir are important for the entire world. Meanwhile, President Muslim Conference and former Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan, grandson of Sardar Gulzar Abbasi and Rashid Gulzar Abbasi in Sengra Condolences and Fateha were offered on the death of his son.

A Decisive strike on religious freedom, educational autonomy and Kashmiri identity

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The All Parties Hurriyat Conference (Azad Kashmir and Pakistan Branch) strongly condemned the move to declare illegal Jamia Sirajul Uloom, a renowned religious and educational institution located in Shopian district of occupied Jammu and Kashmir, terming it not only an action against an institution but also a serious and unacceptable attack on the religious freedom, educational autonomy and identity of Kashmiri Muslims in the region.

In his detailed statement, Hurriyat Conference Information Secretary Mushtaq Ahmed Butt pointed out that the banning of Jamia Sirajul Uloom, Shopian by the Indian occupation administration is not a routine administrative move but is a continuation of a systematic and long-term policy of India, the effects of which may be profound and lasting on the religious, educational and social fabric of occupied Kashmir.

The All Parties Hurriyat Conference urged the international community, especially international human rights organizations and institutions, to take immediate and serious notice of this situation. The statement said that targeting religious and educational institutions in the name of security could set a dangerous precedent, which could have repercussions not only for the future of religious freedom and human rights in occupied Kashmir but also globally.

New PSCA Safety App Integrates Legal Aid, Mental Health Support, and 15 Emergency Services

Bureau Report

LAHORE: The Punjab Safe Cities Authority's "Next Gen Safety App" is rapidly gaining popularity, particularly among the younger generation (Gen-Z), emerging as a secure, modern, and reliable digital platform. According to PSCA's spokesperson, over 1,900 users utilized the app's chat service in the past month to share their concerns anonymously. Additionally, more than 555 citizens received immediate guidance and assistance through video calls with experts, while over 700 users accessed emergency services via this app.

The spokesperson stated that the application ensures prompt support for citizens in psychological, legal, and emergency situations. Qualified psychologists and police officers stationed at Safe City are available around the clock to provide swift assistance. Users can register complaints with complete privacy and confidence, ensuring timely guidance and resolution of their issues.

The spokesperson further highlighted that the "Next Gen Safety App" includes advanced features such as integration with Emergency Helpline-15, Family Circle, location sharing, and other modern safety tools. These features allow users to connect with their family members and enhance personal security. Moreover, the app enables young citizens to access free legal advice and professional psychological counseling with ease. Additional features include a panic button, access to nearby Wi-Fi hotspots, and quick connectivity to Police Facilitation Centers.

The Punjab Safe Cities Authority remains fully committed to providing a safe, trustworthy, and technologically advanced digital environment for the youth.

Safe City Project

ISLAMABAD: Laborers busy in boring hole for lay earth cable under the Safe City Project, in the Federal Capital. Earth cabling under the Safe City Projects in Pakistan consists of extensive underground infrastructure to support high-tech surveillance.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

AJK Prime Minister links skill development to region's sustainable future

Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: The Prime Minister Azad Kashmir Faisal Mumtaz Rathore on Monday underscored the need to equip youth with skills and technological awareness, calling skill development key to the region's sustainable development.

Speaking to the media during his visit to the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Job Festival, he said the initiative aimed to equip youth and job seekers with training, career counselling and insights into evolving market demands. Noting that nearly 64 per cent of the popu-



lation comprises youth, the AJK premier stressed the need to channel their energies into productive activities.

He warned that failure to do so could lead to negative outcomes. He said that the government had demonstrated tolerance and inclusivity in its approach to deal with national issues. Earlier, the prime minister visited stalls set up by government departments and private organisations and received briefings from officials.

He was accompanied by Minister for Finance and Inland Revenue Chaudhry Qasim Majeed, Advisor on Sports and Youth Affairs Ahmed Saghir, Secretary Sports Ansar Yaqoob and the prime minister's spokesperson Shaukat Javed Mir.

PML-N and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam forge electoral alliance for Kashmir polls

Spokesman Report.

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League N and Jamiat Ulema e Islam Azad Kashmir held a meeting at Punjab House Islamabad

Both parties have decided in principle that they will contest the upcoming elections jointly.

The meeting was attended by the Political Committee of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Advisor to the Prime Minister of Pakistan on Political Affairs Rana Sanaullah, Minister for Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan Affairs Amir Muqam, Senator Pervez Rashid, President Pakistan Muslim League-N Azad



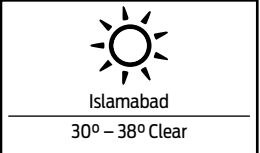
Kashmir Shah Ghulam Qadir, Senior Vice President Mushtaq Ahmed Minhas, Chaudhry Abid Raza, Barjees Tahir, Anusha Rehman and Captain

Safdar.

All Jammu and Kashmir Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam was represented by Ameer Maulana Pir Muhammad Mazhar Saeed Shah, General Secretary Basharat Hussain Naveed and Finance Director Mufti Muhammad Akhtar.

Both parties expressed their resolve that they will work together to protect and promote Islamic values, traditions and public interests in Kashmir.

Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam's decision in principle to support Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Azad Kashmir in the meeting, a formal announcement will be made in a few days.



SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr 3:52 am
Zohr 12:05 pm
Asr 4:52 pm
Maghrib 6:49 pm
Isha 8:20 pm

EMERGENCY

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

Women Police Stations

Islamabad 9222596
Rawalpindi 9270601-20

ENQUIRY

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

HOSPITALS

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

DEPARTMENTS

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

COMPLAINTS

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

Special Message of CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif on World Day for Safety and Health at Work

Bureau Report

LAHORE: In her special message on World Day for Safety & Health at Work, Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif committed to the safety and rehabilitation of workers. She declared workplace safety, health, and employees' well-being as fundamental pillars of a nation's development, and emphasized on protection of physical and mental health of labor in factories; and directed the Labour Department and other institutions to take strict action against violators of workplace laws. She vowed that worker safety and public health are top priorities of Punjab government; and directed the authorities concerned to ensure safety of equipment, besides protective measures in factories, plants, and offices.

Chief Minister Punjab said that there is a need for strict implementation of protective equipment and safety protocols to protect labor, workers,

and laborers from workplace hazards, because only a healthy and safe worker can build a strong nation. She added that owners of all institutions and industrial units should prioritize workers' safety by taking necessary steps for their well-being, and underscored that she is committed to the health, well-being, and safety of every worker in Punjab.

Chief Minister Punjab acknowledged that workforce is a nation's valuable asset, so their health and safety cannot be compromised. She said that protecting employees' lives and property, besides providing them a safe working environment is responsibility of a government. Therefore, implementing international standard safety laws is essential to prevent workplace accidents. Reiterating her commitment to creating a safe environment where workers feel mentally and physically secure, she noted that companies that neglect employees' health and safety will face fines.



Meeting

ISLAMABAD: Acting President Syed Yousuf Raza Gillani in a meeting with the Vice Chancellors of various universities in Lahore on Tuesday.



Photo: PID

Literate Pakistan is Our Dream, says Dr. Nasir Mahmood

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Vice Chancellor of Allama Iqbal Open University, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood has said that Pakistan's progress is directly linked with the promotion of education, stressing that education must be given top priority if the country is to move forward in real terms. He said that sustainable and lasting development is only possible through education and bringing every child into the educational system is an urgent national need.

He expressed these views while addressing the inauguration ceremony of the new building of the university's regional campus in Sahiwal. He stated "Literate Pakistan is our dream and bringing every child into the education system is our mission so that the country can be steered towards development and prosperity."

Dr. Nasir Mahmood said



that the distance learning system, which was once viewed with skepticism is now being adopted and considered by universities around the world. He noted that when this system was introduced in 1974, it was not easily understood by the public but over time it has proven its effectiveness and value in expanding access to education.

On the occasion, Director General Regional Campuses Dr. Malik Tauqeer Ahmed Khan, DIG Prisons Malik Shaukat Feroz, Director Arts Council Faiz Hamdani and Regional Director Sahiwal Dr. Malik Ahmer Zulfikar Noon also addressed the ceremony.

CM Maryam Nawaz Sharif Congratulates Nation on Successful Test Fire of Pakistan Army's "Fateh-2" Missile

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif expressed gratitude over successful training test of Pakistan Army's "Fateh-2" missile; and congratulated army personnels, scientists, engineers and the entire nation on this remarkable achievement.

She said that Fateh missile, equipped with modern avionics and advanced navigation technology, is a demonstration of Pakistan's defense capabilities, as it has an ability to strike targets with extreme precision up to a range of 400 KMs, besides defeating the enemy's missile defense systems. She added that we are advocates of peace, but are not negligent of our defense; and highlighted that the range, expertise, and survivability of Pakistan's conventional missile systems will be further enhanced.

SAU-Private Sector conduct successful trials of heat- and drought-tolerant cotton varieties

Abdul Ghafoor Sarohi

HYDERABAD: In a significant step towards climate-smart agriculture, the Sindh Agriculture University (SAU) Tandojam in collaboration with the private sector is conducting advanced field experiments on climate-resilient cotton varieties aimed at addressing the growing challenges of climate change, water scarcity, and rising temperatures in Sindh.



pressure, particularly Cotton Leaf Curl Virus (CLCV).

A high-level delegation, including Vice Chancellor Engr. Prof. Dr. Altaf Ali Siyal, the former Chairman of the Pakistan Engineering Council, and representatives of the private sector Javed Salim qureshi visited the experimental fields to assess crop performance.

During the visit, the crop—now at approximately two and a half months of growth—was observed to be in excellent condition, demonstrating vigorous vegetative growth, profuse squaring, abundant flowering, and early boll formation, all indicating strong yield potential under stress conditions.

The visit was also attended by Director Farms Dr. Muhammad Mithal Lund, Public Relations Officer Gulsher Lochi, Dr. R. B. Vistro, and other officials.

Smart lockdown should be completely lifted on the occasion of Eid-ul-Adha: Alhaj Naseer

Abdul Majid

FAISALABAD: President of Central Cloth Board Ittehad Group Pakistan Alhaj Naseer Yousuf Vohra has said that smart lockdown should be completely lifted on the occasion of Eid-ul-Adha and traders should be allowed to work openly. He further said that the government has driven the people crazy by load shedding on one side, while on the other hand, by implementing a smart lockdown, the people, especially the traders, have completely stopped their business. 90% of traders are using their own money, while that too is close to ending. Due to the wrong policies of the government, all the splendor and business of the eight markets of Faisalabad have completely stopped. Now, where will we go? Naseer Yousuf Vohra has requested the Chief Minister of Punjab and the Prime Minister of Pakistan to end the smart lockdown completely so that traders and the people can do business on the occasion of Eid-ul-Adha and perform the duties of sacrifice. Naseer Yousuf Vohra has said about the energy crises that Pakistan is getting full supply of oil, yet prices were increased. The government will take any decision after contacting the stakeholders. The government will have to formulate a long-term policy after consulting the traders.



Development work is progressing rapidly in Toba Tek Singh: MPA Ch, Amjad Ali Javed

Zafar Chishti

TOBA TEK SINGH: Pakistan Muslim League (N) Member of Provincial Assembly Chaudhry Amjad Ali Javed has stated that the ongoing development projects in Toba Tek Singh are a practical reflection of the government's public-friendly policies and all possible measures are being taken to provide modern travel facilities to citizens.

Speaking exclusively to our correspondent, MPA Chaudhry Amjad Ali Javed said that construction work on the one-way road from Jhang Road Motorway Interchange to Rajana Motorway is progressing rapidly. He added that the concerned departments are working day and night to ensure timely completion of the project. He said the project will play a vital role in improving traffic flow, reducing accidents and providing safe and quality travel facilities to the public.

Chaudhry Amjad Ali Javed further stated that the road's construction will not only strengthen connectivity between Toba Tek Singh and surrounding areas but will also promote trade and business activities, thereby contributing to the strengthening of the local economy.



Hajj Review Committee briefed on facilities for pilgrims in Makkah, Madinah

ISLAMABAD: A meeting of the Hajj Review Committee was held on Tuesday under the chairmanship of Federal Minister for Religious Affairs, Sardar Muhammad Yousuf, where officials of the Ministry of Religious Affairs briefed the participants on arrangements for pilgrims.

The officials informed the committee that five dispensaries have so far been established in Makkah in accordance with the number of Hajj pilgrims, while five bus stands have been allocated for Haram transport.

Secretary for Religious Affairs Abrar Ahmed Mirza, Additional Secretary Dr. Sajid Mahmood Chohan, and Joint Secretary Hajj Muhammad Bakhsh Sangi gave detailed briefings during the meeting.

Chief Coordinator Makkah Dr. Mirza Ali Mehsud, Coordinator Makkah Zulfikar Khan, and Hajj Directors from Makkah and Madinah also participated in the meeting via Zoom from Makkah.

Addressing the meeting, the federal minister urged officials to remain vigilant throughout the Hajj operation and ensure that pilgrims' problems are addressed immediately. He also emphasized that pilgrims should follow rules and regulations during their stay in Saudi Arabia and uphold the dignity of their homeland.

Director Madinah informed the committee that more than 20,000 pilgrims had reached Madinah till Tuesday. He added that over 11,000 pilgrims have completed their pilgrimage to Riyadh-ul-Jannah.

Head of the Pakistan Hajj Medical Mission, Col. Dr. Tauqeer, informed the committee that one hospital and three dispensaries are currently functioning in Madinah.

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America's Ethical Crisis Unfolds

A nation does not collapse because of external attacks; it begins to erode when its people lose faith in those who lead them. The recent shooting incident in the United States, and the events that followed, go far beyond a simple security lapse. It exposed a deep fracture between power and public trust. Even the most powerful nation cannot remain stable if its moral authority is questioned from within. What we witnessed was not just a moment of crisis, but a reflection of a growing internal decay that is slowly weakening the foundations of American society.

The scene itself was deeply unsettling. A lone gunman managed to breach one of the most secure environments in the world—an event attended by the President and top leadership. The response was chaotic and urgent, with security personnel forcibly removing senior officials in a manner that appeared abrupt and unceremonious. The image of authority being physically overpowered by circumstance sent a powerful message: even the strongest systems can appear fragile when confronted with unexpected internal threats. But the real shock did not lie in the breach itself—it emerged in what followed.

During a televised interview, the journalist read from the suspect's alleged manifesto, which contained severe and disturbing accusations, and asked the President for a reaction. The President responded sharply, rejecting the claims and criticizing the journalist for even raising them. This exchange, now widely circulated, became more than a moment of tension—it became a mirror reflecting

the current state of American political discourse. It showed how quickly allegations, perception, and defensiveness can collide at the highest levels of power.

The real issue is not whether the accusation itself is true. The greater danger lies in the fact that such beliefs now exist and are spreading among the public. A segment of society has come to view those in power as morally compromised, legally protected, and disconnected from accountability. This perception—whether grounded in fact or fueled by suspicion—is shaping public thinking in profound ways. When people begin to believe that justice is not equal, the foundation of society starts to weaken, and trust becomes the first casualty.

At the center of this growing distrust is the unresolved shadow of the Epstein case. Over time, fragments of documents, testimonies, and associations have entered the public domain. Some names have been referenced, some records partially disclosed, yet a significant portion of the material remains sealed or undisclosed. This incomplete transparency has created more suspicion than clarity. Many now believe that individuals within the highest circles of power were linked, directly or indirectly, to a network of exploitation, and yet have not faced full legal scrutiny. Whether every such belief is accurate is secondary—the perception itself is damaging enough.

This situation represents more than a legal gap; it reflects a deeper moral crisis. A functioning society depends

on a simple but powerful principle: the law applies equally to all. When that belief begins to collapse, laws lose their authority and institutions lose their legitimacy. Citizens begin to question not only their leaders, but the entire system that governs them. Over time, this erosion of trust reshapes the social fabric, creating a mindset in which fairness is doubted and justice is seen as selective.

The lone attacker must be understood in this broader context. He was not born with violent intent; he was shaped by the environment around him—by narratives, perceptions, and the belief that a system had failed. His alleged manifesto reflects a mindset that sees leadership as corrupt and accountability as nonexistent. While his actions cannot be justified under any circumstance, they highlight a dangerous psychological shift. When individuals lose faith in lawful processes, they may begin to act outside them, believing that justice must be enforced by their own hands.

The Epstein case has thus evolved into a symbol of something far larger than a criminal investigation. It represents, in the public imagination, a system where wealth and influence can shield individuals from consequences. The continued existence of sealed files, undisclosed evidence, and unresolved questions reinforces this belief. Each delay, each unanswered query, deepens suspicion. And over time, suspicion hardens into conviction, regardless of what the legal truth may ultimately reveal.

This crisis of trust is not confined to domestic issues alone. It is further intensified by the perception of how the United States conducts itself internationally. Critics argue that American foreign policy has increasingly been driven by strategic and economic interests, often at the expense of global stability. Actions in the Middle East, tensions with other nations, and the use of economic and military leverage are seen by many as evidence of a system prioritizing control over cooperation. Whether one agrees with this assessment or not, the perception contributes to the broader narrative of moral inconsistency.

Such perceptions create a dangerous contradiction. A nation that presents itself as a defender of democratic values and human rights cannot afford to appear selective in its application of those principles. When domestic allegations remain unresolved and international actions are viewed as self-serving, the gap between declared values and perceived reality widens. This gap weakens not only global standing but also internal confidence.

The consequences of this growing distrust are already visible. Social cohesion is weakening, political discourse is becoming increasingly hostile, and public confidence in institutions is declining. The longer uncertainty persists, the deeper the damage becomes. A nation cannot rely solely on economic or military strength; it must also maintain the trust of its people. Without that trust, even the most powerful systems begin to lose stability.

The solution lies not in denial, deflection, or confrontation, but in clarity and

Continued on Page 7



Analysis

Qamar Bashir

Pakistan Marks Global Solidarity Day, Citing Lessons from 2005 Earthquake

Pakistan joins the international community today in expressing solidarity with victims of earthquakes and other natural disasters around the world.

Designated by the United Nations, this day serves not only as a reminder to honor those who lost their lives in earthquakes but also to express compassion for survivors and to strengthen global resolve in disaster preparedness and resilience.

It reminds us that mitigating the devastating impacts of natural disasters requires improved infrastructure, comprehensive planning, and widespread public awareness.

At the global level, this day underscores the importance of international cooperation. Collaborative efforts are essential for advancing early warning technologies and strengthening structural resilience.

Integrating safety standards into construction practices can significantly reduce the destruction caused by earthquakes.

In Pakistan, the devastating earthquake of October 2005 remains deeply etched in our national memory. Over 80,000 lives were lost, and nearly 3 million people were displaced across Azad Jammu & Kashmir and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In few moments the tragedy of 2005 earthquake left profound human, social, and economic impacts on our national memory. Yet equally memorable was the resilience, collective resolve and courage of the countrymen which no doubt stand as a powerful testament to the strength of the human spirit.

In the aftermath of this catastrophe, Pakistan introduced comprehensive institutional reforms to enhance its disaster management capacity. The establishment of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) marked a significant milestone in creating a coordinated national framework.

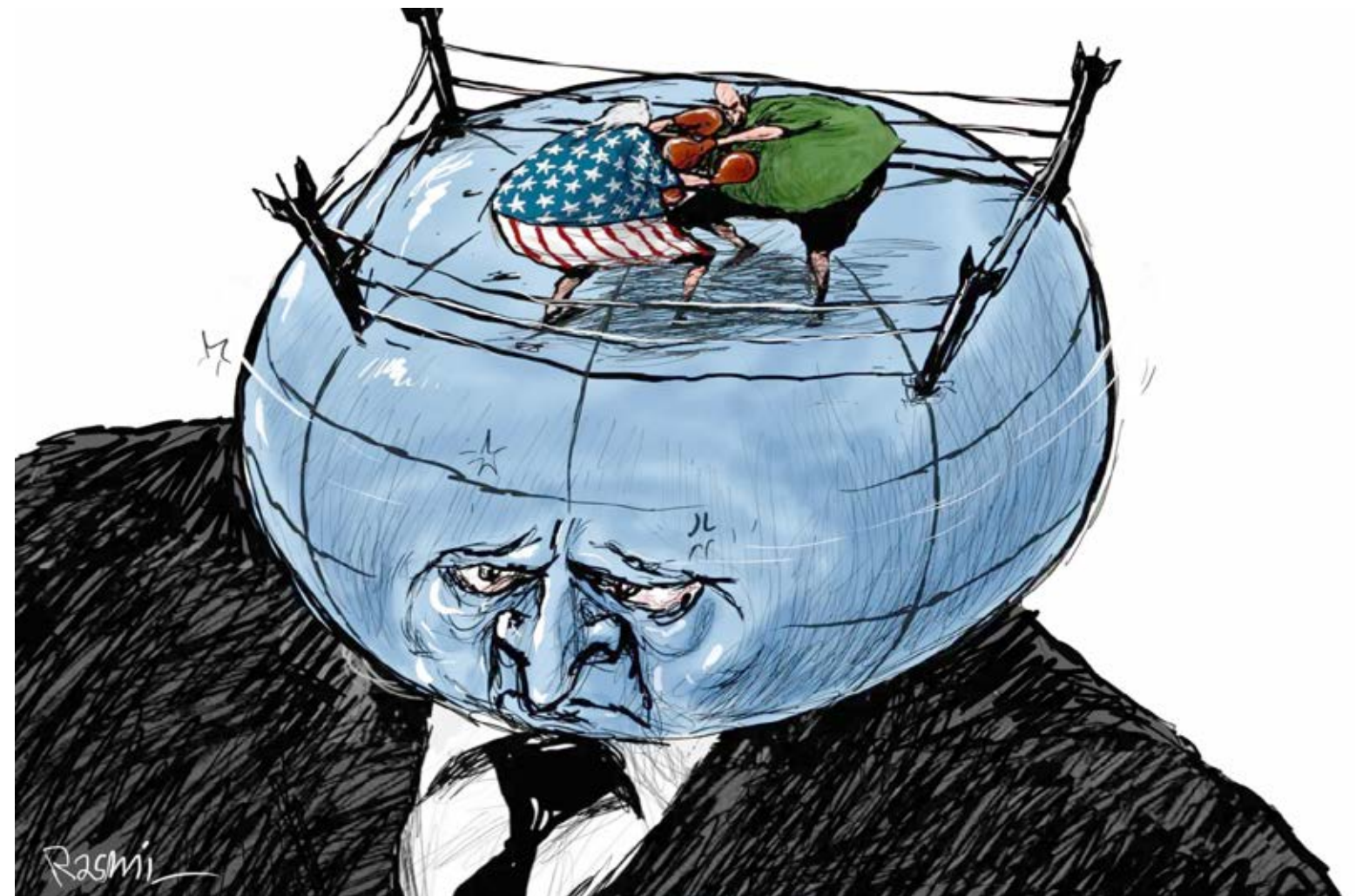
While earthquakes cannot be predicted, NDMA utilizes historical trends, fault line data, and geospatial technologies to identify high-risk areas. These efforts support early warning systems, infrastructure, strengthening, preparedness, and damage reduction.

In alignment with global initiatives, Pakistan reaffirms its commitment to the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030.

And Pakistan emphasizes the need for equitable access to early warning systems and the development of earthquake-resilient infrastructure.

At the national level, capacity building and public awareness remain key priorities. These include training of community first responders, integrating disaster education into the curriculum under the Pakistan School Safety Framework (PSSF), and investing in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and satellite-based modeling.

The Government of Pakistan reiterates its commitment to building a safer and more resilient future and calls upon the international community to strengthen collective efforts through shared responsibility and cooperation.



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

Agricultural Decline in Azad Kashmir: Problems, Concerns and the Urgent Need for Reform

Azad Kashmir is a region rich in natural resources, fertile lands and favorable climatic conditions, but unfortunately, this region has failed to fully exploit its agricultural potential. At a time when the government is moving towards organizing an agricultural conference in Muzaffarabad, this is a very important opportunity to seriously review the shortcomings of the past and formulate a clear, effective and workable strategy for the future. First of all, let us talk about the shortcomings and basic problems of the current system.

In the last seventy-five years, the Agriculture Department of Azad Kashmir has failed to produce significant results in the practical field. Many claims of agricultural development were made, but they were mostly limited to speeches and paper projects, due to which no major change was seen at the ground level. Farmers were not provided with interest-free or easy agricultural loans, due to which they were deprived of the use of modern technology, quality seeds, fertilizers and machinery. Lack of guidance and training at the rural level is also a serious problem, where farmers are still forced to rely on traditional methods, which leads to low per acre yields.

Nepotism, patronage culture and corruption within institutions have hollowed out the sector. Qualified and experienced people were ignored and unprofessional and influential people were appointed to important positions, due to which

the agriculture department could not discharge its real responsibilities. Moreover, insufficient attention was paid to agricultural research, seed improvement, efficient use of water, and modern irrigation systems such as drip irrigation and sprinkler systems. As a result, millions of acres of agricultural land have become barren while the youth are preferring to move away from agriculture to government jobs or abroad, which is a dangerous trend.

Potential concerns and public issues If the current situation continues, Azad Kashmir may face serious challenges in the future. The risk of food shortage is increasing as dependence on external markets is increasing due to low local production. Unemployment, poverty and economic instability will inevitably increase, especially in rural areas where agriculture can be the main source of employment. There will be an increase in the migration of the rural population to cities and abroad, which will further depopulate agricultural lands and affect the social balance.

An important aspect here is that a large part of the state of Jammu and Kashmir is still under the administration of India. In the occupied valley, despite all the difficulties, people have not abandoned agriculture but have made it the basis of their economy. Agriculture, horticulture and tourism are playing an important role in the economy there. In particular, the production of apples, walnuts, almonds, cherries, apricots and other fruits not only supports the economy at the local level but also reaches

global markets. Kashmiri rice, Kashmiri apples, Kashmiri saffron, carpets and shawls have their own unique identity and there is a demand for them in the international market. Many families are earning a respectable living by staying connected to their lands. This example is clear proof that if there is determination and the right policy, agriculture can be made successful even in difficult circumstances.

These problems can be solved in Azad Kashmir, provided that practical steps are taken seriously. First of all, the Agriculture Department should be freed from political interference, patronage culture and corruption and built completely on merit. Experienced and professional people should be brought forward so that the institution can show its real performance. Interest-free agricultural loans should be immediately issued to farmers and workshops and field training programs on modern agriculture should be organized so that they can adopt modern agricultural methods. Agricultural training centers should be established in every district where practical guidance should be provided.

Special programs should be started to make barren lands cultivable and the youth should be attracted towards agriculture by leasing land. The production of fruit trees should be increased, especially crops like apple, walnut, almond, saffron, rice, wheat and corn. Along with this, honey production (beekeeping), dairy farming, poultry farming and herbal medicine plants should also be promoted so that the sources of income can be increased.

Effective steps should be taken at the government level for marketing, value addition and

Continued on Page 7



Analysis

Gulshad Ahmed Butt

Books Speak Louder: Timeless Quotes about Books

Books are more than pages and words; they are a source of wisdom, imagination, and guidance. Through powerful quotations, books capture the thoughts of great minds and pass them across generations. Each quote reflects the importance of reading, reminding us how books shape our thinking, inspire our actions, and enrich our lives. On World Book Day, these words stand as a tribute to the lasting value of books in building knowledge and understanding.

Books are at the heart of learning and progress. They also have the power to inspire and comfort. And transport us, especially in times of stress or difficulty. Quotations about books emphasize their power to transport, transform, and provide companionship, featuring iconic lines from authors like Borges, King, and Angelou. Key themes highlight books as portable magic, essential companions, and mirrors of the soul.

Books are a uniquely portable magic. (Stephen King)
 A reader lives a thousand lives before he dies. The man who never reads lives only one. (George R. R. Martin)
 Reading is dreaming with open eyes. (Unknown)
 To read is to voyage through time. (Carl Sagan)
 A room without books is like a body without a soul. (Marcus Tullius Cicero)
 There is no friend as loyal as a book. (Ernest Hemingway)
 Books are mirrors: you only see in them what you already have inside you. (Carlos Ruiz Zafón)
 I think books are like people, in the sense that

they'll turn up in your life when you most need them. (Emma Thompson)

Today a reader, tomorrow a leader. (Margaret Fuller)

A book must be the axe for the frozen sea within us. (Franz Kafka)

The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go. (Dr. Seuss)

You don't have to burn books to destroy a culture. Just get people to stop reading them. (Ray Bradbury)

I have always imagined that paradise will be a kind of library. (Jorge Luis Borges)

A library is not a luxury but one of the necessities of life. (Henry Ward Beecher)

When I got my library card that was when my life began. (Rita Mae Brown)

So many books, so little time. (Frank Zappa)

You can never get a cup of tea large enough or a book long enough. (C. S. Lewis)

Books are the plane, the train, and the road. (Anna Quindlen)

Outside of a dog, a book is man's best friend. (Groucho Marx)

The man who does not read good books has no advantage. (Mark Twain)

You don't have to burn books to destroy a culture. Just get people to stop reading them. (Ray Bradbury (1953), Fahrenheit 451.

On Books as Friends and Leaders: "There is no friend as loyal as a book. Books are important for the mind, heart, and soul. Today a reader, tomorrow a leader," highlighted by Syed Sardar Shah (Sindh Education Minister), reflecting the prevailing sentiment on literature.

Malala Yousafzai's most famous quote from

Continued on Page 7

Ambassador of Azerbaijan visits APJCCI Office, emphasizes enhanced trade & economic cooperation

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: His Excellency Khazar Farhadov, Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan to Pakistan, visited the newly established office of the Azerbaijan-Pakistan Joint Chamber of Commerce & Industry (APJCCI) in Islamabad.

During his visit, the Ambassador highly appreciated the efforts made for the establishment of APJCCI and acknowledged its growing role in strengthening bilateral trade and economic relations between Azerbaijan and Pakistan. He remarked that the Chamber is playing an important role in facilitating business linkages and promoting cooperation between the private sectors of both countries.

Highlighting specific initiatives, H. E. Khazar Farhadov proposed organizing an exhibition of Azerbaijani products in Pakistan to introduce high-quality Azerbaijani goods to the local market. He also suggested the concept of establishing an "Azerbaijan Market" or dedicated promotional platforms in Pakistan to further enhance the visibility of Azerbaijani products.

He also extended an invitation to the Patron-in-Chief of APJCCI, Mr. Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, to attend the World Urban Forum (WUF). The World Urban Forum, organized by UN-Habitat, is a premier global platform focusing on sustainable urban development, housing, and investment opportunities in urban infrastructure, offering valuable insights for investors and policymakers alike.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, Patron-in-Chief APJCCI, thanked His Excellency for visiting the newly established

office and for his continuous support in promoting bilateral relations. He informed that APJCCI is planning to take a business delegation to Azerbaijan in June, aimed at exploring opportunities across multiple sectors.

He highlighted that Pakistani companies are keen to engage with Azerbaijani counterparts, and APJCCI is actively disseminating information to facilitate business connections and partnerships.

On this occasion, Mr. Zafar Bakhtawari, Chairman APJCCI, also appreciated the Ambassador's dedicated efforts in promoting trade relations and supporting the establishment of the Joint Chamber. He expressed optimism that, with continued cooperation and engagement, bilateral trade between Pakistan and Azerbaijan will witness significant growth in the coming years.



Multan Police Performance Report and the Punjab Chief Minister's Hard Line on Policing

The performance report released by Multan Police for the first 113 days of 2026 appears, at first glance, to narrate an encouraging story. According to official figures, serious crimes—including theft, robbery, street crime, snatching, and vehicle theft—have declined by more than 48 percent overall. The report claims a 62 percent reduction in robbery, complete elimination of car snatching, a 70 percent decrease in motorcycle snatching, and a 57 percent drop in motorcycle theft. These statistics undoubtedly project an image of exemplary policing.

A comparative analysis of the data is even more striking: during the first 113 days of 2025, a total of 21,552 cases were registered, whereas in the same period of 2026, the number dropped to 11,138—reflecting a significant decrease of 10,414 cases. The report also highlights over 70 search opera-

tions, intelligence-based actions, snap checking, and improved patrolling, attributing these outcomes to a coordinated strategy under the leadership of City Police Officer Multan, Sadiq Ali Dogar.

Yet the critical question remains: do statistics alone reflect the complete reality? This is where a more complex dimension emerges—one that cannot be ignored. Recently, the Chief Minister of Punjab expressed serious concerns over the overall performance of the police and the rising crime rate in the province. In unequivocal terms, she stated that negligence in protecting the lives and property of citizens would not be tolerated. She emphasized that the primary duty of the police is to ensure public safety—not to instill fear among citizens.

Following an unusual surge in crime during April 2026, the Chief Minister convened emergency meetings and issued a final warning to police offi-

cers. She declared that just as good performance is publicly acknowledged, poor performance would also be punished openly to ensure transparency and accountability. Setting a strict three-month deadline for police reforms, she directed that tangible improvements must be visible within this period, failing which strict disciplinary action would be taken against the responsible officers. She further stressed the need for a fundamental shift in police behavior, instructing that every citizen visiting a police station must be treated with dignity and respect, and addressed courteously.

To modernize policing, the Chief Minister approved the effective use of technology. Plans include the installation of 14,000 body cameras

and 700 panic buttons across police stations in the province. Additionally, an online system for FIR registration and case tracking is being introduced to ensure transparency and oversight. On the issue of women's safety, she directed immediate and effective

action on all harassment complaints and called for a safe and respectful environment for women in police stations. To facilitate public access, she also launched the "Punjab Police Pakistan App," enabling citizens to register complaints from home and track progress. Concluding her statement, the Chief Minister warned that if crime rates do not decline significantly, indiscriminate action will be taken against those responsible, as public safety remains non-negotiable

for the government. The time has come to eradicate the deep-rooted menace of corruption within the police force and establish a robust, impartial, and independent accountability system. Every officer must be answerable to the law—not to influence or connections. Technology should not only be used for crime prevention but also for internal monitoring, performance evaluation, and prompt redressal of public complaints.

Community policing must be strengthened to rebuild trust between the public and the police, as sustainable peace cannot exist in an atmosphere of fear. Long-standing participants in community policing initiatives should be reassessed, and new social workers should be included. Alongside field presence, ethical training and professional standards must be improved so that the uniform symbolizes service and integrity—not power alone.

While the Multan Police report does indicate a positive trend, the real test lies in whether this decline in crime is sustainable or merely temporary. Without genuine institutional reform, these achievements may prove short-lived. Law and order is not defined solely by reduced crime statistics—it is a composite of justice, transparency, and public trust. That destination, it seems, is yet to be reached.

Before Eid, we submitted an application to Shah Shams Police Station against certain criminal elements, but no action was taken. Those same elements have since targeted us. After we reported illegal petrol sales based on public complaints, police personnel allegedly disclosed our identity to these elements, resulting in an attack by 20/25 people on our residence. What kind of policing is this? As a columnist and reporter, I demand lawful action from the City Police Officer Multan and provide me immediate protection under the law.



Analysis Zain-ul-Abideen Abid

Punjab Assembly approves landmark bill setting minimum marriage age for girls at 18

Bureau Report

LAHORE: A delegation of prominent women leaders representing various districts of Punjab and representing PODA Rural Women Network Pakistan attended the historic session of the Punjab Assembly in Lahore on 27 April 2026, held on Monday, which approved the "Child Marriage Restraint Act, Punjab 2026" that sets 18 years as the minimum legal age of marriage for girls in Punjab province. Similar laws have already been passed in Sindh (2013), ICT (2024), and Balochistan (2025).

Ms. Sameena Nazir, Executive Director of PODA, appreciated the leadership of the Speaker of the Punjab Assembly and the efforts of women MPAs who strongly supported it, especially MPA Ishrat Ashraf (Chair, Women's Parliamentary Caucus, Punjab), MPA Azma Bukhari, MPA Sarah Ahmad, MPA Uzma Kardar, MPA Rushda Lodhi, MPA Safia Saeed, MPA Saadia Temur, and many others who, under the leadership of Chief



Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, took this historic step to protect the rights of the girl child in Punjab province.

Ms. Sameena Nazir, Executive Director of PODA Pakistan, said, "This landmark legislation would enable millions of girls to pursue higher education, develop confidence and skills, and build stronger, more secure foundations for their future families."

The delegation of the PODA Rural Women Leadership Alliance included Bismillah Iram, President of Roshan Rahien (Khanewal); Irshad Safdar, President of Ittehad Foundation (Kasur); Mehwish Majeed, school

teacher from Layyah; Nasreen Anwar, women rights leader and politician from Bahawalpur; Shamim Akhtar, human rights activist (Lahore); and Nabeela Aslam, Gender Specialist at PODA, who led the three-year project "Reduce Early Marriages to Enhance Gender Equality," supported by the Norwegian Embassy, Islamabad.

In a conciliatory and balanced manner, Speaker Malik Ahmad Khan steered the legislative process with dignified skill and successfully secured the passage of the Act, despite opposition from some male members of PML-N and PTI. Most PML-N male politicians and all women members supported the adoption of this law. MPA Nagis Shehadi from PPP assured full support of the PPP for this law in Punjab. The majority of members of the Punjab Assembly strongly supported the demand to raise the minimum age of marriage for girls from 16 to 18 years through the new Child Marriage Restraint Act, Punjab 2026, marking a significant step toward gender equality and the protection of children's rights.

Youth Leadership Drives Educational Equity: Aahil Mushtaq Supports Underprivileged School in Head Baloki

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Demonstrating a strong commitment to advancing literacy and inclusive education, Aahil Mushtaq Director Change in Education Foundation and a brilliant student of Roots Millennium Future World School H-11/4 Campus Islamabad, representing the vision of the Change in Education Foundation, successfully led an initiative to donate essential school furniture to an underprivileged school in Village Wazirpur, Head Baloki says a press release.

This meaningful contribution aims to improve the learning environment for students who face limited access to basic educational resources. The initiative directly aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4: Quality Education, which emphasizes inclusive and equitable education for



all. Speaking on the occasion, it was highlighted that millions of children in Pakistan remain out of school due to socio-economic challenges. Efforts like these serve as practical steps toward bridging the education gap and creating opportunities for marginalized communities.

Dr. Faisal Mushtaq, Chairman & CEO of The Millennium Education Group and the Change in Education Foundation, has consistently championed educational reform and access. Under his leadership, the Foundation continues to work towards transforming lives through education, focusing on access, equity, and quality learning outcomes.

The Change in Education Foundation envisions a Pakistan where every child has the opportunity to learn, grow, and succeed regardless of their background. This initiative reflects the Foundation's ongoing mission to empower communities and contribute to national development through education.

Aahil Mushtaq's involvement symbolizes the rising role of youth leadership in addressing critical social challenges and promoting a culture of giving back to society.

OIC-COMSTTECH & Prince of Songkla University Sign MoU to Strengthen Academic and Scientific Cooperation

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: OIC Ministerial Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation (OIC-COMSTTECH) and Prince of Songkla University (PSU), Thailand, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) today to enhance collaboration in higher education, science, technology, innovation, and international academic exchange.

The MoU signing ceremony was held on Tuesday, with senior leadership, diplomats, and academic representatives from both sides.

The ceremony commenced with an introduction of participants, followed by opening remarks from Assoc. Prof. Dr. Thakerng Wongsirichot, Vice President for Academic and International Affairs, Prince of Songkla University. He welcomed the participants and highlighted the importance of inter-



national academic partnerships in addressing global challenges through education and research.

Prof. Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General, OIC-COMSTTECH, while delivering opening remarks emphasized COMSTTECH's commitment to promoting scientific cooperation among OIC member states and expanding partnerships with leading universities around the

world. The event was graced by distinguished guests including H. E. Mr. Rongvudhi Virabutr, Ambassador of Thailand to Pakistan. Ambassador appreciated the growing academic ties between Pakistan and Thailand and expressed confidence that the MoU would open new avenues for educational collaboration, research mobility, and institutional linkages.

Al-Shifa Eye Hospital begins services in South Punjab

City Desk

RAWALPINDI: Al-Shifa Trust's new eye hospital in Haveli Lakha, Okara, has begun serving patients ahead of a formal inauguration scheduled for May 04, bringing specialist eye care within reach of five districts in South Punjab for the first time.



The facility, built on two acres of donated land, will serve patients from Haveli Lakha, Depalpur, Pakpatan, Sahiwal, and Bahawalnagar, areas long deprived of specialised eye treatment. The total project cost is Rs162 million, including Rs122 million for construction and Rs40 million for medical equipment. The project was made possible through generous contri-

butions from donors, whose support helped expand access to quality eye care in underserved communities.

Pakistan's blindness rate has declined from 1.78 percent in 1990 to about 0.5 percent, a reduction partly attributed to expanded access to cataract surgery and earlier diagnosis, though rising costs and limited facilities remain an issue. For daily-wage families in the Okara and

Sahiwal belt, the new hospital eliminates the need to travel to Lahore or Multan for basic procedures, cutting both time and cost.

With Haveli Lakha now operational, Al-Shifa Trust runs seven hospitals across Rawalpindi, Sukkur, Kohat, Muzaffarabad, Chakwal, Gilgit, and Haveli Lakha, and has set up over 15,000 screening and surgical camps in remote areas. Construction has also begun on an eighth hospital in Lahore.

The trust screened more than 175,000 schoolchildren through over 550 free eye camps last year and aims to reach over two million patients and perform 120,000 surgeries in the coming year, with approximately 80 to 90 percent of all patients treated free of charge.

Bull & Bears
PSX 100-Share
Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index	
Current	Prev. Close
168,412.23	169,497.35
Day's High	Day's Low
169,313.90	168,170.74
Index Value	Change
22,432,193,343	-1085.12
Percentage	Time
-0.64%	28 Apr, 2026 4:30 pm

Europe: FTSE 100 Index	
Index Value	Change
10,332.79	+11.70
Percentage	Time
+0.11%	28 Apr, 4:35 pm GMT

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average	
Index Value	Change
49,170.32	+2.53
Percentage	Time
+0.0051%	28 Apr, 1:07 pm GMT-4

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average	
Index Value	Change
59,917.46	-619.90
Percentage	Time
-1.02%	28 Apr, 3:45 pm GMT+9

Open Market Forex Rates		
Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	198.55	202.90
Bahrain Dinar	729.10	740.85
Canadian Dollar	203.31	206.85
China Yuan	39.25	39.75
Danish Krone	43.25	43.65
Euro	326.16	331.25
Hong Kong Dollar	35.13	36.14
Indian Rupee	2.25	2.45
Japanese Yen	1.7342	1.8340
Kuwaiti Dinar	879.60	890.52
Malaysian Ringgit	65.15	66.55
New Zealand \$	162.66	168.70
Norwegians Krone	27.6	27.9
Omani Riyal	723	733.45
Qatari Riyal	72.25	73.25
Saudi Riyal	74.40	75.40
Singapore Dollar	216.53	222.75
Swedish Korona	30.25	30.55
Swiss Franc	353.24	358.50
Thai Bhat	8.45	8.60
U.A.E Dirham	76.05	77.05
UK Pound Sterling	376.88	382.25
US Dollar	279.2	279.85

S. M. Tanveer warns of 'economic suffocation' following 100-basis-point increase in interest rates

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: S. M. Tanveer, the Patron-in-Chief of the United Business Group (UBG)—the ruling faction in the FPCCI—and a prominent business leader, has strongly condemned the 100-basis-point increase in interest rates. He stated that despite the rising trend in international oil prices, such

a drastic hike has not been seen anywhere else in the world.

He warned that this monetary tightening will have a devastating impact on the national exchequer, noting that given the current volume of government borrowing, ranging around Rs60 trillion, a mere one percent rise in the rate necessitates an additional Rs600 billion in domestic debt servicing.

Mr. Tanveer further lamented that the manufacturing sector is being forced to bear the brunt of these prohibitive markup rates, which, when coupled with a cost of doing business already ranked as the highest in the region, threatens the very survival of local enterprise.

He emphasized that the dual pressure of exorbitant interest rates and surging energy

costs is actively jeopardizing industrial growth, leading to a visible rise in closed industrial units across the country.

Consequently, Mr. Tanveer has demanded an immediate reversal of this monetary policy to prevent further de-industrialization and to provide the private sector with the breathing room necessary to sustain economic activity.



Construction work

ISLAMABAD: Labourers busy in construction of sewerage line during the expansion work on Ataturk Avenue from D-Chowk to Ayub Chowk in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

Hike in Interest Rates Equivalent to Pushing National Industry into Crisis, Zubair Tufail

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Former President of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) and President of the United Business Group (UBG), Zubair Tufail, has termed the 100 basis points increase in the interest rate by the Monetary Policy Committee of the State Bank of Pakistan as a move that will push the country's industry into serious difficulties. He stated that the 1% increase in the interest rate is unrealistic and should be immediately reversed.

Zubair Tufail said that UBG leadership had presented all relevant facts to the central bank and



demanding that the interest rate be brought down to single digits. He added that if there were challenges due to unfavorable global conditions and tensions such as the Iran-US conflict, the rate could have been maintained instead of being increased.

Spotify Reports First Quarter 2026 Earnings



Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Spotify announced its First Quarter 2026 earnings, marking a strong start to its Year of Raising Ambition, with continued momentum across the business and ongoing innovation on the platform, further personalizing discovery and control for users.

Q1 results were in line with or ahead of expectations across all key metrics, with robust growth in both MAUs and subscribers. The platform surpassed 760 million monthly active users and delivered

its second-highest gross margin to date.

Alex Norström, Co-CEO, said: "We surpassed 760 million MAU, delivered on the subscriber growth we aimed to achieve, and saw healthy engagement from existing users, reactivations and new users alike. Since the global rollout of our more personalized free experience, users in key markets like the US are listening and watching more days per month. All that reinforces our confidence in sustained user and subscriber growth, low churn, and continued progress on revenue and margin."

Gustav Söderström, Co-CEO, said: "We're well positioned because of our large, engaged user base, deep creator relationships, and years of investment in personalization and infrastructure at scale.

Together, these create a platform that can take advantage of this moment and unlock entirely new growth vectors that will enable us to climb new mountains previously unimaginable. We see significant room to grow across users, formats and engagement and to expand what Spotify is and can become over time."

SECP approves roadmap to revive Pakistan's underdeveloped ETF market

ISLAMABAD: The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has developed a roadmap to revive Pakistan's underdeveloped Exchange Traded Fund (ETF) market by providing digital onboarding platforms, reducing cost and offering passive investment options to the investors.

Under the new framework, asset management companies (AMCs) can now sell ETFs directly to investors, bypassing traditional stockbrokers, and even open brokerage accounts for them, said a press release issued by the SECP here on Tuesday.

The AMCs will also be allowed to share a portion of their ETF management fees with brokers who help distribute these funds, aligning incentives to further lower investor costs and expand market outreach.

The roadmap, developed with input from the PSX, NCCPL, CDC, MUFAP, brokers, and AMCs, will roll out in phases. For the first time, securities brokers will be allowed to launch and manage ETFs themselves, a move aimed at reducing costly multi-layered management structures and increasing product variety in the market. In addition,



passive investment options such as Index Tracker Funds and ETFs will be added to the Voluntary Pension System (VPS), offering long-term investors with lower management fees compared to traditional VPS equity funds.

To support these changes, investor awareness campaigns and operational upgrades will complement the digital onboarding infrastructure.

SECP reiterated its commitment to strengthening Pakistan's capital markets by promoting transparent, innovative, and cost-efficient investment products. The development of the ETF market is expected to enhance market depth, improve liquidity, and broaden investor participation for both retail and institutional investors.

Necessary implementation instructions have been issued to all stakeholders.

Ehsaas for Life is going to organize an international festival in the last week of May 2026

Tahir Amin Malik

LAHORE: The Cultural Organization Ehsaas for Life is going to organize an international festival in the last week of May, 2026 and This beautiful event, titled the "Pak-China Culture Festival", is a commendable initiative by Ehsaas for Life in collaboration with the Information and Culture Department, Government of Punjab.

This beautiful event, titled the "Pak-China Culture Festival", is a commendable initiative by Ehsaas for Life in collaboration with the Information and Culture Department, Government of Punjab.

The organization has been working tirelessly for the past 25 years to promote Pakistan's culture. According to the Founder Chairman of Ehsaas for Life, Wasim Hassan Awan, the purpose of the Pak-China Culture Festival is not only to promote the cultures of Punjab and China together, but also to foster love, harmony, and cultural exchange between the people of both countries. Over the past 25 years, the organization has conducted theater productions, television shows, fashion shows, festivals, seminars, and sports competitions, all aimed at highlighting the culture of Punjab. The closing ceremony will be graced by Ms. Uzma Bukhari, the Provincial Minister for Culture of Punjab, as the chief guest. The stage will be beautifully decorated with lights and panels, and a spectacular fireworks display will also be part of the event.

This will be one of the largest family festivals ever held in the city of Lahore, attracting not only Pakistani attendees but also Chinese guests. A special press conference will be held prior to the festival to share the complete event plan.. Ehsaas for Life, in collaboration with the Information and Culture Department Punjab, has organized numerous programs over the past 25 years, and this Pak-China Culture Festival is expected to be a memorable event, said by Waseem Hassan Awan, Founder and Chairman Ehsaas for Life. At last Waseem said this will be unique festival which will be remember always by people.

Awam Pakistan Party Backs Military, Highlights Strength in National Solidarity

City Desk

RAWALPINDI: Despite the security challenges facing the region, external conspiracies, and negative propaganda, Pakistan's armed forces have demonstrated unmatched professionalism, courage, and strategic acumen. The armed forces not only thwarted the enemy's malicious intentions but also raised the nation's pride. In such critical times, national unity, public trust, and clear support from political leadership have proven that Pakistan stands united at every level to defend its sovereignty and integrity. Awaam Pakistan Party strongly endorses this national narrative and expresses unwavering solidarity with the armed forces.

Central Vice President of Awam Pakistan Party, Chaudhry Inaam Zafar, and Additional General Secretary

Hafiz Usman Abbasi, while expressing strong support for the armed forces, stated that the role of our brave forces in safeguarding national sovereignty and security is commendable. They appreciated that friendly countries, including China, Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, and Azerbaijan, stood by Pakistan in difficult times, demonstrating strong diplomatic relations. Chaudhry Inaam Zafar and Hafiz Usman Abbasi added that the strong bond between the nation and the armed forces is Pakistan's real strength, and this unity enables the country to face every challenge with resilience. They reaffirmed their commitment that Awam Pakistan Party will always stand with the armed forces on matters of national security and will play its full role in defending the country's sovereignty.

Master Changan Motors Secures Four Prestigious Global Awards

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Master Changan Motors Limited (MCML), Pakistan's #1 Chinese automotive brand and a joint venture between Master Group of Industries and Changan Automobile, was prominently recognized at the Changan Automobile Global Partner Conference 2026 — a global platform where both Changan International and Master Changan reaffirmed their shared commitment to the "Vast Ocean Plan," acknowledging each other's

contributions in driving the strategy forward across global and local markets.

At the conference, Changan Automobile honored Changan Pakistan with four distinguished global awards, recognizing the country's growing role in its international success: "Vast Ocean Plan" Contribution Award for extensive contribution to Changan's global expansion strategy presented to Danial Malik, CEO Master Changan by Zhu Huarong, Chairman of Changan Automobile.

PSL Pakistan Super League Cricket Championship Edition 11

Babar Azam's brilliant century: Peshawar Zalmi defeated Islamabad United by 70 runs to qualify for the PSL final match



Asim Tanveer

KARACHI: Babar Azam's Brilliant Century. Peshawar Zalmi Defeated Islamabad United By 70 Runs to Qualify for the PSL Final Match. Peshawar Zalmi defeated Islamabad Peshawar, Zalmi in the final after 5 years. This year, the crowd was present in the stadium for the first time. Peshawar Zalmi qualified for the final of PSL 11. After 5 years, they have earned the honor of playing the PSL final and going to the final for the 5th time. The team, which became the champion for the only time in 2017, was the runner-up in the 2018, 2019 and 2021 editions. Captain Babar Azam is on the way to a new big record. Islamabad United has been defeated by 70 runs in the PSL 11 qualifiers, but despite this, they still have one more chance for the final. Peshawar Zalmi deserved to be the topper team of the event, because

at the end of the league matches, they were number one with 17 points. Islamabad captain Shadab Khan won the toss for the PSL 11 play-off qualifier and elected to bowl first. Peshawar Zalmi started their innings with great confidence. Shadab Khan took the first wicket for Islamabad at a total of 72 in the 7th over, when he had Mohammad Harris caught for 35. He played 16 balls. He hit 2 sixes and 5 fours. Another in-form batsman Kaushal Mendis joined Babar Azam and made a brilliant partnership of 84 runs in the next 7 overs. Zalmi's second wicket fell in the 15th over at a score of 154, when Kaushal Mendis made 41 off 26 balls and fell to Faheem Ashraf. Islamabad came back with the wickets of Mitchell Bracewell for 2 and Abdul Samad for 0, but Babar Azam could not be controlled. Aaron Hardy supported Babar with 20 runs off 10 balls. Zalmi



completed 200 runs. Earlier, Babar Azam completed his second century of this season and fourth century in PSL history. He scored 103 runs off 59 balls and was caught by Mohsin off Salman Mirza. He hit 4 sixes and 12 fours. He welcomed the crowd with a century. Because the crowd came to the field for the first time this year today. Babar Azam scored his second century of the current PSL and the fourth century in PSL history and set a new record. He equaled Fakhar Zaman's record of 588 runs for scoring the most runs in a single PSL season. Fakhar Zaman had scored 588 runs in 2020 but played 13 innings. Babar equaled it in 11 innings. Babar still has an innings left in this PSL to break this record. Peshawar Zalmi scored 221 runs for the loss of 7 wickets in 20 overs. Shadab Khan took 3 wickets for 42 runs and Richard Gleeson took 2 wickets for 45

runs. Faheem Ashraf and Salman Mirza took one wicket each. In reply, Islamabad United started with a brutal start. 58 runs in 5 overs should have been the basis for victory. Here Devon Conway fell victim to Bracewell and Samad after making 20 off 14 balls. 81 runs were enough in 8 overs, but from here Zalmi took successive wickets and put a big crack in Islamabad's fort. Sameer Minhas was caught by Babar Azam after scoring 44 runs off Hardy's ball. Captain Shadab Khan was sitting in the pavilion after making 6 and Mohsin Riaz after making 25. Islamabad had lost 5 wickets for 109 in the 13th over. Haider Ali could have made 8. Mark Chipman was out for 4 and Faheem Ashraf was out for 1, leaving Islamabad United with 7 wickets at 113. Chris Green fell victim to Khurram Shahzad with 8 on 126. Islamabad United's team scored 151 runs in 18.4 overs. Out. Thus, Peshawar



Zalmi has secured its place in the final by winning the PSL 11 qualifier by 70 runs. After 2017, the chance to become the champion for the second time in 9 years is in its pocket. The main character of

Peshawar Zalmi's victory, Aaron Hardy, took 3 wickets for 24 runs. Along with him, the other hero was Sufyan Muqeem, who took 2 wickets for 25 runs. Muhammad Basit also took 2 wickets.

The next big counter-match of PSL 11 Wednesday, April 29 Elementor 1. Multan Sultans vs. Hyderabad Kingsmen. Lahore. The losing team will be out of the event.



Pakistan Cricket Board Announced Match Officials For HBL Pakistan Super League 11 Edition Qualifier and Eliminators

Asim Tanveer

KARACHI: The Playing Control Teams for the 28 April Qualifier, 29 April Eliminator 1 and 1 May Eliminator 2 of the HBL Pakistan Super League 11 have been appointed, the Pakistan Cricket Board announced on Tuesday.

Member of ICC Elite Panel of Match Referees Sir Richard Richardson will lead the Playing Control Team for the Qualifier between Peshawar Zalmi and Islamabad United at the National Bank Stadium, Karachi. Earlier he made his HBL PSL debut as Match official on 15 April and will bow out for this season having officiated 10 games.

Christopher Gaffaney of New Zealand will be joined by Alexander Wharf of England as on-field Umpire for the Qualifier. Both are part of the ICC Elite Panel of Umpires.

Faisal Khan Aafreedi, ICC International Panel Umpire, will serve as the



third Umpire, while PCB's National Elite Panel Umpire Zulfiqar Jan will be the fourth Umpire for the all-important 41st HBL PSL 11 match

Roshan Mahanama of Sri Lanka will lead the Playing Control Team in the both the Eliminators. He has the honour of officiating in all 11 HBL PSL

seasons and his tally of games as Match Referee in the league currently stands at 127.

In the Hyderabad Kingsmen v Multan Sultans Eliminator 1 in Lahore, ICC Elite Panel Umpire Shahid Saikat from Bangladesh will join ICC Emerging Panel Umpire Asif Yaqoob as on-field Umpire, while Rashid Riaz Waqar of ICC Emerging Panel of Umpires will be the third Umpire. Nasir Hussain of ICC International Panel of Umpires will perform duties as the fourth Umpire.

The Eliminator 2 on 1 May between winner of Eliminator 1 and losing team of Qualifier will be officiated on-field by ICC Elite Panel Umpires Ahsan Raza and Shahid Saikat, while Asif Yaqoob and Rashid Riaz will carry out the duties of third and fourth Umpire, respectively.

The Match officials for the highly-anticipated 3 May final will be announced in due course.

Regional Inter District Senior (Karachi Region) Cricket Tournament

Dashing 121 by Shah Raza Naqvi and Brilliant Batting by Sabeeh Siddiqui and Muhammad Ali Butt

Sports Desk

KARACHI: The 3rd round and 3 Day Matches of the Regional Inter District Senior (Karachi Region) begins on Tuesday at various Grounds of City.

The highlights of the first day dashing 121 in balls by Shah Raza Naqvi and equally brilliant Batting by Sabeeh Siddiqui 93,

Muhammad Ali Butt 80, and good bowling by Roman 4/63.

Scores in Brief:

At KCCA Stadium Zone-V 1st innings 295 all-out in 65.1 overs. Shah Raza Naqvi 121 11x4 7x6 (in balls), Muhammad Ali Butt 80 8x4 1x6. Muhammad Hassan 36, Muhammad Hussain 25. M. Ahad Ali 3/52, Asad Ullah Hamza 3/64, Afnan Khan 2/55,



M. Uzair Ali Akbar 2/62.

Close of Play Zone-IV 105/3 in 27 runs. Imran Shah 71 13x4 notout.

At UBL Sports Complex Zone-II fist innings 195 allout in 68 overs. Syed Shaheer Ali 59 9x4 2x6, Umar Farooq 46 7x4, Ali Hassan 41 3x4 1x6. Aarish Ali Khan 3/50, Saifullah 2/20, Nehal Rasheed 2/28, Kashif Ali 2/36.

In reply Zone-VI 120/2 in 25 overs. Haider Abbas 37, Aibad Khan 44 9x4, Kashif Ali 28 both at the crease.

In the 3rd Match at Baqai Cricket Ground. Zone-VII 1st Innings 287 allout in 69 overs. Sabeeh Siddiqui 93 9x4, Asif Ali Shah 55 9x4, Abdul Basit 38, Huzaifa Muneer 33, Muhammad Abdullah Khan 30. Roman Ali 4/63, Muhammad Luqman 3/47, Abdul Rafay 2/19.

Close of Play Zone-III 67/1 in 24 overs. Syed Adil Hussain 28 not out, Waqas Akbar 24.

Books Speak Louder: Timeless Quotes about Books

Continued from Page 4

her memoir, I Am Malala, emphasizes the power of education: "Let us pick up our books and our pens. They are our most powerful weapons. One child, one teacher, one book, and one pen can change the world."

Give me a bed and a book, and I'm happy. (Logan Pearsall Smith)

Good books produce good people.

(Shakespeare)

The whole world is ruled by books, except for uncivilized nations. (Voltaire)

If I were given books even in hell, I would accept it, because they have the power to turn hell into paradise. (Lokmanya Tilak)

Some books are meant to be swallowed, some are to be tasted, and some are to be chewed and digested. (Francis Bacon)

Books guide us in youth, entertain us in old age, and become our best companions in loneliness. (Al-Beruni)

If you have a garden and a library, it means you have everything you need. (Cicero)

A book or poem without love is better not written at all. (Oscar Wilde)

Placing restrictions on books or newspapers is equal to insulting a nation and shows that people are being made foolish

or enslaved. (Claude Ryan)

Books are not made for cupboards, but even then, they add beauty to a home.

(Henry Ward Beecher)

Bad books are like poison; they do not kill the body, but the soul. (Tolstoy)

A house without books is worse than a deserted place. (Hazrat Ali)

Allow books to teach you how to live in this world. (Rasool Bux Palejo)

Match Referee Amiruddin Ansari Honored for Monumental Service in Peshawar

Tahir Amin Malik

A ceremony was held at local hotel Peshawar in the honour of Amiruddin Ansari Match Referee after sn outstanding services as a match referee Amiruddin has supervised over 500 first class matches as a match referee and this ceremony was organized by Fazal Akbar, Peshawar and Muhammad Kaleem. The Chief guest was former test cricketer Zahoor Elahi who presented the shield to Amiruddin Ansari. At last Amiruddin thanked all the guests to organized the ceremony in his honour.

America's Ethical Crisis Unfolds

Continued from Page 4

accountability. Every credible allegation must be investigated thoroughly. Every individual, regardless of position, must be subject to the same legal standards. Those who are innocent must be publicly and decisively cleared. Those found guilty must face consequences without exception. Justice must not only exist—it must be visible and unquestionable.

The United States still possesses the institutional strength and legal framework to correct this course.

Its history demonstrates resilience and the ability to reform in times of crisis. However, correction requires courage—the courage to confront uncomfortable truths, to open sealed records, and to restore transparency. Without these steps, the perception of moral decline will continue to grow, further eroding the nation's foundation.

In the end, the greatest threat facing the United States is not external aggression, but internal erosion. It is the gradual loss of trust, the weakening of belief in fairness, and the

perception that power operates beyond accountability. A society that no longer believes in justice cannot remain stable. The path forward lies in restoring that belief—through truth, through transparency, and through equal application of the law. Only then can the nation reclaim its moral authority and secure its future.

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

Agricultural Decline in Azad Kashmir: Problems, Concerns and the ...

Continued from Page 4

exports of agricultural products, cold storage, food processing units and transport facilities should be provided so that the farmer can get proper remuneration for his hard work. The most important thing is that we need to learn from other parts of our own region, where people have held on to agriculture despite difficult conditions. If the farmers there can achieve success by

staying connected to their land, then this work can be done in Azad Kashmir in a better way.

The circle of friends, social organizations, agricultural experts and local leadership should also be involved in this process so that the foundation of a real agricultural revolution can be laid through collective efforts. The media should also play a positive role for the promotion of agriculture and bring the stories of successful farmers to the

public so that other people are also attracted to this sector.

The path to prosperity of Azad Kashmir passes through its lands. Now is the time for us to make agriculture our top priority instead of ignoring it. If the government takes practical steps, gives the institutions the right direction and takes the people along, the day is not far when Azad Kashmir will also be on the path of agricultural self-sufficiency.

Group photo

SHAOSHAN, China: A group photograph of President Asif Ali Zardari with MS Zhang Xihui, Director of the Shaoshan Administration Bureau of Hunan, Senator Saleem Mandiwala, Senior Minister Sindh Sharjeel Inam Memon and the Ambassadors of China to Pakistan and Pakistan to China, at the Mao Zedong Memorial Museum on Tuesday.



Photo: PID

President Zardari arrives in Sanya to strengthen Pakistan-China cooperation

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari on Tuesday arrived in Sanya, a city in China's Hainan province, after completing his visit to Hunan province.

Upon his arrival, the president was received by Wang

Qiyang, Secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Hainan. China's Ambassador to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong and Pakistan's Consul General in Guangzhou Sardar Muhammad were also present on the occasion.

"The president's visit to

Sanya reflects the continuity of high-level exchanges between Pakistan and China and underscores efforts to further strengthen bilateral cooperation," President Secretariat Media Wing said in a press release. Sanya, a globally recognized tourist destination, plays

a key role in the development of the Hainan Free Trade Port and serves as an important hub for economic and commercial activities.

During his visit, President Zardari is expected to hold discussions with the provincial leadership on enhancing

economic, trade, and strategic cooperation, as well as advancing progress on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

The president will also attend the commissioning ceremony of the Pakistan Navy submarine 'Hangor' in Sanya.

Judicial Commission approves transfer of three IHC judges



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP) on Tuesday approved the transfer of three judges from the Islamabad High Court (IHC) to other high courts, following a majority vote in a key meeting.

The session was chaired by Chief Justice Yahya Afridi at the Supreme Court, where members reviewed proposals related to judicial transfers and cast their votes.

According to an official handout, the commission endorsed the transfer of Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani to the Lahore High Court, Justice Saman Rafat

Imtiaz to the Sindh High Court, and Justice Babar Sattar to the Peshawar High Court.

Sources earlier indicated that the decision to transfer Justice Kayani to the IHC was backed by nine members, with all three moves approved through majority consensus.

Sources said recommendations for the transfer of Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir and Justice Khadim Hussain Soomro were withdrawn by the relevant authorities.

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Pakistan-EU ties entering new phase of investment, growth: Haroon



Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar Khan on Tuesday said Pakistan and the European Union were entering a renewed phase of partnership focused on investment, innovation, and sustainable growth, as the country strengthens reforms and enhances its global economic standing.

Addressing the inaugural session of EU-Pakistan Business Forum, he said "This is not just another conference, but a moment to shape the future of Pakistan-EU cooperation." He

noted that the strong participation reflects growing international confidence in Pakistan's economic direction.

The SAPM paid tribute to the leadership of the prime minister, adding that his government has successfully stabilized the economy, restored investor confidence, and enhanced Pakistan's credibility on the global stage through consistent and decisive policies.

Highlighting Pakistan's commitment to regional peace and stability, he emphasized that the country continues to promote dialogue and cooperation, reinforcing its role as a responsible and forward-looking nation.

Neptra waives licence requirement for small solar users

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's power regulator has removed the licensing requirement for small-scale solar consumers, in a move aimed at promoting renewable energy adoption.

According to the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Neptra), users with solar systems of 25 kilo-

watts (kW) or less will no longer need to obtain a licence. The decision follows a formal request from the Power Division.

A spokesperson for the Power Division said the move was made on the directive of Energy Minister Awaiz Leghari, who had asked the regulator to review its rules and ease requirements for small consumers.



Neptra subsequently issued a notification restoring the earlier framework under which systems up to 25kW were exempt from licensing and related fees.

Previously, new "prosumer regulations" had centralised approvals with Neptra and introduced application

charges, raising concerns about slowing solar adoption.

Officials said the revised policy would simplify procedures, reduce costs for households, and support broader efforts to expand renewable energy use across the country.

Pakistan, Sri Lanka begin counter-terrorism exercise at Tarbela



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The two-week-long bilateral Exercise 'Shake Hands-II' between the armies of Pakistan and Sri Lanka commenced on Monday at Tarbela.

The counter-terrorism exercise aims to enhance professional capabilities through joint training while further strengthening the longstanding military-to-military

relations between the two friendly nations, said a news release issued by Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR).

Participating troops of the Pakistan Army's Special Services Group and Special Forces from the Sri Lankan Army will benefit from the exchange of operational experiences and expertise in counter-terrorism operations, contributing to improved interoperability and mutual understanding.

Pakistan reviewing budget proposals, eyes Panda bonds by mid-May



Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb said on Tuesday that consultations are underway for the upcoming budget, adding that proposals were being reviewed in this regard.

Talking to the media, he said that an International Monetary Fund (IMF) mission is expected to visit Pakistan by mid-May for budget discussions, and the next tranche of the loan agreement will be received soon.

Aurangzeb added that the govern-

ment is currently focused on issuing Panda Bonds, noting that the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) have provided guarantees in the past week.

If plans proceed as expected, bonds worth \$250 million could be issued by mid-May.

Responding to a question on a possible increase in the petroleum levy and potential relief measures for the public, the minister said other countries' approaches should be examined.

Over 1,000 operations conducted against militants in 3 months, KP Police says in fresh report

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police has released its performance report for the first three months of 2026, highlighting extensive operations against militants and criminal elements across the province.

According to the report, the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) carried out 1,087 intelligence-based operations targeting "Fitna-ul-Khawarij." During these operations, 283 suspected terrorists were arrested, while 108 terrorists and their facilitators were killed. Those taken into custody included three key commanders and a female suicide bomber.

The report revealed that 194 terrorist attacks were carried out against police during this period, of which 106 were successfully foiled through timely action. However, 59 police officers and personnel were martyred and 88 others sustained injuries in the line of duty.

In the anti-narcotics drive, police

registered 7,771 cases and arrested 7,751 suspects. Authorities recovered large quantities of drugs, including 5,695 kilograms of hashish, 275 kilograms of opium, 210 kilograms of heroin, 847 kilograms of crystal meth (ice) and 22,000 liters of alcohol.

The crackdown also extended to facilitators, with 5,528 informers arrested and 66 killed in police

encounters.

Under the National Action Plan, a total of 6,684 search and rescue operations were conducted. Additionally, during targeted strike operations, 21,531 suspects were taken into custody.

The report noted that 43,221 suspects were arrested during 22,028 snapp checking operations across the province.

