



Daily The Spokesman

A Leading National Daily



فرمان رسول ﷺ
ایہا القاسم صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم نے فرمایا کہ جو
کے دن ایک ایسی گھڑی آتی ہے جس میں
اگر کوئی مسلمان اس حال میں پالے کہ وہ
کھڑا نماز پڑھ رہا ہو تو جو جملائی بھی مانگے گا
اللہ عز و جل فرمائے گا اور آپ نے اپنے ہاتھ
سے اشارہ فرمایا اور تم نے اس سے یہ سمجھا کہ
یہ کریم صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم اس گھڑی کے مختصر
ہونے کی طرف اشارہ کر رہے ہیں۔
(کنز العمال صفحہ نمبر 6400)
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Israeli minister posts video showing detained flotilla activists bound, forced to kneel

Israel's far-right National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir posted a video on Wednesday showing detained activists from a Gaza-bound flotilla kneeling with their hands tied behind their backs and foreheads on the ground.



NDMA issues weather alert for multiple regions of Pakistan

National Disaster Management Authority through its National Emergencies Operation Center issued a weather alert for several districts across Pakistan regarding expected weather conditions over the next 12 to 24 hours. According to the alert, rain is expected in upper areas of Punjab, Gilgit-Baltistan, Azad Kashmir and upper regions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

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Called on

ISLAMABAD: Vice Chairman of the Standing Committee of the 14th National Peoples Congress H.E. Cai Dafeng called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday.



Photo: PID

Mohsin Naqvi holds second meeting with Iranian president within a week



Monitoring Desk

Pakistani Interior Minister Mohsen Naqvi met Iranian President Masoud Peshkeshian in Tehran for the second time in a week. Naqvi's visit, his second to Iran this week, comes amid ongoing Pakistani mediation efforts between Tehran and Washington to end the war.

He is also meeting with Revolutionary Guards officials and General Ahmad Wahidi. Pakistan has been acting as a diplomatic intermediary, with Naqvi previously visiting Tehran on May 16-17 to facilitate stalled Iran-US talks, discuss regional security, border cooperation, and

arrangements for pilgrims.

During his prior visit, he met with his Iranian counterpart Eskandar Momeni to discuss bilateral relations, border trade, transit, and goods exchange.

This latest trip underscores Pakistan's role as a mediator following increased US-Iran tensions and regional instability, particularly after US-Israeli strikes and Iranian retaliation impacted the Strait of Hormuz.

While a ceasefire is in place, Iran-US negotiations have reportedly slowed due to disagreements over Iran's uranium enrichment and regional security.

PM Shehbaz meets Vice Chairman of Standing Committee of 14th NPC Cai Dafeng

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif met with a high-level Chinese delegation led by Cai Dafeng, Vice Chairman of the NPC Standing Committee, to celebrate 75 years of diplomatic relations.

The meeting, attended by key Pakistani ministers and officials, highlighted the "All-Weather

Strategic Cooperative Partnership" between Pakistan and China, emphasizing mutual trust, strategic convergence, and a unique bond forged over seven decades.

Prime Minister Sharif conveyed greetings to Chinese leadership and people, reaffirming Pakistan's support for China's core interests and expressing gratitude for China's

backing of Pakistan's sovereignty and territorial integrity. He lauded the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as a transformative initiative for Pakistan's development, pledging commitment to the CPEC's next phase focusing on agriculture, IT, industries, and mining.

The Prime Minister also expressed anticipation for his upcoming visit to China. Sharif acknowl-

edged China's constructive role in regional peace and stability, particularly in South Asia and the Middle East, and reiterated Pakistan's dedication to regional harmony and multilateral cooperation.

Vice Chairman Cai Dafeng reciprocated the warm welcome and greetings, affirming China's strong commitment to enhancing bilateral relations

and building a "China-Pakistan Community with a Shared Future."

He assured Pakistan of China's continued support for its regional peace efforts and its role in maintaining global peace and stability. Both leaders underscored the strength of the Pakistan-China "ironclad brotherhood" as a crucial factor for regional peace, development, and stability.

Iran's threat to Hormuz submarine cables

AFP

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps threatened Monday to impose "permits" on submarine fibre-optic cables passing through the Strait of Hormuz.

Here is what you need to know about cable infrastructure in the region and how the threats could play out:

- What cables run through Hormuz? -

Major connections running through Hormuz include a branch of AAE-1 (Asia, Africa, Europe), which connects points from Hong Kong to Italy and France.

Meanwhile, the FALCON and Gulf Bridge cables connect countries in the Gulf — including Iran — with India and eastern Africa as far as Egypt.

Data running over the cables includes "all kinds of traffic, any data you can think of — videos, email, social media, financial transactions, government communication," Alan Mauldin, research director at specialist data firm TeleGeography, told AFP.

The potential for global disruption is limited as data flowing between Asia and Europe on AAE-1 does not pass via the Gulf branch, Mauldin said.

What's more, "all of the Gulf countries



using submarine cables that traverse the Strait of Hormuz have multiple other connectivity options," he added.

But Mauldin did note in a March blog that "the capacity of terrestrial networks may not be sufficient to handle the complete re-routing of traffic" if the Gulf's subsea connections are cut off.

As host of AAE-1's Gulf terminal, Qatar especially would be affected by any disruption to the link.

- What threat could Iran pose to cables? -

Hormuz is "a closed-in geographic area in a strait, with relatively shallow

waters... it's especially favourable for harassment operations using manned or unmanned systems," said Eric Lavault, a former French naval officer.

Lavault pointed out that American forces have not been able to prevent Iran launching operations from its long Gulf coast, with Tehran retaining "solid military potential".

Iran could both attack the cables themselves and "prevent the cable firms from carrying out operations, either for maintenance or for laying new cables," he said.

"If Iran damages them, they'll have to be repaired," Lavault added.

IMF expresses concern over Pakistan's solar policy



Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) expressed serious concerns over the solar policy of Pakistan. According to details, in the new solar policy, old and new consumers were separated. The net metering system was maintained for the old consumers of solar panels, while a cross-subsidy will be provided to the old consumers.

The old solar panel consumers were not shifted on net billing. Officials said that the net billing model is as per the international standard.

The officials will brief the IMF about the privatisation of DISCOs. Officials further revealed that the privatisation processes of three DISCOs are underway.

A system is already finalised for the restructuring of the transmission network. The first wholesale auction will be conducted in the middle of June 2026.

Saudi Arabia welcomes US move to extend negotiation window

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: Saudi Arabia has welcomed a decision by the United States to grant additional time for negotiations aimed at ending hostilities and restoring security and freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz to pre-Feb. 28, 2026 conditions.

In a statement posted on X, Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud said the kingdom "highly appreciates" the response of the United States of America in allowing negotiations another opportunity to reach an agreement that would end the war, stabilize the region and ensure safe maritime passage through the strategic waterway.

He said the proposed talks should also address all



outstanding disputes in a manner that serves regional security and stability.

The Saudi minister also praised Pakistan for its continued mediation efforts, expressing hope that the diplomatic initiative would help move the negotiations toward a comprehensive agreement.

He urged Iran to seize the opportunity to avoid what he described as the serious consequences of further escalation and to respond promptly to efforts aimed at advancing the talks.

Pakistan ensures uninterrupted fuel supply despite global energy crisis: Ali Pervaiz

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik on Wednesday said that Pakistan successfully ensured uninterrupted fuel supplies and maintained market stability despite unprecedented global challenges in the energy sector.

Speaking at SDPI's conference titled "Energy Debate: Way Forward for Fiscal Discipline," the minister said the government effectively managed an extremely difficult situation marked by soaring global oil prices, shipping disruptions, and record-high insurance premiums.

He said the recent crisis had reinforced the importance of strengthening Pakistan's energy security framework through greater resilience, diversification, expanded storage capacity, infrastruc-

ture development, and institutional preparedness.

Ali Pervaiz Malik said energy security was not limited to the procurement of fuel from multiple jurisdictions but also depended on flexibility, coordinated response mechanisms, and preparedness to deal with external shocks.

Highlighting the magnitude of the challenge, he said Dubai crude prices had surged to nearly \$170 per barrel, while diesel premiums climbed to around \$285 per barrel—levels he described as unprecedented in global commodity market history.

The minister said disruption in passage through the Strait of Hormuz, shortage of vessels, and an extraordinary increase in insurance costs had significantly complicated oil imports, with freight insurance expenses rising sharply.

Azad Kashmir PM Prioritizes Public Relief and Development Projects

City Desk

MUZAFFARABAD: Azad Kashmir Prime Minister Faisal Mumtaz Rathore is taking concrete actions to address public concerns and expedite development projects throughout the region. He conveyed these thoughts during a meeting with a delegation led by Senior Minister Mian Abdul Waheed.

Rathore emphasized the government's commitment to providing equitable facilities to all citizens and prioritizing public relief.

The discussion encompassed matters of shared interest, public well-being, and administrative issues, with the delegation commending the government's efforts in these areas.

The delegation included prominent figures such as Maulana Muhammad Atiq Danish and Allama Muhammad Asif Baloch from the Islamic Ideology Council, former administrator Mir Mushtaq Hussain, and Maulana Farhan Khalid from the Central Zakat Council.

In a separate development, Prime Minister Rathore has ordered the inclusion of Phase-III of the District Headquarters Hospital in Chak Rawalakot



into the forthcoming budget.

This directive, made during a high-level meeting to assess the hospital's needs, also includes the creation of 477 new positions to bolster healthcare services.

Rathore reiterated the government's focus on enhancing the healthcare sector and expanding medical infrastructure to meet public demand.

He expressed confidence that the new positions will alleviate staffing shortages and improve healthcare delivery.

Key officials present at the meeting included Additional Chief Secretary Atif Rehman, Principal Secretary Zafar Mahmood Khan, Secretary Finance Hassan Masood, Secretary PPH Chaudhry Muhammad Rakib,

Secretary P&D Aamir Latif, Director General Health, and former Information Minister Sardar Abid Hussain Abid. Sardar Abid Hussain Abid's proposal to include Phase-III of the hospital project in the next fiscal year's development budget was approved by the Prime Minister, who instructed the relevant departments to allocate the necessary funds.

Azad Kashmir Govt Hails Education Package, Criticizes Coalition Cabinet Delay

City Desk

MUZAFFARABAD: Azad Kashmir government spokesperson Shaukat Javed Mir lauded Prime Minister Raja Faisal Mumtaz Rathore's government for implementing a significant three billion seventy crore education package, establishing numerous educational institutions and extending educational opportunities to remote areas. He contrasted this with the coalition government's six-month delay in cabinet formation. Mir asserted that the PPP favors holding general elections on time, aiming for a government established through public mandate, and stressed the importance of political stability. He urged the Tehreek-e-Insaf to be allowed to participate in elections under their own symbol to prevent tarnishing the electoral process, dismissing notions of the PPP seeking delays as propaganda from groups fearing defeat. Mir expressed confidence in the Election Commission's independence and impartiality. He challenged PML-N President Shah Ghulam Qadir to a debate on the PPP's performance, while also calling for an investigation into alleged scams concerning the construction and distribution of plots for homeless families since 1985, advocating for accountability and disqualification of those involved. Mir predicted a decisive victory for PPP candidates in the upcoming general elections, driven by the party's manifesto promising the protection of fundamental rights for all.



Sardar Attique Honors Kashmir Martyrs, Denounces Indian Suppression



Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan, President of All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference and former Prime Minister, honored Shaheed-e-Millat Mirwaiz Maulvi Muhammad Farooq and Shaheed-e-Hurriyat Khawaja Abdul Ghani Lone. He condemned the Indian administration's brutal tactics and atmosphere of fear in Kashmir, emphasizing that arrests cannot suppress the freedom spirit or alter the reality of the dispute. Khan affirmed that the martyrs' mission will be fulfilled, highlighting their invaluable sacrifices as guiding lights for Kashmiris to continue their peaceful struggle for liberation from Indian rule. He lauded Khawaja Abdul Ghani Lone as a fearless leader and Mirwaiz Muhammad Farooq as a great scholar. Khan vowed that the sacrifices of these martyrs, including those of Hawal, will not be in vain and that Kashmir will ultimately be free.

Kashmir's Fight for Freedom: Leaders Vow No Sacrifice Will Be In Vain

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Ms. Mehranul-Nisa, Secretary General of the Muslim Conference and former Deputy Speaker, has honored the martyrs of the freedom movement, Mirwaiz Kashmir Maulvi Muhammad Farooq and Shaheed Abdul Ghani Lone, on their martyrdom anniversaries. She vowed that the sacrifices made would not be in vain and highlighted that India systematically targets and eliminates leaders, activists, intellectuals, and religious figures involved in the freedom movement, also arresting numerous Hurriyat Conference members. Ms. Nisa condemned the ongoing brutality of the Indian army, recalling how they fired upon mourners at Mirwaiz Maulvi Farooq's funeral and the assassination of the Mirwaiz in 2002 by unknown gunmen. She emphasized that the Kashmiri nation remembers its martyrs and will continue its struggle for independence and the withdrawal of Indian forces. Ms. Nisa denounced India's "cruel" and "barbaric" tactics to suppress the movement, including changing the population demographics in occupied territories, revoking special status, settling non-native people, and occupying the land of Hurriyat leaders' homes. She reaffirmed her commitment to the mission of Mirwaiz Muhammad Farooq and Shaheed Abdul Ghani Lone, stating the struggle for the state's independence and the end of Indian occupation will persist.



Attock police recover 2 kg Heroin, Hashish and 10 litres of liquor

Raza Naqvi

ATTOCK: Attock Police Operation: 6 Drug Dealers Arrested, 2kg Heroin, 5780 gram Hashish and 10 Liters of Liquor recovered.

According to details, during a checking operation, Assistant Sub-Inspector Qasim Ali of Hazro Police, along with his team, recovered 2000 grams of heroin from Savab Gul son of Multan Khan, a resident of Peshawar.

Similarly, Sub-Inspector Mahmood Ahmad of Saddar Attock Police recovered 1200 grams of hashish from Jahangir Ahmad son of Sher Afzal, resident of Sheen Bagh, Attock.

In another operation, Sub-Inspector Noor Shah of Basal Police recovered 1180 grams of hashish from Arshad son of Gul Nazir, resident of Kohat.

Likewise, Assistant Sub-Inspector Tariq Mahmood of City Hassan Abdal Police recovered 1600 grams of hashish from Waris Ali son of Hazrat Yousaf, a resident of Hassan Abdal. Meanwhile, Sub-Inspector Amir Mahmood recovered 10 liters of liquor from Muhammad Amir son of Muhammad Nawaz, also a resident of Hassan Abdal.

In a separate action, Assistant Sub-Inspector Fayaz Khan of Saddar Hassan Abdal Police recovered 1800 grams of hashish from Umar Farooq son of Chaudhry Khurshid, a resident of Hassan Abdal, and arrested him.

All accused were taken into custody and cases have been registered against them.

Camels at livestock market

ISLAMABAD: Camels arrived at livestock market in Sector I-14 of the Federal Capital ahead of Eid Al-Adha.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

PML-N Accuses PPP of Election Evasion, Plotting Kashmir Division

City Desk

RAWALAKOT: PML-N Azad Jammu and Kashmir President Shah Ghulam Qadir accused the PPP of attempting to evade elections, possibly by using the Action Committee as a shield.

He asserted that PML-N would not participate in conspiracies to disempower the state and urged political opponents to compete in elections, highlighting the importance of economic realities.

Qadir alleged the PPP is plotting to divide Kashmir, drawing parallels to historical divisions, and vowed PML-N would thwart these plans.



He refuted claims of anti-Pakistan sentiment in Poonch, emphasizing the region's loyalty and sacrifices for Pakistan.

Qadir criticized the ruling party for avoiding elections and accused them of misleading voters about Benazir Income Support, stating the funds

originate from the World Bank.

He expressed confidence in PML-N's strength, rejecting the need for electoral alliances and predicting a two-thirds majority based on their manifesto and past performance. Qadir welcomed new joiners, including Dr. Rashida Khanum, urging women to

participate actively in the elections and assuring them of legitimate positions and protection of their rights.

Other speakers echoed these sentiments, criticizing the PPP's alleged attempts to rig or postpone elections and demanding the Election Commission announce the schedule by May 25.

Kashmir Global Council to Host Houston Event on Human Rights

News Desk

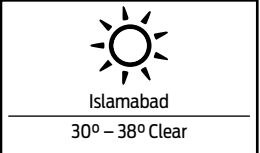
ISLAMABAD: Kashmir Global Council hosts a community engagement event in Houston on May 24, 2026, themed "New Voices."

New Approaches." The event aims to raise awareness on the Kashmir dispute and human rights concerns in Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir.

It will feature discussions on advocacy, diplomacy, and international engagement, with KGC President Farooq Siddiqi addressing historical and political aspects and advocating for a UN-backed peaceful resolution based on self-determination.



Interactive sessions and networking aim to foster constructive dialogue and encourage fresh perspectives.



SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr	3:27 am
Zohr	12:04 pm
Asr	5:00 pm
Maghrib	7:04 pm
Isha	8:42 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	5556311-4
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

District population welfare office TT Singh screens documentary highlighting social issues in Govt College Gojra

Zafar Chishty

TOBA TEK SINGH: Gojra Government Graduate College hosted a documentary screening event organized by the District Health and Population Welfare Office, Toba Tek Singh. The aim was to foster youth engagement and social awareness on critical issues. Tehsil Health and Population Welfare Officer Rana Izhar Khan, the chief guest, emphasized the importance of youth as national assets and the role of documentaries in promoting responsibility and consciousness. The Health and Population Welfare Department actively conducts programs on health, education, population, and social values to build an aware society. Students found the event beneficial for personal growth and positive thinking.

CM Punjab, Azerbaijan Economy Minister agree to form Joint Working Group for Economic Cooperation

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif met Azerbaijan's Economy Minister Mikayil Jabbarov and discussed expanding bilateral cooperation in trade, investment, urban development, agriculture, logistics, tourism and infrastructure.

During the meeting, both sides formally decided to establish a joint working group to facilitate economic cooperation and investment. Senior Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb was appointed head of the joint working group on behalf of the Punjab government.

The two sides agreed to further strengthen bilateral economic cooperation, investment linkages and institutional partnerships between Punjab and Azerbaijan. Discussions were also held on the prospects of a Preferential Trade Arrangement (PTA) between

Pakistan and Azerbaijan.

CM Maryam Nawaz reaffirmed the commitment to further strengthen the longstanding friendly relations between Pakistan and Azerbaijan. Both leaders agreed to expand organised economic engagement, particularly in trade, investment, urban development, agriculture, logistics, tourism and infrastructure.

The meeting decided that the joint working group would include relevant government departments and technical experts from both sides. The group will identify priority sectors for cooperation and joint ventures, organise opportunities for public-private partnerships (PPP), and facilitate investor coordination and project development.

CM Maryam Nawaz invited the Azerbaijani economy minister to visit Pakistan. Both leaders expressed resolve to deepen insti-



tutional linkages and maintain close coordination through the newly established working group. The chief minister highlighted Punjab's ongoing economic trans-

formation agenda, including reforms in land-use policy, development of Special Economic Zones (SEZs), and the upcoming Punjab Economic Transforma-

tion Plan. Both sides agreed to accelerate follow-up engagements to transform discussions into investment-ready projects and reaff-

irmed their joint commitment to developing a long-term and structured framework for Pakistan-Azerbaijan economic partnership.

Welcome

ISLAMABAD: Billboard on Constitution Avenue featuring portrait of President Asif Ali Zadari, Prime Minister Shehbaz Shaifir and Prince Rahim al-Hussaini Aga Khan V in the Federal Capital. Spiritual leader of the Ismaili Shai Muslim community and its 50th Imam, Prince Rahim al-Hussaini Aga Khan V, arrived in Pakistan on his first official six-day visit.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

AIOU Gets New Dean for Social Sciences and Humanities Faculty

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The President Islamic Republic of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari has appointed renowned educationist Prof. Dr. Syed Muhammad Aamir Shah as Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities at Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU). The Federal Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training has issued a formal notification in this regard and communicated the directives to the university administration.

Under the Allama Iqbal Open University Act, the President of Pakistan serves as the Chancellor of the university. The appointment is being viewed as an important development in academic circles and a positive step

toward strengthening the university's academic leadership.

Following the announcement, faculty members of AIOU particularly the Academic Staff Association welcomed the appointment and extended their congratulations to the newly appointed Dean. They also appreciated the leadership and merit-based policies of Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood terming them instrumental in promoting transparency and academic excellence within the institution.

On this occasion, Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood congratulated the newly appointed Dean and expressed confidence that under his leadership, the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities would achieve greater academic success.

Dr. Yousif Memon visited NDF Pakistan rehabilitation centre

News Desk

Dr. Yousif Memon, a development practitioner, visited the National Disability & Development Forum (NDF) Pakistan rehabilitation centre in Gulistan-e-Johar, Karachi. NDF President, Tamgha-e-Intiaz recipient Mr. Abid Lashari, briefed Dr. Memon on the organization's inclusive services for children with disabilities, including physiotherapy, speech therapy, and remedial education. Dr. Memon lauded NDF's dedication to rehabilitation and inclusion, recognizing Mr. Lashari's social services, particularly his recent civil award, as a well-deserved acknowledgment of his commitment to empowering persons with disabilities. Mr. Lashari thanked Dr. Memon and pledged NDF's continued efforts to serve children with disabilities and foster an inclusive society.

Book Launch Celebrates "Journey of Self-Introduction" in Multan

Iram Asim

MULTAN: The inauguration of Professor Dr. Haroon Khurshid Pasha's third book, "Journey of Self-Introduction," was attended by numerous doctors, professors, writers, and intellectuals in Multan. Dr. Asad Areeb, presiding over the event organized by Kitab Nagar, praised Dr. Pasha's writing style, noting its depth and maturity, attributed to his educated family background. Special guest Dr. Khalid Masood Gondal highlighted how the book, memorized by him, educates and inspires. Emerson University Vice Chancellor Dr. Hassan Khaliq Qureshi described the launch as a gathering of knowledge and intellectual maturity. Nashr University Vice Chancellor Dr. Mehnaz Khakwani expressed honor in participating, citing a long-standing family connection built on knowledge and respect. Dr. Hamid Raza Siddiqui lauded Dr. Pasha's ability to impart knowledge and wisdom, calling him a pioneer in medicine and a poet of the human spirit. Dr. Anwar Ahmed deemed the book a reflection of great thought and pledged to donate copies to Emerson University library. Renowned singer Soraya Multanikar also spoke and performed a ghazal by Mirza Ghalib. Several other notable figures also addressed the event, while Shakir Hussain Shakir and Ali Sakhnir served as directors.

FASP Magnolia Chapter Holds Monthly Meeting in Islamabad

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Floral Art Society of Pakistan's Magnolia Chapter convened its monthly meeting at Islamabad's Serena hotel. The event featured Quranic recitation and minutes from the prior meeting. Members from Orchid and Lotus chapters joined the gathering. Guest of Honour, floral designer Farida Kalim, impressed attendees with three stunning arrangements, detailing plant material selection, pastel blending, and line importance in design, earning a standing ovation and a gift from Chapter President Nahida Raza. Raza announced Magnolia Chapter's 23 accolades in the "Enhance" virtual competition. The meeting concluded with birthday recognitions and refreshments.

Hazara Culture Represents Peace, Education, Tolerance and Brotherhood, says Fatima Ati

City Desk

KARACHI/ISLAMABAD: Hazara Culture Day was celebrated across the country with great national and cultural enthusiasm. In this connection, a prestigious central ceremony was organized in Islamabad, attended by political, social, cultural and literary personalities from different walks of life.

The event was specially attended by Syed Aman Shah, Provincial Convener Awaam Pakistan Party's, Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar, Former Prime Minister, Fatima Atif, Founder Hazara Culture Day, Farhatullah Babar, along with political and social leaders from across the country also participated in the ceremony.

Addressing the gathering, Syed Aman Shah said that the Hazara community with its rich history, refined civilization, love for education, peaceful nature and cultural traditions is an integral part of Pakistan's social beauty and diversity. He stated that Pakistan is a beautiful blend of different languages, ethnicities, cultures and respect for every culture further strengthens national unity, stability and harmony.

Pakistan Faces Thalassemia Crisis: No Cure, but Gene Therapy Offers Hope

City Desk

KARACHI: Hamdard University Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Imran Amin emphasized that thalassemia is a critical, life-threatening illness for which no definitive cure exists in Pakistan, neither in public nor private health-care sectors, though gene therapy offers future hope.

He spoke at a seminar marking the end of a two-day International Thalassemia Day awareness program at the university, an event chaired by Chancellor Ms. Sadia Rashid. The program included a blood screening and donation camp organized by the Faculty of

Eastern Medicine in partnership with Saylani Welfare International Trust, with significant participation from students, faculty, and staff.

Dr. Amin lauded the efforts of NGOs, particularly Saylani Welfare Trust, in supporting thalassemia patients and encouraged further development of Dr. Tabeeba Saima Ghias's research, "IROCHEL."

He also noted an upcoming project with Saylani Welfare involving AI-based data for improved thalassemia health-care support. Dr. Ghulam Rasool of Saylani Welfare stated that Pakistan witnesses around 10,000 new minor thalassemia cases annually, with over

100,000 children currently affected, and a 5-9% prevalence in Sindh.

He highlighted that early preventive measures are key, citing Iran's success in eliminating thalassemia births and Saudi Arabia's reduction of the disease ratio. Dr. Rasool detailed prenatal diagnostic options like CVS testing within the first 14 weeks of pregnancy, and the permissibility of terminating pregnancies within 10-12 weeks for major thalassemia.

He advocated for broader awareness campaigns through religious scholars, media, and mosque sermons, and urged for the amendment of the Sindh Assembly's 2016 thalassemia prevention law



to make testing mandatory. Dr. Saima Ghias proposed that national identity cards and Nikah Nama (marriage contracts) should mandate thalassemia screening status.

She suggested that marriage registars should be prohibited from solemnizing marriages if either party is a minor thalassemia carrier, with penalties for violations.

The event featured a welcome address by Dr. Hakim Shiraz Siddiqui, an exhibition of student-created awareness posters, and concluded with the

distribution of shields and certificates by Chancellor Sadia Rashid and Vice Chancellor Dr. Imran Amin, underscoring the program's success in promoting awareness, prevention, and the need for stronger legislation against thalassemia in Pakistan.

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Pak Army Reacts Firmly to Indian Army Chief's Statement

The exchange between Indian Army Chief Upendra Dwivedi and Pakistan's military media wing, Inter-Services Public Relations, reflected deep historical, ideological, and psychological tensions between India and Pakistan. General Dwivedi's statement questioning whether Pakistan wanted to remain part of "geography and history" was viewed in Pakistan as a challenge to the country's ideological foundation based on the two-nation theory and the creation of Pakistan in 1947, reviving fears that India still seeks an "Akhand Bharat" and has never fully accepted partition. The ISPR reaffirmed Pakistan's sovereignty, identity, and permanence as a nation of more than 240 million people with nuclear capability and a secure place in South Asian history. Pakistan's nuclear status was emphasized as the main guarantee of sovereignty that changes the nature of any conflict and makes attempts to erase Pakistan politically unrealistic and militarily disastrous. The response criticized "Hindutva thinking" as an ideology promoting India as a Hindu nation seeking regional dominance at the expense of minorities, while Pakistan emphasized mutual respect and peaceful coexistence. Pakistan's geographical and historical significance was highlighted through its borders with India, China, Afghanistan, and Iran, the strategic importance of Gwadar Port and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, the Indus River system, and its role in regional geopolitics involving the United States, China, and Russia. References to the Indus Valley Civilization, the Gandhara, Maurya, Ghaznavid, Mughal, and British Raj empires, along with Pakistan's seventy-six years of statehood, wars, democratic transitions, and struggle for recognition, reinforced the belief that Pakistan's existence is firmly rooted in geography and history. The ISPR stated that India had failed to learn the lessons of eight decades of wars, border clashes, and diplomatic crises since partition, maintaining that military threats and aggressive rhetoric deepen mistrust, fuel nuclear escalation, while also drawing in powers such as China and Europe, disrupting global trade and increasing fears of worldwide nuclear conflict. It stated that the political and strategic costs for India would become unacceptable regardless of military objectives and insisted that India recognize Pakistan as a major regional power with legitimate interests and pursue peaceful coexistence through dialogue, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, an end to cross-border terrorism and propaganda, and cooperation on poverty, climate change, and regional connectivity. The statement emphasized that peaceful coexistence was not a sign of weakness but a position backed by military power, nuclear capability, and national unity, and that General Dwivedi's remarks had strengthened Pakistan's determination to defend itself and demand equal respect internationally. Inside Pakistan, political leaders from both the ruling coalition and opposition parties united in support of the military response, while social media, television discussions, and public opinion strongly backed the army. Many people recalled events such as the 2019 Balakot airstrike and the downing of an Indian pilot as examples of Pakistan successfully responding to Indian aggression. Support for the military and readiness to defend the country's honor and security was expressed across all four provinces, from Karachi and Lahore to Quetta and Khyber. The statement that the whole nation was prepared to teach India a strict lesson in response to future aggression reflected widespread public readiness to support the military in any conflict, rooted in decades of wars, border tensions, memories of the 1971 war, the Kargil conflict of 1999, and continuing clashes along the Line of Control. Many Pakistani families have direct connections to the armed forces or have been affected by tensions with India, reinforcing the perception of India as an existential threat and the Pakistan Army as the ultimate defender of the nation. This unity was presented as a major strategic asset that gives the military credibility and public backing for any response to



Analysis
Abdul Basit Alvi

Pakistani exhibitors showcase mineral wealth at China's major gemstone expo

Pakistani exhibitors highlighted the country's vast mineral and gemstone resources at the 2026 China (Nanjing) International Mineral Gemstone & Fossil Expo (CIMGE), held from May 14 to 18 at the Nanjing International Exhibition Center (NIEC), as China's growing gemstone market opened new opportunities for international traders and collectors.

The exhibition attracted participants from more than 50 countries and regions, including Pakistan, Peru, the United States and Switzerland, with international exhibitors making up over 25 percent of the total participants. Spread across 65,000 square meters, the expo featured dedicated sections for domestic and international mineral crystals, fossils and meteorites, jewelry, and educational displays.

At least ten Pakistani companies participated in the event, showcasing mineral specimens and gemstones including emeralds, tourmalines, topaz, morganite, quartz, aquamarine and crystals sourced from Gilgit-Baltistan, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. For many exhibitors, the expo represented more than just a sales opportunity, according to CEN, which reported on the event on Wednesday.

Liaquat of Pakistan Astor Gems and Minerals told China Economic Net that China is a large and vibrant market, adding that Chinese collectors are becoming increasingly knowledgeable about mineral specimens and gemstones and are gradually embracing gemstones as everyday wearable items.

The growing presence of Pakistani exhibitors at China's leading gemstone fairs reflects deepening mineral cooperation between the two countries. According to China customs data, Pakistan's exports of unworked precious and semi-precious stones (HS Code 71031000) to China surged by around 145.7 percent year-on-year to \$783,890 during the first four months of this year.

The increasing trade momentum has also been supported by high-level bilateral engagement. Earlier this year, Pakistan's Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Ahsan Iqbal, addressed the China-Pakistan Mineral Cooperation Forum, saying the two countries were entering a decisive new phase of economic partnership by placing mineral development at the center of CPEC 2.0. He said the initiative aims to transform connectivity into productivity, exports and sustainable economic growth.

Pakistan possesses globally rare and high-quality gemstone resources, with total national reserves estimated at around \$450 billion. The country has approximately 92 known minerals, of which 52 are currently being extracted. Pakistan also has nearly 5,000 operational mines and annual mineral production of about 68.5 million metric tons. Despite the sector's scale, mineral exports contribute only 2-3 percent to the country's GDP.

In an effort to unlock the country's undervalued mineral wealth and move from exporting low-cost rough stones to producing high-value finished products for global markets, Pakistan's first International Gemstone Expo is scheduled to be held in July this year. The event aims to attract major industry players, including exhibitors from China, and build on the momentum generated at international exhibitions such as the CIMGE in Nanjing.



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

Rasoob250: Pakistan's Leap in Precision Strike Capability

Pakistan's defence industry has entered a new phase of maturity, underscored by the unveiling of the Rasoob250, a precision air-launched cruise missile. Coming on the heels of successful tests of the Fateh2 and Fateh3 in May 2025, this achievement reflects not only technological progress but also a doctrinal evolution shaped by recent regional crises.

From Breakthrough to Maturity

The rapid succession of missile developments is no accident. Three factors explain this breakthrough. First, indigenous R&D capacity has grown remarkably. Institutions such as NESCOM, GIDS, and the Air Weapons Complex have invested heavily in advanced composites, guidance systems, and software integration. Second, operational necessity has driven innovation. Pakistan faces a volatile neighbourhood where standoff precision strike capability is essential to offset adversary advantages. Third, the doctrinal lessons of Marka-e-Haq in May 2025, Pakistan's response to India's ill-fated Operation Sindhoor, reshaped strategic thinking. That episode demonstrated the importance of multidomain integration — cyber, electronic warfare, and precision munitions — as pillars of deterrence. The Fateh series and now Rasoob-250 are direct products of this doctrinal shift.

Indigenous Development with Global Parallels

The Rasoob-250 is primarily a Pakistani development, led by the Air Weapons Complex under NESCOM. While its design conceptually parallels foreign systems such as Norway's Joint Strike Missile or Turkey's SOM, the engineering and integration are tailored to Pakistan's operational environment. Unlike imported platforms, Rasoob250 is optimized for compatibility with Pakistan's UAVs, maritime patrol aircraft, and future stealth fighters. This reflects a deliberate strategy: to build systems that are not only technologically advanced but also seamlessly integrated into Pakistan's force structure.

Warhead Versatility

The missile currently carries a 75-kilogram semi-armour piercing warhead, but future variants are expected to support multiple payloads. These include high explosive fragmentation for area targets, penetrator warheads for hardened structures, and cluster munitions for dispersed assets. Importantly, the Rasoob-250 is not designed for nuclear payloads. Its compact size and sub-strategic role place it firmly in the conventional domain. Pakistan's nuclear deterrent remains anchored in larger, strategic missile systems, while Rasoob-250 strengthens the conventional tier of deterrence.

Competitors in the Global Arena

In terms of capability, Rasoob-250 can be compared to Norway's Joint Strike Missile (JSM), Turkey's SOM cruise missile, and China's CM-400AKG. Its lighter weight and stealth oriented design make it a versatile competitor in the category of precision, air-launched cruise missiles. By fielding such a system, Pakistan signals that it can match global standards in precision strike technology, while maintaining affordability and adaptability to its own operational needs.

Missiles in Pakistan's Doctrine

Missiles occupy a central place in Pakistan's overall doctrine. They serve three critical roles.

First, deterrence: by providing credible stand-off strike capability, missiles reduce the need to risk aircraft in hostile airspace. Second, force multiplication: precision cruise missiles extend the reach of Pakistan's air force and navy, enabling multi-domain operations that combine air, sea, and land assets. Third, strategic balance: just as Iran relied on missiles to withstand US-Israeli assaults, Pakistan views them as cost-effective equalizers against technologically superior adversaries. In short, missiles are not merely weapons; they are pillars of Pakistan's deterrence architecture, ensuring survivability and credibility in a contested region.

Regional and Global Implications

The unveiling of Rasoob-250 comes at a time when missile technology is reshaping regional balances. Iran's reliance on missiles during its confrontation with the US and Israel highlighted how precision strike systems can level asymmetries. Pakistan's achievement signals that it too has embraced this logic. By investing in indigenous systems, Islamabad reduces dependence on external suppliers and strengthens its bargaining position in regional diplomacy. Moreover, the integration of Rasoob-250 into Pakistan's arsenal enhances its credibility as a responsible actor capable of managing crises without resorting to nuclear signalling.

A Doctrinal Watershed

The broader picture is clear: Pakistan's defence posture has matured into full spectrum deterrence. This combines technology, jointness, and narrative control. The Rasoob250 is emblematic of this evolution. It reflects not only technical progress but also strategic foresight. By fielding a missile that is indigenous, versatile, and doctrinally aligned, Pakistan demonstrates that it can shape its own security environment rather than merely react to external pressures.

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Analysis
S. M. Hali

World Urban Forum in Azerbaijan and a New Direction for Punjab's Changing Future

The world is rapidly facing challenges such as growing urban populations, climate change, housing crises, and the need for modern infrastructure. In this context, the World Urban Forum, organized under the auspices of the United Nations, is regarded as the largest global platform for discussions on urban development, sustainable planning, and public welfare policies. This month, at the forum held in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, Pakistan was represented by Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, who highlighted the Punjab government's vision for urban development on an international stage.

The 13th World Urban Forum in Baku was not merely an international conference, but a major global platform to deliberate on the future of cities around the world. Organized by the United Nations since 2001, the forum aims to seek collective solutions for pressing issues such as rapid urbanization, housing, sustainable development, climate pressures, and urban planning.

Against this global backdrop, the presence of Maryam Nawaz Sharif in Baku carried significance both politically and administratively. Upon her arrival for a three-day visit, she was welcomed by the host country's Deputy Minister for Defense Industry and later met with Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev. Another notable aspect of her political vision was reflected when she visited the mausoleum of Heydar Aliyev and laid flowers there, reaffirming the ties and traditions shared between the two countries. Her participation cannot simply be termed a

diplomatic visit; rather, it was a significant effort to present Punjab's urban policies, affordable housing initiatives, and modern governance model before the world. During the forum, she emphasized that urban development is not merely about constructing roads and buildings, but about improving people's lives in a dignified, secure, and meaningful way. She prominently showcased Punjab's urban development model, especially the "Apni Chhat, Apna Ghar" program at the international level. Accompanying her on the visit were Senior Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb, Information Minister Azma Bukhari, Minister HUD&PHE Bilal

Yasin, Energy Minister Faisal Ayub Khokhar, and Agriculture Minister Ashiq Hussain Kirmani.

At the World Urban Forum, the Punjab government's "Apni Chhat, Apna Ghar" scheme received special attention. The Chief Minister inaugurated the "Punjab Pavilion," where various provincial development projects, digital governance initiatives, eco-friendly measures, and housing programs for low-income groups were presented. Housing and Urban Development Minister Bilal Yasin and his team deserve appreciation for their dedication and commitment in turning the impossible into reality. Unlike many projects that have historically fallen victim to political favoritism and public exploitation, this initiative stands as a realistic, transparent, and merit-based example that is gaining recognition on the global stage.

The "Apni Chhat, Apna Ghar" scheme is among Punjab's flagship housing programs

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Analysis
Talha Mahmood Malik

Maryam Nawaz at Baku: Punjab's Global Welfare Vision



Analysis
Professor Dr. Muhammad Jalal Arif

In the rapidly transforming political landscape of the twenty-first century, the emergence of women leaders across the Muslim world is no longer merely symbolic — it is substantive, strategic, and globally consequential. From education and climate resilience to social welfare and urban reform, women-led governance is fundamentally reshaping public policy around the world, placing human dignity, inclusion, and sustainability at the heart of statecraft. Against this evolving backdrop, the participation of Maryam Nawaz at the World Urban Forum in Baku, Azerbaijan, has acquired extraordinary international significance.



Her address at one of the United Nations' foremost global platforms on cities, sustainability, and inclusive governance was far more than a provincial policy presentation. It represented the confident entry of Pakistan's most populous province into a broader global conversation — one defined by resilient societies, people-centred leadership, and the transformative power of women in public office.

A Global Stage, A Civilisational Message

The World Urban Forum brought together an exceptional gathering of global policymakers, urban planners, diplomats, economists, and climate strategists to chart the future of urban civilisation. In this distinguished international arena, Maryam Nawaz projected not merely administrative confidence, but a broader civilisational message: that governance must ultimately serve the vulnerable, empower women, protect families, and restore dignity to ordinary citizens.

Her message resonated far beyond Pakistan's borders because the challenges confronting Punjab today — climate stress, rapid urbanisation, affordable housing deficits, healthcare inequality, environmental degradation, and youth unemployment — are the shared crises of the Global South. Yet Punjab's evolving welfare agenda is responding to these challenges through ambitious, measurable public-sector innovation, and Baku was the platform chosen to tell that story.

The Historical Roots of Women's Leadership in Islam

The significance of this moment becomes even more profound when viewed through the lens of Islamic history and civilisation. Women's active participation in economic life, public welfare, and social leadership is not a modern import — it is a tradition rooted centuries deep. Hazrat Khadija bint Khuwaylid (RA), the revered wife

of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him), remains one of the earliest and most consequential figures in Islamic history: a pioneering entrepreneur, philanthropist, and moral pillar of the first Muslim community. Her life embodied economic independence, visionary leadership, and principled service long before modern discourse on women's empowerment was conceived.

Pakistan's Enduring Legacy of Women's Democratic Leadership

Pakistan's own national history equally reflects this enduring continuity of courageous and visionary women's leadership. Fatima Jinnah stood alongside Muhammad Ali Jinnah as a towering symbol of constitutional struggle, democratic aspiration, and national unity. Begum Ra'ana Liaquat Ali Khan expanded women's social participation and welfare mobilisation during Pakistan's earliest and most formative years. Among the inspiring women remembered in public memory is Begum Salma Tassaduq Hussain, associated with the symbolic hoisting of Pakistan's flag at the Civil Secretariat during the nation's foundational transition. Such women helped shape Pakistan's moral and democratic identity.

No discussion of democratic struggle and women's leadership in Pakistan can be complete without paying profound tribute to Benazir Bhutto — one of the most influential democratic figures in the Muslim world. Daughter of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, she transformed personal tragedy into a national democratic movement. Following the judicial execution of her father, she endured imprisonment, political persecution, exile, and immense personal suffering, yet remained unwavering in her commitment to constitutional democracy and the rights of the Pakistani people. Benazir Bhutto became the first woman elected Prime Minister in the Muslim world, symbolising courage, resilience, and democratic continuity in the face of

authoritarianism. Her sacrifices ultimately culminated in martyrdom, but her political struggle continues to inspire generations of women seeking participation in public life and democratic governance.

Similarly, Kulsoom Nawaz Sharif occupies a deeply respected place in Pakistan's democratic history. During some of the country's most politically turbulent periods, she stood firmly beside Nawaz Sharif and played a dignified yet resolute role in defending democratic continuity. Particularly during the period of political exile and institutional confrontation, Kulsoom Nawaz emerged as a symbol of patience, perseverance, and constitutional resistance. Her composure, moral strength, and commitment to democratic values elevated her beyond conventional political symbolism, making her an enduring figure in Pakistan's democratic memory.

Against this broader historical and civilisational backdrop, Maryam Nawaz's governance narrative in Punjab is best understood not as an isolated political phenomenon, but as a continuation of a long and honourable tradition of women contributing to public service, democratic resilience, and national development.

A Governance Philosophy Centred on Human Dignity

At the heart of her Baku address was an unambiguous emphasis on human welfare. Her remarks articulated a governance philosophy rooted in the realities of ordinary citizens — the woman walking miles for clean water, the child breathing toxic urban air, the family without shelter or security. This language was both emotionally compelling and strategically global, aligning Punjab's development discourse with the international vocabulary of sustainable development, inclusive governance, and climate justice.

Apni Chhat, Apna Ghar — Housing as a Human Right

One of the most widely

discussed initiatives presented at the forum was the 'Apni Chhat, Apna Ghar' housing programme. Affordable housing remains one of the greatest developmental failures across much of the developing world, with millions living in informal settlements without secure ownership, sanitation, or dignified living conditions. Punjab's interest-free housing initiative directly confronts this failure. According to figures presented at the forum, more than 160,000 families have received housing support, with over 100,000 homes already completed and occupied within a remarkably short timeframe. International delegates reportedly ranked the initiative among the leading global models of affordable housing innovation.

Village Modernisation and Rural Transformation

Equally important is Punjab's commitment to rural uplift. Under the Model Village Programme, more than 2,000 villages are being upgraded with paved streets, drainage systems, solar-energy infrastructure, clean drinking water, and sanitation facilities. This matters profoundly: development in Pakistan has historically remained disproportionately urban-centric. Sustainable national progress demands the integration of neglected rural populations into broader economic and infrastructural growth. The Model Village Programme represents a serious structural response to decades of rural marginalisation.

Infrastructure, Connectivity, and Economic Revival

Infrastructure expansion featured prominently in Punjab's international narrative. At the Baku summit, Maryam Nawaz highlighted that more than 30,000 kilometres of roads have been completed in just two years under an urban resilience and connectivity programme exceeding two billion dollars in investment. These are not merely transportation corridors — they represent economic revival,

agricultural access, market integration, and social mobility for millions of citizens who previously remained cut off from opportunity.

No serious discussion of contemporary infrastructure-led governance in Punjab can be complete without acknowledging the historical developmental legacy associated with Nawaz Sharif — a political figure whose tenure fundamentally altered Pakistan's physical, economic, and strategic landscape.

Equally consequential were the historic and courageous strategic decisions taken under his leadership in 1998. In the face of immense international pressure, economic sanctions, and diplomatic isolation, Nawaz Sharif authorised Pakistan's nuclear tests at Chagai, establishing Pakistan as the first nuclear power in the Muslim world. That decision fundamentally reshaped South Asia's strategic balance and entered national history as one of the most defining assertions of sovereignty and national security in Pakistan's modern political journey.

The significance of that moment extended beyond military deterrence. It reflected political resolve under extraordinary external pressure — a willingness to prioritise national sovereignty despite immense geopolitical consequences. For millions of Pakistanis, the Chagai tests became a symbol of confidence, resilience, and independent statecraft.

Alongside strategic strength, Nawaz Sharif's governance philosophy consistently emphasised infrastructure modernisation, energy development, industrial growth, and large-scale public works. Major road networks, transport corridors, energy initiatives, and urban expansion projects initiated during different phases of his leadership contributed significantly to Pakistan's economic mobility and developmental aspirations.

Viewed through this broader

historical lens, many of Punjab's present governance initiatives — from connectivity expansion and housing schemes to transport modernisation and welfare-driven infrastructure — appear not as isolated administrative exercises, but as part of a larger political and developmental continuum shaped over decades.

In Baku, therefore, Maryam Nawaz's international presentation carried an unmistakable historical undertone: the continuation of a governance tradition that combines infrastructure, welfare, strategic confidence, and developmental ambition within a distinctly Pakistani framework.

Clean Mobility and Environmental Responsibility

Punjab's transition toward environmentally responsible public transport also attracted notable international attention. Maryam Nawaz announced the introduction of 1,100 electric buses in the first phase of Punjab's clean mobility programme, with long-term plans to expand to 5,000 electric buses, e-bikes, and e-taxis by 2029. In an era when global cities are grappling with pollution crises and climate emergencies, Punjab's commitment to electric public transport signals meaningful alignment with emerging international sustainability standards.

Healthcare as Social Justice

Healthcare reform stands as one of the most defining tests of state legitimacy in modern governance. Punjab's expanding health agenda — encompassing specialised cardiology and paediatric facilities, field hospitals, mobile clinics, and modern cancer-treatment infrastructure — reflects a serious attempt to strengthen healthcare accessibility for ordinary citizens. Government figures indicate that over twenty million patients have already benefited from mobile healthcare and field medical services alone.

The proposed Nawaz Sharif Cancer Hospital carries particular emotional and social significance. Cancer treatment remains finan-

cially catastrophic for countless families across South Asia. Advanced treatment facilities, subsidised care, and early diagnosis systems can dramatically improve survival outcomes for low-income populations. Such an institution becomes more than a hospital — it becomes a symbol of state compassion and social solidarity.

Suthra Punjab — Sanitation, Dignity, and the Circular Economy

The "Suthra Punjab" initiative also warrants serious international recognition. Cleanliness, sanitation, and waste management are frequently underestimated as governance indicators, yet modern urban civilisation fundamentally depends upon organised sanitation systems, recycling, and public hygiene. The initiative reportedly employs more than 150,000 sanitation workers and is evolving toward waste-to-value and recycling models aligned with the principles of the global circular economy. In terms of scale, intent, and alignment with global sustainability frameworks, this programme deserves far wider international visibility.

Public Safety and the Protection of Women

Public safety and women's protection emerged as equally important dimensions of Punjab's governance transformation. The expansion of Safe City surveillance systems, institutional policing reforms, and stronger legal action in cases of harassment and cyber-harassment has projected an image of administrative seriousness in defending women's dignity and public safety. Administrative accountability for tragic urban negligence incidents — including open sewerage and manhole accidents — has increasingly entered governance discourse as a marker of genuine institutional responsibility.

Punjab as a Subnational Diplomatic Actor

Punjab is speaking with growing confidence on the global

Continued on Page 7

Palestine Prof Dr Sami says Pakistan source of strength for Palestine

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Professor Sami Al-Arian, eminent Palestinian scholar and Director of the Centre for Islamic & Global Affairs (CIGA) at Istanbul has said that Pakistan is the source of strength for the Palestinian people as a nuclear Muslim state that does not recognize Israel and whom Israel considers a threat for her. Palestinians are thankful to Pakistan for raising their voice at all forums of the world including the UN.

He said this in his special lecture on "Emerging Middle East & Zionism -Hindutva Nexus" hosted by International Parliamentarians Congress (IPC) collaboration with Pakistan Africa Institute for Development and Research (PAIDAR) in Islamabad.

Senator Sitara Ayaz, Secretary General, IPU, Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, President PAIDAR, jointly hosted the lecture and also expressed their valuable views on the topic. Renowned journalist Hamid Mir also shared his views about the Palestine issue and Pakistan's role in support of their cause, especially the close rela-

tionship between Quaid e Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah & Mufti Amin Al Hussein, the Grand Mufti of Palestine.

Senator Mushahid Hussain, conducting the lecture, shed light on the historic ground realities of the Palestine issue and Pakistan's national policy on "Kashmir is our Jugular Vein" and "Israel not acceptable as it is an illegitimate state". He said, the national policy of Pakistan regarding Israel was formed by the founder of Pakistan Quaid e Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah even before the independence.

Mushahid shared, the first letter to any world leader written by the Governor General of Pakistan, Quaid e Azam which was addressed to the then US President Harry Truman on 13 December 1947 about the illegal status of the Israeli state.

President PAIDAR enlightened the participants on Pakistan's unique and exclusive role in the Palestine -Israel conflict which is based on Pan-Islamic Solidarity. He shared that Pakistan is the only non-Arab country that fought two wars against Israel and downed several Israeli fighter jets. He detailed that, In June 1967, PAF



pilots flew planes of Jordan and Iraq and In October 1973, Pakistani pilots took part in the Arab Israel war from the Syrian and Egyptian side.

He presented a comparison of Palestine and Kashmir issues and welcomed the attendance of Hurriyat leaders from Occupied Kashmir, Ghulam Mohammad Saffi and Hameed Lone in the lecture.

He urged upon the Muslim regimes to quit hypocrisy as they were trying to hunt with the hound and run with the hare

and join hands together against the Hindutva-Zionist Nexus. He lauded Iran's heroic resistance to aggression, adding Iran was targeted because of its support to Palestine.

Professor Sami delivered his lecture and shared his valuable perspectives on evolving geopolitical realities and global challenges with special focus on recent developments in the Middle East, US Israel War on Iran and Pakistan's mediation to save the region from any major catastrophe.

Palestinian-American professor



and political analyst expressed his vision to break down the war of aggression against Iran, its causes, and what could come next. Dr Al-Arian, a longtime scholar and activist on Middle East politics, discussed the regional stakes and the wider implications of the conflict.

He said, governments have their own limitations but civil society is free to raise its voice against the global threat of Zionism. If we want peace and stability in the Middle East and beyond in Muslim world, we

have to dismantle the ideology of Zionism.

The speakers pointed out that two strong moves have been seen in the last two decades to recognize Israel by Pakistan but the firm, popular stand of Pakistanis against Israel as an illegal illegitimate state thwarted the attempts supported by certain quarters. The speakers said that the reaction from Pakistani society, organizations and opinion makers left Israel and her sympathizers in Pakistan disappointed.

Professor Sami shared

what happened to the nuclear programs of Iraq and Iran? He said Iraqi nuclear weapons were destroyed by Israel. Now the Iranian program is under attack. This is why they want no Muslim state to be powerful for defense. He mentioned Pakistani nuclear only as the survivor of the Zionist conspiracies and it is a source of courage for the whole Muslim world.

Hamid Mir said, Netanyahu and Narendra Modi are partners in crime with their respective agendas of Zionism and Hindutva. He said a large number of the citizens in their own countries are criticizing their policies of jingoism.

The participants of the lecture were prominent persons from their respective fields including diplomacy, bureaucracy, parliament, retired generals, civil society and media. They included Additional Foreign Secretary Pakistan Ambassador Hamid Asghar Khan, Chairman Islamabad Strategic Studies Institute Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Ambassador Sarwar Naqvi, Major General (r) Dr Raza & Major General (r) Ehsan Mahmood among many others.

Bull & Bears
PSX 100-Share
Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index	
Current	Prev. Close
164,831.42	162,896.68
Day's High	Day's Low
165,081.69	162,895.74
Index Value	Change
16,080,091,532	+1934.74
Percentage	Time
+1.19%	20 May, 2026 4:30 pm

Europe: FTSE 100 Index	
Index Value	Change
10,432.34	+101.79
Percentage	Time
+0.99%	20 May, 4:35 pm GMT+1

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average	
Index Value	Change
49,848.51	+484.63
Percentage	Time
+0.98%	20 May, 1:04 pm GMT-4

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average	
Index Value	Change
59,804.41	-746.18
Percentage	Time
-1.23%	20 May, 3:45 pm GMT+9

Open Market Forex Rates

Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	196.36	203.63
Bahrain Dinar	731.47	741.85
Canadian Dollar	201.41	207.65
China Yuan	40.05	41.15
Danish Krone	43.35	43.75
Euro	323.01	328.48
Hong Kong Dollar	35.09	36.06
Indian Rupee	2.50	2.75
Japanese Yen	1.7423	1.8424
Kuwaiti Dinar	879.28	890.25
Malaysian Ringgit	65.35	66.25
New Zealand \$	161.06	165.85
Norwegians Krone	27.70	28
Omani Riyal	722.00	733.25
Qatari Riyal	74.66	75.75
Saudi Riyal	74.20	75.20
Singapore Dollar	215.98	220.02
Swedish Korona	30.35	30.65
Swiss Franc	352.78	356.68
Thai Bhat	8.55	8.75
U.A.E Dirham	75.90	76.90
UK Pound Sterling	373.10	378.60
US Dollar	279.00	279.60

PTCL & Ufone achieve PCI DSS v4.0.1 certification, strengthening secure payment card data handling

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's leading telecom and digital services providers, PTCL & Ufone, have successfully achieved PCI DSS v4.0.1 certification for 2026, strengthening their secure payment card data handling capabilities and alignment with international cybersecurity standards.

The certification was awarded by Risk Associates, a globally recognized PCI Qualified Security Assessor (QSA), following an independent assessment of PTCL & Ufone cloud infrastructure and cardholder data environment.

The certification validates the implementation of robust security controls designed to reduce risks related to data breaches, fraud, and unauthorized access, while strengthening customer confidence in secure digital transactions.

Commenting on the achievement, Chief Technology and Information Officer, PTCL & Ufone, Jafar Khalid said: "Achieving PCI DSS



v4.0.1 certification reflects our continued focus on aligning with global security standards and protecting sensitive customer information." Kashif Hassan, Managing Director of Risk

Associates, added: "PTCL & Ufone demonstrates strong alignment with PCI DSS v4.0.1 requirements through mature cloud infrastructure and secure data handling practices."

This achievement further strengthens PTCL & Ufone commitment to deliver secure, compliant, and resilient digital services across Pakistan.

Budget Proposals

ISLAMABAD: Mian Zahid Hussain with Federal Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb Khan and President FPCCI Mr. Atif Ikram Sheikh, presenting FPCCI Budget Proposals for the upcoming Federal Budget.



Mobilink Bank Partners with Legal Aid Society

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Mobilink Bank has partnered with Legal Aid Society (LAS) to empower women in Pakistan by securing their inheritance rights and enhancing climate resilience. This collaboration, part of Mobilink Bank's CSR, focuses on providing legal assistance, community outreach, and awareness campaigns to help women claim their rightful inheritance. The initiative supports both climate-affected inheritance disputes and non-climate related cases, offering comprehensive legal aid from assessment to representation. Mobilink Bank's CEO, Haaris Mahmood Chaudhary, emphasized that finan-



cial empowerment necessitates access to rightful assets, while LAS CEO, Barrister Haya Emaan Zahid, highlighted that inheritance is crucial for women's dignity and independence, thanking Mobilink Bank for expanding access to justice. Building on its "The Invisible Heirs" campaign, Mobilink Bank also launched Pakistan's first in-app inheritance calculator on its Dost App to promote digital financial awareness. LAS, with its decade of experience in legal aid, has impacted millions through awareness initiatives and case representation. The partnership aims to address systemic barriers, foster financial resilience, and contribute to a more inclusive Pakistan where women have equitable access to rights and opportunities.

Late Haji Saleem Raza Butt's Organizational Services Remembered at Condolence Reference

City Desk

Speakers at a condolence reference organized by the Rawalpindi Restaurant Caterer, Sweet and Baker Association paid rich tribute to the late Haji Saleem Raza Butt for his remarkable social, welfare, and organizational services. The efforts of Association President Muhammad Farooq Chaudhry and Chairman Mumtaz Ahmed in organizing the event were also appreciated.

A prayer and condolence reference was held to honor the organizational contributions of late Haji Saleem Raza Butt, Vice Chairman of the Association, with a large number of members in attendance. President Muhammad Farooq Chaudhry said the late leader was devoted

to welfare work, humanity, and always supported the Association during difficult times, especially in Ramadan welfare activities. Chairman Mumtaz Ahmed said Haji Saleem Raza Butt actively participated in social and religious activities and always stood with the Association in challenging situations. Fahim Butt thanked the Association leadership for organizing the reference and proposed launching a welfare project in his brother's name as a continuing charity. He added that the event gave strength and comfort to the grieving family. Hafiz Ali said the prayers offered at the gathering would never go unanswered, while Chaudhry Zahid Mahmood described the deceased as simple, compassionate, and kind-hearted.

Chaudhry Imtiaz said his good deeds would remain a continuing charity. Sajid Bhatti said Haji Saleem Raza Butt always encouraged others, while Sardar Mahmood Hussain said a person's character and words remain alive even after death. Adnan Mahmood and Hashim Ejaz Butt said his absence was difficult to believe because he always guided and supported others. Tariq Khan, Sheikh Hafeez, Sheikh Idrees, Chaudhry Abdul Wahid, Fazal Mahmood, Sardar Ejaz Wilayat, Arshad Farooq, Sheikh Muhammad Munir, Ghazanfar, Fazul ur Rehman, and Malik Sohail Awan also paid tribute to the late leader's moral, social, and organizational services and prayed for his forgiveness and patience for the bereaved family.

Hutchison Ports Pakistan handles five-vessel operations simultaneously

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Hutchison Ports Pakistan has reinforced its operational excellence by successfully processing a complex multi-vessel operation, handling four mainline vessels and one feeder vessel simultaneously.

A total of 10,301 TEUs were efficiently handled during the operation, minimizing vessel turnaround times and maintaining strict service reliability. The vessels have since moved across critical trade lanes, with next destinations extending to Sohar (Middle East), Colombo (South Asia), and Singapore and Malaysia (Southeast Asia), further integrating Pakistan into global maritime trade routes.

Commenting on the achievement, CS Kim, CEO of Hutchison Ports Pakistan, stated, "This successful operation reflects our team's planning discipline and operational resilience. Managing this volume simultaneously demonstrates our capacity



strength and our commitment to ensuring seamless service for our shipping line partners."

Hutchison Ports Pakistan continues to invest in infrastructure and workforce capability to support growing trade volumes, reinforcing its position as a reliable, high-performance gateway in the region's maritime logistics network.

Pakistan's Economic Future Tied to Regional Connectivity: Business Leaders Hail PLPA Launch

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Mian Zahid Hussain, President of the Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum and other business organizations, has praised the operationalization of the Pakistan Land Port Authority (PLPA) as a significant development for Pakistan's economic integration and regional connectivity. He stated that the PLPA, a central coordinating body, fulfills a long-standing demand from the private sector.

Under Lt Gen (Retd) Hassan Azhar Hayat's leadership, the PLPA aims to restructure border management and leverage Pakistan's geographic position for regional transit. The PLPA's primary goal is to streamline the movement of goods, vehicles, and passengers across borders, acting as a central agency for customs, immigration, and security to reduce administrative overlaps and logistics costs.

With ADB support, the authority is modernizing border infrastructure for trade with China, Afghanistan, and Central Asia, while also deterring illegal trade and formalizing economic activities through technology. Hussain emphasized that trade stabilization creates jobs and reduces security costs. He noted that while land trade between Pakistan and China is currently limited, modernization of border points under CPEC could



significantly increase volumes. Formalizing regional trade, according to World Bank estimates, could expand Pakistan's export base, benefiting sectors like textiles, pharmaceuticals, and engineering by providing access to cheaper raw materials via efficient land corridors instead of costly sea routes.

Hussain urged the government to fully support the PLPA's Managing Director in developing warehousing, cold chain storage, and logistics terminals at key border points like Torkham, Chaman, and Wagha. He concluded that regional connectivity is essential for economic survival. By transforming border crossings into efficient, digitized hubs, the PLPA will boost investor confidence, drive export-led growth, ensure economic stability, and promote prosperity for border populations.

Google I/O brings real-world benefits through cutting-edge innovation in new AI tools, updates

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: At I/O 2026, Google shared how it's making AI more helpful for everyone.

Anchored in the belief that technology should simplify and make life fun rather than complicate it, Google's impressive new developments range from hands-free Intelligent Eyewear that gently guides people through their

physical world, to Antigravity 2.0, a powerful application capable of orchestrating multiple AI agents simultaneously to handle complex tasks, and so much more.

Gemini Omni, Google's new model that can create anything from any input, is built to make creating media as easy as making a conversation. Turn any combination of text, photos and video clips into high-quality

video outputs with Gemini Omni. Gemini Omni Flash is first launching with video outputs in Gemini app, Flow & YouTube. Google's strongest agentic and coding model yet, Gemini 3.5 Flash delivers frontier-level intelligence at exceptional speed. What used to take days or weeks, 3.5 Flash can now help complete in a fraction of the time, often at less than half the cost of other frontier models.

AJK Women Chamber Revamps Operations for Economic Empowerment

Commerce Desk

MUZAFFARABAD: The Women Chamber of Commerce & Industry Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK) held a high-level meeting in Muzaffarabad, chaired by President Dr. Sidra Azad, with key officials present. The assembly reviewed the chamber's performance and made a principled decision to establish specialized committees with clear Terms of Reference (TORs) to enhance institutional capacity and promote women-led businesses in line with modern economic needs. The Governing Body lauded the AJK Government and Chief Secretary Khushhal Khan for their institutional support and ensuring representation of the Chamber in policy-making, marking a significant step towards women's economic inclusion and empowerment.

Alaska Batteries signs MoU with Pakistan Hockey Federation to Support National Hockey

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Alaska Batteries and the Pakistan Hockey Federation have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to foster hockey's development in Pakistan through collaborative efforts. The agreement, finalized at Naseer Bunda Gymnasium, signifies a long-term commitment to promoting the sport. The ceremony was attended by sports figures, federation officials, national players, and Alaska Batteries' management, with the company's Chairman, Haroon Mahmood, serving as the Chief Guest. Both parties emphasized their dedication to nurturing young talent and contributing to hockey's growth. Alaska Batteries highlighted its belief in supporting sports and national institutions, while the Pakistan Hockey Federation welcomed the partnership as a crucial step for national and grassroots promotion.

Providing a healthy environment to youth is the prime obligation of Punjab Sports Department: Secretary Sports

Sports Desk

LAHORE: Secretary Sports Punjab Fazlur Rehman has said that providing a healthy environment to youth is the prime obligation of Punjab Sports Department and sports officers must utilize all tactics to incline children to the grounds.

Secretary Sports Punjab Fazlur Rehman shared these views while chairing an important meeting about public awareness of sports facilities at the Punjab Stadium on Thursday.

Director General Sports Punjab Muhammad Tariq Qureshi, Director

Admin Abid Shaukat, Director Sports Chand Perveen and Deputy Director Zahoor Ahmed attended the meeting in person while all Divisional Sports Officers of the province participated through video link.

Addressing the meeting, Secretary Sports and Youth Affairs Punjab Fazlur Rehman said that it is the duty of sports officers to share the proper information about sports grounds with youth through social and print media platforms. "There should be a rush of young people in grounds taking part in sports activities".

Secretary Sports and Youth Affairs

Punjab Fazlur Rehman said that the youth should have proper knowledge about the grounds of every city. "The mechanism of booking sports facilities should be made easy so that youth should take maximum advantage of sports facilities."

Secretary Sports and Youth Affairs Punjab Fazlur Rehman further said that Punjab Sports Department is going to organize a mega sports event like CM Punjab School Games. "Millions of children from different schools, colleges and universities of Punjab will participate in the CM Punjab Games".

Secretary Sports and Youth Affairs

Punjab Fazlur Rehman announced that scholarships will be given to the winners of CM Punjab Games. "The students from various madrassas will also participate in CM Punjab Games and numerous fresh talented athletes will emerge from this great platform".

Secretary Sports and Youth Affairs Punjab Fazlur Rehman further said that the performance of all sports officers will be assessed on the basis of their events and activities as per Annual Sports Calendar. "A comprehensive plan should be prepared for proper human resourcing in Punjab Sports Department".



Secretary Sports and Youth Affairs Punjab Fazlur Rehman said that Punjab Sports Department is taking effective measures for the promotion of sports culture and development of youth across the province in accordance with the vision of Punjab Chief Minister.

Bangladesh Cricket Team Defeated Pakistan Cricket Team By 78 Runs in the Second Test Match to win the Test series 2-0

Asim Tanveer

SYLHET: Pakistan Test Cricket buried in Bangladesh, failure in Sylhet, lost the second series in a row. Bangladesh defeated Pakistan by 78 runs and won the Sylhet Test. Thus, the 2-match Test series was also won 0-2. On the 5th day of the game, Wednesday, in Sylhet, Mohammad Rizwan and Sajid Khan put up a brilliant resistance and the score was 316 to 358. Victory was 79 runs away when all three wickets fell. Rizwan's 94 runs went in vain. This is Bangladesh's fourth consecutive Test victory against Pakistan, which is a new record against any country. Not only this, but this is Bangladesh's first series victory against Pakistan in its own country and now, after 2024, it is the second consecutive series in 2026, before that it could not

do this against any full member country.

It rained heavily in Sylhet but it stopped on the morning of the 5th day of the second Test on Wednesday. The decisive day began with a slight delay of 15 minutes. Pakistan started the campaign for 121 runs and Bangladesh for 3 wickets. The record target for Pakistan was 437 runs and the day started with 316 runs for 7 wickets. Not out batsmen Mohammad Rizwan and Sajid Khan started batting with confidence. It seemed as if there was no problem. Both quickly took the score to 358. At the same score, Sajid Khan was caught at slip by the bowling of Tejal Islam to Bangladesh captain Shantu. The 54-run partnership ended here. Rizwan was moving towards first a century and then victory to give hope. He was joined by



Khurram Shahzad. On the very first ball of Shariful Islam's next over, Mohammad Rizwan was caught by Mehdi Hassan Mirza on a shot pitch. Rizwan was not convinced but he gave the first wicket of this Test to Sharif. He scored 94 runs off 166 balls with

the help of 10 fours. Pakistan was bowled out for only 232 runs to 358 runs for 9 wickets. Victory was far away. The tenth wicket also fell on the same score, when Khurram Shahzad fell victim to Tejal Islam. The Pakistani team was bowled out in the 98th over after scoring 358 runs. Bangladesh won the match by 78 runs and the series 0-2. Tejal Islam took 6 for 120 runs in 34.4 overs and 9 wickets in the match.

The Pakistan-Bangladesh Test played in Sylhet was the second Test match of the 2-match series of the ICC World Test Championship series, which began on May 16. Shan Masood won the toss and put Bangladesh in the field, who were bowled out for 278 runs in the first innings. Liton Das scored 126 runs, while Khurram Shahzad, who replaced Shaheen Afridi, was outstanding with 4 wickets for 81

runs. In reply, the Pakistan team was bowled out for only 232 runs in the first innings. Apart from Babar Azam's 68 runs, Sajid Khan's 38 runs were prominent. Naheed Rana and Tejal Islam took 3 wickets each. Bangladesh managed to score 390 runs in the second innings. Mushfiqur Rahim's 137 runs were the score. This time Khurram Shahzad took 4 wickets for 86 runs. With Bangladesh leading by 46 runs, the target for Pakistan was 437 runs. In response, the Pakistani team They were dismissed for 358 runs in 97.2 overs. The last 3 wickets fell at the same score. Rizwan scored 94, Salman Agha and Shan Masood scored 71.71 runs. Tejalul Islam took 6 wickets for 120 runs. He took 9 wickets for 187 runs in the match. Bangladesh won the 2-match series 0-2.

Maryam Nawaz at Baku: Punjab's Global Welfare Vision

Continued from Page 6

stage precisely because of these integrated welfare initiatives. International relevance in the twenty-first century is no longer determined solely by geopolitical size or military capability. It is increasingly shaped by governance innovation, environmental resilience, urban sustainability, and social inclusion. Provinces and cities are becoming influential diplomatic actors in their own right — and Punjab's participation at the World Urban Forum reflects precisely that emerging dynamic.

Maryam Nawaz's presence at the forum therefore represented something larger than protocol diplomacy. It reflected the emergence of a subnational governance model actively seeking inter-

national recognition through developmental performance and welfare-based politics — a model that other provinces and nations in the Global South may well study with interest.

The Symbolism and the Responsibility For women across Pakistan and the broader Muslim world, the symbolism of this moment carries genuine psychological weight. Female leadership in governance remains unevenly represented globally, particularly in many developing societies where structural barriers continue to restrict women's participation in political decision-making. Visible women leaders occupying major international platforms help reshape generational aspirations and public imagination in ways that statistics alone cannot.

Baku as a Defining Moment

Whether this ambitious vision fully succeeds will depend on institutional continuity, transparent implementation, and long-term governance stability. But the larger message delivered in Baku remains significant and worth recording: modern Muslim women's leadership can simultaneously embrace welfare, development, environmental consciousness, administrative reform, and civilisational confidence — and project all of this credibly before the world.

From Hazrat Khadija's entrepreneurial dignity to Fatima Jinnah's democratic courage, from Benazir Bhutto's sacrifices for democracy to Kulsoom Nawaz Sharif's steadfast constitutional resilience, and from Pakistan's pioneering

women nation-builders to the governors and ministers of today, the thread of women's leadership in Muslim public life continues without interruption.

At the World Urban Forum in Baku, Maryam Nawaz sought to place Punjab firmly — and permanently — within that unfolding global story. In many respects, Baku symbolised not only the emergence of women-led governance on the global stage, but also the continuation of a broader developmental and democratic legacy that has profoundly shaped Pakistan's modern political and infrastructural history.

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AKU Showcase Explores AI in Research for Global Impact

News Desk

KARACHI: Aga Khan University (AKU) hosted a Global Research Showcase highlighting how researchers are using Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Digital Intelligence (DI) for global impact in health, education, and development. Innovations presented included AI for tuberculosis diagnosis, maternal/child health, cancer diagnostics, and educational tools. AKU President Sulaiman Shahabuddin emphasized the university's role in shaping AI responsibly, focusing on ethical use to maintain public trust. Keynote speaker Dr. Ravi Pendse stressed that AI should augment, not replace, human judgment, advocating for human-centered AI development that benefits society. The event also unveiled AKU's Digital Innovation Mapping Report, identifying over 300 digital/AI initiatives and underscoring the need for better governance and ethical oversight. A panel discussion involving experts from AKU, LUMS, and NHS addressed crucial issues like data governance, privacy, bias, and accountability, with an emphasis on universities shaping equitable and transparent AI frameworks. Professor Salim Virani noted AI's potential for precise problem-solving and improving quality of life, positioning AKU as a research-led institution focused on translating knowledge into impact.

Pak Army Reacts Firmly to Indian Army Chief's Statement

Continued from Page 4

future Indian actions while denying India any expectation that internal divisions could weaken Pakistan's resolve.

Furthermore, the people's determination to stand with the Pakistan Army to tackle strictly all internal and external enemies of Pakistan shows a holistic understanding of national security. The phrase "internal and external enemies" is important because it acknowledges that Pakistan faces threats not only from India but also from terrorist groups. By pledging to stand with the army against all enemies, the Pakistani people are endorsing a comprehensive security doctrine that prioritizes national unity, law and order, and the elimination of terrorism. This is not just about India. It

is about creating a stable and secure environment in which Pakistan can grow and prosper. The Indian Army Chief's statement, by attacking Pakistan's very right to exist, has inadvertently strengthened this internal cohesion. This is a common pattern in international relations, where external aggression often leads to a rally-around-the-flag effect. In this case, the flag is not just the national flag but also the flag of the Pakistan Army, which is seen as the most reliable and effective institution in the country.

The reaction of the Pakistan Army to the Indian Army Chief's provocative statement has been comprehensive, firm, and multilayered. The ISPR did not simply deny the statement or issue a routine condemnation. Instead, it offered a detailed critique of Indian

ideology, a reminder of Pakistan's nuclear and geopolitical importance, a warning about the catastrophic consequences of war, and an appeal for peaceful co-existence based on mutual respect. The Indian Army Chief's statement, intended perhaps to project strength and confidence, has instead exposed what Pakistan sees as India's inability to accept the reality of a separate, nuclear-armed Muslim state on its western border. The exchange has deepened the mistrust between the two countries, but it has also clarified the stakes. Pakistan will not be erased from geography or history. It will not be intimidated by threats or rhetoric. It will continue to defend its sovereignty with all the means at its disposal, including its nuclear arsenal. And it will do so with the full support of a united

nation that has proven time and again its resilience in the face of adversity. The path forward remains uncertain, but one thing is clear. The language of civilizational superiority and existential threats has no place in a nuclearized South Asia. The only responsible way forward is through dialogue, restraint, and a genuine acceptance of each other's right to exist. Until India is ready to take that path, the Pakistan Army and the people of Pakistan remain vigilant, united, and prepared to respond to any challenge with the utmost firmness and resolve. The message from Pakistan is loud, clear, and backed by the ultimate deterrent. It is a message that the Indian leadership would do well to hear and heed before pushing the region any closer to the brink.

Rasoob250: Pakistan's Leap in Precision Strike Capability

Continued from Page 4

Conclusion

The Rasoob-250 is more than a missile; it is a statement of intent. It signals Pakistan's determination to achieve technological self-reliance, doctrinal sophistication, and strategic balance. In a region where military asymmetries are stark and crises frequent, such achievements carry weight far beyond the battlefield. They shape perceptions, deter adversaries, and reassure allies. As Pakistan continues to refine its missile arsenal, the message is unmiss-

able: its defence industry has come of age, and its doctrine has matured into a credible, multi-layered deterrence posture.

As the Quran enjoins: "And prepare against them whatever you are able of power and steeds of war by which you may terrify the enemy of Allah and your enemy..." (Surah Al-Anfal, 8:60).

This verse captures the essence of Pakistan's pursuit of readiness — not for aggression, but for deterrence, resilience, and the preservation of sovereignty in a turbulent region.

World Urban Forum in Azerbaijan and a New Direction for Punjab's Changing Future

Continued from Page 4

and is enabling thousands of deserving families to move toward homeownership through a transparent process. In her interactions with international delegates and the media, the Chief Minister described the program as a reflection of Punjab's social priorities. The documentary and digital exhibition displayed at the pavilion also attracted considerable attention.

Without any initial fee or the need to visit offices repeatedly, applicants can submit requests

online from home, while representatives reach out directly to them. Interest-free loans of up to 1.5 million rupees are being provided for constructing homes on plots ranging from one to five marlas in urban areas and one to ten marlas in rural areas. The number of beneficiaries has reportedly exceeded 150,000, while more than 100,000 homes have already been constructed.

In a country like Pakistan, promises of large-scale housing construction have long remained political slogans. However, for

the first time, not only have these homes actually been built, but a new example of public service has been established across all districts without political or gender discrimination. International delegates described Punjab's low-cost housing initiative as an effective model, and the forum included it among the world's notable housing projects.

In her address, Maryam Nawaz Sharif stated that the true measure of governments lies not in announcements, but in the positive changes brought

to people's lives. She stressed that urban development must be environmentally friendly, aligned with public needs, and based on modern data so that better and more sustainable cities can be built for future generations.

At the forum, the Punjab Chief Minister also expressed a desire to further strengthen relations between Pakistan and Azerbaijan. Praising Azerbaijan's urban development, modern infrastructure, and global connectivity, she said Punjab also aspires to achieve international standards

in modern urban facilities, smart governance, and environmental protection.

This was the first occasion on which Punjab's urban development vision was presented on such a large international platform. Representatives from various countries, urban experts, investors, and policymakers showed interest in Punjab's development initiatives, raising prospects for future international cooperation and investment.

Maryam Nawaz Sharif further emphasized in her speech that the

real purpose of development is to provide convenience and dignity to ordinary citizens. She identified housing, a clean environment, safe transportation, modern infrastructure, and digital services as the fundamental components of urban development. According to her, the Punjab government seeks to build cities where the benefits of development reach every segment of society and no citizen feels deprived. The practical manifestation of this vision is expected to emerge soon in the form of the Punjab Development

Plan. Punjab's participation in the World Urban Forum demonstrated that the province is moving toward modern urban development in line with global trends. If these projects continue to be implemented effectively, Punjab could emerge not only as a model for Pakistan but also as an important example of urban development across the region. *The writer is a Lahore-based Public Policy Analyst and can be reached at mtmalik3590@gmail.com*

PN Investiture Ceremony 2026

KARACHI: Admiral Naveed Ashraf, Chief of the Naval Staff, awarding Letter of Commendation to an officer during PN Investiture Ceremony held on Wednesday.



Pakistan Navy holds investiture ceremony 2026, confers awards on naval personnel

Spokesman Report

KARACHI: The Pakistan Navy Investiture Ceremony 2026 was held at Bahria Auditorium, Karachi, where military awards were conferred on naval personnel in recognition of their meritorious services in the line of duty.

The ceremony was graced by Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf as the Chief Guest, who conferred various honours on officers, Chief Petty Officers, sailors, and Navy civilians.

During the ceremony, Sitara-Imtiaz (Military) was awarded to 18 officers of the Pakistan Navy, while 11 officers received the Tamgha-i-

Imtiaz (Military).

In addition, 33 awards of Tamgha-i-Khidmat (Military)-I, 82 awards of Tamgha-i-Khidmat (Military)-II, and 69 awards of Tamgha-i-Khidmat (Military)-III were conferred upon Chief Petty Officers and sailors of the Pakistan Navy.

Furthermore, Letters of Commendation from the Chief of the Naval Staff were awarded to 51 officers, Chief Petty Officers/sailors, and Navy civilians in recognition of their distinguished services.

The ceremony was attended by a large number of senior serving and retired officers of the armed forces as well as the families of the awardees.

Bangladeshi senior civil servants' delegation visits Ministry of Foreign Affairs



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of senior civil servants from Bangladesh visited the Ministry of Foreign Affairs here on Wednesday.

The delegation was currently in Pakistan for a three-week executive development programme titled "Strategic Leadership, Governance Systems, and Policy Innovation" at the Civil Services Academy, Lahore, under the Pakistan-Bangladesh Knowledge Corridor initiative, a Ministry of Foreign Affairs news release said.

While extending a warm welcome to Pakistan and the Ministry, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, expressed great satisfaction over the positive momentum in

bilateral relations between the brotherly countries of Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The DPM/FM expressed the hope that the visit of the Bangladeshi senior civil servants would contribute to strengthening mutual understanding and institutional linkages between the two countries.

The DPM/FM stressed that Pakistan looked forward to working with the new BNP-led government of Prime Minister Tariq Rahman in a spirit of cordiality, mutual respect, and constructive engagement.

The visiting delegation appreciated the warm hospitality extended by the Government and people of Pakistan and expressed interest in promoting greater institutional linkages and professional exchanges between the two countries.

Pakistan-China friendship stood test of time for 75 years, says Ishaq Dar

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Mohammad Ishaq Dar, met with a Chinese parliamentary delegation, emphasizing the 75-year enduring friendship between Pakistan and China.

He highlighted their "all-weather strategic cooperative partnership" based on mutual trust and respect, with Pakistan supporting China's sovereignty and adhering to the One-China principle.



Both nations share common views on regional and global issues, coordinating efforts in international forums like the UN and SCO to promote peace and support developing nations. They are also working

together for regional stability amid Gulf tensions. Dar mentioned the successful five-point peace initiative for regional conflict, proposed in Beijing and supported by many countries.

He underscored the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as a symbol of their strong bond and a vital project for Pakistan's economic development, with future phases focusing on industrialization, IT, and socio-economic progress. Dar recalled China's crucial support in overcoming

Pakistan's 2013 energy crisis.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's upcoming visit to China (May 23-26) will include celebrations for 75 years of diplomatic ties, meetings with President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang, and discussions on the Pakistan-China Political Forum and CPEC.

Dar reiterated Pakistan's commitment to strengthening bilateral relations, believing their friendship will continue to foster regional peace and prosperity.

AIIB Vice President calls on Aleem Khan, discusses key infrastructure projects

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Vice President of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), Konstantin Limitovskiy, along with Director General Xiaohong Wang, called on Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan on Wednesday to discuss the ongoing and proposed communication and infrastructure development projects across Pakistan.

During the meeting, Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan emphasized that partnership and investment with the AIIB were of paramount importance to Pakistan, said a press release.



He stated that the government aimed to complete many vital transportation

and infrastructure projects within the next two years. He added that the most critical project for Pakistan right now was the Karachi-Hyderabad and Hyderabad-Sukkur Motorway which would play a pivotal role in the country's economic development.

Aleem Khan assured that the Government of Pakistan would utilize all available resources to ensure its timely completion and aims to complete the project within 2 years.

The minister shared that the section of the Motorway connecting to the Karachi Port would consist of 8 lanes while the Hyderabad-Sukkur section would feature 6 lanes.

Pakistan invites Kazakh investment in Gwadar, Karachi Port projects

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry on Wednesday invited Kazakh investors to explore joint ventures at Pakistani ports including opportunities in Gwadar's free zones to enhance Kazakhstan's access to regional and international trade markets.

The minister made the remarks during a meeting with an 11-member Kazakh delegation led by Timur Turlov, chief executive officer of Freedom Holding Corp.

Both sides discussed cooperation prospects in transshipment operations, off-dock and multipurpose terminals, and dry-dock and floating-dock facilities at Pakistani ports. Junaid Chaudhry highlighted the



strategic importance of Karachi and Gwadar in regional commerce and said Pakistan's maritime infrastructure offers significant opportunities for international investors.

The Kazakh delegation expressed strong interest in investing in the maritime sector, reflecting growing international confidence in the government's economic and maritime policies.

opening maritime sector and reiterated his company's interest in exploring long-term strategic investments aligned with Pakistan's economic development priorities.

The minister also invited Freedom Holding Corp. to participate in Pakistan's blue economy initiatives, stressing the role of Pakistani ports as gateways for Kazakhstan and other landlocked Central Asian states to markets in the Gulf, Africa and South-east Asia.

Discussions also covered potential collaboration on road, rail and air connectivity between Pakistan and Central Asian countries particularly Kazakhstan to strengthen regional trade integration.

Turlov expressed confidence in Pakistan's development in Pakistan's maritime sector and reiterated his company's interest in exploring long-term strategic investments aligned with Pakistan's economic development priorities.

Adiala Jail superintendent, not IHC judge

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday issued a detailed written judgement on a petition seeking permission for the family and doctors to meet the former first lady Bushra Bibi.

In a 14-page judgement announced by Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir, the court rejected the request for a direct order allowing such meetings and remanded the matter back to the Superintendent of Adiala Jail for reconsideration.

The court directed that the Superintendent of Adiala Jail should once again review the request for family meetings and decide the matter in accordance with jail rules and regulations.

According to the verdict, if the jail superintendent rejects the request,

the petitioner may approach the Inspector General of Prisons as an available forum for further remedy.

The court noted that, as per the jail administration, daily necessities are being provided to Bushra Bibi, while her medical treatment is also continuing inside the prison facility. It was further stated that, when required, she has been shifted to a hospital outside the jail for medical care.

The written decision emphasized that matters relating to the medical condition and treatment of prisoners fall under the jurisdiction of the executive authorities, and any objections can be raised through the relevant legal forums provided under jail rules.

The court also ordered that copies of the judgement be sent to the Chief Commissioner Islamabad and the Superintendent of Adiala Jail for necessary action.

AIIB expresses interest in Pakistan's energy sector investments

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Power, Sardar Awaiz Ahmed Khan Leghari on Wednesday held a meeting with a delegation of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), led by its Chief Investment Officer Konstantin Limitovskiy, to discuss investment opportunities in Pakistan's energy sector, transmission infrastructure and renewable energy projects.

During the meeting, the minister briefed the delegation on the government's ongoing reforms and future priorities in the power sector, emphasizing upon efforts to improve efficiency, transparency and sustainability, said a news release issued here.

He highlighted that the availability of relatively low-cost electricity in the southern part of the country has created significant investment opportunities in North-South transmission infrastructure to ensure efficient transfer of electricity to northern regions.

Sardar Awaiz Ahmed Khan Leghari said the government was also working on the digitalization of the power sector and the installation of Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) meters was an important part of this strategy.

He informed the delegation that progress was underway on the phased installation of around 10 million meters, while nearly 1.5 million meters have already been installed in the initial phase.