



# Daily The Spokesman

A Leading National Daily



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سے ایک باشت قریب ہو جائے تو میں ایک باشت  
اس سے قریب ہو جاؤں اور جب بندہ مجھ سے  
ایک باشت قریب ہو جائے تو میں اس سے دو باشت  
قریب ہو جاؤں اور جب وہ میرے پاس پہنچ ل  
چل کر آتا ہے تو میں دو در کر آجاتا ہوں۔  
(صحیح بخاری: حدیث نمبر 7536)  
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## Kazakh President calls for AI development to promote peace and sustainable growth

Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev has proposed a number of initiatives aimed at developing cross-border digital infrastructure and harmonizing artificial intelligence policies during the opening ceremony of the 2026 World Artificial Intelligence Conference in Shanghai, dedicated to the theme "AI Partnership for a Better Future," Qazinform News Agency reports.



## Nawaz Sharif to run PML-N election campaign in AJK

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President Mian Nawaz Sharif's visit to Azad Kashmir has been finalized to lead the party's election campaign. Nawaz Sharif will address major election rallies in Muzaffarabad on July 21 and Mirpur on July 24.

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## New Era

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif witnesses the signing and exchange of agreements between Chinese and Pakistani Pharmaceutical Companies at the Pak China Pharmaceutical 82B Conference on Friday.



Photo: PID

# PM hails US\$440 million Pakistan-China Pharma Agreements

Naveed Ahmad Khan

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday welcomed the signing of nine Pakistan-China business agreements worth approximately US\$440 million in the pharmaceutical sector, calling the development a major milestone in strengthening bilateral economic ties and advancing the next phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC 2.0).

Addressing the Pakistan-China Pharmaceutical

Business-to-Business Conference, the prime minister said the agreements would translate into practical investments in pharmaceutical manufacturing, vaccine production, research and development, enabling Pakistan to become a regional hub for the production and export of life-saving medicines.

He noted that China has consistently supported Pakistan during challenging times and has already invested over US\$30 billion under the first

phase of CPEC. He congratulated Pakistani and Chinese entrepreneurs and appreciated the efforts of Health Minister Syed Mustafa Kamal, SAPM Haroon Akhtar Khan, Pakistan's Ambassador to China Khalil Hashmi, Chinese Ambassador Jiang Zaidong and other stakeholders for facilitating the conference.

Reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to Chinese investors, the prime minister assured that the security of Chinese nationals working in Pakistan

remained the government's highest priority.

Health Minister Syed Mustafa Kamal said the conference reflected the prime minister's vision to expand Pakistan-China cooperation in healthcare and pharmaceuticals, adding that extensive preparations had paved the way for successful business partnerships.

Chinese Ambassador Jiang Zaidong described Pakistan's expanding healthcare market as an attractive destination for investment and praised the

country's improving economic indicators. He expressed confidence that Pakistan would continue providing a secure and business-friendly environment for Chinese enterprises.

Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Haroon Akhtar Khan said pharmaceuticals, biotechnology and vaccine production had been identified as priority sectors, inviting Chinese companies to collaborate in research, manufacturing and exports to serve regional and global markets.

# PM Shehbaz Directs Expedited Implementation of Ease of Doing Business Act 2025

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Friday directed authorities to expedite implementation of the government's policy initiatives and the Ease of Doing Business Act, 2025.

Chairing a review meeting, the PM instructed that third-

party validation by international organizations be ensured to assess effectiveness. He said utilizing Pakistan's potential for domestic and foreign investment remains a top priority and ordered a comprehensive implementation report be submitted at the earliest.

He appreciated the Ministry

of Law and Justice, SIFC, Board of Investment, Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Industries and Production and other institutions for work on legislation and policymaking.

Officials briefed that work on 558 reforms to cut regulatory requirements, paperwork and approval procedures is complete. 71 policy measures

have been implemented, with 272 progressing rapidly across seven phases. The reforms are expected to save the business community an estimated Rs468.7 billion in compliance costs.

The meeting was told that reducing complex regulations will help boost exports, attract FDI, and create jobs.

The PM directed that implementation and jobs generated be treated as Key Performance Indicators for officials of relevant institutions.

The meeting was attended by federal ministers, senior officials, provincial chief secretaries, SBP Governor Jameel Ahmad, and international experts via video link.

# Pakistan cargo crash families push for international help to find black boxes

Reuters

KARACHI: Relatives of the five crew members aboard a Boeing 737 cargo plane that crashed into the Arabian Sea off Pakistan last week are urging an international search effort to find the flight recorders to determine the cause.

Debris from the K2 Airways freighter was recovered shortly

after the July 7 crash, but the water in the area is about 3,000 m (9,800 feet) deep.

Finding the "black boxes" would require a costly underwater search likely to need foreign assistance, according to aviation experts familiar with deepwater crashes such as Air France 447 in 2009.

The locator beacons on the 27-year-old plane were

designed to transmit pings for only 30 days.

Recovering the recorders could show whether a navigation system issue reported shortly before the crash was linked to a navigation component that relatives say was replaced before the flight.

Pakistan has provided no public update on the search for a week, and an industrial

company with underwater search expertise told Reuters it had not heard of any requests by Pakistan for assistance from foreign companies or navies.

"The search has to continue, and whatever resources can be deployed, locally and internationally, should be deployed,"

Yashib Rizwan, the eldest son of Captain Rizwan Idris, told Reuters. "For us a transparent

investigation is key."

Engineer Muhammad Arif Siddiqui's son, Abdur Rafay Siddiqui, also called for international assistance if needed.

Both families have held funeral prayers after losing hope the bodies would be recovered.

K2, which lost its only plane in the crash, has not responded to requests for comment.

# Security Forces eliminate 24 Khwarij in Bannu operations following surge in terrorist attacks



City Desk

RAWALPINDI: In the backdrop of recent surge in terrorist activities against Police and vehicle borne suicide bombing in Bannu District, in which Indian Proxy Fitna Al-Khawarij targeted Law Enforcement Agencies and innocent civilians, Security Forces have initiated extensive joint intelligence-based operations to hunt the perpetrators of these heinous attacks and their support infrastructure.

Accordingly in last twenty four hours following the fierce fire exchanges in Bannu district and adjoining areas, twenty-four khwarij belonging to Indian proxy Fitna Al Khwarij have been sent to hell.

Weapons and ammunition have also been recovered from killed Khwarij, who remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities and killing of innocent civilians.

The operations in the area would continue and perpetrators of these heinous and cowardly act will be brought to justice, as the relentless Counter Terrorism campaign under vision "Azim-e-Istehkam" (as approved by the Federal Apex Committee on National Action Plan) by Security Forces and Law Enforcement Agencies of Pakistan will continue at full pace to wipe out the menace of foreign-sponsored and supported terrorism from the country.

# President, PM pay tribute to security forces for killing 24 terrorists in Bannu

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday paid tribute to the security forces and law enforcement agencies for killing 24 Indian-backed Fitna al Khawarij terrorists during a successful intelligence-based operation in Bannu and nearby areas.

In separate statements, the president and the prime minister said the security forces' timely and effective action against the elements responsible for attacks on police personnel and innocent civilians, particularly in Bannu, was commendable.

"The operations against Fitna al Khawarij and their facilitators working under Indian patronage will be taken



to their logical conclusion," the president said, adding that the entire nation stood shoulder to shoulder with the security forces and law enforcement agencies.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said eliminating terrorists and their facilitators remained the government's top priority.

He reaffirmed the government's resolve to foil the nefarious designs of Indian-backed terrorist elements and bring those involved in attacks on security personnel and civilians to justice.

# Bilawal pledges to be voice of AJK people in centre

Bureau Report

DADYAL: PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari vowed to represent the people of Azad Jammu and Kashmir in Islamabad and on global forums if given the mandate.

Addressing a rally in Dadyal, he called the current polls the most significant in AJK's history. He said politicians must bridge AJK and the Centre, but this responsibility is not being fulfilled. He added that Sindh, KP, Balochistan and Gilgit-Baltistan face the same disconnect.

Bilawal said all issues can



be resolved politically and peacefully. PPP has proposed a truth and reconciliation commission for AJK. He urged both protesters and the government to pause further action until the commission completes its work.

He said protest is a right, but blocking food, fuel and medicine hurts the public, not the government. No response has yet come from either side on his proposal.

# Deputy Director Information visits Bhimber Office, inspects staff attendance and performance

City Desk

BHIMBER: The Deputy Director Information, Divisional Directorate of Public Relations Mirpur, Mr. Raja Suhail Khan, visited the District Information Office, Bhimber, where he reviewed staff attendance and inspected various sections of the office.

During the visit, the District Information Officer, Bhimber, Mr. Adnan Mukhtar, briefed the Deputy Director on the office's performance and ongoing activities. The District Information Officer, Mirpur, Mr. Khizar Hayat, also accompanied him.

Later, while addressing an introductory meeting with the staff, Mr. Raja Suhail Khan emphasized the need to equip the District Information Office, Bhimber, with modern media technologies. He stated that the office's working environment and operational capacity could be significantly improved through the optimum utilization of available resources.

He directed all officials to ensure punctual attendance and to perform their duties with dedication, integrity, and professionalism. He underscored that negligence or laxity in the discharge



of official responsibilities would not be tolerated. Highlighting the role of the Information Department, the Deputy Director observed that disseminating the activities and initiatives of the Government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir to the public is one of its core responsibilities. He stressed the importance of providing timely and accurate information to the public in order to counter misinformation and prevent the spread of fake news in society.

## Rehabilitation of Tourism

ISLAMABAD: People enjoying the view of Federal Capital from the site of restaurant on Margalla Hills. Federal Constitutional Court (FCC) on Wednesday ruled that earlier Supreme Court (SC) and Islamabad High Court (IHC) decisions that led to the demolition of restaurant and other commercial establishments within Margalla Hills National Park (MHNP) constituted an exceptional transgression of judicial power, resulting in a "grave miscarriage of justice".



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

# JKDFP Marks 9 Years of Shabir Ahmad Shah's Continued Detention and Pays Tribute to His Sacrifices

Abdul Majeed Tahir

ISLAMABAD: On July 17, nine years mark the current incarceration of JKDFP Chairman and Kashmiri resistance leader Shabir Ahmad Shah, who has spent nearly 39.5 years in prisons and detention centers—a rare and extraordinary term unmatched in many freedom movements.

His life exemplifies courage and unwavering commitment to Jammu and Kashmir's right to self-determination. Despite prolonged solitary



confinement, physical and psychological suffering, and political pressure, Shah has never compromised his peaceful principles. In 1994, Amnesty International declared him a "Prisoner of Conscience," and he has become internationally known as the "Nelson Mandela of Kashmir" due to his endurance and decades-long incarceration. Acting Chairman Mahmood Ahmad Saghar noted that Shah remains a symbol of hope and resilience for Kashmiris, proving that ideas and aspirations for justice cannot be suppressed. He urged the UN, international community, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and other global bodies to urgently address Shah's prolonged detention and the deteriorating health of Kashmiri political prisoners, calling for their release and respect for human rights. The JKDFP reaffirms its highest tribute to Shah's sacrifices and steadfast leadership, pledging to continue the peaceful and democratic struggle until Kashmiris exercise their right to self-determination.

# PML-N Welcomes Raja Ilyas Khan as Key Political Catch Ahead of AJK Elections

Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: Raja Ilyas Khan, a former candidate for the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly from Lower Neelum, joined the Pakistan Muslim League (N) at a gathering organized by the party's District Neelum chapter. Special guests included former MNA Captain (Retd.) Muhammad Safdar, former Deputy Speaker Murtaza Javed Abbasi, and PML-N AJK President Shah Ghulam Qadir. Party leaders welcomed his induction as a significant political development, noting he secured nearly 14,000 votes in previous elections, strengthening the party's position in Lower Neelum. They reaffirmed PML-N's commitment to public service, development, and the Kashmir cause. Raja Ilyas Khan thanked the leadership, pledging to work for Neelum's welfare and resolve public issues. The event concluded with enthusiastic worker support, marking his joining as an important pre-election political development.



## AJK Inaugurates First-Ever Excise Police Station to Bolster Tax Enforcement



City Desk

MIRPUR: The Azad Jammu and Kashmir Inland Revenue Department established its first Excise Police Station at the Mangla Toll and Excise Check Post. Inaugurated by Chairman Muhammad Younis Mir, the facility aims to enhance tax law enforcement and regulatory compliance. Commissioner Syed Ansar Ali termed it a landmark achievement. Senior officers and field staff attended the ceremony, noting the station will strengthen efforts against tax evasion and improve revenue administration. After the inauguration, the Chairman visited industrial units in Mirpur, addressing taxation issues raised by the industrial sector. He also reviewed Inland Revenue office performance in Mirpur District and directed staff to achieve annual revenue targets while improving service delivery.

## Restoration of statehood alone cannot resolve Kashmir dispute, Masood Khan

Spokesman Report.



ISLAMABAD: Former Ambassador of Pakistan to the United States, China and the United Nations, and former President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Sardar Masood Khan on Friday stated that the restoration of statehood in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), even if implemented, would only be a partial administrative measure and cannot substitute the internationally recognised right of the Kashmiri people to self-determination. He stressed that the Jammu and Kashmir dispute remains an unresolved international issue under the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions and can only be settled through a free and impartial plebiscite.

Speaking in a television interview, Sardar Masood Khan said that the renewed demand by mainstream political parties in IIOJK for the restoration of statehood reflects growing political dissatisfaction with New Delhi's policies following the unilateral abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A in August 2019. He observed that while regional political parties are seeking the restoration of constitutional status that existed before August 5, 2019, the aspirations of the Kashmiri people extend beyond administrative arrangements to the exercise of their inalienable right to determine their own future in accordance with international law.

## Former AJK PM's Convoy Ambushed Near Dhalkot, Security Officer Killed

Abdul Majeed Tahir.

RAWALAKOT: The convoy of former Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir and President of the Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) A.J.K, Sardar Tanveer Ilyas Khan, came under gunfire at Tain, Dhalkot, shortly after entering Azad Jammu and Kashmir, according to his staff.



The former Prime Minister was travelling to Rawalakot on a two-day visit, accompanied by a large convoy, when unidentified assailants allegedly opened fire on the vehicles. Preliminary reports indicate that the attackers targeted the vehicle carrying Mr. Khan, injuring several members of the convoy and damaging a number of vehicles.

According to members of his staff, retired commando Muhammad Asif, a resident of Palandri, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, was fatally wounded while shielding the former Prime Minister during the attack. He succumbed to his injuries in the line of duty.

Sources further stated that Sardar Tanveer Ilyas Khan paid tribute to the exceptional courage, professionalism, and selfless sacrifice of the late security officer. He also announced financial assistance of PKR 20 million and the allotment of an eight-marla residential plot for the bereaved family. The incident has heightened tensions in the area.

## PM's convoy not stopped, but involved in fatal accident: official clarification

City Desk.

RAWALAKOT: Reports circulating on social media claiming that the Prime Minister's convoy was stopped are incorrect.

According to details that facts are that, near Chhanjal in the Forward Kahuta area, a police vehicle that was part of the Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir's convoy occurred with a road accident. As a result, a police official, identified as Anser, tragically lost his life, while the Station House Officer (SHO), Mr. Barkat Rathore, and four other police personnel sustained injuries and shifted medical center for onward treatment.

The injured officials were promptly shifted for medical treatment. The Government expresses its profound grief over the loss of the police official and prays for the swift recovery of those injured.

## Sardar Attique Condemns Attack on Sardar Tanveer Ilyas' Convoy

Spokesman Report



RAWALPINDI: President of the Muslim Conference and former Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan, has strongly condemned the reported armed attack on the convoy of former Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir and President of the Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party, Sardar Tanveer Ilyas Khan, while he was travelling to participate in the ongoing election campaign.

Expressing profound concern over the incident, Sardar Attique Ahmed Khan stated that reports indicating the loss of one precious life and injuries to several others are deeply distressing. He extended his heartfelt sympathies to the bereaved family and wished a swift and complete recovery to those injured.



Islamabad

30° – 38° Clear

## SERVICES

## Namaz Timings

|               |          |
|---------------|----------|
| Fajr .....    | 3:30 am  |
| Zohr .....    | 12:14 pm |
| Asr .....     | 5:11 pm  |
| Maghrib ..... | 7:18 pm  |
| Isha .....    | 8:58 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 |

**IPP President Abdul Aleem Khan Strongly Condemns Attack on Sardar Tanveer Ilyas's Election Convoy in Azad Kashmir**

## City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The President of the Stability Pakistan Party (IPP), Abdul Aleem Khan, has vehemently condemned the armed attack on the election convoy of IPP Azad Kashmir President, Sardar Tanveer Ilyas.

According to reports, miscreants associated with the Action Committee opened fire on the election convoy at Tain Dalkot in Azad Kashmir.

Expressing deep grief and sorrow over the incident, Abdul Aleem Khan extended his heartfelt condolences on the martyrdom of a security guard who lost his life in the line of duty during the firing. He also expressed intense concern for former advisor Sardar Imtiaz Shaheen and another security guard who sustained injuries during the attack.

"This attack by malicious elements is an extremely cowardly act," stated the IPP President. "There is absolutely no room for violence in democratic politics."

Abdul Aleem Khan assured the grieving families that the party stands firmly by them in this tragic hour. "Our thoughts and prayers are with the family of our martyred guard and with those who were injured.

# Punjab launches interest-free home loan scheme under 'Apni Chhat, Mehfooz Chhat'

## Bureau Report

LAHORE: The Punjab government has launched the "Apni Chhat, Mehfooz Chhat" programme, under which eligible citizens will be provided inter-

est-free loans of up to Rs500,000 to help them construct their own homes.

Addressing the launch ceremony, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif said owning a home is a dream shared by every individual, adding

that a house provides security, peace of mind and a sense of stability.

She also expressed deep sorrow over the recent tragic incident in Lahore's Kahna area, saying the loss of children in the incident had deeply disturbed her and that she understood the pain of the bereaved families.

Maryam Nawaz expressed hope that the launch of the "Apni Chhat, Mehfooz

Chhat" programme would help ensure that no family in Punjab loses its happiness because of an unsafe or weak roof.

Under the scheme, eligible applicants will receive interest-free loans of up to Rs500,000 for home construction. The loan will be repayable over nine years, with beneficiaries exempt from instalments during the first three months. After the grace period,

borrowers will pay a monthly instalment of Rs4,700.

The Chief Minister said the government's objective is to improve housing facilities and provide citizens with opportunities to live with dignity. She reaffirmed the Punjab government's commitment to prioritising public welfare initiatives that bring meaningful improvements to people's lives.



## Painting on the wall

ISLAMABAD: Students of National College of Arts (NCA) paints the wall of Jinnah Square Underpass with Pakistan-China Friendship designed by Anas ur Rehman and Maria Adil, in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

## Women University Multan Concludes Two-Week ICT Capacity Building Programme

## Iram Asim

MULTAN: The Quality Enhancement Cell (QEC) of The Women University Multan concluded its two-week "Capacity Building Programme: Enhancing Academic Quality in ICT Course Delivery." Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Syeda Shahida Batool attended as Guest of Honour and distributed certificates to faculty.

The programme was organized in line with the HEC Undergraduate Education Policy, which integrates computing knowledge, digital competencies, and computer-based learning across disciplines. It aimed to strengthen faculty capacity to deliver ICT and Artificial Intelligence content relevant to their subjects.

Addressing participants, Dr. Batool said training in computer-based learning and



AI is essential for implementing HEC's revised curriculum. She noted computing is no longer limited to Computer Science and stressed developing technological capacity among teachers from diverse backgrounds.

She urged faculty to build

proficiency in core computing concepts and seek guidance on integrating ICT and AI into courses. Highlighting the new one-credit-hour AI course, she said it must be practical, academically focused, and aligned with modern require-

ments.

Dr. Sarah Musaddiq, Director QEC, emphasized continuous faculty development. The session was hosted by Dr. Malika Liaquat, Deputy Director QEC, with Ms. Sehrish Raza as master trainer.

## Former PM Sardar Tanveer Ilyas Alleges Assassination Attempt, Commando Killed in AzK

## Spokesman Report.

ISLAMABAD/MUZAFFARABAD: President of the Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Sardar Tanveer Ilyas Khan, released a video statement addressing an alleged assassination attempt on his convoy. The incident occurred while he was traveling to his ancestral home in Constituency LA-22 Poonch-V. Shortly after entering Azad Jammu and Kashmir, the convoy came under attack at Union Council Tain Dalkot. Sardar Tanveer claimed his security companion, former SSG commando Sardar Muhammad Asif, was martyred while shielding him, and several others were injured. Condemning the attack, he alleged it was carried out by armed members of the proscribed Awami Action Committee. He accused them of disrupting public life by blocking roads and undermining state writ, while noting efforts to resolve issues through dialogue. Sardar Tanveer called for strict legal action against those involved in violence. He paid tribute to Sardar Muhammad Asif, describing his death as a great sacrifice, and expressed condolences to his family. He also honored sacrifices of Rangers, Police, and Frontier Corps in countering militancy and urged decisive action against lawlessness. Sardar Tanveer stressed that no individual or group should challenge state authority, calling on the government to ensure citizen protection and maintain law and order across Azad Jammu and Kashmir.



## CM Maryam Orders Province-Wide Launch of 'Sanjhi Sabzi' Project

## Bureau Report



LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif has directed all deputy commissioners to replicate the 'Sanjhi Sabzi' project after appreciating its success in Muzaffargarh. Free Vegetables

for Needy Families

Launched in Muzaffargarh, the initiative cultivates seasonal vegetables on government-owned urban and rural land for free distribution to deserving families. Vegetables are being grown on 140 plots across 139 kanals. The project began in a Christian community village, where residents also started voluntary cultivation. Land Utilization Across Departments

DC Muhammad Usman Tahir Jappa briefed CM Maryam that vacant land near health, education, local govt, forest, and AC offices is being used. Plots from one marla to one kanal in villages have been identified for farming. CM Praises Initiative

Maryam Nawaz awarded the DC a Merit Badge and Rs100,000 cash prize, calling 'Sanjhi Sabzi' a model for all districts and urging its sustained implementation.

## Business Community Pledges Full Support to Armed Forces Against Terrorism



## City Desk

RAWALPINDI: Muhammad Farooq Chaudhry, President of Restaurants, Caterers, Sweets and Bakers Association Pakistan, reaffirmed the business community's solidarity with Pakistan's armed forces until terrorism is eradicated.

In a joint statement with Chairman Mumtaz Ahmed and Patron-in-Chief Chaudhry Muhammad Naem, Chaudhry praised the forces' continued operations, calling them proof of commitment to national peace and stability. He said terrorists and their facilitators are enemies of the country and indiscriminate action against them is essential.

Association leaders expressed pride in the professionalism, bravery, and sacrifices of security forces. They stressed that national unity, public cooperation, and institutional coordination are key to lasting peace.

The business community vowed to stand "shoulder to shoulder" with the armed forces and said anti-state elements will never be allowed to succeed in their designs.

## Pakistan's Current Account Deficit of \$139 Million Worrying; Rice Exports Offer Hope, Malik Muhammad Bostan

## Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Chairman of the Exchange Companies Association of Pakistan (ECAP), Malik Muhammad Bostan, has expressed concern over Pakistan's \$139 million current account deficit recorded during fiscal year 2025-26, saying that despite a widening trade deficit, strong workers' remittances provided vital support to the country's external financial position.

He said that the increase in imports, coupled with stagnant exports, pushed

Pakistan's external account back into deficit. However, record inflows of remittances from overseas Pakistanis prevented the situation from deteriorating further and helped maintain stability in the country's balance of payments.

Bostan stressed that Pakistan cannot achieve sustainable economic growth without significantly increasing exports. He urged the government to reduce the cost of doing business, lower energy tariffs



for exporters, ensure timely payment of tax refunds, and introduce export-friendly policies to improve the country's competitiveness in international markets.

He noted that while overall exports remained below expectations, the increase in rice exports was an encouraging development. According to him, Pakistani Basmati and non-Basmati rice continue to enjoy growing demand in international markets, generating valu-

able foreign exchange. He called on the government to provide further incentives and facilitation to rice exporters so that the sector could contribute even more to export earnings.

He also emphasized the need to support other export-oriented industries, including textiles, leather, engineering goods, information technology, and agriculture, warning that continued growth in imports without a corresponding rise in exports would put additional pressure on Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves.

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## Editorial: Mango Diplomacy — Strengthening Pakistan-U. S. Ties Through Culture

Diplomacy is no longer confined to conference rooms, formal negotiations and official communiqués. In today’s interconnected world, cultural diplomacy has emerged as one of the most effective ways to build trust, strengthen relationships and create lasting goodwill between nations. The annual Mango Festival hosted by the Embassy of Pakistan in Washington is a shining example of how culture, cuisine and people-to-people engagement can complement traditional diplomacy.

Pakistan’s mangoes are globally celebrated for their exceptional taste, aroma and quality. Varieties such as Chaunsa, Sindhri and Anwar Ratol are more than agricultural products; they represent Pakistan’s rich farming heritage, fertile land and export potential. Showcasing these world-class fruits before U. S. lawmakers, diplomats, business leaders and the Pakistani-American community is an effective way to promote the country’s soft image while opening new avenues for trade and investment.

The festival carried significance beyond its culinary appeal. Congressman Ryan Zinke’s positive remarks about the improving relationship between Pakistan and the United States reflected the importance of sustained engagement at multiple levels. Strong bi-lateral relations are built not only through strategic dialogue but also through mutual respect, cultural understanding and direct interaction between people. Events such as the Mango Festival help foster that understanding in an informal yet meaningful setting.

Ambassador Rizwan Saeed Sheikh rightly described the Pakistani mango as a symbol of friendship and deepening ties. His remarks highlighted that Pakistan has much more to offer the world than its geopolitical importance. The country possesses a rich cultural heritage, vibrant traditions, talented people and high-quality agricultural products capable of competing in global markets.

The festival also demonstrated the value of the Pakistani-American community as a bridge between the two nations. Their contributions in business, academia, medicine, technology and public service continue to strengthen bilateral relations. The cultural tribute blending the U. S. national anthem with traditional Pakistani music beautifully reflected shared values of friendship, respect and diversity.

Beyond diplomacy, the event offers an important economic lesson. Pakistan remains one of the world’s leading mango producers, yet its exports still fall short of their full potential. Improving cold-chain infrastructure, packaging, branding, quality certification and market access can significantly enhance exports and increase foreign exchange earnings. Cultural events abroad should therefore be linked with stronger trade promotion strategies to convert goodwill into commercial opportunities.

As Pakistan seeks to diversify its exports and strengthen international partnerships, cultural diplomacy should remain a key pillar of foreign policy. Festivals like these not only celebrate Pakistan’s identity but also project a confident, peaceful and progressive image of the country.

Sometimes, the sweetest diplomacy is served not through speeches, but through the simple sharing of a mango—bringing people together, strengthening friendships and creating opportunities for a more prosperous future.

## The Colour of Heat

Every summer, Pakistan waits for a number. Forty-one. Forty-three. Forty-six. Weather bulletins flash across television screens, newspapers publish maps coloured in shades of orange and red and mobile phones buzz with warnings urging people to stay indoors. Meteorologists speak in numbers, governments issue advisories and social media debates whether this year’s summer is worse than the last. Yet, for all the attention given to temperature, numbers often fail to tell the story that unfolds on the streets. Climate change is not only something recorded by weather stations. It is something written across the landscape, the human body and the city itself. Perhaps the real story of heat is not measured in degrees Celsius but in colours.

On one blistering afternoon in Islamabad, I stopped looking at the thermometer and started looking at the city. The more I walked, the more I realised that climate change had quietly painted the capital in a palette that no weather forecast could capture. Every street carried a different shade of the same crisis. Every colour reflected a different experience of living through a warming world. Heat, I discovered is visible long before it becomes a statistic.

The first colour was red. It appeared on the faces of construction workers balancing on bamboo scaffolding beneath an unfinished building. Their cheeks had turned crimson under the relentless afternoon sun, while sweat ran down their temples and disappeared into shirts already soaked from hours of labour. Their movements had slowed, but the work had not. Cement still needed mixing, steel still needed lifting and deadlines still had to be met. Around them, vehicles passed with windows rolled up and air conditioners humming softly behind tinted glass. The same sun shone on

everyone, yet it did not burden everyone equally. The colour red was not merely the colour of heat, it had become the colour of unequal exposure.

As the afternoon progressed, another colour emerged. White streaks appeared across faded uniforms, shirts and caps. They were not stains left by dust or paint but by salt, the residue of sweat that had dried under the scorching sun. On the backs of gardeners watering Islamabad’s green belts, sanitation workers sweeping roads and delivery riders weaving through traffic, these white lines quietly testified to hours spent battling temperatures that continued to rise. Scientists describe dehydration through medical terminology and laboratory reports, but on the streets it leaves behind something far simpler, a shirt marked by the body’s struggle to keep itself cool.

By midday, the city itself seemed to surrender to grey. Roads shimmered beneath the sun, concrete pavements reflected heat back towards pedestrians, and glass buildings intensified the glare instead of softening it. Islamabad, celebrated for its wide avenues and planned sectors, suddenly felt like an endless landscape of asphalt and cement. Urban planners often speak of the urban heat island effect, explaining how concrete absorbs and retains heat long after sunset. Walking through the city, however, the phenomenon required no scientific explanation. It could be felt rising from beneath every step, turning ordinary streets into corridors of trapped warmth.

Then came yellow the quietest colour of all. In parks and roadside medians, patches of grass had lost their vibrancy. Leaves curled inward, flower beds faded and shrubs waited for rain that seemed increasingly uncertain. Climate change is often associated with spectacular disasters, floods sweeping away villages

or glaciers collapsing in distant mountains. Yet much of its impact arrives gradually, almost unnoticed. It appears first in the yellowing of leaves, in fields that dry earlier each year and in landscapes that slowly surrender their colour without attracting headlines.

The most hopeful colour was blue. It appeared in bottles of cold water carried by workers, in public taps outside mosques, in plastic water tanks resting on rooftops and in the occasional fountain where children paused to splash their hands and faces. Blue represented relief, but it also revealed inequality. For some, access to clean, cold drinking water was immediate and effortless. For others, every sip had to last through hours of physically demanding work beneath an open sky. Even comfort, it seemed, had become unevenly distributed.

Perhaps the most important colour was green, the colour that seemed to be disappearing. Every tree cast a small island of shade where labourers paused for a few precious minutes before returning to work. Beneath these trees, strangers became companions, sharing bottles of water, conversations and brief moments of escape from the relentless sun. As Islamabad expands, however, these pockets of green continue to shrink beneath roads, housing schemes and commercial developments. Every tree removed is more than a loss of beauty; it is the disappearance of natural protection in a city growing hotter with each passing summer.

Climate change is often discussed through scientific reports, carbon emissions and international climate conferences. Those conversations remain essential, but they can also make the crisis feel distant and abstract. Walking through Islamabad that afternoon revealed another way of understanding a warming planet. The climate crisis was no longer hidden inside graphs or satellite images. It was visible on flushed faces, dried salt, cracked grass,

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# Is Israel the Biggest Threat to the US?

For decades, the United States has viewed Israel as its most trusted ally in the Middle East—a beacon of democracy, a strategic bulwark, and a partner in shared values. Yet a growing body of evidence suggests this relationship has evolved into something far more complicated, raising an uncomfortable question: could Israel actually be the biggest threat to American security and sovereignty?

When we examine cyber capabilities, espionage activities, influence operations, and legislative maneuvers, Israel emerges as a uniquely dangerous actor—one whose authorized access to American systems makes it more capable of doing harm than any traditional adversary.

Israel’s cyber warfare capabilities are widely considered among the most sophisticated in the world, with the Pentagon’s Defense Intelligence Agency rating its espionage threat against the US as “critical”—the highest designation available.

The country has demonstrated this prowess through operations like the mass pager explosions in Lebanon and the Stuxnet virus, but what makes Israel uniquely threatening is that these capabilities were largely built with American assistance, meaning they understand US systems from the inside out.

This insider knowledge, combined with their own innovations, arguably gives them an asymmetric advantage over other adversaries like China or Russia, who lack the same level of authorized access to American military and intelligence infrastructure.

The espionage is not hypothetical—Israel has been caught numerous times

planting spyware on the phones of American Iran negotiators, attempting to place listening devices inside US Secret Service vehicles, and running the infamous Jonathan Pollard spy ring.

These incidents represent a pattern of behavior inconsistent with an ally relationship and more characteristic of an adversarial power operating against American interests. While China and Russia certainly conduct espionage against the US, neither has the same level of institutionalized access to American systems, making Israel’s intelligence-gathering capabilities uniquely dangerous and harder to detect.

Perhaps the most alarming development is the revelation that the Israeli government engaged Brad Parscale, Donald Trump’s former campaign manager, to run a multimillion-dollar digital influence campaign targeting American conservatives to prevent them from turning against Israel.

The operation escalated to the point where Vice President JD Vance publicly accused elements within the Israeli government of funding a campaign “to try to derail the negotiation” of a US-Iran deal and attacking him personally to shift American foreign policy in Israel’s favor.

When a sitting US Vice President must publicly call out a foreign government for attempting to undermine American foreign policy, the relationship has moved beyond normal ally dynamics into dangerous territory.

The legislative threat is even more

concrete—Section 219 of the NDAA would have effectively merged the US and Israeli military industrial bases, allowing joint weapons development and granting Israel co-ownership of American weapons systems.

While the Senate blocked this proposal by a narrow 50-46 vote, the fact that nearly half of US senators supported such an unprecedented surrender of sovereignty demonstrates the depth of

Israeli influence within the American legislative branch.

Prime Minister Netanyahu framed this as moving “from aid to partnership,” but critics like Representative Thomas Massie called it an “unprecedented escalation of foreign involvement” that amounts to “fully capitulating our nation’s autonomy to foreign influence.”

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee functions as a powerful lobbying force that has effectively shaped US foreign policy to serve Israeli interests, sometimes against American interests, with documented “revolving-door” relationships between AIPAC, the US government, and the Israeli government.

Unlike other countries seeking to influence US policy, Israel has legal and institutionalized access through these organizations, giving it a level of domestic influence that no other foreign power can match. This access extends beyond lobbying to actual legislative drafting, with critics charging that Netanyahu runs Congress through the legislation he writes and sends to American lawmakers.

The current crisis is exacerbated by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s personal legal troubles—facing corruption charges that would likely end his political career; he has been described as taking aggressive actions to secure Israel’s position while simultaneously fighting for his political survival.

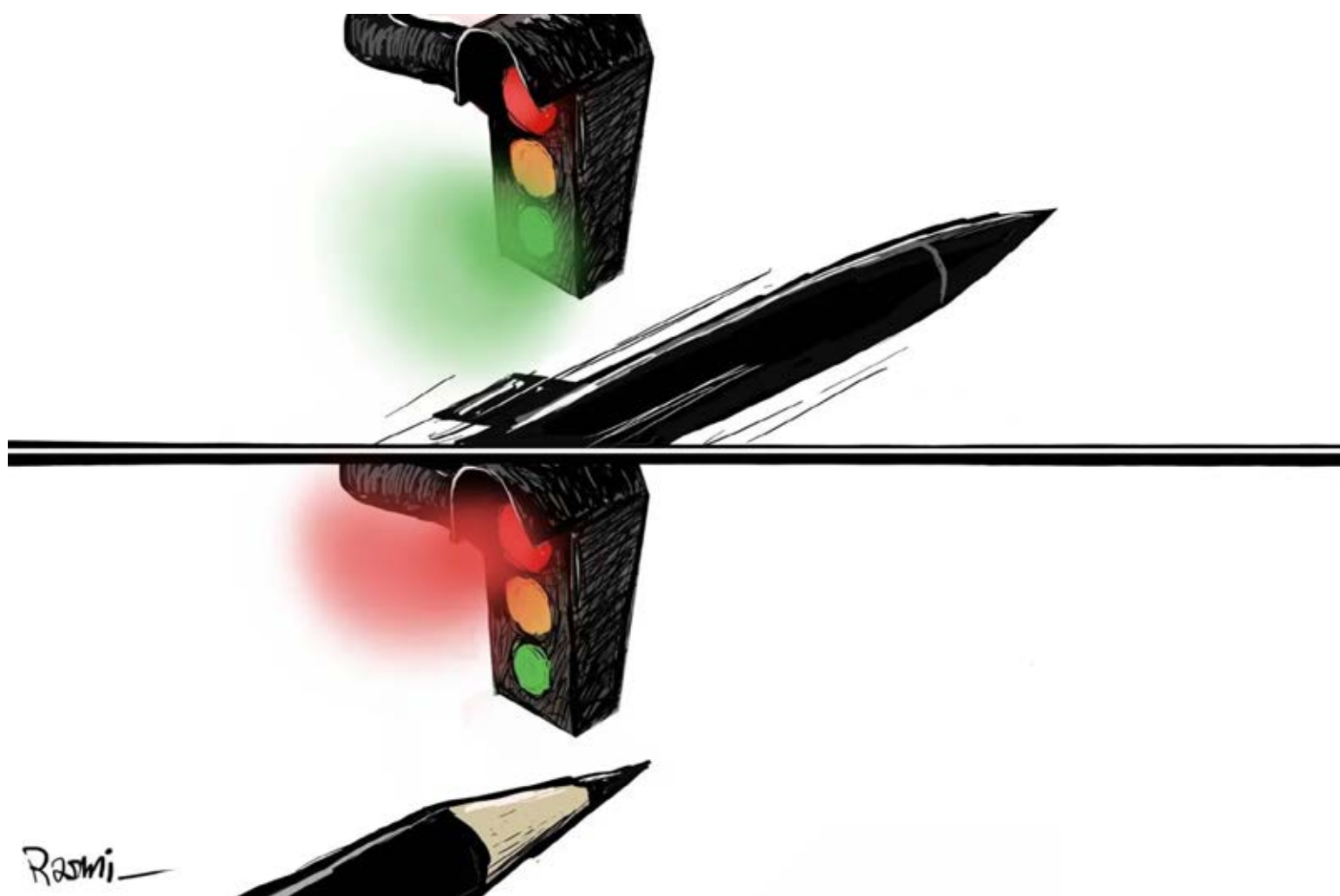
This introduces an unstable element into US-Israel relations: a foreign leader willing to manipulate American politics and policy to serve his personal legal and political interests, with critics arguing his aggressive policies are driven more by self-preservation than Israeli national security. The combination of capability, access, influence, and personal motivation makes Israel a uniquely dangerous actor in the American political landscape.

To determine if Israel is truly the biggest threat, we must compare it to other adversaries—China remains America’s primary strategic competitor with global ambitions to displace US dominance, while Russia poses an immediate military threat through its war in Ukraine and proven willingness to interfere in American elections.

However, neither China nor Russia has the same level of authorized access to US military technology, intelligence systems, and governmental processes that Israel enjoys, nor do they have domestic lobbying networks as powerful as AIPAC operating on their behalf. The old adage “trust, but verify” does not apply when you have literally integrated your defense systems with a foreign power.

If “biggest threat” means greatest military potential or most expansive geopolitical ambitions, China retains that title, but if “biggest threat” means greatest

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

## From Commitment to Action: Strengthening Pakistan’s SDG Journey Beyond 2030

As an academic member of Together For SDGs, I strongly believe that improving Pakistan’s global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) ranking requires more than policy commitments it demands effective implementation, accountability, evidence-based decision-making and active participation from every sector of society. The recently released Implementing Sustainable Development: 2030 and Beyond report provides valuable lessons for countries seeking to accelerate progress toward the SDGs. The report offers an independent assessment of global progress since all 193 United Nations Member States adopted the SDGs in 2015. It evaluates 169 countries using 123 indicators that measure social, economic, environmental and governance performance. Importantly, the SDG Index is not a measure of how many goals have been completed, rather, it reflects how close a country is to achieving the desired level of sustainable development. The 2026 rankings highlight the importance of strong institutions, long-term planning and investment in people. Finland leads the global SDG Index with a score of 87.4, followed by Sweden and Denmark. These countries continue to perform well because of effective governance, quality education, universal healthcare, environmental protection and transparent institutions. At the same time, the report acknowledges that even top-performing nations still face challenges in climate action, biodiversity conservation and responsible consumption. One of the report’s

most encouraging findings is that countries can significantly improve through sustained reforms. India has climbed 18 positions since 2015, while China has also recorded notable progress. These examples demonstrate that political commitment, strategic investment and institutional capacity can translate into measurable development gains.

The report also emphasizes that peace is the foundation of sustainable development. Without peace, governments struggle to deliver quality education, healthcare, economic opportunities, environmental protection and justice. Conflict destroys infrastructure, diverts national resources, weakens institutions and undermines public trust. For countries such as Pakistan, promoting peace, social cohesion and inclusive governance must remain central to national development. Another important message concerns the implementation gap. Although many governments have incorporated the SDGs into national strategies, only a small percentage have linked them directly with budget allocations. Policies without adequate financing rarely achieve meaningful results. Sustainable development requires measurable targets, responsible institutions, sufficient financial resources, reliable data and continuous monitoring. The report also highlights the importance of multilateral cooperation. Most countries continue supporting the United Nations and international partnerships because global challenges including climate change, poverty, pandemics, migration and food insecurity cannot be solved by individual

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# Pakistan High Commission London Hosts Silk Route Festival 2026 Road Show

**Bureau Report**

LONDON, JULY 16: The Pakistan High Commission in London, in collaboration with Silk Road Enterprises, successfully hosted the International Silk Route Festival 2026 Road Show, bringing together diplomats, business leaders, tourism professionals, investors, media representatives and members of the British-Pakistani community to promote Pakistan's tourism, trade, investment and cultural opportunities.

Acting High Commissioner Haseeb Bin Aziz highlighted the importance of strengthening Pakistan-UK relations and positioning Pakistan as an emerging destination for tourism, business and cultural exchange. The event featured prominent speakers from busi-

ness, tourism and development sectors who discussed sustainable investment, youth empowerment, cultural diplomacy and regional connectivity.

During the event, Sadaf Khalid Khan, Global Coordinator and Director of Silk Road Enterprises, officially introduced the International Silk Route Festival 2026, scheduled for October 24-25 in Islamabad at PNCA and Serena Hotel. She said the festival enjoys support from the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, TDAP, PTDC and other public and private organizations.

Speakers highlighted Pakistan's vast tourism potential, including its mountain ranges, UNESCO World Heritage Sites, Silk Route heritage, eco-tourism and hospitality sector, while

emphasizing investment opportunities in tourism infrastructure, renewable energy, technology and sustainable development.

The event also announced a post-festival Historic Silk Route Familiarisation Tour along the Karakoram Highway to Khunjerab Pass for international delegates.

Organizers said the festival aims to become Pakistan's premier international platform for promoting tourism, trade, investment, culture and regional cooperation through exhibitions, investment forums, business networking and cultural activities. The road show concluded with a networking reception, reaffirming commitments to enhancing Pakistan's global image and attracting international investors and tourists.



## PLPGMA Calls for Immediate Government Intervention to Protect LPG Supply Chain

**Commerce Desk**

LAHORE/ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan LPG Marketers Association (PLPGMA) has urged the Federal Government to immediately intervene to stop the sealing of licensed LPG plants, warning that continued enforcement actions could trigger supply disruptions, increase prices and adversely affect millions of consumers across Pakistan.

The Association expressed serious concern over the recent enforcement operations carried out by the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) and other authorities in Lahore and other major cities, where licensed LPG plants are reportedly being raided, harassed and sealed despite operating under valid licences. PLPGMA maintained that these actions are disrupting legitimate businesses at a time when the industry's core pricing issues remain unresolved.

PLPGMA stated that the existing LPG pricing framework has become commercially unworkable as marketing and distribution margins have not been revised since 2018, despite signifi-



cant increases in operational costs, freight charges and other supply chain expenses. The Association also highlighted that locally produced and imported LPG continue to be regulated under a uniform pricing mechanism despite their substantially different cost structures.

Chairman PLPGMA, Ahsan Butt, said the current enforcement campaign is addressing the consequences of an outdated pricing system rather than resolving its underlying structural flaws.

"Instead of addressing the weaknesses in the pricing framework, enforcement actions are disrupting legitimate businesses and weakening the LPG supply chain. Continued sealing of licensed plants will reduce market supply, increase pressure on consumers and contribute to price instability," he said.

PLPGMA emphasized that licensed operators should not be penalized for operating under an outdated regulatory framework and warned that if enforce-

ment actions continue, any resulting shortages or market disruptions would be a direct consequence of policy shortcomings rather than the industry's unwillingness to serve consumers.

The Association called upon the Federal Minister for Petroleum and relevant authorities to immediately halt the sealing of licensed LPG plants, reopen facilities closed due to the pricing dispute, initiate an urgent revision of LPG marketing and distribution margins, introduce separate pricing mechanisms for locally produced and imported LPG, and convene an immediate meeting with PLPGMA to develop a sustainable solution before the situation escalates into a nationwide supply crisis.

PLPGMA reiterated that timely policy-level engagement is essential to ensure uninterrupted LPG availability, protect consumer interests and restore confidence across the country's LPG value chain.

"The situation requires urgent and decisive intervention. Any further delay will disrupt supplies, harm consumers and further destabilize the LPG market," Ahsan Butt concluded.

## Attock Police arrest four drug dealers, recover over three kilograms of ice

**Raza Naqvi**

ATTOCK: Attock Police, in separate operations, arrested four suspects involved in drug trafficking and recovered more than three kilograms of ice (crystal methamphetamine).

According to police, Assistant Sub-Inspector Ramzan Ali Shah of Attock Khurd Police Station, along with his team, recovered 1,000 grams of ice from Hilal Khan, son of Kafeel Khan, a resident of Peshawar, during a checking operation. Similarly, Sub-Inspector Ghulam Shabbir of Rango Police Station recovered 1,000 grams of ice from Naveed, son of Zareef Khan, a resident of Mohmand District.

In another operation, Assistant Sub-Inspector Qasim Ali Khan of Hazro Police Station arrested Akhtar Zeb, son of Abzar Khan, a resident of Mardan, after recovering 500 grams of ice from his possession.

Meanwhile, Sub-Inspector Sajjad Ahmed, along with his team, arrested Arsala Khan, son of Asad Ali Khan, also a resident of Mardan, and recovered 537 grams of ice during a checking operation.

All four suspects were taken into custody, and separate cases have been registered against them under the relevant provisions of the law. Further investigation is underway.

## FIR registered against police officials over alleged negligence in Multan suicide case

**Zain Khan Malghani**

MULTAN: An FIR has been registered against several police officials over alleged negligence in handling the complaint of Shamim Akhtar (50), who reportedly died by suicide after claiming she was a victim of rape. The case has intensified concerns about police response to sexual assault complaints and accountability within the criminal justice system.

According to the FIR, Shamim repeatedly approached Budhla Sant Police Station over five days seeking registration of her complaint, but police allegedly failed to act promptly despite receiving her written application and conducting a medical examination. Authorities have accused the station house officer of denying receipt of the complaint, while a sub-inspector allegedly delayed submitting forensic evidence.

Following the incident, FIR No. 320/26 was registered under Section 155-C, and an official inquiry was launched into the conduct of the officers concerned. RPO Multan Usman Akram Gondal ordered legal proceedings against the SHO, a sub-inspector and a police clerk, while DSP Irshad Baloch was suspended on the orders of the Punjab Inspector General of Police. Sources said the nominated officials have been taken into custody for investigation.

The case has sparked widespread public debate, with calls for strict action if negligence is established. Legal experts maintain that police are legally required to register sexual assault complaints without unnecessary delay, regardless of the eventual outcome of the investigation. The inquiry is expected to determine whether procedural failures contributed to the tragedy and to help restore public confidence in the justice system.

## Pakistan, Japan host startup and innovation event to boost AI, Web3 cooperation

TOKYO: The Embassy of Pakistan in Tokyo, in collaboration with the Asia Web3 Alliance Japan (AWAJ), organized a Pakistan-Japan start-up and innovation event to promote cooperation in artificial intelligence (AI), Web3, digital technologies and entrepreneurship. The event brought together representatives from government, industry, technology companies, investors and the startup ecosystem of both countries.

Delivering the keynote address, Ambassador of Pakistan to Japan, Abdul Hameed highlighted the growing importance of technology and innovation in Pakistan-Japan economic relations.

He emphasized Pakistan's expanding digital economy, skilled technology workforce and entrepreneurial potential, and called for stronger partnerships between institutions, companies, investors and startup communities of the two countries.

The keynote presentation, "Creating the Digital Future: Startup Co-Creation in the AI & Web3 Era," was delivered by Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Digital Affairs, Japan, Hideto Kawasaki. He outlined Japan's vision for digital transformation, including policy developments relating to AI, Web3, trusted cross-border data flows and digital innovation. Highlighting the complementary strengths of Japan's technology and innovation ecosystem and Pakistan's growing digital talent, he encouraged closer collaboration between startups, technology companies and innovation institutions in both countries, and called for working together to build a new "Digital Silk Road" through innovation and emerging technologies.

Secretary, Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication, Zarar Hasham Khan delivered a presentation under the Ministry's Tech Destination Pakistan initiative, highlighting Pakistan's technology talent pool, growing startup ecosystem and opportunities to strengthen Pakistan-Japan cooperation in digital innovation.

He emphasized that Pakistan's greatest competitive advantage lies in its young and highly skilled digital workforce and encouraged greater collaboration between the two countries in technology, innovation and entrepreneurship. The programme concluded with a panel discussion on "Building Pakistan-Japan Startup and Innovation Ecosystem Partnerships," featuring Mr. Jonathan T. 500 Global Mentor, Venture Capital Advisor and Startup Accelerator Programme Leader, and Ms. Tomoko Takasaki, Head of Web3 Innovation Platform at Ibex Japan KK and Senior Manager at Antler Ibex. The discussion was moderated by Ms. Hinzza Asif, President of the Asia Web3 Alliance Japan.

## Standard Chartered Pakistan recognised by Euromoney as Pakistan's Best Mortgage Bank

**Commerce Desk**

LAHORE: Standard Chartered Pakistan has been recognised by Euromoney as Pakistan's Best Mortgage Bank, reflecting the strength of its mortgage proposition and commitment to delivering a seamless, client-focused home financing experience.

This recognition reinforces Standard Chartered's broader Wealth proposition, which is centred on helping clients build, manage and protect wealth throughout their financial journey. Home ownership remains one of the most important pillars of long-term financial security, and the Bank continues to combine tailored mortgage solutions with holistic financial planning and advisory services for its clients.

This accolade comes at a time when expanding access to housing remains an important national priority. As Pakistan advances initiatives aimed at increasing home ownership, including the Government of Pakistan's Wazir-e-



Azam Apna Ghar Program-Ghar Ho Tu Apna, access to financing will play a critical role in expanding home ownership, supporting economic development and building long-term financial resilience.

Standard Chartered's mortgage proposition is designed to help clients

navigate the home ownership journey with confidence, offering competitive financing solutions, digital convenience and end-to-end support. Through its Future Focused Move platform, the Bank continues to support both local clients and overseas Pakistanis in achieving their housing aspirations.

Commenting on the recognition, Saadya Riaz, Head of Wealth and Retail Banking, Standard Chartered Pakistan, said:

"As Pakistan continues to prioritise greater access to housing, we remain committed to helping individuals and families realise their home ownership aspirations while building lasting financial well-being.

"We are honoured to be recognised by Euromoney as Pakistan's Best Mortgage Bank. At Standard Chartered, we view home ownership as more than a financial milestone; it is one of the most important foundations of long-term wealth creation. This award reflects the trust our clients place in us and the dedication of our teams to delivering exceptional service and trusted advice."

With a presence in Pakistan spanning more than 160 years, Standard Chartered continues to connect clients to opportunities through its international network, deep local expertise and differentiated banking solutions.

## Meezan Bank Strengthens Sustainability Agenda with LEED Gold Certification

**Commerce Desk**

KARACHI: Meezan Bank's new Regional Headquarter-Meezan Tower Islamabad has been awarded the internationally recognized LEED Gold Certification, by U. S. Green Building Council & Green Business Certification Inc. reaffirming the Bank's commitment to integrating sustainability across its operations and infrastructure. As a globally recognized benchmark for sustainable buildings, LEED evaluates performance across energy efficiency, water conservation, indoor environmental quality, sustainable materials and overall environmental impact.

The LEED Gold certification reflects



**Meezan Bank**  
The Premier Islamic Bank

Meezan Bank's commitment to integrating sustainability across both its business and the infrastructure that supports its operations.

A key contributor to Meezan Tower's LEED Gold certification is its strong

performance in energy efficiency. By integrating high-performance HVAC systems, energy-efficient lighting, intelligent building controls, an optimized building envelope and advanced monitoring systems, the building signifi-

cantly reduces energy consumption compared to conventional commercial buildings. Abundant natural daylight, improved ventilation, and employee-focused design create a healthier and more productive workplace. Together, these measures reduce operating costs and greenhouse gas emissions while providing a more comfortable working environment.

The Meezan Tower Islamabad now serves as a benchmark for sustainable commercial development in Pakistan's banking sector showing how thoughtful design, efficient systems, and operational discipline can create long-term value for employees, customers, shareholders, and the wider community.

 **Bull & Bears**  
PSX 100-Share  
Index Fluctuation

| Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index |                         |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Current                       | Prev. Close             |
| 175,802.78                    | 178,123.56              |
| Day's High                    | Day's Low               |
| 178,694.48                    | 175,790.62              |
| Index Value                   | Change                  |
| 20,493,839,828                | -2320.78                |
| Percentage                    | Time                    |
| -1.3%                         | 17 Jul, 2026<br>4:30 pm |

| Europe: FTSE 100 Index |                           |
|------------------------|---------------------------|
| Index Value            | Change                    |
| 10,600.37              | +28.13                    |
| Percentage             | Time                      |
| +0.27%                 | 17 Jul, 4:35 pm<br>GMT +1 |

| USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average |                          |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Index Value                       | Change                   |
| 52,335.25                         | -217.72                  |
| Percentage                        | Time                     |
| -0.41%                            | 17 Jul, 1:42 pm<br>GMT-4 |

| Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average |                          |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Index Value                         | Change                   |
| 64,141.12                           | -2,694.42                |
| Percentage                          | Time                     |
| -4.03%                              | 17 Jul, 3:45 pm<br>GMT+9 |

| Open Market Forex Rates |        |         |
|-------------------------|--------|---------|
| Currency                | Buying | Selling |
| Australian Dollar       | 194.48 | 205.17  |
| Bahrain Dinar           | 741.05 | 751.95  |
| Canadian Dollar         | 197.72 | 201.65  |
| China Yuan              | 38.05  | 38.80   |
| Danish Krone            | 42.56  | 43.25   |
| Euro                    | 321.04 | 324.40  |
| Hong Kong Dollar        | 35.24  | 36.25   |
| Indian Rupee            | 2.75   | 3.20    |
| Japanese Yen            | 1.7114 | 1.8100  |
| Kuwaiti Dinar           | 890.02 | 900.95  |
| Malaysian Ringgit       | 67.00  | 68.05   |
| NewZealand \$           | 161.20 | 163.75  |
| Norwegians Krone        | 27.99  | 28.29   |
| Omani Riyal             | 725.81 | 735.65  |
| Qatari Riyal            | 75.45  | 76.47   |
| Saudi Riyal             | 74.65  | 75.30   |
| Singapore Dollar        | 214.85 | 217.85  |
| Swedish Korona          | 28.25  | 28.90   |
| Swiss Franc             | 343.59 | 348.25  |
| Thai Bhat               | 8.55   | 8.80    |
| U.A.E Dirham            | 76.30  | 77.00   |
| UK Pound Sterling       | 376.31 | 379.15  |
| US Dollar               | 278.95 | 279.15  |

*inDrive*  
*enhance safety*  
*features with*  
*Trip Audio*  
*Recording*  
*feature in*  
*Pakistan*



 **Commerce Desk**

KARACHI: inDrive, has announced the official rollout of its new in-app “Trip Audio Recording” feature across Pakistan. This feature allows the passenger and the driver to manually activate recording from the app’s Safety Center during a ride.

By giving both parties the ability to document their journey environment, it introduces a reliable and transparent framework that supports inDrive’s safety teams in evaluating situations fairly and accurately based on verified audio data.

Awais Saeed, Country Manager for inDrive Pakistan commented, “ By putting the Trip Audio Recording tool directly into the hands of our passengers and drivers, we are removing the guesswork from dispute resolution. Sometimes, simply knowing that an objective, secure record can be created makes every single journey feel a little safer for everyone in the car.”

The tool operates under a transparency protocol that allows it to only record when explicitly turned on by a user. This means the app cannot record covertly or run audio capture in the background. Additionally, all recorded audio files are fully encrypted immediately upon generation. No one can play it back, download, or share the audio, including the passenger, the driver and inDrive doesn’t give it to third parties.

# 29% decline in cotton cultivation poses serious threat to economy: Mian Zahid Hussain

 **Commerce Desk**

KARACHI, JULY 17: President of the Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum (PBIF) and Chairman of the FPCCI Policy Advisory Board, Mian Zahid Hussain, has expressed serious concern over the 29 percent decline in Pakistan’s cotton cultivation area, warning that it threatens rural livelihoods, textile exports and economic stability.

Referring to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics Agricultural Census 2024-25, he said cotton cultivation has fallen from 9.23 million acres in 2010 to 6.51 million acres in 2024, reducing its share to just eight percent of the country’s cropped area. He noted that cotton remains the backbone of Pakistan’s textile industry,



supporting millions of farmers, workers, spinning factories, spinning mills and related businesses.

Mian Zahid said the textile sector contributed nearly 59.6 percent of Pakistan’s exports during the first nine months of FY2025-26, earning around US\$13.5 billion in foreign exchange. Continued decline in cotton production, he warned, would increase dependence on imported cotton, raise production costs and weaken Pakistan’s competitiveness in global markets.

He attributed the decline to low farmer returns, costly and poor-quality seeds, expensive fertilizers and pesticides, water and electricity shortages, climate change, pest attacks and the absence of an effective pricing mechanism.

Calling for an immediate National Cotton Revival Programme, he urged the federal and provincial governments to provide certified climate-resilient seeds, announce support prices before sowing, strengthen agricultural research, improve irrigation, expand crop insurance and ensure affordable financing. He also recommended strict action against counterfeit agricultural inputs and the introduction of cotton zoning.

He added that the Agricultural Census highlights broader structural challenges, including shrinking farm sizes and increasing land fragmentation, stressing that its findings must be translated into practical policies to safeguard Pakistan’s agriculture, exports and economic future.

## Hard working

ISLAMABAD: Capital Development Authority (CDA) workers trimming the grass near a hand sculpture along Srinagar Highway during a hot and humid day, in the Federal Capital.



Photo: Online by Sultan Bashir

# Zong Launches 5G-Ready Network and Customer Facilitation Desk at Islamabad International Airport

 **Commerce Desk**

ISLAMABAD: Zong, Pakistan’s leading technology services enterprise, has commenced deployment of its exclusive 5G-ready Indoor Building Solution (IBS) as the only telecom operator at Islamabad International Airport, alongside a Customer Facilitation Desk.

The initiative will provide seamless, high-speed indoor coverage across passenger terminals and enable travelers to access instant SIM activation, data services, and on-ground customer support. It lays the foundation for intelligent services and next-generation travel experiences powered by 5G.

The inauguration was attended by senior leadership from Zong, Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA), and Huawei Global.

Mr. Mao Weiliang, CTO Zong, said connectivity is now the backbone of intelligent travel and economic growth. The collaboration is building a future-ready 5G digital ecosystem at the airport, reflecting the China-Pakistan technology partnership and commitment to smart



aviation.

Mr. Faheem Durrani, Executive Director Sales & Distribution, Zong, added that the Facilitation Desk and 5G infrastructure make it easier for travelers to stay connected.

Mr. Aftab Gillani, Airport Manager,

said the deployment will enhance passenger convenience and support modern aviation needs.

The project is part of Zong’s strategy to build intelligent digital infrastructure across major transit hubs, advancing the Digital Pakistan agenda.

# SMAP Hails Pink Salt Financing Scheme, Calls for Similar Initiatives Across Pakistan

 **Commerce Desk**

KARACHI: Founder Chairman of the Salt Manufacturers Association of Pakistan (SMAP), Ismail Suttar, has welcomed the Chief Minister Punjab Pink Salt Value Addition Financing Scheme, describing it as a landmark and forward-looking initiative for Pakistan’s mineral sector that could transform the country’s pink salt industry into a globally recognized value-added export brand.

In a statement, Ismail Suttar said the scheme would not only promote value-added exports, attract investment and create employment opportunities, but would also

significantly enhance Pakistan’s ability to earn foreign exchange by exporting finished products instead of raw pink salt.

He urged the federal government and other provincial governments to introduce similar incentive-based financing programmes for the minerals, value-addition and export sectors to unlock the country’s untapped export potential and strengthen the national economy.



# ABHI Microfinance Bank and Thardeep Partner to Expand Banking Access Across Pakistan



 **Commerce Desk**

KARACHI: ABHI Microfinance Bank has signed a strategic partnership with Thardeep under its Banking-as-a-Service (BaaS) and Super Agency framework to expand access to formal banking for underserved communities across Pakistan.

The agreement was signed by Ms. Mariam Pervaiz, Chief Commercial Officer, ABHI Microfinance Bank, and Mr. Sono Khangharani, CEO, Thardeep, in the presence of Mr. Kabeer Naqvi, Entrepreneur in Residence – ABHI, and senior representatives from both organizations.

Under the collaboration, ABHI will leverage its BaaS platform and Super Agency model with Thardeep’s extensive community network to

deliver secure, convenient, and innovative financial services in remote and underserved areas. The aim is to reduce barriers to financial access and promote convenience, security, and financial empowerment.

By combining digital innovation with on-ground outreach, the partnership seeks to bridge financial gaps and bring inclusive banking solutions closer to people who need them most. It will enable individuals and businesses to access essential banking services, supporting Pakistan’s broader financial inclusion agenda.

Both organizations reaffirmed their commitment to creating greater financial accessibility through technology, trusted partnerships, and community-focused innovation.

# BYD Pakistan Receives Largest-Ever Shipment of 2000+ NEVs at Karachi Port

 **Commerce Desk**

KARACHI: Mega Motor Company (MMC), the official partner of BYD in Pakistan, announced the arrival of a Roll-on/Roll-off (RoRo) vessel carrying more than 2,000 BYD New Energy Vehicles (NEVs) at Karachi Port. It marks one of the largest BYD consignments to reach Pakistan to date.

The shipment comes as demand for electric mobility grows in Pakistan, with consumers recognizing the economic, environmental, and technological benefits of NEVs. The scale of imports reflects BYD’s

commitment to making NEVs more accessible and supporting a shift toward cleaner, sustainable transportation.

Danish Khaliq, Vice President-Sales & Strategy, BYD Pakistan – MMC, said the milestone shows growing consumer confidence and the momentum of Pakistan’s transition to sustainable mobility. Despite global supply chain challenges, close coordination with partners has improved logistics to ensure timely vehicle deliveries. BYD remains focused on world-class products, dependable aftersales support, and an expanding charging network.



Lei Jian, Country Head, BYD Pakistan, added that Pakistan is a key market in BYD’s global growth. BYD will continue introducing world-class NEVs and strengthening its presence to support Pakistan’s transition

to cleaner transportation.

The RoRo vessel enables safe, efficient transport of large consignments, improving supply chain resilience and vehicle availability.

# Pakistan Cricket Board Sports Psychology Programme introduced in U19 Skills Development Camp Held in Multan: Aqib Javed

**Asim Tanveer**

MULTAN: The Pakistan Cricket Board has introduced a structured sports psychology programme as part of the ongoing U19 Skills Development Camp in Multan, reinforcing its commitment in the development of country's emerging cricketers.

The camp which began in the third week of June features 31 players who are undergoing an intensive programme comprising skill-based training, fitness conditioning, practice matches and scenario-based sessions under the supervision of head coach Shahid Anwar and his coaching staff.

The newly introduced sports psychology programme is designed to strengthen the players' mental preparation alongside their technical and physical development. The programme includes psychological assessments, group workshops focusing on team unity and one-on-one sessions aimed at helping players build mental toughness, emotional control, resilience and the ability to perform under pressure.

The players are also preparing for the upcoming tour of England, where they will experience different playing conditions before shifting their focus towards the ACC U19 Asia Cup and later for the ICC U19 Cricket World Cup.

Pakistan U19 are the defending

champions of Asia Cup after they defeated India in the final of the event which took place in UAE in December 2025.

Director High Performance Aqib Javed visited the camp on Wednesday, where he addressed the players, shared insights from his playing and coaching career and stressed the importance of discipline, hard work and continuous learning in a young cricketer's development. He later observed players' training session and interacted with the coaching staff.

Dr Ahmed Bilal, Sports Psychologist "Mental preparation is as important as technical and physical preparation in a young cricketer's journey. Through this programme, we are helping the players develop the mental skills required to perform consistently under pressure.

"We began with psychological assessments to understand each player's strengths and areas for improvement. The programme then progresses through group sessions to improve team cohesion, followed by individual consultations focusing on resilience, confidence and emotional control.

"Learning these mental skills at a young age helps players develop habits that will benefit them throughout their careers. Our aim is to equip them with the mindset to recover quickly from

setbacks, remain disciplined and perform with confidence in challenging situations."

Shahid Anwar, Head Coach "The camp has now moved into its second phase after we assessed the players during the opening weeks. Our training programme has been designed around those observations, with particular emphasis on improving game awareness, running between the wickets and decision-making.

"The tour to England will provide valuable exposure to different playing conditions and will play an important role in the players' development ahead of the Asia Cup and the ICC U19 Men's Cricket World Cup.

"The introduction of the sports psychology programme has added another important dimension to the camp. It is helping the players understand how to deal with pressure, stay mentally strong and prepare themselves for the demands of competitive cricket."

Aqib Javed, Director High Performance "Developing future Pakistan cricketers requires equal emphasis on skill, fitness and mental strength. Introducing sports psychology at the U19 level is an important investment because players are more receptive to learning and adapting at this stage of their careers.

"The pathway from U19 cricket to



Pakistan Shaheens and ultimately the national team begins with building the right habits. We want these young players to embrace discipline, hard work and continuous improvement so they are ready to compete at the highest level.

"Tours such as the upcoming visit to England are vital for their development. Experiencing different conditions and learning to adapt will prepare them for future international cricket, while our long-term objective remains producing players capable of serving Pakistan successfully for many years.

## Zone-IV General Body meeting held yesterday at CAA Club

*We will continue our mission for the promotion of cricket in Zone-IV: Musarrat Raza; Magnificent Tournaments in the Zone-IV in the past years:Touseef Siddiqui*

KARACHI: The first General Body meeting of the Regional Cricket Association Karachi Zone-IV was held under the chairmanship of newly elected President Musarrat Raza at Civil Aviation Club, in which the Zone-IV newly elected officials Naushad Ahmed Khan Secretary, Mahmood Khan Treasurer, besides the large numbers of Presidents of Zone-IV Clubs attended the meeting. In the Meeting according to Pakistan Cricket Board law clause number 4.3 election of Vice President, Treasurer and Two Executive Committee Members was held, The General Body unanimously elected the Following

officials of the Regional Cricket Association Zone-IV for the term of three years S. M. Asim Zahoor as Vice President, Khalid Abbasi as Joint Secretary while S. M. Ishaq and S. M. Adeel were elected as Executive Committee members

On this occasion, the newly elected president of Zone-IV Mr. Musarrat Raza thanked and congratulated to all the Presidents of the Zone-IV Election Victory with a big margin and work to promote cricket in Zone-IV, and he announcing to hold camps at grass root level. He further said that like PCB Inter Club, S. M. Adil Inter Club and

T.20 Inter Club Cricket Tournament will be held shortly. He further said on this occasion that InshaAllah on 23rd July in Regional Cricket Association Karachi elections Nadeem Umar Panel will win with a big majority. On this occasion, Former Acting Secretary of Regional Cricket Association Karachi Muhammad Touseef Siddiqui Congratulated the office bearers of Zone-IV on their magnificent performance in past years and assured of his every possible cooperation. Earlier S. M. Ishaq, Saud Farooqi, S. M. Asim Zahoor and Khalid Abbasi also expressed their views briefly.

## Secretary LG Punjab Mian Shakeel Ahmed Reviews Development Projects in Attock, Stresses Quality and Timely Completion

**Raza Naqvi**

ATTOCK: Secretary Local Government Punjab, Mian Shakeel Ahmed, paid an official visit to Attock district and inspected various development projects being executed under the Punjab Development Program (PDP).

He was accompanied by Deputy Commissioner Attock Dr. Mudassir Ahmed Shah, ADC (General) Anil Saeed, Assistant Commissioner Attock Arif Qureshi, Chief Officer Municipal Committee Sardar Aftab Ahmed

Khan, and other officials.

Officials briefed the Secretary on progress, construction quality, fund utilization, and completion timelines. They informed him that work on all PDP schemes is progressing rapidly and will be completed within the stipulated timeframe while maintaining high standards.

During inspections, Mian Shakeel Ahmed emphasized strict adherence to quality, work pace, and transparency. He directed that no negligence or delay would be tolerated and every

scheme must meet prescribed standards.

Later in Hazro Tehsil, he reviewed ongoing projects and instructed officials to prioritize public welfare in timely completion. He stated that, in line with Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif's vision, the Punjab government is taking practical steps to improve urban infrastructure.

DC Dr. Mudassir Ahmed Shah assured that all projects are being continuously monitored and will be completed on time for public benefit.:

## Pakistan win seven medals, best Under16 team title at Asian Ju-jitsu Championship



Pakistan's final tally stood at two gold medals, three silver medals and two bronze medals, along with the Best Under16 Team of Asia title.

According to information received here, on the final day of competition, Ebad ur Rehman won a bronze medal in the Under18 Fighting System (85kg) event after defeating his Indian opponent. In the Under21 Men's Duo Show System, Umer Yaseen and Ebad ur Rehman claimed

silver medals, taking Pakistan's overall tally to seven.

The medal and closing ceremony was attended by guests of honour including Secretary General of the South Asian Jujitsu Regional Association and Pakistan Jujitsu Federation Tariq Ali, and Trade and Investment Counsellor at the Embassy of Pakistan in Kazakhstan Rizwana Qazi.

Chairman of the Pakistan Jujitsu

Federation congratulated the athletes, coaches and officials, saying the achievement was the result of years of dedication, strategic planning and collective commitment. Tariq Ali, Secretary General of the Pakistan Jujitsu Federation and team leader, said the performance demonstrated the growing strength of Pakistan's Jujitsu programme and would motivate the team ahead of future Asian and World Championships.

## PCB introduces Sports Psychology Program at U-19 Skills Development Camp

MULTAN: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has introduced a sports psychology programme at the ongoing U-19 Skill Development Camp in Multan, marking a significant step towards the holistic development of the country's emerging cricketers. A total of 31 players are currently attending the camp under the supervision of head coach Shahid Anwar. The initiative was designed to strengthen players' mental resilience, improve emotional balance, and enhance their ability to perform under pressure alongside their technical and physical training.

PCB Director High Performance Aqib Javed visited the camp and interacted with the young cricketers, encouraging them to take full advantage of the opportunity to develop all aspects of their game. Head coach Shahid Anwar said the camp had entered its second phase, with the training program refined after an initial assessment to meet the specific needs of each player. Special emphasis was being placed on game awareness and decision-making, while the upcoming tour of England would provide valuable exposure to different playing conditions. He added that the Sports Psychology Program opens an important new dimension to the budding talent, enabling them to better manage pressure and improve their on-field performance.

## From Commitment to Action: Strengthening Pakistan's SDG Journey Beyond 2030

**Continued from Page 4**

nations alone. Strong international collaboration remains essential for achieving sustainable development.

For Pakistan, these findings offer an important opportunity. Improving our SDG ranking will require investment in quality education, healthcare, digital transformation, climate resilience, gender equality, decent work, child protection and effective governance.

Equally important is strengthening data systems, increasing transparency, engaging youth and civil society and ensuring that development policies are backed by adequate financial resources and measurable outcomes. As a researcher and academic working with Together For SDGs, I remain committed to promoting evidence-based research, youth engagement, and policy dialogue

that supports Pakistan's sustainable development journey. Improving our global ranking should not be viewed merely as achieving a higher position on an international index. Rather, it should reflect genuine improvements in the daily lives of our citizens through better education, stronger institutions, equal opportunities, environmental sustainability and respect for human rights.

The SDGs are more than global aspirations they represent a shared roadmap toward a peaceful, inclusive, and prosperous future. Pakistan has both the potential and the responsibility to transform commitments into action. By investing in people, strengthening institutions and embracing innovation, our nation can make meaningful progress toward the 2030 Agenda and continue building a sustainable future well beyond 2030.

## The Colour of Heat

**Continued from Page 4**

concrete streets and the desperate search for shade. It was not waiting for the future. It had already become part of the city's everyday life.

Perhaps we have spent too many years measuring climate change with thermometers alone. Numbers tell us how hot the day became, but they cannot show the exhaustion on a worker's face, the white salt left behind by sweat or the fading colour of a city waiting for rain. Sometimes, the most powerful evidence of a "changing climate is not found in data but in the colours we have learned to ignore.

The next time another heat-

wave is announced, Pakistan will once again be told how many degrees the temperature has reached. Yet beyond the forecasts and statistics, another story will continue unfolding in plain sight, a story written in red, white, grey, yellow, blue and green. It is a story that reminds us that while the heat may be shared, its burden is not.

*The writer is a journalist, social activist and communications professional committed to advancing human rights and social justice. As a Media Officer in Pakistan's development sector, he leads strategic communication initiatives that drive advocacy and community empowerment.*

## Is Israel the Biggest Threat to the US?

**Continued from Page 4**

capability to harm the United States from within through espionage, influence operations, and legislative capture, then Israel is at minimum among the top tier and arguably the most dangerous.

The distinction between "biggest" and "most unique" is crucial—Israel presents a threat unlike any other because it comes from an "ally" where the US has let its guard down, making it more capable of doing damage than any traditional adversary precisely because of the trust extended to it.

The Defense Department's own intelligence assessments placing Israel's espionage threat above even China and Russia confirm that this is not mere conspiracy theory but a genuine intelligence concern. If we compare any other country with influence in the United States, no nation can be more dangerous than Israel itself should the relationship turn adversarial.

This is not to say that Israel is currently an enemy or that the alliance should be abandoned, but rather that the current trajectory of ever-deepening

integration without appropriate safeguards is dangerously naive and threatens American sovereignty in unprecedented ways.

The central question for US policymakers is whether the current path of military integration, intelligence sharing, and legislative deference serves the American people or a foreign power with its own distinct interests.

When a foreign government can fund social media campaigns to shape American public opinion, draft legislation for US lawmakers, and threaten to derail American

foreign policy when it doesn't align with its interests, the alliance has fundamentally shifted from partnership to something resembling dependency. America's founders warned against entangling alliances that could compromise sovereignty—their wisdom deserves renewed attention in this context.

Ultimately, whether Israel is the "biggest" threat depends on whether we define threat as "potential for conflict" or "capacity for harm from within." In the latter category, Israel may well be the single greatest danger to American sovereignty

and security—hidden in plain sight, protected by the very alliance that makes it so dangerous, and operating with capabilities that no other nation can match.

The time for honest conversation about this relationship is now, before the integration becomes so complete that disentanglement becomes impossible.

*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 Michigan, USA*

Meeting

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, chairing a meeting of the Capital Market Development Council CMDC at the Finance Division on Friday.



Photo: PID

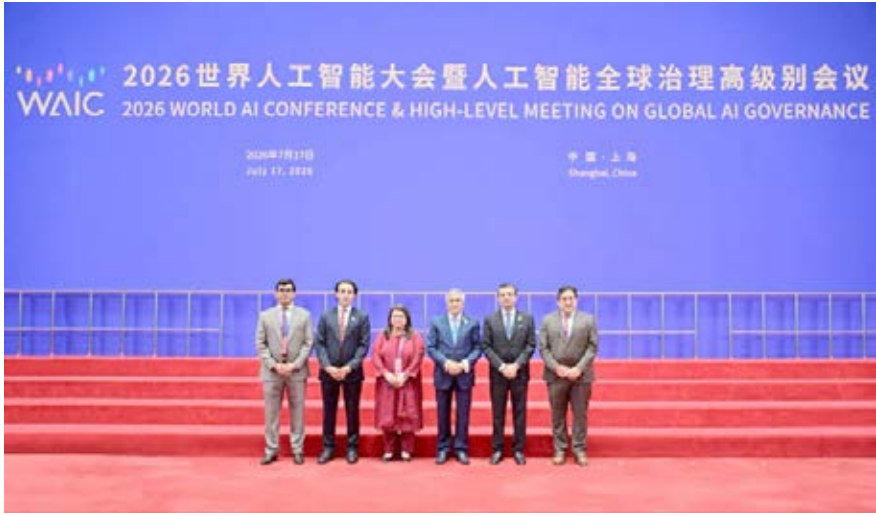
# DPM Dar winds up China visit after attending AI moot, meeting FM Wang Yi

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Ishaq Dar on Friday concluded a two-day “productive” official visit to Shanghai, China, expressing sincere appreciation to the Chinese government and its leadership for their warm hospitality and excellent arrangements.

“Just concluded a productive visit to Shanghai, China. I express my sincere appreciation to the Government of the People’s Republic of China and its leadership for its warm hospitality and excellent arrangements throughout my short visit,” Deputy Prime Minister Dar wrote on his X timeline.

The deputy prime minister thanked Foreign Minister



Wang Yi for his warm hospitality and their productive discussions.

“We reaffirmed our shared commitment to the continued

advancement of the Pakistan–China All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership, with a special focus on high-quality development

under CPEC 2.0, including the Siah Diq mining project, Karakoram Highway (KKH) Realignment Project, as well as other priority areas of bilateral

cooperation agreed between our two countries during the official visit of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in May 2025,” he sharing details of their bilateral meeting.

He also commended the valuable contributions of his accompanying delegation, including Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunications Shaza Fatima Khawaja, Adviser to Chief Minister of Punjab on Artificial Intelligence and Special Initiatives Ali Mustafa Dar, Chairman of the Pakistan Virtual Assets Regulatory Authority (PVARA) Bilal Bin Saqib, and Additional Secretary (Asia Pacific) Dr. Syed Asad Ali Gillani, whose dedication helped make this visit both productive and successful.

# Petrol pump owners reject daily fuel pricing policy, warn of protests

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: The All Pakistan Petrol Pump Owners Association on Friday rejected the government’s proposed petroleum price deregulation policy, warning that it could consider protests and a nationwide strike next week if the decision is not withdrawn.

In a video statement, Association Chairman Nauman Ali Butt urged the government to review the policy, saying petrol pump owners had serious reservations over the proposed changes.



He said nearly 15,000 petrol pump owners across the country were concerned that the new pricing mechanism

would disrupt the petroleum supply chain, including oil transportation and the existing system for deter-

mining fuel prices.

Butt said the burden of the new policy should not be shifted onto petrol pump owners and called on the government to consult all stakeholders before finalising fuel prices in coordination with oil marketing companies (OMCs).

He urged the government to avoid unilateral decisions and engage petrol pump owners in consultations before implementing any changes to the pricing mechanism.

Separately, Jamaat-i-Islami Pakistan chief Hafiz Naeemur

Rehman criticised the government’s decision to determine petroleum prices on a daily basis, saying the move would place an additional financial burden on consumers.

In a statement, he said daily revisions in petroleum prices would effectively translate into daily increases in the cost of living for the public.

He urged the government to reduce taxes on petroleum products instead of introducing a new pricing mechanism, claiming that nearly Rs120 per litre in taxes had become a major burden for consumers.

## Ambassador Moin ul Haque Takes Charge as DG ISSI

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador Moin ul Haque has assumed charge as Director-General of the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), succeeding Ambassador Sohail Mahmood upon completion of his term.

Ambassador Haque brings nearly 35 years of Foreign Service experience in Pakistan. His last posting was as Pakistan’s Ambassador to China from 2020 to 2023. He previously served as Ambassador to France from 2016 to 2020 and as Consul General in Vancouver from 2007 to 2010.

At Headquarters, he served as Additional Secretary (Administration), Chief of Protocol, Director-General (Europe), and Director in the Foreign Secretary’s Office.

Earlier in his career, he held assignments in Pakistani embassies in Brussels, Colombo, and Ankara, and as Counsellor at Pakistan’s Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York.



# Balochistan Govt, Protest Committee Reach Agreement After Successful Talks

Bureau Report

QUETTA: The Government of Balochistan and the Dharana (Protest) Committee have reached a written agreement following successful negotiations led by Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti, marking a significant breakthrough aimed at restoring peace and addressing the concerns of the families of the Ziarat martyrs.

According to an official statement, both sides agreed to implement the demands of the bereaved families and undertake joint efforts to promote peace, stability and public confidence across the province.

A key feature of the agreement is the formation of a Judicial Commission to investigate the Ziarat incident. The provincial government also announced that a joint meeting, chaired by Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti, will



be held with opposition parties and the families of the martyrs to review the overall law and order situation in Balochistan.

The agreement further provides for strengthening the capacity, manpower and professional capabilities of the police force in urban areas of the province to improve public security.

Under the prevailing government policy, the victims of the Ziarat incident will be officially recognized as martyrs, while their families will receive financial compensation, support for

dependents and educational assistance for their children. The government also decided to name various public buildings after the martyrs in recognition of their sacrifices.

To address public concerns regarding revenue-related matters, a committee headed by the Provincial Revenue Minister will be established, comprising government officials and respected local community representatives.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti said the martyrs hold a special place in the nation’s heart and reaffirmed that the welfare of their families remains the responsibility of the provincial government. He also paid tribute to the sacrifices of the Pakistan Army, Frontier Corps, Police and other law enforcement agencies, saying the entire nation honours their commitment to safeguarding peace and security.

# Finance Minister Reviews Progress on FBR’s National Faceless Centre

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb on Friday reviewed the implementation roadmap and operational readiness of the Federal Board of Revenue’s (FBR) National Faceless Centre, a flagship initiative under the new Tax Operating Model aimed at modernizing Pakistan’s tax administration through digitalization, transparency and centralized operations.

During the meeting, officials briefed the minister on progress in establishing the Project Management Unit (PMU), governance arrangements, technology development, operational preparedness and the phased rollout plan, covering

pre-pilot, pilot and nationwide implementation stages.

Aurangzeb appreciated the progress made and emphasized the importance of close coordination between operational and technology teams to ensure the project’s successful execution. He described the National Faceless Centre as a key reform that will enhance efficiency, standardization and transparency in tax administration.

Participants also discussed digital infrastructure, system integration and technology development under an agile implementation approach. Aurangzeb underscored the importance of robust cybersecurity measures, secure digital infrastructure and effective data governance to protect taxpayer information.

# Govt to Introduce Daily Fuel Pricing for Transparency, Says Atta Tarar



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information Ataullah Tarar said on Friday that the government’s shift to a daily fuel pricing mechanism will ensure transparency and allow international oil price fluctuations to be passed on to consumers immediately.

Speaking with Petroleum Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik, Tarar said OGRA will publish prices daily on its website. Pakistan is moving from a weekly average to daily pricing to align with international standards, as practiced in several countries.

He dismissed claims of inflated profits for oil marketing companies. PM Shehbaz Sharif has issued

strict directives for zero tolerance against profiteering and hoarding, and for the first time extra profits were reclaimed from OMCs. Citizens can lodge hoarding complaints directly via OGRA’s web portal.

Tarar attributed the recent rise in domestic petrol prices to geopolitical escalations. He said Pakistan avoided shortages during global tensions by arranging cargos through alternative routes outside the Strait of Hormuz.

To provide relief, the government gave a Rs129 billion subsidy to deserving citizens and reduced the petroleum levy during peak tensions.

He added that transitioning to electric bikes and vehicles is now inevitable and urged public and private sectors to adopt EVs.

# Danyal Rejects ‘Selective Lectures’ on Minority Rights During GSP+ Review

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Parliamentary Secretary Danyal Chaudhry criticized “selective lectures” on minority rights targeting Pakistan during its GSP+ assessment.

He cited data showing Pakistan’s inter-faith harmony: 2,189 churches, 732 temples, and 58 gurdwaras. With 97% Muslim population, he noted this equals 1 church per 1,206 Christians, 1 temple per 5,669 Hindus, and 1 gurdwara per 159 Sikhs, comparing it to the UK’s

1 mosque per 2,249 Muslims.

Danyal said neither state nor society discriminates against minorities. Federal and provincial governments support minority festivals and protect holy sites, backed by constitutional and legal reforms.

He pointed to France’s hijab, face veil, and abaya bans, plus restrictions in Belgium, Denmark, Austria, Switzerland and the Netherlands, saying the EU ignores Pakistan’s efforts while recycling narratives from “agenda-driven NGOs.”

# Naqvi meets Chinses delegation, discusses immigration and border

News Desk

Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Minister of State Talal Chaudhry met with a delegation led by Director General of China’s National Immigration Administration, Qi Jingyang.

During the meeting, both sides agreed to enhance cooperation in immigration, border management between the two countries.

Both sides reached an accord to enhance the effectiveness of joint operations against illegal immigration, arms smuggling, and cross-border crime.

It was decided both sides will expedite the immigration process. Both sides agreed to establish a joint Pakistan-China working group for border management and security.

ON the occasion, Naqvi said that cooperation with China regarding land borders, seaports, and immigration management will be further enhanced as the Government of Pakistan was implementing a zero-tolerance policy against illegal immigration, unauthorized border crossings, and smuggling.

Naqvi said a GB Scouts check post was being established at Khunjerab Pass to further enhance security.