

Green Electric Buses: A Gift from Maryam Nawaz Sharif to Attock, says MNA

Raza Naqvi

ATTOCK: Member of the National Assembly Sheikh Aftab Ahmad said that the Green Electric Buses are a valuable gift from Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif to the people. He added that the decision to provide free travel for students and senior citizens is also a remarkable public welfare initiative by the Chief Minister.

Speaking to media representatives, Sheikh Aftab Ahmad said that the Punjab government, under the leadership of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, is committed to providing every possible facility to the people of the province. He stated that by introducing Green Electric Buses, the Chief Minister has won the hearts of the public.

He further said that the Punjab government plans to expand the electric bus service across the province. The buses have been equipped with modern facilities to ensure a comfortable and high-quality travel experience for passengers. He added that the introduction of electric buses will also contribute to improving the environment by reducing pollution.

Sheikh Aftab Ahmad said that under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif, both the federal government and the Punjab government are working to



provide relief to the public, and that more welfare measures will be introduced over time.

He also paid tribute to Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif for providing Green Electric Buses to Attock District

and expressed hope that the initiative would greatly benefit the local population.

Muslim Conference Wraps Up Candidate Interviews for 2026 AJK Elections

Spokesman Report

RAWALPINDI: The interview process of party candidates for the general elections 2026 has been completed under the chairmanship of Chairman of the Parliamentary Board of All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference Sardar Irshad Khan.

A total of 75 candidates from Azad Jammu and Kashmir and refugees settled in Pakistan constituencies of have submitted their applications for party tickets at the Central Secretariat.

The parliamentary board has completed the interviews of candidates belonging to all constituencies. The All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference will field its candidates from all constituencies in the 2026 general elections.

The final list of party candidates will be released soon by the central secretariat.



IRS Policy Dialogue Highlights Iran's Appreciation for Pakistan, Pushes Regional Cooperation



City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Institute of Regional Studies [IRS] held a policy dialogue titled "Pakistan's Role in Building Regional Peace: Iran's Strategic Posture, Regional Alignments, and Pathways to Stability" to assess Iran's strategy, the Iran-Israel conflict, and Pakistan's role in regional stability.

Keynote speaker H. E. Dr. Reza Amiri Moghaddam, Iran's Ambassador to Pakistan, thanked Pakistan's government and people for solidarity during recent conflict. He cited unified leadership, cohesion, geography, and an indigenous defence base as pillars of Iran's deterrence. He proposed closer engagement among Pakistan, Iran, Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt to advance peace, stability, and prosperity, reaffirming commitment to diplomacy.

IRS President Ambassador Jauhar Saleem said Iran's posture shapes West Asia's security, with implications for Pakistan's borders, connectivity, energy, maritime interests, and West Asia engagement.

Former Ambassador Asif Ali Khan Durrani suggested a six-point cooperative security architecture: sovereignty, non-interference, institutionalized dialogue, collective maritime security, economic integration, and counterterrorism.

Iran's First Counsellor Zohreh Shahbeik praised Pakistan's peace role. Al Mayadeen's Abu Baker Younis Matar noted media's role and called the Palestinian issue central to instability. The dialogue ended with calls for sustained diplomacy and regional cooperation.

Punjab Govt enforces new market entry fee schedule; concerns rise among rickshaw drivers and public



Zain Khan Malghani

MULTAN: The Punjab Government, through the Punjab Agricultural Marketing Regulatory Authority (PAMRA), has enforced a new Market Entry Fee Schedule for government grain, fruit, and vegetable markets, effective May 25, 2026. The fee aims to make revenue collection more transparent and efficient. Under the new schedule, entry fees are: Rs. 20 for donkey carts, Rs. 50 for rickshaws, loader rickshaws, cars, and jeeps, Rs. 80 for tractor-trolleys, Rs. 200 for Hilux pickups and similar vehicles, Rs. 500 for six to ten-wheel trucks, and Rs. 1,000 for trailers and containers. A Rs. 5 fee per bale also applies, while bicycles, motorcycles, and scooters are exempt. Fees will be collected at market entry points under Auction Committee supervision.



The decision has sparked strong concerns among rickshaw drivers and small transport operators, who argue that Rs. 50 per entry places an excessive burden on working-class transporters, especially as vehicles may enter multiple times daily. A loader rickshaw making four to ten trips incurs Rs. 200-500 extra per day. Transporters warn these costs will be passed to consumers through higher fruit and vegetable prices, fueling inflation. They urge the government to adopt a "One Vehicle, One Day, One Slip" policy or introduce daily, weekly, or monthly passes to protect low-income workers while maintaining revenue. Economic experts stress the need to consider the financial capacity of small businesses and daily wage earners before implementing new fees, warning that repeated collection will raise transportation costs and essential food prices, burdening consumers. PAMRA, established under the 2018 Act, collects fees as per law. Business and public representatives call for a review to balance government revenue with public interest and working-class welfare. In protest, rickshaw drivers and loader rickshaw owners demonstrated outside Multan Sabzi Mandi, blocking the road and demanding immediate withdrawal or revision of the policy.

Below the poverty

RAWALPINDI: Deserving people having free food along a road at Mukha Singh State area, in the city.



Photo: Online

Sardar Tanveer Ilyas Joins Tehreek-e-Istaikam Party, Shifting Political Alliances in AJK

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Former Prime Minister Azad Kashmir Sardar Tanveer Ilyas has formally joined Pakistan Tehreek-e-Istaikam Party. On this occasion, Abdul Halim Khan chairman Tehreek e Istaikam e pakistan party welcomed them to the party.

The PPP, which seemed to be in a good position, lost the contest to nearly a dozen parties candidates after the coup of Sardar Tanveer Ilyas. According to the details.

Raja Shoaib Abid from Dadial, Colonel Maroof from Chakswari, Moez Majid from Mirpur City, Samahni Ali Shan Soni, Bhambar Anwar-ul-Haq, Barnala Liq Jaral, Khoirta Rafiq Nair, Sahansa Rajah Zahkum Satbadkhar, Kayani, Raj Mahal, Malik Muhammad Yousuf, Palandri Sardar Muhammad Hussain, Eastern Bagh Ejaz Khatana, Haveli Khawaja Tariq Saeed, Muzaffarabad City Mubarak Haider, Kotla Sardar Tabarak, Lachharat, Murtaza Qihaba Gilani, Muhajirin Javed Butt will be



the candidate or supported by Sardar Tanveer Ilyas Khan. Sardar Tanveer also suffered losses to PML-N in many constituencies along with PPP. Simi-

larly, the seats of PPP Sardar Qamar Zaman, Zia Qamar, Qasim Majid, Yasir Sultan, Pervez Ashraf would certainly have been ignored.

PML-N President insists on timely AJK elections, predicts victory with Sharifs' Campaign Support

Bureau Report

MUZAFFARABAD: Shah Ghulam Qadir, President of PML-N (AJK), stated that general elections in Azad Jammu and Kashmir must proceed as scheduled, with his party not supporting any other candidate. He confidently predicted PML-N's victory, citing

campaign involvement from Nawaz Sharif and Maryam Nawaz. Addressing a press conference in Muzaffarabad, Qadir emphasized that timely, transparent elections are the sole solution to the region's political, economic, and administrative issues. He urged workers to intensify door-to-door campaigning, promising basic facilities and relief from hardships. He criticized the government for failing to address the serious commodity crisis and condemned a recent Neelam incident, attributing it to PPP members, not APC workers. Qadir accused PPP of attempting to disrupt the electoral process and postpone elections due to anticipated defeat. He affirmed

PML-N's non-participation in undemocratic moves and criticized the administration under Minister Faisal Mumtaz Rathore for failing to protect lives and property. Noting restored transport and reopened markets, he expressed readiness to cooperate on APC issues while insisting on peaceful, constitutional elections to drive development.

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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

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PIA Flight Info 114
PIA Cargo 9280979
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Railway Exchange 9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi 5555489
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MH 561116
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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
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Cantonment Board 9270151-3
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Punjab Safe Cities Intensifies Crackdown on Fake, Cloned and Tampered Number Plates

Bureau Report

LAHORE: The Punjab Safe Cities Authority (PSCA) has further strengthened its enforcement against use of fake, cloned and tampered number plates employed to evade E-Challan system. Advanced Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based technology is being utilized to monitor and trace blacklisted, wanted and suspicious vehicles across Punjab.

According to the spokesperson of Punjab Safe Cities Authority, during June 2026, PSCA's AI-powered camera network identified more than 200 fake, cloned and suspicious vehicles, which were subsequently intercepted by law enforcement agencies through timely action.

The spokesperson stated that PSCA's AI-based cameras instantly detect suspicious, fake or tampered number plates and automatically generate alerts. Virtual Patrolling Officers immediately notify nearest police teams, enabling swift operational response and enforcement.

The spokesperson further stated that use of fake, cloned or tampered number plates is not merely an attempt to evade E-Challan penalties but also constitutes a serious criminal offence that may result in legal action, fines and registration of an FIR.

CM welcomes Uzbek delegation, discusses trade and investment

Bureau Report

LAHORE: A delegation from the Autonomous Republic of Karakalpakstan, Uzbekistan called on Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif to discuss enhancing bilateral cooperation in trade, agriculture, investment, tourism and industry.

The delegation comprised Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Karakalpakstan Ermanov Farkhod and Uzbekistan's Ambassador to Pakistan Alisher Tukhtaev.

The chief minister warmly welcomed the delegation. During the meeting, the delegation invited Punjab to participate in the establishment of a Special Economic

Zone in Karakalpakstan on the lines of Punjab's model.

Both sides held detailed discussions on increasing bilateral trade, particularly between Punjab and Karakalpakstan. They also agreed to promote tourism and cultural exchanges between Pakistan and Uzbekistan.

The delegation extended an invitation to the chief minister to visit Uzbekistan and Karakalpakstan, which she accepted with thanks.

The meeting also discussed a proposal by Karakalpakstan to allocate 100 to 200 hectares of land to Pakistani farmers for potato cultivation.

The two sides reviewed a proposal to



declare Lahore and Nukus as sister cities and agreed to further strengthen cooperation in trade, agriculture, livestock and industry.

CM Punjab said the Punjab government would examine the possibility of

meeting Karakalpakstan's and Uzbekistan's annual demand for 30,000 head of livestock from Punjab.

She welcomed Uzbekistan's interest in investing in Lahore's textile industry, saying the Punjab government was

providing excellent opportunities for foreign investors.

The chief minister said there was considerable potential to further expand trade corridors and regional cooperation between Pakistan and Uzbekistan.

Called on

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Saudi Arabia H.E. Nawaf Saeed A. Al Malki called on Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Naveed Ashraf at Naval Headquarters on Thursday.



Women University Multan Opens Fall 2026 Admissions, Deadline July 17



Iram Asim

MULTAN: Women University Multan has announced Fall 2026 admissions across undergraduate, postgraduate, MPhil, PhD, Pharm-D, B. Ed, PGD, diploma and certificate programmes, Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Syeda Shahida Batool said.

According to a university spokesperson, applications are online only and will be accepted until July 17, 2026. Admissions are open in Associate Degree, four-year BS, Post-AD/BS 5th semester, Doctor of Pharmacy, MS, MPhil and PhD across disciplines including Biotechnology, Business Administration, English, Education, Physics, Chemistry, Botany, Zoology, Economics, Urdu, History, Islamic Studies, Media & Communication Studies, Mathematics, Microbiology, Public Health, Arts & Design, and more. All programmes are HEC-recognized.

The university offers modern labs, a digital library, experienced faculty, hostels, transport, and scholarships. Merit-based and need-based financial assistance is available.

For skill development, diploma and certificate courses are offered in Graphic Design, Digital Painting, Photography, Calligraphy, Oil Painting, Sculpture, and other creative fields.

Candidates must submit applications online, upload required documents, and check the portal regularly for eligibility, entry tests, schedules, and merit lists.

Change Mechanics Launches League of Launchers Season 02 with S&P Global

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Following strong response to Season 01 in 2025, Change Mechanics has launched League of Launchers Season 02, an 8-week AI accelerator bootcamp for students and young builders in partnership with S&P Global.

48 teams from across Pakistan will move through mentorship, coaching, and weekly hands-on workshops to build working MVPs from scratch. The program ends with a Demo Day before investors and ecosystem leaders. The winning team will receive PKR 100,000 and a pathway into Taksh Venture Studio.

Learning partners — GDG Islamabad, Google Cloud Islamabad, Canva Community Islamabad, and GDG Live Pakistan — will run capacity-building sessions on tools and platforms used in modern startups. Outreach partners TechJuice, Akhtar Hameed Khan Foundation, TIE Islamabad, and AuratTech helped reach over 50 teams nationwide.

S&P Global's Samia Abbasi said the partnership aims to equip youth with real, applicable skills. Muhammad Umar Nazir of S&P Global called it structured, hands-on preparation to turn ambition into execution.

Change Mechanics' Mehar Alam said the initiative empowers young builders to shape the future. The season kicked off with an Orientation at NIC Islamabad, the venue and strategic partner.

inDrive Launches STEM and AI Education Program for Drivers' Children in Pakistan

KARACHI: inDrive has announced a STEM, coding, and AI training initiative for school-age children and youth across Pakistan, modeled on a successful Egypt pilot.

The program reserves 80% of seats for drivers' children and 20% for children from marginalized local communities, split across three age groups. It aims to fully train 400+ students, with about 100 children per regional location. Learning will be delivered in 4 to 5 specialized groups per location to maintain quality.

In a new linkage to commuting, inDrive app users can donate digital coins earned via the inDrive MAX loyalty program. Coins can be contributed directly to fund resources, equipment, and training infrastructure for the initiative.

Country Lead Muhammad Awais Saeed said the goal is to use technology and programming for social action, teaching students to build digital solutions for local problems while encouraging critical thinking and agency. By combining corporate infrastructure with community support, inDrive says the program seeks to reduce inequities and create a sustainable path for children of its driver partners into the digital economy.

FDE Summer Fiesta 2026 Concludes at IMCG Tarlai with 1,650 Students

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Model College for Girls [IMCG] Tarlai wrapped up the FDE Summer School & Fiesta 2026 with a closing ceremony, marking two weeks of learning, creativity, and skill development for female students from rural Islamabad.

Organized under the Federal Directorate of Education's Summer Fiesta, the free program enrolled 1,650 students in 12 specialized courses. Offerings included Spoken English, Canva and Digital Marketing, Sketching and Canvas Painting, Creative Mehndi and Nail Art, Crochet Work, Hand Embroidery, Culinary Arts, Calligraphy, and Qirat and Tajweed.

Area Education Officer Dr. Khalid Mahmood, chief guest, praised FDE's focus on holistic



development and said such initiatives help students build academic, creative, and practical skills. He noted strong student participation prepared girls to meet future challenges.

Principal Mrs. Kausar Parveen said the program aimed to go beyond classrooms, boost

confidence, and develop practical skills. Vice Principal Mrs. Saima Shaheen highlighted high demand for Spoken English.

FDE officials including Director Schools Dr. Ehsan Mehmood and Director Academics Ms. Riffat Jabeen

visited and commended the college. Parents and the SMC lauded the free, quality courses as part of Secretary Nadeem Mahbub and DG Javed Iqbal Mirza's vision for public education. Certificates were distributed to students and resource persons.

DC Hyderabad conducts surprise visit to Mukhtiarkar Office to review progress of revenue

Abdul Ghafoor Sarohi

HYDERABAD: Deputy Commissioner Hyderabad, Mr. Zain-ul-Abedin Memon, paid a surprise visit to the Mukhtiarkar Office to review the ongoing progress of the Revenue Record Rewriting process.

During the visit, Mukhtiarkar Qasimabad, Mr. Farhan Jatoti, briefed the Deputy Commissioner on the current status of the rewriting work. He presented details regarding the pace of progress, record maintenance, and the measures being taken to ensure accuracy, transparency, and timely completion of the exercise.



Deputy Commissioner Mr. Zain-ul-Abedin Memon emphasized the

importance of maintaining error-free and updated revenue records, stating that accurate land records are essential for efficient public service delivery and transparent land administration. He directed the concerned officers to expedite the remaining work while strictly adhering to the prescribed standards and timelines.

The Deputy Commissioner also inspected the relevant record sections and expressed his commitment to continuously monitor the progress of the Revenue Record Rewriting project through regular visits to ensure its timely and successful completion.

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How the 2026 World Cup Mirrors a Shifting Planet

Football is not merely a game. It is the most universal emotional language on earth. No other sport commands the same depth of passion, the same river of tears, the same roar of hope, and the same national longing. It belongs to streets, villages, capitals, stadiums, television screens, migrant communities, rich clubs, poor neighborhoods and entire continents. A football match can become a national festival, a public tragedy, a diplomatic signal and a cultural declaration all at once.

The FIFA World Cup sits at the center of this global emotion. The 2026 World Cup is the biggest edition in history: 48 teams compete across 104 matches in Canada, Mexico and the United States. FIFA presents this tournament as the largest and most ambitious World Cup ever staged. But the real importance of 2026 is not only its size. Its deeper meaning is that football power is becoming more democratic. The old monopoly of Europe and South America is visibly under pressure.

The tournament is now in the Round of 32, and the evidence is on the field. African teams are not present as decoration; they are present as serious competitors. Morocco eliminates the Netherlands on penalties and reaches the last 16. Morocco beats the Dutch 3-2 in a shootout after a 1-1 draw and now faces Canada in the Round of 16. Paraguay

eliminates Germany on penalties. Brazil survives Japan only by a narrow 2-1 margin. France defeats Sweden, but the old European aura of automatic superiority is weaker.

In the Round of 32 field, Africa is strongly represented by Morocco, South Africa, Ivory Coast, DR Congo, Senegal, Algeria, Egypt, Cape Verde and Ghana. Asia and the wider AFC zone are represented by Japan and Australia, while Middle Eastern and North African football is present through Morocco, Algeria and Egypt, with the broader regional rise visible in the growing investment of Saudi Arabia, Qatar and other Gulf states.

For decades after the Second World War, South America carried the soul of football. Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay give the world beauty, rhythm, improvisation and artistry. Brazil's five World Cup titles remain the highest by any country. Argentina and Uruguay add their own legendary chapters. South American football is not only about tactics; it is about imagination. It teaches the world that the ball can be danced with, not merely kicked.

Then Europe rises. Germany brings discipline. Italy brings defensive intelligence. France brings athletic diversity and tactical balance. Spain brings posses-

sion football. England, the Netherlands, Belgium and Portugal become central to the modern football economy. European clubs become the richest and strongest institutions in the game. They attract the best players from Africa, South America and Asia. Europe becomes the training ground, marketplace and tactical laboratory of world football.

But 2026 shows that the old football map is changing. Europe still has money, clubs, academies and history, but fear is disappearing. African and Asian teams no longer enter the pitch with inferiority. They press, attack, organize, counterattack and take penalties with belief.

Morocco's victory over the Netherlands is not only a result; it is a message. Japan's narrow loss to Brazil is not failure; it is proof that Asia can push the five-time champions to the edge. African teams reaching the knockout stage in large numbers shows that the continent is no longer waiting outside the palace. It is already inside.

Africa appears to be the next great football frontier. It has youth, speed, hunger, physical power and a huge talent base. African players already shape European leagues. The missing piece has often been national organization, federation stability, coaching continuity and infra-

structure. But Morocco's 2022 semifinal run and its 2026 continuation show that when African talent is organized properly, it can challenge anyone. Senegal, Ghana, Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Algeria, Egypt, DR Congo and South Africa all represent different dimensions of this rise.

Asia's rise is different but equally important. Japan and South Korea build through discipline, school systems, domestic leagues and technical education. Japan now plays with confidence against the strongest nations. South Korea has already shown in past tournaments that Asian football can reach deep stages. Iran, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iraq and other West Asian nations add another layer: physical courage, tactical compactness and growing investment.

The Middle East is becoming a football investment zone. Qatar hosts the 2022 World Cup. Saudi Arabia is preparing to host the 2034 World Cup. Gulf states are buying clubs, attracting stars, building academies and placing football inside national development strategies. Money alone cannot produce greatness, but money combined with youth development, coaching, facilities and football culture can accelerate history.

This shift in football also resembles a wider shift in the world. The old global order is no longer as fixed as it once appeared. Power is moving from a narrow Western center toward a more

Continued on Page 7



Analysis

Qamar Bashir

Mango Festival in Beijing

Pakistan Embassy in China on Thursday hosted an impressive mango festival in Beijing as part of celebrations marking 75 years of Pakistan-China diplomatic relations.

Themed as "Pakistan-China Silk Road Mango Festival 2026," the event was organized at Pakistan House and co-hosted with Asia-Africa Trade Promotion Office. The vibrant festival brought together over 400 guests from all walks of life including officials, diplomatic envoys, business leaders, media representatives, artists and representatives of cultural and trade organizations.

The event showcased Pakistan's world-famous mangoes and a curated range of mango-based products, highlighting the country's fertile agricultural landscape and its long-standing reputation for premium fruit exports.

In his remarks, Ambassador of Pakistan to China, Khalil Hashmi described mangoes as the "King of Fruits" and a symbol of Pakistan's cultural heritage. He highlighted the unique characteristics of Pakistani mangoes such as distinct aroma, sweetness and taste, adding that these mangoes were an emblem of Pakistani hospitality, warmth, and friendship.

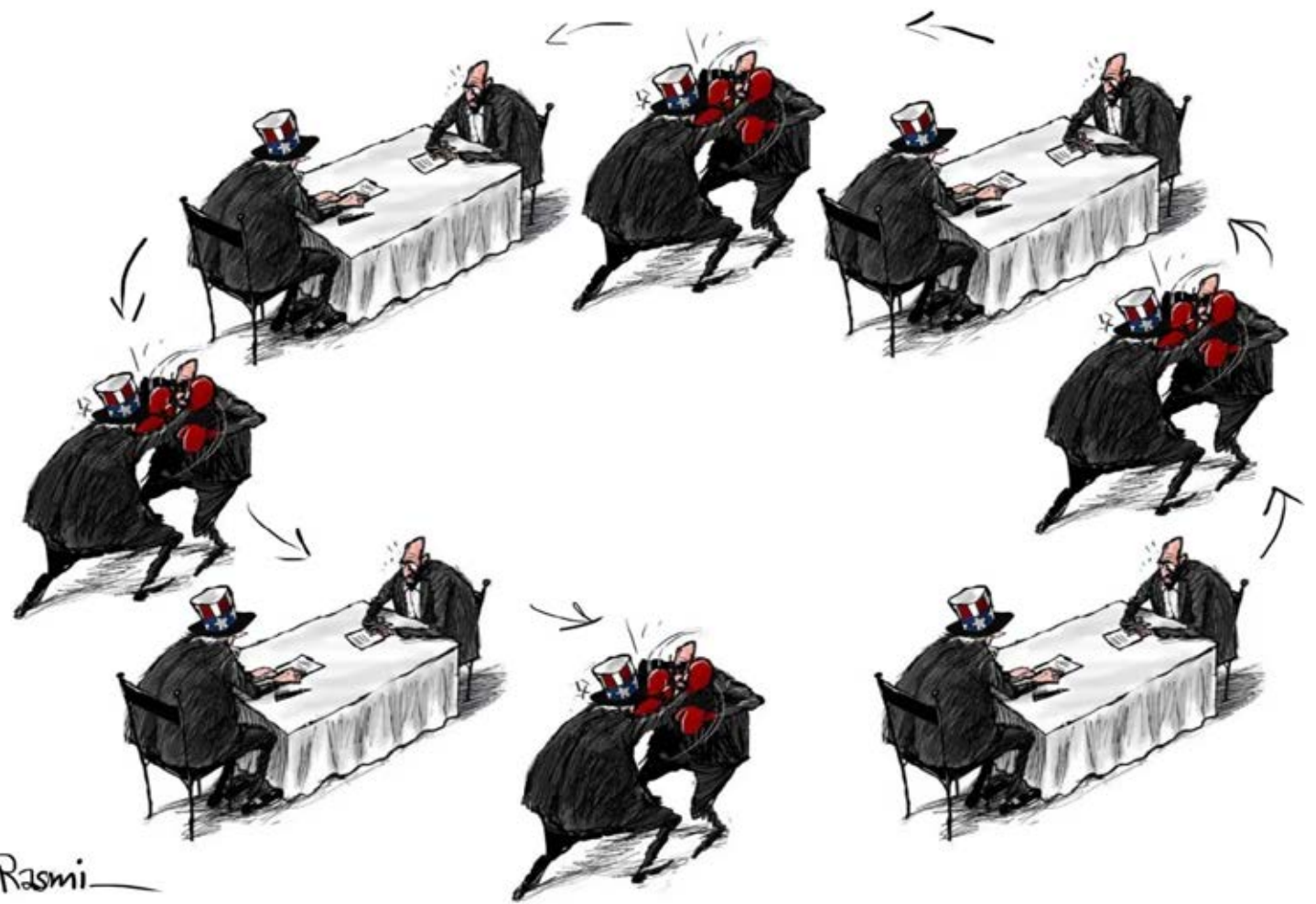
Sharing Pakistani mangoes with Chinese friends, he said, reflected the spirit of goodwill and deepening of friendship between the two nations and people. He further emphasized that the festival sought to blend Pakistani culture, commerce and cuisine.

The event was graced by several prominent guests, including senior Chinese officials from Beijing and other cities, representatives of cultural organization such as Long Yuxiang, Chairman of the China International Cultural Exchange Centre, Liu Guangyuan, Member of the Party Committee and Vice President of Dong-E-E-Jiao Co., Ltd, President of the China Fruit Marketing Association, alongside members of the diplomatic corps and representatives of Pakistani mango farmers and exporters. The attendees commended the Embassy's continued efforts in promoting Pakistan's cultural and agricultural excellence in China.

Two Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) were signed between China Ole High End Super Market and Tianjin Midtrans Int Co. as well as Hainan Jiao Long Technology Co. and RIC Nexus on mango trade and logistics. The MoU mark another important milestone in strengthening Pakistan-China collaboration in the agricultural sector.

The guests were also treated to vibrant cultural performances by the renowned Pakistani music band "Kaltoor" and talented students of the Pakistan Embassy College Beijing, who performed a delightful repertoire of traditional Pakistani and Chinese songs, adding a unique cultural dimension to the celebrations. Four varieties of mangoes were presented on the occasion and guests relished the unique taste and texture of Sindhri, Chausa, Anwar Ratol and Dusehri.

This was the second edition of the mango festival organized by the Embassy in Beijing. It concluded on a high note as it added a human and cultural dimension to the enduring friendship between Pakistan and China and underscored the growing cultural, agricultural, and economic partnership between the two countries.



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

Sanctions as Soldiers: The Rise of the Financial Battlefield

Economic statecraft has widely been used in International Relations by the states to achieve their foreign policy objectives. Economic tools such as Foreign aid, trade, and policies governing the international flow of capital can be used as foreign policy tools and are considered the most common forms of economic statecraft. Marshall Plan launched by the United States in 1948 is an example of the economic statecraft used to achieve particular goals. Though in the very early times when the battles were being fought through swords and spears the main target the armies would use to cut off the food supply chain, the trade and ports from the particular kingdom. This deferment of the state would be done in order to exhaust it. It was a way to deplete its resources that would led to the weakness of a particular kingdom the victory thus would become more easy for those who would target the economy of the other state.

In 1453 the Sultan Mehmed 2 uses the siege warfare strategy to conquer Constantinople. He utilized a brutal and highly strategic food and economic blockade as a primary weapon to weaken Constantinople before and during the famous siege. A year before the actual military siege began, Mehmed launched an economic strike by constructing the Rumelihisari fortress on the European side of the Bosphorus Strait. His great-grandfather had already built a fortress on the Asian side Anadoluhisari. Constantinople heavily relied on grain ships and economic trade coming from the Black Sea. Mehmed began demanding a steep toll from all passing ships. When a Venetian ship refused to pay and tried to bypass the checkpoint, Ottoman cannons sank it, sending a clear message the supply line was dead. During the siege, Mehmed's navy of around 300 ships completely surrounded the city from the Sea of Marmara and the Bosphorus to ensure

no Western European relief ships could slip through with food or weapons. By using the economic coercion this the Mehmed conquered the most prominent city at that time.

Centuries later after World War 2 the same economic coercion is still used by the powerful states to suppress the vulnerable states. The methods have evolved but the tool is used the same as was used centuries ago which is the economy. Now the major states have adopted modern techniques such as economic sanctions, tariffs and trade barriers, cut offs of foreign aid, Debt Trap Leverage and Export Controls and Technology Blacklists. These modern methods paralyse a state economically after which it has to surrender its resources to the major powers.

The great powers have established various institutions in this respect that are utilized to suppress the states through various tactics and strategies. The weak states are thus compelled in a way that serves the interests of the dominant states.

Weaker nations mostly rely on a single major powerful state to buy their primary exports (agricultural goods, textiles, or raw materials). Major Powers exploit this vulnerability by cutting the imports from the small country. For the weaker nation, it means immediate economic devastation, bankrupt farmers, and massive domestic political pressure on the government to capitulate. The US used this particular tool in order to suppress Venezuela. In 2019, the United States intensified its economic pressure on Venezuela by sanctioning the state owned oil company PDVSA it barred the US companies from buying Venezuelan oil which accounted for over 90% of Venezuela's export revenue. The US also froze Venezuelan government assets held under U.S. jurisdiction. These measures aimed to deprive the Maduro government of critical financial resources and compel political change without military intervention.

The financial assistance is rarely free, it comes with invisible geopolitical strings attached. When the indebted country does not behave in a way expected by the major power it can pull up the strings and strangle the weak economically. China also uses economic means to pursue its national interests. It mostly uses debt trap economic coercion to dominate the weaker state economy. Sri Lanka took loans from China to construct the Hambantota port. In 2010 the port was bleeding money, operating at massive losses, and drawing fewer than 200 ships a year. Concurrently, Sri Lanka was drowning in overall external debt. The vast majority of which was actually owed to Western sovereign bonds, the IMF, and Wall Street, not China. Desperate for foreign exchange reserves to pay off its global creditors, the Sri Lankan government made a sovereign decision in 2017 to sign a 99-year lease handing over a 70% stake of the port's operations to a state owned Chinese enterprise, China Merchants Port Holdings, in exchange for \$1.12 billion in cash.

Five centuries after Sultan Mehmed II proved that choking a strategic waterway was more effective than storming a physical fortress, modern statecraft has returned to the logic of the siege. Today's battlefields are not fought with wood and iron, but with SWIFT codes, semiconductor embargoes, and 99-year commercial leases. While this reliance on economic coercion is often celebrated as a peaceful alternative to kinetic warfare, it is ultimately a dangerous illusion. By turning international trade into a weapon, major powers are replacing global cooperation with deep seated systemic mistrust, forcing smaller nations to retreat into defensive economic blocs. If every commercial transaction becomes a geopolitical vulnerability, the 'Cold Peace' will eventually freeze global progress entirely. The weapons of the 21st century do not fire shots, but they are fully capable of dismantling the modern world order from within.

The writer is Student of BS International Relations at National Defence University Islamabad



Analysis

Zohaib Khan Durrani

The Heavy Tread of Faith: Amarnath Yatra and the Occupation of Kashmir

Every summer, the Himalayan cave shrine of Amarnath draws hundreds of thousands of Hindu pilgrims to the Indian illegally occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IloJK). For centuries, this journey was a testament to the region's syncretic culture—facilitated by Muslim shepherds, most notably the Malik family of Pahalgam, who discovered the cave and traditionally shared the offerings. But in recent decades, particularly since the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019, the Yatra has mutated from a community-managed pilgrimage into a massive, state-orchestrated security operation. As the 2026 Yatra approaches, the friction between national security imperatives, Hindu nationalist politics, and the daily survival of Kashmiris has never been more acute.

"Militarized pilgrimage" is not hyperbole; it describes the physical reality. For 40 to 60 days, the Valley is placed under a security grid of extraordinary density—an estimated 300,000 to 500,000 personnel from the CRPF, Army, and NSG. The movement of yatis is secured through a "sanitized" corridor: highways are closed to civilian traffic for hours (the "convoy movement" protocol), villages endure cordon-and-search operations (CASOs), and biometric registration, RFID tagging, and drone surveillance monitor the flow.

For locals, this is the experience of being strangers in their own land. Highway closures block ambulances, students miss

exams, and perishable fruit harvests—IloJK's economic lifeline—rot in stranded trucks. The "siege" atmosphere in Anantnag, Pahalgam, and Ganderbal is the inevitable byproduct of treating a religious procession as a counter-insurgency operation.

The official narrative touts the Yatra as an economic boon. Ground reality in Pahalgam, Anantnag (Islamabad), and Baltal tells a different story.

The Shri Amarnathji Shrine Board (SASB)—headed by the Lieutenant Governor—increasingly centralizes services. Major contracts for tented cities, langars, helicopter services, and waste management go to outside corporate entities. Local hoteliers in Pahalgam report plummeting occupancy because pilgrims are housed in SASB's pre-booked, subsidized tent cities. Pony-wallahs and porters face wage suppression via a rigid, app-based registration system that bypasses local unions. The money flows through IloJK, but it rarely stays in Kashmir. Meanwhile, local shopkeepers are frequently forced to shut down for "security sanitization," losing peak-season revenue.

The environmental cost is catastrophic. The fragile alpine ecology of the Lidder and Sindh valleys—glacial-fed, landslide-prone, and seismically active—cannot sustain footfalls exceeding 300,000 to 400,000 in weeks. The result: open defecation and untreated sewage contaminating water sources feeding Srinagar and Anantnag;

Continued on Page 7



Analysis

Altaf Hussain Wani

Chairman Senate Reaffirms Commitment to Strengthening Pakistan and Portugal Relations

Kiran Asim

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Portugal to Pakistan, Paulo Miguel Guedes Dominguez, called on Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani at Parliament House on.

Welcoming the Ambassador, Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani underscored Pakistan's commitment to further strengthening its long-standing and friendly relations with Portugal. He noted that both countries enjoy cordial ties and cooperate closely at bilateral and multilateral levels to promote peace, stability, and sustainable development.

The Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani emphasized the importance of continued high-level engagement and expressed confidence that the upcoming Bilateral Political Consul-



tations in Islamabad would further enhance cooperation between the two countries.

Highlighting economic relations, Chairman Gilani noted the steady growth in bilateral trade and stressed the need to explore greater collabo-

ration in trade, investment, agriculture, information technology, education, culture, and the blue economy. He also appreciated Portugal's support for Pakistan, particularly regarding the GSP Plus framework, and expressed hope for continued cooperation in this

regard.

Chairman Gilani highlighted the role of parliamentary diplomacy in strengthening bilateral relations and welcomed continued interaction between Parliamentary Friendship Groups and legislators of both countries.

Ambassador Paulo Miguel Guedes Dominguez thanked the Chairman Senate for the warm welcome and reaffirmed Portugal's commitment to further deepening cooperation with Pakistan in the political, parliamentary, economic, educational, and cultural fields.

The meeting concluded with both sides reaffirming their commitment to strengthening bilateral relations and expanding cooperation for the mutual benefit of the peoples of Pakistan and Portugal.

Experts urge Pakistan to accelerate coal transition and scale clean cooking to meet climate, energy goals

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan must adopt a comprehensive strategy to repurpose underutilized coal plants, expand clean cooking, and mobilize climate finance for a just, economically viable energy transition, experts said at an SDPI-UNESCAP policy dialogue, "Beyond Fossil Fuels: Pathways for a Clean Energy Transition."

SDPI Deputy Executive Director Dr. Sajid Amin Javed said clean cooking is missing from policy discourse despite its impact on climate, health, women's welfare, and energy security. He proposed using part of the enhanced climate levy to support electric cooking.

UNESCAP's Michael Williamson called clean cooking central to health, gender equality, and decarbonization, noting falling costs of renewables and storage. He said Pakistan's young coal fleet needs innovative repurposing to meet climate targets and reduce circular debt.

SDPI's Dr. Khalid Waleed warned rising coal use and CBAM compliance risks could hurt exports. He urged early retirement/repurposing of coal plants and green manufacturing, data centres, and BESS under CPEC 2.0.

SDPI's Zainab Babar said coal plants, averaging 8-9 years old, ran at 27-51% utilization but took 18.9% of FY2025 capacity payments, totaling US\$7.69 billion. After externalities, local coal is 2.5x costlier than imported coal. The study lists five repurposing options: solar PV, BESS, synchronous condensers, green data centres, and green hydrogen/ammonia. BESS ranked highest; a hybrid solar-BESS-condenser model is most practical. Solar conversion could cut capex by 97.6%, save US\$34m in fuel, and avoid -US\$5bn in capacity payments.

On cooking, UNESCAP's Anis Zaman cited cost, finance, and service as barriers. Clean cooking access may rise from 49.3% in 2021 to 59.2% by 2030, but 18.3m households could still lack it. SDPI's Ubaid ur Rehman Zia said induction stoves work for many dishes but not flatbreads, stressing awareness, design, and women's inclusion.

Panelists backed hybrid restructuring, climate finance, and grid modernization, with 90% clean energy by 2035 targeted. Dr. Shafiq Munir closed, noting behavior change is as vital as technology.

FPCCI, Portugal Agree to Boost Trade and Investment Ties

Commerce Desk



Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Portugal have agreed to strengthen bilateral trade and investment through enhanced B2B engagement, trade delegations, and closer private-sector collaboration.

The understanding came during a meeting between H. E. Paulo Domingues, Ambassador of Portugal, and an FPCCI delegation at the Portuguese Embassy. The FPCCI team was led by Mr. Malik Sohail Hussain, Chairman Coordination, representing President Atif Ikram Sheikh. Also present were Mr. Haider Raza Naqvi, Founder President, Mandi Bahauddin CCI; Mr. Aun Raza Naqvi, Patron-in-Chief, Mandi Bahauddin & Hafizabad CCIs; Mr. Omar Hashmi, Director FPCCI; and Embassy officials Ms. Houria Sheikh and Ms. Riffat Fatima.

Both sides emphasized economic diplomacy to build sustainable partnerships. It was agreed in principle to send a high-powered FPCCI delegation to Portugal, with representatives from Hafizabad, Mandi Bahauddin, and Sargodha CCIs, to explore cooperation in healthcare, IT, textiles, agriculture, real estate, manufacturing, entrepreneurship, and investment, and to hold direct B2B meetings.

Ambassador Domingues said Portugal's Trade Minister is expected to visit Pakistan in September or October to advance economic engagement. Mr. Malik Sohail welcomed the visit and said FPCCI will host a Pakistan-Portugal Business Forum for chambers, exporters, and investors.

Mr. Haider Raza Naqvi invited the Ambassador to Mandi Bahauddin and Hafizabad to see rice, textile, and agro-based potential firsthand. Mr. Malik Sohail reaffirmed FPCCI's commitment to converting diplomatic engagement into commercial outcomes through partnerships and joint ventures, expressing confidence the delegation and forum will lay the groundwork for a long-term economic partnership.

Mr. Malik Sohail Hussain further stated that FPCCI remains committed to translating diplomatic engagement into tangible commercial outcomes by facilitating direct business partnerships, encouraging joint ventures, and promoting sector-specific investment opportunities. He expressed confidence that the proposed trade delegation and Pakistan-Portugal Business Forum would lay the foundation for a long-term economic partnership, contributing to increased bilateral trade, investment, and sustainable economic cooperation between Pakistan and Portugal.

Souvenir

ISLAMABAD: The Hon'ble Chief Justice of Pakistan, Mr. Yahya Afridi, presenting souvenir to Hon'ble Chief Minister of Punjab Ms. Maryam Nawaz Sharif during the National Conference on Prison Reform, held under the theme "Justice, Dignity and Reform," at the Supreme Court of Pakistan on Thursday.



Talk by Saeed Mehdi, Bureaucrat Par Excellence

City Desk

KARACHI: Quaid e Azam House Museum (QAHM) Institute of Nation Building organised a talk today by Muhammad Saeed Mehdi, author of The Eyewitness and former Principal Secretary to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif at Flagstaff House today. The Eyewitness has been published by Lightstone Publishers. Liaquat Merchant, senior vice chairman of QAHM welcomed the guests and Ameena Saiyid, member, board of governors, QAHM, introduced Saeed Mehdi. Raheela Baqai of Lightstone Publishers gave the Vote of Thanks.

Saeed Mehdi spoke to a packed hall about his decades of experience as a bureaucrat including how he received Benazir Bhutto from inside the plane when she arrived in Lahore in 1986 and Z.A Bhutto's time and execution in Rawalpindi when Saeed Mehdi was DC Rawalpindi. Saeed Mehdi's talk held the audience in rapt attention.

Present were Syed Khadim Ali Shah, Aftab Nabi, Salman Faruqi, Shanaz Wazir Ali, Mahtab Rashdi, Sirajuddin Aziz, Khurshid Hyder and many more.

KKAWF Marks Anti-Drug Day with Mall Awareness Drive in Islamabad

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Karim Khan Afridi Welfare Foundation [KKAWF] commemorated the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking 2026 at Centaurus Mall, bringing together policymakers, enforcement agencies, diplomats, youth, and civil society.

KKAWF CEO Cristina von Sperling Afridi presented the UNODC World Drug Report 2026, noting record global drug use: 331 million people in 2024, or 6.2% of the population aged 15-64, up from 5.2% a decade ago. She warned of spreading synthetic drugs, with 755 new psychoactive substances identified in 2024, including 118 new ones.



Speakers cited domestic concerns: 17 million youth aged 18-30 use drugs

[ANF], 53% of university students reported use, and drugs affect 1 in 4 Karachi households. Pakistan faces synthetics, online markets, organized crime, and public health strain.[2025] [2022]

Addressing the event were ANF's Brigadier Hasan Awaan, UNODC's Representative, DIG Jawad Tariq, Min of Narcotics Control's Akhlaque Qureshi, Portugal's Ambassador Paulo Domingues, and Centaurus CEO Sardar Yasir Ilyas. Footballer Eman Fayyaz urged youth to join team sports for resilience.

The atrium event featured KKAWF's film "Drive", youth skits, advocacy material, quizzes, and photo booths. KKAWF, founded in 2015, marked its 10th anniversary in 2025.

CPSC-ISSI & CMG Hold Seminar on CPC's 105 Years, China-Pakistan Shared Future

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The China-Pakistan Study Centre (CPSC) at ISSI, with China Media Group (CMG), organized a seminar titled "CPC's 105 Years: Achievements, Experiences, and the China-Pakistan Community with a Shared Future."

Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, ISSI Chairman, called the CPC's 105-year journey a testament to visionary leadership and reform. He said China's progress in growth, poverty reduction, and tech offers lessons for Pakistan, noting the All-Weather Partnership is expanding into digital economy, AI, green development, agriculture, and HR



under evolving CPEC.

CMG's Wang Lei linked the event to the CPC's 105th and 75 years of Pakistan-China

ties, reaffirming CMG's role in promoting understanding and people-to-people links.

Chief Guest Minister of

State Wajihah Qamar described the CPC's path as people-centred national rejuvenation. She said Pakistan's next cooperation

phase should focus on education, research, skills, innovation, youth, and university/think-tank linkages.

Keynote speaker Ambassador Masood Khan highlighted CPC's role in transformation and poverty alleviation, backed BRI,

and said CPEC 2.0 is widening into industry, agriculture, tech, and vocational training, while noting value in China's strategic planning.

Ambassador Naela Chohan and Dr. Abdul Wahid stressed trust, civilizational ties, and human development as drivers. Mr. Shi Yuanqiang, DHoM, China Embassy, reaffirmed high-quality CPEC and the Action Plan for a closer shared future.

Dr. Jibran Hussain Raza and Dr. Talat Shabbir underlined institution-building and long-term planning. The seminar ended with discussion on China's modernization and future Pakistan-China cooperation.

Bull & Bears PSX 100-Share Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index		
Current	Prev. Close	
184,520.96	184,050.10	
Day's High	Day's Low	
185,890.52	184,214.79	
Index Value	Change	
44,397,775,151	+470.86	
Percentage	Time	
+0.26%	2 Jul, 2026 4:30 pm	
Europe: FTSE 100 Index		
Index Value	Change	
10,652.87	+174.53	
Percentage	Time	
+1.67%	2 Jul, 4:35 pm GMT+1	
USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average		
Index Value	Change	
52,529.71	+224.47	
Percentage	Time	
+0.43%	2 Jul, 3:31 pm GMT-4	
Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average		
Index Value	Change	
68,733.15	-1,741.81	
Percentage	Time	
-2.47%	2 Jul, 3:45 pm GMT+9	
Open Market Forex Rates		
Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	190.23	194.22
Bahrain Dinar	737.15	747.71
Canadian Dollar	196.93	201.25
China Yuan	38.10	38.85
Danish Krone	43.35	43.75
Euro	317.12	321.57
Hong Kong Dollar	35.07	36.06
Indian Rupee	2.77	3.05
Japanese Yen	1.7121	1.8104
Kuwaiti Dinar	884.59	894.90
Malaysian Ringgit	67.15	68.05
New Zealand \$	156.32	160.65
Norwegians Krone	27.97	28.27
Omani Riyal	722.05	732.55
Qatari Riyal	75.04	76.75
Saudi Riyal	74.35	75.05
Singapore Dollar	213.64	217.54
Swedish Korona	30.25	30.55
Swiss Franc	342.11	346.10
Thai Bhat	8.50	8.75
U.A.E Dirham	75.85	76.75
UK Pound Sterling	370.23	374.25
US Dollar	279.05	279.25



Nadeem Khan Appointed as CEO PTCL

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: The Board of Directors of Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL) today announced a major leadership transition as the company marks the successful completion of the amalgamation of Telenor Pakistan into Pak Telecom Mobile Limited (PTML), operating as Ufone 5G. The Board of Directors

appointed Nadeem Khan, previously working as Group Chief Financial Officer of PTCL and Ufone, as CEO of PTCL, effective immediately for a period of 14 days.

Nadeem Khan is a Chartered Accountant with over two decades of association with the PTCL Group. He joined Ufone as Chief Financial Officer in 2003, a role he held for a decade, before a brief

stint on the Board of U Microfinance Bank Limited. He was appointed at the PTCL Group in 2017 as Group Chief Financial Officer, going on to oversee the Group's financial strategy through a period of major transformation, including the Telenor Pakistan acquisition. He currently serves as a Member of the Accounting Standards Board of the Institute of Chartered Accountants

of Pakistan.

Hatem Bamatraf, serving as President and CEO of PTCL & Ufone for the past 5 years, has stepped down from his role at PTCL to take on the position of CEO of Pak Telecom Mobile Limited (PTML).

The leadership transition ensures continuity across both PTCL and PTML as each organization moves into its next phase of growth.

BMPP urges Govt to Scrap DSS as Audit Flags Power Sector Failures



Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Businessmen Panel Progressive Secretary General Khurram Ijaz said consumers are still paying for power sector mismanagement, citing the Auditor General of Pakistan's [AGP] Audit Report 2025-26. He called for an immediate review of the Rs3.23/unit Debt Service Surcharge [DSS], saying it has become a way to pass institutional failures to households and businesses.

Ijaz noted the AGP found the sector ran deficits averaging 2.8% of GDP from

FY2014-FY2024, despite the National Electricity Policy and Plan 2023-27 promising a competitive market. Circular debt fell from Rs2.39trn in June 2024 to Rs1.61trn in June 2025, but the AGP said the drop came from borrowing and fiscal moves, not structural reform.

DISCOs recorded Rs265bn in T&D losses and Rs132bn in poor recoveries in FY2024-25. Losses hit 17.55% vs Nepra's 11.77% benchmark, driven by theft, faulty metering, and weak recoveries. The AGP also questioned charging DSS to K-Electric, which does not add to circular debt.

With Rs1.9trn in capacity payments tied to an ageing grid, Ijaz said Pakistan cannot compete with inflated tariffs. He urged tariff review, DSS withdrawal, DISCO governance reforms, anti-theft action, grid upgrades, and more private participation.

Stitching Tarpal

RAWALPINDI: A vendor is busy in stitching Tarpal at his workplace in the city.



Photo: Online

Mobilink Bank Wins Three FinanceAsia Awards, Named Pakistan's Best Digital Bank

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Mobilink Bank has secured top honors at the FinanceAsia Awards 2026, being named Pakistan's Best Digital Bank, Best Bank for Financial Inclusion, and Best Bank for Use of Technology in the domestic category.

FinanceAsia, Asia Pacific's premier capital markets platform, recognized the bank for innovation, performance, and impact. Mobilink Bank reported resilient financial results despite climate disasters and sector-wide asset quality pressures. It maintained profitability, expanded lending in conventional and nano segments, grew deposits, and posted strong revenue growth led by SME financing, especially for women-led enterprises. It also expanded sustainability initiatives, including solar energy financing.

President & CEO Haaris Mahmood Chaudhary said the awards reflect the



bank's commitment to a digital-first, inclusive financial ecosystem. "As we continue to empower women, small businesses, and underserved communities through technology, we remain focused on expanding access to innovative financial solutions that create lasting economic opportunity," he

said.

Mobilink Bank has previously won honors from CFA Society Pakistan, GSMA GLOMO, Pakistan Banking Awards, GDEIB, and the Annual Microfinance Conference for innovation and women's financial inclusion.

PPL-operated Adhi Field secures development & production lease for 12 years

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL) has been granted Development and Production Lease (D&PL) for 12 years over its operated Adhi Field located in the Punjab.

Adhi lease, spanning an area of 212.86 sq. km in districts Rawalpindi and Chakwal, is a joint venture between PPL as operator with 39 percent working interest (WI) and Oil and Gas Development Company Limited and

Pakistan Oilfields Limited with 50 percent and 11 percent WI, respectively.

With this, PPL will continue to sustain and enhance production through safe and uninterrupted operations while actively pursuing production optimization through the use of advanced technologies and targeted interventions, aimed at maximizing recovery and extending the economic life of Adhi together with its joint venture partners.

FPCCI Calls Solar Energy a 'Strategic Necessity' for Pakistan's Industrial Competitiveness



Tahir Amin Malik

LAHORE: FPCCI President Atif Ikram Sheikh said promoting solar energy is now a strategic imperative, not an option, for Pakistan's industrial competitiveness, export growth, energy security, and long-term sustainability. He stressed that affordable, reliable, and clean energy is critical for strengthening the economy and global market position.

Announcing the Pakistan Solar Association's Solar & Storage Expo 2026, he said the three-day event will run from July 10-12 at the Lahore Expo Centre across three halls, with 70+ international and 70+ local brands exhibiting solar tech, storage solutions, and renewable energy innovations.

At a press conference, FPCCI VP Zaki Aijaz, PSA Chairman Waqas Musa, former chairman Aamir Pervez, and senior leader Adil Mahmood urged federal and provincial governments

to launch a 3% concessional financing scheme for solar batteries. They said it would help industries, especially in Punjab, cut costs and improve export competitiveness.

Zaki Aijaz welcomed PM Shehbaz Sharif's decision to keep solar panels, batteries, and inverters tax-free, calling it business-friendly. He added Pakistan faces high tariffs, rising costs, fuel import dependence, and environmental pressures. With abundant sunshine, he said a large-scale industrial shift to solar would lower electricity and manufacturing costs, boost exports, save forex, cut emissions, and support green growth.

He also backed the government's 30% EV target by 2027, urging incentives, expanded charging infrastructure, and affordable financing. FPCCI reaffirmed support for policies advancing renewables and a resilient, sustainable economy.

Cyberattacks on SMBs disguised as AI services surged by five times in 2026, Kaspersky reports

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: Kaspersky security solutions detected over 33,300 attacks on small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs) from January to April 2026, where malware for PCs was disguised as popular AI services. This marks an almost 5x increase compared to the same period in 2025, according to a new Kaspersky report.

The most common AI lures in early 2026 were malware posing as ChatGPT (42%), Claude (24%), and DeepSeek (20%). Kaspersky experts observed mainly Trojware, including Trojans capable of downloading and running other malware. Trojware disguises itself as harmless files and can steal, delete, block, modify, or copy data, posing a high risk to businesses.

ABHI Microfinance Bank receives Phoenix Award

Commerce Desk

KARACHI: ABHI Microfinance Bank has been awarded the Phoenix Award at Mobile Commerce 2026, one of Pakistan's leading forums for digital commerce, payments, and fintech.

The award recognizes the bank's shift into a stronger, more resilient, and future-ready institution. ABHI said it reflects ongoing efforts to strengthen the business, expand digital capabilities, and build a more inclusive financial ecosystem for individuals, entrepreneurs, SMEs, and communities across Pakistan.



Chief Marketing Officer Sultan Zaidi received the award and said it reflects

the commitment of teams nationwide. He added the bank remains focused on

creating accessible, relevant solutions aligned with customers' evolving

needs in a changing digital economy. At the event, Head

of Digital Products Muhammad Khurram Shahzad joined a "Digital Payments Revolution" panel.

The discussion covered Pakistan's digital payments landscape, AI's role in financial services, and the need for inclusive finance to bring more people and businesses into the formal system.

ABHI is combining regulated banking strength with fintech speed and customer focus. With more branches, expanding digital products, and an emphasis on inclusion, it aims to serve underserved communities, SMEs, entrepreneurs, and salaried individuals.

Gillani departs for Tehran to attend Funeral Ceremony of Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei

Kiran Asim

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate of Pakistan, Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, has departed for the Islamic Republic of Iran to attend the official funeral ceremony of the late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, scheduled to be held in Tehran on July 3, 2026. The visit is being undertaken at the invitation of the Speaker of the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Majlis) of Iran, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf.

Amongst others, Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Faisal Karim Kundi is also part of the delegation.

Expressing profound grief and sorrow over the demise of Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani stated that, on behalf of the Senate of Pakistan and in his



personal capacity, he extends heartfelt condolences to the Parliament, Govern-

ment, and people of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The Chairman Senate said that the late Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei was a leader of exceptional vision, wisdom, and statesmanship who guided his country with dignity and honor. He remarked that with his passing, Iran has lost a great leader, Pakistan has lost a sincere friend, and the Muslim Ummah has been deprived of a farsighted and influential statesman.

Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani further stated that Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei's services, leadership, and contributions to the Muslim world will be remembered for generations. He prayed that Almighty Allah may grant the departed soul the highest ranks in Jannah and give strength and patience to the people of Iran to bear this irreparable loss.

D-8 Secretary-General Calls for Stronger Global Cooperation on Earthquake Health Preparedness



Spokesman Report

ISTANBUL: The Secretary-General of the Developing-8 (D-8) Organization attended the Ministerial Conference on "Protecting Health in Earthquakes" in Istanbul, reaffirming the organization's commitment to strengthening resilient health systems and enhancing international cooperation in disaster preparedness.

The conference, jointly organized by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Ministry of Health of Türkiye, brought together health ministers, senior government officials, medical professionals, academics, international partners, and other stakeholders to discuss strategies for improving earthquake emergency management and protecting public health during disasters.

On the sidelines of the conference, the D-8 Secretary-General held productive meetings with Türkiye's Minister of Health, Prof. Dr. Kemal Memişoğlu, and Indonesia's Minister of Health, Budi Gunadi Sadikin. The discussions focused on expanding cooperation among D-8 member states in the health sector and strengthening partnerships in areas of mutual priority.

The Secretary-General emphasized that health security is a shared global responsibility and underscored the importance of collaborative efforts to build resilient healthcare systems capable of responding effectively to future emergencies and natural disasters.

He reaffirmed the D-8 Organization's commitment to promoting stronger regional cooperation, improving emergency preparedness, and safeguarding communities through enhanced health resilience and coordinated disaster response initiatives.

Punjab Auqaf Chief Orders Strict Action After Theft at Bulleh Shah Shrine



Bureau Report

LAHORE: In line with the vision of Punjab Chief Minister to ensure transparency, accountability, and good governance, Secretary and Chief Administrator Auqaf Punjab, Dr. Ehsan Bhutta, has ordered stringent disciplinary action under the PEEDA Act, 2006, issuing final penalties against officials and employees after charges of gross negligence, financial misconduct, and misuse of authority were conclusively established.

According to the details, an inquiry conducted by a committee comprising the Director General Religious Affairs and the Director Finance/Deputy Secretary confirmed the theft of cash amounting to millions of rupees from the donation boxes at the Shrine of Hazrat Baba Bulleh Shah (RA) in Kasur.

Following a personal hearing by the Additional Secretary (Administration) and in light of the recommendations of both the inquiry committee and the hearing officer, former Auqaf Manager Kasur, Tariq Mahmood Najmi, has been directed to repay Rs. 1,318,955, while he, along with former supervisors Muhammad Riaz, Muhammad Sharif, and former watchman Muhammad Ramzan, has been penalized with forfeiture of five years of service and permanently disqualified from handling cash or being posted at shrine establishments.

In a separate disciplinary case, following an inquiry conducted by the Director Estate and a personal hearing by the Director Administration, former Auqaf Manager Jhang, Munir Ahmad Jam, was awarded the penalty of withholding one annual increment for exceeding his authority by unilaterally increasing the lease amount of over 105 acres of Waqf agricultural land in Faisalabad Zone by 10 percent without obtaining approval from the competent authority. The decisive action reflects the Auqaf Department's unwavering commitment to financial discipline, institutional integrity, and zero tolerance for corruption and administrative irregularities.

Atta Tarar Pledges Govt Support for Sports Journalists' Welfare

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar has pledged government backing for sports journalists' welfare and invited the community to submit recommendations to promote sports journalism.

Speaking at a ceremony for World Sports Journalists Day 2026, Tarar called sports journalism an essential pillar for promoting healthy competition, sportsmanship, and positivity. He said sports' societal impact cannot be realized without journalists covering events effectively for the public.

The minister stressed that recognizing sports journalists will encourage



youth to join a profession requiring field reporting, hard work, and close monitoring of sport. Citing the Tamgha-i-Imtiaz awarded to senior journalist Mohi Shah, he said the honour belongs to the entire fraternity for fostering a pro-sports environment.

Tarar asked the community to form a committee and present proposals on welfare, professional development, and promotion of sports journalism, adding "we will do whatever is possible at the government level."

He also noted PTV Sports is telecasting the FIFA World Cup 2026 nationwide to encourage youth. He administered the oath to RISJA's new body and cut a cake for the Day

IRS Policy Dialogue: Iranian Ambassador Appreciates Pakistan's Solidarity, Calls for Enhanced Regional Engagement

Spokesman Report

Islamabad: The Institute of Regional Studies (IRS), Islamabad, organized a policy dialogue titled "Pakistan's Role in Building Regional Peace: Iran's Strategic Posture, Regional Alignments, and Pathways to Stability" to examine Iran's strategic posture, evolving regional alignments, the implications of the recent Iran-Israel conflict, and Pakistan's role in promoting regional peace and stability. The dialogue also paid tribute to Iran's leadership on the occasion of commemorative ceremonies held across the Islamic Republic of Iran. It provided a timely platform for discussing emerging security challenges in West Asia and exploring pathways for diplomacy, regional cooperation, and conflict prevention.

Delivering the keynote address, His Excellency Dr. Reza Amiri Moghaddam, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Pakistan, outlined Iran's assessment of the evolving strategic environment in West Asia and expressed appreciation for solidarity shown by the government and people of Pakistan during recent conflict. He identified unified leadership, national cohesion, strategic geography, and an indigenous defence industrial base as the principal pillars of Iran's deterrence posture. Stressing the significance of regional cooperation, he proposed a closer engagement among



Pakistan, Iran, Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt to advance peace, stability, and shared prosperity, while reaffirming Iran's commitment to dialogue and diplomacy.

Ambassador Jauhar Saleem, President IRS, observed that Iran's strategic posture remains a key factor shaping the security landscape of West Asia. He noted that understanding Iran's security priorities is essential for assessing regional stability, energy security, and opportunities for diplomacy. Emphasizing the dialogue's relevance for Paki-

stan, he highlighted its implications for border security, regional connectivity, energy cooperation, maritime interests, and Pakistan's broader engagement with West Asia.

Ambassador Asif Ali Khan Durrani, former Ambassador of Pakistan to Iran, described West Asia as standing at a strategic inflection point where broader questions concerning the regional order remain unresolved. He proposed a six-point framework for a cooperative regional security architecture based on sovereignty, non-interference, institu-

tionalized dialogue, collective maritime security, economic integration, and counterterrorism cooperation.

Ms. Zohreh Shahbeik First Counsellor at the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, appreciated Pakistan's constructive role in facilitating peace dialogue and bringing stability to the region. She reaffirmed that sustained engagement, mutual respect, and understanding remain the most effective means of addressing shared challenges and strengthening Pakistan-Iran relations.

Addressing the role of the media, Mr. Abu Baker Younis Matar, Bureau Chief, Pakistan Al Mayadeen TV, discussed how regional media shape public perceptions of the conflicts in Gaza, Lebanon, and Iran. He described the Palestinian issue as a central factor underlying regional instability and emphasized the importance of sustained and balanced media coverage.

The policy dialogue concluded with an interactive exchange of views on the prospects for a cooperative security architecture in West Asia. The dialogue reaffirmed the importance of sustained diplomacy, regional cooperation, and inclusive dialogue in reducing tensions and promoting lasting peace, stability, and regional connectivity, while underscoring Pakistan's constructive role in fostering regional engagement.

The Heavy Tread of Faith: Amarnath Yatra and the Occupation of Kashmir

Continued from Page 4

tons of plastic waste and horse dung choking meadows; and the widening of ancient tracks into motorable roads, triggering landslides and glacial retreat. The 2022 flash floods near the cave, which killed pilgrims, were a direct consequence of unregulated construction and climate stress. The SASB prioritizes "footfall records" over carrying capacity, treating the mountains as infrastructure rather than ecology.

This militarization serves a political design. The 2008 land transfer agitation—when the government tried gifting forest land to the SASB—revealed the intent: creating permanent Hindu institutional footholds in a Muslim-majority region. Post-2019, the amended SASB Act grants the Board sweeping powers over "Yatra areas," creating a parallel administration unaccountable to any local legis-

lature. Simultaneously, the syncretic history is being erased. The Malik family, traditional custodians of the Chhari Mubarak (holy mace), were sidelined in the 1990s and formally removed by the SASB Act. In a region fearing demographic change via new domicile and land laws, the sight of hundreds of thousands of non-local Hindus moving under military protection, staying in permanent concrete structures, fuels deep existential anxiety. The message received is clear: "Kashmir is incomplete without us."

The state argues this apparatus is a response to terror threats—citing the 2000 Pahalgam incident and the 2017 bus attack—and a necessity to facilitate the constitutional right to faith (Article 25). Pilgrims undertake the journey from deep devotion.

But security need not require occupa-

tion. The Yatra was once the ultimate symbol of Kashmiriyat—Muslims carrying Hindu pilgrims on their backs. That model was dismantled by geopolitics and majoritarianism. Today, the pilgrimage stands as a metaphor for the state's approach: heavy on force, heavy on symbolism, indifferent to ecological limits, and light on trust.

Unless management is decentralized to local bodies, ecological caps are strictly enforced, local economic linkages are prioritized over corporate contracts, and civilian spaces are demilitarized, the Yatra will remain an annual occupation. It deepens the alienation of the very people whose hospitality once made the journey possible. The road to the cave cannot be paved with the grievances of the valley below.

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How the 2026 World Cup Mirrors a Shifting Planet

Continued from Page 4

complex, multipolar world. China is rising economically and strategically. India is growing. Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan and other regional powers are asserting themselves more visibly. The comparison is not exact—football results do not prove military, economic or diplomatic supremacy—but football does reflect confidence, investment, identity and the psychology of nations.

That is why the 2026 World Cup feels larger than sport. When Morocco defeats the Netherlands, when Paraguay removes Germany, when Japan pushes Brazil, when African teams fill the knockout stage, the message is clear: history is no longer owned by the same few countries. The world is becoming more competitive, and football is one of the most visible arenas where this

change is seen.

Europe and South America remain giants. Brazil, Argentina, France, Spain, Portugal, England and others are still elite. But the gap is narrowing. The next twenty years may not produce the complete fall of Europe or South America, but they are likely to produce a new football order. Quarterfinals and semifinals will increasingly include African and Asian teams. The first World Cup champion from outside Europe and South America is no longer impossible. Africa appears the strongest candidate to break that wall first, followed by Japan or South Korea from Asia.

The 2026 World Cup is therefore a turning point. It is not only expanding the number of teams; it is expanding belief. It is giving the global South, Africa, Asia and the Middle East a larger stage. And these teams are not merely

filling spaces. They are creating shocks, rewriting assumptions and forcing the old powers to sweat.

Football's power map begins with South American genius, moves into European organization, and now enters the age of global redistribution. The ball is moving from old centers to new frontiers. The World Cup is no longer only a contest between Europe and South America. It is becoming a world parliament of talent, emotion, money, identity and ambition.

The beautiful game is telling us something profound: the world is changing, and the football field is changing with it.

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ECC meeting

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, chairing a meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) at the Finance Division on Thursday.



Photo: PID

ECC approves key measures on PASSCO winding-up, trade policy

Commerce Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet here on Thursday approved key measures for the winding-up of the Pakistan Agricultural Storage and Services Corporation (PASSCO) and amendments to the Import Policy Order, 2022, aimed at strengthening Pakistan's trade governance framework.

The ECC, which met here under the chairman-

ship of the Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb, approved summaries submitted by various ministries and divisions on matters relating to food security, public sector reforms, and Pakistan's international commitments.

The cabinet body approved a summary of the Ministry of National Food Security and Research for the auction of 8,197,989 metric tons of flood-damaged PASSCO

wheat through an open and transparent competitive bidding process, subject to third-party validation, to minimize financial losses, ensure the transparent disposal of damaged stocks, and support the ongoing restructuring and winding-up process of PASSCO.

The Committee further approved a proposal submitted by the Ministry of Commerce to amend the Import Policy Order, 2022, by incorporating a defini-

tion of "forced labour" in line with the ILO Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29).

The amendment will strengthen Pakistan's legal framework governing imports, reinforce compliance with international labour commitments, and enhance the country's trade governance framework.

The meeting was attended by Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan; Federal Minister for Investment, Qaiser Ahmed

Sheikh; Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training, Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui; Federal Minister for Petroleum, Ali Pervaiz Malik (virtually); Federal Minister for Power, Sardar Awaiz Ahmad Khan Leghari (virtually); Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Industries, Haroon Akhtar Khan, along with federal secretaries and senior officials from the relevant ministries, divisions and regulatory authorities.

PACA Holds Orientation for Islamabad District Judiciary on Anti-Money Laundering Laws

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Anti-Corruption Academy (PACA) conducted a one-day orientation session for District Judiciary judges of Islamabad to strengthen understanding and inter-agency coordination on Pakistan's Anti-Money Laundering (AML) regime.

Chairman NAB Lt. Gen. (Retd) Nazir Ahmed inaugurated the session, calling money laundering a grave threat to economic stability and governance. He stressed a coordinated approach among investigators, prosecutors, financial institutions, and the judiciary, and reaffirmed NAB's focus on professionalism and technology to counter complex financial crimes.

Hon'ble Mr. Justice Inaam Ameen Minhas, Islamabad High Court, attended as Chief



Guest. He commended PACA's initiative and said continuous capacity building is essential for the judiciary to handle modern financial offenses.

Deputy Chairman NAB Sohail Nasir briefed participants on the Anti-Money Laundering Act, 2010, outlining agency roles, typol-

ogies like trade-based laun-

dering, shell companies, and crypto misuse, and court powers for attachment, seizure, and forfeiture of crim-

inal assets.

DG Special Investigation Division NAB Muhammad Tahir covered the global AML framework, FATF, UNCAC, parallel financial investigations, and international cooperation tools including Mutual Legal Assistance and the GlobE Network for asset repatriation.

FMU Master Trainer Noor us Sahar explained the FIU's role, the importance of Suspicious Transaction Reports and the goAML platform in intelligence-led investigations.

The session ended with certificates for judges and a souvenir presented to Justice Minhas by NAB's Deputy Chairman and PACA's DG. Organizers said the event reflects a unified effort to bolster Pakistan's resilience against money laundering through evidence-based adjudication.

Placenta smuggling case: probe uncovers anti-ageing injection racket

City Desk

ISLAMABAD: Investigators have found that human placenta was allegedly being used to manufacture anti-ageing injections, as authorities intercepted a 100-kilogram consignment being smuggled out to Vietnam.

The development comes amid an ongoing investigation into a human placenta smuggling case that surfaced in Islamabad last week.

Sources said the anti-ageing injections made from the material sold for close to Rs700,000 each.

The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has identified alleged agents operating in Lahore, Peshawar and Rawalpindi and has begun investigating the possible involvement of waste management



companies in the racket.

Investigators are also examining whether customs officials were complicit.



The placenta, a temporary organ that forms in the womb during pregnancy and serves as the life-sustaining link between mother and

child until birth, is classified as infectious medical waste under health regulations and must be disposed of through specified procedures.

Under Pakistan's Human Organs Transplantation Act, 2010, the commercial sale or purchase of any human organ, tissue or body part is banned and constitutes a serious offence.

The case emerged after the FIA and the Human Organ Transplant Authority (HOTA) conducted a joint raid on a private residence in Islamabad on June 25, acting on information about an alleged illegal trade in human organs.

Initial investigations indicated that the accused purchased human placenta from various hospitals, mislabelled it as sheep placenta, and allegedly smuggled it abroad.

CMs Maryam Nawaz, Sarfraz Bugti outline jail reform steps in Punjab, Balochistan

Bureau Report

ISLAMABAD: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif and Balochistan CM Sarfraz Bugti highlighted provincial jail reforms at a conference in Islamabad.

CM Maryam said reforms are being implemented based on hardships she witnessed during imprisonment with her father, former PM Nawaz Sharif. She recalled poor living conditions, hygiene, sanitation, delayed medical care, and solitary confinement. She also said she was denied permission to meet her ailing mother and was in jail when her mother died.

On current measures, she noted video-link facilities are now available for inmates across Punjab, along with emergency response buttons.

CM Bugti said prison reform is a top priority. Rehabilitation programs have been launched for inmates



with drug addiction, and vocational training is helping prisoners gain modern skills. The government is building new, modern prisons to ease overcrowding and has allocated significant funds.

He added that CCTV cameras are being installed for security and the Jail Reforms Committee's recommendations are being fully implemented.

Junaid Chaudhry invites Turkish investment in Pakistan's Maritime Sector at Istanbul Summit



Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry has called for Turkish investment in Pakistan's ports and maritime industry, saying green shipping, resilient supply chains, the blue economy, digitalisation, and AI are reshaping global trade.

Addressing the 5th Maritime Summit in Istanbul, Chaudhry said the sector faces profound transformation and no country can manage challenges alone. He stressed strong international partnerships are key to sustainable maritime growth and congratulated Türkiye on hosting the summit.

He described Türkiye as a trusted

friend and strategic partner, with ties spanning defence, trade, transport, energy, and maritime affairs.

Highlighting Pakistan's location at the South Asia, Central Asia, and Indian Ocean crossroads, he said the country can serve as a regional trade gateway. Reforms are underway at Port Qasim, Karachi Port, Gwadar Port, and PNSC to build a modern maritime, logistics, and industrial hub.

He invited Turkish firms to invest in port terminals, LNG and energy infrastructure, green ship repair/recycling, industrial zones, ship fleet expansion, ferry services, logistics, free zones, fisheries, seafood processing, and decarbonisation/digitalisation.

BISP, ILO to Strengthen Skills Collaboration for Beneficiaries



ISLAMABAD: BISP and the International Labour Organization [ILO] have agreed to enhance cooperation on skills development, employment, and livelihoods for Benazir Income Support Programme beneficiaries.

BISP Chairperson Senator Rubina Khalid said the Benazir Hunarmand Programme is a major poverty graduation initiative to equip beneficiaries with market-relevant skills for financial independence and better quality of life.

Meeting ILO Pakistan Country Director Geir Thomas Tonstol at BISP Headquarters, both sides discussed cooperation on skills development, employment generation, capacity building, and institutional linkages through market-

driven, demand-led interventions. Khalid highlighted BISP reforms, including the Digital Wallet payment system for financial inclusion and transparency. Citing a World Bank study, she said BISP now contributes to the local economy beyond a social safety net through multiplier effects.

She stressed the need for ILO collaboration on demand-driven skills in areas with strong employment potential, including women-led crafts and handicrafts, hotel management, tourism, and other emerging industries.

Tonstol lauded BISP's role in social protection. Both agreed to appoint focal persons, prepare a joint work plan, and sign an MoU to formalize long-term cooperation.