



Daily The Spokesman

A Leading National Daily



فرمان رسول ﷺ
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ایک نہر ہے تو انہوں نے کہا کہ جوہر جنت میں
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(بخاری ص 578)

Barkat Rice Mills
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CM Bugti praises security forces for successful operations against terrorists

Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti commended the professional skills, bravery, and sacrifices of the security forces, noting that their timely and effective actions had thwarted the malicious designs of terrorist elements and dealt a significant blow to networks working against peace and stability in the province.



Sindh cabinet approves additional funds for water supply, drainage projects

Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Tuesday presided over a meeting of the provincial cabinet which approved a wide-ranging package of financial, infrastructure, energy, health, security and education initiatives, including Rs 8.825 billion in additional funds for water and drainage schemes across the province and Rs11.198 billion worth of major infrastructure projects for Karachi.

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Called on

ISLAMABAD: Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan H.E. Jiang Zaidong called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday.



Photo: PID

PM emphasizes expanding cooperation in key areas under CPEC 2.0

Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday stressed the need to expand cooperation in key areas under China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) 2.0, particularly agriculture, IT, industries, including SEZs, and mines & minerals.

While talking to Ambassador of China to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong who called on him at the

Prime Minister House, the prime minister conveyed his warm regards and best wishes to President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang and fondly recalled his most productive and substantive meetings with the Chinese leadership during his recent visit to China.

While conveying his firm resolve to ensure the further strengthening of Pakistan-China All Weather Strategic Cooper-

ative Partnership, the prime minister emphasized the need to immediately initiate necessary actions for follow up on the important decisions taken during his visit to China.

The prime minister further stressed the need to ensure timely follow-up of the various MoUs signed between Pakistani and the Chinese companies, at the B2B Investment Conference, held in Hangzhou, during

his visit.

He appreciated the Chinese Ambassador's efforts to make the visit successful, in every aspect, while observing that it was now incumbent upon the two sides to work together to deliver on the decisions taken by the leadership of the two countries.

Amb. Jiang Zaidong thanked the prime minister for receiving him and congratulated him on Eid ul Azha, as

well as on his successful visit to China from May 23-26. He assured the Prime Minister that China remained committed to strengthening its iron-clad brotherhood with Pakistan and expand cooperation across all spheres.

Adviser to the Prime Minister Dr. Syed Tauqir Shah, SAPM Syed Tariq Fatemi and Foreign Secretary Amb. Amna Baloch were also present in the meeting.

Disco's 100 corrupt SDOs, XENs identified; Energy Minister orders disciplinary action

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Energy Awaiz Ahmad Khan Leghari directed stern action against all those field officials of DISCOs who showed poor performance.

According to details, 100 SDOs and XENs were identified who showed poor performance and were involved in corruption.

The Minister further directed that disciplinary action be taken

against SDOs, chief executive officers (CEOs), and XENs involved in corruption.

A spokesman from the power division said that PESCO and SEPCO also suspended many officials who failed to address public complaints in a timely.

The spokesman further said that lists of corrupt officials have already been finalized and forwarded for necessary action.

The federal minister expressed his disappoint-



ment and displeasure with not addressing public complaints.

He said that Call Centre Form 118 was established to strengthen collaboration between consumers and DISCOs.

The federal minister said that a comprehensive system should be implemented for the removal of complaints. He said that the performance of all SDOs and XENs will be published in quarterly reports.

Calls for strikes given by lawyers are illegal, rules Federal Constitutional Court

News Desk

ISLAMABAD: Declaring calls for strikes given by bar associations and bar councils 'illegal', the Federal Constitutional Court (FCC) on Wednesday noted that such calls constituted a violation of the constitutional right of litigants to have access to justice.

In a written order, Justice Aamer Farooq said that strikes put additional burden on the judicial system, which was already grappling with the issue of case



backlog.

The judge wrote that when

lawyers went on a strike, naturally they boycott court proceedings due to which hearings of cases were postponed.

He noted that already the country's judicial system was under lot of stress as there existed long lists of pending cases. "Litigants have to wait for years for decisions in their cases," Justice Farooq said, adding, "Even if the strike is observed for a noble cause, the truth of the matter is that it is no solution to different issues."

The judgement was given in the

case of cancellation of the license of a lawyer who had represented an SHO nominated in the murder case of his colleague despite the pressure put by the KP Bar Council on him not to represent the police official.

The affected police official had moved the Peshawar High Court (PHC) against the cancellation of his license.

The High Court restored the lawyer's license.

The FCC upheld the PHC's decision in the case.

403 candidates in the race for 24 seats in GB elections

Bureau Report

GILGIT: The Election Commission released the final candidate list for the Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly elections 2026 on Tuesday. A total of 403 candidates will contest elections across 24 constituencies, with independent candidates dominating the race.

According to official data, 272 candidates are contesting as independents, while 131 are running on party tickets. Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians leads political parties with 23 candidates, followed by Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz with 22.

Other parties include Iste-hkam-e-Pakistan Party with 15, Pakistan Muslim League with 11, Islami Tehreek Pakistan and Pakistan Nazriyati Party with 10 each, and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam with 9. Majlis Wahdat-ul-Muslimeen has fielded 7 candidates, Jamaat-e-Islami and Muttahida



Qaumi Movement 6 each, and Awami Workers Party 4.

Constituency-wise, GBA-2 Gilgit-II has the highest competition with 40 candidates for one seat. GBA-14 Astore-II follows with 33 candidates.

In contrast, GBA-24 Ghanche-III has the lowest number with only 6 contestants. Women's representation remains very low. Out of 403 total candidates, only 8 are women, highlighting the limited participation of female candidates in the electoral process.

The figures show a highly fragmented contest driven largely by independents, with major parties fielding limited slates compared to the total seats available.

Budget 2026-27: PM Sharif unveils focus on public relief and export growth



ML-2 lines are also slated for upgrades. A National AI Transformation Plan is in development, and video analytics systems are improving revenue collection in key sectors.

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif announced that the upcoming federal budget for FY2026-27 will focus on public relief and an export-led growth strategy.

He met with leading industrialists and business leaders, emphasizing the importance of bringing the informal economy into the tax net and fostering a strong public-private partnership. The Prime Minister highlighted business-friendly policies that have stabilized the economy and boosted investor confidence.

Initiatives to promote industries, create employment, and enhance technical training for youth were discussed, alongside reforms in tax tribunals, plans for Special Commercial Courts, and infrastructure upgrades like the M-10 Motorway and Pipri Freight Corridor.

Pakistan Railways' ML-1 and

The business delegation praised Pakistan's diplomatic efforts and expressed confidence in the government's economic recovery plans, fiscal management, and commitment to industrial development, export growth, and job creation.

They welcomed tax reforms, ease of business measures, reduced electricity tariffs for industry, abolition of the Export Development Levy, and timely tax refunds. Recommendations for the budget and economic strengthening were presented. The Prime Minister assured support for the Artificial Intelligence industry and expressed a desire to boost exports and provide tax relief to the business community.

The meeting also underscored the need to increase economic growth and expand export volume. Present at the meeting were several federal ministers, state ministers, government officials, and prominent business figures.

Bilawal Bhutto Promises Sovereignty for Gilgit-Baltistan, Vows to Foil Election Conspiracies

Bureau Report

GILGIT: PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto, addressing an election rally in Challas, Gilgit Baltistan, declared that his party will grant sovereignty and ownership rights to the people of GB. He vowed to foil conspiracies aiming to manipulate the June 7 elections and emphasized that strong provinces ensure a robust center. Bilawal pledged to extend the benefits of the 18th Amendment to GB and increase BISP allocations. He highlighted PPP's past achievements, including giving GB its current iden-

tity, the establishment of the nuclear and missile programs, and closing foreign military bases. Bilawal criticized other parties, claiming they were worried and that their development achievements were due to President Zardari's 18th Amendment and NFC Award. He expressed confidence in a PPP victory and the prospect of a jiyala Chief Minister in GB, anticipating similar success in national elections. Bilawal also urged PM Shehbaz to complete the Diamir Bhasha Dam and stressed that Pakistan's prosperity is linked to GB's well-being.

AJK PM reiterates commitment to dialogue, criticizes Action Committee's stance

Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: The Prime Minister Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Faisal Mumtaz Rathore, while addressing the media at the conclusion of the All Parties Conference held here today at the Prime Minister's House, reaffirmed his government's commitment to resolving all public issues through dialogue and democratic means.

The Prime Minister said that the Joint Awami Action Committee had been invited to participate in the conference as an important stakeholder.

He added that he personally visited the residence of one of the Action Committee's core members a day earlier to extend the invitation and encourage its leadership to join the deliberations.

Referring to the agreement reached between the government and the Action Committee, the Prime Minister stated that the issues raised by the Committee had been addressed in accordance with the agreed frame-



work.

He noted that the government had sought additional time from the Committee to complete the implementation of certain commitments under the agreement; however, the Committee was not prepared to allow even five to seven days for that purpose.

Responding to a question, Mr.

Rathore clarified that the government had not taken any decision to use force against the Action Committee.

"We believe in resolving differences through negotiations and constructive engagement," he remarked.

The Prime Minister observed that despite significant progress on the agreed issues, the stance adopted by

the Action Committee indicated a continued inclination towards protest and shutdown calls.

He emphasized that while peaceful democratic expression was a fundamental right, maintaining public order, institutional stability, and the normal functioning of the state was equally important.

Pindigheb police arrest seven gamblers, recover Rs 922,000

By Raza Naqvi

ATTOCK: Pindigheb Police arrested seven alleged gamblers during a raid and recovered Rs 922,000 in stake money from the scene.

According to a spokesperson for Attock Police, a police patrol team received information that several individuals were gambling with playing cards behind Nawabzada Bus Stand under the cover of trees.

Acting on the tip-off, police immediately formed a raiding party and conducted a raid at the location. Upon seeing the police team, the suspects allegedly attempted to flee and mix up the stake money, but seven individuals were apprehended on the spot.

The arrested suspects were identified as Javed Iqbal and Muhammad Ayub, sons of Gul Muhammad; Tauqeer Abbas and Usama Abbas, sons of Tahir Abbas; Sher Khan, son of Muhammad Ayub; Mudassar Ali, son of Ali Asghar; and Sifarish Khan, son of Habib Khan. All are residents of Sorg village in Pindigheb Tehsil.

Police recovered a total of Rs 922,000 in stake money and registered a case against the accused.

Attock Police Action: 3 Suspects arrested for drug trafficking

By Raza Naqvi

ATTOCK: According to details, during a checking operation, Assistant Sub-Inspector Muhammad Mizan of City Hassan Abdal Police Station, along with his team, recovered 1,420 grams of hashish from Naqash son of Nazir Elahi, a resident of Housing Colony, Hassan Abdal.

Similarly, Assistant Sub-Inspector Muhammad Arslan of Hazro Police Station, along with his team, recovered 700 grams of hashish from Shakir Hussain son of Sabir Hussain, a resident of Ahmed Abad Saman, Tehsil Hazro, during a checking operation.

Meanwhile, Sub-Inspector Muhammad Arif of Fateh Jang Police Station, along with his team, recovered 660 grams of hashish from Noor Hussain son of Abid Hussain, a resident of Karam Khan Road, Fateh Jang. He was arrested and taken into custody.

In total, 2,780 grams of hashish were recovered, and legal action has been initiated against all three suspects.

CM's complaints cell arrives in Faisalabad to address public grievances

By Abdul Majid

FAISALABAD: On the orders of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, we welcome the team responsible for the Chief Minister's Complaints Cell to Faisalabad to directly communicate with the public and resolve public issues at their doorsteps, said Alhaj Naseer Yousuf Vohra, President of the Markazi Cloth Board Ittehad Group Pakistan, while talking to the media. He further said that Chairperson of the Punjab Chief Minister's Complaints Cell Saima Farooq held an open court at the Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan Auditorium and listened to public issues, which are valuable. Naseer Yousuf Vohra pointed out the losses suffered by traders in the smart lockdown and also told about the problems of the city. He asked the Chief Minister Chairperson Saima Farooq to talk to Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif to resolve the problems of traders and end the lockdown. On this occasion, Commissioner Faisalabad Musarrat Jabeen, RPO Sohail Akhtar Sukhera, Deputy Commissioner Captain (ret'd) Nadeem Nasir, CPO Tanveer Hussain also listened to the problems along with the Chairperson and resolved the problems of some applicants on the spot while issuing necessary instructions to the officers of the relevant departments to resolve the complex matters quickly. DG FDA Muhammad Asif Chaudhry, Additional Deputy Commissioners, Assistant Commissioners, MD Parks and Horticulture Agency, MD WASA, MD Shatra Punjab Agency, SDEOs, Para Force, District Police, Chief Officer Municipal Corporation, CEO Education and Health and officers of other departments were present. Naseer Yousuf Vohra thanked all the officers and said that such open courts will prove to be very helpful in resolving the problems of the people.

PECA amendments strengthen action against digital misinformation, says NCCIA

Special Correspondent

MULTAN: The Special Correspondent of Daily Spokesman Islamabad Zain Khan Malghani met with National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA) Additional Director Shamsuddin Khan at his office to discuss the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) 2016, the 2025 amendments, cybercrime prevention, misuse of social media, and the agency's jurisdiction.



During the meeting, Shamsuddin Khan said that spreading fake news, fabricated allegations, blackmail, character assassination, and misleading vlogs through social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and other digital channels is not merely a matter of defamation. In certain circumstances, he noted, such acts may also constitute cybercrime, online harassment, and the dissemination of false information under the law. He stated that the legal framework for taking action against individuals who deliberately spread false, fake, or misleading information through electronic means has been further strengthened following the recent amendments to PECA introduced in 2025.

According to the Additional Director, various provisions of PECA provide legal safeguards for citizens' reputation, privacy, and digital security. He explained that Section 26-A, introduced through the amended law, specifically addresses the dissemination of false or fake information. Any person who knowingly spreads information likely to cause fear, panic, disorder, or public harm may face legal action in accordance with the law.

Shamsuddin Khan further said that NCCIA is the competent authority for receiving complaints, conducting inquiries, and investigating cyber-crime offences. Citizens who face blackmail, online harassment, fake propaganda campaigns, character assassination, or false accusations through social media can approach the agency for legal recourse.

NCCIA In-Charge Adnan Khan was also present during the meeting.

Entry fee for New Blue Area challenged in IHC

ISLAMABAD: The imposition of an entry fee for the New Blue Area in the federal capital was challenged before the Islamabad High Court on Wednesday, with a petition seeking to declare the fee charge illegal and null and void. Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir is scheduled to hear the petition tomorrow on Thursday.

Advocate Muhammad Tayyib filed the petition through lawyers Zohaib Gondal, Hazrat Younis, and Muhammad Saeed Dar. The petition has named the Secretary Interior, Chief Commissioner, and Administrator MCI as respondents. The petition contends that commercial markets, corporate headquarters, and restaurants are located in the New Blue Area. The MCI is charging a fee of Rs. 100 for the use of the service road in the New Blue Area.

The petitioner argued that this is not a parking fee but a charge being levied on anyone who uses the service road. The MCI is not providing any facility or service in exchange for this charge.

The petition further stated that charging an entry fee for the New Blue Area is a violation of superior court decisions. The court has been requested to declare the MCI's fee charge illegal and null and void.

Fresh Lychees

RAWALPINDI: A vendor showering water for refreshes Lychees display while waiting for customers along Murree Road in the city.



Photo: Online

Key Political Figures Attend Muzaffarabad All Parties Conference

Abdul Majeed Tahir

MUZAFFARABAD: The All Parties Conference has concluded at the Prime Minister's House, Muzaffarabad. The conference was held in a very pleasant atmosphere.

Prime Minister Azad Kashmir Faisal Mumtaz Rathore, Opposition Leader and President PML-N Shah Ghulam Qadir, President Pakistan Peoples Party Chaudhry Muhammad Yasin, President Muslim Conference Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan are participating. Former Prime Minister Raja Muhammad Farooq Haider Khan, former Presidents Sardar Muhammad Yaqub Khan and Sardar Masood Khan are participating in the APC. Former



Prime Minister Sardar Tanveer Ilyas Khan, Peoples Party Sardar Hassan Ibrahim, Secretary General PML-N Chaudhry Tariq Farooq are participating in the APC Government Ministers Mian Abdul Waheed, Javed Iqbal Badhanvi, Qasim Majeed and Nabila Ayub are participating in the APC Members of the Assembly Abdul Majid Khan, Ahmed Raza Qadri, Taqdees Gilani are participating in the APC Ameer Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Maulana Saeed Yousaf, President Liberation League Khawaja Manzoor Qadir, Chairman Ulema Mashaikh Council Imtiaz Siddiqui, Jamaat-e-Islami Noor Al-Bari, MWM President Yasir Abbas Naqvi, President Supreme Court Bar Raja Aftab are participating including Qazi Mahmoodul Hassan Ashraf, Daniyal Shahab Leaders of other parties are also in the APC.

Sardar Attique: Muslim Conference is Past, Present, and Future of Kashmir Movement

Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD / DHIRKOT: Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan, President of All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference and former Prime Minister, emphasized the party's commitment to its workers and their welfare, stating, "no one will be disappointed."

Addressing a reception, he described the Muslim Conference as a party of the past, present, and future, asserting that it advocates for the Kashmir independence movement



and upholds the ideology of accession to Pakistan. Khan highlighted the Muslim Conference's developmental achievements and its foundational role in supporting Pakistan

and Kashmir. He invited the public to join the party, predicting future success and reaffirming the Muslim Conference's dedication to construction and devel-

opment, which he characterized as a "golden era" for Azad Kashmir. He concluded by expressing confidence in the party's victory in upcoming elections.



Islamabad
30° - 38° Clear

SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr 3:16 am
Zohr 12:06 pm
Asr 5:05 pm
Maghrib 7:14 pm
Isha 8:56 pm

EMERGENCY

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

Women Police Stations

Islamabad 9222596
Rawalpindi 9270601-20

ENQUIRY

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

HOSPITALS

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

DEPARTMENTS

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

COMPLAINTS

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

Ambition Fuels Pakistan's Finance Workforce: ACCA Report

News Desk

LAHORE: If there is one word that captures Pakistan's finance workforce in 2026, it is ambition. New research from ACCA (the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants) finds that 86% of Pakistani finance professionals aspire to become entrepreneurs or business owners at some point in their careers, one of the highest rates recorded anywhere in the world, and a figure that speaks to both the dynamism of Pakistan's economy and the scale of opportunity that finance professionals see within it.

Assad Hameed Khan, Head of Pakistan at ACCA, said: 'Pakistan's finance professionals are not just looking for a job. They are looking for a role in which their skills can contribute to something larger than themselves, whether through the organisation they work for or, increasingly, through building their own. The employers who understand this will find Pakistan an exceptional source of motivated, capable talent. Those who treat it as a cost centre will find retention a persistent and expensive problem.'



Bureau Report

LAHORE: More than 832,000 farmers across Punjab have been issued Kisan Cards, according to official figures.

The data showed that these farmers collectively utilized agricultural loans worth Rs 2.54 billion through the scheme.

During the wheat season, farmers

used the Kisan Card facility to purchase agricultural inputs worth Rs100 billion, while Rs90 billion in financial support was provided for the Kharif crop season.

Punishment

RAWALPINDI: A traffic police warden is picking up the wrongly parked vehicle with the help of forklift.



Photo: Online

PPP Accuses Federal Govt of Undermining Gilgit-Baltistan Polls

Asim Tanveer

MULTAN: Pakistan Peoples Party leaders from South Punjab have expressed serious concerns about the federal government's recent actions and statements regarding the Gilgit-Baltistan elections, alleging they undermine electoral transparency and public trust.

They criticized the PML-N government's approach, drawing parallels to its past electoral tactics when facing potential defeat.



The PPP leaders highlighted the public's enthusiasm for their candidates as evidence of a desire for change, suggesting the opposition's actions stem from panic. They called for

consensus-based administrative measures and transparency in election monitoring and security to ensure impartiality.

The party reiterated its commitment to the sanctity of the vote and warned against repeating past controversial electoral experiences. They urged the federal government

to avoid divisive tactics and ensure a level playing field for all parties. The PPP stated it would use all constitutional and democratic means to protect the people's vote and warned that the people of Gilgit-Baltistan would not tolerate any attempts to manipulate their democratic rights.

Finally, the PPP reserved the right to reassess its future political strategy and parliamentary cooperation in response to the federal government's policies, emphasizing its unwavering stance on protecting democracy, the constitution, and the public mandate.

Chinese Diplomat Encourages Greater Academic Exchanges with Pakistan During Visit to NUML

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The National University of Modern Languages (NUML) hosted Mr. Wang Shengjie, Political and Press Counsellor at the Chinese Embassy in Pakistan, for an interactive session with students and faculty aimed at strengthening academic and people-to-people ties between Pakistan and China.

Mr. Wang was received by Rector NUML, Major General (R) Shahid Mahmood Kayani, who presented him with a souvenir. The session was organized by Dean Faculty of Social Sciences, Prof. Dr. Riaz Shad.

Addressing the participants, Mr. Wang highlighted the enduring Pakistan-China friendship and emphasized opportunities for enhanced cooperation in education,



technology, and research. He encouraged NUML students to benefit from academic exchange programs and scholar-

ship opportunities in China. During the question-and-answer session, students shared suggestions

for expanding academic collaboration through joint research initiatives and student exchange programs.

Kisan Card scheme transforming lives of farmers, says CM Maryam

In addition, around 300,000 farmers obtained inputs worth Rs 30 billion through the program.

Officials said that out of 538,000 farmers required to repay Rs67 billion, nearly 86% of the recovery target has been achieved, with Rs57 billion already repaid in installments.

Punjab Chief Minister Maryam

Nawaz Sharif said the Kisan Card scheme is transforming the lives of farmers, adding that they will no longer depend on middlemen and will move towards financial independence and prosperity.

She also praised farmers for timely repayments, calling it a positive example of responsibility and progress.

Massive Protest Against Privatization Held at IESCO Head Office Islamabad



News Desk

ISLAMABAD: A large-scale protest demonstration against privatization was held at the IESCO Head Office in Islamabad under the banner of the All Pakistan WAPDA Hydro Electric Workers Union (CBA) and APCA. The protest was presided over by Regional Secretary Imran Khan, APCA President Chaudhry Khalid Javed Sanghera, Haji Fazal Ghaffar, Bacha Nasir Khan, Hanif Sarir Khan, and other labor leaders.

The demonstration was attended by Regional Joint Secretary Shaukat Khan, senior leader Khalid Mughal, Deputy Zonal Joint Secretary Adnan Zarab Satti, Deputy Chairman Chaudhry Waqas Akram, Chaudhry Pervez, Vice Chairman Circle, Divisional Secretary Islamabad Division-II Sardar Ayaz, Shahid Satti, Raja Imran Safdar, Information Secretary Sarwat Khan Siddique, Chairman Rana Mudassar, Raja Hasnain, Asad Mahmood, Malik Tahir, Shahzad Abbasi, Atiq Satti, Malik Ishtiaq, and numerous other union representatives and employees. A large number of APCA office-bearers, coordinators, employees, and workers also participated in the protest.

Addressing the gathering, the speakers strongly opposed the government's privatization plans and stated that IESCO and WAPDA employees would not accept privatization under any circumstances. They emphasized their commitment to safeguarding the organization, protecting employees' rights, and defending the public interest through all democratic and legal means.

CO Hafiz Saeed Farooq Strengthens Anti-Corruption Drive in Toba Tek Singh

Zafar Chishti

TOBA TEK SINGH: Circle Officer Hafiz Muhammad Saeed Farooq has implemented effective anti-corruption measures in Toba Tek Singh, enhancing transparent governance. The Anti-Corruption Establishment, under his leadership, has broadened its scope, resulting in the apprehension of several bribe-accepting government officials and the initiation of legal proceedings. He has also prioritized resolving pending inquiries, registering FIRs and pursuing legal action against substantiated corruption allegations. Furthermore, where permissible, he has facilitated reconciliation, recovering and returning ill-gotten gains to complainants, thereby restoring public trust. Citizens and observers commend the establishment's impartial and merit-based approach, which has reportedly curbed corrupt practices. Hafiz Muhammad Saeed Farooq is recognized for his honesty, integrity, and professional competence, with his proactive engagement in addressing public complaints being widely appreciated.

PSCA's Advanced Surveillance Technology Leads to Apprehend Mobile Snatching Suspects in Lahore

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Punjab Safe Cities Authority (PSCA) achieved another significant success through its Virtual Patrolling initiative by playing a key role in the arrest of suspects involved in a mobile phone snatching incident. According to details, a citizen was travelling through Lahore's Nishtar Colony area when motorcycle-riding suspects snatched his mobile phone and fled the scene. Upon receiving complaint through Emergency Helpline-15, Virtual Patrolling Officers of Punjab Safe Cities Authority immediately initiated surveillance and tracking operations.

According to the PSCA's spokesperson, Virtual Patrolling team utilized Safe City camera network and advanced surveillance systems to trace suspects' escape route, movements, and motorcycle used in the crime. The information gathered through camera monitoring was promptly shared with the concerned police team. Taking swift action on the intelligence provided by PSCA, Nishtar Colony Police conducted a timely operation and successfully arrested the suspects. Police also recovered snatched mobile phone, cash, and a motorcycle used in committing crime. Legal proceedings against the accused have also been initiated.

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Pakistan: From Peace Mediation to the Heart of FIFA 2026

When a journalist recently asked President Donald Trump whether Iranian players and officials would be granted visas to participate in the FIFA World Cup 2026, the president paused briefly before responding in a relaxed tone: "Let them come and play." The remark was simple, even reassuring. Yet behind those few words lies a far more complicated reality—one that has transformed what should have been a celebration of global unity into a tournament overshadowed by war, diplomacy, sanctions, and geopolitical rivalry.

Pakistan's contribution to the 2026 FIFA World Cup extends far beyond manufacturing. In recent months, Pakistan has been widely recognized for playing a constructive diplomatic role in encouraging dialogue and helping facilitate efforts that contributed to a ceasefire from April 7 onward in one of the world's most consequential and potentially economically devastating conflicts. Had a wider war erupted, the global economy could have suffered losses running into trillions of dollars. By supporting dialogue over confrontation, Pakistan demonstrated how mediation can help prevent destruction and preserve stability. Now, in a remarkable parallel, Pakistan will once again be at the center of a global story—not through diplomacy alone, but through football. The same nation that helped promote peace between opposing sides will provide the football that connects players,

supporters, and nations from every continent. Billions of viewers watching from homes around the world, on television screens and digital devices, will witness a Pakistani-made football at the center of the action, symbolizing connection rather than conflict.

The football itself—the very heart and soul of the tournament—will be manufactured in Sialkot, Pakistan. For decades, Sialkot has been recognized as one of the world's leading producers of footballs, supplying an estimated majority of premium match balls used globally.

There is profound symbolism in this reality. At a time when Pakistan has been acknowledged for encouraging dialogue and de-escalation in international affairs, a football produced by Pakistani craftsmen will sit at the center of every match played in North America. The same ball will travel across stadiums, connect nations, inspire fans, and perhaps even help create moments of reconciliation between rivals. Just as diplomacy seeks common ground between adversaries, football creates a shared arena where competition remains peaceful and mutual respect can flourish.

In a strange twist of history, while Pakistan sought dialogue between opposing sides in the geopolitical arena, a Pakistani-made football may become the instrument through which those same rivals compete peacefully on the sporting

field. This is, after all, the essence of sport.

Football provides an alternative battlefield—one where competition replaces conflict, goals replace missiles, and victory is measured not by destruction but by skill, teamwork, and perseverance.

Yet the ongoing conflict has unquestionably affected the atmosphere surrounding the tournament. Many supporters who would ordinarily travel freely now face uncertainty. Political tensions have entered discussions that should ideally focus on football. Questions of visas, security, sanctions, and diplomacy have become part of the World Cup narrative.

The 2026 FIFA World Cup is unlike any other tournament in history. For the first time, 48 nations will participate. For the first time, three countries—the United States, Canada, and Mexico—will jointly host the event. The tournament is scheduled to begin on June 11, 2026, and conclude with the final on July 19, 2026. Spread across 16 stadiums and lasting more than a month, it is expected to become the most watched, most technologically advanced, and most commercially successful sporting event ever organized.

Yet as the countdown to kickoff continues, the shadow of the Iran-United States conflict hangs heavily over the tournament. For Iran, qualification for the World Cup was already a matter of national pride. Memories remain fresh

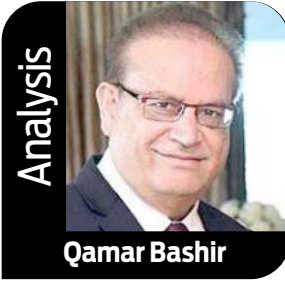
of the extraordinary celebrations that followed Iran's victory over the United States in a previous World Cup. Although Iran did not win the tournament, that single victory was celebrated across the country as a triumph of national dignity and resistance. Players returned home to hero-like receptions, welcomed as champions who had humbled a global superpower on football's biggest stage.

Now history threatens to repeat itself under even more dramatic circumstances. The difference is that this time the two nations are not merely football rivals. They are adversaries emerging from a dangerous military confrontation that shook global markets, disrupted international trade routes, and pushed the Middle East to the brink of a wider regional war.

Yet football has a unique way of transforming adversity into motivation. If the two countries meet again on the field, it will undoubtedly become one of the most watched matches in World Cup history. It will not merely be a football game. It will be a contest loaded with symbolism, emotion, and political significance. The United States will enjoy home-ground advantage, but Iran will arrive carrying the passion of a nation determined to prove itself once again against a powerful rival.

Beyond the geopolitical drama, the World Cup itself promises to redefine sporting entertainment. The opening ceremonies across the three host nations are expected to feature some of the world's most recognizable artists. *FIFA*

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Analysis

Qamar Bashir

Pakistan's Pine Nuts: A Premium Export Boom for China

Pakistani pine nuts, or chilgoza, are emerging as a high-potential export to China as Chinese consumers increasingly demand premium, nutritious, and naturally grown food products. Harvested from the pristine mountain forests of North and South Waziristan, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan's pine nuts are valued for their rich flavor, thin shell, crispy texture, and mild taste. Despite their superior quality and geographical proximity to China, they still hold only a modest share of China's fast-growing premium nut market. Production is highly concentrated. North and South Waziristan contribute 80-85% of national output, according to Amjad Zarin of Jilin International Studies University.

North Waziristan alone produces 1,700-2,000 metric tons annually, while South Waziristan adds 800-900 metric tons. Pakistan's total annual production ranges between 2,100 and 2,900 metric tons depending on weather conditions. The seasonal nature and reliance on natural cultivation make yields variable, but quality remains consistently high. China has rapidly become Pakistan's most important pine nut market. Data from China's General Administration of Customs shows exports nearly doubled from 579.8 tons in 2023 to 1,147 tons in 2025. Export earnings rose from \$8.2 million in 2023 to a peak of \$18.8 million in 2024 before settling at \$17.9 million in 2025. Traders estimate 80-90% of Pakistan's total pine nut exports now go to China. Abdul Mateen, CEO of AM Enterprises with 12 years of experience exporting to China, says Chinese consumers strongly prefer Pakistani chilgoza over other origins. Rising global demand has pushed prices up sharply. In Islamabad, pine nuts sold for PKR 4,500-8,000 per kg in 2025-26, while export-quality nuts reached PKR 12,000 per kg. In Wana Bazaar, prices increased from PKR 2,200-2,500 per kg to nearly PKR 2,700 in winter due to seasonal demand. Inside China, the average retail price was RMB 130 per kg in 2025. Despite strong market potential, Pakistan's pine nut sector faces structural challenges.

Experts cite limited processing facilities, inadequate packaging, inconsistent quality standards, and weak cold-chain logistics. Most exports remain raw or minimally processed, limiting value addition. Industry stakeholders see major room for cooperation with China in agricultural processing and technology. Key areas include modern cleaning and sorting systems, dehydration and roasting technology, advanced packaging, and cold-chain management. Such collaboration could reduce post-harvest losses, extend shelf life, and help Pakistani exporters develop premium retail products. Expanding e-commerce partnerships would also give direct access to Chinese consumers and strengthen bilateral agricultural trade. In conclusion, Pakistani pine nuts have the quality and demand to become a flagship export, but realizing full potential requires investment in processing, branding, certification, and supply chain upgrades. Stronger ties with Chinese investors, food-processing firms, and e-commerce platforms could help Pakistan move beyond raw exports and capture a larger share of China's premium food market.



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

Protest or Pressure Tactic? Debating JAAC's June 9 Strike in AJK

Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) is a self-governing territory created after the partition of the subcontinent and the 1949 ceasefire line rather than a province like Punjab or Sindh. Although it has its own president, prime minister, legislative assembly and supreme court, it remains heavily dependent on Pakistan for defense, foreign policy, currency and financial support. Because of its sensitive border with Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir, one of the world's most militarized and volatile regions, Pakistan treats AJK as both a strategic asset and a moral responsibility, continuing to

provide billions of rupees in grants, subsidies, infrastructure projects and development packages even during periods of economic crisis, inflation, debt and international financial pressure. Despite this support, the Joint Awami Action Committee's June 9 strike call has sharply divided public opinion. Supporters consider it a democratic and peaceful attempt to highlight delayed development projects, lack of transparency, inflation and poor healthcare, while a much larger group including traders, shopkeepers, transporters, teachers, doctors, students and daily wage workers believes strikes only deepen hardship for ordinary people by shutting down markets, schools, universities, transport and government offices. Critics point out that laborers lose wages, businesses suffer financial losses, students face academic disruption and stress, and patients experience delayed treatment and worsening health. Many also question the timing because Pakistan itself is struggling with inflation, rising fuel and electricity costs and IMF-related tax measures

while still providing subsidized flour, fuel, electricity and development funds to AJK through programs such as the Annual Development Program and the Kashmir Economic Package. Since AJK reportedly receives higher federal transfers per capita than most provinces, many citizens and analysts in Muzaffarabad, Mirpur, Kotli, Bagh and Rawalakot view the strike as disruptive, damaging to AJK's image and potentially harmful to future federal support.

Critics further argue that the Joint Awami Action Committee's repeated strikes, protests, sit-ins and road blockades over political and economic issues have failed to solve underlying problems and instead forced ordinary citizens to bear economic losses while the committee leadership claims success and returns to comfortable lives with their own income, security and resources. Growing public frustration has led many people in AJK to reject strike culture and demand dialogue, peaceful engagement and long-term stability instead of repeated shutdowns and street politics. A distinction is increasingly made between genuine protest, such as peaceful demonstrations and legal challenges that avoid harming the public, and pressure tactics that deliberately create suffering through road blockades, transport shutdowns and market closures to force government action. Many fear this cycle encourages further instability because governments may accept demands simply to restore normal life rather than because the demands are justified. Serious concerns are also being raised about the impact on the youth of AJK, especially college and university students who are mobilized through rallies, pamphlets, social media campaigns and emotional speeches.

Critics believe the committee promotes hostility toward the state, government, police, law enforcement agencies and even Pakistan itself by portraying every issue as oppression or conspiracy, filling young people with anger, frustration and victimhood that can easily be manipulated for political purposes. Young protesters are often placed on the front lines where they risk injury, arrest or death, and such incidents are then used to fuel more anger and recruit additional supporters. Many fear this culture of confrontation threatens AJK's traditionally peaceful, moderate and educated society, which has produced respected professionals and strong academic institutions. They warn that if young people continue to focus on destructive protests instead of education, skills and careers, they may become instruments of instability rather than productive contributors to society. Critics also argue that ongoing unrest benefits Pakistan's adversaries, particularly India, which they believe uses strikes and protests in AJK as propaganda to portray the region as unstable and dissatisfied with Pakistani administration.

Given all these concerns, it is not surprising that there is a growing demand from the people of AJK themselves to call back the strike of June 9. This demand is not coming from the government or from any political party but from ordinary citizens, civil society organizations, trade unions, traders associations and even many religious leaders. They have organized small gatherings, written letters to newspapers, posted messages on social media and used local radio stations to express their opposition to the strike. They say that they have had enough strikes and shutdowns and that they want peace, normalcy and the freedom to go about their daily lives without fear of disruption. They argue that if the Joint Awami Action

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The Lasting Scars: Strategies to Combat Child Abuse Worldwide

Zunaira Riaz

Protecting yourself and others from abuse and rape involves several key strategies. It's important to trust your instincts and remove yourself from any situation that feels unsafe. Setting clear boundaries and communicating them assertively is crucial. Learning self-defense techniques can also build confidence and provide practical skills.

For children, open communication is vital. Talk to them about body safety, consent, and the difference between safe and unsafe touches. Teach them that they have the right to say no to any touch they don't like, even from someone they know. Encourage them to tell a trusted adult if something makes them feel uncomfortable or scared. Additionally, educating them about online safety is essential, as much abuse can happen through digital platforms. Knowing who to contact for help, like trusted family members, teachers, or specific helplines, is also empowering. The global situation regarding child abuse and sexual violence is complex and varies significantly by region. Many countries face challenges with underreporting, inadequate legal frameworks, and insufficient resources for prevention and support services. International organizations and NGOs work to address these issues through advocacy, education, and direct intervention.

In "Pakistan" like many other nations, child abuse and sexual violence are serious concerns. Efforts are being made to raise awareness, strengthen laws, and improve the response system for survivors. However, societal factors, economic challenges, and access to justice can

present significant obstacles. There are various local organizations and government initiatives working to combat these issues. The reasons behind child abuse and sexual violence are multifaceted and deeply rooted in societal, psychological, and systemic factors. Power imbalances often play a significant role, where perpetrators exploit their position of authority or influence over vulnerable individuals. Cultural norms that may silence victims, stigmatize survivors, or normalize certain harmful behaviors can also contribute to the problem.

Psychological factors in perpetrators can include a lack of empathy, personality disorders, or a history of experiencing or witnessing abuse themselves, though this is not an excuse for their actions. Systemic failures, such as a lack of robust child protection services, inadequate law enforcement response, or legal loopholes, can allow abuse to continue unchecked. Poverty and displacement can also increase vulnerability.

Regarding specific cases in Pakistan, there have been numerous documented instances of child abuse and sexual violence that have garnered public attention. These cases often highlight the devastating impact on victims and survivors, and have spurred calls for greater accountability and reform. For example, high-profile cases involving child sexual abuse in religious institutions, public spaces, and within families have led to increased media coverage and public outcry. These incidents have often brought to light the challenges victims face in seeking justice, including social stigma, fear of reprisal, and difficulties in navigating the legal system. The reporting of such cases, while tragic, has also been instrumental in driving

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Ethiopia Voted: The Historic Election Marks A Major Step In Ethiopia's Political Maturity



Ambassador Jemal Beker (PhD)

non-partisan institutions. This transition has been heavily anchored in a home-grown democratic philosophy Medemer— an approach that synthesizes international best practices with local socioeconomic realities to repair legacy structural fractures. Supported by strategic updates in administrative organization, political thought, and electoral technology, this institutional shift ensures that political transition is dictated solely by law and the ballot box.

The Architecture of the 7th National Election

Building directly upon the foundations and lessons learned from the landmark 6th National Election, the recent 7th National Election represents a highly sophisticated evolution in governance style. It intentionally reflects the principles of consociational democracy, explicitly designed to maintain stability and equitable representation in a multi-faceted nation. The operational structure of this election was built upon four pillars consisting of Grand Coalitions to foster broad political alliances for widespread consensus, Fair Representation to ensure equitable legislative weight across diverse political views, Segmental Autonomy to allow cultural and regional identities to manage local interests securely, and Minority Rights Protection to safeguard the voices and inclusion of smaller communities.

Consequently, these inclusive structural pillars directly inspired an unprecedented wave of nationwide civic enthusiasm, translating high-level design into historic voter turnout.

Numbers Don't Lie: High Engagement and Inclusive Participation

To evaluate the democratic integrity

of an election, international standards examine three core phases consisting of the Pre-Election, Election Day, and Post-Election periods. Ethiopia's rigorous management of the pre-election phase laid the groundwork for an inclusive, highly competitive environment, verified by exact institutional data points. The process achieved a total registered candidate field of over 10,438 candidates across participating 42 political parties, with opposition and party competitors deploying 250,000 observers to guarantee transparency across polling stations. Additionally, the field included 80 independent candidates contesting outside traditional party structures, while registered voter turnout reached exactly 54,057,871 citizens who successfully registered and secured their voting cards. Among the registered voters, 90% of them have cast their votes in the ballot box.

Out of an overall eligible population of 135+ million, this impressive turnout represents an undeniable vote of confidence from the Ethiopian public. Furthermore, during this pre-election phase, the political parties successfully conducted 19 televised debate forums across five distinct languages using strategically allocated public airtime slots to guarantee equity in media access. In tandem with this remarkable civic energy, Election Day unfolded as a peaceful, joyful climax where voters confidently exercised their democratic rights.

Election Day: A Free, Fair, and Sovereign Expression

On Election Day, citizens turned out en masse to cast their ballots freely, peacefully, and without external influence or intimidation. This smooth



execution reaffirms a fundamental truth that our public embraces a credible electoral process as the sole legitimate mechanism for establishing a social contract with governance. By mobilizing to build an accountable administration, the electorate has consciously chosen a path of constitutional continuity, stability, and peaceful institutional transition.

The transparency and exclusivity of the entire process were thoroughly observed and verified by international monitoring bodies, including the African Union (AU) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), complemented extensively by domestic civil society. Specifically, the African Union deployed a 59-member Election Observer Mission led by the former President of the Republic of Kenya, H. E. Uhuru Kenyatta, while IGAD fielded a specialized team of 26 international observers. On the domestic front, 55 legally authorized civil society organizations successfully mobilized and deployed 1,562 certified

exercising their democratic rights and choosing their preferred parties without pressure. Kenyatta further described the electoral process as a "completely peaceful and credible process." Observer missions highlighted strong citizen participation, broad voter engagement, and voting processes that largely proceeded without major incidents in observed areas. These preliminary findings reinforced confidence in the overall conduct, credibility, and peaceful nature of the electoral process while demonstrating the commitment of Ethiopian citizens to express their democratic will through the ballot box.

Consequently, this profound milestone stands validated before the international community, perfectly setting the stage for a bright, self-determined future for our nation's democratic exercise. The successful completion of this historic 7th election is a testament to our growing political maturity and the enduring resilience of our state architecture. Ultimately we, the Ethiopian people, are the true authors of this success, establishing a sacred mandate for our own peace, justice, and equitable development. By coming together to transcend past fractures, we have proven that our democratic path is irreversible, positioning Ethiopia as a powerful global exemplar of democratic consolidation.

Ambassador Dr. Jemal Beker Abdula is a prominent Ethiopian diplomat currently serving as the Ambassador Extraordinary & Plenipotentiary of Ethiopia to the United Arab Emirates.

He is well-known for his academic achievements, holding a completed PhD in Diplomacy and International Affairs and an honorary doctorate

Malaysian High Commissioner Highlights MTCP's Impact on Pakistan and Beyond

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Point News—3rd Jun, 2026) Malaysia's flagship Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme (MTCP) has played a significant role in developing human capital not only in Malaysia and ASEAN countries but across the globe, Malaysian High Commissioner to Pakistan, Dato' Mohammad Azhar bin Mazlan, said on Wednesday.

Addressing a gathering of alumni of the MTCP and Malaysian universities at the Malaysian Embassy in Islamabad, the envoy said that around 850 Pakistanis had completed various training programmes in Malaysia under the initiative, contributing to nation-building and human resource development.

Malaysian High Commissioner said the programme had benefited participants from 144 countries, serving as an important platform for capacity building and international cooperation.

"Human capital is the key to nation-building and economic progress. Pakistan and Malaysia can further strengthen cooperation to enhance productivity and



competitiveness in both economies," he said.

The High Commissioner noted that more than 40,000 participants worldwide had been trained under the MTCP, which has been recognized for supporting the objectives of the United Nations, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

He emphasized that policy consistency had been one of the key factors behind Malaysia's sustainable economic development and highlighted the country's effective management of natural resources, including food preservation and seafood processing systems.

The envoy said Malaysia MTCP had also trained diplomats

from five Central Asian countries and provided training to around 1,200 Afghan English-language teachers to support educational development.

"We believe in working together with Pakistan for mutual development and prosperity. Our cooperation spans human resource development, trade, education and economic growth," he added.

Speaking on bilateral relations, he said the leadership of both countries remained engaged in expanding cooperation.

He referred to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's recent visit to Malaysia, during which discussions focused on strengthening trade, investment and economic



cooperation.

A panel discussion, moderated by First Secretary of the Malaysian Embassy Amri Kamrudi, focused on Malaysia-Pakistan relations and the experiences of MTCP and Malaysian university alumni.

Speaking on the occasion, MTCP alumnus and academician at Riphah International University, Dr Jibril Raza, highlighted Malaysia's remarkable transformation from an agriculture-based economy in the 1960s to a high-income nation.



He said Malaysia's success was driven by sustained investment in human capital, innovation and sustainable development policies. He also described Malaysia as a global leader in Islamic finance and fintech.

Dr. Raza noted that Malaysia's capital market exceeds \$1 trillion, compared to Pakistan's approximately \$70 billion, underscoring the scale of Malaysia's economic development.

He identified several areas for enhanced Pakistan-Malaysia cooperation, including agriculture technology, Islamic finance, Shariah-compliant contracts, halal certification and fintech innovation.

"Pakistan faces challenges related to productivity and competitiveness, and there is much to learn from Malaysia's

development experience," he said. Another MTCP alumna, Asia Loudi, described the programme as a transformative bridge between the two nations that promotes cultural understanding, knowledge exchange and professional development.

Senior journalists, Almas Nacvi participating in the discussion also highlighted the growing political, economic and people-to-people ties between Pakistan and Malaysia, stressing the importance of expanding cooperation in education, trade and human resource development.

The event concluded with a renewed commitment from both sides to further strengthen bilateral relations and deepen collaboration through educational and professional exchange programmes.

First Meeting of D-8 Energy Ministers Adopts "Baku Declaration on Energy Cooperation"

Spokesman Report

BAKU: The Developing-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation (D-8) marked a significant milestone with the successful convening of the First Meeting of the Ministers of Energy of D-8 Member States in Baku, Republic of Azerbaijan, on 1 June 2026.

Hosted by the Ministry of Energy of Azerbaijan on the sidelines of Baku Energy Week, the Ministerial Meeting brought together Ministers and senior representatives from D-8 Member Countries under the theme "Enhancing Cooperation in Sectors of Hydrocarbon, Energy Transition and Energy Connectivity."

Chaired by H. E. Parviz Shahbazov, Minister of Energy of Azerbaijan, the Meeting was attended by high-level delegations from Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Pakistan, Türkiye and Malaysia, as well as H. E. Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, Secretary-General of the D-8 Organization along with his delegation.

In his opening remarks, Minister Shahbazov underscored the growing importance of enhanced cooperation among D-8 Member States amid evolving global energy



dynamics, emphasizing the need to strengthen collaboration in hydrocarbons, energy transition, and energy connectivity. He highlighted Azerbaijan's commitment to promoting regional energy security, sustainable development and diversified energy partnerships across the D-8 region.

Addressing the Meeting, Secretary-General Ambassador Sohail Mahmood described the first-ever meeting of the D-8 Energy Ministers as a landmark step in implementing the Decennial Roadmap (2020-2030), which identifies energy as a key pillar of D-8 cooperation. He stressed that energy

serves as a strategic driver of economic growth, industrial development, trade competitiveness, technological advancement and sustainable prosperity across the Member States. He also emphasized the need for a balanced and pragmatic approach that recognizes the continued role of hydrocarbons in ensuring energy security, affordability and reliability, while simultaneously accelerating investments in renewable energy and low-carbon solutions.

Going forward, the Secretary-General outlined five priority areas for practical cooperation: the development

of a D-8 Energy Cooperation Framework and Action Plan with clear targets and timelines; establishment of an energy investment facilitation mechanism to mobilize public and private capital; strengthened collaboration on innovation and emerging technologies, including renewables, hydrogen, storage and smart grids; enhanced capacity-building and technical cooperation through training and institutional partnerships; and expanded energy connectivity and cross-border infrastructure cooperation, where feasible and mutually-beneficial.

The principal outcome of

the Ministerial Meeting was the adoption of the "Baku Declaration on Energy Cooperation," which establishes a comprehensive framework for practical, result-oriented and forward-looking cooperation in the energy sector.

The Declaration reaffirms the pivotal role of energy cooperation in promoting energy security, economic diversification, industrial development, and sustainable resilience across D-8 Member States. It also underscores the importance of maintaining stability and predictability in energy markets through strengthened cooperation and energy diplomacy.



Under the Declaration, Member States agreed to enhance cooperation in the following priority areas:

- Clean and renewable energy development;
- Energy connectivity and cross-border energy infrastructure;
- Cooperation across the hydrocarbon value chain;
- Investment facilitation and private-sector engagement;
- Technology, innovation and capacity-building;
- Strengthened institutional coordination and implementation mechanisms; and
- Collaboration between the energy and mining sectors.

Another key highlight of the Meeting was the presentation of the proposed Charter of the D-8 Energy and Climate Center (D-8 ECC) being established by Azerbaijan in Baku. The Ministers commended Azerbaijan's initiative and recognized the Center's potential to serve as a flagship D-8 institution for promoting technical cooperation, project

development, investment facilitation, knowledge-sharing and capacity-building in the fields of energy and climate.

The participants also supported the establishment of a D-8 Energy Senior Officials Group (SOG) to ensure effective follow-up and implementation of Ministerial decisions and to strengthen institutional coordination among Member States.

The Meeting further underscored the strategic geographical position of D-8 Member States as a bridge between major energy-producing regions, international transit corridors and global consumer markets. Participants emphasized the importance of pursuing balanced, realistic and nationally driven pathways toward energy transition while ensuring energy security, affordability, accessibility and sustainability.

The successful convening of the First Meeting of D-8 Energy Ministers and adoption of the Baku Declaration form a solid foundation for structured and long-term energy cooperation within the D-8 framework. The outcomes reflect the collective commitment of Member States to advancing a practical, inclusive and sustainable energy agenda for the benefit of their economies and peoples.

Bull & Bears
PSX 100-Share
Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index	
Current	Prev. Close
170,190.64	171,021.77
Day's High	Day's Low
171,624.45	169,790.33
Index Value	Change
16,751,643,272	-831.13
Percentage	Time
-0.49%	3 Jun, 2026 4:30 pm

Europe: FTSE 100 Index	
Index Value	Change
10,332.30	-41.21
Percentage	Time
-0.40%	3 Jun, 4:35 pm GMT+1

USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average	
Index Value	Change
50,878.02	-429.77
Percentage	Time
-0.84%	3 Jun, 1:22 pm GMT-4

Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average	
Index Value	Change
68,402.13	+1,667.89
Percentage	Time
+2.50%	3 Jun, 3:45 pm GMT+9

Open Market Forex Rates

Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	197.46	202.77
Bahrain Dinar	733	743.75
Canadian Dollar	199.44	206.20
China Yuan	38.00	38.75
Danish Krone	43.35	43.75
Euro	321.53	327.02
Hong Kong Dollar	34.87	35.87
Indian Rupee	2.70	2.95
Japanese Yen	1.7235	1.8226
Kuwaiti Dinar	882.18	892.75
Malaysian Ringgit	67	67.75
New Zealand \$	162.72	167.81
Norwegians Krone	27.85	28.15
Omani Riyal	718.20	729.25
Qatari Riyal	74.65	75.65
Saudi Riyal	73.80	74.60
Singapore Dollar	215.79	223.81
Swedish Korona	30.25	30.55
Swiss Franc	350.27	356.75
Thai Bhat	8.50	8.65
U.A.E Dirham	75.35	76.35
UK Pound Sterling	372.52	378.20
US Dollar	278.25	279.50

FPCCI Presents Solutions to PM Amidst Economic Crisis

KARACHI: Mian Zahid Hussain, President of the Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum (PBIF), President of the All Karachi Industrial Alliance (AKIA), Chairman of the National Business Group Pakistan (NBG), Chairman of the FPCCI Policy Advisory Board, and Former Provincial Minister of Information Technology, has termed the recent meeting between the Prime Minister of Pakistan, FPCCI President Atif Ikram Sheikh, United Business Group Patron-in-Chief S. M. Tanveer, and presidents of various chambers of commerce as a highly encouraging development towards economic stability and industrial growth.

Mian Zahid Hussain stated that during this crucial meeting, the FPCCI leadership and business representatives candidly



discussed the severe macroeconomic challenges facing the country and presented concrete proposals to the Prime Minister for the promotion of trade and industry. He

noted that the trade deficit has reached a staggering \$32 billion during the first ten months of the current fiscal year, while the ratio of exports to imports has witnessed an alarming decline. Furthermore, Pakistan's economy is currently facing immense pressure due to the ongoing US-Iran war. The business leader emphasized that there is no alternative for economic revival other than reducing reliance on imports and providing incentives to the export sector on an emergency basis.

Mian Zahid Hussain further stated that the business community attaches high expectations to the Federal Budget 2026-27, hoping the government will take practical steps to protect local industries while simultaneously honoring its agreements with the IMF.

PCDMA Seeks GST, WHT Cuts, FTR Revival, EFS End, and Customs Reforms

KARACHI: The Pakistan Chemicals & Dyes Association (PCDMA) has urged the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to ease the compliance burden on businesses, cut the General Sales Tax (GST) rate, and restore protections for importers in its pre-budget proposals submitted ahead of the federal budget 2026-27.

PCDMA Chairman Salim Valimulhammad warned that mounting compliance requirements and aggressive audits are steadily driving taxpayers into the informal economy. "People generally want to pay taxes, but due to limited awareness and tech-savviness they make honest mistakes — and FBR



takes advantage of that," he said, stressing that officers should guide taxpayers instead of issuing harsh notices.

"Taxpayers generally want to comply with tax laws, but complicated procedures and lack of guidance often result in genuine mistakes," Mr. Valimulhammad said, adding that the FBR should adopt a facilitative and educational approach instead of relying on notices and enforcement measures.

Souvenir

ISLAMABAD: President of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), Atif Ikram Sheikh presenting shield to President of the Asia Web3 Alliance Japan (AWAJ), Hinza Asif at FPCCI, in the federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

Chenone Partners with Social Welfare for Industry-Academia Linkage

LAHORE: Chenone Wednesday inked memorandum of understanding with Social Welfare and Bait-Ul-Maal Punjab to further strengthen industry integration and promotion of academia-Industry linkage.

Chief Executive Officer Chenone Mian Kashif Ashfaq said under MOU, our design team will provide quarterly "Trend Forecast" ensuring all products align with current global aesthetics, color palettes and consumer preferences.

He said we will contribute towards operational flow of the social welfare centres across the province to optimise their production efficiency and quality control. He said we will also structure ultra modern training modules for imparting training to workers on high end machinery, finishing

techniques and modern material design and modern material handling. He said workers will also be educated to use high quality raw materials to ensure the final product meeting premium market standards.

Director General Social Welfare and Bait Ul Maal Dr Shahinshah Faisal Azim briefly speaking on the occasion termed the MOU as a milestone in the history of the department pursuing latest trends, design and expertise in the field of Home Textile, Furniture, apparel and Decor.

He said collaboration will initially focus on improving underutilised workforce to equip them with modern silhouette. He said Chenone will ensure full industry support to us aimed at the direct enhancement of exports.

70-80pc businesses delaying or revising investment decisions in Pakistan, reveals latest OICCI BCI Survey

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: The Overseas Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OICCI) today released the results of its Business Confidence Index (BCI) Survey Wave 29, conducted across Pakistan in the second quarter of 2026. The survey reveals a marked deterioration in business sentiment, with the overall BCI falling 9 percentage points to a positive 13 percent, down from 22 percent in Wave 28, as the ongoing war in the Middle East casts a long shadow over investment confidence, supply chains, and economic growth prospects.

The decline is driven primarily by elevated inflationary pressures, rising fuel costs, and the intensifying fallout from the war in the Middle East. The Services sector recorded the sharpest drop, falling 20 points to 14 percent, while Manufacturing declined by 7 points. The Retail sector was the only segment to show improvement, rising 3 points to positive 20 percent. Investment intentions have

weakened sharply, with the New Investment Index collapsing 10 points to just 2 percent, reflecting a near-total freeze in near-term capital deployment.

Around 70-80 percent of businesses across all sectors are delaying or revising investment decisions and diversifying supply chains to reduce exposure to affected trade routes. The strategic focus is shifting towards risk mitigation and operational resilience. The survey's global business situation indicator deteriorated by 31 points, and businesses across all sectors expect the disruption to persist well beyond six months.

"The results of Wave 29 are a clear signal that businesses operating in Pakistan are navigating an increasingly complex environment," said M. Abdul Aleem, Secretary General, OICCI. "The ripple effects of the Middle East conflict are being felt across every sector, from investment freezes to supply chain restructuring. While the fundamentals of the Pakistani market remain intact, restoring business confi-

dence will require policy stability, cost relief, and a concerted effort to shield the economy from prolonged geopolitical uncertainty."

Looking ahead, 34 percent of respondents anticipate a negative outlook over the next six months, up sharply from 22 percent in Wave 28, with political instability, fuel prices, and inflation cited as the top concerns. When asked about the key structural threats to business growth, rising inflation topped the list at 84 percent, followed by high taxation at 79 percent, and concerns over currency stability and inconsistent government policies both at 61 percent. Business confidence among OICCI member companies, representing the country's leading foreign investors, remained relatively resilient, improving marginally to positive 28 percent.

Metropolitan confidence fell 12 points to 11 percent, while non-metro cities including Peshawar, Quetta, Rawalpindi, Multan, Sialkot, and Sukkur saw a modest 3-point improvement to 22 percent.

Petroleum Dealers Give Government 48-Hour Deadline Over Commission Increase Demand, Malik Khuda Bakhsh

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Petroleum dealers have given the government a 48-hour deadline to address their demand for an increase in sales commission.

During a crucial meeting held under the chairmanship of PPDA Chairman Abdul Sami Khan, it was decided to immediately send a letter to Federal Minister for Petroleum Ali Pervaiz Malik. The dealers warned that if the minister fails to respond within two days, a major decision regarding the future of petrol pumps across the country could be announced.

Speaking to the media at Federation House on Wednesday, PPDA Chief Adviser Malik Khuda Bakhsh stated that oper-

ating petrol pumps on the existing commission structure has become impossible, and dealers are facing severe financial difficulties. He said that petroleum dealers would send a final letter

regarding the commission issue to the Petroleum Minister today.

Malik Khuda Bakhsh revealed that diesel sales have almost collapsed across the country, while smuggled fuel is increasingly dominating the market. He said that five oil refineries have formally informed the government about their concerns regarding the rise in petroleum product smuggling. The refineries have also warned that declining diesel sales are causing storage facilities to reach capacity limits.

CCP Approves Acquisition of Pakistan Oxygen's Liquid CO₂ Plant by Pak Arab Fertilizers

The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has approved Pak Arab Fertilizers Limited's acquisition of Pakistan Oxygen Limited's liquid carbon dioxide (LCO₂) plant. The Phase-I review found the horizontal merger would not significantly alter market competition, create barriers to entry, or strengthen market dominance. Pak Arab Fertilizers, a Fatima Fertilizer subsidiary, produces fertilizers and chemicals. Pakistan Oxygen manufactures industrial/medical gases and other products. The CCP concluded the transaction aligns with the Competition Act, 2010, facilitating business while protecting competition and consumer welfare.

Pakistan: From Peace Mediation to the Heart of FIFA 2026

Continued from Page 4

has announced that the first-ever FIFA World Cup final halftime show will be curated by Coldplay's Chris Martin and Phil Harvey in partnership with Global Citizen. While FIFA has not yet officially confirmed the complete lineup for the opening ceremony, closing celebrations, or halftime performers, the involvement of Chris Martin and Phil Harvey has already generated significant global interest. Major celebrations are planned in Los Angeles, Mexico City, Toronto, and Vancouver.

For FIFA, the challenge is immense. The organization must preserve the spirit of inclusivity and neutrality while navigating one of the most politically sensitive tournaments in modern history. The hope shared by football lovers across the world is simple: that peace returns before the opening whistle is blown.

If diplomacy succeeds and tensions subside, FIFA World Cup 2026 could

become a powerful symbol of reconciliation. If hostilities continue, the conflict risks overshadowing what should be humanity's greatest sporting celebration.

The world will be watching not only to see who lifts the trophy in New Jersey on July 19, but also to see whether football can once again accomplish what politics often cannot—bringing together nations divided by ideology, conflict, and history.

You could replace the concluding paragraph with the following stronger version:

From the battlefields of the Middle East to the football grounds of North America, the intertwined stories of the Iran conflict and FIFA World Cup 2026 may ultimately remind humanity that nations are far better served competing with a football than with missiles and bombs.

History may also remember Pakistan for playing a unique dual role in both events. In one of the most dangerous geopolitical crises of recent times, Pakistan emerged as a voice for dialogue, de-escalation,

and peace, helping encourage diplomatic efforts aimed at preventing a wider regional war that could have devastated the global economy.

At the same time, in the world's largest sporting spectacle, the very football that will unite 48 nations and captivate billions of viewers will be manufactured in Sialkot, Pakistan. Thus, in both a historic quest for peace and a historic celebration of sport, Pakistan occupies a symbolic place at the center of the story—serving as a mediator in one arena and providing the central element of the game in the other. It is a rare moment when a nation becomes associated simultaneously with the pursuit of peace and the spirit of global unity through sport.

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

Protest or Pressure Tactic? Debating JAAC's June 9 Strike in AJK

Continued from Page 4

Committee has any genuine grievances, they should present those grievances in writing to the government and engage in serious negotiations. If the government does not respond, they should take legal action or use parliamentary forums to raise their issues. But they should not force the entire population to suffer for their political agenda. This message is resonating with more and more people every day, and it is likely that if the committee goes ahead with the strike on June 9, they will face widespread resistance and non-cooperation from the public. The people of AJK have shown great patience and resilience over the years, but that patience has limits, and those limits have now been reached.

The people of AJK are demanding that the government take tangible and visible steps to stop the growing culture of hate, division and violent protests that groups like the Joint Awami Action Committee are promoting. They want the government to enforce the law strictly against anyone who incites violence, blocks roads, damages public property or disrupts normal life. They want the government to work with educational institutions to teach students about peaceful and legal methods of protest, and to protect young people from being exploited by political groups. They also want the government to improve governance, transparency and service delivery so that genuine grievances are addressed before

they can be exploited by pressure groups. If the government delivers good governance and listens to the people, then groups like the Joint Awami Action Committee will have no excuse to call strikes. But even if governance is not perfect, the people of AJK have made it clear that they prefer dialogue over strikes and peace over chaos. They understand what is good for them and what is bad for them, and they have decided that the strike culture is bad. Therefore, they are speaking with one voice to say that the June 9 strike should be cancelled, that the Joint Awami Action Committee should change its approach, and that the government should act firmly to protect the peaceful and prosperous future of Azad Jammu and Kashmir for generations to come.



Federal Budget 2026-27

People First: Investing in Education, Health, Innovation, Agriculture and Inclusive Growth



Analysis

Prof. Dr. Muhammad Jalal Arif

Pakistan stands at a defining crossroads. The Federal Budget 2026-27 arrives not merely as a routine fiscal exercise but as a critical opportunity to reshape the nation's future. At a time when inflation continues to erode household incomes, utility costs are escalating, the import bill remains significantly higher than exports, and economic uncertainty affects millions of citizens, Pakistan requires a budget that places people at the center of national development.

The true success of Budget 2026-27 will not be measured solely by revenue collection or fiscal targets. It will be measured by improvements in education, healthcare, employment opportunities, research and innovation, agricultural productivity, social protection, and the quality of life of ordinary Pakistanis.

Pakistan's salaried class remains one of the most documented and tax-compliant segments of society. Taxes are deducted at source, leaving little room for avoidance. Yet inflation, rising electricity and gas tariffs, increasing educational expenses, healthcare costs, housing expenditures, and transportation charges have significantly reduced the purchasing power of middle-income families. The hard statistical reality is striking: in fiscal year 2023-24, salaried individuals contributed a record Rs. 368 billion in income tax to the national exchequer — surpassing the combined tax paid by exporters and retailers, who together contributed only Rs. 111 billion, or Rs. 257 billion less than the salaried class. For fiscal year 2024-25, the government further increased income tax rates and imposed a 10% surcharge on the highest income bracket, pushing the salaried class contribution to over Rs. 550 billion — making salaried persons among the single largest contributors to direct income tax in Pakistan. Despite this enormous fiscal contribution, many households that once enjoyed financial stability now struggle to meet routine expenses. The Federal Budget 2026-27 should therefore provide meaningful relief through inflation-adjusted tax slabs, enhanced tax credits for education and healthcare expenditures, and measures aimed at reducing the burden of utility costs on middle-income households.

It is noteworthy that Federal Finance Minister Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, in a written response to the National Assembly in March 2025, formally stated that there was no proposal under consideration to increase the salaries or pensions of government employees in the upcoming budget for fiscal year 2025-26, and that no revision of pay scales or allowances was being considered. This announcement, made at a time of persistently high inflation and rising living costs, was deeply disconcerting for millions of government servants who had been hoping for financial relief. The Finance Minister's position, though later subject to clarification by the Finance Ministry, reflected a troubling institutional stance that prioritizes fiscal consolidation over the welfare of Pakistan's most disciplined and tax-compliant workforce. While the Finance Minister subsequently announced a 10% salary increase for government employees in the Budget 2025-26 speech, the initial resistance

to acknowledging their plight underscored the need for a more empathetic and forward-looking fiscal approach in Budget 2026-27.

The impact of inflation is even more severe on low-income households, daily wage earners, domestic workers, small farmers, and workers employed in the informal sector. Rising food prices and utility bills consume a major portion of their monthly income, leaving little room for healthcare, education, or savings. The government should strengthen targeted social protection initiatives, expand support through cash transfer programs, improve food security interventions, and ensure that vulnerable populations receive adequate assistance without creating unsustainable fiscal burdens.

Education: The Foundation of Prosperity
No country has achieved sustained economic development without investing heavily in education. Developed nations consistently allocate significant portions of their GDP to educa-



tion because they recognize that human capital is the foundation of prosperity. Pakistan currently spends approximately 2 percent of GDP on education, which remains considerably below international standards. With millions of children out of school and concerns regarding educational quality, there is an urgent need to increase educational investment. The Federal Budget 2026-27 should establish a clear roadmap to gradually raise education spending toward international benchmarks. Investments should focus on improving schools, teacher training, digital learning, technical education, vocational training, and higher education institutions.

Higher Education Commission: Engine of Innovation

The Higher Education Commission plays a central role in developing Pakistan's universities, supporting research, improving academic standards, and facilitating international collaboration. However, limited financial resources have constrained its ability to fulfill these responsibilities effectively. Pakistan's universities possess tremendous potential in agriculture, biotechnology, artificial intelligence, climate science, engineering, health sciences, and emerging technologies. Increased HEC funding should support research grants, scholarships, faculty development programs, technology parks, innovation centers, startup incubators, commercialization initiatives, patent development, and international research collaborations.

Universities should not be viewed merely as educational institutions. They are engines of innovation, entrepreneurship, technology transfer, commercialization, economic growth, and national competitiveness. Enhanced allocations for HEC can significantly contribute to knowledge creation, industrial advancement, import substitution, and export-oriented economic growth.

Healthcare: An Investment, Not an Expenditure

Healthcare remains one of Pakistan's most critical development challenges. Public health spending remains relatively low, placing enormous pressure on both healthcare institutions and citizens. The Federal Budget 2026-27 should prioritize investments in primary healthcare facilities, maternal and child health services, preventive medicine, disease surveillance systems, nutrition programs, affordable medicines, cancer diagnosis facilities, and modern health-

care infrastructure. A healthy population contributes directly to economic productivity, workforce participation, and social stability. Healthcare spending should therefore be viewed as an investment rather than an expenditure.

Long-Term Investments for Inclusive Growth

While providing immediate relief to citizens affected by inflation and rising living costs remains essential, the Federal Budget 2026-27 must also focus on long-term investments that promote inclusive growth, employment generation, productivity enhancement, and sustainable national development.

Agriculture remains the backbone of Pakistan's economy and supports millions of livelihoods. Increased investment is needed to support small farmers through climate-smart agriculture, modern irrigation systems, improved seed technologies, integrated pest management, mechanization, storage facilities, agricultural research, and value-added agro-industries. Such



measures can improve food security, reduce rural poverty, strengthen agricultural exports, and contribute significantly to national economic growth. Quality education and skills development are fundamental to economic progress. The government should increase investments in schools, colleges, universities, technical institutions, vocational training centers, digital literacy programs, and industry-linked skill development initiatives to prepare youth for emerging employment opportunities and improve national productivity.

Healthcare spending should be substantially increased to strengthen primary healthcare systems, maternal and child health services, preventive healthcare, disease surveillance, nutrition programs, affordable medicines, cancer diagnosis and treatment facilities, and modern healthcare infrastructure, particularly in underserved rural areas. Pakistan requires comprehensive energy sector reforms focused on reducing circular debt, improving operational efficiency, expanding renewable energy projects, modernizing transmission systems, and ensuring affordable electricity for households, agriculture, and industries.

Small and Medium Enterprises are vital drivers of employment and economic growth. Low-interest financing, simplified regulations, tax facilitation, business incubation services, and support for women entrepreneurs, startups, and youth-led enterprises should be prioritized.

Given increasing climate-related challenges, substantial investments should be made in dams, flood protection infrastructure, irrigation modernization, water conservation projects, drought management initiatives, and climate adaptation programs to protect livelihoods and ensure sustainable development.

The government should strengthen social protection programs by expanding targeted cash transfers, disability assistance schemes, orphan support initiatives, widow assistance programs, and women empowerment projects to protect vulnerable populations from economic shocks.

Trade Imbalance and Export-Oriented Growth

Pakistan's annual import bill remains approximately 52 billion dollars while exports hover around 25 billion dollars. This persistent trade imbalance underscores the urgent need to strengthen domestic manufacturing, industrial modernization, value addition, innovation, commercialization, and export-oriented growth. Greater support should be provided to export-oriented industries, textile modernization, pharmaceutical manufacturing, engineering industries, information technology services, and local manufacturing to improve foreign exchange earnings.

Investment in rural roads, affordable



public transportation, logistics networks, warehousing facilities, and digital infrastructure can improve market access, strengthen regional connectivity, and promote economic inclusion. Enhanced funding for universities, research institutions, innovation centers, technology parks, startup incubators, and commercialization initiatives is essential for strengthening Pakistan's knowledge economy and long-term competitiveness. Research in agriculture, artificial intelligence, biotechnology, renewable energy, climate resilience, and digital technologies should receive priority support.

Sustainable economic growth requires effective population management policies. Increased investment in family planning services, women's education, reproductive health programs, and community awareness initiatives can contribute significantly to human development and poverty reduction. Fiscal sustainability requires broadening the tax base rather than imposing additional burdens on already compliant taxpayers. Improved tax administration, digitalization, transparency, accountability, expenditure rationalization, and efficient utilization of public resources should remain central components of fiscal policy.

International Benchmarks: Lessons for Pakistan

The experience of successful economies demonstrates that sustained investment in people is the most reliable pathway toward prosperity. Pakistan currently allocates approximately 2 percent of GDP to education and less than 3 percent to healthcare. In comparison, the United States spends approximately 5 percent of GDP on education and over 16 percent on healthcare. The United Kingdom allocates around 5 percent to education and nearly 10 percent to healthcare. Germany and

France spend approximately 5 to 6 percent of GDP on education and more than 11 percent on healthcare. Canada allocates around 6 percent to education and over 11 percent to health services. South Korea transformed itself into a global technological powerhouse through sustained investments in education, research, innovation, industrial development, and human resource development.

These nations have developed world-class universities, advanced healthcare systems, highly skilled workforces, robust innovation ecosystems, and globally competitive industries because they consistently invested in human capital. Pakistan must gradually move toward allocating at least 4 percent of GDP to education and 5 percent of GDP to healthcare while ensuring transparency and efficiency in public spending.

The Higher Education Commission remains one of Pakistan's most important institutions for national development. Enhanced allocations for HEC



should support research grants, post-graduate scholarships, faculty development programs, technology parks, innovation centers, startup incubators, commercialization initiatives, patent development, and university-industry linkages.

The efforts of Dr. Niaz Ahmad Akhtar, Chairman Higher Education Commission Pakistan, and Dr. Iqar Ahmad Khan, Chairman Punjab Higher Education Commission, deserve sincere appreciation. Both distinguished academic leaders have consistently worked to strengthen universities, enhance research and innovation capacities, promote commercialization and university-industry linkages, improve academic quality, and elevate the global competitiveness of higher education institutions. Their continued advocacy for enhanced university funding reflects a strong commitment to developing human capital, advancing scientific research, fostering technological innovation, and supporting national development through knowledge-based growth.

Government Employees, Pensioners and University Faculty: Urgent Attention Required

Special attention must also be given to government employees who remain among the most dedicated, disciplined, hardworking, and patriotic contributors to national development. They serve Pakistan in schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, research institutions, law enforcement agencies, public administration departments, and development organizations. Persistent inflation, rising food prices, escalating utility bills, transportation costs, healthcare expenditures, and educational expenses have significantly reduced their purchasing power. The Federal Budget 2026-27 should therefore provide meaningful salary increases, inflation-adjusted allowances, and targeted relief measures.

In this context, it is important to recall that Finance Minister Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb had, in March 2025, initially informed the National Assembly that no proposal was under consideration to increase the salaries or pensions of government employees in the budget for 2025-26. This announcement generated widespread concern and disappointment among government servants across the country. While the Finance Ministry subsequently issued a clarification and the budget ultimately provided a 10% salary increase, the episode highlighted the persistent

vulnerability of government employees to fiscal austerity decisions. For Budget 2026-27, it is imperative that the welfare of government employees and pensioners be treated as a priority, not an afterthought.

Similarly, pensioners who devoted decades of service to the nation deserve greater financial protection. Inflation has substantially reduced the real value of pensions, creating hardships for retired public servants who played a vital role in building Pakistan's institutions.

Faculty members serving under the Tenure Track System (TTS) in Pakistani universities also require urgent attention. Despite their critical role in teaching, research, innovation, commercialization, technology transfer, and human resource development, TTS salaries have remained largely stagnant while living costs continue to rise. Strengthening the TTS framework and revising salary structures will help retain talented scholars, improve research productivity, and enhance Pakistan's international academic standing.

Conclusion: A People-Centered Budget for National Transformation

Pakistan possesses enormous strengths: a youthful population, fertile agricultural resources, expanding technological capabilities, growing entrepreneurial talent, and resilient institutions. The challenge is not a lack of potential but a lack of sustained investment in people.

The Federal Budget 2026-27 presents a historic opportunity to prioritize education, healthcare, higher education, research, innovation, agriculture, social protection, climate resilience, economic inclusion, and human development. Such investments are not costs; they are investments in national prosperity.

The government should seriously consider increasing allocations for education to at least 4 percent of GDP in the medium term and healthcare to at least 5 percent of GDP while ensuring transparency and efficiency in public spending. Meaningful relief for government employees, pensioners, university faculty members, persons with disabilities, widows, daily wage earners, small farmers, low-income families, and the salaried class should remain a central objective of fiscal policy.

It is humbly requested that the Honourable Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Deputy Prime Minister Senator Ishaq Dar, Federal Finance Minister Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, and all policymakers give special consideration to the challenges faced by government employees, pensioners, university faculty members, persons with disabilities, widows, daily wage earners, small farmers, and low-income households while finalizing the Federal Budget 2026-27. Government employees remain among the most dedicated, disciplined, hardworking, and patriotic contributors to national development and deserve due recognition and support.

The success of the budget will ultimately be judged by whether it improves the lives of ordinary citizens, strengthens public institutions, empowers universities, enhances HEC funding, creates employment opportunities, reduces poverty, enhances exports, promotes innovation and commercialization, and lays the foundation for sustainable economic growth.

A truly people-centered budget can transform Pakistan's future and place the country on a path toward inclusive development, global competitiveness, innovation-driven growth, and shared prosperity.

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The Lasting Scars: Strategies to Combat Child Abuse Worldwide

Continued from Page 4

discussions about the need for stronger legal protections, improved reporting mechanisms, and more comprehensive support services for survivors across Pakistan.

Educating children about preventing abuse and rape involves a multi-pronged approach that starts early and continues as they grow.

"First" it's essential to teach children about their bodies and personal boundaries. This means using correct anatomical terms and empowering them to understand that their body belongs to them. They should be taught that no one has the right to touch them in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable, scared, or confused, and that they have the right to say "no." This includes understanding that this applies even to people they know and trust, like family members or

family friends.

"Second" open communication is key. Create an environment where children feel safe to talk about anything, without fear of judgment or dismissal. Encourage them to share their feelings and experiences, and listen attentively when they do. Let them know that if something ever happens that makes them feel bad, they should tell a trusted adult immediately, and that you will believe them and help them. It's important to identify a few trusted adults in their lives they can turn to.

"Third" educate them about the difference between safe and unsafe secrets. A secret that makes them feel scared, confused, or dirty is not a secret they should keep. Teach them that telling an adult about something unsafe is not tattling; it's being brave and responsible.

Fourth, as they get older, conversations can evolve to

include consent in relationships, recognizing and avoiding risky situations, and understanding the impact of their online activities. Teaching them about healthy relationships and respecting others' boundaries is also part of this broader education. It's crucial for adults to be informed and vigilant. This means recognizing the signs of abuse, knowing where to seek help, and actively creating safe environments for children in all aspects of their lives. It's really important for parents to talk to each other about how they want to keep their kids' social lives, like who they hang out with and their friends. They need to figure out how much they trust their kids and set some clear rules about meeting people and going places. It's also good to decide how much they want to know about their child's friends and what they're up to. Plus, they should agree on how much they'll watch over their

kids, depending on how old they are and what they're doing. Most importantly, they should have a way to talk about and deal with any worries they have about their child's friends or activities. This way, they can be on the same page and parent consistently. When it comes to keeping children safe, it's not just about friends and meetups; it extends to family members and relatives too. Parents need to have open conversations about how they want to monitor their children's interactions with everyone, including extended family. This involves establishing trust and clear boundaries, not just with external friends, but also within the family circle. They should decide how much information they want to share and receive regarding their child's relationships with relatives, and what level of supervision is appropriate. It's crucial for parents to discuss potential risks that might

exist even within family settings and to have a plan for addressing any concerns that arise. This could involve setting boundaries on unsupervised time with certain relatives or ensuring that children know they can always talk to their parents if they feel uncomfortable or unsafe, regardless of who is involved. By extending these safety discussions to include family and relatives, parents can create a more comprehensive network of protection for their children, ensuring their well-being in all social interactions.

Schools and educational institutions craft their safety rules with a deep understanding of the vulnerabilities children face. They weave a tapestry of protection through comprehensive child protection policies, ensuring every staff member is a vigilant guardian, trained to recognize the faintest signs of distress or harm and equipped with clear,

decisive action plans. Beyond just rules, they foster a culture of respect and safety through codes of conduct that actively combat bullying and harassment, creating an environment where every student feels valued and secure. Their visitor policies act as a firm gatekeeper, ensuring that only trusted individuals can access the school grounds, adding another layer of security. Constant supervision, from the classroom to the playground, is meticulously planned, providing a watchful presence throughout the school day. Furthermore, schools empower students with knowledge, integrating vital lessons on personal safety, digital citizenship, and healthy relationships, equipping them with the tools to navigate risks and seek help. And crucially, they establish accessible and confidential reporting systems, assuring students and parents that their concerns will be heard and

addressed with the utmost seriousness and care. Child protection and controlling abuse situations in Pakistan involve a multi-faceted approach. Key strategies include strengthening legal frameworks to ensure stricter enforcement of laws against child abuse and exploitation, and increasing public awareness campaigns to educate communities about children's rights and the signs of abuse. Establishing and supporting child protection services, such as helplines and shelters, is also crucial for providing immediate assistance to victims. Moreover, integrating child protection education into school curricula and training teachers and other professionals who work with children can help create safer environments to report abuse and encouraging a culture where children feel safe to speak up are vital steps in controlling this situation.

Meeting

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, holding a meeting with a World Bank Group delegation led by Ms. Mamta Murthi, Vice President for Human Development (Health, Education and Social Protection), to discuss human capital development, skills, health outcomes, and technology-led service delivery at the Finance Division on Wednesday.



Photo: PID

Finance Minister, World Bank discuss Human Capital Development, Skills, Health Outcomes and Technology-Led Service Delivery

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, held a meeting at the Finance Division with a World Bank Group delegation led by Ms. Mamta Murthi, Vice President for Human Development (Health, Education and Social Protection).

The delegation included Ms. Bolormaa Amgaabazar, Country Director for Pakistan; Ms. Keiko Inoue, Regional

Director for Human Development; Ms. Sherin Varkey, Health Practice Manager; and Mr. Simon Andrews, IFC Director.

Welcoming the delegation, the Finance Minister appreciated the World Bank Group's continued partnership with Pakistan and acknowledged its support for the country's development and reform priorities.

He noted that while Pakistan has made important progress in restoring macroeconomic stability,

the Government's focus has been increasingly directed towards improving social and human development outcomes through targeted investments in health, education, skills development, and social protection.

He emphasized the importance of maintaining a strong focus on measurable outcomes and effective implementation under the World Bank's long-term Country Partnership Framework with Pakistan.

The Finance Minister high-

lighted that Pakistan's large and youthful population presents both a significant opportunity and an important policy priority.

He underscored the need to improve human capital indicators, strengthen workforce participation, and equip young people with skills aligned with evolving labour market requirements.

The meeting further explored opportunities for broader collaboration between the Government, the World

Bank Group, and the private sector in support of Pakistan's human capital objectives. In this regard, Ms. Mamta Murthi invited Pakistan to participate in an upcoming global forum on Universal Health Coverage to be held in Japan later this year. She noted that the forum is a collaborative initiative supported by the Government of Japan and jointly facilitated by the World Bank Group and WHO to advance progress towards Universal Health Coverage.

Governor KP, Azam Tarar discuss matters of mutual interest, various legal issues

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Law and Justice Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar met with the Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi, to discuss matters of mutual interest and various legal issues.

During the meeting, the two dignitaries exchanged views on the overall constitutional and legal landscape of the country, intergovernmental cooperation, and issues of public importance. They emphasized the importance of strengthening institutional linkages and maintaining close coordination on



matters of national significance.

The discussion also focused on

ongoing legal reforms, measures to enhance access to justice, and efforts aimed at improving the delivery of legal services to the public.

The minister and the Governor reaffirmed their commitment to promoting effective cooperation between the Federation and the provinces in matters relating to governance and the rule of law.

The meeting was held in a cordial atmosphere, with both leaders expressing their resolve to continue working together for national development, the supremacy of the Constitution and law, and the welfare of the people.

PMYP Launches 'PurAzm Pakistan' Initiative to Empower Youth

City Desk

The Prime Minister's Youth Programme (PMYP), in partnership with UNICEF and Generation Unlimited, has launched "PurAzm Pakistan," a nationwide initiative to enhance education, skills training, employment, and leadership opportunities for Pakistani youth. The program includes technical training, language courses, scholarships, and digital employment platforms.

Chairman PMYP Rana Mashhood Ahmad Khan emphasized the government's commitment to youth empowerment across various sectors, noting that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has fully supported budgetary proposals for youth development.

A significant allocation of Rs19 billion has been earmarked for technical and vocational education, marking potentially the largest program of its kind in Pakistan's



history.

Beyond vocational skills, the initiative also focuses on soft skills and character development, with language training in Japanese, Arabic, English, Korean, German, and French being offered to improve overseas employ-

ment prospects. PMYP is actively exploring job and development opportunities in 17 countries for Pakistani youth.

The Digital Youth Hub, launched last year, has seen substantial growth, with over 800,000 registered users

and an average of 4,800 new registrations daily.

More than 2,000 companies are registered, offering numerous job openings domestically and internationally. UNICEF is supporting the Digital Youth Hub's role in youth welfare. Additionally, the Pakistan Education Endowment Fund has been established, mirroring the Punjab Education Endowment Fund, to provide financial aid to students in need. Government officials and UN representatives highlighted the critical importance of Pakistan's youth as a national asset and the necessity of equipping them with globally competitive skills.

UNICEF highlighted the challenge of 25 million out-of-school children in Pakistan, underscoring the urgency of skill development. Young people are encouraged to register on the Digital Youth Hub to access these government-supported opportunities.

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Pakistan maritime sector offers vast investment opportunities for Saudi investors: Junaid Anwar Chaudhry



Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry highlighted Pakistan's significant investment opportunities in its maritime sector to the Pakistan-Saudi Arabia Joint Business Council.

He emphasized potential in ports, logistics, blue economy, and infrastructure, aligning with Saudi Vision 2030 and Pakistan's goals. Discussions included investment in Karachi

Port, Port Qasim, Gwadar Port, Pakistan National Shipping Corporation (PNSC), and Korangi Fish Harbour Authority (KoFHA).

Specific proposals for Saudi investors included a maritime business district, marine workshop, drydock, a multipurpose cargo terminal, an integrated oil terminal, storage farm, energy city projects, PNSC fleet expansion, and an Aqua Research and Technology Park at KoFHA. Key port officials presented detailed plans for these ventures.

Pakistan emerged as genuine mediator in Iran-US talks: Iranian Ambassador



News Desk

ISLAMABAD: Iran's Ambassador to Pakistan, Reza Amiri Moghadam, on Tuesday stated that Pakistan emerged as a genuine mediator in the Iran-US negotiations, adding that Iran is sincerely grateful to the Government of Pakistan and the Field Marshal for their efforts and thanked the Pakistani nation for its support of Iran and the people of Gaza.

Reza Amiri Moghadam further claimed that when a threat of an attack on Beirut arose, Iran warned that northern Israel would be evacuated if such an attack took place.

He said that five minutes later, then-President Trump reportedly called Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and urged him not to proceed with the attack. According to the ambassador, Trump's action reflected concern over the capabilities of the Iranian armed forces.

The Iranian ambassador was addressing a ceremony held to mark the 37th death anniversary of the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Imam Khomeini.

While addressing the large gathering, Ambassador Reza Amiri Moghadam said that Pakistan has

played the role of a genuine mediator in the Iran-US negotiations. He expressed heartfelt gratitude to the Government of Pakistan and the Field Marshal for their efforts and thanked the Pakistani nation for its support of Iran and the people of Gaza.

Reza Amiri Moghadam further claimed that when a threat of an attack on Beirut arose, Iran warned that northern Israel would be evacuated if such an attack took place.

He said that five minutes later, then-President Trump reportedly called Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and urged him not to proceed with the attack. According to the ambassador, Trump's action reflected concern over the capabilities of the Iranian armed forces.

Book on Pakistan Army's 1993 Somalia operation to rescue US Rangers unveiled

News Desk

RAWALPINDI: A book documenting a historic Pakistan Army operation in 1993, titled "Rescuing the US Rangers", was unveiled to the public for the first time at the Army Institute of Military History.

The launch event was attended by army veterans, educators, prominent figures, and members of the general public.

Written by Sarmad Zia, the book

highlights a key operation in Mogadishu, Somalia, where Pakistani forces successfully rescued stranded US Rangers in 1993. It details the planning, challenges, and achievements of the mission, and includes interviews with Pakistani veterans who participated.

During the ceremony, several of the brave soldiers involved in the operation also shared their experiences and reflections, giving attendees a firsthand account of the historic military success.

MNAs call on PM Shehbaz Sharif

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday held separate meetings with Members of the National Assembly Malik Abrar Ahmed, Malik Suhail Khan, and Hafiz Mian Nauman.

The MNAs paid tribute to the prime minister for his leadership role during the tense situation in the region. During the meetings, the MNAs briefed the prime minister on matters related to their respective

constituencies.

They also informed him about the progress of ongoing public welfare and development projects in their constituencies.

Political affairs concerning the constituencies were also discussed during the meetings.

Federal Minister for Public Affairs Unit Rana Mubashar Iqbal and the Prime Minister's Special Assistant Talha Burki were also present during the meetings.